

# Four Armenian Families

CARL T. SMITH AND PAUL A. VAN DYKE

By the late eighteenth century, Armenians were at the center of many of the commercial activities in both Macao and Canton. They poured money into the capital market that allowed the China trade to grow; they were actively involved in both the import and export trade in Canton, which also contributed to its growth; and they were intricately involved in the contraband trade that contributed to the trade's collapse. The reconstruction of the four family histories in this paper will help to fill a void in the literature so that we can better understand the historical processes that were behind the developments in the region.

## RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS IN MACAO

Permanent and temporary residency in Macao was regulated by the Portuguese Viceroy in Goa. Normally only Portuguese citizens and persons connected to their households, such as slaves and servants, were allowed to reside in Macao. All other persons (which usually meant non-Portuguese) needed special permission from the Macao Senate to stay there. Prior to the 1680s, very few non-Portuguese traders were allowed to remain in the city (with the exception perhaps of the Japanese).

In the late 1680s and early 1690s, the situation began to change, and Macao had to adopt a new policy. The Qing government established an interest in encouraging foreign trade, and as a result, pressure was placed upon the Macao government to allow foreign<sup>1</sup> traders to reside there for the purpose of conducting trade with Canton. Except for a few special arrangements that were made with Spanish merchants from Manila, other foreigners were not allowed to do business in Macao. They could come to the city if they were in some way connected to a legitimate Macao trader (e.g., captain, sailor, or servant on a Portuguese ship, etc.), but they could not stay or do business on their own account. Persons without those connections could only conduct trade at Canton.

Trading at Canton was, in fact, a prerequisite to obtaining permission to reside temporarily in Macao. The trading season in Canton lasted from about August to January, and when that was over, the foreigners were expected (required after 1757) by the Canton government to leave. Permission to live in Macao in the off-season was granted on a season-by-season and case-by-case basis. The license often stipulated that the foreigners had to leave again when the next trading season began. If their ships were delayed and did not show up as expected, then they could appeal for an exemption from the Macao Senate to stay longer. In those cases, however, it was entirely up to the Senate to allow such leniency, because the Qing government also supported the stipulation that trade was a prerequisite to temporary residency. This policy was applied to all male traders who were non-Portuguese citizens.

Foreign women were not allowed in Canton, so they were usually the only non-Portuguese who were allowed to live year-round in Macao. There were foreigners who found ways to get around the residency restrictions by connecting themselves in some way to the Portuguese in Macao. The Senate also made exceptions and allowances to foreigners with extenuating circumstances such as severe illness or the loss of a ship. The only other way for non-Portuguese foreigners, including the Armenians, to get around the connection between temporary residency in Macao and trade at Canton, was to become a Portuguese citizen.

## THE JOANNES FAMILY

The Joannes family provides one of the most interesting, revealing, and intriguing stories of Macao's history during the era of the Canton trade (ca. 1700 to 1842). The affairs connected to the family over the years present a unique cross-sectional view of what it was like for non-Portuguese foreigners to live in a Portuguese colony in China. Over time, the family became very influential and important, to the point

that, by the early nineteenth century, officials in Macao felt that the city's economy would collapse without the Joannes fortune supporting it. The story of the Joannes family is thus an important part of Macao's history that has been given very little attention in the historical literature in the past.

**Matheus Joannes** first arrived at Macao as a young man in 1761. After many years of working his way into the social and commercial fabric of the city, he applied for citizenship and was naturalized as a subject of Portugal in 1783. Matheus died fourteen years later in Canton on 10 Dec. 1794. He was survived by two brothers: Lazaro and Cachick.<sup>2</sup>

Matheus Joannes never married, but he had a natural son by a Greek woman, Vartini Petrus Gajam. The son, João (the Portuguese version of Joannes), was baptized at the Church of Sto. António in Macao in 1784. The boy's godfather was Manuel Vicente Rosa de Barros, an elderly bachelor from one of Macao's leading families.<sup>3</sup>

The historical records that have survived provide us with only a very brief view of Matheus's early years in Macao and Canton. We know that when he first arrived, he lived in a house with three other Armenians, Zoure [Zore] Joannes, Artú [Aratoon] Jacob, and Sueri de Ayvai. In 1764, Matheus's name shows up again in the records. In that year, one of the Macao Senators reported that "the Armenian firm called Matheus and Zoré had made various injurious statements against the residents of this city and the government of this Republic, which members of this Senate consider to be reprehensible."<sup>4</sup>

The example above shows clearly that Matheus did indeed come for the purpose of doing business in China, and he was a partner with Zore Joannes.<sup>5</sup> Many of the references to "Armenians" in the records often do not have specific personal names attached to them, so it is not possible to retrace each person's movements. However, because we know that all adult male foreigners were expected to leave Macao and go to Canton each year, we can assume that Matheus followed this practice as well.

In late 1760s, a few references begin to appear of Matheus's business activities. In 1767, Matheus was repaid for a loan that he had given to the Swedish supercargo Johan Abraham Grill. The exchange, however, was done under the name of Simão Vicente Rosa in Macao. The amount that the Swedes paid him

was 1,332 taels (1,500 Spanish dollars, which probably represents the original principal). In 1768, Matheus gave another loan to the Swedes, but this time he was in partnership with Father Rioz [Rodrigues] of Macao. That loan was for 740 taels (1,000 Spanish dollars).<sup>6</sup> Matheus was a very active participant in this capital market in Macao.

The first specific reference that we have to Matheus Joannes making a trip to Canton is on 21 Feb. 1770. On that day, Joaquim Lopes da Silva informed the Senate that the Armenians Mateus [Matheus] and Inácio [Ignacio] had arrived from Canton and were living in his house.<sup>7</sup> In these early years, Armenians often traveled to Canton with other private traders, such as the English or the French. This could be the reason why they do not show up regularly in the records. After their numbers increased, Armenians began hiring their own sampans and traveled separately to Canton. Then they show up separately in the records as well.

In the 1770s and 1780s, references begin to appear that give us a picture of Matheus's trading activities in China. On 23 Aug. 1775, the Dutch report that Matheus arrived at Canton. The next day he received 35 piculs (47 chests) of cloves out of the Dutch ship *Indian*. The cloves were shipped from Batavia, and were taken aboard on consignment to Matheus. This means that Matheus would have owed the Dutch freight charges.<sup>8</sup>

In September of the same year, Matheus agreed to purchase several hundred canisters of sugar from the Dutch. After agreeing on the price, the sugar was transferred out of the Dutch ship *Blyenburgh*, by the English Captain Janson, to a small vessel at anchor in Whampoa Roads. The Dutch mention that this private ship arrived on 21 Sept., that it was flying an English flag, and that it was on consignment to the Armenians. Because of a lack of transparency in the records, it is difficult to know how many private ships were actually covers, like this one, for Armenian trade.<sup>9</sup> After the sugar was received, it was discovered that much of it was water damaged, and the majority was subsequently rejected.<sup>10</sup>

Matheus is mentioned again in the Dutch records on 7 Aug. 1777, when he is said to have arrived at Macao from Canton with his entourage. On 30 Mar. 1779, he arrived again at Macao with six or seven other Armenians, and then returned to Canton with his

## MINORIAS CULTURAIS DE MACAU

entourage on Aug. 25. In that year, the Dutch stated that Matheus and the other Armenians were holding large debts of the Hong merchant Kousia [Zhang Tianqiu]. Kousia was in a very bad financial state at the time because his pack house had been entirely consumed by flames in late March.<sup>11</sup>

These brief references to Matheus's business activities reveal a couple of interesting things about him and his commercial affairs. He appears to be shipping goods to China by any means possible, aboard private ships as well as those of the East India companies (in this case, the Dutch). The references also suggest that by the late 1770s, Matheus was the senior Armenian merchant in Canton as other Armenians with him are simply recorded as part of "his entourage."

The examples also show that Matheus and company dealt in both high-cost and high-risk items such as cloves, and in low-cost and low-risk items such as sugar. The clove market in Canton could be quite volatile at times. Because of the market's uncertainty, many of the Hong merchants preferred not to deal in cloves. Some Chinese merchants refused to purchase or accept the spices on barter regardless of the attractive prices they were offered.<sup>12</sup>

There were good reasons for these apprehensions. The quality of the cloves coming to Canton in the eighteenth century varied considerably, which means there was also a wide range in their prices. In a given year, the lower-end cloves might go for around 60 to 80 taels per picul; the mid-level range might go for 90 to 110 taels per picul; and the superior quality might have a purchase price of over 140 taels per picul. To make matters worse, cloves were tied to nutmeg prices in China, and were often sold together. Chinese herbal medicine buyers, who were the main purchasers of the two spices, considered them to be of equal value, whereas, outside of China, cloves could sell for almost double the price of nutmeg.<sup>13</sup>

In order to balance out the disparity between the Chinese market and the outside markets, merchants in Canton matched one picul of cloves to one picul of nutmeg when they purchased them from the foreigners. They added the two purchase prices together (e.g.  $146 + 84 = 230$  taels), and then took the sum and divided it in half ( $230/2 = 115$  taels). As far as the Chinese merchants were concerned, the quotient (115 taels) was the price of both products in China. Because of this disparity in prices inside and outside of China,

because of their high value, and because of the wide range in their prices and quality, it was very tricky business dealing in cloves in Canton. Unless a merchant understood this market very well, it was probably best to stay out of it. In the reference above, Matheus ordered 35 piculs of cloves, which was a fairly large amount. He was thus prepared to take risks.<sup>14</sup>

One of the examples above shows Matheus giving credit to a Hong merchant. We know from Matheus's estate papers that this was a regular part of his business dealings. Loaning money to the Canton merchants could produce very handsome profits from interest, but those transactions also carried great risk. In the 1760s and 1770s, Matheus could command a rate of at least 20 percent to as much as 40 or 50 percent annual interest on loans to Chinese merchants. But as the example of Kousia reveals, Chinese merchant houses could be ruined very easily overnight. A pack house burning up, a junk sinking at sea, or a foreigner absconding on a debt were all potential hazards of the trade that sometimes devastated smaller merchants.<sup>15</sup>

As would be expected of a good businessman, Matheus balanced out his high-risk transactions with more stable ones. Aside from trading in sugar, which was much more consistent in quality and price from one year to the next than cloves, he also offered brokering services.<sup>16</sup> On 9 April 1779, the Danes loaded two chests of camphor aboard one of their ships at Tranquebar. The goods came from the Armenian Sador Gregorig of Madras, but were shipped to China on consignment to "Mathius Johones." The freight amounted to 4 percent of the value of the cargo, which was the common going rate at the time. Matheus would have taken a commission for his services in arranging the sale of the goods, which was usually around 3 to 5 percent of the value. As far as Matheus's commission was concerned, he would get his money regardless of whether or not Gregorig made a profit on the sale. This "safer" side of Matheus's business activities was probably a way for him to balance out losses suffered on his high-risk ventures.<sup>17</sup>

This was about the same time that Matheus made another move to provide himself and his business with more security in Macao. In 1780, he applied to Queen Maria I for Portuguese citizenship. In his application, Matheus took advantage of a new law that allowed him exemption from serving in public positions such as senator, procurator, and judge. Notification of the

## MACAO'S CULTURAL MINORITIES

approval of his naturalization reached the Macao Senate on 5 Dec. 1783. Shortly thereafter (22 Dec.) he requested permission to go to Lisbon, so he may have been away from Macao in 1784 and the first half of 1785 (assuming that it would take him at least a year and a half to make the trip).<sup>18</sup>

By this time, Matheus was a very wealthy man, so he also had the wherewithal to take full advantage of his new rights and purchase his own ships. According to the Macao ship passports that have survived, Matheus owned and operated the following vessels:

Date of passport <sup>19</sup>	Name of vessel	Destination
1785 Dec. 16	<i>Santa Rita</i>	Bengal
1786 Feb. 1	<i>Santa Luz</i>	Madras
1786 Dec. 15	<i>Santo José (João?)</i>	Coromandel and Malaya
1788 Jan. 13	<i>Santo João</i>	Madras
1789 Mar. 4	<i>João Baptista</i>	Malaya
1790 Jan. 30	<i>João Baptista</i>	Batavia and Coromandel

All of the Macao ships at this time were rather small compared to those of the East India companies. The Macao vessels ranged from about 150 tons to usually no more than 500 tons. One of the reasons for the smaller size was the shallowness of the water around Macao. By the eighteenth century, all Macao vessels (Chinese and Portuguese) were required to anchor in the Inner Harbor. That was where their respective customs houses were, and where the trade was regulated, taxed, and controlled. The Inner Harbor, however, could only accommodate ships with a draft of no more than about eighteen feet at low tide. Ships larger than 500 tons usually drew more than eighteen feet of water. Those larger vessels could enter the Inner Harbor at high tide, but when the tide subsided, they would become grounded.

The Barra Fort protected the entrance to the Inner Harbor, and only allowed those vessels that were licensed to trade in Macao to pass. All other ships had to remain in the anchorage called Macao Roads near Cabrita Point on Taipa Island. They remained there until permission was granted for them to come upriver to Canton.<sup>20</sup>

As for ascertaining the purchase price of these ships, we get some idea of their value from a Dutch

reference. In 1772, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) purchased a Portuguese ship in Macao of 475 tons, the *S. Simão*, for 38,000 Spanish dollars.<sup>21</sup> A couple of Matheus's vessels were listed as "sloops", so they were probably in the range of about 200 tons. Matheus could have purchased one of these small two-masted vessels in Macao for around 15,000 to 25,000 Spanish dollars. From the loans mentioned above that he gave to the Dutch, who were by no means the only persons he lent money to, we can assume that by the mid-1780s, Matheus probably had sufficient funds to pay cash money for all of these ships.

On 30 Dec. 1790, the ownership of Matheus's sloop *João Baptista* was transferred to someone outside of Macao.<sup>22</sup> This may have been the fate of Matheus's other ships as well, because they do not show up again in the Macao records. There is no mention of them being lost at sea, which is something the foreigners (especially the Dutch) usually kept close track of. Thus, it is possible that the first ships Matheus purchased were employed in the Indian coastal trade, or that he simply had purchased them for a third party.

Even though Matheus now had the freedom to remain in Macao, he appears to have continued going to Canton every year until his death. On 4 April 1780, the Dutch report that Matheus arrived at Macao from Canton in three sampans. He was accompanied by the Armenian Caleston [also spelled Calistan Satur] and the rest of his entourage.<sup>23</sup> In 1784, the Bishop assigned to Peking visited Matheus's house in Canton. In 1787, the Dutch reported that Matheus arrived in Canton on 10 Nov. On 11 Oct. 1792, he was issued a pass from the *junminfu* to go to Canton with nine other persons; and we know that he was in Canton when he died on 10 Dec. 1794.<sup>24</sup>

Aside from loaning money to the Chinese merchants, Matheus also loaned money out to safer and more secure patrons, albeit at a much lower interest rate. In 1781, he gave a loan of 20,000 Spanish dollars (14,800 taels) to the VOC at 10 percent annual interest. By 1783, the amount listed in the Dutch books under Matheus's name had risen to 43,350 Spanish dollars (32,079 taels).<sup>25</sup> He was able to provide these funds despite the fact that he was holding debts with Kousia, and despite the fact that the Armenians in Macao had lost nearly 10,000 Spanish dollars when the English captured the Manila sloop *Hornby* in 1780. Some of those revenues were certain to have been the

## MINORIAS CULTURAIS DE MACAU

property of Matheus, as he had his hands in almost all aspects of the trade.<sup>26</sup>

This was when Matheus applied for Portuguese citizenship. He did not have citizenship yet when the *Hornby* was captured, so he had no legal means of applying for compensation for any loss that had occurred. The capture of the *Hornby* was thus a clear sign to the Armenians that they were in a very precarious situation in Macao. They could not trade in the port unless they disguised their trade under Spanish or Portuguese colors, which meant sharing part of the profits with those parties. But the privilege of using that disguise did not come with any protection, as it did for the Spanish or Portuguese themselves. Thus, as far as the trade was concerned, citizenship may have given Matheus more protection for his profits. It allowed him the freedom to trade in his own name and to remain in Macao permanently, which were also benefits that provided security. Along with that protection and those freedoms, of course, came greater responsibility and expectations of him to contribute to Macao's welfare. But the latter was much more predictable and negotiable than the former, so taking citizenship was probably a good move on his part. However, for his descendants and the inheritors of his fortune, his citizenship status created enormous problems.

After his death, the executing of Matheus's estate became a major ordeal in Macao. Because the estate involved such large amounts of money that were connected in various ways to the Macao government, Portuguese officials put many obstacles in the way of collecting the inheritance. Matheus's total receipts came to many hundreds of thousands of Spanish dollars (called "patacas" in his will), while the total receipts and expenditures of the city of Macao itself in 1797 was a mere 215,390 dollars. If all of the funds in Matheus's estate were withdrawn from the treasury at the same time, it was feared that it could bankrupt the city.<sup>27</sup>

The enormous importance of the estate to the stability of the city gave rise to a very long and drawn-out ordeal of endless claims being filed, and then of government officials issuing counter-claims to keep the funds from leaving. Aside from family members, numerous Armenian and Portuguese partners, and other private traders in China and India, Matheus had dealings with almost all the foreign trading companies and Chinese merchants in Canton. English, Dutch, Swedish, Spanish, and French companies were all issued

bonds and/or promissory notes that were in some way connected to Matheus's estate. Some of the Chinese merchants either owed money to the estate, or were creditors holding Matheus's debt receipts. Many of those funds were eventually collected by Portuguese officials, but then the money tended to remain in the city. The heirs to the estate tried every tactic they could think of to wrest their inheritance from Macao, but were only marginally successful. By as late as 1832, a good share of Matheus's estate was still in the hands of the city, which led the government in Portugal to once again urge the case to be closed.<sup>28</sup>

**João Mateus:** Matheus's immediate family suffered considerably because of this tangled financial web. Matheus's son, João Mateus, and the boy's mother had been assigned in the will to be sent to Madras. They were to be placed under the care of Shamier Sultan. The judge in Macao, however, declared that the boy was "a Portuguese subject, and according to the emigration law, he could not leave without a license from the Sovereign." At the same time, his elderly godfather, Manuel Vicente Rosa de Barros, was appointed his guardian and placed "in charge of his Christian and civil education, and his property was not to be taken from the city."<sup>29</sup>

In 1800, at the age of sixteen, João was taken to Lisbon by his guardian and placed in a school. Six thousand patacas were used from his inheritance to pay for his voyage, education, and expenses in Lisbon. In the issuing of the license for the boy to leave Macao, the Secretary of State warned that if a large amount of his estate also left, "a serious inconvenience would result to the commerce of Macao." His godfather argued that if he moved the boy to Portugal, and placed him in some good school for young people in the capital city, he might forget Armenian ideas, acquire a love of the Portuguese nation, respect for Our Majesty, and become a good subject and a useful merchant, which could not be done in Macao.<sup>30</sup>

In May 1803, João's godfather died, and the boy was placed in an institution called the Casa de Rihafles, which was run by Lazarist Fathers. A year later at the age of eighteen, he fell in love with Joana Fuschini, the daughter of a Venetian painter living in Lisbon. The Councilor of the Overseas Council to the Secretary of the State for Overseas Dominions recommended that a marriage not take place before a contract was drawn up. The girl was a year older than João, and his inheritance



## MACAO'S CULTURAL MINORITIES

in Macao was now worth about 300,000 patacas. These two factors alone were probably enough to raise concerns that she and her family might be trying to take advantage of João's youth and his infatuation with their daughter Joana to get at his wealth.<sup>31</sup>

João's request to marry was denied because his guardian at the time did not approve. All of the parishes in Lisbon were instructed not to perform the ceremony. The would-be groom and her father then appealed to the throne for help. While they were waiting for a reply, João was placed in quarantine at the Lazarist College. He could not leave or communicate with anyone outside without express permission from the school administration. Somehow, however, he managed to send an appeal to the throne for his release. Finally, the throne intervened in the affair, João was granted his freedom, and the marriage was approved. They were married on 9 Oct. 1804.<sup>32</sup>

The marriage presented a problem for the holders of Matheus's estate in Macao. According to Portuguese law, this change in his status should have qualified João to receive his full inheritance, but because the funds were being used to support the trade in Macao, there was still great reluctance among officials to allow the inheritance to leave.<sup>33</sup>

In 1805, João's name shows up again in a list of donations to the royal crown. The document shows him giving one-tenth of his inheritance "to Her Majesty at a time of national crisis." This action was apparently the result of an appeal that the crown had made to the extended empire to help the motherland in its present crisis. João's donation reached Portugal in the form of merchandise sent in the ship *Carolina* to the value of 30,461.15 patacas. It is not known who actually officiated this transaction.<sup>34</sup>

The Macao records do not reveal much about João Mateus over the next two decades. In 1824, João's name appears in a request for a statement of the delivery of the six thousand patacas that had been given to his guardian more than twenty years before.<sup>35</sup> This action suggests that that money may not have ended up in João's hands. The authorities in Lisbon requested the Judge of the Macao Orphans Court in Macao, Miquel de Arriaga Brum da Silveira, to wind up the affairs of the estate. The judge used the excuse that great harm would come to the economy if such a large sum was withdrawn from the treasury. In 1827, Macao informed Lisbon that it would transmit one-tenth of

João's fund.<sup>36</sup> As is noted above, five years later the government in Portugal made another appeal, but to no avail. The other inheritors of Matheus's estate fared no better.

## THE LAZARO FAMILY

**Lazaro Joannes's** first arrival in Macao is a bit of a mystery. In a document from the late 1790s, there is a reference stating that Lazaro had arrived eighteen years before with his wife, which would put him in Macao sometime in 1780 or 1781.<sup>37</sup> Another reference, however, mentions Lazaro being in Macao earlier. In 1777, a citizen of Macao, João Fernandes, died, and an inventory was taken of his godown. Among the goods listed were eleven chests of opium that belonged to Lazaro Joannes. The court ordered the merchandise to be sold at auction, and the money was to be placed in the public treasury until a final decision was given as to its ultimate disposal.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the reference to 1780 may be the year that Lazaro settled in Macao, and not necessarily the first time he visited the city.

By this time, Matheus was well established in the region, so Lazaro could benefit from his brother's extensive commercial connections. Little is known of Lazaro's early years in Macao. We know that a son was born shortly after the couple's arrival, and was named Joannes Lazaro [also called Lassar].

In 1791, in a letter from the Senate to the governor general at Goa, Lazaro is noted as being connected to the "vagabond foreigners" in Macao. The document mentions that there were six vessels anchored in an "English port" near Macao. Lazaro apparently purchased a sloop there and was using it to ship goods to Macao. This activity was seen as harmful to the Portuguese trade. The service boats from the vessels in that harbor were given permission to obtain their daily supplies from Macao. However, some of these small craft were coming in at night, and it was suspected that they were engaging themselves in various injurious and illegal activities.<sup>39</sup>

In 1795, Lazaro and Moisés Joannes show up in a document where they are listed as being part-owners of 306 chests of opium that were seized by the Macao government from the ship *Lucônia*. Because three Armenians and one Chinese were listed on the ship's manifest, it was suspected that this opium was being shipped into Macao illegally, under the name of José

## MINORIAS CULTURAIS DE MACAU

Luís Barreto.<sup>40</sup> The seizure of the opium was probably one of the reasons behind Lazaro requesting a license on 12 Nov. 1796 to ship opium in Macao ships. This request was refused because it violated the stipulation that opium could only be imported by Portuguese subjects in Macao ships.<sup>41</sup>

Lazaro then appealed to the Viceroy at Goa to reverse the Senate's decision, but there is no record of this effort being successful. After the death of his brother, Lazaro tried to shore up his precarious situation in Macao by applying for citizenship, but that was denied as well. He then transferred some of his business to Calcutta.<sup>42</sup>

The Senate saw the example of Matheus's naturalization as injurious to the city, and even claimed that Matheus had introduced opium into Macao. While it was true that the Joannes brothers were deeply involved in the opium trade, Matheus was certainly not the first person to introduce the drug to the city. Nevertheless, because of this past experience with Matheus and these perceptions of the threat that Armenians posed to the monopoly on the trade, the government was reluctant to allow Lazaro the same freedoms. In the years that followed, he continued to meet with one refusal after another.<sup>43</sup>

Because of Matheus's citizenship, Lazaro was faced with the daunting task of trying to wrestle his brother's estate out of the hands of the Orphan's Court. This led to several accusations being filed against Lazaro by the Macao Senate in 1800, in which he was accused of mishandling the accounts of the estate. The Orphan's Court claimed that he had illegally transferred some funds in Canton and Bengal to Armenian accounts outside of Macao. The Court claimed that these funds should have come under the administration of the city. This last accusation and the failure of Lazaro to establish himself as a legitimate trader were probably the reasons why he and his family left Macao shortly thereafter.<sup>44</sup> After Lazaro's departure, his brother Cachick Joannes took over as executor of the estate, and he also experienced considerable obstacles (explained below).

**Joannes Lazaro** [also called Lassar]. After the Lazaro family moved to Calcutta in 1802, the son, Lassar, appears to have found employment with the English government as a Chinese translator. By this time, he was about twenty years old. In 1835, the editor of the *Chinese Repository* investigated the boy's past and discovered that he had been raised by two Christian Chinese who were provided for him by his parents. It

was suggested that Lassar may have learned the Chinese language from these two house servants.<sup>45</sup>

By 1806, Lassar had gained a reputation for his knowledge of the Chinese language. Upon examining several of his translations, the provost of the college at Fort William, Rev. D. Brown, declared that Lassar could read "everything in the language [Chinese] as readily as you do in English, and writes it as rapidly." He was recommended as being duly suited to "the great work of translating the scriptures into that language."<sup>46</sup> On 28 April 1808, Rev. Brown wrote about Lassar again, stating that he had made much progress in the translating of the scriptures, which he had apparently been doing for the past year and a half. The entire New Testament of the Bible was translated into Chinese by the end of 1813 and available in print by 1814.<sup>47</sup>

In December 1813, Dr. Marshman wrote the following from Serampore about Lassar and the ongoing work of translating the Bible:

"The first step ... taken in the translation, is that of Mr. Lassar's sitting-down at my elbow, (where he sits from month to month and year to year,) and translating from the English, assisted by his knowledge of the Armenian. For a long time he and I read over the assigned portion together, prior to his beginning it, till he found it unnecessary; he now therefore only consults me respecting particular characters, rejecting some, and suggesting others. When a whole chapter is thus done, which sometimes takes three or four hours, I give him the Chinese, and read Griesback into English very slowly and distinctly, he the meanwhile keeping his eye on the Chinese version. It is then copied fairly, and sometimes, (that is when any doubt remains,) it is examined thus a second, and even a third time."<sup>48</sup>

It took another nine or ten years to complete the translating of the Old Testament into Chinese. It is not known the extent to which Lassar was involved with the rest of this work. By 1824, the entire Bible was in print in Chinese.<sup>49</sup> Much of the credit for that work went to a Macao-born Armenian by the name of Lassar—nephew to Matheus, one of the great private traders in Asia during the Canton era.

## THE CACHICK FAMILY

**Cachick Joannes** arrived at Macao sometime around 1800. Unlike his brother Lazaro, who returned to India out of frustration with his dealings with the

## MACAO'S CULTURAL MINORITIES

Macao government, Cachick became a long-term resident of the city. He married Maria Teresa Pereira in Macao. They lived on Sto. António Street in Macao, which is where other foreigners had their residence as well. Cachick and Maria had a son, João Joaquim, and a daughter, Isabel Maria.<sup>50</sup>

Unfortunately, most of the information that has survived about his early years in Macao concerns his legal and financial difficulties. Cachick took over as executor of Matheus's estate after Lazaro Joannes left in 1802, but his difficulties had begun even before this transition. On 30 Dec. 1800, Cachick was listed as the brother and heir of Matheus in a case that was filed in the Macao court by the Hong merchant Gonqua [Zhang Zhongqian]. Gonqua claimed that he had loaned 18,000 patacas to Matheus before his death. The loan consisted of 1,875 patacas in cash and 150 chests of opium, which was exchanged for a promissory note of 18,000 patacas. Sixty chests of opium came from the ship *Frederick* that was anchored at Whampoa. The loan was issued at a rate of 2 percent per month and was to be repaid two months later. Three Portuguese and two Armenians (José Minaz and Mathias Bazilio) witnessed the transaction. To support his claim, Gonqua submitted a document that was originally written in Armenian and translated into Portuguese by Minaz.<sup>51</sup>

Another court case involving Cachick emerged shortly thereafter. After Lazaro moved to India in 1802, he and another Armenian, Aviet Seth, filed a complaint against Cachick for mismanaging the estate. The two claimed that Matheus's former partner in Madras, Nazar Jacob Shamier, had not received the rightful amount that he was owed. Two obligations were in dispute: one in the amount of 5,000 patacas from the Armenian Aratoon Petrus, and one in the amount of 15,000 patacas worth of merchandise that was seized by Shamier. The two brothers were apparently now adversaries, because we see the case dragging on through the Macao courts for many years. In 1809, Cachick filed an appeal against Lazaro's claim, which reappears again in 1819.<sup>52</sup> As can be seen from all of these examples, Matheus's estate created no end of problems for the immediate family.

## THE BABOOM FAMILY

**Gregory Marcar Baboom**<sup>53</sup> was the son of Marcar Joannes Baboom and Clara Baboom of Madras. He married Maria Baboom, who was the daughter of

Miquel Joannes Baboom. The common middle name "Joannes" suggests that Gregory's father and Miquel may have been brothers, which would make Maria a cousin of Gregory.<sup>54</sup>

Gregory and Maria had two children in Macao. Unlike other Armenian families in which their father's first name became the children's last name, the Baboom children used their father's last name as well. Margarida Michaela Baboom was born in December 1806, and Miguel João Baboom in February 1810. Both of the children were baptized at the S. Lourenço church in Macao. Maria Baboom died in Madras on 3 Sep. 1837.<sup>55</sup>

Gregory was a very determined, resourceful, and motivated businessman. He had no scruples about smuggling opium into China, and even tried to establish a monopoly on the trafficking. In 1799, he wrote to the English East India Company (EIC) Committee in China proposing to contract for the whole of the opium manufactured in Bengal. He wanted a three-year contract that would fix the purchase price at 550 sicca rupees per chest, and the maximum output set at 4,500 chests per year. The exchange rate of the rupee was to be fixed at 43 Spanish dollars per 100 rupees. If Baboom's proposal had been approved, he would have gained considerable control over the selling price of the drug in China. This would have, in turn, brought greater protection to his profits. The proposal was passed on to the governor general at Bengal, but nothing came of it.<sup>56</sup>

Having failed this attempt, Baboom moved on to other grand schemes. In 1801, he contracted with the Hong merchant Conseequa [Pan Zhangyao] for 100,000 Spanish dollars worth of pearls from Madras. After making the agreement, Baboom then set off to India and appointed Mr. Charles Mackinnon as his agent to oversee the contract. Conseequa, however, refused to recognize Mackinnon. Mackinnon then sought help from the EIC. But Baboom was still indebted to the EIC for contracts that predated Conseequa's, so the directors were not about to intercede in the matter concerning Conseequa.

In the meantime, Captain George Seton of the private ship *Mysore* wrote to the EIC Committee complaining that Conseequa refused to account for 500 piculs of tin and 1,500 piculs of pepper that had been sold to him by Baboom. Payment was to be made in camphor, but Conseequa refused to



## MINORIAS CULTURAIS DE MACAU

deliver the goods or to return the tin or pepper until Baboom liquidated his account.

The EIC directors in Canton deliberated over the matter and resolved that all parties were somewhat at fault, but in the end laid most of the blame on Baboom. They felt that Captain Seton had been very careless to assign Baboom as agent without security. The directors were of several opinions concerning the matter, but finally decided that Captain Seton must file his claim against Baboom. They condemned Conseequa's counter-measures of withholding the payment, but did not allow Captain Seton to file a claim against him.<sup>57</sup>

It is not certain how long Baboom stayed in India. He seems to have continued being involved in the China trade in the years that followed, but the next reference we have to him being in China is from the 1806-1807 trading season. On 19 April 1807, the Dutch reported that the private merchant G. M. Baboom arrived at Macao from Canton.<sup>58</sup>

Baboom shows up fairly regularly in the years that follow, and he appears to have formed a business relationship with the Barretto family in Macao. On 14 Sep. 1807, the Dutch report that he left Macao for Canton in company with Luis Barretto. On 1 Oct. 1808, Baboom made the trip in company with the Armenian Lazar. On 19 May 1809, Baboom arrived at Macao with the "Barrettos"; and on 30 Sep. 1809 and again on 23 Oct. 1810, he made the trip to Canton in company with A. L. Barretto.<sup>59</sup>

In the 1808-1809 season, Conseequa purchased all of the EIC's tin imports for Baboom, who intended to re-export it to India. Because the company was in need of silver for tea purchases, and because Baboom offered to pay for the tin in silver from his opium sales, the EIC Committee allowed it to go forward. By February of 1810, however, the tin still had not been paid in full, because the opium market was in a slump.<sup>60</sup>

Baboom's name reappears again in the EIC records in 1816. By this year, there were many private Moor [Muslim], Parsee, and Armenian traders in China staying over each season. The directors of the EIC saw their continual presence as a problem to the control of the trade and harmony in the port. They thus tried to make all private traders leave Canton by April 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. It was recommended that Baboom, who had now been in China for about ten years, should be forcibly deported.<sup>61</sup>

By this time, the small private traders were well accustomed to coming and staying in Canton and Macao as long as they pleased (as long as some trade was done). They evaded English attempts to force them away by claiming citizenship from Austria, Prussia, Sweden, or some other country. In 1819, Baboom himself claimed the American privilege to remain in China.

Several of these nations had established consulates in China that represented private traders operating under their respective flags. The consuls protected the merchants under their charge and did what they could to represent their concerns. The persons did not necessarily have to be citizens of those nations so long as some of the cargo or the ship itself was at least partially owned by a national. This situation made it easy for private traders to claim rights under another flag, and in so doing, avoid the EIC impositions.

The following reference from the account book of the American brig *China* provides us with an inside glimpse of how Baboom conducted his opium business in the delta.

1817, Sep 16: "Sold to Gregory Baboom all the Opium on board at five hundred & twenty five dollars per picul of one hundred & thirty three 1/3 pounds. He is to take it from on board & pay all expences—is to pay noting to my officers—to clear it from the ship in thirty days from this date. He is to pay me bargain money to morrow evening fifty dollars per pecul—which he is to forfeit in case he does not comply with his bargain. He is to pay me down in Cash before he takes away any—at each time he wants to receive—and the Opium is at his Risk."<sup>62</sup>

Baboom contracted "all the Opium on board" the brig, which is consistent with his other monopolistic activities mentioned above. The more supply of opium that he could obtain, the more he could control prices in China, which would bring some protection to his profit margins. As was often the case with smuggling in the delta and in Canton, Baboom was to "pay all expences," which means he assumed all the risks. He also put down earnest money of "fifty dollars per pecul." Both of these practices lowered the risks to foreign shippers, which contributed to more contraband coming to China.

As the risks were lessened, the trafficking became more stable. This, in turn, helped the smugglers to

## MACAO'S CULTURAL MINORITIES

better calculate profits in advance. Greater security and transparency in the sale of the drug led to more foreigners trying their luck in opium. As the example of the brig *China* clearly shows, agents like Baboom formed a crucial link in the contraband trade. Thus, even though many Armenians provided valuable services to the legal trade in China, some of them contributed directly to the advancement of illicit trade and to the deterioration of the Chinese economy and society in general.<sup>63</sup>

## SUMMARY

As can be seen from the examples of the four families described above, Armenians played a very important role in the historical development of the Pearl River delta. By the late eighteenth century, Armenians were at the center of much of the commercial activity in both Macao and Canton, including the capital market, the legitimate trade in commodities, and the contraband trade. They were also actively involved in the missionary effort in China, with Lassar's translation of the Bible into Chinese. Histories of Macao, Canton, and the delta that have been written

in the past have only briefly mentioned the role of the Armenians, mainly because of the lack of information available about them. Now that we know they were very important participants, and now that we have a brief history of some of their lives and their activities, it is time we reconsidered the events and the processes that were behind the historical developments in the region. ☒

## ABBREVIATIONS

AM	<i>Arquivos de Macau</i> . Published in three series: Series 1 has three volumes (1929-1931); Series 2 has one volume (1941); and Series 3 has fifteen volumes (1964).
AHU	Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Portugal
ARA	Algemeen Rijksarchief (General State Archives), The Hague, Netherlands.
EIC	English East India Company.
PL	Philips Library, Pebody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, USA.
RAC	Rigsarkivet (National Archives), Copenhagen, Denmark.
VOC	Dutch East India Company.

## NOTES

- 1 The terms "foreign" and "foreigner" in this paper refer to things, places, and persons that were not of China or the Chinese.
- 2 In this period, many Armenians were following the patronymic naming system, in which individuals adopted the given name of their father as their surname. Hence, the children of the two brothers had the surname Lazaro and Cachick, respectively.
- 3 AHU: Macau cx. 22, no. 22 microfilm CO643 and cx. 24, no. 19 microfilm CO645; and Jorge Forjaz, *Famílias Macaenses* (Macao: Fundação Oriente, Instituto Cultural de Macau, 1996), 3:297. There were other Armenians who had illegitimate children as well. In 1774, Anna Xavier is mentioned in the Bishop's Visitation Report as living with an Armenian on the Travessa Thomas Moniz. She is mentioned as already having two children with him. AHU: Macau cx. 7, no. 29, microfilm CO632.
- 4 AM: 3. XXIII. no. 5 (May 1975) 286-287.
- 5 The authors have not been able to establish whether Zoure [Zore] Joannes was related to Matheus Joannes. It seems likely that they were, considering that they appear to have the same last name. It is possible that "Zore" was in fact Matheus's brother "Lazaro," who appears later in the records.
- 6 NM: F17.
- 7 AM: 3. XXIV. no. 3 (Sep. 1975) 137-138.
- 8 ARA: Canton 84.
- 9 On 26 Jan. 1779, for example, the Dutch mention that the private English ship *Elisa*, of George Smith, was being freighted to Madras and Bombay by the Armenians in China. ARA: Canton 88. Armenians were conducting their trade under cover of English and Danish passes in Southeast Asia as well. Jeyamalar Kathirithamby-Wells, "Restrains on the Development of Merchant Capitalism in Southeast Asia before c. 1800," in *Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era*, ed. by Anthony Reid (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 134-135.
- 10 Matheus would only accept 377 canisters out of about 1,000, all the rest being water damaged. At this time in Canton, sugar was normally exported by the foreigners, not imported. The cargo on the Blyenburgh was actually intended for Japan, but the ship put into Canton because of storm damage, which is why it was sold in Canton. ARA: Canton 38, 84.
- 11 ARA: Canton 86, 88.
- 12 ARA: Canton 73.
- 13 ARA: Canton 73.
- 14 ARA: Canton 73.
- 15 For a more detailed analysis of the risks involved in Canton, see Paul Van Dyke, "Port Canton and the Pearl River Delta, 1690-1845" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 2002) Chapter Five: "The Macau Trade, the Junk Trade, and the Capital Market in Canton."
- 16 Armenians were also involved in the sugar industry in the Philippines at this time. Benito J. Legarda, Jr., *After the Galleons* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1999), 81-82.
- 17 RAC: Ask 1180.
- 18 AHU: Macau cx. 13, no. 17 microfilm CO636, and cx. 14 no. 41 microfilm CO638.

## MINORIAS CULTURAIS DE MACAU

- 19 AHM/LS/120. Passports issued by the Leal Senado, nos. 8, 11, 18, 26, 37, 97. These passports and voyages are also mentioned in A. M. Martins do Vale, *Os Portugueses em Macau (1750-1800)* (Macao, Instituto Português do Oriente, 1997), 170 n. 420.
- 20 For a detailed analysis of the relationship between drafts, river depth, and trade in the Pearl River delta, see Van Dyke, "Port Canton," Chapter Two: "Piloting the Pearl River."
- 21 The Dutch renamed the ship *The Herstelder*. ARA: Canton 81.
- 22 AM: 3. XVII. no. 2 (Feb. 1972) 83-85.
- 23 ARA: Canton 89. "Caliston" may be the same as the name "Galstin" or "Galauston" that appears in other records.
- 24 AM: 3. XIV. no. 6 (Dec. 1970) 325-327; ARA: Canton 93; and Lau Fong 劉芳 and Zhang Wenqin 章文欽, eds. *Qingdai Aomen Zhongwen Dangan hui bian* 清代澳門中文檔案匯編 [A Collection of Ming Chinese Documents Concerning Macao] (Macao: Aomen Jijinhui Chubun, 1999), 2:708-709 no. 1378 and 733 no. 1419. Matheus's will was written on 4 Dec. 1794, and he died in Canton a few days later (Dec. 10). AHU: Macau, cx 20, no. 33, microfilm CO642.
- 25 ARA: VOC 4423, 4430 and Canton 244, 245.
- 26 The Dutch and English reports of the capture of the *Hornby* are somewhat different. The Dutch reported that the cargo consisted of two chests of birds nests that belonged to the captain, and 12, 000 Spanish reals that belonged to the Armenians. They said the ship was held for a ransom of 3,000 Spanish dollars. The English records, however, show the ransom to be "2,000 dollars." Captain Tasker reported the cargo to be "in money and Bird's nests 8,299 Dollars," with no mention of Armenians. ARA: Canton 89; and H.B. Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China 1635-1834* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926. Reprint, Taipei: Ch'eng-wen Publishing Co., 1966), 2:51-52. Matheus's will and estate documents clearly show him being deeply involved with the Spanish in Manila. AHU: Macau, cx. 20, no. 33, microfilm CO642.
- 27 AHU: Macau cx. 20, no. 33, CO642. The authors hope to publish Matheus's estate proceedings and claims in a separate article. They are much too extensive to include here.
- 28 AHU: Macau cx. 20, no. 33, CO642.
- 29 AHU: Macau cx. 63, no. 39, microfilm CO671.
- 30 AHU: Macau cx. 63, no. 39, microfilm CO671.
- 31 AHU: Macau cx. 24. no. 19, microfilm CO645.
- 32 AHU: Macau cx. 24. no. 19, microfilm CO645, and cx. 25, no. 22, microfilm CO645.
- 33 AHU: Macau cx. 27, no. 41, microfilm CO647.
- 34 AHU: Macau cx. 25, no. 22, microfilm CO645.
- 35 AHU: Macau cx. 51, no. 33, microfilm CO664.
- 36 AHU: Macau cx. 44, no. 40, microfilm CO658, cx. 46, no. 35, microfilm CO659; and cx. 59, no. 16, microfilm CO668.
- 37 AM: 3. VIII. no. 2 (Aug. 1967) 81-82.
- 38 AM: 3. X. no. 4 (Oct. 1968) 233. See do Vale, *Os Portugueses em Macau*, 211, n. 503.
- 39 This "English port" was probably Lark's Bay, on the west side of Hengqin Island. It was a popular smuggling depot from about 1780 to 1800. In 1780, the opium market became glutted, and the private English traders who were bringing the product to China responded by anchoring a warehouse ship (called a "hulk") at Lark's Bay. This location then became the storage and distribution place for the opium smugglers. See Van Dyke, "Port Canton," Chapter Six: "The Contraband Trade."
- 40 AM: 3. VIII. no. 2 (Aug. 1967) 81-82; Ângela Guimarães, *Uma Relação Especial. Macau e as Relações Luso-Chinesas (1780-1844)* (Macao, Instituto Português do Oriente, 1996), 67-68; and A. M. Martins do Vale, *Os Portugueses em Macau*, 211. Moisés Joannes does not appear in Matheus's will, so it is assumed he was not related.
- 41 AM: 3. VIII. no. 2 (Aug. 1967) 81-82.
- 42 AM: 3. VIII. no. 2 (Aug. 1967) 81-82; Ângela Guimarães, *Uma Relação Especial. Macau e as Relações Luso-Chinesas (1780-1844)*, 67-68; and Vale, *Os Portugueses em Macau*, 211.
- 43 AM: 3. XVII no. 4 (April 1972) 202-203. For a detailed account of the early development of the opium trade in Macao and the Pearl River Delta, see Van Dyke, "Port Canton," Chapter Six: "The Contraband Trade."
- 44 AM: 3. XVII. no. 4 (April 1972) 202-203. In 1835, the editor of the *Chinese Repository* reported that the Lazaro family left Macao in 1802 for Calcutta. *Chinese Repository* (Oct. 1835), 4:252 and note ‡.
- 45 All of the information in this paragraph comes from the 1835 reference to him in the *Chinese Repository* (Oct. 1835), 4:252 and note ‡.
- 46 *Chinese Repository* (Oct. 1835), 4:252 and note ‡.
- 47 *Chinese Repository* (Oct. 1835), 4:252-257.
- 48 *Chinese Repository* (Oct. 1835), 4:253-254.
- 49 *Chinese Repository* (Oct. 1835), 4:252-256.
- 50 Father Manuel Teixeira, *Arquivos da Diocese de Macau* (Macao 1970), "Tipografia da Missão do Padroado" 1:134 n. 1. Aside from other Armenians, the Dutch and Spanish lived on Sto. António Street as well. Some of the English supercargoes lived at the end of the street near Sto. António Church. Joannes Cachick is sometimes also called "Cachick Joannes" in the records. The same was true with other Armenians such as Matheus, who was sometimes called "Matheus Joannes" and other times "Joannes Matheus."
- 51 Microfilm from the Genealogical Society of Utah in the Macao Historical Archive of the Archives of Juízo de Direito da Comarca de Macau. Reel no. 1127863. Here after referred to as JDCM. Gonqua was in serious financial difficulties at the time. Anthony Kuo-tung Ch'en, *The Insolvency of the Chinese Hong Merchants, 1760-1843* (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1990), 327-328.
- 52 JDCM reel no. 1127859.
- 53 Aliases: Gregorio Marcos.
- 54 *Canton Register*, 28 Nov. 1837.
- 55 *Canton Register*, 28 Nov. 1837. According to *The Hindu* (28/04/2003), Maria Baboom's and Roasa Johannes Baboom's tombs are at the Moorat Chapel in Madras. Both died in 1837.
- 56 Morse, *Chronicles*, 2:325-326.
- 57 Morse, *Chronicles*, 2:365-367; and Ch'en, *Insolvency*, 378 n. 59. This debt was small compared to the credits Conseequa extended to the American merchants, which by 1808 were said to have reached half a million dollars. Frederic D. Grant, Jr., "The Failure of the Li-ch'uan Hong: Litigation as a Hazard of Nineteenth Century Foreign Trade," *The American Neptune*, vol. 48, no. 4 (Fall 1988), 243-260.
- 58 ARA: Canton 99.
- 59 ARA: Canton 99, 100.
- 60 Morse, *Chronicles*, 3:106-107. It is difficult to ascertain from Morse's account of this affair whether or not it was finally settled.
- 61 Morse, *Chronicles*, 3:252-253.
- 62 PL: Benjamin Schreve Papers, "Brig China Accountbook 1817."
- 63 For a detailed description of the contraband trade and breakdown of the connivance fees in the delta, see Van Dyke, "Port Canton," Chapter Six: "The Contraband Trade."