

Parsee Merchants in the Pearl River Delta

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Illustration by Victor Hugo Marreiros.

WHO WERE THE PARSEES?

The Parsees who established themselves as merchants in Macao were descendants of followers of the Zoroastrian faith, which was established five or six centuries before the present Christian era in Persia (Iran). It celebrated the ultimate victory of the power of light over darkness. When, in time, the Muslims came into power in Persia, many Parsees migrated to other parts of Asia. Those that came to Macao were from India, principally Bombay. Through the centuries Parsees maintained a strong sense of identity as a minority religious community with distinctive dress and customs.

The Parsee presence in Macao was preceded by their advent at Canton as merchants.

PARSEE NAMING SYSTEM

They retained the patronymic naming system, which used their father's first name as their last name, therefore no fixed surname was passed on from generation to generation. However, in time and on occasion a fixed surname was adopted, such as Mody, Setna, Cama, Canajee Bottlewalla, Wadia, Buxey,

Bisney, Shroff, Readymoney, etc. A fixed surname was not universally used in the nineteenth century. Most of the patronymic names ended in "bhoy" and "jee".¹ These endings usually indicate the individual was a Parsee. The pool of given names was rather restricted. These features of the traditional Parsee naming system make it difficult to establish relationships.

In this article no attempt has been made to standardize the spelling of names. They are given as they appear in the original source.

EARLY PARSEE TRADE TO CHINA

According to W. H. Coates, author of *The Old Country Trade of the East Indies*, Parsees began trading in India in 1735, and in 1755, Mr. Readymoney visited China.² He must have been welcomed with such a propitious name! The Parsees in India owned twenty large vessels.

From the records of the English East India Company at Canton, there are scattered references to several Parsee merchants as well as figures and lists of Parsees which provide information on the growth of the Parsee community in Canton.³

Reference is made in 1819 to Meerwanjee Manockjee, Jehangee Framjee and other unnamed Parsees, along with other British subjects who were trading there without licenses.⁴ In 1825 there were “several” Parsees at Canton.⁵ But in 1829 they become “a considerable number.”⁶

The first time the English records have statistics for the Parsee residents at Canton is in 1831. There were twenty-one merchants, eight clerks and fifteen servants—altogether forty-one.⁷

The Anglo-Chinese Calendar for 1832, compiled by John Robert Morrison, has a list of Asiatic British subjects, which includes Parsees, Muslims and Jews. The list is arranged according to the occupants of the different Hong or Factories. Thirty-one Parsees occupied five separate quarters in the foreign factories enclave in Canton.

- No. 3. Pou Shun Hong
 - Framjee Pestonjee
 - Hormasjee Sapoorjee
 - Framjee Heerajee
 - Jamsetjee Bhicajee
 - Pestonjee Rustomjee
 - Dorabjee Byramjee
- No. 1. Chow Chow Hong
 - Dadabhoy Rustomjee
 - Ruttonjee Byramjee
 - Pestonjee Cowasjee (died 1842 at Macao)
 - Jamsetjee Rustomjee
 - Dhunjeebhoy Muncherchee
 - Framjee Merwanjee
 - Cursetjee Bomanjee
- No. 2. Chow Chow Hong
 - Ruttonjee Burjorjee
 - Sorabjee Rustomjee
 - Dajeebhoy Muncherchee
 - Cawasjee Eduljee
 - Limjee Bomanjee
 - Bhicajee Framjee
 - Shaik Hussain Adumjee (the name suggests he was a Muslim)
 - Pestojee Ruttonjee
 - Abadeen Abdoollatil (the name suggests he was a Muslim)
- No. 4. Dutch Hong
 - Ardeseer Jamsetjee
 - Sorabjee Tamooljee
 - Bhicajee Burjorjee

- No. 7. French Hong
 - Hormusjee Cowasjee
 - Nasserwanjee Bhicajee
 - Hormasjee Nowrojee
 - Mahomed Salay Bubool (the name suggests he was a Muslim)
 - Byramjee Hormasjee
 - Bomanjee

1832 = 31 merchants (and clerks?) in five premises

1836 = 62 Parsees. (The second-largest group; first was 158 English)

1838 = 58

1841 = 42

1842 = 35

1843 = 50

1844 = 63⁸

By comparing the lists with each other, one has a reasonable record of the comings and goings in China of the Parsees of that period.

In 1837 the General Chamber of Commerce of Canton had a membership of twenty-four firms, each with two votes, and seventeen individual merchants, each with one vote. There were two Parsee firms, D. and M. Rustomjee and H. and M. Cursetjee, and four Parsee merchants—Framjee Pestonjee, Furdonjee Hormusjee, Cursetjee Furdoonjee and Nanabhoy Framjee—were members of the Canton General Chamber of Commerce.⁹

THREE NOTICES OF TRAGIC EVENTS

A few scattered records provide some details about Parsee life in Canton. The issue of the *Canton Register* for 28 September 1828 reported the death on the 22nd of “Asspundeanjee Mancherjee, a young man. At daybreak, as some of his countrymen went down to the river to pray, found him lying dead close to riverbank in the shoal water. Buried next day on Danes Island.”

The mention of praying at the river at daybreak throws light on a religious practice of the Parsee community at Canton. Prayer at sunrise would be an affirmation of the basic belief of the Parsees in the victory of light over darkness and the purifying power of water and fire.

MINORIAS CULTURAIS DE MACAU II

The usual course of affairs in the foreign factories at Canton ran fairly smoothly. It was, however, a small space shared by people from many different countries and cultures, speaking many different languages. All these created tensions, which were usually repressed, but on occasion could break out into conflict or insult.

A small dispute in 1829 at the Dutch factory about a key ended in a beating from which the victim died. His attackers were three Parsee servants of the merchant Merwanjee Hormusjee. The factory at Canton had two entrances, a private one for quarter number one, the other entrance was to all the other quarters.¹⁰

One of the residents of the Hong, Charles Bovet, had a lock placed on the door that gave entrance to all the quarters but number one. A Parsee who was also a resident asked for a key. He was summarily refused. Angered, he ordered three of the ship's servants to break the lock. Mr. Bovet produced a sword and attacked the Parsees. It was three against one, and the sword was wrested from him. He then tried to run away shouting for help. A ship's captain, Mr. Mackenzie, rushed out armed with an umbrella. He used it to strike one of the Parsees. In retaliation the Parsees used wooden cudgels to strike the captain on his head causing serious wounds, from which the unfortunate man died the next day.

As the deceased captain had been in the employ of the Holland Company, the Dutch Consul at Canton swore in a jury to consider the case. The three Parsees were arrested and confined. Then the Chinese authorities decided to take over the case and pronounce their own judgment on the perpetrators. To avoid this, the three accused Parsees were sent to Bombay. The Chinese authorities had to face the fact that they had been outmanoeuvred.¹¹

The third event was not connected with death but with racial prejudice in the Canton community against the Parsees. It took place at a farewell banquet for William Jardine in January 1839. A detailed account of what happened is in a letter written by Robert Bennet Forbes, an American merchant, to his wife.

A close and long-standing tie existed between Jardine and the Parsee merchant Heerjeebhoy Jamsetjee. They first met when the ship on which they were both traveling was shipwrecked. At the time both were young men launching out in the China trade. In about 1799 he left Bombay for China in pursuit of

profit with only 120 rupees in his purse. His profit from the voyage was not very great, but he did make some good contacts to be used on a future trip. His second trip to Canton was on a vessel of the East India Company. On his third voyage to China in 1805 on the Ship *Brunswick*, he traveled with his uncle. The vessel, however, was seized by a French privateer, and was taken to Capetown in Africa. Undaunted, he tried again. There is a probable connection between Jeejeebhoy Rustomjee of Macao with the Bombay firm of Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy and Co.

A letter of appreciation was presented to Jeejeebhoy Rustomjee. It was signed by forty-two Parsees. The first name on the list was Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee, the agent in China for Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy Sons and Co. of Bombay.¹²

In his letter, dated 25th January 1839, Robert Bennet describes how the banquet for William Jardine degenerated into a shambles with insults directed at the Parsees in attendance. This was a sign that under the surface of profitable business relationships there were cultural and ethnic tensions, which in this instance must have surfaced after the consumption by one side of too many glasses of wine and spirits.¹³ The party was held at the East India Company's Hall with one hundred and forty guests in attendance, and among them there would have been most of the forty two Parsees who signed the letter of appreciation to the man being honored. Mr. Forbes' description gives some insights into the lavish hospitality and the quantities of wine that a public social occasion could feature in the bachelor society of the cosmopolitan merchant community at Canton.

After much toasting and drinking, what appears to have been some racial antagonism was expressed against the Parsee attendants, and an ugly scene followed. But first, let us turn to Mr. Forbes' description of the venue at the former establishment of the East India Company. (Jardine, Matheson and Co. were occupying it at the time. It is interesting to note that at this time Jardine's and the Parsees were occupying adjoining quarters of the Palácio of the Baroness de São José do Porto Alegre on the Praia Grande in Macao)

So that his wife could better visualize the proceeding, Forbes drew a rough plan of the dining hall and adjoining verandah. The room in which the dinner was held was about one hundred feet by sixty

MACAO'S CULTURAL MINORITIES II

feet and opened upon a verandah of fifty or sixty square feet, which for the occasion was enclosed by cloth and its pillars festooned with evergreens and brightened by blooming flowers in pots on the balustrades. In front of the enclosing fabrics were draperies between the pillars and at one end the letters W. J. in colored lights. The decoration of the porch was to serve as a background for the banquet hall. Later there was dancing on the verandah's marble floors. Since foreign women were prohibited from Canton by the Chinese authorities, the dancing must have been unisex and raucous. A band had been brought up from one of the ships at Whampoa to provide music. Dinner was served at seven thirty. By one in the morning all the regular toasts and songs were finished, but there followed a demand for voluntary toasts. By this time the wine was beginning to take effect, formality had disappeared and boorish behavior began to take over. Volunteers climbed over the tables to make their toasts, Forbes included, though he had drunk moderately, or so he wrote to his wife. His toast was all about "union", but was persistently interrupted by loud shouts and unseemly behavior. Soon, unfortunately, a serious breach of "union" was shouted out by a young inebriated Scotsman, "Let us clear the table and send these damned Parsees home, and then we shall have supper." It was then about three o'clock in the morning.

Things began to get nasty. Forbes, who at this time was acting as Chairman, tried to restore some semblance of order. He stood up on his chair and shouted for support and a cooling of tempers. Twenty cried out "Support the Chair". Twenty more shouted, "Let us have supper". Eventually Forbes restored a degree of order. By that time, only two Parsees remained, he got them to stand up on each side of him and explained that the rude young man had not meant to insult them and made the culprit offer an apology and shake hands with the two Parsees. Forbes informed his wife there was a parting glass of good fellowship and reconciliation. Though the formalities of reconciliation were observed, undoubtedly the episode left its wounds.

PARSEES AND THE OPIUM TRADE

A comparison of the annual import of Malwa and Patna opium shows that between 1800 and 1822 there was more Patna than Malwa brought to China,

but from 1822 to 1839 the balance was reversed in favor of Malwa.¹⁴ The implication is that in the sixteen years preceding the Opium War, the Parsee merchants of Bombay took an increasing part in the trade.

The Bombay Malwa opium syndicate of Jardine, Matheson and Co., Remington, Crawford and Co. and Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, Sons and Co. attempted to monopolize the trade. An agency house, such as Jardines, charged a commission. In 1825 the Canton agency houses agreed on the rates to be charged for their services, but these were often undercut by the Parsee merchants on the basis of friendship.¹⁵

From 1820 to 1830 there was a rapid increase in the import of Malwa opium. The British made inroads on the Portuguese by using Lintin Island in the Pearl River estuary above Macao as an anchorage and opium smuggling point.

The first mention of Malwa in the Jardine letters is in 1802 by the Ship *Asia*. In early years the trade was largely conducted by the Armenians, whose purchases dominated the opium sales at Calcutta.¹⁶ There was, however, increasing competition from Parsee and British merchants. In 1820 Magniac and Co. entered into an arrangement with the largest Bombay opium dealers, Motichund Amichand, a Hindu, and Hormusjee Dorabjee and Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, both Parsees.

Meanwhile, the Chinese authorities were increasing their efforts to stamp out the trade. An Edict issued in July 1838 ordered five British and three Parsee opium traders resident in Canton to leave China. The Parsees were Framjee, Hormusjee and Dadabhoy.¹⁷

PARSEE PRESENCE IN MACAO

The first reference to Parsees in Macao is in a document of the Macao Senate dated 20th August 1825. A letter was sent to the Governor calling his attention to J. V. Ribeira having rented a house to Parsees without first getting a license from the Governor.¹⁸ Unfortunately the names of the Parsees are not given, so, at present, they must remain anonymous pioneers.

During the 1830s and 1840s, there were many changes in the foreign trade of China which affected the Parsees, along with other traders. In 1834 the charter of the East India Company trading with China

MINORIAS CULTURAIS DE MACAU II

was revoked and the India-China trade was dominated by independent merchants. There was a dramatic increase in the import of opium into China. The Parsee merchants of Bombay became very active in supplying the Chinese smugglers of that drug grown in the Bombay region. It was known as Malwa opium as distinguished from the Patna, which was exported from Calcutta. The import of opium to China was illegal. In the closing years of the 1830s the Emperor took strong measures to stop the trade. These resulted in the forced departure of foreign merchants from the foreign factory area of Canton. They removed to Macao and the anchorages at Hong Kong harbor and its neighborhood. The British occupied the island of Hong Kong in 1841, and so began the commercial decline in Macao. In the 1840s there was a small number of Parsee merchants residing in Macao. Their numbers decreased as some departed for the new British settlement or returned to Canton. There was another inflow of Parsees to Macao at the close of the 1850s when war broke out between the British and Chinese. Again, after the end of that war, the Parsees gradually left Macao, and I have found no records of them there after 1890.

The following account of their presence in Macao is based on documents of the period.

The first direct reference of a Parsee in Macao is the burial there of Cursetjee Framjee in 1829. He died 17th March 1829, aged fifty-six. The community needed a cemetery for his burial. For this purpose his fellow countrymen acquired a plot of land in Macao as a place of burial, although this was not the first place of burial for Parsees in China.

The wall and gate of the Parsee Cemetery is on what is now called Estrada dos Parses. The plot extended down the hill to the sea-shore. A notice of Cursetjee Framjee's death was published in the *Canton Register*. It states he died "aged fifty years [sic], of a lingering illness, born in Bombay and an agent of Forbes and Co. [of Bombay] and the nephew of Jamsetjee Bomanjee, the famous ship builder, and Hormusjee Bomanjee. He had been in the habit for several years in visiting China annually for commercial purposes." The uncles of Cursetjee Framjee were of the Lowjee Wadia family.

Hormusjee Bomanjee Wadia had met John Forbes in 1785. Charles Forbes, a nephew of John, became a partner in Forbes and Co. in Bombay in

1789. Hormusjee was a close friend of both the Forbes, and when the broker of their firm died in 1794, Hormusjee became their broker. Through this connection, Cowasjee Framjee acted as the agent for Forbes and Co. in China.¹⁹

Pestonjee Cowasjee bought Marine Lot 7 at the first auction of land in Hong Kong in June 1841. Apparently he changed his mind about moving his business from Macao to the new British settlement on Hong Kong Island. It may well have been he had intimations of his impending death, for on 3th May 1842 he placed a notice in the *Canton Register*, that he had for sale a quantity of granite stones on his Hong Kong lot. Undoubtedly the stones had been intended for the erection of a substantial building on the lot.

Sometime between then and 1844, the lot reverted to the Crown, presumably because Pestonjee Cowasjee's executor did not pay the annual crown lease rent. It was resold by the Government in 1844, under a new crown lease, to Dent and Co. Marine Lot 7 was on the East Side of Pedder Street. On the west side of the street was Marine Lot 66. After Pestonjee Cowasjee's death, his executor Cowasjee Pallenjee registered the lots in Hong Kong in June 1845, in which he transferred Marine Lot no. 66 to Jeehangeer Framjee Buxey, both of Canton. On the same month, Jeehangeer transferred the property back to Cowasjee Pallenjee.²⁰ Cowasjee Pallenjee sold the lot to William Emeny in 1854. From 1845 to 1854 it was rented to a succession of occupants, none of them Parsees.

Pestonjee Cowasjee left a will, but I have found no record of its probate either in Macao or Hong Kong. The name of his executor in China, Pestonjee Cowasjee, indicates that, under the patronymic naming system practiced by the Parsees, he was a son of the testator.

Pestonjee Cowasjee was the founder of the firm of Cowasjee Pallenjee. It became one of the principal Parsee firms trading in China. The obituary of a senior partner of the firm, Cursetjee Bomanjee Sethna, who died in Bombay in 1889, stated that the founder of the firm had been to China in 1833.²¹ However, as mentioned above, his name is listed on the 1832 list of Asiatic British subjects doing business at Canton in 1832. Another member of the family, Cooverjee Bomanjee Sethna, probably a brother of Cursetjee Bomanjee, who died in Bombay in 1903, aged eighty-

Nusserwanjee Manecjee Wadia, attributed to Spoilum, c. 1800. Oil on primed cloth, 99 x 73.7 cm. Photograph courtesy of Peabody Essex Museum (M245).



MINORIAS CULTURAIS DE MACAU II

two, had established a branch of the firm in Shanghai in 1849.²² The company's corresponding firm in Bombay was Cawasjee Bomanjee and Co. The Cawasjee Pallenjee firm was still doing business in Hong Kong in 1914.

Pestonjee Cowasjee died in 1842 and was buried in Macao.

The Parsee cemetery contains fourteen marked graves. Father Manuel Teixeira, in his book *A Voz das Pedras de Macao*,²³ has the inscription:

This monument is erected
To the sacred memory of
Pestonjee Cawasjee Darabsh Sethna, Esre. [sic]
The founder of the fir. [sic] of
Cawasjee, Pallenjee & Co.
of China.
Who departed this live [sic]
18 August 42
By his descendants
31st July 1919.

A place name that has disappeared from Macao is the "Horta de Parces" (sic), which I have interpreted to be the Parsee Garden. It was a small strip of land just outside the Campo Gate. On one side it was bounded by the city wall, and on the other side by the Calçada do Poço, which climbed the Monte hill toward a former Chinese Christian Cemetery above the old Chinese village of São Lázaro.²⁴ This description fits an advertisement placed by Framjee Jamsetjee in the Macao paper, *A Aurora Macaense*, on 30 December 1843 for rent of a garden with a small shed or house to the right of the Campo Gate.²⁵

The Parsee Garden reappears in the Macao records in 1877 in connection with the estate of Joaquim do Rozario. It was described as a kitchen garden. It contained eight wood plank buildings and a ruined structure at the top of Escada do Corrector. This street disappeared when the area was redeveloped at the turn of the last century.

Joaquim do Rozario had mortgaged his property, and after his death it was sold at public auction to pay his creditors.²⁶ The purchaser was probably Francisco de Paula das Dores Senna, because when the government expropriated some parcels of land near the old wall of the city in 1908, the owners of one of the parcels were four of his daughters, Anna Maria Senna, Isabel de Senna

Ribeiro, Rosa Maria de Senna Rodrigues and Maria Estella de Senna Mello. Their property was described as "Land next to Campo Gate, formerly Horta dos Parsees, now Rua Ferreira do Amaral."²⁷

In the introductory section we have given a brief survey of the arrival and presence of Parsee merchants at Canton. With the seizure and burning of the opium stock of the foreign traders by Commission Lin in 1839, the foreign community left Canton.

On 8th December 1840, the *Canton Register* published a letter from "British subjects now resident at Macao." Among the signatories are the following Parsees:²⁸ D. and M. Rustomjee and Co.; Shavuxshaw Rustomjee; Hormasjee Byramjee; C. Saporjee Lungra; Pestonjee Cowasjee; Hormusjee Framjee; Byramjee Rustomjee; Pallenjee Nasserwanjee; Framjee Jamsetjee; Burjorjee Maneckjee.

Some were only temporary residents, others were more permanent. For most of the above, their stay in Macao was a short one. They were waiting there to return to Canton.

The 1848 *Hong Kong Almanack and Directory* has a tabulation of the number of Parsee firms and the number of their partners and assistants for that year. It clearly shows that the Parsees on the 1840 list did not stay there for any period of time. In fact there is only one Parsee who is listed in the directory as a resident of Macao, namely Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee. Of the other Parsee firms and residents in China in 1848, there was a branch of a Canton firm at Shanghai. The business there was conducted by two assistants, as none of the partners was resident there. For Hong Kong, three firms are listed. However, one of these was not Parsee but a Portuguese Bombay firm, and another had a Parsee owner assisted by a Muslim employee. At Canton, however, there were thirty-one Parsee firms, with 117 resident partners and assistants.

Of those whose names are on the 1840 list, I have found extensive records for some, and for others only a few brief notices, as shown by the following biographical sketches.

D. AND M. RUSTOMJEE AND CO.

This was the only company on the list. Its two principals were the brothers Dadabhoy and Maneckjee Rustomjee, sons of Rustomjee Cowasjee of the Banajee family of Bombay.

MACAO'S CULTURAL MINORITIES II

Their father Rustomjee was born in Bombay in 1790. He came to Canton in 1814 and stayed for three years before returning to Calcutta, where he established himself as a permanent resident. He died there in 1852. Through the years he acquired a fleet of vessels that made regular trips to China carrying cotton and opium: the ships *Cowasjee Family*, *Sylph*, *Rustomjee Cowasjee*, *Mermaid* and *Beremer*.²⁹

Dadabhoy was born in 1811. At the age of eighteen he made his first voyage to China on the ship of his uncle Framjee Cowasjee. He arrived at Canton in 1826 and returned to Bombay in 1830. He soon returned to Canton and established there the firm of D. and M. Rustomjee and Co.

Maneckjee Rustomjee was born in 1815. Like his brother Dadabhoy, he came to China as an adolescent to learn the trade. He arrived at Canton in 1830 and returned to Bombay after three years.³⁰

Dadabhoy Rustomjee attended the first sale of land in Hong Kong in June 1841. He bought Marine Lots 5 and 20. On Lot 5, east of Pedder's Wharf, he built a large building. He offered this to the Government as temporary quarter for Commissioner Keying who came to Hong Kong in 1843 to sign the Treaty of Nanking. For some years the building was known as "Keying House".³¹ He never moved his business to Hong Kong, but from Macao returned to Canton. The firm of D. and M. Rustomjee became insolvent in 1851.

SHAVUXSHAW RUSTOMJEE

In 1845 an assistant of Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee in Macao. He first appears in the Canton records in 1835.

HORMUSJEE BYRAMJEE

On Canton records from 1833 to 1845.

C. SAPORJEE LUNGA, or more commonly appears as Cowasjee Samporjee Lungrana

The firm of Cowasjee Saporjee Lungrana is listed at Canton from 1845 to 1848 at No. 5 Pau Shun Hong. In 1851, as representative of the Parsee community in China, he presented a donation of a bamboo water pipe to the Macao Government.³² This gift is further evidence of the importance the Parsee religion places on water as a symbol of spiritual cleanliness and purity. In 1855 he sold Inland Lot 3 in

Hong Kong. At the time he was designated as "of Bombay, but formerly of Canton."³³

PESTONJEE COWASJEE

He died in Macao in 1842 and was buried in the Parsee Cemetery there. His biography appears in the discussion of the establishment of the cemetery.

HORMUSJEE FRAMJEE

He was a partner with Dhunjeebhoy Muncherchee and is listed in 1839 at No. 5 Pau Shun Hong, Canton. In 1840 his partner was Maneckjee Burjorjee. His name appears in 1842 in a petition of British merchants at Canton. He left China for Bombay in January 1843. This is the last mention of him in the China records.

BYRAMJEE RUSTOMJEE

His first appearance in the China records is this list dated December 1840. His name appears again in 1843. Is he the same as Byramjee Rustomjee Cudawana, who in 1845 resided at No. 1 Chow Chow Hong, Canton?

PALLENJEE NASSERWANJEE

From 1835 to 1839, he was doing business at No. 1 Fung Tai Hong, Canton, and in 1846 and 1847 he was at No. 1 Chow Chow Hong, with D. and M. Rustomjee and Co.

FRAMJEE JAMSETJEE

He was a resident in Canton from 1834 to 1839. With other Parsees trading at Canton he moved to Macao at the approach of open hostility between the British and Chinese. He purchased a marine lot at the first land sale in Hong Kong. It was located in Wanchai near Spring Garden Lane and was numbered 36. He improved the lot with a rough sea wall and a brick and mat godown, but he did not leave the settled comforts of Macao for the inconveniences of a new settlement that was hastily being thrown together. He tried to lure a tenant to his Hong Kong investment by advertising it for sale or let in January 1842 and offered to remodel the crude structure on the lot into a proper dwelling.³⁴ The advertisement continued to appear until the end of 1843. By that time, he had strengthened the sea wall and remodeled the godown into a comfortable bungalow but he received no

MINORIAS CULTURAIS DE MACAU II

acceptable offer for the premises. Finally in May 1844, nearly three years after he had purchased the lot, he reluctantly uprooted himself from Macao and moved to Hong Kong. Within two years, however, he again advertised the sale of the property, describing his property as “that pleasant and healthy residence known as Framjee’s bungalow surrounded by a well stocked garden and commanding a fine view of the bay with a large sea frontage.”³⁵

After his advertisements for the sale or rent of his Wanchai property ceased appearing in the Hong Kong newspaper, he placed an advertisement in the Macao paper, *A Aurora Macaense*, on 30th December 1843 for a garden with a small shed or house to the right of the Campo Gate. Inquiries were to be made to Framjee Jamsetjee, at Rua Formosa.³⁶

He acquired some other properties in Hong Kong but could not dispose of them. He became increasingly dissatisfied with Hong Kong and in 1854 published a “Final Notice”, stating that Framjee Jamsetjee, the oldest resident of Hong Kong, being tired of Hong Kong and being obliged to leave at last, requests all accounts be sent for liquidation.”³⁷ Perhaps throughout his ten-year residence in Hong Kong, even in so pleasant a location, he never adjusted to the faster pace of Hong Kong as compared with the more relaxed style of Macao and even more of being at “home” in India.

BURJORJEE MANECKJEE

In January 1840, with Hormusjee Framjee, he advertised a ship about to depart for Singapore and Bombay. This is the only other reference to him in the China records.

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF THE PARSEE PRESENCE IN MACAO

The main sources to document the increase and decrease of Parsee residents in Macao are directories and the annual lists of foreign residents in China published in the *Chinese Repository* up to 1855.

The previous section concerns the ten Parsees who were in Macao at the end of 1840. After the 1840 list, the next list of Parsees resident in Macao is in 1848 in a list of houses whose occupants maintained an oil lamp outside their houses to illuminate their section of the street. The following

appear on the list. All were resident on the Praia Grande. No. 26. Pallenjee Dorabjee; No. 34. A Parsee – perhaps Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee; No. 60. Cowasjee Pallenjee

In a directory of Macao published in 1848, the only Parsee is Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee, whose name does not appear as one of the street lamp providers. He was probably, however, the unnamed Parsee at No. 34, who lived next to the Governor’s Palace. As can be seen in the account of his life in Macao, he rented premises in the mansion of the heirs of Henrique Hyndman, which was to the south of the Governor’s residence.

COWASJEE HORMOSJEE

His name appears on the 1832 list of Parsees residing at Canton. The next mention of him is in 1845. His house on the Praia Grande is on the list of residents who maintained a street lamp outside their residence as a service to the public. For a number of years in the 1850s, he was an assistant to Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee.

He had some financial reverses in 1851. In February his household effects were sold at public auction in a case brought against him for an un-expired lease of No. 7 Rua Formosa.³⁸ His name appears as a merchant in the 1861 Directory of Macao, but is not in the directory for 1863.

PALENJEE DORABJEE

He lived from 1835 to 1839 at the foreign factories in Canton. He does not appear in the records again until 1848. This suggests that he may have returned to India during the opium war. He was an assistant to Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee in 1850. This is the last mention of his name in the China records.

HEERJEEBHOY RUSTOMJEE

He had close connections with the British firm of Jardine, Matheson and Co. He first appears on China records in 1835 as a resident at the foreign factories compound at Canton. In 1838, 1839 and 1840 he made round trips to India. After his return in 1840, he gave a “splendid quadrille party” at his residence in Macao.³⁹

This was either a card party with tables for four persons played with a deck of forty cards, or a square dance of four couples with eight figures. If it was the

MACAO'S CULTURAL MINORITIES II

latter, it raises the question of who were the females. The same question arises for the dancing at the dinner given in Canton in 1839 for William Jardine. In Macao there was a multiplicity of women in the Portuguese community. The selection from the foreign residents was more limited. But even more interesting is that of a dance party with mixed couples being held by a Parsee. The Parsees followed the same practice as Indian Muslims and Hindus of secluding the female members of the family in their own quarters. In India there was strong criticism in the 1860s of a prominent Parsee resident who was seen shopping with his young wife and walking with her on the public streets.⁴⁰ Parsee merchants seldom took their wives with them when they traded in foreign countries. There is no evidence of a Parsee woman living in Macao in the nineteenth century. The first record I found of a Parsee family in Hong Kong records is 1876.⁴¹

Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee traded largely in Malwa opium, and in 1840 was a party in the courts of Macao with Alexander McIntyre over fifty chests of the drug.⁴²

After the British took possession of Hong Kong Island in February 1841, Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee must have considered relocating in the new settlement. He attended the first land sale there in June 1841 and bought two lots. If he had in mind building on them and moving over to Hong Kong, something must have caused him to change his plans, because shortly before 1843 he disposed of Marine Lot 10, located between Pedder and Pottinger Streets. Perhaps he was disgruntled because the Hong Kong administration had repossessed his other lot in order to use it for storage of military

ordinances. This lot was on the north side of the present Queensway.

Shortly after purchasing the two lots, he wrote to Alexander Anderson, Acting Surgeon for the establishment of the Superintendent of British Trade in China, to inform the doctor he had placed \$12,000 Hongkong dollars in the care of Jardine, Matheson and Co. for the purpose of building a hospital in

Hong Kong for foreign seamen. There was a delay in implementing the plan for a

seamen's hospital, but eventually a

committee was organized for that

purpose. When they applied to

Jardines for the contribution of

Mr. Rustomjee, they were

informed that Jardines had

no record of the sum.

Somewhere something

obviously went wrong.

Perhaps the benefactor

had for some reason or

other neglected to

transfer the money to

Jardines. However, they

offered to assume

responsibility for the

\$12,000 and added to it

their own contribution of

\$20,000. It was intended

that the hospital would

bear the name of

Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee, but

instead it was given the more

mundane name of Seamen's

Hospital. The name was changed

in 1873 to the Royal Naval Hospital.

Many decades later the site was

acquired by the Hong Kong Ruttonjee

family for the Ruttonjee Sanitorium for

tuberculosis patients. Thus, after a century, a Hong

Kong hospital bore the name of a Parsee family.⁴³

In Macao Mr. Rustomjee rented premises in the

Hyndman family mansion on the Praia Grande. Its

neighbor to the north was the old Governor's Palace

and to the south the Palace of the Baroness de São José



Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, First Baronet.
Courtesy of Rustom Jamsetjee, Seventh Baronet.

MINORIAS CULTURAIS DE MACAU II

de Porto Alegre. It was a central and prestigious location. A part of the mansion of the Baroness was rented by Jardine, Matheson and Co. In 1820 the Hyndman property had been rented by the East India Company.⁴⁴

In 1845 Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee was experiencing financial difficulties. He fell behind in his rent and was in default on a mortgage. Both creditors took him to court and asked for an embargo on his moveable property.

João Hyndman, for himself and his sibling, brought an action on 23rd April 1845 for payment of rent due on the residence he had leased from them. He was in arrears for 300 patacas. This was half the annual rent of 600 patacas and covered the six months from 21st July 1845 to the completion of the lease on 21st January 1846. An embargo order was issued on 1st December 1845.

The other creditor was António Gomes, who held a mortgage on the furniture as surety for a loan dated 3rd June 1845. In both cases the court archives contain a list of furniture. They are almost identical. One difference is that the list in the Gomes case gives the contents of each room. So we can enter the house with the guests of the 1840 “splendid quadrille party” into the mansion’s spacious, palatial rooms.

The entrance hall was not overly impressive. It had six rattan chairs, a little table, a wall clock, a square globe lamp and a collapsible telescope. The last item was useful for checking if an expected ship and its cargo had arrived in the Macao Roads. It is not clear whether the remaining rooms were on the ground floor or up a staircase on the upper floor. Usually in the houses of that period the ground floor was occupied by servants, storage and other service rooms.

The furnishings of the visiting or drawing salon showed the refined taste and wealth of the occupant. If our visit is on the evening of the party, a portion of the room may have been rearranged as space for dancing the quadrilles with another space for musicians. The inventory does not include a piano. The light from the chandeliers, wall lamps and candles were reflected in two large wall mirrors. Ten drapes hung at the windows, which meant the room had either five or ten windows. The floor had a large carpet, and a small one was in front of the fireplace. The furniture was elegant and costly. The room

contained two marble tables, a “fancy” gilded sofa, another sofa covered in blue silk with a set of fourteen chairs, a round table of narra wood – the best the Philippine forests had to offer. Less formal than the preceding articles were two “conversation” chairs and a large comfortable rocking chair, an “easy” chair, two covered in chintz, and two chairs without arms. There was a desk for writing notes and letters and a barometer for forecasting the weather. Glass bells were much in vogue as decorative items. There were two each enclosing a vase of artificial flowers and another protecting an elaborate table clock. Scattered around the room were some two dozen knick-knacks of china, bronze and glass, and four little tables with flower vases. On the artistic side were seven portfolios of paintings. On the less refined side were two china cuspidors.

Across from the visiting room was a somewhat similarly furnished smaller room. On the floor was a large carpet, at the windows were twelve drapes—either for six windows or twelve—and on the wall was a round mirror. The room was lighted with a bright light globe. There was a set of a silk-covered sofa and twelve chairs. There was a marble table and five other tables and three settees. For diversionary interests, there was a music box, four English books, two boxes with games and eight china and glass knick-knacks.

The dining room had six windows covered by twelve drapes, a dinner table with its complement of ten chairs, one being large for the head of the table, and two little settees.⁴⁵

The embargoed moveable goods did not include any bedroom furniture, silver, cutlery or dinnerware.

Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee must have arranged for the court orders to be lifted. He continued to live in Macao until 1856 or 1857. In July 1858, It was announced that he had received a lucrative appointment from the Queen of Oudh, a historic region of India in east central Uttar Pradesh with its capital in Lucknow.

COWASJEE SAPOORCHEE TABACK

He appears in records from 1838 to 1845. In September 1839 he was compelled to leave Macao for the harbor at Hong Kong, and from there he was ordered to remove to the Toonkoo anchorage some little distance up the Pearl River estuary. He was a party to the case of Alexander McIntyre at Macao in 1841.

MACAO'S CULTURAL MINORITIES II

FRAMJEE HEERAJEE

In the 1832 list of Parsees at Canton he was occupying No. 3 Pau Shun Hong. He appears in the records from 1835 to 1842. In November 1839 he was responsible for goods of Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee on a ship anchored with other British merchant ships at Hong Kong, which were ordered to remove to the Toonkoo. In 1842 he was back with Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee in Macao.

HORMUSJEE CAWASJEE

Associated with Hormusjee Cawasjee, he is listed in the first full list of Parsees at Canton published in 1832. Apparently he returned to India, for he does not reappear on the lists of foreign residents in China until fourteen years later. In 1848 he was one of Macao's public-spirited residents who placed an oil lamp outside their houses to provide guidance for those abroad during the hours of darkness. He was still resident there in 1855. In 1850 he was an assistant to Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee.

HORMUSJEE RUSTOMJEE

From 1852 to 1854 he was at Macao. And in the 1861 *Macao Directory* listed as a merchant. His name is not in the 1863 *Macao Directory*. In the 1880s he sold Sections D, E, F and G of Inland Lot 405 to Chinese spinsters. In 1885 he is listed as a broker with Tata and Company on Hollywood Road, Hong Kong, but is not on the 1886 list.

Between 1848 and 1855, the firm of Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee is listed with two assistants, Hormusjee Cowasjee and Pallenjee Dorabjee. However in 1853, Hormusjee Cowasjee began to operate under his own name, and Pallenjee Dorabjee is not listed as an assistant for Mr. H. Rustomjee after 1852. J. J. de Aquino, a local Portuguese, took his place as an assistant. It was rare that a Parsee merchant had a Portuguese on his staff.

PESTONJEE MERWANJEE

He was living in Macao in 1843. In that year one of his coolies suddenly disappeared along with 124 taels of silver. Pestonjee reported this to the office of the *Procurador*, who liaised with the Chinese mandarin residing in Macao.⁴⁶ Pestonjee Merwanjee and Company appears on the Chinese records from 1842 to 1845.

THE SECOND OPIUM WAR

AND THE MOVEMENTS OF THE PARSEES

In 1859 the foreign traders at Canton were forced to leave when hostilities broke out between Britain and China over the "Arrow" *lorcha* incident. At that time some of the Parsee merchants moved to Macao, others to Hong Kong.

An 1859 Hongkong Directory published by the Armenian Press Hongkong lists fifteen Parsees. The following names appear, with the addition of brief biographical notes. These indicate that many of them moved over to Hong Kong or back to Canton between 1859 and 1861.

- Alarkia Patell—no record in my files.
- Bomanjee Muncherjee—with Pestonjee Framjee and Co. (He was with P. F. Cama and Co.) from 1846 to 1848. In 1866 at Hong Kong.
- Burjorjee Nasserwanjee—in 1863 at Hong Kong. He died at Hong Kong, 28th November 1865.
- Poonjeebhoy—There is no record of him in any Parsee file. He many have been a Muslim.
- Framjee Nowrojee—from 1843 to 1845 he was connected with the firm of Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee at Macao. In 1848 he was a witness in a Macao court case concerning unlawful landing of a box of pearls.
- Jamsetjee Eduljee—other than his appearance on the 1863 Directory, there is no other record of him in my files.
- Nanabhoy H. Harda—no record in my files.
- Pestonjee Dinshaw —He is also in the directory for 1861.
- Rustomjee Dhunjeeshaw—from 1850 to 1864 his name appears in Hong Kong land records. His association with P. F. Cama and Co. ceased in 1865. Four years later he was admitted as a partner in the firm of Framjee Hormusjee in Shanghai. The members of this firm announced in 1869 that they had opened an office in Hong Kong. At that time the firm of Framjee Hormusjee and Co. of No. 7 Hollywood Road, Hong Kong, consisted of Rustomjee Dhunjeeshaw and Framjee Hormusjee, with Dadabhoy Muncherjee being authorized to sign for the firm. This suggests that the two partners were not in Hong Kong in 1869.

MINORIAS CULTURAIS DE MACAU II

- Dadabhoy Limjee—an assistant of Rustomjee Dhunjeeshaw. There is no further record of him in my files.
- Nasserwanjee Cowasjee—an assistant to Rustomjee Dhunjeeshaw. His name is on the Hong Kong Jury Lists from 1860 to 1868, as a merchant of Mehta and Co.
- Rustomjee J. Tavaría (absent)—There is no further record of him in my files.
- Eduljee Dadabhoy, assistant to Rustomjee J. Tavaría—In 1864 he is on the Hong Kong Jury List as a merchant of Eduljee, Framjee and Co.
- Rustomjee S. Mogra—In 1887 his name appears on a subscription list at Canton

After the end of the Second Opium War, a foreign concession for the British and French was created out of a mud flat in the Pearl River at Canton. This new section of Canton City was named Shameen, and in 1861, its lots were put up for auction. Among the successful bidders were three Parsee merchants, P. F. Cama and Co., E. Framjee and N. Kesrojee.

Only three of the thirteen names on the 1859 list appear on the 1861 *Macao Directory*. The other Parsees on the list are Hormusjee Rustomjee, Hormusjee Cowasjee, and an individual with the single name Premjee, whom I cannot identify. It is possible he may have been a servant of Pestonjee Dinshaw.

Hormusjee Rustomjee, if he is the same as the above, reappears on the Hong Kong records as a broker of Tata and Co. In 1885 Hormusjee Cowasjee had been an assistant of Macao's long-time resident Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee, and a sketch of his activities in China follows that of Heerjeebhoy Rustomjee above.

There is only one Parsee on the 1863 Macao Directory. He is Framjee K. Bomanjee, the manager of F. B. Cama and Co. Their office was at No. 11 Praya Grande. The company is listed at the same location in 1866. In 1872 the address for F. K. Bomanjee is Travessa Sto. Agostinho.

There were no Parsees in 1867 Directory listings.

A notice of the bankruptcy of Pestonjee Aspundiarji Mehta, carrying on business in Hong Kong and Macao under the name of P. A. Mehta and Co. was published in the Hong Kong Government Gazette, on 4th February 1871. He then was located on Stanley Street in Hong Kong. In April 1873 Maximiano António dos Remédios, of Macao, brought an action for a debt for \$4,450 patacas in the Macao courts. A

month later Dossabhoy Nesserwanjee entered a similar action against him.⁴⁷ Earlier, before his financial reverses he had been connected with H. B. Cama and Co. since 1864.

The 1872 Directory of Macao lists five Parsee individuals or firms, F. K. Bomanjee, at Travessa Sto. Agostinho, Dadabhoy Nasserwanjee, manager of H. B. Cama and Co., J. B. Colah, at Travessa do Tronco, and Ruttonjee Muncerchee.

In an 1890 property tax list, Nowrojee Pestonjee Dhalle, of Mody and Co., was paying the tax for the property of the Jewish firm of David Sassoon, Sons and Co. on the Praia Grande.

Jamshedji Hormusji Bejonje registered as an individual businessman in Macao in 1923. His address was No. 13 Rua Central.⁴⁸

This is the last mention I have found of a Parsee connection with Macao.

CONCLUSION

The Parsees have had a long history in the Pearl River area of South China. Some of that history has been chronicled in this article. At one period in the first half of the nineteenth century they played an important part in the India-China trade. Like other Asian diaspora communities, they valued their traditions and maintained their identity as a distinct religious group.

Their numbers have lessened. They may find it a struggle to maintain their unique identity under the homogenizing impact of a global culture and economy. The *Directory of Hong Kong Zoroastrians* for 1990-1992, published by the Incorporated Trustees of the Zoroastrian Charity Fund of Hong Kong, Canton and Macao lists 39 households. A comparison of this directory with that of 1980 illustrates the effect the global economy had on the community. The 1980 Directory also lists 39 households in Hong Kong, but the 1990-1991 Directory includes another list of 19 households and the addresses of "overseas relatives". An analysis of this list shows how widespread was the dispersal of this group.

Under the cloud suggested above, it is important to record the role of Parsees in the formation of modern Asia. It is obvious that the Parsees played an important role in the development of the region. It is now time to include them in the historical discourse. **RC**

MACAO'S CULTURAL MINORITIES II

NOTES

- 1 For a discussion of the endings "bhoy" and "jee" see: Guo Deyan, "The Study of Parsee Merchants in Canton, Hong Kong and Macao," *Review of Culture*, International Edition 8 [2004], p. 55.
- 2 W. H. Coates, *The Old Country Trade of the East Indies* (London, 1911, Chapter VIII. Parsee Ship Owners).
- 3 *The Chronicles of the East India Company trading to China* by H. B. Morse (republished by Ch'eng-Wen Publishing Company, Taipei, 1966).
- 4 Morse, 3:348.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 4:109.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 4:187.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 4:254.
- 8 These records will be found in the "List of foreign residents in China," published in the *Chinese Repository*.
- 9 *The Anglo-Chinese Calendar for 1837*.
- 10 *The Anglo-Chinese Calendar for 1832*, compiled by J. R. Morrison, Macao.
- 11 H. B. Morse, *Chronicles of the East India Company trading in China*, 4:232-3.
- 12 *The Canton Register*, 29 January 1839.
- 13 *Letters from China, the Canton-Boston Correspondence of Robert Bennet Forbes, 1838-1840*, compiled and edited by Phyllis Forbes, Mystic Seaport Museum, Mystic Connecticut, 1996, pp. 88-90.
- 14 Michael Greenberg, *British Trade and the Opening of China*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England, 1951, p. 221, Opium Shipments to China 1801-39.
- 15 Greenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 150.
- 16 "An Eighteenth-Century Macao Armenian Prince," *Review of Culture*, International Edition 6 [2003], pp. 120-129.
- 17 *Canton Register*, 24 July 1838.
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- 20 Hong Kong Land Registry, Memorials 112 and 116.
- 21 *Daily Press*, 10 June 1889.
- 22 *Hong Kong Telegraph*, 19 January 1904.
- 23 Imprensa Nacional de Macau, 1980, p. 220.
- 24 Carl T. Smith, *A Sense of History*, Hong Kong Educational Publishing Co., Hong Kong, 1996, p. 35 note 42. "The Chinese Catholic Congregation at San Lazaro, Macao: the Church, the Members, the Community and the District," pp. 353-88. See particularly p. 378.
- 25 *Arquivos de Macau*, Series 3, vol. xxxi, no. 3 (Mar. 1979), p. 131.
- 26 Archives of Macao Orphans Court no. 1, masa no. 2, no. 25, Year 1877.
- 27 *Boletim Oficial de Macao*, 13 Aug. 1908. For Senna Family, see Jorge Forjaz, *Familias Macaense*, Vol. III, pp. 537-8.
- 28 *The Canton Register*, 8 Dec. 1840.
- 29 *The Canton Register*, 31 Mar. 1840, published a biographical sketch of Rustomjee Cowasjee from the December issue of the *Indian Review*.
- 30 W. H. Coates, *The Old Country Trade of East Indies*, London, 1911, Chapter VIII, "Parsee Ship Owners."
- 31 Carl T. Smith, *Sense of History*, p. 394-5.
- 32 *Boletim de Macau*, 7 July 1851.
- 33 Hong Kong Land Registry, Memorial 947.
- 34 *The Canton Register*, 25 January 1842.
- 35 *Friend of China*, 6 September 1846.
- 36 *Arquivos de Macau*, Series 3, vol. xxxi, no. 3 (March 1979), p. 131.
- 37 *Friend of China*, 22 October 1854.
- 38 *Boletim de Macau*, 20 February 1851, *Friend of China*, 26 February 1851.
- 39 *Canton Register*, 26 May 1840.
- 40 *Scions of the Wadia Family*, p. 183.
- 41 Carl T. Smith, *Sense of History*, p. 396.
- 42 Archives of the Macao Court.
- 43 Dr. M. J. Humphries, *Notes on the Ruttonjee Sanitarium*, privately printed (Ruttonjee Sanatarium), Hong Kong, 1989.
- 44 H. B. Morse, *Chronicles of the East India Company trading in China*, vol. 3, p. 376.
- 45 Utah Genealogical Microfilm 1128011.
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- 47 *Boletim Provincial de Macau*, 5 April and 10 May 1873.
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