

"Enseada de Bengala", map by João Baptista Lavanha in *Quarta Década da Ásia* by João de Barros, published in 1615.

# A Probe Into Macao's Political Economy and Trade Relations During the Mid-Qianlong / Pombaline Period

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## A SURVEY

Since its reversion to the People's Republic of China in 1999, Macao has been in the process of evolving and re-forging its role in the region. Like its more prosperous counterpart Hong Kong, Macao is situated at the tip of the resource-abundant and well-networked region of the Pearl River. However, it always seems to score one grade lower than Hong Kong whenever economic and production indicators are applied to assess its developmental status. These two cities are located in a prosperous Asian economy, and they need not be directly competitive with each other. As one observer has noted, Macao could tap into entirely different markets – it could be a window to the Latin and Lusophone worlds thanks to its different heritage compared to Anglophile Hong Kong. Despite

limits to the cross-application of historical settings, an increased appreciation of Macao's roots can perhaps give new vigour to this settlement because there was a time when Macao was operating as the “sole” gateway vis-à-vis Canton in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup>

The field of the history of Macao during the medieval or early modern period can be divided into three main areas: i) studies of the Portuguese (for instance, the *Senado*, the missionaries, etc) and their business in the settlement (for example, their jurisdictional, judicial, and charitable activities, as well as their management of other ethnic groups within the city); ii) studies of the relations, especially foreign diplomacy, between the Portuguese and the Chinese or the English;<sup>2</sup> and iii) studies of various aspects of trade and specific commodities.

This paper will focus on one brief aspect of the last of these areas. One monograph which attempts an admirable sweep of trade history from 1630 through the 1750s is George Bryan Souza's *The Survival of Empire: Portuguese Trade and Society in China and the South China Sea (1630-1754)*. Earlier, in his work *The Great Ship from Amacon: Annals of Macao and the Old Japan Trade (1555-1640)*, C. R. Boxer tapped many of the sources available in Lisbon. A survey of

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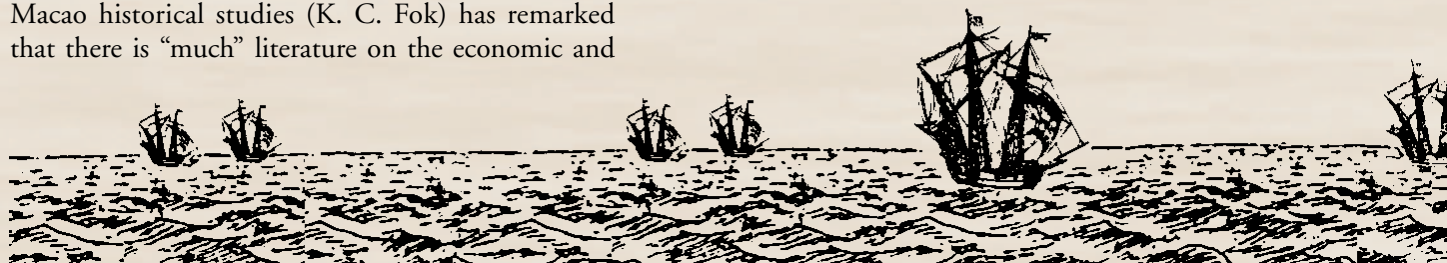
Macao's maritime commerce at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century can be found in the 1991 issue of the *Revista de Cultura*.<sup>3</sup> An earlier work encompassing a broader sweep of the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is A. M. Vale's *Os Portugueses em Macau, 1750-1800*. By and large, as in other areas of Portuguese historical studies, research by historians (especially Portuguese historians) has focused primarily on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>4</sup> This trend extends to commodity studies as well; for instance, R. Ptak's study of the transport of sandalwood to Macao during the Ming Dynasty.<sup>5</sup> In terms of the relations between Macao and other specific places, B. V. Pires' research connecting Manila to Macao is a comprehensive work worthy of mention.<sup>6</sup> Providing a wider background context, a Braudel approach to the study of the Indian Ocean and the adjacent seas has culminated in an authoritative work by K. Chaudhuri.<sup>7</sup> On the Pombaline period, the one or two studies that mention the East—by F. Hoppe (1960) and A. Carreira (1983)—are out of print and not easily accessible.<sup>8</sup> Of greater impact, the British ascendancy and also perhaps the Seven Years' War are beginning to be understood in terms of their effect on a global and geostrategic scale.<sup>9</sup>

On the Chinese side—and moving inland—much has been done to map mercantile networks: for instance, C. K. Ng's work on the Amoy network in coastal China in the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>10</sup> The opening-up and development of trade along the coast, and the evolution towards the restriction of foreign access to just one port are reasonably well-established. Up until the period under investigation in this paper, the tussle was still unfolding and in fact had reached its peak in the eruption of the well-recorded Flint incident. Reasonably well-recorded, also, is the rise of the Cohong merchants, with increased attention to individual merchant families and the roles they played in the Canton trade.<sup>11</sup> Generally, the articles of trade available in Canton were fairly well-documented and listed. Moving farther inland, one specialist on Macao historical studies (K. C. Fok) has remarked that there is "much" literature on the economic and

commercial developments in the Pearl River Delta, although this writer feels that many of these focus on the contemporary era.<sup>12</sup> Specifically on the economic relations between Canton and Macao, and perhaps overlapping with port-hinterland studies, the thesis published by P. Van Dyke, though it focuses on the former, reveals a considerable amount about the role of Macao, and unveils further details on procedures and previously overlooked observations (especially regarding defence). In fact, Van Dyke's work is ground-breaking because it encourages researchers to perceive Canton and its surrounding settlements, including Macao, as an interconnected and functioning economic unit focused on the former. Macao and other inland centres may also be explored spatially and as demographic thresholds of demand. Earlier, W. Skinner's landmark study on rural China touched on the Pearl River Delta,<sup>13</sup> and may be seen as a linkage to Annales-style Chaudhurian studies of marine trade through the intermediary of port-hinterland research.

In terms of foreign relations, the Sinocentric model (suggested by J. K. Fairbank)—that of viewing all official relations as guises for bearing tribute to the Son of Heaven—has diminished in influence as more extended versions of this model have been propounded (for instance, K. C. Fok's "Macao formula"). Yet the thesis remains that the Chinese were able to relegate or confine Westerners to some manageable corner of the empire. From the perspective of Western colonial powers (although Portugal had never been a major one), this was a period in which they were still "deferent," even though there is increasing evidence that they too engaged in the probing and "testing of boundaries."<sup>14</sup>

The author of this article feels that there still might be merit in a more Macao-centred or Portuguese-oriented perspective, such that the hub of activities that were intrinsic to Macao are not overlooked or lost. This study has two modest objectives which will hopefully contribute to the history of commerce in Macao:



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a) to follow a lead in Fok's article (above), to see if the *riscos* of the *Misericórdia*, together with some printed primary sources, have more to say about the emphasis of investments and other details pertaining to commerce during the mid-Qianlong/Pombaline period;

b) to link the discussion of trade to the larger context of the political economic climate.

## RISCOS

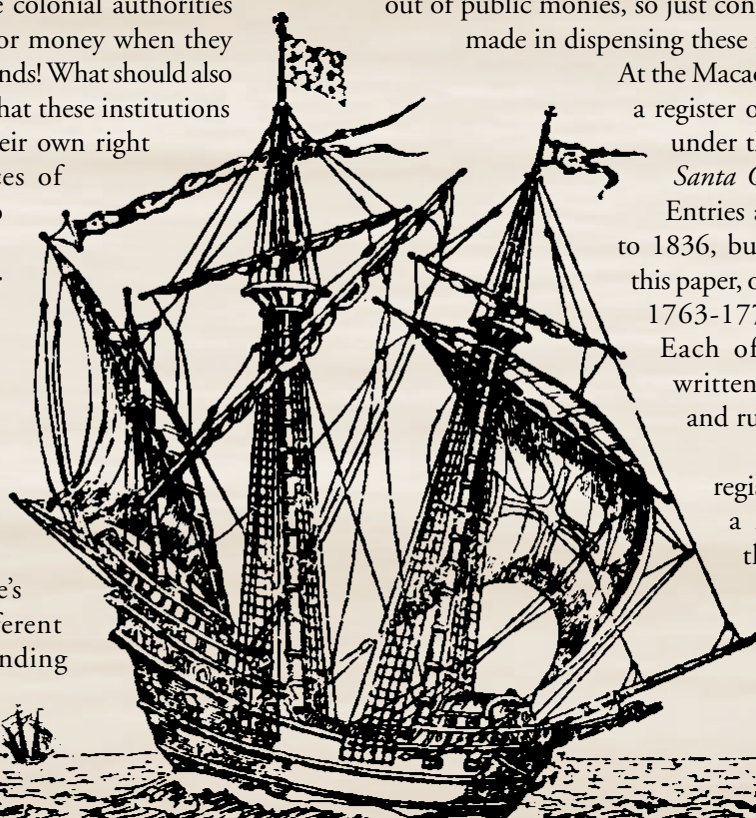
Found in most overseas colonies, the *Santa Casa da Misericórdia* was a feature unique to the Portuguese empire. This institution ran charities, hospices and hospitals for the poor, and was involved in providing food and shelter to the needy, burying the dead, and ransoming captives. Although aid was supposed to be restricted to themselves and their family members, in fact it was often extended to a wide range of people. In the local context, it should be noted that the posts in a *Misericórdia* were occupied by persons of prestige or those who served in some capacity in the colonial bureaucracy, for example, as *provedores*.<sup>15</sup> In fact, it was not surprising for the colonial authorities to raid the *Misericórdias* for money when they themselves were short on funds! What should also be highlighted is the fact that these institutions were good investors in their own right and often made advances of monies to well-to-do people, usually in return for interest. A *risco de mar e terra* was an insurance-cum-loan advancement to a merchant who wished to undertake a trade venture at sea (or on land) in return for a sum of interest on top of the principal sum. Hence, in the context of Van Dyke's observation of how different players in the money-lending

business exerted an effect on the prices of commodities, the *Misericórdia* in Macao was likely to have been quite influential, considering that credit-worthy persons (as well as those who were less credit-worthy) approached it for loans.

To be sure, the *Misericórdia* was not the only one who issued such loans; the *Senado* of Macao provided them as well. "Approvals" for these loans can be seen regularly in the collection of Macao's senate documents.<sup>16</sup> A report dated April 1771 enumerates the factors taken into consideration when deciding upon the distribution of *riscos do mar* (as well as of loans for business undertakings on land). The criteria considered included the quality of the ships, the reputation of the undertakers, and nature of the voyage. As negative illustrations of applications for loans that were rejected, we find that Nicolao Pires Vianna and Vicente Jozé de Campos did not make it; the former failed to meet the first two criteria, and the latter did not have up-to-standard ships. Of the two, Nicolao Pires Vianna regularly took loans jointly with another person from the *Misericórdia*. In the end, funding for the loans came out of public monies, so just considerations had to be made in dispensing these funds.

At the Macao Historical Archives, a register of *riscos* is catalogued under the documents of the *Santa Casa da Misericórdia*. Entries are dated from 1763 to 1836, but for the purpose of this paper, only documents dated 1763-1777 were examined. Each of these entries was written using a set format and rubric.

A typical entry in the register of *riscos* features a header, centred at the top of the page, giving the name of the lender, the amount loaned,





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the destination of the voyage, the type and name of the vessel, and the year in which the loan was given. The main text of the entry starts with the date on which the lender presented his petition to the board (which was presided over by a number of superintendents or comptrollers, one of whom is named). The petition states and reiterates the amount requested, the type and name of the vessel, and the destination. This dispatch was to be passed to a *thezoureiro*, who would issue the loan in “good pataca silver weighed by the balance scale of the House.” This was taken by the named lender at a certain interest rate, “with risk in the *fazendas* (goods),” who would repay the sum within one month of disembarking on return to this city, so as to be freed from any further impositions. Finally, the document would state that the lender and all the members of the board would sign their names at the bottom of the document. A note would usually be scribbled to the right of the main body of text, indicating whether the contract had been “rightfully repaid and gained,” usually a year later. It seems from the register that many of the borrowers were able to settle the debts as stipulated, although a few repaid at later dates.<sup>17</sup>

In a survey of 150 such entries,<sup>18</sup> the top five borrowers were Antonio Jozé da Costa, João Ribeiro Guimarães, Simão Vicente Roza, Nicolao Pires Vianna, and Manual Pereira da Fonseca. A couple of loans were even undertaken by a woman named Maria Pereira. Added to the list of men of “dubious” reputation who approached the *Misericórdia* as an alternative source of liquidity were Simão de Araujo Roza and Thomé Francisco de Oliveira; the former undertook trading voyages abroad on at least two occasions without a license. In addition to these persons of lesser repute, however, several men of better standing also went to the *Misericórdia* for loans. Among the top five borrowers, Guimarães and Roza, for instance, were themselves *procuradores* of the *Senado*. Apart from the above, there were at least half a dozen more persons associated with the *Senado* who also took loans from the *Misericórdia*. These were Joaquim Lopez da Sylva, Manuel Lopez Correa, Manuel Pereira da Fonseca, Antonio Correa de Liger and João da Fonseca e Campos. It should be noted that virtually all these loan applications were approved, with one possible exception.<sup>19</sup>

The amount of the loans ranged from 100 to nearly 4000 taels. There is no discernable correlation between the amount of the loans and the destination

of the voyages. One trip to Java might merit a loan of up to 3500 taels, while another trip to the coast of India might require only a few hundred taels. It is worth noting, too, that the *Misericórdia* may not have been the only source of finance available. In any case, the amount of the loan would also depend on the cargo on board. The interest rate was usually pegged at 20 percent, although this was occasionally raised to 25 percent for voyages to locations in the Province of the North and its surroundings (including Surat). Perhaps due to questions of credibility, one borrower was charged 25 percent interest for a trip to the coast of India (not including the North), while another was charged the usual 20 percent for a trip to the North. In this regard, Van Dyke has shown that it may have been cheaper for Westerners to take loans from Chinese lenders than vice versa. The types of vessels sailing on these voyages were mostly in the “small” category, including *barcos*, *chalupas* and *palas*.<sup>20</sup> However, no attachments or details were found pertaining to the cargo these ships were carrying.

The main destination of the voyages was usually listed as the “coast of India.” Often, an intermediate stopover point would also be noted; for instance, “Madras, coast of India” or “Ceylon, coast of India.” At other times, the furthest point of the voyage would be stipulated, for example, the “coast of India till Goa.” Logically speaking, if the furthest destination were Goa, the vessel would very likely pass by places like Coromandel or Madras before rounding the tip of the sub-continent. However, it is the opinion of this author that ships would not stop at these locations unless it was specifically highlighted in the entry. Vessels under bond went to other locations in India as well, including Bengal, Coromandel, Bombay, Surat and the North. Goa was the most common end-point listed in the records. In Southeast Asia, destinations included Cochinchina, the coast of Java (sometimes specifically Batavia), the coast of Malaya (at times specifically Melaka), and islands of Timor and Solor. Given the conditions for sailing during that period, ships going to India via the Straits of Melaka usually arrived and stopped at Melaka around August and waited there until January of the following year before sailing on. M. Oleiro is of the opinion that ships may have stopped over at other ports along the Malaya coast as well.<sup>21</sup> Further afield, one entry specifically listed in the register was as far away as Mozambique (passing ports

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of the North along the way). All in all, the round-trip journey between India and Macao took about a year, which explains the payment of most loans a year after they were made.

From data in Souza's *The Survival of Empire*, we find that ships were allowed to, and frequently did, sail to Melaka and Batavia in the period 1700-50. Some of these ships would have continued to sail on to India despite Goa's restrictions. In fact, the English settlements in India were already attracting people and trade at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup> As indicated above, many of the vessels surveyed in the *riscos* between 1756 and 1775 were sailing to India even though, after Plassey, British hegemony would not be firmly established until the last decades of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. By comparison, fewer numbers seem to be taking loans for voyages to Java and Batavia. However, the actual figures of voyages to Java may be incomplete, as this study only surveyed sources related to one institution.

Along with the destination of each voyage, one entry in the *Chapas Sinicas*, dated October 1761, gives the number of ships sailing under the different major flags visiting the coastline of Guangdong: there were thirteen ships flying the English flag and two flying the Dutch.<sup>23</sup> For some reason, no identification was made of Portuguese vessels. As for the array of goods and commodities being traded, a set of transcribed *relações* by a governor of Angola (of whom we will hear more below), which roughly corresponds to the duration of the *riscos*, provides useful information on the cargos carried along each route.

From nearby in Southeast Asia, the goods that were picked up on the way to China included fine sugar, camphor and benzoin from Aceh. Ambom<sup>24</sup> was re-exported from Batavia. Coral in Southeast Asia came from Pegu. From New Spain or the Philippines, woollen cloth was re-exported to China and eventually to Madras. Finally, from the Malayan coast came bird's nests.<sup>25</sup> From Malabar, Coromandel and Bengal in India, the following commodities came to China: cotton, pepper, sandalwood, shark's fin, cardamom, timber, cow's hides (red and black), wood, cloth (fine and coarse as well as plain or printed), (medicinal) opium, rice, raw silk, and saltpeter. From other parts of India, agate beads were carried to CochinChina from Surat before being re-exported to China. Fish maw came from Bombay. *Meira goma*<sup>26</sup> came from Calcut. Clove oil and sandalwood oil came from Ceylon,

although it was also available in Malabar. Finally, pearls were traded at Madras and brought to China.<sup>27</sup>

Goods that hailed from an even wider network—as far away as Muscat—included a number of commodities that were probably re-exported from India. For example, both incense and indigo were exported from Muscat and sold in Surat. Myrrh was likely to have been shipped from Muscat in a similar fashion. Presumably, however, not all goods were re-exported from Surat; rhinoceros' horns, for instance, passed through Goa and Malabar before going to China. Dates and attar of roses were found at Madras and Coromandel, respectively, before transiting through Melaka to China. Almond, mocha coffee and wheat came from Muscat, while the last-mentioned was also exported from Bassora. Finally, boxes of cloth came from Anjengo, and precious stones and pearls came from Persia, which were probably produced in India as well.<sup>28</sup> At this point, it can be casually observed that the discrepancy between the variety of commodities moving to China from West Asia (i.e. Muscat) and the lack of sponsorship of loans for voyages beyond India (as well as the gap between the information recorded in the *riscos* and in the *relação*) can be explained by the fact that most of the goods from Muscat could be picked up in India.

For some categories of commodities, the sources of supply were more diverse, as they were available in more than one place. Opium, for instance, came in two types, red and black. Red opium was further sub-divided into: a) small, flat pieces of which about 80 weighed a picul, and b) "round" pieces, of which about 60 weighed a picul, both from Persia. There were three categories of black opium, all from Patana: a) 50-65 pieces weighing a picul, b) 42-47 weighing a picul, and c) 32-40 weighing a picul. Of the other "miscellaneous" types, there was mention of at least one more from Persia and another from Manila. Red opium was not sold in China; the first type of black opium was sold in China for between 300-700 Spanish patacas (and could range as high as 200-1000 patacas), and was bought in from Coromandel and Malabar. Another type (*gamboa*) sold in China was similar to the second type of black opium. A third type sold in China, opium in straw form, was also similar to the second type of black opium.<sup>29</sup> The black opium from Patana (Patna), which came from Bihar in Bengal, conformed with developments of the day during



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a period when the British were exerting their rule there. Secondly, the British were seeking to increase the export of this good to balance the deficit in their tea trade with China. Macanese were able to pick up opium (and other goods) from the southern ports of India as they were shipped down via the internal coastal trade network.

At Macao, a 1757 entry in a collection of senatorial documents reveals an attempt by the *Senado* to “raise” prices to make opium a “fine” (high-class) good. Understandably, this would have had an effect on the customs collected on opium, which had until then yielded 16 taels (at 4% on 400 taels per picul) and more (up to 25) as prices rose.<sup>30</sup> From the perspective of Goa, the Viceroy was not only interested in the price, but also in ensuring that the merchants at Macao did not buy opium from foreign ships, which would presumably affect the contribution made by Macao traders. In this light, another entry in the senatorial documents notes a negotiation that took place over the possible withholding of a cache of (possibly illegal) opium in Melaka.<sup>31</sup> In fact, Thomé Francisco de Oliveira—one of the borrowers of *Misericórdia* funds mentioned above—was noted to have been involved in opium smuggling as well.<sup>32</sup> Cross-referencing Van Dyke’s work, which also mentions the trade of opium in Macao, it is understood that business involving this good only came to Canton belatedly during the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century and Macao did not become the exclusive agent for the commodity arising from, as observed by a contemporary in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, “excessive” interference by Goa. On the Chinese side, the ban on opium was in force during the reign of Qianlong’s father and the good was only imported for “medicinal” purposes.

But it is in the case of tobacco that the political economy of price determination can be more fully demonstrated. The Portuguese would usually be asked to leave aside a portion of imported tobacco for the mandarins and the emperor. It seems the mandarins would pay for it. In August 1768, the receipt and payment according to an agreed price did not provoke any complaints on either side. However, the issue that subsequently surfaced demonstrated dissatisfaction on the Portuguese side: they had to be accountable to Goa and Lisbon, and to explain why tobacco was provided for some “scandalous” reason.<sup>33</sup> The *Estanco Real de Tabaco* (Royal Tobacco Monopoly) of Goa

sent endorsements certifying that certain batches of tobacco were to be set aside for the emperor.<sup>34</sup> Cross-referencing the *Chapas Sínicas*, we find that on other occasions, the “contribution” of tobacco to the emperor was accepted “willingly” as an expression of gratitude for the emperor’s “benevolence and vassalage.”<sup>35</sup> The culmination of this series of developments, which came in the form of an *alvará*, dictated possibly after consultation with the *Junta da Administração do Tabaco* (Tobacco Administrative Council) in 1763, was this: for the quantity of tobacco that was to be “sold” to the emperor (600 *arráteis* that season), the Senado was to make up the difference between the price and the amount paid. Furthermore, some *moradores* of companies in Macao would chip in to cover the difference. There was to be no compromise on the prices set by the *Junta* in the royal resolution issued the previous year (1770).

Macao had been dependent on a lifeline of basic supplies from mainland China since the Portuguese first established a foothold there. Native produce at Macao, as recorded in the gazetteer, was limited: wheat, some vegetables, fruits like tomatoes and peaches, cloves, a variety of fish and crabs, and a “foreign” species of duck. It is not difficult to find occasions when the supply of rice ran into problems. Indeed, this might be the reason why ships carrying rice did not pay *direito* (customs) on it, as was expected for other products. It is apparent that the *Senado* operated some form of reserve granary; a request for the Senado to release a stockpile of the grain on one occasion in February 1768 was turned down.<sup>36</sup> In the same year, an eruption of conflict in China caused the price of rice in Canton and Macao to rise, and the Senado was asked to store rice coming from Bengal and Batavia.<sup>37</sup> In June 1774, the authorities at Goa even stepped in to ask the Senado to help the poor of the city in a way that did not increase unnecessary administration or the intervention of middlemen, because many were turning to the Chinese for loans which sustained interest of up to 40 percent!<sup>38</sup>

In his recent book, Paul Van Dyke reveals that the trade routes and types of goods carried were influenced by loans from Chinese and European businessmen. In addition to the Cohong at Canton, the EIC, and the merchant-*senadores* at Macao, Van Dyke notes that merchants in the junk trade, English private traders, and small-timers from Macao and

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other states also influenced the nature of the trade. It is worth noting that for part of the period under study, Macao underwent a major economic crisis from 1745-60. The reasons for the downturn were not fully accounted for. An obvious manifestation was that the fiscal balance of the settlement was, for prolonged periods, in the red—a contrast to the financial health in better times. Revenues earned from trade were in shortfall arising from multiple causes which interacted with one another. From one angle relevant to our discussion on loans, it was noted that merchants were not able to secure borrowings during the period. The record of *riscos* under this investigation does not provide information on the pre-1760 period, otherwise, it would have been interesting to study the extent to which the *Misericórdia* was able to extricate the city from this situation. Regarding the goods and commodities that comprised the trade, many manufactured pieces were brought to Canton to be finished, and were then re-exported. Hence, much of the merchandise that was supposed to have been exported from Macao did not in fact transit through that harbour. This might account for why it was once suggested that the Portuguese set up a company at Canton themselves (possibly erecting a building in the factory area where the other Westerners were concentrated?). However, doubts were raised as to whether this would cause confusion in the jurisdiction of trade and a decline in Macao's livelihood. On a related issue, given the close economic relations between goods produced and goods exported, an entry in the senatorial documents suggests that customs on re-exports should not be levied twice if these goods had to be shipped from Macao.

The hinterland, known as Lingnan, represented a macroeconomic region of its own—one of some eight such regions in China proper.<sup>39</sup> The region was generally dominated by Canton, a city on the “confluence of three navigable rivers in their flow to the sea – the West River, the North River, and the East River.”<sup>40</sup> Canton in its own right was also a port of paramount importance in maritime trade on the south-eastern coast of China. In terms of production, “a mild climate permitted triple cropping in the alluvial lands, especially the delta of Pearl River, which flowed from [the city of] Canton,”<sup>41</sup> while farther inland, Lingnan experienced much lower rates of productivity. “Lingnan's wealth was partially based

on the production of goods for sale”<sup>42</sup>—manufactured goods such as iron pots and pans for export. A glance at a local gazetteer reveals the abundance of commodities produced in Xiangshan: a variety of staples such as rice, glutinous rice, wheat, and sesame; textiles such as cotton and gunny sacking; wines and vinegars; a variety of melons, vegetables, and fruits, as well as flowers, herbs, and straw; canes, wood, and numerous feather, fur, and marine products.<sup>43</sup> Goods from other economic regions and provinces also streamed into Canton for trade with the outside world, including, for example, tea from Fujian. It is worth noting that an increasing number of orders for Western-style objects (such as furniture and porcelain) were placed with local shops at Canton. The Cantonese had the most exposure to aspects of Western culture and this fact, coupled with the relatively high level of technology and craftsmanship in the region, meant that Cantonese craftsmen were able to imitate many of these products. In terms of imports, the Chinese also found it increasingly worthwhile to buy from abroad goods that they themselves had once produced—for example, certain fruits and cotton—a sign of the increasingly globalised nature of trade and the principle of comparative advantage at work. Hence, by referencing the *relação* by the governor of Angola, we find that China exported a variety of products: sugar (rock and fine), musk wood, pearls, *tutinhaga*,<sup>44</sup> camphor, pitch, alum, red and white wood, raw silk, tea (green and black), Chincheu crockery, dyed cotton cloth, iron pots and pans, rhubarb, tin products, paper umbrellas and *seuchon*<sup>45</sup> as well as satin (black or rose).<sup>46</sup>

## POLITICAL CLIMATE

The main event in Macao during the period under investigation in this paper (i.e. 1756-75) seems to have been the expulsion of the Jesuits, an offshoot of the wider campaign implemented in Portugal and other places overseas.<sup>47</sup> This view overlooks the fact that a key feature of the Pombaline period was economic and financial reform. Nevertheless, the persecution of the Jesuits must have resulted in substantial economic losses, as the Jesuits were often prudent investors themselves. However, the ruthless efficiency associated with the dictatorial regime did not appear to bring about a forceful revival in the East. The prevailing







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strategy of the top leadership was to make a comeback via the formation of a company along the lines of the EIC. Prior to Pombal's appointment as the first minister, a *Companhia da Ásia Portuguesa* (formed in 1753) seems to have taken off, but subsequently appears not to have done well. The larger developments in the East were noted in the proposal of "useful idea" by Dom Francisco Inocêncio de Souza Coutinho, Governor of Angola between 1764 and 1772. Although an official in West Africa might seem at first to be "unqualified" to comment on affairs in India, it should be noted that the higher leadership did include certain groups who were cosmopolitan and who kept abreast of the latest developments in commerce, which made their insights a worthy source of substantiation for the happenings of the day.

Dom Francisco Inocêncio noted that "a few" companies formed earlier had closed down because of internal failings, which was why the formation of such companies should perhaps best be undertaken on a private basis. The crux of Dom Francisco Inocêncio's plan for eastern revival lay in forming companies and encouraging them to compete, thus boosting trade. The role of the state was to create a conducive environment for commercial activity by advising on prices, setting up *alfândegas* (customs houses), and providing the necessary protection. "Advice" on prices was necessary because early modern markets were imperfect by themselves, as Dom Francisco Inocêncio possibly realized – the EIC was still operating as a monopoly in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, despite increasing participation by private traders. Protection was needed because the early modern maritime world was a hostile environment in which it was not as easy to define who was and who was not a pirate. More importantly, we find corroboration in his proposal of the array and variety of goods whose final destination was China, mentioned in the *relação* cited above. The report also reiterates the demand for Indian goods in Portugal and the Americas.<sup>48</sup>

One possible reason for the dismal performance of those isolated Portuguese companies that did manage to get off the ground was that India and the East were not top priorities because, as the Overseas Minister remarked, "Portugal without Brazil is an insignificant

power."<sup>49</sup> In fact, hand-in-hand with Pombal's monopolization of power at the centre, it might be of interest to learn that during the Pombaline period India and the Far East were placed under the jurisdiction of an administrative structure based in Portuguese America, specifically, at Rio de Janeiro. This implies that Portuguese trade in the East may have been a mere fraction of that in Brazil, and that where the *Casa da Índia* was concerned, the eastern trade may have been very closely tied to Brazil through *naus* that stopped there en route back to Portugal.<sup>50</sup>

Despite the orientation towards Brazil, the eastern capital at Goa, in conjunction with the *Casa da Índia* at Lisbon, continued to coordinate economic measures on a global scale to preserve the king's shrinking earnings there. To this end, reminders were issued to Macao ships (for instance in 1772-73), that they were not to buy *fazendas* along the Malabar coast. Previously, Lisbon and Goa had forbidden ships from Macao to sail to the Malabar coast, but this was flouted to some extent as these vessels continued to venture there to pick up ballast goods.<sup>51</sup> In fact, except for the stipulated number of ships "obligated" to travel to Goa (which were to pay customs), no other ship was permitted. But the merchant-*senadores* had their own plans. In Macao, the Captain-General appointed by Lisbon continued to tussle with the *senadores*, and the reason the Macao merchants continued to pay obeisance to him was probably due to the benefits they could accrue by doing so: for instance, the diplomatic back-up and leverage provided by colonial officialdom in dealing with other foreigners.<sup>52</sup> Ships travelling from Goa to Macao were still required to carry the *carta do passaporte* (cartaz).<sup>53</sup>

Meanwhile, in terms of the wider scene of international politics, after the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, fear of the Dutch threat never totally dissipated. Indeed, it was highlighted in April 1776 when Goa prohibited Macao from giving more permanent residences to the Dutch in that city. The attached document, dated the year before, raises the question of the potential trouble that Dutch residents in Macao could cause. In addition to smuggling, they might manufacture arms and collude with those whose interests were against the city; recall that the very real Dutch threat in 1622 had almost succeeded in overthrowing the Portuguese presence there.<sup>54</sup> Surprisingly, the Portuguese, with English "endorsement," were more "hospitable"

<sup>48</sup> The Indian Ocean from the Maldives to the tip of Sumatra produced from 16<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese cartographic information. In Christovam Ayres' *Fernão Mendes Pinto e o Japão*, Lisboa, Academia Real das Ciências, 1906.



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towards another of their arch-enemies, the Spanish. A *chalupa* from Manila was allowed to enter Macao harbour to buy necessities because the English had “granted” peace to Macao in 1762. This was despite the fact that Spain had joined the Seven Years’ War (1756-73) in 1762 against England and its allies. But that conflict was coming to an end, and perhaps it was thought that the Spanish would not make much of an impact on the outcome.<sup>55</sup>

To summarize the discussion up to this point, one can see that although the actual impact of a supposedly “ruthless, efficient” dictatorship was minimal in the East, a great deal was going on behind the scenes. The *relação* by Dom Francisco Inocêncio at least confirms what kinds of commodities were carried by Portuguese traders along existing routes of the day. Goa continued to extract revenues for the king, and Dom Francisco Inocêncio’s proposal expressed the hope of tapping more such revenues. Nevertheless, just as the EIC was losing control of the country traders (the protagonists of the impending commercial revolution), Pombal and his enlightened cadres, in trying to imitate the best EIC practices, were not able to impose their will any better on the *levantado* traders, a number of whom held dual status as members of officialdom (i.e. the merchant-*senadores*). Meanwhile, despite its declining hegemony and secondary presence in the Far East, the Dutch continued to have some influence on trade routes and even raised fears at Macao, as is evident from the fact that the idea of increasing their presence was rejected. The passing but global effect of the Seven Years’ War also managed to threaten the Macao-Manila link for a while, at least until nearer to the end of the conflict.

On the Chinese side, the political climate during the middle period of Qianlong’s reign (i.e., 1756-76) seemed to be less “xenophobic” than that of his father, Yongzheng. By this time, dissidents on Taiwan island (most notably, Koxinga) had largely been exterminated, although rumours and conspiracy theories associated with supposed renegades-in-hiding continued to linger among the common folk.<sup>56</sup> In a survey of collected edicts dating from the middle period of Qianlong’s rule, we find entries on dissidence by the literati and on proposed censorship.<sup>57</sup> Other, more subtle undercurrents also created simmering tensions during this relatively glorious period: socio-demographic changes led people to embrace more mystic and sectarian

faiths, such as the White Lotus religion, which broke out in rebellion in 1774 in the middle Yangtze region. Although the inhabitants of the Lingnan region were excused in this round, their past association with the Ming cause kept them under surveillance by the court, albeit on more relaxed security standing than the people of Fujian.<sup>58</sup>

Despite these underlying tensions, from as early as the reign of Qianlong’s grandfather, the Qing leadership was committed to economic rehabilitation (amidst unpacified forces linked to pretenders of the previous dynasty, as well as the eruption of fresh rebellions). Despite its channelling of efforts and resources to the agricultural economy, what is often neglected in prevailing historiography of the period is the complementary importance of foreign commerce. In one version of the *Qing Tongshi*, data is provided for the scenario nearer the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The land poll tax constituted approximately two-thirds of total revenue (30 million of 43-44 million taels). At four million taels, customs duties formed at most one-tenth of total revenue. However, seen from another angle, customs revenues formed up to half of the surplus enjoyed by the government during the Qianlong period.<sup>59</sup> After the restriction of foreign trade to Canton in 1757, another *hoppo* was set up in 1762 to exact customs. It is worth noting here that whenever the Chinese decided to raise a new custom house or toll, as in 1757 and 1784, Macao usually suffered an economic crisis. The *Chapas Sínicas* mentions a few incidents of probing and transgressions by Westerners along the coast of China, in Zhejiang and even in Zhili. Concerns over collusion between natives and foreigners were also expressed in these documents. However, as the Governor of Liangguang said in response to one incident, the “transgressors” were “not to be over-castigated lest it result in panic.”<sup>60</sup> In the end, the court exercised a policy that wavered between restricting foreign trade and closing an eye to violations of these restrictions.

A sampling of the collection of edicts shows Qianlong’s court to have been largely preoccupied with non-maritime matters. One entry dealt with the “more familiar” tribute-bearing mission by Westerners to Beijing. Another pertained to a customs matter at Tianjin. A third dealt with the problem of natural disasters in the coastal counties.<sup>61</sup> In the main, the other matters put forward in these edicts concerned

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the military, its maintenance and campaigns; agriculture, irrigation and other public works; the judiciary, involving numerous cases-in-transit; and the administration and business of the imperial household. However, from the *Chapas Sínicas*, one notes that some incidents involving foreigners had either been discussed or raised directly via the Grand Council – an indication of the importance of matters of this nature.<sup>62</sup> Apart from the “widely reverberating” Flint incident, European and more specifically Portuguese dissatisfaction sometimes flared up, as in a minor incident over the appointment of an intermediary (linguist) in the Canton-Macao trade channels of administration. In the event, the New Christian who was to be appointed to the post did not receive endorsement from the bishop.<sup>63</sup>

A quick surmise at this point confirms that the Chinese held foreign commerce in some importance but probably, as Van Dyke asserts, did not know how to handle the beginning signs of a creeping crisis.<sup>64</sup> At the same time, the combination of the extraction of gifts and the issuance of pardons shows the multifaceted nature of the Qing's approach to dealing with Westerners. Rather than a single-track line, it was one that mixed practicality (awareness of the benefits to be gained) and idealism (insistence on the heightened image of the Son of Heaven). From the reverse angle, the Portuguese often took the opportunity not to be deferent when the chance arose, but a square-off between a hard-nosed Captain-General and the Mandarins in the manner experienced during the tenure of António José Teles de Menezes was not to be encountered, even in the Pombaline era in the East.<sup>65</sup>

## FINAL THOUGHTS

The field of Macao history has seen new research emerging at the turn of the millennium, especially studies that place Macao in the context of its larger geographical neighbourhood. The records of the *Misericórdias* (in the form of *riscos*) confirm that the commercial activities which had allowed Macao residents to survive were continued into the third quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Voyages were undertaken by a range of merchants (both those who comprised the local ruling elite, and those who were less reputable) heading to a variety of destinations, including ports in Southeast Asia, India, and even as

far away as Mozambique. However, a majority of the voyages continued to be fixated on India, especially as Dutch influence started to wane in the East Indies after the mid-1700s. It should be recalled that evidence from the *Misericórdia* may give, at best, a kaleidoscopic view of the investments undertaken by the Macao traders. Although this investigation found no concrete data in the form of cargo lists in Portuguese records, a report and observations from a reasonably highly ranked official of the Portuguese empire corroborates the types of goods that were carried along the trade network between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.

Although the “enlightened despotism” of the Pombaline regime was limited by available resources and more pressing priorities, there was no shortage of aspirations and debates among the elite colonial officials, many of whom were tuned into the latest practices in commerce and knew a great deal about the situation on the ground. On the Chinese side, although the Chinese continued, naturally, to be largely preoccupied with non-maritime affairs, matters related to commerce and interaction with Westerners received added attention on those occasions when they were raised. Finally, the effect of other considerations (for instance, gifts and customs extractions) on the determination of prices of commodities like tobacco is briefly discussed.

To return to the observation raised in the beginning of this essay, today in the twenty-first century Macao need not play a game of “catch-up” with Hong Kong in a directly competitive way. Macao could position itself to tap into the Lusophone world. China and Portugal have had a long and special relationship. Even in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, China, Portugal and Macao had appeared to be bound in inexplicable but inextricable ways. Just as China is beginning to experience a revival, Macao should perhaps engineer its own continued survival and revival in the new millennium by building on this special historic link. Seen from certain perspectives, both China and Portugal experienced a “decline” in the third quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century – the Manchu empire was poised for a downward slide as Qianlong became “senile” (a symptom of which can be seen in the favouritism he showered upon a young imperial guard). At the same time, Macao, having experienced depression for a large part of the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, was poised to face the challenge of Hong Kong



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at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Meanwhile, at the other end of the world, Portugal seemed to have missed its chance to break out of its semi-peripheral status (again), as Pombal, the minister and favourite of the king, was

brought down after a brief period of reform, with the death of his royal patron. Perhaps this time around, the “city in the name of God” will be able to achieve a greater destiny... **RC**

## NOTES

- 1 Ptak 2001: 327-36.
- 2 Naturally, there was some overlap between domestic and foreign commerce; for example, missionaries were seconded to the Chinese court with a mix of *padroado* and ambassadorial agendas. On the external front, informal hostile interactions with pirates persisted throughout the period.
- 3 Oleiro 1991.
- 4 For example, see Huang and Deng 1988: 25-32, and Moura 1973: 5-35.
- 5 Ptak 1987: 36-45. See also Ptak and Rothmund 1991.
- 6 Pires 1994.
- 7 Chaudhuri 1985.
- 8 Hoppe 1960; Carreira 1983.
- 9 For instance, see Kennedy 1989.
- 10 Ng 1983.
- 11 For example, Van Dyke 2005: 60-89.
- 12 See for instance, Fok 1999: 36-53. In the Chinese literature, see Huang 1984: 37-50.
- 13 Skinner 1964-65: 3-44, 195-228 and 363-400, respectively.
- 14 Fairbank 1968.
- 15 Serrão n.d.: 571-573.
- 16 For instance, the *Arquivos de Macau* (hereafter referred to as *AM*), published by the Imprensa Nacional, contains transcribed documents pertaining to Macao, many relating to the *Senado* (*AM*, Series 3, Vol. 3, No. 6, pp. 329 and 336). All references to *AM* in this paper refer to Series 3.
- 17 Arquivo Histórico de Macau, Inventário de Santa Casa da Misericórdia / Sem Secção / Riscos de Mar e Terra / N.º 47 Registo de Contrato de Risco de Mar, 1763-1836. (Hereafter referred to as AHM, Riscos de Mar e Terra N.º 47). The survey comprises about two-thirds of the collection. Late repayments were usually delayed by a couple of months, stretching into the following year. See entry numbers 95 and 102 in the table. A few of these seem to end up paying more than the originally agreed-upon total of principal plus interest, perhaps as a penalty.
- 18 AHM, Riscos de Mar e Terra N.º 47.
- 19 AHM, Riscos de Mar e Terra N.º 47. Their names are signed at the bottom of the series of documents in *AM*.
- 20 AHM, Riscos de Mar e Terra N.º 47. The term *barco* is ambiguous, as it generally refers to a vessel of any size and mode of propulsion. This author feels that it usually refers to any vessel smaller than a full-fledged Indiaman in the pre-modern context. A *chalupa*, by contrast, was quite big, referring to a vessel with two masts. As for a *pala*, it usually referred to a small vessel equipped with both sailing and oaring capacity.
- 21 Oleiro 1991: 38.
- 22 Prakash 1998: 216 and 242.
- 23 The *Chapas Sínicas* are documents in Chinese, written by the Mandarins, pertaining to a variety of matters of life and business in Macao. A parallel set of documents in Portuguese was kept by the Senado. Currently stored in the Arquivo do Torre de Tombo, the documents were transcribed and published in the *Correspondência Trocada entre as Autoridades de Cantão e os Procuradores do Senado* (Portuguese version) and in part in the *Ming Qing Shiqi Aomen Wenti Dang'an Wenxian Huibian* 明清时期澳门问题档案文献汇编 (Chinese version). The latter was edited by Zhongguo Diyi Lishi Dangan Guan 中国第一历史档案馆, Fundação Macau and Jinan University (Macao, nd).
- 24 Amboyna, wood of an Asiatic tree (*Prerocarpus indicus*), used in making furniture. Also called Andaman redwood.
- 25 “Breve e Util Idea de Commercio, Navegação e Conquista d’Azia e d’Africa (incluindo Relação) escripto por Dom Francisco Inocêncio de Souza Coutinho, 1779,” ff. 54v-57r in Ahmad 1997: 106-109. Hereafter, the main document will be referred to as “Breve e Util Idea;” the attachment will be referred to as “Breve (Relação).”
- 26 A type of smelly gum.
- 27 “Breve (Relação),” ff. 45v-57v.
- 28 *Ibidem*.
- 29 “Breve (Relação),” ff. 20r-31v, pp. 66-78.
- 30 *AM*, vol. 3, no. 5, p. 299.
- 31 *AM*, vol. 7, no. 6, pp. 291, 302 and 313.
- 32 *AM*, vol. 10, no. 4, p. 230.
- 33 *AM*, vol. 3, no. 6, pp. 377, 379, 381 and 383.
- 34 *AM*, vol. 7, no. 6, p. 299.
- 35 “Chapas Sínicas” in Jin and Wu 2000: doc. 21.
- 36 *AM*, vol. 3, no. 6, pp. 358 and 379.
- 37 *AM*, vol. 7, no. 6, pp. 309 and 318.
- 38 *AM*, vol. 10, no. 4, p. 196.
- 39 See Map 1 in Rawski and Naquin 1987.
- 40 Rawski and Naquin 1987: 177.
- 41 *Ibidem*.
- 42 *Ibidem*: 181.
- 43 Li, Xiangshan Xianzhi 香山县志, pp. 389-392. For example, in Xinning, there was also quite an array of products, although the list was given in a much-shortened one-page description (arising from inconsistencies in the record?); in Li ed., *Xinning Xianzhi* 新宁县志 (Hainan, Hainan Publishing House, 2001), p. 21. Variety is again encountered in Zhengchen’s gazetteer; in Li ed., *Zhengchen Xianzhi* 增城县志 (Hainan, Hainan Publishing House, 2001), pp. 366-370.
- 44 Whitish alloy made of copper, zinc and nickel to which bits of iron, silver or arsenium are added. It is considered a Chinese invention, though Portuguese inherited the word via Persian “titianak”, meaning “zinc oxide”.
- 45 Souchon tea.
- 46 “Breve e Util Idea;” “Breve (Relação).”
- 47 Survey of Book II of the multi-volume Beatriz Basto da Silva *Cronologia da História de Macau*.
- 48 “Breve e Util Idea,” ff. 89r/v, in Ahmad ed., *Os Portugueses na Ásia*: 129.

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- 49 See Maxwell 1995:130, who in turn quotes from an entry in the *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* 25 (1862): 479-483.
- 50 The idea that the Portuguese trade in the East had slowly, since the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, become an appendage of Brazilian commerce has been explored by a couple of scholars, namely, A. J. Russell-Wood "Brazilian Commercial Presence beyond the Cape of Good Hope," in P. Malekandathil & J. Mohammed eds., *Portuguese, Indian Ocean and European Bridgheads* (Tellicherry, Institute for Research in Humanities of MESHA, 2001): 191-211 and P. Shirodkar, "Brazil and India. Centuries old contact," in Shirodkar ed., *Researches in Indo-Portuguese History* (Jaipur, Publication Scheme, 1998): 137-167. Incidentally, the Casa was dissolved in 1774.
- 52 See Souza 1986: Chapter 6.
- 52 *AM*, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 183, 189, 194 and 204.
- 53 *AM*, vol. 7, no. 6, p. 305.
- 54 *AM*, vol. 10, no. 4, p. 215.
- 55 *AM*, vol. 3, no. 6, p. 335.
- 56 In her brief pictorial history of China, P. Ebrey writes of the "darker" side of the Qianlong emperor. For instance, when there were rumours involving sorcerers "stealing souls" and harbouring anti-Manchu sentiments, pressure from the emperor eventually led officials to turn up evidence and culprits in what was a non-existent plot. In fact, Qianlong's much-lauded project of collecting in one source all of China's notable literary works ("The Complete Books of Four Treasuries") led to the destruction of many works that were deemed "slighting" to the Manchu rulers. Ebrey 1996:225.
- 57 Zhongguo Diyi Lishi Dangan Guan 1986: 78. Hereafter cited as QLCYD.
- 58 Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the Taiping Rebellion, which erupted about a century later and was led by Hakkas, originated in Guangdong. Although the rebellion in the 1770s broke out around the Yangtze, it should be noted that many Hakkas had emigrated to the Yangtze, as they had to Guangdong. See Rawski and Naquin 1987: 176 and 134-36.
- 59 Xiao Yishan 萧一山, *Qingdai Tongshi* 清代通史 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1962), II, Chps. 7-9, quoted in Hsu 1990: 61.
- 60 *Chapas Sínicas* (Chinese version), documents 206, 209, 213, and 216.
- 61 QLCYD, vol. 5, pp. 1, 18 and 31. The sampling surveyed edicts from several months of each year for 1763-70 collected in volumes 4-6.
- 62 *Chapas Sínicas* (Chinese version), documents 202, 203, 218-19, 234, 236, 238, 240, 242, 244, 246, 255, 257-58, and 261.
- 63 *AM*, vol. 3, no. 5, p. 316. For European dissatisfaction, see *Chapas Sínicas* (Chinese version), document 209.
- 64 See Van Dyke 2002 and 2005.
- 65 See the account of António José Teles de Menezes in Boxer 1968, Chp. XIV.

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