



# José Maria Braga (Jack Braga) in Macau and his literary estate

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**ABSTRACT:** José Maria Braga or Jack Braga, as he was known, was born on the 22nd of May of 1897, in Hong Kong, where he was educated in St. Joseph's College. His great-grandfather had settled in Hong Kong, right after the occupation of that territory by the English, and his father, José Pedro Braga, a member of the Macanese community of the then English colony, married an Australian woman, Olive Pauline Kollard, who arrived in Hong Kong in 1890.

Jack Braga, on the other hand, was a well-known businessman in Hong Kong but, in the 1920s, settled in Macau, and here he married, in 1924, Augusta Isabel da Conceição Osório da Luz. After World War II, he returned to Hong Kong and, afterwards, emigrated to Australia, where he continued his studies and research until his retirement, at 75 years of age. After, he went to San Francisco (USA) with his wife and went to live with their eldest daughter. Here he came to pass away on the 27th of April of 1988, at the age of 90 years old.

Jack Braga left behind a large collection of books, manuscripts, maps, pictures, journals and magazines. His collection was sold to the National Library of Australia, in Canberra, in 1966, but he was invited by this Library to work there, to organize his own bibliographic collection (1968 and 1972), creating the Portuguese section in that library.

**KEYWORDS:** Jack Braga; Portuguese section; National Library of Australia; “Macau Room” – Central Library of Macau

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## 1. SOME BIOGRAPHICAL DATA AND THE BIBLIOGRAPHIC TROVE (IN MACAU)

José Maria Braga or Jack Braga, as he was known, was born on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May of 1897, in Hong Kong, where he was educated in St. Joseph's College.

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His great-grandfather had settled in Hong Kong, right after the occupation of that territory by the English, and there had founded the publishing company “Noronha and Co.”, which would be in business for over a century. His father, José Pedro Braga, a member of the Macanese community of the then English colony, married an Australian woman, Olive Pauline Kollard, who arrived in Hong Kong in 1890 and was a violinist. He was also a writer, besides from being a printer and editor, and was also director of the “Hong Kong Telegraph” and even of several public companies of Hong Kong, founded by him. He was the representative of the Portuguese



Braga family (left to right) Teresa, Carol, Mrs. A.I. Braga and Mr. J.M. Braga, Angela, Mariazinha (standing) and Pedro, Antonio, Josea (sitting). National Library of Australia. nla.obj-147187661-1.

community in the Legislative Council of Hong Kong for many years, being one of their most prominent members.<sup>1</sup>

His paternal ancestors were Macanese, the most illustrious of them all being Manuel Vicente Rosa<sup>2</sup>, born in Tancos, who had come to Macau in 1704, dedicating himself to the commercial and maritime life, having been a great merchant and ship-owner, having many important political responsibilities for the time.<sup>3</sup>

Jack Braga, on the other hand, was a well-known businessman in Hong Kong but, in the 1920s, settled in Macau. Here he married, in 1924, Augusta Isabel da Conceição Osório da Luz, with whom he had seven children. After World War II, he returned to Hong Kong and, afterwards, emigrated to Australia, where he continued his studies and research until his retirement, at 75 years of age. After, he went to San Francisco, in the United States of America, with his wife and went to live with his eldest daughter. Here he came to pass away on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April of 1988, at the age of 90 years old.<sup>4</sup>

During the Pacific War, Jack Braga and Sir Robert Ho Tung found themselves in Macau where they had met. At the end of the conflict, when both returned to Hong Kong, Jack Braga would have convinced Sir

Robert Ho Tung to donate the house where he had lived in Macau, to the Government, for the establishment of a library, the Sir Robert Ho Tung Library.<sup>5</sup>

In Macau, he was manager of “Watco” (Water Supply Company) and a trader (he dedicated himself to export/import activities). In the “Seminário de S. José” (St. Joseph Seminary) he directed the Commercial Degree in English, where he taught English Language and Literature. Besides from teacher he was also a journalist and writer. He published innumerable articles in various newspapers and magazines of Macau, Hong Kong and Shanghai. Besides from being the founder of “*The Macao Review*” (1929-1930), he was co-founder of “*Renascimento*”, “*Macau Herald*” and “*The Macau Tribune*” (published during the Pacific War).<sup>6</sup>

Also in Macau, he was an unofficial advisor of several governors, especially regarding relations between the governments of Macau and Hong Kong, and also played a role of official link between several groups of the Secret Services, during World War II, including from the Chinese government and from the support group to British Army; he also organized an underground mail service that transported important messages between Hong Kong, Macau, Chung Kin



(Chung Kung) and the Allies' radio stations installed behind Japanese lines in China.<sup>7</sup>

He was also a "*Reuters News Agency*" and "*South China Morning Post*" correspondent in Macau.<sup>8</sup>

In Macau, he became interested in the Portuguese sea voyages and discoveries, who were the first to sail beyond the Cape of Good Hope, reaching India, Insulíndia, China and Japan. He himself went to Japan, England, Italy, and Portugal, where he dedicated himself to historical research in Archives, Seminaries and other institutions, to deepen his knowledge.<sup>9</sup>

He dedicated the greater part of his free time to historical research, where he was encouraged in by Charles R. Boxer, with whom he collaborated on several works. It was even Boxer who convinced him to broaden the scope of his historical work, not only to the actions of Portuguese in the Far East but also to the rest of the world.<sup>10</sup>

Jack Braga left behind a large collection of books, manuscripts, maps, pictures, journals and magazines. His collection was sold to the National Library of Australia, in Canberra, in 1966 (for 25,000 Australian dollars), with him having been invited by this Library to work there, with a monthly salary, to organize his own bibliographic collection (1968 and 1972), creating the Portuguese section in that library.<sup>11</sup>

In the Braga Collection of the National Library of Australia, in Canberra, there are about 6,000 monographies and 200 boxes of manuscripts, abranging several topics, such as the Portuguese Expansion, History of Portugal, the Portuguese Patronage, Commerce and Relations with China, History of Hong Kong and the British, and later, World War II, the Japanese Invasions, etc.<sup>12</sup>

There are also thousands of photographs and drawings about Macau, Hong Kong, China and Japan, over 100 maps about Macau, Hong, China and Portugal, and more than one hundred works of Journals and Academic Magazines.<sup>13</sup>

Some of his books, however, were acquired by the Public Library of Macau. It is from this small sample existing in the "Macau Room" of the actual Central



(Upper) Mr. J.M. Braga and Mrs. A.I. Braga with their baby daughter, Carol, with maid in background, Macau, ca. 1927. National Library of Australia. nla.obj-147188048-1

(Lower) Mr. J.M. Braga and Mrs. A.I. Braga in Japan. National Library of Australia. nla.obj-147188329-1

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Braga family members at the celebration of the  
National Library of Australia. nla.obj-147188



## MACAO STUDIES



the Silver Wedding Anniversary of Mr. J.M. Braga and Mrs. A.I. Braga, 30 December 1949, Hong Kong .  
708-1

Library of Macau, that we propose talking about and analyzing.

## 2. THE ASSETS OF THE BRAGA COLLECTION IN THE CENTRAL LIBRARY OF MACAU

These assets are composed by various works, between books (monographies) and articles (in periodical publications), broaching several topics, which we tried to group by large categories, albeit in a simple manner. Thus, we have:

### Chronology of the History of Macau

*A voz do passado: redescoberta de "A colecção de vários factos acontecidos nesta mui nobre cidade de Macao"*. Macau: Boletim Eclesiástico da Diocese de Macau, 1964.

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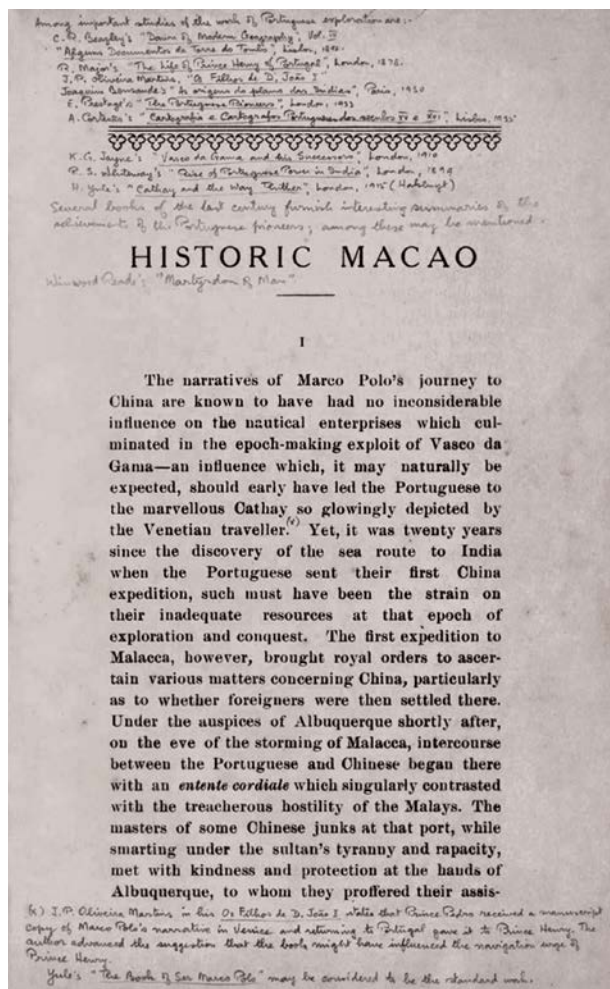
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"Servidores de Portugal no Oriente", in *Renascimento*, Macau, 2 (2) Aug. 1943, pp. 170-172; 2 (3) Sept. 1943, pp. 245-248; 2 (5) Nov. 1943, pp.

483-488; 2 (6) Dec. 1943, pp. 620-627; 3 (2) Feb. 1944, pp. 197-201; 3 (3) Mar. 1944, pp. 295-298; 3 (4) Apr. 1944, pp. 403-413; 3 (6) Jun. 1944, pp. 578-586; 4 (1) Jul. 1944, pp. 61-65; 4 (2) Aug. 1944, pp. 180-188.

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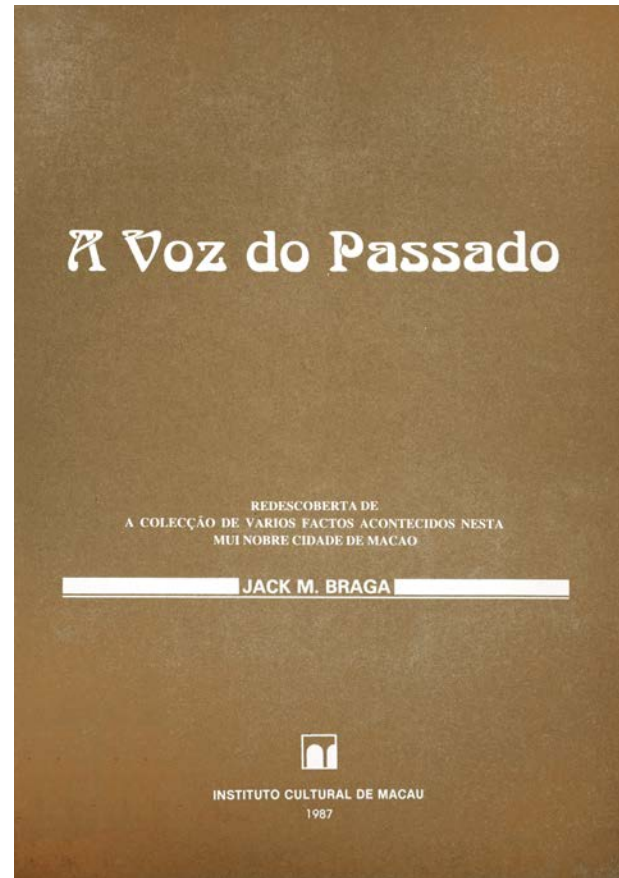
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# THE WESTERN PIONEERS AND THEIR DISCOVERY OF MACAO

J. M. Braga



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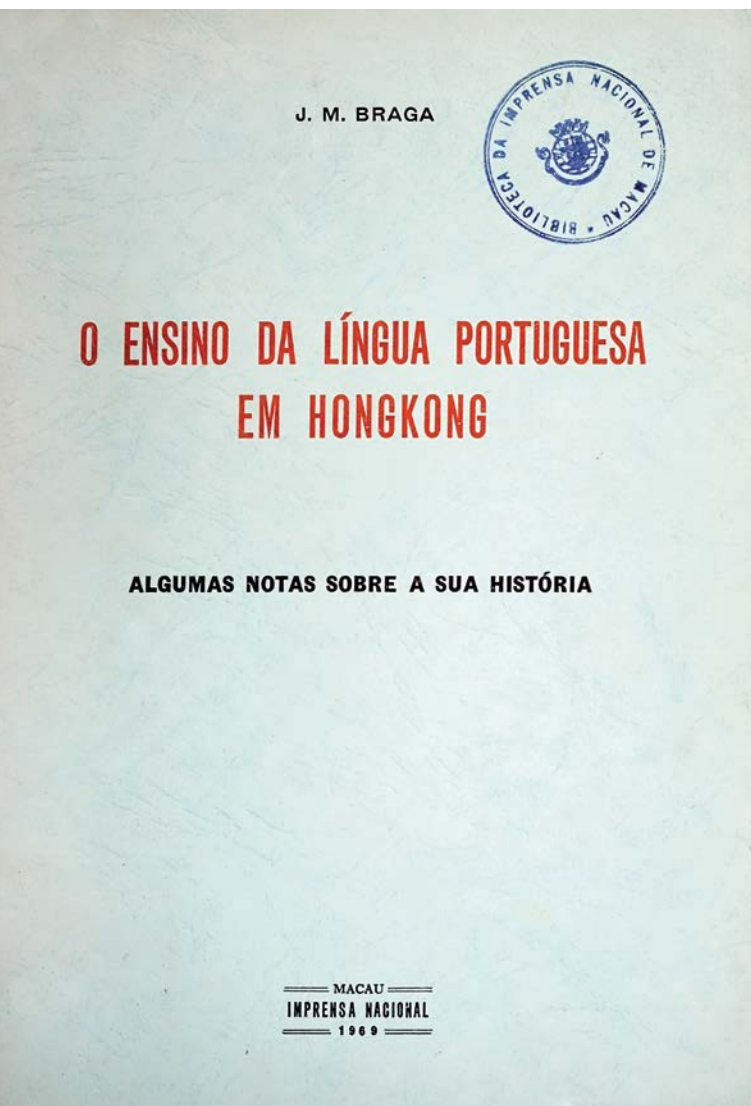
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- "The Macau-Shekki Highway", in *The Macau Review*. Macau, 1 (1) Dec.1929,p.4;1 (2) Jan.1930,p.8,20;1 (3) Feb.1930,p.4;1 (5) Apr.1930,p.4; (incomplete).

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Pimentel, Padre Francisco, *Breve relação da jornada que fez a Corte de Pekim o senhor Manoel de Saldanha, embaixador extraordinário del rey de Portugal ao emperador da China e Tartaria (1667-1670)*, compiled and annotated by C. R. Boxer and J. M. Braga. Macau: Imprensa Nacional, 1942.

### 3. J. M. BRAGA AND THE EMBASSY OF MANUEL DE SALDANHA (1667-1670)

In the 16th century, Portuguese trade in the Far East was based, primarily, in the exchange of China silk for silver bars from Japan. Besides from these two main products, many others were also traded: apricots, musk, gold, porcelain, etc., acquired in China; and copper, weapons (swords and lances), lacquered objects, etc., acquired in Japan. As the relations between China and Japan were completely cut off, the trade between both countries maintained itself, indirectly, through the Portuguese. Thus, on one hand Macau had a support and supply function to the Portuguese route of Japan; on the other hand, it played an important role in the local context, especially in the scope of the commercial links between Japan and China.<sup>14</sup>

Canton was, at the time, the only port where the South China external trade was made and, among the foreigners, only the Portuguese were authorized to enter. But, more than an exit port, Macau was also the supply center of China, in the context that legal or semi-official trade had become a profitable enterprise. Besides from that, the connections were not only made with ports in the China Sea and with Asia and Europe, but also expanded to other Pacific zones, distinguishing the regular trade with the Philippines since the 16th century. Manila, in turn, in the scope of the Spanish Empire, had connections to the West Indies (Central America) through a long route - the Acapulco route - from which circulated silver and gold from Mexico and Peru.

The Spanish dominion (1580-1640) had negative consequences for Macau, causing alterations to the traditional diplomatic and commercial relations and provoking the emergence of new competitive empires; for example, the successive attacks of the Dutch ships, between 1601 and 1622, when they were definitively defeated by the Portuguese, and the emergence of the first English East India Trading Company fleet, in 1637.

Another significant hit on Macau was the prohibition of direct trade between Macau and Manila, as decreed by the king of Portugal and Spain, in 1594, similar, by the way, to what happened to all possessions of both countries linked by a common route. Despite that, this route - lasting from 1565 to 1815 - never stopped occurring annually, though clandestinely, and even, sometimes indirectly, through Makassar; or supporting itself by direct sailing between China and Manila.

The cessation of the profitable trade with Japan, in 1639, represented a great loss for the economy of Macau. Its inhabitants searched new markets and incentivized commercial relations with other localities, namely Indonesia, Timor and Makassar, among others.

The conquest of Malacca by the Dutch, in 1641, was also a rude hit for Macau, as, besides from the loss of the main supply center of Southeast Asia, it also signified the loss of the support center to the Portuguese navigation between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Macau saw itself, thus, needing to find a relationship in that zone and will lean itself on Siam.

Trade between Macau and Indo-China (Tonkin, Cambodia and Cochinchina), Siam, Makassar, Timor and Solor, continued uninterrupted, despite

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the breakdown of trade with Japan in 1639 and, later on, with Manila.

However, in 1661 the Chinese Emperor decreed the abandonment of all cities, towns and villages on the coast, forcing the population to retreat four leagues to the interior, in the five provinces of the South of China, due to the constant attacks by pirates, led by Koxinga, basing himself in Formosa (Taiwan) and a supporter of the Ming. This order only arrived in Macau in 1662 and the Macanese refused to obey, resulting in the city being blockaded by sea, thus impeding trade. As a consequence, it became indispensable, to the eyes of Macanese society, to send an embassy to Beijing, to try to move Emperor Kang Hs'hi, explaining to him the situation that the city and its inhabitants found themselves in. Thus, the Leal Senado (Loyal Senate) solicited Goa to send an embassy to China, which was organized in Goa and in Macau, although it presented itself in the name of the king of Portugal, D. Afonso VI (being his uncle, D. Pedro, the Regent Prince). For this reason, Manuel de Saldanha was nominated for the leadership of this diplomatic mission that departed Goa on the 14th of May of 1667, making a slight stopover in Malacca towards the end of June, having arrived in Macau on the 4th of August of the same year. Three months later, on the 21st of November, he departed for Canton accompanied by the elements of the embassy, there remaining for about two years, departing for Beijing only in January of 1670. But the relations between the members of the embassy were very tense, especially with the Macanese, chiefly Bento Pereira de Faria - the embassy's secretary - for having different objectives and opinions. And, finally, on the 27th of August of 1672, the Embassy began the trek back to Macau, without having achieved the main aims of the Macanese community, namely the easement of the maritime trade prohibition (which would only occur in 1680).

It is the description of this embassy and its troubles that Father Pimentel introduces us to in his "Relação", which was published and appropriately annotated and transcribed by Jack Braga and Charles Boxer. It is the only one publishing so far, which makes it particularly important for the History of Macau and its scholars.

In this work, the "Relação" begins on page 11 until page 45, then there are several letters written by

Ambassador Manuel de Saldanha, between 1668 and 1670, from page 47 until page 74; finally, there is an "Appendix", with the "costs that the inhabitants of this City of the Name of God incurred with the Embassy [...] that the Viceroy of Goa [...] sent to the Emperor of China [...]", from page III until XLII, with the description of the gifts sent to the Emperor, etc., as well as all other costs of the embassy supplied by the Leal Senado (Loyal Senate) of Macau. Between page 7 and 9 there is an "Introduction" authored by Charles R. Boxer and J. M. Braga, as well as authoring the notes throughout the work, which makes it even more attracting for the researcher.

Regarding this embassy, there are some references in some attractive works, for example:

Jesus, C. A. Montalto de - *Macau Histórico* (First Portuguese edition of the English version retired in 1926). Macau: Livros do Oriente, 1990.

Ljungstedt, Andrew - *An historical sketch of the Portuguese settlement in China and of the roman catholic church and mission in China*. Boston: James Muroe, 1836;

Maria, José de Jesus - *Asia sinica e japônica*, anot. por Charles Ralph Boxer, 2nd ed. Macau: Instituto Cultural/Centro de Estudos Marítimos, 1988;

Oliveira, Fernando Correia - *500 anos de contactos luso-chineses*. [Lisboa]: Público/Fundação Oriente/D.L., 1998;

And some studies, such as:

Brazão, , Eduardo - *Subsídios para a história das relações diplomáticas de Portugal com a China: a embaixada de Manuel de Saldanha (1667-1670)*. Macau: Imprensa Nacional, 1948;

Santos, Isaú, "A embaixada de Manuel de Saldanha à China, em 1667-1670", in *Actas do VI Seminário Internacional de História Indo- Portuguesa* - Directed by Artur Teodoro de Matos and Luís Filipe F. Reis Thomaz. Macau: Lisboa: SIHIP, 1993, pp. 405-436;

Monteiro, Anabela Nunes - *Macau no tempo de Bento Pereira de Faria*, Master's Dissertation presented at the University of Macau, 1998.

We may conclude that Jack Braga (José Maria Braga) contributed greatly to the study of the History of Macau and the Portuguese Presence in the Orient, especially, as demonstrated by his research works and his important library.

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