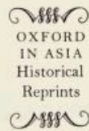


FIDALGOS
IN THE FAR EAST
1550-1770

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INTRODUCTORY

Bertrand Russell once suggested that history should be written by international committees, because only thus can any nation become acquainted with facts that its own historians would inevitably suppress, and only thus can it know what other nations think of it. This desirable state of affairs is unlikely to materialise until Dr. Johnson's dictum that Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel finds more general acceptance than at present. Meanwhile, the historian of early Western contacts with the Far East can at least make sure that he consults sources which reflect something besides the prejudices of "the missionary praying in his little Bethel, the diplomat enmeshed in the coils of punctilio, and the foreign trader lying drunk on the floor of his club", which a forgotten American reviewer characterised as inspiring most books on the subject.

This acidulous observation probably was not meant to be taken too seriously, but it contains enough truth to justify an explanation of the *fons et origo* of this book. Bigoted missionaries and drunken traders are not absent from its pages, but other aspects of God and Mammon have received due consideration. The book is not a history of Macao, but, as the sub-title implies, a study of key episodes and periods connected with the story of the colony, centered around typical personalities of the time. Readers unfamiliar with Portuguese may care to be reminded that *Fidalgo* is derived from the term *filho d'algo* 'son of a Somebody', originally applied to the so-called gentlemen of blood and coat-armour, but here used in the sense of men who were personalities in their own right, however doubtful or obscure their origin may have been.

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INTRODUCTORY

XI

Portuguese sources on the Far East have been unduly neglected by Anglo-Saxon writers, mainly through their ignorance of the language. Iberian scholars, on the other hand, are seldom at home with the Dutch and Japanese material which has been freely utilised in the present work. Polyglot Dutch historians have the widest knowledge of all, but their works are unfortunately closed books to the majority of Anglo-Saxon and Latin readers. This book, although written almost entirely from the resources of the author's own library, is based on extensive reading in all those languages. Even so, it can hardly claim to have achieved Bertrand Russell's standard, since a knowledge of Chinese would have enabled the author to use still more varied material. Nevertheless, although written primarily for the perusal of persons interested in the history of Macao it may afford something of interest to that wider public concerned with the larger problem of the clash of cultures and the conflict of races precipitated by European colonial expansion in Eastern Asia.

Both author and publisher regret that the high cost of printing Chinese ideographs in Europe, prevented their use in the text alongside the romanised versions of Chinese and Japanese names. As regards Japanese, the omission does not matter very much, for the Hepburn system of transliteration is as accurate as it is well-known. Moreover it closely corresponds to the method used by the Portuguese Padre João Rodriguez S. J. in his pioneer Japanese grammar of 1604-08. It is far otherwise with Chinese, since the confusing systems in vogue lead to one and the same province being variously written as Anhui, Anhwei, Nganhwei; whilst the Chinese name for Macao is rendered as Ao-Men, Ao-Mun, O-Mun etc. Worse still, although the *Heung* of Heungshan and the *Hong* of Hongkong are represented in the original Chinese by the same character (meaning 'fragrant'), yet Heungshan is never romanised as Hongshan nor is Hongkong written Heungkong. The most one can do in these circumstances is to avoid making the existing confusion worse confounded; and the author trusts he has achieved this modest aim through the use of a comprehensive glossary and index.

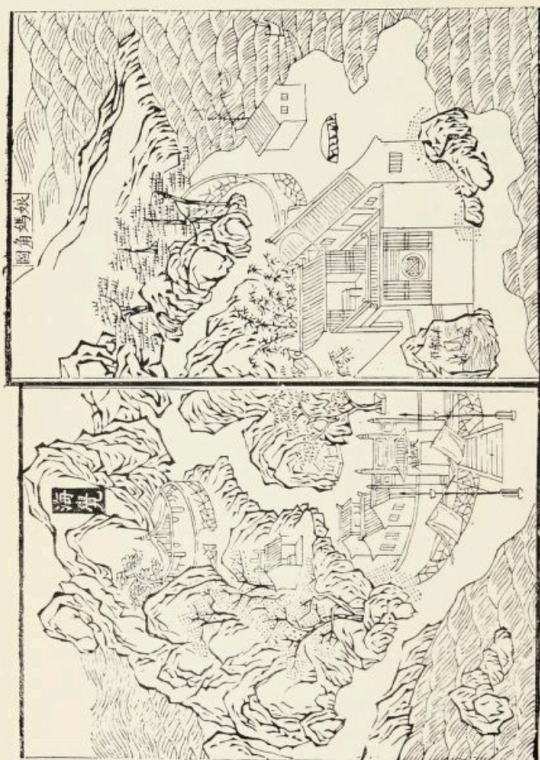


Plate I

The Ama Temple at Macao

I. BAY OF THE GODDESS AMA, AND CITY OF THE NAME OF GOD

When the Portuguese first reached India in 1498, the Chinese no longer traded West of Sumatra, although their junks had at one time navigated the Indian Ocean as far as the Persian Gulf and Somaliland. Malacca was the chief port they visited in the 'Golden Chersonese', but they voyaged periodically to the principal ports and islands in the Malay Archipelago, and to the warring states of Indo-China over which they claimed a shadowy suzerainty. The three main islands of Japan were torn by futile civil wars, whose ravages gave rise to the swarm of corsairs from the coasts of Kyushu who harried the shores of the China Sea from Shantung to Hainan. These *Bahan* or *Wako* as they were variously termed, alternated peaceful trading with their piratical pursuits; and in company with (or disguised as) lawful traders from the Ryukyu islands they occasionally visited the Malayan ports of Patani and Malacca. Formosa was virtually unknown and seldom visited by either Japanese freebooters or Chinese merchants, but both parties were better acquainted with the island of Luzon in the Philippines. Arab and Gujarati traders were to be found in some of the Indonesian ports between Java and the Moluccas; but at this time they no longer voyaged in the China Sea, and few traces remained of their once flourishing settlements at Canton and Ch'uanchow.

Although the search for "Christians and Spices" was the primary impulse behind the Portuguese voyages of discovery and trading, reports of the existence of China soon aroused the curiosity of King Manuel, the self-styled "Lord of the Conquest, Navigation and Commerce of Ethiopia, Arabia, Persia, and India", — or the "Grocer King" as François I less grandiloquently termed him. He instructed

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1

Diogo Lopes de Siqueira, who left Lisbon for Malacca in 1508, to find out all he could about China, which was not yet identified with Marco Polo's Cathay. Siqueira's visit to Malacca proved a fiasco, and he was compelled to leave before he could trade with the crews of three Chinese junks which he found in the harbour. When Affonso de Albuquerque conquered the city in July 1511, he not only established excellent relations with the masters of the Chinese junks he found in the roadstead, but also with those of some Japanese or Ryukyu vessels which came in shortly after the fall of the fortress.

These good relations between the representatives of the Farthest East and the Farthest West were not impaired by the pioneer Portuguese voyages to Lintin island in the Pearl River Delta in 1513-15, nor by the first official expedition under Fernão Peres de Andrade which paid a highly successful visit to Canton in 1517. But the good impression hitherto made by the Portuguese was quite ruined by the outrageous behaviour of Simão de Andrade, brother of Fernão Peres, who visited the Pearl River estuary with a squadron of four sail in August, 1519. His piratical behaviour caused a rupture in official Sino-Portuguese relations which lasted for over thirty years. During this time all the attempts made by the Portuguese to renew direct commercial relations with Canton were unsuccessful, whilst few (if any) junks from China, Japan and the Ryukyu visited Malacca, but instead they made Patani their Malayan port of call. Meanwhile an irregular kind of smuggling-trade, sometimes with the connivance of the local authorities and sometimes in despite of them, was obtained by the Portuguese at various places, and at different times, along the coast of Kwangtung, Fukien, and Chekiang, as far north as Ningpo. As the Japanese *Wako* continued to ravage the China coast during this period, the Portuguese must have met them occasionally. This is nowhere explicitly stated in the Portuguese chronicles (which moreover confuse the Japanese with the Ryukyu men under the name of *Guores* at their first meeting in Malacca) but is alluded to in passing in contemporary Chinese records.

The accidental discovery of Japan by three Portuguese deserters in a Fukien junk in 1542, opened a new and immen-

sely profitable market which temporarily diverted the Lusitanians from pressing their efforts to reopen officially the China trade. But the dangers of navigating their clumsy carracks and galleons during the typhoon season in the China Sea, soon forced them to try to obtain a sheltered port of call between Malacca and Kyushu, apart from the necessity of securing a base where they could get adequate supplies of the Chinese raw and wrought silks which formed the best part of their cargoes for Japan. In or about the year 1550, the Portuguese reached a tacit understanding with the Chinese, for an annual "fair", or exchange of goods, in the island of St. John or Shang Chuan (Sanchuan,) some fifty miles to the S.W. of Macao and where Francis Xavier died in 1552. This was, of course, no permanent settlement, and the Portuguese merely erected some matsheds during the trading season from August to November, on the conclusion of which they were burned. For some unknown reason, the annual fair was transferred from Sanchuan to the more easterly island of Lampacao (Langpakao or a site near the modern Bullock Horn island) in 1554-5; apparently as the result of a verbal agreement made in the former year by Leonel de Sousa with the Chinese authorities, which placed the trade on a more satisfactory footing. Lampacao remained the seat of the annual fair till 1558 at least, although it would appear that the Portuguese began to frequent Macao about the same time. At any rate, we know that Fernão Mendes Pinto and the Jesuit Padre Belchior Nunes Barreto were there in November 1555, since a letter of the former is dated from this port which is described as lying six leagues from Lampacao.

The Chinese names for Macao are legion, the one most commonly employed being *Ao-men* 'Gate (or Port) of the Bay'. The Portuguese version is generally admitted to be derived from the term *A-ma-o* or *A-ma-ngao*, with the *ng* strongly nasalised in Cantonese, meaning Bay of Ama, Goddess of sailors and navigators. The picturesque temple dedicated to this Goddess at the entrance of the inner harbour is the oldest building in Macao, and is probably little changed from the time when Mendes Pinto and his compatriots first set eyes on it in 1555. The preliminary A,

variously written in Chinese, is often omitted as a superfluous prefix; but the Portuguese evidently picked up the full form from the local fisher folk, since they invariably wrote the name as *Amacao* in the town's early stages, whence the *Amakon* of Richard Cocks and his English contemporaries. The goddess *Ma* or *Ama* appears to be one of the manifestations of *Kuan Yin*, Deity of Mercy, the popular Buddhist equivalent of Our Lady. It is perhaps not unsuitable that if the Chinese Goddess of Mercy had to be displaced, her successor should have been the compassionate Christian Queen of Heaven.

The first Portuguese settlers of 1557, called their new home *povoação do Nome de Deus na China*, or Settlement of the name of God in China. This was sometimes varied by *Porto do Nome de Deus* or *Porto de Amacao*, or even more vaguely as *Porto da China*, i.e. Port of China. This varying nomenclature was officially ended by the grant of the status of a city to the colony by the Indo-Portuguese authorities in 1586, with the name of *Cidade do Nome de Deus na China*. This was too unwieldy ever to become popular; and the name of the Chinese goddess continued to be perpetuated in the more usual forms of *Amacao* and *Macao*. The *Santo* (*Holy*) which is frequently included nowadays in the title, is frowned on by ecclesiastical purists who point out that its insertion before the Name of God is redundant.

By this time the trade with China and Japan had been placed on a regular footing by the Government at Goa. For the first few years after the discovery of Japan in 1542, the trade was open to all and sundry; but by 1550 it was organized on a monopolistic basis in accordance with the economic and political ideas of the time. The right of trading in the China Sea was restricted to the Captain-Major of the Voyage of China and Japan, and this post was conferred annually by the King (or by the Viceroy of Portuguese India in his name) upon a fidalgo or gentleman whose services had been something out of the ordinary and who deserved a particularly lucrative reward. If the Captain-Major could not or would not make the voyage himself, he could sell his privileges to another, who then made the voyage with the same prerogatives. For the duration of the voyage, the Captain-Major

was the recognised chief of all Portuguese ships and settlements he might meet with between Malacca and Japan, and the official representative of Portugal vis-a-vis the Chinese and Japanese authorities. The port of departure was normally Goa; and Malacca (or occasionally Jacatra on the N.W. coast of Java) the only port of call before the China coast. The Captain-Major was usually responsible for fitting out his own ship, but in some cases the King provided a ship on loan against adequate security.

The Captain-Majors of the Japan Voyage (the 'China' was usually dropped from the title as being understood) were not appointed to a post which was unique of its kind. The trade to the Moluccas, Pegu, Bengal, Mozambique and elsewhere was organised on a similar plan based on the principle of a Royal Monopoly, but the China-Japan voyage was by far the most lucrative during the ninety years of its existence. The beneficiaries of the voyage were not always limited to honourable fidalgos, for on several occasions it was conferred on deserving institutions, such as the Municipalities of Cochin, Malacca and Macao, in order that they might sell it to the highest bidder and devote the proceeds of the sale to the fortification of their cities. In other instances, one or more voyages were conferred on ecclesiastical institutions, for example on the Monastery of the Incarnation at Madrid in 1629, at the request of the Queen of Spain. In later years the voyage was not given as a grant but sold or farmed to the highest bidder, who, as we said, could either make the voyage himself or by proxy, or sell it to another.

The great profits reaped by the Portuguese from this voyage, were due to the political situation in East Asia. Owing to the frightful havoc wrought by the Japanese *Wako* pirates along the China coast, direct commerce between the two Empires had been categorically forbidden by the Ming Emperor about 1480. It is true that a smuggling trade on a greater or lesser scale never entirely ceased, any more than did the illegal Sino-Portuguese coastal trade in 1520-1550, but the Imperial Ban did put the Chinese merchants at a great disadvantage. In this way, the peculiar position had arisen that the Chinese could only trade offici-

ally with their Japanese neighbours through the medium of the Portuguese, who, in addition to being (prior to 1600) the only important source of supply for European and Indian goods for Japan, likewise enjoyed a virtual monopoly of the Chinese silk export market which was far and away the most profitable part of the Sino-Japanese commerce. This sounds strange today, when Japanese silks have a deservedly higher reputation than Chinese, but the case was far otherwise in the sixteenth century when the wealthy classes preferred the Chinese material, both raw and finished, in much the same way as good English cloth was valued in Spain and Portugal above the native product. The Portuguese could therefore buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest, and the gold and silver bullion they carried away from Japan in payment for their silk imports, was profitably disposed of in India and China respectively, where the relative and fluctuating values of these two metals enabled them to make further profits on the rates of exchange.

The English traveller Ralph Fitch, who visited the East Indies in 1585-1591, gives the following succinct account of the trade in his time: — 'When the Portugales goe from Macao in China to Japan, they carrie much white silke, Gold, Muske and Porcelanes: and they bring from thence nothing but Silver. They have a great Carake which goeth thither every yeare, and shee bringeth from thence every yeare above 600,000 crusadoes; and all this silver of Japan, and 200,000 crusadoes more in Silver which they bring yearly out of India, they imploy to their great advantage in China: and they bring from thence Gold, Muske, Silke, Copper, Porcelanes, and many other things very costly and gilded.' This is corroborated by the Portuguese historian Diogo do Couto (1542-1616) who wrote in his *Dialogo do Soldado Pratico* at the turn of the 16th century, anent... 'the silver which comes from Japan every year in our great ship of commerce (*nao do Trato*) which goes there, whose cargo is all exchanged for silver bullion which is worth more than a million in gold'. Jan Huyghen Van Linschoten or rather his English translator of 1598, wrote in his *Discours of Voyages unto ye Easte and West Indies*, 'The Captaine of the ship that sayleth to *Iapen* doth greatly profit by

his Voyage, for having a good summe of money to traffique thither withall, in a good ship which commonly is of 14 or 16 hundred Tunnes, hee may well gaine 150 or 200 thousand Ducats by the Voyage'. In this respect, as in others, these captains were the worthy forerunners of the commanders of John Company's ships two centuries later, several of whom made upwards of £ 20,000 on a single voyage to Canton.

Modern writers are often inclined to overlook the fact that the Portuguese normally derived greater profits from the commerce which they drove as middlemen in Asia, than from the spices and commodities which they shipped to Europe. The basis of this commerce was their control of the export trade in cotton and calico textiles from the ports of Gujarat and Coromandel. These textiles found a ready market in Indonesia, where they were exchanged for spices and aromatic woods, and in East Africa where they were bartered for gold and ivory. The populations of these regions provided as profitable a market for Indian piece-goods in those days, as they did for the products of the looms of Manchester and Osaka in more recent times. Japanese silver was used to buy the Chinese silks which were then profitably disposed of in Japan and Manila, whilst Chinese gold was invested in the purchase of Indian manufactured textiles with similarly profitable results. The Portuguese control of this interlocking commercial system gave them a firm grip on the "Country Trade" (as their English successors called it), and accounts for the fact that Portuguese was the commercial *lingua franca* of the maritime trade of Asia for over two centuries. Pidgin English was derived from Pidgin Portuguese.

The first Portuguese voyages to Japan were made from Malacca with one of the islands off the coast of Kwangtung as an intermediate port of call, but once the trade had been placed on a regular footing, Goa became the starting-point and Macao the entrepot in China where the raw and finished silks bought at Canton were taken on board on the outward voyage, and where the bulk of the silver bullion was disposed of on the return trip. The exact date of the first permanent settlement at Macao, apart from its temporary use as a

trading mart for a few weeks or months, is still a matter of dispute. The most commonly accepted version is that the Portuguese were allowed to form a settlement on the peninsula in 1557, in recognition of their services in expelling a pirate band who had made the place their stronghold. This story has yet to be confirmed by a reliable Chinese source, but there is nothing inherently improbable in it. At any rate they began to settle here about this time, though Lampacao was not forthwith abandoned since there were still five or six hundred Portuguese there in 1560.

Macao owed its foundation and continued existence to an understanding reached between the Kwangtung provincial authorities and the Captain-Major of the Japan voyage. Neither the Chinese government nor the Viceroy at Goa took any official cognizance of the settlement for some years. In 1586 the Viceroy of Portuguese India, Dom Duarte de Menezes, issued a decree empowering the Senate or Municipal Council to elect its officers triennially, and to make a number of judicial appointments. Another Viceregal *Alvará* of the same date confirmed the classification of Macao as a City, with the same "privileges, liberties, honours and precedents" enjoyed by that of Evora in Portugal. This was the result of the initiative of the Bishop, Dom Leonardo de Sa, who in 1583 or 1585 (authorities differ as to the exact year) had called together the leading citizens and arranged for the formation of a municipal council, known as the *Senado da Camara* with elected Aldermen, Judge, Magistrate and other officials. The place had hitherto been known as the "Settlement (*Povoação*) or Port of the Name of God in China", but this was now changed to "City of the Name of God in China", which was confirmed by the Viceroy in this year and in due course by the King, who, however in January 1587 was still writing to the Viceroy about the *povoação de Macao*. On this occasion, the King rejected the suggestion that Macao should be governed by an independent Captain and ordered that the Captain-Major of the Japan Voyage should continue in supreme control as hitherto. A special *Ouvidor* (Magistrate) in the person of Alexandre Rebello was appointed, but for a long time neither he nor his numerous successors held down the job for more

than a year or two, whether through their own fault or the intractability of the populace it is hard to say.

Not content with the privileges of Cochin and Evora, the inhabitants of Macao later petitioned the Crown for the same privileges as those of Oporto; but successive Royal Decrees of 1595, 1596 and 1709 merely ratified the original Viceregal concession of 1586.

A Royal Decree dated 16th February 1587, separated the judicial functions of the *Ouvidor* from those of the Captain-Major, and strictly prohibited the latter from any interference with or control of the executive functions of the former. It also enjoined that on occasions when the Captain-Major had left Macao for Japan before the arrival of his successor in August, the place should be governed by the *Ouvidor* together with a Captain elected by the citizens until the new Captain-Major arrived. It seems that this is the origin of the *Capitão da terra*, whose functions are nowhere described and who is so often confused by later writers with the Captain-Major and Captain-General. As regards the Senate, this was composed of elected representatives and Crown nominees. Briefly, the *moradores* or citizens elected representatives who in their turn nominated three residents as *Vereadores* or Aldermen. These together with three legal officials and a Secretary formed the Senate; this body was in practice responsible for the civil and financial administration of the colony, the titular Captain-Major's (Captain-General since 1623) jurisdiction being limited to the control of the garrison. The senatorial election was usually annual, but sometimes triennial, the presidency devolving upon each of the aldermen in rotation. On momentous occasions, the military and ecclesiastical authorities, together with the leading citizens, were convoked to deliberate with the Senators in a *Conselho Geral* or general council. It is true that the principal Indo-Portuguese cities like Goa, Malacca and Cochin, had a similar municipal organization, but in their case the Aldermen seldom ventured to challenge the wishes of the Viceroy or Governor, still less those of the Bishop or the Inquisition; whereas in Macao the Senate often acted as an effective check on the despotic tendencies of the local governor, and there was no branch of the Inquisition to worry them. Curiously

enough, this democratic form of government lasted until the establishment of the Liberal Constitutional Monarchy in Portugal in the early 19th century, when the Senate's powers were reduced to those of a mere municipal council.

It should be added that the Magistrate of the Hsiangshan or Heungshan district in which Macao lies, claimed a vague and undefined jurisdiction over the Chinese inhabitants of the place, which was enforced to a greater or lesser degree in accordance with the strength or weakness of the Portuguese. The latter called both the district and its metropolis *Ançião*, *Anção*, *Anssão*, etc., which was the nearest they could apparently get to the original Chinese name meaning 'Fragrant Hills', — compare the 'Fragrant Streams' of Hongkong. The modern name of Chungshan dates from Republican times, since when the district capital has been called Shekki. A few miles North of Macao lies the little town of *Tsinshan* known to the Portuguese as *Casa Branca*, or the White House, from the conspicuous Magistrate's dwelling-place therein. This Magistrate was the one who was chiefly concerned with claiming jurisdiction over the Chinese inhabitants of the colony, together with the Hopu or Customs Commissioner (written *Opu* by the Portuguese and *Hoppo* by the English) who had a shore office in Macao from 1688 to 1849.

It was from the profits of the Japan trade that Macao took shape, and this commerce, in spite of occasional setbacks and the competition later encountered from Spaniards, Hollanders and English, was the mainstay of the place until the expulsion of the Portuguese from the island empire in 1639. An illegal but lucrative trade was also carried on with Manila during this period, the most profitable exports being Chinese silk textiles for the Philippines, Mexico and Peru. Other markets were the Lesser Sunda islands of Timor and Solor, together with Macassar in Celebes, whose development compensated to some degree for the loss of the Japan Trade. Indo-China and Siam likewise provided an outlet for certain Chinese goods on a modest scale.

The existence of alternative markets explains why Macao was able to remain relatively wealthy and prosperous, at a time when the Dutch blockade of the straits of Malacca had

virtually severed communications with Goa, and when Portugal's remaining Asiatic colonies were slowly sinking before the Hollanders' incessant attacks. Full credit should also be given to the courage and determination of the Macaonese in developing these new markets, and in maintaining their precarious foothold in China, in spite of the many and at times almost overwhelming difficulties they encountered on all sides.

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