Making Impressions

The adaptation of a Portuguese family to Hong Kong, 1700-1950

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Chapter 1

‘Stubborn endurance’

Macau: the Portuguese and Chinese 1557-1839

Those who came there from the four corners of the earth over several centuries generally saw China as a land of opportunity. Yet, having arrived on the China coast, they often seemed to ignore the Chinese people as much as possible. The Chinese were useful as merchants, providers and as servants, but apart from that, most foreigners had as few dealings with them as possible. Exceptions were Christian missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, whose dedicated lives were often spent selflessly in service of the people to whom they sought to bring the Gospel. For their part, the Chinese people and their government had no understanding of any foreigners other than those who came periodically from beyond the immediate boundaries of the Celestial Empire to make obeisance and pay tribute money to the Son of Heaven.

Foreigners could scarcely be expected to understand, let alone resolve, these fundamental tensions. Ultimately, most came to realise that they were not there by right. People who had lived in the Far East for up to ten generations from the seventeenth to the late twentieth century eventually left, unable to see a role for themselves into the future. Yet in the period they lived there, their achievements were considerable. So too were the challenges they faced, and often the disasters they endured. This thesis examines the role played by one of these extended families. First, however, it is necessary to explain how the strange situation arose in which people like this were able to remain for so long, passing through many vicissitudes.

Initially, the long tenure by the Portuguese of Macau needs to be examined. The Portuguese presence there lasted from 1557 to 1999. It was not the first European colony in the East, for the Portuguese had established themselves in Goa in 1510. However, it was the first European settlement on the China coast, and preceded the next, Hong Kong, by close to 300 years. Hong Kong was handed back to China in 1997, Macau following two years later. So the first colony was also the last. It might
be supposed that was due to a sustained military power, but that was anything but the case. For much of this time, the Chinese could have driven out the Portuguese had they chosen to do so, but they did not.

Map 1 - Sea route to the East Indies.
Pierre Duval, *Carte de Voyage de Pirard aux Indes Orientales*, 1677

The Portuguese arrival at and settlement of Macau was remarkable enough in itself. Their prolonged continuation there was still more extraordinary. The Portuguese Empire rose and fell in scarcely more than fifty years in the early sixteenth century, although Macau’s greatest prosperity continued for another ninety years, suddenly being snuffed out in 1639 when foreigners were expelled from Japan and the hugely lucrative trade that the Portuguese had conducted there since the 1550s vanished. Yet, impoverished and defenceless, Macau remained under Portuguese control for more than 350 years longer. Its survival is surely the most amazing story in the long record of relations between China and the outside world.

Colonial expansion is commonly regarded as the result of commercial prowess, often accompanied by religious zeal, sustained by overpowering military and naval force. This is broadly true of the astounding Portuguese conquests as they worked their
way around the African coast and across the Indian Ocean between the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Francisco de Almeida (ca. 1450-1510), the first Portuguese viceroy in the East, and his successor, Afonso de Albuquerque (1453-1515) saw as early as 1509 that to secure trade they must destroy any who might stand in their way. This they did in a major naval engagement off the Indian coast. At that time, the technological superiority of the Portuguese in shipbuilding and gunnery made it easy for Albuquerque to sweep his opponents from the seas. Arab dhows were no match for the far more manoeuvrable and better gunned Portuguese caravels and carracks.

It was not long before the Portuguese ventured further. The Chinese were known in India, where the voyages of the celebrated Chinese admiral Cheng Ho (1371-1433), some fifty years earlier had left a strong memory. The Chinese were seen by the Indians as a civilised people with paler skins than theirs. Thus informed, Albuquerque decided to venture further east. Arriving at Malacca in 1511, he found a fleet of Chinese junks there. He sent one of his captains, Jorge Álvares (d. 1521) to find whether trade could be opened with these mysterious and remote people. In 1515 Álvares landed at an island he named Tamão at the mouth of the Pearl River. Here he placed a padrão, a stone column bearing the arms of Portugal, and in some sense staking a claim for a continuing Portuguese presence in China. This was within striking distance of what was already the great city of Guangzhou (traditionally Romanised as Canton). With no understanding of Chinese culture or language, the Portuguese appear to have applied the name of the province, Guangdong (traditionally Romanised as Kwangtung) to the city. They were unable to pronounce its name, which they rendered as Cantão. In English parlance this became Canton for most of the next five centuries. That name is used in this thesis, as it was the name in general use during the period covered by this study.

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1 Chinese names are usually Romanised in this thesis using the Wade-Giles system of rendering Chinese names in English, the most common form used throughout the Far East in the period covered. Moreover many of the sources referred to use the Wade-Giles system. It remains common in Hong Kong. As most of this thesis deals with events and people in Hong Kong (to use the form ‘Xiang gang’ would be absurd), it is appropriate to use terms within that context. By the late twentieth century, the Wade-Giles system was becoming obsolete, being replaced by the Pinyin system. An attempt has been made to provide a concordance indicating the Wade-Giles, Pinyin and Chinese forms. This may be found in Appendix 17, A Glossary of Chinese names.

2 J.M. Braga has identified this island as Lintin, a conclusion accepted by Charles Boxer. J.M. Braga, *China landfall, 1513: Jorge Álvares’ voyage to China*; J.M. Braga, *Tamão dos pioneiros Portugueses*, passim.

Álvares was not permitted to proceed up-river to Canton, but first impressions were so favourable, and the trade casually engaged in so profitable, that others soon followed. In 1517 an embassy was despatched to the Imperial Court at Peking, led by Tomé Pires (ca. 1465–unknown, but after 1524), a scholar whose *Suma Oriental* was an important reference work describing the Portuguese eastern discoveries. He seemed to be the ideal man for what proved to be an impossible task. After lengthy delays, it transpired that the communication to the Emperor which came, not from the King of Portugal, but his underling, the Viceroy at Goa, was not in the form of abject submission deemed proper for barbarian rulers. To make matters worse, another Portuguese fleet arrived off Canton, led by Simão de Andrade, who behaved in a manner offensive to the Chinese, described by them as an ‘outrageous and high-handed way’. This destroyed the position of Pires and his entourage, who were then seen as dangerous spies and thrown into prison in Canton, where some were executed, while the rest died miserably some years later. The Portuguese had discovered, as did other Europeans over the next three centuries, that dealing with the Chinese authorities was difficult, unpredictable, and could be deadly.

This disaster halted Portuguese trade with China for a generation. Cautiously, others ventured back. In 1542, Fernão Mendes Pinto (ca. 1509–1583) and a companion trying to reach China were driven far north by a storm and accidentally discovered Japan, where their arquebuses created a sensation, and were immediately copied by Japanese armourers.

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4 Duarte Barbosa, writing about 1515 averred that pepper could be sent from Malacca to China at a profit of 300%. L. Dames (ed.), *Book of Duarte Barbosa*, vol. 2, p. 215.
5 A. Cortesão (trans.), *The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires, an account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, written in Malacca and India in 1512-1515*.
7 J.E. Wills, ‘Relations with Maritime Europe, 1514–1662’, in *Cambridge History of China: Volume 8, The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644, Part 2*, pp. 333–375; C.R. Boxer, *South China in the Sixteenth Century*, p. xxi. Using Portuguese sources, Ljungstedt reported in 1832 that Andrade had built a fort on the island of Tamão near Canton, and ‘ended by arrogating to himself the prerogative of a sovereign; he hazarded to condemn a sailor to death, and had the man executed’ A. Ljungstedt, *Contribution to an historical sketch of the Portuguese settlements in China, of the Portuguese envoys and ambassadors to China, of the Roman Catholic Mission in China, and of the Papal legates to China*, quoted in *Chinese Repository*, vol. 1, no. 10, February 1833, p. 400.
It was the beginning of a vastly profitable trade that lasted for almost a century, based on the fact that trade between China and Japan had been forbidden by the Japanese two centuries earlier. Now the Portuguese found that they could satisfy an insatiable Japanese demand for Chinese silk, paid for in silver, the price of which
was far higher in China than in Japan. Until the end of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese enjoyed a monopoly of this lucrative bonanza. Added to this was the already profitable trade with Europe which had brought them to India and the Far East in the first place. All that was needed was a suitable accommodation with the Chinese and a secure base for a permanent trading operation.

Map 3 – Macao in the mid-seventeenth century


The original map, above, is one of several bound with Faria e Sousa’s massive three volume study.

This map in J.M. Braga’s set of Asia Portuguesa is poorly inked (all the other maps are better), and ought to have been rejected either by the seventeenth century master printer or by the bookbinder.

J.M. Braga had the map redrawn and coloured, probably by Vicente Pacia.

The city walls and several fortifications are emphasised. These were hurried to completion after the Dutch attack in 1622 was repulsed. The city’s walls and fortifications are the main feature of this depiction. In the foreground is the Inner Harbour, with Ilha Verde (Green Island) on the left.

Orientation is north to left.

During the next twenty years this evolved by slow degrees. Several temporary trading sites were selected and then abandoned before a small rocky promontory to the west of the Pearl River estuary became the preferred trading station in the 1550s. This was Macau, populated by a few fishermen. Its only distinction was the location there of a temple to the goddess Mazu, known to the Portuguese as A Má. The name Macau is thought to be derived from the A-Ma Temple, simplified as Macau or Macao, before acquiring in 1586 the title Cidade do Santo Nome de Deos de Amacao
na China, the City of the Holy Name of God of Macau in China. By then Macau was seen by the Jesuits, still in the first flush of religious zeal soon after their foundation by Ignatius Loyola, as a springboard from which the whole of China would be thrown open to the Gospel. If the Jesuit mission was to bring fire upon the earth, God’s fire, then in Macau was to be the spark from which that fire would be kindled in China.

This mission was greatly strengthened by the right granted to the Kings of Portugal by a series of papal bulls between 1456 and 1514 to exercise their Padroado, patronage, over all Catholic missions in Africa and the Far East. This Jus Patronatus was both a right and a duty, and for several centuries, the monarchs of Portugal exercised it diligently, though it gradually declined until by the beginning of the nineteenth century the only remnant of this once mighty Padroado was in the Portuguese territories dotted around the African coast, in India and in Macau.

Within a short time, permanent houses were built in Macau, of a standard surpassing that of most people’s expectations in their homeland, Portugal. They were accompanied by numerous churches, a seminary and a convent. This was Macau’s golden age, which lasted for another two generations. Its obvious prosperity and the wealth of its people struck an English visitor, Peter Mundy, who commented on

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10 So styled in a charter granted by Duarte de Menezes, viceroy of Portuguese India. C.A. Montalto de Jesus, *Historic Macao*, p. 48. Montalto de Jesus added, ‘Macao was then the fulcrum of Christianity in the Far East’. p. 54. This important book will be quoted frequently. Its author and the tribulation he faced in publishing the second edition of his book, are discussed in Appendix 4.


12 M. Hugo-Brunt, ‘The Portuguese settlement at Macao’, *PLAN*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1963, pp. 120-128. Hugo-Brunt was a pioneer in examining the domestic architecture of Macau. C.A. Montalto de Jesus *Historic Macao*, p. 58 pointed out that the eleven churches in Macau provided for a European population of about 1,000. These were the Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady, generally termed Sé, St Lazarus (the oldest), the parish churches of St Anthony and St Lawrence, four churches attached to the missions of the Jesuits, Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinians, two attached to the Santa Casa de Misericôrdia and the Santa Clara Convent, and a chapel attached to the Jesuit seminary of Nossa Senhora de Amparo, where Chinese proselytes were trained. Besides all these was a small chapel attached to the Senate House. More churches were built in the early seventeenth century prior to the disruption of the Japan trade: the first was famous Church of the Mother of God, usually known as St Paul’s, in 1602, followed between 1622 and 1634 by Our Lady of Guia (Guidance), Our Lady of Bomparto (Good Hope), Our Lady of Penha de França, Our Lady of the Mount and in the large Convent of St Clare was built the church of the Conception of Our Lady. In the prolonged period of economic collapse that followed, no new church was built on the peninsula of Macau itself until 1929, three centuries later (M. Teixeira, ‘The Church in Macau’, in R.D. Cremer (ed.), *Macau: city of commerce and culture*, p. 42). The presence of all these churches and chapels, and the sound of their bells, dominated Macau.
Their faire large strong Riche and well furnished houses, Their wives and Children as Rich in Jewells and apparel, their Number off slaves.\textsuperscript{13}

To crown all was the opulent and superbly decorated Jesuit Collegiate Church of St Paul. In Europe the Counter-Reformation had stressed, in part, the power and majesty of the church. This policy led to the construction of magnificent ecclesiastical buildings throughout Catholic Europe. The same strategy applied in Macau. By the early seventeenth century, among the eleven churches in Macau were three magnificent early baroque churches, St Augustine’s, St Dominic’s and St Lawrence’s.\textsuperscript{14} In the 1840s a French visitor counted fourteen spires – none of them tall because of the frequency of typhoons.\textsuperscript{15} All were surpassed with the construction between 1602 and 1637 of the church of the Mother of God situated high upon an eminence above the town.\textsuperscript{16} Generally known as St Paul’s from the name of the college of which it was the collegiate church, it was intended to convey the magnificence of the Roman Catholic Church and to symbolise the superiority of Christian civilisation over that of China. If it was intended to foster evangelism by its size and splendour, it appears to have made no impact. It was for more than two centuries the grandest European building in the Far East, and convinced the Portuguese in Macau of their superiority in every possible way – spiritually, architecturally and technically.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{13} P. Mundy, \textit{The travels of Peter Mundy, in Europe and Asia, 1608-1667}, vol. 3, p. 267. The original spelling of each quotation in this chapter has been carefully retained. The wide variation between seventeenth century spelling and modern spelling will be apparent.


\textsuperscript{15} M. Yvan, \textit{Six Months among the Malays and a Year in China}, p. 295.

\textsuperscript{16} This remarkable building is mentioned by virtually all the journals of visitors to Macau from Peter Mundy in 1637 until Elijah Bridgman’s account of its destruction by fire on 26 January 1835 (\textit{Chinese Repository}, vol. 3, no. 10, February 1835, pp. 485-486). It was designed by the Italian Jesuit Carlo Spinola during a sojourn in Macau from 1600 to 1602 (when the foundation stone was laid) en route to Japan, where he was martyred in 1622 (C. Guillén Nuñez, \textit{Macao’s Church of Saint Paul: A Glimmer of the Baroque in China}, pp. 92-93, 101). A thorough account of its significance is given by C.A. Montalto de Jesus, \textit{Historic Macao}, pp. 59-61.

\textsuperscript{17} The church of Bom Jesus in Goa, built in 1585, and which survived at least in part the ruination of most of Goa in the next three centuries, was perhaps equally magnificent, especially the bejewelled tomb of St Francis Xavier. St Paul’s in Macau did not have a shrine to give its interior the same degree of magnificence. J.N. da Fonseca, \textit{An historical and archaeological sketch of the city of Goa, preceded by a short statistical account of the territory of Goa}, pp. 279-280, illustration facing p. 278.
It was a statement of power and presence. To the Chinese, it can only have been a triumphalist statement of oppressive foreign occupation. However, Carlos Montalto de Jesus, the first Macanese historian to write in English, preferred to conclude that ‘the impressive symbology ... is typical of the masterly tact with which the Jesuits knew how to impress pagan minds and arouse a curiosity which generally resulted in conversion’.\(^\text{18}\) There is little evidence to support this. His case was weakened when he asserted that the Chinese authorities were apprehensive that the vast facade, built in 1637 and some twenty metres in height, twice as high as the church behind it, was really a fort. Whatever grand structures the Portuguese might build, they chose to ignore the political realities of Macau’s precarious existence.

Elsewhere in the Portuguese empire, there was no question about who was in control. Portuguese law and military power, such as it was, was unchallenged. It was important to Macau that the same situation obtained there as it did in Goa. However,

\(^{18}\) C.A. Montalto de Jesus, op. cit., p. 60.
the desire and the reality were far apart. The leading European scholar of the western incursions into the Far East, Charles Boxer, refused to take sides: ‘much has been written on the origins of the settlement at Macao itself, but nothing definite has been established’. However, the eminent French scholar and bibliographer of Western books on China, Henri Cordier, had no hesitation. Reviewing Sonnerat’s flimsy evidence for a Chinese cession of ‘a dry and arid little island’ as a reward for the wiping out of brigands who infested the hinterland of Canton, Cordier went on to point out that from 1582, tribute of 500 taels of silver per year had been paid to the Chinese authorities. Besides this, customs duties and anchorage fees were levied. He concluded:

It cannot be believed at all that the Chinese had abandoned all rights to Macao; in reality, the Portuguese there were the vassals of the Chinese.

J.M. Braga observed ruefully: ‘it must be admitted that no Chinese documents bearing on the subject of the foundation of Macao have been found in recent times’. Boxer pointed out that the Senate as early as 1621, during Macau’s wealthiest era, had admitted that ‘this land in which we live is not ours but belongs to the emperor of China’.

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19 C.R. Boxer, *South China in the Sixteenth Century*, p. xxxv, a remark repeated in his *Portuguese society in the tropics*, p. 42.
20 H. Cordier, *L’Arrivée des Portugais en Chine*, p. 48. B.V. Pires, ‘Origins and early history of Macau’ in R.D. Cremer (ed.), *Macau: city of commerce and culture*, p. 10, gives the date 1578, adding that the ‘taxes’ were doubled in 1735 to 1,000 taels. The tael was a Chinese measure of silver by weight, which in Canton was 37.5 gm.
22 J.M. Braga, *The Western Pioneers and their Discovery of Macao*, p. 112. Braga reprinted the Jesuit account, originally published in 1719, of a Portuguese expedition which around 1556 wiped out a group of pirates who had crippled the trade of Canton. His Appendix E, pp. 211-214, quoting Fr António Franco, *Imagem da Virtude em o noviciado da Companhia de Jesus no Real Collegio de Jesus de Coimbra*, 1719, vol. II, pp. 402-404. This account, which first appeared more than 160 years after the foundation of Macau, has continued to be repeated ever since. A recent iteration is in an essay on the history of Macau by the distinguished scholar B.V. Pires, ‘Origins and early history of Macau’ in R.D. Cremer (ed.), *Macau: city of commerce and culture*, p. 10. Pires admitted that ‘there are no records’, but went on, ‘it is widely believed that the successful battles that the Portuguese fought against the pirates impressed the Chinese authorities.’
23 C.R. Boxer, *Portuguese society in the tropics*, p. 53. Yet, as time went by, the Portuguese assertion grew more strident. In 1831 Emanuel de Castro, the Captain-General in Goa told Lord William Bentinck, the Governor-General of British India, that ‘the small Peninsula of Macao has not for ages been nor now is, a dominion of the Empire of China, but is a Territory and Colony belonging to the Crown of Portugal for three hundred years. It was not obtained as a favour or concession from the Emperor of China to that Crown, but acquired by right of conquest which the Portuguese arms then achieved.’ (Emanuel de Castro to Bentinck, H.B. Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company trading to China*, 1635-1834, vol. 4, p. 265).
The Portuguese assertion of sovereignty was vigorously defended at the beginning of the twentieth century by Montalto de Jesus. A later writer, J.M. Braga, carefully identified many of the sources used by Montalto de Jesus; both assert the sovereignty of Portugal over Macau from the beginning, a notion dismissed by others.24 Much of Montalto de Jesus’s discourse is devoted to an attack on the position held by Anders Ljungstedt, a Swedish merchant, who began to take an interest in the history of Macau about 1808. He eventually published a series of essays in the *Canton Miscellany* in 1831, and then revised them in two small books, finally producing the first history of Macau in English, *An historical sketch of the Portuguese settlements in China*.25 Ljungstedt consistently maintained that the occupation of Macau, whenever it occurred, was a local arrangement between merchants and mandarins that suited both parties.26 Neither the Imperial government in Peking nor the Portuguese vice-regal government in Goa knew of the existence of Macau for several years. As seen through Portuguese eyes, the Imperial reaction was benign:

They [the Portuguese] have travelled on the oceans myriads of miles in a marvellous way and have come, big and small, to place themselves under the regenerating influence of the glorious sun of the Celestial Empire.27

The Portuguese assertion, stridently maintained for so long, is hard to sustain, given that only forty years before the Portuguese settlement of Macau commenced, a Portuguese embassy had been first turned away and then exterminated by the

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24 C.A. Montalto de Jesus, *Historic Macao*, pp. 22-37; J.M. Braga, *The Western Pioneers and their Discovery of Macao*, passim. M. Hugo-Brunt provided a useful summary of the discussion in ‘The Portuguese settlement at Macao’, in *PLAN*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1963, p. 121. Great store is set by Portuguese apologists on the description by the old China hand Sir George Staunton of granite columns he saw in the Macau Senate House, ‘with Chinese characters cut into them signifying a solemn cession of the place from the Emperor of China’ (G. Staunton and G. Macartney, *An Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China*, London, 1797, vol. 2, p. 588). The same pillars were mentioned in 1845 by M. Yvan, *Six Months among the Malays and a Year in China*, p. 296. A. Ljungstedt quoted Staunton, adding that ‘nothing like [these characters] is seen’ (A. Ljungstedt, ‘Actual state of Macao’, *Canton Miscellany*, no. 5, 1831, p. 369). This suggests that the columns referred to by Staunton may have disappeared by 1831. Even if they remained in 1831, these columns did not survive the destruction by fire and subsequent rebuilding of the *Leal Senado* in 1875, nor were they transcribed and recorded in the Senate’s records. The inscriptions on these columns, if they did in fact refer to the cession of Macau, simply posited a unilateral claim, which Staunton noted, but did not endorse, adding, ‘this solid monument is, however, an insufficient guard [for Macau] against the encroachments of its Chinese neighbours, who treat the Portuguese very cavalierly (G. Staunton and G. Macartney, *An authentic account of an embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China*, vol. 2, p. 588).

25 A. Ljungstedt’s work is carefully discussed in Appendix 3.

26 As quoted, unfortunately without citation, by R.E. Jobez in ‘Macao at the end of the XVIIIth century’ an address to the Portuguese Institute of Hong Kong, *Boletim, Instituto Português de Hongkong*, July 1948, p. 233.
Imperial government. It did not in any way fit into the Chinese scheme of things, succinctly set out two centuries later in the response of the Qianlong Emperor to King George III following the rejection (but not the annihilation) of the Macartney embassy in 1793: ‘tribute missions from the dependencies are provided for by the Department for Tributary States’.28

The idea of alienation of even the smallest part of its territory could never have been contemplated by the Imperial Court. The Qianlong decree, dismissing Macartney’s request for British occupation of a small island near Chusan, made this abundantly clear.

Every inch of the territory of our Empire is marked on the map and the strictest vigilance is exercised over it all: even tiny islets and far-reaching sandbanks are clearly defined as part of the provinces to which they belong ... England is not the only barbarian land which wishes to establish relations with our civilization and trade with our Empire: supposing that other nations were all to imitate your evil example and beseech me to present them each and all with a site for trading purposes, how could I possibly comply? This is also a flagrant infringement of the usage of my Empire and cannot possibly be entertained.29

Macartney, like others before him, came to realise that this was a government like no other. It regarded all foreigners as barbarians whose dealings with it could only be overt manifestations of total submission, of which the ‘kow tow’ was the most demeaning, and utterly unacceptable to him and to all other western emissaries. The mutual incomprehension of Chinese and foreigners did not essentially change for several centuries. As late as the Treaty of Tientsin in 1858, the British forced the Chinese to cease using the term ‘barbarian’. Likewise the kow tow was ended. It was agreed that the British ambassador ‘shall not be called upon to perform any ceremony derogatory to him’.30

It is therefore clear that the Portuguese attempt to invent a diplomatic arrangement between the Emperor of China and a group of merchant adventurers acting without

28 ‘The Ch’ien Lung Emperor, a Decree’, in F. Schurmann and O. Schell (eds), China Readings – 1, Imperial China, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, p. 101.
29 Ibid., p. 105.
credentials or authorisation is absurd. The reality is that the Portuguese occupation of Macau was likely to have been a developing relationship between people on the spot. A *modus vivendi* slowly emerged that was never codified in any way. It was explained by Austin Coates, who understood Macau well. ‘The Chinese conceded nothing of importance. In their view, the peninsula was a fractional part of their country in which non-tribute-paying foreigners, on payment of the normal taxes, were allowed to settle.’

![Map 4 – Pearl River Estuary](image)

*Portion of Kwangtung province, South China, showing Macau, Hong Kong, Canton and the estuaries of the Chu-Kiang and Si-Kiang Rivers, 1922. nla.map-brsc71-2.*

One of a series of maps promoting Macau as an international port.

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Coates pointed out that in the initial negotiations between the Portuguese merchants and the local officials, gifts would have been expected, and the Portuguese would have recognised this as a polite requirement. Some would have taken the form of European novelties, some were in cash. Soon the officials discovered that this new settlement had become fabulously wealthy. It then became easy for them to ‘provoke splendid gifts to themselves’ – Coates avoided using the word ‘bribes’ or the evocative term ‘squeeze’, used throughout the Far East. In this he followed the view expressed by Anders Ljungstedt in 1831:

Conscious of their weakness, and of their inability to maintain themselves by force of arms, the settlers determined to continue the old policy. By submission and gifts, petty Mandarins were induced to wink at an increasing population, at the installation of a government, and at the influx of priests, and their exertions to draw infidels over to Christianity. The higher Mandarins had paid, for twenty-five years, but a slender attention to what was going on at Macao.

Over time, gifts became regularised as ground rent, insisted upon by the Chinese authorities and paid regularly until 1847, when the Imperial government was in a far weaker position following its defeat by the British in the first Opium War.

The Portuguese assertion of sovereignty has been dwelt upon at some length because it came to be seen by the British in Macau in the period immediately before their occupation of Hong Kong as a cardinal example of the purblind irrationality of Portuguese attitudes, far removed from the reality of the awkward situation in which all Europeans found themselves. It was a leading cause of their growing contempt for the Portuguese. This attitude continued when all the British, accompanied by some enterprising Portuguese, transferred to Hong Kong in the early 1840s. Although the Portuguese had survived in Macau in a decidedly hostile political environment for over 250 years, the British gave them no credit for their tenacity.

The precarious balance that kept Macau under Portuguese occupation for 450 years from the mid-sixteenth century until the end of the twentieth century is a study in the

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33 Ibid., p. 30. He used the phrase ‘provoke splendid gifts to themselves’ several times in describing dealings between the Portuguese and the Chinese. However, he did employ the term ‘squeeze’ in discussing Chinese dealings with the British, in his Macao and the British, p. 44.
34 A. Ljungstedt, An historical sketch of the Portuguese settlements in China, p. 21, repeating in 1835 an assertion he had initially made in Canton Miscellany, no. 4, 1831, p. 227.
35 C.A. Montalto de Jesus, Historic Macao, p. 323. Governor Ferreira do Amaral refused to pay ground rent in 1847. The crisis that followed this step is discussed in Chapter Three.
art of compromise. Naturally its long history is seen in different ways, and the Chinese, Portuguese and British had completely different views about how the Portuguese came to be there, and also about how they remained there. The Chinese view continued to be that their presence was tolerated as long as these foreigners were of good behaviour. The Chinese world view unswervingly asserted the supremacy of the Middle Kingdom. All barbarians were expected to recognise this central fact. The official conclusion to many communications, ‘tremble and obey’, was no mere form of words. It was a manner of address used by all levels of Chinese administration to succeeding European monarchs, governors and plenipotentiaries. They must never forget that they were lesser mortals.

Its constant repetition greatly irritated them. In 1834, the Governor-General of Liangguang (Guangdong and Guangxi provinces), Lu Kun (1772-1835), confronted the rapidly growing menace of the British traders. He concluded one of his thunderings to the newly appointed Superintendent of Trade, Lord Napier (1786-1834), ‘tremble hereat, intensely, intensely tremble.’ In vain did Lord Napier try to turn it back on him: ‘therefore tremble, Governor Loo, intensely tremble!’

The persistent Portuguese view was that their possession of Macau, like that of all their overseas territories, was sovereign. They were there by right, not on sufferance. There was no discussion of this assumption, because the Chinese Empire lacked the administrative diplomatic framework for such a discussion to take place. The Tsungli Yamen the Chinese foreign office, was not established until 1861 as a result of pressure from the Western Powers.

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36 The Qianlong decree already cited is one example. Another, from a local official, is the communication from Lin Zexu (1785-1850) to Queen Victoria in 1839 concerning the banning of the opium trade. ‘Our Celestial Dynasty rules over and supervises the myriad states ... the legal code of the Celestial Court must be absolutely obeyed with awe’. S. Teng and J. Fairbank, *China’s Response to the West, a documentary survey, 1839-1923*, p. 27.

37 The Qianlong Emperor to King George III: ‘Do not say that you were not warned in due time! Tremblingly obey and show no negligence! A special mandate [i.e. command].’, E. Backhouse and J. O. P. Bland, *Annals & memoirs of the court of Peking, from the 16th to the 20th century*, p. 331.


39 *Chinese Repository*, vol. 3, no. 4, August 1834, p. 190.

40 *Chinese Repository*, vol. 3, no. 5, October 1834, p. 286. Amazingly, Napier concluded his threatening letter to Lu Kun with the polite salutation always used in English official letters at that time, even from superiors to their subordinates: ‘I beg to remain your very obedient servant, Napier’. We cannot know whether the translator quietly omitted it.
It suited the Portuguese world view for their assumption of sovereignty to remain unquestioned by themselves or anyone else. In the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that presence had been established in more than forty fortifications dotted around the shores of Africa, the Persian Gulf and India. Besides being strong points designed to protect commerce, some were intended to be springboards for an energetic evangelistic thrust, initially led by the Jesuits. This was never intended in places like Hormuz in the Persian Gulf, in partibus infidelium. For several centuries Portugal had been locked in deadly military conflict with Islam and evangelism was not contemplated. The African territories became objects of commercial exploitation rather than settlement. However, India and possessions further east presented greater opportunities. The native people here were seen as more civilised than the black Africans, who were enslaved, whereas Indians and Chinese never were. Goa, occupied in 1510, was created an archbishopric as early as 1557. Jesuit missionaries were soon active further east in Malacca and Japan. Ignatius Loyola’s evangelistic zeal firmly embraced Christ’s last command, ‘go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel, and lo, I am with you always, even to the uttermost part of the Earth’. In the second half of the sixteenth century that meant China and Japan. When the Portuguese occupied Macau in 1557 it was soon seen as the principal base for trade and missionary activity in both China and Japan. Echoing the missionary journeys of St Paul, the distinguished Italian Jesuit, Father Alessandro Valignano, established St Paul’s College in 1565, soon after the Portuguese occupation of Macau. It was intended to be the forerunner of a great intellectual thrust of Christian civilisation into the Far East. For the next half century Macau was a centre of commercial and religious activity, all the more splendid when seen from a later and vastly less advantageous perspective.

41 J.N. da Fonseca, An historical and archaeologica sketch of the city of Goa, preceded by a short statistical account of the territory of Goa, p. 66.
42 Tang Kaijian, who did not cite his sources, claimed that by 1577 it had 150 students, and by 1584, 200 students. ‘An investigation of the construction of the city of Macao during the Ming dynasty’, in Review of Culture, no. 36/37, 2nd series, July/December 1998, p. 91. The energetic and far-sighted Fr Valignano, the distinguished priest who pioneered this important work, was Visitor of the Society of Jesus in Asia Extrema, the Far East. He brought a printing press to Macau, where two, perhaps three books were printed between 1588 and 1590. He then took the press to Japan, where perhaps fifty-four books were printed up to 1614. J.M. Braga, The beginnings of printing at Macao, , Studia, (Lisbon), no. 12, July 1963; M. Teixeira, ‘The IVth centenary of printing in Macau’, in Review of Culture, no. 6, July/September 1988, pp. 2-10.
Few grand visions are ever matched by comparable attainment. The early Jesuit successes in both China and Japan gave way to disappointment in China and catastrophe in Japan.\(^{43}\) Macau was not to be the hoped-for base for trade and evangelism. From 1638, when the last Portuguese galleots left Nagasaki, Macau experienced a long period of economic decline. From 1638, trade with Manila was also halted when Spanish galleons arriving at Acapulco were so heavily taxed as to make the trade across the Pacific unprofitable.\(^ {44}\) Trade with China was also unpredictable at best.

\(^{43}\) In China, Jesuit missionaries exercised considerable influence over the late Ming emperors, but this came to an end during the Qing dynasty. In Japan the Jesuit missionaries achieved astonishing results until the late sixteenth century, when, first under the Sengoku shogun Hideyoshi, (1537-1598) then the first three Tokugawa shoguns, Ieyasu (1543-1616), Hidetada (1579-1632) and Iemitsu (1604-1651), the Portuguese were ejected, missionaries and traders alike, between 1616 and 1638. Japanese Christians were wiped out in a most cruel persecution concluding with the horrifying Shimabara massacre in 1638. The final and irrevocable stage of the Portuguese exclusion was the beheading of 61 members of an embassy sent in 1640 in an attempt to restore relations.

As early as 1573 a barrier wall was erected by the Chinese authorities across the narrowest point of the isthmus joining Macau to the mainland. The Portuguese were seldom allowed beyond it. Until then, the boundary between the two jurisdictions had not been demarcated, much less agreed upon. It remained a contentious issue right up to the 1920s, an indication that no territory had been sequestered from the Chinese Empire. Its purpose was clear: this controlled the food supply, for little food was grown in the small area of flat land south of the wall. A single gate was opened periodically to enable the Macanese to purchase provisions at a fair in a small fenced area beyond the barrier. At its conclusion, the gate was closed and sealed with the seal of the mandarin of the Heungshan district, the local authority. Beside the gate was a pointed inscription: ‘Dread our greatness; respect our virtue’.

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45 The Chinese contention remained that the boundary was the city wall, built by the Portuguese in the 1620s, not the barrier wall built by the Chinese in 1573 to regulate commerce. However, a Portuguese writer insisted as late as 1988 that the construction of the wall proved that ‘China accepted that Macau was independent from it’. Isau Santos, then Director of the Arquivo Histórico in Macau, ‘Sino-Portuguese relations via Macau in the 16th and 17th centuries’, in Review of Culture, no. 7/8, October 1988/March 1989, p. 9.
At first the fair was held every five days, then, without notice, only fortnightly. Chinese troops guarded the gate insolently. Describing them, Macau’s historian could not conceal the rage and bitterness that comes of impotence: ‘a disgraceful set of mean, spiritless and badly-armed rogues, who harassed the carriers of provisions for the fair’. The better-off Macanese laid in ample supplies, but the poor starved. In consequence, houses in Macau were built with ample storage for supplies that would keep. Usually the ground floor was a series of store rooms, while the family lived above.

Over time, the screws tightened further. The Heungshan magistrate erected an administrative compound in an elevated position not far away, the more readily to supervise the proceedings of Macau. There was no ignoring it; it was conspicuously painted white, and was therefore termed by the Portuguese the ‘Casa Branca’, the ‘White House’. For the next two centuries, its control was inescapable, but was almost always negotiable, except in criminal matters. Especially was this flexibility true when it came to permits for building, in which the Casa Branca mandarin insisted on compliance, with otiose prescriptions, usually relaxed when sufficient silver was produced. Some exactions were not negotiable: the payment of anchorage dues for Portuguese ships in the Inner Harbour was an example. To ensure that these were paid, a Chinese Customs House was built in 1688 in sight of the harbour, and within the city of Macau itself. It did no good to rail against the ground rent as a ‘sop for Cerberus’ and to wring one’s hands at the ‘accursed yoke of mandarindom’. Moreover, Chinese criminal jurisdiction was exercised over the Chinese residents of Macau as though the Portuguese presence did not exist. Despite all this, the Portuguese clung tenaciously to Macau, with a resilience and a capacity for survival never displayed by later European powers in the Far East.

The growth of Chinese interference coincided with the collapse of Macau as a wealthy trading port; their authority was asserted most effectively at the time of

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46 C.A. Montalto de Jesus, Historia Macao, p. 41.
48 It was there by 1688. Ljungstedt, An historical sketch of the Portuguese settlements in China, p. 91. Montalto de Jesus could not bring himself to name the place.
50 C.A. Montalto de Jesus, Historic Macao, p. 125.
Macau’s greatest weakness. Well before the disastrous end to the fabulous Japan trade, Portuguese strength had begun to fade away.\textsuperscript{51} Portugal lacked the population or the shipbuilding capability to sustain an empire of the size so rapidly acquired a century earlier, with more than forty forts dotted along the African and Indian coasts. The ships that had ruled the oceans in the sixteenth century, sweeping Arab dhows and Chinese junks before them, were unsuited to surviving the typhoons that beset Far Eastern waters.\textsuperscript{52} At the beginning of the seventeenth century, British and Dutch merchants, both sanctioned by respective royal warrants, began to challenge them with ships better suited to these dangerous seas. Both had been at war with Spain since the 1580s, and the hapless Portuguese fell prey to their marauding when the Portuguese crown lapsed to Spanish control between 1580 and 1640. In Macau this was never recognised, the Portuguese there seeing the Spanish in Manila as their rivals in commercial and religious terms as well as in patriotic allegiance.

Thenceforth, the Portuguese Jesuits in Macau found themselves in conflict, not co-operation, with the Spanish Franciscans and Dominicans from Manila in missionary activity throughout the Far East. It blighted the efforts of both, and with the collapse of trade and wealth, both missions went into a steep decline. To make matters worse, trade with Canton was also interdicted in 1631 after a protracted dispute about the access of Portuguese ships. Chinese concern about the building of fortifications in Macau following a Dutch attack in 1622 added to the tense situation. A memorial to the Emperor from the Viceroy at Canton asserted that the Portuguese in Macau were ‘a kingdom with great and many forts and a great and insolent population ... it would be proper to debar them from the commerce at Canton’.\textsuperscript{53}

There remained Goa, the important Portuguese base in India, to whose viceroy Macau was subject until 1844. Even this link was severed when the Dutch seized Malacca in 1641, and with better ships, dominated the narrow Straits of Malacca, cutting Macau off from its parent. The profitable Manila trade was also severed the

\textsuperscript{51} The causes for its decline were brilliantly analysed by C.R. Boxer, \textit{The Portuguese Seaborne Empire}, pp. 130-151.
\textsuperscript{52} C.R. Boxer detailed several sorrowful catastrophes in two volumes in the Hakluyt Society’s Second Series: \textit{The Tragic History of the Sea, 1589-1622} and \textit{Further Selections from the Tragic History of the Sea}.
\textsuperscript{53} A. Ljungstedt, \textit{An historical sketch of the Portuguese settlements in China}, p. 67; C.A. Montalto de Jesus, \textit{Historic Macao}, p. 115.
same year, following Portugal’s successful rebellion against Spain in 1640. In little more than a decade, Macau had lost all its trading partners: Japan, China, Manila and Goa. It faced utter disaster. To make matters even worse, a plague broke out, and at Macau alone 7,000 people died, mostly Chinese.  

Until commerce with Manila and Canton began slowly to recover, a process that took many years, there remained only the sandalwood trade with Timor. It was small by comparison with what had been lost, but it was vitally important for the next two centuries until the sandalwood was exhausted. No-one had bothered to replant the forests.

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54 F. C. Danvers, The Portuguese in India, vol. II, p. 292. Danvers added ‘this effectually put an end to commerce there for a time’.
55 C.R. Boxer, Fidalgos in the Far East, p. 187-198. However, there were often only one or two ships each year.
There was but one straw to grasp at: the supremacy of the Portuguese Crown. Overshadowed by the Spanish in nearby Manila, the Portuguese in Macau had clung doggedly to their separate identity after Portugal came under Spanish dominion in 1580. Whether from wisdom or indifference, Spanish kings left the remote, obstinate Portuguese outpost largely to its own devices. The Macau Senate had always asserted its supremacy. Its charter was bestowed in 1586 by the viceroy of India, who at the same time advised against the appointment of a governor for Macau.\footnote{The charter was confirmed by King João V in 1712. C.A. Montalto de Jesus, Historic Macao, pp. 48, 161-162.}

This charter was confirmed by the royal court in 1595.\footnote{C.A. Montalto de Jesus, Historic Macao, p. 54.} When a governor was eventually appointed in 1623, the Chinese refused to deal with him, and his authority in consequence was limited to command of the various forts.\footnote{C.R. Boxer, The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, p. 288; The Great Ship from Amacon, p. 11.}

On the restoration of the Portuguese throne in 1640, the Senate contrived to send the new king a gift of two hundred bronze guns, cast at Macau, and ‘a great donation of ready money’, from the little that was left following the collapse of trade.\footnote{A. Ljungstedt, ‘Portuguese settlements in China: Independent of China’, Canton Miscellany, no. 4, 1831, p. 293, quoting the seventeenth century writer Manuel de Faria e Sousa, Asia Portuguesa [no page number given]. However, Ljungstedt doubted that such a gift was ever received in Lisbon, noting that no reference to it was made there.}

King João IV, told of the tenacity of this tiny place at the remotest end of the earth, is said to have remarked wonderingly, ‘\textit{não ha outra mais leal}’ – ‘there is no other more loyal’. Shortly before his death in 1654, it was added to the city’s motto, and the Macau Council proudly bore the title \textit{Leal Senado}, Loyal Senate, until 1999. It was a gesture that in reality meant little; it was ignored by Macau’s earliest historian, Ljungstedt. On the other hand, Montalto de Jesus made much of it, though he at once went on to comment on Macau’s defenceless condition.\footnote{C.A. Montalto de Jesus, Historic Macao, pp. 107-108.}

For the next century, Macau was poverty-stricken, with a declining population, and left with little but a magnificent past upon which to dwell. In 1563, less than a decade after its foundation, Macau’s Portuguese population was about 900. There
were also up to 5,000 slaves. In the early seventeenth century, the Jesuit, Fr Álvaro de Semedo (1585 or 1586-1658), who had reached Macau in 1610, returning there in 1621, gave a brief sketch.

The City is not great. In it are about 900 or 1000 Portuguesse, who are all rich, and live very splendidly: there are many Chines Christians, who are cloathed, and live after the Portuguesse fashion, there are also Chineses who are Gentiles, and are cloathed, and live after the fashion of their own Countrie: all the Artizans of the City consist of this last sort, as also the Shop-keepers and Retailers &c. and are in all about 5 or 6000.

Ljungstedt averred, quoting an official source, that the population at the end of the seventeenth century was 19,500; by 1821 it had declined to no more than 4,600. While it is apparent that the former figure included Chinese, the latter figure, confirmed by an estimate made in 1830, included 1202 white men, 2149 white women and 1129 slaves. Black African slaves had been a substantial feature of Portuguese colonies in Asia since their first settlement.

The deterioration was widespread. Braz de Castro, appointed governor and captain-general in 1648, declined the appointment on the grounds that the previous governor, Diogo Coutinho Doçem, had been murdered. The story was also put about that in 1644 the then governor, the rapacious scoundrel Sebastião Lobo da Silveira had also been murdered by a mob in Macau. The Spanish Dominican friar, Domingo Navarrete (c. 1610-1689), wrote in *Tratatos Historicos* (Lisbon, 1672) that ‘it would take up much time and paper to write but a small Epitome of the Broils, Uproars, Quarrels and Extravagancies there have been at Macao.’ The worst year was 1662, when an anti-Qing uprising in Guangdong (Kwangtung) province led to an order that the coastline be evacuated. The Chinese population of Macau fled in a body, and the

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61 Ibid., pp. 51, 61. The number of slaves was estimated by António Bocarro in his *Livro das Plantas de todas as Fortalezas e provoacoes do estado da India Oriental*, 1635, quoted by C.R. Boxer, *Macao Three Hundred Years Ago*, reprinted as *Seventeenth Century Macau*, p. 15.
63 A. Ljungstedt, *An historical sketch of the Portuguese settlements in China*, p. 22. His source was an unspecified representation to King João VI.
65 C.A. Montalto de Jesus, *Historic Macao*, p. 115. However, Boxer has shown that ‘there is not a vestige of truth’ in this story, Silveira having perished miserably on the coast of Natal, shipwrecked while en route to Lisbon to answer for his misdeeds, and then abandoned in the jungle by other survivors. *Fidalgos in the Far East*, pp. 150-154.
border was closed for three months. Many people starved to death, but Macau
survived by the skin of its teeth because it suited the mandarins to allow it to remain
as long as their palms were greased.67

Navarrete described with disgust a deputation from the Senate, now styling itself the
*Leal Senado*, to the *Casa Branca*:

> They go in a body with rods in their hands to the Mandarine who
> resides a League from hence and they petition him on their Knees.
The Mandarine in his Answer writes thus: ‘This barbarous and
> brutal People desires such and such a thing: let it be granted.’ Or
> ‘refus’d them.’ Thus they return in great state to their City and their
> Fidalgos or Noblemen with the Badg of the Knighthood of the
> Order of Christ hanging at their Breasts have gone upon these
> errands ... if their King knew of these things it is almost incredible
> that he should allow of them.68

This fractious, divided, impoverished and demoralised people, cut off from their
distant homeland, became fixated on past glories. There was a fascination with the
great age of expansion, now a distant memory, of what the Portuguese discoverers
had done two centuries before. However, that brief and magnificent achievement
was used to assert Portuguese superiority in all things, to blame the sixty years of
Spanish rule for all Portugal’s disasters. There was an insistence on the observance
of pettifogging regulations and restrictions, amounting, said Macau’s historian, to
‘suicidal egotism’.69 The monastery of the Dominican Order to which Navarrete
belonged had once numbered twenty-four. By 1670, there were only three,
maintained in poverty with great difficulty.70 Navarrete’s Spanish view, predictably
hostile to the Portuguese, was that the people of Manila were free. These people in
Macau were slaves (to the Chinese).71 They were trapped in a most unenviable
situation, wracked by penury, but with no way out. Even if ships could be found to

1697.
68 J.S. Cummins, *The travels and controversies of Friar Domingo Navarrete*, vol. 2, pp. 263-269. This
was indeed forbidden by King João V in 1712.  A. Ljungstedt, ‘Independent of China’, in *Canton
Miscellany*, no. 4, 1831, p. 286.
69 C.A. Montalto de Jesus, *Historic Macao*, p. 133. Some of these are discussed in detail, pp. 128-133.
70 That remained the case in 1833, when there were still only three Dominicans. Other Orders were
similarly affected. The Augustinians had four monks and the Capuchins three, who were in charge of
take them away, where would they go, and how would they evade the Dutch cordon in the Straits of Malacca?

Nevertheless, Macau was held to be, without question, Portuguese sovereign territory. This defied reality every time the barrier gate closed in their faces. It would only re-open on the bidding of the mandarin of the Casa Branca, whose constant admonition to the ‘barbarians of the Western kingdom’, as they were called, remained unchanged: ‘Dread our greatness; respect our virtue’.

If the Portuguese had found themselves unable to deal effectively with the Chinese, they were no better equipped to cope with the British. True, a determined Dutch attack had been beaten off heroically in 1622 in Macau’s palmy days, but in the two centuries after that, growing British commercial might became irresistible. Apart from Sir Francis Drake, a voyager but not a coloniser, Britain did not have a sixteenth century mariner of equal stature to Vasco da Gama, Albuquerque or Almeida each of whom left behind such an amazing legacy. Still less did Britain have conquistadores such as Cortes or Pizarro, who at much the same time destroyed two empires in the Americas. However, neither the Portuguese nor Spaniards had the sustained and growing entrepreneurial drive of the British, best exemplified in the English trading business, the Honourable East India Company, first chartered in 1600 or its counterpart the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie or VOC), which operated from 1602 until 1798. Fully absorbed in India during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the British made few attempts to reach the Far East and trade there until the mid-eighteenth century.

However, they were aware of the Portuguese presence in Macau from the late sixteenth century. An expedition of three ships set out to seek opportunities for trade in 1596, but vanished without a trace. The first British fleet to visit Macau arrived in 1637, immediately after the collapse of the Japan trade. Its commander, John Weddell (1583-1642), was greeted guardedly by the Portuguese and with hostility by the Chinese. He eventually left empty-handed after six months of trouble that ended disastrously. Moreover, he gave the lasting impression to the Chinese that these new

‘red barbarians’ (or ‘hong mao ren’ – ‘red-haired men’) were a great deal more troublesome than the ‘barbarians of the Western kingdom’, the Portuguese, who they had well under control. To emphasise that point, the Chinese Marine Superintendent imposed on Macau the largest fine in its history.73 However, one of Weddell’s officers, Peter Mundy, besides recounting details of the long and unhappy encounter, set out a detailed description of the newly completed St Paul’s Church, which appears to be the only good description ever made in English. That aside, it was a dreadful beginning to Anglo-Chinese relations.

The British then left China alone for quite some time, while in the late seventeenth century Jesuit influence grew in Peking, chiefly through the outstanding Jesuit astronomer, Fr Ferdinand Verbiest (1623-1688), who won the confidence of the Kangxi Emperor to such an extent that in 1685, Chinese ports were opened to foreign shipping. It should have been a golden opportunity for Macau to recover much of its former status, but the opportunity to take it up slipped through the fingers of the Macau Senate, which viewed the imperial edict with resentment and suspicion. They saw it as depriving them of their ancient monopoly rights.74 Such an attitude arose from the entrenched, embittered mind-set that has been outlined above.

It is likely that the emperor underestimated the importance that foreign trade would come to have, but it had an immediate effect, though in a small way to begin with. In 1719, realising that the ‘red barbarians’ might prove hard to control if left unchecked, the Kangxi emperor, towards the end of his reign, again proposed to centre the foreign trade of China at Macau.75 Incredibly, the imperial offer was once more rejected, seen as a ‘Trojan horse’, giving the Chinese a much larger presence in and control of Macau than they already had.76 Small-mindedly, the Senate baulked at the cost of having to provide fifty to sixty men to administer the proposal. Perhaps the rejection was not as blinkered as it might have seemed to Montalto de Jesus two centuries later. The Senate had seen too many instances of local mandarins squeezing every bit of pecuniary advantage that could possibly be gained from any

74 Ibid., p. 41.
75 C.A. Montalto de Jesus, *Historic Macao*, p. 129.
76 Ibid., p. 130.
profitable operations undertaken by the Portuguese. In 1732, thirteen years later, the Yongzheng emperor renewed the proposal. This time the Senate was enthusiastic.

Map 5 - A map of the City and Harbour of Macau, 1840
The five sketches inset at the top are of the seventeenth century fortifications, principally ‘Fort Monte’. The barrier wall is also shown.
W. Bramston (drawn). James Wyld (published)

Hong Kong Art Museum AH1964.0126
Reproduced in The Chater Legacy, p. 87.
However, the Bishop of Macau, João de Casal (1641-1735) who was acting governor, was not, as it would bring English traders, heretics, into the City of the Name of God. Although foreigners were not permitted to reside in Macau, several had slipped in as ‘lodgers’. Most were bachelors, and the effect on Macau’s night life was predictable; these men were not monks. Fearful for the morals of his flock, the bishop persuaded the Viceroy of India, Pedro Mascarenhas (in office 1732-1740), to over-ride the Senate’s wishes.77 In vain the Senate protested.

Though some may presume that the residence of foreigners might be the cause of mischief and danger to the city, those who have more experience are of opinion that their establishment in the town can never be prejudicial, on the contrary, greatly advantageous, for it is certain that no place can be rich and opulent but by means of commerce.78

For the third time, Macau’s chance of economic recovery was pushed aside, this time by the overriding authority of the Viceroy in Goa. Instead of calling at Macau, British ships went to the nearby island of Lintin in the Pearl River estuary to transfer their opium and to bargain with Chinese merchants.

Montalto de Jesus, unfailingly loyal to his Macanese heritage, nevertheless reserved for this huge error of judgment the most biting criticism in his entire book. Ironically, Montalto de Jesus would himself be the subject of a remarkable instance of the same small-mindedness against which he had written so powerfully. Some three hundred copies, the bulk of the second edition of his Historic Macao, were publicly burned in Macau on 11 March 1929, the author being condemned by the local press in Ibsenesque terms as ‘this enemy of the Portuguese people’.79 In 1902 he had written,

That the whole foreign trade of an empire should have been thus cast to the winds ... was a blunder due to the prevailing narrow-minded views; it was egregious, unparalleled in the history of commerce, and quite characteristic of the nation that spurned Columbus when he proffered the New World.80

77 A. Coates, Macao and the British, p. 47.
78 A. Ljungstedt, An historical sketch of the Portuguese settlements in China, p. 104.
79 Jornal de Macau, 28 November 1929. This incident is explained in Appendix 4.
80 C.A. Montalto de Jesus, Historic Macao, p. 130.
This was the sociology of ingrained poverty at work. The pattern that had developed since 1640 of lack of insight, parochialism, incessant bickering and failure to grasp opportunities had become too deeply ingrained to break. From grim necessity, the Macanese had developed a practice of cringing obsequiousness to the Chinese authorities at the *Casa Branca* and at the Chinese customs house within their very walls. It would be shown repeatedly in the decades ahead. Those who stood out from this pattern were few. Some will be mentioned in later chapters. Nevertheless, through all of this period, despite their limitations, the Portuguese community of Macau continued to show what Charles Boxer called ‘the stubborn endurance of this little colony’.  

Chapter 2

Ancient Ally

The whole of the British community finally quitted the friendly but ineffectual protection of their ancient ally, and proceeded, the greater part, to the harbour of Hong Kong.

J. Ouchterlony, 1844

British travellers made very little progress in Macau until the mid-eighteenth century. Commodore George Anson (1697-1762), calling at Macau in 1742 during his epic circumnavigation of the globe, was, like Weddell, greeted with hostility. The sight of the small European settlement at the farthest bounds of civilisation must have brought relief to Anson and his men, suffering severely from scurvy. However Anson’s visit placed the Portuguese authorities in Macau in a very difficult position. Even though it was storm-battered and needed urgent repair, his ship, the *Centurion*, a 60-gun ship of the line, was vastly superior to anything seen on the China coast, and demonstrated to the Chinese authorities the real weakness of the Portuguese position. There was a protracted wrangle about the payment of harbour dues to the Chinese customs office. Anson sought the assistance of the Portuguese governor, Manuel Pereira Coutinho, and at once saw what a precarious position he was in. The ship’s chaplain, Richard Walter, who wrote the official account of the voyage, summarised the situation succinctly.

It was formerly a very rich and populous city, and capable of defending itself against the power of the adjacent Chinese Governors: but at present it is much fallen from its antient splendour; for though it is inhabited by Portuguese, and hath a Governor nominated by the King of Portugal, yet it subsists merely by the sufferance of the Chinese, who can starve the place, and dispossess the Portuguese whenever they please: This obliges the Governor of Macao to behave with great circumspection, and

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82 H.B. Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company trading to China, 1635-1834*, vol. 1, pp. 5-6, 13.
carefully to avoid every circumstance that may give offence to the Chinese.\footnote{R. Walter, \textit{A Voyage round the World in the years MDCCXL, I, II, III, IV, by George Anson, Esq., Commander in Chief of a Squadron of His Majesty’s Ships, sent upon an Expedition to the South Seas}, p. 353.}

The Portuguese were thus in a cleft stick.\footnote{Austin Coates discussed Anson’s visit thoroughly, \textit{Macao and the British}, pp. 38-54.} Anson found that they put every obstacle in his way. It took months of fruitless negotiation before he was able to repair his ship, revictual and set out for home.\footnote{R. Walter, \textit{A Voyage round the World}, pp. 353-416.}

Anson had come from the Philippines, where he had captured the annual galleon bound for Acapulco, laden with treasure. It was the greatest booty ever taken from the Spanish, and on Anson’s return to England this immense treasure earned him flag rank and a peerage.

Yet to the Chinese mind, the capture of this great prize was piracy on a staggering scale. This barbarian, obviously of high rank, was a pirate, the infernal agent of a barbarian kingdom of pirates. The huge gulf between the Chinese and the English widened still further. The viceroy of Canton himself went on board the \textit{Centurion} and was amazed by the number and size of its guns. However, not until 1841 would Lin Zexu, trounced by British guns that had changed little in a century, recommend that China improve its artillery.\footnote{S. Teng and J. Fairbank, \textit{China’s Response to the West, a documentary survey, 1839-1923}, p. 28.} Although the visit ended happily enough with Anson’s men saving Canton from a fire that threatened its total destruction, the Chinese determined on a show of strength as Anson left.
As he sailed past the last fort on the Pearl River it bristled with soldiers. On the parapet there stalked about a warrior resplendent in shining armour, with a battle-axe in his hand, personifying valour and defiance. Anson examined him carefully, and was astounded to see that the dazzling armour was made, not of steel, but of ‘a particular kind of glittering paper’.87

Not for another century would British forces test Anson’s comments on Chinese military and naval shortcomings, which ‘suffice to give an idea of the defenceless state of the Chinese Empire’.88 In 1842, an early issue of the *Illustrated London News* included a hand-coloured illustration of a *jingal*, a small Chinese field piece, intended to show its readership how ludicrous was the armament of the Chinese soldiery.89 The growing taste in Europe for Chinese tea and porcelain made a rapid growth of foreign trade with China inevitable. It is outside the scope of this thesis to touch upon this, or to examine the way in which opium came to dominate that trade by the late 1830s. Nor need the nature of trading relations in Canton be discussed, leading to the crisis at the end of the 1830s culminating in war between Britain and China, generally termed the Opium War.

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87 R. Walter, *A Voyage round the World*, pp. 410-411. W. Alexander, *The Costume of China*, a volume of plates published for a curious English public, included a ‘Portrait of a soldier’, describing him in terms that Anson would recognise. ‘The dress of the troops is clumsy, inconvenient and inimical to the performance of military exercises, yet a battalion thus equipped has, at some distance, a splendid, even war-like appearance; but on closer inspection these coats of mail are found to be nothing more than quilted nankeen, enriched with thin plates of metal, surrounded with studs, which gives the tout-ensemble very much the appearance of armour.’ Alexander’s book, combined with another similar volume, has been reprinted as W. Alexander and G.H. Mason, *Views of 18th century China: costumes: history: customs*. Plate XXXI, p. 68.


89 *Illustrated London News*, vol. 1, no. 9, 9 July 1842.
Instead, one purpose of this thesis is to discuss the relationship between the Portuguese and the British, who were the principal players in the growing trade, who came to Macau in increasing numbers from the late 1750s onwards. The pattern had already been established of relations between them that were at best guarded. The relationship was seldom hostile but was never cooperative, despite an affirmation in the 1760s of the centuries-old Anglo-Portuguese alliance.\(^\text{90}\) That relationship would soon be tested more closely as the two communities found themselves living in the same place. Although it was their city, the Portuguese were disadvantaged in comparison with the British, more aggressive and successful traders, as the Portuguese had been two centuries before. Before long, the British developed open contempt for their hosts, so obviously and helplessly under the control of the mandarins.

In the mid-eighteenth century, the steady growth of foreign trade led to a Chinese reconsideration of the basis on which it was conducted. Only in Canton was the administrative machinery sufficiently well developed to regulate both trade and traders on both sides. In 1760, all ports were therefore again closed except Canton, and a set of eight regulations issued governing trade. As usual, the prohibitions these contained were negotiable by the time-honoured means of ‘squeeze’. However, in one case there was no room for compromise. No foreign women were permitted in Canton, and foreigners were permitted to reside there only during the trading season, confined to a small area outside the walled city. The reason was obvious. The Chinese knew that permanent residency of foreigners of both sexes would create another European colony.

\(^{90}\) C.R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, pp. 187-188.
This created an immediate problem for Macau, which had not long before banned foreign, i.e. Protestant, residence. If Macau continued to exclude foreign residents, they were likely to force their way in. If so, the Chinese were unlikely to stop them, because it was convenient to have them close at hand, but not within the camp. For the Senate, a pragmatic solution was vital lest Macau lose all. This time, the Senate’s urgent request to rescind the ban was heeded, despite the objections of the bishop, now Bartolomeu Manoel Mendes dos Reis (1720-1799, in office 1753-1773). A resolution of the Senate on 9 February 1757 was endorsed by the Viceroy in Goa. Foreigners might live in Macau, but they were not permitted to own property.91

The Senate was right in supposing that this volte face was essential to the survival of Macau. Many years later, an English army officer, part of the force sent out in 1840 to defeat the Chinese Empire, drily observed

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91 A. Ljungstedt, ‘Actual state of Macao’, Canton Miscellany, no. 5, 1831, p. 380; H.B. Morse, The Chronicles of the East India Company trading to China, 1635-1834, vol. 2, generally. J.M. Braga, ‘A seller of ‘Sing-Songs’ a Chapter in the Foreign Trade of China and Macao”, Journal of Oriental Studies, vol. 6, nos. 1-2, 1961/1964, p. 76, n. 46, pointed out that ‘the Macao archives seem to be silent about the permission given to the representatives of the various Western governments and their East India Companies to install themselves at Macao’. In other words, the local authorities and the arrivés had as little to do with each other as possible.
The English merchants only rent houses here, but since they have been forced to retire from Canton and to reside in this place, Macao has risen from an almost ruined to a very flourishing condition. The Portuguese as well as the Chinese thrive on British wealth and industry; and both will suffer when Macao is abandoned for Hong Kong.\footnote{\textit{\textquoteleft A Field Officer\textquoteright}, \textit{The Last Year in China to the Peace of Nanking}, pp. 58-59.}
Poverty that had ground down the Macanese for generations began to ease, chiefly through the vigorous entrepreneurship of the newcomers. Within a few years, the fine houses on the Praya Grande and the ridge behind, the best real estate in Macau, cooled by the sea breezes, were occupied by foreign, chiefly English tenants. They often found the properties ‘in a wretched condition’; when they were renovated, the owners demanded the house back again, obviously leading to friction. Worse, when the tenants returned after spending some months in Canton during the trading season, they sometimes found that the owners had moved back in. At one point the Governor’s wife was said to have demanded to have the residence of the head of the Swedish East India Company, the *Svenska Ostindiska Companiet*, which she regarded as better than her official residence after the Swedes had spent $8,000 on renovations.

Following the Seven Years War which ended in 1763, Britain emerged as the dominant European power in the East; the French had been bundled out of their American and Indian interests, only a token possession remaining. There were a few other Europeans, and after the War of Independence, a growing number of Americans. Needless to say, the British brought with them their class system, with its social norms and expectations. The premier British trading concern in Asia had since the beginning of the seventeenth century been the Honourable East India Company, often called colloquially, with a mixture of awe and joviality, ‘John Company’. Its operations, originally authorised by Royal Charter, had gradually come under parliamentary control after 1773, leading to the Charter Act in 1813 which renewed its monopoly of the China trade for a further twenty years. Though a British enterprise, this huge mercantile company was the world’s first multi-national corporation. Its business was effectively globalised three centuries before the term existed. ‘John Company’ arrived in Macau in 1773, and soon had the biggest

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93 Samuel Shaw, the first American consul at Canton, was one who experienced this. J. Quincy (ed.), *The Journals of Major Samuel Shaw, the First American Consul at Canton*, pp. 239-240, cited by R.W.N. Lamas, *Everything in Style: Harriett Low’s Macau*, p. 22.
94 R.W.N. Lamas, op. cit., p. 22.
95 St Pierre et Miquelon in the Gulf of St Lawrence, and Pondicherry in southern India.
96 To be an officer of the Company in eighteenth century India or China was effectively to hold a licence to gain quick riches, followed by a long, comfortable and well-funded retirement in a fashionable English spa town. There was a contemporary phrase for it: ‘shaking the pagoda tree’, the pagoda referred to being an Indian coin, not a Chinese structure. Brewer’s *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, p. 676.
establishment: four large houses adjacent to the governor’s palace. Joined together, they occupied the finest position in the centre of the Praya Grande, rising from the shore to the ridge above.\textsuperscript{97}

The company’s Far Eastern operation was governed by a Select Committee of three senior officers, ‘the Select’ for short, whose President was its Chief Executive Officer. His residence, rented from Manuel Pereira, head of a leading Macanese family, was the best house in Macau, located on an eminence above the city, with an extensive garden that is now a public park, the Camoens Garden.

This mansion was a display of conspicuous, ostentatious wealth and power. Entertainment there was elegant and formal. The banquet on Christmas Day in 1829 was an example.\textsuperscript{98} The President kept a fine table, but he and his staff had come to Canton and Macau not only to live well, but to make money. As has been pointed out, European trade was initially in tea, porcelain, soon to be known generically as ‘china’, and in oriental curios. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, opium was insignificant, but it was growing in value and the number of addicts in the Canton area was also growing. Recognising it to be a dangerous drug, the Yongzheng Emperor prohibited its importation in 1729.

As usual, this prohibition was seen in Canton as no more than yet another opportunity for extracting ‘squeeze’ from foreign merchants. At that time, no-one could have foreseen that the insatiable Chinese demand for opium and the vastly increased supply of it from India would eventually drive relations between Britain and China to war. From the late eighteenth century, the illegal trade flourished and

\textsuperscript{97} The impressive scale of the establishment and its sumptuous furnishings were evocatively imagined by Austin Coates in his novel \textit{Macao, city of broken promises}, p. 31-34.
\textsuperscript{98} A young American visitor, Harriett Low, was impressed. ‘Everything on the table was splendid – a whole service of massive [silver] plate. There were about sixty at table. The dinner consisted of every delicacy, served in the most elegant style, and with the greatest order. Everyone brings their own servant to wait on them at table.’ R.W.N. Lamas, \textit{Everything in Style: Harriett Low’s Macau}, pp. 112-113; S. Braga, ‘An American girl at Macau’, \textit{Casa Down Under}, vol. 20, no. 5, December 2008.
after 1833, when the monopoly of the East India Company ended, boomed. Its consequences were disastrous for China, but in the short term led to the triumph of British commercial and strategic power in the Far East. Indirectly, the consequences were also disastrous for Macau and its people.

The East India Company could not overtly flout the Chinese prohibition, but it could and did find a way around it. It issued licences to other ship-owners to sail to China. Its monopoly extended there but this remote region was secondary to its interests; therefore a growing number of the Company’s licensees also arrived in Macau. They were termed ‘country traders’, perhaps to emphasise the gulf between the urbanity of the gentlemen of the ‘Honourable Company’ and the uncouth rusticity of all others. The status of the country traders did not match that of the Company men, but they were no less determined to leave the Far East with as much money as possible. This was to be a continuing pattern for British merchants in the Far East. Whereas the Portuguese had come for good, seldom returning to their homeland, the British and a smaller number of other European traders came to enrich themselves and then to leave. However, it would be wrong to conclude that unbridled greed was their only motivation and making money their only activity.

An English group, sketched by George Chinnery

Over time, the foreign, mainly English-speaking, expatriate community developed its own strong social and cultural life. The patterns of upper middle-class life in
Georgian England quickly emerged. Ladies of comparable rank (according to their husbands’ station in life) spent much time visiting each other. They went about in sedan chairs as there were no carriages in Macau. Many of the men were well-educated people, with cultivated literary tastes and a genuine desire to participate actively in the community life of this new and strange situation with its inherent unreality of living for half the year in one place, half in another, but neither being home. Both in Canton and Macau cultural activities developed as the foreign communities grew stronger. In 1806, the staff of the East India Company, with time on their hands, set up a subscription library of good books in Canton. By 1827 a weekly newspaper, the Canton Register, was being produced under the aegis of William Jardine, the most prominent of the private traders. A Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge was started in 1835. Its express intention was to give ‘clear proof that foreigners who come to this country have other objects in view than

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99 R.W.N. Lamas, Everything in Style: Harriett Low’s Macau, p. 21. Not only were distances short, but there was nowhere for horses to graze or exercise.

100 J.M. Braga, The beginnings of printing at Macao, p. 97. Its catalogue, 77 pages in extent, was printed at the East India Company's press at Macau in 1819, reprinted in 1829 and again in 1832. It was entitled A Catalogue of the Library belonging to the English Factory at Canton in China. Copies of the first edition are held by the New York Public Library and the National Library of Scotland. The 1829 issue is held by the British Library. No copies of the 1832 issue are known in public collections. (Worldcat, accessed 26 November 2011). Another copy has come to light in recent years. Noted then as 'apparently unreccorded', it was offered by the English firm, Dawson Books, in 1984 (Catalogue 22, item, 572). Library History, vol. 8, 1988, p. 62). When the Company closed its operations in 1834, the library was dispersed. Braga, who more than a century later examined a copy of the 1832 issue of the catalogue, now lost, was an avid book collector, and remarked regretfully that the library was 'a splendid and costly one'. He was not the only one to deplore the dispersal of a fine library that could have been the nucleus of a major collection in the Far East. In 1835, Elijah Bridgman, editor of the Chinese Repository recorded the library and mourned its demise the previous year in a lengthy note. He quoted the preface to the catalogue, which described the library’s origins. Its founders planned ‘a library, which … must shortly far surpass in extent, variety, and adaptation to general use, any collection that has hitherto been in possession of, or attempted to be formed by, any European in this country.’

He continued: ‘The catalogue before us was published in 1832, and contains the names of about sixteen hundred different works, most of them comprising two, four, five, or more volumes each, amounting probably to a total of about four thousand. Many, if not most, of these were choice, select books; and were conveniently arranged under the following subjects: 1. divinity, law, and philosophy; 2. biography, history, travels, and voyages; 3. arts, sciences, commerce, and politics; 4. classics, antiquities, translations, and philology; 5. poetry, drama, and novels; and 6. miscellanies. Such a library, if well managed and made accessible to the public, in such a place as this, must ever be regarded as of great value. Hence, we were not surprised, on the breaking up of the factory last year, when the library came into the hands of a few individuals, that efforts were made to perpetuate the institution, and to render it available to all the foreign residents in China. We regret exceedingly, as many others do, that those efforts were not successful. But ‘the deed is done’; and the valuable collection is scattered, not so widely, however, we trust, as to be beyond the hope of at least a partial recovery. In this hope, we are encouraged by what has already been done.’ Chinese Repository, vol. 4, no. 2, June 1835, p. 96.

mere selfish gains’. 102 Though it met in the American *hong* (factory) most of the twenty present were British merchants, including William Jardine and Alexander Matheson, nephew of James, Jardine’s partner. The unquestioned leader of the community being Jardine, he became President. Interestingly, one of the growing Parsee community was there, Framjee Pestonjee. This community was to distinguish itself repeatedly in Hong Kong in the following century.

In Macau, cultural life developed too, with a broader appeal. A visiting Italian opera company, the *Corps d’Opera Ambulant*, stayed for six months in 1833 and at the great hall of the Company’s establishment put on eleven operas which it seems to have been *de rigueur* for the smart set to attend. 103

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With a few exceptions, that did not include the Macanese. Most of their music was in the liturgy in the numerous churches, though when the Italians left, there was a Portuguese version of *Cinderella*, conducted by Francisco José Paiva. There was no library in Macau; indeed, as is shown in Appendix 16, printing was banned in all the Portuguese colonies from 1736 until 1820. Therefore there was no published literature. One searches in vain for Macanese poetry, letters, diaries or memoirs of this period. The most dramatic occurrence for perhaps a century was the burning of the great St Paul’s Church in 1835; it was recorded only by the noted American Protestant missionary, Elijah Bridgman (1801-1861). The English artist George Chinnery drew St Paul’s shortly before the fire, and recorded its ruins afterwards.

There were however two short-lived weekly newspapers. *A Abelha da China, The Bee of China*, appeared for fifteen months in 1822 and 1823, not long after the ban on printing was lifted. However, this was not so much a response to a public demand

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for news as a vehicle for a waspish Conservative attack on their Miguelist, more liberal, opponents. It was succeeded between 1824 and 1826 by the more moderate Gazeta de Macao. Both papers reprinted long extracts from European papers. Neither had much local content, for there was little to report, so both closed for want of public support.

As Boxer has pointed out, there was almost no painting except for formalised religious subjects, and portraits and landscapes were rare. For several centuries the only depictions of Macau were by British, Dutch and French artists and their Chinese students. To these should be added Chinnery’s student Marciano Baptista, who produced a notable corpus of work, mainly landscapes. This was a sorry tale of cultural deprivation and neglect.

Foreign observers seldom saw the community life of the Macanese within their own homes. An exception was a well-educated Frenchman, Dr Marcel Yvan, who visited in the 1840s. He was one of the few who paid attention to Macanese women. He wrote:

They are possessed of a remarkable taste for the poetical in everything: I have heard them sing sentimental ditties in the most expressive manner, and the songs, which were generally the composition of one of their countrymen, combined elegant ideas, with happy expression—the great charm of poetry in every country.

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107 A similar paper, the Gazeta de Goa, was published in Goa between 1821 and 1825, J.N. da Fonseca, An historical and archaeological sketch of the city of Goa, p. 59.
110 As evidenced in the catalogue of the major exhibition, Views of the Pearl River Delta, Macau, Canton and Hong Kong, drawn largely from the Hong Kong Museum of Art and the Peabody Essex Museum, U.S.A., 1996. There is not a single artist from Macau represented in the catalogue of the great Chater collection, most of which was sadly lost during World War II. J. Orange, The Chater Collection, pictures relating to China, Hong Kong, Macao, 1655-1860.
111 Three examples are in the J.M. Braga collection in the National Library of Australia.
112 He went on: ‘This natural love of poetry, renders the women of Macao very observant of the language addressed to them; I was, upon one occasion, present at a reunion, at which several young people were expressing to a charming girl, the feelings of admiration with which she had inspired them, and I was quite struck with the soft, elegant language they employed, when a discussion arose among the matrons of the party as to the merits of the songs which had been sung; one of the party was particularly remarkable, among the female assemblage, for the correctness of her language, and although she made use of some terms somewhat foreign to the general custom, it was a charming discussion.’ M. Yvan, Six Months among the Malays and a Year in China, p. 287.
One of the songs is certain to have been the Macao Lullaby, a traditional melody of singular beauty. Overall, Yvan gave a disturbing picture of a community in which for ordinary people intellectual life was at a very low ebb.

As to the younger inhabitants, they pay very little attention to studies from which no pecuniary profit can be derived, and the appellation of learned, considered so desirable on the other side of the wall which separates the Portuguese territories from China, is thought very little of in *La Cidade de Santo-Nome-de-Deos de Macao*.

I need scarcely say, that with such a neglected state of education, the amusements and conversation of the natives are not very interesting; in his own house the Portuguese reads little, yawns a great deal, and fans himself the whole of the day, while his wife in a light style of deshabillé seats herself behind the blind, and with her fan in her hand, and a cigarette or a morsel of arecnut in her mouth, gazes listlessly at the passers-by, who are not very numerous in the quiet streets.

On the other hand,

At Macao, as in other places, there are clever, intelligent men, free from the weaknesses of their fellow countrymen, salons in which as much intellectual conversation may be heard as in London or Paris, as well as elegant women and well educated youths.

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113 It does not seem to have been set down in manuscript until it was arranged by Harry Ore, noted for his discoveries of folk music, and published by W. Paxton & Co., London, ca. 1963.

114 ‘As may readily be imagined, the education of both sexes is very much neglected here, and the means of obtaining instruction extremely limited, particularly as regards females, the suppression of some of the religious orders having contributed to the backward condition of this country when compared with the progress of the European nations; it is true that the ancient communities of Santa Clara and Rosa still exist, but as they are strictly prohibited from receiving novices, they may be considered perfectly useless, as far as education goes. In former times, when these establishments were at the height of prosperity, the metropolis of this country was now and then visited by religieuses who had been brought up in the convents of Lisbon, and were enabled by their superior training, to impart much useful information, but of late years the Macaists have been deprived of this intellectual advantage.’ M. Yvan, *Six Months among the Malays and a Year in China*, p. 285.

115 ‘And the same remark applies to the men, for those who have been educated in Europe are perfect gentlemen, and even among those who have been brought up in their own country, some remarkable persons may be found ... There are many other men at Macao living and labouring in tranquil retirement, without even the wish for celebrity, loving art and science for their own sakes alone; amongst their number I may name an excellent priest, Father Remedios, whose happy family was grouped around him in a state of harmony, delightful to witness.’ M. Yvan, *Six Months among the Malays and a Year in China*, pp. 290-291.
Yvan thus made it plain that there was a social hierarchy among the Macanese, which he went on to describe. At the apex was a small group of wealthy families, who had profited from the booming opium trade. Foremost among those Yvan had in mind were the Pereira and Paiva families, both of whom were socially acceptable at English and American parties, and spoke English.\textsuperscript{116} Both had arrived in Macau from Portugal in the second half of the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{117}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image}
\caption{George Chinnery (attributed), Aurélia Susana Viana Pereira and two of her children, perhaps Eduardo Pereira \newline b. 16 September 1817 and Maria Joaquina Pereira \newline b. 15 August 1818. \newline Oil on canvas, ca. 1827. \newline Hong Kong Museum of Art AH1964.0161.}
\end{figure}

The Pereiras were possibly the most anglophile people in a community in which many people disliked the British after their unsuccessful attempts to occupy Macau in 1802 and 1808. António Pereira was instrumental in securing for the Company a small plot of land to build a Protestant chapel next to the cemetery acquired earlier in 1821.\textsuperscript{118} This family would have been notable in any society; the fact that they

\textsuperscript{116} R.W.N. Lamas, \textit{Everything in Style: Harriett Low’s Macau}. pp. 110, 218. As well as the group portrait shown here, Chinnery painted another family group, which appears also to be of the Pereira family, ca. 1822. R. Hutcheon, \textit{Chinnery, the man and the legend}, p. 45.
\textsuperscript{118} L.T. Ride & M. Ride, \textit{An East India Company Cemetery: Protestant Burials in Macao}, p. 63. The East India Company had with great difficulty secured permission in 1821 to purchase a small plot of land for a Protestant cemetery, a step resisted for many years by the ecclesiastical authorities, determined not to allow the burial of heretics within the walls of the City of the Holy Name of God. It was stipulated that the cemetery must have high walls and there must be no bell to offend the ears of the Catholic faithful. No place of worship was to be erected, though some years later, through the good offices of António Pereira, a small chapel was permitted as a gathering place for those attending burials. The chapel was not described as a place of worship, which would have been anathema to the
owned numerous African slaves did not create adverse comment from an American visitor, Harriett Low, who wrote admiringly in November 1829,

Mrs Pereira called to see us today. She was most splendidly dressed in a rich crimson velvet pelisse neatly trimmed, with a handsome white hat. She is a very pleasant woman.

Next month Harriett called on Mrs Pereira. She described her mansion. It was

A perfect palace. She has 18 Caffres [black Africans – not necessarily Kaffirs] live with her and is obliged to keep 12 sepoys [Indian servants] to take care of them beside China servants, Bengalies and everything else. She has an immense household.

Their wealth attracted the expatriate community to the Pereiras and to another leading family, the Paivas. Harriett noted two weddings of members of the Paiva family – ‘one of the most respectable families here’. She did not attend the wedding, but remarked at the size of Ana Rita Paiva’s dowry – said to be $80,000.

The second Paiva wedding was the subject of small-town gossip about the match-making ambitions of the mother of the bride, Inácia Vicência Paiva. Her brother, Francisco José Paiva would later become the first Portuguese consul in Hong Kong. The Pereiras, like the English gentry in India and later Hong Kong, sent their sons to England for their education. Soon after the establishment of Hong Kong, Eduardo, now Edward, moved permanently to England, perhaps the first Portuguese from Macau to do so. Others soon went to England too, including João Joaquim Braga, whose career is also dealt with in a later chapter. To Harriett, not immune from snobbery, like most of the expatriates in Macau, to be ‘respectable’ was to be wealthy. To be wealthy, you had to deal in opium, but polite society never

Catholic authorities, but ‘a place of reception for the funerals of deceased foreigners, on account of its contiguity to their place of interment’. J. Crouch-Smith et al., Macau Protestant Chapel: a short history, p. 39.

119 Macanese families. http://www.macanesefamilies.com/, accessed Tuesday 22 February 2011. These were Ana Rita de Paiva, #30915, who married Bernardino da Costa Martins at S Lourenço on 10 September 1831, and Francisco Paiva, #30912, who married Auréia Pereira, #30941, on 29 October 1833, for her money, if Harriett can be believed. The identifying numbers are those used on the website; M. Teixeira, Galeria de Macaenses ilustres do seculo dezanove, p. 131.


121 M. Teixeira, Galeria de Macaenses ilustres do seculo dezanove, p. 131.

122 R.W.N. Lamas, op. cit., pp. 164-165. When they returned some years later, their mother did not recognise them, nor they her.
spoke about it. Only one trading firm, Olyphant & Co., a partnership of two American Quaker brothers, steadfastly refused to do this, and left a lasting memory of their integrity.  

Increasingly, Macau became subservient to British interests, not in partnership with them. A major cultural change was that many Macanese learned English. They had to, because the expatriates seldom bothered to learn Portuguese or Cantonese. Chinese merchants and servants were spoken to (or spoken down to) in a crude form of basic English termed ‘pidgin’, the word originally a corruption of ‘business’. It remained the norm for patronising communication to inferiors until after World War II. A few young Portuguese men found employment as junior clerks in the British firms that increasingly dominated the economy of Macau. Speaking Portuguese, English and Cantonese, they were useful as interpreters.

Some years later, this established in Hong Kong a pattern both of employment and social hierarchy for most of the Portuguese community there that changed little until the 1960s. Their employment was largely clerical, in government offices and private commercial firms. Foreign managerial staff were at the apex, with Portuguese clerks beneath. Below both in status and remuneration in this rigid system were the

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Chapter 13 discusses in further detail what came to be described as a ‘three-tiered system of employment’. Taking their lead from the President of the Select, all Englishmen considered themselves to be superior to all Portuguese and all Chinese. An attitude of racial superiority was part of the reason for this. There were few Portuguese-born men in Macau or Goa. From the beginning in the sixteenth century, there had been very few women accompanying men to the Far East. To ensure their permanent occupation of the places they had occupied, commanders from Albuquerque onwards encouraged their men to marry local women, much as Alexander the Great had done two millennia before, and for the same reason. Portugal was described by the unsympathetic Charles Boxer as ‘more priest-ridden than any other country in the world, with the possible exception of Tibet’. However, with fewer constraints in Portuguese India, there was widespread and flagrant concubinage that scandalised the priests. This was not the case in Macau, where ‘it usually needed no lusty blast on the ecclesiastical whistle to bring the laity humbly and crouchingly to heel.’ Maurice Collis, another mid-twentieth century English writer familiar with the history of the Far East, went much further in his condemnation of the Macanese in the eighteenth century.

130 Ibid., pp. 40-41.
A half-caste society, priest-ridden, poorly educated and living on past glories, it ambled into modern times, a caricature of itself, its grandees often slavers, cruel, debauched, and lazy, but managing to keep on good terms with the Chinese government by careful observance of its orders.\textsuperscript{131}

By the late eighteenth century, most Macanese people, other than the ruling elite, were racially mixed. Two contemporary observers chose to comment on this. The Swede, Anders Ljungstedt, described these ‘\textit{mestiços}’ as mongrels.\textsuperscript{132} It was a contemptuous remark that gave enormous offence to those involved.\textsuperscript{133} However, a view maintained for many years was that ‘the Portuguese in the East rapidly degenerated’.\textsuperscript{134}

Even stronger observations were made by a Portuguese artillery officer, Colonel José de Aquino Guimarães e Freitas, stationed in Macau from 1815 to 1822. Alone of civil or military officers in the early nineteenth century, he published his memoirs. He wrote, as might be expected, appreciatively of the fortifications, even though these had been built almost two centuries earlier. He had scant regard for Macau’s venerable buildings:

\begin{quote}
In no other part of the World, looking at their proportion, is there such a large number of churches and convents. The Church of St. Paul deserves and holds the attention of the not indifferent traveller: it is a Jesuit foundation, and is most remarkable, even if, as happens everywhere, it is poorly maintained, despite the creative spirit of that Society. The Convent attached to the Church, where there was a large and scholarly library, was formerly the retreat of the French Jesuits, to whom Louis XIV presented a clock, which still keeps good time. This tyrant did not respect the Church, and still less the Convent, which now serves as the habitation of the most robust rats (\textit{robustissimos ratos}).\textsuperscript{135}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{131} M. Collis, ‘Macao, the City of the Name of God’, \textit{History Today}, vol. 1, no. 4, April 1951, p. 49.
\textsuperscript{132} A. Ljungstedt, \textit{An historical sketch of the Portuguese settlements in China}, p. 22. He added that in 1834 the number born in Portugal did not exceed 90 in a Portuguese population of 4628.
\textsuperscript{133} e.g. to J.P. Braga, \textit{The Portuguese in Hongkong and China}, pp. 70-74. However, Braga himself was not a \textit{mestiço}, having descended from \textit{reinóis} families, i.e. pure-born Portuguese.
\textsuperscript{134} e.g., by F.B. Eldridge, \textit{The Background of Eastern sea power}, p. 170.
\textsuperscript{135} J. de A. Guimarães e Freitas, \textit{Memoria sobre Macão}, p. 12. The passage was kindly translated by Alberto Guterres.
It is a disturbing picture of the decline of a once-magnificent compound. Guimarães e Freitas had scant regard for the Macanese people as well as their buildings:

They can be accurately divided into three classes. The first, Europeans, the second [are] mestiço-Europeans and the third, mestiço-Asians. The first are best-known to my brush, the second too swarthy, and seldom fail to show the vices of breeding, as the product of white with black, or vice versa, if possible.\(^ {136}\)

He reserved his most withering comments for what he called the mestiço-Asians, those with chiefly Chinese ancestry.

‘The third is the most horrible variety of the human species, a variety which seems destined in the immediate future to become a prison of humanity’.

However, he observed qualities in the Macanese, mestiço-Europeans, his second class, that their British employers in Hong Kong in the following century also appreciated. He too deplored the lack of educational opportunity:

Good and bad features are best considered separately, but generally speaking, the Macanese is good-humoured, sober, orthodox and consequently a fine citizen. The third class still has plenty of firm Chinese moral character, which perfectly accompanies the physical. Education, if at all, is worse than mediocre, for lack of schools. It would be easy to cite exceptions, but they only serve to prove the rule.\(^ {137}\)

Yvan was not as severe as this patrician officer who looked down his aquiline nose at the local people. Unlike the English, he did not ignore the Macanese, nor did he hold them in contempt. His account of their racial mixture avoided the offensive tone that Ljungstedt perhaps intended and that Guimarães e Freitas certainly did:

Almost all the Portuguese inhabitants of Macao were born in the city itself, and as most of the ancient families intermarried with the Asiatics and Africans, the origins of their descendants are of

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\(^ {136}\) Ibid., p. 16. He appears to have painted them, but no paintings are known. It should be noted that military and naval officers were routinely taught to sketch in the era before photography. He seems to have made a distinction between mestiços with a predominately European background and those with a predominantly Chinese background.

\(^ {137}\) J. de A. Guimarães e Freitas, op. cit., p. 16.
a very mixed nature ... one remarkable circumstance with regard to this heterogeneous mass of population is, that the members of one family rarely bear the slightest resemblance to each other, and now and then there reappears amongst them a striking resemblance to someone long since dead and forgotten.138

Yvan was thus aware of the complex social and ethnic fabric of Macau.139 A picture emerges of a very varied community. Large elements of it were lethargic – almost moribund, and had been for generations. Others were dynamic and vibrant. These were the more recent arrivals, determined to make the most of whatever opportunities still offered.

For the most part the British ignored the local authorities and people as though they did not exist.140 An important exception is the presence in Macau from 1825 to 1852 of the very prolific artist George Chinnery (1774-1852). But for Chinnery’s large corpus of work, little would be known visually of Macau at this significant period of its history. Yet Chinnery’s work consisted largely of views, street scenes and studies of the Chinese; he and the Macanese ignored each other.141 However, the expatriates

138 He went on to explain: ‘I used often to go and visit a Portuguese family residing at Macao, near Praia-Manduco; they were the undoubted descendants of the ancient conquerors, and their European origin was universally acknowledged; these good people lived in a little cottage of one storey, and the family consisted of six persons, the mother, two sons, and three daughters; the latter, who bore the names of Mariana, Maria, and Monica, were all as opposite in appearance as possible; Mariana was a white negress, with rather woolly hair, thick lips, coarse features, high cheek bones, and a pale face: Monica, on the contrary, had the dark rich tint of the Andalusian, the upper lip covered with a light down, and remarkably beautiful hair; as to the third, she was as yellow as amber, more resembling the women seen on the shores of the Ganges than her sisters; the two sons were thoroughly Chinese.’ M. Yvan, Six Months among the Malays and a Year in China, pp. 283-284.

139 He spelt this out: ‘The Portuguese Macaists can scarcely be said to form a distinct people, although there are some remains of aristocracy amongst them, and their European descent seems to regulate their privileges in proportion as it is more or less decided. In the picture I have endeavoured to give of the appearance, manners, and customs of the inhabitants of La Cidade do Santo-N’ome-de-Deos, I have rather sought to convey an idea of the tout ensemble, than to describe individualities.’ M. Yvan, Six Months among the Malays and a Year in China, p. 290. Yvan appears to have stumbled a little on the correct spelling of the name Cidade do Santo Nome de Deos.

140 R.W.N. Lamas, Everything in Style: Harriett Low’s Macau, passim. Ljungstedt mentioned by name none of the Macanese of his own time, from 1798 until the early 1830s.

141 It is thought that Chinnery never had an exhibition of his work in Macau during his 27 years there. When he died in 1852, there was no attempt to keep any of his work in Macao. An important exhibition was eventually held at the Leal Senado in September 1985, the works being drawn from two significant collections: those of the Toyo Bunko, Tokyo [Tokyo Art Museum] and the Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa. The published catalogue is in the collection of the National Library of Australia, which has catalogued it thus: Chinnery, George, and Macao. Leal Senado. Qiaozhi Qiannali: Aomen = George Chinnery: Macau Aomen shi zheng ting, [Macao: 1985, Catalogue of two exhibitions held 5-30 September 1985 at Galeria do Museu Luis de Camões, and 6-30 September 1985 at Galeria do Leal Senado de Macau]. While this is the citation called for by the Library, I feel that it obscures the catalogue, which is a copiously illustrated book containing much work unknown to other writers about Chinnery. The exhibition was noted by Geoffrey Bonsall, ‘George Chinnery’s
did not ignore those Portuguese families who maintained a position of pre-eminence, and as the local economy prospered in the 1830s, increased their wealth and standing until the crisis of 1839 that brought everyone to ruin. Some will be discussed in the next chapter, especially the Rosa family.

Just as the British, American and other foreign communities (apart from the Olyphant brothers) grew rich on the booming opium traffic, so too did the Portuguese merchant community in Macau, though in a much smaller way. The best opium, Patna and Benares, came from Bengal, ruled by the Company after 1757, while the Americans, who arrived in 1784, obtained theirs from Smyrna, in Turkey.\textsuperscript{142} Opium grown in the central Indian district of Malwa, not yet under British control, was exported from nearby Goa by Portuguese merchants from Macau, only too keen to join in the opium frenzy.\textsuperscript{143} It was hastened by the advent of the clipper ship, fast and efficient, the apogee of the sailing ship’s long development, though the Portuguese ship owners lacked this latest improvement.

What is most striking about the events of the half century from 1790 to 1840 is the massive growth of trade led by British merchants, set against the complete failure of British diplomacy in China at the same time. Moreover, two British attempts to occupy Macau by military force in 1802 and 1808 both failed, through a combination of Chinese intransigence, British heavy-handedness and Portuguese adroitness.\textsuperscript{144} Both failures left a legacy of Portuguese animosity towards the British, not that there was anything they could do to stem the increasingly dominant British commercial presence and their growing arrogance.\textsuperscript{145}

\textsuperscript{142} A. Coates, \textit{Macao and the British}, p. 125.
\textsuperscript{143} J.P. Braga commented, ‘Sad to relate, Portuguese merchants at Macao were not above trafficking in the “black mud” of such evil repute.’ \textit{The Portuguese in Hongkong and China}, p. 63.
\textsuperscript{144} Montalto de Jesus, \textit{Historic Macao}, pp. 210-228; A. Coates, \textit{Macao and the British}, pp. 94-110.
\textsuperscript{145} The British tone is evident in the transcript made by J.M. Braga of the despatches of the Marquess of Wellesley, who gave this menacing advice to the Governor of Macau, José Manuel Pinto: ‘Your Excellency’s wisdom and discernment will suggest to you the inutility of opposing any resistance to the accomplishment of this measure; your Excellency’s justice and humanity will not permit you to expose the lives and property of the inhabitants of Macao to the danger of an unavailing contest with the superior power of the British arms’. British Museum, Additional Manuscripts 13,710. The transcript is in the J.M. Braga Papers, National Library of Australia, MS 4480.
\textsuperscript{145} A. Coates, \textit{Macao and the British}, p. 126.
A succession of British missions to China all failed: Macartney in 1793, Amherst in 1817, and – most abjectly – Napier in 1834, expelled from Canton in utter humiliation, a dying man. It took a few more years before matters came to a head, but when they did, early in 1839, this seemed to the Daoguang Emperor (reign dates 1820-1850) the moment to rid China once and for all of the British and their damnable curse of opium.

In the four years following the death of Lord Napier (1786-1834), the annual volume of opium reaching China doubled from 20,000 chests to over 40,000 chests. When the emperor determined at last to end this terrible scourge, it seemed from the Chinese point of view that after their recent successful repulse of Napier, stern measures would easily succeed. Lin Zexu, the Imperial Commissioner who arrived in Canton on 10 March 1839 to accomplish this, at once adopted the usual measures for enforcing compliance: stopping food supplies to the Canton factories. As ever,
The foreign factories at Canton, ca. 1820.

Chater Collection, Hong Kong Museum of Art AH1964.0114

The method was eventually successful, and after a protracted, tense siege, more than 20,000 chests of opium were handed over in May 1839 and promptly destroyed by Lin. 146 The opium was surrendered, not by the merchants, but by the British Superintendent of Trade, Captain Charles Elliot (1801-1875), who had succeeded Davis, thus forcing the hand of the British Government. Seeing what was coming, the Governor of Macau, Adrião Acácio da Silveira Pinto (held office 1837-1843), instructed merchants there to get their whole stock – from 2,000 to 3,000 chests – away to Manila before Commissioner Lin could demand its surrender too. 147

Elliot also sought and secured from Silveira Pinto an assurance of protection for all British subjects in Macau. 148 Not for the first time was Macau placed in an invidious position. Silveira Pinto did what little he could to maintain Macau’s neutrality, realising that it was indefensible in the face of a resolute Chinese blockade. J. F.

146 A. Waley, The Opium War through Chinese Eyes, pp. 20, 27-46. In a rare error, this distinguished scholar gave the date as 10 March 1838.
147 C.A. Montalto de Jesus, Historic Macao, p. 297; Ljungstedt’s tally of opium imports in 1834 accords with this figure of about 10% of the 1839 seizure of British-owned opium. An historical sketch of the Portuguese settlements in China, pp. 105-106. Coates gave a figure of 3,000. Macao and the British, p. 187.
148 A. Coates, Macao and the British, p. 184.
Davis contemptuously referred to the Portuguese garrison as ‘two or three hundred starved blacks’, who could be seen begging for food at the doors of convents. Others sneered at their fondness for sticking feathers in their hats, apparently to compensate for their shabby uniforms. That neglect had gone on for a long time. Seventy years before, an English visitor saw ‘a few sallow-faced, half-naked, and apparently half-starved creatures in old tattered coats that had once been blue, carrying muskets upon their shoulders, which, like their other accoutrements, were of a piece with their dress. These wretches were honoured with the title of soldiers’.

On the Chinese side of the barrier wall, Lin commenced a threatening military build-up. In 1834, during the stand-off which occurred while Lord Napier was attempting to stare down the Imperial Viceroy, Lu Kun, in Canton, two large war junks were moved into Praya Grande Bay to intimidate the British. It is likely that this action was repeated five years later to add visibly to the sense of menace. During the tense summer of 1839, the British were divided into two groups. Some took refuge in Macau, while others remained on board British merchant vessels which

149 J.F. Davis, The Chinese, p. 89; A. Coates, Macao Narrative, p. 65. John Francis Davis (1795-1890), the last President of the ‘Select’ (1832-1834), held office as Superintendent of Trade (1834-1839), was appointed, as Sir John Davis, bart., Governor of Hong Kong, 1844-1848. This situation was similar to what happened in Goa, where the soldiers lacked proper training, uniforms or even standardised weapons. ‘When the monsoon began in May or June, they were left for several months to beg for their food on the streets.’ M.N. Pearson, The Portuguese in India, p. 59.


151 Memoirs of William Hickey, vol. 1, cited by C.R. Boxer, Fidalgos in the Far East, p. 259. Boxer observed that ‘Portuguese garrisons were commonly ill-provided with sufficient weapons and when they had them they were often neglected, rusty and other-wise unserviceable’. C.R. Boxer, The Portuguese Seaborne Empire, p. 120.

152 Any such attempt was futile, the British having already reached firm conclusions about the Chinese war junks. ‘The Chinese war ships (junks) are large unwieldy-looking masses of timber, with mat sails, wooden anchors, rattan cables, a considerable sheer, flat upright stems, no stern posts, enormously high sterns ornamented with gold and paintings, considerably weakened too by a large hole in which the monstrous rudder can be hoisted up and housed in bad weather : immense quarter galleries, and look-out houses on the deck; generally drawing but little water, flat floored, painted red and black, with large goggle eyes in the bows ... such is the appearance of a celestial “first rate”. Few are over 250 to 350 tons, and the generality are armed with but two or four guns which ... are on solid beds, and must therefore be useless, save in the smoothest water. We have occasionally, however seen six guns in a large war junk, on special service; and two which were stationed in front of the Praia Grande at Macao, during the business of the late Lord Napier, had each eight, of various sizes; two of which, taking the whole width of the deck, were old brass field pieces, which, had they been fired, must have ether sunk the junk, or gone, with the recoil, over the gangway in the rear.’ Chinese Repository, vol. 5, no. 4, August 1836, p. 173.
gathered in the sheltered waters of what would soon become Hong Kong harbour.153 Here too, Lin adopted an aggressive posture, building two powerful batteries at the southern point of Kowloon peninsula, with the British merchant vessels under their guns.154

An unfortunate incident in July 1839 greatly aggravated the crisis. This was the murder at Kowloon of a Chinese villager by some drunken sailors. It was at once obvious to British and Portuguese alike that a grave situation had arisen. That incident inevitably harked back to two incidents, one in 1773 and the other in 1784 that left in the British mind an indelible memory and a lasting contempt for both the Portuguese and the Chinese. Nothing leaves a deeper impression than a perception of gross injustice. The British were horrified by these events. The first was the supine way in which the Portuguese had appeared to sanction the callous judicial murder by the mandarins of an innocent British subject. The second convinced all the Europeans of the barbarism of what passed for justice in the Chinese mind.155 These

153 It had been used since 1837 as a rendezvous for British shipping. W. Tarrant, Hongkong. Part I, 1839-1844. A history of Hongkong from the time of its cession to the British Empire to the year 1844, p. 2.
155 It is important to observe that the Chinese justice system was by no means as flawed as the Europeans took it to be. H.B. Morse held the view that in the case of homicide, it was based on two fundamental assumptions. The first was that the loss of a life must be atoned for by another life. No distinction was made between murder, manslaughter or misadventure. Someone was always responsible and must atone. The second assumption was that the village headmen were responsible for the maintenance of law, but not for judgment. That was the prerogative of the highly educated mandarins. Headmen were required to deliver a criminal for judgment and sentence because they were in control of their villages. On the whole it was a straightforward system that worked well in the Chinese context, but European concepts of evidence were not part of it. Therefore foreigners found
events had not been forgotten in the 1830s, when a correspondent identified only as ‘A Visitor to China’ wrote that ‘the blood of innocent Englishmen still cries out for redress’.\textsuperscript{156} It is necessary to summarise them to explain why the crisis of 1839 unfolded as it did. It led first to the temporary flight of the British, then to their decisive victory, but it also led indirectly to the lasting disadvantage of the Macanese both in Macau and in Hong Kong.

\textsuperscript{156} Chinese Repository, vol. 5, no. 3, July 1836, p. 130.
Both cases involved the death of Chinese citizens. In 1773, the year in which the Company arrived, Francis Scott, a British subject, was accused of the murder of a Chinese man in Macau, but when the case came to trial by the Portuguese court no-one would testify against him. However, the Casa Branca mandarin informed the Senate that Scott was guilty and must be surrendered for execution. This meant death by slow strangulation, a most cruel and protracted death, clearly contrived with deterrence in mind. When the Senate refused to hand him over, the usual coercion was applied: the closing of the barrier gate, with Macau set to starve. The Senate was at first determined to stand firm, but when after some time it became clear that the mandarin would not yield, it was at last persuaded to alter its decision by the Vicar-General of the Diocese, Alexandre da Silva Pedrosa Guimarães, who was an ex officio member.\footnote{http://www.gcatholic.com/dioceses/diocese/maca1.htm. Accessed 21 February 2011.}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{portrait.jpg}
\caption{Alexandre da Silva Pedrosa Guimarães. 
Vicar-General of the Diocese of Macau. 
in office, 1773-1789

The effect of a tropical climate on the portrait is apparent.

Reproduced in monochrome in Review of Culture, no. 20, 2nd series, July/September 1994, p. 95. 
The caption here reads: One of the prelates in Macao history who fought most for morality and decency in dressing.

The location of the portrait is not indicated, but it is likely to be held by the Diocese of Macau.}
\end{figure}

This was the same prelate who had successfully vetoed the Senate’s attempt to permit the transfer to Macau of the East India Company’s factory.\footnote{C.R. Boxer, Fidalgos in the Far East, p. 260.} Guimarães argued:

When a tyrant demands even an innocent person, with menaces to ruin the places, the republic can say to any innocent, you must go and deliver yourself up, for the sake of saving, from inevitable destruction the community, which is worth more than the life of an
individual. Should he refuse to obey, he is not innocent, he is criminal.  

It was the counsel of Caiaphas, another High Priest, and the Senate, grasping at straws, took it, urged on by the Procurator, who added, but without the priest’s sophistry, ‘the Mandarins are forcing away the Chinese retailers, determined to make us die of hunger; we had better surrender the Englishman’. After what can only have been a tense and solemn meeting, this was done, and Scott came to a cruel end. The second case, eleven years later, was even more horrible, because the victim was plainly innocent, but it did not involve the Portuguese. The Lady Hughes, a country ship (i.e. privately owned), arrived at Whampoa near Canton on 24 November 1784, and fired the customary salute as it approached the anchorage. A small Chinese vessel was hit, and two men were killed. In vain did the foreign community plead that the deaths were accidental. Food and water were cut off from all the foreign factories until the culprit was surrendered. The original gunner could not be identified, but instead, another gunner, an old and frail man, was most reluctantly handed over with a letter pleading for clemency, in a stratagem clearly intended to appeal to the well-known Chinese veneration for age. Supplies were at once restored. In a macabre way the plea seems to have partly succeeded. Nothing happened for several weeks while the matter was sent to Peking for consideration by the Throne. Eventually the heads of the various foreign factories in Canton were summoned and told that although two men had died, clemency had indeed been granted: only one need be executed. The foreign barbarians were told to be more obedient in future, and to surrender culprits for punishment without delay. Meanwhile, the elderly gunner was being strangled outside. Writing in 1822, 38 years later, Peter Auber wrote that ‘the surrender of this man is considered to have inflicted indelible disgrace upon all parties concerned’.

159 A. Ljungstedt, An historical sketch of the Portuguese settlements in China, pp. 65-66. The text as given by Ljungstedt appears to be a close transliteration from a document no longer extant. Significantly, Montalto de Jesus chose to ignore this important and far-reaching case.
160 The Scott case is also discussed in H.B. Morse, The Chronicles of the East India Company trading to China, 1635-1834, vol. 5, pp. 182-185.
162 P. Auber, China, an outline of its laws and policy, cited by H.B. Morse, The Chronicles of the East India Company trading to China, 1635-1834, vol. 4, p. 34.
By contrast, a similar case in Canton in 1807 produced a markedly different result.\(^{163}\) It was a familiar scenario for sailors on shore leave to get out of hand. A drunken brawl involving the crew of the Company’s ship *Neptune* left a Chinese dead. This time the British determined not to give way. The memory of the old gunner’s fate and of their own humiliation in 1784 was too strong. Those involved in the brawl were questioned in groups of five; one Edward Sheen was selected, but he was not surrendered. An inconclusive enquiry took place before the Select Committee, who then sought to take him away to Macau, but failed to achieve this. Sheen seemed doomed. However, at Macau was a British ship of the line, HMS *Lion*, 64 guns, Captain Robert Rolles. Rolles, who was present at the interrogation, took matters into his own hands with a show of strength, declaring his intention to proceed to Canton and take Sheen on board. The record of the incident does not say this, but we can imagine that on *Lion* the guns were run out and the decks cleared for action in a bustle of noise, activity and shouted orders. The whole crew would have enjoyed this show of strength.

To their surprise, the Englishmen found that a face-saving device could then be contrived, even when a Chinese life had been lost. A story was invented that Sheen

\(^{163}\) Morse gave the date 1808 (H.B. Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company trading to China, 1635-1834*, vol. 4, p. 46), but a contemporary lithograph gives the precise date of the hearing before a Chinese court: 8th March 1807 (*The Chater Legacy*, p. 19).
had opened a window, from which a piece of wood fell, killing the man below. A suitable piece of wood was sent to Peking to verify the tale. The Imperial consent to Sheen’s release was quickly obtained, and a fine of 12.42 taels, about £4, was imposed. The British were not impressed:

This singular transaction proves at once how easily the emperor may be deceived, and with what readiness the local government can get out of a difficulty.

The Select Committee’s report to the Court of Directors of the East India Company praised Rolles’ ‘able advice and assistance’. They were delighted with the outcome, and Captain Rolles was awarded £1,000 for his firm action – a huge

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164 H.B. Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company trading to China, 1635-1834*, vol. 4, p. 46.
reward. In the foreign factories in Canton, the message was clear. Meet force with force.

Thirty years later, in the tense situation he faced in 1839, Commissioner Lin would never succumb to the device worked out in 1807, but nor would a British subject ever again be sacrificed to what was seen as the caprice of Chinese injustice. In the time-honoured manner, Lin demanded a culprit from the British community in Macau. Their Chinese servants were ordered to leave, and supplies were cut off from them, but not from the Portuguese, Lin hoping to drive a wedge between the two foreign communities.

At first this did not work, the servants of the Portuguese community obtaining food supplies for the British, who were effectively under house arrest. 167 It stands greatly to his credit that Silveira Pinto held out for several days, but placards in large letters were carried through the streets and market places by Chinese soldiers, forbidding any person whatsoever to supply food to the English.

They soon found it very difficult to obtain even bare necessities. 168 Silveira Pinto realised that it was only a matter of time before all supplies would be cut off from Macau. Reluctantly, he advised Elliot that he could no longer guarantee the safety of British citizens. This time there was no Lion on hand to roar with its 64 guns. Instead, Chinese vessels seemed to possess greater force. That was indeed true at the time; towards the end of August, a small British schooner, Black Joke, was attacked near Macau and its whole crew killed, a single passenger surviving. 169

The news provoked panic in Macau. Silveira Pinto had no option but to advise the whole British community to leave the next morning. After a sleepless night, their footsteps were hastened by ‘an infernal din of gongs and the yelling of a raving

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169 M. Collis, Foreign Mud, p. 246.
At noon on Monday, 26 August 1839, the second British exodus from Macau commenced, including even Chinnery, who had lived and worked there since 1825 in perfect safety. The pathetic ineffectiveness of the Portuguese garrison is apparent in the following account.

Men, women and children, with bag and baggage were hurried through the streets of Macao amidst terrible excitement of the whole population, expecting every moment a massacre by the Chinese soldiery. The refugees assembled on the Praya in the presence of Governor Pinto who had the whole of the Portuguese troops (some 400 Indian lascars and 500 Caffre slaves) under arms, and embarked hurriedly on board British ships, lorchas [vessels with a European hull and the rigging of a Chinese junk], schooners and boats of all descriptions, which immediately set sail for


Panic-stricken, Chinnery wrote to Jardine. ‘To be away is everything to me. I should like to paint a few good pictures (at least try at it) before I am put to the sword’. M. Collis, *Foreign Mud*, p. 244. Collis explained (p. 512) that he had been granted unprecedented access to the Jardine, Matheson archives.
Ever courteous, Silveira Pinto was at the Praya to bid them all farewell. Most made for the fleet already in Hong Kong harbour where by December there were thirty-two merchant vessels at anchor awaiting a resolution of the crisis. On 3 September, eight days after the flight of the British, Commissioner Lin came to Macau in a splendid sedan chair carried by eight bearers to survey the scene of his triumph and was welcomed with a guard of honour and a nineteen gun salute. Two years later, Lin’s principal adversary, Captain Charles Elliot, would receive only a thirteen gun salute from the forts of Macau when he was recalled in disgrace. By then, Lin was disgraced too. The Americans remained in Canton, still doing ‘pidgin’, as they had signed undertakings not to deal in opium; they had knuckled under. The British had all gone from Macau after seventy years of growing trouble. From the point of view of the Chinese mandarins, the Portuguese, still there after close to three centuries, could stay, for they had always been compliant and an easy source of lucre.

Some of the departing British appreciated what their Portuguese hosts had tried to do for them, faced with an impossible situation. An officer who came next year with the inevitable punitive expedition heard their stories and caught their mood. ‘The whole of the British community finally quitted the friendly but ineffectual protection of their ancient ally, and proceeded, the greater part, to the harbour of Hong Kong.’ Silveira Pinto, who remained governor until 1843, continued to be held in high regard by the British community. In later years, the perception changed in line with the growth of British contempt for the Portuguese, and looking back on the role

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174 Ibid., p. 246. Lin made a circuit of the town, finally parading along the whole length of the Praya Grande, where the Chinese inhabitants erected *pai laus* (ceremonial arches) decorated with scrolls expressing their ‘profound gratitude for the visit of His Excellency the High Commissioner who had saved them from a deadly vice and removed from them a dire calamity by the destruction of the foreign mud’. R. Hutcheon, *Chinnery*, pp. 118-119.
178 *Chinese Repository*, vol. 12, no. 10, October 1843, p. 555. Bridgman observed, in a rare commendation of a Portuguese official, ‘We think a better representative of the place, or one more likely to succeed, could not be found’. 
of the Portuguese governor in 1839, a mid-twentieth century Hong Kong writer condemned this ‘vacillating and unpredictable Governor’ with his ‘unfriendly and unco-operative attitude’. Others turned their backs on Macau with bitterness. Few had ever enjoyed their stay. A writer (i.e. junior clerk), on leaving in 1831, penned some lines of verse that were probably widely relished:

Farewell to Canton,
Farewell to Macao,
In joy and in gladness we part,
In truth may I say,
That I hallow the day,
When thy shores from my sight shall depart.

Farewell to Tea Scales,
To Dollars and Tales,
To Congo, Souchong and Bohea;
To Macao’s Rocks and Caves,
To her numerous Graves;
And now for a long voyage at sea.

The most outspoken critic was J.F. Davis, whose remarkable career included a long period with the East India Company in Canton from 1813 to 1834, the last two years as President of the Select Committee. He lived in lordly fashion, enjoying an income said to be $25,000 a year. When the Company ceased operations in 1834, he became, jointly with the ill-fated Napier, the first Superintendent of Trade, a Government position. Looking back on the whole British connection with Macau, Davis, who as Sir John Davis, baronet, became the second Governor of Hong Kong, had not a good word to say for the Portuguese in an important work, *The Chinese: a General Description of China and its Inhabitants*, published in 1836, well before the debacle of 1839. He claimed that even from early contacts in the seventeenth century they had treated the English with perfidy, adding that ‘in the course of time they have been able to exclude us altogether even from Macao’. He maintained that

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179 R. Hutcheon, *Chinmery*, p. 119.
180 He was identified only by the initial ‘B.’, *Canton Miscellany*, no.1, 1831, pp. 49-51. ‘Tales’: i.e. ‘Taels’. Congo, Souchong and Bohea were varieties of tea. Another verse, omitted here, obliquely mentions the weighing of different grades of opium: Patna and Benares, as among the writer’s tasks. It was rare for the nefarious trade to be mentioned by its practitioners.
they had caused the failure of the British attempt to occupy Macau in 1808 by ‘their customary intrigues with the Chinese government’.

Perhaps with greater justification, but ignoring the illegality of the opium trade, he commented that ‘the Portuguese have had ample leisure to repent their short-sighted and narrow policy towards our countrymen which had the effect of driving the whole of the Indian opium trade from Macao to Lintin, and thereby depriving the former place of its most fertile, and indeed only source of wealth’. Devastatingly, he characterised the whole of Portuguese policy to the Chinese as marked by ‘their usual servility’.

Davis’s book was very well received and ran through many editions. It became the standard reading on China in the mid-nineteenth century. The respected and

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183 Ibid., vol. I, p. 81.
184 Ibid., vol. I, pp. 81-82.
185 Ibid., vol. I, p. 91.
186 The Rev. Dr James Legge, a noted sinologue and the first Professor of Chinese at Oxford in 1876, regarded it in 1872 as ‘still the most readable and entertaining work on the country up to the time to which he was able to bring it down’ [1834]. J. Legge, ‘The colony of Hong Kong’, in China Review,
scholarly editor of the *Chinese Repository*, Elijah Bridgman, who lived in Canton during these stirring times, went so far as to describe it as ‘the best account of the Chinese Empire and its inhabitants which has ever appeared in the English language’, thus perhaps endorsing these scathing remarks.\(^{187}\) It was left to the Frenchman, Marcel Yvan, to express a more moderate view. Referring to Davis, he observed:

In his valuable work on China, he has rendered himself quite the detractor of the [Portuguese] heroes of the sixteenth century; his observations are evidently made in a spirit of chagrin and ill humour; and it is quite visible that he is actuated by intense hatred for the first discoverers of these far-distant shores.\(^{188}\)

Yvan was right. Davis ignored the accomplishments of the Portuguese, not only in the heroic age of exploration, but in maintaining their position in Macau for so long despite insuperable difficulties. Looking about them in the 1830s, the British saw a once great trading port that had fallen upon very hard times. Macau grew nothing, produced nothing and seemed to have no visible means of support. Its slide into decrepitude, begun in the 1640s, had continued for two centuries. The British at once discerned the precarious nature of the Portuguese presence in Macau and often commented on it. Their understanding of the legal basis of a colony was that a formal claim had been laid on the territory in question and that the claim had been made good by occupation. Thenceforth the law of the occupying power was enforced and no other. Obviously this was not the case in Macau, seen by the British as a pseudo-colony, which had survived for so long only by humiliating compromise. Yet they were quite prepared to make full use of the Portuguese presence until the crisis of August 1839.

When that crisis came, they were glad to take refuge on British ships in Hong Kong harbour, albeit threatened by Chinese guns at the newly constructed Kowloon forts.\(^{189}\) What would happen to the 4,000 Macanese left in Macau? The victorious

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\(^{187}\) *Chinese Repository*, vol. 5, no. 6, October 1836, p. 280.

\(^{188}\) M. Yvan, *Six Months among the Malays and a Year in China*, pp. 129-130.

\(^{189}\) The *Canton Register* warned that this step ‘would be viewed by the Chinese as a retreat from their force, and an encouragement to further acts of aggression.’ So it proved, and on 11 November the Kowloon batteries commenced a cannonade that lasted through the night. Untrained Chinese gunners
Qing emperors had wiped out vast numbers of opponents in the seventeenth century, especially in South China. Was this to be the fate of those Europeans still there? The British never gave it a thought.\(^{190}\) It would not have occurred to them that there was no escape for the Macanese. As ever, they must survive as they had done for so long by making the best accommodation they could with the mandarins. This was a unique community. Its people had developed their own ethnic identity and their own language they called patuá, a creole composed largely of Portuguese and Malaccan influences.\(^{191}\) They were intensely pious, and remained so for much longer. They had a very strong sense of family ties. Many of them seemed to have been left behind by an advancing world that had suddenly intruded upon their quiet backwater. Some remained caught in a time warp, but others would seize very different opportunities that were about to open. They never forgot that they had descended from a nation that had once dominated two oceans, the coast of Asia and achieved great things.

\(^{190}\) William Tarrant’s account may be typical of contemporary British attitudes towards the Portuguese. ‘We can hardly end our story of the year [1844] without a glance at Macao, where the effect of the bigoted, illiberal policy of the Government began to be felt directly Hongkong got fair headway. The act of siding with the Chinese Government during our war, and ordering us to leave because the place, in reality, belonged to the Chinese, was first made to tell on them by an ordinance of the Hongkong Government, in which the Holy City was declared part and parcel of the dominions of the Emperor of China, a measure which gave great umbrage to the most Faithful Majesty of Portugal, and brought about a correspondence resulting in an order to the Hongkong Government to make some provision for alteration in the working of any process of the ordinance mentioned. England did not desire war with Portugal on the point: – but, though making an extraordinary alteration in working with the law, we did not abolish it, maugre [sic. An obsolete word in English, derived from the French malgré, meaning ‘in spite of’] the complaint. To keep pace with the times the following ordinances were enacted.’ [Macao was declared a free port on 27 November 1844, in the hope of emulating the growing prosperity of Hong Kong]. W. Tarrant, *Hongkong, Part I, 1839 to 1844*, p. 142. Tarrant’s account concludes with a sneer: ‘Now that Macao can boast of a very large surplus revenue, the following story of the state of the public chest in 1844 becomes interesting by contrast. We have before us a most melancholy account of the deplorable state of affairs in Macao. The Government are literally bankrupt. Not a stiver to pay a few miserable half starved troops, who have the equivocal honour of wearing the uniform of Portugal. We hear that since April the exchequer has been empty, – the troops threaten that they will stand it no longer and a riot is far from improbable.’ p.144.

\(^{191}\) This is discussed more fully in Appendix 10, Malacca and Macau.
Chapter 3

Search for identity: Macau and Hong Kong, 1841-1900

Part 1 – Macau after the Opium War: a decade of peril

Unsettling events in Macau in 1839 were a harbinger of how community relationships would develop in Hong Kong under British rule. Hong Kong’s first decade would confirm those relationships, with Macau and its people slipping still further in British estimation. In the next half century, various national groups would pursue their commercial activities, mostly with little communication between each other. Self-interest was, by-and-large, the driving force. What held the thriving colony of Hong Kong together, despite these inherent polarities, was their reliance on each other to carve out successful livelihoods. These relationships, already well-established between the Portuguese and British communities by 1839, were thrown sharply into focus by the dramatic events that unfolded in the next two years in what would come to be called the Opium War.192

192 In Macau, no-one from the governor down can have had any idea of what was going on in the confused and threatening situation that unfolded around them. Both Chinese and British combatants ignored the neutral Portuguese. A detailed history of what was then termed the Chinese War, and became more commonly called the First Opium War, lies outside the scope of this thesis, but it will be useful to sketch the main events and consequences. In Macau, people had little idea of what was going on in the bizarre, confused and threatening situation that unfolded around them. There were two significant naval actions and a land battle virtually at the gates of Macau. These events had the initial effect of liberating Macau from nearly three centuries of vassalage, but the commercial consequences then plunged it into a severe economic depression for most of the next century.

On 21 June 1840, a British expeditionary force of three 74-gun ships of the line, Melville, Wellesley and Blenheim, supported by fourteen frigates, reached the Pearl River estuary. Their total fire-power was 596 guns, nearly ten times greater than anything seen on the Chinese coast hitherto. There were also four armed steamers belonging to the East India Company. They were sent to navigate rivers which the sailing ships could not do. There were thirty transports carrying 4,000 marines commanded by Sir James Gordon Bremer. It was an overwhelming force. (Details of the force were given by J.L. Shuck, Portfolio chinensis, p. 191, at the conclusion of his important reprint of Lin Zexu’s regulations against opium).

The lack of military capacity of the Chinese forces was evident from first to last in the fighting that dragged on for nearly three years. Elliot’s force could have brought about the defeat of the Chinese Empire far more rapidly than it did, but he had been instructed to use no more force than was necessary. This he did, seeking only to bring the Chinese to the negotiating table and to restore an amicable trading arrangement. It gradually became evident that this was next to impossible, first because of the prevarication of local authorities; he then encountered the intransigence of the Daoguang Emperor, unable to accept that his forces had been vanquished until the ‘red barbarians’ literally stood at the gates of Nanking, China’s ancient capital city on the Yangtze River. Then, and then only was the Treaty of Nanking wrung out of the Chinese government, forced at last to accept humiliating terms on 29 August 1842. Earlier, events in South China had moved more rapidly, with...
The precipitate departure of the British in August 1839 left Macau in limbo, and in severe economic difficulty, with trade at a standstill. The British were in desperate trouble. Elliot did his best, under heavy pressure from people cooped up in ships in Hong Kong harbour in the broiling heat of summer, to reach a three-way accommodation with Lin and Silveira Pinto for the British to return to their comfortable homes in Macau. Such a plan could never hope to succeed, with the constant threat of starvation as a Chinese trump card. After two months, when negotiations broke down completely in October 1839, military action was inevitable.

three naval engagements at Chuenpi at the mouth of the Pearl River which left Canton at the mercy of British forces. The first was in November 1839, then two more in January and February 1841. In August 1840, a British force sailed north to Tientsin, presenting a demand for compensation for British losses. The Daoguang Emperor reacted by replacing Lin Zexu with Qishan, who was instructed to kill all the ‘red barbarians’. In this he failed conspicuously, there being a second Chinese naval defeat at Chuenpi five months later on 10 January 1841 and a third the next month. In March, Qishan was sent in chains to Peking following the Chuenpi Convention, the agreement he had reached with the British to avoid the destruction of Canton. That agreement included the cession of Hong Kong to Britain, a concession that was at once acted upon when Bremer and a party of marines took possession of what was soon derided in Whitehall as a ‘barren rock’ on 26 January 1841. 

Whitehall and Peking had this much in common: neither understood the local situation. Each dismissed in disgrace the man best placed to resolve an intractable impasse. To both the Chinese Emperor and the British Foreign Secretary the idea of negotiating was inconceivable. The Daoguang Emperor saw Elliot as no more than the headman of a particularly troublesome set of uncivilised barbarians. Palmerston had a broadly comparable view. He saw the Chinese government as corrupt, debased and incapable of civilised standards of justice and equity.

Elliot left in August 1841, the victim of a sustained campaign of vilification orchestrated by William Jardine, the most rapacious of the opium traders, who happened to be in London throughout the early part of the conflict. Elliot’s acquisition of Hong Kong only served to confirm his utter lack of capacity in the eyes of his far-away superiors. The following year, the Treaty of Nanking confirmed the British presence in Hong Kong, ratifying the Chuenpi Convention. However, the British Foreign Secretary in Whitehall was infuriated with Elliot, the Daoguang Emperor in Peking with Lin Zexu and Qishan. Qishan, at first sentenced to death, was then banished to Lhasa in Tibet, perhaps a fate worse than death. Elliot was posted as British consul-general to Texas, as far west as it was possible to send him. Later, fifty years after Napoleon had been banished there, Elliot eventually became Governor of the minor colony of St Helena in the 1860s. By then, a modus vivendi originally intended only to give security to British merchants troubled by constant threats in Canton and Macau had more than achieved its purpose. Hong Kong would continue to be a British possession and a highly successful commercial base until 1997.

The tangled affairs of the Opium War created a considerable literature. The British public sought information about China, a strange place where war had broken out at the end of the earth. Of several soldiers’ memoirs, the very detailed and careful account by John Ouchterlony, an officer in the Royal Engineers, is valuable: The Chinese war: an account of all the operations of the British forces from the commencement to the Treaty of Nanking. This and other similar books were published some years later. However, those close to the scene of the action, English-speaking people in Macau, needed urgently to know what was going on. There was occasional news in the Chinese Repository, but it was not a newspaper. In the tense period from August 1839 until the arrival of the expeditionary force in June 1840, there was little accurate information about the decisions taken and proposed by the Chinese authorities. A vastly different source of information became available in July 1840: J.L. Shuck, Portfolio chinensis or a collection of authentic Chinese state papers, illustrative of the history of the present position of affairs in China: with a translation, notes and introduction. This is a reprint in Chinese and translation into English of Lin Zexu’s regulations against opium, which had been issued in Chinese, but the details of which were unknown to westerners until Shuck’s book appeared just after the arrival of the British fleet. Shuck thereupon added a brief appendix describing the powerful force about to be brought to bear on China. There soon followed what Austin Coates aptly called ‘the crude wrench of war’. (A. Coates, Macao and the British, 1637-1842, p. 175). 

Lin, sure that he held the advantage, began by threatening to bombard the unarmed vessels in Hong Kong harbour. Elliot, who had just been reinforced by the arrival of two 18-gun corvettes, HMS *Hyacinth* and HMS *Volage*, countered by a feint near the entrance to the Pearl River leading to Canton. It turned into a naval battle; his two ships, led by *Hyacinth*, with Captain Smith in command, defeated a Chinese fleet of 29 war junks in ‘a sharp action’ on 3 November at a place Elliot called Chuenpee.  

This escalation left Macau in a precarious position, the Chinese smarting from their unexpected reversal. Smith’s subsequent entry into the Inner Harbour forced Silveira Pinto to demand his immediate withdrawal, for there was a fresh crop of placards demanding death to all the British. Smith withdrew as requested, but steadily deteriorating events in succeeding months led to a significant action which proved to be decisive for Macau’s security for the next century. It was triggered by the capture at Macau in August 1840 of an English missionary, the Rev. Vincent Stanton, who was imprisoned in chains at Canton, his life clearly in peril following the death of the

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villager in Kowloon. Stanton’s predicament led to an immediate response. The long
and trying stalemate at Macau ended when Smith landed a force just north of the
barrier gate and destroyed the Chinese encampment that had menaced Macau for
twelve months.¹⁹⁵ This exercise of *force majeure* led after four months to Stanton
being released, not strangled. He kept the chains, which for many years afterwards
continued to be exhibited in London.¹⁹⁶

An Engineer officer who was present noted that 600 rounds of thirty-two pounder
shot were fired in what was the largest display of armed strength in Macau since the
repulse of the Dutch in 1622. He added that the action was watched by a ‘vast
concourse of people’ from the excellent vantage point of Mong Ha, a hill just south
of the barrier.¹⁹⁷ It must have made a deep impression on those present. It seems
certain that the Portuguese young men who went to Hong Kong a few years later
were there. They would have readily made up their minds about the future of
European presence on the China coast.

In a short engagement, Smith effectively brought to an end the suzerainty enjoyed by
the *Casa Branca* mandarins for 250 years. Hitherto, no building might be erected or
repaired in Macau without their permission, for which a fee had of course to be paid.
This requirement was ended in 1843. At the same time, it was agreed that
communications between Macau and the *Casa Branca* mandarin would be on the
basis of equality.¹⁹⁸ However, this did not significantly strengthen the position of
Macau. For some time to come, it became in effect a dependency of Hong Kong, as
events would prove twice in the next twenty years.

The first such event was the assassination of the governor, João Maria Ferreira do
Amaral, on 22 August 1849, set upon by a Chinese mob when he rashly ventured
outside the city wall. This led to an immediate response by the Governor of Hong
Kong, Sir George Bonham, who despatched two British naval vessels, HMS
*Amazon*, commanded by Captain Troubridge, and the steamship HMS *Medea*, to
Macau. He told the hastily set up Macau Governing Council:

Portuguese writer passes over this immensely significant action in a few lines; it was, after all, a
British, not a Portuguese achievement.
¹⁹⁸ *Chinese Repository*, vol. 12, no. 10, October 1843, p. 555.
Captain Troubridge will remain at Macao for the present, and I trust the arrival of H. M. vessels at this juncture will be sufficient to shew the Chinese Authorities that the British Government fully sympathize with that of Her Most Faithful Majesty on this distressing occasion, and that the Chinese will, if evilly disposed, be induced in consequence to refrain from any further acts of aggression.  

Three days after the governor’s death, and with Macau facing a menacing situation, a small local force, 36 men strong, led by a young sub-lieutenant of the artillery, Vicente Mesquita, bravely and successfully stormed Baishaling (Cantonese, Pak Shan Lan; Portuguese, Passaleão), the nearby Chinese fort, heavily garrisoned, but with untrained soldiers.

\[199\] It is noteworthy that permission was neither sought from nor granted by the ad hoc authorities in Macau for this armed British incursion. Bonham continued: ‘I yesterday addressed a Letter to the High Commissioner on the subject of this atrocious murder, and informed him that I conceived it to be one in which all the Representatives of the Foreign Powers in China were directly concerned, and that I fully expected that he would cause the perpetrators of the bloody deed to be at once apprehended, should they have taken refuge within the dominions of the Emperor of China.’ J.F. Marques Pereira, Ta-Ssi-Yang-Kuo, Lisbon, 1899, vol. I, p. 233, cited by J.P. Braga, The Portuguese in Hongkong and China, p. 179. ‘Her Most Faithful Majesty’, was the title of the Queen of Portugal, the title ‘Rex Fidelissimus’ having first been bestowed on King John V in 1748 by Pope Benedict XIV.
A Portuguese view of ‘the Battle of Passaleão’. The artist had little idea of what actually took place. Passaleão was to the north-west of Macau, and Green Island, not shown here, is in the bay between Passaleão and Macau. This view is from the north-east, showing Guia (left) and Mong Ha (right). In the distance, to the left of Guia, is Penha, the hill at Macau’s south tip. In the distance is the Chinese island of Lappa, to the west of Macau. To the east of Macau is open sea.

The depiction of Mesquita’s troops as a highly disciplined force is likewise fanciful.

J.F. Marques Pereira,

The fort’s guns were spiked and its magazine blown. The mob had severed Amaral’s head and hand which were seized as trophies. In a savage act of reprisal, Mesquita did the same to an unarmed mandarin, a civilian, who was captured.200

Map 7 - The Portuguese colony of Macau, 1909,
M. Azevedo Coutinho, *Planta da colonia Portugueza de Macau*

The entire map, inset to right, shows the boundaries of territory held by Macau (edged in blue) and China (edged in yellow). The detail from this map (left) refers to boundary disputes and tensions that remained unresolved after 1849, and continued to cause friction between Portugal and China until the 1920s.

A neutral zone north of the Barrier Gate (*Porta do Cêrco*), is boldly marked in red. This was protected by the Chinese *Fortaleza de Passaleão* until its destruction in 1849. Thereafter, Portuguese guns at the hastily constructed *Fortaleza de Mongha* (No. 7), south of the *Porta do Cêrco*, prevented Chinese reoccupation of the plain between the two positions. This plain is marked *Campo neutro ou terreno desocupado pelos chins desde 1849 a 1890* (Neutral ground or land unoccupied by the Chinese from 1849 to 1890). However, it is still edged in yellow, a recognition that it remained Chinese territory.

To the west is the *Casa Branca* (the White House), headquarters of the Heung Shan magistrate, once formidable, but impotent after 1849.

*Lest the Chinese contemplate a counter-attack, Troubridge occupied the position with his marines, well-armed, well-trained and supported by the guns of the Amazon and the Medea, a far stronger statement than Mesquita’s spectacular sortie, heroic though it undoubtedly was.*

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201 C.R. Boxer, *The Portuguese Seaborne Empire*, pp. 119 and 302, pointed out that Portuguese military tactics for several centuries amounted to no more than a wild on-rush, accompanied by the war cry ‘Santiago e a elles’ – ‘St James and at them’ (the traditional representation of St James shows him armed with a sword). In this case it was highly successful, unnerving a disorganised enemy who fled at the sight of cold steel. However, many years later, Fr Manuel Teixeira unconsciously revealed how poorly equipped they had been. He told how a public-spirited citizen, Constantino Maria de Sousa, had presented the newly established Macau Museum in 1929 with the lance used by his father...
presence and the fort’s occupation by the Royal Marines was power of a different order. The French sent a detachment of troops too, and the Spanish later sent a gunboat from Manila.

The destruction of Passaleão was a local incident, and it resolved the immediate threat to Macau. That did not stop a panicky exodus of Macanese to Hong Kong, certain that China would seek vengeance. That did not happen until 117 years later, when in 1966 a rioting mob tore down a large statue of Mesquita that had been erected as recently as 1940 in the Largo do Senado, the chief public place in Macau.

During the next few years, friction between British and Chinese increased. Another war seemed certain, and, inevitably, when it was fought between 1857 and 1860, it was won by Britain. China was further humiliated. As for Macau, it slid further into obscurity. Within a few years, it was beneath notice; there was no longer a British consulate there from 1846 until World War II. The Portuguese government sought to negotiate a treaty with China that placed Portugal on an equal footing with Britain. This treaty was signed at Tientsin on 13 August 1862, and was hailed in Macau and Lisbon as a diplomatic triumph for Portugal. The governor who negotiated it, Isidoro Francisco Guimarães, was elevated to the peerage as Viscount de Praia Grande de Macau. However, when his successor as Governor of Macau, José Rodrigues Coelho do Amaral, went to Tientsin in June 1864 to exchange ratifications, the Chinese prevaricated. After fruitless negotiations, it became clear that the Chinese had no intention of ratifying the treaty ‘as Macau could not but be regarded as Chinese territory’. ‘Then go and conquer Macau’, retorted Coelho do Amaral.

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202 A. Coates, op. cit., p. 96.
203 The Governor of Hong Kong, Sir George Bonham, to Earl Grey, 26 April 1851, R.L. Jarman, Hong Kong Annual Administration Reports, 1841-1941, vol. 1, pp. 95, 121, 148; L. Andrade de Sá, The boys from Macau, p. 4.
204 L. & M. Ride, Voices of Macao Stones, pp. 53-54.
206 C.A. Montalto de Jesus, Historic Macao, p. 374.
207 Ibid., pp. 376-377.
He had placed himself in an awkward situation. The Chinese had suffered heavy defeat at the hands of the British twice in twenty years, but they might take on the far less powerful Portugal. Indeed, they had begun gunboat diplomacy on the China coast. However, much had changed, and in 1864 it was the British, not the Chinese who could use gunboats to impose their will.

The second Chinese War had led to a major British naval and military presence in Hong Kong, and any further disturbance to stability in the Far East would certainly lead to renewed British intervention. Governors of Macau were used to walking a tightrope, and Coelho do Amaral now found himself in that situation. It did not warrant asking for gunboats, but a limited show of strength and solidarity might work wonders. He could not mount the display of naval or military might that Britain would be able to put on. Sir Hercules Robinson, the Governor of Hong Kong, determined on another piece of tacit British support – not gunboat diplomacy.

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208 When war junks threatened Lord Napier in 1834, as discussed in Chapter 2. Chinese Repository, vol. 5, no. 4, August 1836, p. 173.
209 The China Directory, 1861, detailed the naval vessels and military units then in Hong Kong.
210 British support did not extend to forcing China to ratify the 1862 treaty, which was quietly forgotten. The Royal Navy had eleven ships at Hong Kong, while all Amaral could muster was a single lorch, the grandiloquently named Amazona (The Times, 17 November 1864). He might have taken comfort from the fact that two of the British gunboats, the Hardy and the Staunch, were actively hunting down pirates on the China coast (The Times, 28 November 1864).
this time, but nevertheless a barely veiled piece of sabre-rattling. This was an
ostentatious and well-publicised official visit to Macau by the newly raised and well-
led Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps, which significantly took its small arms
and light artillery with it to visit this foreign jurisdiction. Not until 1887 was there
grudging Chinese admission of the sovereignty that Portugal had vainly claimed for
330 years. That too would be summarily dismissed in the negotiations a century
later that led to the return of Macau to China in 1999.

Throughout the nineteenth century, prospects for Macau grew steadily bleaker, and
the trickle of emigration continued, particularly following Amaral’s death in 1849
and a generation later in the aftermath of the immensely destructive Great Typhoon
in 1874. Another French visitor, Fr Evariste Régis Huc, wrote in 1855:

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212 The Treaty of Peking, Tratado de Amizade e Comércio Sino-Português, was signed on 1 December 1887. Far from being dictated by Lisbon in the manner of most of the unequal treaties forced upon China in the later nineteenth century, it was the result of a British initiative designed to forestall the possibility of a French occupation. Montalto de Jesus, ever the apologist for Macau, complained: ‘an actual dependency of Hongkong, indeed, could scarcely be more subordinated to British dictation than the spoliated and perverted Portuguese colony’. C.A. Montalto de Jesus, op. cit., p. 432. A Chinese view, written soon after the Revolution of 1949, was broadly similar. Writing of the influence of Sir Robert Hart, Inspector-General of the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs Service from 1863 to 1908, Hu Sheng wrote: ‘In controlling the customs service, the Inspector-General was actually in a position to control the destiny of the Manchus. Having the customs under its control, imperialism used it to establish dominance over China’s policies. It was in essence a rope thrown around the neck of the Manchu Government which the imperialists used for various acts of aggression against China.’ (Hu Sheng, Imperialism and Chinese Politics, p. 66).
At present Macao is a mere remembrance; the English establishment at Hongkong has given it the mortal blow, and nothing is left of its former prosperity but fine houses without tenants; in a few years more, perhaps, the European ships, as they sail past this once proud and wealthy Portuguese colony, will see only a naked rock to which the Chinese fisherman will come to dry his black nets.²¹⁴

Thus post-bellum Macau had little to offer aspirational young men. The attraction of a better life in Hong Kong was irresistible to growing numbers. The careers of three of them are examined in subsequent chapters.

Part 2 – The early years of Hong Kong: race relations established

The exhaustive debate about the merits of the selection of Hong Kong as a British naval and trading base need not be discussed here.²¹⁵ It has been shown how Macau again endured troubled times after 1839. Macau’s transient prosperity during the 1830s was a by-product of the explosion in the opium trade. With the sudden cessation of the opium trade in 1839, Macau’s economy collapsed as suddenly as it had done in the late 1630s. After Captain Smith’s demonstration of ‘shock and awe’ in August 1840, the Chinese threats vanished. Some British residents had already begun to trickle back to Macau; the rest now followed. The inward flow of opium and the outwards flow of tea and silver resumed as before. Prosperity resumed briefly in Macau, while the uncertainty of Hong Kong’s future as a British colony made people hesitant about moving there. It was by no means certain until August 1842 that the acquisition of Hong Kong in January 1841 by Captain Charles Elliot would be confirmed by a British government reluctant at best, hostile at worst, to the idea of acquiring this barren rock almost devoid of flat land on which civilians might build or troops parade. Had Britain left Hong Kong, it would not have been the first time that it had withdrawn from an unsuitable location. Therefore, for the first two years of occupation, all arrangements were temporary and makeshift, though land

²¹⁵ The choice of Hong Kong by Captain Elliot, the subject of bitter criticism throughout the 1840s, was ably defended by Austin Coates, *Macao and the British*, pp. 212-217. Coates viewed Elliot’s policy, not so much with the benefit of hindsight, as with a measured appreciation of his wisdom in dealing with intractable difficulties, exacerbated by the serious rate of illness and mortality in the forces available to him.
sales had been conducted in June 1841 and land was snapped up by the same merchants who were Elliot’s sternest critics.\textsuperscript{216}

Most of those who went there in the first three years were adventurers rather than economic migrants. From August 1841, a considerable number of Chinese arrived, camp followers catering for the British military encampment already present. They were described by an officer as ‘about as rascally and vagabond a community as could be found in a similar situation in any part of the world’.\textsuperscript{217} As a result, a gaol was rushed up by October 1841.\textsuperscript{218} The earliest years of western presence in Japan in the 1850s were marked by similar opportunism, as were the early post Civil War years in the late 1860s in the defeated Confederate States in America, where the word ‘scallywag’ entered the language to describe their behaviour.

Hong Kong’s ‘scallywag’ period was eventually resolved, but it took many years. A schoolboy essay written in 1843 by a Chinese student at the Morrison Education Society’s school in Hong Kong wrote that ‘[the] year before last almost all the Chinese who lived in Hong Kong were robbers ... but a great change has taken place’.\textsuperscript{219} It was far too optimistic a view, and lawlessness continued. The Rev. George Smith, who visited Hong Kong in 1844, later to return as its first Anglican bishop, wrote discerningly and devastatingly of the mutual antagonism that prevailed between the British and Chinese. Whereas he had found in northern China ‘an intelligent and friendly population’, Hong Kong was different.

The lowest dregs of native society flock to the British Settlement in the hope of gain or plunder ... the principal part of the Chinese population in the town consists of servants, coolies, stone-cutters, and masons engaged in temporary works ... the colony has been for some time also the resort of pirates and thieves, so protected by secret compact as to defy the ordinary regulations of police detection or prevention. In short, there are but faint prospects at present of any other than either a migratory or a predatory race being attracted to Hongkong, who, when their hopes of gain or

\textsuperscript{216} G.B. Endacott & A. Hinton, \textit{Fragrant Harbour}, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{217} J. Ouchterlony, \textit{The Chinese War}, p. 172.
\textsuperscript{218} G.R. Sayer, \textit{Hong Kong, 1841-1862}, p. 118. It was well filled by 1843. Among the inmates were nine Portuguese rogues; itinerant adventurers had arrived from Macau too. (\textit{Chinese Repository}, vol. 12, no. 10, October 1843, p. 534. The report was copied by William Tarrant in his newspaper \textit{The Friend of China}, and further reprinted in his \textit{History of Hongkong Part I, 1839-1844}, p. 71. Details of these nine are unknown, but their diet is recounted. Each man was given daily a pound of beef and a loaf of bread. They would all have quickly fallen victim to scurvy. The Chinese fared better, with rice, fish and vegetables).
\textsuperscript{219} \textit{Chinese Repository}, vol. 12, no. 7, July 1843, p. 365.
Spring Gardens, looking eastwards towards Hospital Hill, from which the mansion of Jardine, Matheson & Co. dominates the town below. Painted by Murdoch Bruce, lithographed by A. Maclure, 1846. There is a vast chasm between the group of fashionable English residents promenading on the praya in front of their fine residences and the Chinese occupants of the sampan. Nearing the praya is a naval boat manned by British bluejackets, oars held aloft in salute as they arrive. The sole contact between the two races is a Chinese servant, bowing obsequiously to his master.

Hong Kong Museum of Art, AH64.389.10, reproduced in Historic Pictures, p. 28.

Smith was horrified by the contempt in which the Chinese were held and dismayed at the heavy-handed attempts at control of the lawless situation by means of a curfew.

The Chinese are also treated as a degraded race of people. They are not permitted to go out into the public streets after a certain hour in the evening, without a lantern and a written note from their European employer, to secure them from the danger of apprehension and imprisonment till the morning.

220 G. Smith, A Narrative of the exploratory visit to each of the consular cities of China, quoted by G.B. Endacott and D.E. She, *The diocese of Victoria, Hong Kong, 1849-1949*, pp. 7, 8.
The poisoning incident gained international notoriety. The baker’s premises are unlikely to have looked anything like this mid-Victorian architectural pastiche concocted by the artist.

Illustrated London News, 28 March 1857

The problem of lawlessness, but not of race relations, was discussed at some length, by the Rev. Dr James Legge, resident in Hong Kong from 1843 until 1872.\(^{221}\) Legge was one of the victims of a botched attempt in 1857 to poison the entire British population, all of whom were known to eat bread for breakfast. The baker, known to Legge as ‘A-lum’, put too much arsenic into the dough, and succeeded only in making his 400 victims violently sick.\(^{222}\) Later, in prison, ‘the respect and deference


\(^{222}\) Historical and Statistical Abstract of the colony of Hongkong, 1841-1920, p. 9. ‘The excitement was of course most intense’, wrote one of the intended victims, the educational administrator Eitel (E.J. Eitel, Europe in China, p. 311). Nearly forty years later, Augustine Heard, head of the company that bore his name, wrote a detailed account of the incident: A. Heard, ‘Poisoning in Hong Kong, An Episode of Life in China Forty Years Ago’, written about 1894, Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Heard I/Box GQ-2. Folder GQ-2-1. Online, accessed, 27 November 2011.
shown him by all the prisoners were wonderful’, wrote Legge.223 The attempt to wipe out the intruders failed and was not repeated.224

Perhaps it was in an attempt to rid Hong Kong of its evil reputation for lawlessness that Sir Henry Pottinger, who succeeded the disgraced Elliot as British plenipotentiary in August 1841, decided, on announcing his assumption of office as


224 A decade later, the governor, Sir Richard MacDonnell, was quite candid in his comment: ‘In the Chinese quarter of the town, it was possible, till lately, and is even now occasionally so, for a man to be knocked down at noon and robbed in presence of fifty witnesses, without any intervention in his aid, or the least disposition to give information to the police.’ MacDonnell to the Duke of Buckingham, 29 October 1867, R.L. Jarman, Hong Kong Annual Administration Reports, 1841-1941, vol. I, p. 304. However, by 1870, his successor, Sir Arthur Kennedy, could report that ‘the Chinese population are docile and orderly’. Kennedy to Carnarvon, 24 August 1870, R.L. Jarman, Hong Kong Annual Administration Reports, 1841-1941, vol. I, p. 423. In the meantime, MacDonnell had recruited a large contingent of Sikh police, not susceptible to bribes from local people. Fifty years later, an old resident, R.C. Hurley, looked back on MacDonnell as ‘the best Governor the Colony has ever known’, whose ‘resolute policy for the suppression of crime and vice was inaugurated and immediately put into severe practice with highly satisfactory results’. R.C. Hurley, Picturesque Hongkong, p. 111.
the first Governor of Hong Kong on 26 June 1843, to advance the rapidly growing town to the dignity of the City of Victoria. He proclaimed that ‘his excellency the governor is further pleased to direct, that the present city, on the northern side of the island, shall be distinguished by her majesty’s name’. There could no longer be any doubt that the British presence would be permanent and formidable.

Part 3 – British ascendancy: ‘the racialisation of urban form and space’

Most Europeans who came to Hong Kong from 1844 onwards would have regarded themselves as ‘respectable’. Most foreign communities in Hong Kong during the first century of its existence were composed of entrepreneurs who, like the shakers of the ‘pagoda tree’ in early nineteenth century India, returned to Britain or the USA having secured a competency – or far better. Most foreign communities were transient, but the Portuguese community, which came to be the second-largest after the British, made Hong Kong their home for up to five generations.

Among others who came to be significant were various Indian groups. The first of these were Parsees, who already had a presence in Macau at a small enclave near the

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226 Pottinger also firmly put to rest any doubts as to where the main settlement should be, others having promoted the cooler but more exposed southern coast. Two typhoons in July 1841, the first of many which would devastate Hong Kong in years to come, had already effectively ended that idea.
227 Reliable demographic statistics for nineteenth century Hong Kong are difficult to obtain. It is especially difficult to provide a dissection by nationalities of the European community. An attempt has been made to do this in Appendix 2.
Colina da Barra.\textsuperscript{228} They were present in Canton in the 1830s, and rapidly became significant in the early decades of Hong Kong’s existence. Later, the Police Force and Prisons Department were largely staffed by Indians, not subject to the pressure that might otherwise have come from the local Chinese community.

Apart from these was a small but very significant Jewish community. Though initially based in Shanghai, they came to have an importance in the economy of Hong Kong far beyond their numbers. All these communities gave Hong Kong its distinctive character.

After its hesitant beginning, the new colony began to develop more rapidly in 1844, though economic prosperity took some years longer to accelerate. However, it was

clear that the British would never return to Macau in large numbers. Instead, a number of Portuguese began to move to Hong Kong, mainly seeking employment in government service and in private commercial houses. There was no indication either in the choice of its location or in the layout of the town that this little place, with a precipitous mountain behind and a deep water anchorage in front, might one day become a great city.²²⁹

The eight Chinese villages on the northern side of Hong Kong Island, with a total population of little more than 5,000, were left alone.²³⁰ Temporary structures, built of bamboo poles covered with mats woven from bamboo leaves, and known locally as mat sheds, were run up adjacent to the anchorage early in 1841, and the transfer of commerce from Macau began, Jardine, Matheson & Co. leading the way. Running north-east from the chain of mountains sheltering the anchorage from the worst fury

²²⁹ By comparison, Melbourne and Adelaide, both founded less than ten years earlier, had been carefully laid out, as was Christchurch, founded a little later. Town planning was not unknown in the British Empire, but the exigencies of rapidly transferring trade from precarious Macau to a secure location under British naval protection precluded such considerations.

²³⁰ The following account of the settlement is principally drawn from the notes provided in Historical and Statistical Abstract of the colony of Hongkong, 1841-1920, pp. 1-6, and C.H. Ho, introduction to City of Victoria, translated by S. Bard, pp. 13, 47.
of the typhoons that periodically laid waste the China coast was a prominent ridge that in November 1841 was reserved for Crown use. Subsequently named Government Hill, it became the site for the residences of the Governor and the General Officer Commanding the troops. Here too were the offices of the Colonial Secretary and St John’s Cathedral, for the Anglican Church was seen as the established church, the government’s ecclesiastical arm, in these infant years of the colony, state aid continuing until 1892. On the lower slopes of Government Hill were the military barracks and parade ground, with the naval dockyard on the shore below. Their location was soon seen to impede the growth of the city, but the naval and military authorities refused to move them to a more suitable location for well over a century.

This meant that commercial and residential areas could only be developed to the west of Government Hill and to the east of the barracks. To the east, Spring Gardens, later called Wanchai became a European residential area, where fine residences with harbour views were built. Later, it became a zone of social deterioration, as demographers have it, and by the 1940s was one of the most crowded slums in the world. To the west, houses and business premises were crammed into the small available space. The towering mountain above the newly proclaimed City of Victoria became Victoria Peak. In both cases, the royal appellation eventually fell into disuse; Victoria became Central, and the peak became The Peak. At the same time the recognition of vastly different European and Chinese standards of housing, living and hygiene led to rapid action, but it was not to remedy the situation. Any Chinese living in what had become almost exclusively a European residential area were forced to move further west to Sheung Wan.

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232 G.B. Endacott, *History of Hong Kong*, p. 164. It was a frequent complaint that Hong Kong was ‘strangled at its waist’. J.M. Price, quoted by Endacott, p. 163.
234 The 1921 Census Report, in enumerating the inhabitants of the City of Victoria added that it was ‘a term hardly known to ordinary residents and rarely heard or seen except in maps and official reports’. *Report on the Census of the Colony, 1921*, pp. 152-153. Hong Kong Sessional Papers 15/1921.
235 W. Tarrant, *A history of Hongkong*, pp. 101-105. An English correspondent described the Chinese quarter as ‘filthy and disreputable’. A petition to the governor, Sir Henry Pottinger, signed by 89 Chinese shopkeepers in the Upper Bazaar sought ‘your Excellency’s celestial benevolence’. Pottinger yielded only to the extent of having the ground cleared and levelled at public expense in the location to which these people were compelled to move.
Apart from the mansions of the taipans, the heads of the main English trading houses, who had already built their residences on Morrison Hill and Hospital Hill, higher ground east of Government House, the Europeans were at first located almost entirely at Spring Gardens, a small area along the shoreline. This began a defined pattern of rigidly separate communities that would persist until towards the end of the twentieth century. It set in place what has been termed ‘the racialisation of urban form and space in Hong Kong’. It reflected and intensified the earlier complete separation of the Portuguese and Chinese communities in Macau, the *Largo do Senado* being the dividing line between the two. In Hong Kong, reclamation began in the 1850s to wrest a little more land from the harbour, a process that continued on an increasing scale for the next 150 years and more. Settlement had not yet begun to move up the steep slope of the Peak towards what eventually became the Mid-Levels. This took place after 1870, as the area behind the waterfront, the ‘praya’ or ‘praia’ – a Portuguese word borrowed from Macau, one of the few to take root in British parlance in Hong Kong – became impossibly overcrowded, and with steep rises in the price of land, the Portuguese population was forced out as rents also rose. They would always be on the fringe.

**Part 4 – Religious diversity: ‘defenders of the faith’**

Within a few years of their arrival, the British community had established all the organisations that marked a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant colony of the mid-nineteenth century: an elite gentleman’s club, the Hong Kong Club, a Masonic lodge, Zetland Lodge, a cricket club, St John’s Anglican Cathedral and the Hong Kong Jockey Club. In the 1860s, the Botanical Gardens were laid out nearby, the governor reporting that ‘a place of recreation, whereto the inhabitants may resort

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236 ‘Here the intersection between ideas and images concerning civil society, cultural identity, architecture, and the official practices of colonial urban planning is demonstrated ... this coalescing of ideas, images, and practices in the colonial environment of British Hong Kong not only led to the racialisation of urban form and space there but also contributed to the apparent anxiety exhibited by the European population over the preservation of their own identity through the immediacy of the built environment.’ G.A. Bremner and D.P.Y. Lung, ‘Spaces of exclusion: the significance of cultural identity in the formation of European residential districts in British Hong Kong, 1877-1904’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 21(2), p. 223.


238 As reported by the Governor, Sir William des Voeux to Lord Knutsford, 31 October 1889, R.L. Jarman, *Hong Kong Annual Administration Reports, 1841-1941*, vol. 2, pp. 60-61.
after the toil and heat of the day, is not only a luxury, but indispensable in a climate such as that of Hong Kong’. Besides serving the interests of the ruling community, these institutions also reflected and established geographical and social boundaries which excluded not only the Chinese, but also severely constrained what became a quite substantial Portuguese community from Macau.

Further east was Wong Nei Chong valley, with the village of that name at its head. It was well watered – too well watered. It was swampy and malarial. Disastrously, the military cantonment was placed not far away because there was flat land at Happy Valley for a parade ground. In the first three years, 1841 to 1843, there was an appalling death rate from what was termed Hong Kong Fever, probably a strain of malaria, for there was little understanding of tropical diseases. The name Happy Valley was a macabre contradiction in terms for this death trap. Hundreds were buried there in the Colonial Cemetery, generally known as Happy Valley Cemetery. ‘Our life here is emphatically in the midst of death’, wrote a correspondent to the

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240 W. Tarrant, Hongkong. Part I, 1839–1844. A history of Hongkong from the time of its cession to the British Empire to the year 1844, p. 65. Tarrant quotes in detail a paper on the ‘Hongkong fever’ read by Dr Dill, the Surgeon of the 55th Regiment, to the China Medico Chirurgical Society in 1845.
Chinese Repository, whose editor recorded somberly in November 1843 ‘the rapid filling up of our graveyards for the last 18 months’. 241

To the west of Victoria, in what is now the Sheung Wan district, was a rapidly growing Chinese settlement. As this area became overcrowded with a huge influx of people escaping from the turmoil of the Taiping Rebellion in the 1850s, settlement spread uphill into Tai Ping Shan, above Sheung Wan and straight below the steep rise of Victoria Peak. 242 Between the Chinese settlement and the British town of Victoria, a Portuguese enclave developed. The people who lived here were the first wave of the diaspora from Macau, those who came soon after the British occupation of Hong Kong. In Macau the whole Portuguese population had lived within the sound of church bells. So it would be in Hong Kong until well into the twentieth century. Intensely devout, they lived within the sound of the church bells which sounded the Angelus each evening. With Chinese heathen on one side and English Protestants on the other, the Portuguese community drew closer together in defence of and in commitment to the Catholic faith.

241 Chinese Repository, vol. 12, no. 11, November 1843, pp. 611, 612.
242 A dense population was crammed into slums constructed without any planning controls until a serious outbreak of bubonic plague in 1894 forced the authorities to take drastic action. (S. Braga, “An unexampled calamity”, the Hong Kong Plague of 1894*, Casa Down Under: Newsletter of the Casa de Macau, Australia, vol. 19 no 3, June 2007). The problem had been ignored, not remedied, and the price then paid at the end of the nineteenth century was a heavy one both in deaths and badly soured relations between the Chinese community and their British rulers.
For many years, that community had only one focus. A Catholic church was built well ahead of St John’s Anglican Cathedral, not completed until 1849, though since 1843 there had been an official (Anglican) Colonial Chaplain, who conducted services in a mat shed on the parade ground. The Catholic Church moved far more quickly. A Prefect Apostolic, Mgr. Theodore Joset, was appointed in 1841, arriving in Hong Kong on 3 March 1842. He chose a spot for his church and received a grant of land from the Government of the new colony upon which he ‘erected a structure of mat-sheds for Catholic service. But even on the first day on which it was opened this structure was insufficient for the congregation, consisting of soldiers and others (especially Portuguese who had already begun to settle in the new colony). A

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243 G.B. Endacott & D.E. She, The Diocese of Victoria, Hong Kong, p. 9; G.B. Endacott, History of Hong Kong, p. 43. This was the Rev. Vincent Stanton, whose capture in August 1840 had led to Captain Smith’s tour de force in Macau. Until his arrival, one of the naval chaplains conducted services in the mat shed. Chinese Repository, vol. 12, no. 10, October 1843, p. 549.
244 The Rock, new series, vol. 1 no. 9, September 1928, p. 298. This report is at variance with a contemporary report of the consecration of the permanent church in 1843, which suggests that there were few Portuguese at the first service. Their numbers grew slowly as businesses transferred from Macau.
permanent structure was soon built, situated near the corner of Pottinger Street and Wellington Street in the lower part of the town, and remained in use for fourteen years.245

Dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, and consecrated on Trinity Sunday, 11 June 1843, it was located about 500 metres to the west of the symbols of English

dominance and closer to the praya. It was surrounded by crowded rows of semi-detached cottages, which remained a Portuguese enclave until the 1870s. This church both reflected and defined the geographical location of the Portuguese community, devoutly and conservatively Catholic. Destroyed by fire in 1859, it was replaced by a fine building with twin towers which dominated its immediate neighbourhood.

A quarter of century later, the growth of the Catholic community was such that it too had to be replaced. In commenting on the Catholic community of Hong Kong in the nineteenth century, J.P. Braga would observe:

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For the first half-century after the setting up of the Catholic Mission in Hongkong, the congregations of the Catholic churches were almost entirely Portuguese. The students attending the Catholic schools were also nearly all Portuguese.
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Thus an enclave was established that would exist until the early twentieth century, an area of small terraces extending up the hillside, between Caine Road and Robinson Road near the Mosque. It gradually expanded into Robinson Road, first laid out in 1861. It was termed by its residents Mato Moiro, ‘the field of Muslims’, the name deriving from the Jamia Mosque, built in 1843.

Here, within a kilometre of each other were the Anglican and Catholic cathedrals, the mosque, a non-conformist chapel and, later, the Jewish synagogue. It was an appropriate symbol of such religious diversity, and was made necessary by the tiny

246 Chinese Repository, vol. 12, no. 6, June 1843, p. 336; Historical and Statistical Abstract of the colony of Hongkong, 1841-1920, p. 3; W. Tarrant, Hongkong, Part I, 1839-44, reprinted in A. Sweeting, Education in Hong Kong, p. 157. An account of the consecration in the Friend of China, 22 June 1843, indicated that there were few Portuguese in Hong Kong at that early stage: ‘The Roman Catholic church has been completed. It is called the Chapel of the Conception and is located on Wellington Street with its front towards the bay in the middle of our burgeoning town. A college is attached to educate Chinese for the ministry. The church is 112 ft long and 48 ft wide. The first 12 feet is the porch and the last 38 feet is the altar leaving an area of 62’ x 48’ for the congregation. There are eight 30” diameter columns supporting the roof, four along either side at 6½’ centres from the outer walls. The walls are granite, infilled with brick, the roof is wood. There is a granite walkway from porch to altar but the rest of the floor to either side is wood. The walls are painted white and the roof is light blue making it cheerful inside. Father Feliciani thinks he can house 1,000 persons. The cost was $9,000 of which one third came from mission funds and the rest from donations by residents.’ About 100 people attended the first service - Negroes, Bengalis, Madrassis and Chinese. There were soldiers from the 55th Regiment (Connemara), sepoys and native artillerymen as well as Portuguese, Italian and other foreign seamen. The English were in two groups at the sides near the altar. There were 7-8 women present as well. In addition the orchestra numbered about 50 musicians. Sourced from website http://www.houghton.idv.hk/chapter39.htm (accessed 21 January 1012).


249 Chinese Repository, vol. 12, no. 10, October 1843, p. 549, Historical and Statistical Abstract of the Colony of Hongkong, 1841-1920, p. 3. Several units of the garrison were Indian regiments. It was deemed necessary to build a mosque as quickly as possible, even before a Protestant church.

250 The first to be completed was the chapel built on Queen’s Rd by the Rev J.L. Shuck, the American Southern Baptist missionary, and opened for worship on 17 July 1842 (W. Tarrant, op. cit., p. 37).
wedge of land on which the city of Victoria was built in its first half century. The adherents of each saw themselves in some sense as ‘defenders of the faith’.

The Portuguese enclave was readily identifiable by the dress of the women, many of whom attended Mass twice a day. They usually appeared in public wearing a dó, a long black cape-like costume, a cover-all. It was very distinctive and Portuguese women wearing it were immediately recognisable.251

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A clear picture of the business community of Hong Kong does not emerge until the late 1840s, when a few Portuguese were in business for themselves, mainly in service industries, where opportunities seemed to be available. British commerce dominated the next half century. The reliance on opium, tea and general wares grew more complex and sophisticated, though still based on shipping. As time passed, British firms embarked on banking and insurance as well as the staple import/export businesses. A study by Solomon Bard in 1993 based on a careful examination of

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local directories and the early Hong Kong press identified 88 British firms in business in Hong Kong between 1843 and 1899.\(^{252}\)

Of the dozens of British firms, three should be included here. Butterfield and Swire commenced business in Hong Kong in 1870, just as the benefits of the Suez Canal were beginning to be felt in the Far East. Shipping and sugar refining were the basis of its long period of prosperity, enhanced with the development of the important Taikoo Dockyard. The other two will be briefly mentioned. They are Shewan, Tomes & Co. and Gilman & Co. Both were of significance in the business careers of members of the Braga family in the early decades of the twentieth century, and will be discussed in that context. For more than half a century from 1903 when their premises were all built together on the new praya following a major reclamation of the harbour foreshore, the grand and imposing Edwardian buildings of Butterfield and Swire, Jardines, Shewan, Tomes & Co., the travel agent Thomas Cook and the General Post Office, lined the waterfront near the Star Ferry. A significant open space, Statue Square, was dominated by a statue of Queen Victoria, later joined by other royal personages. The square was flanked by the Supreme Court

\(^{252}\) S. Bard, *Traders of Hong Kong: some foreign merchant houses, 1841-1899*, pp. 52-79, 84. Some had been established in Canton in the 1830s, most notably Jardine, Matheson & Co., the largest trading company in Hong Kong for well over a century. It had antecedents in Canton going back to 1780, easily the oldest foreign firm in the Far East. ‘By the end of the nineteenth century it stood at the peak of the mercantile community of Hong Kong, its success assured’, was Bard’s assessment (p. 67). Another important company was Dent & Co, active from the 1820s until the serious depression of 1867. Longer lived was Gibb, Livingstone & Co, founded in 1836, and still extant as part of a larger entity, the Inchcape Group, which also absorbed Gilman & Co., another former Canton trader. The following brief discussion of British and other foreign businesses is based on Bard’s important and detailed research, the product of decades of familiarity with Hong Kong’s institutions. Bard indicated that a few of the 88 may have been American firms.
and the Hong Kong Club, powerful symbols of British commercial and political supremacy.

At every point as they played out their lives, the heads of these companies and the heads of government departments were acutely conscious of prestige and status. The Hong Kong Club and the Masonic Lodge were obvious loci for such display. So too was St John’s Cathedral, for this was still an era when attendance at Divine Service was expected, just as it had been in Macau, where the President of the Select Committee instructed the junior members of his staff that such observance was required by the Court of Directors in London and enjoined by him. Andrew Carnegie, the American capitalist, visited Hong Kong as a young man and on Christmas Day 1878 enjoyed the service at St John’s very much. The previous Sunday he wrote, with a sense of egalitarianism that would have been incomprehensible to these people:

I could not help being somewhat shocked on Sunday, as I strolled about the Cathedral, to see some thirty odd sedan chairs on one side, and I suppose as many on the other, each with two, three and sometimes four coolies in gorgeous liveries in attendance, all waiting for the closing of prayers ... It did not seem to me to be quite consistent for some of my Scotch friends who stand so stoutly for Sabbath observance to keep so many human beings on duty, say three for one who worshipped, just to save them from walking a few short squares to and from church, for the town is small and compact ... Really, three men kept at work that one may pray seems just a shade out of proportion.

Within a few years the fabulously wealthy Carnegie could have bought the entire assets of all these soi disant potentates. Inside the Cathedral, the position of one’s pew indicated the importance of the occupant. That was worked out when the cathedral was opened in 1849, but by 1865, the growth in size of the Royal Navy’s China Station caused the Admiral to demand a sitting of the same status as the General Officer Commanding the troops. This was achieved, but by means of an exchange which was to the disadvantage of one of two brothers, evidently

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253 ‘Mr Roberts [President of the Select Committee] begs to acquaint the Gentlemen of the factory that in compliance with the orders, Divine Service will be performed the next and every Sunday following in the Company’s hall at eleven o’clock in the forenoon when their presence will be required in obedience to the orders of the H’ble the Court of Directors’, H.B. Morse, *The Chronicles of the East India Company trading to China 1635-1834*, vol. 3, p. 31, cited by J. Crouch-Smith et al., *Macau Protestant Chapel, a short history*, p. 22.

Huguenots, who ran the firm of Vaucher Frères. There followed months of wrangling and unpleasant scenes in the cathedral before the matter was referred to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Duke of Newcastle, who ruled that ‘parishioners have a claim to be seated according their rank and station’. Vaucher got his sittings back, seats 29 and 30 in the sixth pew from the pulpit, two feet and six inches (less than a metre) closer than the spot to which he had been relegated. 255 The lengths to which the elite in Hong Kong were prepared to go to establish and maintain their prestige is almost beyond belief to observers 150 years later. How would others fare? The answer depended on their success in business.

Part 5 – Foreign business communities: ‘phenomenally successful’

A measure of political stability returned to China following the defeat of the Taiping rebels in 1864. It was followed by three major developments in communications: the advent of the telegraph, the opening of the Suez Canal and the development of steam navigation on China’s river systems. Hong Kong and Shanghai, especially the latter, became boom cities. While Shanghai was cosmopolitan and international, Hong Kong was firmly a British colonial city. Nevertheless, several significant foreign communities prospered there. The principal ones were the Americans, the Parsees, the Jews and the Germans. All did better than the Portuguese, who were by far the most numerous but the least prosperous.

Before World War II, American firms lacked the enormous strength of British commerce in Hong Kong, though they had their own establishment (‘factory’ or ‘hong’) at Canton. Bard identified seven, including three originating in Canton before 1839. The American share of the opium trade was only 5% of the British, who held a near-monopoly on Indian opium. 256 The oldest American firm was Russell & Co., founded in 1818. Like other American businesses, it remained in Canton well after the British had departed, only moving to Hong Kong in 1850. There it became a ‘great and successful’ enterprise, before waning later in the century, then being taken over by two of its British members, Robert George Shewan

255 G.B. Endacott & D.E. She, The diocese of Victoria, Hong Kong, a hundred years of church history, 1849-1949, pp. 35-37.
256 S. Bard, Traders of Hong Kong: some foreign merchant houses, 1841-1899, p. 80.
and Alexander Tomes. Second was A. Heard & Co., whose impressive building dominated Hong Kong’s Central Business District for some years, but the firm declined from what had been a very strong position before the American government banned the opium trade in 1858.\(^{257}\) Third was Olyphant & Co., already noted for its probity, ‘at a time when these qualities were not abundant’, observed Bard.\(^{258}\)

Of a different order of success was the Parsee trading community. The Parsees, a distinct ethnic and religious Indian minority largely originating from Mumbai (then Bombay), were already active in East Asia by the late eighteenth century. Like the British, with whom they always enjoyed good relations, they set up business in Canton, four of them moving to Hong Kong as early as June 1841, where they bought land at the first land sale.\(^{259}\) Thirty-five Parsee firms were in business in Hong Kong between 1841 and the early twentieth century. Their significance in business and community life was out of all proportion to their numbers. The early Parsee merchants were opium dealers, like the early British and Americans, but most seem to have been active later in the nineteenth century after the opium trade was in decline. They were, commented Bard, ‘excellent merchants, honest and fair in their dealings’.\(^{260}\) Several became noted for their generous benefactions. Hormusjee Mody’s gift of the princely sum of $285,000 made it possible to establish the University of Hong Kong; he was knighted at the ceremony of laying the foundation stone on 16 March 1910.\(^{261}\) Three generations of the Ruttonjee family first established and then provided constant and most generous support to the Ruttonjee Sanatorium, which cared for sufferers from tuberculosis. Other Indian communities are discussed in a later chapter, as their significance in commerce, the Police Force and the Civil Service belongs principally to a later period.

Akin to the Parsees in their small numbers and major importance were the Jews, whose business acumen has left a substantial footprint wherever they go. The first

\(^{257}\) Ibid., p. 81.
\(^{258}\) Ibid., p. 82. Matheson required the resignation of one of his captains who refused to deal in opium on the Sabbath, commenting to his partner, Jardine, that ‘we fear that very godly people are not suited to the opium trade’. M. Collis, *Foreign Mud*, p. 292.
\(^{259}\) These were Dhunjeebhoi Ruttonjee Bisney, Hirjibhoi Rustomjee, Pestonjee Cowasjee and Framjee Jamsetjee. S. Bard, *Traders of Hong Kong: some foreign merchant houses, 1841-1899*, pp. 85-89.
\(^{260}\) Ibid., p. 85.
\(^{261}\) B. Harrison, *University of Hong Kong, the first 50 years, 1911-1961*, p. 34.
Jew prominent in the affairs of Hong Kong was Emmanuel Rafael Belilios, spectacularly successful from the moment he arrived in Hong Kong from Calcutta in 1862. Belilios, who had initially made a fortune in opium trading, was by 1883 chairman of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, a member of the Legislative Council, and noted for his philanthropies.\(^{262}\) These included the endowment of Hong Kong’s first government girls’ school and a scholarship set up in memory of his wife. An early winner was J.P. Braga, who would build on this initial achievement to create a prominent role in public affairs. Belilios did not found a dynasty, unlike several other Baghdadi Jewish families, notably the Sassoons and the Kadoories. The earlier of these were the Sassoons, whose patriarch, David, was born at Baghdad in 1792.

The Sassoons never spoke of their reason for leaving Baghdad after many centuries.\(^{263}\) David Sassoon moved in youth to Mumbai, where he and his sons developed a strong position in the opium trade. A move to Shanghai and later Hong Kong followed naturally. Arthur Sassoon was one of the founders of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation in 1864.\(^{264}\) By 1877 the Sassoons’ staff in various ports in the Far East numbered thirty-five, marking it as a large firm at that time.\(^{265}\) In the 1880s, two brothers of another Baghdadi Jewish family, Ellis and Eleazar (always known as Elly) Kadoorie, arrived in the Far East, setting up a broking business first in Hong Kong, and later investing heavily in Shanghai. Both made a reputation for their conspicuous flair for business, and also for their philanthropy. Both were knighted with the KBE, Sir Ellis in 1917 and Sir Elly in 1926.\(^{266}\) Both of Sir Elly’s sons, Lawrence and Horace also received the KBE in later years. Lawrence’s son Michael was knighted too; the Kadoories became a dynasty uniquely distinguished in the history of the British colony of Hong Kong.\(^{267}\)

\(^{262}\) G.B. Endacott, *History of Hong Kong*, pp. 177, 238.

\(^{263}\) That was left to another emigrant, David Solomon, who became a Singapore merchant. Solomon told a visitor in the 1860s that persecutions in Baghdad had increased until he was forced to flee. ‘The soles of my feet were beaten until they were raw; for they wished to torture me into disclosing treasures which I had not.’ (J.T. Thomson, *Some glimpses into life in the Far East*, p. 244.)


\(^{265}\) From the 1890s they decreased their interest in Hong Kong, moving to Shanghai and London. S. Bard, *Traders of Hong Kong: some foreign merchant houses, 1841-1899*, p. 94.

\(^{266}\) Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.

\(^{267}\) J. Green, in M. Holdsworth and C. Munn (eds), *Dictionary of Hong Kong Biography*, pp. 216-218.
Like Belilios and the Sassoons, Sir Elly was a superb businessman, with an acute eye for new opportunities. He had a remarkable grasp of detail, a fine memory and a flair for selecting competent business associates. All of these were evident in his long association with J.P. Braga. The important partnership between these two is discussed at a later point in this thesis.

Observations made about the acute eye for new opportunities that Jewish merchants displayed could also be made of German businessmen. Already present in the Far East early in the nineteenth century, they arrived in larger numbers as German political development gathered pace in mid-century, and as they came to realise that Hong Kong was a much better place at that time than the treaty ports of Shanghai, Canton, Amoy or Ningpo. Shanghai’s speedy growth was interrupted by the Taiping Rebellion. By contrast, under British administration, Hong Kong not only created an excellent business environment, but also established a social and political order that Europeans found easy to live with. For this reason, the 1860s witnessed the mushrooming of German firms in Hong Kong.268

As a small minority in a British colony, the Germans initially chose to integrate into the British community. In the confined space of the European quarter, they lived close to the British and were sometimes members of the Hong Kong Club. Their presence was important.269 As the number of Germans grew, their cultural and social

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life came to revolve around their own fraternal associations, notably the German Club founded in 1859, and later named ‘Club Germania’, to which only members of the large firms had access. Having few alternatives, many German merchants chose to spend their free time there. It thus became something of a cultural cocoon, despite ‘a large number of the English community, including His Excellency the Governor,’ being present when it commemorated its fiftieth anniversary in 1909. The opening of a Lutheran church in 1879 meant that the German community became even more self-contained.

It was natural for German businesses to flourish in Hong Kong following the unification of the German Empire in 1871. They were phenomenally successful, as reflected in the construction of a five-storey building in 1902 for the German Club in what was then the dress circle of Hong Kong, Kennedy Road, well above the town. It was much bigger than that pillar of the British establishment, the Hong Kong Club, which it overlooked.

German nationalism became more assertive in the later nineteenth century, and tensions between the two nations grew. Germany’s acquisition of Jiaozhou (Kiaochau in German) as a naval base in 1898 in the Shandong Peninsula was promptly matched by Britain’s move on nearby Weihaiwei. Soon afterwards, at the beginning of the twentieth century, ill-feeling began to grow between Britain and Germany over Germany’s support of the Boers in South Africa.

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270 Besides offering a library, a reading room, a concert hall, a billiard room, a bowling alley, a bar, and a dining room, the German Club organised concerts and lectures. There was also a lowlier ‘Captain’s Club’ which owners of small German stores frequented. R.K.S. Mak, ‘The German community in 19th century Hong Kong’, *Asia Europe Journal*, vol. 2, 2004, p. 249.
272 *Historical and statistical abstract of the colony of Hongkong, 1841-1920*, p. 22.
273 Between the 1860s and 1914, thirty German firms were located in Hong Kong, mostly after 1871. S. Bard, *Traders of Hong Kong: some foreign merchant houses, 1841-1899*, pp. 96-105.
275 Despite the Germans’ drive and commercial success, their presence in Hong Kong depended on the goodwill and cooperation of the British. Once this goodwill and cooperation gave way to hostility at the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the influence of the Germans in Hong Kong came to a sudden end. R.K.S. Mak, ‘The German community in 19th century Hong Kong’, *Asia Europe Journal*, vol. 2, 2004, p. 254.
Naturally, the growing success of the Germans drew envious comment. In 1907, the first editor of the *South China Morning Post*, Douglas Story, commented sourly that British trade ‘was drifting into the hands of the enterprising Americans, the industrious Germans, the indefatigable Japanese and the unsleeping Chinese’. He continued:

Every evening, at five o’clock, the great bar of the Hongkong Club is lined with the British who have finished their work. In the street, the offices of the British firms are dark and silent, but from the windows of the German merchants broad streams of electric light signal the nation’s industry until after midnight. On Sunday the British, to a man, are engaged in launch parties and on bathing excursions, at golf and at play. The Germans devote at least part of the day to work.

A few merchants from other European countries and Japan also found their way to this cosmopolitan city, but they totalled fewer than ten in the period under review.277

**Part 6 – The Portuguese in Hong Kong: ‘a vastly inferior status’**

Story did not comment on the commercial activity of the Portuguese, already the second-largest non-Chinese community in Hong Kong. No Portuguese competition threatened the dominance of British, Parsee, Jewish, German or American businesses. Nor did Portuguese clerks threaten the British managers’ jobs, which were beyond the reach of all local people, Portuguese or Chinese. The continuing employment of Portuguese clerks in private concerns depended entirely on the vagaries of trade. Never in a position to threaten others, they were themselves only as secure as the businesses that employed them, for cheap local labour was the basis of the British mercantile system. Naturally, there were casualties, and the employees of failed businesses faced hard times, especially in the recession of the 1860s. Yet it was at that very time that the Portuguese community set up its own social club, perhaps because of the need to assert its identity in these difficult circumstances. Not all Portuguese employment was threatened. Some businesses were flourishing, and

several senior positions in government departments were held by Portuguese who had through their successful careers become prominent in the community. It was this group of business leaders and senior public servants who decided to establish Club Lusitano, which came into existence in 1865, some twenty years after the elite British club, the Hong Kong Club, founded in 1846, and from which the Portuguese community was barred.

Such a step had been mooted in January 1863 in a literary magazine, *O Movimento*, an ambitious but futile attempt to cultivate Portuguese literature in Hong Kong. One essay advocated the establishment of a Portuguese club in Hong Kong.\(^{278}\) The magazine did not take root, but the idea of a club did. It had taken this length of time for the leaders of the Portuguese community first to establish themselves and then to set about providing organisations in which community life might prosper. In the next half century others, especially sporting and charitable organisations would follow.

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\(^{278}\) *O Movimento*, March 1863.
cost.\footnote{279} An English writer, a Hong Kong resident for more than forty years, wrote in 1923:

The Old Club Lusitano, one of the earliest Social Institutions in Hongkong, was for the last half century to be found in Shelley Street with the southern front on Elgin Street at an elevation of about 400 feet above sea level. It owned and occupied a substantial three storied building of brick and white granite, its interior fittings mostly of teak. A brief sketch of its history is here given.

The chief object for which it came into being was to promote social, recreative and intellectual intercourse among the members and families of the Portuguese Community.

In the early days the number of Portuguese residents in the Colony all holding responsible positions both in the Government Service and in the principal mercantile hongs, was, in proportion, much greater than it is today. They were the interpreters and go-betweens in many of the big contracts and export-business transactions put through during the Co-hong at Canton as well as in the trade which passed through old Macao.

In these stirring times there was a total absence of any provision for healthy recreation or amusement adapted either to their means or tastes, and to supply this great want certain prominent members of their community came together and started the Club Lusitano during the early sixties.

The foundation of a very suitable clubhouse was laid on the 26th of December, 1865, in the presence of the Acting Governor, the Hon. W.T. Mercer, attended by the Civil, Military and Naval Authorities of the Colony: and, on the 17th December, 1866, just a year later, the inauguration took place, the celebration being in the form of a grand Ball at which the Governors of Macao and Hongkong were present, together with a large number of the foreign element including half the residents of Macao.\footnote{280}


\footnote{280} R.C. Hurley, *Picturesque Hongkong*, pp. 113-114. Hurley gave further details: ‘The building was of such a substantial character that today it is the private residence of a wealthy Chinese gentleman. It appears much the same as it was fifty years ago. Its appointments were complete, with Reading-room and Library, Billiard, Dining and Card rooms, having also several bedrooms. There was also a ball-room, one of the best in Hongkong, and a theatre originally attached in which travelling Opera and Comedy Companies often used to perform, as also the local Amateur Dramatic Society of its day: sad to say, the theatre after the City Hall was completed, had to be demolished. The Jubilee of the Club Lusitano was duly celebrated on the 16th day of December, 1916, by a reception in the afternoon when a large number of friends from all communities attended: this reception was followed by a grand ball in the evening amongst the members and their friends. The Club Lusitano enjoys a somewhat unique privilege. It is accepted by Government Officials and the Foreign Communities as the representative institution of the Portuguese Community.’

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In its early days, it also served a broader community function. It was the venue for a production of Donizetti’s opera ‘Lucia di Lammermoor’ on 11 March 1868. Later, ‘the first demonstration of wireless telegraphy’ was held in its big hall.

Delfino Noronha, though one of the most successful Portuguese settlers, and one of the Club’s principal founders, could still look back on early opportunities that he had lost, especially in land dealings when land was cheap and plentiful in the first few years. His grandson recalled that Noronha ‘used to say that the Portuguese are fine workers but, while keeping their heads bent to their tasks, they are apt to lose sight of good business opportunities flitting past them.’

This was a severe judgement, and it reveals a situation that was in stark contrast to the overall story of thriving foreign communities and sustained success despite the disasters which befell Hong Kong from time to time: several destructive typhoons, serious epidemics and at least two severe recessions. Besides these there was the uncertainty caused by the constant turmoil in China as the Qing dynasty slowly disintegrated. Yet the situation the Portuguese brought upon themselves, as J.P. Braga described it, was entirely consistent with the ingrained pattern of decline and failure to seize opportunities that the Portuguese brought with them from Macau. Generally speaking, that intellectual baggage could not be discarded overnight, or even in two or three generations.

Other foreign communities tended to stick together, but the Hong Kong Portuguese were often faction-ridden. A series of short-lived newspapers and magazines between 1846 and the end of the nineteenth century reflected this, especially after the 1874 typhoon, when a wave of emigrants arrived from Macau. They envied the

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281 China Mail, 7 March 1868.
282 J.P. Braga, Portuguese Pioneers of Hong Kong, p. 6. The date is unknown, but may have been early in the twentieth century.
283 J.P. Braga, The Portuguese in Hongkong and China, p. 193. Noronha’s great-grandson, J.M. Braga, observed much later that ‘those who bought property did well, but curiously enough few did this. Generally the families were too large for the wage-earner to save much, and at the death of those who did leave good sums the share of each person was woefully small.’ Jack Braga to Paul Braga, 4 May 1970. Paul Braga Papers.
284 J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/7.3/7. Braga prepared careful notes on the history of the Portuguese press in Hong Kong. Of O Porvir (The Future), published from 1897 to 1907 he commented that ‘it did much to create a split in the community, with the younger Portuguese, who had been coming from Macao in increasing numbers after the 1880s, and the older Portuguese, who were British subjects and educated in British schools in Hong Kong.’ Of O Patria (1900-1904, published by Noronha & Co.) he noted that ‘this paper sought to heal the differences between the pro-Portuguese and pro-British members of the community’.
success of those who, like the Noronha and Braga families, had become well-established.

While the Portuguese were unable to establish trading companies to rival the enormously successful mercantile and financial enterprises of the British and some other Europeans, they readily found employment in those enterprises and in government service. Over time, and especially as educational provision improved, they developed attributes of sustained hard work, of thoroughness and attention to detail. They gained both as an ethnic group and as a class of clerical workers a reputation for probity and reliability. In the first few years of Hong Kong’s existence, they were the backbone of most British businesses, which could not have afforded to pay expatriate salaries to men brought out from their homeland, expecting rapid social and economic advancement. The preparedness of Portuguese clerks to work for much lower wages and their ability to speak English and Cantonese made them indispensable in running the companies for which they worked. Yet these traits fixed them into a pattern of social and economic inferiority from which only a few escaped in the next century. Sir John Davis’s jibe, ‘their accustomed servility’, made in 1836, no longer applied to relations between the Portuguese and the mandarins of the Casa Branca. However, their British employers in Hong Kong expected, if not servility, then a similarly ready compliance and a willingness to accept a vastly inferior status.