

Making Impressions

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

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A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy of
The Australian National University

October 2012

Chapter 8

Making his mark – J.P. Braga 1900-1929

J.P. Braga was fortunate to have something to turn to in Macau, even if it was a position far below his capacities and his previous attainments. He secured an appointment to teach English at the *Instituto Comercial*, the Commercial Institute. Conversely, the Institute was lucky to have him. Situated towards the south part of Macau, the Commercial Institute was close to St. Lazarus' Church. In terms of Braga's career, nothing could be more appropriate. In 1900, that career seemed finished as far as future prospects were concerned. He was exiled from his birthplace, Hong Kong, rejected by the Noronha family which had nurtured him in childhood and young manhood. Now he was apparently without prospects. Yet in 1929, he was back in Hong Kong, with a large family of his own, a reasonably successful businessman, a board member of two significant public companies, the unquestioned leader of his community, and to crown all, on the cusp of a significant political career as the first Portuguese member of the Hong Kong Legislative Council. His appointment received the plaudits of the entire Press and the Portuguese community. Lazarus indeed!

Little is known of J.P. Braga's two years in Macau teaching English at the Commercial Institute, established in 1878. Akin to an English Comprehensive School of the same era, it was indirectly the by-product of one of those periodic fits of Portuguese anti-clericalism designed to weaken what was seen as the dead hand of conservative Catholicism. In 1870, priests of the Jesuit order were again expelled, and once again, St Joseph's College closed its doors, to the consternation of the Macanese community. It wreaked havoc on what little provision for public education existed in Macau. The President of the *Leal Senado*, Lorenço Marques, told the authorities in Lisbon that the Jesuits 'are the only persons in Macau who are really qualified. Without them, education will cease'. This appeal to have the expulsion revoked was ignored. Apprehensive lest the youth of the little settlement face an

illiterate future, the local community set up two schools of its own, one being the Commercial Institute.⁶⁸¹



The English classroom, Instituto Comercial, 1920s.

Macau, No. 96, 1996, p. 141.

All the students were local Macanese boys. None was a native English speaker, though these students possibly had a smattering of English before entering the school. The school's English programme would have been far below the standard of St. Joseph's in Hong Kong, let alone St. Xavier's in Calcutta. It was an age well before teacher

training was required, and Braga's achievements at schools in Hong Kong and India, followed by a decade in Noronha & Co. in Hong Kong would have been known to P. Gomes, the head of the Commercial Institute. His book, *The Rights of Aliens in Hongkong*, had been warmly applauded in Macau, where he was well-regarded. The Commercial Institute's tuition was in Portuguese and the curriculum utilitarian. It did not provide a full secondary course, though its offering was thorough and the school had an excellent tone and reputation.⁶⁸² In English lessons, the students were

⁶⁸¹ There were four Jesuits then on the staff, and without them, as Fr Manuel Teixeira, himself a Jesuit, expressed it: 'the Seminary fell into decadence'. (L. A Ferreira, *Um Brado pela Verdade, ou a questão dos Professores Jesuítas em Macau*, pp. 13-16; M. Teixeira, *Pedro Nolasco da Silva*, p. 67). With Macau facing a future of illiteracy, a group of concerned citizens headed by Maximiano António dos Remédios met in 1871 to found the *Associação Promotora da Instrução dos Macaenses*, the Association for the Promotion of Macanese Education (Website of the Associação Promotora da Instrução dos Macaenses - <http://www.apim.org.mo/en/> Accessed 29 October 2010). Among its initial members was José Joaquim Braga, who subscribed \$300 of the \$11,000 raised to establish the school (O. Vaz, 'The Commercial School: a victory for Macau', *Macau*, No. 96, 1996, p. 136). As a result of the Association's efforts, two institutions were set up, first the *Instituto Comercial* in 1878, and some years later, in 1894, the *Liceu Nacional de Macau*, preparing students for Coimbra University in Portugal (M. Teixeira, *Liceu nacional Infante D. Henrique jubilee de ouro, 1894-1944*; *Liceu de Macau*. http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liceu_de_Macau. Accessed 30 October 2010). Of these, the major one came to be the *Liceu*, corresponding to an English Grammar School. The Commercial Institute was set up to prepare boys for the limited commercial opportunities that Macau still offered, or in hope of emigration to Hong Kong or Shanghai. It had taken seven years to achieve this, perhaps because of the colossal set-back occasioned by the devastating Great Typhoon of 1874. It took a determined champion, Pedro Nolasco da Silva, to get the school started, and following his death in 1912, it was named in his honour (M. Teixeira, *Pedro Nolasco da Silva*. See also J. Guedes and J. Silveira Machado, *Dois Instituições Macaenses*).

⁶⁸² As attested by a former pupil, Filomena Marie Semiramus Jorge dos Santos in *Casa Down Under*, 15, 2, June 2003, pp. 5-6.

following a course in what would now be termed English as a Second Language – utilitarian, basic and almost devoid of literature.

These boys already spoke Portuguese and Cantonese, supplemented by the local Macanese *patuá*. English was in fact their fourth language, and they would have spoken it with a pronounced accent in which the Cantonese glottal stop was prominent, and with little understanding of the idiom and delicate nuances with which the English language is endowed. There was only one class in English, and the school was struggling for enrolments, with only 52 students in its three year course.⁶⁸³ Little English was needed in this place. The boys needed to know no more English than was needed to secure lowly employment in a bank or to get them by in dealing with what little commerce there was with Hong Kong.⁶⁸⁴

Whatever the frustrations of working at a level far below his ability might have been, the position did at least provide steady employment for J.P. Braga, who had a growing family. There were two girls and two boys when he left Hong Kong. They were:

Jean Pauline, born on 23 June 1896, whose second name was also her mother's second name.

José Maria [Jack], born on 22 May 1897

Maude Caroline, born on 8 December 1898, named after a maternal aunt and her paternal grandmother

Delfino [Chappie], born on 13 February 1900, named in honour of his paternal grandfather, who had died a week earlier.

⁶⁸³ O. Vaz, 'The Commercial School: a victory for Macau', *Macau*, No. 96, 1996, p. 140.

⁶⁸⁴ There was so little of this that from 1846 until 1939 there was no British consulate in Macau (J.M. Braga, 'British Consulate in Macau', *Renascimento*, 30 September 1945, p. 3. John Rickett, Esq., was consular agent in Macao, subordinate to the Consul at Canton. There were consuls at all five Treaty Ports, but not at Macau (*AngloChinese Calendar, 1845*, pp. 33-34). By 1846, even this agency appears to have been closed. *Hongkong Almanack, 1846*, p. [6]). The Protestant chapel, last known to be used in 1860 (S. Braga, 'Macau puts on a show', *Casa Down Under: Newsletter of the Casa de Macau, Australia*, vol. 22, no. 2, July 2010) was then abandoned, and was eventually occupied by a fireworks factory that enjoyed rent-free premises until Bishop Duppy, the Anglican Bishop of Victoria, Hong Kong began to take an interest in 1921 (J. Crouch-Smith et al., *Macau Protestant Chapel, a short history*, pp. 24, 58; L.T. Ride, *An East India Company Cemetery*, p. 63).

Table 4**Children of José Pedro and Olive Pauline Braga**

23 June 1896	Name:	Jean Pauline Braga
	Birth:	23 June 1896 in Hong Kong
	Death:	01 February 1987 in Hong Kong
22 May 1897	Name:	José Maria [Jack] Braga
	Birth:	22 May 1897 in Hong Kong
	Death:	27 April 1988 in San Francisco
08 December 1898	Name:	Maude Caroline Braga
	Birth:	08 December 1898 in Hong Kong
	Death:	18 October 1962 in Rock Castle Private Hospital, Harbord, Sydney
13 February 1900	Name:	Delfino [Chappie] Braga
	Birth:	13 February 1900 in Hong Kong
	Death:	14 October 1917 in Macau
23 September 1902	Name:	Clement Albert Braga
	Birth:	23 September 1902 in Macau
	Death:	07 February 1972 in Vancouver, British Columbia
06 December 1903	Name:	Noel Braga
	Birth:	06 December 1903 in Macau
	Death:	19 December 1979 in Mount Pleasant Hospital, Southall, London
15 February 1905	Name:	Hugh Braga
	Birth:	15 February 1905 in Macau
	Death:	02 June 1987 in Gordon, NSW
27 April 1906	Name:	James Braga
	Birth:	27 April 1906 in Hong Kong
	Death:	21 April 1994 in Milwaukie, Portland, Oregon
28 August 1907	Name:	Antonio Manuel [Tony] Braga
	Birth:	28 August 1907 in Hong Kong
	Death:	09 May 1994 in Hong Kong
25 September 1908	Name:	John Vincent Braga
	Birth:	25 September 1908 in Hong Kong
	Death:	29 May 1981 in 10 Suffolk Rd, Edinburgh
16 June 1910	Name:	Paul Braga
	Birth:	16 June 1910 in Hong Kong
	Death:	14 August 1989 in San Francisco
19 December 1911	Name:	Caroline Mary Braga
	Birth:	19 December 1911 in Hong Kong
	Death:	21 November 1998 in Queen Mary Hospital, Hong Kong
04 March 1914	Name:	Mary Braga
	Birth:	04 March 1914 in Hong Kong
	Death:	15 July 1965 in St Paul's Hospital, Hong Kong



The Braga Family circa 1903

*Delfino “Chappie” Braga Olive Pauline Braga Maude Braga Jean Pauline Braga
Carolina Maria de Noronha Braga (mother of J.P. Braga)
Clement Braga José Maria “Jack” Braga*

J.M. Braga Pictures Collection, Box 2, National Library of Australia

They were growing up in a most unpromising environment. A Hong Kong journalist, Carlos Montalto de Jesus, was at that time writing an improbable book, *Historic Macao*, published in English in Hong Kong in 1902 at a time when few if any English people cared anything about Macau and would be unlikely to buy a book about it. In Macau, people were uninterested in their past, and unreflective about it. The picture that Montalto de Jesus painted of the present and future of Macau was bleak.

The resources and opportunities of the Macaenses, their maritime and commercial activity, their hardihood and prestige, are all a dream of the past. Whilst improvidently increasing and multiplying abroad, they are constantly decreasing in number at Macao, mostly in consequence of the new generation emigrating in search of employment, of bread, which Macao, alas, cannot give to her own hapless sons, destined to vegetate as the proletariat of prosperous foreign communities in the Far East, to eke out a jaded, hopeless

existence, to which is condemned many a gifted, promising youth, thus blighted like the doomed regeneration of Macao.⁶⁸⁵

For J.P. Braga, the experience can only have been dreary and frustrating, but it was in his nature to give it his best effort. When he left for Hong Kong in August 1902, Gomes wrote a warm letter of congratulations and thanks, concluding, '*Amigo muito grate*' – 'Your most grateful friend'.⁶⁸⁶ J.P. Braga left a good name behind him. An indication of this is that some twenty years later, his son Jack, despite having left Hong Kong in disgrace, was also given employment as a teacher in Macau.

Braga had no intention of dropping out of sight, but his future must have seemed bleak, especially when he had come to distrust what he later called 'the commercial immorality of the place'.⁶⁸⁷ A way out of this entrapment came from what may have been a wholly unexpected quarter. This was an approach from Robert Ho Tung, who suggested that J.P. Braga should apply for the position of Manager of the *Hongkong Telegraph*.⁶⁸⁸ He wrote: 'I have succeeded in bringing up your name to the notice of the board without their knowledge that you would be a very suitable man to become the manager of the paper.'⁶⁸⁹

The *Hongkong Telegraph* had been published for some twenty years, but had a dubious reputation.⁶⁹⁰ What was needed was a good manager as well as a good

⁶⁸⁵ C.A. Montalto de Jesus, *Historic Macao*, p. 424.

⁶⁸⁶ P. Gomes to J.P. Braga, 26 August 1902. J.P. Braga Papers, MS Acc08/113.

⁶⁸⁷ J.P. Braga to his son Tony, 13 August 1934. A.M. Braga Papers.

⁶⁸⁸ A.M. Braga, *South China Morning Post*, 31 May 1987.

⁶⁸⁹ R. Ho Tung to J.P. Braga, letters, 8 May, 15 May 1902, J.P. Braga Papers, National Library of Australia, MS Acc08/113.

⁶⁹⁰ It is necessary to explain why Braga's background and hands-on approach made him Ho Tung's favoured candidate for a position with considerable difficulty. The *Telegraph* was one of three English language newspapers then published in Hong Kong. These were the old established *China Mail*, first published in 1846, the *Hongkong Daily Press*, first published in 1857 and an afternoon paper, the *Hongkong Telegraph*, first published in 1881. Another, which appeared in 1903, was the *South China Morning Post*, the only one of the four to survive into the twenty-first century. The *Telegraph* was founded and edited by an extraordinary man, Robert Fraser-Smith, who developed a remarkable reputation for creating trouble. He was a member of the group of dissidents with which Rizal would later be associated during his brief sojourn in Hong Kong. He was frequently hauled before the courts for libel and usually convicted. In a place where excessive consumption of alcohol was the norm and was regarded with some tolerance, Fraser-Smith's heavy drinking drew comment. When found guilty of libel, with the option of a fine or gaol, he always preferred the prison option, because it gave him better publicity and perhaps the opportunity to dry out (R. Hutcheon, *SCMP The First Eighty Years*, p. 7. Robin Hutcheon observed that Fraser-Smith was given the privilege of living in 'first-class debtor's prison conditions'. There was something of a tradition in this. William Tarrant, the editor of the *Friend of China*, who had a grudge against the governor of the day, was thrown into gaol in 1854. He was housed in the debtors' wing and given preferential treatment, his dinners being sent to him by the Hong Kong Club, according to John Luff, 'the Fourth Estate', *South China Morning Post*, 28 August 1967, cutting in the Paul Braga Collection. Fraser-Smith ran the *Telegraph* for fourteen years until his death in 1895. Fraser-Smith's 'scurrilous allegations' throughout this period had given it a bad name but a reputation for cutting-edge journalism and therefore a continuing

editor, a man with a sound knowledge of the printing industry, a businessman's grasp of running a profitable enterprise, a profound understanding of the local scene and the ability to maintain its high profile in Hong Kong. This was the best prospect to raise circulation and develop a steady profit. Ho Tung had a man in mind whose work and capacity he clearly knew.⁶⁹¹ Accordingly, he offered the position of manager to Braga.⁶⁹²

Ho Tung had thrown a lifeline to J.P. Braga and to his children.⁶⁹³ He wrote, using the surname 'Braga' as a salutation. In the accepted courtesies of that era, lasting until the 1960s, this implied cordiality. 'Mr Braga' would be strictly formal and impersonal. These two men were 'on terms'.

Hong Kong

"Idlewild"

15/5/02

My dear Braga,

At a meeting held yesterday afternoon it was decided to appoint you as the manager of the "Hong Kong Telegraph" on the terms stipulated in your application. Mr Skertchley will send you draft of agreement which is being prepared by Mr Sin Tack Fan ... I am prepared to wait till the rough plan is ready, but I trust you will ... let me have the sketch as soon as possible, as I may be leaving the colony for a trip north at a moment's notice.

readership R. Hutcheon, op. cit., p. 18). The paper was then acquired by an Irish lawyer, John Joseph Francis, who died in 1901. Francis, sole proprietor from 1895 until 1900, formed the business into a limited liability company. There followed a series of short editorships, those of Chesney Duncan until 1899, E.F. Skertchley until 1902, and then E.A. Snewin until 1906. After Francis' death, the majority shareholding was acquired by Robert Ho Tung and several of his associates 'who wanted an outlet for their views' (R. Hutcheon, op. cit., p. 7). The shares were held in the name of the Chinese Syndicate, precursor of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce (<http://hongkongfirst.blogspot.com>. Accessed 8 October 2010). Ho Tung knew that the paper lacked stability and steady direction, but considered that it had potential.

⁶⁹¹ Sir Robert Ho Tung to J.M. Braga, 15 February 1944: 'Your father and I have been lifelong friends and on many important occasions have been working together.' J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300 /13.1/1.

⁶⁹² The substance of Ho Tung's letter was confirmed in notes prepared by A.M. Braga for an interview with Beverley Howells, A.M. Braga file, p. 4. This led to an article, 'Braga's wealth of Hong Kong stories', which was published in the *South China Morning Post*, 31 May 1987.

⁶⁹³ It is significant that Braga kept the correspondence and the ensuing contract together with a very small collection of important personal papers that he treasured. Among others were his Certificate of British Nationality, his wedding certificate, prize lists from St. Joseph's, St Xavier's and Roberts Colleges, a letter from a school chum in India, and little else. When he fled to Macau as a refugee in 1942, these were entrusted for safe-keeping to his daughter, Jean. She did indeed keep them safely for the rest of her life. They were found after her death in a bank safe-deposit box, and are now in the National Library of Australia. J.P. Braga Papers MS Acc08/113.

Yours very truly,

Ho Tung⁶⁹⁴

His appointment was for a five year term on a salary of \$350 plus a guaranteed annual bonus of 5% of the company's profit, or \$600, whichever was the greater. The contract provided that 'it shall be competent for the Company to summarily dismiss the said José Pedro Braga ... in case the said José Pedro Braga shall prove habitually intemperate or dishonest...'⁶⁹⁵

Although he was initially appointed for five years, Braga stayed for eight. He turned around the fortunes and tone of the paper. Hong Kong journalism had for decades had an unsavoury reputation for 'a hearty appetite for libel, invective, smear and emotional gossip.'⁶⁹⁶ Under his control, with an editor who was responsible to him, he insisted on fair criticism from its editors.⁶⁹⁷ By 1908, an exhaustive study of businesses in the Far East could comment that the three Hong Kong papers 'were now in one accord moulded on high principles and thoroughly living down the evil reputation gained, not undeservingly, in former years'.⁶⁹⁸

In 1906, an experienced editor, A.W. Brebner, was appointed and continued until 1910.⁶⁹⁹ With Braga as manager and Brebner as editor, the *Telegraph* became a model of clear presentation and content that gave reliable news and information, above all on the shipping movements so essential for this major maritime community. The young firebrand of the 1890s had mellowed. The *Telegraph* continued, as it had done since 1881, to support the Chinese Republican movement. While that might once have been construed as subversive and embarrassing to the government, it was obvious after the Boxer rebellion of 1900 that the Qing dynasty's days were numbered, and that China needed an effective replacement. A pro-Republican position was no longer deemed radical.

⁶⁹⁴ J.P. Braga Papers MS Acc08/113.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid. Fraser-Smith's bibulous indiscretions had left a memory that was not easily erased.

⁶⁹⁶ R. Hutcheon, op. cit., p. 4.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 7.

⁶⁹⁸ A. Wright and H.A. Cartwright, *Twentieth century impressions of Hongkong, Shanghai and other treaty ports of China*, p. 347.

⁶⁹⁹ Brebner had experience in the *Aberdeen Free Press* before going to Jamaica as sub-editor of the *Daily Times*, whence he proceeded to Hong Kong in 1906.

<http://hongkongfirst.blogspot.com/2010/08/newspapers-and-newsies-in-nineteenth.html>.

Accessed 16 May 2012.

In 1906 Braga was appointed the Hong Kong correspondent for Reuter's, then the leading international newsagency. It was in one sense a small extra commitment, but in another it was important, because whatever the outside world knew of the colony passed through his hands. He realised that local affairs would have little interest elsewhere, and that disasters would be the best means of catching the world's attention. Later that year, the most destructive typhoon in the colony's history struck, with heavy loss of life, including the Anglican bishop, Joseph Charles Hoare, who was on a pastoral visit by boat.⁷⁰⁰ Bishops do not often drown, so that story did well.

Many years later, he wrote a report that was picked up by a newspaper in drought-prone Australia. It was the story of another destructive storm that led to heavy loss of life.⁷⁰¹

DELUGE IN HONGKONG.

A deluge of rain this morning, following the torrential rains of the last few days, caused the collapse of seven houses at Po-hing-fong, near the disinfecting station at Chau-siuki. An ex-member of the Legislative Council was killed. It is feared that his mother, and two sons and their wives, are among the dead. So far seven bodies have been dug out from the debris. The total number of persons living in the collapsed houses is believed to be 200.-Reuter.

Braga could not have known when he wrote this report that one of his sons, Hugh, would receive two medals for gallantry in saving life during this disaster.

He held the Reuter's appointment for twenty-five years, and on his relinquishing it on 31 August 1931, the *Telegraph*, with which he had severed his connection twenty years earlier, remarked:

His long residence here, his knowledge of Hongkong affairs, his keen 'nose for news', his faculty for sifting reports for their significance and importance, and the fact that his obvious integrity and courtesy gave him entry everywhere – these natural advantages enabled him to cover the Hongkong field accurately and thoroughly.⁷⁰²

⁷⁰⁰ G.B. Endacott, and D.E. She, *The Diocese of Victoria, Hong Kong: a hundred years of church history 1849-1949*, pp. 116-117.

⁷⁰¹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 July 1925.

⁷⁰² *Hongkong Telegraph*, 4 September 1931. J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 92.

By 1908, J.P. Braga had become a well-recognised figure in the Hong Kong newspaper world, rating his own entry and photograph in Wright's compendious tome on the ports of the China coast.⁷⁰³ Acceptance in the British community, once totally denied to the Portuguese, gradually commenced, and he became a committee member of the Odd Volumes Society.⁷⁰⁴ This was a literary and debating society, started by Sir James Cantlie, an eminent and public-spirited medical practitioner, who was one of the founders of the Hong Kong College of Medicine, forerunner of the University of Hong Kong.⁷⁰⁵ Braga had been a member of Club Lusitano since young manhood, and would come to take a leading role in its affairs, but membership of the exclusively British Hong Kong Club was out of the question.⁷⁰⁶



J.P. Braga as Manager of the Hongkong Telegraph, 1908. By then regarded as one of Hong Kong's leading newspapermen, his was one of nine photographs published in an article on the Hong Kong press in A. Wright and H.A. Cartwright, Twentieth century impressions of Hongkong, Shanghai and other treaty ports of China, p. 345.

A newspaper executive's position is always precarious, and ultimately dependent on his compliance with the wishes of the owners. That ownership was itself precarious, for within three years of Braga's arrival at the *Telegraph*, Ho Tung had twice made overtures to sell the paper to the morning paper, the *South China Morning Post*.

⁷⁰³ A. Wright and H.A. Cartwright, *Twentieth century impressions of Hongkong, Shanghai and other treaty ports of China*, p. 345.

⁷⁰⁴ *South China Morning Post*, 16 May 1929.

⁷⁰⁵ G.B. Endacott, *History of Hong Kong*, pp. 250, 282.

⁷⁰⁶ *The Bye-laws of the Club Lusitano Ltd*, 1904, contains a list of members.

Lacking capital themselves, the directors of the *Post* could not close the deal at a price acceptable to Ho Tung.⁷⁰⁷ There was a more direct threat to editorial independence. In 1910, Braga and Brebner were to discover the limits. The previous year, the Portuguese government took up the matter of the boundary between Macau and China, never resolved despite the three and a half centuries of Portuguese presence there and much acrimony in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁷⁰⁸ Attempting to resolve the rancorous dispute, the Hong Kong Government brokered a conference between the Portuguese and Chinese governments. José Braga was a member of the *Comissão Portuguesa de Delimitação de Macau* set up for the purpose.⁷⁰⁹ The conference dragged on inconclusively from June to November 1909, the Chinese commissioner, Kao, steadfast in his rejection of Portuguese claims to any form of sovereignty.⁷¹⁰ Brebner also took a partisan stand on the matter in favour of Portugal. Although Braga's contract had specifically absolved him from any responsibility for the paper's content, this led to a parting of the ways with the Chinese owners of the *Telegraph*. Gilding the lily, his son Jack observed that his father 'asked to be excused to retire from the company'.⁷¹¹

In October 1910, he left the *Telegraph* to commence his own business. His papers contain no record of appreciation from the directors of the Hongkong Telegraph Company, but the staff gave him a silver bowl to mark the occasion.⁷¹²

⁷⁰⁷ R. Hutcheon, op. cit., p. 26.

⁷⁰⁸ C.A. Montalto de Jesus, *Historic Macao*, pp. 439-452.

⁷⁰⁹ *A Patria*, undated [December 1926]. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 3. J.M. Braga collected the documents prepared to argue the Portuguese case and had them specially bound. *Transcões documentos respeitantes os limites de Macau, 1908*, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4327.

⁷¹⁰ C.A. Montalto de Jesus, *Historic Macao*, p. 444.

⁷¹¹ J.M. Braga interview, 11 June 1972.

⁷¹² The presentation was reported in the *South China Morning Post* 1 November 1910. 'At the offices of the *Hongkong Telegraph* an interesting ceremony took place, when Mr J.P. Braga, formerly business manager of the paper, was presented with an illuminated address and handsome silver bowl. Mr. Braga, who has been with the *Telegraph* for a number of years, is severing his connection, and his colleagues showed their appreciation in a very tangible manner.' The *Post*, a keen supporter of Braga, reprinted this item in 1935, under the by-line 'Twenty-Five Years Ago'. *South China Morning Post* 31 October 1935, J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 93. A careful search of the original file of the *Hongkong Telegraph* in the Hong Kong Public Record Office revealed no mention of this presentation. As the *Post* put it, the connection had been severed. The illuminated address appears to have been lost. The bowl was latterly in the possession of J.P. Braga's daughter, Caroline M. Braga. On her death on 21 November 1998, it passed to her niece, Mrs Sheila Potter, daughter of Hugh Braga. It was brought to Australia in February 1999.

The inscription read:

PRESENTED TO
J.P. BRAGA ESQ.
BY
THE STAFF OF THE HONG KONG TELEGRAPH
IN TOKEN OF THEIR HIGH REGARD AND AFFECTION
ON THE OCCASION OF HIS DEPARTURE FROM THE MANAGEMENT
31.10.10

Like many men who have suffered a severe reversal in their fortunes, J.P. Braga set out single-mindedly to prove his detractors wrong. His whole time and attention were given to his career, which for more than eight years was bound up with the *Telegraph* and its associated job printing. Newspapers have a relentless pace, and daily deadlines cannot be avoided. As the inscription showed, he gained a reputation as a competent manager. Besides this he set out to build a public profile as well as acceptance in the Portuguese community. Increasingly, he achieved both as the years went by, but there was a personal cost. He had grown up in a household without a father, and he seems to have given little attention to the parenting of his own rapidly increasingly family.

Montalto de Jesus had rather sourly commented in 1902 that Macanese families were ‘improvidently increasing and multiplying abroad’.⁷¹³ J.P. Braga’s family was a prime example. Between 1896 and 1914, thirteen children were born, all of whom survived infancy, and there was also a miscarriage.⁷¹⁴ Large families were the norm in the Portuguese community in Hong Kong, but this family was exceptional. Another exceptional feature in a tight-knit community was that José Braga had married outside it. Olive Braga’s background has been mentioned briefly in an earlier chapter, but her role and that of her sister Corunna, hereafter referred to by the name by which she was known in the family, ‘Crun’, should now be examined at greater length. Modern feminists might see Olive as a helpless victim trapped in circumstances from which there was no escape from constant pregnancy and the poverty that inevitably ensued from there being too many mouths to feed. She could

⁷¹³ C.A. Montalto de Jesus, *op. cit.*, p. 424.

⁷¹⁴ Caroline Braga interview, 20 October 1996.

not confide in anyone, but towards the end of her life, told two of her granddaughters that her marriage had been nothing but ‘bear, bear, bear’.⁷¹⁵

Olive herself had been a member of an exceptionally large Victorian family. She was the thirteenth of the fifteen children of the *first* marriage of James Joseph Pollard, a piano tuner who emigrated from London to Tasmania in 1854 in search of better opportunities. When his wife Mary Eleanor, née Weippert, died of cancer of the womb, he married her younger sister Corunna Elizabeth, and another three children were born. To support this great brood of whom all but two survived infancy, he formed them into a touring theatrical troupe, the Pollard Lilliputians. Their highly successful tours of New Zealand, the eastern Australian colonies and India have also been touched upon. Their success was not only the product of the novelty of this remarkable family, with small children playing adult roles, but also the undoubted fact that several of the children were highly talented musicians and performers. The eight girls of the first family were particularly affected by this very unusual background. Before going on their long tour in 1881, they had a very structured life in which music played a very large part. The younger girls had little schooling, no friends outside the family and no time to themselves. This prefigured in some ways the milieu in which Olive would later bring up her own large family, though all of them, particularly her nine sons, received a sound education.

Once they were on tour there were also the incessant demands of practice, rehearsal and performance and constant moving from one place to another. His children bore their father no bitterness about their treatment, but greatly respected his firmness and strict control.⁷¹⁶ In fact Pollard was looked upon by his contemporaries as a good father and valued citizen.⁷¹⁷ Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* may have painted an idyllic

⁷¹⁵ Angela Ablong, daughter of Jack, her eldest son, and Frances Rufener, daughter of Paul, the youngest of her nine sons.

⁷¹⁶ Interview with his daughter, May Pollard, 24 December 1967, Wahroonga, NSW. May Pollard was then aged 99.

⁷¹⁷ P. Downes, *The Pollards*, pp. 15, 28. James Pollard died in 1884, but one of his sons set out on a similar tour in 1910 with another troupe called Pollard’s Lilliputian Opera Company, none of the children being family members. By then a demanding regimen like this was seen as child abuse, and led to a scandal in India (P. Downes, *The Pollards*, pp. 196, 208). This time the more usual spelling, ‘Lilliputian’, was adopted. It was widely reported in the Australian press, including the Melbourne *Age*, 22 April 1910, *Argus*, 25, 27 April 1910, the Broken Hill *Barrier Miner*, 27-30 April 1910, the Adelaide *Advertiser*, 25 March 1910, the Adelaide *Register*, 5, 12, 16 April 1910 and the Launceston *Examiner* 16, 28 April 1910. This unhappy episode has also been traversed in a novel, *India Dark*, by a well-known Australian children’s writer, Kirsty Murray.

picture of Lilliput, but Pollard's Liliputians were less fortunate. This was no life for children, especially girls, some of whom were growing into young womanhood.⁷¹⁸



Olive Pollard in
'HMS Pinafore', 1881.
P. Downes, *The Pollards*, p. 25

No wonder that two of the older girls, Nellie and Corunna (named after her aunt and step-mother), escaped this demanding regime in India in 1884 to get married. Olive returned to Australia, and may have lived in Brisbane with her brother Harry, occasionally giving public performances as a violinist.⁷¹⁹ The next ten years were quiet, apart from the celebration in Hong Kong in 1891 of Delfino Noronha's 67th birthday. Here she once again held centre stage as she had done as a child in the early days of the Pollard Liliputians. Perhaps enticed by this attention, she returned four years later to Hong Kong to marry a glamorous young man she scarcely knew. The Pollards had grown up as nominal Anglicans, but Corunna and Olive were

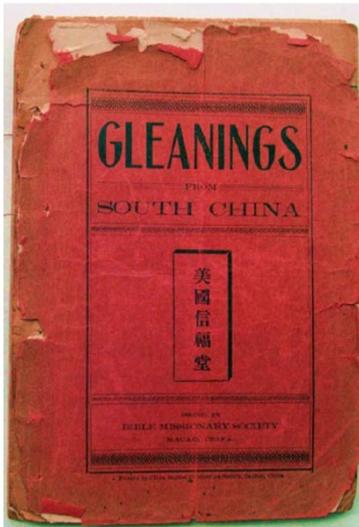
married in a Catholic church, undertaking that their children would be brought up as Catholics. They themselves earnestly embraced the Catholic faith. Olive later remarked: 'I was considered very devout – but there was no depth in my religion.'⁷²⁰

⁷¹⁸ Peter Downes has observed: 'Very true, in hindsight, but not in the context of the time. The theatrical environment (performers *and* audiences) in those years allowed and, indeed, encouraged what we would now call the 'exploitation' of children on the professional (and amateur) stage. These troupes were an enormous attraction in all parts of the Western world and would never have been thought of as child labour. The Pollards were probably treated better than many other troupes of children, largely because they were all (or mostly) of the same family and travelled with their step-mother and father. The younger members also had much older brothers and sisters to look after them.' Email to this writer from Peter Downes, 20 September 2011.

⁷¹⁹ She played solo violin in Brisbane with the Brisbane Orchestral Society conducted by Henry Pollard twice in September 1884 and later gave solo performances at Rockhampton in 1887 and 1888. In those two years she also appears to have been first violin in one of Brisbane's theatre orchestras. She was highly praised by reviewers (*Brisbane Courier*, 4, 13 September 1884, 14, 20 October 1887; *Morning Bulletin*, Rockhampton, 21 November 1887, 2 February, 15 June 1888). She may then have gone to Melbourne, joining her sister Nellie Chester, then returning with her to India in 1888. This is uncertain, but is the informed opinion of Peter Downes. However, an obituary in the *South China Morning Post*, 14 February 1952, probably written by her son Tony, claimed that 'she was engaged to tour Australia and New Zealand with her uncle in a series of concerts'. This may be a garbled recollection of the original Liliputians' tour.

⁷²⁰ Olive Braga to her daughter-in-law Audrey Braga, undated, but marked 'received 15 June' - i.e. 1943. Paul Braga Papers.

Olive lived in Hong Kong from 1895 until 1900, then in Macau, returning early in 1906 to Hong Kong, where she lived for most of the rest of her life, apart from a long visit to her sister Nellie in America in 1930-1931, and the war years, 1943 to 1945, again spent in Macau as a refugee. She died on 13 February 1952. A girl who had been a child prodigy, a fine violinist whose performances often drew rapturous applause, now became as shut away as though she had entered a contemplative order of nuns. Instead of celibacy, she had to endure the constant strain of pregnancy and child-bearing for twenty years, followed by more years of the incessant demands of small children and making do with little. The younger boys wore patched hand-me-downs for many years and were constantly hungry. Olive did not learn Portuguese at all, and had only a little Cantonese.



The limitations of her upbringing remained with her, and she never learned to form close relationships outside the family. Lacking Portuguese, she was shut off from contact with the community in which her husband moved with increasing self-assurance. Her sister Crun was in a similar plight, made worse by the fact that her marriage broke down for a lengthy period between 1900 and about 1906 when she and her husband Charlie Noronha resumed married life.⁷²¹

Lonely and desperate, the two sisters came into contact with missionaries from an American Protestant mission, the Bible Missionary Society, whose home base was at Charlotte, North Carolina. Olive kept a tattered copy of their magazine, *Gleanings from South China*, that told the story of what happened.⁷²² It contains a lengthy account by one of the mission team, a Miss F.P. Winn, of the conversion of both sisters in 1905 and 1906: first Crun, then Olive. Both remained intensely devout Protestants for the rest of their lives.

⁷²¹ Moving first to Manila and in 1930 to the USA, Charlie and Crun went on to enjoy a tranquil old age in a very different culture. E. Morrison, *Looking up, looking down the road*, pp. 12-15, 201-202.

⁷²² *Gleanings from South China*, vol. 3, no.1, January 1907, pp. 38-42.

This was, of course, one side of the story, and there is another. Olive was intransigently Protestant, José resolutely Catholic and deeply traumatised by what had happened. Their twelfth child, Caroline, had not been born when these events took place, but nearly forty years later, in 1943, after her parents had finally separated, and bitterness had abated during the still more bitter experiences of war, Caroline spoke to her father about those times.

We talked about God, and he regretted so much that certain missionaries came into Mother's life with unreasonable ideas which had such an influence on Mother that he could not stand them ... He used to resent tactlessness and having things thrust on him, which is only natural.⁷²³

The circumstances of Olive's conversion and her husband's sense of bitterness and devastation are discussed in detail in Appendix 6.

José knew that his uncle, Charlie Noronha, had separated from Crun and left Hong Kong for Shanghai. He must surely have considered leaving his wife or forcing her to leave him. If he did either, his public image would be ruined, and his business career would be irretrievably damaged. He had a choice between Scylla and Charybdis. The Scylla of divorce in the conservatively Catholic Hong Kong Portuguese community was utterly unthinkable; the Charybdis of putting up with a devoutly Protestant wife was profoundly unpalatable. He chose Charybdis, and the facade of a marriage was maintained by both from then on. However, Olive never attended any occasion when a wife's support of a prominent public figure might be expected. Her husband kept up appearances, saying when a Divorce Bill came before the Legislative Council that divorce was 'a luxury for the leisured'.⁷²⁴ This was perhaps an indirect reference to the highly publicised divorce of Vandeleur Grayburn, Chief Manager of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corp. Braga added that 'the best thing about divorce is that it is hard to achieve'.⁷²⁵ By 1917 the marriage had effectively ended. Caroline said late in life that when her father came home for dinner, 'the atmosphere was most unpleasant'.⁷²⁶

⁷²³ Caroline Braga to James Braga, 21 October 1945. James Braga Papers.

⁷²⁴ *South China Morning Post*, 28 October 1932. J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/14.1/34, fol. 26.

⁷²⁵ *The Critic*, 5 November 1932. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/13.3/4. Grayburn's divorce was reported on the front page of the *Hongkong Telegraph*, greatly affronting Grayburn and stirring up trouble for the editor. R. Hutcheon, *SCMP The First Eighty Years*, p. 79.

⁷²⁶ Caroline Braga to this writer, 20 October 1996.

Crun and Olive threw themselves body and soul into supporting their children, and bringing them up 'in the fear and nurture of the Lord'.⁷²⁷ Both women became members of the Christian Brethren movement, commonly called 'Plymouth Brethren' from their origins in Plymouth in the 1830s. They did not consider themselves a sect or a denomination, but saw themselves simply as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, obedient to His Word. They rejected all formal ecclesiastical structures, hierarchical systems and liturgical forms, reverting instead to their view of the practice of the Primitive Church in the Book of Acts when disciples met with each other and with the Lord in the breaking of bread. They were incessant and uncritical readers of the Bible, seeking to live in the presence of the Lord and were constant in prayer in the literal way that the apostle Paul had enjoined.⁷²⁸ Their emphasis on the Scriptures linked many of them with other conservative Protestants, so that in time, many of the Brethren came to have close sympathies with mainstream Evangelical churches, which many of them, or their descendants, joined during the following century. Although they were never a large movement, the Brethren have had an influence on Protestant Christianity far beyond their numbers.⁷²⁹

The name of the movement gives a clue to the nature of the people who belonged to it. As children of God, they were members of a family. Some religious bodies have more to do with belonging than with believing, but for the Brethren, belief and discipleship were paramount, and went hand in hand together. It followed that people who became alienated from a religious and cultural community such as the Catholic Church might find a spiritual home among the Brethren, whose religious observance was so utterly different from Catholic worship. So it proved for Olive and all but one of her thirteen children. Crun had three children, who also became firm members of the Brethren.⁷³⁰

⁷²⁷ As the Anglican Marriage Service expresses it.

⁷²⁸ Romans 12, v. 12.

⁷²⁹ According to the Most Rev. D.W.B. Robinson, Anglican Archbishop of Sydney, 1985-1996. The Brethren steadfastly refused to count heads – or souls – so that their numbers are impossible to determine. The most important single Meeting, Bethesda Chapel in Bristol, was reckoned to have 5,000 adherents at its height in the 1840s. I am grateful to Mr John R. Prince, a leading Brethren elder, for checking this comment on the Christian Brethren.

⁷³⁰ E. Morrison, *Looking up, looking down the road*, p. 12. They were Delfino, Carlos and Umbelina. All adopted anglicised names: Delf, Charlie and Lena.

After two years in Macau, José returned in August 1902 to Hong Kong, leaving Olive in Macau with her four children. She stayed there for several more years, during which time another three sons were born. It had long been common for Portuguese businessmen to leave their families behind in Macau while they worked in Hong Kong, returning periodically for recreation and procreation. The three were:

Clemente Alberto [Clement], born on 23 September 1902, soon after José's return to Hong Kong

Noel, born on 6 December 1903. He was given the baptismal name Anna Noel to conform to the Catholic practice of using a saint's name, but was always known as Noel.⁷³¹

Hugh, born on 15 February 1905, named for [António] Hugo dos Remédios, the husband of his aunt Umbelina ['Bellie']

Early in 1906 José rented a large house, 37 Robinson Road, in the Mid-Levels of Hong Kong, on the edge of what had become some thirty years earlier the domicile of most of the Portuguese community. Olive would later aver that she had fled Macau to escape earthquakes there.⁷³² The Braga family moved from Macau and lived at Robinson Road for twenty years, before moving to Kowloon on the other side of the harbour in 1926. By October 1910, when José left the *Telegraph*, there were four more boys, all born in Hong Kong. These were:

James, born on 27 April 1906, soon after his mother's conversion. She would live to see this son, born at such a critical time in her life, just after her conversion, become a Baptist pastor in the United States.

António Manuel [Tony], born on 28 August 1907, named after his uncle who had died of smallpox in 1888.

⁷³¹ The priest thought that he was baptising a girl. The baptismal record in the Cathedral register reads, as transcribed and translated by Carl Smith: 'Bapt. Sé, 22 December 1903, Anna Noel Braga, born 6 December 1903, 17 Calçada St Agostinho, leg. dau. of José Pedro Braga & Olive Pauline Pollard Braga.' CS/1021/00200843.

⁷³² Letter from Olive Braga to her daughter-in-law Audrey Braga, undated, but marked 'received 15 June' - i.e. 1943. Paul Braga Papers. It is more likely that José Braga's mother, Carolina, who lived with the family, refused to leave Macau. After her death on 11 January 1906, he was able to move his family to Hong Kong.

João Vicente [John Vincent], born on 25 September 1908, named after his paternal grandfather.

Paul, born on 16 June 1910. This was not a family name; J.P. Braga, now with nine sons, had run out of people he wished to commemorate. It also seems that he decided not to use Paulo, the Portuguese form of the name.

The last two children of this large family were girls. Both were named in honour of their grandmother, Carolina Maria, who had died in 1906. J.P. Braga had hoped for another daughter in order to honour his mother's memory.

Carolina Maria [Caroline or 'Carrie'], born on 19 December 1911

and lastly

Maria [Mary], born on 14 March 1914.

A few group snapshots survive of the seven boys born between 1902 and 1910. They were a family within the family and remained close for many years. They were far from being a rough street gang: family pride, firm school discipline and the strong leadership of Chappie, the second son, made them a family group who maintained high standards in all that they did. Above all, the gentle influence of a devoted and godly mother counted for much.

From about 1907, they lived a double religious life, going to Mass on Sunday morning at the nearby Catholic Cathedral, and in the evening to the Gospel Meeting of the Brethren at the Gospel Hall, a little further away on Pedder St.⁷³³ St Joseph's College had its Religious Instruction, too, and its formal, stately worship. At the Gospel Hall, the Braga family formed a substantial part of the congregation, which varied between twenty and thirty, often augmented by uniformed sailors from the ships of the Royal Navy's China Station and soldiers from the garrison. Olive received strong support from several stalwarts, notably two English medical missionaries, Dr Harry Lechmere Clift and his wife Winifred, and a Miss Meadows,

⁷³³ The Church Notices in the *South China Morning Post*, 7 February 1920 detail the weekly activities of what appears to have been a thriving religious community: 'Gospel Hall, 10 and 12 Pedder Street – Sunday. Breaking of Bread for Believers only 11 a.m., Gospel Meeting 7 p.m.; Tuesday, Study of Scripture 5.30 p.m.; Thursday, Study of Scripture 8 p.m.; Friday, Ladies' Bible Class 5.30 p.m.; Saturday, Prayer and Praise Meeting 7-8 p.m.'

the daughter of a missionary in Macau.⁷³⁴ Over a period of many years, Miss Meadows in particular was a strong influence on the youngsters, passing on tracts and pamphlets that had been written for soldiers.⁷³⁵ She was a good local example of the wider moral reform movement of the late nineteenth century.

Chappie, the leader of his brothers in most of their activities, including sport, physical fitness and stamp collecting, also led the way in their spiritual development. In September 1917, aged 17, he wrote to his Auntie Crun in Manila expressing his appreciation of her assistance in his spiritual growth.⁷³⁶ Earlier that year he had drafted a letter to his cousin Lena in Manila:

I have not been able to enjoy a [week-night] meeting at the Gospel Hall as their services coincide with my lessons, but shall be able to go on Sundays. It shall not be long I hope before I shall be able to start and enjoy serving the Lord.⁷³⁷

He changed that to:

~~It shall not be long I hope before~~ I shall be able now to start and enjoy serving the Lord.

This was a period when strong emphasis was laid on youth movements such as the Young Men's Christian Association and the Mutual Improvement Associations set up by the Presbyterian Church, while the Boy Scout Movement was founded in Britain in 1908. It spread rapidly through the British Empire, arriving in Hong Kong on 11 September 1913 when the 1st Hong Kong Scout Troop of St. Joseph's College was established by Major F.J. Bowen, an Army officer who was also a keen Catholic layman.⁷³⁸ In the next few years until it lapsed during the Great War for want of mature leadership when its senior members were absorbed by the Hong Kong Volunteers, the three eldest Braga boys, Jack, Chappie and Clement all joined it.

⁷³⁴ *Hongkong Sunday Herald*, 11 October 1936. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 63.

⁷³⁵ These included *Miss Robinson's Magazine*, produced by a remarkable morals campaigner, Sarah Robinson. A copy of this survives, bearing the signature 'C. Braga', presumably Clement. Her aim was 'to improve the health, manners, and morals of British soldiers by removing them from their unseemly haunts and by putting them in touch with Christian influences.' J.G.S, 'Robinson, Sarah (1834?-1921)', in C. Hartley, *A Historical Dictionary of British Women*. The name of Miss Meadows is to be found in documents connected with three of the older boys, Delfino ['Chappie'], Clement and Noel.

⁷³⁶ Delfino Braga to Corunna Noronha, author's collection.

⁷³⁷ Delfino Braga to Umbelina ['Lena'] Noronha, 19 February 1917. The draft survived in the papers of his brother Paul. The reference to lessons suggests that Chappie, by then employed in a bank, had enrolled in an evening accountancy course.

⁷³⁸ <http://www.scout.org.hk/>, accessed, 8 May 2011. It grew rapidly to a membership of 100 (*St Joseph's College, Hong Kong: diamond jubilee 1975-1935*, p. 134).

While not specifically Christian it was certainly Christian in tone, and its impact was designed to be one of wholesome living in mind and body. The Catholic Church too had its sodalities, though they tended to be more formal, and led by the clergy.



Olive Braga reading her Bible, ca. 1920s

Hugh Braga album

Besides the Brethren, Olive's quiet influence was paramount. She kept her troubles private, and her children saw only a loving mother seeking to share with them her strong Christian faith. She would gather them round the piano after school and lead them in singing hymns. They were spellbound by her exquisite violin playing, for she retained a fine instrument made by the great Amati family of Cremona that must have been acquired during the heady early triumphs of the Pollard Liliputians.⁷³⁹

They learned to play themselves, starting in infancy on a quarter-sized instrument. Jack, then aged thirteen,

produced a hand-written 'Braga News' which advertised that 'lessons in music will be given free of charge by mother to anyone'.⁷⁴⁰ In Catholic homes, the Angelus might be intoned each evening, but in the Braga household, the children sang with their mother the Revival hymn 'Count your many blessings', with its chorus at the end of each verse, 'Count your blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done'. It remained graven on their memory to the end of their days, whether or not they retained her faith.⁷⁴¹

The double religious life could not last indefinitely. Periodically, the boys were required to attend Confession, though as childhood advanced into searching

⁷³⁹ 'There was always music in the house. My mother was a highly talented violinist, and my first musical memory is hearing her play Mozart, violin sonata in E minor [K 304]. She played with such warmth of expression that the tones of her instrument have lived with me all down the years from my early childhood.' Letter from A.M. Braga to Mrs Beverley Howells, 8 April 1987. A.M. Braga file.

⁷⁴⁰ *Braga News*, no. 3, 13 August 1910. J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/2.1/3.

⁷⁴¹ Letter from A.M. Braga to Mrs Beverley Howells, 8 April 1987.

adolescence, they began to question the necessity for auricular confession. At some time about 1917, there was a group reaction – the word ‘revolt’ may not be too strong – and all but Jack, who had already left school, refused to go to Mass any more. There was trouble at home and school, but they did not recant. They remained to varying degrees anti-Catholic from then on, one of the very few Portuguese families in Hong Kong to become Protestant.

There was nothing that J.P. Braga could do about it. Impotence and frustration led to estrangement. It seldom surfaced, but when James wrote to his father in 1929 telling him that he intended to study at Moody Bible Institute at Chicago, his father’s reaction was swift and bitter. He sent the letter, scored across with red pencil, to Jack, the only remaining Catholic. He wrote, furiously:

This is adding greater sorrow to my complete disappointment in James. With every year I find life’s cup of sorrow in the family gets a larger fill.⁷⁴²

His children never discussed religious matters with their father, apart from an attempt made by Noel in 1926 to convert him, though his elder sister Jean counselled him not to open wounds. That finished with both the older and the younger man adopting entrenched positions. J.P. Braga was angry, Noel distraught. He wrote a long account of the confrontation in his diary, concluding:

My disobedience to the voice of the Lord condemned me terribly. If I had only spoken the words clearly and at the right time, what a difference there might have been! As a result of my disobedience great troubles might come and Father may be much more difficult to reach.⁷⁴³

Their conversion meant the severance not only of attendance at Mass each Sunday, but the end of their connection with the Portuguese Catholic community as well. That community regarded Protestants with fear and loathing, in which both *odium theologicum* and economic thralldom played a part. For almost the whole Braga family to have turned against the Church and thrown in their lot with the Protestants was almost beyond belief. In this close-knit community, there was endless and horrified gossip.

⁷⁴² J.P. Braga to J.M. Braga, 5 June 1929, J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/2.3/2.

⁷⁴³ Noel Braga Diary, 8 May 1926.

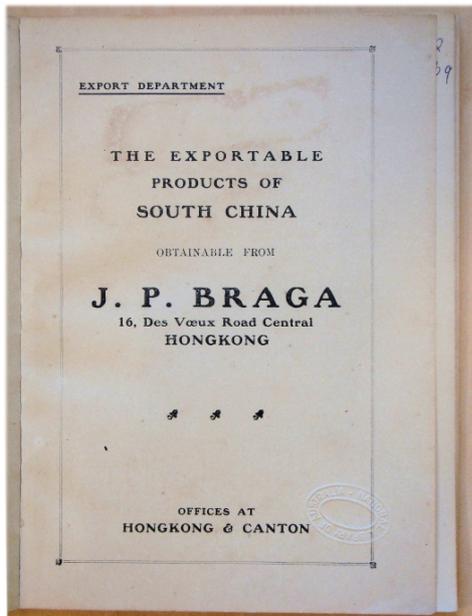
In the end, the only sense members of the Portuguese community could make of it was that the Protestant Bragas ('PBs', they were termed) had thrown their lot in with the British in the hope of improving their standing in the community and thus their prospects in life. In short, it was seen as a cynical economic exercise, not a religious conversion.⁷⁴⁴ In coming to that conclusion, people may have seen that J.P. Braga's business career had not prospered as well as he might have wished, and that his two eldest sons, Jack and Chappie, had both become poorly paid bank clerks.⁷⁴⁵ Perhaps their younger siblings hoped not to be, as Montalto de Jesus had expressed it, 'destined to vegetate as the proletariat of [this] prosperous foreign community in the Far East', though, like their father, they were examples of the 'gifted, promising youth' of the Portuguese community. The calamities that befell both Jack and Chappie before 1920 devastated their family and had far-reaching consequences for the seven younger sons that will be discussed in a later chapter.

J.P. Braga had indeed found it difficult to develop a prosperous business after he left the *Hongkong Telegraph* in October 1910. Not yet forty, he faced an uncertain future for the third time in his life. This time there were significant differences. One was the necessity of securing an income adequate to provide for a family of eleven children, soon to number thirteen. Another, less forbidding difference, was the fact that he was by now a well-known public figure, with a proven record of managerial experience in printing and publishing. That did not translate into a suitable commercial opening, so he determined to set up in business as a printer and as an importer of Chinese smallgoods.

He rented premises in the heart of the city at 16 Des Voeux Road, Central, and published, in the form of a small book, *Commercial Products of South China*, a catalogue of the products he planned to import. The Industrial Revolution that would transform China in the late twentieth century lay far into the future, and most items in the lengthy list were either the handicrafts of cottage industry, processed food stuffs or animal products. The list was arranged from A to Z rather than in product type, perhaps indicating the vendor's inexperience in wholesale marketing.

⁷⁴⁴ Interview, Philomeno ['Meno'] Baptista, Macau, 24 November 2010. The Catholic community would not have realised it, but the Protestant Bragas also regarded themselves as 'PBs' – the usual abbreviation for 'Plymouth Brethren'.

⁷⁴⁵ On leaving school, Jack commenced with the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corp. and Chappie with the French bank, Credit Foncier. Chappie's account book shows that in 1917 he was paid \$20 a month by his employer. Paul Braga Papers.



Some examples are:

Bamboo brushes, blinds and furniture
Buffalo horns
Castor Oil
Fans (Palm Leaf)
Feathers
Firecrackers – a big selection of these
Ginger
Glue
Human hair (drawn, unwashed) – supplied in cases of 133 ½ lbs.
Joss sticks
Mats and matting
Peanuts and peanut oil
Preserved fruit, such as cumquats
Soy sauce – casks of 667 lb. or 45 gallons
Tobacco leaf – in bales of 146 ½ lb.
Lastly, rice, in many varieties and qualities, all from Siam.⁷⁴⁶

This enterprise resumed a trading connection with Siam that his great-great-grandfather, Simão d'Araújo Rosa Sr, had once had in the mid-eighteenth century. In that long passage of time, there were few differences in this list of commodities. However, in 150 years trade had been transformed, but not for this trader. Most of these local products were low in value by comparison with manufactured products imported from Europe, or, increasingly, from Japan. Yet it was the only way forward for Braga, who obviously lacked the capital and the contacts with British businessmen to set up anything more substantial. Nevertheless, the careful planning and presentation of his catalogue indicates how thoroughly he had planned and set up his business. It never became a large one, and none of his sons became partners in it. His struggle continued to be, as it had always been, a lonely one. On at least one occasion, that struggle took a turn that in later years he would have wished to forget.

In 1943, discussing the rapid growth of the opium trade in the late eighteenth century, J.P. Braga would write, 'sad to relate, Portuguese merchants at Macao were not above trafficking in the "black mud" of such evil repute'.⁷⁴⁷ However, in 1917, desperate for income, he approached the Macau government for a share in that

⁷⁴⁶ *Historical and Statistical Abstract of the Colony of Hongkong, 1841-1920*, p. 66 noted that in 1919, and presumably in other years, 'a large business was done in Feathers and Human Hair'. In 1920 the export of 7,051 piculs of human hair was valued at £163,429. At 60 kg per picul, this amounts to more than 4 tonnes of human hair.

⁷⁴⁷ J.P. Braga, *The Portuguese in Hongkong and China*, p. 63.

traffic. Under an Anglo-Portuguese treaty signed in 1913, the opium trade was allowed to continue both in Hong Kong and Macau for local consumption only. Quantities were controlled, with an annual limit of 260 chests for Macau. Although all the opium was imported from Calcutta, the local sole contractor was referred to as the opium ‘farmer’. This person had a five year contract.⁷⁴⁸ In Macau this was held by a company called Tai Seng. When its contract expired in 1917, it appears that 3,500 taels (131 kg) of prepared opium remained unsold, suggesting that the market was dwindling. J.P. Braga headed a syndicate seeking sole rights to sell this remaining opium at auction before a new contract came into effect. It appears that the bid was unsuccessful, though the file was active for six months.⁷⁴⁹

It was inevitable that Braga would seek to take a prominent part in public affairs. The brash gossoon who had rushed into print with *Rights of Aliens* in 1895 was now more temperate in his views, but he continued to march to the same drumbeat. His son Tony remarked:

In his time J.P.B. probably contributed more letters to newspapers in Hong Kong than anyone else. In them he exposed much that was wrong with the social system in those days, and he constantly stressed the need for a fairer deal for the local born.⁷⁵⁰

Letters to the editor have always been a prominent feature of newspapers in the British tradition, powerfully enhancing the role of the Press as the Fourth Estate. Though no longer a newspaper man, J.P. Braga remained wedded to the world of print. He gradually built up a high profile in Hong Kong at large and in the Portuguese community in particular. He always signed his letters, unlike some who adopted a *nom de plume* such as the clichéd ‘Pro Bono Publico’, ‘A Briton’, or, with a local flavour, ‘Old Hongkong resident’.⁷⁵¹

⁷⁴⁸ Agreement between the United Kingdom and Portugal for the regulation of the opium monopolies in the colonies of Hong Kong and Macao, Great Britain, Parliament, Command Paper. 7052, 1913.

⁷⁴⁹ Arquivo Histórico, Macau, File No.MO/AH/AC/SA/01/06290, 21 November 1917-28 May 1918. *Pedido de J. P. Braga, de Hong Kong, em nome de um sindicato que pretendia concorrer à arrematação do exclusivo do ópio, para lhe ser concedido um período de 10 dias com vista à preparação do ópio antes do início do contrato. Trespasse à Companhia Iau Seng, de 3.500 taéis de ópio cozido pertencentes à companhia concessionária cessante Tai Seng.*

⁷⁵⁰ Notes prepared by A.M. Braga for an interview with Beverley Howells, April 1987, p. 4. A.M. Braga file.

⁷⁵¹ It may have been this practice that in 1925 led the *Post* to crack down on writers who ‘deem it meet to infuse into their criticisms thinly veiled abuse under the cloak of anonymity.’ J. Scott Harston, chairman of the board of the *South China Morning Post*, to Henry Ching, the editor, as reported by a later editor, Robin Hutcheon, op. cit., p. 63.

The role of the Portuguese community in Hong Kong remained problematical. The early prominence of a few who had held significant Government positions – the d’Almada brothers, Alexandre Grandpré, J.M.A. Silva and J.A. Carvalho – was not repeated in the following generations as the British colonial service became far more highly structured and stratified.⁷⁵² It followed that local people were excluded from the upper levels of Government Service, as they were in private enterprise. R.C. Hurley, who had lived in Hong Kong for 44 years, wrote in 1923:

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 hong, was, in proportion, much greater than it is today.⁷⁵³

Those responsible positions were seen as the birth right of men who were educated in the English Public Schools. Boys educated locally would never again receive these appointments. The unwritten policy of exclusion extended, of course, to Chinese, Indians and Eurasians as well as to Portuguese. However, a few wealthy Chinese had by the late nineteenth century achieved a degree of prominence that could not be ignored. The political consequences of this will be discussed in the next chapter. In the meantime, the significant appointment of Justice of the Peace was granted to a few Chinese. It took much longer for the first Portuguese Justice of the Peace to be appointed. This was Eduardo José (‘Edo’) Noronha, son of Leonardo, who had been the proprietor of Noronha & Co. since 1910, and was President of the Club de Recreio, one of the two major Portuguese community associations in Hong Kong. When ‘Edward Joseph Noronha’ – he was thus named in the *Government Gazette* – was appointed a Justice of the Peace in 1916, a group of twenty-four leading members of the Portuguese community, including J.P. Braga, his cousin, presented him with a silver rose bowl.⁷⁵⁴ Braga must have

⁷⁵² Januário Carvalho, Chief Clerk of the Colonial Treasury, had retired on a pension of \$2,368. Silva received \$2,528. The former Chief Justice received \$6,000. Pensions of this magnitude paid to Portuguese would be unthinkable by the 1920s. R.L. Jarman, *Hong Kong Annual Administration Reports, 1841-1941*, Annual Report 1893, p. 118.

⁷⁵³ R.C. Hurley, *Picturesque Hongkong*, p. 113.

⁷⁵⁴ A. Jorge da Silva, *The Portuguese in Hong Kong*, pp. 17, 87, 93. J.P. Braga did not attend the ceremony, but the official photograph, reproduced in this book, shows his eldest son Jack, then aged twenty, in the back row. Noronha’s death in March 1921 was described as a serious loss, not only to the Catholic community, but also to the Colony at large. *The Rock*, vol. 2, no. 7, April 1922, p. 558.

reflected that the appointment could have been his had events not conspired against him in 1900. He did not have long to wait, for in 1919 he too was appointed a JP.⁷⁵⁵

Other community positions followed in the next few years. The Prince of Wales visited Hong Kong in 1922 during a year-long tour of the Empire; J.P. Braga was a member of the Executive Committee set up to make suitable arrangements. He joined the committee of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals – it was not yet the RSPCA – and earned the comment ‘he has done much valuable work for local causes’.⁷⁵⁶

He was for many years a very loyal supporter of St Joseph’s College. He was often present on its public occasions.⁷⁵⁷ An early student of St Joseph’s and a distinguished alumnus, he put his own nine boys through the school. In 1914 he was ‘the leading spirit in the formation of the first Old Boys’ Association, of which he was the Honorary Secretary’.⁷⁵⁸ It was short-lived, but it was revived in 1928, when J.P. Braga, by then eminent in the community, was President.⁷⁵⁹ He had earlier been the occasional speaker at the college’s golden jubilee in 1926.⁷⁶⁰

He remained interested in the running sore that was the dispute between Portugal and China concerning the boundary of Macau. The protracted dispute came to a head with a proposal for port works in Macau alleged by the Canton authorities to encroach on Chinese territory.⁷⁶¹ Once again, the Hong Kong Government brokered

⁷⁵⁵ *Hongkong Government Gazette*, 25 April 1919. In 1919 there were 60 official JPs, all British, and 134 non-officials. Of these, 21 were Chinese, 6 Parsee or Indian, 1 Jewish and 4 Portuguese. The remainder, 102 in number, had British names. *Hongkong Government Gazette*, 9 May 1919.

⁷⁵⁶ *South China Morning Post*, 15 January 1929, J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 1. On 5 February 1935, at the request of Sir William Shenton, he prepared a list of all the committees to which he had belonged. Too lengthy to be included here, it appears as Appendix 7.

⁷⁵⁷ Such as the prize-giving in 1920. *The Rock*, vol. 1, no. 2, November 1920, p. 300.

⁷⁵⁸ *South China Morning Post*, 15 January 1929, J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 7. It was then stated that the association was founded almost fifteen years earlier, hence in 1914. It appears not to have survived World War I. Also, *St Joseph’s College, Hong Kong: diamond jubilee 1975-1935*, p. 134.

⁷⁵⁹ *The Rock*, new series vol. 1, no., 7, July 1928, p. 230.

⁷⁶⁰ *St. Joseph’s College golden jubilee celebrations: brief historical retrospect. Being an Address delivered at the College by Mr. J.P. Braga, a former pupil, on the 17th May, 1926*, p.1. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/13.1. His son Noel was present, and noted that ‘Father’s address was a feature of the occasion’. Noel Braga Diary, 17 May 1926.

⁷⁶¹ Despite the on-going turmoil in China following the 1911 revolution, the Canton authorities took strong exception to a major land reclamation project planned by the Macau government for many years and finally commenced following World War I. Early in 1920, the contractor was forced to stop work when Chinese workers refused to continue. The Governor of Macau reluctantly sanctioned this, to the great displeasure of NCOs in the Macau garrison, who demanded that he explain his actions (*South China Morning Post*, 6 March 1920). It was an embarrassment painfully reminiscent of more than two centuries of Macau’s humiliation in dealing with the Chinese Empire. Work eventually

a Macau Boundary Delineation Conference to deal with the issue. Braga took a leading part in the conference, held at Hong Kong in 1921. It was, he commented later, an 'ever-recurring problem'.⁷⁶² Some years later, in October 1929, he was appointed *Comendador da Ordem de Cristo* by the Portuguese government in recognition of his role in the conference.⁷⁶³ If his appointment as a Justice of the Peace gave him greater standing in the Hong Kong community, the Portuguese decoration gave him still more respect in the Portuguese community.

Following the family's move to Kowloon in 1926, he joined the committee of the Kowloon Residents' Association, which had been founded in 1919.⁷⁶⁴ His letters to the newspapers were full of ideas about the progress of this peninsula on the north side of the harbour, where development had been slow since it was added in 1860 to the Colony of Hong Kong.⁷⁶⁵ A long-standing member of Club Lusitano, he was elected President in 1927.⁷⁶⁶

In 1920, F.J. Bowen, who had founded the Boy Scouts in Hong Kong in 1913 and revived it on his return from the Great War, founded a monthly Catholic periodical, *The Rock*. Braga became its leading contributor. Unusually, he chose to use a *nom-de-plume*, 'St Josephian', for his regular and penetrating observations on the local scene, especially in Kowloon.⁷⁶⁷ The issue for April 1922 contained a full-page photograph of Braga, describing him as a member of the editorial staff, adding, a year later:

he has laboured, often in the face of great difficulties, to maintain the high literary and artistic standard set by the founders of the magazine, and he has had no small share in bringing it to its present position as *the* English Catholic magazine of the Far East.⁷⁶⁸

resumed on the harbour reclamation and was largely completed by 1926 at a cost of more than HKD \$6 million (*South China Morning Post*, 20, 22 March 1926).

⁷⁶² J.P. Braga *The Portuguese in Hongkong and China*, draft notes for Chapter 20, pp. 1-8. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/13.3/3.

⁷⁶³ Letter to J.P. Braga from the Governor of Macau, 26 October 1929. J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/13.1/3.

⁷⁶⁴ *South China Morning Post*, 9 January 1920; *Historical and statistical abstract of the colony of Hongkong, 1841-1920*, p. 65. Its inclusion in this official compendium of significant events suggests that this step was regarded by senior government officials as important.

⁷⁶⁵ J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/14.1/40 passim.

⁷⁶⁶ An incomplete list of the Presidents of Club Lusitano published in 1996 failed to include his name. T. Paiva, 'A home shared by Hong Kong's Portuguese community', *Macau*, No. 96, 1996, p. 69.

⁷⁶⁷ *The Rock*, 1920-1932. After about 1928 it became the vehicle for the Jesuits in Hong Kong, and Braga, whose public career was increasingly busy, no longer contributed to it.

⁷⁶⁸ *The Rock*, vol. 3, no. 10, July 1923, p. 587.

For J.P. Braga, these years were not all a story of steady advancement, much less a triumphal progress. The official history of the *South China Morning Post* characterised the decade after World War I as ‘the chaotic twenties’. Although it obviously smacks of a journalistic headline, the comment was just. The turmoil that followed the 1911 revolution in China showed no signs of abating, and the repercussions were felt in Hong Kong. What had once been the great Chinese Empire was wracked by civil war throughout the decade and Chinese nationalism began to assert itself. Hong Kong found itself an immediate target of Chinese dissatisfaction with the status quo of subjection to foreigners. However, unrest there could not be dismissed as only the by-product of Chinese troubles. Hong Kong and Shanghai were obvious foci of discontent. The revulsion of Chinese intellectuals at their country’s humiliation by Japan’s twenty-one demands in 1915 and the subsequent indignities inflicted on China at the Versailles Conference in 1919 led directly to the May Fourth Movement, beginning in Peking on that day in 1919. There followed serious trouble in Shanghai, and other cities. The May Fourth Movement was an intellectual turning point in Chinese reactions to the outside world. It was a seminal event that radicalised Chinese intellectual thought. Among the principles of the ‘Call to Youth’ by Chen Duxiu in 1915 were ‘be independent, not servile, be aggressive, not retiring’. He concluded, ‘youth, take up the task!’ a call perhaps consciously reminiscent of the well-known flourishes of his antecedents, Rousseau and Marx.⁷⁶⁹ There were soon far-reaching consequences that would be calamitous for many people in Hong Kong.

The troubles in China led to a flood of refugees to Hong Kong. Between 1915 and 1925, the population increased from 509,200 to 725,100.⁷⁷⁰ There was overcrowding

⁷⁶⁹ The May Fourth Movement has received rather less attention than the subsequent rise of the Chinese Communist Party, which is in some respects the child of that movement. Discussion of it includes, initially, K.S. Latourette, *A History of Modern China*, pp. 126-134, S. Teng and J. Fairbank, *China’s Response to the West, a documentary survey, 1839-1923*, especially pp. 233-239, 242-245, 252-256, and F. Schurmann and O. Schell, *China Readings – 2: Republican China: nationalism, war, and the rise of communism, 1911-1949*, pp. 64-86. The later study (1960) by Chow Tse-Tsung, *The May Fourth Movement: intellectual revolution in modern China*, Harvard East Asian Studies, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., has become the standard work.

⁷⁷⁰ As recorded in the *Hong Kong Blue Book*, and maintained in the records of the Hong Kong Bureau of Census and Statistics. It was always recognised that the actual population was likely to be at least 20% higher, with many Chinese escaping official notice.

of squalid tenements and a huge increase in rents. There were food riots and looting in 1919 when there was a critical shortage of rice and thus desperation among the Chinese population. There was little unionism in Hong Kong, but engineers and fitters formed the Chinese Engineers Guild, which went on strike for higher pay in April 1920. With the colony crippled, the union quickly won. This inevitably led to further industrial action, with a Chinese Seamen's Union being established. It too went on strike in January 1922, the strike soon leading to a general strike and the exodus of much of the Hong Kong Chinese population to Canton, a move backed by the local authorities there.⁷⁷¹ With shipping at a standstill for eight weeks, the shipowners, backed by the Hong Kong Government, were forced to give way. A settlement was negotiated by Sir Robert Ho Tung, respected by both sides and himself a major shipowner, who used his immense prestige and wealth to resolve an apparently intractable situation, but this was a massive defeat for the Hong Kong Government.⁷⁷²

Far worse was to come when an unruly demonstration in Canton on 23 June 1925 called for another general strike against British imperialism. It was fired upon by European police from the British concession, Shameen, and there was serious loss of life, with 52 people killed and 117 wounded.⁷⁷³ This at once precipitated the called-for general strike. The servants in the Braga household and J.P. Braga's office staff at once departed.⁷⁷⁴ Thousands more did the same, believing rumours that the government would poison the water supply.⁷⁷⁵ However, after the 1922 experience, contingency plans had been made in Hong Kong to keep essential services going. The Hong Kong Volunteers were called out, troops patrolled the streets to maintain order and 2,000 Europeans joined a labour force to keep essential services going.⁷⁷⁶ The British knew that they could rely on 'the staunch and ever loyal Portuguese'.⁷⁷⁷

⁷⁷¹ R. Chung Lu Cee, 'A Study of the 1925-26 Canton-Hong Kong Strike-Boycott', MA thesis, University of Hong Kong, p. 57; N. Miners, *Hong Kong under imperial rule, 1912-1941*, pp. 11-14.

⁷⁷² N. Miners, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-14. There was loss of life when striking domestic servants making their way on foot towards the border were fired upon. Most of the strikers' demands were met, with compensation for their lost income during the strike. That additional cost was a particularly bitter pill to swallow for the shipowners, who had to subscribe to a fund to pay it. Ho Tung emerged as the man of the hour and personally guaranteed the fund.

⁷⁷³ R. Chung Lu Cee, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

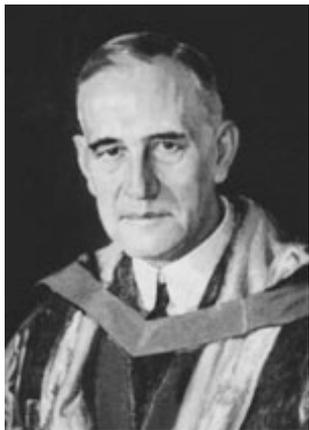
⁷⁷⁴ Noel Braga Diary, 23 June 1925.

⁷⁷⁵ R. Chung Lu Cee, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 89

⁷⁷⁷ R. Hutcheon, *op. cit.* p. 60. After World War II, they were no longer prepared to be taken for granted.

The strike was less effective than the two earlier strikes had been, and by September, most businesses were running again. However, although essential services were maintained, an effective boycott of British goods and shipping, organised by the strike committee in Canton, continued for 15 months. The number of ships entering Hong Kong harbour fell by 60%. The Governor of Hong Kong, Sir Reginald Stubbs, proposed robust military action that would have been tantamount to a third Chinese War, but the Colonial Office rejected any such suggestion. Officials in London correctly judged that Hong Kong could not be starved into submission as Macau had been on many occasions during the previous three centuries. Stubbs' proposal 'to appeal to their deepest feelings — that is, by the cat' did not appeal to the local Chinese population, British public opinion or the Foreign Office, though it was applauded by the local British population.⁷⁷⁸



Sir Cecil Clementi, 1926
Detail of a portrait held by
Hong Kong University

Stubbs' successor, Sir Cecil Clementi, who arrived in October 1925, inherited an unprecedentedly difficult situation. He has been criticised for allowing the ruinous boycott to drag on for another year, but refused to give way to political demands unacceptable to London and to a scale of compensation that he regarded as blackmail. Wisely, he consulted his Executive and Legislative Councils in five joint sessions in the next twelve months of economic calamity and political stalemate.⁷⁷⁹

Eventually, in September 1926, he resorted to a limited form of gunboat diplomacy, traditionally effective on the China coast, by sending marines to

Canton and clearing the pickets from the wharves. A gunboat was moored there to keep them away, but this was not the massive use of force and firepower that Stubbs had sought. A subdued strike committee saved face by organising a demonstration on 'Double Tenth', 10 October, the fifteenth anniversary of the 1911 Revolution, celebrating their achievement, and vowing to continue the struggle against

⁷⁷⁸ R. Chung Lu Cee, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

⁷⁷⁹ N. Miners, *op. cit.*, pp. 54, 293 n 36.

imperialism. Nevertheless, the boycott was quietly dropped, and trade between Canton and Hong Kong slowly recovered.⁷⁸⁰

While one British writer, Miners, has seen this as a result of Clementi's patient negotiation and firm if limited action, Chung has mounted a more persuasive argument. She has established that the end of the boycott was ordered by Chiang Kai-shek once he gained the ascendancy in Canton.

Chiang was primarily preoccupied with the military expedition against the militarists [in the north]. The settlement of the strike boycott was therefore considered necessary. Chiang did not favour the idea of having to deal with troubles from the British at Hong Kong in the south while campaigning in the north.⁷⁸¹

It was for Clementi a victory of sorts. It is hard to see another governor dealing with the situation more effectively, given what Chung has described as the 'nebulous and ever-changing political situation at Canton'.⁷⁸² With long experience as a younger man in the colonial service in Hong Kong, Clementi realised that the vehemence of the political storm in Canton had to run its course. Nevertheless, the long boycott was an economic catastrophe.⁷⁸³ The loss of trade has been estimated at up to HK\$500,000,000, with an additional \$500,000,000 wiped from Hong Kong property values and share prices.⁷⁸⁴ Recovery would be slow and protracted, and before it did occur, commerce was again hit badly by the Great Depression a few years later.⁷⁸⁵ In 1935 imports and exports were down to half their 1931 values.⁷⁸⁶ The deteriorating economy seriously affected the business confidence of the colony.

Many people were ruined, and J.P. Braga was no exception. At the time, he shared something of his troubles with his son Noel, already seen as a promising young executive.

⁷⁸⁰ The tortuous and ineffectual negotiations with the left-leaning Canton authorities only terminated with the ascendancy of the Kuomintang. R. Chung deals with them in two lengthy chapters, op. cit., pp. 179-304

⁷⁸¹ R. Chung Lu Cee, op. cit., p. 306.

⁷⁸² Ibid., p. 305.

⁷⁸³ Extensive detail is given by R. Chung Lu Cee, op. cit., pp. 128-140.

⁷⁸⁴ N. Miners, op. cit. p. 19.

⁷⁸⁵ *Hong Kong Annual Report, 1933*, p. 15. Imports fell by 19.7% and exports by 14.6% from the previous year's value.

⁷⁸⁶ N. Miners, op. cit., p. 23.

I went to Father's room, after much hesitation, and we talked about his financial difficulties. At times he would stop to say how unfortunate circumstances have been and how cruel the present trouble has been, inasmuch as the money which he had hoped to retire on has been snatched out of his hands, as it were, and he is left with heavy debts to pay without hope of being able to meet his liabilities at present ... He said that everybody who had money lost and those who did not lose were those who did not have the money to lose.⁷⁸⁷

Fifteen years later, in a broadcast talk marking the centenary of Hong Kong, J.P. Braga spoke of

The collapse resulting from the strike and boycott on the 22nd June 1925. That was a disastrous year for the Portuguese of Hong Kong. Many savings of a lifetime vanished into thin air on that fateful afternoon in mid-June.⁷⁸⁸

Privately, he admitted to his son Jack that he had rashly borrowed on margin to speculate on the stock market, which resulted in his losing all his savings when the market collapsed.

All these disadvantages and avoidable loss should impress on you the folly of over-speculation when you are not in a position to take up your forward commitments. It can be very embarrassing and ruinous.⁷⁸⁹

By the early 1920s, before the crash of 1925, J.P. Braga might well have supposed that the worst of his troubles were behind him. He had caught the eye of one of the few successful British businessmen to treat members of the Portuguese community as anything other than underlings beneath their notice. On the Portuguese side what was most resented was 'the calm British assumption of superiority'.⁷⁹⁰ In this *weltanschauung* a minor Portuguese local had no place, but Robert Gordon Shewan was an exception to this arrogant outlook.

Shewan had joined the long-established American firm Russell & Co. in 1881 where another Englishman, Charles Alexander Tomes, was already working. The firm was wound up in 1891 and Shewan & Co. took its place, to become Shewan, Tomes & Co. in 1895. An extremely active – even aggressive – enterprise, it developed wide-ranging business interests in several cities, and as general managers and agents for

⁷⁸⁷ Noel Braga Diary, 6 May 1926.

⁷⁸⁸ J.P. Braga, *Portuguese pioneering: a hundred years of Hong Kong*, p. 12. The date was actually 23 June 1925.

⁷⁸⁹ J.P. Braga to J.M. Braga, 21 October 1931, J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/2.3/8.

⁷⁹⁰ D.B. Horn, *Great Britain and Europe in the eighteenth century*, p. 272.

many others. As it expanded it acquired shipping, insurance and manufacturing agencies, and was associated with the forming of the Green Island Cement Company and the China Light and Power Company, which generated electricity for Kowloon, where the demand for electricity was far smaller than on Hong Kong Island. Electricity supply here since 1890 had been the monopoly of the Hong Kong Electric Company.⁷⁹¹ The rise of Shewan, Tomes & Co. was spectacular, as by the early twentieth century it had become one of the major firms in the Far East.⁷⁹²

Shortly after World War I, Shewan invited J.P. Braga to join the board of China Light, as it was usually known, and also employed one of his sons, the promising Noel Braga, who became its company secretary while still in his early twenties.⁷⁹³ It was the beginning of a fulfilling career for both. Noel gave his father unswerving support and loyalty despite the religious gulf that divided them, while J.P. Braga's political career in the ensuing decade would hardly have been possible had he not held some reasonably significant position in business. However, despite his prominent position, he never recovered financially from the major setback of the 1925-1926 strike and boycott. The two aspects of his public life, commercial and political, are both dealt with in the next chapter.

A necessary first step towards higher office for anyone in public life in Hong Kong was committee work in some position open to public scrutiny. Lawyers could be, and were, assessed on their performance in court.⁷⁹⁴ Prominent businessmen such as the Chief Manager of the Hongkong Bank and the General Manager of Jardine's were automatically appointed to the Council, in much the same way that the heads of major companies were elected to the Shanghai Municipal Council.⁷⁹⁵

Significant in the public eye was the oddly-named Sanitary Board. It was set up in 1883 following a damning report prepared by Osbert Chadwick on the appalling sanitary conditions in the colony. Initially comprising four officials, four appointed

⁷⁹¹ Initially Shewan, Tomes & Co dealt with the commodities that Russell & Co had exported from Canton through Hong Kong for half a century – raw silk, silk piece goods, tea, matting, fire-crackers, rattan, and others; and imported cottons, woollens, hardware, glassware, flour, hemp, raw sugar, and wine and spirits. D. Waters, 'Hong Kong's Hongs with Long Histories and British Connections', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch*, vol. 30, 1990, p. 249.

⁷⁹² S. Bard, *Foreign Traders in Hong Kong*, p. 77.

⁷⁹³ N. Cameron, *Power*, p. 111.

⁷⁹⁴ N. Miners, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-131.

⁷⁹⁵ *South China Morning Post*, 13 February 1920.

unofficial members were added in 1886, and the next year, provision was made for a further two unofficial members to be elected by ratepayers who were also qualified to be jurors. Its public importance was emphasised by the panic which accompanied the serious outbreak in 1894 of bubonic plague. However, during the next twenty years, the board remained quiescent until the next serious epidemic, an outbreak of typhoid in 1926 which affected more Europeans than hitherto.⁷⁹⁶ This led to press criticism of the inadequate way it had carried out its functions.⁷⁹⁷ This, broadly speaking, encompassed many of the public health responsibilities of a British local government body, but was extended to include the special requirements of an Asian city with significant public health problems.⁷⁹⁸ Because of the epidemic, the Sanitary Board became a body of importance, and its membership was coveted as never before. It was an advisory, not an executive body. However, its significance lay in the fact that it was the only element of elected self-government in the colony, although the electorate was tiny.⁷⁹⁹ It was a tremendous boost to Braga's public standing when in 1926 he was appointed a temporary member of the Sanitary Board in the place of a government unofficial appointee, Dr W.V.M. Koch, who was on a year's 'home leave'.⁸⁰⁰

When William Pitt the elder triumphantly concluded the Seven Years' War in 1763, he was feted in towns and cities throughout Britain. 'It rained silver platters for several weeks', was one witty comment. In its own small way Hong Kong rained compliments on J.P. Braga. The *Hongkong Sunday Herald* led the way.

⁷⁹⁶ N. Miners, op. cit., p. 147.

⁷⁹⁷ E.g. *South China Morning Post*, 22 February 1927.

⁷⁹⁸ As outlined in the annual reports of the Sanitary Department, these were Scavenging (i.e. garbage collection) and Nightsoil Removal, House Cleansing, Disinfection of infected clothing, control of Cemeteries, supervision of Markets and Slaughter Houses, control of Public Bath Houses and latrines, Offensive Trades (of which pig-roasting was the major one, totalling 37 of the 127 premises under control). Ambulances were also provided by the Sanitary Dept., and at the two Disinfecting Stations a Dead Box was provided. This was an attempt to deal with a terrible social evil that reflected the extent of destitution and starvation among refugees fleeing the constant warfare in inter-bellum China. In each year during this period more than 1,000 corpses were collected from the streets in a regular morning pick-up. *Report of the Sanitary Department for the Year 1929*, pp. 4-9; *Report of the Sanitary Department for the Year 1931*, pp. 1-5.

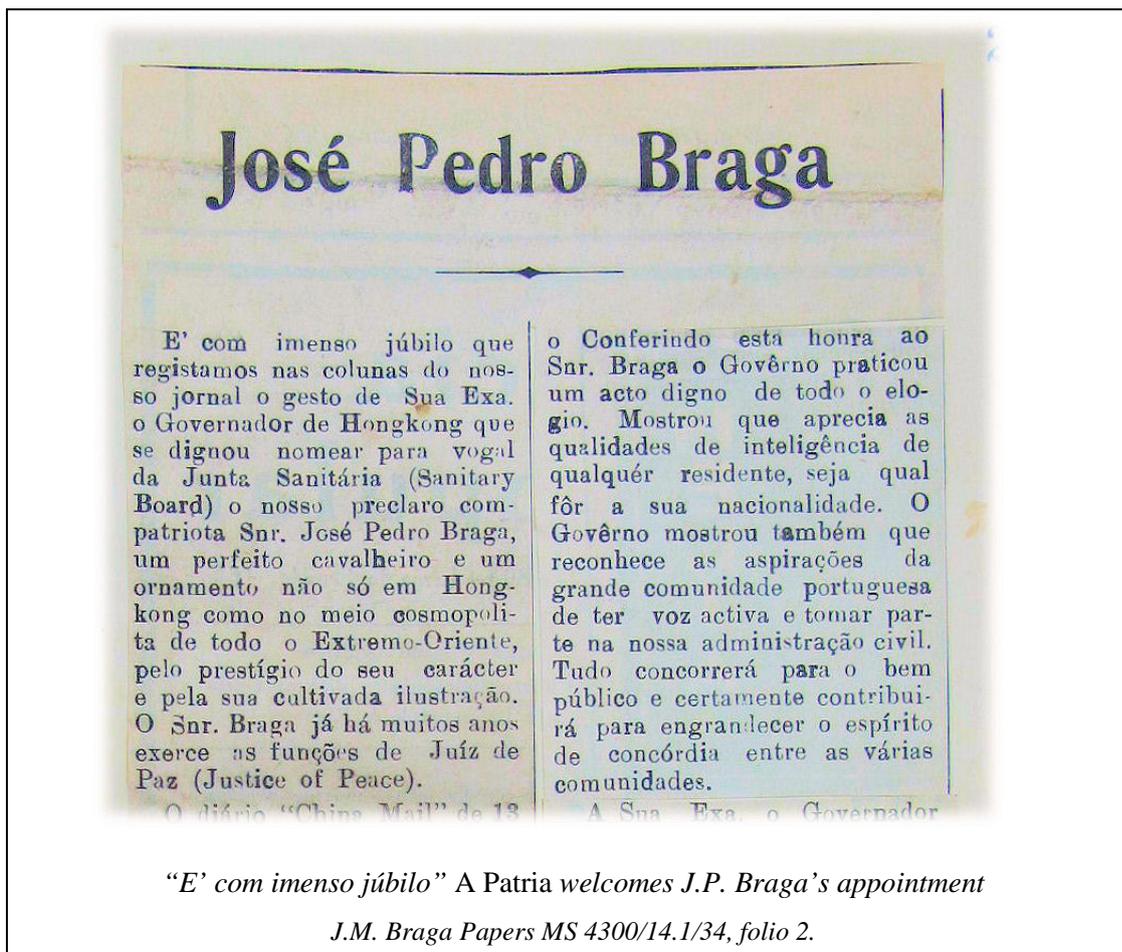
⁷⁹⁹ N. Miners, op. cit., p. 134. In 1920 the number of jurors was 1,500, of whom only 61 had Chinese names. As all jurors were required to have a working knowledge of English, 98% of the population were immediately excluded. The census of 1921 gave a total population of 625,155. The electorate for the Sanitary Board was thus 0.24% of the population, surely one of the smallest electorates ever, and this for an advisory body. The 61 Chinese electors were 1 in 10,000, or 0.009% of the total population. No further comment is necessary.

⁸⁰⁰ *South China Morning Post*, 22 December 1926, J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 4.

Congratulations will be showered on Mr J.P. Braga on his appointment as a member of the Sanitary Board during the absence of Dr Koch – congratulations that will by no means be confined to the Portuguese community of which Mr Braga is one of the most respected members. [The Government] has shown that it appreciates public-spiritedness on the part of any resident irrespective of nationality. It has shown that it recognises the claims of the large Portuguese community to a voice and share in our civic administration.⁸⁰¹

The *China Mail* pointed out:

The appointment is without precedent in the history of the Colony, as this is the first occasion on which a member of the Portuguese community has been appointed to the Sanitary Board. It is very fitting that the honour should fall to Mr Braga, whose position in the Portuguese community is acknowledged, and whose public spirited work for the Colony on many occasions has won him the respect and goodwill of the entire British community. The Government is to be commended on its choice, and Mr Braga is to be congratulated on a notable distinction.⁸⁰²



⁸⁰¹ *Hongkong Sunday Herald*, 14 November 1926, J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 1.

⁸⁰² *China Mail*, 13 November 1926. J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 1.

The local Portuguese-language monthly, *A Patria*, outlined Braga's work for the Portuguese community and for the interests of Macau in some detail in a leading article, adding percipiently:

We must emphasise that membership of the Sanitary Board is sought after by the British themselves, for it is seen as a stepping stone to a seat on the Legislative Council. The modesty of the nominee would not have permitted him to apply for membership himself. It has been this great modesty which has now brought his name even more to the fore.⁸⁰³

The Portuguese language is rich in embellishment and flattery, and *A Patria* laid it on thickly, extolling this 'gentleman, in every sense of the word ... well known for his fine character and cultured background ... his exceptional intelligence and *savoir faire*', concluding:

the day will not be too far away when the Portuguese Government honours a man of his intelligence, clear perception and brilliant literacy, with the *Ordem de S. Tiago*, the Order of St James, in recognition of services rendered to Portugal and Macau.⁸⁰⁴

At first glance all this fuss about a temporary position on a second-rate board in a remote colony seems inordinate. However, two things must be borne in mind. The first, stressed continuously in this thesis, is that the Portuguese had been beneath everyone's notice until this point – indeed, beneath their contempt. In securing this appointment, Braga had broken through a significant glass ceiling entirely through his own conspicuous merits. The second is that this small step in constitutional development, for that is what it was, was achieved without any sort of radical agitation.⁸⁰⁵

⁸⁰³ *A Patria*, [undated, but probably November 1926]. J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 2. Translation from Portuguese by Dienecke Carruthers.

⁸⁰⁴ Braga did indeed receive state recognition from Portugal three years later, in October 1929, though as *Comendador de Ordem do Cristo*, a lower order than the highly esteemed *Ordem de S. Tiago*.

⁸⁰⁵ This was steadily increasing in India, where major concessions were gradually being wrung by force from a reluctant British government (Initially the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909, and most recently the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms in 1919. The next few years would see major concessions following the Round Table Conferences of 1931, 1932 and 1935, culminating in the India Act of 1935, intended to grant dominion status to India). In other parts of the Empire, there had been throughout the nineteenth century a steady move towards representative government in colonies with white majority population, but similar moves in other colonies had hardly begun.

Braga used the time well, initially doing all he could to stir the Sanitary Board and its chairman, the Head of the Sanitary Department, into vigorous action in regard to the prevention of typhoid, a water-borne disease. At his first meeting, a philippic against the Board's lack of action in dealing with insanitary conditions conducive to typhoid at a Chinese village, Kaulungtung, close to an area then being developed as Kowloon Tong, a European 'garden suburb', attracted detailed press attention.⁸⁰⁶ He then turned his attention to unhygienic conditions in the Central Market, where, among other insanitary practices, meat was prepared on wooden surfaces that could not be cleaned properly. His speech on this occasion was reported *in extenso* in the press.⁸⁰⁷ A testy reply from the Board's chairman was also fully reported, but other members backed Braga, and things did change. In the next twelve months he kept up the pressure.

As a result, he was elected unopposed in 1927 to one of the two elected positions when it fell vacant. He was nominated by the General Manager of the *South China Morning Post*, Benjamin Wylie, who saw in Braga a capable man very active in public affairs.⁸⁰⁸ A man who had lost three brothers in a smallpox epidemic was the ideal person to tackle public health issues with passion. Other members of the Sanitary Board urged caution in interfering with traditional Chinese customs.⁸⁰⁹ They lived on the Hong Kong side, well away from the outbreak of typhoid at Kowloon Tong, which was at the northern extremity of Kowloon. Even in dealing with the important Central Market on the Hong Kong side, the acting chairman, N.L. Smith, seemed unaware of unsanitary conditions there. Braga had begun a practice of irritating complacent officials that he would continue for the next ten years.

⁸⁰⁶ *South China Morning Post*, 22 February 1927. The spacious new development, directed at attracting British business people away from what is known as the 'Hong Kong side' to the 'Kowloon side' temptingly named the streets after some of the more appealing English 'home counties', such as Norfolk, Suffolk, Kent, Devon, Somerset and Cornwall. A touch of British triumphalism was added in the name of the newly built approach road, Waterloo Road. The developer's map of the project is in the J.M. Braga Special Map Collection, National Library of Australia, Map 53/14, New Kowloon.

⁸⁰⁷ *Hongkong Telegraph*, 3 March 1927, *South China Morning Post*, 23 March 1927, *Hongkong Daily Press*, 20 April 1927. J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 8, 10-13.

⁸⁰⁸ *South China Morning Post*, 30 November 1927. His other nominator was C.M. Manners, OBE. Wylie had been with the *Post* since 1909, and was familiar with Braga's work at the *Telegraph* and his growing prominence during the next 16 years. R. Hutcheon, *SCMP, the first eighty years*, pp. 30, 31. Major C.M. Manners was Chairman of the Star Ferry Company, President of the Hong Kong Automobile Association and a Council member of the Boy Scouts Association, Hong Kong Branch (websites of the three bodies accessed 17 May 2012). These were two good men to have as backers.

⁸⁰⁹ *South China Morning Post*, 22 February 1927.

It was a quarter of a century since he had returned to Hong Kong as Manager of the *Hongkong Telegraph*. In that time, J.P. Braga, J.P., had become the most prominent member of the Portuguese community, E.J. Noronha, the first Portuguese Justice of the Peace, having died in 1921. He had survived serious personal and financial crises, and was at the threshold of a more significant role in business and public affairs that would draw upon all the experience he had gained. His attainments were entirely his own. There was no precedent in Hong Kong for a member of the Portuguese community, little regarded by others, to take so prominent a part in public life and to devote so much of his time to honorary positions. In creating this degree of public esteem, he did not stand on the shoulders of others, though in later years, other members of the Portuguese community would benefit from his achievements.

Chapter 9

'Son of Hong Kong' – J.P. Braga 1929-1941

Forty years after he had won a gold medal in India as a very promising boy, J.P. Braga again won unprecedented distinction in becoming the first member of the Portuguese community to be appointed to membership of the Hong Kong Legislative Council. Others would follow in later years, largely due to his initial achievement. After many years of difficulty, he at last gained in these years a degree of prominence in business, becoming an effective chairman of two thriving public companies. He saw several of his sons established in business, with three of them, Noel, Hugh and John, becoming successful executives of these two companies. A fourth son, Tony, was his indispensable right-hand man in his own office. He had acquired his own home in mainland Kowloon after many years of renting in an area of Hong Kong Island that was becoming overcrowded and less attractive, and this gave him a solid reason to work hard for the development of this hitherto neglected part of the colony.

These were busy and fulfilling years, despite several serious bouts of illness and the constant battle to gain equality in a British colony that maintained an unswerving belief in the superiority of all things British – commercial practice, legal procedures, efficient administration and its self-assured domination of Hong Kong society. For Braga to have carved out what amounted to a personal niche in this rigidly hierarchical and exclusive system of control was no mean achievement, especially at a time of on-going economic crisis and a deteriorating international situation from 1931 onwards.

Both personally and in his community, Braga's most significant achievement was his appointment in January 1929 as a member of the Hong Kong Legislative Council. It was, observed Carlos da Roza, another leading member of the Portuguese community, 'a position much desired and eagerly sought after by all residents of

Hong Kong'.⁸¹⁰ He might have added that no-one really expected that such a thing would ever occur, as in Shanghai, the only other foreign settlement on the China coast to have its own administrative structure; no Portuguese ever became a member of the Shanghai Municipal Council. Indeed Shanghai was the model for British administration in China in the 1920s, as three-quarters of British economic interests in China were concentrated there, compared with less than 10 per cent in Hong Kong.⁸¹¹

It is necessary to trace the history of community participation in the Hong Kong Legislative Council in order to explain the significance of da Roza's remark. The normal practice in nineteenth century British colonies was to establish an Executive and a Legislative Council as something of a brake on the governor's autocratic power. In the case of Hong Kong, both were kept deliberately small when they were set up in 1843, in recognition of the difficult circumstances facing the new colony.⁸¹² Both had three members, all of whom were senior officers of the government. Following representations from the Hong Kong business community which were duly approved by the Colonial Office, two unofficial members of the Legislative Council were added in 1850. They were appointed by the governor, but on the nomination of the unofficial Justices of the Peace.⁸¹³

Over the next half century, as the colony grew in importance and diversity, the Legislative Council grew with it, but the model of government by elected representatives, a central doctrine to Victorian liberals, was never applied to Hong Kong, where the English minority was tiny and transitory. Therefore all members of both councils were appointed, and official members, subject to the governor's direction, were always in a majority. When the Council was enlarged by the

⁸¹⁰ At a dinner held to celebrate J.P. Braga's appointment. *South China Morning Post*, 24 January 1929. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 7.

⁸¹¹ J. Darwin, Chapter 1, 'Hong Kong in British Decolonisation', in J.M. Brown and R. Foot, *Hong Kong's Transitions, 1842-1997*, p. 27.

⁸¹² G. B. Endacott, *History of Hong Kong*, p. 38.

⁸¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 43, 83. When news of the change reached Hong Kong, the fifteen justices, highly delighted, went to the exclusive Hong Kong Club to elect their two representatives, one of whom, predictably, was David Jardine, the taipan of Jardine, Matheson & Co. (*South China Morning Post*, 13 January 1919). That set the pattern for exclusivity from then on.

appointment of further unofficial members, an equal number of official members were added at the same time.⁸¹⁴

A proposal for the Legislative Council to have an elected majority emerged when a Constitutional Reform Association was established on 3 May 1917.⁸¹⁵ J.P. Braga, no stranger to reform agitation, joined its committee.⁸¹⁶ It revived proposals made a generation earlier by a British elite, but its timing was poor. World War I was hardly a suitable time for a remote colony to be seeking constitutional change. It received short shrift from the governor, Sir Henry May, and from the Colonial Office in London. Immediately after the war, with a new governor, Sir Reginald Stubbs, in office, two unofficial members, Henry Pollock and Percival Holyoak, revived the Association, initially attracting strong support.

A well-attended public meeting was held on 9 January 1919. As a committee member, J.P. Braga was one of the dignitaries on the platform.⁸¹⁷ The proposed changes were greeted enthusiastically. These were:

That as regards all the unofficial members of the Legislative Council (other than the two Chinese nominated members) the principle of election instead of nomination shall be applied.

That the number of unofficial members shall be increased from 6 to 9 and that the number of official members shall remain as at present, namely 8.

That of the seven elected unofficial members (all of whom shall be British subjects) two shall be elected by the Hongkong General Chamber of Commerce; one by the Justices of the Peace; three (two of whom shall be of British race and one of Portuguese race) by British subjects who are jurymen ... and the one by the Chinese

⁸¹⁴ Thus by 1894, the Council had been enlarged to thirteen: six unofficial and seven official members. This step resulted from a petition from European residents seeking an elected European majority. This was no expression of high-minded liberal principle; the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London saw it for what it was, a grab for power by a tiny plutocracy of about 800 British businessmen who sought to rule, in their own interests, over a Chinese population of a quarter of a million (N. Miners, *Hong Kong under imperial rule, 1912-1941*, pp. 126-127). Instead, the number of unofficial members was increased by one, it being made clear that the additional member was to be Chinese. To detail the constitutional development of the Hong Kong Legislative Council lies outside the scope of this thesis. However, it is necessary to indicate what occurred in the context of the role carved out by J.P. Braga and his successors. It is therefore dealt with in the form of an appendix. See Appendix 8.

⁸¹⁵ *Historical and statistical abstract of the colony of Hongkong, 1841-1920*, p. 60.

⁸¹⁶ *South China Morning Post*, 24 January 1929, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 5.

⁸¹⁷ The meeting filled the Royal Theatre, then the largest venue in Hong Kong. *South China Morning Post*, 10 January 1919.

General Chamber of Commerce, or some other body representative of the Chinese community.⁸¹⁸

These motions were duly carried, with an amendment: the reduction of the representation of the Chamber of Commerce from two to one. Two members of the Portuguese community spoke, J.L. Alves and Leo d'Almada.⁸¹⁹ The chairman, Holyoak, acidly reprimanded Alves for his sharp comments on the Chamber of Commerce and the Portuguese (meaning d'Almada) for their audacity in seeking what would amount to a reserved seat elected by universal male suffrage of that community. The *Post* took up both comments in the headline of its detailed report of the meeting: 'Constitutional Reform. Amended Resolution Carried – Portuguese "Audacity" – Government by Peakites.'⁸²⁰

This initiative received no more attention from the government than earlier attempts at 'Peakite' control of Hong Kong, twice rejected by the Colonial Office. However, this time there was an important difference. Although labelled as 'audacity', the inclusion of a Portuguese member was a significant departure from earlier proposals. If such a step were to be taken, it must be presumed that a nominee was in mind. The presence of J.P. Braga on the platform suggests that he was the man the Constitutional Reform Association would put forward. Wisely, he did not speak at the meeting, unwilling to be associated with the bitter and abrasive comments of the elderly Alves or the impractical suggestion of the youthful d'Almada. Braga knew that he too had been brash and outspoken in his younger days, and had suffered for it.

For his part, Sir Reginald Stubbs felt that he could ignore these people, though he was not averse to the principle of election. He told the Colonial Office:

⁸¹⁸ *South China Morning Post*, 10 January 1919.

⁸¹⁹ J.L. Alves scathingly denounced the influence of the elite 'Peakites', numbering some 200 people, who he claimed would in this proposal control three of the nine elected seats on an elected Legislative Council, as most of the JPs and members of the Chamber of Commerce lived on the Peak (The press report does not indicate which member of the Alves family spoke; several were active in public life. It is likely to have been José Luiz de Selasia Alves, who had been Chief Clerk of the Harbour Office, described at his death in 1927 as the 'Grand Old Man of the Portuguese community' in an obituary by 'an old friend', probably J.P. Braga. *Hongkong Telegraph*, 11 July 1927. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/41, fol. 14). The other Portuguese speaker, Leo d'Almada, grandson of the distinguished civil servant of earlier times, and an up-and-coming young lawyer, argued that all Portuguese residents, not only British subjects, should be able to vote for a Portuguese representative on the Legislative Council, but this did not win much support,

⁸²⁰ *South China Morning Post*, 10 January 1919. The *Post* was no lover of Hong Kong's Peak-dwelling elite, which generally favoured the old-established rival paper, the *Hongkong Daily Press*. R. Hutcheon, *SCMP, the first eighty years*, p. 55.

The general indifference of the community to all matters of public life was almost unbelievable. The Constitutional Reform Association was a farcical body of a few dozen persons which owed its origin to the personal pique of certain persons against the previous governor.⁸²¹

Although the Colonial Office saw that this was too dismissive, there the matter rested, and the serious anti-British strikes and boycott of the next few years put an end to any suggestion that the governor's authority, crucial in those troubled times, should be diminished. Still more was this the case when the international situation deteriorated throughout the 1930s, especially in the Far East.

Instead the impetus for change came from an unlikely quarter. Henry Pollock, one of the prime movers for the 'Peakite' reform in 1919, put down a question for the governor at the March 1928 meeting of the Legislative Council asking whether a representative of Kowloon could be added to the Council.⁸²² Sir Cecil Clementi, who had replaced Stubbs in 1925, and was strongly opposed to the previous proposal for constitutional change, gave this idea his support, informing the Secretary of State that 'I find myself in sympathy with the object of the present proposal'.⁸²³ He noted that the population of Kowloon had increased from 80,000 in 1918 to 250,000 in 1928, more than a quarter of the population of the colony. He went beyond Pollock's suggestion to propose that the Legislative Council should be enlarged by two further unofficial members, meaning that two further additional official members would also be appointed. One unofficial would represent Kowloon, and the other would be a third Chinese representative. The Colonial Office raised no objection to the proposal, one official minuting, 'The European desire for constitutional reform has been more or less killed by the realisation that any changes would have to be made in a Sinophile direction'.⁸²⁴ The Colonial Office did not specify the race of the two new members nor the method by which they were to be chosen, that being left to Clementi's discretion. A man of action, Clementi was determined that things must change, both in terms of constitutional development and in the growth of the colony, especially in the hitherto neglected Kowloon and the New Territories. Despite the

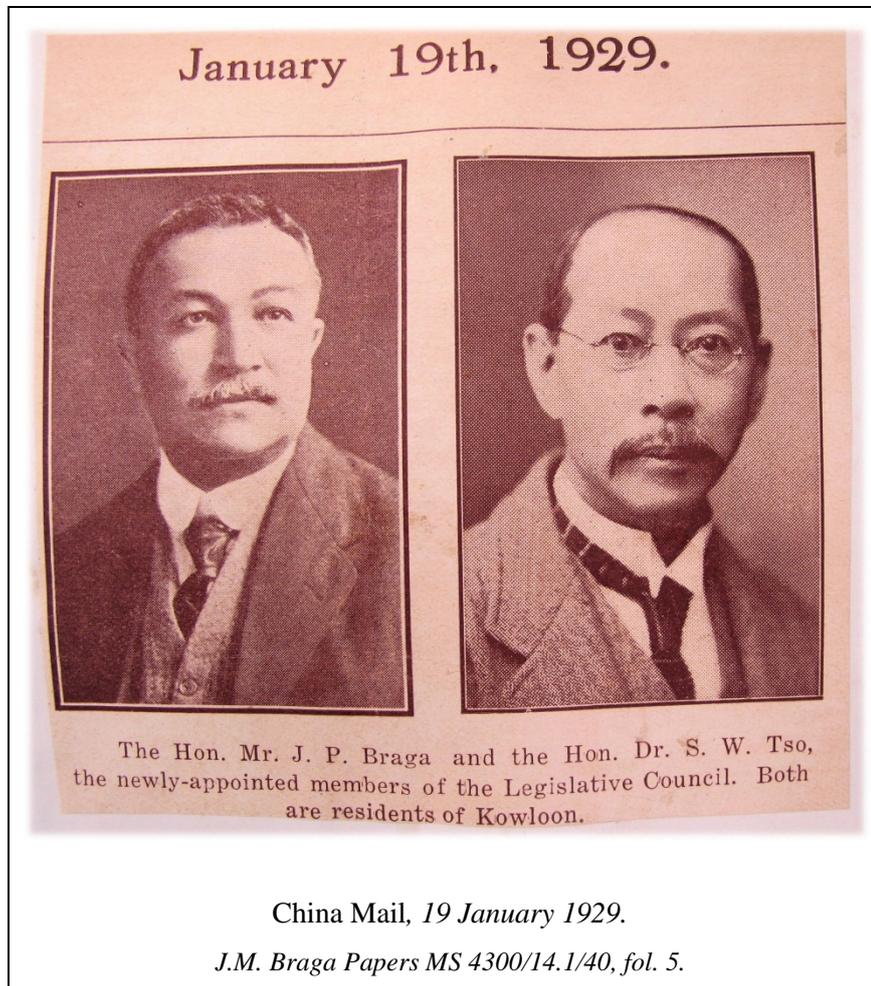
⁸²¹ N. Miners, *op. cit.*, p. 135. The targets of this remark were plainly Pollock and Holyoak, neither of whom had enjoyed good relations with Sir Henry May.

⁸²² Clementi to L.S. Amery Colonial Secretary, 25 April 1928, CO 129/511/29.

⁸²³ *Ibid.*, CO 129/511/28.

⁸²⁴ *Ibid.*, 25 April 1928, CO 129/511/5, and Minute dated 8 October 1928 in CO 129/509/14, p. 18.

troubled times he faced for a year after he assumed office, Clementi has been described by Nigel Cameron, author of several Hong Kong histories, as ‘one of the finest governors the Colony ever had’.⁸²⁵



There had already been a public call for J.P. Braga to be appointed to the Legislative Council. The editor of a new and short-lived paper, the *Hong Kong Observer*, editorialised ‘Mr Braga for the Council’. After drawing attention at some length to his outspoken and effective role in the Sanitary Board, the writer went on, with a certain degree of journalistic bombast, to ask,

Why should Mr. Braga’s ability and initiative be limited to the narrow confines of the Sanitary Board? Why should his undoubted talents for focusing attention on vital problems and for acting as spokesman of the whole community, irrespective of race or sect, not be extended to the Legislative Council? The Government may be a benevolent autocracy, and, *per se*, incapable of truly

⁸²⁵ N. Cameron, *Power*, p. 103.

interpreting the wishes of the community who pay for the time they do not call, but that of itself is no reason why an improvement should not be effected in the personnel of the Legislative Council.⁸²⁶

The manner of authorisation of this step was the issue of Royal Instructions to the Governor, for reform in colonial Hong Kong came from the top down. The Instructions were duly amended.⁸²⁷ They were promulgated in Hong Kong on 14 January 1929 and immediately acted upon by Clementi.⁸²⁸

Clementi's selections were well accepted by the whole English-language press in Hong Kong. After discussing the merits of the two new official members, the Harbour Master and the Director of Medical and Sanitary Services, the *Hongkong Telegraph* observed that

The factors that have operated in the selection of the two new Councillors are obvious. First and foremost, Kowloon representation was desired and it is most gratifying to find that both seats have been allocated to residents of the peninsula. The selection of Mr Braga has fulfilled a double purpose. Not only does it give Kowloon its own non-Chinese member, but the appointment may also be regarded as a recognition of the point that the Portuguese community is entitled to some representation. No happier choice could have been made than that of Mr. Braga, who, born in the Colony, has given years of unstinted service to the public and whose active participation in public life in recent times has shown him to be admirably qualified for the honour now accorded him.⁸²⁹

Dr Tso Seen-wan (1865–1953), the new Chinese member, also a Kowloon resident, with a conspicuous record of service in the Chinese community, was similarly applauded by the *Telegraph*. Dr Tso, a lawyer, had rendered valuable service in the strike of 1925.

'Kowloon comes of age', the *Hongkong Daily Press* told its readers, many of whom would have preferred the 'Peakite' proposal of 1919 and reflected on the deep-seated prejudice that beset Hong Kong society. This 'establishment' paper pointedly refrained from commenting on the merits of either of the new unofficial appointees.

⁸²⁶ *Hong Kong Observer*, vol. 1, no. 7, 3 March 1928. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/41, fol. 34. It is possible that this strongly worded argument led to Pollock's raising the matter a few days later at the next meeting of the Legislative Council.

⁸²⁷ CO 129/511/8-10.

⁸²⁸ *Hong Kong Government Gazette*, 18 January 1929.

⁸²⁹ *Hongkong Telegraph*, 15 January 1929. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 1.

Thirty years ago, and possibly at a much later date, there were many people in Hong Kong who regarded the little settlement on the opposite side of the harbour rather as a joke, – and a poor one at that.⁸³⁰

Those days, said the *Daily Press*, had gone.

It is particularly fitting that Mr. Braga should have been selected to represent Kowloon on the Legislative Council. It was the Portuguese who first went over in considerable numbers to Kowloon from Hong Kong to take up residence there and many of the very picturesque villas and attractive gardens still to be seen on that side of the harbour were built and laid out by Portuguese who migrated from Hong Kong ... thus the appointment of a Portuguese resident to represent the interests of Kowloon in the Legislative Council is most appropriate, and a delicate and well-deserved compliment to that section of the community. Both Mr Braga and Dr Tso are residents of Kowloon and with their appearance at the meeting of the Legislative Council Kowloon may consider itself as having fully come of age.

The *South China Morning Post* had developed a much stronger position during the 1920s, having capably weathered the strikes of 1922 and 1925.⁸³¹ It printed a concise but informative biographical sketch of the new unofficial appointees, clearly the product of skilled interviewing, concluding with a favourable comment on each. The *Post's* editor, the very capable Henry Ching, a Eurasian of Australian birth, could not resist a swipe at the *Daily Press*.

Happily His Excellency's choice has fallen upon men, who by general consent must be called both capable and eligible. Cavil can only come from malcontents.⁸³²

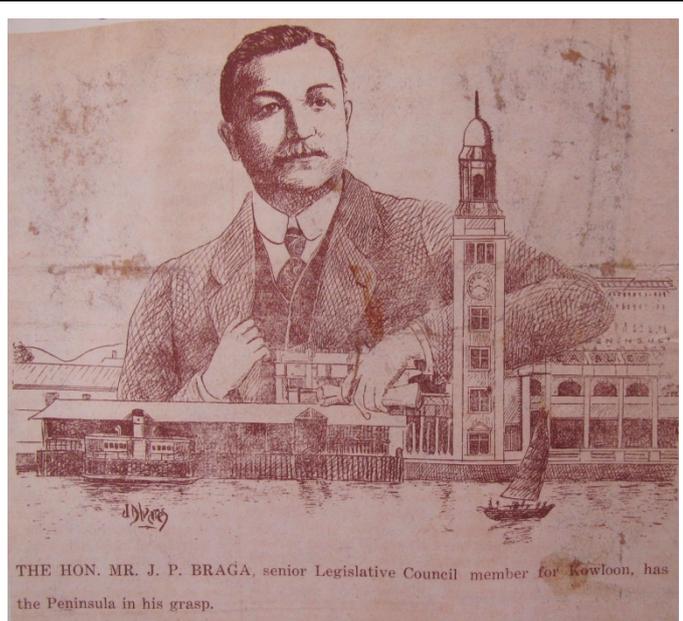
It was left to J. Álvares, a member of the Hong Kong Portuguese community, to crow delightedly in a cartoon published in the fourth local paper, the *China Mail*.⁸³³

⁸³⁰ *Hongkong Daily Press*, 15 January 1929. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 2.

⁸³¹ R. Hutcheon, op. cit., p. 53.

⁸³² *South China Morning Post*, 16 January 1929. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 3.

⁸³³ *China Mail*, 22 January 1929. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 5. The artist is tentatively identified as José Augusto Álvares, #336662, (1905-1990). Álvares was an Assistant Overseer at China Light.



Cartoon by J. Álvares, *China Mail*, 22 January 1929.

J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 5.

The impression given by the cartoon that Braga had something to do with the Kowloon-Canton Railway was misleading. All the artist was trying to convey was that the clock tower, already a famous landmark, was Kowloon's major symbol of progress, for Kowloon had indeed come of age. The *Hong Kong Observer* apparently did not last long enough to add its comment. However, the previous June,

it had added a perceptive judgment to its earlier advocacy of Braga's elevation to the Legislative Council. The reason why Braga was not already a member of the Legislative Council, suggested the *Observer*, was that 'officialdom simply cannot bear a man with the ferreting instinct. He would be a thorn in their very tender sides.'⁸³⁴ So it proved.

Sir Cecil Clementi would have been well aware of the ferreting instincts of his new councillor, who had attracted much public attention during his membership of the Sanitary Board. At the first meeting of the enlarged Council on 24 May, Clementi welcomed all four new members, correctly lauding the Harbour Master and the Director of Medical and Sanitary Services, and going on to say:

In the Honourable Mr. Braga I welcome the first representative of the Portuguese community to sit in this Council. (Applause.) We all of us appreciate the value of the Portuguese community here resident, and it is a pleasure to us that Mr. Braga, who in a very literal sense is a son of Hongkong, should inaugurate the representation of that community in the Legislative Council.⁸³⁵

⁸³⁴ Editorial, *Hong Kong Observer*, June 1928. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/41, fol. 46.

⁸³⁵ *Hong Kong Hansard*, 24 January 1929; *South China Morning Post*, 25 January 1929. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 8.

Both the Portuguese community and the Kowloon community welcomed Braga's appointment. Each held a special celebration, and the Portuguese community in particular marked the occasion with a significant presentation. E.J. Noronha's appointment as a Justice of the Peace had been recognised with the presentation of a silver rose bowl. So too was J.P. Braga's appointment to the Legislative Council.⁸³⁶

The inscription reads:

PRESENTED TO
THE HON. MR. J.P. BRAGA, J.P.
BY THE
PORTUGUESE COMMUNITY
IN COMMEMORATION OF HIS APPOINTMENT AS A
MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
HONGKONG 24TH JANUARY 1929

It was a great leap forward, not only for the man himself, but for the whole community, and deserved to be celebrated. There were lengthy speeches, fully reported in the press.⁸³⁷ Eulogistic addresses were made by the presidents of Club Lusitano, Club Recreio and the *Associação Portuguesa de Soccoros* (Portuguese Mutual Aid Society) in his honour. Congratulatory messages were received from the Governor of Macau, the President of the *Leal Senado* and several Portuguese community bodies. Having been ignored by the British for such a long period of time, the Portuguese community greeted the elevation of one of its leading members to the Legislative Council with immense satisfaction.

Twelve years later, on 20 January 1941, Braga quoted Clementi's gracious welcome in one of a series of broadcast talks marking Hong Kong's centenary, later published as a booklet by Club Lusitano.⁸³⁸ That welcome had been the pinnacle of his own

⁸³⁶ On accepting the presentation, Braga told the bowl's donors, 'I thank you from the bottom of my heart for this valuable piece of silver which I shall be proud to keep as a testimonial of your friendship and goodwill. I hope to hand it down to my children and by them to my children's children.' *South China Morning Post*, 25 January 1929. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 8. This has indeed transpired. The bowl passed on J.P. Braga's death to his son Anthony M. Braga, who regarded it as his most precious possession. On his death on 9 May 1994, it passed to his sister, Caroline M. Braga, who in turn presented it to her nephew, Stuart Braga, son of Hugh Braga, of Sydney. It was brought to Australia in September 1994.

⁸³⁷ *South China Morning Post*, 25 January 1929. J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 5-8.

⁸³⁸ *Portuguese Pioneering: a Hundred Years of Hong Kong*

career, and also one of the major events in the life of the Portuguese community in the 100 years of Hong Kong's history as a British colony.



Flashlight photograph taken in the Hall of St. Joseph's College when the Hon. Mr. J. P. Braga was entertained by the Old Boys' Association on the occasion of his appointment to the Legislative Council. (Photo: Ming Yuen).

China Mail, 22 January 1929.

J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 10.

The Legislative Council had for some time had members who saw themselves as representing sectional interests, if not constituencies. This applied in particular to the nominee of the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, and to a lesser extent, to the two, now three, Chinese members. Nevertheless, Braga's appointment introduced into the affairs of the Legislative Council a greater degree of particularism than there had previously been. Braga and Tso not only knew that they had been appointed to represent double constituencies – Kowloon and their respective ethnic groups – but they were told by the Governor that this was the case. Both were public-spirited men who worked for the benefit of the whole community, but there were occasions on which Braga in particular spoke only for his own sectional interest. In his defence, it must be pointed out that both of these 'constituencies' had previously been ignored. The press at once noted that 'there was a decided "kick" in some of his comments'.⁸³⁹ There was no period of quiet apprenticeship as he learned the ropes in his new role, for Braga had acquired over many years of active public life a considerable insight

⁸³⁹ *Hongkong Sunday Herald*, 7 March 1929. J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 12.

into the working of the various government departments. As a young man in the government printer's office, he had learned much about the Council's procedures. It was novel for a new member to take such an active part in the Council's debates, but this man was no tyro.

Two of J.P. Braga's sons later reflected on their father's role in the Legislative Council. Both had seen it at close quarters. The first was Jack, who drafted an obituary shortly after his father's death in February 1944. More than forty years later, Tony wrote a lengthy essay on several generations of the Braga family for a journalist preparing an article for the *South China Morning Post*.⁸⁴⁰ Jack had to be very careful what he said in wartime Macau, and wrote chiefly about his father's role there, but little about his public life in Hong Kong. The Legislative Council in which his father had played such a major role had been swept away by the occupying Japanese.

So nobly did he fulfil his duties that he opened the way to future Portuguese representation as he did in the other official posts which he occupied ... his part in many public questions proved that he was always on the side of the poor and helpless.⁸⁴¹

Tony, writing so much later, could be more reflective. He wrote:

He was the first representative of the Portuguese community and one of two of the first members representing Kowloon to occupy a place on the Council. He served as a member of the Legislature for two full terms, and certainly he was one of the most vigorous and stimulating representatives of the people in all the years of the Council.

Both comments were just, if uncritical. The elder Braga undoubtedly saw himself as the people's tribune, in much the same way as did John Bright, the English radical leader of early Victorian England.⁸⁴² Like Bright, Braga was convinced that social injustice must be vigorously opposed; like Bright, he made enemies as he challenged complacency. Unlike Bright, he did not see himself as an unofficial Leader of the Opposition. Hong Kong's stage of constitutional development provided for discussion and dissent, but not for an organised and sustained attempt to provide an

⁸⁴⁰ Notes prepared by A.M. Braga for an interview with Beverley Howells, April 1987. A.M. Braga file.

⁸⁴¹ J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/7.2/17 – Braga, José Pedro.

⁸⁴² A popular appellation reflected in several biographies, e.g. J.P. Hutchinson, *John Bright, "The tribune of the people"*, London, 1879.

alternative to the colonial system so powerfully entrenched. Therefore Braga, like the other unofficials, voted to support the Government on most issues. They seldom voted as a bloc against the Government. An exception was the budget for 1930, which provided an appropriation for road works in Kowloon that the other unofficials thought unnecessary. All but Braga voted against it. This was the only occasion in Braga's eight years membership that his name was mentioned in a despatch to the Secretary of State. 'On a division being called, the vote was passed by the official majority, Mr Braga alone of the unofficials voting with the Government.'⁸⁴³

Braga could occasionally tilt at windmills. As a leading Catholic layman, he spoke at length against a Divorce Bill.⁸⁴⁴ The Council patiently heard him out, but his was the sole vote against the bill. On another occasion, he spoke strongly against the use of prisoners in Stanley Gaol to print government work, arguing that this was an intrusion into private enterprise. Again, his was the only dissenting voice and vote.⁸⁴⁵ At a time of declining commerce and falling revenue, it was seen by all other members as a sensible economy. Braga never hesitated to be the sole voice advocating or opposing something about which he felt strongly.⁸⁴⁶

If his searching questions could make it difficult for government officials, they could also get their own back. He resented, as did all local people, the practice of employing English senior public servants when local people could do the job every bit as well. In the budget debate in 1931, he argued against an increase in the budget to pay sterling salaries at a time when money was scarce, only to find that this increase was in fact a provision for the pensions of two senior officers who had retired in England. His sparring with the Colonial Secretary and Colonial Treasurer on this occasion had an unpleasant tone. Their retorts were scathing and

⁸⁴³ Clementi to Passfield, 26 September 1929, CO 129/519/31. Obviously regarding this as most unusual, Clementi enclosed with his despatch copies of the *South China Morning Post* of 24 September 1929 which reported J.P. Braga's dissent from the position taken by the other unofficials. Stubbs sometimes used his despatches to criticise councillors, but succeeding governors, Clementi, Peel and Caldecott, did not.

⁸⁴⁴ *South China Morning Post*, 28 October 1932. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/34, fol. 26.

⁸⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 17 December 1936. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/34, fol. 101.

⁸⁴⁶ In the middle of the Depression he attacked 'the bears of Ice House Street', stockbrokers on Hong Kong's Wall Street who he considered were manipulating the market in two Kowloon companies. He did not name them, but they were obviously the two major companies of which he was a board member (*Hongkong Telegraph*, 6, 8 October 1932. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/34, fol. 24, 25).

exasperated.⁸⁴⁷ This man was a Portuguese, a member of a community whose members were expected to be submissive and amenable; they had no experience of a Portuguese who did not behave as they thought he should. A later observer of the Hong Kong scene remarked that ‘the Portuguese were habitually slighted’.⁸⁴⁸

The press, even the *Daily Press*, appreciated his probing, especially in financial matters. It deplored what it described as ‘under the punkah politics’, in which difficulties were resolved in the punkah-cooled offices of senior colonial officials rather than in the open forum of the Legislative Council. ‘The Council Chamber is the proper place for Unofficial Members to express their doubts about any Government proposal, and the Council Chamber is the place where Government should answer any criticisms of its plans for spending public money.’⁸⁴⁹

Unlike some other members of the Legislative Council, Braga’s role went well beyond mute attendance at its meetings. One of his early concerns was the serious decline in commerce, hit by the Great Depression before it had recovered from the 1925-1926 strike and boycott. Braga suggested that Hong Kong stage a British Empire Trade Fair, and agreed to run it. The result was that two fairs were held, in 1932 and 1933, both opened on 24 May, Empire Day. These fairs were not directly associated with his position on the Legislative Council, but arose from it.

Braga was chairman of the committee for the first, and vice-chairman for the second, which was far bigger. In effect, he ran both. The fairs, held when the Depression was at its worst, were a valiant effort to turn the tide. In terms of the volume and value of trade, they did not achieve their objective, commerce remaining depressed for some years to come. In terms of an expression of optimism for future recovery, they were brilliantly successful.⁸⁵⁰ It took much effort to drum up support at a time of prevailing gloom, and G.R. Sewell, the local representative of the

⁸⁴⁷ *South China Morning Post*, 4 September 1931. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/34, fol. 100-101. They had been disadvantaged by the steep decline of the Hong Kong dollar relative to sterling, caused by the slump in the colony’s trade. In Braga’s defence, it must be pointed out that the estimates presented to the Finance Committee did not make this plain.

⁸⁴⁸ F. Welsh, *A borrowed place: the history of Hong Kong*, p. 382.

⁸⁴⁹ *Hongkong Daily Press*, 4 October 1930, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 67. Air-conditioning was not installed in government offices until the 1960s. Not even electric fans were common in the early 1930s. The ‘punkah’ allusion of the *Daily Press* is an interesting glance though an Eastern prism at Cavour’s famous adage, ‘Better the worst of Chambers than the best of antechambers’ (W.R. Thayer, *The Life and Times of Cavour*, p. 504).

⁸⁵⁰ Hong Kong lacked anything approaching an exhibition hall or convention centre, so the fairs were held in the capacious lobby of the recently completed Peninsula Hotel, the only space large enough.

Federation of British Industries was brutally frank in a broadcast address just before the 1933 Fair, reported in the next day's paper.

I would be ungrateful if I did not conclude with a word of thanks to the Hon. Mr J.P. Braga for the magnificent work he has done in connexion with this Fair. Despite criticism, some thoughtless, some destructive, and some, unfortunately, rather cruel, he has not faltered in his determination to make the Fair an unqualified success.⁸⁵¹

The undercurrents can only be guessed at, but Braga's public life had often been marked by a dogged determination to silence his critics. So it was on this occasion. The *Post*, not a gossip sheet, seldom gave its readers a cameo of public figures, but the forthcoming Fair, a big event for Hong Kong, prompted the paper to make an exception. Shortly before the opening of the Fair, it invited readers to become acquainted with Braga:

Meet one of the busiest men in Hongkong – the Hon. Mr. J.P. Braga, Kowloon's Legislative Councillor, managing director of the Hongkong Engineering and Construction Company, but most of all, Vice-President of the British Empire Fair.

I dropped in to see Mr. Braga the other day and found a queue of young men outside his office waiting for an interview. When I eventually reached him, his private telephone was ringing and at almost minute intervals it kept ringing throughout our conversation. Surrounding his table was file upon file dealing with the Fair. His son Tony was in and out of his father's office, scribbling down a few notes, dashing away to type out an important letter, and coming back for the signature. Plans were lying here and there, yet there was no confusion. Mr. J.P. Braga seemed to know where everything was and in a second was able to put his hand on whatever he wanted. He had all the appearance of a London City editor, with an edition running late.

"Don't know how I manage to get my own work done", he remarked, but those associated with Mr. Braga know how he does it – by working 16 hours a day and more.⁸⁵²

⁸⁵¹ G. R. Sewell, broadcast address on ZBW, Hong Kong, 22 May 1933, reported in the next day's *South China Morning Post*. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/34, fol. 45.

⁸⁵² *South China Morning Post*, 19 May 1933. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/34, fol. 46. A splendidly bound album of photographs of the opening of the Fair and of its exhibits survived the Japanese Occupation and is in the collection of the Hong Kong Heritage Project, an archive set up by Sir Michael Kadoorie to record his family's long involvement in the territory. It appears to be one of three such albums prepared for presentation to significant people. Braga mentioned having presented such an album to the Hon. Sir William Shenton, Honorary Secretary of the Fair. Another went to N.L. Smith, the Colonial Secretary. It is probable that another was presented to Sir Elly Kadoorie, the owner of the Peninsula Hotel.

The paper was more than cordial in its editorial the day after the opening.

The purpose behind the British Empire Fair is to advertise the Empire and to make use of British Hongkong as an appropriate shop window ... principally worthy of commendation is the Hon. Mr. J.P. Braga, whose indefatigable work in arranging for the exhibits has been crowned with triumphant success.⁸⁵³

Coming soon after his re-appointment to a second four-year term on the Legislative Council, the Fair was one of Braga's major successes, but the eight years of his membership were also marked by set-backs. An obvious one was the decision (not his) taken in 1934 not to hold further fairs because no further business had been generated. Supported by the *Post*, he argued unsuccessfully for such fairs to be held regularly in order to show-case Hong Kong, if not to advertise local products, then mainly agricultural.⁸⁵⁴

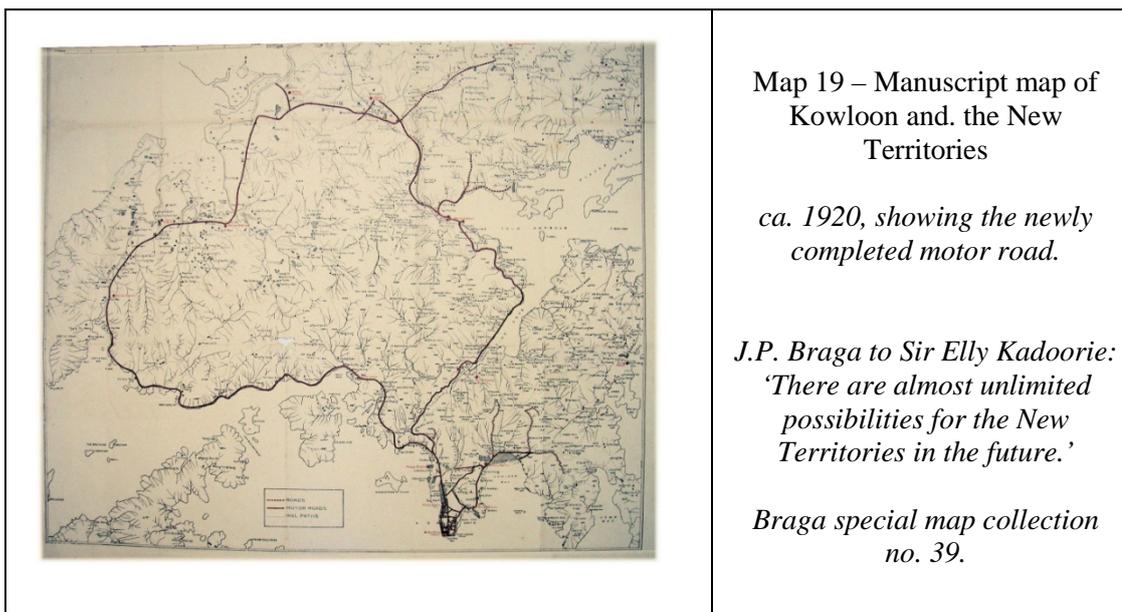
Braga felt that Hong Kong's administrators were often lacking in vision. He did not forget that his grandfather had pioneered farming in Kowloon in the late nineteenth century, and looking further back, he knew how Macau had so often been starved into submission. Accordingly, he wanted to make Hong Kong self-reliant in some foods, at least in vegetables, poultry and pork. Rice would always have to be imported. During the 1920s, the New Territories were still undeveloped, though the Kowloon-Canton Railway was in operation and a motor road had been put through to link its main towns with Kowloon. Tony, his father's right-hand man, wrote much later:

I well remember him saying to Sir Elly Kadoorie back in the 1920s after they had both come back from a motor drive round the New Territories: 'There are almost unlimited possibilities for the New Territories in the future!'⁸⁵⁵

⁸⁵³ *South China Morning Post*, leader, 25 May 1933. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/34, fol. 46.

⁸⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 25, 26 April 1934. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/34, fol. 69, 70.

⁸⁵⁵ A.M. Braga to Beverley Howells, *South China Morning Post* reporter, 8 April 1987. A.M. Braga file. He published a pamphlet, *The beauties of Kowloon and the New Territories*, seeking to attract the interest of people on the Hong Kong side to whom it would never have occurred to cross the harbour. It may have been written with Sir Elly Kadoorie in mind.



Over the next few years they kept an eye on those possibilities. J.P. Braga told Jack in 1935:

Hughie and I are going out with the old man [Sir Elly Kadoorie] to tiffin [lunch], and after that we are going to do a tour of Kowloon and the New Territories.⁸⁵⁶

Braga and Sir Robert Ho Tung encouraged the foundation of a New Territories Agricultural Association and in 1934 Braga opened their inaugural Annual Show, with 3,472 entries and over 300 exhibitors. He remarked that ‘the day will come when the inhabitants of Hong Kong will look upon the farmers of the New Territories as a very important asset of the Colony.’⁸⁵⁷

Braga’s growing prominence, first as a member of the Sanitary Board, and then of the Legislative Council undoubtedly enhanced his business career. His connection with R.G. Shewan has already been mentioned. A still more eminent businessman was Sir Paul Chater.⁸⁵⁸

⁸⁵⁶ J.P. Braga to J.M. Braga, 7 November 1935, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300 /2.3 / 7.

⁸⁵⁷ *Hongkong Daily Press*, 8 January 1934, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/34, fol. 61.

⁸⁵⁸ Chater had been chiefly responsible for a major praya reclamation in the Central District commencing in 1890 and finally finished more than a decade later, which greatly benefitted the colony, thus earning him a knighthood in 1902. He then looked to developments on the Kowloon side, beginning with the Hongkong and Kowloon Wharf and Godown Company. A major wharf and godown [warehouse] complex was built close to the terminus of the Kowloon-Canton Railway, which opened in 1910 (*Historical and statistical abstract of the colony of Hongkong, 1841-1920*, p. 42). Chater’s decision to build a larger wharf, 655 ft. (200 metres) in length, was a step very much in tune with Braga’s thinking. It was completed in 1916 (*Historical and statistical abstract of the colony of Hongkong, 1841-1920*, p. 59).

"Hongkong Daily Press" - 8th Jan. 1934

THE PRODUCE OF THE NEW TERRITORIES

Farmers Receive Encouragement and Advice

HON. MR. J. P. BRAGA OPENS ANNUAL SHOW

There were many visitors to Shek Wui Hui over the week-end when the new Territories Agricultural Association held their Annual Show. The entries were very good indeed and some of the exhibits reached a satisfactory standard.

In addition to the show, there was a programme of theatricals and musical entertainment while lectures were also delivered. The gates were opened at 10.30 a.m. on Saturday morning and the exhibits were judged between 11 and 12.30.

At 2.30 p.m. the Hon. Mr. J. P. Braga performed the opening ceremony and in the course of his speech said: 'It is no prophetic prediction when I state that the day will come when the inhabitants of Hong Kong will look upon the farmers of the New Territories as a very important asset of the Colony.' He encouraged the farmers to employ modern methods and stated that there was plenty of room in the markets of Hong Kong for a larger production from the New Territories.

Chater already had an interest in the Hong Kong Electric Company, which only supplied the island. No-one bothered with the then miniscule market of Kowloon until Shewan set up China Light and Power Company in 1901, managed by his firm, Shewan, Tomes & Co. It had a Consultative Committee, on which both Shewan and Chater sat. This was re-organised in 1928 with its own board of directors, which J.P. Braga was invited to join. Tony Braga, who had seen them working together, reflected that 'Shewan was impressed by J.P. Braga's ability and integrity. They were

both men of vision, who were highly optimistic about future developments in the Colony generally and especially in the New Territories.⁸⁵⁹

Chater and Shewan needed local people of ability to take on management positions in the various companies in which they were interested or had formed. Shewan had also singled out Noel Braga as a promising young man. So too had Sir Paul Chater, the most respected businessman in Hong Kong. When Shewan appointed Noel, then aged only 21, as Company Secretary in May 1925, Chater gave him friendly support. Noel recorded Chater's death the next year at the age of 80 with genuine sorrow and esteem.⁸⁶⁰

For his part, J.P. Braga paid Chater a unique tribute. He gathered all the obituaries in the Hong Kong and Shanghai papers and printed them in a memorial volume. Its length, 132 pages, is an indication of the impact made by this remarkable man, whose far-sighted business decisions and benefactions had touched most parts of the life of Hong Kong.⁸⁶¹

By the mid-1920s, Shewan had gathered a capable team of directors, and under sound management, the company began to show a profit as domestic use of electricity increased rapidly in the years following World War I, although the 1925 strike and boycott demonstrated how vulnerable it was. All but one were local people. The exception was Harry Compton (he pronounced it 'Cumpton', in the old

⁸⁵⁹ Notes prepared by A.M. Braga for an interview with Beverley Howells, April 1987, p. 5, A.M. Braga file.

⁸⁶⁰ Noel Braga, Diary, 27 May 1926: 'Sir Paul Chater was the greatest man in Hongkong, was in many ways the "father" of the Colony and the grand old man of Hongkong. He did more for Hongkong than any other man and was probably the oldest British resident at the time of his death. The story of his life is so bound up with the history of Hongkong that it can almost be said he laid the foundation of Hongkong's greatness. He was one of the most civil and courteous men I have ever known, and I feel very sorry at his death,' His comment that Chater was the oldest British resident is a reflection of the fact that almost all British businessmen and civil servants retired to the 'Home Country', often at the age of 55, and seldom later than 60. An Armenian by birth, Chater could never have returned to his homeland after the massacres during and after World War I.

⁸⁶¹ *Sir Paul Chater: the grand old man of Hongkong, his career his amazing success and his death*, Hong Kong, J.P. Braga, 1926. Despite its length of over 100 pages, this is not a biography, but a collection of obituaries from all the English newspapers in Hong Kong and Shanghai. There appears to be no comparable tribute paid to any other person in the history of Hong Kong. Some sixty years later, Nigel Cameron assessed Chater's role in generous terms, linking him with Shewan. 'Without the energetic and far-sighted mind of Paul Chater both in Hong Kong Island and in Kowloon, Hong Kong as we know it today would probably have a quite different look, and would not have developed so astonishingly in the fields of shipping and industry as it did during their lifetime and afterward'. N. Cameron, *Power*, p. 23.

English manner), whose long connection lasted from 1919 to 1947, including two terms as Chairman in 1933 and 1937.⁸⁶²

Another member was the prominent Eurasian lawyer Man Kam Lo, whose connections with Braga went back to 1919, and whose political career earned him a knighthood in 1948 as Sir Man Kam Lo. Sir Robert Ho Tung retained his seat on the board from 1926 to 1933.⁸⁶³ Towards the end of the 1920s, at a time of rapidly growing demand for electricity, Sir Elly Kadoorie, a leading Jewish financier in Shanghai, became interested in what had been until then quite a small firm, and joined the board in 1928.

Tony Braga, whose understanding of his father's affairs in relation to the Kadoorie family was unparalleled, explained the connection in a nutshell.

The Kadoorie family's fortune had been invested largely in public companies in Shanghai, and Sir Elly and his sons decided to transfer a considerable part of their capital to Hong Kong. The firm had retained a small holding of stock in the China Light & Power Company from its inception, and Sir Elly Kadoorie, after discussions with J.P. Braga, who was most enthusiastic about the possibilities for expansion of Kowloon and the New Territories, invested more and more money in China Light until the Kadoorie family became the largest shareholders in this company.⁸⁶⁴

J.P. Braga was an original board member in 1928.⁸⁶⁵ He was appointed chairman in 1934 and again in 1938. Sir Elly Kadoorie appears to have rotated this position among the board members rather than leave it in the hands of one man who might then become too independent. Braga's interest in the company was obviously not technical, but arose from his conviction that, as he expressed it, the possibilities of the New Territories were almost limitless. Sir Elly Kadoorie and J.P. Braga worked together amicably in the next decade, with Kadoorie keeping a very firm grip on the

⁸⁶² Others included another leader of the Portuguese community, the prominent accountant and businessman, Carlos da Roza, like Braga, a President of Club Lusitano, and like Braga, educated abroad (*South China Morning Post*, 15 August 1936, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/33, fol. 30). He joined the Consultative Committee in 1922, continued when the business was reorganised in 1928, was Chairman in 1932, and remained on the board until his death in 1936.

⁸⁶³ N. Cameron, *Power*, p. 267.

⁸⁶⁴ Notes prepared by A.M. Braga for an interview with Beverley Howells, April 1987, p. 5, A.M. Braga file.

⁸⁶⁵ The appointment was noted by his son Noel in his diary on 1 May 1928.

fortunes of the company. His son Lawrence, a young man in his twenties, joined the board in 1930, to enable the older man, who lived at Marble Hall, a magnificent mansion in Shanghai, to keep a close watch on the company. Sir Elly was most hospitable to any of Braga's children if they happened to be passing through Shanghai. 'We were met and entertained by the Kadoories with true Jewish hospitality', reported Mary to her brother Paul in 1939.⁸⁶⁶

Braga wrote a detailed report to Kadoorie at least twice weekly on a specially printed letterhead.⁸⁶⁷ Particularly in 1938, after Braga's term of office on the Legislative Council had concluded, he gave this position his major attention, giving Kadoorie not only detailed information on the progress of China Light's big new power station being built at Hok Un, but comments on affairs in Hong Kong and the looming threat of war as Canton fell to the Japanese and Hong Kong filled with destitute refugees. Braga relayed some tragic stories to Kadoorie, adding, 'Why cannot people realise that war is such a horrible, detestable, inhuman thing?'⁸⁶⁸ He knew that Kadoorie had an eye for titbits of news. An interesting example is his acidulous comment on the knighthood awarded 'after many years of disappointed hopes' to Sir Robert Kotewall, who held one of the Chinese seats on the Legislative Council.⁸⁶⁹ Braga and Kadoorie developed a most cordial relationship, but it was not one of equals. Braga knew that Kadoorie's controlling interest was exactly that, in matters large and small.⁸⁷⁰ Staff morale was important, because what mattered at that juncture to both

⁸⁶⁶ Mary Braga to Paul Braga, 27 July 1939. Paul Braga Papers. Others included Hugh and Nora on their honeymoon in 1935 and Audrey Braga in 1940.

⁸⁶⁷ J.P. Braga's regular reports to Sir Elly Kadoorie for 1938, his second term as chairman, and for 1940, are held by the Hong Kong Heritage Project. Few of the firm's records survived the Japanese Occupation apart from the Minute Books, complete from the company's foundation.

⁸⁶⁸ J.P. Braga to Sir Elly Kadoorie, 17 October 1938. Hong Kong Heritage Project, A02/15.

⁸⁶⁹ J.P. Braga to Sir Elly Kadoorie, 10 June 1938, Hong Kong Heritage Project, A02/15.

⁸⁷⁰ A prime example was the board's decision in September 1938 not to appoint F.C. Clemo, the Power Station Superintendent, as Acting Deputy Manager in the absence of that officer. Braga initially had the board's support to make the appointment, but Lawrence Kadoorie, always opposed to the move, turned the opinion of three other board members. Braga stuck to his guns and gave instructions that Clemo was to attend board meetings, as the Deputy Manager normally did. In this he acted without board approval, but explained his decision in detail to the elder Kadoorie. 'It is bad policy to give any offence to the man', he wrote. 'I want to see justice done to Clemo', he told Kadoorie, adding bluntly that 'there is too much of this sharp division among the staff, which does not contribute to harmonious and efficient working in a big organisation such as ours' (J.P. Braga to Sir Elly Kadoorie, 16 September 1938, Hong Kong Heritage Project, A02/15). Evidently, Sir Elly gave J.P. Braga the backing he sought.



*An aerial view, ca. 1931,
of what was to become
the 'Garden Suburb'.
It is hard to imagine
a more unpromising site
for what was at the time
a major housing development.*



*J.P. Braga speaking at a ceremony to
mark the commencement of
construction,
20 January 1932.*



*Site formation well advanced, ca. 1934.
Removal of the hill of solid granite on
the line of Argyle St (foreground) was
the top priority. Waterloo Road curves
below the crest of what would become
Braga Circuit.
In the background is Lion Rock*

Photographs by courtesy of Hong Kong Heritage Project

men was the rapid completion of the company's new power station at Hok Un, commenced in 1937, and opened to much *éclat* on 26 February 1940.⁸⁷¹

The following year, both men were caught up in the catastrophe of war. They died within six days of each other, Kadoorie in Shanghai on 8 February 1944, Braga in

⁸⁷¹ N. Cameron, *Power*, pp. 123-136.

Macau on 14 February. They were missed as the firm began to recover when the war ended. ‘Two of the oldest and wisest heads in the company’s affairs were missing from the first meeting after the trauma of the occupation.’⁸⁷²

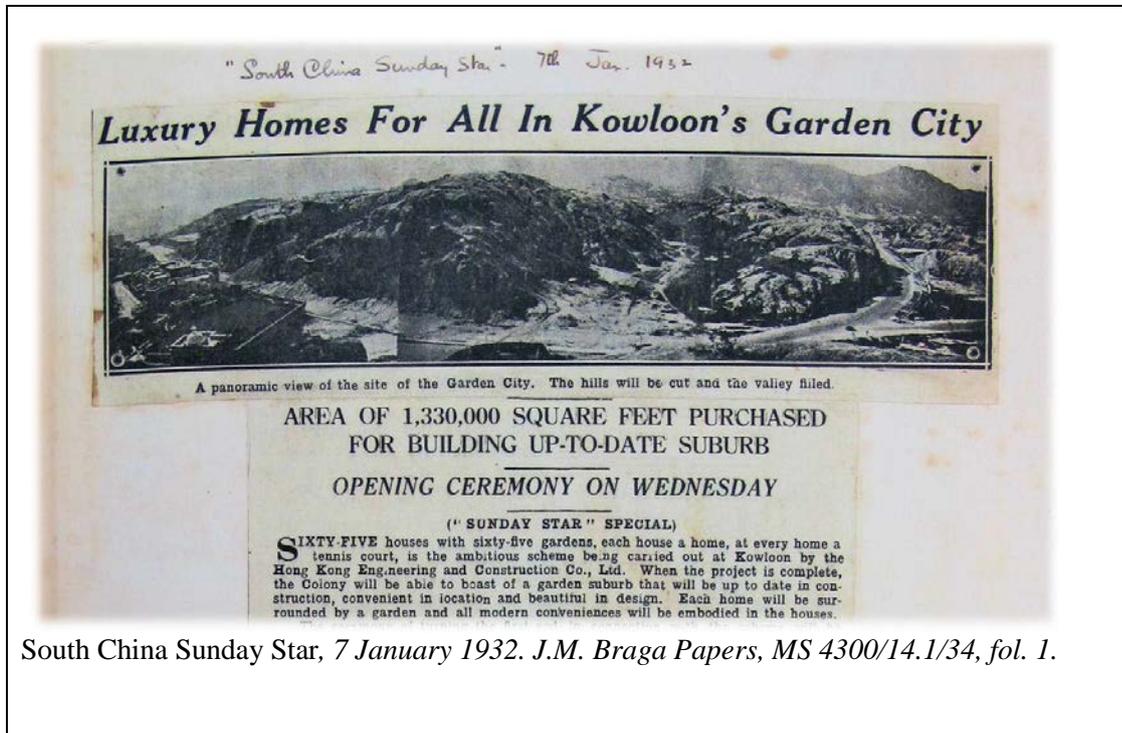
Braga’s other major business activity in the 1930s was in another of the concerns in which the inter-locking interests of Shewan, Ho Tung and later Kadoorie were evident. This was the Hongkong Engineering and Construction Company. Ho Tung had watched Braga since the 1890s, and had seen his growth in stature and capacity over several decades. Braga’s appointment to the Sanitary Board and to the Board of China Light placed him in a far better position for a senior post in the local business scene – in Kowloon, but not the great British-controlled firms whose palatial head offices lined the praya on the Hong Kong side. That waterfront had been created by Sir Paul Chater between 1900 and 1903. The Hongkong Engineering and Construction Company, set up in 1922, was one of Ho Tung’s interests. Like most businesses, especially in the construction industry, it was badly affected by the 1925 strike, and was slow to recover. Once again, Tony Braga, intimately involved in the conduct of his father’s business affairs, assessed his family’s role:

At that time, J.P. Braga and his son Hugh conceived a scheme for the Hong Kong Engineering and Construction Company to transform a huge barren tract of land in Kowloon into a model housing estate. The site consisted to a large extent of two high hills with a deep valley in between, situated between the Diocesan Boys’ School and the Kowloon Hospital. The project, as designed by Hugh Braga, provided for the levelling of the two hills and filling up of the valley, and the building of a modern residential suburb of detached and semi-detached houses with gardens, and with wide approach roads from Argyle Street and Prince Edward Road.

As Sir Robert Ho Tung had previously expressed a desire to dispose of his shareholding in the Hong Kong Engineering and Construction Company, J.P. Braga persuaded Sir Elly Kadoorie to provide financial backing for the proposed new housing development. The area to be developed, comprising 1,333,000 ft.², was sold by the Government at public auction on 16 January 1931 [an error; the date was 16 November 1931], the successful bidders, Hong Kong Engineering and Construction Company, paying \$326,000 for the land, which worked out at 24.5 cents a square foot.

⁸⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 150.

In due time, the project was successfully completed, and the Government rewarded the principal movers in the development of Kowloon's prime residential area by naming the two main roads running through the estate as Kadoorie Avenue and Braga Circuit.⁸⁷³



J.P. Braga became Chairman and Managing Director in February 1930, retaining this position until the Japanese Occupation.⁸⁷⁴ The purchase of what at once became its major project took place on 16 November 1931. What was termed the 'Garden Suburb' was described by the *Post* as 'one of the biggest property undertakings in the history of the colony'.⁸⁷⁵

⁸⁷³ Notes prepared by A.M. Braga for an interview with Beverley Howells, April 1987, pp. 6-7, A.M. Braga file. Tony's reference to Ho Tung's role was cautious. J.P. Braga himself told a board meeting in June 1941 that he had been put in by Ho Tung and told that he had six months to turn the company's fortunes around or it would be wound up. He added that he was given the small salary of \$250 per month. Minutes, Hongkong Engineering and Construction Co., 17 June 1941. The minutes of this meeting make it clear that the 'Garden Estate' scheme was proposed by Hugh Braga.

⁸⁷⁴ Minutes, Hongkong Engineering and Construction Co., 3 February 1930.

⁸⁷⁵ *South China Morning Post*, 17 November 1931. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 93. Other areas nearby had been opened up with a view to the expansion of European residential areas: Homantin soon after World War I, with its obvious street names, Liberty Ave, Peace Ave and Victory Ave. Kowloon Tong had followed in the mid-1920s, but its developers got into difficulties and approached J.P. Braga to use his good offices to seek relief from Government for their financial problems (*South China Morning Post*, 15 July 1929. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 34-38).

Much later, his son Hugh described the reason for its neglect until the 1930s and the company's successful approach to this large project.

One reason for the hesitancy on the part of investors in the site was the existence of a hill of solid granite 50 ft. high, 200 ft. long and occupying $\frac{3}{4}$ of the width of Argyle St. One of the conditions of sale was that this hill had to be removed by the purchaser at his own cost. [We] let the hill of 30,000 tons as a quarry and turned a major liability into a profit. The stone for all the retaining walls and for concrete for the earlier residences came from this quarry.⁸⁷⁶

The purchase and development of this 30 acre (12 hectares) site and its steady progress attracted much press attention in Hong Kong, still essentially a small town caught up in its own affairs.⁸⁷⁷ There was a long period of site development of the roads and 100 building sites, and the first four houses were not built until 1936. In the meantime, income from the quarry kept the company solvent, with a small profit of \$5,178.57 in 1935. However, no dividends were paid, and the directors agreed to forego half their directors' fees.⁸⁷⁸ By 1937, things were no better, with a still smaller profit of \$2,510.93.⁸⁷⁹ It meant that J.P. Braga, on a small emolument as chairman, was still unable to recover from the financial disaster of 1925-26.⁸⁸⁰ In a candid moment, he told Kadoorie, reporting a confidential conversation with a key consultant, Erik Faber, 'I have no money and never pretended to be with any. But one thing I quite assured him I had and that was a good name'.⁸⁸¹ His membership of the boards of China Light and the Construction Co, as it was usually called, gave him status, as did the widespread recognition of his significant community service.

⁸⁷⁶ Letter, Hugh Braga to Paul Braga, 4 May 1970. Paul Braga Papers.

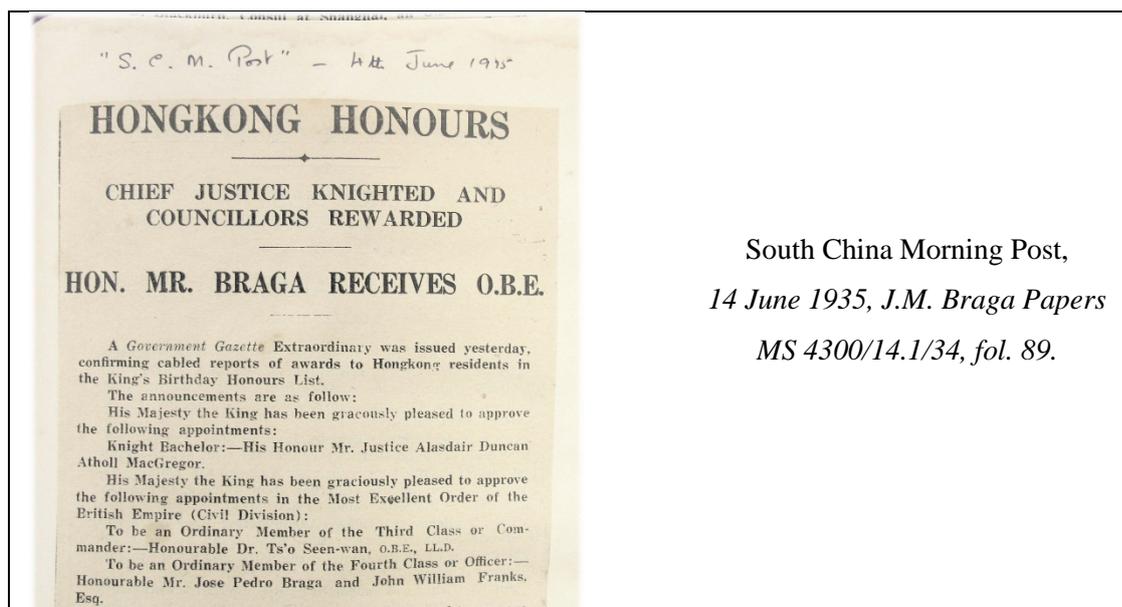
⁸⁷⁷ e.g. *South China Sunday Star*, 7 January 1932, *South China Morning Post*, 21, 22, 23 January, 30 April, 11 August 1932, 4 May 1933, *Hongkong Telegraph*, 30 January 1932, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/34, fol. 1-9, 23, 42; R. Hutcheon, op. cit., p. 82.

⁸⁷⁸ As reported to the Company's 1936 Annual General Meeting, *South China Morning Post*, 18 April 1936. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/34, fol. 96 and 97.

⁸⁷⁹ *South China Morning Post*, 14 April 1938. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/34. Loose cutting at end of album.

⁸⁸⁰ He pointed out in 1941 that his predecessor as Chairman had received a fee of \$1,500 per annum. His fee was half that, \$750, and no increase had been made in the eleven years since his appointment in 1930. Minutes, Hongkong Engineering and Construction Co. 17 June 1941. This was in addition to his salary as Managing Director of \$250 per month.

⁸⁸¹ J.P. Braga, letter to Sir Elly Kadoorie, 4 April 1938. Hong Kong Heritage Project, A02/15.



Would this recognition be made formal? J.P. Braga's work for the British Empire Trade Fairs in 1932 and 1933 both merited and received recognition. In the King's Birthday honours in June 1935, he was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE).⁸⁸² J.P. Braga was the first member of the Hong Kong Portuguese community to receive the OBE, but other unofficial members of the Legislative Council had received higher decorations for less distinguished service. It rankled with his family. Tony wrote a note to Jack, using the family's nickname 'the General' for their father, who was away in Shanghai.

Am just going to send this telegram to Father. "Warmest congratulations. Greatly disappointed meagre recognition. Family." It's disgraceful. After all these years of service the General is given just a paltry O.B.E. It looks like a "cumshaw"⁸⁸³ from the departing Peel the snob.

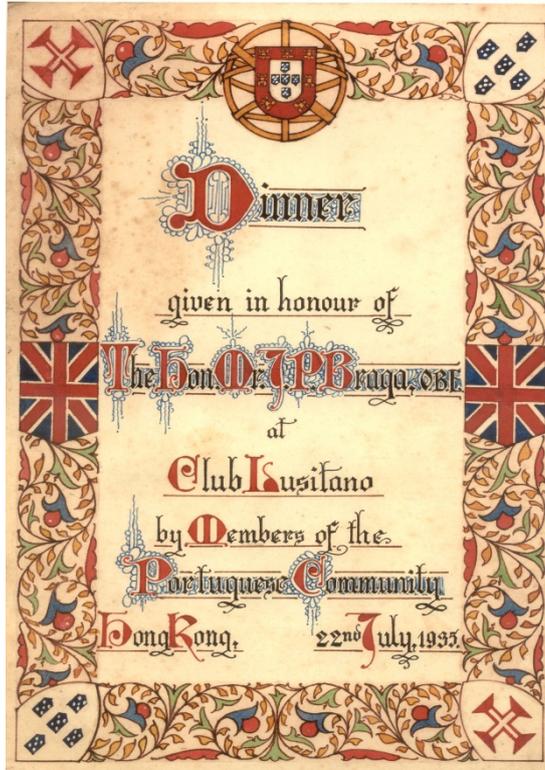
However, 'the General' responded pacifically.

Probably my services to Hong Kong are over-rated by the family and my more intimate friends, whereas Hong Kong officialdom might think that an OBE is quite adequate for what I have done. However, the mere fact that recognition has been made is gratifying enough when the achievement of my self-imposed task to raise the prestige

⁸⁸² *Hong Kong Government Gazette*, 3 June 1935.

⁸⁸³ A.M. Braga to J.M. Braga, 6 June 1935, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.3/4. Sir William Peel concluded his term of office as governor in December 1935. A cumshaw was a pittance given to a beggar in the street.

of our community in the Colony is the best form of reward I could hope for.⁸⁸⁴



'Dinner given in honour of The Hon. Mr. J.P. Braga, O.B.E. at Club Lusitano by Members of the Portuguese Community, Hong Kong, 22nd July 1935'

A superbly illustrated menu card, thought to have been executed by Marciano Baptista.

J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/13.3

His compatriots recognised that no other member of the Portuguese community had received comparable recognition, whatever the comparisons. The community rose to the occasion, as it had done six years earlier, and tendered him a dinner at Club Lusitano, attended, wrote the *Post*, by most of the Portuguese community.⁸⁸⁵ The superbly illustrated menu card was among the few personal papers of J.P. Braga to survive the war.⁸⁸⁶ He had just returned from Shanghai, where he was delighted to find that, on the strength of his OBE, he was made a Visitor of the Shanghai Club, the counter-part of the Hong Kong Club, from which, as a Portuguese, he was debarred.⁸⁸⁷

⁸⁸⁴ J.P. Braga to J.M. Braga, 19 June 1935, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.3/6. His sons commonly referred to their father as 'the General' in conversation between themselves, but seldom in letters.

⁸⁸⁵ *South China Morning Post*, 23 July 1935, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/33.

⁸⁸⁶ J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/13.3. Although unsigned, it is likely to have been executed by the skilled graphic artist, Marciano 'Naneli' Baptista, who later produced similar work in the POW camp at Shamshuipo and after the war. 'Naneli' Baptista was the grandson of the earlier Marciano, Chinnery's pupil.

⁸⁸⁷ The invitation from the Shanghai Club, dated 11 June 1935, was held (2012) by Braga's granddaughter, Mrs Angela Ablong. His passport, in the writer's possession, indicates that he was away from Hong Kong from 12 to 22 July 1935.

Braga might have expected the higher award of Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) when he retired from the Council fifteen months later, in January 1937, but he got nothing. It was a bitter pill, and he could not swallow it. Four years afterwards, making a broadcast to mark the centenary of Hong Kong in January 1941, he remarked that ‘before the retirement of the first Portuguese member from the Legislative Council in 1937, at the conclusion of his second term of office, the honour of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire was conferred on him.’ He did not admit that the award was made two years before his retirement, nor had he mistaken the date. He could not bear to admit in public that he had been passed over for a reward that most others received.

The Press was more generous than the Government. Henry Ching’s editorial style in the *Post* is unmistakable.⁸⁸⁸ Hinting at the lack of recognition, he described both Tso and Braga as ‘two tried and proven public servants ... Both have deserved well of the public and cannot be allowed to withdraw from the Council without adequate expression of the public’s thanks.’ Henry Ching deftly assessed each man. ‘Tso’s ‘unobtrusive demeanour conceals a surprisingly virile personality ... and a conservative sagacity that have made him a valued adviser to Government’, but he found it hard to say anything specific. Indeed, members of the Chinese community saw him as subservient to the government.⁸⁸⁹

A correspondent to Ching’s paper was still more direct. M.K. Lo was appointed to the Council in 1936 while Tso still held his seat. ‘Before Mr. Lo’s appointment, the Chinese community had very feeble “champions” on the Council’, wrote ‘Non-Chinese’.⁸⁹⁰ Braga could not be described in words like this! Ching knew his man.

⁸⁸⁸ As pointed out by Robin Hutcheon, a later editor. *SCMP, the first eighty years*. p. 74.

⁸⁸⁹ M. Holdsworth, ‘Tso Seen-wan’, in M. Holdsworth and C. Munn (eds), *Dictionary of Hong Kong Biography*, p. 439.

⁸⁹⁰ *South China Morning Post*, 29 August 1936, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/33, fol. 29.

His public service [has been] based on long residence, familiarity with workaday problems and an indefatigable enthusiasm for development. Probably more than any other member of the Council he is in contact with the Colony's industries and with those therein engaged. His utterances are marked by concern for Hongkong as Hongkong – a territory with its own economic and social problems, the permanent home of thousands whose domestic interests are so easily overlooked in the consideration of matters of high finance and politics. A man of high moral courage, Mr. Braga's complete retirement from public life would be an irreparable loss to the community.⁸⁹¹

The *Hongkong Telegraph* added:

Always a strong advocate of the development of the mainland, he has never wavered in his faith in the future of the Colony. When he has differed from the Government on matters of policy, he has been fearless and outspoken, but his criticisms have always been constructive in character. Perhaps more than any other member of the Council, Mr. Braga had come to be regarded as the champion of the people. Regret at his decision to retire is universal.⁸⁹²

They were generous and gracious comments, warmly appreciated by Braga, who told Jack:

I called on both Wylie and Ching in person the other day to thank them for their magnificent leader. It was all very gratifying to hear from both of them that I fully deserved all that they said ... Both of them were extremely nice, and I fully appreciated the genuineness of their congratulations.⁸⁹³

Sir Andrew Caldecott had succeeded Sir William Peel as Governor in December 1935. He was gracious in his public tribute, while refraining from comment on anything that had transpired in his predecessors' terms of office. Instead, he looked forward.

Happily in the case of Mr Braga and Dr Tso their public service is in no wise terminated by the expiry of their appointments on the Legislature, and I was very glad to see this point emphasised in a

⁸⁹¹ *South China Morning Post*, 26 January 1937, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/34, loose cutting at end of album.

⁸⁹² *Hongkong Telegraph*, 30 January 1937. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/34, loose cutting at end of album. This editorial was referred to by the governor in his valedictory statement at the Council's next meeting.

⁸⁹³ J.P. Braga to J.M. Braga, 28 January 1937, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.3/6. Wylie was the Managing Director, Ching the editor of the *South China Morning Post*.



Hong Kong dignitaries, ca. January 1937.

J.P. Braga is seated at the left. In the centre is the governor, Sir Andrew Caldecott. Other unofficial members of the Legislative Council identified include Sir Robert Kotewall, Man Kam Lo, and Dr Tso Seen-wan. Sir Robert Ho Tung, a member of the Executive Council, was always distinctive in Chinese dress.

Stuart Braga collection.

Copies have been given to the Hong Kong Public Record Office and the Archives of the Hong Kong Legislative Council, neither of which possessed the photograph, nor could they add to the identifications given above.

recent newspaper appreciation of what they have done for Hong Kong. Indeed Mr Braga is already busy with the organisation of our local Coronation festivities and Dr Tso will shortly sail for England to represent us at the Abbey ceremony.

Looking back over the past 29 years I can remember several cases in which public-spirited gentlemen accomplished even more valuable work for the community and exerted an even greater influence on public opinion after their retirement from the Legislature than they did during membership of it. The truth is that the successful Legislative Councillor is never really *functus officio* because he has become the proved friend and trusted confidant of the Administration and the people.⁸⁹⁴

⁸⁹⁴ *Hong Kong Hansard*, 3 February 1937, also reported in *South China Morning Post*, 4 February 1937. However, his appreciation of the retiring Colonial Treasurer, E.H. Taylor, four months later,

Braga's role in public life did indeed continue, but in a much reduced form. He was patron of the Portuguese Company of the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps, and in 1935 had given a gold medal and two silver medals to be presented at the Company's Annual Dinner for the members who enlisted the greatest number of recruits for the Portuguese Company.⁸⁹⁵ That support continued, besides which three of his sons were members of the Volunteers: Hugh, Tony and Paul.

However, he was aging rapidly, and the intense pressure of running both a business and a public career told on him. The ill-health of earlier years returned. A photograph taken in January 1929 when he took his place on the Legislative Council shows a man of 58 in his prime.⁸⁹⁶ Later photographs tell a different story. A group photograph of prominent people taken about January 1937 shows a sick man of 65 seated heavily in his chair. He was no stranger to worry and ill-health. In 1926 Noel recorded that his father 'spoke of the hard times he had as a young man, without money and severely handicapped by ill-health'.⁸⁹⁷ Lung trouble laid him low that year for some time, and he went to Shanghai to recuperate, staying with his sister Bellie, who met all expenses, as he had lost so much money in the strike. He was hospitalised for several weeks in 1934 with gall bladder trouble, then a particularly painful and debilitating illness, and when he recovered, wrote that 'Dr Sousa, who had been in attendance, thought at one time that I might not be able to pull through'.⁸⁹⁸ He suffered from chronic high blood pressure, at that time largely inmedicable. That led to a mild stroke in January 1938, and he was hospitalised for a month in the newly completed Queen Mary Hospital, but recovered well.

was far more fulsome. *Hong Kong Hansard*, 14 April 1937; *South China Morning Post*, 15 April 1937. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/34, loose cutting at end of album.

⁸⁹⁵ *South China Morning Post*, 11 September 1935, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/34, fol. 92, 93.

⁸⁹⁶ *China Mail*, 19 January 1929, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/40, fol. 5. This photograph appears earlier in this chapter.

⁸⁹⁷ Noel Braga Diary, 8 May 1926.

⁸⁹⁸ *Hongkong Daily Press*, 27 October 1934, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/34, fol. 77; J.P. Braga to A.M. Braga, 13 August 1934. It took him several months to recover. Hugh wrote to Jack on 14 November 1934 that 'Father is picking up very nicely'. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.3/7.



J.P. Braga, ca. 1937

He told Sir Elly Kadoorie later that year that ‘I cannot expect my health to be restored to what it had been. There is one fortunate circumstance, however, that I am able to perform my duties as usual.’⁸⁹⁹ Five years later, in 1943, he recognised that it had affected his ability to write.⁹⁰⁰

As J.P. Braga was such a prominent public figure, his progress received press attention.⁹⁰¹ He was able to continue his chairmanships of both China Light and the Construction Co., then approaching the completion of its long period of development of the ‘Garden Suburb’. It had been expected to take five years, and by October 1936

several houses were ready for occupation. At his suggestion, the board of the Construction Co. resolved to ask Sir Elly Kadoorie for his consent in requesting the Government to name the road running through the Estate after him. Kadoorie replied, accepting, ‘on condition that the name of the Managing Director was associated with the other’. Braga too accepted, commenting to the board that ‘he hoped the Directors would understand that he was not seeking publicity’.⁹⁰² The names Kadoorie Avenue and Braga Circuit were gazetted in November 1936.⁹⁰³ In the fullness of time, the street names would become the most visible monument for both men in this uniquely attractive residential locality, still in the early twenty-first century a source of satisfaction to the company that provided the financial support for its development.⁹⁰⁴

⁸⁹⁹ Braga to Kadoorie, 10 August 1938. Hong Kong Heritage Project, J.P. Braga A02/15.

⁹⁰⁰ Draft Chapter 21 of his *The Portuguese in Hongkong and China*, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/13.3.

⁹⁰¹ ‘Mr. J.P. Braga in no danger’. Three cuttings, dated 27 January, 15 February, 19 February 1938 from unidentified newspapers. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/34. Loose press cuttings at end of album.

⁹⁰² Minutes, Hongkong Engineering and Construction Company, 6 October 1936.

⁹⁰³ *Hong Kong Government Gazette*, 6 November 1936.

⁹⁰⁴ ‘It is such a unique environment in HK that we should probably do something to remind people about its heritage, and we are considering various potential avenues, such as a simple website.’

A less visible but far more important legacy was the succession of other prominent members of the Portuguese community to positions of responsibility in Hong Kong's public life. There was a regular place on the Legislative Council for a Portuguese member for the next two generations. J.P. Braga had demonstrated that a Portuguese councillor could not be ignored, and his successor followed his lead.⁹⁰⁵ This was the young scion of Hong Kong's premier Portuguese family, Leonardo d'Almada Jr, grandson of the man whose connection with the origins of Hong Kong had received such acclaim, Leonardo d'Almada e Castro.⁹⁰⁶ J.P. Braga would love to have had a career liked Leo's. After a successful career at St Joseph's College, he went to England, studied law at Exeter College, Oxford, and returned to Hong Kong where he enjoyed a brilliant legal and political career that effectively began with his appointment to the Legislative Council in 1937 at the age of 32.⁹⁰⁷ Like Braga, he became known for his activism.

He in turn was succeeded by another St Joseph's boy, Alberto Rodrigues. On leaving St Joseph's in 1927, he studied medicine at Hong Kong University. A distinguished career of service to the community and the university led to his appointment to the Legislative Council in 1953. In 1971 he became the first Portuguese in Hong Kong to receive a knighthood, taking the title Sir Albert. He was followed by Sir Roger Lobo in 1985. By that time, attitudes of racial inequality had passed. So too had the numerical strength of the Portuguese community, the numbers of which were fast dwindling following serious troubles in the mid-1960s. Forty years earlier, in 1925-26, Portuguese trapped in Hong Kong had no way out. In 1942 they fled en masse to nearby Macau. In the 1960s and 1970s, most departed for the USA and other Pacific Rim countries.⁹⁰⁸

Nicholas Colfer, Director, Sir Elly Kadoorie & Sons Ltd, to this writer, 6 June 2011. The website was developed some months later. <http://www.thekadoorieestate.com/>, accessed 20 May 2012.

⁹⁰⁵ *Hong Kong Government Gazette*, 22 January 1937; N. Miners, *Hong Kong under imperial rule, 1912-1941*, p. 142.

⁹⁰⁶ J. W. Norton-Kyshe, *The history of the laws and courts of Hongkong*, p. 243.

⁹⁰⁷ *South China Morning Post*, 25 January 1937. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14.1/34, loose cutting at end of album.

⁹⁰⁸ This exodus is discussed in Chapter 13.



*Hong Kong centenary stamps, January 1941.
The 25c stamp used a photograph that grandly celebrated the new head office
of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation,
opened on 10 October 1935, China's National Day.*

*Unidentified press cutting, possibly from China Mail, ca. 1937,
in J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/14.1/33, folio 142.*

Hong Kong celebrated its centenary as a British colony in 1941 with a good deal of display. Several postage stamps were issued, and a series of talks were broadcast on the radio station, ZBW, between 18 and 21 January 1941. Wisely, the planner of these talks did not put together a triumphalist array of British achievements, and there was no mention of the Opium War that led to the presence of the British in the first place. Instead there were cameos of Hong Kong's commercial, sporting and cultural life. These were augmented by the reminiscences of the two grand old men of the Chinese community, Sir Shouson Chow and Sir Robert Ho Tung. Two talks on non-British communities were also included: the Portuguese and the Indians. Braga was the obvious choice for the first of these. In discussing the role of the Portuguese community at large, he did not attempt to overstate their significance, merely saying that 'in business the Portuguese obtain positions and remain in employment by virtue of attentive devotion to duty'.⁹⁰⁹ It was a fair statement of the true position of the

⁹⁰⁹ J.P. Braga, 'Portuguese pioneering: a hundred years of Hong Kong', in *Hong Kong Centenary Commemorative Talks*, p. 31. It was not the time to brandish big issues, and Braga rose to the occasion well in a reflective address that acknowledged what had been achieved. He did not try to set an agenda for what still had to be done. He gave no names, but any Portuguese listeners would have had no trouble identifying the leading families he mentioned. They were those covered in earlier chapters of this thesis: d'Almada e Castro, Noronha, Remedios, Rosario, Marques, Soares and Baptista as well as his own. In the current generation of leaders, he referred, still anonymously, to Dr Graça Ozorio, Henrique Botelho and Marciano ('Naneli') Baptista. Not surprisingly, this man whose

Portuguese community. They were not the downtrodden proletariat that Montalto de Jesus had lugubriously depicted, but had developed, for the most part, into what might be thought of in the social composition of a European city as a lower middle class, respectable and industrious. Besides, there was a group of aspirational achievers, who had made a real difference to the whole community. Of these, José Pedro Braga undoubtedly stood head and shoulders above others.

The gradual closing of his public life from 1937 on gave him a greater degree of family life than he had ever known. Passing years brought a partial healing of the breach in family relations caused by the religious split some twenty years earlier. The contributions made by four of Braga's sons were solid. Noel's was to the stable management of China Light as Company Secretary. Hugh, General Works Manager of the Construction Co., was described by his father as 'a key employee of the Company who had played the game by the Company'.⁹¹⁰ Tony became Property Superintendent in the Construction Co. in August 1937.⁹¹¹ After many years as a clerk, John became Assistant Secretary of China Light in 1939.⁹¹² Jack married in Macau in 1924, and by 1935 had seven children. The eldest, Carolina, named for José Braga's mother, was born on her grandfather's 55th birthday, 3 August 1926. These two circumstances created a special relationship.

Of seven sons still in Hong Kong, six married between 1934 and 1940, and by the end of 1941, there were seven more grandchildren. Eventually there would be eighteen. Three of his sons who married in Hong Kong chose St Andrew's Anglican Church, close to the family home at Knutsford Terrace, for their weddings. José Braga did not attend any of them. He told Noel firmly in 1926 that he would always remain a Catholic. This meant that to enter a Protestant church was a mortal sin, though a layman of such prominence could easily have obtained an episcopal dispensation had he so wished.⁹¹³

education had been so vital to his success, made special mention of the opportunities afforded by Catholic schools and latterly by Hong Kong University.

⁹¹⁰ J.P. Braga to Sir Elly Kadoorie, 13 June 1938. Hong Kong Heritage Project, A02-15.

⁹¹¹ Minutes, Hongkong Engineering and Construction Co., 26 August 1937. By then, his father's term of office as a member of the Legislative Council had concluded and his affairs were much quieter.

⁹¹² Hong Kong Jurors Lists, 1939-1940.

⁹¹³ Filomeno ('Meno') Baptista interview, 24 November 2010.



'Joe as Father Xmas'. Christmas 1937 at Knutsford Terrace.

*By courtesy of Noel Braga's son Maurice,
the small boy seated on the ground in front of Olive.*

Olive would not attend any of the weddings either, but for a very different reason. She had invested so much into the upbringing of her thirteen children that she simply could not let them go. All her adult sons except Jack lived in the large family home until their marriages, only Tony remaining a bachelor. Only one of her four daughters married: Maude, the second. As they grew into adult years during the 1920s and 1930s, her children became very caring of their mother, knowing very well how hard life had been for her. She had become care-worn and chronically ill, and underwent several operations in the 1930s.⁹¹⁴ Not surprisingly, she became a hypochondriac, prone to over-dosing herself with all sorts of medicines. All her food had to be puréed. Later, Paul wrote to his brother James of his concern 'that she was doing herself more harm [than good] with all the poisons she has been taking for years'.⁹¹⁵ By the end of the 1930s, she had become increasingly dependent on her youngest

⁹¹⁴ These were mentioned in various letters, but never specified. Gynaecological problems were unmentionable in that era. It seems that the surgery was only partially successful. As a result she had difficulty walking. This is apparent in movie film taken by Hugh in 1938.

⁹¹⁵ Paul Braga to James Braga, 22 October 1943. Paul Braga Papers.

daughter Mary, then in her twenties, whose life was gradually stifled by a clinging, demanding, prematurely aged mother, not yet 70 years of age, but incapable of independent action.

Christmas brought all the younger Bragas together in the early years of their married life, and there were large gatherings at the family home at Knutsford Terrace, followed by an obligatory group photograph on the tennis court. In the centre was 'Joe as Father Xmas'.⁹¹⁶ He enjoyed his role as a grandfather in a way that he had never done as a father.

Each year from 1936 to 1940 brought at least one more infant to the gathering, though on Christmas Day 1940, James had gone to America with his new wife Anne, and Hugh's family was no longer there, having been evacuated to Australia in July that year. 'It was hard to part from these dear little ones. I felt very bad when the time came to say "Good-bye". This separation is hard to endure', J.P. told Kadoorie.⁹¹⁷

In 1941 there was no happy gathering at Knutsford Terrace. Kowloon had fallen to the Japanese on 11 December, and there were two days of anarchy before the victorious Japanese began to restore order. It was a time of terror with looters armed with knives, meat cleavers and daggers breaking into many houses. Isaac Newton, a doctor at nearby Kowloon Hospital could hear the roar of looting in Nathan Road, nearly a kilometre away. 'It was a very nasty sound', he wrote.⁹¹⁸ Most of the Braga family gathered in 26 Kadoorie Ave, close to Paul's home on nearby Braga Circuit. Occupied by the Argentine Consul, Senõr R.M. Lavalle, it had a very heavy teak door, and was therefore selected as a fortress. Another battle took place there. Tony wrote:

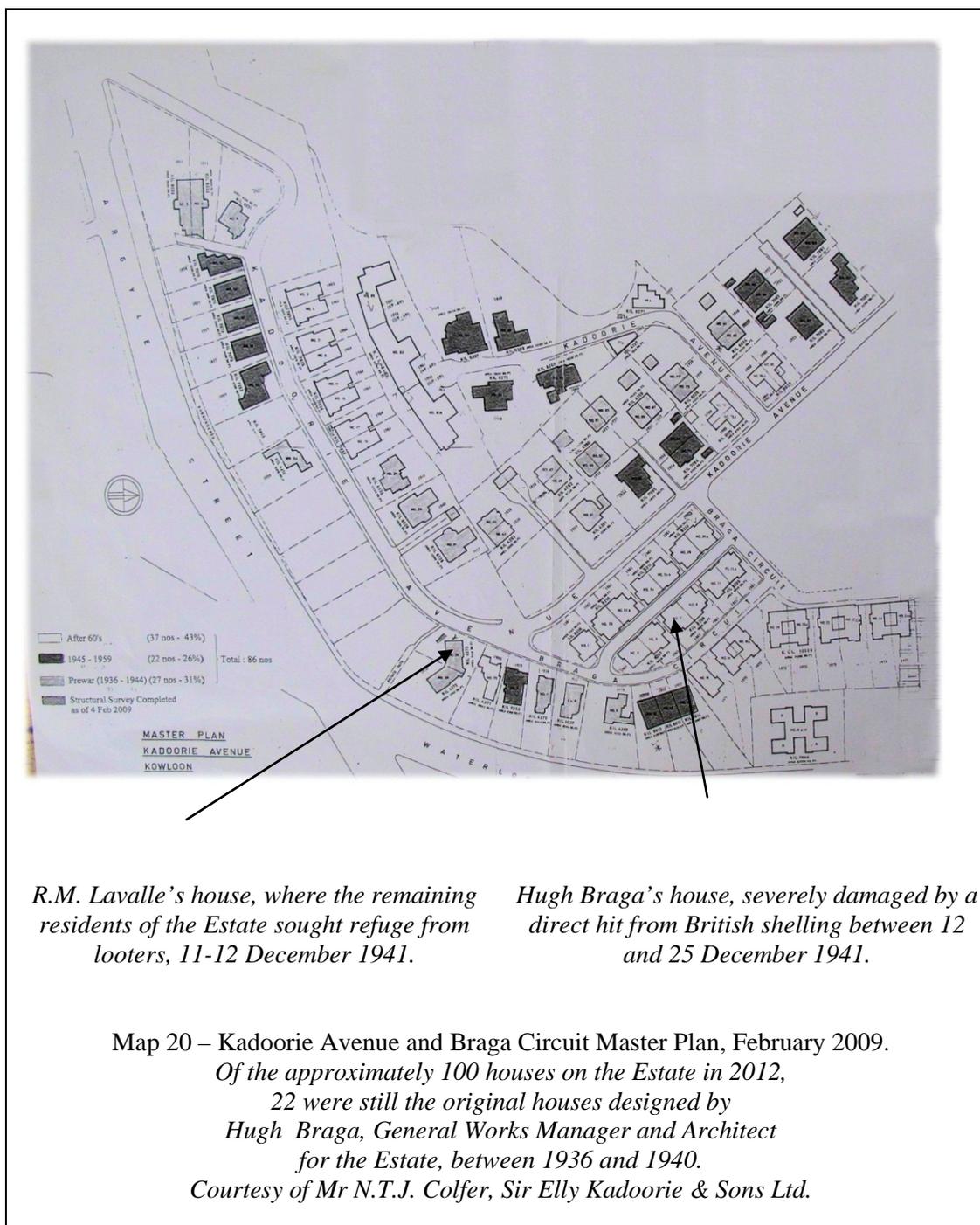
The police abandoned [Kowloon] ... without any warning to the people. A reign of terror followed throughout the afternoon, that night and the following day, thousands of Chinese roamed the streets in bands, armed with choppers, bamboo poles and some with revolvers ... up at the site [the Kadoorie Avenue estate] all the tenants left behind congregated in one house for safety and we fought off the looters.⁹¹⁹

⁹¹⁶ As Olive described him on the back of the 1937 photo, sent to her sister May Pollard in Australia, with the added note, '7 sons, 4 daughters & 5 "in laws & 3 babies' . May Pollard Papers, MLMSS 2205, State Library of NSW.

⁹¹⁷ J.P. Braga to Sir Elly Kadoorie, 6 July 1940. Hong Kong Heritage Project, A02/15.

⁹¹⁸ Dr Isaac Newton, diary, in A. Birch & M. Cole, *Captive Christmas*, p. 29.

⁹¹⁹ Tony Braga to James Braga, 27 June 1942. James Braga Papers.



Paul added that 'it was due mainly to the cool-headedness of the Argentine Consul and Tony that we did not lose'.⁹²⁰ In these two days, the men present repelled two determined attacks from a shouting, menacing mob of between forty and fifty looters.

⁹²⁰ Paul Braga to James Braga. The following summary and account are taken from a long letter sent by Paul to James on 22 October 1943 following his escape to Free China. James Braga Papers.

The house was immediately above the headquarters of China Light, a public stairway joining the two levels. Noel, who spoke Japanese, ventured out on the second day and made contact with some Japanese soldiers, suggesting that this building would suit them. So it proved, and with the Japanese military close by they knew they were safe from looters for the present.

The women took refuge in their faith. 19 December was Caroline's 30th birthday, and her mother gave her a small book of devotional verse, *It matters to Him about You*. On the fly-leave she wrote, 'Fear not, be of good courage, neither be dismayed. The Lord Thy God is with thee wheresoever thou goest. 19th Dec: '41. Memorable days. The besieging of Hongkong'. Mary added, 'The Battle of Hong Kong. With the earnest hope that these calamities may soon be over'.⁹²¹

These days of defeat and fear left José Braga, in Paul Braga's words:

a broken man both physically and mentally ... We all admired him for his wonderful patience and the way he "took it" without any complaints. He often and often spoke of his devotion to each of us and repented at his aloofness in past years.⁹²²

Yet he rallied for Christmas Day. Paul told the story of an unforgettable Christmas Day:

He got Audrey [Paul's wife, all the servants having fled] to cook a special 'Xmas tiffin for the whole family, what was to be our last real feed. After being starved for the past fortnight we all agreed that it tasted better than any meal before. Two of our chickens were killed and tinned food (corn etc.) made up for the rest. Then there was a real 'Xmas pudding which was made from ingredients Aud bought a few weeks previous. There was even a box of crackers!! And the room was decorated with 'Xmas banners saved from previous years ... It was the first time we had showed real indifference to the blazing of artillery fire from Jap guns in the several vacant lots of the site – some of them so close to our house that the plates jumped on our tables from the concussion in the air. Nor did we leave our seats during the return shelling from British forts in Hongkong which brought direct hits on some of the Jap guns. (Most of these shells missed their targets, one hit Hughie's house and wrecked it completely). It was the happiest and yet the gloomiest tiffin we ever had. During the fire and cross-fire we all

⁹²¹ Found in Caroline's effects after her death in 1998 and now in this writer's possession. The Scriptural quotation is Joshua 1:9.

⁹²² Paul Braga to James Braga, 22 October 1943. James Braga Papers.

sat still, but you could never imagine more laughter and talk from a 'Xmas party when the guns were silent. At the end of the meal, Father gave a speech in which he told us how he really loved his family always, and wanted us all to stick together through the trouble, and to have more patience with each other. When he spoke of Maude and the children [Maude was not there, her whereabouts uncertain. The children, four of them, were there in the house, facing a perilous future], he broke down in tears and it was some time before he was able to resume.

As darkness fell on that strangest of Christmas Days, the sound of gunfire on Hong Kong Island ceased and there was silence. 'We knew what that meant', said Noel's wife Marjory fifty years later. 'Hong Kong had surrendered'.⁹²³

⁹²³ Marjory Braga interview, 22 May 1991.

Chapter 10

'The honourable tribe'

The Braga family in Hong Kong, 1906-1925

Growing up at Robinson Road

When José Braga brought his family back to Hong Kong from Macau in 1906, they lived at 37 Robinson Road, a rented property on what was already known as the Mid-Levels of Hong Kong Island, about 500 feet above sea level. This district was described at the time as 'one of the loveliest spots on the island ... with a full view of all boats and islands'.⁹²⁴ It was 'a particularly attractive residential area at that time'.⁹²⁵ No. 37 was a large and comfortable two-storey house built on a new extension to the road.⁹²⁶



*Robinson Road, late nineteenth century,
'a particularly attractive residential area'.*

City of Victoria, a selection of the Museum's
historical photographs,
Hong Kong Museum of History, p. 105.

In later years, the family looked back on their childhood with affection. It is human nature to try to ignore the hard times, but those memories were just below the surface. While their father had his good position at the *Telegraph*, the family lived in modest comfort, but once he was on his own, life was much harder. It was essential to bring the children back to Hong Kong. He knew from first-hand experience that schools in Macau could not provide them with

the education they would need to succeed in a world dominated by the British Empire. At that stage, in 1906, there were seven to feed and educate. By 1910 when

⁹²⁴ *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 June 1902, cited by K. McDougall and B. Pettman, *The Ohel Leah Synagogue Hong Kong*, p. 19..

⁹²⁵ K. McDougall and B. Pettman, *The Ohel Leah Synagogue Hong Kong*, p. 19. The synagogue was located at 70 Robinson Road, not far from where the Braga family lived at No. 37.

⁹²⁶ *Historical and Statistical Abstract of the Colony of Hongkong, 1841-1920*, p. 39.

he left the *Telegraph* there were four more boys, and by 1914, there were another two girls.



*37 Robinson Road. Home of the
Braga family from 1906 to 1925.*

Stuart Braga collection: Hugh Braga's album

The struggle and poverty that flowed from this situation have already been referred to. In his eightieth year, Tony would recall that his mother had done all the cooking.⁹²⁷ She would have been the only European woman in Hong Kong to do so. Servants were cheap in those days, and even poorly paid Portuguese clerks could afford two or three: a wash amah, a cook and perhaps a

‘makee-learn’, a young girl learning her skills the hard way in a foreign household. The Braga household made do with a single wash amah, but sometimes there was no money even for that one. Olive had then to do everything herself. ‘She coped very well with all problems; I revere her memory’, added Tony.⁹²⁸ Not far away lived R.M. Kotewall, who would later sit with J.P. Braga on the Legislative Council. Kotewall was a prominent lawyer, which was what Braga would like to have been, and had a household of 26 servants.⁹²⁹ Rich and successful, Sir Robert Kotewall became in 1938 the second Eurasian to be knighted.⁹³⁰

Looking back in 1926 on these hard years, the father of this large family was justifiably proud that he had managed to put them all through school and get them started in life.⁹³¹ This meant that all nine boys went to St Joseph’s, with its known excellence, and the two younger girls to St Stephen’s Girls’ College, though in the straitened times after the 1925-26 strike and boycott, Jean paid the fees for her

⁹²⁷ *Sunday Morning Post*, 31 May 1987.

⁹²⁸ Notes prepared by A.M. Braga for an interview with Beverley Howells of the *South China Morning Post*, 8 April 1987. A.M. Braga file.

⁹²⁹ P. Gillingham, *At the Peak*, p. 23.

⁹³⁰ Annual Report, 1938, in R.L. Jarman, *Hong Kong Annual Administration Reports, 1841-1941*, vol. 5, page 172. Sir Robert Ho Tung, knighted in 1915, was the first. M. Holdsworth, ‘Ho Tung, Sir Robert’, in M. Holdsworth and C. Munn (eds), *Dictionary of Hong Kong Biography*, p 196; P. Snow, *The fall of Hong Kong*, p. 11.

⁹³¹ Noel Braga Diary, 8 May 1926.

younger sisters, Caroline and Mary, fifteen and eighteen years her junior. St Joseph's was largely staffed by unsalaried Religious, but Jean's commitment to her sisters



*The Braga family on the steps of 37 Robinson Road, ca. April 1908.
Within six years, the brood of nine children would grow in number to thirteen.
Left to right: Clement, Jean, Tony, Noel, Jack, James, Maude, Chappie, Hugh.*

Stuart Braga collection: Hugh Braga's album

was enormous. Her income from piano teaching cannot have been large, but she also contributed to the weekly family budget, and for a year paid the university fees for her brother Hugh when he forfeited his scholarship, perhaps because the Physics taught at St Joseph's had not been of a sufficient standard. Each of the children who had the opportunity to stay at school did well. In one year, 1918, three of the boys won prizes at St Joseph's: Noel, Hugh and Tony.⁹³² John and Paul were later prize-winners.⁹³³ School sport was unknown in their father's day, but several of the boys were fine sportsmen, especially Jack, Chappie, Hugh and Paul, each a champion athlete.

⁹³² *South China Morning Post*, 31 January 1919.

⁹³³ *South China Morning Post*, 17 March 1927.

The two older girls, Jean and Maude, found themselves of necessity caring for their mob of young brothers. An early family photograph taken in Hong Kong about 1908 shows the two girls head and shoulders above the crowd of small fry, with a demeanour of gentle authority.⁹³⁴ Significantly, Tony, a small baby, is on Jean's lap, James on Maude's. Jean in particular was the one to whom her mother looked in the many years of exhausting and unremitting care for small children, though she inherited both her mother's musicality and her ability to pass it on. Jean also inherited her father's intellect, and was dux of her school. Like her father, she hoped to study abroad, but this did not eventuate.⁹³⁵ She was brought up in the environment of her mother's conspicuous musical talent, becoming a capable violinist and pianist. She was vivacious and charming and was sought after as a music teacher. She became an accomplished horsewoman before the motor age, when access to the family home at Robinson Road was difficult. She was a woman of promise. Three of the Braga sisters became music teachers, Caroline and Mary following in Jean's footsteps, but Maude worked for the Standard-Vacuum Oil Co. as a secretary.

Less prominent in the Braga ménage was the second daughter Maude. Born in December 1898, and more than two years younger than Jean, she necessarily took a lesser role in household management than Jean came to take, or was obliged to take through sheer necessity. Maude was seven when the family returned to Hong Kong and grew up to become an energetic, friendly, vivacious person who despite difficult circumstances retained an infectious enthusiasm for whatever life had to offer. She learned the piano from her older sister and had a lovely singing voice, trained by her mother.⁹³⁶

⁹³⁴ Her younger siblings' memories of Jean's household management were not always happy ones, though in later life they could laugh about it. Jean enthusiastically embraced supposed 'health' diets, the most extreme being a lecture by a visiting nutritionist/faith healer who convinced Jean that one chicken liver was equivalent in nutritional value to a whole chicken. For a time, her younger brothers, ravenously hungry, were given half a chicken liver each for dinner, and sent to school next day with a slice of bread and dripping for lunch. Another memory is of being shut in a dark room, the 'rat room', for misbehaviour, but it was a memory shared without bitterness (By Tony Braga with this writer, July 1991). The picture is one of excessive expectation of a young woman who had little time to live her own life. Yet Jean retained her love of and commitment to music, especially the violin. Olive later wrote, in a letter to her youngest son Paul in 1943, of Jean's 'extraordinary love for teaching and her wonderful aptitude in fashioning clothes.' (Olive Braga to her daughter-in-law Audrey Braga, undated, but marked 'received 15 June' - i.e. 1943. Paul Braga Papers). All the younger boys wore hand-me-downs for many years, and it was Jean who ensured that they were not ill-fitting.

⁹³⁵ An undocumented tradition is that she was to have been awarded a scholarship for this purpose, but it went to a student with better connections.

⁹³⁶ According to undocumented family tradition, she became the first woman in Hong Kong to hold a motor cycle rider's licence, an interesting reflection on changing technology.



Maude Braga, ca. 1918
J.M. Braga Pictures, Box1/52

Like Jean, Maude was a competent horsewoman and later visited Shanghai to compete at a gymkhana there. She had the reputation of being good at everything that she undertook. She was even-tempered, charitable in disposition, and, like Jean, warmly supportive of her mother's conversion soon after the family's return to Hong Kong. Her personality was well caught in her brother John's phrase 'Maude, good soul that she is.'⁹³⁷ Jack remembered her as 'always so kind and considerate, so loving and gracious, that she endeared very many to her'.⁹³⁸

It fell to Jean to take an important supporting role in a family tragedy that brought out the best in this fine young woman. Jean was only twenty-one years of age when her brother Delfino, always called 'Chappie', four years younger than herself, died a terrible death in 1917. It left a deep scar on the family.

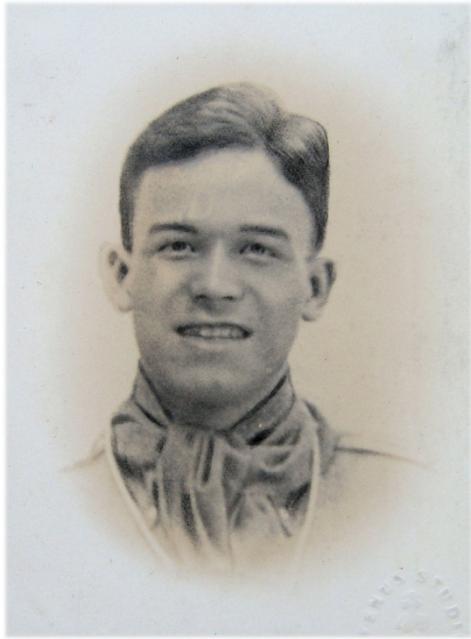
Chappie, or 'Delf' (as he signed himself), was born in 1900, and was clearly the leader in his family, though his brother Jack was nearly three years older than himself. He had seven younger brothers, all born in the next ten years. When Chappie was about fourteen, he got all who could write to sign up as 'partners' in a recreational club in which each brother had to improve his fitness, his progress to be measured. He led them in party games, describing one in a letter to his cousin Lena in Manila. It is easy to imagine the uproarious fun they enjoyed together.

We had a very nice party at home on Saturday in spite of the bad weather. We all had tea first of all upstairs and then we went down stairs for the games and songs. One of them was the old song of the Ten little nigger boys. We all stood in a row and as there were only 9 boys Maud took part also & Mother played the piano. Maud got shocked & went away leaving nine, so the others followed until we came to the last which was Hugh and he got married to Caroline.⁹³⁹

⁹³⁷ John Braga to James Braga, 27 March 1946. James Braga Papers.

⁹³⁸ On hearing of her death in 1962, Jack to Noel, 4 January 1963. J.M. Braga MS 4300/2.3/12.

⁹³⁹ Delfino Braga to Lena Noronha, undated, but 1917. Pencil draft, Paul Braga Papers.



Delfino 'Chappie' Braga, 1900-1917

*Stuart Braga collection:
Hugh Braga's album*

Chappie, a year younger than Maude, pulled his weight too, more than willing to do the dirty jobs. After he died, his mother wrote to her sister Crun,

I can see him now making a joke of emptying the chambers and the buckets of sloppy slushy house refuse in the rain when we had no servants – I wanted to do it myself and would say I am afraid of his clothes, then he would pull up his trousers and put on my old skirt and blouse and make such a lot of fun and frolic, dancing up and downstairs and the children gleefully rushing after – the whole crowd.⁹⁴⁰

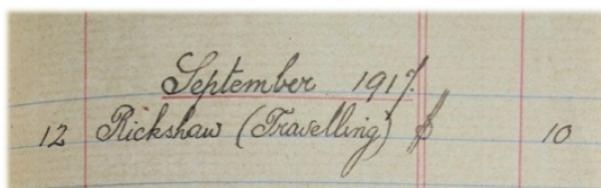
He and Jack used to go rowing or swimming at 5.30 each morning to keep fit. He wrote well, was a good organiser and meticulous in detail. His calligraphy was splendid, and he took great satisfaction in executing beautiful capital letters. He took himself very seriously, as high-minded teenagers tend to do, but he also had a great sense of fun. What is known of his short life comes from a collection of papers which appear to have been kept as precious relics by his mother when he died of septicaemia, at the threshold of promising manhood. They reveal a remarkable young man, with a maturity and self-confidence well in advance of his years. They also reveal a strong spiritual dimension that was warmly responsive to his mother's patient and loving up-bringing.⁹⁴¹

⁹⁴⁰ Olive Braga to her sister, Corunna Noronha, October 1917. Typed copy in A.M. Braga Papers.

⁹⁴¹ They were kept by Jean, in whose bank security box they were found on her death in 1987. They are now held by this writer. A few other mementos were kept by his youngest brother Paul, who was only seven when Chappie died. Paul Braga Papers. His stamp collection went to his brother Hugh.

In 1913 he became an enthusiastic Boy Scout when the movement reached Hong Kong. He was Patrol Leader of the 1st Hong Kong Troop of Boy Scouts, affiliated with St Joseph's College, and willingly assumed responsibilities as secretary of the Football Club associated with it. He drew up rules for two sporting clubs: a Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association and a United Club of Hong Kong, and typed out a lengthy speech to be delivered at the inaugural meeting of the latter. These rules emulated, possibly consciously, his father's competence and experience in public affairs. In August 1916, he joined the Victoria Recreation Club. This was a largely Portuguese club, despite the British name.

He left St Joseph's College that year and was employed as a clerk by the French bank, *Crédit Foncier*. He became keen on stamp collecting, and during 1917 wrote to several stamp dealers in the U.S.A., in addition to local contacts.



He was extraordinarily well-organised, and kept a detailed cashbook of his income and expenditure. The last entry was

10 cents spent on a rickshaw ride on 12 September 1917. A little more than a month later he was dead.⁹⁴²

The most significant indication of the values of this fine young man with so many interests and talents is contained in an exchange of letters between Chappie and his 'Auntie Crun' in Manila, between 26 June and 24 September 1917.⁹⁴³ Corunna pressed her nephew: 'Dear Chappy, Have you become a Christian and accepted Christ as your personal Saviour? Write and tell me, dear, for I pray for you and Jack every morning, also your Father.' He replied: 'I always thought you knew that I was a Christian, though not a very good one. The Scout movement has helped me, and so have the lessons on Sunday given by Miss Meadows. I have been several times with mother and received from her a page of the Grace Gospel Tidings which you have been good enough to send me ... As Mother told me, you said that "it pays to be a Christian" and really it does'. He concluded, 'Your Christian nephew, Delf.' Corunna replied on 24 September, only three weeks before her nephew died. 'It is,

⁹⁴² *South China Morning Post*, 16 October 1917. CS 00200856.

⁹⁴³ Transcripts made available by Sheila Potter, Chappie's niece. The warmth of affection and bond of understanding between aunt and nephew which the letters reveal is uncommonly strong.

dear, such a joy to think of you belong[ing] to Him. Let each of His children shine and walk worthy of His love, for it means much to be a Christian, but it is worth all to have the joy of knowing you are His, and should death call you away, you go home to Him.’ Chappie, like most of his brothers, had devoutly embraced his mother’s Protestant faith.

Chappie’s illness and death are recorded in a harrowing letter written by his mother to Crun. He was taken seriously ill on 7 October 1917 with what was eventually diagnosed as an abscess on the liver following a bout of dysentery, and the doctors in Hong Kong were unable to do anything for him. After some days of indecision and ineffectual treatment, his desperate mother took him to Macau, then a ferry trip lasting several hours; Portuguese doctors had a better reputation than the local people, for many British doctors were away at the war. Olive was prepared to go to any length to save her son’s life. The journey only added to Chappie’s intense suffering in his last few days, but he held fast to his new-found faith, refusing to accept the Catholic last rites, until his mother persuaded him for his father’s sake. When Chappie died on 14 October in S. Rafael Hospital at the end of a ghastly week, ‘Joe broke down like a little child in sorrow’, wrote Olive. She could not find words to express her own grief, but added, ‘Jean came with love to my rescue. She with such brightness and glowing love came like an angel’.

Chappie was buried in San Miguel Cemetery in Macau. In 1924, his brother Noel went there. ‘I visited Chappie’s grave, spending some minutes in quiet meditation around it. He is, I trust, asleep in Jesus’, he wrote in his diary.⁹⁴⁴ Forty years after Chappie’s death, his brother Clement wrote to Jack on 14 October 1957. He always remembered the anniversary of the day when ‘poor dear Chappie passed away. What a blow it was and such a sad loss to all of us. Would that fine Chappie had lived and raised a family like others of us’.⁹⁴⁵ There was the enduring sadness of having lost, not only a brother, but a young man of great promise.

Jack too had been ill and was hospitalised in a Catholic hospital. Apparently, he had initially joined the whole family in leaving the Catholic Church, but now returned to the faith of his fathers. Olive told Crun that ‘Jack had changed and gone over to his

⁹⁴⁴ Noel Braga Diary, 4 December 1924.

⁹⁴⁵ Clement Braga to Jack Braga, 14 October 1957, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.3/11.

father's side through the influence of the sisters while he had been in the hospital – even going to communion.’⁹⁴⁶ Sadly, in this family crisis, sides were taken, and made obvious. It seems that Jack and his father attended the Requiem Mass in the small chapel at San Miguel Cemetery, but Olive, rejecting both sacrament and sacerdotalism, did not, immediately returning to Hong Kong. ‘I intended returning by boat over to Hongkong as Jack and Joe was [sic] to attend funeral here in Macao’. Her absence could only have made the breach much worse. Chappie's younger brothers, at home in Hong Kong, knew which side they were on. Olive told Crun that ‘when we reached home, the boys were boisterous ... I called them and they said, “Mother, how can we be sad? Chappie is in Heaven.” ’

The sudden death of a promising young man who had been in excellent health was a disaster that seemed almost unimaginable, but exactly two years later, another disaster overwhelmed the Braga family. At the time it must have seemed even worse in some ways, because it had on-going repercussions that were bound to affect others.

Jack was the eldest son and had shown early aptitude as a fine athlete and scholar at St Joseph's College. Childhood photographs show a sturdy boy, growing into a tall, self-confident youth, the sort of young man who would be a splendid role model for his eight younger brothers. He joined the Boy Scout movement as a member of St Joseph's Troop when it commenced in Hong Kong in 1913. He did well, and won the approval of the English scoutmaster, Major F.J. Bowen, who returned to England after war broke out in 1914. The troop was thus bereft of leadership, and in 1915, Jack took on the role of scoutmaster.⁹⁴⁷

On leaving school in 1913, Jack trod the familiar path to the doors of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corp., and about two years later joined the staff of the colony's biggest insurance company, the Union Insurance Society of Canton Limited. Like all British businesses it was feeling the impact of the long drawn-out war as many of its young English staff returned to the Home Country to enlist. 579 out of a total European male population of 2,157 in Hong Kong volunteered for

⁹⁴⁶ The Brethren do not have sacraments. Attendance at Mass and receiving Communion can only mean that Jack had been to Confession and made his peace with the Catholic Church.

⁹⁴⁷ It was too much to ask of a boy of eighteen, and the troop did not survive the war, being re-established shortly afterwards when Bowen, now lieutenant-colonel, returned. The certificate of appointment, dated 7 April 1915, is the oldest document in Jack's personal papers. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.1.

military service overseas.⁹⁴⁸ A higher proportion of juniors in the financial sector seems to have enlisted.⁹⁴⁹ This gave local boys opportunities they would never otherwise have had. Jack was one of two staff receiving cash sometimes amounting to \$1 million a week. His knowledge of banking procedures was useful in the different environment of an insurance company. A surviving fragment of his diary for 1916 is written in tiny careful handwriting, a reflection of his meticulous and painstaking work in the cash books of his employer.⁹⁵⁰ He began on the small salary of \$100 a month and within three years progressed to \$140, well below what a young Englishman would have earned. The firm's manager, Mr. Hay, came to place trust and confidence in this young man and marked him down for a senior position in the near future.

Jack is likely to have read his father's pamphlet, *The Rights of Aliens in Hongkong*, written in 1895, in which J.P. Braga discussed the odium that attached to the whole Portuguese community arising from a well-publicised case in which a Portuguese clerk had defrauded his employers. He could never have imagined that his own eldest son would confirm these hostile and negative impressions. There was a later suggestion that Jack had fallen into bad company and was led by others into criminal activity, but the evidence does not support this. He was on a far lower salary than his responsibilities would suggest. As his employers did not reward him in a way that he felt was due to him, and in the absence of effective supervision, Jack took matters into his own hands.

Starting in June 1919, he began to misappropriate increasingly large sums of money, apparently to invest in some risky venture the details of which are unknown. Like so many embezzlers before and since, Jack hoped to make a fortune and replace the money before anyone found out. Like so many embezzlers before and since, he lost everything. At the beginning of October he fled, panic-stricken, to Canton. From here he wrote to his employer confessing what he had done and then voluntarily returned to face the consequences rather than await extradition. It soon emerged that

⁹⁴⁸ N. Miners, *Hong Kong under imperial rule, 1912-1941*, p. 7.

⁹⁴⁹ The figures for the Union Insurance Society of Canton are unknown, but 45 of the 75 Eastern staff juniors in the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corp. enlisted at the outbreak of war, and at least 169 enlisted in the British forces during the war. F.H.H. King, *The Hongkong Bank in the period of imperialism and war, 1895-1918*, p. 590.

⁹⁵⁰ J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/1.

the extent of the defalcation was \$65,000, a huge sum at that time. This amounted to a lifetime's salary at Jack's current rate of pay. In the fortnight before the case came before a magistrate's court on 18 October, he came to the office each day, doing his best to help sort out the mess. Curiously, the magistrate, Norman Smith, who became Colonial Secretary, and both counsel, W.E.L. Shenton and Man Kam Lo, would sit on the Legislative Council with J.P. Braga in later years. As a result of Jack's co-operation, both the prosecution and defence sought leniency and when Jack pleaded guilty he was fined \$250. It was a remarkably light sentence.⁹⁵¹

However that was on a Saturday morning, and by the time Smith sat again on Monday, he had changed his mind. It is likely that senior figures in the business community had told him over the weekend that the defendant must go to jail as an example to all the other young Portuguese clerks. Jack was then sentenced to six months' hard labour, the maximum penalty for the offence. There were at the time only six Europeans in gaol in Hong Kong.⁹⁵²

The defence counsel correctly spelt out the effect of this devastating calamity on 'the old man' – he was then aged 48!

Mr. Lo: I think perhaps this is one of the saddest cases that one could really conceive. As my friend [the prosecuting counsel, Shenton] has told you the defendant is a member of a family which is one of the most respected of the Portuguese community, and his father is a man of sterling worth and integrity, and I think it was a revelation to him to have discovered what his son had done. The suffering and pain it has caused to the old man and the family can be imagined.⁹⁵³

J.P. Braga was already seen as one of the leaders of the Portuguese community in Hong Kong. He had recently been appointed an unofficial Justice of the Peace, one of only four Portuguese members of the Commission of the Peace. It was a rare and significant honour at that time. This serious blot on his family's name might spell the end of his public career. He was proud of what his family had achieved and had high standards that his sons were expected to live up to. If any of them had been punished at school, there was a double dose. They were also beaten at home with a leather strap for having disgraced the family name. Now this!

⁹⁵¹ The court case was briefly reported in the *Hongkong Telegraph*, 21 October 1919 and more fully in the *South China Morning Post*, 22 October 1919.

⁹⁵² *Hongkong Blue Book*, 1920, p. 338. The magistrate's change of mind is further discussed in Appendix 12.

⁹⁵³ *South China Morning Post*, 22 October 1919.

It spelt the end of Jack's career in Hong Kong. He was unemployable there from then on. Worse, what might happen to his younger brothers? Following Chappie's death there were seven, their ages ranging from seventeen (Clement) to nine (Paul). Were their prospects irretrievably ruined as well? All of them would leave school in the next decade and would seek employment. It seems that none of them ever worked in the financial sector at a time when that was the obvious career path for most Portuguese youths. One can only speculate, but there are three possible reasons for this. The most obvious is that the whole family's reputation was irreparably ruined to the extent that no Braga boy would ever be welcome in a bank or insurance company. The second is that all the brothers chose to look elsewhere, ashamed at what had happened, and knowing that advancement beyond the lowest clerical level was likely to be denied them. Even if they did secure employment in the financial sector, they would be rigorously supervised. The third scenario is what did occur. The increasingly diverse economy in the 1920s provided opportunities that had not existed ten years earlier, in sunrise industries such as oil, motor vehicles and electricity generation, and in the engineering profession. All seven gained employment in these areas, except Tony, who worked in his father's office for more than ten years.

For Jack himself there would be no such opportunities. Twenty years earlier, his father had been banished to Macau by his uncles, and was employed to teach English



*Jack Braga, September 1921.
A snapshot by his brother Paul.*

*Stuart Braga collection:
Hugh Braga's album*

at the Commercial Institute. Jack appears to have lived at the family home until he left for Macau on 5 September 1924.⁹⁵⁴ He was appointed to the staff of St Joseph's College, Macau, where his great-grandfather had been a student under the great sinologue Fr Gonçalves a century earlier.⁹⁵⁵

Jack fell on his feet, and was better off financially than most of his brothers, earning \$250 a month plus meals worth \$25 a month.⁹⁵⁶ It seems possible that he owed this appointment to Sir Robert Ho Tung in a curious echo of Ho Tung's role in his father's appointment to the *Hongkong Telegraph* in 1902.⁹⁵⁷ On that occasion Ho Tung rescued J.P. Braga from Macau. In 1924, he rescued J.M. Braga by sending him to Macau. As a teacher of English Jack shone, and quickly gained the confidence and respect of his pupils.⁹⁵⁸

Jack's experience is uncannily reminiscent of Evelyn Waugh's first novel, *Decline and Fall*, published in 1928, but set at much the same time as Jack's exile to Macau, with the main character, Paul Pennyfeather – the term 'hero' scarcely applies – teaching at a fifth-rate school after being sent down from Oxford. Just as Waugh's 'Paul Pennyfeather' succeeded in trying circumstances, so did Jack Braga. As he left for Macau, he was told maliciously that it was 'a small, dirty place, filled with nasty people'.⁹⁵⁹ Jack did not need to be told that Macau was backward. He had his own boyhood memories of Macau, having lived there between the ages of three and nine. Some fifty years later, he wrote that

At the beginning of the 20th century, Hongkong was flourishing and progressing by leaps and bounds, but Macau stagnated – it lacked life and vitality and preserved an air of decayed splendour. The streets were

⁹⁵⁴ Noel Braga Diary, 5 September 1924.

⁹⁵⁵ The average attendance between 1910 and 1928 was about 275 students, with 19 teachers on the staff. J.M. Braga, *Picturesque Macao*, p. 24. The same figures are given in M. Hugo-Brunt, 'Architectural survey of the Jesuit Seminary and church of St Joseph's, Macao', J.M. Braga collection, National Library of Australia, MS 4381, p. 11. Hugo-Brunt presented his MS to Braga, from whom this information obviously came.

⁹⁵⁶ Noel Braga diary. 5 December 1924.

⁹⁵⁷ According to Dr Barney Koo, 'Researching José Maria Braga', a paper presented to the Ricci Institute, Macau, 2004. It has not yet been published.

⁹⁵⁸ Attested by a respectfully worded postcard from a pupil at Christmas, 1925. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.1.

⁹⁵⁹ J.M. Braga, Address to the Union Middle School, 31 October 1940 on 'Early Portuguese contacts with the Chinese'. He continued, 'My informants were wrong and I am glad to tell you so, for I have found that there is much about Macao and the Portuguese to admire and praise.' J.M. Braga, MS 4300/5.2. On the other hand, a few years previously, Jack's brother Tony, in hospital in Macau for an extended period, wrote to another brother, John, 'You can't [think] Hong Kong is rotten if you see Macau.' Tony to John, 6 September [1919]. Tony Braga Papers.

lighted at night by dim kerosene lights that provided a faint glimmer, and after sunset the community retired into their houses.⁹⁶⁰



Jack Braga in a white suit, with a group of staff and seminarians, at St Joseph's College, Macau, ca. 1927

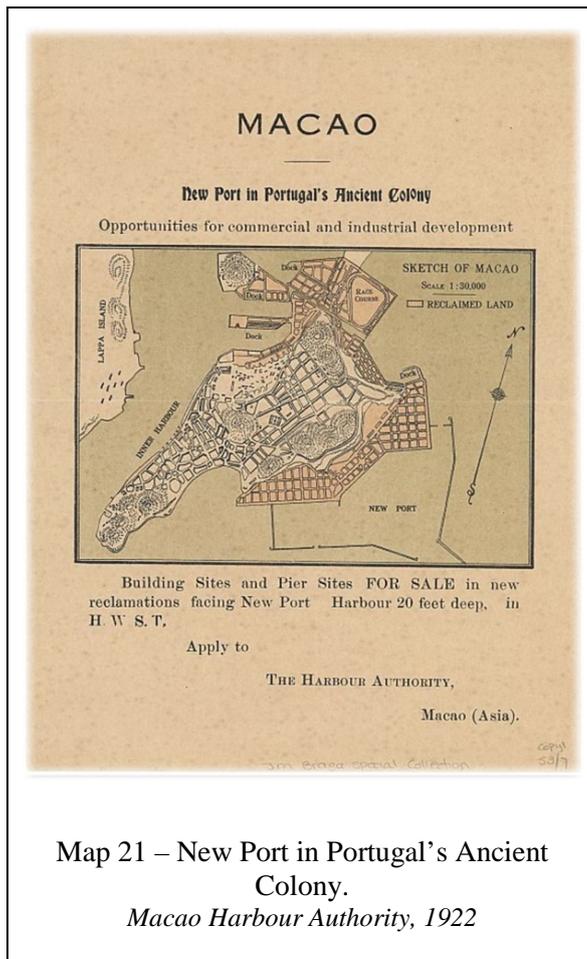
J.M. Braga Pictures, box 10, folder 1, National Library of Australia

From the first, Jack determined to redeem himself by throwing himself wholeheartedly into his work and the life of the community. On 30 December 1924, he married Augusta da Luz, a member of a well-regarded Macanese family. Seven children were born to them in the next ten years. Passing years would bring acceptance and finally, during World War II, a major role of leadership in his family that in the dreadful days of October 1919 could never have been imagined.

His family did not treat Jack as a pariah. No family members were present at his wedding in Macau, but that evening he and his bride 'were given a hearty reception' when they came over to Hong Kong.⁹⁶¹ He would often return to Hong Kong for a family occasion and his brothers would often visit him in Macau, where he and

⁹⁶⁰ Article by Jack Braga on the origins of the Macao Electric Lighting Company Ltd, n.d.[1950s], Macau Special File, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/7.3/4.

⁹⁶¹ Noel Braga Diary, 30 December 1924.



Augusta were unfailingly hospitable.⁹⁶² Moreover, a strong bond of affection developed between Jack and his father, for Jack had taken his father’s side when Chappie died. Alone of the thirteen children, he remained steadfast to the Catholic faith of his upbringing. Jack’s disgrace intensified the gulf between the rest of the Braga family, not only firmly Protestant, but vehemently anti-Catholic as well, and the two remaining Catholic members, Jack and his father. It was a gulf that was never spoken of or written about in their letters, but it remained a deep and permanent division.⁹⁶³

J.P. Braga had been banished to Macau for only two years, but Jack knew that his exile was permanent. He did not abandon his habits of industry and scholarship nor the hope for a better future that had led his forebears to Hong Kong two generations years earlier. For him, that better future had to be in Macau. There seemed good reason to think that Macau could yet recover. A large reclamation scheme, the construction of an outer harbour and the dredging of a deep-water channel was commenced in the early 1920s, despite strong opposition from the authorities in Canton. Jack wrote a series of articles about this big project.⁹⁶⁴ He enthusiastically collected the maps and publicity material associated with it.⁹⁶⁵ This seems to have

⁹⁶² Noel Braga Diary, e.g. 31 October, 18 November 1924.

⁹⁶³ Noel Braga Diary, 4 May 1926.

⁹⁶⁴ The articles were published in the *South China Morning Post* in late March 1926.

⁹⁶⁵ There are seven maps in the series issued by Macau Harbour Authority, ca. 1922, to promote the new Outer Harbour works. All are in the Braga Special Map Collection in the National Library of Australia. They are variously titled in Portuguese and English. Their titles and catalogue number are:

1. Planta de Macau e territorios vizinhos com a indicaçao do projecto de obras na peninsula e Ilha da Taipa nla.map-brsc66
2. Plant[a] of Macao nla.map-brsc64
3. Plano geral das obras do porto artificial de Macau nla.map-brsc71-3

been the beginning of a passion for collecting that soon became an obsession. He gradually built a fine collection of books, manuscripts, pictures and maps that would eventually make his name famous and bring him state honours from Portugal.

As well as collecting he began to write about Macau and its history. His first publication was a guidebook, *Picturesque Macao*, ‘with, if I may modestly say so, interesting historical references’.⁹⁶⁶ He then collaborated with C.A. Montalto de Jesus in the publication of the second edition of his *Historic Macao*.⁹⁶⁷ In 1936 he met Charles Boxer, then a captain in the British Army who was posted to Hong Kong as an Intelligence Officer. Boxer’s long and distinguished record of publications on the history of the Portuguese and Dutch colonial empires had already begun. A casual acquaintance rapidly warmed into a close friendship.⁹⁶⁸ During World War II, when Boxer was imprisoned in Argyle Street officers’ POW Camp in Kowloon, Braga saw through the press in Macau Boxer’s important bilingual book *Macau na época da restauração (Macau three hundred years ago)*, Imprensa Nacional, Macau, 1942. In 1953 Boxer dedicated *South China in the sixteenth century*, a significant volume in the Hakluyt Society’s series of voyages, ‘to Jack Braga as a small acknowledgement of many kindnesses’.⁹⁶⁹

Jack’s disgrace was never discussed in his family. Instead, Jack was always spoken of in high terms. Noel visited Macau for a weekend in October 1925, and wrote that ‘Jack and Augusta were very kind to me’.⁹⁷⁰ Later Noel commented that his cousin from Manila, Charlie Noronha, visiting Hong Kong and Macau in October 1926,

4. Plano dos arruamentos nos terrenos do Porto Exterior nla.map-brsc53-2

5. Sketch of Macao nla.map-brsc53-7

6. The Portuguese Port of Macao : the new gateway to South China nla.map-brsc71-1

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

There are 82 maps in the Braga Special Map Collection. They are identified by the letters ‘brsc’, followed by a number. All have been digitised and are available on-line.

⁹⁶⁶ Like all publications, it was subject to censorship, a policy which prevailed in Macau for many more years. A proof copy was lodged with the appropriate authorities, publication being authorised on 5 November 1926. Arquivo Histórico de Macau, MO/AH/AC/SA/01/10949-A1091; P-10880.

⁹⁶⁷ This proved to be calamitous, the bulk of the edition being seized by the authorities and publicly burned. This is discussed in Appendix 4.

⁹⁶⁸ J.M. Braga’s personal papers contain typescript copies of numerous letters to Boxer, in which the formal address ‘Captain Boxer’ soon gave way to ‘Dear Boxer’ and then ‘My Dear Charles’. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/3.1.

⁹⁶⁹ Hakluyt Society Second series No. CVI.

⁹⁷⁰ Noel Braga Diary, 12 October 1925

‘was charmed with Jack and delighted with quaint Macao’.⁹⁷¹ Some sixty years later, writing an article on the story of the Braga family for the *South China Morning Post*, all his brother Tony would say is that, ‘being bored after working for a few years in an office in Hong Kong, Jack moved over to the land of his forefathers, where he established an excellent reputation as a teacher of English language and literature’.⁹⁷² However, people in the wider Portuguese community in Hong Kong were deeply affected, their probity now suspect. They had long prided themselves on a deserved reputation as ‘a peaceable and law-abiding people.’⁹⁷³ The memory of Jack Braga’s fall from grace lingered in that community for the best part of a century.⁹⁷⁴

The next brother was Clement, then aged seventeen. In the long run, he was more deeply affected than the rest, but this did not emerge for more than a decade. He left school at thirteen to work in his father’s struggling printing business; ‘the primary purpose was to help the family’.⁹⁷⁵ By 1924, he was an assistant in Holyoak, Massey & Co. a trading firm. Percy Holyoak, a leading member of the business community, represented the General Chamber of Commerce as an unofficial member of the Legislative Council from 1911 to 1926.⁹⁷⁶ A position in his office might have been a significant opportunity, but in the five years he was there, Clement gained no promotion.⁹⁷⁷ It was too close to the notorious court case.

Noel, a year younger, was also thrown into the battle in the family’s struggle to make its way, and for some years handed his father 90% or more of his monthly pay.⁹⁷⁸ He

⁹⁷¹ Noel Braga Diary, October 1926.

⁹⁷² The article was published in the *South China Morning Post*, 31 May 1987, but the comment on Jack in Tony’s typescript (page 7) was omitted from the final article. Notes prepared by A.M. Braga for an interview with Beverley Howells of the *South China Morning Post*, 8 April 1987. A.M. Braga file.

⁹⁷³ J. Norton-Kyshe, *The History of the Laws and Courts of Hongkong*, vol. 1, p. 540.

⁹⁷⁴ Questions were asked in Macau in 2010 at the 4th *Encontro das Comunidades Macaenses sob os auspícios da Região Administrativa Especial de Macau*.

⁹⁷⁵ Essay on Clement Braga by his daughter Lynne, 1996.

⁹⁷⁶ N. Miners, *Hong Kong under imperial rule, 1912-1941*, p. 60.

⁹⁷⁷ Percy Holyoak was one of the prime movers in the Constitutional Reform Association of which J.P. Braga had been a strong supporter. Clement was with the firm from about 1924 to 1929, by which time it had become Reiss, Massey & Co. (Jurors’ Lists, 1924-1929, in *Hong Kong Sessional Papers*). Later moving to China Light, he fell out badly with his supervisor, the Chief Accountant, Mr W.J. Brown, and marched out. He then worked again in his father’s office for a time.

⁹⁷⁸ Noel Braga Diary, 1924-1926. e.g. ‘30th August 1924. Received pay \$250. Retained \$15, handed balance to Father.’

was a fine student at St Joseph's. Like his father, he was awarded the Belilios Scholarship in his final year.⁹⁷⁹ He completed his Matriculation in July 1918 and in



*A group of 'Gospel-Hallites' at the beach, ca.1922.
In the group are Clement, Mary, Noel, John, Paul, Tony, Hugh and James.*

Stuart Braga collection: Hugh Braga's album

the next four years completed courses at the Hong Kong Technical Institute, earning distinctions all the way through.⁹⁸⁰ Noel's first job was in the family printing business, which may suggest that nothing else was open to him. However, the closed shop that was Hong Kong's business community was beginning to change as American and Canadian firms gained a stronger position after World War I. In 1923 he was employed part-time by the Canadian Pacific Steamship Co. as a stenographer.⁹⁸¹ Here he came under the notice of Harry Tayler [sic], described by Noel as 'one of the ablest men in Shewan, Tomes & Co., being a favourite of Mr

⁹⁷⁹ *South China Morning Post*, 31 January 1919.

⁹⁸⁰ His shorthand achieved a speed of 70 words a minute, and he taught himself to become a proficient typist. Copies of certificates made available by his son, Maurice.

⁹⁸¹ Jurors' List, 1924, in *Hong Kong Sessional Papers*.

Shewan's'.⁹⁸² Noel added 'it was through him that I got into the firm'. Impressed by Noel's outstanding qualities, Robert Shewan had his eye on J.P. Braga, and perhaps his sons too.

By 1924, Noel was working in the office of Shewan, Tomes & Co.⁹⁸³ By 1925 he was seen as a very promising young employee.⁹⁸⁴ His remarkable progress in China Light has already been referred to. He had a phenomenal memory and excellent clerical skills that proved to be a springboard for the management position he held at the early age of 21, that of Company Secretary. He grew with the job, at a time when the company was expanding rapidly.

As young men Clement and Noel were very close. Making do with very little money did not trouble them in the least way, and they lived simply. Most of their spare time centred on the Gospel Hall and its activities. There was a group of young people their own age, and they enjoyed each other's company, both in the Meetings and on social outings. There were usually about 25 people present,⁹⁸⁵ but on one occasion, Noel was glad to find 49 there.

'Large party of Gospel Hall-ites spent an enjoyable afternoon on the beach at Cheung Chau, inc. Clement, self, Tony, John and Paul', wrote Noel in June 1924. Later that year he gave his first address at the Gospel Meeting: 'What think ye of Christ?', the meeting being opened by Clement.

In January 1926, the new aircraft carrier H.M.S. *Hermes* visited Hong Kong. One of the pilots, Lieut. Richardson, met the two brothers at the Gospel Hall and invited them to see the ship. Security was not a concern in those days, and they went everywhere, spending an hour in 'the huge hangar, where we inspected several aeroplanes and seaplanes including his own plane, No.V6, in which we saw the three seats, one for himself, one for the wireless operator, and one for the observer'.

They had reached the ship, anchored in the middle of the harbour, by sampan (careful of every cent he spent, Noel noted that it cost him 30 cents), but returned to shore far more grandly in the ship's pinnace. Their younger brother Paul photographed the two

⁹⁸² Noel Braga Diary, 29 December 1925.

⁹⁸³ Noel Braga Diary, May 1924; CS/1021/00200901, from *South China Morning Post*, 22 December 1929.

⁹⁸⁴ Noel Braga Diary, 6 April 1925.

⁹⁸⁵ Phone call with Marjory Braga, Noel's wife, 15 December 2001.



*Noel (left) and Clement
after their visit to H.M.S. Hermes,
9 January 1926.*

Paul Braga Papers

excited young men on the pier of the Naval Dockyard. Next day, Noel noted that ‘Clement gave a splendid address at the Gospel Hall’.⁹⁸⁶ They were both still enraptured by the experiences of the previous day.

However, they were to drift far apart in the next ten years, Noel remaining loyal to family and faith, while Clement rejected both. In those years, a far closer relationship developed between Noel and his next brother, Hugh. Again the gap between them was only fifteen months, the same as the gap between Clement and Noel. They were remarkably similar in appearance, to the extent that people occasionally mistook

them. All the Braga boys were achievers, and their careers as young men were marked by a desire for excellence, but none more than Hugh’s.⁹⁸⁷ He entered St Joseph’s in 1916, and as a schoolboy worked solidly and enthusiastically at all that he did. In 1920, still an era when Britannia ruled the waves, he entered a competition promoted by the Hong Kong Branch of the Navy League for the best essay on ‘Nelson and his Day’. The fifteen-year-old Hugh won the award with an essay beautifully handwritten in a script calligraphic in quality. It served to reinforce strongly his already well-developed sense of public duty and national loyalty.⁹⁸⁸ He represented the school in inter-school athletics, and was the school sprint champion.

⁹⁸⁶ Noel Braga Diary, 10 January 1926.

⁹⁸⁷ This information is compiled principally from a folder prepared by Hugh after drastically culling all his papers in the late 1970s, leaving only a small file of papers he thought his descendants might wish to retain. Hereafter cited as Hugh Braga file.

⁹⁸⁸ The essay was still extant in the 1950s, but is now lost, though the prize, a volume of English verse remains in the writer’s possession.

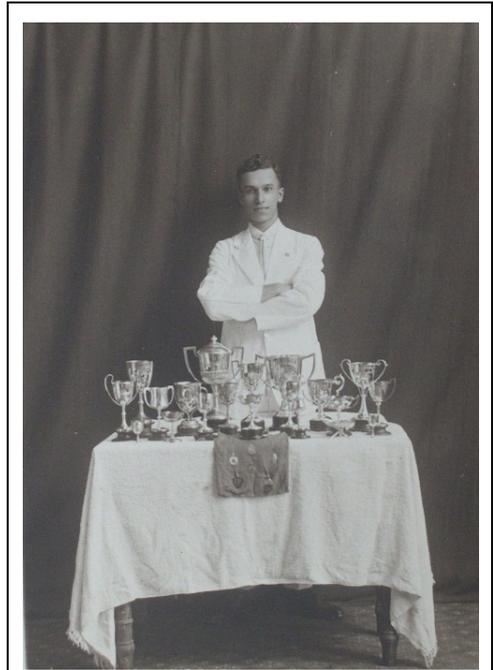
He repeated this success at Hong Kong University, and was also the sprint champion of the colony of Hong Kong, winning a large collection of silver cups. At University he was an outstanding footballer, being awarded a University Blue. Like his elder brothers Chappie, Clement and Noel, he consciously resolved, in the words of St Paul, to run the race that was set before him, in both literal and figurative terms. Hugh and several of his brothers, including Noel, were prefects in their final year at St Joseph's.

His last two years at school were supported by the award of the Lugard Scholarship, set up in 1910 by Sir Hormusjee Mody, the benefactor of Hong Kong University, clearly with a view to encouraging the

winner to proceed to the university, the foundation stone of which he was about to set.⁹⁸⁹ His success at school drew his thinking towards a university course in Engineering.

It must at first have seemed an impossible dream. His father was deeply impressed by the way the Engineering Faculty had been set up and equipped. He wrote a lengthy article praising it in the Catholic magazine *The Rock*,⁹⁹⁰ but was not in a position to support one boy at university when there were another five after him.

What made it possible was the establishment in 1915 of the *Associação Portuguesa de Socorros Mutuos*, the Portuguese Mutual Aid Association.⁹⁹¹ In 1920, Igenez Soares, the wife of Adão Soares, a wealthy bullion broker, endowed the Igenez Soares



Hugh was a champion athlete at school and university and was sprint champion of Hong Kong. This photo was taken ca. 1926.

*Stuart Braga collection:
Hugh Braga's album*

⁹⁸⁹ It gave Hugh the prestige of being the Lugard Scholar, and it undoubtedly raised his sights. His brief final school report (printed, incidentally, by J.P. Braga), noted his excellent character on leaving the school on 21 December 1921, and added, 'He has always shown himself devoted to the College. We wish him success in his future career'. He retained a high regard and affection for the good-natured Irish Brothers who largely staffed St. Joseph's.

⁹⁹⁰ *The Rock*, vol. 1 no. 1, October 1920, pp. 33-36.

⁹⁹¹ A.M. Jorge da Silva, *The Portuguese Community in Hong Kong, a Pictorial History*, p. 9.

Scholarship Fund to enable the *Socorros* to carry out one aspect of its stated aims: to provide access to tertiary education.⁹⁹² Hugh was very conscious that he had been awarded the only scholarship then available at Hong Kong University.⁹⁹³ His father also went out of his way to mention it at the St Joseph's College Jubilee celebrations in 1926.⁹⁹⁴



B. Harrison, The University of Hong Kong, the first 50 years, 1911-1961, p. 118.

Construction was delayed and the building was not completed until 1925.

Photographer, Herman Wong

The other benefactor who made possible what was to become Hugh's very fruitful career was Sir Robert Ho Tung, yet again with an eye to a specific need. The

⁹⁹² *The Rock*, vol. 1 no. 4, January 1921, pp. 176-177. *The Rock* applauded this important breakthrough, noting that the scholarship was worth \$600 per annum. [This] 'should go a long way towards the fees and maintenance of a student at our local university... a University degree now is placed within the reach of the Portuguese of moderate means. We heartily congratulate Mrs Soares for the magnificent gift which will meet a great need of the Portuguese communities of Hongkong and Macao.'

⁹⁹³ Hugh Braga file.

⁹⁹⁴ J.P. Braga, address at St Joseph's College Jubilee, 17 May 1926. J.M. Braga Papers MS4300/13.1. Hugh graduated in December 1928, not long before his father was appointed to the Legislative Council. C.A. da Roza, President of the *Socorros Mutuos*, in his speech of congratulations to J.P. Braga, also extended his good wishes to Hugh Braga: 'Our esteemed guest is a member of the *Socorros Mutuos*, and I feel happy to say that his son, Hugh, has also been connected with us as a joint holder of the scholarship designated the "Ignez Soares Scholarship" of which my Society are the Trustees. The young gentleman graduated in December last with Honours in the Faculty of Engineering of the Hongkong University, and this opportunity is taken to offer him our congratulations'. *South China Morning Post*, 15 January 1929, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/14/1/40, fol. 7.

university was planned to commence with two faculties: Medicine and Engineering. Funds did not stretch to the provision of an adequate engineering workshop, and this, together with the endowment of a Chair of Surgery, was donated by Ho Tung in 1919.⁹⁹⁵ After a lengthy delay, the workshop was opened in 1925 at the cost of \$100,000.⁹⁹⁶ Hugh entered the university in 1922 and was thus one of the beneficiaries of this fine facility.⁹⁹⁷

Even with a good scholarship, he needed family support, but his father was in no position to give it. J.P. Braga required all the help he could get to keep his business going, and he himself had been forced to forgo the opportunity of a legal career that might have made him a wealthy man. Nevertheless, even if he could not afford to assist Hugh, he did not stand in his way.

Instead assistance was provided for several years by four of his siblings. At the suggestion of James, younger than Hugh, he, Jean, Clement and Noel contributed \$1 a month to his support, though Noel's contribution eventually increased, first to \$3, then to \$4.⁹⁹⁸ Although they were contributing massively to the expenses of the home, they also assisted Hugh during these lean University years. Without their sustained generosity he could not have completed his course. It was a generosity that twenty years later he would set himself to repay when most members of the Braga family were in desperate straits after World War II. Strangely, when discussion took place in January 1925 about which of Noel's brothers should take his place when he received a promotion, J.P. Braga wanted Hugh to be recommended. He said that 'Hugh had chosen the worst profession, the architect's'.⁹⁹⁹

Knowing the antipathy of the British business community towards the establishment of the university only a few years before, and its practice of bringing young professionals from 'Home', he feared lest Hugh find himself unable to gain employment in his profession, and as he put it, 'come crawling to me for a job'.¹⁰⁰⁰ Yet within ten years he found that Hugh was indispensable to him, first as Engineer,

⁹⁹⁵ B. Harrison, *University of Hong Kong, the first 50 years*, p. 117.

⁹⁹⁶ *Hong Kong University Engineering Journal*, vol. 6, no, 1, September 1934, p. 113.

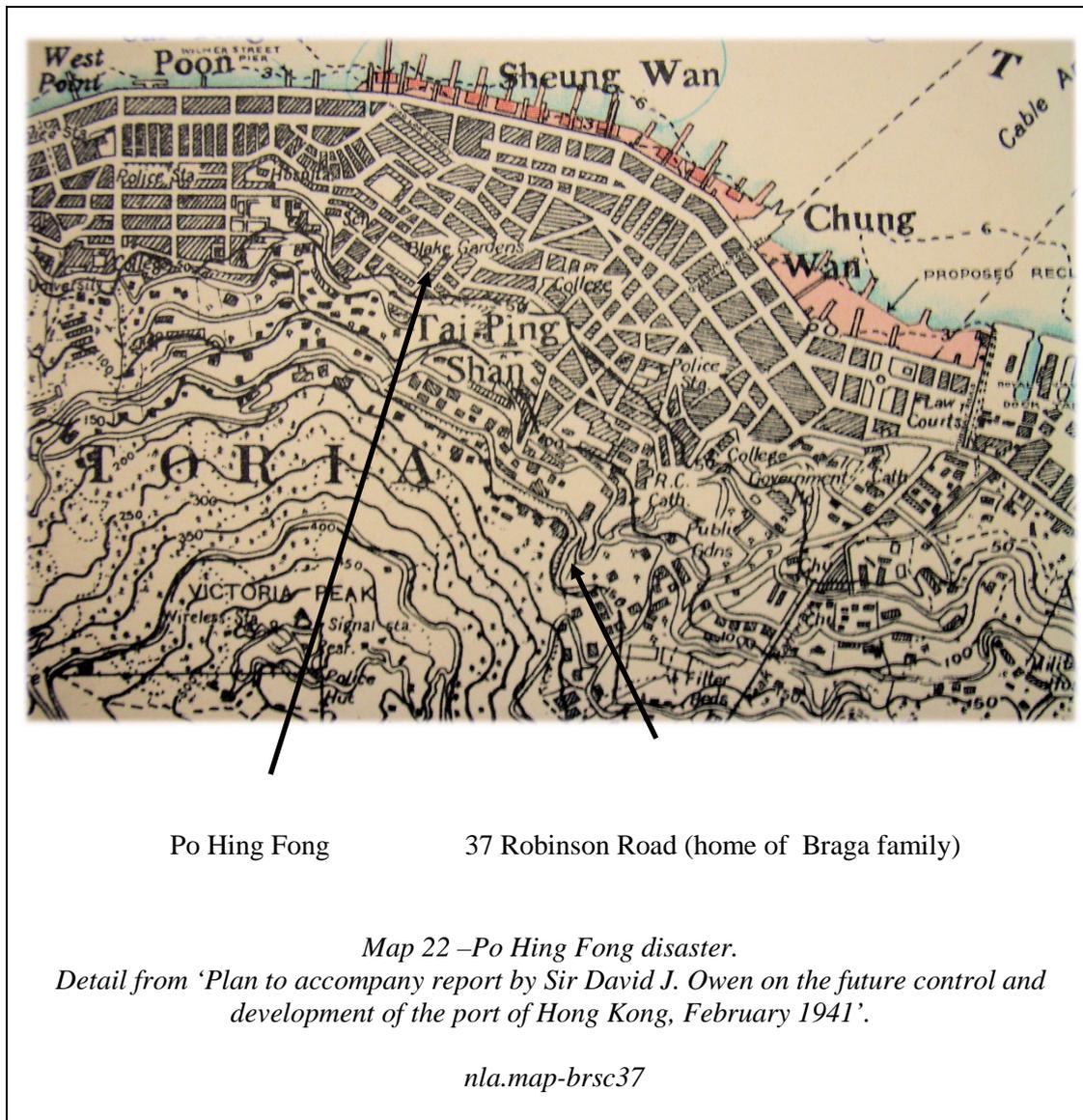
⁹⁹⁷ University of Hong Kong Register of Graduates. Hugh Braga matriculated in December 1921. The degree of Bachelor of Science in Engineering was conferred in January 1929.

⁹⁹⁸ Verbal information from James Braga to his niece, Sheila Potter, July 1989; Noel Braga Diary, 1927-1928.

⁹⁹⁹ Noel Braga Diary, 5 January 1925.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Recollection of his daughter, Sheila Potter, 24 August 2011.

then as General Works Manager of Hongkong Engineering & Construction Co., which embarked on the largest development then taking place in Hong Kong.



Hugh joined the Boy Scouts while at school, and in 1924 became Scoutmaster of the 1st Hongkong (St Joseph’s College) Scout Troop at the age of nineteen, with his younger brothers Tony and Paul in the troop. Like Chappie, he had a natural ability to command.¹⁰⁰¹ Looking beyond his own troop, he organised and trained a troop in a Japanese school in Hong Kong, receiving the ‘Thanks Badge’ from the Boy Scouts of Japan. He later summarised his role in the Scouts laconically. ‘Involved in all

¹⁰⁰¹ He laid down the law to his troop in the matter of badge-hunting, telling them bluntly that their Scoutmaster ‘disapproves very strongly of badge-hunting’ adding that ‘the boys themselves would rather show that they have earned the badges by what they can do, and not by decorating themselves as is the custom of some scouts’. *Silver Wolf, the official organ of the Boy Scouts Association, Hongkong*, vol. 4, no. 5, December 1924, p. 172.

activities of the 1st Hong Kong Troop of Boy Scouts and attended all emergencies in the city'.¹⁰⁰²

The Boy Scouts' motto 'Be Prepared' was put to the test the next year when a huge storm in the early hours of 17 July 1925 led to what became known as the Po Hing Fong disaster, the Reuter's report of which, written by his father, has already been mentioned. At least 150 lives were lost; at least one was saved – by Hugh. As he told the story to his grandson, David Hugh Braga, in 1976, he and Tony put on their scout uniforms and went out into the darkness to see what they could do to help.¹⁰⁰³

At the scene of the disaster, not far from where they lived, they found that a retaining wall had given way, leading to the collapse of a whole terrace of houses, trapping all the residents. Unlike bigger men who were there, he was small enough to crawl beneath some collapsed beams and pull out a young girl. Although he was the fastest runner, Hugh was the shortest of his brothers.¹⁰⁰⁴

Hugh was awarded the Bronze Cross of the St John Ambulance Brigade 'for service in the cause of humanity' and the Silver Star of the Boy Scouts for 'Gallantry in Saving Life with considerable risk'.¹⁰⁰⁵ Both awards were presented by the Governor, Sir Cecil Clementi, at separate ceremonies the next year.¹⁰⁰⁶ His father was naturally delighted, and made mention of the recognition given to his son in his address a few days later at the golden jubilee celebrations of St Joseph's.¹⁰⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰² Hugh Braga file.

¹⁰⁰³ He gave the medals to David, named in his honour, on this occasion.

¹⁰⁰⁴ In 1958, an old Hong Kong resident who had arrived in 1925 was prompted by the report of a similar recent rescue to write to the *Post* about his experience in the earlier calamity when his car disappeared into a deep hole on a washed out road at nearby Pokfulam. Apparently an eye-witness at Po Hing Fong, he described the scene: 'In that vicinity seventeen houses collapsed at Belchers Gardens and in keeping with the heroes of last week, Hugh Braga won the coveted Scouts Bronze Cross for crawling into the slithering chaos and rescuing victims of the collapse.' (Belchers Gardens were later renamed Blake Gardens. The correspondent used the *nom de plume* "Seeing red and wearing green and certainly not yellow". Tony Braga sent the clipping to his brother Hugh in Australia. It is undated, but the reverse side indicates the year 1958. Hugh Braga file).

¹⁰⁰⁵ The Scout decoration was described in a special article in *The Times History of the War*, vol. 17, 1918, p. 156. It is rarely awarded.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Noel Braga Diary, 24 March 1926: 'Hughie received at the hands of the Governor life-saving medal awarded by St John's Ambulance Association for saving the life of a Chinese girl at the Po Hing Fong disaster in July 1925.' 12 May 1926: 'At a Boy Scout display on the Volunteer Parade Ground in which about 300 scouts and wolf cubs took part, Hughie received the silver cross at the hands of the Governor (Sir Cecil Clementi) for gallantry in rescuing a Chinese girl at the Po Hing Fong disaster in July 1925.' Neither ceremony was reported in the *South China Morning Post*.

¹⁰⁰⁷ J.P. Braga, address at St Joseph's College Jubilee, 17 May 1926. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/13.1/1.



Hugh wearing the Bronze Cross and Silver Star, awarded in 1926 for saving life at the Po Hing Fong disaster on 17 July 1925.

Stuart Braga collection

At university, Hugh was resident in Morrison Hall. He was a keen member of the very active Hong Kong University Engineering Society, of which he immediately became Vice-President, later editing the society's journal.¹⁰⁰⁸

James, the sixth son, born on 27 April 1906 was fourteen months younger than Hugh, He, Noel and Hugh were close in years and in their Christian faith. All would 'hold fast the faith' throughout their lives, but only James eventually carried it into ordained ministry. On leaving school, James worked for Shewan, Tomes, where members of the Braga family were always welcome, before moving in

November 1926 to work in Canton for the Standard-Vacuum Oil Co. of New York.¹⁰⁰⁹ Transferred to Foochow, he remained there for some years.¹⁰¹⁰ It says much for his strength of character that the values he learned at his mother's knee remained with him throughout a long period of isolation in his young manhood.

¹⁰⁰⁸ *Hong Kong University Engineering Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1, April 1929, p. 53; vol. 3, no. 1, September 1931, p. 1. He formed strong attachments to the staff, especially Professor C.A. Middleton Smith and Professor F.R. Redmond, an expert in reinforced concrete. This would become Hugh's professional specialty for several decades. The confidence was mutual, and Hugh was appointed a Demonstrator in his last two years. He was among the 34 to have graduated with Second Class Honours among the 188 engineering graduates from 1916 to 1934, another 19 having received First Class Honours. Six of the graduates were Portuguese, almost all the others being Chinese (*Hong Kong University Engineering Journal*, vol. 6, no. 1, September 1934, pp. 131-135.) Tertiary education was a rarity in the Portuguese community until after World War II.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Noel Braga Diary, 18 November 1926.

¹⁰¹⁰ Noel Braga Diary, 20 December 1926, 5 October 1928.



*'Crowd of brothers' ca. 1917.
A snapshot, probably taken on
Robinson Rd close to home. On the
steep slopes of the Mid-Levels, road
construction required high retaining
walls on the south (left) side of the
road, with the Peak towering above.*

*Stuart Braga collection:
Hugh Braga's album*

There would be five more children. On schedule, another son, Anthony Manuel, was born the following year on 28 August 1907, another, John Vincent, on 25 September 1908, to be followed by Paul on 16 June 1910. Finally, there were two daughters, Caroline Mary and Mary, born on 19 December 1911 and 14 March 1914. By then, their mother was 44, and her child-bearing years were over. All these five would become keen on the fine arts, especially music, though Paul's aesthetic interests eventually grew broader, encompassing Chinese arts.

Anthony –Tony – grew up as one of a crowd of brothers who during their boyhood formed something of a family within the family, and throughout boyhood and youth were inseparable companions, building life-long values of hard work, loyalty to each other and commitment to the causes they espoused, though, over time, these became more diverse. In Tony's early years, the family was not well off, and the Braga boys were often hungry. The experience left him with a sympathy for the disadvantaged that never left him.

When the Boy Scout movement came to Hong Kong, several of the younger boys joined it as they reached the minimum age, following the lead of their elder brothers Jack, Chappie, Clement and Hugh. Tony considered it a great honour to be a member of the 1st Hong Kong (St Joseph's College) Troop of which his brother Hugh was Scoutmaster. He threw himself enthusiastically into the movement and soon became

Patrol Leader. Like the others, he was for some years an active member of the group his brother Noel called ‘the Gospel Hall-ites’.¹⁰¹¹



*1st Hong Kong (St Joseph's College) Scout Troop, ca. 1925.
Hugh Braga, Scoutmaster, with Tony Braga, Patrol Leader, behind him.
On Tony's left is Paul Braga.*

Stuart Braga collection: Hugh Braga's album.

The general strike and financial crisis of 1925 occurred in his last year at school, and he was obliged to leave before taking the Matriculation Examination. All the Chinese office staff departed, so Tony became his father's private secretary and factotum for more than a decade. He later wrote of his toil during these years as

¹⁰¹¹ Tony sustained a serious accident at the age of twelve, falling off a banister. Hong Kong doctors proposed to amputate his right hand, but he was taken to Macau, where Portuguese army doctors were able to save the hand. He was in hospital for a year but was left with a permanent disability, and the injured arm continued to trouble him for years. The long period of absence from school created in him a love of literature, and enhanced the love of music that his mother inculcated in all her children, though he was now unable to play an instrument. Back in Hong Kong, he heard the famous guitarist Andrés Segovia play at the City Hall on Queen's Road, Central. Decades afterwards, he recalled the experience: 'Never before had I heard a classical guitarist, and I was under his spell. Then a tram came clanging by and spoiled it all. I resolved then that one day we would have a proper concert hall in Hong Kong' (*Sunday Morning Post*, 31 May 1987). In later years he would work actively to achieve this goal.

‘sheer drudgery’.¹⁰¹² Nevertheless, Tony was his father’s loyal supporter throughout this time, which was J.P. Braga’s decade of political prominence. He fully shared the older man’s criticism of what a later generation of critics was to term ‘the unacceptable face of capitalism’.

John was the second last of the crowd of eight boys. The older members of this group naturally tended to dominate the younger ones. They were a boisterous lot, sometimes too much for their mother. She took special care of the younger ones, who tended to be left out, and, apart from Paul, were not as sports-minded. John responded to his mother’s care perhaps more than any of his brothers and became a keen violinist.¹⁰¹³ He too entered the employment of China Light and Power Company, at the time managed by Shewan, Tomes & Co. His musician’s neatness and thoroughness were an asset in a business environment.

The last of the nine brothers was Paul. At 14 he became a keen member of the 1st Hong Kong (St Joseph’s College) Scout Troop. A group photo shows him standing sturdily, chest expanded, beside his brothers Hugh and Tony, respectively Scoutmaster and Patrol Leader. At school he excelled as an athlete, and physical fitness remained a lifelong interest.¹⁰¹⁴ Paul reached adult years after the rest of his brothers, and by the time he left school in 1927, the family had moved to Kowloon, with nine of his brothers and sisters still living at home. From early years he was a skilled photographer, and this remained an enduring hobby. Keen on fresh opportunities, he became interested in cars, beginning what was to become a long career in the motor industry.

Caroline Braga (generally known in the family as ‘Carrie’) was the twelfth child and would eventually be the last survivor. She was principally educated at home by her

¹⁰¹² In 1932 he wrote to Jack ‘Am spending my first long interrupted holiday of four days since leaving school’, i.e. nearly seven years. Tony Braga to Jack Braga, 5 February 1932. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.3/1.

¹⁰¹³ Olive still played her Amati violin, though mostly for the family. John more than any of the other boys shared his mother’s love of the instrument, and over many years, played, often with his younger sisters Caroline and Mary, in concerts and musicales in Hong Kong. Several programmes list their names (Papers of Caroline Braga, 1921-1996, National Library of Australia, MS Acc05/35, hereafter cited as the Caroline Braga Papers). He also wrote well, and attracted the notice of his teachers at St Joseph’s, despite the fact that he disliked the school. An essay written by John was published in *The Rock*, vol. 4, no. 6, March 1924, pp. 463-464.

¹⁰¹⁴ He enjoyed school, retaining for the rest of his life a newspaper account of his last prize-giving at St Joseph’s (*South China Morning Post*, 27 March 1927, Paul Braga Papers. He won a prize for Biblical Knowledge).

elder sister Jean, though she attended St Stephen's Girls' College for a few months until ill health forced her to leave. As a younger member of a large family, she was brought up within a community of energetic and creative people. The principal influence on her life, as for all her brothers and sisters, was her mother. Olive Braga had been noted for her perfect pitch and remarkable capacity to pick up a piece of music at a single hearing. Caroline picked up much of this precision.¹⁰¹⁵



*Caroline Braga, aged 9,
September 1921
Paul went round the house one day
taking photos of whoever was handy.*

*Stuart Braga collection:
Hugh Braga's album*

By the age of ten, she was assisting Jean with the teaching of piano. This became her life-long vocation and passion; by the time of her death in 1998, she had been teaching for nearly seventy-seven years. The Chinese community contained many who wanted their children to acquire the 'polite accomplishments' of cultivated Westerners. Most of her pupils were the children of Chinese business and professional families keen to learn the piano from a gentle yet demanding teacher.

Mary, the last of what her brother Tony was fond of calling 'the honourable tribe', was, like her sister Caroline, principally educated at home by her elder sister Jean, though Jean paid for her to attend St Stephen's Girls' College for her final three years. She seemed swamped by the dynamism and focussed endeavour that characterised many of her siblings. At the age of twelve she was seriously ill and 'some home folks entertained little hope of her recovery'.¹⁰¹⁶ She remained delicate

¹⁰¹⁵ She began to learn the piano from Jean at the age of five. Later, she was a pupil of an accomplished local teacher, the self-styled 'Professor' Emil Danenberg, and first performed in public at one of his recitals at the age of nine. (Programme in the Caroline Braga Papers). Emilio Francisco Xavier Danenberg (1878-1928) was a member of the Macanese community, and was descended from a German who had married into it in the eighteenth century.

¹⁰¹⁶ Noel Braga Diary, 25 November 1926. Like Caroline, Mary naturally picked up the ability to play the piano. While Caroline made a successful life-long career as a well-qualified piano teacher, Mary did not develop the same degree of professionalism and competence as her older sister, though she

from then on. Mary's upbringing closely followed that of her sister Caroline, slightly more than two years her elder. Her role as her mother's principal carer during the 1930s has been noted. It was an important role, indeed an essential one in the circumstances. Mary's lot, like so many women of that and earlier eras, was to become from her late teens the dutiful, submissive and devoted youngest daughter of an aging, ailing, demanding mother who had become entirely caught up with herself.

In 1925, the first quarter of the twentieth century came to an end. The Great War had barely touched the 'honourable tribe', and the Locarno Pact signed that year promised a peaceful future, although in Hong Kong the serious General Strike and boycott remained unresolved. At the beginning of 1926, when their father decided to move to Kowloon, his children were ambivalent about the plan.¹⁰¹⁷ Nevertheless, family bonds remained strong, and on 31 January 1926 they all joined in to set up house on the other side of Hong Kong harbour. The Bragas looked to a future challenging and bright with opportunity. None could possibly foresee that in the second quarter of the twentieth century another war and its aftermath would bring greater challenges than any that this family or its forebears had ever faced.

was painstaking and earnest in all that she endeavoured, and was good with small children as a piano teacher. A few surviving letters show that she was intelligent, observant, and a good letter-writer.

¹⁰¹⁷ Noel Braga Diary, 12 January 1926.

Chapter 11

Divergent paths

The Braga family in Kowloon, 1926-1941

1. 'Pure air, fresh breezes and quietness': Knutsford Terrace, Kowloon

At the beginning of 1926, J.P. Braga took what might seem a surprising step during the worst slump Hong Kong had known. He purchased four houses, Nos 9-12, in a recently built block of three-storey terrace houses on Knutsford Terrace, just off Nathan Road, Tsimshatsui, Kowloon, and within a ten minute walk of the Star Ferry. Shortly after the Great War, there had been a property boom, during which a large housing scheme was mooted for Kowloon.¹⁰¹⁸ It was short-lived, the bubble being pricked by the strikes of 1922 and 1925. Values crashed, and although Braga was left in a precarious position, he seized the opportunity to purchase his own property in order, as he expressed it, to make long-term provision for his family.¹⁰¹⁹ It was a decision that not only reflected his enterprising spirit, but also his desire to get away from a deteriorating area, for Robinson Road, once a pleasant location, had become a crowded ghetto of clerks towards the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum of the Portuguese community. Given their large families, housing became, he pointed out, 'a problem more acutely felt perhaps by the Portuguese than any other community'.¹⁰²⁰

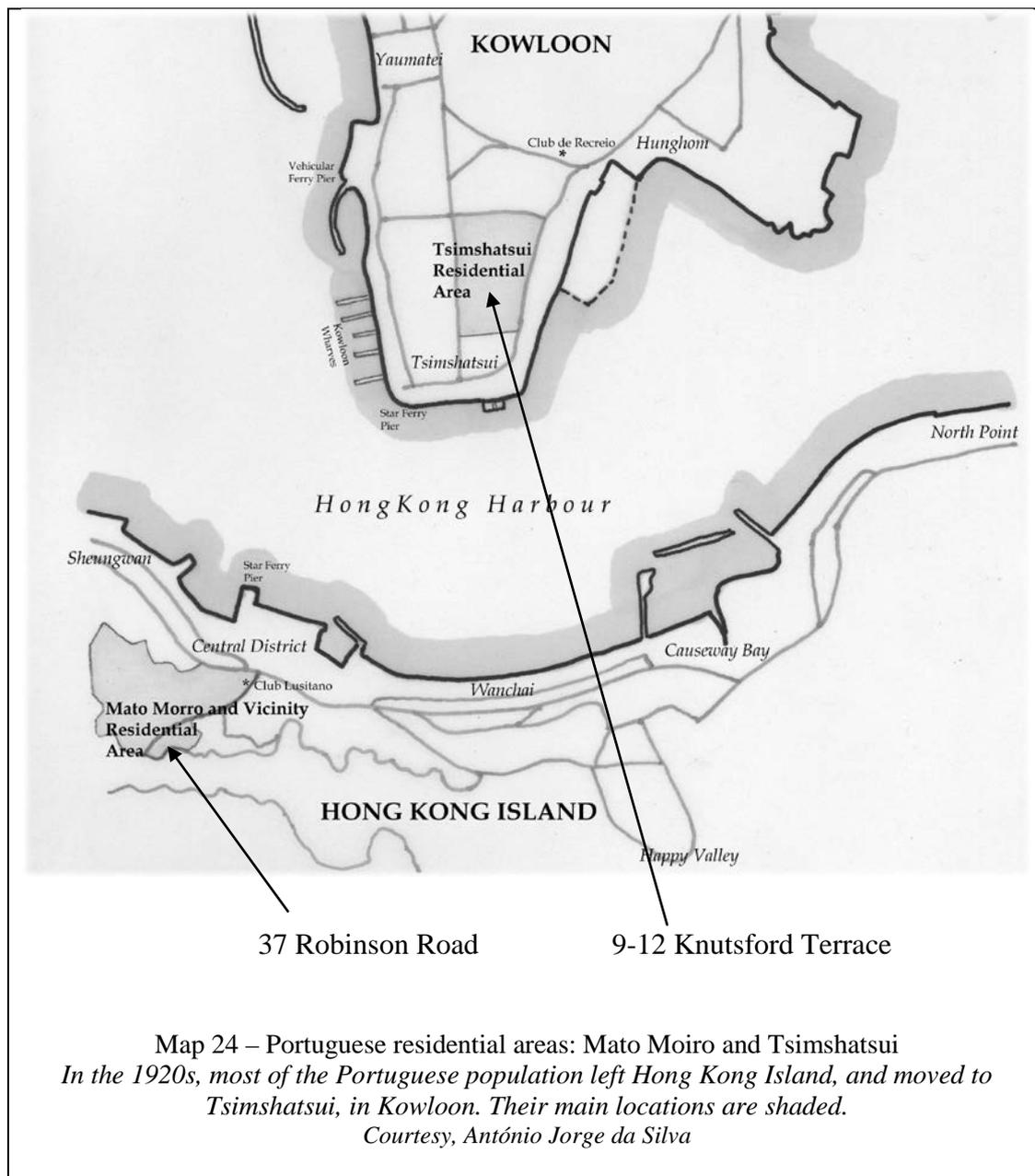
He could not have done it on his own, but knew that he could rely on the support of his sons, whose major contribution has already been noted in the case of Noel.¹⁰²¹

¹⁰¹⁸ J.P. Braga, MS of *The Portuguese in Hongkong and China*, unpublished chapter xix. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/13.3/ 4.

¹⁰¹⁹ Noel Braga Diary, 5 May 1926.

¹⁰²⁰ *The Rock*, vol. 1, no. 4, January 1921, p. 177. Observing in December 1920 that during the previous three months more than twenty houses in Kowloon had been purchased by members of the Portuguese community, J.P. Braga wrote that 'there are at least a hundred more Portuguese families ... who are anxious to own their own houses, but who have no substantial security to offer'. *The Rock*, vol. 1, no. 3, December 1920, p. 136.

¹⁰²¹ While this was spelt out in Noel's diary, the support of others can be presumed. In the case of Tony, the support took the form of working in his father's office for minimal reward.



On 31 January 1926, the family moved to Nos. 11 and 12, while Nos. 9 and 10 were rented as investment properties.¹⁰²² Noel described the house in some detail, knowing that it would be the family compound for the foreseeable future.

The “bachelors’ mess”¹⁰²³ (consisting of two rooms on the top floor of No. 11), the beautiful wall decorations (in the way of

¹⁰²² J.P. Braga to Tony Braga, 13 August 1934, Tony Braga Papers; Paul Braga to James Braga, 22 October 1943. Paul Braga Papers.

¹⁰²³ Several of the large British firms maintained a ‘bachelors’ mess’ on the Peak, where the bosses – and their wives – could keep a watchful eye on the behaviour of the young men they employed. In earlier times, it was permissible to keep a Chinese mistress, but with many more English women about, morals and protocols had tightened. By the 1920s, a young man who crossed the harbour to live in Kowloon with his ‘piece’ risked instant dismissal. This was a society in which Lady Clementi,

paintings and electric lamps, etc.) in the drawing room and dining room, the Studio (for Jean's pupils) and Study (for the boys) in No. 11, special rooms each for Mother and Father, and the lawn, are the outstanding features of the new house.¹⁰²⁴



Clement (left) and Hugh on the S.S. Empress of Australia, 1924

Stuart Braga collection:
Hugh Braga's album

The contrast with noisy, overcrowded Robinson Road was most marked. Noel wrote the next day:

After our first night in Knutsford Terrace we are still finding things somewhat strange, but like the place for the pure air, fresh breezes and quietness of the surroundings.¹⁰²⁵

Gradually, the young men ventured forth into a wider world. Already Hugh had travelled to Canada with the Canadian Pacific ship *Empress of Australia* during the university vacation in the summer of 1924 as a steward.¹⁰²⁶ Noel commented, perhaps enviously, that he was the first of the family to go to America. 'Father was thunderstruck, and let Hugh go without a word of disapproval'. On his return six weeks later, 'Hugh looks quite stout and extremely well' noted Noel.¹⁰²⁷

The following year, Clement, Noel, Hugh and James all had the opportunity to travel to Vancouver when several passenger ships were stranded in Hong Kong after their crews deserted to join the General Strike.¹⁰²⁸

Thereafter, the demands of their employment and the exigencies of the Great Depression clipped their wings. Furthermore, their careers, linked with the somewhat limited opportunities available to them in the 1920s, took divergent paths, though they continued to live in the family home for several more years.

the wife of Sir Cecil Clementi, governor from 1925 to 1930, read every book that entered the library of the Helena May Institute to ensure its suitability. P. Gillingham, *At the Peak*, p. 22.

¹⁰²⁴ Noel Braga Diary, 31 January 1926.

¹⁰²⁵ Noel Braga Diary, 1 February 1926.

¹⁰²⁶ He wrote a series of articles about his time in Canada in the *Silver Wolf*, vol. 4, nos. 4 and 5, November and December 1924.

¹⁰²⁷ Noel Braga Diary, 12 June and 6 August 1924.

¹⁰²⁸ Noel Braga Diary, July to October 1925.

Noel continued to do well with China Light. He was treated with consideration when he suffered a nervous breakdown in 1932, and spent several months in Japan recuperating.¹⁰²⁹ While there, he gained a workable knowledge of Japanese, which proved an inestimable boon when the family were in dire straits following the fall of Kowloon in December 1941. Noel then went to Britain, where he met Marjory Morris, who he would later marry, returning to Hong Kong and his position at China Light in August 1933.

When he married in 1934, he was placed on an expatriate basis, a privilege that says much about the high regard in which both Noel and his father were held. It also says much about the firm for which he worked. He would not have been so well treated in the big British concerns. J.P. Braga told Noel's mother-in-law:

It is not given to everybody to be granted Home Leave on full pay and passages provided by the firm to and from England both for husband and wife. I consider Noel a lucky lad that he is in a position of enjoying this privilege.¹⁰³⁰

The 1930s were years of growth in the electricity business, and both Noel and John did well in this successful company. In 1938, after many years in a clerical position, John became the Assistant Company Secretary, in charge of the shares office.

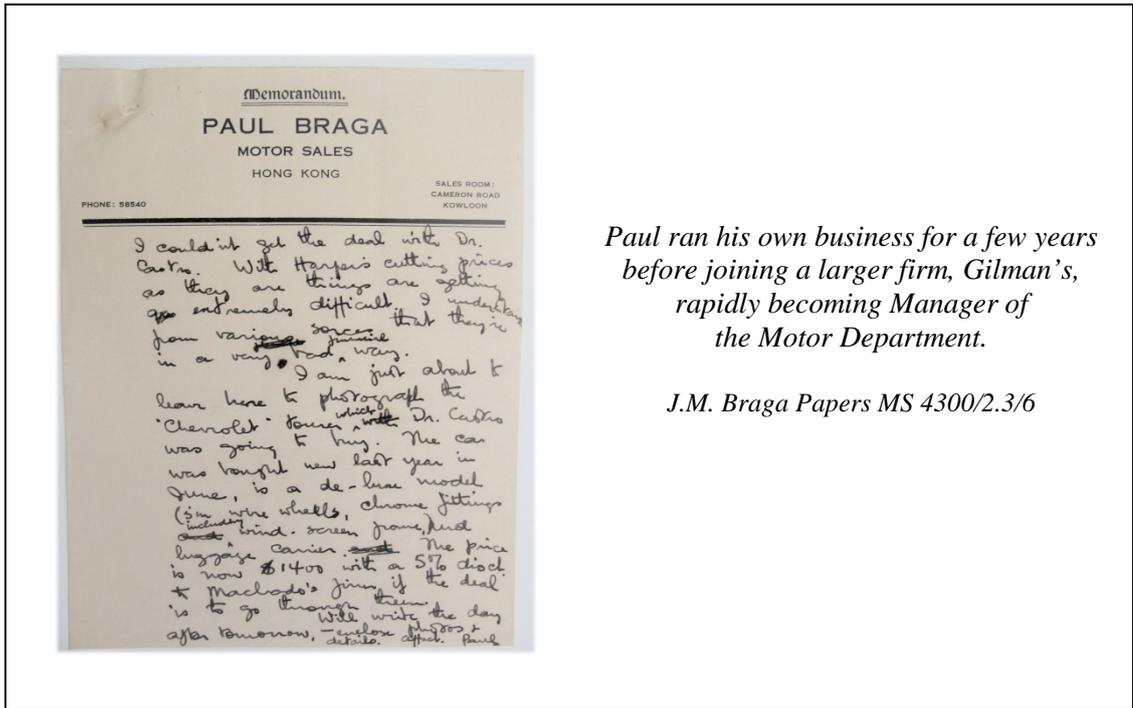
While Noel became an executive of ability and probity, James left the business world. In 1929, he felt called to the ministry, and studied in America at Moody Bible Institute and then at the Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Chicago, where he graduated as Bachelor of Theology.¹⁰³¹ Returning to Hong Kong, he was again employed by Standard-Vacuum Oil.¹⁰³² He went back to America in 1940, becoming the first of the brothers to leave the Far East for good, a break that all seven of his married siblings would eventually make.

¹⁰²⁹ Noel to Jack, 17 May 1933. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.3/5. In 1951, while visiting Japan, his brother Jack was interested to meet a Professor Inatsuga, who asked after Noel (J.M. Braga to Clement Braga, undated, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.3/10).

¹⁰³⁰ J.P. Braga to Mrs Ethel Morris, 5 February 1935. Copy from Maurice Braga, Noel's son, August 2008.

¹⁰³¹ Coming back to Hong Kong as a missionary, he received assistance from the Scripture Gift Mission in London for the distribution of 250,000 Bible tracts. (Obituary in the *Sunday Oregonian*, 24 April 1994).

¹⁰³² Jurors' Lists, 1938-1939, in the *Hong Kong Sessional Papers*.



Paul ran his own business for a few years before joining a larger firm, Gilman's, rapidly becoming Manager of the Motor Department.

J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.3/6

In 1928 Paul was the last brother to enter the work force. The motor age had arrived and Paul soon had a motor-bike. He found an opening in the motor industry, first in selling second-hand cars, trading as Paul Braga Motor Sales.¹⁰³³ In April 1936 he joined Gilman Motors, soon becoming Manager of the Motor Department.¹⁰³⁴ He stayed with the firm until the fall of Hong Kong in December 1941.

Not until the mid-1930s did the household at Knutsford Terrace change, and then it changed rapidly. Most weddings were at St Andrew's Church of England, Kowloon, for there could be no thought of the nearby Rosary Church. Maude married an Englishman, Eric Franks, in August 1934. Three months later, in England, Noel married an Englishwoman, Marjory Morris. In 1935, Hugh married an English missionary, Nora Bromley, a member of an Anglican mission, the Bible

¹⁰³³ Letterhead of a note from Paul to his brother Jack, ca. June 1935, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.3/6.

¹⁰³⁴ Reference for a former employee written during 1942, Paul Braga Papers. With a pleasant and outgoing personality, Paul did well and developed good business contacts. He gained a lasting reputation for reliability and probity. He stayed with the firm until the fall of Hong Kong in December 1941. Following his escape from Macau during the war, and seeking assistance in securing a military commission (which did not eventuate), he wrote: 'I was never afraid to tackle a job ... I quickly got down to knowing a new subject by applying myself hard at it ... I have always come through successfully with anything I started' (Paul Braga to Hugh Braga, 1 November 1943, Paul Braga Papers).

Churchmen's Missionary Society.¹⁰³⁵ Paul married a local girl, Audrey Winsel, in 1937. In 1938, Clement eventually married Muriel Williamson, who he had first met in Vancouver in 1925. James was married in February 1940 to a fellow student from Moody Bible Institute, Anne Johnson, who had come out as a missionary with the South China Boat Mission.¹⁰³⁶

Lastly, John was married in August 1940 to a Scottish medical student, Louise (known as 'Louie') Ashton. In the seven years from August 1934 to August 1940, there were seven weddings, so that only four remained of the eleven who had moved to Knutsford Terrace in 1926: Jean, Tony, Caroline and Mary.

Over the years, Caroline steadily gained the recognised qualifications in the teaching of music through Trinity College of Music, London, and became well-established as a piano teacher.¹⁰³⁷

During 1940, Jean and Caroline both found men to whom they became deeply attracted: Jean to Theo Ingram¹⁰³⁸ and Caroline to Norman Mackenzie, a South African academic who came to Hong Kong University that year as a lecturer in English.¹⁰³⁹ Jean's attachment was viewed by her family with dismay. Ingram had a wife and children who had been evacuated to Australia, and the attention he paid to Jean was never more than a casual dalliance. Neither romance led to marriage, both

¹⁰³⁵ W.S. Hooton and J.S. Wright, *The first twenty-five years of the Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society*, pp. 119, 226. Founded in 1921, the B.C.M.S. was a conservative evangelical off-shoot of the long-established Church Missionary Society.

¹⁰³⁶ This was a small group of very self-sacrificing people who lived in the midst of Chinese boat people in crowded typhoon shelters. For a few months, James joined Anne's work with the Boat Mission among people who lived in junks moored in the typhoon shelter at Cheung Chau, one of the out-lying islands.

¹⁰³⁷ In the 1930s, Trinity College was the only well-recognised examining body in music whose qualifications were available in Hong Kong. She first obtained the Local Exhibition Certificate in 1930 at the age of 19, proceeding to the Licentiate (LTCL) and finally in 1935 to Fellowship (FTCL). This was a remarkable achievement of single-mindedness, determination and perseverance. She sent for the syllabus, and learned all that was necessary and practised to the necessary standard. She was at the time the only Fellow of Trinity College in Hong Kong. The College went to the trouble of sending out an examiner to examine the sole candidate there; it was something for the College, as well as a real achievement for Caroline (Information from Caroline Braga, 24 October 1996).

¹⁰³⁸ Theodore Ralph Ingram, Private 1747. Identified in the lists of Volunteers in the Hong Kong War Diary. www.hongkongwardiary.com. This is a website conducted by Tony Banham, who has also written several books about Hong Kong in World War II. Banham has become the leading authority on the subject.

¹⁰³⁹ F. Leighton, *Frayed Lifelines*, p. 88. After World War II, Mackenzie had a distinguished career as a Professor of English Literature in Canada, and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1979. Obituary, 2004, by P.D. Taylor, <http://www.rsc.ca/documents/MackenzieNormanHughElectedin197919152004.pdf>, accessed 18 July 2011.

men, members of the Hong Kong Volunteers, being imprisoned during the war. Ingram was sent to the notorious Sendai #2 Camp in Japan.¹⁰⁴⁰ Mackenzie was in Shamshuipo Prisoners of War Camp. He was thought to be the only member of his artillery battery to survive the short, sharp battle for Hong Kong.¹⁰⁴¹ Both women went through a very hard time emotionally, and for both, the experience left deep scars on their personalities. However, the war would have infinitely more drastic consequences for tens of millions of others. In Macau, Jack had found a wife in the community of his Macanese forefathers, but in Hong Kong, all his siblings found their spouses outside that community. They had effectively cut their ties with it many years earlier, only to rediscover them all of a sudden at the end of 1941.

The enthusiastic support given by the Braga family to the Gospel Hall diminished following their move to Kowloon, although Noel continued to attend the Gospel Hall on the Hong Kong side. Instead, most of them began to attend and then to throw their weight behind the Emmanuel Church and its associated Fraternity Book Room. This was a small independent evangelical medical mission and church run by two British missionaries, Dr Harry Lechmere Clift and his wife Winifred on Nathan Road not far from Knutsford Terrace.¹⁰⁴² The Braga family imbibed from these respected mentors a keen interest in missions. The Clifts were no narrow sectaries, Mrs Clift producing an intelligent and observant book on Chinese life in Hong Kong.¹⁰⁴³ The Clifts, like Miss Meadows at the Gospel Hall, were outstanding role models for the Braga family, no longer impressionable adolescents, but as young

¹⁰⁴⁰ According to a website established by the late Roger Mansell: Center for Research: Allied POWs under the Japanese. http://www.mansell.com/pow_resources/camplists/sendai/sendai_2. Accessed 13 August 2012.

¹⁰⁴¹ Tony Braga to James Braga, 27 June 1942. James Braga Papers.

¹⁰⁴² The Clifts had originally come to China in 1909 to set up the Emmanuel Medical Mission in Nanning, in Kwangsi Province, entirely at their own expense. In 1924 they handed it over to the Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society, which they joined, serving at nearby Liu-chow (Pinyin Liuzhou), then coming to Hong Kong in 1930 after six years spent in courageous and dedicated service in a part of China wracked by civil war and brigandage (W.S. Hooton and J.S. Wright, *The first twenty-five years of the Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society*, pp. 30, 33-35, 79, 82-83, 227). Noel Braga kept with his diary an account of the perils endured by missionaries in Liu-chow at this period. (*South China Alliance Tidings*, vol. 18, no. 6, Wuchow, 1924). The Clifts were not mentioned in this account, but it graphically described an attack by brigands on a band of missionaries in the district where they served. (Noel Braga Papers). They retained strong links with the Bible Churchmen's Missionary Society, and remained steadfastly at their post for several decades. Dr Clift died in Hong Kong in 1949. Mrs Clift finally retired to England after sixty years' missionary service in China and Hong Kong. (Undated press cutting, ca. 1969, *South China Morning Post*, Scrapbook 1921-1987, Caroline Braga Papers).

¹⁰⁴³ W. Lechmere Clift, *Looking on in Hong Kong*. Several other books by Mrs Clift are in the catalogue of the British Library, but have not been seen by this writer.

adults adherents to a cause in which they firmly believed. As time passed, not all retained the Protestant faith they had so enthusiastically embraced more than a decade earlier. Caroline played the piano for services here from the beginning in the early 1930s until 1997, not long before her death, apart from the war years and brief sojourns abroad.¹⁰⁴⁴ Hugh became a strong financial supporter. Jean, Paul, John and Mary were also members of Emmanuel Church, as was their mother.



*Olive Braga with three of her children,
Caroline, Tony and Paul,
at Repulse Bay Hotel, ca. 1940.*

Paul Braga Papers

Tony, on the other hand, kept his distance. He was his father's loyal supporter throughout this period. Tony also acquired a distaste for what he saw as the ruthless commercialism of the taipans with whom he dealt on a daily basis. He developed a fascination for the Soviet regime in Russia, seeing in communism an effective riposte to the exploitation of the working classes that he saw all around him.¹⁰⁴⁵ Ideologically, this drew him away from the evangelical Christianity of his mother's upbringing, but not from a reverence for her finer qualities.¹⁰⁴⁶

While five of his brothers married between 1934 and 1940, Tony remained single, preferring, as he put it

rather sourly in later years, to be 'happily unmarried rather than unhappily married like several of my brothers', and pointing out that his parents had been 'hopelessly incompatible'.¹⁰⁴⁷

¹⁰⁴⁴ Her service was recognised in 1994 by the presentation of a symbolic tray bearing the inscription, 'An honour to Senior Member of the Emmanuel English congregation'.

¹⁰⁴⁵ This is best seen in a letter from Tony to his brother John, 29 April 1946. James Braga Papers.

¹⁰⁴⁶ In later years, although an agnostic, he would often refer to a hymn which she had taught her children: 'Count your blessings'.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Tony Braga to Craig Ellyson, Waterloo, Iowa, 24 October 1988. Tony Braga Papers. Dr Craig D. Ellyson had been a friend in pre-war Hong Kong. Tony asked James to send Ellyson a copy of his letter of 27 June 1942, giving the first news of the Braga family since the fall of Hong Kong seven months earlier.

In August 1937, after a decade as his father's private secretary he was appointed Property Superintendent of the Hongkong Engineering and Construction Company through the advocacy of his brother Hugh, retaining this position until the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941.¹⁰⁴⁸

While Tony remained stable in his journey away from faith, Clement did not. Once the scion of the Gospel Hall, he turned decisively and bitterly against it and all that it stood for. When Chappie died, Clement slipped into a leadership role that the younger boys had come to expect. For some years, he did indeed fill this role, but gradually his brothers, maturing into manhood, grew out of their need for it. Moreover, several of them, especially Noel, Hugh, and later, Paul, appeared to be doing better in life than Clement, whose career did not prosper as those of his younger siblings did.¹⁰⁴⁹ Moreover his health was not robust. In 1927, his father told Jack: 'Clement has gone to hospital again with influenza. He is not a strong boy.'¹⁰⁵⁰ Over time, Clement gradually slipped in his family's estimation. This led to a loss of confidence, a loss of heart and a loss of faith. In 1935 things came to a head. Worried letters to Jack from Hong Kong told the story of a troubled, alienated man, in debt to his brothers and to Indian money-lenders, and surrounded by reproachful, judgmental faces, voices and attitudes.

Writing in May, Tony did not mince matters. 'Maud heard from a friend that he gets drunk quite often and the other night at the Hong Kong Hotel while under the influence he was babbling out all sorts of things about the family in a loud voice for all to hear. Unless he pulls himself together and leaves the bottle alone I'm very much afraid he'll sink deeper and deeper.'¹⁰⁵¹ In July James wrote that 'Clement has hardly been home for many days ... we can't do anything for him, as he seems to be very antagonistic towards all the family'.¹⁰⁵² He was 'positively aggressive',¹⁰⁵³ to his father, who added, 'I can't make head or tail of his behaviour beyond concluding that he is not in his normal senses ... He is so pig-headed as to rush headlong into

¹⁰⁴⁸ Minutes, Hongkong Engineering and Construction Co., 26 August 1937.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Noel's diary, remarkably detailed in some respects, says little about his brothers' jobs. He commented on 26 January 1926 that Clement's salary had been increased from \$150 to \$200 a month, a very good income in that time of crisis. His name appeared in the Jurors' Lists until 1930, still as an 'assistant' in the same firm.

¹⁰⁵⁰ J.P. Braga to J.M. Braga, 28 September 1927. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.3/6.

¹⁰⁵¹ A.M. Braga to J.M. Braga, 22 May 1935. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.3/7.

¹⁰⁵² James Braga to J.M. Braga, 30 July 1935, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.3/4.

¹⁰⁵³ J.P. Braga to J.M. Braga, 19 July 1935. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.3 /4.

ruin, absolutely regardless of the consequences.’¹⁰⁵⁴ By then, any religious affiliation or belief had definitely ceased, to the consternation and grief of his Christian brothers and sisters.

Grasping at straws, Clement had a notion of setting up a fortnightly magazine that he hoped would be a big financial success.¹⁰⁵⁵ Nothing came of it, but this precipitated a resolution of the crisis. The Macau solution seemed once more to be a good option. At Jack’s suggestion, Clement was persuaded in September 1935 to go to Macau, where Jack took him in and found coaching work for him. Well-established in Macau since 1924 and with a reputation as a fine teacher of English at St Joseph’s College, Jack secured a position for Clement teaching English at the *Liceu*.¹⁰⁵⁶ Jack and Augusta took Clement under their wing in this critical period. As a result, Clement and Jack had a close friendship for more than thirty years.¹⁰⁵⁷ Jack and Augusta provided solid and continuing care and support in this crisis in a way that no other family members could have done. Once he settled into the steady daily routine of school teaching, the constant regimen of lesson preparation and essay marking, and above all marriage in 1938 settled him down. Seven years later, in 1942, they would again support their family in the far graver crisis of the Japanese Occupation of Hong Kong.

After graduation in 1929, Hugh worked for two years as a civil engineer in the Public Works Department, observing later that ‘in those days engineers were

¹⁰⁵⁴ J.P. Braga to J.M. Braga, 24 August 1935. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.3/8.

¹⁰⁵⁵ J.P. Braga to J.M. Braga, 17 July 1935. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.3/8.

¹⁰⁵⁶ J.M. Braga to J.P. Braga, 7 September 1936, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.3/8. Gustavo Uriel da Roza, in later life a distinguished Canadian architect and Officer of the Order of Canada, was one of Clement’s pupils and spoke highly of him to this writer in Macau in 2004.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Another factor in Clement’s life assisted him to find his feet again. He had not lost contact with Muriel Williamson, who at 17 had been captivated in Vancouver by the 23-year-old Clement in 1925. ‘Sept. 25: Meet Miss Meadows and Braga boys at Mrs. Reid’s. Clement easily leads. We all thought so,’ she wrote in her diary (Held by his daughter Lynne Braga. The other ‘Braga boys’ were Hugh and James. Noel Braga Diary, 3 October 1925). In 1929 he returned to Vancouver, and became engaged to Muriel, but they could not afford to marry. Muriel was then dogged by health problems for some years, while Clement was penniless and in debt. In October 1935 Jack suggested that family members in Hong Kong pay Muriel’s fare to Macau so that she and Clement could marry, offering to pay more than anyone else, despite the fact that he had a large family to provide for (J.M. Braga to A.M. Braga, 11 October 1935, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.3/3. Jack proposed that he would pay \$150, Maude \$125, Hugh \$125 and Tony \$100). After all he had done for Clement, Noel was not asked to contribute. Hugh, earning better than most, offered to pay Maude’s share, for she did not earn well, and Clement had contributed to his upkeep at university. However, this plan was not implemented. More than two years later, it seems that Jack paid for Clement to go to Vancouver where he married Muriel in July 1938, then returning to Macau (Clement to ‘home folks’, 29 July 1938, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.3/2).

expected to serve a two-year apprenticeship after graduation'. The salary of \$150 a month was hardly an enticement to spend several years as a university student.¹⁰⁵⁸ In these two years he acquired what a senior official there described as 'an enviable reputation'.¹⁰⁵⁹

Hugh's father had recently been appointed chairman of the Hongkong Engineering and Construction Co. J.P. Braga faced an almost impossible challenge in turning around its fortunes. In 1931 Hugh had an idea that saved the company from ruin, together with his father's career and reputation. As recorded by the company secretary, 'he suggested looking around for a large enough and suitably located piece of ground for an Estate development.'¹⁰⁶⁰ To support the idea, he prepared a detailed lay-out plan and cost estimates for a dauntingly difficult site in Homantin, Kowloon Inland Lot 2657, having also conducted a detailed survey of the site.¹⁰⁶¹ Hugh expected no recompense, but when the scheme went ahead, he was rewarded by a delighted board of directors with a substantial ex gratia payment of \$2,500.¹⁰⁶² With characteristic generosity, he at once put \$2,000 into shares in the Macau Waterworks Co., managed by his brother Jack, and in dire need of funds.¹⁰⁶³ He knew that it was a risky proposition; within three years, the company had collapsed and was refinanced by outside sources. Hugh received only \$432 when the original company was wound up in 1935.¹⁰⁶⁴

In 1931 he was appointed Engineer by the Hongkong Engineering and Construction Co. at the beginning of what was called the 'Garden Suburb' project.¹⁰⁶⁵ Its development for the next decade was entirely in his hands. By 1935 he had proved his capacity, and was appointed General Works Manager of the company,

¹⁰⁵⁸ *Hong Kong University Engineering Journal*, vol. 5, no. 1, December 1933, p. 11.

¹⁰⁵⁹ This was later mentioned, in another context, by his father J.P. Braga to Sir Elly Kadoorie, 10 August 1938. Hong Kong Heritage Project, J.P. Braga A02/15.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Hugh's words, as reported by the company secretary, B. Alves, at a meeting of the board of the Hongkong Engineering and Construction Co., 17 June 1941.

¹⁰⁶¹ The University Engineering Society followed the careers of recent graduates, and noted in 1931 that 'we hear he is very busy' (*Hong Kong University Engineering Journal*, vol. 3, no. 1, September 1931, p. 62).

¹⁰⁶² Minutes, Hongkong Engineering and Construction Co., 20 November 1931.

¹⁰⁶³ Tony to Jack, 20 November 1931. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.3/1.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Jack to Hugh, 27 September 1935. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.3/4.

¹⁰⁶⁵ On the motion of Lawrence Kadoorie, a board member. Minutes, Hongkong Engineering and Construction Co. 30 September 1931.

responsible for 1,200 employees.¹⁰⁶⁶ His intensely hard work was appreciated by Sir Elly Kadoorie, known as a businessman with high expectations.



Years later, following a report that Hugh had worked right through the night, Kadoorie counselled J.P. Braga not to kill Hugh with overwork, though Kadoorie himself was sometimes the real cause. Tony told Jack in 1935 that 'Kadoorie keeps him hopping around day and night'.¹⁰⁶⁷ For his part, J.P. Braga told Kadoorie that 'Hugh has been unsparing in his efforts to succeed for the Company'.¹⁰⁶⁸

2. War clouds – 'no-one took the slightest notice'

The Scriptural phrase 'marrying and giving in marriage' applied powerfully to this family. It implies a pre-occupation with daily work and the tasks of child-rearing, home-building and mortgage repayment. It also implies a lack of awareness of problems beyond these all-absorbing commitments. This was to be expected, as Hong Kong gradually worked its way out of the Great Depression and prosperity began to return. Naturally, they were aware of the deteriorating political situation in the Far East from 1931 onwards, but it seemed remote. Caroline and Mary went on holiday to the USA in 1939, calling at Yokohama en route. Four years before, Hugh and Nora had enjoyed their honeymoon in Japan, but the rise of Japanese militarism

¹⁰⁶⁶ *South China Morning Post*, 25 April 1935: 'The Board has appointed Mr Hugh Braga, the Company's Engineer, its General Works Manager as from 2 January 1935'. Also Hugh Braga file.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Sir Elly Kadoorie to J.P. Braga, 26 May 1938, Hong Kong Heritage Project, J.P. Braga A02/15; Tony Braga to Jack Braga, 18 July 1935, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.3.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Braga to Kadoorie, 19 July 1938, Hong Kong Heritage Project, J.P. Braga A02/15. In addition to his busy professional life, he was pleased to be invited to join the Rotary Club of Hong Kong representing the civil engineering profession (Hugh Braga file). It was to prove a life-line in 1941 in Australia, when a prominent Sydney Rotarian employed Hugh, who had recently arrived from Hong Kong.

was changing the atmosphere. Mary wrote: ‘Japan. Unpleasant memories ... treated discourteously. Ship left in black-out air-raid practice ... All passengers relieved to get away.’¹⁰⁶⁹

In Hong Kong there was greater interest in the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps, commonly known as the Hong Kong Volunteers. It waxed and waned over the years depending on the international situation. A Portuguese Company was raised in 1931, and by 1940 there were two strong Portuguese Companies.¹⁰⁷⁰ Hugh, Tony and Paul joined the Volunteers, but, having turned their backs on the Portuguese community, they eschewed these companies. Their postings were appropriate to their skills and experience. Hugh, with his two years’ experience working as an engineer with the Public Works Department, was placed in charge of demolitions in the New Territories, it being recognised that a withdrawal to a defence line well back from the border would be necessary.¹⁰⁷¹ He had designed some of the bridges that would have to be blown up. Tony, gentle and caring, was a stretcher bearer in the Field Ambulance,¹⁰⁷² while Paul, with his experience in the motor industry, was an officer in the Auxiliary Transport Service.¹⁰⁷³ In the event, none of the three would see active service.

The savage Japanese attack on Shanghai and the massacre in Nanking in 1937 horrified the world, but it was noted that the Shanghai International Settlement and French Concession were not touched.¹⁰⁷⁴ In Hong Kong a tide of refugees began to arrive. It became a flood the following October when Canton was occupied by the Japanese. When war did break out in 1939, it was on the other side of the world.¹⁰⁷⁵ Hong Kong busied itself with raising funds for a bomber for the Royal Air Force.¹⁰⁷⁶

¹⁰⁶⁹ Mary Braga to Paul Braga, 27 July 1939. Paul Braga Papers.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Their nominal rolls did not survive the Japanese Occupation, but have been carefully reconstructed by Tony Banham, <http://www.hongkongwardiary.com>. Accessed 16 July 2011.

¹⁰⁷¹ He is likely to have been an officer in the Field Company Engineers, which was tasked with these demolitions in December 1941 under the command of Major J.H. Bottomley. E.G. Stewart, *Hong Kong Volunteers in battle*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁷² No. 4399 Lance Corporal Braga, A.M., E.G. Stewart, *Hong Kong Volunteers in battle*, p. 81.

¹⁰⁷³ No nominal roll of this unit is known. The Hong Kong War Diary lists only four members of the ATS. Paul Braga is not one of them.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Japan went so far as to apologise to the U.S. Government for the accidental sinking of the USS *Panay* near Shanghai, and to pay compensation for its loss.

¹⁰⁷⁵ There was a brief panic in Hong Kong at the beginning of September. Tony still hoped for peace. On 1 September he told Jack: ‘People here have gone absolutely wild with panic. Great rush at the Banks and steamship offices. Jamie wanted to send Mother off to Manila, but we couldn’t get her passport renewed owing to the crush at the Passport Office. I still refuse to believe that a general war will break out. My guess is that, since both Gt Britain and Germany can’t very well climb down now,



Games Room, Library and Tea Room for Servicemen at Emmanuel Church.

Dr and Mrs Clift and two unidentified younger lady helpers, with six servicemen.

Paul Braga Papers

With a larger military presence in the colony, the Clifts opened a Games Room, Library and Tea Room for Servicemen at Emmanuel Church, which was close to Whitfield Barracks, the main military barracks in Kowloon. Prudently, consideration was given by the British War Cabinet to the evacuation to Australia of British civilians from Hong Kong in the event of an emergency in the Far East.¹⁰⁷⁷ These plans were put into effect on 29 June 1940, with the rapid deterioration of the international situation following the fall of France. At first, it appeared that all non-essential British civilians were to be evacuated to Australia, and J.P. Braga thought that he too would have to go to Australia. He did not want to go. ‘I will stay with Hong Kong through thick and thin’, he told Kadoorie.¹⁰⁷⁸ That plan soon changed, and only women and children went. If they stayed, they would be a large and unwelcome burden on the defenders should the Japanese attack. Seven days’ notice were given and each evacuee was allowed very little luggage.¹⁰⁷⁹ 3,474 women and children, including this writer, were sent in three voyages to Manila, a brief stop-

Poland will have to do it – make the big sacrifice for the sake of humanity, etc. etc. [i.e. surrender the Polish Corridor to Germany]. Better that than be crushed completely.’ A.M. Braga to J.M. Braga, undated, but Friday, 1 September 1939, J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/2.3/8.

¹⁰⁷⁶ R. Hutcheon, *SCMP The First Eighty Years*, p. 85.

¹⁰⁷⁷ A Japanese occupation of French Indo-China – which took place a few months later – would mean that Saigon was within 600 air miles of most major cities in the region, including Hong Kong. Not only could Hong Kong be attacked by land and air, but its supply lines were effectively interdicted.

¹⁰⁷⁸ J.P. Braga to Sir Elly Kadoorie, 11 July 1940. Hong Kong Heritage Project, A02-15.

¹⁰⁷⁹ A cabin trunk and a suitcase per adult and a suitcase for each child. D. Neale, *Green Jade*, p. 40.

over before shipping to Australia could be arranged.¹⁰⁸⁰ There was immediate and sustained criticism of the evacuation. Some hundreds of British ‘bachelor husbands’ strongly condemned what they saw as a precipitate and unnecessary move. On the other hand, Portuguese and Eurasian holders of British passports were excluded. Leo d’Almada, Braga’s successor as the Portuguese member of the Legislative Council, warned that the government had ‘placed an appreciable strain on the loyalty of a large section of the community’.¹⁰⁸¹

The only Braga women eligible for evacuation were Noel’s wife Marjory and Hugh’s wife Nora, each with two children.¹⁰⁸² They spent four weeks in Manila, where the evacuees were given free US Army accommodation, but they could stay in a hotel if their husbands paid for it. Noel and Hugh did this, so the two Braga sisters-in-law and their children had better accommodation, but it lacked the security of an army barrack. Finding life very difficult without their domestic servants, many women begged to be allowed to return to Hong Kong. Marjory lost all her money in a burglary and besought Noel to approach the authorities in Hong Kong to allow her back. He succeeded. Security in Manila seemed even worse than in the precarious Hong Kong situation. Nora wanted to return to Hong Kong too, but Hugh would not hear of it.¹⁰⁸³ His father told Kadoorie that ‘Hugh thinks his children will be safer in Australia’.¹⁰⁸⁴

The Spanish Civil War had alerted people to the horrors of air attack on civilian populations, so Hugh had an air raid shelter, a substantial tunnel, built into a hill in the Kadoorie Avenue estate. Eight feet high, seven feet wide and forty-five feet long [2.4m x 2.1m x 13.7m], it was big enough to hold 150 people, all of the nearby residents. It was inspected in September 1940 by the Governor, Sir Geoffrey

¹⁰⁸⁰ Bernice Archer, *The Internment of Western civilians under the Japanese, 1941-1945*, p. 39. The evacuation is the subject of a PhD thesis to be submitted to the Australian Defence Force Academy by Tony Banham. Banham confirms this figure: ‘What really amazes me here is Bernice’s number, 3474. I just checked my spreadsheet of all known evacuees, put together very laboriously from uncountable sources over three years, and I have 3476! I wonder where she found her number. It’s so close that she could well be more accurate than me.’ Email from Tony Banham, 27 September 2012.

¹⁰⁸¹ *Legislative Council Proceedings*, 1940 Session, pp. 100-104. Also L.A. de Sá, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-88 (Portuguese edition, pp. 115-118); P. Snow, *The fall of Hong Kong*, pp. 43-44. Regarding the Macanese as Eurasians, the Australian Government made it clear that the White Australia Policy would be rigorously applied.

¹⁰⁸² They left on 5 July on board the Empress of Japan. Email from Tony Banham, 27 September 2012.

¹⁰⁸³ Interview with Nora Braga, September 1987.

¹⁰⁸⁴ J.P. Braga to Sir Elly Kadoorie, 1 August 1940, Hong Kong Heritage Project, J.P. Braga A02-15.

Northcote, who remarked that ‘this is the first tunnel shelter of the kind in the Colony’.¹⁰⁸⁵ The next year, his brothers would be glad of it.¹⁰⁸⁶ Hugh, Jack and James seemed to be the only members of the Braga family convinced that the unthinkable was soon to occur. Hugh had worked for the Construction Co. for nine years with little time off apart from his honeymoon, and his brothers realised that working for the Kadoories was no easy task.¹⁰⁸⁷ His request for leave to accompany his wife Nora to England in 1938 was declined, not by his father, but by Lawrence Kadoorie, son of Sir Elly, who regarded his continued presence as essential while China Light’s big new power station at Hok Un was under construction.¹⁰⁸⁸ It was completed in 1940 to everyone’s great satisfaction.¹⁰⁸⁹

During 1941, the international situation continued to deteriorate, even before the German invasion of Russia on 22 June, though very few in Hong Kong seemed to see this. Whereas other people were trying to bring their families back to Hong Kong, Hugh applied for leave to visit his family in Australia. At first this was arranged amicably, with Hugh being granted six months’ leave and First Class travel both ways.¹⁰⁹⁰ However, Lawrence Kadoorie again insisted that he remain in Hong Kong to oversee a difficult technical contract being undertaken for the installation of a new turbine at Hok Un.¹⁰⁹¹ It is clear that the company had come to rely too much on one man’s expertise and was not looking after its senior staff. With war in the Pacific becoming more likely, and with his family in distant Australia, Hugh’s reaction was to resign with immediate effect.¹⁰⁹²

¹⁰⁸⁵ J.P. Braga to Sir Elly Kadoorie, 6 September 1940, Hong Kong Heritage Project, J.P. Braga A02-15.

¹⁰⁸⁶ ‘The tunnel shelter Hughie built was an ideal place of refuge.’ Tony Braga to James Braga, 27 June 1942. James Braga Papers.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Tony Braga to Jack Braga, 16 July 1935. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/ 2.3/7.

¹⁰⁸⁸ J.P. Braga to Sir Elly Kadoorie, 19 September 1938, Hong Kong Heritage Project, J.P. Braga A02-15.

¹⁰⁸⁹ N. Cameron, *Power*, pp. 131-134; J.P. Braga to Sir Cecil Clementi, 15 September 1940, Hong Kong Heritage Project, J.P. Braga A02-15.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Minutes, Hongkong Engineering and Construction Co., 17 April 1941.

¹⁰⁹¹ Lawrence Kadoorie was quite prepared to slight J.P. Braga. A movie film was taken by Hugh Braga showing members of the Board of China Light inspecting work on the waterfront at Hok Un in January 1938 following typhoon damage. Kadoorie stepped first into the work area, then turned and snapped his fingers for Braga, Chairman of the Board, to follow. The film and a DVD made from it are in the possession of Hong Kong Heritage Project.

¹⁰⁹² Minutes, Hongkong Engineering and Construction Co., 17 June 1941. At a lengthy and tense board meeting, Lawrence insisted that a weekly meeting be held to supervise the company’s operations. With J.P. Braga strongly opposed to such a move, Lawrence secured board authorisation to proceed with the proposal, he chairing the weekly meeting. Such a step indicates clearly that the board had little confidence in the new Works Manager, A.V. Skvorzov. Conversely, they had relied far too much on the competence of Hugh Braga. 46 years later, when Hugh died, Lawrence, then Lord

For decades, J.P. Braga's thinking had been dominated by business considerations. His family scarcely seemed to matter, though as the previous chapter indicates, events would soon shock him into a very different perspective. On 18 June he wrote to Jack in Macau:

There was a Board meeting of the Construction Co. yesterday to consider Hugh's resignation from his position of General Works Manager of the Construction Co. The resignation was accepted. I cannot imagine what induced Hugh to resign. I have not the faintest idea of his motive; he has not told me a word. He is leaving for Australia tomorrow and will join Norah [sic] and his children in Sydney.¹⁰⁹³

Later, in 1943, J.P. Braga would go out of his way to mention Hugh's role in the large project for which he had been largely responsible.¹⁰⁹⁴ James had already gone to America, where he was ordained as a Baptist minister on 18 December 1940, subsequently serving as pastor in churches in Chicago, Sacramento (California), and Los Angeles.

Three days after Hugh left Hong Kong, Germany invaded Russia. It was then obviously impossible for the Soviet Union to menace Japan, giving Japan a far greater opportunity to implement its much-vaunted Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, but in Hong Kong, few seemed to notice this dramatic shift in the balance of power and the much greater risk of a Japanese attack.

The arrival of two Canadian infantry battalions in September 1941 was a substantial gesture of British commitment to the defence of Hong Kong, though Churchill had in January that year accurately predicted that there was 'not the slightest chance' of holding it.¹⁰⁹⁵ Noel and Marjory befriended a young English soldier, Joe Howell, who came to meetings of the Brethren at the Gospel Hall. As was their wont, they extended warm hospitality to him on many occasions, and invited him to Christmas

Kadoorie, wrote to Tony, reflecting on Hugh's 'exceptional qualities'. Lord Kadoorie to A.M. Braga, 5 June 1987. A.M. Braga File. However, Skvorzov's appointment was successful; he carried out his duties capably both before and after the Pacific War.

¹⁰⁹³ J.P. Braga to Jack Braga, 18 June 1941. In the possession of Angela Ablong, Jack's daughter. This was less than candid. Hugh had spelt out his reasons very clearly the previous day at the meeting of the board of the Construction Co.

¹⁰⁹⁴ In notes for an unfinished chapter of his book, *The Portuguese in Hongkong and China*. J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/13.1.

¹⁰⁹⁵ W.S. Churchill, *The Second World War, Vol. 3, The Grand Alliance*, p. 157. The phrase was used by Tony Banham as the title of his book on the fall of Hong Kong in 1941.

Dinner.¹⁰⁹⁶ Tragically, he was killed that very day in the last fierce fighting on Stanley Peninsula, where a few weeks later British civilians would be interned.

British arrogance towards all Asian peoples remained undiminished, it being held locally that the Japanese would never dare to attack Hong Kong. If they did, so the governor assured the Chief Manager of the Hongkong Bank, ‘the Navy will be up from Singapore, and everything will be hunkey-dorey’.¹⁰⁹⁷ ‘You often even heard in those few days prior to the out-break people “wishing” the Japs to start – “all they needed was a good lesson and a taste of what they had been giving to China” ’ wrote Paul.¹⁰⁹⁸ Jack, more sanguine, made a special trip to Hong Kong to ask his family to go to Macau, but ‘no-one took the slightest notice’, Paul admitted later.¹⁰⁹⁹

Strained relations between the United States and Japan were already almost at breaking point when the Canadians arrived, but this was also ignored. Tony later wrote to James that on the first day of the attack ‘I couldn’t forgive myself for not having taken heed of your repeated warnings & sent Mother & the girls to Australia’.¹¹⁰⁰ The incoming Governor, Sir Mark Young, left his wife and daughter behind in England when he took up his post in September, and explained the reason in a radio broadcast.¹¹⁰¹ The luckiest man in Hong Kong that year was the departing Colonial Secretary, Norman Smith, who left on Sunday 7 December, the day before the Japanese attack; a less fortunate man was Franklin Gimson, who arrived that day to succeed him and was interned. The fate of many more was much worse.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Email from Janet Howell, Joe’s daughter-in-law, 4 March 2011. Joe had heard of the birth of his son, John, only a few days before the outbreak of the Pacific War. Marjory wrote to her mother on 26 June 1942 of Joe’s death. ‘We loved him dearly as a brother in the Lord, and shall and do miss him dreadfully.’ James Braga Papers.

¹⁰⁹⁷ About a week before ‘the balloon went up’, Sir Vandeleur Grayburn told a senior member of his staff in the Hongkong Bank, T.J.J. Fenwick, ‘Fenwick, not to worry, I’ve just come down from Government House. The Governor and the General assure me that there is nothing to bother about. If anything happens, the Navy will be up from Singapore, and everything will be hunkey-dorey.’ F.H.H. King, *The History of the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation*, Volume III, *The Hongkong Bank between the wars and the bank interned, 1919-1945: Return from Grandeur*, p. 571.

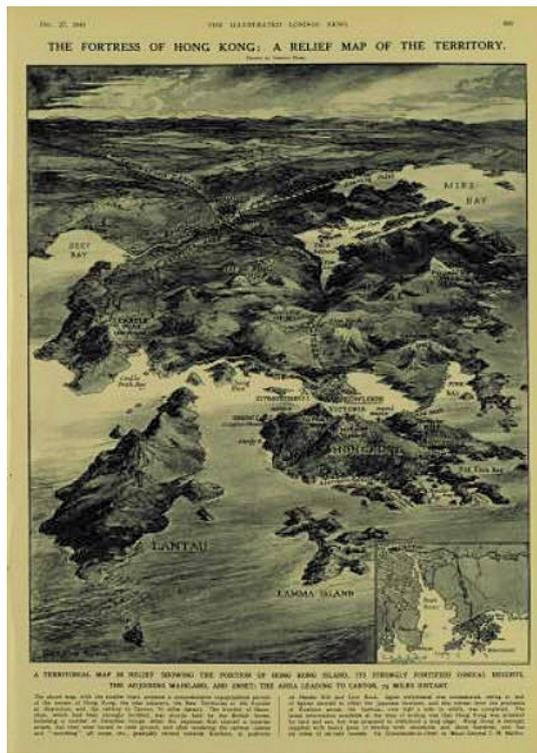
¹⁰⁹⁸ Paul Braga to James Braga, 22 October 1943. Paul kept a copy of the issue for 28 November 1936 of the English illustrated magazine *The Sphere*. It is an ‘Orient Number’, with articles on the public administration of ‘Britain’s Colonial Dependencies in the Far East’. The issue was dominated by a full-page coloured equestrian portrait of King Edward VIII, resplendent in the uniform of Colonel-in-Chief of the Household Guards. The article on each colony was accompanied by photographs of the Great and Powerful. Three weeks later, the king had fallen. In little more than another five years, so too had the territories celebrated in this triumphalist magazine, together with those whose images adorned its pages. Paul Braga papers.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Paul Braga to James Braga, 22 October 1943. James Braga Papers.

¹¹⁰⁰ Tony Braga to James Braga, 27 June 1942. James Braga Papers.

¹¹⁰¹ P. Gillingham, *At the Peak*, p. 174.

According to the authoritative list compiled for later editions of Colonel Evan Stewart's *Hong Kong Volunteers in battle*, based on the post-war report of Major-General C.M. Maltby, General Officer Commanding British Troops in China, 2,114 Allied army and 59 naval personnel were killed or listed as missing, and 2,359 were wounded in the eighteen day battle for Hong Kong.¹¹⁰² Another 2,340 died in POW and internment camps.¹¹⁰³ Far greater numbers of Chinese residents would be brutally killed or would die of starvation in the terrible years that followed.¹¹⁰⁴



'The Fortress of Hong Kong'
 Illustrated London News,
 27 December 1941,
 This issue was published
 two days after the surrender.

Kowloon was abandoned by British forces and by the Hong Kong Police on 11 December, the fourth day of the conflict. The reality of defeat was a far cry from the

¹¹⁰² E. G. Stewart, *Hong Kong Volunteers in battle*, p. 64. However, T. Banham, *We shall suffer there*, p. 245, considered that 1,550 Allied soldiers were killed or listed as missing. This appears to exclude casualty figures for Indian Other Ranks, totalling 687. Major-General C.M. Maltby reported interim casualty figures totalling 2,093 killed and missing and 2,300 wounded. Major-General C.M. Maltby, 'Operations in Hong Kong from 8th to 25th December 1941', Supplement to the *London Gazette*, 29 January 1948, p. 725.

¹¹⁰³ T. Banham, *We shall suffer there*, p. 245.

¹¹⁰⁴ Paul Braga told of hundreds dying daily in the early months of 1942. Paul Braga to James Braga, 22 October 1943. On 12 December 1943, the Japanese English-language newspaper, the *Hongkong News* scolded the population for callously leaving dead bodies in the streets. One account circulating at the end of the war told of at least 50,000 executions, increased three-fold by rumour. T. Banham, *We shall suffer there*, p. 214.

propaganda. The previous day, 10 December, *The Times* had reported that attacking enemy parties were brought to an abrupt halt, while two days after the fall of Hong Kong on Christmas Day, the *Illustrated London News* carried a full-page relief map of 'the Fortress of Hong Kong'.¹¹⁰⁵ Both Tony and Paul told how they escaped the fate of many other members of the Hong Kong Volunteers. The story of Tony's narrow escape from death begins with an account written by his brother Paul in 1943.

Tony returned from his regular annual Volunteer Camp on the eve [of the attack, Sunday 7 December]. That night at dinner at my place we heard on the radio that his unit was to mobilize next morning at 5.00 and in his usual optimistic spirit [he] left the house [before daylight] without saying good-bye to anyone.¹¹⁰⁶

Tony had written to James a year earlier. Writing during the war, with danger ever-present, he did not then tell his brother that his first reaction when he saw the bombs falling on Kai Tak was one of utter horror. He expected that few members of his family would survive the Japanese attack, fearing that they would suffer the same fate as the people of Nanking, where half the population was said to have been killed.¹¹⁰⁷ In 1942 he kept that thought to himself, for that dreadful outcome was still a real possibility. He told James:

When the bombs began to fall about 8 on Monday a.m., Dec. 8, we were all at home with the exception of this chap on the way to Red Cross post on the Island ... the whole defence scheme was an utter failure, due principally to incompetence and corruption in high places. I had hardly any food the four days I was out at my post, and only one set of splints and a few bandages in the whole place. We kept asking for more but couldn't get them. On the fourth day [Thursday 11 December] my turn came for one day's leave. Was just about to say good-bye to all the home folks up at the tunnel [Hugh's air raid shelter] when Reggie came rushing in to say our troops were being driven down Nathan Road. I was thus cut off and stayed with the family, most fortunately, as most of the fellows in our sector were wiped out.'¹¹⁰⁸

¹¹⁰⁵ *The Times*, 10 December 1941, *Illustrated London News*, 27 December 1941.

¹¹⁰⁶ Paul Braga to James Braga, 22 October 1943. James Braga Papers.

¹¹⁰⁷ Memorandum written on 2 June 1987. Tony Braga File.

¹¹⁰⁸ Tony Braga to James Braga, 27 June 1942. James Braga Papers. Reggie is thought to be Reginaldo Emanuel dos Remédios (#592, Macanese Families website). Tony's sector was at Stanley Gap, on the south side of the Island, the scene of heavy fighting on Christmas Day 1941. Tony revealed this, perhaps unintentionally, in an interview on 8 April with Beverley Howells of the *Morning South China Post* for an article published on 31 May 1987. Most of those who served there were indeed killed. Lieutenant-Colonel E.G. Stewart succinctly summarised the fighting there: 'It was a fight to the finish; no quarter was given and the battle-crazed Japanese "fleshed their steel" on every

Paul added, 'it was then out of the question for him to return and we quickly and quietly changed him into one of my suits'. His own account was briefer.

I was an officer in the Auxiliary Transport Service and received instructions at six o'clock on the morning of the out-break to set up the station in the fastest time ... Aud. [his wife Audrey] appeared shortly and I had to leave them to report for duty, - saying good-bye was certainly the hardest experience of my life up till then.¹¹⁰⁹

He and another officer soon had the station going, but Paul later explained:

Almost from the outset it became evident that the A.T.S. was unable to give the required support to the fighting forces, owing to the strong "Fifth Columnist" activities from our own men.¹¹¹⁰

It was an early example of the desertion and acts of minor sabotage that would hamper the defence of Hong Kong in the next fortnight.¹¹¹¹ With the collapse of the British position in Kowloon on 11 December, Paul too was cut off. 'Everything was over in Kowloon before we knew where we were', he wrote.¹¹¹² His unit stranded, its personnel melted into the civilian population. In May 1970 he told Wendy Barnes, a radio journalist, that he too changed into civilian clothes. 'What happened to your uniform?' he was asked. 'I buried it', he replied.¹¹¹³ He buried his British identity along with it. Some time later, a Japanese officer appeared at Paul's house, 4 Braga Circuit. He had a little written English, and wrote neatly on the back cover of a copy of the August 1941 issue of *Good Housekeeping* a demand that Paul hand over his house: 'Japan great soldier come here tomorrow morning sleeping this house from there ago house.' This message appears to mean: 'The soldiers of Great Japan will come here tomorrow morning and will be sleeping in this house. [You

recumbent body, alive or dead. There were no survivors of this section.' *Hong Kong Volunteers in battle*, p. 55.

¹¹⁰⁹ Paul Braga to James Braga, 22 October 1943. James Braga Papers.

¹¹¹⁰ Paul Braga to J.A. Taylor (a business associate), 12 September 1943. Paul Braga Papers.

¹¹¹¹ G. Wright-Nooth, *Prisoner of the Turnip Heads*, pp. 50, 55. General Maltby acknowledged the serious nature of both the looting and desertions. 'During the day 11th December fifth column activities developed in Kowloon. Some of the fifth columnists were armed, and rioting and looting occurred in the streets. A large number of launch crews and lorry and car drivers deserted, throwing a heavy handicap on the shoulders of the administrative services — civil, naval and military — particularly in view of the large and hurried evacuation for that evening and night.' Major-General C.M. Maltby, 'Operations in Hong Kong from 8 to 25 December 1941', Supplement to *London Gazette*, 27 January 1948, p. 707.

¹¹¹² Paul Braga to James Braga, 22 October 1943. James Braga Papers.

¹¹¹³ A CD of the tape-recorded interview was made available by Paul's daughter, Frances Rufener.

will] go from the house.’ Paul wrote in reply. ‘This one Portuguese house’.¹¹¹⁴ This ploy was initially successful, but he came to realise that they all had to get out.

The Braga family, economic refugees from impoverished Macau soon after 1841, had in the following century become British to the bootstraps. When Kowloon was hastily abandoned by the British Army they suddenly discovered that they were still Portuguese after all. Now they really were refugees, and in a desperate plight.

¹¹¹⁴ He kept the page as a relic of this critical moment. Paul Braga papers.

Chapter 12

'This terrible nightmare'

The Japanese Occupation, 1941-1945

*Thank God for protecting you all and for bringing us through
this terrible nightmare¹¹¹⁵*

1. 'We could not tell what was next to happen to us'

In 1900, one Joseph was forced into exile by his jealous relatives. Between 1942 and 1945, his son, another Joseph, again like the Biblical patriarch, saved almost his entire family from starvation in a time of great tribulation. Without José Maria (Jack) Braga, it is doubtful that they would have survived the war. Jack's role in the Braga family was crucial in the hard years of the Japanese Occupation of Hong Kong. Soon after the war ended, his sister Caroline would write, 'if ever there was one who deserves highest honours it is Jack'.¹¹¹⁶

Roosevelt's 'day that will live in infamy' was Sunday 7 December. For Hong Kong, on the other side of the International Date Line, that day was Monday 8 December. It is outside the scope of this thesis to discuss the Japanese invasion and subsequent occupation, which have produced an extensive literature.¹¹¹⁷ A few personal accounts of escape were published during the war or soon afterwards.¹¹¹⁸ A little later came the official accounts of the Governor and the GOC.¹¹¹⁹ There has been a

¹¹¹⁵ Maude Franks to Olive Braga, 31 August 1945, James Braga Papers.

¹¹¹⁶ Caroline Braga to James Braga, 21 October 1945, James Braga Papers.

¹¹¹⁷ T. Banham, *We shall suffer there*, pp. 327-328, gives a comprehensive list of 42 books published up to 2005. Henry Ching's column, 'A Bird's Eye View', in the *South China Morning Post* observed on 8 September 1945 that 'to judge from the number of people who are going to write 'em, books on Hong Kong will be two a penny'. In the event, very few did. Those consulted are mentioned in the following five footnotes.

¹¹¹⁸ G.E. Baxter, *Personal experiences during the siege of Hong Kong, December 8th - 25th, 1941*, Sydney, [1943?]; J.H. Marsman, *I escaped from Hong Kong*, Sydney, 1943; R.B. Goodwin, *Hongkong Escape*, London, 1953.

¹¹¹⁹ Sir Mark Young, 'Events in Hong Kong on 25th December 1941', Special Supplement to the *Hong Kong Government Gazette*, 2 July 1948; Major-General C.M. Maltby, 'Operations in Hong Kong from 8 to 25 December 1941', Supplement to *London Gazette*, 27 January 1948.

steady flow of memoirs since then.¹¹²⁰ There followed several histories of the battle itself.¹¹²¹ Over the years, other general accounts followed.¹¹²² In recent years, active interest has been taken in the experience of Hong Kong in the war years.¹¹²³ Contribution to the Portuguese story has been slight until recently.¹¹²⁴ All accounts convey the terror and the confusion of the battle and the early days of surrender.

During the fighting there were occasional glimpses of the old life that was about to be snuffed out. Let two of them suffice. As the battle drew closer to the Central District, many people hid in basements from the shelling and air raids as the Japanese tightened their grip. Sheltering in the basement of the Chartered Bank were the families of the Bank's ten English and twenty Portuguese staff. One of the firm's executives, G.A. Leiper, came down. To his astonishment, the Portuguese children were singing Christmas carols. It was Christmas Eve, and this was the only tiny oasis of peace on what was anything but a silent night. Leiper found it most touching. 'During the past fortnight I had witnessed many tragic sights, but nothing which I had seen or heard exceeded in sheer poignancy the sound of these childish voices.'¹¹²⁵

¹¹²⁰ G. Dew, Gwen, *Prisoner of the Japs*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1943; E. Field, *Twilight in Hong Kong*, London, 1960; J. Gittins, *Stanley: behind barbed wire*, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, 1982; M.F. Key, *Hong Kong before, during and after the Pacific War, being chiefly an account of the Stanley Internment Camp*, Kapunda, South Australia, 1945; G.A. Leiper, *A Yen for my thoughts*, South China Morning Post, Hong Kong, 1982; G. Wright-Nooth, *Prisoner of the Turnip Heads*, London, 1994.

¹¹²¹ E.G. Stewart, *Hong Kong Volunteers in battle*, Hong Kong, 1963, reprinted 8 times until 2005; J. Luff, *The Hidden Years*, Hong Kong, 1967; O. Lindsay, *The lasting honour*, London, 1978, and *At the going down of the sun*, London, 1981.

¹¹²² T. Carew, *The fall of Hong Kong*, London, 1960; A. Birch & M. Cole, *Captive Christmas: the Battle of Hong Kong – December 1941*, Hong Kong, 1979; T. Banham, *Not the slightest chance*, Hong Kong, 2003.

¹¹²³ T. Banham, *We shall suffer there: Hong Kong's defenders imprisoned, 1942-45*, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, 2009; G.C. Emerson, *Hong Kong Internment, 1942-1945: Life in the Japanese Civilian Camp at Stanley*, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, 2008; P. Snow, *The fall of Hong Kong: Britain, China and the Japanese Occupation*, New Haven, 2003; C.G. Roland, *Long Night's Journey into day*, Waterloo, Ontario, Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2001.

¹¹²⁴ Leo d'Almada e Castro, 'Some notes on the Portuguese in Hong Kong' *Boletim Instituto Português de Hongkong*, 11 Sessão, March 1949; L.F.V. Ribeiro, 'Personal account of war experiences'; C. Rozario 'P.O. W. Experiences at Shamshuipo & Sendai Camps', *Voz de Macaenses de Vancouver* November, 2001; L. A. de Sá, *The Boys from Macau*, Macau, 1999; A.M. Jorge da Silva, *The Portuguese community in Hong Kong : a pictorial history*, Vol. 2, 2007; P. Yvanovich, *My Wartime Experience*, privately printed, Canberra, 2009.

¹¹²⁵ G.A. Leiper, *A Yen for my thoughts*, p. 88. The Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China was one of the three note-issuing banks in Hong Kong, the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation being the largest.

The Union Jack came down at 3.25 p.m. at Government House next day and the white flag of surrender was raised over Hong Kong.¹¹²⁶ It was the only time that a British Crown Colony had been surrendered by a civil governor to one of His Majesty's enemies. That evening, a large crowd of British women and children were gathered in the basement of Lane Crawford's, Hong Kong's major department store, when the General Manager came down to announce the surrender. There were screams of dismay and horror, for these women knew what had happened in Nanking. He invited people to help themselves to whatever they wanted. 'It all belongs to the Japanese now', he said. They ignored all the expensive luxuries, and selected only a few essentials.¹¹²⁷

Within a few days, the British civilian population was rounded up and for the next three weeks crammed into filthy brothels and hotels in the Wanchai and Sheung Wan districts, for which they were presented with a bill for \$9,000.¹¹²⁸ They were eventually taken to Stanley on the southern side of the Island. Here, more than 2,500 people were crowded into the premises of a boys' school designed to accommodate 500. They included Maude and her husband Eric, who had been employed as a warder in the gaol next to the school.¹¹²⁹ During the next few days prisoners of war were taken from Hong Kong Island and marched off to camps in Kowloon. Paul Braga, his uniform safely buried, was bewildered to see them smiling and whistling as they went.¹¹³⁰ He wrote that a rumour had got about that Churchill had promised the recapture of Hong Kong within three months.¹¹³¹

¹¹²⁶ G.E. Baxter, *Personal experiences during the siege of Hong Kong*, pp. 15-16. No photographs are known of what must have been a dreadful sight.

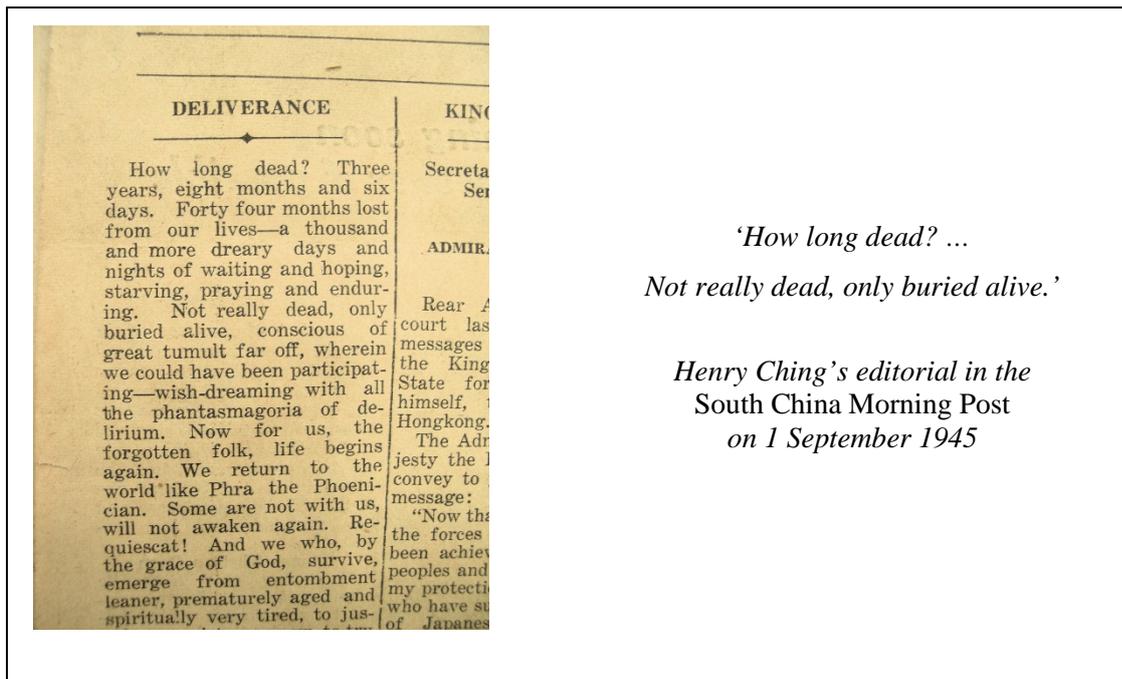
¹¹²⁷ Interview with Gloria da Sousa, Macau, April 1999. Mass rape is well-known to be a means of terrorising a civilian population; it has been reckoned that 10,000 women, including many British women, were raped in Hong Kong during and after the fighting. Li Shu-fan, *Hong Kong Surgeon*, p. 111, cited by P. Snow, *The fall of Hong Kong*, p. 81.

¹¹²⁸ M.F. Key, *Hong Kong before, during and after the Pacific War, being chiefly an account of the Stanley Internment Camp*, p. 4. Key, a leading figure in the business community, was Secretary of the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce.

¹¹²⁹ Eric had briefly been in the Volunteers, as the European prison staff at Stanley gaol had been incorporated into the HKVDC and formed up to fight in military uniform. When Hong Kong surrendered, they changed back into prison officers' uniform and so were interned at Stanley Camp rather than becoming POWs at Shamshuipo (G. Wright-Nooth, *op. cit.*, p. 62). Eric's membership of the Volunteers, though brief, placed him in greater peril when the Japanese rounded up internees accused of illegal activities. (Maude Franks, his wife, to James Braga, 12 February 1946. James Braga Papers).

¹¹³⁰ Paul Braga to James Braga, 22 October 1943. Paul Braga papers.

¹¹³¹ The basis of this was not a rumoured broadcast by Churchill, but an over-optimistic communication from General Maltby, the commander of British forces. His report in 1948 included the following: 'Admiral Chan reported that General Yu Han Mou had wirelessed that 60,000 troops were at Sham Chun on the frontier and were about to attack. The following message was issued to all



That was the first of many myths – Australians would call them ‘furfies’ – that either sustained or disheartened people as the Occupation dragged on for year after year. ‘How long dead?’ began Henry Ching’s editorial in the *South China Morning Post* on 1 September 1945, the first regular issue after liberation. The answer was not three months, but three years, eight months and six days. It is rightly celebrated in newspaper history as one of the finest editorials ever written. It was certainly the most heart-felt.¹¹³² Many would indeed die inside and outside camps and for the whole population those years would be a grim struggle for survival as the incoming Japanese administration was unable to maintain any essential service except, mercifully, the water supply. On the Island that too was cut off in the last days of the fighting, but in Kowloon it had been cut off since 11 December. Paul wrote:

We had no water for the fifteen days that the island was under siege (there was a single bathtub full only from which each person was allowed a mug-full daily), and the food question was getting desperate with our canned supplies running short, there was a

units. ‘There are indications that Chinese forces are advancing towards the frontier to our aid. All ranks must therefore hold their positions at all costs and look forward to only a few more days of strain.’ Major-General C.M. Maltby, *Operations in Hong Kong from 8th to 25th December 1941*, Supplement to the *London Gazette*, 29 January 1948, p. 717. The Japanese were aware of this, replying that it was ‘a fool’s dream’, in a propaganda leaflet dropped on the Island after the fall of Kowloon. P. Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong*, illustration 14 between pp. 196 and 197.

¹¹³² It was reprinted in the *Post* on 3 April 1968, on the occasion of his death, and again reprinted in the paper’s 80th anniversary history. R. Hutcheon, *SCMP, the first eighty years*, p. 99.

feeling of gloom and hopelessness ... our feelings sunk lower with the days – none of us ventured to leave the house and we could not tell what was next to happen to us. Then, about the third or second-last day of the year, three Portuguese lads came up from Frank Soares' house (he was acting Portuguese Consul and turned his house into the Consulate). They had Portuguese flags tied around their arms and little flags on the lapels of their coats – they were 100% Third Nationals. They told us they were able to creep about like this by slipping down side-roads and avoiding the Japs as much as possible, and when accosted, pointed to the flag of a neutral country – their fatherland, this gave us courage to go out so the girls got out some green, red and yellow bits of cloth and sewed most excellent Portuguese flags. (We had become “Our People” indeed!).¹¹³³

It must have been the first time that any of the Bragas other than the patriarch, J.P. Braga, had thought in terms of the Portuguese phrase *Nossa Gente*, ‘Our People’, indicating a proud cultural and patriotic identity with the great discoverers, conquerors and empire-builders four centuries earlier. The Macanese people had often known tribulation; they were to know it again in full measure. Many others shared the Bragas’ apprehension. Two were Francis Ozorio and his brother Charles, boys of eleven and eight, who cowered at the roadside as the Japanese troops marched past. ‘We were bloody terrified.’ Their heads bowed low, they were amazed to see that these soldiers who had defeated the British Army were shod with cheap shoes with canvas uppers.¹¹³⁴ Their lack of good equipment had not stood in the way of a victory that brought Hong Kong to its knees.

Francisco (‘Frank’) Soares had already grasped the situation firmly, and realised that the broadest possible definition would have to be given to *Nossa Gente*. In practical terms, this meant the granting of Portuguese citizenship to hundreds of people who had hitherto claimed to be British. This would enable them to obtain Third National [i.e. neutral countries] passes from the Japanese authorities.¹¹³⁵ This later created much criticism, it being said that he granted papers to

people whose only claim to have anything Portuguese in them lay in that they had eaten Portuguese sardines, [and who] clamoured for Portuguese Identity Cards. Others of Portuguese descent, and who

¹¹³³ Paul Braga to James Braga, 22 October 1943. Paul Braga papers.

¹¹³⁴ Francis Ozorio, to this writer, October 2001. Francisco Ozorio, #30290 and Charles Ozorio, #30312.

¹¹³⁵ Very few of these have survived. One belonged to Jean Braga, who remained in Hong Kong throughout the war. It is in the writer’s possession. It can be imagined with what glee all the others were torn to pieces at the end of the war.

had previously been at pains to conceal their origin, now openly wore arm-bands bearing the Portuguese colours. All of them sought refuge in Macao.¹¹³⁶

Without doubt this action saved lives; Soares was Hong Kong's Schindler. He issued some 600 certificates of Portuguese nationality.¹¹³⁷ The grateful recipients included seventeen members of the Braga family.¹¹³⁸ His grandson, Bosco Correa, explained what occurred.

When the Japanese attacked Hong Kong on 8 December 1941 my grandfather, then 74 years of age, was the Acting Consul for Portugal. He decided to move the Consulate from the Bank of East Asia Building in Des Voeux Road, Central, to his home in Homantin. When Kowloon was abandoned a few days later by the British forces who fell back to Hong Kong Island, looters took over Kowloon and he opened his home and gave refuge to some 400 refugees, mainly Portuguese residents from Homantin and Kowloon Tong.

The logistics to shelter and feed so many people when all utilities such as water, power, gas and telephone were cut off due to the hostilities were immense. Just imagine cooking for so many people and arranging their washing and sanitary needs. Not only was he able to organise all this; he also got all the able-bodied Portuguese residents together and set up street guards to fight off marauding looters, some of whom had to be shot and killed.¹¹³⁹

The Portuguese community was in some ways even worse off than the British, who were at least given scanty rations by their captors. Portuguese civilians were not. Those paid weekly would have received their last pay on Saturday 6 December; those paid monthly, at the end of November. Poorly paid clerks living a hand-to-mouth existence were in dire straits, and there was real distress, though not on the scale of the afflicted Chinese working class. Within six months, according to Tony, 'about half the population have returned to the country. Poor Chinese are dying of

¹¹³⁶ L. d'Almada e Castro, 'Some notes on the Portuguese in Hong Kong', Address at Club Lusitano, Hong Kong (*Instituto Portugues de Hong Kong, Boletim*, no. 2, September 1949, p. 274). D'Almada had no reason to criticise Soares. He was a member of the Hong Kong Legislative Council and a solicitor of the Supreme Court of Hong Kong. In both capacities he had sworn an oath of loyalty to His Majesty the King. He studied law in Britain, travelling on a British passport. He was one of the Portuguese majority to flee to Macau, travelling with Portuguese papers issued by Soares.

¹¹³⁷ J. Forjaz, *Famílias Macaenses*, vol. 3, p. 829.

¹¹³⁸ The seventeen were J.P. Braga, his wife Olive, Jean, Noel, his wife Marjory and their two children, John, his wife Louie and their baby daughter, Paul, his wife Audrey and their two children, Tony, Caroline and Mary. All of them eventually went to Macau except Jean.

¹¹³⁹ B. Correa's reminiscences, quoted by A.M. Jorge da Silva, *The Portuguese community in Hong Kong, a pictorial history*, vol. 1, p. 32.

starvation by the hundreds every day'.¹¹⁴⁰ Following the systematic plunder of Hong Kong's godowns, with supplies sent to Japan by the shipload, there was soon little food left. James Braga obtained a letter from William Vallesuk, Chief Radio Engineer of China Electric Co. Ltd, describing the harrowing situation.

Never, as long as I live, will I forget the scenes of horror, of inhuman suffering, that I have witnessed. People dying by hundreds in the streets; mothers – themselves on the doorsteps of death – wailing over corpses of their infants; the picture of a child of six beheaded in the middle of the street – bullets are too precious to waste – for snatching a handful of rice from a military canteen; women and old men slowly tortured – until they begged for death – for forgetting to bow to a sentry. To a man accustomed to a normal, routine mode of living, these things will sound incredible, unbelievable – yet they happened, and what's more, I've seen them happen with my own eyes.¹¹⁴¹

The Macau government quickly came to appreciate the grave situation of '*nossa gente*' in Hong Kong. A trickle of refugees began as early as 10 December, the third day of fighting.¹¹⁴² After the surrender it became a flood. Within six weeks of the surrender, arrangements were made for a ship-load of refugees to go to Macau in M.V. *Shirogame Maru*. These were people without work or resources. The banks were closed in any case for all except an occasional day when the occupying authority permitted it. They arrived in Macau on 8 February 1942 destitute and starving. There was another shipload of 616 on 20 April and a steady flow for the next three years.¹¹⁴³ It has been estimated that more than 90% of the Portuguese population of Hong Kong eventually sought refuge in Macau.¹¹⁴⁴ Roy Xavier has estimated that up to 30,000 Macanese refugees fled to Macau.¹¹⁴⁵ However, this

¹¹⁴⁰ Tony Braga to James Braga, 27 June 1942. James Braga Papers.

¹¹⁴¹ James Braga Papers. Written in the Embassy of the USSR, Chungking, 9 September 1943.

¹¹⁴² In the motor trawler *Perda*. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/7.4/4.

¹¹⁴³ A figure given by Jack Braga in a chronology of events from 1941 to 1945. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/7.4/4. This figure appears to have been written at the time. R. Pinto, writing in 1996, claimed that 1,203 Portuguese refugees had fled Hong Kong in August 1941, followed by 950 people on 6 January 1942 and another 450 the next day. R. Pinto, 'War in peace', *Macau*, No. 96, p. 90.

¹¹⁴⁴ By Bosco Correa, one of those who stayed. Interview, 21 June 2010.

¹¹⁴⁵ R. E. Xavier, 'World War 11 as a "Defining moment"', pp. 6 and 8, an article on his website, <http://www.fareastcurrents.com>, accessed 26 August 2012. Xavier sought to support his figure thus: 'A more precise number is not available due to the lack of definitive census data during the war years. The number of Portuguese/Macanese refugees may be extrapolated from several sources, including F. Welsh's estimates in, *A Borrowed place: the history of Hong Kong*, p. 437, "The Population of Hong Kong", p. 2, 1974, University of Hong Kong, and "AR 1939", p. M18, a report on Hong Kong's medical and sanitary conditions written in 1939. My estimate includes Macanese from Hong Kong, Canton, Shanghai, Manila, and Timor. The total number of refugees in Macau is estimated by Joachim Groder, a researcher at the University of Salzburg, Austria, at about 1 million, as noted in Melina Dawn Cannon's Master's Thesis, 'Experience, Memory, and the Construction of the Past:

figure seems grossly exaggerated, the Portuguese population of Hong Kong being ca. 10,000 in 1940.¹¹⁴⁶ The only people who stayed were trying to protect their property.

In Hong Kong, the dwindling Portuguese community established a Portuguese Residents' Association. Bosco Correa, among the few who lived in Hong Kong throughout the Japanese Occupation, described its role:

Its purpose was to assist in the distribution of bread, rice and sugar supplied by the Japanese to the Portuguese community. The Association had various zonal centres: three in Kowloon and one on Hong Kong Island. Its committee was made up of the leaders of the various local Portuguese clubs and associations ... We of course had to pay for all our rations! These PRA centres lasted for about a year or so. With the vast evacuation of the Portuguese community to Macau the Japanese ceased their rations to us and instead issued us with ration cards for us to line up for hours at a public distribution centre in the northern end of Cumberland Road in Kowloon Tong for rice rations only.¹¹⁴⁷

In June 1942, Noel's wife Marjory confirmed this, writing that 'we are allowed a ration of bread daily from the Portuguese centre, but we expect this to cease at any moment'.¹¹⁴⁸

The Braga family took stock of the situation. Jack sent clandestine messages from Macau via a Japanese vessel begging them to come across, but they demurred, gradually going back home instead. Paul's house, close to the Argentine Consul's 'fortress', had escaped looting, and he returned, with his father. Initially, J.P. Braga thought he could do something to assist in helping the employees of the companies of which he had been a director, but reluctantly came to realise that he had no influence whatever in what the Japanese called 'the New Hong Kong'.¹¹⁴⁹ When electricity was restored – it would eventually cease altogether – he spent hours glued to the radio. Paul tuned it to San Francisco, 'as the announcers were so full of

Remembering Macau 1941-1945', August 2001, University of British Columbia. No refugee statistics for the period 1941 to 1945 were kept by the Macau government'. Xavier was a Visiting Scholar for 2012-2013 in the Institute for the Study of Societal Issues, University of California, Berkeley.

¹¹⁴⁶ See Appendix 2.

¹¹⁴⁷ A.M. Jorge da Silva, *The Portuguese community in Hong Kong, a pictorial history*, Vol. 2, p. 30.

¹¹⁴⁸ Marjory Braga to her mother, Ethel Morris, in England, 26 June 1942. James Braga Papers.

¹¹⁴⁹ According to Jack's preface to J.P. Braga's book, *The Portuguese in Hongkong and China*. 'The New Hong Kong' was a term frequently used in the *Hongkong News*, the English-language newspaper published by the Japanese authorities between early 1942 and August 1945.

enthusiasm that you thought the war almost over.’¹¹⁵⁰ His father became seriously ill after the fall of Singapore on 15 February, but recovered, particularly after Doolittle’s air raid on Tokyo on 18 April 1942. No-one would admit that this was a mere gesture, and that major bombing would not begin for another year. He remained in Hong Kong with Paul until Jack’s entreaties became irresistible some months later.

Olive had refused to go to the air raid tunnel during the fighting, perilously remaining on the upper floor of Paul’s house, even though Hugh’s house, only seven doors away, was badly damaged by British shelling. Family members took turns to stay with her, at the risk of their lives. At the end of the war, Olive remembered it all in vivid detail.

I stayed in Paul’s house, with Rollo, Paul’s dog, shivering under my knees while the shells exploded close to us. Then the looters came in a mob. They smashed the windows of the front door, but God gave me a great deliverance, for the British forts began shelling again and drove them away.¹¹⁵¹

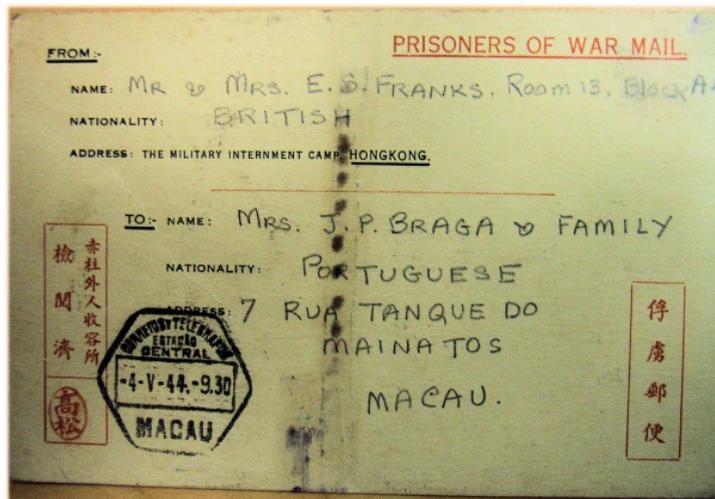
Once the fighting ended, she just as stubbornly insisted on returning to her home at Knutsford Terrace. It so happened that one of the tenants of No. 10 Knutsford Terrace before the war had been a friendly Japanese officer. Only Japanese officers now had cars, and he took Olive, Caroline and Mary home by car. She and her husband would never live under the same roof again. The separation, effectively begun at least 25 years earlier when Chappie died, at last became actual. Tony, Noel and Marjory returned on foot. Jean had remained at Knutsford Terrace during the frenzy of looting, with Theo Ingram. Tony – unable to mention Ingram by name – reported:

At home [Knutsford Terrace], Jean with that big fellow, the dogs and the neighbours, chased off the looters and we lost nothing to speak of. After Hong Kong surrendered he gave himself up and was interned.¹¹⁵²

¹¹⁵⁰ This was a world-wide phenomenon. Ed Murrow, the American broadcaster, said of Britain in 1940 that ‘there never was so much radio listening’. People would stop and listen to every news broadcast.

¹¹⁵¹ Olive Braga to Hugh Braga, 10 September 1945. James Braga Papers. Some time later, as order was restored, gangs of looters were strung up to chain link fences on Kadoorie Avenue, beaten and left to die. T. Banham, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

¹¹⁵² Tony Braga to James Braga, 27 June 1942. James Braga Papers.



JUNE 22, 1943.

DEAREST HOME FOLK -
 DELIGHTED CARRIES,
 LOUISA'S, MAJORY'S MESSAGES
 & KNUTSFORD KINDNESSES.
 I'M VERY FIT; ALSO ERIC.
 CHILDREN MUST BE
 GROWING; HOW WE'RE
 LONGING TO SEE YOU ALL.
 HOPE ALL IN MACAU.

[REDACTED] HAVE
 GREAT HOPES.
 KATHERINE'S
 BABY IS LOVELY
 LOVE TO FATHER,
 MOTHER & EVERYBODY.
 MAUDE, ERIC

This card was written on 22 June 1943. It did not pass through the post office in Macau until 4 May the next year.

Olive's version of it was that Ingram was hiding in the basement.¹¹⁵³ For a time, a semblance of normality returned to this quiet back street, though no-one had any work or income. Economic activity had all but ceased and with the exception of

¹¹⁵³ Olive Braga to James Braga, undated, but late 1942.

limited retail trading, remained in a state of collapse throughout the Occupation. Unable to face the reality of defeat, the Bragas of Knutsford Terrace clung to what they knew – home, furniture, music and each other’s emotional support. Tony, absurdly optimistic, also clung to the notion of an early British return, telling everyone that the war would end any day now. As they sold possessions on the limited black market to stay alive, and as the price of what little food there was soared, their standard of living and therefore their health deteriorated sharply. Tony wrote that they had only one servant and therefore all had to do some housework, a novel experience for all of them except Marjory.¹¹⁵⁴ The ‘PBs’ were naturally averse to going to Catholic Macau. It was a last resort, and Marjory, for one, was determined to put off the evil day for as long as possible. She told her mother that ‘we have been allowed to draw most of our money from the bank and this has kept us going ... after that we shall be cast on the Lord and it may necessitate us going to Macao, but we wait on Him for guidance in this matter. We live on rice and vegetables, as meat is prohibitive.’¹¹⁵⁵

Maude and her husband Eric Franks had no decisions to make as to where they would live. Early arrivals at Stanley Camp, they were allocated to kitchen duties, retaining this role for the duration of the war.¹¹⁵⁶ Like all internees, they suffered from lack of food, lack of news and lack of privacy, the three things that above all other forms of deprivation people found hard to endure. There was always the fear of atrocity. The execution at Stanley on 29 October 1943 of thirty-two internees for listening to a clandestine radio was the worst instance of their captors’ harshness and

¹¹⁵⁴ Tony Braga to James Braga, 27 June 1942. James Braga Papers.

¹¹⁵⁵ Marjory Braga to Ethel Morris, 26 June 1942.

¹¹⁵⁶ Stanley Camp has received attention, particularly from G. Wright-Nooth, *Prisoner of the Turnip Heads* and G.C. Emerson, *Hong Kong Internment, 1942-1945: Life in the Japanese Civilian Camp at Stanley* and C. Chu, ‘Stanley Internment Camp’, in C. Chu (ed.), *Foreign Communities in Hong Kong, 1840s-1950s*. The important role of Franklin Gimson, who as Colonial Secretary was the senior government officer there, has yet to receive adequate attention. In my view, Gimson did not deserve the calumnies heaped on his head by internees and repeated by Emerson. However, Emerson, in his introduction, acknowledges that his judgement had been too heavily influenced by these criticisms, but in publishing his book in 2008, he did not bother to revise conclusions reached in a Master’s thesis completed thirty years earlier. Gimson’s own account is remarkably forbearing and self-effacing. F.C. Gimson, ‘Internment of European civilians at Stanley during the Japanese Occupation of Hong Kong, 1941-1945’.

cruelty.¹¹⁵⁷ Eric was lucky to escape with his life. Maude kept the story to herself until they were back in Britain.

Although hungry most of the time, we were unmolested, and we had a room (although terribly small) to ourselves. On occasions when others in the camp were punished, and we might have been, we were left alone. On one occasion when the Japs were looking for arms which the men had hidden when they first arrived in the camp, we felt sure that Eric would be called, because he had buried a number of rifles and ammunition. I called on Miss Wilson [a missionary friend] and together we prayed and Eric's name was not even mentioned, and yet another man who knew what Eric had done because he had been with him at the time, was taken up by the Japs and executed.¹¹⁵⁸

Maude was able on one occasion early in their captivity to smuggle out a small pencilled note to her family, perhaps between June 1942 and mid-1943. The bearer ran a grave risk of discovery. Amazingly, while visiting Stanley in January 1946 with her brother Hugh, Caroline met this brave person. She was a Chinese guard, and she had indeed been caught with some-one else's note, and had been tortured by her Japanese superiors.¹¹⁵⁹ Maude wrote:

Dearest home folk –

Thank you very much for parcel & letter from Marj [Marjory]. Have replied officially but only limited to 50 words which explains brevity. Do not know the conditions outside, but would it be better for you to go to Macao? Perhaps mother's condition prevents move. If you do please let us know. The money we sent came from Socony [the Standard Vacuum Oil Co, installation at Laichikok] before the Americans left for America and I felt that your need was greater than ours. We are fairly well fed. Eric's bread is really 1st class – he intends to go in for a bakery when we get out of here.

Glad to know you are all alright, but I guess it is difficult to get proper food. This is hurried so please excuse scribble.

Much dear love to each one. We pray that you will be kept safe and well.

¹¹⁵⁷ T. Banham, *We shall suffer there*, pp. 126, 136-138. Charles Boxer narrowly escaped their fate. After the war he could not bear to hear the sound of a radio. D. Alden, J.S. Cummins and M. Cooper, *Charles R. Boxer: an uncommon life: soldier, historian, teacher, collector, traveller*, p. 226.

¹¹⁵⁸ Maude Franks to James Braga, 12 February 1946, written at Camberwell, London. James Braga Papers. It has proved difficult to verify this account. T. Banham, *We shall suffer there*, provides lists of deaths at Stanley: 1942, p. 105; 1943, p. 151; 1944, pp. 184-185; 1945, pp. 240-241. The unnamed witness to Eric's action could be one of several named in these lists. It is unlikely that Maude was referring to the executions on 29 October 1943.

¹¹⁵⁹ Caroline Braga to James Braga, 7 January 1946. James Braga Papers.

In the next few years, Maude was able to write occasional cards, clearly printed so that Japanese censors could read them. There were occasional bright spots in the tension and deprivation of Hong Kong. John wrote to his mother-in-law in Edinburgh:

Somehow, from the most unexpected sources, help would come when we most needed it, often in the very nick of time ... Some of the Jap soldiers were most kind and I hope it will be possible for me to repay them some day. I think of Naoji Mori, just a common soldier, who came almost daily for some weeks with food, especially for Rosemary; he it was who several times drove away very evil men.¹¹⁶¹

Gradually, they gave way to the inevitable. The first to go to Macau was John's wife Louie with her baby Rosemary. A highly intelligent medical student, she knew better than anyone else the corrosive effects of slow starvation, especially on infants. She was on the Portuguese refugee ship on 20 April. Her husband John stayed a little longer. J.P. Braga still hoped to make a contribution to what the Japanese called 'the new Hongkong'.¹¹⁶² Tony told Francisco Monteiro, a friend who besought the Braga family to come to Macau:

Father considers that he should remain here as long as possible, because as a director of several companies in Hong Kong in which large numbers of Portuguese were employed, he may be of some service to the authorities and possibly to members of the Portuguese community if questions should arise having to do with the companies with which he was connected which would require his personal attendance.¹¹⁶³

It took several more months before J.P. Braga could accept that all that he had sought to achieve in Hong Kong had been destroyed. In March he was still grasping at straws. He told Monteiro:

¹¹⁶⁰ Maude Franks to Braga family, n.d. Few notes can have been smuggled out of Stanley; still fewer can have survived to the present day. James Braga Papers. Americans were repatriated in a prisoner exchange in June 1942. G.E. Baxter, *Personal Experiences during the siege of Hong Kong*, pp.42-48.

¹¹⁶¹ John Braga to Mrs Ashton, Edinburgh [Louie's mother], 23 February 1943. James Braga Papers.

¹¹⁶² A term frequently used in the *Hongkong News*, the English-language newspaper published by the Japanese authorities between early 1942 and August 1945.

¹¹⁶³ Tony Braga to F.X. Monteiro. 16 February 1942. J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/8.1/12.

Our resources are running low and the future is rather worrying ... let us trust in a kind Providence to see us through the present difficult times.¹¹⁶⁴

He did not leave until 1 June, travelling on Portuguese National Pass No. 3639 to Macau where he lived with Jack at 6 Rua de S. António.¹¹⁶⁵ He was accompanied by John. Paul, Audrey and their two children followed a few weeks later. Noel's knowledge of Japanese was a great asset to him, as he was able to go to places where none of the others dared. He made five trips to Macau during 1942 before eventually taking his family across at the end of January 1943.¹¹⁶⁶

Thus in the first year after the Japanese Occupation began, all the married men left Hong Kong and went to Macau. It seems astonishing that it took so long for this to happen, but their mind-set of negativity towards Macau cannot be overlooked. For Macau to be seen as a haven, as a destination of choice, was a completely new idea, and one that they could grasp only with difficulty. Still more was this true of Olive's thinking, even after five of her married sons were established there and pleading with her to come over. Her years of loneliness and misery in Macau from 1900 to 1906 were still a heavy memory.

2. 'Please remember the family in your prayers in these dark days'

It is a truism that war brings out the best and the worst in people. This was indeed the case in the Braga family. The grave crisis brought out the best in Jack and Augusta who shouldered a great burden as by slow degrees, all the Hong Kong Bragas except Jean arrived, destitute, on their doorstep. They were kind, hospitable and caring. It brought out the best in Marjory and Noel as well. Augusta was a very devout Catholic, Marjory an equally devout Protestant. While far apart in religious adherence, they were closely united in Christian attitudes. Both were self-sacrificing and always looking for ways of serving others.

¹¹⁶⁴ J.P. Braga to F.X. Monteiro. 10 March 1942. J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/13.1/12.

¹¹⁶⁵ J.P. Braga to Tony Braga, 26 September 1942. Paul Braga Papers. An earlier letter indicated a different Pass Number: 7611. Presumably a new pass was required to permit travel. J.P. Braga to F.X. Monteiro, 10 April 1942. J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/8.1/12.

¹¹⁶⁶ Notes by Paul Braga, 22 October 1943. Paul Braga Papers. On one of these Noel was able to take his piano, without which his mother refused to go. It had a secret drawer, and in this he hid the share register of China Light, rightly considering it the most essential of the company's records. Marjory Braga interview, May 1996. The piano remained in her possession in London until shortly before her death in 2005.

Noel and Marjory lived up to the reputation they had earned in many years of Christian discipleship at the Gospel Hall. Paul wrote of them appreciatively. During the fighting, Noel, 'as might be expected, was the "willing horse" during and after war [8-25 December] and was general peace-maker. Marji came through in a marvellous way – shouldered most of the heavy kitchen work'. Noel's efforts in 1943 to get his mother and three sisters still in Hong Kong to join them in Macau met with frustration. Paul, who saw what was happening, wrote of Noel's attempt with a mixture of admiration and concern.

Much against Marji's wishes and pleadings [Noel] made final trip to Hong Kong to fetch Mother and Mary who were to have been ready to leave. They were not, so he had to wait around for weeks during which time he got dysentery, then developed into colitis – very nearly died. Marji was frantic as British Consul was at the time warning refugees to get their relatives to come without delay – emphasised was of vital importance. Cables and letters were sent and at last she decided on something on these lines "Marji seriously ill further delay may be too late". Noel had to be carried onto the ship, and at the wharf in Macao we understood why he couldn't get away. Was down to 96 lbs [i.e. 43.5 kg. He had been 135 lbs or 61 kg] and looked not much better than the Chinese destitute dying in the streets of Hong Kong and Macao. Marji agreed with us all that had he stayed on in Hong Kong we would never have seen him again. He said the food the family was eating would not have been good enough for our dogs before the war and it surprised him that they were so anxious to hold onto their belongings in Hong Kong at the expense of their lives – especially when they knew living conditions in Macao were as near normal as could be expected. ... He was in a very serious condition – required a transfusion, and the doctor did not know how to treat him.¹¹⁶⁷

Olive, Jean, Tony, Caroline and Mary remained at Knutsford Terrace. All Olive would say is that 'everyone's nerves are in a tangle and the strain, hardship and fear has aged all, and all are like shadows. My eyes and ears are failing'.¹¹⁶⁸ Stupefaction had set in. Paul had strong words in assessing the role played by Tony, when instead of being decisive and dynamic he was inert and supine.

From being the most optimistic person, [Tony] became the greatest pessimist after surrender. When he regained his optimism after news of Midway and Solomon battles, he allowed optimism to develop

¹¹⁶⁷ A note hastily scribbled by Paul on 22 October 1943 about Noel and Marjory included in a letter he was typing for James. He had to stop typing as the plane was about to leave Chungking. James Braga Papers.

¹¹⁶⁸ Olive Braga to James Braga, late 1942, James Braga Papers

into a violent form of stubbornness. He of all persons should have left Hong Kong because of his service in the Volunteers (several volunteers were discovered by Japs and were punished before being interned). He has a fixed idea that he should “see the war through” in Hong Kong and that those who stay on will have “preference” with all the best jobs in the “Post-War” re-building plans. Makes any number of sacrifices – if anything he gave way to the girls and Mother too much for their own good – he knew all along it was best for them in Macao and it was in his power to make them go. This has affected everyone in a very marked way, and if he could only have been persuaded to visit Macao he would have changed his view. Regarded Jack’s and British Consul’s warnings as “alarms” – such a great pity.¹¹⁶⁹

It is at once evident where some of the problems lay in a fraught situation. Tony, a keen reader of Dickens, emulated one of his favourite characters, Mr Micawber, well-meaning, but forever waiting for something to turn up.¹¹⁷⁰ Olive was self-centred, dominating, manipulative, relentlessly obstinate and caught up in a mystical dream world that she took to be the Will of God. Jean and Caroline were determined to stay if there was any chance that they could take food parcels to their sweethearts Theo and Norman. Mary always did as she was told. Tony told Monteiro:

As regards Mother, we feel that it would be dangerous for her to make the trip during the cold weather because when she is out of doors she feels the slightest wind during the cooler months very keenly. If it should become advisable for her to go in the summer, Mary will accompany her. Mary is very devoted to Mother, who relies greatly on her.¹¹⁷¹

Meanwhile, in Macau. Audrey’s flamboyance got the better of her, and she enraged those she had to deal with on a daily basis.¹¹⁷² As in Stanley Camp, the overcrowding, the lack of privacy and the uncertainty of the situation tended to blow things out of proportion, and a small irritation could become a major quarrel because

¹¹⁶⁹ Notes by Paul Braga, 22 October 1943. Paul Braga Papers. In the second of these notes, about Tony, written in evident haste, Paul omitted most prepositions, which have been supplied here.

¹¹⁷⁰ He gave Noel a copy of *David Copperfield* for Christmas 1924. Noel Braga Diary, 23 December 1924. To the present writer he wrote on 20 March 1991, ‘I have been renewing one of the chief pleasures of my boyhood years by reading again all the works of Charles Dickens’.

¹¹⁷¹ Tony Braga to F.X. Monteiro, 16 February 1942. J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/8.1/12.

¹¹⁷² John Braga to Olive Braga, 2 November 1942. In making copies in 1946 to send around the family, James wisely softened the most searing comments. He wrote ‘Audrey [Paul’s wife] has a genius for making enemies for herself’, but in the original letter Audrey was described in far more scathing terms. ‘Audrey is clever; and so is the devil – both have a genius for making enemies of themselves. While I think of her as a living Jezebel, she has already infuriated Clement into calling her something not very different’.

there was no getting away from each other.¹¹⁷³ All were hungry. The few letters that reached relatives in the USA or Britain never mentioned this. It would distress them needlessly, and they were powerless to help. Marjory was, as ever, a calming influence. Well might Paul conclude his letter to Hugh in Australia, ‘please remember the family in your prayers in these dark days’.¹¹⁷⁴

Eventually, Caroline did go to Macau in May 1943, perhaps seeing what a physical wreck Noel had become, and no longer able to send anything to Norman. Olive at last went to Macau in August 1943. Mary dutifully followed. They lived at 7 Rua Tanque dos Mainatos with Noel, who had made so many perilous journeys the year before, taking her books, papers and an array of medicines in preparation for the long-delayed event. When she arrived she was able to play the piano Noel had earlier brought over. Shutting out the harsh reality of Hong Kong under enemy occupation, Olive had retreated into a strange little world of her own, her children subservient to her every whim. Caroline told her brother James:

All the tonics and medicines you stocked up before you left Hong Kong [for the USA in 1940] were passed by the Japanese when we came over and have been made use of. In bringing them over we had no trouble at all with the searchers. I think the Japanese were very fed up in examining so many odds and ends wrapped up in such a curious way with odd names that Mother gave them, which they could not understand: for instance, Mother gave salt the name of Muppin; brandy she poured into a dark-brown bottle which used to hold hydrogen peroxide and many other jokes she played on the old Jap.¹¹⁷⁵

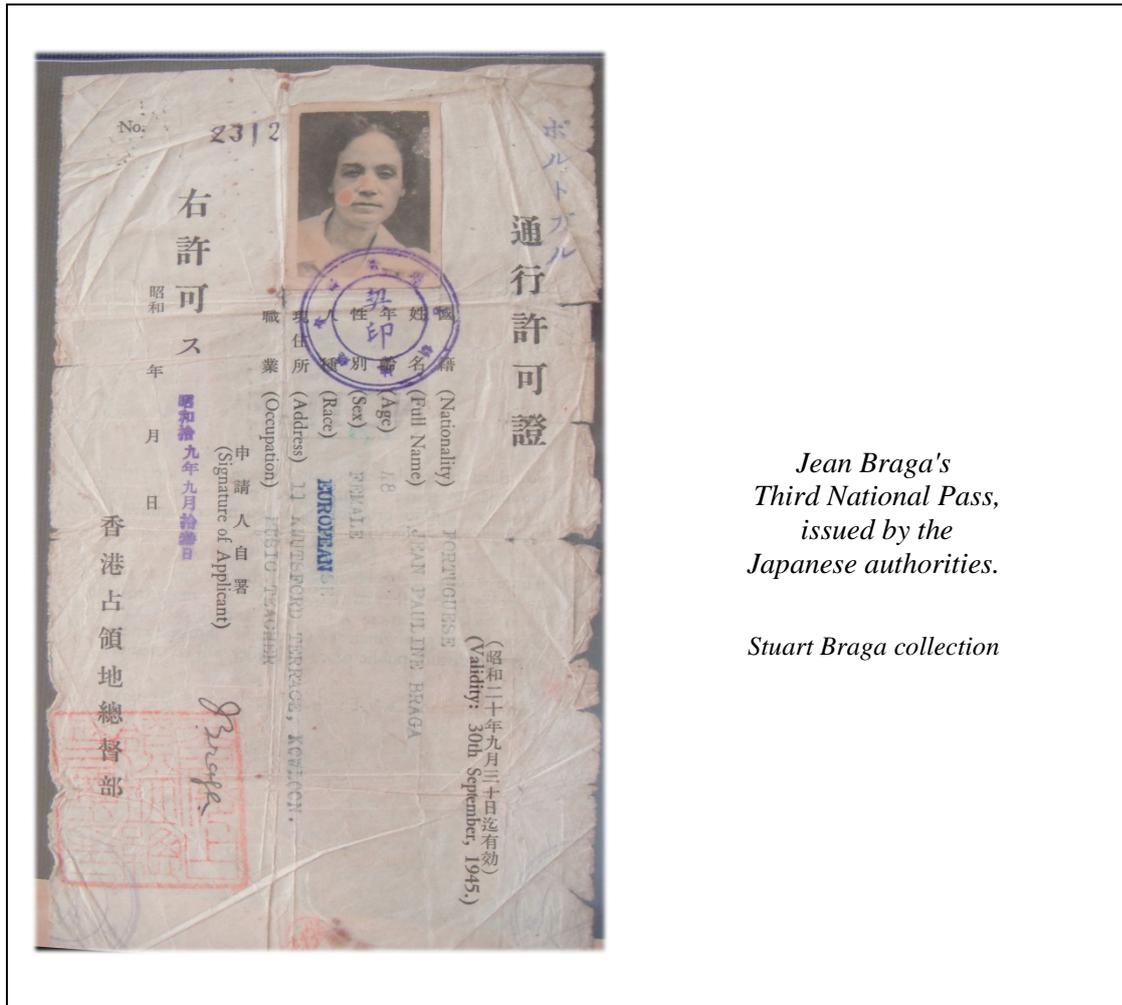
Caroline had her own way of coping with ‘the old Jap’. All people had to bow low to every Japanese soldier, but Caroline told this writer that she would do no such thing. However, she felt the need, whenever she saw one, to stoop to adjust a safety pin on her dress.

Tony remained for another year, endlessly procrastinating and falling ill with one malnutrition-related problem after another. Jean wrote that ‘it has been ... most

¹¹⁷³ T. Banham, *We shall suffer there*, p. 21; C. Chu, ‘Stanley Internment Camp, in C. Chu (ed.), *Foreign Communities in Hong Kong, 1840s-1950s*, p. 142. After the war, John told one of Jean’s pupils that he had been so hungry he used to play the violin in the street to get money (‘Post-war I met up with one of the brothers - John, a talented violinist. He told us that when in Macao during the war, he was so hungry he used to play the violin in the street to get money.’ Barbara Anslow, entry in the website ‘hongkongwardiary’, 4 December 2010).

¹¹⁷⁴ Paul Braga to Hugh Braga, 1 November 1943. Paul Braga Papers.

¹¹⁷⁵ Caroline Braga to James Braga, 21 October 1945. James Braga Papers.



*Jean Braga's
Third National Pass,
issued by the
Japanese authorities.*

Stuart Braga collection

depressing with Tony so helpless and ill.’¹¹⁷⁶ The next January Tony told Noel, ‘I intend leaving as soon as it becomes possible, but there’s no knowing when that will be’. Despite the grave risk of being exposed as a Volunteer, he stayed, enjoying his unwonted independence. Two months later he wrote, ‘My packing has been sadly neglected, I am sorry to say, mainly because I have been engaged almost every day in some very hard-fought games of chess.’ On 7 April 1944 he wrote, expecting to leave the following week, but not until June was he definitely in Macau, also staying with Noel and Marjory.¹¹⁷⁷

Jean was pleased to be alone, free at last of her mother’s constant presence and insistent demands. Her mother wrote to say that it broke her up to think of Jean

¹¹⁷⁶ Jean Braga to Olive Braga, 14 February 1944. James Braga Papers.

¹¹⁷⁷ A series of postcards, 6 January, 7 March and 7 April 1944. A letter from Tony Braga to the *Macau Tribune*, 23 August 1944, mentioned that he had been in Macau for two months. James Braga Papers.

living on in the big family home. Jean replied with a blast. ‘Why should you worry on my account, when I do not?’ The obvious reason for staying in Hong Kong was that ‘I can’t bear to see these houses ruthlessly looted.’ However, there was far more to it than that. She had discovered independence.

About “peace” – this is attained when one can go ahead doing one’s best without hindrances. Up till now, I have enjoyed a quiet and peace that electricity & water & other comforts cannot give. Here I rise with the dawn, finish my housework before 10 am, & can go about my business without upsetting the habits & time tables of others & their feelings too. This year my health has never been so good, because thinking and acting for myself have made me strong. Food has never tasted so good, because my appetite has never been so keen. Work has never been so pleasant, because there has never been anyone to find fault. Sleep has never been so sound, because I have never been so tired. Real friends have never been so loyal, because they have been tried and not found wanting. Pleasures like playing on the grand piano & gardening have never been so enjoyable, because I can now spare the time for them. My music upsets no-one’s nerves and even singing (or is it screeching?) is music to me & who else cares? ¹¹⁷⁸

It was the clearest of statements that Jean was determined never again to be under her mother’s powerful thumb. In fact she too knew real hardship right through the war, holding the fort at Knutsford Terrace. She had a few pupils still, but survived thanks to a huge mulberry tree that stood in the grounds. She discovered that the Japanese had a liking for mulberries, and sold the fruit to them.¹¹⁷⁹ The proceeds of that and of keeping rabbits kept her going – just.

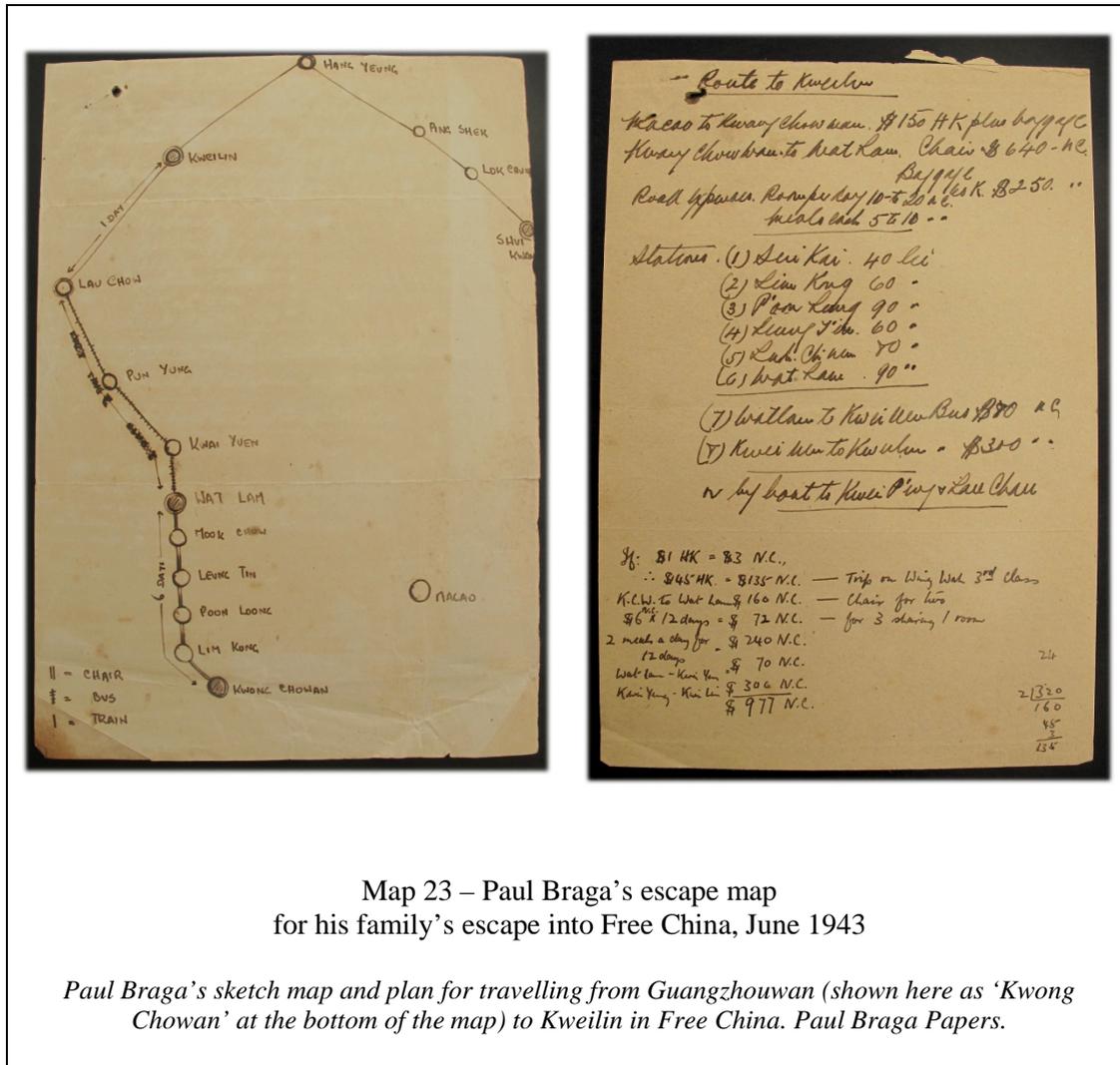
Jean’s youngest brother Paul also determined to follow an independent path. Like Jean, he did not see a future in Macau, though for entirely different reasons. Once in Macau in mid-1942, Paul had his own house, close to Jack and almost a mile from Clement, John and Noel. Unlike his brothers, who had always been employees, he was a businessman, and began to look for opportunities, even in these difficult circumstances. However, he soon saw that this was impossible, and also realised how precarious Macau was. His letters reveal his concern that strained relations between Japan and Portugal over Timor might lead to the occupation of Macau as well as Hong Kong, a disaster from which there could be no escape for the Braga family or anyone else. ‘It is almost certain they will starve’, he told Hugh.¹¹⁸⁰

¹¹⁷⁸ Jean Braga to Olive Braga, 14 December 1944. James Braga Papers.

¹¹⁷⁹ Caroline Braga to James Braga, 21 October 1945. James Braga Papers.

¹¹⁸⁰ Paul Braga to Hugh Braga, 1 November 1943. Paul Braga Papers.

Moreover, Audrey was pregnant with their third child, due in December 1943. He had no option but to escape.



Map 23 – Paul Braga’s escape map for his family’s escape into Free China, June 1943

Paul Braga’s sketch map and plan for travelling from Guangzhouwan (shown here as ‘Kwong Chowan’ at the bottom of the map) to Kweilin in Free China. Paul Braga Papers.

He made his plans carefully, but was delayed for several weeks, as ‘the Japanese have stopped issuing passes for Europeans’ and ‘it being impossible for the time being to get anybody willing to risk taking us through’.¹¹⁸¹ On 4 July 1943 the family arrived in Kweilin.¹¹⁸² Methodical in everything he did, Paul planned the journey, drawing a sketch map of the journey in which they would travel along an indirect route, moving partly through occupied territory, using whatever mode of

¹¹⁸¹ Paul Braga, note to unnamed person, 19 May 1943. Carbon copy in Paul Braga Papers.

¹¹⁸² Paul Braga to J.P. Reeves, British Consul in Macau, 6 July 1943. Paul Braga Papers.

transport they could, even a sedan chair for the first six days.¹¹⁸³ He wrote to his father that ‘the Chinese authorities placed [a] military escort of 7 soldiers at our disposal upon setting foot in Free China so were we absolutely safe from robbers.’¹¹⁸⁴ He hoped to develop business contacts in Kweilin, but living there proved difficult and precarious. He became Manager of the Red Cross Club until Kweilin was evacuated, as Japanese forces approached.¹¹⁸⁵ During the months they were in Kweilin their second son, Joseph Peter, was born on 27 December 1943. Kweilin, threatened by the advancing Japanese Army, was a difficult and uncertain place for a European fugitive.

At the end of the war, he told Jack that ‘the months that followed were days of anxiousness and worry ... there were many many times when we regretted with all our hearts that that we ever left Macao ... Father’s reputation and standing was the thing that pulled me through some very anxious moments and never did I lose sight of this.’¹¹⁸⁶ By October 1944 Paul and his family were in Chungking, where Paul, always personable and with a gift for relating well to people, found a temporary position. By then it was clear that the war was drawing to a conclusion, and Paul considered that the opportunities for business in China after the war were almost limitless, based on trade with America.

After a long delay, Paul and his family were able to fly out of China, over the ‘Hump’ to Calcutta. The west coast of the USA was the place to be, and Paul’s contacts enabled him to get there by January 1945, via Sydney, where he had a long conversation with Hugh about the state of affairs in Macau. Paul hoped to be an agent for an American interested in trading opportunities in the Far East after the war. However this did not eventuate. He paid a visit to James in Chicago as soon as he was able. James had hoped to give Paul financial assistance, but in the event, Paul gave money to James. Since his ordination in 1940, James had pastored Grace Gospel Church, a small congregation unable to pay a living stipend. He did not abandon it, for James had no desire to lay up treasure on earth and he had no children to provide for.

¹¹⁸³ Paul Braga Papers.

¹¹⁸⁴ Paul Braga to J.P. Braga, 1 August 1943. J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/8.1/12/

¹¹⁸⁵ Paul Braga to Jack Braga, 21 November 1945. Copy in James Braga Papers.

¹¹⁸⁶ Paul Braga to Jack Braga, 21 November 1945. J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/2.3/9.

(Modelo n.º 801)

Serviço Telegráfico das Colónias Portuguesas

Indicações de serviço P	O Estado não é responsável pelas consequências da transmissão ou recepção incorrecta dos telegramas, nem pela demora da sua transmissão, recepção ou entrega. Advertencia: — Esta minuta deve acompanhar qualquer reclamação que o expeditor ou destinatário fizerem acerca de erros na transmissão ou demora na entrega.	Telegrama de recepção N.º 140 3-11-43 Marca do dia
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Em 25 de - de 25 De **SYDNEYPO** N.º 428 Transmittiu (a) CUX
 Recebeu SIMPLICIO às 04/30

Nome do destinatário: DLT BRAGA
 Endereço: 6 RUA ANTONIO MACAU

ANY NEWS FAMILY ALSO BRADBURY SIDNEY FOWLER DO YOU
NEED FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE LOVE -
BRAGA 9 OAKLAND AVENUE BEECROFT SYDNEY

Reph: -
All Bragas safe Manderie interned others coming
Macao soon stop Fowler Bradley both philosophically
enduring internment stop financially all still
able manage thanks love.

Cor # 111-80

(*) Iniciais da estação transmissora e nome do empregado que transmittiu.

Paul spent the last months of the war in San Francisco, where, as an outsider, he was not able to develop the openings he hoped for. Eventually, he and his family returned to Hong Kong, living in Kowloon Tong, a good residential area in North Kowloon. In writing to his brothers, James and Hugh, on either side of the Pacific after he reached Chungking, Paul did not try to hide or to exaggerate the situation in Macau.

The present population is between 350 and 400 thousand of which 95% is Chinese, the majority refugees from Hong Kong. At the time of our escape into China, literally thousands were lying around the sidewalks everywhere, dying of starvation. The authorities were picking up 60 to 80 dead daily, and the figure was expected to rise to at least 200 before the end of summer ... with the cost of food from 20 to 60 times their pre-war rate, their funds cannot be expected to go very far. The effect this malnutrition [has] on people in Occupied parts is indescribable. With the exception of those who work with or for the Nips, practically everyone has a colourless, parchment-like skin. Each has that drawn expression of constant strain and worry, and hardly without exception, they are very considerably underweight.¹¹⁸⁷

¹¹⁸⁷ Paul Braga to Hugh Braga, 1 November 1943. Paul Braga Papers.

Paul told Hugh that he would suggest to Jack that he should ‘wire you for money. I’m sure that will be alright with you’. That had already occurred more than a year before. In June 1942, Tony told James that Hugh has ‘cabled Jack very kindly offering to help the family financially’.¹¹⁸⁸ Hugh asked about his neighbours as well as the family: ‘Any news family also Bradbury Sidney Fowler do you need financial assistance love Braga’. Jack replied, ‘All Bragas safe Mauderic interned others coming Macao soon stop Fowler Bradbury both philosophically enduring internment stop financially all still able manage thanks love’.¹¹⁸⁹

It appears that despite Jack’s response, Hugh did transmit upwards of \$2,000 to Macau in 1942 and 1943. Jack kept an account of how the money was spent between March 1942 and January 1944, ‘Father’s up-keep’ being the major item.¹¹⁹⁰

Hugh’s A/c

Hugh 12/1/42	\$ 591.10
21/4/43	<u>\$1,515.48</u>
	<u>\$2,106.58</u>
Rent of Ground Floor (March)	\$70
Mother (through Noel)	\$200
Rent of Ground Floor (April)	\$70
Butter for family	\$78
Father’s up-keep (June-December, 1942)	\$700
Rent of Ground Floor (May)	\$70
Rice, etc., supplied to Audrey	\$23
Rent of Ground Floor (June)	\$70
Advance to Marjory (Noel’s illness)	\$100
Rent of Ground Floor (July)	\$70
Audrey’s house rent (1 month) <u>old house</u>	\$50
August 1943 <u>new house</u>	\$78
Rent of Ground Floor (August)	\$70
Clement for Audrey’s watchmen and furniture man	\$22
For Mary’s expenses (Oct-Dec)	\$300
21/1/44 Mother’s teeth	\$114
	<u>\$2,112</u>

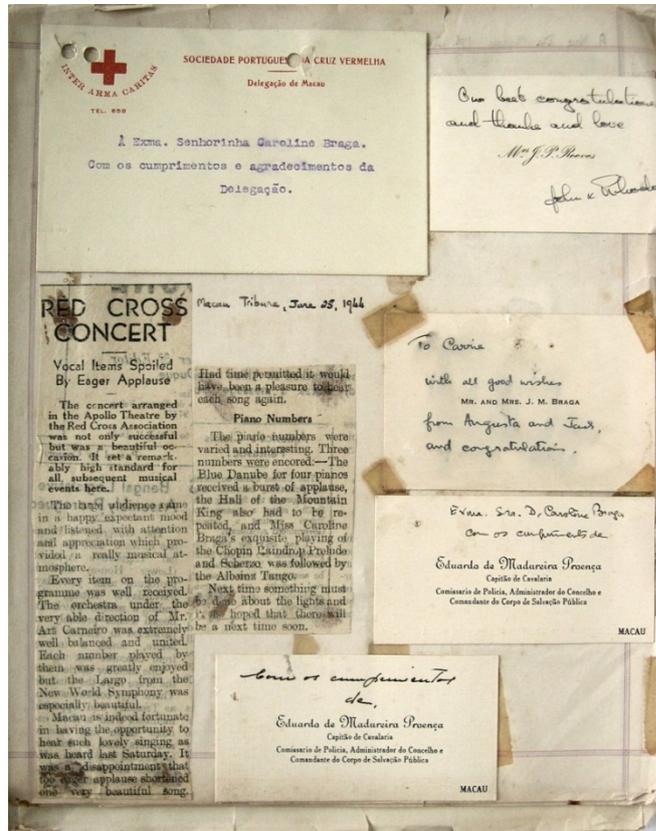
¹¹⁸⁸ Tony Braga to James Braga, 7 June 1942, James Braga Papers.

¹¹⁸⁹ J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/8.1/12. Hugh’s telegram was received on 30 April 1942. Bertram Bradbury was Hugh’s next-door neighbour. He was another in whom war and internment appear to have brought out his worst characteristics. George Wright-Nooth described him as ‘perhaps the most despised of the internees’ (op. cit., p. 141)

¹¹⁹⁰ Undated note, J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/8.1/12. Jack ensured that his father had two eggs per day at a time when most people never had such a luxury.

A montage put together by Caroline Braga following a concert on 17 June 1944.

Caroline Braga Papers, National Library of Australia, MS Acc05/35



It was one of a great many things Jack had to attend to. In a letter that Paul gave by hand to a traveller to America, for personal delivery to James, he revealed more of Jack's role than he should have done.

[Jack] looked worried out of his wits for more reasons than one. Has been No. 3 on the Jap black-list of Macao people because of stories to Reuters's and A.P. [Associated Press] of conditions in Canton under Jap occupation and photos to Illustrated London News of C.N.A.C. [China National Airways Corporation] plane shot and later machine-gunned at spot about 10 miles from Macao. Besides has been of tremendous help to British Consul concerning information from Hong Kong but with the latter has been so extraordinarily careful that Japs can't place a finger on him. For this reason you must not mention to a soul anything about him as you will be surprised at the amount of information they seem to be able to get from other countries. I am told that they somehow manage to get newspapers from the U.S. and England, and anything of what I've mentioned getting to Macao is bound to cost him his life to say nothing of the lives of others including our family. I've urged him

time and again to escape to Free China especially before I came away as he was threatened, and was forced to keep his movements solely between house and office. The Governor secretly gave him a special heavy type revolver ... News came up last week that the Governor was assassinated by Japs and the situation was tenser than ever before.¹¹⁹¹

45 years later, Tony could look back on these years with appreciation.

Known to but a few trusted individuals was Jack Braga's work for the Allied cause during the Pacific War. In Macau he was the liaison officer between several secret service groups including the Chinese Government service and the British Army Aid Group. He organised the clandestine courier system which carried vital messages between Hong Kong, Macau, Chungking and Allied radio stations behind the Japanese lines in China.¹¹⁹²

Jack had indeed become a close collaborator with John Reeves, the British Consul, who wrote a warm letter of thanks after the war, and in an accompanying reference indicated that on at least one occasion his life had been in danger.¹¹⁹³ Jack's own reflection confirms this.

Yet we survived the War, and for that we praise God, and thank Him for protecting not only us but all the others who would certainly have suffered had the Japs. realized what we were really doing in Macao ... I confess, now, how full of fear my heart was on many a day.¹¹⁹⁴

Jack's role in the Special Operations Executive was more extensive than his family realised.¹¹⁹⁵ Jack hinted at that role three years later in a letter to Sir Robert Ho

¹¹⁹¹ Paul Braga to James Braga, 22 October 1943, James Braga Papers. In copying this letter for other family members, James omitted this paragraph. The report of the governor's assassination was false. This was a time of much rumour-mongering. However, the Japanese consul was assassinated in January 1945. This led to a great deal of tension and the fear of massive reprisals or a Japanese occupation, but neither took place.

¹¹⁹² Notes prepared by A.M. Braga for an interview with Beverley Howells of the *South China Morning Post*, 8 April 1987. A.M. Braga file.

¹¹⁹³ J.P. Reeves to Jack Braga, 20 July 1946. J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/8.1/11.

¹¹⁹⁴ Jack Braga to Tony Braga, 23 February 1946. James Braga Papers. Jack Braga's files on this period are in the National Library of Australia, but are closed until 2017. (J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/8.1/27-29). According to Pauline Haldane, they cover the following topics: the operations of allied secret-service agencies; the treatment of military prisoners and civilian internees in camps. P. Haldane, *The Portuguese in Asia and the Far East: the Braga Collection in the National Library of Australia*, A paper prepared for the Second International Conference on Indian Ocean Studies held in Perth, Western Australia, 5-12 December 1984. <http://www.nla.gov.au/asian/pub/bragappr.html>.

¹¹⁹⁵ It was researched at the British National Archives, then the Public Record Office, by Dr Barney Koo in the course of preparing a paper, 'Researching Jack Braga', delivered at the Ricci Institute in Macau in 2004. Dr Koo told his audience: 'Some time in 1942 Jack Braga was recruited as an agent for British Intelligence becoming part of the complex web of the Special Operations Executive in the Far East. Established by the Ministry of Home Security in London, the SOEs gathered intelligence on activities behind enemy lines. Their senior operatives consisted mainly of 'third nationals' – citizens of neutral countries – who were able to traverse through the various war zones. According to British

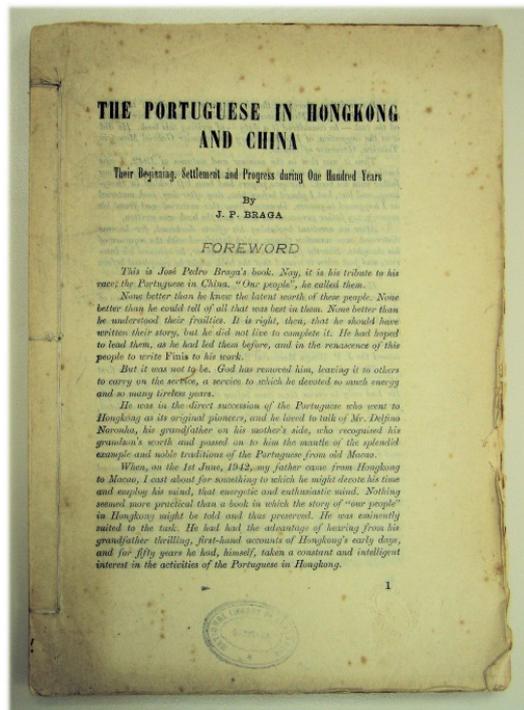
Tung, who had seen at first hand what Jack had done. He commented that Reeves' reference 'should prove that I did more than my share'.¹¹⁹⁶

Jack's role in wartime Macau was much greater than any of them realised. A water supply sufficient for the needs of half a million people was largely the result of his perseverance in the previous decade. Jack Braga's role in this vitally important public utility was never acknowledged. He remained General Manager of Watco throughout the war and until 1946, when he moved to Hong Kong.¹¹⁹⁷

Public Record Office records, the two senior officers responsible for the Hong Kong and Macau area were F. A. Olsen (Danish) and a Mr Terestchenko (Russian). In 1942, Olsen came to Macau and recruited three key agents: Mr Fletcher, the Manager of the Macau Water Works, Mrs Joy Wilson, the Danish wife of Geoffrey Wilson, Superintendent of Hong Kong Police who was interned in Stanley, and Mr Fay, a Frenchman and a commissioner of the Chinese Maritime Customs. Together with the British Consul, John Pownall Reeves, they formed the upper stratum of the intelligence network for Hong Kong and Macau. Each was given a codebook for encrypting and deciphering the wireless communication with the Allied headquarters in Chungking. They were responsible to recruit their own sub-agents for the tasks at hand. It was not entirely clear whether Jack Braga was recruited by Fletcher with whom he worked at the Water Works or by John Reeves due to their friendship. But Braga was an ideal candidate due to his linguistic ability, local knowledge and extensive contacts. Moreover, he had already been drawn into the game of military intelligence by Charles Boxer, an Intelligence Officer in the British Army with the rank of Major. Boxer's biographer has suggested that Braga was the conduit for the exchange of military intelligence between Boxer and the Governor of Macau before Boxer was captured and interned in Hong Kong. Braga had a key role in the successful rescue of three American airmen whose plane had been shot down at sea in January 1945 by the Japanese, George C. Clarke, Don E. Mize and Charles Myers. They were brought to Macau by a fisherman, who then sought out the British consulate. Braga gave the hazardous mission of picking them up to one of his agents, Miguel A. F. M. ('Mickey') de Sousa who was summoned at 0230 hours by the consul, John Reeves, Jack Braga and the Macau Police Commissioner. Braga warned de Sousa that the mission could be a trap set by the Japanese to implicate the British Consulate in anti-Japanese activities ... After the Americans were delivered to the British Consulate, Braga arranged for their escape into Chinese-controlled territory. Braga's role [in the rescue] has not been publicly acknowledged.' B.H.M. Koo, 'Researching Jack Braga', pp. 14-15.

¹¹⁹⁶ J.M. Braga to Sir Robert Ho Tung, 2 July 1948. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/4.7/1.

¹¹⁹⁷ Since 1929 he had been the driving force behind a proposal to supply town water to Macau, which had a completely inadequate water supply, with a very small catchment area, Guia Hill. Macau therefore relied on water brought in by lighter from China. The Macau Water Works Company (usually known as Watco) was floated in 1930. Jack was effectively the company's founder and became its General Manager. The plan was to build a retaining wall enclosing a bay on the relatively undeveloped north-eastern coastline of Macau, which would then be used as water storage. A filtration plant was to be provided. Raising capital during the depression proved excruciatingly difficult. By 1934, the company was in a desperate financial predicament. It was without funds and salaries were unpaid. Money was owed to the Hongkong Engineering and Construction Co. (of which the Managing Director was J.P. Braga, Jack's father) among other large debts. The Macau Government was not involved in the project, being itself in a difficult financial situation. The company went into liquidation, but after much effort and worry, was recapitalised, and the project was brought to completion in 1936, largely due to Jack's sustained commitment. His father observed that 'at every turn he has met with obstructions ... all due to the commercial immorality of the place in which he has to work'. The population of Macau was then fewer than 200,000. In 1938, a flood of refugees fled to Macau when Canton fell to the Japanese. A few years later, the population, swollen by refugees, reached 500,000 after the fall of Hong Kong in 1941. Without an adequate water supply, Macau could not have coped with this emergency, and most refugees would have had to be turned away, leading to thousands more deaths. Jack Braga kept extensive records of the firm's struggles throughout the 1930s, contained in thirty folders of the J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/4.2.



There was some cultural activity in wartime Macau, despite the poverty and degradation of those times. There were several thousand English-speaking refugees, and, despite gnawing hunger and boredom, they and the Portuguese community put on concerts and plays, held debates and play-readings, and did what they could to keep the life of the mind going. In the long term, the most important cultural product of wartime Macau was the semi-completed book written by J.P. Braga at his son Jack's behest, and

published with the title *The Portuguese in Hongkong and China* in a very small edition after the older man died on 12 February 1944.

It bore no publisher's imprint, and the scarcity of paper was such that it did not even have a title page. It was printed on 'cho chi', rough paper.¹¹⁹⁸ J.M. Braga's massive collection of papers does not, surprisingly, contain any details of its publication.

Writing the book absorbed the old man and gave him a goal that would otherwise not have existed. Not all shared his enthusiasm; John was corralled to type part of the manuscript. His reaction was wholly negative. It is evident that the pages handed to him were the early chapters, a lengthy background to what was intended to be the main subject. He wrote to his mother, still in Hong Kong,

I forgot to mention Father. He is looking old – worrying too much about you all in Hong Kong, but he is very busy writing a whole lot of stuff about the people of Macao – a history of their doings since 1560. Don't mention this to him, because there is a great deal about Morrison and what he did 120 years ago, but in all his writing he tries to do nothing but boost up the Holy Roman Catholic Church. He had me typing the rot when I was at Jack's place, and then I soon found the more I did the more he had for me to do – typing pages and pages of utter nonsense.¹¹⁹⁹

¹¹⁹⁸ The book is discussed extensively in Appendix 5.

¹¹⁹⁹ John Braga to Olive Braga, 2 November 1942. James Braga Papers.

The water supply was sufficient in this critical situation, but the food supply was desperate, and, as in Hong Kong, many destitute Chinese starved, as government services did not stretch to their relief. Every public building was crowded with Portuguese refugees from Hong Kong.¹²⁰⁰ One refugee wrote that ‘dependants of each Hong Kong Portuguese in prisoner of war camps received 30 patacas a month from the British Consulate in Macau and rations from the Macau Government like oil, rice and bread. That did not buy very much as food was scarce and expensive.’¹²⁰¹ This matched the Macau government’s subsidy to other Portuguese refugees, but was much lower than the \$120 subsidy paid to British subjects.¹²⁰² Jack Braga appealed desperately to the Watco Board for a small salary increase for his staff, paid less than any of the refugees, but this appears to have been unavailing.¹²⁰³

3. ‘That great old Hong Kong citizen’

The Macanese people, though sympathetic with their plight, had misgivings about the flood of refugees. There had been a long-standing tension between the Hong Kong Portuguese and the Macanese, who had a crude term, ‘ton ton’, for those who had turned their backs on Macau.¹²⁰⁴ Many of the expatriates had, until 1941, done better in life than those who stayed behind, but the situation was now reversed. In the course of only one or two generations, a gulf had developed, and most of the Hong Kong people had become more anglicised than they realised. The Braga family, with an Australian mother, and having become Protestant, were far more anglicised than the rest. Many from Hong Kong spoke no Portuguese and though many Macau

¹²⁰⁰ These were principally the Bela Vista Hotel, Teatro Dom Pedro V, Grémio Militar, Armazém, Bairro Tamagnini Barbosa, the Canidromo [the greyhound race track] and *Ilha Verde*.

¹²⁰¹ Theresa Yvanovich da Luz, in A.M. Jorge da Silva, *The Portuguese community in Hong Kong, a pictorial history*, vol. 2, p. 36.

¹²⁰² Jack Braga to Watco Board, 1 July 1944, J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/8.1/11. Single people received \$120, married couples \$100 each, and children \$50 each.

¹²⁰³ Jack Braga to Watco Board, 1 July 1944, J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/8.1/11. Single people received \$120, married couples \$100 each, and children \$50 each.

¹²⁰⁴ Dog shit. L.A. de Sá, *The Boys from Macau*, English translation, p. 5, n. 4. The phrase is not to be found in the Portuguese original of the book.

residents spoke some English, the gap was always there.¹²⁰⁵ While accepting that the refugees had to leave Hong Kong in the dire circumstances of defeat, the local people were in no mood to compromise their standards. One small example is telling.

A dress code was posted at the entrance of the places of worship and directed at the more relaxed attitudes of refugees from Hong Kong. The edict required that shorter skirts and sleeveless dresses worn in Hong Kong were forbidden and ladies were required to cover their heads with veils during church services. These poor souls who fled with what they had, in reality, just did not have the funds to purchase clothing to conform to local customs and many resented being told how to dress and what to do. Though many Macau families befriended those from Hong Kong, their underlying differences were very apparent.¹²⁰⁶

For the Braga family, life in Macau settled into a routine of daily survival, but there was the constant concern, not only for food, but for the future. Still far-sighted, and keen to do something for the community, J.P. Braga visited the *Colégio de S. Luiz* to give lectures on careers, and planned to go again in mid-February.¹²⁰⁷ He became keenly interested in setting up a Macau Technical School as a necessary step towards post-war reconstruction. He chaired a committee working towards this objective; Jack was secretary.¹²⁰⁸ On 27 January 1944, three weeks before his death, he headed a delegation to the governor to press for its establishment. Governor Teixeira gave his patronage to the proposed school, but needless to say, there was no money available.

After his father died, Jack redoubled his efforts and worked energetically towards opening the school in borrowed premises in 1945. Issues of staffing, curriculum, funding and government support were all carefully addressed. The college commenced in January 1945, with Jack and several of his brothers doing their bit.

¹²⁰⁵ Jack Braga's family spoke little English until Tony arrived from Hong Kong in June 1944 and set about teaching them English for the sake of their future (Attested by Maria Braga in a tribute to Tony after his death in 1994).

¹²⁰⁶ Theresa Yvanovich da Luz, in A.M. Jorge da Silva, *The Portuguese community in Hong Kong, a pictorial history*, Vol. 2, p. 37.

¹²⁰⁷ Fr H. O'Brien, SJ, to J.M. Braga, 14 January 1944. J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/7.4/1. The letter has been incorrectly placed, and instead of being in the correspondence series is located in a chronology of events at the date 1646, nearly three centuries away from the date it was written.

¹²⁰⁸ J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/4.3.

However, the conclusion of the war in August 1945 brought the project to an end with the return of refugees to Hong Kong.

J.P. Braga lived with Jack, Augusta and their seven children. Close by were Paul, Audrey and their two. Consequently, he saw more of his grandchildren than ever before. After Paul left for Kweilin, he missed them. Writing to Paul just before Christmas 1943, he concluded with an affectionate greeting that only two years earlier would not have crossed his mind. ‘We are all very well here, but miss you and the children intensely. Tell Bunny [Paul’s daughter Frances, aged seven] “Grandpa loves her very much”’.¹²⁰⁹ He would have been delighted to read a letter written a few weeks later by Paul on 2 February 1944. ‘The most important [news] is the arrival of Joseph Peter Braga 2nd, on the 27th Dec., weight 8 lb. and very Braga. We expected him on the 24th but unlike his Granpa and like his Papa he had to be late.’¹²¹⁰ However, with mails severely disrupted, he may not have heard of the birth of his fourteenth grandchild.



*Bust by Oseo Acconci over the grave
of J.P. Braga,
S. Miguel Cemetery, Macau.*

Photograph by Stuart Braga, April 1996.

José Pedro Braga, or, to borrow Paul’s whimsical phrase, Joseph Peter Braga 1st, died of a heart attack on 12 February 1944 and was buried in S. Miguel Cemetery. Sir Robert Ho Tung, who had also come to Macau following the fall of Hong Kong, wrote to Jack. ‘Your father and I have been lifelong friends and on many important occasions have been working together’.¹²¹¹ Harry Compton, for many years a

¹²⁰⁹ J.P. Braga to Paul Braga, 13 December 1943. Paul Braga Papers.

¹²¹⁰ Paul Braga to J.P. Braga, 2 February 1944. Paul Braga Papers.

¹²¹¹ Sir Robert Ho Tung to Jack Braga, 15 February 1944. J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/13/1.

director of China Light, was interned at Stanley, and sent Noel a POW card: ‘I shall miss my old friend’.¹²¹²

A public subscription paid for a bronze bust over his grave by the Italian sculptor Oseo Acconci. It was, said, Marjory, considered to be a very good likeness.¹²¹³ Later, his grave was moved to Chappie’s grave, father and son being buried together. A lengthy obituary was published in the Portuguese-language paper *A Voz de Macau*, stressing his sustained work for the Portuguese community of Hong Kong.¹²¹⁴ He stood far above the tensions generated by wartime, and was held in deep respect by the Macanese as well as by the Hong Kong Portuguese. Naturally, the Japanese paper, the English-language *Hongkong News*, ignored his demise. It was left to Henry Ching to write in gracious terms in an editorial in the *South China Morning Post* a few weeks after it resumed publication at the end of the war. Ching caught Braga in a few well-chosen words: ‘that great old Hong Kong citizen ... [who] fought strenuously for justice for the “local lads” ’.¹²¹⁵

The end of the war! How they had all longed for it. It is not the purpose of this thesis to give details that are readily available elsewhere.¹²¹⁶ In the last months of the war, the Portuguese-language paper *Renascimento* had begun to publish an English edition, which steadily traced events as they unfolded in Europe and the Pacific – D Day in June 1944 and the unconditional surrender of Germany in May 1945, the costly American attacks on Saipan, Iwojima and Okinawa and the massive bombing raids on Japan itself. At Stanley Camp in Hong Kong, the American raids had an unfortunate consequence when a bomb accidentally dropped on the camp killed fourteen internees in January 1945.¹²¹⁷ All the internees knew that the end of the war was drawing much closer, though no details were known other than the little revealed by the *Hongkong News*, which admitted the death of Hitler and just five

¹²¹² A.H. Compton to Noel Braga. James Braga Papers.

¹²¹³ Interview with Marjory Braga, 22 May 1991.

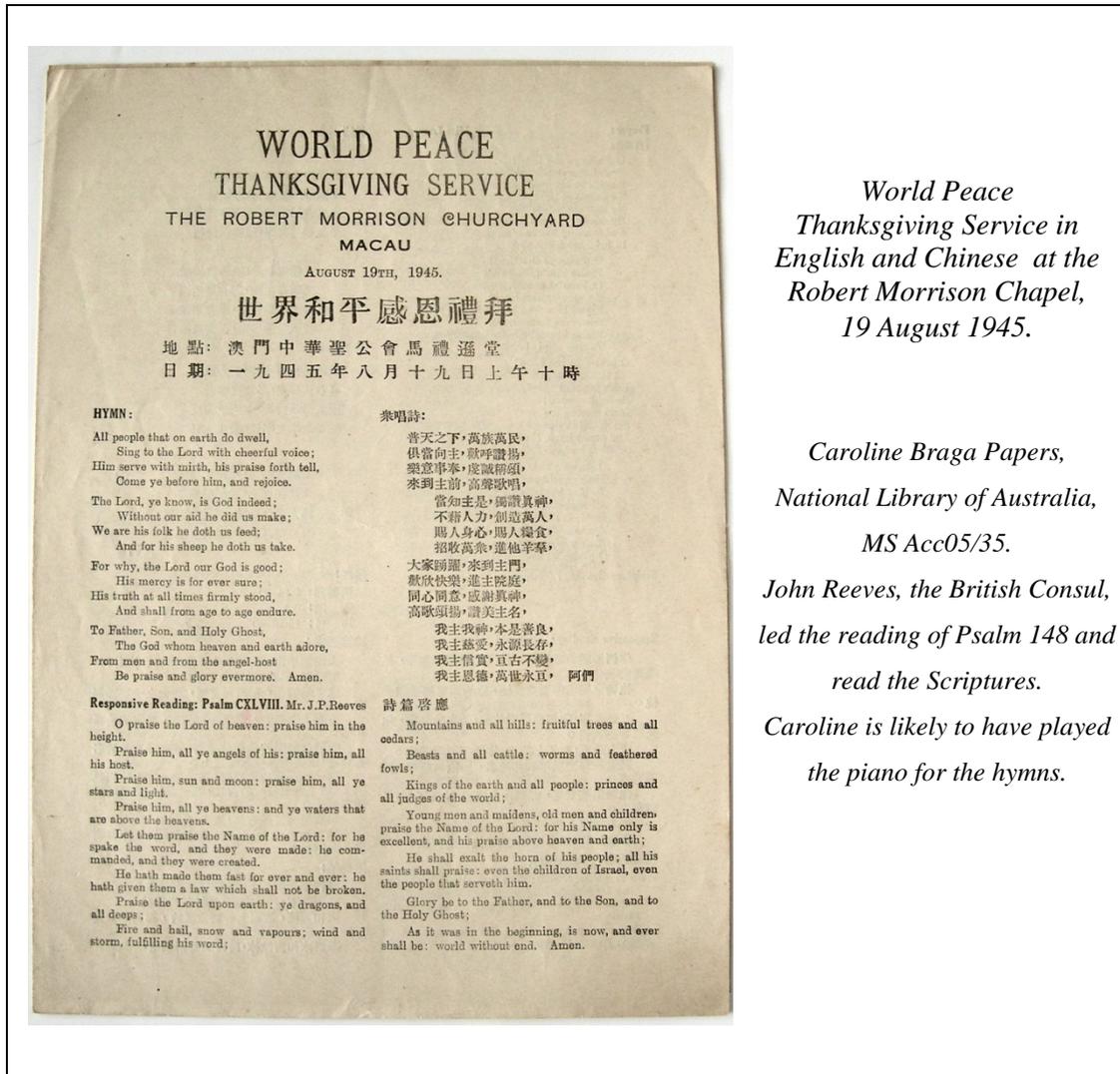
¹²¹⁴ *A Voz de Macau*, 15 February 1944.

¹²¹⁵ *South China Morning Post*, 14 November 1945. In sending a cutting to Paul, Tony added, ‘You will be proud of this fine tribute to Father’s memory written by Henry Ching’. Ching’s editorial elicited a letter from a correspondent who identified himself as ‘an old friend and admirer of the late Mr J.P. Braga’ giving further details of his career, stressing that ‘he was ever ready to help those in distress ... No “under-dog” ever went to him in vain’. *South China Morning Post*, 20 November 1945. The style and content of the letter suggest that it was penned by his son Tony.

¹²¹⁶ Many of the books referred to at the beginning of this chapter deal also with the end of the war and the relief of Hong Kong. Also, R.S. Clark, *An end to tears* and S. Braga ‘We have come here as conquerors. You will do as we say’, *NLA News*, September 2005.

¹²¹⁷ T. Banham, *We shall suffer there*, pp. 189-190.

days before the surrender announced that Japan was the only trustworthy nation left in the world.¹²¹⁸



*World Peace
Thanksgiving Service in
English and Chinese at the
Robert Morrison Chapel,
19 August 1945.*

*Caroline Braga Papers,
National Library of Australia,
MS Acc05/35.
John Reeves, the British Consul,
led the reading of Psalm 148 and
read the Scriptures.
Caroline is likely to have played
the piano for the hymns.*

In Macau, far better informed about the progress of the war, anticipation grew. The end of Nazi Germany was marked by a Thanksgiving Service for Victory in Europe on 13 May in the Morrison Chapel.¹²¹⁹ The sudden capitulation of Japan amazed everyone. A Thanksgiving Mass was celebrated in the cathedral. There was again a well-attended Thanksgiving Service for World Peace on 19 August at the Morrison

¹²¹⁸ *Hongkong News*, 3 May 1945, 10 August 1945.

¹²¹⁹ A copy of the Order of Service is in the J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/8.1/15.

Chapel.¹²²⁰ Almost at once, people began besieging the British consulate, wanting to get back to Hong Kong, but they did not realise how badly Hong Kong had suffered, with few buildings left unlooted. Anything that could burn had been used as fuel. The loss of J.P. Braga's fine library has been noted. A far more grievous loss was the disappearance of most of the magnificent Chater collection of paintings and drawings and all of the 985 ceramics.¹²²¹ Even the roof of the Loke Yew Hall at Hong Kong University had been torn down and burned in the power station to keep the trams going a little longer.¹²²²



At Stanley, there would be a longer wait than in Macau. The fortnight following news of the surrender of Japan and the arrival of a strong British fleet commanded by Rear Admiral Cecil Harcourt was even harder to bear than the long incarceration. Had the news of victory all been a dream?¹²²³ Relief finally arrived on 30 August. The sight of the largest fleet of ships of the Royal Navy ever to enter Hong Kong

¹²²⁰ Copies of the Order of Service are in J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/8.1/15 and Caroline Braga Papers, MS Acc05/35.

¹²²¹ It is known in detail from the superb catalogue compiled in 1924 two years before the death of Sir Paul Chater. J. Orange, *The Chater Collection, pictures relating to China, Hong Kong, Macao, 1655-1860; with historical and descriptive letterpress*. The 94 pictures to have been recovered between 1945 and 2006 were commemorated in an exhibition in 2007 at the Hong Kong Museum of Art. The Chater collection comprised 430 pictures on the early history of Macau and Hong Kong, Another part of the Chater legacy to the Hong Kong Government was a collection of 985 ceramics from the Ming and Qing dynasties. All of these were lost, according to an essay in the exhibition catalogue, *The Chater Legacy: a selection of the Chater collection*, pp. 26-28.

¹²²² Sir Franklin Gimson, 'Internment of European civilians at Stanley during the Japanese Occupation of Hong Kong, 1941-1945', p. 11.

¹²²³ Powerfully verbalised by Henry Ching in the editorial already mentioned. *South China Morning Post*, 1 September 1945.

harbour, 19 ships in all, was a thrilling sight graven on the memory of all who saw it.¹²²⁴



Left: British fleet at anchor, stem to stern, Hong Kong harbour, September 1945.

H. Empson, Mapping Hong Kong, p. 219. Plate 6-4. RAF photograph.

Right: HMS Swiftsure entering Lyemun Pass, 30 August 1945. Stuart Braga collection

Admiral Harcourt's flagship was the aptly named HMS *Swiftsure*. On landing, the admiral went straight to the POW camp at Shamshuipo in Kowloon, and then to Stanley. The next day Maude shared her excitement with her family in Macau. She described the dropping by parachute of fifteen large boxes of medical supplies the day before. 'People were shouting and waving hankies and sheets and jumping for joy.' She went on:

Yesterday was the crowning day of all ... at about 5 o'clock the Admiral arrived in the camp, and told us that they had come from Australia especially for us: they had steamed all the way at 25 knots an hour. The Japanese had packed up before they expected and so they had to rush post haste here to release us. The Americans had planned to bombard Hong Kong on the 21st. Had they done so we would all have been massacred by the Japs – they intended to machine-gun all internees and prisoners-of-war. What a miraculous escape ... 9 flags – British, American, Belgium, China, French,

¹²²⁴ *South China Morning Post*, 1 September 1945. Witnesses included Osler Thomas and Bosco Correa, both of whom shared the thrill with this writer. Interviews with Dr Osler Thomas, 25 November 2008, and Bosco Correa, 27 June 2010. There was a battleship, two aircraft carriers, two cruisers, a hospital ship and several destroyers and corvettes from the Royal Australian Navy (detailed in the *South China Morning Post*, 4 September 1945). Admiral Harcourt sent the Australian corvettes in first as minesweepers, lest the Japanese stage a final act of defiance by mining one of his capital ships. The Record of Proceedings of HMAS *Mildura* commented 'Much pleasure and satisfaction was obvious that the Ship had the privilege of being the first R.A.N. ship to enter Hongkong, also having led the way over the reputed minefields, which fortunately did not exist.' Australian War Memorial, AWM78/221/1.

Australian, Greek, Dutch and Polish flags were then hoisted amid tremendous cheering. The English national anthem and the hymn “Oh God our help in ages past” were sung and the Admiral departed.

Thank God for protecting you all, and for bringing us all through this terrible nightmare. We do hope we may see you all soon. God bless and keep you and all our loved ones. Much love from Maude and Eric.¹²²⁵

But for Macau and but for Jack Braga, it would have been a different story for the Braga family. Leo d’Almada, who came there from Hong Kong in April 1942, called Macau ‘the miracle of the time’.¹²²⁶ Later, borrowing Churchill’s phrase, Austin Coates referred to the war years as Macau’s finest hour.¹²²⁷ Both comments were just. Governor Gabriel Teixeira did not need to go out of his way to provide a safe haven for so many refugees. In making them publicly welcome, and in making available every possible public building for their accommodation, he established the merciful policy that his administration then pursued until the end of the war. Teixeira could easily have taken the view that Macau had already done enough, and that public services were stretched to breaking point as it was. He could have concluded that the Japanese had created this problem by occupying Hong Kong, planning for it to become the regional centre of their grand design, the ‘Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere’. Let them show what they could do, and harness the capabilities of the people they had inherited.

Perhaps the strongest reason not to accept Portuguese refugees from Hong Kong was that they or their forebears had turned their backs on Macau. If Macau meant so little to them then, why should Macau lift a finger for them now? If any of these considerations crossed Teixeira’s mind, he quickly dismissed them. The disaster in Hong Kong had precipitated a massive humanitarian crisis. In the three and a half years of the Japanese Occupation, thousands of people fled to Macau, most of them

¹²²⁵ Maude Franks to Olive Braga, 31 August 1945. James Braga papers. Harcourt naturally did not mention that the fleet had been delayed in Subic Bay for a fortnight while negotiations took place between Britain and China over the future of Hong Kong. There was certainly foreboding lest the Japanese massacre their prisoners, but no evidence emerged subsequently to indicate that this was the intention of Japanese authorities in Hong Kong or elsewhere. The admiral’s comment that the ship steamed at full speed from Sydney was confirmed by a crew member. Interview with Norman Barker, 31 July 2011. In 1945 Barker was a Radar Engineer in HMS *Swiftsure*. The ship’s radar scanner jammed, and Barker was sent aloft to fix it. As the ship entered Lyemun Pass, Barker found himself staring at Japanese guns aimed straight at the flagship.

¹²²⁶ L.A. de Sá, op. cit., pp. 137-143; English translation, p. 99.

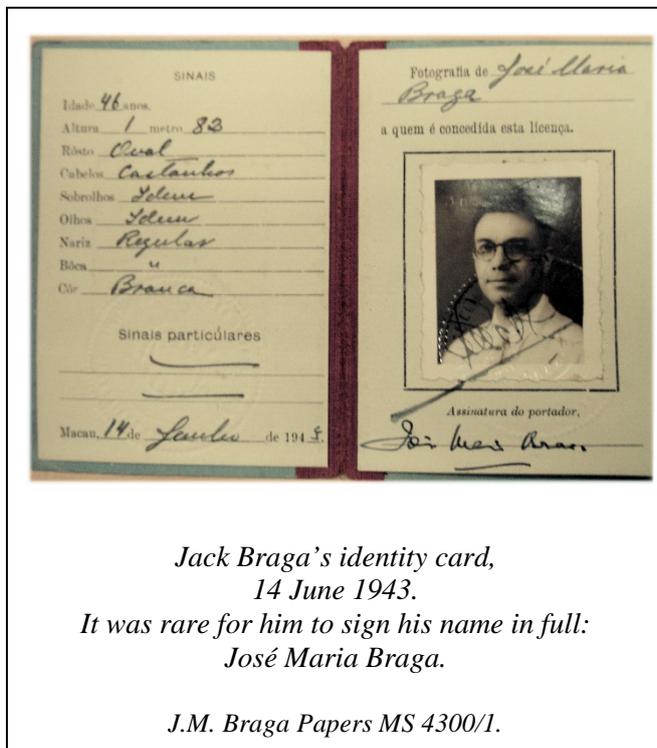
¹²²⁷ A. Coates, *A Macao Narrative*, p. 103.

taking with them little more than what they could carry. Austin Coates, a writer with a close knowledge of and interest in Macau, wrote of this period in generous terms.

The whole of the gambling taxes – \$2,000,000 – were made over by the government to the assistance of refugees. Indeed Macao's entire conduct during the period from Christmas 1941 to August 1945, when Hongkong was under Japanese occupation, was a gesture of unselfish friendship, made in Portugal's traditional style, regardless of dangers which others less magnanimous might have thought it more prudent to avoid.

The patient endurance of the Macanese during these fateful years, and the sagacity and foresight of their Governor can hardly be overestimated ... no one who experienced Macao's hospitality during these years would ever forget it. The entire episode ranks as one of the city's finest moments.¹²²⁸

It was also Jack Braga's finest hour. His work for his family and for British Intelligence has been briefly instanced. So too has his vital work in ensuring the provision of a water supply, but for which Teixeira's policy would have had to be quite different and much harsher. He continued to be Manager of Watco during the war years, and as food costs soared, was obliged, from his own limited means, to assist Chinese members of his staff paid a pittance. His desperate plea for increased remuneration was not acceded to by the board of Watco.



*Jack Braga's identity card,
14 June 1943.*

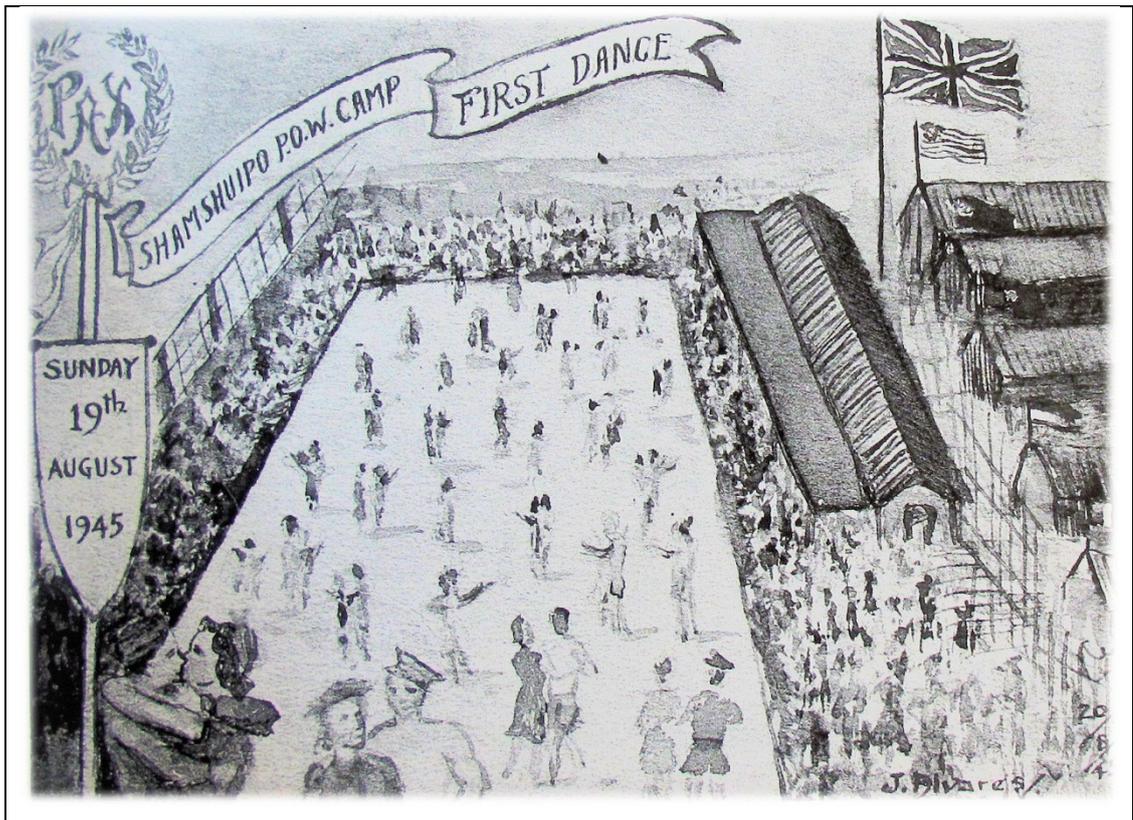
*It was rare for him to sign his name in full:
José Maria Braga.*

J.M. Braga Papers MS 4300/1.

Although his buying of books stopped, he continued to produce a constant stream of articles for the English and Portuguese press. Moreover, Jack carefully collected printed ephemera reflecting the cultural life of Macau during the war. Both the Portuguese and English speaking communities made a determined effort to maintain a cultural life despite the privations they were enduring.

¹²²⁸ Ibid., pp. 103-104.

His file of this material is a unique record of this remarkable endeavour.¹²²⁹



Between June 1941 and December 1942, he prepared and delivered a weekly fifteen-minute address for the Macao Radio Club, there being no government radio station. In 1944 he prepared his father's book for publication. Later, in January 1945, with rumours circulating about the possible massacre of all internees and POWs by the departing Japanese, he joined a committee planning to take over Hong Kong in the event of such a catastrophe.¹²³⁰ All this would have been a considerable achievement for a fit, well-fed and healthy man, but Jack and his family were almost on starvation rations. Well might Caroline write, 'if ever there was one who deserves highest honours it is Jack'.

He saved just one indulgence for the end of the war. At Stanley Internment Camp, people cheered wildly and jumped for joy. As news broke at ShamshuiPO Camp of the Japanese surrender, 'the joy of the men knew no bounds. There were

¹²²⁹ J.M. Braga Papers, MS 4300/8.1/15.

¹²³⁰ Ibid. A system of boards was carefully drawn up composed entirely of Hong Kong Portuguese and Chinese people, on the assumption that no British personnel from the POW and internment camps in Hong Kong would be available.

scenes of near hysteria.’¹²³¹ They put on a dance on 19 August, just five days after the surrender. José Álvares, who had drawn an energetic cartoon of J.P. Braga in 1929, celebrated the event with a triumphant drawing.¹²³² However, Jack Braga waited until his friend Charles Boxer was freed from the Argyle Street Officers’ POW Camp and came over to Macau. Together, they enjoyed what Boxer said was ‘the last bottle of *ginginha* (cherry brandy) in the colony’.¹²³³

¹²³¹ L. Ribeiro, ‘Personal account of war experiences’, p. 22.

¹²³² A.M. Jorge da Silva, *The Portuguese community in Hong Kong, a pictorial history*, p. 183.

¹²³³ D. Alden, J.S. Cummins and M. Cooper, *Charles R. Boxer: an uncommon life: soldier, historian, teacher, collector, traveller*, p. 264.