

# Macau Between Republics: Neither War nor Peace (1914-1918)

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## Abstract

During World War I, the Portuguese far-eastern colony of Macau underwent an intensification of the climate of instability that had hitherto characterized its life. Portugal and China, young republics both, projected their internal convulsions into their foreign policy. The two nations also nurtured an old dispute concerning the territorial delimitation of Macau. Dependent for its protection on Portugal's traditional ally, Great Britain, via Hong Kong, the Portuguese colony survived thanks to a precarious *modus vivendi* with the Chinese. Portugal exercised in Macau a limited sovereignty, threatened continuously by the nationalist impetus of China. The risk of a Chinese military offensive against Macau never ceased. Although sheltered from the world conflict, Macau went through a time of great tension from 1914 to 1918.

## Keywords

Macau, China, Borders, World War One, Carlos da Maia.

## Resumo

Durante a I Guerra Mundial, Macau viu agravado o clima de instabilidade que caracterizava a vida daquela colónia portuguesa no Extremo Oriente. Portugal e a China, jovens Repúblicas, projectavam as suas convulsões internas na política externa. As duas nações alimentavam um litígio antigo a propósito da delimitação territorial de Macau. Dependente da protecção da aliada britânica, via Hong Kong, a colónia portuguesa sobrevivia graças a um precário *modus vivendi* com os chineses. Portugal exercia em Macau uma soberania exígua, ameaçada em permanência pelo ímpeto nacionalista da China. O espectro de uma ofensiva militar chinesa contra Macau nunca cessou. Embora resguardada do conflito mundial, Macau viveu uma realidade de tensão.

## Palavras-chave

Macau, China, delimitação, Grande Guerra, Carlos da Maia.

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## Introduction

In the years that preceded the outbreak of the Great War, the colonial authorities in Macau had attempted to find a balance between the distant (and not always well-informed) supervision from Lisbon, Imperial China's political pressure, and the conflicting drives of an administration permeable to the influence of local and regional interests. The impunity with which pirates and opium smugglers operated in the waters and islands adjacent to Macau, which Portugal claimed as its own, completed the complex tableau that was local government, structurally precarious and resting on agreements of doubtful validity. Secret societies – Portuguese and Chinese – saw in Macau fertile ground for their machinations.

Some months before the proclamation of the Republic, Portuguese authorities in Macau were given the chance to renew the long-delayed question of the territorial delineation of Macau. Pearl River pirates, daring and used to acting with impunity, kidnapped children from Macau's neighboring villages, taking them to their headquarters on Coloane Island. The Macau government reacted with vigor, mobilizing military and police forces, backed by heavy artillery, gun-boats, and a cruiser. The Battle of Coloane resulted in the liberation of almost all the hostages and the arrest of the surviving pirates. Conditions were created for the reaffirmation of Portuguese sovereignty over an island which, for centuries, had been at the heart of a dispute with China.

This episode neatly illustrates the precarious nature of Portuguese colonial ambitions in this portion of the Far East, since Macau was regularly submitted to internal and external pressures. This scenario would become more serious still during the first years of the young Republics – Portuguese and Chinese – and, more specifically, during the period of the Great War. Macau would once more survive, thanks mostly to the erratic evolution of China's foreign policy and the civil war which absorbed the various centers of power in Nationalist China. It should be noted, however, that the highly problematic political agenda which surrounded the Macau question remained unresolved in the years that followed the conclusion of a conflict which raged throughout the entire world and which involved two accidental allies – Portugal and China.

As was the case in other Portuguese colonies, the question of borders was the most delicate issue in Macau's political and administrative agenda. The Treaty of Friendship and Commerce concluded in Beijing on 1 December 1887 and ratified on 28 April 1888 had left open the question of Macau's borders on land and at sea. This meant that the sovereignty claimed by the Portuguese over the islands of D. João, Montanha, and Lapa

would, alongside the territory's maritime limits, be disputed by China for a number of decades. In truth, for China the issue was never simply one of establishing precise borders; it was, instead, a full-blown territorial dispute (Saldanha, 2006, 916-917). This would remain, until the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the most troubling question for Portugal's foreign policy in the Far East.

### **The Delayed Republic**

The telegram by which Lisbon announced the proclamation of the Republic was only published in the *Boletim Oficial de Macau* on October 10, 1910. The reasons for this delay seem to lie in the metropolis's unruly political life. In other words, there was no guarantee that the change of regime was really an accomplished fact, as a result of which the local authorities played it safe. "A Republic was proclaimed yesterday with the help of the army, the navy, and the people. Enthusiasm. Absolute Order," stated the telegram.<sup>2</sup> News of the Republic's advent did not give rise to the same kind of enthusiasm in Macau, where indifference reigned. On 11 October a new supplement to the official gazette invited – in very unenthusiastic fashion, and by order of the governor – "all officers, public servants and clergy" to participate, "out of inclination or duty," in the proclamation of the new Republic in the *Leal Senado*, Macau's municipal body.<sup>3</sup> Not long after the Republic's proclamation, the governor was replaced and the Chinese population began to abandon the colony, fearing the unknown consequences of the impact of the new regime on Macau's administration. The local government was forced to take measures to entice the Chinese to return to the Portuguese-administered territory. This aside, the political party's agitation experienced in the Metropolis did not have, in this early stage, visible consequences among the various social classes which made up the Portuguese community.

One should note that in the years between the proclamation of the Republic and the outbreak of the Great War, the governing action of Aníbal Sanches de Miranda was responsible for increasing the profit which resulted from the opium contract, a source of considerable revenue for the colony's administration. At the International Opium Convention, held in 1912 at The Hague, this army officer was responsible for defending the preservation of the monopoly on the sale of that particular drug in Macau. Until the nomination of Carlos da Maia in 1914, Macau would know four interim administrators.

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<sup>2</sup> AM, *Boletim Oficial do Governo da Província de Macau*, Supplement to N. 41, 10 October 1910.

<sup>3</sup> AM, *Boletim Oficial do Governo da Província de Macau*, Second Supplement to N. 41, 11 October 1910.

At the start of 1914, Macau was a territorially asphyxiated colony, beset by problems old and new. Its territorial integrity and sovereignty were, more than ever, at risk. The latter was exercised *de facto*, but not *de jure*, notably over the islands adjacent to Macau and the waters of the Inner Harbor. Local administration was divided up between two constituencies (*circunscrições*), that is, the municipality of Macau, with four parishes, and the Military Command of Taipa and Coloane, which together made up a single parish. The overlapping of administrative bodies and their respective duties created a complex web in which all Portuguese of note were caught. The mission of the *Leal Senado* was restricted by the governor, while in Taipa and Coloane it fell to the military commander to carry out the duties of municipal administrator, president of the municipal commission, and maritime delegate.

The majority of the population was Chinese. It took no part, and had no interest, in the bureaucratic intricacies typical of Portuguese colonial administration. The inhabitants were divided up between Chinese and Portuguese quarters. The *Procuradoria Administrativa dos Negócios Símicos* was charged with looking after the interests of the Chinese population. Restricted to the colony's center, notably the surroundings of the principal fortifications and churches, the Portuguese found themselves in an area no larger than three square kilometers. The population stood at 79,807 inhabitants (11.8% of today's total), of whom 3,000 were born in Macau and around 1,000 were born in the metropole. Demographic density was high, with some 16,000 inhabitants for every square kilometer in the Macau peninsula. In the islands of Taipa and Coloane, density fell sharply to 211 inhabitants per square kilometer (Cónim;Teixeira, 1999: 134).

Portuguese citizens occupied all the leadership roles available in the civil service, the military garrison, religious orders, and the press. Officers had a privileged role in local society, with pride of place going to the governor, usually a military man. The Macau peninsula was some three kilometers long from the Inner Harbor to the land border with China, tellingly given the name of *Portas do Cerco* (Siege Gates). In truth, the colony was surrounded by an overwhelming Chinese presence which did not hesitate, on a cyclical basis, to undertake hostile actions, covert or very visible, against the Portuguese presence. Macau depended for its survival on foodstuffs from China and drinking water from the island of Lapa, which overlooked the Portuguese colony and was claimed by China. Macau was living on borrowed time and space.

## Carlos da Maia

On the eve of the Great War, Carlos da Maia, a new governor sent by the Republic, arrived in Macau. He would go down in history for both good and bad reasons. His consulate was the subject of positive references in the official historiography, but, as we shall see, his administration was far from consensual. His legacy was remarkable, but Carlos da Maia courted controversy by leaving the territory in circumstances which were far from clear, never to return.

Carlos da Maia alighted in Macau on 10 July 1914, after having been received in Hong Kong with the pomp and circumstance characteristic of the British authorities there. The new governor, one of the founders of the republican regime, which he had already served in a number of high-profile positions, knew Macau well, having already been posted there at the service of the Navy (1903-5). He was appointed by Bernardino Machado, a republican whose colonial policy followed in the footsteps of the Monarchy, and who stated publicly that the overseas possessions constituted as sacred a patrimony as the territory of the *Pátria*. It now fell to his party colleague, Carlos da Maia, to watch over the perpetuation of Portugal's imperial designs. This is just what he did, even if in a slightly excessive fashion. The hero of the republican revolution was intent on shaking the *status quo* in Macau, with little regard for the consequences.

At this time the colony's security was at risk as a result of the instability experienced in China. Communications between the two Republics, China and Portugal, were carried out at two levels: Lisbon favored Beijing while Macau took care to preserve good relations with the succession of rulers in Canton, the nearest Chinese province, who exercised a good deal of influence over the life of the Portuguese colony. This scenario was further complicated by the fact that Macau's governance was frequently the victim of the poor communication between the Ministry of the Colonies, to which it was subordinated, and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and War.

On the very day of Carlos da Maia's arrival in Macau, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Freire de Andrade, sent a confidential telegram to the head of the legation in Beijing, informing him of the doubts expressed by the Chinese chargé d'affaires in Lisbon about the new negotiations over the delineation of the colony. The Governor of Macau soon intervened in the dialogue, confirming his willingness to support Portuguese

diplomacy in its search for the longed-for solution to the border question.<sup>4</sup> Carlos da Maia made clear the problematic relationship with China, source of frequent incidents, provoked or tolerated by the Chinese authorities. China did not, for example, recognize the right of the harbor authorities, the *Capitania dos Portos*, to register and concede licenses to vessels. The pernicious dependence on China for the supply of foodstuffs and water to Macau was another of the issues which the governor highlighted to the central power in Lisbon, as well as the activity of pirates around the islands contested by Portugal and China. To break that dependence, Carlos da Maia proposed the raising of livestock on Coloane Island and the seizure of Lapa Island, Macau's source of drinking water. Neither of these proposals would come to fruition in the ensuing decades.

Carrying on from his initial communication in July, the holder of the Foreign Affairs portfolio conveyed his scepticism in regards to the reestablishment of bilateral contacts regarding the delineation of Macau. In a message sent to Beijing he noted,

I must inform Your Excellency that I have no great hope that in this new negotiation we shall be more fortunate than in previous occasions. In Canton, more than in any other part of the new Republic, there continues to prevail the desire to abrogate the rights which foreigners possess in China.<sup>5</sup>

The evaluation made in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, MNE] was correct in that, as was underlined in that communication, the eventual failure of the negotiations might reawaken Cantonese hostilities against Macau. Taking care to avoid developments that might spin out of control, the MNE eventually instructed its diplomat in Beijing to avoid the start of negotiations. The recurring question of the territorial delineation of Macau would have to wait until the end of the Great War.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> AHD, Box N. 1236/Limites de Macau, Governo da Província de Macau, General Correspondence N. 39, confidential, 23 July 1914, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> 'Devo dizer a V. Ex.<sup>a</sup> que não tenho grande esperança de que nesta nova negociação sejamos mais felizes que nas anteriores. Em Cantão, mais do que em qualquer outra parte da nova república continua a dominar o espírito da recuperação dos direitos que os estrangeiros possuem na China.' AHD, Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, confidential despatch N. 3, Box N. 1236/Limites de Macau, 19 September 1914, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Problems related to the delineation of Macau's territory did not come to an end with the passing of the colonial age. In December 2015, the People's Republic of China's Council of State approved a new map establishing the land and sea borders of the *Região Administrativa Especial de Macau* (RAEM). The RAEM's authorities and the government of the Province of Canton then negotiated the demarcation of their territories, which had not been done before, and which gave rise to difficulties when it came to maritime security. The transition of the territory to China had occurred, it should be remembered, on 19 December

## The Longed-for war

On 9 March 1916, Portugal finally entered the First World War. This was merely an official step, since the armed conflict with Germany had begun much earlier in the African colonies. Two days later, on 11 March, the supplement of the *Boletim Oficial de Macau* published the historic news. Since the start of the war, the neighboring British colony of Hong Kong had taken steps to ready itself for an active participation in the conflict (Man, 2014). However, the conquest of the German colony of Shandong by the Imperial Japanese Army at the end of 1914 had neutralized the widening of the conflict to China (Cunha, 2014). Through the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, signed in 1902 and renewed in 1905 and 1912, Great Britain had entrusted the protection of its interests in Chinese waters to the Empire of the Rising Sun. As a result, the most immediate danger to Macau did not arise out of a possible extension of the conflict between Allies and Central Powers to that part of the world, but rather out of the recurring Chinese threat, in the shape of the uncontrollable warlords of the Canton region. The authorities in Beijing were in no position to guarantee that the Chinese Republic would be one and indivisible. On the contrary, the provinces insisted on an autonomy which proved problematic and which was supported by the armies-for-hire of generals interested only in the accumulation of wealth and political favors.

The announcement of Portugal's involvement in the war had little impact on daily life in Macau. A report to Lisbon by the manager of the *Banco Nacional Ultramarino* (BNU) noted the paralysis of business activity and an increase in the cost of living, but the colony's finances were buoyant, thanks to the revenue generated by opium and gambling.<sup>7</sup> This made Macau unique in the Portuguese overseas empire, which stretched from Lisbon to Timor.

## Macau Funds the War

Shortly after the new governor took up his post, the colony's life was agitated by an administrative row with Lisbon. This involved the imposition of an important loan (120,000 *escudos*, or 270,000 *patacas*) to the overseas province of Angola, where Portugal, as in Mozambique, was fighting a war of attrition with the Germans. Macau was the sole

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1999; 444 years after the arrival of the Portuguese the process of establishing Macau's precise borders was finally concluded.

<sup>7</sup>AHCGD (BNU fund), file 012.8/92, reserved report n° 47, Macau 21 August 1914.

overseas province that enjoyed a fiscal surplus and the government in Lisbon did not hesitate to make the most of that advantageous condition. The reaction was not long in coming. The *Leal Senado* published the minutes of its extraordinary session, held on 15 June 1914. Recognizing the good financial situation in which the colony found itself – all the while pointing out that this was merely temporary – the signatories manifested forcefully against the loan imposed by Lisbon, which called into question, they said, the important works needed for the development of Macau.

A telegram sent by the *Leal Senado* to Lisbon, having as its intended recipients the Presidents of the Republic and of the Ministry, the Minister of the Colonies, and the capital's leading newspapers – namely *O Século*, *Luta*, *Notícias*, *Intransigente*, *Mundo*, and *República* – underscored the need for improvements to the Inner Harbor, susceptible to the build-up of sand, to the sanitary condition of the territory, which did not even have a supply of drinking water, and to its inadequate police organization. “[...] In these terrible conditions – Metropole takes away our surplus – accumulated by good fortune – preventing it from resolving the needs of the colony – provoking general upset [...]”<sup>8</sup>

This evaluation was refuted by the local manager of the *Banco Nacional Ultramarino* [BNU], Arthur Drouhin, who in letters sent to the bank's headquarters considered the attitude of the *Leal Senado* ‘electorally-minded’ since the improvements referred to in the minutes/telegram were not even agreed to in any definitive sense. According to this BNU official, who played an important role in Macanese society, the 120,000 *escudos* loaned to Angola did not in any way affect the oriental colony's economy, which benefitted from the monopoly of cooked opium and the concession of the Chim-Pu-Pio Chinese lottery (Coelho, 1991, 37). In subsequent confidential dispatches to Lisbon, the local BNU manager went as far as to consider it unfair to keep money unused in Macau when Angola and Mozambique were confronted with an absolute lack of funds. It will therefore come as no surprise that this official was responsible for the polemical transference of funds to the African colony, carried out in secret in order to sidestep the susceptibilities of the local authorities. One thing is for sure: the money forcibly lent to Angola was never repaid.

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<sup>8</sup> “[...] Nestas desgraçadas condições – Metrópole arranca saldo – fortuitamente acumulado – impedindo aplicação necessidades colónia – causando desânimo geral [...]’ AHCGD (BNU fund), file 012.8/92, copy of the minutes of the extraordinary session of the *Leal Senado* of 15 June 1914.



## Expulsion of the ‘White Wolves’

In the meantime, the governor attempted to ensure that the subversive activities of some Chinese agitators who operated clandestinely in Macau did not provoke irreparable harm to Portuguese-Chinese relations. Denoting a careful reading of the evolving political situation in China, Carlos da Maia ensured the internal security of the colony while simultaneously attempting to extract political dividends from China, since Macau

[...] performs great services to China, and this might prove of unquestionable use in our future relations – attempting to instill in the Chinese feelings of friendship for us, putting an end to the disagreements that have prevented the delineation [...]<sup>9</sup>

The governor was here referring to the expulsion from Macau of the followers of the “White Wolf,” Pai Lang, a bandit who terrorized Central China between the fall of 1913 and August 1914. His rebel army operated in a number of provinces, wherein he attacked government garrisons with success. Carlos da Maia’s strategy did not, however, meet with the desired result, since, in accordance with a dispatch sent to Lisbon, “despite the services rendered to China by the province’s government in the expulsion of the white wolves the Cantonese authorities continue to defy our sovereignty.”<sup>10</sup>

Taking advantage of intelligence gathered by missionaries and the secret police, the highest figure in the local administration recounted the goings-on in southern China that might yet jeopardize Macau’s safety. Carlos da Maia alerted Lisbon to the fact that the Chinese authorities were very aware of the colony’s weakness, “knowing full well that the small number of available troops renders Macau vulnerable to an audacious coup.”<sup>11</sup> In the face of this delicate situation, the governor was forced to ask the Ministry of the Colonies for the reinforcement of his military means, including two companies of *landins*

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<sup>9</sup> [...] presta importantes serviços à China, e isso nos pode ser de incontestável utilidade nas relações futuras – procurar levar os chineses a sentimentos de amizade para conosco, fazendo cessar os mal entendidos que têm impedido a delimitação [...]. AHD, Box N.1236/Limites de Macau, telegram from the governor of Macau, Carlos da Maia, to the 6th Bureau of the Directorate General of the Colonies, Ministry of the Colonies, General Correspondence N. 141, 21 September 1914.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Apesar dos serviços prestados à China pelo Governo da província na expulsão dos lobos brancos as autoridades de Cantão desacatam soberania.’ AHD, Box N. 1236/Limites de Macau, telegram from the governor of Macau, Carlos da Maia, to the 6th Bureau of the Directorate General of the Colonies, Ministry of the Colonies, 6 October 1914.

<sup>11</sup> ‘Sabendo muito bem o reduzido efectivo de forças, donde resulta estar Macau à mercê de golpe audacioso.’ *Ibid.*

(Mozambican soldiers) and the rerouting of Timor-bound troops. There is no trace of this request having been approved of by Lisbon. The 46<sup>th</sup> Indigenous Company of Mozambique only reached Macau in 1920 (Cação, 1999, 24). The deterioration of relations with the Governor of Canton was also confirmed by the MNE, which, in a letter sent to the Ministry of the Colonies, considered the situation in Macau “extremely delicate [...] as a result of the current international conflagration.”<sup>12</sup> The MNE, noting that the Governor of Macau and the Portuguese minister in Beijing should speak with one voice, called attention to the urgent need to avoid conflicts which, given Chinese instability, could result in situations harmful to Portuguese interests. Such conflicts did not take long to appear.

### Volunteer Corps

Conscious of Macau’s weaknesses in matters of defense and security, governor Carlos da Maia, a career officer, quickly attempted to organize all available men, civilians and soldiers alike, in accordance with a contingency plan designed to ensure the protection of the territory. The most emblematic of these initiatives was the creation of the Volunteer Corps, created by government order on 12 August 1914. All Portuguese residents in Macau over seventeen and under forty-five years old could enlist, provided that they demonstrated the required stamina. This order did not establish time limits for volunteer service. Macau’s press greeted the initiative in patriotic terms, recalling the Volunteer Corps that the Portuguese community in Shanghai – made up mostly of Macau-born citizens – had previously created and deployed. This *Colonel Mesquita* company had earned the recognition of the international settlement within that cosmopolitan Chinese city.

One hundred and ten men responded in Macau to the patriotic appeal, enlisting in the Volunteer Corps, which was to be led by a captain aided by other subaltern officers and sergeants from the police corps. The municipal band of the *Leal Senado* was also assigned to the Volunteer Corps. Volunteers with a university degree were exempted from military instruction. In the years to come, the Volunteer Corps would grow to four hundred men. It became known for its eye-catching public march-pasts and for its band’s concerts. It never took up arms in defense of the colony’s territorial integrity, even though it carried out a number of dressrehearsals for just such an occasion. The Macau government invited its

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<sup>12</sup> ‘Extremamente delicada [...] por motivo da atual conflagração internacional’. AHD, Box N. 1236/Limites de Macau, Report from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of the Colonies, 25 November 1914, p. 1.

Hong Kong counterpart to be present at the celebrations of the first anniversary of the Volunteer Corps.

On 28 March 1916, after Portugal entered the war, the Volunteer Corps was the subject of a reorganization. A few days later, its men were called on to perform military service, given the state of war with Germany. Trained and disciplined, the Corps became a regular second-line force, supporting the colonial army and navy in Macau. It comprised a number of companies, each with no more than 150 men. After the war, the Volunteer Corps lost much of its original patriotic and republican élan. In 1919, the Macau newspaper *A Colónia* praised the dedication of the volunteers, but called attention to the need for a shooting range – “Volunteers who cannot shoot are a dangerous institution.”<sup>13</sup> A second reorganization, in 1920, introduced a period of mandatory service of four years for the members of the Volunteer Corps, which could be extended by periods of two years. However, by 1920 the Volunteer Corps had shrunk to a mere twenty men. In September of that year it would be called on to collaborate in the support of military forces which neutralized yet another conflict with the Chinese. In May of the following year, all valid Portuguese citizens were directed to present themselves at the Volunteer Corps barracks, given the revolutionary mutinies that had occurred in Macau. The Chinese population abandoned the territory and a state of siege was declared. The firm response of the then governor, Commander Correa da Silva-Paço, prevented the escalation of the crisis. The Macau Volunteer Corps was disbanded in 1936.

### **Military situation**

The creation of a Volunteer Corps had very positive effects on the morale of the colony’s population. In practice, though, everyone knew that Macau was militarily indefensible. This had been the case before the Great War, and would remain the case long after it. An interesting and very complete report drawn up in 1922 by Macau’s military services for the attention of General Gomes da Costa, charged at the time with inspecting the military forces in Macau and Portuguese India, was disconcertingly realistic:

[...] With such numbers and given the Macau Peninsula’s geographical situation, completely overlooked by the heights of Lapa Island, to the West, and the Kat-Tai Mountains, to the North, no-one will be as bold as to think

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<sup>13</sup> BIACM, *A Colónia*, Macau, 29 March 1919, p. 1.

Macau defensible, and its resistance assured for anything over half a dozen days, against a strong external attack, which would naturally result in a Chinese uprising [...].<sup>14</sup>

In truth, the territory's geography rendered it absolutely permeable to external aggression. Internally it could count on the barest of military means, split between the colonial army and navy. The artillery batteries installed on Guia Hill and the Mong Ha Fortress would be of little use against a well-coordinated external attack. The same could be said of the territory's colonial navy, composed of two gunboats, *Pátria* and *Macau*, and some motor boats. The demands of the vast Portuguese colonial empire and the war then being waged against Germany in the African colonies did not allow for the permanent stationing of a navy cruiser in Macau.

Available military equipment was insufficient to hold back a Chinese offensive. The colony would only acquire a substantial quantity of modern war material, from the surplus stockpiles of the Great War armies, from 1919 onwards. By 1922, Macau possessed “[...] one of the most important deposits in our Colonies, if not the most important of all.”<sup>15</sup> Any defensive strategy necessarily relied on the guarantee of a supply of foodstuffs and drinking water. Here Macau's shortcomings were even more evident. Its drinking water came from the disputed island of Lapa. Carlos da Maia could not be clearer: “The eastern slope of Lapa Island in the effective hands of China renders impossible the defense and security of Macau.”<sup>16</sup> This vulnerability, soon to be tested, was also known to the MNE, clearly adamant about the impossibility of Macau going to war against China.<sup>17</sup>

Unlike its British counterpart, the Portuguese Empire lacked the means, especially naval means, to defend Portuguese sovereignty throughout its extensive and distant overseas territory. The projection of force was a mirage. Should the political situation

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<sup>14</sup> “[...] Com tais efectivos e dada a situação geográfica da Península de Macau, absolutamente dominada pelas alturas da ilha da Lapa, a Oeste, e pelas montanhas de Kat-Tai, ao norte, ninguém certamente terá a veleidade de supor mantida a defesa de Macau, e assegurada a sua resistência além de meia dúzia de dias, contra um forte ataque externo, havendo demais a contar, em tal caso, com a sublevação dos chineses [...]” AHM, Report on the Military Services of the Province of Macau to General Inspector Gomes da Costa, F. 62, S.I., Box N. 923, n. 5, 22 October 1922, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> “[...] de um dos mais importantes depósitos das nossas Colónias, senão o mais importante de todos.” AHM, Report on the Military Services of the Province of Macau to General Inspector Gomes da Costa, F. 62, S.I., Box N. 923, n. 5, 22 October 1922, p. 23.

<sup>16</sup> ‘A vertente oriental da ilha da Lapa na posse efetiva da China significa a impossibilidade da segurança e da defesa de Macau.’ AHD, Box N. 1236/Limites de Macau, government of the Province of Macau, General Correspondence N. 39, Confidential 23 July 1914, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> AHD, Box N. 1236/Limites de Macau, Confidential report from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Minister in Beijing, 19 September 1914, p. 3.

degenerate into a threat to its territorial integrity, Macau would have to rely on Great Britain, Portugal's ancient ally, and its powerful Royal Navy. Salvation was expected to come from the British colony of Hong Kong, itself experiencing problems in its relations with China similar to those of Macau. Busy as it was with its own participation in the Great War, however, it was doubtful that Great Britain would be able to render Macau any emergency help, as it had already done in the past.

Macau's troops were organized in accordance with the new military plan for overseas Portugal, approved in November 1901 and in place until 1921. Its military forces were made up of a headquarters, one European garrison artillery company (of about 100 men), and the Police Corps, made up of three companies (one European, one mixed, made up of Europeans and Macanese, and a third with Indian and Chinese troops), for a total of 600 men. The European infantry company had been incorporated in the Police Corps in 1911. The garrison military band, then a part of the Police Corps, had been abolished in 1912, being transferred to the *Leal Senado*. Tours of duty on colonial service in Macau lasted two years, with many soldiers staying on for an extra two years.

In May 1915, governor Carlos da Maia prepared the organization of a Defense Council, to be composed of senior officers, commanders, and heads of the military and naval bureaus, with the objective of studying military and defense matters. The Military Defense Council, a consultative organ of the Macau government, would only be formally created in October 1920, long after the end of the Great War. In accordance with the regulations then applicable to the colonies, the Governor of Macau was the supreme military authority, with the status of general or vice-admiral. It was in that quality that he commanded both the land and sea forces.

### **Gunboat *Pátria***

The gunboat *Pátria* and its crews marked an era in Macau's history. The most powerful unit of Macau's colonial navy served uninterruptedly in that territory for twenty-five years. Its complement was 160 men, including twelve officers. Many of these played an important role in Macau's social circles, both military and civilian. In 1910, this ship had played a leading part in the fight against the pirates operating out of Coloane island. In November of that year, after the proclamation of the Republic, the governor tried to remove the *Pátria* to Hong Kong, "since it was considered one of the most dangerous

elements.”<sup>18</sup> Some of its sailors had participated in public demonstrations, demanding the expulsion of priests from Macau. There were also doubts about the crew’s loyalty to the new Republic. In 1912, the same year that it was called on to help suppress an insurrection in Timor, known as the Manufahi War, the *Pátria* was assigned to the Colonial Navy, separate from the Portuguese Navy and having as its mission the policing and preservation of law and order on colonial coasts, rivers, and canals. The Colonial Navy was overseen by the Ministry of the Colonies.

At the start of 1914, interim administrator Aníbal Sanches de Miranda sent a report to Lisbon which raised doubts about the usefulness of the services rendered by the gunboat *Pátria*, whose very presence strained the Colony’s budget: “Given its poor construction and multiplicity of mechanisms, it will never properly adapt itself to the naval needs of Macau,” stated the report.<sup>19</sup> The interim administrator was basing his opinion on overwhelmingly negative intelligence about the gunships *Pátria* and *Macau* gathered by the Macau Naval Administration, which considered the first vessel useless for surveillance and policing of rivers and the second incapable of operating on the high seas. In response, the Minister of the Colonies overruled the interim administrator, calling the latter’s attention to Portugal’s need to reaffirm its sovereignty and to fly the flag at various points along the Chinese coast where Portuguese communities were to be found, a mission which only the *Pátria* was in any way able to perform – even if, as both the Macau authorities and the Ministry of the Colonies recognized, it had to spend months on end at anchor.

In the years that followed, the *Pátria*’s operational characteristics, its constant need for repairs, the poor state of the ammunition stored on board, and the growing expense associated with its crew were the subjects of an intense correspondence between the Governor of Macau and the Minister of the Colonies. The former wanted to replace the *Pátria* with motorboats similar to those of the Chinese Navy, suited to operations in the region’s rivers. But little came of this effort; the controversial vessel would eventually be decommissioned in 1936, while still in Macau. Purchased by a Chinese citizen, who in turn sold it to the Nationalist Government, it would again take to the seas as part of the Chinese Navy.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> ‘por se considerar que ela representava um dos elementos mais perigosos’. Reis, 2003: 21-22.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Pela sua fraca construção e multiplicidade de mecanismos, nunca se poderá adaptar convenientemente aos serviços da marinha de Macau.’ AHU, Report sent by the governor of Macau *ad interim*, Aníbal Sanches de Miranda, to the Ministry of the Colonies, Box 2501 (Colonial Navy), DGC/6R/MAC/1L, 9 January 1914.

<sup>20</sup> Some years later, during the Second World War, it would be the turn of the gunboat *Macau* to be sold – in this case to the Japanese – in order to make the colony’s ends meet. See Day and Garrett (eds) (2014). The Imperial Japanese Army occupied at this time the whole region, including Hong Kong, but Portuguese

### *Leal Senado*

The polemic surrounding the *Leal Senado's* future was one of the most public aspects of Carlos da Maia's time as governor of Macau. A number of old studies recommended the dissolution of Macau's municipal assembly, but these had never led to any action worthy of note. Carlos da Maia decided to break with the *status quo*, adopting, from the very first moment, a position of opposition to the survival of the *Leal Senado*. In an extensive report sent to the Ministry of the Colonies in May 1915, the governor, signing off as a "simple citizen who renders a service to his country and conveys information to this Government,"<sup>21</sup> considered the *Leal Senado* to be "an institution whose advantages no-one can ever discern."<sup>22</sup>

Taking advantage of the ongoing project to draft an Organic Charter for Macau, Carlos da Maia decided to lead the movement that argued for the definitive elimination of Macau's municipal organ. In a careful strategic move, he decided to carry out a public consultation about this delicate matter, to be conducted through the *Leal Senado* itself, before making such a radical decision. At a public meeting called for the debate of this most important of issues, the population decided to delegate the study of the delicate case to a specialized commission, which included the Vice President of the *Leal Senado*. This commission, perhaps surprisingly, voted in favour of the organ's extinction. The governor was thus amassing precious ammunition for his battle against the municipal power.

There were justifiable reasons for the governor's offensive against the *Leal Senado*. In accordance with the Colonies' Organic Charters, residents who could read and write in any language could vote, including foreigners with over two years' residence in a given territory. In the case of Macau, where the overwhelming majority of the population was made up of literate Chinese, the risk that Chinese interests might very well take over the *Leal Senado* was a real one. Carlos da Maia warned, in the already cited report,

If the municipality of Macau is preserved, Chinese control is guaranteed and the government of the city of Macau will clearly lie in the hands of the Mandarin of Canton.<sup>23</sup>

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neutrality was generally respected in Macau. Timor was not as fortunate, having been invaded and occupied by the Japanese. See Cunha, 1996: 32-46.

<sup>21</sup> 'Simples cidadão que presta ao seu país um serviço e ao Governo uma informação'.

<sup>22</sup> 'Uma instituição cujas vantagens ninguém descobre.' Bessa, 1999: 111.

<sup>23</sup> 'Se for conservado o município de Macau os chineses terão nele definitivamente a entrada garantida e será o mandarim de Cantão quem aberta e claramente governará a cidade de Macau.' Bessa, 1999: 134.

Moreover, Carlos da Maia considered it unjustifiable that there should exist municipal institutions whose activity interfered directly with public administration. He argued that the colony's minuscule dimension did not allow for administrative subdivisions, and that these merely contributed to create an overlap of roles and their distribution with neither rhyme nor reason. The governor was also basing his argument on the Organic Charters which, in their final dispositions, determined that in small provinces there should be no municipal corporations, their functions being exercised directly by the Government Councils (Fava, 2010, 46).

In the end, the Governor forwarded the project for a new Organic Charter of Macau to Lisbon, including in it the proposal for the abolition of the *Leal Senado*. The institution's uncertain future was hotly debated in the parliamentary sessions of 1916 and 1917 by deputies who either attacked, or defended, the arguments put forward by the governor of Macau. But nothing came of the initiative, which ended with an anti-climax. Carlos da Maia's project was eventually forgotten about by both the Ministry of the Colonies and the Parliament. An Organic Charter of Macau was indeed published in 1917, quickly suspended as a result of Sidónio Pais's revolution and then reinstated in 1919. However, the *Leal Senado* would survive all political storms.

### *Sun Yat-sen's Recognition*

The father of the Chinese Republic and one of the founders of the Portuguese Republic would see their paths cross in Macau. Sun Yat-sen and Carlos da Maia had in common a republican ideal and membership in secret societies. The Triad, a secret association present in various countries, was led by Sun Yat-sen, and enjoyed good relations with the Freemasons, of which Carlos da Maia was allegedly a member. The Camões Lodge gained fresh impetus during Maia's time in Macau, although there is no record of his active participation in its activities.

Sun Yat-sen was born in a village located close to Macau, and it was in the Portuguese colony that this Chinese republican leader had sought shelter for his conspiracy aimed at overthrowing the Manchu dynasty. He practiced as a doctor in Macau beginning in the fall of 1892. But while Sun Yat-sen stayed in Macau, he established a friendship with a local, Francisco Hermengildo Fernandes, editor of the *Echo Macaense* newspaper and another alleged freemason. An intricate web of personal relationships anchored in



membership of the masons allowed for the “balancing of loyalties and the articulation of strategies”<sup>24</sup> amongst the leading figures in Macau society” (Gonçalves, 2010, 55). However, Sun Yat-sen “did not stay long in Macao” for two reasons: “lacked favorable condition for political activities” an “[i]n addition, Portuguese doctors in Macao tried to expel him” (Lei, 2006, 55). In the fall of 1893, he decided to go to Guangzhou.

On the other side of the border, China was undergoing a troubled political period. The general to whom Sun Yat-sen had ceded the presidency of the Republic, Yuan Shikai, took under his wing the movement for the restoration of the monarchy, eventually proclaiming himself emperor in December 1915. Yuan Shikai would prove an ephemeral emperor, dying in June 1916. Members of Sun Yat-sen’s Nationalist Party (Kuomintang), now illegal, took refuge in Japan, Hong Kong, and Macau. The province of Canton became the stage for armed conflict which threatened to engulf the Portuguese colony. Two governments, one in the South (Canton) and one in the North (Beijing), would fight for power over the whole of China in years to come. The civil war, carried on by the so-called warlords, would last until 1928. In June 1916, Sun Yat-sen wrote to Governor Carlos da Maia, expressing his thanks for the support offered to the Nationalists who had sought temporary shelter in the Portuguese colony (Bessa, 1999). Not long after, Carlos da Maia would seek to capitalize – in a somewhat hurried fashion – on China’s political instability.

### China Threatens Macau

According to the available historiography, the reasons for governor Carlos da Maia’s controversial resignation lie either in the opposition to Macau’s forced loan to Angola (Reis, 2003, 22) or to the battle waged to abolish the *Leal Senado* (Fava, 2010, 47-48). Other historians refer also to the need to discuss the financing of works in the Port of Macau that led Carlos da Maia to travel to Lisbon, from where he would not return (Spooner, 2010, 27). However, as has already been noted, Carlos da Maia never hid his dissatisfaction with the hybrid situation in which Macau’s adjacent islands, over which Portugal claimed sovereignty, found themselves. The most problematic of all was Lapa, separated from the Portuguese colony by the Pearl River. A mere three months after his arrival in Macau, Carlos da Maia, in his reports back to Lisbon, argued for the establishment by the Portuguese authorities of a military governor on the island.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> ‘Concertar lealdades e articular estratégias’.

<sup>25</sup> AHD, Box N. 1236/*Limites de Macau*, telegram from the governor of Macau, Carlos da Maia, to the 6th Bureau of the Directorate General of the Colonies, Ministry of the Colonies, 6 October 1914.

Early in April 1916, Macau was shaken by shots which, fired by light weapons from Lapa, hit a number of houses and the waters close to where the *Pátria* lay at anchor. The struggle between the factions which fought to control southern China had reached the gates of Macau. In the report he produced regarding these incidents, the harbour master, João de Freitas Ribeiro, noted that the time had come for Portugal to assume a more assertive posture over Lapa in order to guarantee the safety of the population of Macau. In other words, this officer recommended a police intervention on the disputed island so as to extend Portuguese protection to its population. He wrote,

If our action in Lapa overshadows that of China, the Chinese nation will not be able to consider that fact as an attack or an insult to its rights; on the contrary, a justified Portuguese intervention will result only in a straitening of relations which the victorious party will easily recognize.<sup>26</sup>

Still in April, the governor decided to send an Army officer at the head of twenty policemen to Lapa in order to assert Portuguese sovereignty over the disputed island. They disembarked in plain clothes “every once in a while,”<sup>27</sup> being thus “the target of the natives’ ridicule.”<sup>28</sup> The harbour master was initially kept on the margins of this initiative, which involved naval means under his overall command. Feeling slighted and in an open conflict with the officer who led the expedition to Lapa, he sent a formal complaint against governor Carlos da Maia to the authorities in Lisbon. The row between the harbour master and Carlos da Maia, both naval officers, was not entirely new. In 1915, the first had complained of the inconvenient nature of the obligatory accumulation of functions, which included the supervision of the opium trade. As far as Freitas Ribeiro was concerned, the management of this trade was harmful to his prestige as a naval officer. Late in August 1916, the governor sent the Ministry of the Colonies his reply to his naval colleague’s complaint, leaving for Lisbon “temporarily” in order to deal directly with the Minister “about matters related to this province’s administration.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> ‘Se a nossa acção na Lapa sobrelevar, por momentos, à da China, não pode a nação chinesa considerar esse facto como atentatório ou postergador dos seus direitos: pelo contrário, da justificada intervenção portuguesa não pode resultar senão um estreitamento de relações que o partido vencedor facilmente reconhecerá.’ AHU, Report by the Harbor Master, Box N. 2503, Colonial Navy, Macau, 6th Bureau, 19 April 1916, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> ‘De vez em quando’.

<sup>28</sup> ‘Motivo de zombaria dos indígenas’.

<sup>29</sup> ‘Temporariamente [...] sobre assuntos da administração desta província.’ AM, Supplement to N. *Boletim Oficial* n. 36, government of the Province of Macau, 4 September 1916.

At year's end, the Chinese reacted to the Portuguese moves, sending 100 soldiers to Lapa Island and another military force to the Chinese side of the *Portas do Cerco*. In a note sent to his bank's Lisbon headquarters, BNU manager Arthur Drouhin recorded the state of anxiety being experienced in Macau. This bank official believed that

The causes for these shows of strength by the Chinese Government could form the basis for a very long report which most probably would not be favourable to the highest authority in this colony, now absent from Macau.<sup>30</sup>

Carlos da Maia had indeed left the colony at the end of the summer of 1916, never to return. Although Portugal was in a state of war, Lisbon was in no hurry to send a new plenipotentiary governor to Macau. For almost two years, until the arrival of Artur Tamagnini Barbosa in October 1918, the governance of Macau was left to provisional administrations. In the meantime, China, in August 1917, entered what had become a globalized war.

It would also take the Ministry of the Colonies nearly one year to reach a verdict on the complaint made against the governor of Macau. Although, Solomon-like, it strove to allow the two parties to save face, the Ministry of the Colonies, in a note issued in May 1917, recognized that “[...] it is hard to understand the political aims of the attempted mission on Lapa Island, or to conceive of its chances of success [...]”<sup>31</sup> In other words, the actions of governor Carlos da Maia, who by then had been in Lisbon for many months, was clearly denounced by the Ministry which oversaw Macau. Coincidentally, the minutes of the Council of Ministers for the same month reveal that the government “did not agree at all with his policy.”<sup>32</sup>

Carlos da Maia left a mark on Macau, thanks in part to a strong presence and the work accomplished, but also because of his unexpected absence. In his desire to abolish the *Leal Senado* and, especially, in his clash with China over the disputed Lapa Island, his

<sup>30</sup> ‘As causas destas justas manifestações de força por parte do Governo chinês dariam material para um extenso relatório que decerto não poderia ser favorável à primeira autoridade da colónia hoje ausente de Macau.’ AHCGD (BNU fund), file 012.8/92, *Political Situation of the Colony*, Report N. 53 from the BNU Manager to Lisbon, 12 December 1916.

<sup>31</sup> ‘[...] não se compreendem bem os intuitos políticos da pretendida missão na ilha da Lapa, nem se concebem as possibilidades de êxito [...]’ AHU, Complaint by the Harbour Master of Macau, Captain João Ribeiro, against the governor of the Province, Carlos da Maia, 6th Bureau of the Directorate General of the Colonies, Ministry of the Colonies, Box N. 2501, Colonial Navy, 1917, Macau, 16 May 1917, p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Não concordava em absoluto com a sua orientação’. Marques, 2009, 95.

patriotic zeal went too far. The government order which related to his removal from the post was annulled in 1918, during Sidónio Pais's consulate, but Carlos da Maia would never return to Macau. He would later become Minister of the Navy and of the Colonies, before being murdered in October 1921, during the events collectively known as the *Noite Sangrenta* (Bloody Night).

## Conclusion

At the starting point of the movements that led to the formation of the Portuguese and Chinese Republics there lay a nationalist ideology that would pit them against one another. In truth, while Portuguese nationalism, embodied in and interpreted by republicanism, fought for the *mise-en-valeur* of the empire – in accordance with a sovereign vision of the overseas colonial space – Chinese nationalism was completely opposed to the presence of foreign powers in China, underpinned by the so-called *unequal treaties*. However, this republican nationalism would lead Portugal, first, and China, later, to enter the world war on the same side. Mindful of their republican legitimacy and of the ever present spectrum of a monarchical/imperial restoration, the governments of the two nations would opt to address and dilute internal structural difficulties through a high-risk foreign policy.<sup>33</sup> Even so, the two countries would be kept at arm's length by the international directory which resulted from the Great War.

The two nations would know periods of great political instability, dictatorial leaders, attempts to restore the monarchy, short-lived governments, and even armed conflict. In both cases, the attempts to establish a republican regime were more the result of the exhaustion of the monarchical option than an affirmation of an ideological alternative. The Chinese Emperor was kept in place, still benefitting from many of his expensive privileges. The Portuguese monarch was sent into a golden exile in London. Portugal and China made the changeover to republican regimes in the same period, being among the first to do so in their respective continents. They had in common the need to reach a decision over Macau.

Portugal and China, weak powers charged with administering vast territories, saw in their participation in the war an unmissable opportunity to acquire the respect of the international community. Among other objectives, they hoped to gain a seat at the post-war peace talks, where their wartime effort might be recognized. This hope was undone by both the reconfiguration of the international system and the actions of uneasy allies: Great

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<sup>33</sup> See Oliveira, 2011: 199-332; Teixeira, 1996: 377-83; Xu, 2005.

Britain in the case of Portugal, the United States and Japan in the case of China. The dubious handling of the Shandong affair by President Woodrow Wilson would undermine the League of Nations. For its part, the Macau question would remain unresolved, thanks to civil war in China. The two questions would come before the Washington Conference of 1921-22.

Macau, a diminutive Asian oasis, survived the Great War unscathed. The later unveiling of the Communist regime in China would create new difficulties for the Portuguese administered territory in the Far East, most notably in 1955 when Premier Zhou Enlai forbade Macao's fourth centennial celebrations and during the 1966 mutinies that resulted from the Maoist *great proletarian cultural revolution*. Macau would eventually be handed back to China on 19 December 1999, the final day of the old Portuguese Empire.

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