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From the Far East to the Far West. Portuguese Discourse on Translation: A case study of Camilo Pessanha

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The history of translation is a site of memory that gathers testimonies of various kinds, from texts to images, from translated literature to statements reflecting on translation praxis. In Portugal, the existing anthologies of comments on translation into Portuguese are heavily dependent on a Eurocentric view of Portuguese literary and translation history, and rather neglect or elide the discourses of those who translate(d) lesser known literatures, particularly those written in non-Western languages, as is the case of Chinese and Japanese. The present article conceptualizes a project that seeks to put together a collection of meta-discourses by translation agents working with languages and textual traditions other than Western. The aim of such a project is to delocalize Portugal's history of translation by offering a corpus that testifies to the long-term cultural transfers between two geographical extremes: the Far East, which here refers exclusively to China and Japan, and the Far West, which is where I position Portugal from the viewpoint of the Far East. This anthology of texts about a Far Eastern geocultural periphery in translation would be an important bibliographical source for historical research necessary to (re)think, (re)write, and (re)map the Portuguese tradition of translation. The kinds of text to be anthologized are illustrated on the basis of a case study: the preface by the Portuguese symbolist poet Camilo Pessanha (1867–1926) to his direct translation from Chinese into Portuguese of eight elegies from the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), which was published in Macau in 1914. The article is thus divided into three parts: the first part provides an historical overview of the translation flows between the Far West and the Far East; the second part sketches the structure of a representative anthology of voices translating from East Asian languages; and the third part analyses Pessanha's statements on his poetry translations and literariness of Chinese language.

Keywords: anthology of statements about translation; Portugal; Macau; Camilo Pessanha; Chinese language

1. Introduction

The history of translation is a site of memory that gathers testimonies of various kinds, from texts to images, from translated literature to statements reflecting on translation praxis. These reference materials may help identify multiple, often conflicting, cultural, aesthetic, political concerns or agendas that shape and constrain translation transfers and intercultural communication, that is, the history of translation. It is no surprise that the history of literatures and thus of translation is made not only of texts, their contexts of production, circulation and reception, but also, because a text does not travel by

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itself, of agents, either textual producers (mainly authors, translators) or intermediary agencies (e.g. editors, publishing houses, educational institutions). The voice of the agents that make and write the history of translation can be made audible either by looking into their legacy of translated texts or by collecting and examining their comments on translation, the latter being the kind of historiographical research on which this article focuses.

In Portugal, the existing collections of writings on translation into Portuguese (Pais 1997b; Sabio Pinilla and Fernández Sánchez 1998) are heavily dependent on a Eurocentric view of Portuguese literary and translation history, and rather neglect or elide the discourses of those who translate(d) less known literatures, particularly those written in non-Western languages, as is the case of Chinese and Japanese.[1] The need for a project that is able to overcome a local view of literary and translation history and thus document the contribution of translation agents working with languages and textual traditions other than Western seems obvious.

The purpose of this article is to conceptualize a project aimed at putting together statements on translation that will fill a geocultural void and decentre Portugal's history of translation by investigating the cultural transfers between two geographical extremes: the Far East, a label I will use here to refer exclusively to China and Japan, which are the East Asian spaces my research has been dealing with, and the Far West, which is where I position Portugal from the viewpoint of the Far East. By exploring an alternative cartography for Portugal's history of translation, this collection would highlight its multicultural diversity through a textual corpus that made available an important bibliographical source for historical research, against which the Portuguese tradition of translation should then be re-examined. Through translators' meta-discourses – and the historical, institutional, cultural, aesthetic, ethical contextualization they may offer of their own practice – and through the discourses of other translation-related agents, such an anthology would show how they theorize translation from Chinese and Japanese, how they act in between East and West, what metaphors and images are more often used to approach those languages and configure their respective literatures and cultures, how familiar translators are with the poetics in translation, and which concerns dominate translators' praxis, among other issues.

On the whole, an anthology of textual testimonies about translation from East Asian languages into Portuguese would challenge the invisibility of translators, be they known or anonymous voices, and, above all, the invisibility of less translated languages. Albert Branchadell defines "less translated languages" as those which "are less often the source of translation in the international exchange of linguistic goods, regardless of the number of people using these languages" (2005, 1). As he further explains, it is a comprehensive category that "serves equally well for well-known widely used languages such as Arabic or Chinese and long-neglected minority languages such as Catalan" (1). The fact is, these less translated languages and their literatures have more limited markets and readerships.

Formally, the present article is divided into three parts with the first two sections setting up the background for the case study in section three: the first part provides a historical overview of the translation flows between the Far West and the Far East; the second part sketches the structure of a representative anthology of voices translating East Asian languages; and the third part illustrates this anthologizing exercise by focusing on one particular contribution, that of the poet Camilo Pessanha (1867–1926) as a Portuguese voice in exile in Macau.

2. The Far West meets the Far East: a historical survey of translation transfers

Translation transfers between Portugal and East Asia are part of a historical process of intercultural contact that can be traced back to the sixteenth-century expansionist enterprise after Vasco da Gama's fleet arrived in India in 1498. Succinctly, those transfers concentrated on the Portugal – Macau (China) – Japan triangle and were pioneered by the Society of Jesus through missionary work and education (establishment of schools and printing presses). Missionary work was mainly grounded on a linguistic policy of local language learning and training as a key instrument not only for successful intercultural communication and assimilation to indigenous communities, but also for effective religious service.[2] The printing presses that missionaries brought along with them (first established in Macau [1588] and then exported to the Japanese provinces of Kazusa, Amakusa and Nagasaki [1590–1614]) were chiefly intended to produce materials to assist the missionaries in their administration of the Catholic sacraments and in the learning of local languages, customs and cultural habits. During the sixteenth century, the printing activity benefitted from the vernacularization shift taking place in Renaissance Europe, where the use of vernaculars started competing against the monopoly of Latin, especially in the spheres of literature, science and administration; this shift gave way to a demand for translation into Portuguese (Buescu 1984, 11). As Ana Paula Laborinho (2006, 71–72) puts it, two language-related movements can be distinguished at the time: on the one hand, the local teaching of the Portuguese language to the newly encountered peoples in China and Japan as a manifestation of the non-material power of the Portuguese empire; on the other hand, the learning of East Asian languages as an acculturation strategy at the service of the missionary cause. Both movements, one towards the Portuguese language and the other towards East Asian languages, favoured the formal study of the languages and the development of lexicographical instruments, which involved intense translation activity (71–72).

In the second half of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese successfully settled in Macau, from where Portugal entered international and regional trade alongside China and Japan and gradually assumed the role of mediator between the European and Asian markets. Macau's geographically strategic position enabled it to grow as a cosmopolitan, multicultural and multilingual port city, where the Jesuits undertook their first studies on the Chinese language and completed the first translations, mainly of religious works, into Latin and the vulgar tongues. Macau thus became the ideal place from which to access the Chinese language; it was held as a Portuguese colony until its administration was handed over to China in 1999, an event that symbolically marked the end of the Portuguese colonial cycle.

The first dictionary of Chinese into a Western language was a Portuguese–Chinese dictionary, probably written between 1584 and 1588 (João de Deus Ramos cited in Ramos 2001, 60, n.4); its manuscript was discovered in 1934 and attributed to Italian Jesuits Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) and Michele Ruggieri (1543–1607).[3] Before this dictionary, Tomé Pires (ca. 1480–1540) had written the *Suma oriental* (ca. 1515), which provides the first global geography of Asia after the discovery of the sea route to India (Loureiro 2014, 29). It deserves further recognition for presenting the first European phonetic representation of the Chinese language. The Jesuit Gaspar Ferreira (1571–1649) is also known to have produced a dictionary of Chinese and Portuguese; around 1640, Father Álvaro Semedo (1586–1658) authored a new dictionary consisting of two handwritten lexicons of Portuguese–Chinese and Chinese–Portuguese (João de Deus Ramos cited in Ramos 2001, 60–61, n.4). With regard to literary exchanges, Muriel Détrie (1991–1992, 45) observes that until the suppression of the Jesuit Order in 1775 the few existing translations

of Chinese literature were predominantly linguistic and ethnographic in character and were included in broader works documenting societal, cultural and religious practices. The long-term Portuguese presence in Macau retained the metropolis' distant interest in China and eventually encouraged throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, on a par with major European cultural centres (specifically England, France, and more recently the United States of America), a more intense involvement in its literature, Chinese classics (Confucius and poetry) in particular, either by translating it or by commenting on it. The case study to be examined exemplifies both tendencies.

Nowadays the Japanese language holds a minor position as source or original language in the Portuguese translation system, although at least during the right-wing dictatorship period of *Estado Novo* (1933–1974) Japanese literary works were, according to Teresa Seruya, "better known to the Portuguese reading public than Indian and Chinese literature" (2013, 181). The first translations of Japanese into a European language were also into Portuguese and appeared in the pedagogical works commissioned by the Society of Jesus, consisting mostly of bilingual/trilingual dictionaries and grammars.[4] With the expulsion of the Portuguese Jesuits from Japan around 1639, as part of the country's sociocultural, political, and economic isolation under the *sakoku* policy which officially ended with the Meiji Restoration in 1868, the pivotal role of the Portuguese language and its protagonists gradually fell into oblivion.[5] From the nineteenth century onwards, following the forced opening of Japan to the West in 1854, the number of diplomats and consuls, travellers, journalists and writers moving towards the Far East steadily increased. As East Asia became the stage of several conflicts – specifically the Sino-Japanese wars (1894–1895, 1937–1945), the Russo-Japanese war (1904–1905), and the closing phase of the Second World War (1945) – it drew more international attention, thus renewing Western interest in its cultural assets and providing new possibilities for translation.

These East–West translation flows have been a marginal area of research within translation studies in Portugal. The focus has traditionally been on the history of translation from classical languages (Latin and Greek) and from dominant or neighbouring literatures written in more central, and consequently more translated, languages, in particular English, French, Spanish, and German.[6] Despite the privileged historical relationship between Portugal and both the Chinese and Japanese languages via Macau, scant research is available on their associated literatures, still to this day. When these literatures are translated, it is usually via the mediation of more central languages, especially English and French. Recourse to indirect translation practices via vehicular languages of prestige became more common from the second half of the nineteenth century, as English and French translations of Chinese and Japanese literature started circulating in Europe. Henri Meschonnic (1998, 232) unhesitatingly states that it is only in the nineteenth century that the volume of translations of literary and religious works from China, Japan and India into Western languages multiplies. Despite the contribution of Portuguese missionaries to the study of East Asian languages in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which later benefitted the work of nineteenth-century orientalists, Oriental or Asian studies in general,[7] and Chinese or Japanese studies in particular, would flourish more strongly in the Anglo-Saxon world and in France.

Notwithstanding a significant number of studies on the history of the Portuguese expansion in the Orient focusing primarily on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – Luso-Japanese relations have predominantly been studied with regard to "missionary, commercial, political, cultural and artistic aspects" (Pinto 2001, 129) with the same holding true for Luso-Chinese relations, which have however known further development

concerning literature and the arts – or studies on Portuguese as a *lingua franca* of communication and trade among Europeans, among Asians and between Europeans and Asians (e.g. Laborinho 2006), the discipline of Oriental or Asian studies, and related fields, is underrepresented in the Portuguese academia. Former ambassador to Japan, Armando Martins Janeira (1981, 27) rebuked Portugal not only for being the sole European country that does not have a school of Oriental or Asian studies, but also for not keeping up with European or Japanese research on these matters. The poet-translator António Graça de Abreu is likewise critical of the neglect that befell Portuguese sinology and therefore denies the existence of a school or tradition of Oriental studies or sinology in Portugal (1996b, 47).[8]

3. Anthologizing voices translating from the Far East

Anthologies of statements about translation constitute primary source material for a rethinking of translation. Regardless of the criteria followed, which may be conducive to a more conservative or innovative collection, these anthologies can establish a dialogue between different worldviews and promote, to different extents, either resistance or openness to expert texts and unfamiliar geographies, since anthologizing is an intersubjective exercise of selection that responds to its initiator's rationale.

As stated, the historical and cultural transfers between Portugal, China and Japan have gone unmentioned in the existing collections of writings on translation in Portugal, which hardly go beyond a Eurocentric view of Portuguese translation history. *Teoria diacrónica da tradução portuguesa* (1997) by Castilho Pais and *O discurso sobre a tradução em Portugal* (1998) by Sabio Pinilla and Fernández Sánchez illustrate this omission. Both works were produced by scholars, and Pais' anthology was actually published by a university press. Both works are presented as long-required tools at the service of translation academics and researchers of Portugal's history of translation. According to Sabio Pinilla (2013, 91), the proliferation of these kinds of anthology is linked to the rise of translation studies as an academic discipline. Within the Iberian Peninsula these anthologies were quite popular in the 1990s and 2000s with a view to providing the discipline with a historical perspective and consequently developing self-awareness of the field.

Castilho Pais' pioneering work *Teoria diacrónica da tradução portuguesa* [Diachronic Theory of Portuguese Translation] consists of an inventory of 59 theoretical discourses that cover a historical period ranging from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries. Pais' main goal, so he says in the "Introduction," is to make known the Portuguese translators of remote times and their texts, which encode translational behaviours and ways of performing (Pais 1997a, 17). Of the 59 chronologically ordered texts, which seek to highlight key moments of Portugal's incomplete history (40), only two testimonies refer to Asia: (1) the sixteenth-century historian João de Barros (1496–1570), who mentions the Portuguese conquests in Asia; and (2) the twentieth-century poet and critic Jorge de Sena (1919–1978), for his world poetry anthology *Poesia de 26 séculos (de Arquíloco a Nietzsche)* [26 Centuries of Poetry (from Archilochos to Nietzsche)]. Initially published in two volumes in 1971–1972, the anthology was republished in 1993, which is the edition Pais uses. This edition includes four poems (indirectly) translated from Chinese of two canonical poets (Li Bai and Du Fu) and 21 haiku of the Japanese poet Matsuo Bashō in a cluster of about 361 poems by 107 poets presented in chronological order.[9]

Sabio Pinilla and Fernández Sánchez's *O discurso sobre a tradução em Portugal: o proveito, o ensino e a crítica. Antologia (c. 1429–1818)* [Discourse on Translation in Portugal: Gains, Education, and Critique. Anthology (ca. 1429–1818)] brings together 44 testimonies of 40 translators from the fifteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century. These texts are organized according to genre or discursive types, as either preliminary, normative or critical. Each discursive type is preceded by a summary of the historical specificity and context of the corresponding texts; as Sabio Pinilla (2013, 99) explains elsewhere, the anthology offers reading guidelines that are discontinuous and uneven for they are circumscribed to each epoch of Portugal's history of translation. India is the furthest Orient represented in the anthology with an excerpt from João de Barros' *Diálogo em louvor da nossa linguagem* [Dialogue in Honour of our Language] (1540), an extended passage of the one included in Pais' anthology. Again, the absence of the Far East is notable.

The construction of a representative anthology[10] of comments on translation from East Asian languages into Portuguese would complement existing anthologies and challenge both a Eurocentric historicization of translation transfers and the domination of the Portuguese literary space by works and authors of hegemonic literatures. Ideally the construction of such a volume would rely on a team of researchers to conduct historical research with a view to assembling and analysing a significant corpus covering different epochs of cultural history and several linguistic areas (from classical and modern Japanese and Chinese to China's dialectal diversity), written by translators who are often writers themselves (this is the case with contemporary poetry translation, as will be shown) and by other relevant agents involved in this segment of the translation market. The point of departure would involve collecting paratextual materials such as prefaces, epilogues, blurbs, or other meta-discourses, such as reviews, critiques of translation, letters, interviews, all to be subjected to scrutiny, selection and contextualization. This anthologizing of the accumulated intellectual and symbolic capital supporting Portugal's history of translation would lead to a diachronically comprehensive corpus encompassing more than four centuries of translation transfers between the Far East and the Far West, which have been predominantly lexicographical and literary in nature.

From the twentieth century onwards, poetry translations in particular from Chinese and Japanese increased in Portugal. A preliminary analysis of the prefaces and introductory notes to those works reveals recurring topics of discussion common to Portuguese translators. Whether dealing with first- or second-hand translations, poetry translators tend to report the difficulty of finding homologous forms in the Portuguese literary tradition that are as concise, semantically rich and suggestive as Chinese or Japanese poetic forms, and that preserve the visual materiality of the latter and as many layers of meaning and intertextuality as the original poems. Translators often perceive this difficulty as untranslatability, which seems to have become a catchphrase with respect to these so-called exotic literatures and languages, not to mention the specifics of the genre itself that lead many poet-translators to sustain that "poetry is untranslatable" (e.g. Brito 1962, 10). Nonetheless, pragmatically translators overcome untranslatability by including critical apparatus and/or solving their doubts and hesitations by consulting translations into other European languages, reference works such as dictionaries, and other didactic and research materials.

Wenceslau de Moraes (1854–1929), naval officer, consul in Japan, and a writer who was enthusiastic about all things Japanese, established himself in 1898 in the Empire of the Rising Sun, from where he wrote for Portuguese readers on Japan. In his long essay *Relance da alma japonesa* [Glimpse of the Japanese Soul] (1926), for example, he

provides a small selection of haiku in Japanese followed by several interpretive exercises in Portuguese. These combine prose translation, consisting of one or two short sentences, a comment or personal explanation of the haiku, and a poetry translation, consisting of a four-line stanza of rhymed verse (Moraes 2015, 274–281). Although the *Anthologie de la littérature japonaise* (1910) by French japanologist Michel de Revon (1867–1943) was one of his main sources for accessing and studying Japanese literature, Moraes supported his in-depth knowledge of Japanese culture by incorporating into his body of work (re)sources such as the works of the British diplomat William G. Aston (1841–1911) and German philologist Karl Florenz (1865–1939) (Janeira 1973).

More recently, sinologist Gil de Carvalho has edited two anthologies of Chinese poetry in Portuguese (1989, 2010). Despite his expert knowledge of the language, he openly states that his translations hinge on "at least one translation in Western languages. It would have been impossible for me to translate without using them" (2010, 22).[11] António Graça de Abreu, most widely known for his (direct) translations of classical poets such as Li Bai, Du Fu and Wang Wei, says he has encountered both "the impossibility and the possibility of translation" (1996a, 39). With regard to translating Li Bai, he confesses that

> I have never worked alone. Besides my Chinese friends and books, I helped myself with English and French translations, so often crucial to my understanding, organizing and ordering of Li Bai's poetic discourse.
> […] I seek tools, dictionaries, explanations, translations in languages more similar to ours. (39–40)

Jorge de Sousa Braga, another poet-translator with no knowledge of either Japanese or Chinese, is careful to classify his haiku and Chinese poetry translations as "Portuguese versions" and, similarly to Gil de Carvalho or António Graça de Abreu, to list in the introduction or at the end of each work the bibliographical sources used in multiple languages (French, English, and/or Spanish).

These language and translation issues were first addressed by Camilo Pessanha (1867–1926), who is touted as the principal Portuguese exponent of symbolism. During his exile in Macau he became a translator himself as well as a collector of Chinese art and material culture. The next section focuses exclusively on the voice of Pessanha as translator. Not only was Pessanha a pioneer at the turn of the twentieth century in translating directly from Chinese into Portuguese, but he also theorized about the Chinese language. Although his work paved the way for subsequent poetry translation from Chinese,[12] the history of Portuguese literature and translation has not been favourable to him. An anthology of views on translation should enshrine the ethical duty of reinstating cultural agents of his kind in Portugal's history of translation.

4. A hard nut to crack[13]

In order to exemplify the corpus that could be constituted in the kind of anthology I have been describing, I advance Camilo Pessanha's 1914 preface to his translation of eight Chinese elegies. The issues raised in "Elegias chinesas (prefácio)" [Chinese Elegies (preface)] dialogue with another essayistic work of the author published in 1915, which I will discuss at the appropriate juncture: "Literatura chinesa (conferência)" [Chinese Literature (lecture)].[14] Taken together these texts testify to the poet's familiarity with the history, aesthetics and tenets of Chinese classical poetry and language.

These written testimonies cannot be detached from Pessanha's exile in Macau, where he settled in 1894 and actively committed himself to learning Chinese and to translating Chinese poetry.[15] As an exile he found spiritual repose and delight in this self-learning, as he would acknowledge in his 1915 lecture on Chinese literature:

> [To] provide the audience with a general idea of the intimate structure of the literary Chinese language and of the intense spiritual pleasure that the study, however superficial, of that language and its monuments offers to those who devote themselves to it – for the beauty it discloses, for the surprises it causes and especially for the vast horizons it opens the spirit to about humanity's general condition and the intense light it projects about the way of being of extinct civilizations. (Pessanha 1993, 55)

One year before, Camilo Pessanha had already translated eight monuments of Chinese literature that bear witness to his rapture over this literary tradition, the Chinese language and its inherent literariness, on which he elaborates throughout his essays. On September 13, 1914, the Macau newspaper *O Progresso* published eight Chinese elegies from the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) and Pessanha's translations side by side. The poet-translator's condition of exile can per se lead one to hypothesize the translated work, on the one hand, as an exercise in the mother tongue or a tribute to the remote homeland,[16] or, on the other hand, as a test of Pessanha's command of the dominant language in the colonial space of exile. In the preface that precedes the elegies, the poet-translator describes his poetic compositions as the product of "a modest attempt, a futile hobby of sad hours during long years of solitude" (1993, 78), yet a hobby that would supposedly lead to the publication of a short anthology of 17 elegies. As far as is known, only these eight elegies were actually published, and they were extracted from a songbook compiled in the beginning of the nineteenth century by Chinese minister Iong-Fong-Kong (Pessanha 1993, 75).

In the preface, Pessanha presents himself as an amateur scholar (77) who translates for pleasure, and distinguishes three major features of Chinese poetry (77–78):

(1) "the sensorial or musical element […] [which is] absolutely incontrovertible";
(2) "the exaggerated taste for historical or literary allusion that imbues countless passages, and even entire poems, with a double meaning – one superficial and direct, and another mentioned or symbolic, erudite and deep"; and
(3) "epigraphic concision […], in which the elegance of style demands the almost complete suppression of words describing logical relations."

Musical games, puns, allusions, intertextuality, semantic imprecision (double meanings), concise syntax, and economic structures are the particular characteristics of Chinese poetry highlighted above, which increase all the more its potential for suggestiveness. To Pessanha, both the suggestive and prosodic elements are untranslatable: suggestiveness is "one of the untranslatable charms of Chinese poetry" (78) and prosody is deemed "incontrovertible" (77). These same characteristics defy therefore the limits of translation of Chinese poetry, or, as Gil de Carvalho has put it more recently, the "major difficulty is to master the set [of characteristics] in a culture as encyclopaedic as the Chinese" (2010, 23).

Nearly 40 years after Pessanha, in 1951, Francisco de Carvalho e Rêgo, an important figure in Macau society, would publish a translated collection of 26 classical Chinese poems, followed by two poems by a contemporary woman poet, under the title of *Mui-Fá – Versos chineses* [Mui-Fá – Chinese Verses]. In his preface "Duas palavras" [Two Words], Carvalho e Rêgo evokes Pessanha's constructs; he mentions allegorical, metaphorical and history-related networks of signification: "the constant use of allegorical or metaphorical phrases, the reference to historical facts, ancient uses and customs and even legends that have become lost in the mists of time" (1951, 22). The musical element is additionally pinpointed as an aesthetic void, a loss in translation: "Chinese poetry is essentially musical and defies perfect translation, because there is always a loss of beauty" (22).

In contrast, Pessanha never speaks of loss. Instead he prefers to draw the line between what is possible and what is impossible within the limits of the target language. It is another way of posing the question of what is translatable and can, or cannot, thus be transposed into the target language. In addition to questioning the limits of linguistic representation, the poet-translator makes use of a lexis that describes his effort to accomplish the translations in terms of measure/degree. Pessanha states that:

> I translated as literally as the radical difference between the genius of the two languages allowed me to. I did my best not to suppress any of the ideas contained in the original, […] although I had sometimes to sacrifice to that imposition of faithfulness the signs of rhythm and the relative symmetry of form that I would like to imprint on the translation of each Chinese *quadra* (four-line stanza) given the impossibility of translating them into *quadras* of Portuguese verses. Even less have I added anything whatsoever with the aim of providing details nor did I worry about false exoticisms. I isolated the translation of each line and in each I kept as far as possible the original order of ideas and symbols. In other words, I tried to transfer exactly what was transferable – the nominal or imaginative element […]. (Pessanha 1993, 76–77)

Pessanha reveals his ethical stance as a poetry translator by privileging literalism as a means of compensating for the specificities of Chinese poetry, which are inextricably linked to the so-called "genius" of language (76). Chinese poetry and language are construed as bounded domains; hence the understanding of Chinese written language as poetry itself,[17] hence its inherent literariness that hardly lends itself to translation. Furthermore, Pessanha rejects any additions in his translations to avoid the risk of unveiling what might be implied or concealed and of falling into false exoticisms, which could be equated with the risky temptation of stereotyping. Gustavo Rubim perceptively sees this "economic rhetoric" as a display of "an *irreplaceable* capital in the economy of human languages, as a *unique testimony* to man's humanity" (1993, 10; emphasis in the original). Rubim goes on to elaborate that "the Chinese language capital puts into question the rhetoric and (progressive) philosophy based on which Europe places itself in the capital position of leader of all civilizations" (10). As will be made clearer, this superior linguistic capital is explained on historical and aesthetic grounds.

The poet's report on his "Chinese Literature" lecture, published on March 21, 1915, in *O Progresso*, may shed light on the "irreplaceable capital" of Chinese language. In the text, Pessanha reaffirms himself as a dilettante whose encounter with the Chinese language can be paralleled with a transcultural aesthetic encounter that is in stark contrast with the lack of aesthetics in Chinese everyday life. One cannot undervalue the internal instability and social downgrading of nineteenth-century, early twentieth-century China brought about by the

Opium Wars (1839–1842, 1856–1860), the Taiping rebellion (1851–1866), China's defeat by Japan (1894–1895), or the Boxer uprising (1899–1901). Pessanha's introduction to Morais Palha's book *Esboço crítico da civilização chinesa* [Critical Sketch of Chinese Civilization] (1912) depicts a wicked, loathsome, deforming portrait of his present-day China (Pessanha 1993, 19–54). The dysphemism achieved is at times so extreme as to sound implausible and result in a parody of Portuguese readers' orientalist expectations.

Conversely, Chinese literature is valued for being an old, long-established literary system and for its originality. To these qualities the poet adds an intrinsic one: beauty, which is "so great and so strange and so exclusively peculiar" and is strictly linked to the beauty of Chinese language itself:

> if it is maybe true that no Chinese work equals in greatness of conception the great works of Western literatures, – no one can doubt that […] the Chinese language is the most beautiful and the most suggestive of all living or dead literary languages. (Pessanha 1993, 59)

On the one hand, this statement apparently unveils an orientalist attitude in the sense of measuring the literary value of a non-Western literary space against a Western idea of literature, which does not, however, cancel out the superiority of Chinese language capital as "the most beautiful and the most suggestive" (59). Pessanha seems thereby to compromise his openness to a system of world literature that strives against the rule of a literary centre of reference.[18] On the other hand, the excerpt also shows that Pessanha consistently comments on Chinese literature and language from a predominantly aesthetic viewpoint as is made evident from the lexical choices that abound in the text: the adjectives "great" (which describes degree, amount or status) and "beautiful" (which connotes a superlative aesthetic experience) serve as benchmarks of literary prestige.

The beauty of Chinese written language, so argues Pessanha, relies on the same particular characteristics identified with regard to poetry, which are deemed to resist translation:

> *the agedness of the characters* used and the *structural uniqueness of language* […] *the ideographic nature* of those same characters and its subsequent great power of *visual evocation*; the *intrinsic aesthetic value* of those characters […]; and, finally, *the musical eurhythmy of the written sentence* […] which, given its wise valuation of tones, is richer, more expressive and more perfect in Chinese literature than in any European metre […]. (Pessanha 1993, 59–60; my emphasis)

This passage reinforces the aesthete's exclusive interest in the Chinese written language that he exalts, first, in terms of the contrast between the spoken word and the ideogram-based writing system, which is believed to exist autonomously and to be the main force of cohesion of the Chinese nation (57), and, second, in relation to phonetic and etymological orthographies. The ideogrammatic feature is crucial for understanding Pessanha's defence of the intrinsically poetic nature of Chinese language, which is close to Ernest Fenollosa's stance in "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry" (1908), edited in 1919 by Ezra Pound. (On the similarities between Pessanha and Fenollosa regarding their understanding of the Chinese ideogram, see Ramos 2001, 114–115; Rubim 1997, 68–72; Franchetti 1988, 15–31.) Yet, the texts here under discussion were written before Fenollosa's ideas became widely known and include insights into the Chinese poetic matter and tradition, which confer on Pessanha a sort of critical sophistication that should not be downplayed.

To the poet-translator, the Chinese written character holds "such a high evocation power that the most accurate etymological orthography is unable to yield that power" (Pessanha 1993, 60). At least three assumptions are shown to underlie this claim: first, the aesthetic superiority of etymological writing over phonetic writing in Latin countries; second, the Chinese ideographic character as an etymologically based writing system; third, the aesthetic superiority of Chinese ideograms over any kind of etymological and phonetic writing,[19] which is explained on the basis of temporal and plastic, visual dimensions.

On the one hand, however Chinese ideographic characters evolve over time, they would always contain in themselves their originary idea (radical). Therefore, the etymology of the ideogram is visually embedded in its form. On the other hand, each ideogram is perceived as an image that can communicate and combine several abstract ideas, yet preserving its radical, thus its strong powers of evocation. In short, Pessanha's aesthetic elevation of the Chinese language resides in its plastic capacity to disclose its own history, which one can retrieve from processes of word formation. Paulo Franchetti conceptualizes this elevation as "a poetic utopia" that both Pessanha and Fenollosa would share of "a complete, Adamic language, fortunately preserved in the Chinese language" (1988, 24). Although the scholar does not expand on the implications of this assertion, the homology between the Adamic language and the Chinese ideogram, already implied in Pessanha's claim that Chinese is the only language to have survived unaltered through time and to have preserved the historical memory of extinct, ancient ages (Pessanha 1993, 56), gains strength in light of the contrast the aesthete draws between the speaking tongue and the written form of Chinese. The language spoken in Paradise would only be intelligible when supplemented with its written form, the Chinese ideogram, whose root can be conceived of as a remnant of pre-Babel times. This homology and supplementing of the Adamic language with the Chinese written character raises obvious issues of translation. It can be hypothesized that translating from Chinese into a non-ideogrammatic, phonetic writing, such as Portuguese, would result in the desacralization of Chinese and readers' deprivation of its Adamic "genius." The literal rendering of Chinese, which is put at the top of the hierarchy of languages, could thus be viewed as an attempt to remain as close as possible to the pre-Babel linguistic memory that certainly engages with an idea of universal humanism and literary patrimony.

Pessanha's overvaluing of the ideogram cannot however, in my view, be detached from a critical position opposing the orthographic reform implemented in Portugal following the establishment of the Republic in 1910. The title of Pessanha's only published book of poems, *Clepsydra* (1920), is elucidatory. Had the poet complied with the new orthography for the Portuguese language, the book would have been titled *Clepsidra*. Barbara Spaggiari (1982, 33–34) explains this "graphical dressing" based on the poet's admiration for ideographic writing, for the *y* in the title visually and symbolically represents the water flow that measures time (Ramos 2001, 120).

The poet-translator's preface to the elegies provides other pragmatic solutions to embrace the "genius" of Chinese idiom and poetry; his translation task would not be complete without being subject to the scrutiny and approval of a reputed sinologist:

> […] I submitted the work to the censorship of my dear old friend master José Vicente Jorge […]. The distinguished sinologist not only did me the favour of correcting some instances of the translation by bringing it closer to the intention of the original but also spontaneously provided me with a great amount of elucidatory notes […]; without them […] the

> intelligibility of the texts (even from the purely aesthetic point of view) would be incomplete. (Pessanha 1993, 77–78)

Pessanha's eight elegies are profusely annotated (42 endnotes in total). His notes serve as guidelines for reading the subtexts of the poems by documenting interpretive choices and by providing historical contextualization, biographical information on the poets in translation, and explanations of images, symbols and allegories. Not only do the notes draw attention to the translator's discursive presence, but also testify to his erudition, even if under the instructions and knowledge of the Macanese José Vicente Jorge (1872–1948), who, moreover, assisted him in identifying the author of each poem. These notes help to form a pact of reliability with the reader that contributes to the legitimacy and authoritativeness of the translation.

Camilo Pessanha's strategy of seeking expert advice is likewise repeated by other translators, such as the above-mentioned Francisco Carvalho e Rêgo, who ends his preface by thanking his "distinguished, literate friend Leonel Yeong (Yeong Iau Kün), for the support he provided me with in the translation of the poems […] and without which I would not have completed the work" (1951, 24). This need of peer review by language specialists and other local authorities in Chinese literature and culture mirrors the need for a seal of quality that guarantees the credibility of both translator and translation.

Along with José Vicente Jorge, Pessanha identifies textual resources that assisted him during the translation process, in particular the work of the Cambridge Professor Herbert Giles (1845–1935), a landmark in sinology, covering from dictionaries and anthologies of literature in translation to language textbooks. Other readings, both source culture- and genre-oriented, mostly in languages other than Portuguese, are mentioned in the notes, namely: the *Diccionario china–portuguez* [Chinese–Portuguese Dictionary] (1833) by the Portuguese sinologist and reverend Joaquim Afonso Gonçalves (1781–1841), who was a foreign member of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland; the Scottish sinologist James Legge's *The Chinese Classics* (8 volumes, 1861–1872); Father Séraphin Couvreur's *Dictionnaire classique de la langue chinoise* (1904); Father Corentin Pétillon's *Allusions littéraires* (Shanghai, 1895–1898); and Father Léon Wieger's three-volume *Textes historiques. Sommaire de l'histoire chinoise, depuis l'origine jusqu'en 1905* (1903–1905). Other scientific sources were also used to comment on the floral landscape and diversity alluded to in some poems, such as Ernest H. Wilson's two-volume *A Naturalist in Western China* (1913) and E. Bretschneider's three-volume *Botanicon sinicum* (1882, 1893, 1895). In this way Camilo Pessanha acknowledges the need for collaborative work, which means not only using mediating texts but also being assisted by a language specialist. Grounded in a network of knowledge sharing, this practice, or paradigm of translation as collaboration, has recently been termed "translaboration,"[20] which seems to be growing as an effective practice for translating between languages of different writing systems.

In sum, as Rubim (1993, 11) rightly puts it, the task of translating eight Chinese elegies can be construed as a fragmented exercise of Pessanha's theoretical reflection about the ideogrammatic nature of Chinese language.

5. Final remarks

The critical pieces I have briefly discussed offer the informed and personal reading by an autodidact in exile of a literature that is still little known among Portuguese readers and has been relegated to a disciplinary periphery. Chinese poetry is described as

beautiful for its visual and prosodic fluency as well as for its concision, intertextuality, allusions and combinations of symbolic and literal meanings, which in the current Western discourse on translation are still presented as the great challenges posed to translators of Chinese. As a producer of relevant discourse on translation coming from a geocultural periphery of Portugal (Macau), Camilo Pessanha's pioneering theoretical discourse in early twentieth-century Portugal certainly engages with other Western discourses from stronger centres of sinology. More voices like his need to be heard in order to delocalize Portugal's history of translation, foreground discourses and agents that have been living on the margins of translation history but have served as promoters of less known literatures and thereby as makers of world literature in Portuguese language, and ultimately promote a comparative history of Western discourses on East–West translation transfers. An anthology of statements about the translation of East Asian literatures is therefore needed to complement the available bibliographical sources in what João Barrento (2002, 78) describes as Portugal's cultural history of translation, as well as to (re)think, (re)write, and (re)map the history of both translation practice and translation theory.

Translation studies scholars in Portugal seem to prefer a more comfortable zone of research and action in geoculturally more familiar spaces. The cautious interest in testimonies resulting from the Portuguese presence in Macau is indicative of the peripherality of the space itself within the Portuguese-speaking world system. This supposed lack of motivation towards researching Far Eastern cultures could also be argued to derive from a fear of geocultural distance and linguistic inaccessibility to an object of study that seems to be out of scholars' control. A fear that the establishment of area studies such as Oriental or (East) Asian studies, to which discourses about East–West translation also pertain, could help overcome, and without which interdisciplinary research in translation history cannot be productively undertaken.

Camilo Pessanha (1993, 60) ends his lecture on Chinese literature by urging Portuguese youth to devote themselves to the study of the Chinese language and civilization. This article likewise urges translation scholars to help rewrite Portugal's history of translation by giving the floor to neglected areas of Portuguese-Asian translation theory, that is to say, not only to China but also to Japan and all the other Eastern absences that have not yet been accounted for, thus bringing in from the periphery voices and actors that have been deliberately silenced.

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Notes

1. The category "Eurocentric" is here used to encompass translation flows in Europe, transfers involving Western languages, and Europe's Judeo-Christian heritage. Within non-Western languages, other zones of silence can be identified in the existing collections of writings on translation in Portuguese, such as Portugal–Africa historical and intercultural relations. These lie outside the scope of this article.
2. Alessandro Valignano (1539–1606), the Jesuit Visitor for Japan, was ground-breaking in realizing the need of thorough instruction in local languages and cultures in order to guarantee effective missionary work.
3. Michele Ruggieri, S.J., and Matteo Ricci, S.J. 2001. *Dicionário português–chinês = Portuguese–Chinese Dictionary*, edited by John W. Witek, S.J. 1st ed. Lisbon and Macau: Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal/Instituto Português do Oriente.
4. Mention should at least be made of the pioneering work of Father João Rodrigues (ca. 1561–1634), also known as The Interpreter. Rodrigues was responsible for the first grammar of the Japanese language, *Arte da lingoa de Iapam* (Nagasaki, 1604–1608), followed in 1620 by a shorter version published in Macau, *Arte breve da lingoa iapoa*. He also collaborated in the first printed dictionary of Japanese into a European language, *Vocabulario da lingoa do Iapam* (1603).
5. The 1614 edict ordered the expulsion of Jesuits from Japan and consequently the prohibition of Christian practices. In 1616, a new edict enforced the ban on Christianity, and in 1639 a decree put a definitive end to commercial relations between Portugal and Japan (Manso and Seabra 2012, 185–186). In 1853, Japan reopened its doors to international commerce following the pressure from an American fleet that anchored in the port of Edo (Tokyo). Signed on March 31, 1854, between the United States and Japan, the Treaty of Kanagawa would be taken as a model by countries like the United Kingdom (1854), Russia (1855), and France (1858) to strike up similar "friendship" agreements. The Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Commerce between Portugal and Japan was signed on August 3, 1860, and it formalized the reestablishment of cultural and trade relations.
6. According to *Index Translationum* data, English, French, Spanish, German, and Italian are the "Top 5" original languages most translated in Portugal: http://www.unesco.org/xtrans/bsstatexp.aspx. Accessed 10 July 2015.
7. A simplistic but effective distinction between Oriental and Asian studies can be drawn as follows: whereas Oriental studies is built upon a Eurocentric vision of the world where the so-called Orient, either as a site with physical boundaries or as an imaginative geography, is construed in relation to Europe, Asian (area) studies is less scientifically contestable and is built upon a specialized knowledge of an objective geography, for it circumscribes its object of study to Asia.
8. For a summary of Portuguese sinology, see: António Aresta. 2014. "Sinologia portuguesa: caminhos e veredas." In *Portugal–China: 500 anos*, coordinated by Miguel Castelo-Branco, 275–279. Lisbon: Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal/Babel.
9. In her analysis of Sena's anthology, Ana Maria Bernardo emphasizes that "[a]lthough concentrating on the canon of Western poetry, Sena reminds the reader that Eastern poetry [in Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Persian, and Sanskrit] represents one third of the selection and, together with Greek and Latin poets, almost half of its total, the other half belonging to the Christian Western tradition […]" (2013, 114).
10. The adjective "representative" recognizes, on the one hand, the need to select a textual corpus from a wider body of texts and, on the other, the inclusion of examples of different types of discourses.
11. All translations from Portuguese are mine.
12. The recognition of his mastery is reflected, for example, in dedications included in following translated works. See, for example, Jorge de Sousa Braga's *Sono de Primavera. Poemas chineses* [Spring Slumber. Chinese Poems] (1986).
13. In *A History of Chinese Literature* (1901), sinologist Herbert Giles defines Chinese poems as "at best a hard nut to crack" (cited in Pessanha 1993, 78).
14. Other texts could be brought into discussion, in particular "Estética chinesa (conferência)" [Chinese Aesthetics (lecture)] (1910). However, for the sake of economy, it was excluded as it focuses primarily on aesthetic considerations regarding Chinese art in relation to its European counterpart.

15. Pessanha moved to Macau for professional reasons. He was placed as a teacher in the Liceu de Macau high school, and simultaneously continued his advocacy work. Whilst Pessanha's poetry translations are better known, he also translated Chinese prose, such as "Vozes de Outono" [Autumn Voices]. This translation of a short text from the Tang Dynasty (618–907) was published in the Lisbon journal *Atlântida*, on January 15, 1918, and preceded by an introduction by the Portuguese writer Ana de Castro Osório.
16. Pessanha (1993, 61) concludes his 1915 lecture by advising Portuguese exiles in Macau to spend their leisure time studying Chinese as part of a high service to be paid to the nation.
17. Although further research in East–West comparative aesthetics is needed, especially concerning the literary encounter between Portugal and China, the influence of Chinese poetics on Pessanha's symbolist discourse has been examined, mainly with respect to the poet's assimilation of musical processes (e.g. Ramos 2001, 117–128; Paixão forthcoming).
18. In *What Is World Literature?*, David Damrosch offers a seductive because comprehensive and non-elitist definition of "world literature" that seeks to decentre it from a Western canon of literary prestige. According to Damrosch, world literature would "encompass all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language," it being "rather a mode of circulation and of reading […] as applicable to individual works as to bodies of material" (2003, 4–5). From this perspective, the concept of "world literature" presupposes a hospitable discursive space where different literatures can coexist on equal ground and similarly contribute to the world's literary capital.
19. Camilo Pessanha (1993, 58) goes as far as to advocate that the Chinese language needs to be visualized, that is, matched with its written form to be fully understandable, since, in line with Fenollosa's writings, he perceives the language as non-phonetic. In *Of Grammatology* (1967), Jacques Derrida's point of departure is the superiority of speech over writing. Sharing Fenollosa's and Pound's views, Derrida uses Chinese and Japanese ideogram-based writing in opposition to Western phonetic writing to exclude them from logocentrism. In *The Tao and the Logos: Literary Hermeneutics, East and West* (1992), Zhang Longxi disclaims Derrida's East–West dichotomy by criticizing that exclusion and the Western undermining of the role of phonetics in Chinese character formation.
20. "Translation as Collaboration: Translaboration?" was the title of a recent symposium organized by the University of Westminster on June 18, 2015.

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