

## **A Portuguese Merchant's East Asian Network: Jozé Nunes da Silveira and the Macau-Lisbon Trade in the Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

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### **Abstract**

This paper sets out to introduce the Portuguese merchant and shipowner Jozé Nunes da Silveira and his involvement in the Macau-Lisbon trade during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The detailed analysis of data on two voyages, undertaken by different ships and taking place more than twenty years apart, as well as a brief glimpse at the longevity of ties within a merchant network revolving around Silveira provide the background for the impending analysis of the nature of trust and co-operation between merchants. Thus answers to bigger research questions will be sought: how did Silveira manage risk in long-distance transactions in which he as the principal was not directly involved, but through his agents? Did the merchant network he appears to have headed reduce uncertainty in commercial transactions and thus agency costs?

**Key words:** merchant; Macau; longevity; network; trust; principal; agents; agency

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## Introduction

Throughout history, a merchant or principal had two options when carrying out trade: either to travel with his goods or to hire overseas agents to handle trade abroad. Employment of agents was considered efficient – the term as used here meaning that individuals use information in their own private interest -, since it minimised the cost of trading by avoiding time spent on travel by the merchant and the risks associated with it, besides enabling him to diversify sales across trade centres or fairs. These agency relations were not likely to be established unless supporting institutions, such as coalitions and merchant guilds, existed, which allowed principals to minimise risk of opportunistic behaviour. Agents, by having control not only over a merchant's capital abroad but also over market information - for instance price and supply/demand conditions -, were able to act opportunistically. Networks can be considered informal contract enforcement institutions employed as substitutes for institutions that guarantee written contracts.

Business and economic historiography offer few rich examples of trade conducted by Portuguese merchants. Few official documents have survived the 1755 Lisbon earthquake, and private documents do not seem to have survived the impiety of time. This paper sets out to fill this gap, though somewhat hastily given the page limitation: by way of an analysis of two voyages to Macau undertaken in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and in the early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, it introduces the reader to the Portuguese merchant and shipowner Jozé Nunes da Silveira, and acquaints him or her with Silveira's remarkable engagement in the Asian trade at a time when the Asian trade was considered by many, particularly Portuguese government officials, as detrimental to the nation's coffers.

A detailed analysis of data on two voyages, undertaken by different ships respectively in 1796-7 and 1818-9, hence taking place more than twenty years apart, based on unpublished primary archival evidence<sup>1</sup> -, enables the reader to draw two key conclusions: (i) his trade with Asia involved the allocation of massive amounts of capital to considerably high risk ventures, and that (ii) his tenacity and shrewdness as trader, the favourable market conditions for his imports, and his self-financing capacity alone cannot entirely explain his business success. The paper concludes by providing a brief glimpse of the longevity of ties within Silveira's social network, ties that span the period of more than twenty years comprehended between the voyages. Further research is warranted though: these results may prove to corroborate the hypothesis that membership of a network of relationships was an efficient alternative to individuals who trade via a series of market exchanges, and managerial hierarchies which trade via its internal markets, where informal communication mechanisms were employed to minimise uncertainty in exchange relationships, and thus transaction costs.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is mostly based on the private documents of Jozé Nunes da Silveira housed at the Lisbon Geographic Society (*Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa, S.G.L.*). A total of 91 books, 834 account books, and approximately 2,150 single documents, contained in 37 boxes and organised by ship, documenting 46 years (1786-1832) of history remain, for its most part, unpublished (*Secção de Reservados, Colecção Manuscritos Oferecidos pelo Banco de Portugal*). I take this opportunity to thank the staff at the Library of the Lisbon Geographic Society for their kind assistance during my extensive stays at that institution.

## Jozé Nunes da Silveira and the Macau-Lisbon trade

The merchant and shipowner Jozé Nunes da Silveira was born in Pico Island, Azores, on 24 June 1754, and died in Lisbon on 16 June 1833 (Lima 1952). Throughout his life he engaged in the Asian trade<sup>2</sup>, in particular the Macau-Lisbon trade, initially as a captain and later on as a major shipowner. He owned a total of twenty ships of various sizes, most of them employed in long distance voyages to Asia. According to Vianna (1901, p. 18), the list of twenty ships include: (1) *Condessa das Galveias*, (2) *Carolina I*, (3) *Carolina II*, (4) *Nova Aliança*, (5) *Correio d'Asia*, (6) *Santa Cruz*, (7) *Golphinho*, (8) *Temerario*, (9) *Constancia*, (10) *Resolução*, (11) *Viajante*, (12) *Corsario*, (13) *Delphim*, (14) *Liguria*, (15) *Thetis*, (16) *Andorinha*, (17) *Voadora*, (18) *Diana*, (19) *Corsa* and (20) *Diligente*<sup>3</sup>.

Silveira will have arrived in Macau in the early 1780s. His presence in Macau is documented in the minutes of the meetings of Macau's *Leal Senado* (municipal council) in the year 1782, when he petitions that institution for a passport to travel to Cochinchina and Malacca and is granted his request<sup>4</sup>. On 9 September 1785 he returns to Lisbon: his name shows in a report written by Lisbon's Customs judge António Joaquim de Pina Manique, who inspected the ship *Santa Cruz e Almas Visconde da Lourinhã* which left Macau on 21 January 1785, and after stopovers in Africa – more specifically Benguella and Angola - arrived in Lisbon on 8 September 1785<sup>5</sup>. The report names Silveira as captain of the ship, which belonged to the merchant Joaquim Jozé Vasques.

Silveira's presence in Macau is recorded again in 1786, when he appears as captain of the ship *Santa Cruz* (*Santa Cruz e Almas Visconde da Lourinhã?*) in a letter from Macau's Crown governor, Bernardo Aleixo de Lemos e Faria, to Portugal's Secretary of State of the Navy and Overseas Possessions, Martinho de Melo e Castro dated 15 December 1786<sup>6</sup>. The ship arrived in Lisbon on 21 August 1787, although under a different name, *Resolução e Santa Cruz*<sup>7</sup>. The 1780s seem indeed to have represented a

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<sup>2</sup>Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, A.H.U. - AHU\_ACL\_CU\_062, Cx.63,D.3049 – *Pedido para licenciar o navio "Temerário"*. On 21 April 1832, towards the end of his life, Jozé Nunes da Silveira still petitioned the Portuguese king, D. Miguel I, requesting a passport for his brig *Temerario* to travel to Macau.

<sup>3</sup> José da Silveira Vianna was one of Silveira's grandchildren, and wrote a book honouring his grandfather in 1901. Carreira (1979, pp. 9-11), using the private papers of Jozé Nunes da Silveira housed at the Geographical Society of Lisbon, presents a slightly different list of the twenty ships owned by Silveira. In 1979 he published a case study on the slave trade in the east coast of Africa during the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century using data for only two of the ships named above, the *Delfim* and the *Golphinho S. Filipe de Nery*, thus supporting the claim made in the introduction of this study on the use of unpublished primary archival evidence in relation to Asia, and in particular to Macau.

<sup>4</sup> *Arquivos de Macau*, Leal Senado, 1782, fl. 353, in Pires (1993).

<sup>5</sup> AHU\_ACL\_CU\_062, Cx.17, D.758 – *Visita a navios*. Besides the report by the Lisbon's Customs judge, this manuscript contains the voyage report written by the captain Jozé Nunes da Silveira, which lasted seven months and nineteen days in total, plus a list of names of the fifteen passengers, which included the merchant and shipowner Joaquim Jozé Vasques and his family, and the lists of goods brought from Macau – mainly tea, cinnamon, fabrics and china - and Angola – mainly wax, ivory and silk.

<sup>6</sup> AHU\_ACL\_CU\_062, Cx.17, D.789 – *Raridades do mar e da terra*. It is not clear from this manuscript whether or not Silveira owned the ship *Santa Cruz*.

<sup>7</sup> AHU\_ACL\_CU\_062, Cx.17, D.804 – *Visita do ouro ao navio Resolução e Santa Cruz*. It is not clear why the ship arrives in Lisbon under a different name. This manuscript shows Silveira as captain of the ship *Resolução e Santa Cruz* in another inspection report written by Lisbon's Customs judge António Joaquim de Pina Manique; the ship arrived in Lisbon on 21 August 1787, after a three-day stopover in the island of

period of intense trading activity for Silveira as captain, merchant and shipowner, with the year 1786 marking the establishment of his headquarters in Lisbon, at the *Rua Direita do Corpo Santo no. 33*<sup>8</sup>, not far from Lisbon's Customs House, from where he conducted trade on a global scale for the next forty-seven years.

During a period in the late 18<sup>th</sup> - early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries when trade with Brazil and Africa, especially Mozambique<sup>9</sup>, concentrated Portugal's attention, Jozé Nunes da Silveira diversified his business to Asia, a complex undertaking that seems feasible only by nurturing an extensive network of relationships. The 17<sup>th</sup> century's mercantilist theory was still very much in vogue at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Portugal, when trade with Asia was perceived by the majority of government officials as unbeneficial to the nation. Exports of bullion to pay for expensive Asian imports, for instance various types of tea, porcelain, fabrics, and cinnamon, among others, were seen as detrimental to the nation's treasury, that is these had the potential to deprive the nation of much needed bullion at a time when the threat of warfare and the high costs of maintaining empires characterised ever-present dangers. Table 1 presents trade data for three individual years within a span of thirty-three years (1786, 1806 and 1819). These, at least the more detailed ones for the year 1786, do not validate the assumption held above that the Asia trade was detrimental to the nation's coffers: 77% of Asian imports in that year were re-exported to either Brazil or Europe, most likely at a profit.

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Insert Table 1 about here

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In 1786 the value of Portugal's exports to Brazil was approximately 7,000 *contos de réis*, with 1,000 *contos de réis* represented by Asian imports being re-exported to Brazil. Total Asian imports in the same year amounted to 1,667 *contos de réis*, hence 60% of total Asian imports was re-exported to Brazil alone. Re-exports to European countries, in particular Spain and Hamburg, amounted to 278 *contos de réis* (17% of the total), and domestic consumption accounted for 389 *contos de réis* (23% of the total). By 1806 total imports from Asia amounted to 1,705 *contos de réis*, with 625 *contos de réis* (37% of the total) being exported to other European countries, predominantly to Italy and France. Re-exports of Asian imports to other European countries – Italy, Holland,

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Saint Helena in the South Atlantic Ocean, and carried a similar cargo to Silveira's 1785 Macau voyage: tea, cinnamon, fabrics, silk, china.

<sup>8</sup> See Forjaz, 1996, Volume II, *Goulart*, p.104. Silveira's Lisbon headquarters' address is corroborated by a letter dated 18 December 1794 from António Goulart da Silveira, Silveira's cousin and captain of the brig *Diligente* during 1793-4— see below —, to his brother André Francisco Goulart (*Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa, S.G.L. - Secção de Reservados, Coleção Manuscritos Oferecidos pelo Banco de Portugal - 2765.Res. 5 – A – caixa 8, «Diligente», caderno 9 – Carta de António Goulart da Silveira, capitão da corveta Diligente, a André Francisco, sobre o transporte de certos produtos a bordo da embarcação. Setúbal, 18 de Dezembro de 1794. 1 fl.*).

<sup>9</sup> A thorough description of Portugal's trade with Africa and Asia, particularly Africa, appears in *Relação do commercio em os diferentes portos da Azia (incluindo) Breve e Util Idea de Commercio, Navegação e Conquista d'Azia e d'Africa, escripto por meu pay, Dom Francisco Innocencio de Souza Coutinho, 1779*. D. Inocência de Souza Coutinho wrote this manuscript while he was governor of Angola from 1764 to 1772, and a copy of his original work is housed at the *Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino* (A.H.U.) in Lisbon. This 176-page copy has been transcribed by Ahmad (1997).

Hamburg, Spain and France amounted to 872 *contos de réis* in 1819, approximately 8% of Portugal's total foreign trade in that year.

But how did Jozé Nunes da Silveira fare, and how did trade he conducted with Asia compare to Portugal's total Asian trade? Data on two of Silveira's ships, the brigs (*brigues*)<sup>10</sup> *Diligente* and *Temerario*, and their respective Lisbon-Macau-Lisbon voyages, are depicted below. These voyages were undertaken more than twenty years apart by each ship, the years 1796-7 referring to the *Diligente* and 1818-9 to the *Temerario*. It should be highlighted, though, that data on other Macau voyages undertaken by these two brigs do exist<sup>11</sup>: the voyages described below were not randomly chosen, or chosen simply because more data on them could be found. Together they portray the longevity of ties within Silveira's network of relationships, ties that endured more than twenty years.

### **Brig *Diligente*, Lisbon-Macau-Lisbon, 1796-7**

The brig left Lisbon to Faial Island, Azores, a stopover<sup>12</sup>, in March 1796<sup>13</sup>, where it was loaded with wine and sugar cane brandy (*aguardente*) barrels for export to Macau<sup>14</sup>. It

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<sup>10</sup> A brig was a fast two-masted sailing vessel used in transatlantic commerce during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The brig *Diligente* measured 14 meters long or 46 ft. (S.G.L. - 2769. Res. 5 - A - caixa 8, «*Diligente*», caderno 13 - *Inventário do bergantim Diligente. Setúbal, 15 de Janeiro de 1794. 2 fls.*), while the brig *Temerario* measured 29 meters long or 96 ft. (S.G.L. - 4602. Res. 5 - D - caixa 30, «*Temerario*», caderno 3).

<sup>11</sup> The brig *Diligente*'s expenses in Rio de Janeiro while on its way to Macau from Lisbon in 1798 were recorded in detail by Jozé Joaquim Ferreira, the brig's captain (S.G.L. - 2801. Res. 5 - A - caixa 9, «*Diligente*», caderno 45 - *Despesas do bergantim Diligente aquando da sua estadia no Rio de Janeiro. 1798. 4 fls.*). The brig arrived in Macau before Christmas Eve 1798, as stated in a letter from the captain to the supercargo, Manoel da Silva de Carvalho (S.G.L. - 2807. Res. 5 - A - caixa 9, «*Diligente*», caderno 50 - *Despesas do bergantim Diligente. Macau, 24 de Dezembro de 1798. 1 fl.*), and returned to Lisbon on or before 13 July 1799 (S.G.L. - 2825. Res. 5 - A - caixa 9, «*Diligente*», caderno 68 - *Lista de vários chás e respectivos preços trazidos pelo bergantim Diligente, para serem vendidos em Lisboa. 1799. 4 fls.*). The brig *Diligente* set sail to Macau - with a stopover in Rio de Janeiro - again in 1800 (S.G.L. - 2828. Res. 5 - A - caixa 10, «*Diligente*», caderno 71 - *Lista da carga embarcada no bergantim Diligente para uma viagem de Lisboa a Macau. 1800. 4 fls.*, and S.G.L. - 2830. Res. 5 - A - caixa 10, «*Diligente*», caderno 73 - *Lista da carga embarcada no bergantim Diligente para uma viagem de Lisboa a Macau. 1800. 2 fls.*). The brig *Temerario* travelled to Macau five times from the year Silveira bought it in Sierra Leone - 1816 - until 1827 (S.G.L. - 4597. Res. 5 - D - Cx. 30 - *Códice 1*; S.G.L. - 4598. Res. 5 - D - Cx. 30 - *Códice 2*; and S.G.L. - 4599. Res. 5 - D - Cx. 30 - *Códice 3*). It was still in operation in 1832 when Silveira petitioned the Portuguese king requesting a passport to Macau (AHU\_ACL\_CU\_062, Cx.63,D.3049).

<sup>12</sup> S.G.L. - 2775. Res. 5 - A - caixa 8, «*Diligente*», caderno 19 - *Carta de Manoel Francisco de Oliveira a Tomás de Bethencourt sobre a viagem do bergantim Diligente de Lisboa à Ilha do Faial. Lisboa, 7 de Março de 1796. 3 fls.* This letter is signed by Jozé Nunes da Silveira and provides detailed instructions to the captain, Manoel Francisco de Oliveira, and to the pilot and supercargo, Thomás Silveira Betancourt, on routes, stopovers and cargo handling, and information on Siveira's agents in the Faial Island, his uncle Manoel Francisco Goulart, and in Macau, Felix Jozé Coimbra and Manoel Pereira.

<sup>13</sup> S.G.L. - 2773. Res. 5 - A - caixa 8, «*Diligente*», caderno 17 - *Lista da tripulação do bergantim Diligente. 1 de Março de 1796. 2 fls.*

<sup>14</sup> S.G.L. - 2770. Res. 5 - A - caixa 8, «*Diligente*», caderno 14 - *Lista da carga embarcada no bergantim Diligente, para a viagem da Ilha do Faial a Macau. Faial, 4 de Abril de 1796. 4 fls.* The list containing the cargo taken to Macau does not include any prices and/or freight charges. In the brig's 1800 voyage to Macau the freight charges are negligible, with the majority of the consignees carrying Madeira

arrived in Macau on 13 August 1796, and made its way back to Lisbon in December 1796<sup>15</sup><sup>16</sup>, arriving on 6 September 1797 after another stopover at Faial Island, Azores<sup>17</sup>.

Table 2 below presents investment data<sup>18</sup> for the brig *Diligente* in its voyage to Macau in the years 1796-7:

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Insert Table 2 about here

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Silveira and his partner in the venture, the merchant João Rodrigues Caldas, invested 12 *contos de réis* on the fully-fitted brig<sup>19</sup>, and spent roughly 15 *contos de réis* on overheads on the return voyage. Purchases of goods sold in Lisbon amounted to 38 *contos de réis*: fabrics (*canga* or *ganga*, a type of fabric highly sought after in Europe)

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wine and *aguardente* barrels free of charge (S.G.L. - 2830. Res. 5 - A - caixa 10, <<*Diligente*>>, caderno 73 - *Lista da carga embarcada no bergantim Diligente para uma viagem de Lisboa a Macau. 1800. 2fls.*).

<sup>15</sup> S.G.L. - 2772. Res. 5 - A - caixa 8, <<*Diligente*>>, caderno 16 - *Recibo em como no bergantim Diligente foram carregados vários géneros, na viagem de Macau a Lisboa. Macau, 26 de Dezembro de 1796. 2fls.* This manuscript lists the goods loaded onto the ship, mainly tea, china and cinnamon, and their respective prices, plus loading dock, packaging and other expenses.

<sup>16</sup> S.G.L. - 2774. Res. 5 - A - caixa 8, <<*Diligente*>>, caderno 18 - *Carta de Félix Coimbra a José Nunes da Silveira, proprietário do bergantim Diligente, sobre a carga do mesmo. Macau, 26 de Dezembro de 1796. Cópia. 2 fls.* In this letter Felix Jozé Coimbra, Silveira's agent in Macau, acknowledges receipt of Silveira's letter of 13 March 1796, containing instructions on purchases of goods to be carried back to Lisbon.

<sup>17</sup> S.G.L. - 2779. Res. 5 - A - Caixa 8, <<*Diligente*>>, caderno 23 - *Despesas do bergantim Diligente. 1796-1797. 24 fls.* This extensive manuscript contains details of overheads - food, spare parts, wages -, lists of goods purchased in Macau for sale in Lisbon, expenses incurred in the various ports, copies of two employment contracts - one between Silveira and the ship's captain and the other between Silveira and the pilot and supercargo - and other accounting/financial data, that is details on the overall investment made by the two partners in the venture, the merchants Jozé Nunes da Silveira and João Rodrigues Caldas.

<sup>18</sup> This table was compiled using data contained in two manuscripts: S.G.L. - 2772. Res. 5 - A - caixa 8, <<*Diligente*>>, caderno 16 - *Recibo em como no bergantim Diligente foram carregados vários géneros, na viagem de Macau a Lisboa. Macau, 26 de Dezembro de 1796. 2fls.*, and S.G.L. - 2779. Res. 5 - A - Caixa 8, <<*Diligente*>>, caderno 23 - *Despesas do bergantim Diligente. 1796-1797. 24 fls.*

<sup>19</sup> The brig *Diligente* had been commissioned prior to November 1793, as portrayed on a list of overheads amounting to 209,375 *réis* incurred on a return voyage to the Islands (Azores? Madeira? Cape Verde?) in that year (S.G.L. - 2757. Res. 5 - A - caixa 8, <<*Diligente*>>, caderno 1 - *Relação dos mantimentos embarcados no bergantim Diligente. 1793. 3 fls.*). Silveira's cousin António Goulart da Silveira was captain of the brig in 1793-4 (S.G.L. - 2757. Res. 5 - A - caixa 8, <<*Diligente*>>, caderno 1 - *Relação dos mantimentos embarcados no bergantim Diligente. 1793. 3 fls.*; S.G.L. - 2760. Res 5 - A - caixa 8, «*Diligente*», caderno 4 - *Carta de António Goulart da Silveira, capitão do bergantim Diligente, a José Nunes da Silveira, proprietário do mesmo, relatando o início de uma viagem. Setúbal, 26 de Dezembro de 1794. 1 fl.*; S.G.L. - 2761. Res 5 - A - caixa 8, «*Diligente*», caderno 5 - *Despesas da corveta Diligente. 1794. 5 fls.*; S.G.L. - 2764. Res 5 - A - caixa 8, «*Diligente*», caderno 8 - *Folha de pagamentos à tripulação da corveta Diligente. 1794. 3 fls.*; S.G.L. - 2765. Res 5 - A - caixa 8, «*Diligente*», caderno 9 - *Carta de António Goulart da Silveira, capitão da corveta Diligente, a André Francisco, sobre o transporte de certos produtos a bordo da embarcação. Setúbal, 18 de Dezembro de 1794. 1 fl.*; and S.G.L. - 2766. Res 5 - A - caixa 8, «*Diligente*», caderno 10 - *Carta de António Goulart da Silveira, capitão da corveta Diligente, a José Nunes da Silveira, proprietário da mesma, relatando o início de uma viagem. Setúbal, 18 de Dezembro de 1794. 1 fl.*). On its return to Lisbon in 1797 Silveira bought the brig for 7.2 *contos de réis*, even though assessors valued it at 4.8 *contos de réis* (S.G.L. - 2779. Res. 5 - A - Caixa 8, <<*Diligente*>>, caderno 23 - *Despesas do bergantim Diligente. 1796-1797. 24 fls.*).

accounted for more than 71% of the total value (26.86 *contos de réis*), followed by tea<sup>20</sup> (26.5%, or 10 *contos de réis*), cinnamon (1.5%, or 560,000 *réis*) and china (0.8%, or 310,000 *réis*). Other expenses, for instance packaging and port charges, amounted for approximately 2.5 *contos de réis*. But the shares in the venture were not equal: Silveira invested 40 *contos de réis* (59.7%), while Caldas invested the balance, 27.3 *contos de réis* (40.3%)<sup>21</sup>.

As portrayed on Table 2 above, the two partners purchased several goods that were later auctioned at Lisbon's clearing house, the *Caza da Índia*<sup>22</sup>. The brig also carried a number of boxes containing tea, fabrics, and china sets which belonged to various consignees who were charged freight upon the goods' arrival in Lisbon<sup>23</sup>. The auction that took place at the *Caza da Índia* on 25 September 1797<sup>24</sup>, less than three weeks after the brig's arrival, generated revenues of 129 *contos de réis* by 7 December 1798<sup>25</sup>, whereas freight charges generated revenues of 16.7 *contos de réis*<sup>26</sup>. Thus total revenues for the return voyage were 145.7 *contos de réis* and total profits a staggering

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<sup>20</sup> Three different kinds of tea were imported, Hisson (178 boxes), Uxim (53 boxes), and Perola (75 boxes), totalling 306 boxes (S.G.L. - 2772. Res. 5 – A – caixa 8, <<Diligente>>, *caderno 16 – Recibo em como no bergantim Diligente foram carregados vários géneros, na viagem de Macau a Lisboa. Macau, 26 de Dezembro de 1796. 2fls.*, and S.G.L. - 2781. Res. 5 – A – caixa 9, <<Diligente>>, *caderno 25 – Lista da carga embarcada no navio Diligente. 1797. 4fls.*)

<sup>21</sup> Slightly lower figures for total investment and profits appear on the P&L (profit & loss, or income) statement compiled for use by the venture partners (S.G.L. - 2796. Res. 5 – A – caixa 9, <<Diligente>>, *caderno 40 – Despesas do brigue Diligente. 1797. 6 fls.*). Shareholdings concerning the two partners in the venture are corroborated by this manuscript.

<sup>22</sup> Two major consignees in the brig *Diligente* 1796-7 voyage, João Pereira de Souza Caldas and the Real Contracto do Tabaco, also auctioned off their cargo at the the *Caza da Índia* on 16 and 25 October 1797, respectively (S.G.L. – 2799. Res. 5 – A – caixa 9, <<Diligente>>, *caderno 43 – Lista dos produtos oriundos de Macaue da China que iam ser levados a leilã, a 25 de Setembro, a 16 e 25 de Outubro de 1797, na Casa da Índia. 34 fls.*).

<sup>23</sup> S.G.L. - 2780. Res. 5 – A – caixa 9, <<Diligente>>, *caderno 24 – Lista da carga embarcada no navio Diligente. 1797. 3 fls.*, and S.G.L. - 2781. Res. 5 – A – caixa 9, <<Diligente>>, *caderno 25 – Lista da carga embarcada no navio Diligente. 1797. 4fls.* These manuscripts contain lists of names of cargo carriers (*carregadores*) and consignees (*consignatários*), number of boxes belonging to each one and freight charges paid or to be paid.

<sup>24</sup> S.G.L. - 2785. Res. 5 – A – caixa 9, <<Diligente>>, *caderno 29 – Lista dos produtos, nomeadamente chá e canga (tecido) oriundos de Macau e que iam ser levados a leilão, a 25 de Setembro de 1797, na Casa da Índia. 19fls.* This printed document contain terms and conditions for the sale of items through auction, for instance rights and duties of both sellers and buyers as well as due dates for payment and collection of purchased items.

<sup>25</sup> This figure is based on financial data contained in manuscript S.G.L. - 2756. Res 5 – A – caixa 8, «*Diligente*», *código 3 – Lista de vários chás e respectivos preços trazidos pelo bergantim Diligente para serem vendidos em Lisboa. 1797. 30 fls.*, whereas another manuscript shows a slightly lower figure, 123:579\$929 or 123.5 *contos de réis* (S.G.L. - 2786. Res.5 – A – Caixa 9, <<Diligente>>, *caderno 30 – Deve e haver do brigue Diligente à sua chegada da viagem a Macau. Lisboa, 6 de Setembro de 1797. 5 fls.*). Another manuscript (S.G.L. - 2755. Res. 5 – A – caixa 8, <<Diligente>>, *código 2 – Negociações para a compra do bergantim Diligente. 1797-1799. 45fls.*), which shows payments for items purchased at auction up to July 1801, presents yet another figure, 124.3 *contos de réis*. Regardless of the figure considered, the difference cannot be deemed sizeable.

<sup>26</sup> S.G.L. - 2781. Res. 5 – A – caixa 9, <<Diligente>>, *caderno 25 – Lista da carga embarcada no navio Diligente. 1797. 4fls.* Freight was charged using a % of the cargo value (price in Macau at time of purchase). For the brig *Diligente*'s 1796-7 voyage this manuscript does not specify the different freight charges that applied to tea, fabrics, cinnamon and china, providing only a lump sum paid – or to be paid – by the consignee. See below freight charges (%) available for the brig *Temerario*'s 1818-9 voyage.

78.5 *contos de réis*, the latter corresponding to 117% of the total investment. For his share of the venture (59.7%) Silveira received profits of 46.9 *contos de réis*, whereas his partner Caldas received the remaining 31.6 *contos de réis* (40.3%).

How did trade Silveira conducted with Asia compare to Portugal's total Asian trade? The value of total imports from Macau arriving in Lisbon on the brig *Diligente* in 1797 corresponded to 2.3% of the total value of Portugal's Asian trade in 1786, and 2.2% in 1806<sup>27</sup>. Comparing the total value of re-exports of Asian goods to Europe in the years 1786 and 1806, the value of Asian goods imported by the brig in its voyage of 1796-7 corresponded respectively to 13.6% and 6%<sup>28</sup>. One cannot disregard the relevance of the numbers depicted in the comparisons made above: trade with a single outpost, Macau, was conducted by a single ship, which belonged to a partnership of two Portuguese merchants - not to a chartered trading company or similar kind of association funded by several shareholders -, is being compared with Portugal's total Asian trade for two individual years.

### **Brig *Temerario*, Lisbon-Macau-Lisbon, 1818-9**

Jozé Nunes da Silveira, "Esquire Merchant of Lisbon", bought the brig in Sierra Leone in 1816 for 1,900 pounds sterling, after it had been impounded by British Crown officials on 13 June 1816. It measured 29 meters long or 96 ft., hence twice the size of the brig *Diligente*<sup>29</sup>. Having set sail to Macau on 26 February 1818<sup>30</sup>, the brig appears to be fully loaded for its return voyage to Lisbon in early October 1818<sup>31</sup>, as evidenced by the cargo list prepared by Felix Jozé Coimbra, Silveira's agent in Macau<sup>32</sup>. Table 3 below lists the goods loaded onto the brig for its return voyage to Lisbon:

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Insert Table 3 about here  
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Table 3 above, together with Appendix 1, which contain the complete cargo list for the brig *Diligente*'s voyage of 1796-7, can thus be used to compare the size of

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<sup>27</sup> Portugal's trade figures for the years 1786 and 1806, contained in Table 1 below, were used for the purpose of comparison.

<sup>28</sup> The total value of imported goods belonging to consignees paying freight on the brig *Diligente* (29.3 *contos de réis*) is not reflected on the comparisons above. If they were, Silveira's trade with Macau in the years 1796-7 via the *Diligente* would correspond to substantially higher percentages of the total value of Portugal's Asian trade and of the total value of re-exports of Asian goods for the years 1786 and 1806 (respectively 4% and 24.1% in 1786 and 3.9% and 10.7% in 1806). Appendix 1 contains the brig's final cargo list for the 1796-7 voyage: 561 boxes of *cangas* (120,410 items), 621 boxes of teas, 49 boxes of cinnamon, and 19 boxes containing china sets.

<sup>29</sup> *S.G.L. - 4602.Res. 5 - D - caixa 30, «Temerario», caderno 3.*

<sup>30</sup> *S.G.L. - 4603.Res 5 - D - caixa 30, «Temerario», caderno 4.*

<sup>31</sup> The brig arrived in Macau on or before 15 August 1818, as attested in an inventory compiled by its third pilot, António Francisco dos Reys (*S.G.L. - 4603.Res 5 - D - caixa 30, «Temerario», caderno 8*).

<sup>32</sup> *S.G.L. - 4603.Res 5 - D - caixa 30, «Temerario», caderno 5.* This detailed cargo list contains the names and marks (Masonic, perhaps?) of cargo carriers (*carregadores*) and consignees (*consignatários*), number of boxes belonging to them and applied freight charges (%). Regrettably this manuscript does not contain price data on goods purchased in Macau and/or sold upon the brig's return to Lisbon.



shipment and the type of cargo for the two voyages set more than twenty years apart: while the *Diligente* carried 621 boxes of teas, 561 boxes of *cangas*, 49 boxes of cinnamon, and 19 boxes of china sets, the *Temerario* carried a total of 2,035 boxes of teas<sup>33</sup>, 157 boxes of *cangas*, and 7 boxes of china sets, among other items. Hence the bulk of the cargo in the 1818-9 voyage of the *Temerario* consisted of tea: it carried almost four times as many boxes as the *Diligente* in its voyage of 1796-7, although it carried only ¼ of the number of boxes of *cangas*. Can one assume, as per the brig's cargo in the 1818-9 voyage, that tea fetched a higher price in Europe during these years than it did in 1796-7? Regrettably P&L data for the 1818-9 voyage of the brig *Temerario* is unavailable, which hinders a direct comparison between the two voyages. What can be inferred from the data is that Jozé Nunes da Silveira seemed convinced he would profit from the venture by fitting a ship twice the size of the *Diligente* for a voyage to Macau in 1818 to carry a cargo composed mostly of tea back to Lisbon.

Data contained in the cargo list above portray yet another facet of Silveira's investment in the 1818-9 voyage, and corroborate the assumption made above that he bet the voyage was worth the risk. Apart from the equivalent of 89 boxes of teas (355 ¼ boxes) and 2 small boxes of sugar that were sent to him by his agent in Macau Felix Jozé Coimbra, the remaining boxes being carried by the brig consisted of cargo belonging to several consignees: these were to be auctioned off in Lisbon upon arrival, and the consignees charged freight<sup>34</sup> once the goods were sold at auction.

An estimate of the total value of the goods imported into Lisbon by the brig *Temerario* in 1818-9 can be given by assuming constant cargo prices and currency exchange rates (Pataca/Real): a whopping 79.8 *contos de réis*, compared to 67.05 *contos de réis* for the 1796-7 voyage<sup>35</sup>, which corresponded to 9.15% of the total value of re-exports of Asian goods to Europe<sup>36</sup>. Certainly not a negligible figure!

Assuming that the conditions above apply, that is constant cargo prices and currency exchange rates, and that Silveira incurred alone the cost of fitting the brig for the voyage as well as overheads and other costs, such as harbour charges and commissions, his total investment in the venture amassed 61.86 *contos de réis*<sup>37</sup>. Still, the 1818-9 voyage yielded freight revenues of 97.1 *contos de réis*<sup>38</sup> to Silveira, plus revenues of 13 *contos de réis* for his sale of the equivalent of 89 boxes of teas at auction (total revenues of 110.1 *contos de réis*). The venture generated a sizeable profit of 48.24 *contos de réis*, a figure just slightly higher than the one Silveira earned in the 1796-7 voyage of

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<sup>33</sup> ½ and ¼ boxes were converted into boxes to facilitate data presentation and consequently comparison.

<sup>34</sup> *Cangas* either paid a fixed freight of 120 *réis* apiece (if small), or 20% of the sale price at auction; charges on teas ranged from 25% to 40% of the sale price at auction, depending on the kind of tea, and china sets paid 40% of the sale price at auction (*S.G.L. - 4603.Res 5 – D – caixa 30, «Temerario», caderno 5*).

<sup>35</sup> This value refers to the sum of the value of the goods purchased by the venture partners (37.76 *contos de réis*) and the value of the goods paying freight, that is which belong to several consignees (29.3 *contos de réis*).

<sup>36</sup> See Table 1 below.

<sup>37</sup> These include double – an extremely conservative estimate, probably unlikely – the amounts for the cost of a fully-fitted vessel, overheads and other costs calculated for the 1796-7 voyage, as per Table 2 below (58.94 *contos de réis*), as well as the value of the equivalent of 89 boxes of teas purchased by Silveira (2.92 *contos de réis*).

<sup>38</sup> Freight paid by boxes of teas, *cangas* and china yielded respectively 89.1, 7.5 and 0.5 *contos de réis*.

the brig *Diligente*<sup>39</sup> – although this time around there was more at stake for Silveira, since he seems to have been the sole investor in the venture.

### **Conclusion: two ships, one destination, and a close-knit network of relationships**

The detailed analysis of the two voyages above, which are representative of a much larger sample of voyages that have been assembled, illustrate the sheer magnitude of Silveira's trade with Asia during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. This analysis also denotes a key characteristic of his Asian enterprise: the pursuit of high returns in exchange for the high risks involved. What factors can be used to explain Silveira's success in two highly profitable ventures taking place more than twenty years apart? One would be a favourable market – pure luck, perhaps? - for the cargo his ships brought from Macau, for instance tea, fabrics and china sets; apart from his tenacity and shrewdness as a trader, another one would be his immense fortune<sup>40</sup>, which enabled him to own a large fleet of ships of various sizes throughout his life, and to take on massive risks to fit and staff them for voyages spanning the globe.

Risks taken by merchants who engaged in long-distance voyages were present in many forms and degrees, for instance piracy, storms, mutiny, cargo theft, capriciousness of government officials, fierce competition from other merchants and chartered trading companies<sup>41</sup>, just to name a few. Risk mitigation strategies at the disposal of merchants also came in many forms: fitting ships with cannon and ammunition and the crew with rifles and swords, navigating within a convoy of armed vessels, buying insurance – availability of insurance policies permitting of course -, bribing government officials, among others. Yet a major risk that could not be easily mitigated remained: the principal-agent problem. Hence, how did Silveira manage risk in long-distance transactions in which he as the principal was not directly involved, but through his agents? Did the merchant network he appears to have headed reduce uncertainty in commercial transactions and thus agency costs?

Silveira's extensive network of relationships in Macau, and the trust he placed in two members of this network, his agents Felix Jozé Coimbra and Manoel Pereira, may provide answers to the principal-agent problem above. To be continued.

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<sup>39</sup> Profits corresponded to 78% of the total investment made by Silveira in this voyage, assuming the extremely conservative amount of total investment above (61.86 *contos de réis*).

<sup>40</sup> Vianna (1901, pp. 20-6) narrates the circumstances in which Portuguese merchants were asked by the Regent Prince *D. João VI* in April 1813 to lend the Portuguese Crown 468 *contos de réis*, amount to be paid to the Kingdom of Argel as stated in a peace treaty signed on 14 June 1813, in which Great Britain acted as mediator. Silveira subscribed to the loan - the amount he subscribed to is unknown -, showing that he was indeed a wealthy merchant ready to contribute funds to a cause he deemed important – the peace treaty entailed the end of state-sponsored piracy in the seas close to Portugal, hence lifting an obstacle to increased trade. Later in his life he proved to be influential in political matters by being nominated one of two trade representatives in the interim government of 1820.

<sup>41</sup> Silveira's ships continued to set sail to Macau throughout the earlier part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, even in the face of stiff competition from individual merchants – Armenians, Muslims, Parsees – and chartered trading companies – the Swedish East India Company – based in Macau and in nearby Hon Kong – the English East India Company (see Johansson (1992), Ljungstedt (1832), Smith and Van Dyke (2003a, 2003b, 2004), and Smith (2004)).

**Table 1**

**Portugal's Trade Figures – 1786, 1806, 1819**

<b>1786</b>		
<b>Detail</b>	<b>Contos de réis (Rs.)</b>	<b>Detail/Total imports from Asia</b>
<b>Total exports to Brazil</b>	<b>7,000</b>	<b>420%</b>
<b>Total imports from Asia</b>	<b>1,667</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Re-exports of Asian goods to Brazil</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>Re-exports of Asian goods to Europe</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Domestic consumption of Asian goods</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>23%</b>

<b>1806</b>		
<b>Detail</b>	<b>Contos de réis (Rs.)</b>	<b>Detail/Total imports from Asia</b>
<b>Total imports from Asia</b>	<b>1,705</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Re-exports of Asian goods to Europe</b>	<b>625</b>	<b>37%</b>
<b>Re-exports of Asian goods to Brazil + domestic consumption</b>	<b>1,080</b>	<b>63%</b>

<b>1819</b>		
<b>Detail</b>	<b>Contos de réis (Rs.)</b>	<b>Detail/Total imports from Asia</b>
<b>Total foreign trade</b>	<b>11,200</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Re-exports of Asian goods to Europe</b>	<b>872</b>	<b>8%</b>

Source: Vianna, José da Silveira. 1901. *Notas Biographicas de José Nunes da Silveira, Governador do Reino em 1820, e Subsídios para Quatorze Annos da Historia Patria (1820-1833)*. Lisboa: Photogravura e Imprensa Castello Branco & Alabern, pp. 16-7.

**Table 2**

**Total Investment Brig *Diligente*, Macau Voyage 1796-7**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Contos de réis (Rs.)</b>
<b>Cost of vessel + overheads various ports</b>		
A1	Cost of fully-fitted vessel	12.00
A2	Overheads* Lisbon	8.56
A3	Overheads Faial Island	0.88
A4	Overheads Macau	5.55
<b>A</b>	<b>Investment vessel + overheads</b>	<b>26.99</b>
<b>Purchases</b>		
B1	Teas (306 boxes)	10.03
B2	Fabrics ( <i>cangas</i> , 325 boxes, 71,424 items)	26.86
B3	China (18 boxes, 10,730 cups and saucers)	0.31
B4	Cinnamon (842 bunches, 49 boxes)	0.56
<b>B</b>	<b>Investment goods purchased in Macau</b>	<b>37.76</b>
<b>Other expenses</b>		
C1	Stevedores	0.06
C2	Packaging	0.20
C3	Expediting fee	0.15
C4	Commission	1.98
C5	Others	0.09
<b>C</b>	<b>Investment other expenses</b>	<b>2.48</b>
<b>Total investment (A+B+C)</b>		<b>67.23</b>

\* Overheads include food, spare parts, and wages, and are calculated for the return voyage  
Conversion rate Patacas/Réis: when not indicated in the manuscript the rate of 720 Patacas/1 Real was used

Sources: S.G.L. - 2772. Res. 5 – A – caixa 8, <<*Diligente*>>, caderno 16 – Recibo em como no bergantim *Diligente* foram carregados vários géneros, na viagem de Macau a Lisboa. Macau, 26 de Dezembro de 1796. 2fls., and S.G.L. - 2779. Res. 5 – A – Caixa 8, <<*Diligente*>>, caderno 23 – Despesas do bergantim *Diligente*. 1796-1797. 24 fls.

**Table 3**

**Cargo List Brig *Temerario*, Macau Voyage 1818-9**

	Item	Boxes	½ boxes	¼ boxes	Small boxes	Packages	Bunches	Pieces	Grand Total (# items)
<b>Teas</b>	Hisson	770	357	403	4				<b>1,534</b>
	Uxim	429			5				<b>434</b>
	Sequim	405							<b>405</b>
	Perola	34	3		1				<b>38</b>
	Siuchom	100							<b>100</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,738</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>10</b>				<b>2,511</b>
<b>Fabrics</b>	Small	126				2			<b>128</b>
	Companion	5							<b>5</b>
	Blue	23			1				<b>24</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>154</b>			<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>			<b>157</b>
<b>Other Cargo</b>	Fine tea	1			5				<b>6</b>
	Lacquer	4			1				<b>5</b>
	China	6			1				<b>7</b>
	Sugar (rock)				2				<b>2</b>
	Mat						1		<b>1</b>
	Ballast (iron)*							664	<b>664</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>			<b>9</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>664</b>	<b>685</b>
	<b>Grand Total (# items)</b>	<b>1,903</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>664</b>	<b>3,353</b>

\* Out of the 664 items, 551 were cannonballs

Source: *S.G.L. - 4603.Res 5 – D – caixa 30, «Temerario», caderno 5.*

**Appendix 1 – Cargo List Brig *Diligente*, Macau Voyage 1796-7**

Carrier	Consignee	Fabrics ( <i>cangas</i> )		Teas			China	Cinnamon
		Boxes	# items	Boxes			Boxes	Boxes
				Hisson	Uxim	Perola		
Felix Jozé Coimbra	Jozé Nunes da Silveira/João Rodrigues Caldas	325	71424	178	53	75	18	49
Felix Jozé Coimbra/Manoel Pereira	Real Contracto do Tabaco	137	30000	186	25	70		
João Pereira de Souza Caldas	João Pereira de Souza Caldas	28	4960		10	5		
Thomás Silveira Betancourt	Thomás Silveira Betancourt	37	7116	1	8		1	
Manoel Francisco de Oliveira	Manoel Francisco de Oliveira	15	3000		6			
Carlos Manoel da Silveira	João da Silveira Pinto	7	1610		1			
Thomás Silveira Betancourt	António Xavier de Brito	5	1000			3		
João Bernardo Monteiro/Manoel Jozé de Almeida	João Bernardo Monteiro/Manoel Jozé de Almeida	3	600					
?	Jozé Mathias	3	600					
?	João Bernardo	1	100					
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>561</b>	<b>120,410</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>49</b>

Sources: *S.G.L. - 2780. Res. 5 – A – caixa 9, <<Diligente>>, caderno 24 – Lista da carga embarcada no navio Diligente. 1797. 3 fls.*, and *S.G.L. - 2781. Res. 5 – A – caixa 9, <<Diligente>>, caderno 25 – Lista da carga embarcada no navio Diligente. 1797. 4fls.*

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