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Gender and language use in Macau, 16th – 19th century

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This contribution traces the impact of gender (roles) in the dynamics of language genesis and shift in Macau, focusing on the city's creole community. The hypothesis on which I elaborate is that most Asian, African, and Eurasian women living in the Portuguese-ruled part of Macau from the 16th to the 19th century found themselves in a social position that was *out of the norm* – a fact reflected in their language use. During this period, these women's access to normative language use was systematically impeded by factors such as gender and ethnic origin. Considering these factors, I reconstruct the interrelatedness of speakers' social position and communicative behaviour. To this end, I analyse metalinguistic data, such as glottonyms, metalinguistic statements, and descriptions of diverse types of speakers. I mostly rely on Portuguese and Macau Creole texts (henceforth: Maquista), which I approach within a framework informed by linguistic anthropology and historical sociolinguistics, with special regard to gender.

1 Gender and creolisation

Gender has long attracted linguists' interest. Studies have focused, for instance, on anatomical differences between male and female speech production, on systematic structural differences between male and female language use, on the construction of third genders and non-binary identities through language use (e.g., Bucholtz & Hall 2004, 2016; Kreiman et al. 2008, Johnson 2008: 378–382), and on the role that gender plays in language change. When it comes to research on contact languages – the interest of this contribution – gender has usually been evoked as a relevant factor in the emergence of so-called *mixed languages.* Mixed languages display a binary split in their lexico-grammatical structure, with one subdomain deriving from one language and a second one from another one. Such a split is often argued to be the result of systematic code-switching in societies where mixed families are common (e.g., male French settlers and local Cree women in Canada, e.g., Michif, Bakker & Papen 2009: 416–419).

Curiously, the role of gender is less often discussed when it comes to the formation of *creoles*, i.e., contact languages the lexicon of which is largely derived from one language (called the *lexifier*), whilst its grammar displays significant restructuring (e.g., Thomason 2009: 45–47). Although explanations of creole formation discuss language learning and acquisition in specific social settings – e.g., expansionism, colonialism, and other such forms of societies marked by strong power asymmetries – gender figures less prominently than ethnicity or socio-economy as a dimension of analysis. Nor is gender discussed broadly with respect to the disappearance of creoles. Focusing on language use in Macau, here, I will discuss the significance of gender for the case of Maquista, to explore the relevance of this dimension for creoles.

I concentrate on the emergence, transmission, and disappearance of Maquista – one of the few creole languages with a long literary tradition, offering a comparatively good documentation of the city's social history, from diverse social strata's perspectives. The hypothesis on which I elaborate is that most Asian, African, and Eurasian women living in the Portuguese-ruled part of Macau from the 16th to the 19th century found themselves in a social position that was out of the norm – a fact reflected in their language use. During this period, these women's access to normative language use was systematically impeded by societal factors such as gender and ethnic origin. As will be shown, this situation had consequences for women's linguistic repertoires, as well as for the formation of linguistic ideologies, and language transmission in Macanese society. I will compare the language situation of Macau to Hong Kong and Shanghai, where the Macanese community has been living in different sociolinguistic settings.

After an outline of the considered data and relevant theoretical notions (Section 2), I proceed with the historical analysis (Section 3). I begin by discussing the role of population movements in pre-colonial and pre-modern Macau from a gendered perspective (Section 3.1). Then, I discuss the impact of education in colonial Macau (Section 3.2). I finish the analysis by considering cultural practices that entail metapragmatic aspects of communication, such as creative writing and theatre (Section 3.3). I conclude by summarising this study (Section 4).

2 Data and methodological approach

This analysis follows a discourse framework which understands a discourse, following Busse & Teubert (1994), as the (virtual) sum of texts that are (a) locally, temporarily, and socially grounded; as well as (b) thematically coherent and structurally cohesive (see also Dohardt 2021: 119–120). For this contribution, I collected and interpreted texts that contain metalinguistic statements on Maquista to uncover how gender and language use intersect.

However, the metalinguistic data on gendered language use in Macau are fragmented, scattered throughout comments on specific languages or on reading and writing in general. Therefore, fictional and factual, poetic and prosaic, public and private sources need to be adduced like pieces of a puzzle to reconstruct the big picture of women's language use. To contextualise these texts properly, I adduce sociohistorical background information (e.g., Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2012).

Furthermore, the semantic analysis of terms for speaker types and glottonyms, as documented in these texts, is particularly insightful (Hermanns 1994, Dohardt 2021).

2.1 Gender hierarchies: Implications for sources and language use

Gender is not a socially neutral category – a fact that has consequences for the sources under consideration as well. Generally, there are significant lacunas in conventional archives when it comes to records on women (Lerner 1993: chap. 11, Schwartz & Cook 2002: 6–9, 16; but see Hinsch 2002: 2–9).

In Macau, however, historical information on women is comparatively rich, in documents that portray the colonial Other. This is so because gender intersects with class, ethnicity, and nationality (see Woolard 1997), as well as with a person's socioeconomic background, civil status, and age (see Tosh 2004: 41–42). Descriptions of women, hence, appear often to complete the description of the (stereo)typical Portuguese, Macanese, or Chinese society as viewed by the other ethnicities.

As in conventional sources, however, one observes that the documentation in Macau reflects gender hierarchies in society. In this regard, Tosh (2004) notes that social relations as construed by gender (performance, assignment, and roles) are hierarchised on the micro-level (e.g., in the household) and on the macro-level (e.g., by marriage legislation). These hierarchies are too complex to be simplistically reduced to notions like *patriarchy* or *matriarchy*. These notions ignore the hierarchical relations between people of the same gender, who exhibit different performances of gender identity, or who are assigned different gender roles (often by force, see below). Tosh (2004: 42) notes, for instance, that stigmatised expressions of masculinity occupy a comparable rank in the social ladder as do certain expressions of femininity. In turn, expressions of femininity that come closer to certain forms of masculinity may have a higher social standing. This motivates Tosh (2004: 43) to use the term *hegemonic masculinity* to describe the dominant form of masculinity, according to which other expressions of gender identity are evaluated.

It is, first and foremost, hegemonic masculinity on which historical documentation centres, rather than on

masculinity in general. In Macau, hegemonic masculinity was embodied by the political and ecclesiastic elite. In the Catholic part of the city, the languages associated with these circles were standard Portuguese and Latin, in which most European sources were written. Women and men from lower social strata seldom had access to Portuguese and Latin, remaining in Creolophone circles. Although many Creole sources exist in the case of Macau, they are still fewer than Portuguese or Latin ones. In the Chinese part of the city, models of societal organisation, especially Confucianism, relegated women to stay in the private sphere, and they restricted their language use to orality and local norms of communication.[1]

Until the 18th century, most metalinguistic documents were produced in political contexts, either by Macau's Chinese officials or Romance-speaking Catholic clerics and the city's administration. Even if they address women's language use, they are hence documents of a male perspective. Maquista texts available for this period, such as popular songs known and recited by broader strata, were written down in the 19th and 20th centuries. Although their history and text traditions can be reconstructed, their authorship often remains unclear. As sources of popular culture, these folkloristic texts emerged in Creolophone circles, offering a more gender-inclusive perspective than the elite's writings (see Jackson 2011). For the 19th century, first-hand linguistic data are available in the form of letters written between female authors.

Tosh's concept of hegemonic masculinities also allows for the following hypothesis: women whose status comes closer to hegemonic masculinity will display linguistic repertoires that are more similar to men's; complementarily, men who do not embody hegemonic masculinity will show more overlaps with women in their language use than they do with men who embody hegemonic masculinity.

2.2 One's own and the other's language

The texts under study must be treated with caution when it comes to their authors' relation to the language they chose. Not all sources discussed here are 'written *as*' testimonies of Maquista speakers; some are 'written *like*' such documents (see also Spotti & Blommaert 2016: 171), imitating the varieties of Maquista which the authors normally do not consider theirs. Thus, they appropriate these varieties of other speakers (or writers) for a specific metacommunicative purpose. In this metacommunicative act, the imitated writer or speaker functions as a *figure of personhood*, which "refers to a set of indexicals that are linked with a recognizable person type – that is, a group of indexical signs that can point to a type of character that is socially identifiable […]" (Park 2021: 47, further references omitted). Therefore, data produced by L2 speakers must not be considered less authentic or less important, but, to the contrary, a valuable source for historical sociolinguistics.

Focusing on gender, I argue that the prototypical figure of personhood considered

[1] See Tomás (2009: 53–56), Diaz de Seabra (2017), and Carneiro de Sousa's (2007) study on the city's marriage policies regarding female orphans in light of ethnic, religious, and economic considerations.

the best speaker of authentic Maquista is an elderly Macanese woman who was conceptualised as lacking discretion and being rude, but frank. In performance arts, these characteristics were used humorously to turn the tables, putting sarcastic social criticism into the mouths of those elderly who '[…] are ignorant of and critical towards Portuguese and the modern world […]' (Marques Morgado Ferreira de Oliveira 2016/2017: 50–51, my translation; Serra 2022).[2]

2.3 The history of linguistic repertoires

This study does not consider Maquista alone, nor does it treat the emergence and disappearance of this language as a system of communication existing as an abstract and disembodied *langue* in the Saussurian sense. Instead, this study departs from a perspective that focuses on the linguistic repertoire of individuals and societies. A linguistic repertoire, here, is understood as the sum of an individual's linguistic resources (lexico-grammatical chunks, combinatorial knowledge, and metapragmatic dimensions of language use), acquired during language acquisition and learning (e.g., Matras 2020: chap. 2–4). Linguistic repertoires do not need to comprise 'complete' languages. Based on an individual's biography, they may be "truncated" (Blommaert 2010: 103), i.e., contain only domain-specific chunks that do not necessarily fulfil the criterion of well-*formedness* in a normative sense. Nevertheless, these chunks may be well-*functional*, as they are typically acquired and learnt in concrete situations. Furthermore, repertoires are also partially redundant, as people often need to accomplish the same communicative tasks with speakers of different languages (e.g., shopping with Chinese and Macanese merchants, talking to a Portuguese father and an Indian mother, etc., see Ansaldo 2009: 101). In the formation of contact languages, new communicative routines emerge over time, building on previous communicative experiences. From a repertoire perspective, this process entails, on the one hand, the restructuring of communicative repertoires through the emergence of new resources (e.g., a creole's lexicon and grammar) and, on the other hand, the emergence of new norms of communication, i.e., routines and habits according to which the resources in one's (shared) repertoire are actualised in communication (Ansaldo 2009: 149–156, Matras 2020: chap. 10). In high contact ecologies, not all linguistic resources become shared amongst all members of a communication community. Instead, certain resources will become reserved for in-group communication, functioning, thus, as ethnolinguistic, religious, or – in this case – as gender repertoires. Tightly associated with certain social groups, such in-group languages also acquire an indexical value, pointing at their prototypical users (Benor 2010). It is from this level of social indexicality that the above-described metapragmatic usages derive when speakers use these repertoires for enacting figures of personhood, without voicing their own identity. The dynamics of ascribing gendered and ethnic indexicality to those linguistic

[2] Marques Morgado Ferreira de Oliveira (2016/2017: 50–51): "são ignorantes e críticas ao [Português] e ao mundo moderno [...]" (see also pp. 49–56, 106–109). See Wong (2004), on elderly men, *avô-gông*, as depicted in Macanese theatre.

resources which we call Maquista are pertinent for this analysis.

3 A gendered history of Maquista

In the analytical section, I will proceed chronologically and highlight three important aspects: first, the significance of mobility and ethnicity in the formative phases of Maquista; second, the stigmatisation of Creolophone people in the context of education, leading to the disappearance of Maquista; third, the role of cultural practices that have functioned as a counterbalance to such stigmatisation, helping preserve the Creole of Macau.

3.1 Mobility and ethnicity in pre-colonial and colonial Macau

Macau started its existence as a fishing village on a peninsula in the Pearl River Delta (Mnd. *Zhūjiāng Sānjiǎo Zhōu* 珠江三角洲). The district of Xiāngshān (香山), to which Macau belonged, was founded in 1152. About one century later, in 1277, Emperor Sòng Duānzōng (宋端宗), ruler of the Southern Sòng-Dynasty (南宋, 1126–1279), fled the Mongol invasion to Xiāngshān. This led to an increase in the population by about 50,000 people (CHRONOLOGY 2000: 21). Macau kept growing as a centre of pilgrimage, thanks to the foundation of the Ama-Temple (Tan 2000, Zheng 2000: 249–254) and the city's role in maritime trade, which attracted most notably merchants from the neighbouring province, Kanton (Mnd. *Guǎngdōng* 廣東) and Fújiàn (福建). Already in the late 15th century, Macau was a multilingual place, with a plethora of Sinitic languages spoken (Cantonese or *Yuè* 粵, Hokkien or *Fújìanhuà* 福建話, Chiu Chao or *Cháozhōuhuà* 潮州話, and Hakka or *Kèjiā* 客家, see Moody 2021: chap. 3).

From its beginnings until the 13th century, when Macau was still a village, one could assume that there was a relatively homogenous population speaking a historical form of the Cantonese *Táishān* (臺山) dialect. The language situation was complexified after the arrival of the Southern Sòng. Although many speakers of different Chinese regional languages came to Macau, the Táishān dialect remained the dominant vernacular until the 18th century (see Chan 1994).

The dynamics of migration and gender help explain the persistence of the Táishān dialect. Most pilgrims who came to Macau remained only briefly. Many traders likely did so as well, although some might have taken residence. Only the population that followed the Sòng permanently might have had a larger impact on the speech situation. Yet, the gendered division of labour offers insights into why many local norms prevailed. In traditional Chinese society, men are seen as the workforce and the family's representatives in the public sphere. This is reflected in the Chinese script, in which the character for the lexeme meaning 'man' (男) (e.g., Mnd. *nán*) is composed of the semantic components 田, derived from the character used to write the lexeme for 'field' (e.g., Mnd. *tián*), and 力, used to write 'force' (e.g., Mnd. *lì*). The compound, thus, means 'workforce (in the field),' which is the prototypical labour performed outside of the home in premodern China (e.g., Hinsch 2003, Dohardt 2021: 135). From this fact, one can deduce that most language contact outside homes occurred between men. This suggests that these men learnt the diverse Sinitic languages in Macau rather as L2s than L1s. The

Táishān dialect was acquired, then, as an L1 because the socialisation of children at the age of L1 acquisition was considered women's duty. The female population remained in the private sphere, which restricted their communicative range to the local vernacular.

Gendered mobility patterns are also reflected in Sinitic lexemes for 'to marry.' For a woman, one uses 嫁 (e.g., Mnd. *jià*). This character consists of one semantic and one phono-semantic component, 女 and 家. The components are derived from characters used to write the lexemes for woman and family (e.g., Mnd. *nǚ* and *jiā*). In this compound, they reflect the fact that women leave their homes for marriage. The complementary lexeme for men is 娶 (e.g., Mnd. *qǔ*). This character is composed, again, of 女 but also of 取, which is used to write a lexeme that means 'to take' (e.g., Mnd. *qǔ*). This character stands for men's 'taking a wife' into their household. After this event of female mobility, women were to remain in their new homes (*patrilocality*). Thus, their contacts to the direct vicinity were limited to interaction with more mobile household members, servants, or maids – a domestic workforce recruited locally. These circles were disconnected from supra-regional tasks like administration and maritime trade. Women were concerned with the household, crafting, and educating children. Before sons were old enough to follow their fathers and to take over responsibilities outside the house, they would acquire the Táishān dialect as an L1 during their early socialisation amongst women. Only those who became traders or members of the administration would become multilingual, as these tasks required interprovincial mobility and knowledge of the languages used in the respective domains.

This Chinese pattern of gendered mobility and multilingualism compares to the Portuguese pattern during the initial phase of expansion. Most of the first people from the *Estado da Índia* who came to Macau were men: merchants, missionaries, low-ranked nobles (Ptg. *fidalgos*), navigators, and slaves[3] (see Boxer 1968, Stolz 1998, Ptak 2000, Baxter 2009, Pinharanda Nunes 2012, 2013: 28–31, Kihm & Rougé 2016, Dohardt 2025). Again, this highlights the central role of unguided second language learning in the formation of Portuguese overseas varieties and contact languages (de Matos 1968, Ansaldo 2009: chap. 8, Cardoso 2016: 70–71). The mobile population steadily absorbed new members in every harbour conquered, who then had to get acquainted with the language spoken on the ship. The few women on the fleets were enslaved Asians, mostly from Japan.[4] They were called *bichas de cozinha* 'kitchen girls' in Portuguese, which refers to their work on the ship (see Teixeira 1965: 8–11, 31; Amaro 1988: 8–9, 106; 1991, de Pina Cabral & Lourenço 1993: 67). Most of these girls and women would likely have not known any Portuguese before. Hence, they also had to learn a form of this language as an L2. At sea, Portuguese (varieties) may not have been attributed any cultural value by L2 speakers. Instead, the language situation on the ship resulted from Portuguese dominance coupled with a mere necessity for successful

[3] See Clements (1996, 2000) and Cardoso (2012) on African slaves' impact on creole formation in India.

[4] To a minor extent, there were also people from Malaysia, the Philippines, Siam (nowadays Thailand), Cochinchina (today: Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia), as well as from Timor (Teixeira 1965: 8–11, 41, see also Tomás 2009: 52–56, Diaz de Seabra 2017).

and efficient communication, so that all crew members aligned their linguistic behaviour accordingly.

On land, in the harbour cities of the *Estado da Índia*, some of these men founded permanent residences and started families with local women. This led to the acquisition of contact languages as an L1 and, thus, to the emergence of nuclei of stabilisation in the Luso-Asian contact zone. In Asia, the Portuguese

> […] were always a small minority in their colonies […]. [M]ost important in terms of social cohesion and control, was the creation of a casado class (European Portuguese officially married to local women), which produced stable bi- and multilingual mestiço populations loyal to Portugal. (Baxter 2005: 10)

In the logic of the Indian caste system, women who married into Portuguese circles, as well as those who converted to Catholicism, were quickly regarded as outsiders to their society of origin. As the linguistic background of these women (and male converts) was quite homogenous, there was no reason to stop using one's L1 when communicating with locals. Portuguese and Portuguese-derived languages were spoken with missionaries and male family members of the first *casado* generation. The *mestiço*-children, i.e., children of Eurasian ancestry, growing up in mixed families, learnt the languages of their fathers, Portuguese and Creole, as well as those of their Indian mothers. Regarded as ethnically, culturally, and linguistically different from people of either exclusive Indian or European descent, the *mestiços* formed a novel social stratum. Thus, contact languages developed the strongest potential for identity alignment as the language of inter-ethnic contact (Clements 2012: 12, see also Teixeira 1965: 19–26).

Next to the outlined, usual pattern of gendered mobility, as linked to sea fare, Tomás (2009) mentions two events of mass mobility that have mobilised men and women alike: the Dutch conquest of, and rule over Ceylon (Ptg. *Ceilão*, nowadays Sri Lanka), from 1638 to 1658; as well as the takeover of Malacca (1641–1825), which led to the exodus of entire families resettling mostly in other cities of the *Estado da Índia*, rather than in Brazil or Europe. Many people from these territories came to Batavia, and also to Macau (see also Diaz de Seabra 2017).

The ethnic and linguistic diversity of the *Estado da Índia* that was brought to Macau was perceived as more homogenous in Chinese sources. The *Monography of Macau* (Mnd. *Àomén Jìlüè* 澳門記略), a geographic and cultural description of this city by two Chinese provincial officials (e.g., Boltz 1977, Coudmont 1993), for instance, does not discuss linguistic diversity broadly. To the contrary, it includes a largely Portuguese-based glossary considered useful to trade with all who are regarded as foreigners.[5] Ethnicity and gender are discussed more broadly, which allows one, however,

[5] In this contribution, I cite the version digitised by Cornell University (signature DS796MIIY51801, V. 1-4), and provide page numbers according to the .pdf-scan. In the bibliography, there are links to scans of the other available versions. Their orthography occasionally differs. The *Monography's* glossary was later expanded into an independent phrasebook in the 19th century, the "Compendium of Assorted Phrases in Macau Pidgin" (Li 2016: 116), printed around 1830 (Mnd. *Àomén fānyǔ zázì quánběn* 澳門番語雜字全卒, see also Li & Matthews 2016). The *Monography* became so popular that the first xylographic edition from 1751 was re-edited several times (1800/1801, 1827, 1884).

to conjecture about women's language use when considering further sources as well. One example of descriptions of foreigners in the *Monography* shall be considered in more detail:

> 其人白晳鼻昂而目深碧不晌不畜鬚髮別編黑白髮蒙首及頷蜷然蒙茸賜自法土得者以為榮其通體黝黑如漆特唇紅齒白略似人者是曰鬼奴(MONOGRAPHY, p. 289) […] 女亦具白黑二種別主奴 (p. 290).
>
> 'These people are of the white race, with big noses, and dark green eyes without glimmer. They do not let the beard grow, and their hair is either white or black. They let it fall from the head to the neck, where they wear it curled up or loose. Those who have slaves take themselves as important. The latter's bodies are entirely black, like varnish, their lips red, and their teeth white. They are very similar to human beings and are called Devils' Slaves. There are also two types of women, Whites and Blacks, i.e., mistresses and servants.' (my translation)

The above-cited quote divides the Portuguese-ruled city demographically according to two genders and two ethnic categories, which must be interpreted hierarchically with regard to their respective social position. White people are portrayed as masters of Black people, although it remains unclear who was considered Black in Chinese eyes, next to people from Africa (Indians, *mestiços*?). Moreover, from the fact that women are mentioned as a kind of afterthought, after men, we can deduce that they were regarded as less important than men. However, as white women were considered to belong to the mistresses, their status was supposedly considered higher than that of Black men and Black women. Black female servants, thus, stand at the bottom of society, according to this description.

Although somewhat vague, this classification in the *Monography* has captured, *grosso modo*, categories that indeed were relevant to Macau's Christian population with regard to the social hierarchies of gender and ethnicity. Macanese and Portuguese sources, as well as language data, help obtain a more nuanced view of this issue.

As outlined above, most of those who came from the *Estado da Índia* were male, and amongst them, people born in Europe constituted the minority. There were even fewer women of European descent in the Portuguese colonies. Most of these women were wives of nobles or other highly influential people, following their husbands. They belonged, thus, to the "masters" mentioned above. The demographic majority in Christian Macau, however, was constituted by Asian and Eurasian women with few economic means, many being unfree and household servants (Holm 1989: 286, Tomás 2009: 54–55, Diaz de Souza 2017).

There is anthropological and linguistic evidence that suggests European women did not socialise with Asian and Eurasian women in Macau. Cantonese and Maquista-speaking women called European women disrespectfully *ngau³-po⁴* (Mnd. *fèipó* 肥婆) and *ngao-pó* 'fat hag' (literally: 'fat granny'), which reflects disparate ideals of beauty. The term refers to a stereotype of female aristocrats (and members of the elite) as being obese, arrogant, snobbish, and ugly (Amaro 1988: 8–9, 26–30, 37–40, 57, 92; 1991, Gaião 2019: 638–639). Demonstrating a certain in-group pride of lower-class women, this pejorative term for European females suggests that there

were few motivations to align their identity with this group. Whilst Eurasian and Asian women may thus have used Maquista as an in-group language, European women may have preferred to use registers like foreigner talk when communicating with their servants, so that they could maintain Portuguese as their own in-group language, aligning them with their husbands.

Further evidence for this sociolinguistic segregation comes from another glottonym for Maquista, *língu nhonha* (Batalha 1988: 239/494, Senna Fernandes & Baxter 2004: 117, Gaião 2011: 282–283, 2019: 21), a term derived from the lexeme *língu* 'language' and *nhonha* (pl. *nhonhonha*) – a designation for *mestiça* women common in Southeast Asia. Maquista is, thus, 'the *nhonhonha*'s language.' How did this designation emerge, and what does it imply in terms of language ideologies?

The term *nhonha* (also spelt *nyonya*) is widely used throughout the *Estado da Índia* and in the Straits of Malacca, e.g., in Malaccan Creole Portuguese (*Kristang*), to refer to a "(Straits-Born) Chinese Woman." It is "[a]lso used as a form of address for a Chinese woman, if the person is unknown to the speaker" (Baxter & de Silva 2004: 66, see also p. 65 on "*nona*"). The Straits-Born Chinese are people of Sino-Malay origin, living, e.g., in Malaysia and Singapore (Ansaldo et al. 2007, Ansaldo 2009: chap. 3, 2010: 617–618). A well-known Malaccan folk song *Jinkli Nona* (aka *Jingli Nona*) contains a line which testifies that these women married into the Portuguese communities: "Jikli Nona, iou querê casá" ('Faire Girl, I wanna marry (you)'). Another popular folk song from Macau helps pinpoint who *nhonhona*'s available bachelors were:

> […] Nhonha na jinella
> Cô fúla mogarim,
> Su mãi tankaréra,
> Su pai canarim.
> […] Quim casá cô preto,
> Tem pocô sintimento.
> 'A woman stands at the window,
> With Jasmin flower in her hair.
> Her Mother is a Tanka,
> Her Father a Canary.
> [She] who marries a Black [guy],
> Has few sentiments.'
> (Marques Pereira 1900, II.11: 704, my translation)[6]

These lines inform us that the *nhonhonha* married into the lower-ranked circles of the Macanese colonial society, as the Black person mentioned in the song is likely a domestic slave from Africa.[7] One also obtains information on the *nhonha*'s pedigree, which hints at marginalisation. Her mother is a Tanka (Mnd. *Dànjiā* 蜑家), a Chinese ethnicity who traditionally lives on boats. Land-dwellers often hold prejudice towards them, considering their lifestyle a sign of poverty. As such, they were also suspected of being involved in shady businesses and prostitution. The song alludes to prostitution through the *nhonha*'s second attribute: She wears a jasmine flower to perfume her hair,

[6] See also Barreiros (1944, III.5: 508) and Batalha (1988: 105/342).

[7] Other people in Southeast Asia who were considered Black by Europeans and used Portuguese-derived contact vernaculars are the Maradikas (also called *mardijkers* or *zwaarte Portugueesen* in Dutch) who came from the Moluccas, Makassar, Ternate and Flores. Their ancestry can be traced to Malabar and Coromandel, as well as to Malacca (Tomás 2009: 60–61).

a sign to identify prostitutes in the *Estado da Índia* (Marques Pereira 1900, II.10: 706, Batalha 1988: 277/541–278/542, Peixoto 1988, Senna Fernandes & Baxter 2004: 159, Gaião 2019: 906–907).[8]

The *nhonha*'s father is also of humble origin. He is not, as one might think, from the Canary Islands. *Canarim* is a pejorative term for Luso-descendants born in India (Batalha 1988: 104/342, 233/487). Often, male *Canarins* came to Macau to escape jurisdiction after committing a crime. Others came for military service. Not seldom had these men affairs with *nhonhonha*, whom they tended to abandon, however, upon leaving for Portugal or another harbour when their service was over. These social dynamics had two linguistic consequences for the *nhonhonha*. First, they were integrated into circles where Luso-Asian contact languages were commonly spoken. Left alone in Macau, their linguistic models became the other *nhonhonha*. Second, abandoned by their fathers, the *nhonhanha*'s children remained in their mothers' social circles where they grew up with Maquista, who also would not have obtained access to normative forms of language use (Amaro 1988: 15–19, 40–42; 1991, see also Teixeira 1965: 31).

Due to their immobility, the semantic shift from *nhonha* meaning 'Sino-Malay *mestiça*' to 'Sino-Portuguese *mestiça*' is explicable, as *nhonha* was applied to refer to the typical *mestiça* in the respective harbour city. The above-cited verses portray the *nhonha* as a young woman. So, the question arises of why the figure of personhood of the typical Maquista-speaking woman is now elderly. The trajectories of this development are traceable through the complementary analysis of the term *chácha*. In Malaccan Creole, *chacha* means 'senile' (Baxter & de Silva 2004: 20), derived from the Malayan term *chachat*, meaning 'a flaw, a defect, a blemish,' which is also a disrespectful designation for handicapped people (Batalha 1988: 119/357). In Maquista, *chácha* must have started similarly, as a designation for weak or senile elderly, narrowing down to 'elderly' in general, and then to 'elderly women.' Already, the *Monography* documents a further semantic specification, providing this term – written 自茶 (Mnd. *zìchá*, Cnt. "tchi-tch'a," see also Gomes 1979: 217, MONOGRAPHY, p. 221) – as the translation of the Sinitic lexeme meaning '(maternal) grandmother' 亞婆 (Mnd. *āpó*, Cnt. *a³-po³*). Gomes (1979: 271) transcribes this as *Xáxa*, Thompson (1959: 40–41) as *Chacha*. In contemporary Macanese, both terms are used. *Apô* (also *aporóna*, which is slightly pejorative) refers to elderly Chinese women, which reflects the Chinese custom of addressing unknown people by designations for family members (Batalha 1988: 48/286, Senna Fernandes & Baxter 2004: 37, Gaião 2019: 80–81). *Chácha*, in turn, can mean 'grandmother' or 'elderly woman' in general, having a humorous undertone (Batalha 1988: 118/356, Senna Fernandes & Baxter 2004: 37, Gaião 2019: 229–230). This undertone might result from its originally pejorative connotation, weakened by a frequently joking usage. The negative connotation implies the stereotype that *chácha* are uneducated, yet sharp-tongued. Thus, in Macau's life world, *chácha* became pragmatically synonymous with an elderly *nhonha.*

[8] See also Nunes (1991) on prostitution in Macau and China.

Returning to the hypothesis that the linguistic repertoires of men who do not embody hegemonic masculinity may resemble those of lower-class women, it becomes evident that a closer analysis of the historical trajectories of terms for the *nhonhona*'s children and other men situated at the lowest strata of society is necessary to fully understand this linguistic alignment. The local, Macanese concept that comes closest to the notion of hegemonic masculinity is that of 'decent men' (Ptg. *homens-bons*) in a Catholic sense. These were most often Portuguese men, occupying important positions in the Senate and the Church, which were offices denied to people like the above-mentioned *canarim* or the *preto* (see Carneiro de Sousa 2007: 7–8, 26). As adults, men at the lower end of society had, however, comparatively more agency than poor women. Amongst the poorest people in early Macau, there were many women from India and Timor, living in slavery-like conditions, abused as prostitutes, beggars, and thieves. They shared this role with boys, lacking the agency of adult men. There is a drastic example of coercing unfree boys into this marginalised femininity, although this practice was officially forbidden (see Teixeira 1965: 49–50): Bishop D. Alexandre da Silva Pedrosa Guimarães of Macau, writing to the King of Portugal in the 18th century, informs us that some criminals in Macau

> [...] alugavam meninas chinas para as levarem consigo, ou ao colo, para receberem a dita esmola e o mais é que fingiam vultos e levavam animais [...]. Nesse mesmo número se introduziam *atais*, que são chinas, mas do género masculino, que iam vestidos de mulher contra a lei, a receberem a esmola (cited in Teixeira 1965: 46).
>
> 'rend Chinese girls to take them with themselves, or on their laps, in order to get the above-mentioned alms. Moreover, they fool people and take [their] animals. At this very moment, they introduced *atais*, who are Chinese, but of male gender, who go disguised illegally as women to receive the alms.' (my translation)

The word *atai* in Macanese comes from a Cantonese lexeme meaning 'little brother, younger brother' (Cnt. *a³-tai⁶* 阿弟). The female pendant, 'little sister, younger sister' (Cnt. *a³-mui²* 阿妹) also entered Maquista with a slight semantic change. Today, these terms refer to Chinese boys and girls, mostly of humble origin. They were employed as servants, home helps, or to do the household's shopping (Batalha 1988: 43/181, 57/297, Senna Fernandes & Baxter 2004: 7–8, 12; Diaz de Seabra 2017, Gaião 2019: 65–66, 96). In premodern Macau, these Chinese children were unfree servants of Portuguese masters. Their social position was the same in legal terms and, as shown by the bishop, also in terms of their gender roles, with boys being dressed as girls when being sent to steal and beg. Most of these boys, hence, grew up entirely amongst marginalised women who did not have the chance to learn Portuguese in school.

3.2 Education in colonial Macau

The formation of homes in the *Estado da Índia*'s harbour cities brought about the emergence of urban societies marked by immense linguistic and ethnic diversity. Whilst a part of this population was frequently mobile (e.g., traders), others stayed for a larger amount of time (e.g., missionaries, soldiers, administrators), and

again others tended to remain permanently (e.g., converted wives). Urban language use was more complex and stratified than on ships, where homogeneous communication was required for practical reasons. Drawing from sources about education, this section shows how language use and gender (roles) were interrelated in the nuclei of the *Estado da Índia.*

In India, as in Macau, schooling was central to solidifying gendered differences in the creole community's linguistic repertoire. The schools frequented by people with Portuguese ancestry or those who had social affiliations with the Luso-descendants were largely administered by the Catholic Church. The Church initially favoured contact languages to facilitate conversion, but after Catholic communities had grown large enough, schooling in Portuguese (and later in Latin) became the norm, and the use of contact languages was discouraged (Dohardt 2024: 80). In India and China, Catholic clerics typically educated mostly boys. This is documented, for example, in a letter by Spanish missionary St. Francis Xavier (1506–1552), writing to a fellow missionary:

> Do your best above all for any Chinese and Japanese boy there, instructing them carefully in Christian doctrine, taking great heed that they progress in spirit, and seeing that they learn to read, write and speak Portuguese so that they may be able to act as interpreters to the Fathers who, please God, will be coming to Japan and China before long. […] That was the dialect I used myself when I taught at Goa. (translation by Brodrick 1952: 392–393)

This passage informs us about the linguistic and gendered backgrounds of the emergent speech community. First, it confirms that Japanese people, too, learnt Portuguese as an L2 upon integration into Lusophone circles. This remained an important demographic factor of the Christian community in the 16th century because converts from Japan, who were persecuted on religious grounds, used to take refuge in Macau as the centre of the Catholic Mission in South East Asia (Teixeira 1965: 8–11, 41).[9] Second, the quote shows indirectly that women were not schooled by the Jesuit Fathers, at least during this period. Finally, it is a testimony to the relevance of Portuguese as the *lingua franca* between Europeans in Asia, given that many missionaries, like St. Francis Xavier himself, were Spaniards or Italians (de Matos 1968, Ansaldo 2009: chap. 8, Cardoso 2016: 70–71).

One expression about language used in this letter merits a closer look. St. Francis Xavier's insistence that the boys learn "to read, write and speak" implies register competence and, as far as writing is concerned, an orientation towards the standard language. The constant presence of standard Portuguese in missionary schools influenced the Luso-descendant community's linguistic repertoires, including language ideologies. For instance, Macau's most important educational institution was in the hands of the Jesuits: St. Paul's College, founded in 1594.[10] Until the 18th century, Latin remained the language of Christianity and erudition in Macau, which paralleled the situation in Europe. Creole languages were similarly regarded as yet another corruption, namely of their lexi-

[9] The presence of Japanese people was a thorn in Chinese officials' eyes due to conflicts with Japanese pirates. Therefore, the Japanese were officially expelled in 1564, and the purchase of Japanese slaves was forbidden. De facto, however, this ruling had no long-lasting effects (see Gomes 1979: 108–109).

[10] The Jesuits previously founded a St. Paul's College at Goa, not to be confused with Macau's.

fiers (Holm 1988: 20, Dohardt 2024: 80). In places like Macau, where Latin and Portuguese were present, contact languages were thus doubly stigmatised during the Renaissance and the 18th century (see Dohardt, accepted; 2024: 80). Nevertheless, the spreading of these ideologies remained limited to a small elite until the 18th century. Furthermore, because of repeated conflicts between the Portuguese Government and influential Catholic orders in Macau, there have been repeated lacunas in Macau's education system that hampered the diffusion of standard languages and normative ideologies (Pinharanda Nunes 2013: 31–33).

Before schooling was widely accessible, Macanese and Portuguese were understood as different registers of the same communicative medium. This fact is also latently present in the above-cited letter by St. Francis Xavier, who tells his fellow missionaries to preach in Portuguese, the "dialect" he used at Goa. There are now two options to interpret this term. First, as a Spaniard, St. Francis Xavier might have labelled Portuguese as a dialect in relation to Spanish (i.e. as an Iberoromance vernacular). Second, as hypothesised by Whinnom (1956: 9), "dialect" can refer specifically to the dialect of Portuguese as spoken in Goa, which would indeed be the term used during this period to refer to pidgins and creoles (still in use in many Ibero-Asian communities, which often do not call their languages 'Creole'). Asian glottonyms, too, suggest that missionaries relied on restructured Portuguese to facilitate conversion (Dohardt 2024: 80). For instance, Malacca's Luso-Asian creole language is called *Kristang* (Malaccan) 'Christian' but in Maquista, *papiá cristám* 'to speak Christian' means 'to speak Portuguese' and 'to speak Maquista' (dos Santos Ferreira 1978: 77, Batalha 1988: 8/126, see also the nominal form *língu cristám* 'Christian language,' Gaião 2019: 302, Senna Fernandes & Baxter 2004: 126).

Since the Church was well established, however, contact languages disappeared from any teaching contexts. A gendered divide emerged in the Macanese community because girls were largely excluded from education. As more and more clerics from Portugal were no longer familiar with contact languages, they took note of communicative barriers with Macanese women. In the 18th century, this situation motivated the above-mentioned Bishop Pedrosa to remark the following about women's language use:

> [F]alam uma linguagem que é mistura de todos os idiomas e gírias, imperceptível aos que não são nacidos no país, por culpa dos maridos e pais de família, que há dois séculos não cuidarem em introducer o português correcto, sobre o que vou trabalhando, por ser esta coisa aquela em que cuidam todas as nações em sus domínios (Teixeira 1965: 45).
>
> 'They speak a language that is a mixture of all tongues and jargons, incomprehensible to anyone who was not born in the country, due to their husbands and family fathers who did not bother introducing correct Portuguese for two centuries, which I will work on because this is what all nations do in their dominions.' (see also Dohardt, accepted, fn. 4)

Considering the diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds of these women, there are two complementary options for reading this statement. On the one hand, the bishop could

have referred to what is nowadays called code-switching.[11] On the other hand, a mixture might simply refer to Maquista, as contact languages were generally described as a mixture and, pejoratively, as a bastardisation of 'real' languages. The letter implies, of course, that male family members understood female ones. Thus, this letter demonstrates that the above-discussed relegation of females to the private sphere was still relevant.

Much like a mirror image of the *âtai,* there was, however, one important group of women in Macau who had more economic independence from men, more education than most women, and a well-respected social status. Consequently, they also had a more diverse linguistic repertoire, similar to the *homens-bons*: nuns.[12] Given that not everyone who joined a convent must have been of European descent, joining a religious order was a way to ascend the social ladder for Asian and Eurasian women in Macau.[13] In the Portuguese sources, the figure of the nun is not as prominent as in Chinese ones, likely because female clerics occupy the bottom of the ecclesial hierarchy from the Catholic perspective. However, Chinese sources see nuns' agency with critical astonishment, given that their high degree of agency did not conform to their own cultural models of femininity. Lǐ Xiálíng's (李遐齡, 1766–1832) Miscellaneous Poems on Macau (Mnd. *Àomén záyǒng* 澳門雜詠) contains a literary portrayal of this group (see Zhang W. 1996, 1997, 2000b: 273–377):

一女為尼九族崇,
殺人如蟻不能訌。
旋盆半片紙條入,
絕勝秋官石肺通。
(cited in Zhang W. 1996)

'A daughter becoming a nun is held in awe by all.
And she can have people killed like ants at will.
She just scribbles a few words on a piece of paper.
And settles all life-and-death matters.'
(cited in Zhang W. 1997, German in 2000b: 373)

Their education offered the nuns literacy. As outlined above, knowing how to read and write meant knowing Portuguese and Latin, which used to be a privilege of upper-class men. Next to their language skills, nuns' living conditions in convents set them apart from marginalised and ordinary females because they did not have any (reproductive) duties towards a family father, and they were socio-economically dependent on the convent, and not on a man. Thus, they also lived apart from servant women, comparable to female aristocrats.

In the 19th century, changes in the educational system led ordinary women's and *nhonhonha*'s linguistic repertoire to become increasingly diverse. Whilst the elderly remained closer to Maquista norms, gendered differences in the language use of younger generations were steadily reduced. Nonetheless, receiving a better education, at this time, often required

[11] See dos Santos (2012) on code-switching and identity in contemporary Macau.

[12] For religion in Anglophone circles, see Leong (2023).

[13] Note, however, that being sent to a convent in the *Estado da Índia* was used as a method to banish unwelcome women from Portugal, such as prostitutes, convicts, or orphans. From these Europeans' perspective, joining a convent was, thus, rather a punishment than an advancement (see Tomás 2009: 54–55).

emigration to Shanghai and Hong Kong (see also Nunes 2013), cities flourishing at the expense of Macau's former economic splendour (Lo 1999: 54, Ptak 2000: 164–171, Dohardt 2022: 38–39).

Divided between these cities, Macanese families wrote letters to maintain contact, which included correspondences between women. The first correspondence analysed here is from the second half of the 19th century, between an elderly Macau-based woman, Pascoela, and her niece, Florência (nicknamed *Chencha*),[14] who resides in Hong Kong. Both women have a high social position; Pascoela's husband works in the Macanese city administration. Florência, too, seems to live in favourable circumstances, as deducible from her rather reactive writing, offering less information than Pascoela's. Florência's husband often frequents Macau's and Hong Kong's high society, and Florência likely does so, too. This is manifested in her language use, which exhibits strong influences from Portuguese and English:

> Minha Querida Tia.
> Eu já receb**eu** muito carta de minh**a** adorad**a** Ti**a**, mas não respond**eu** pelo motivo de **está padecendo** de molestia de proveito. [...] Minha Ado fic**ou** na palma de mão de todos nosso gente de Macáo de dois Clubo, unde elle lev**ou** todo**s** novidade de Macáo que minh**a** adorad**a** Ti**a** escrev**eu** para eu (3rd of May 1870, cited in Barreiros 1943, I.3: 246, my emphasis).
> 'My dear Aunt. I had received a lot of letters from my beloved aunt, but I did not respond due to further unease. […] My Ado spent a lot of time in two clubs amongst our Macanese people to spread all the news from Macau about which my beloved aunt had written to me.' (my translation)

Some influences of standard Portuguese can be observed in Florência's letter: (1) the use of inflectional verbal morphology, instead of exclusively used TAM markers in combination with an invariant verb (Arana-Ward 1977: 96–101, Pinharanda Nunes 2010: 162–163; 2012, 2013: 26–28); (2) the (overgeneralised) use of the plural marker *-s* on nouns and determiners – motivated on semantic grounds rather than morphosyntactic requirements (e.g., *todos* all.M.PL. *novedade* novelty.F.SG.) – instead of reduplication or non-marking (dos Santos Ferreira 1978: 17, Ansaldo & Matthews 2004, Gaião 2007, Avram 2016); (3) the elevated use of gender marking and agreement (see also dos Santos Ferreira 1978: 17–22, Baxter 2012, Pinharanda Nunes 2012); (4) the use of high-register collocations from Portuguese such as *pelo motive de* 'because of,' instead of the more idiomatic *pr'amor de/promor de*. This demonstrates that Florência communicated in Portuguese more regularly than in Maquista, including in writing, which suggests an educated background.

Her aunt Pascoela does not have any trouble understanding this Lusitanised Maquista, likely because she was alphabetised in Portuguese. Despite this, she apparently prefers forms of expression that tend more towards the Maquista pole of a Portuguese-Maquista continuum, probably because of the communicative routines in her generation of women. In the next excerpt, Pascoela complains that she did not understand the English word *firework*, used by her husband, but she understood

[14] See Batalha (1974: 36ss), Amaro (1988: 60–64), Gaião (2019: 1026–1034) on Macanese nicknames.

the Portuguese term *fogo d'arte*, which suggests that, at least in Macau, speakers of Maquista and Portuguese interacted often enough to understand each other passively:

> [D]á com ung-a vapor branco fundado na fronte de palacio. Preguntá com vôsso tio grande são que vapor aquelle, elle falá ung-a nome inglez que eu nompôde entendê, mas cavá jâ virá pra portuguez, falá são chomá "Fogo d'arte" (11th of November 1869, cited in Barreiros 1943, I.2: 134).
>
> 'Suddenly, there was a white vapour in front of the palace. I asked your grand-uncle what that vapour was. He said an English name that I could not understand, but I have translated it into Portuguese, where it is called 'firework.' (my translation)

This excerpt demonstrates another intergenerational difference between Pascoela and her niece, Florência. Whilst Pascoela does not understand English (as opposed to her husband!), Florência does, which was not uncommon for a Hong Kong-based woman of her age. Pascoaela (25th of October 1869), in turn, even complains about Florência's writing being influenced by English and French (alluding to an influence by French-governed Shanghai):

> [E]u amestê pidi ung-a cuza com vôs, pra quando escrevê ôtro vez nuncabom botá na carta palavra inglez, ô frances, pra tem que incomodá vôsso Tio pra pôde sabe são que cuza. Vôs escrevê na carta "City Hall" – querê que eu divinhá são que asnera de palavra são este? Vôsso Tio mesmo, na principio nompôde entendê; mas cavá, com fôrça de isgravatá na dicionario de Pe. Rosquete, então que sabe que são baraca de artu (cited in Barreiros 1943, I.2: 129).
>
> 'May I kindly ask you for a favour? When you are writing to me next time, please do not put English or French words in the letter because I have to bother your uncle to know what they mean. You wrote "City Hall" in the [last] letter – do you want me to guess what that nonsense is? Even your uncle could not understand it at first, but he finally ended up finding it, after great efforts, in Pe. Rosquete's dictionary. Then, we got to know it was the City Hall (literally: High Barracks).' (my translation)

This passage is remarkable as it shows that even men of Pascoela's generation who knew some English did not use the language routinely; otherwise, the term *City Hall* could hardly have been confusing in a context where Hong Kong is frequently mentioned. In another letter, from the 19th of April 1870, Pascoela tells her niece about meeting a Spanish politician, which can be interpreted as a testimony to a more widely spread multilingualism present in Florência's generation:

> Consur espanhol tamêm jâ conversá que lai de tanto cô vôsso prima, mas ella falá que nunca entendê ni ung-a palavra de alquelle papiador, que frovê como bicho-balichão[15] que nontêm tempo (19th of April 1870, cited in Barreiros 1943, I.3: 244).
>
> 'The Spanish Consul was also conversing a lot with your cousin, but I never understood a single word of that chatterbox that talks nineteen to the dozen.' (my translation)

[15] See Gaião (2019: 136) on the expression *bicho-balichám*.

Pascoela reports that she does not understand the Spanish Consul because he speaks too fast. There are now two possible interpretations. If the Consul knew Portuguese, Pascoela may not have understood him just because of the velocity of his speech, which would then hint at her stronger orientation towards Maquista. Alternatively, Florência's cousin, the Consul's primary interlocutor, may even have understood him speaking in Spanish, which would then be a testimony to younger women's increasing multilingualism.

These correspondences show as well that the general trend of young people was to become more multilingual, speaking standard languages at the expense of Maquista. This shift is documented in another set of letters, some of which are reproduced in the anthology *Ta-Ssi-Yang-Kuó* (大西洋國), others were directly written to its editor João Feliciano Marques Pereira. The anthology contains historical information on Macau's society, history, and language(s). It was published in Macau and Lisbon, with multidisciplinary contributions from experts, lay investigators, and locals. The journal became so popular that many (female) Macanese readers sent in letters, either self-composed or reprints of their private correspondences.

One of these excerpts comments on the impact of the anthology itself. It is a postscript to a letter by a namesake and contemporary of Pascoela, an elderly woman signing her letter as *Chácha Pancha*. On the 3rd of January 1865, she writes to her daughter Miquela, mentioning that her writing has improved because of the schooling she received, and thanks to her reading *Ta-Ssi-Yang-Kuó:*

> P.S. – vos logo sintí grandi difernça na minha modo di escrevê. Eu já aperfeiçoá bastante neste um poco tempo. Tudo este escóla novo de machu e femia, e aquele gazeta Ta-ssi-Yang-kuo já fazê indretá bastante nossu lingu (Marques Pereira 1900, I.5: 324, de Carvalho e Rêgo 1950: 18, 23).
>
> 'P.S. – You will see a great difference in my mode of writing. I have already improved quite a lot in this short time. All these new schools for boys and girls and this journal Ta-ssi-yang-kuo have fairly corrected our language.' (my translation)

On the one hand, this comment shows that co-ed schooling had become common. On the other hand, it demonstrates that there was still a tendency to regard Maquista and Portuguese as registers of the same language.[16] If Maquista had been understood in terms of an independent language, it would have hardly made sense to claim that increasing skills in writing Portuguese would perfect one's Maquista. This conviction ultimately led to a decrease in the use of Maquista in most communicative domains. However, as outlined below, the Creole of Macau could maintain a special value for metapragmatic purposes.

3.3 Communicative practices with a metapragmatic dimension

Another letter from *Ta-Ssi-Yang-Kuó*, written by a Macanese woman, who signs the letter

[16] Another Macanese woman, Maria, also begins her letters with the words: „Que pena eu nôn pode escrevê portuguez assim galante" ('It's a pity that I can't write Portuguese so elegantly', Barreiros 1943: I, 4: 350), demonstrating she considers Maquista just a variety of Portuguese, less correct than the standard.

as *"Ung'a Nhonha"* ('a Nhonha'), documents that metalinguistic awareness grew in Macau during the 19th century. Towards the end of the century, Maquista was more and more considered to have proper norms, distinct from Portuguese. Nevertheless, the Nhonha claims that authentic Macanese is losing ground in her generation, precisely because of the influence of Portuguese and English:

> […] Sam divéra sintí ung̃a ancusa pezado na coração quando uvi inglezada fazê chacota di nosso boboriça. Nôs ôtro, Sium co eu, sam nôs já nacê na Macau; mas nôsso gente sam tudo de aqui, por isso nôs sintí vergonha olá este um pôco, vai pa alá sevandiziá com tudo china-china. Qui sabe Sium logo entendê este linguazi ó nadi. Nôsso rancho nunca sã falá assim sa; mas eu já prendê com dós chacha más véla de Macau, promor de sintí saião déçá cavá ung̃-a lingu assí chistosa. Oze em dia tudo nhonhonha sã falá portuguezado; caregá na *r* como acung̃-a Chente ! Estung̃-a linguazi já servi pra eu anos trazado vistí bobo na Quarentóra na más. Si Sium non pôde intendê, eu lógo falá modo de agora, mêo portuguezado, mêo ingrezado; ô intão pôde falá môde de Vochom que fazê avano, si Sium querê. [...]
>
> Ung̃a-a Nhonha (Marques Pereira 1900, II.12: 781; Barreiros 1943, I.4: 359–360).[17]
>
> 'Indeed, I felt saddened when I heard that the English poked fun at us. Sir, you and I were born in Macau; all of our people are from here. Therefore, I felt a little ashamed when I heard this, when I went there and they were mocking us, together with all the Chinese. Who knows whether or not you, Sir, are going to understand this language? Our group had never been speaking in such a way, but I learnt to do so with two very old grannies (*chácha*) from Macau. That is why I feel regret for having left behind so amusing a language. Nowadays, all Macanese girls (*nhonhonha*) speak Lusitanised, emphasising the *r* like that Vincent![18] In the last few years, I have only made use of this language when disguising myself for the Fat Sunday celebrations. So, Sir, if you cannot understand this, I will later speak in the contemporary way, half Lusitanised, half Anglicised, or I will speak like Vochom the fan-maker – if you, Sir, want me to do so.
>
> A *Nhonha*' (my translation)

This letter provides information on many aspects of language use in Macau. First, it shows that there are salient sociophonetic features which speakers identified as Lusitanisms, criticised as unauthentic, e.g., the overemphasis of the phoneme /r/, pronounced as a trill [r] – common in European varieties of Portuguese – instead of a tap [ɾ], which was the most wide-spread realisation in Maquista and Macanese Portuguese. In addition, an overuse of Portuguese expressions is perceived as snobbish. The use of such Lusitanisms is pejoratively called *falá portuguesado* in Maquista (Batalha 1988: 6/124, 253/561, Senna Fernandes & Baxter 2004: 134, Gaião 2019: 757–758) or *torâ português* 'to toast Portuguese' (Senna

[17] The last sentence is a wordplay, meaning 'I will get this work done properly' and 'I will write in Luso-Chinese jargon' (Marques Pereira 1900, II.12: 782–785).

[18] *Chente* is a figure in a poem reproduced in Ta-Ssi-Yang-Kuó (1899, I: 57ss.). The quote, thus, shows that this *nhonha* read the anthology as well.

Fernandes & Baxter 2004: 163).[19] Second, the influence of English on Maquista is also portrayed as a threat to authenticity. In analogy to the term *portuguesado*, the Nhonha speaks of *ingrezado* (see also Batalha 1988: 6/124). The depreciation of Anglicisms can be explained by the economic and cultural rivalry between the Macanese communities in Macau and Hong Kong. Residents in Macau called those from Hong Kong disrespectfully *Tôm-tôm* (literally 'candy,' a term also used for '[d]ried animal excrement,' Senna Fernandes & Baxter 2004: 162). Hong Kongers labelled Macanese from Macau *Macau-Paio* 'Macau sausage' (Senna Fernandes & Baxter 2004: 103). Crucially, the Nhonha postulates proper norms for Maquista as a language distinct from Portuguese and English. Contrary to Chácha Pancha, this Nhonha goes so far as to see Portuguese influence on Maquista as a violation of Maquista norms; thus, as a qualitative deterioration which has become common in quantitative terms, however, amongst her generation.

According to the Nhonha, there are two forms of authentic Maquista. One is spoken by Chinese merchants when addressing their Macanese and Portuguese customers. This form is called *Macau Pidgin* in academia, primarily being a mercantile jargon. There are still some rare mentions of this vernacular in the first two decades of the 20th century until it was entirely given up in favour of (forms of) English (Marques Pereira 1899, I.1: 55, dos Santos Ferreira 1967: introduction, de Pina Cabral & Lourenço 1993: 179, 202; Li 2016, Dohardt, accepted; see also Jorge 1992).[20]

The second and most important form is Maquista spoken by *chácha*, portrayed as living archives of Macanese songs and lore. The Nhonha assigns this role to the *chácha* when reminiscing about her own family:

> Pos eu, parece que ta uvi inda, nosso mai di casa, com minh'ai a Zabel, qui Deus lembra, cantá:
> - Lio-lio lorcha vai Cantão,
> Buscá seda fazê quimão;
> Novo-novo nina visti,
> Vêlo-vêlo limpá chão.
> (Marques Pereira 1900, II.12: 781, see Barreiros 1944, III.2: 203 for variants of this popular folk song)
> 'Well, I it is as if I still hear our home-help singing with my aunt Isabel, may God rest her soul: "A ship floats to Canton,/searching silk for a kimono./The girls wear the new ones/The old ones are used to mop the floor".' (my translation)

The letter of the Nhonha is an important testimony to a new direction in the identity alignment of the Macanese community with Anglophone and Lusophone circles. More and more, 'authentic' or 'pure' Maquista is perceived as a distinct speech style spoken by the elderly, and thus as distinct from the younger generation's, many of whom had left Macau for Hong Kong or Shanghai where one was more used to speaking English, French, or standard

[19] Batlha (1991: 73, note 3) interprets *torrar português* as 'to speak good Portuguese, with the *rr* rolled, as they should be,' but Senna Fernandes & Baxter (2004: 163) interpret this pejoratively as speaking "with an affected accent."

[20] Although Jorge's (1992) article is lay-linguistic, it provides a valuable window into the vestiges of Macau Pidgin in the 20th century.

Portuguese.[21] What has been less salient, however, are possible influences from Sinitic varieties, especially Cantonese. It is possible that Sinitic features did not figure prominently in the metalinguistic discussions analysed so far because Sinitic varieties constitute a shared linguistic resource in the repertoire of nearly all Macanese communities. As such, Sinitic would not impose any barriers to communication or count as a salient feature of differentiation worth discussing.

There is also a sociolinguistic meta-layer in the letter by the Nhonha. She mentions that she herself only uses the language of her elderly female household members to complete her disguise or costume during the Fat Sunday celebrations. Thus, the Nhonha had enough competence in authentic Maquista to imitate the elderly, but she did not claim this register to express her own identity (see also Gal & Irvine 2019: 60). In other words, the *chácha* as a figure of personhood was already present during that period. The fact that the Nhonha writes her letter to *Ta-Ssi-Yang-Kuó* in this style can be interpreted as a metapragmatic act. After all, the Nhonha reports that authentic Macanese culture is vanishing, alongside Maquista, which is lamentable for the community, motivating her to present a sample thereof.

As she said, many recipients of other ethnicities did not get the gist behind Macanese humour, which often breaks with social taboos. Such misunderstandings were a factor that contributed to the stigmatisation of Macanese, as alloglots took these parodies mistakenly for real (see also Tomás 1988, 1990). From a Macanese perspective, however, performance arts served as the perfect outlet to denounce ignorance, so, theatre became one of the last domains in which Maquista continued to be practised (see Jorge 1994, Dohardt, accepted).

As the most authentic speaker of Maquista, the figure of personhood of the *Chácha* was often used to voice social criticism in the theatrical context, as documented by the Nhonha's letter. The letter demonstrates, furthermore, that this practice was applied to written communication, too. In this spirit, Pedro Nolasco da Silva contributed to *Jornal único* (2nd of April 1898), a periodical on Macanese culture, writing through a fictive figure he calls *Annica* (a middle-aged to elderly Macanese woman), sending a letter to her equally fictive niece *Béba*. In the letter, *Annica* laments about the vanishing of Maquista and Portuguese culture in Macau, in the face of other languages. Da Silva, too, subtly transports this social criticism to the metalevel, i.e., the communication between him and his readers, by voicing his description of Macanese history in a language that stands for aspects of Portuguese culture that could actually not be preserved any longer:

> Agora nunca uvi fallá, mas qui inglez, allémám, francez, hollandez, italiano, dinamarquez, láia-láia di gente; mas quim já insiná caminhu pra elôtro vem pra India, pra China, sam purtugez qui já abri porta, fazê

[21] Note that Portuguese was taught in Hong Kong since the mid-19th century, resulting from efforts in the Macanese community to maintain their cultural ties to Macau. Social clubs and libraries were built, too. As Pinharanda Nunes (2013: 34–38) notes, more Macanese – and especially immigrants – had access to Portuguese education in Hong Kong than in Macau. Therefore, as discussed below, many linguistic documents from Hong Kong show an orientation towards Portuguese norms of language use. Nonetheless, this orientation towards Macanese culture, rather than Portuguese, may also have been a factor in not abandoning Maquista entirely in this diaspora community.

> caminhu pra tudo gente vem [...] (originally published in *Jornal único*, cited in Barreiros 1943, I.4: p. 358, de Carvalho e Rêgo 1950: 28).[22]
> 'Now one only hears people talk English, French, Dutch, Italian, and Danish – all kinds of people, but those who taught them the way to India, to China were the Portuguese, who have opened the doors and made a way for everybody to come.' (my translation)

Contrary to the Nhonha who wrote the above-discussed letter, it is unknown in which precise circumstances da Silva has learnt Maquista. Nevertheless, the fact that he writes this letter as a correspondence between two fictional characters shows that he did not consider Maquista a language that contributes to his identity. In this case, the *chácha* is, hence, entirely a figure of personhood in his linguistic repertoire, used to voice social criticism.

Although embedded in fiction, da Silva's letter corresponds to the observable tendencies during this period and the following century, which saw an increasing decline of Maquista. In the 20th century, one of de Pina Cabral's & Lourenço's (1993: 183) interviewees uttered a statement which is reminiscent of da Silva's letter, claiming: 'it was the steamships that killed Maquista, approximating Macau to other Lusophone territories.'[23] With Macau's increasing connections to the English- and Chinese-speaking world, even Portuguese has nowadays almost disappeared, except from the education system and the city administration (Bray & Koo 2004, Ming Young 2009). In the 21st century, performance arts are now the last stronghold of Maquista, which must be considered obsolete in daily interaction. It is in this context that Maquista still perdures as a symbol of local identity (Dohardt, accepted), and the elderly Macanese woman has survived therein, becoming the guardian of local culture.

4 Summary and conclusions

In the example of Macau, this contribution has investigated the role of gender for the formation and disappearance of creole languages, specifically, Maquista.

In the formative phases of Maquista, in the 16th and 17th centuries, gendered patterns of mobility played a crucial role in the emergence of this contact language. Generally, creolisation is discussed in relation to *maritime*[24] language use, which this study, too, considers an important factor; however, one that concerns, first and foremost, male language use. Female mass mobility has been limited to events of "expulsion". Much more important for the constitution of women's repertoires in this period was the *littoral* life experienced by the population in port cities who seldom travel, becoming intermediaries between *continental* (here, Chinese) and maritime culture (Pearson 2006: 356, Rosa 2015: 12). On the shores of the *Estado da Índia*, most of the female population used to live a rather immobile life, after they had come into the Portuguese-ruled cities, be it by force as servants or

[22] Portuguese: "Agora só se ouve falar em Ingleses, Alemães, Franceses, Holandeses, Italianos, Dinamarqueses, toda a espécie de gente; mas quem lhes ensinou o caminho para a Índia, para a China, foram os Portugueses que abriram a porta fazendo caminho para toda gente [...]" (de Carvalho e Rêgo 1950: 31).

[23] "[F]oram os barcos a vapor que mataram o patoá, aproximando Macao dos outros territórios lusófonos" (Original). For other Ibero-Asian Creoles, see Lee (2018, 2020).

[24] Rosa (2015) speaks of *oceanic* languages, but *maritime* language, as in *français maritime*, is more widely used in linguistics in order not to confuse this sociolinguistic term with historical classifications (i.e., languages from Oceania).

deliberately by conversion and marriage. It was in these female circles where Chaudensonian (1992) "approximations of approximations" of Portuguese occurred. Asian women approximated the maritime forms of Portuguese spoken by their husbands, family fathers, and male servants. Isolated from European women, they then aligned their own norms, rather than approximating metropolitan norms. Hence, Maquista became the *língu nhonha*. Nevertheless, Maquista was never completely "disenfranchised" (Mufwene 2001) from Portuguese, given that men acquired this language, too, and learnt Portuguese only if they were from wealthy families with access to education.

In Christian Macau, education used to be in the hands of the Catholic church. In early phases, contact languages were used in conversion, but once Catholicism was firmly established in Macanese society, Portuguese and Latin became the dominant languages in service and education, following European models (Dohardt 2024). Privileging the education of boys and men, only European women had access to standard Portuguese. Eurasians and Asians, thus, generally remained speakers of Maquista. This situation began to change gradually at the end of the 19th century (see also Nunes 2013), when education became democratised and more gender-inclusive. As a consequence, more and more Macanese women's language use aligned with metropolitan Portuguese norms more directly. As a socioeconomically less promising language, Maquista lost ground, being considered old-fashioned.

These tendencies working against the transmissions of Maquista intensified with increasing globalisation. As a counterreaction to a perceived loss of local, Portuguese identity, interest in Maquista as the most characteristic and unique expression thereof grew. Using the stereotype of the sharp-tongued elderly woman to voice criticism against cultural uniformism, the negative stereotype of the *chácha* was turned into a figure of personhood to defend Macau's uniqueness. Maquista, thus, acquired an increasingly metapragmatic function in the linguistic repertoire of the Macanese. Having started as an ethnically neutral medium on the fleets, it became considered women's speech, and – ultimately – a marker of Macanese identity in the 19th century.

With the focus on gender, this study paid special attention to the assignment and ascription of (perceived) gender roles, arguing with Tosh (2004) that societal hierarchies between women and between men must be considered, too, next to hierarchies between men and women. The hypothesis that expressions of femininity that come closer to hegemonic masculinities will have a linguistic repertoire more similar to men's and *vice versa* was confirmed. The example of nuns has demonstrated that gaining independence from men through joining a religious order was a chance for women to gain a better socioeconomic standing and to become literate, which implies learning Portuguese and Latin. In turn, poorer men and boys were excluded from these privileges. Whilst adult men still had a comparatively high degree of agency, the example of the *âtai* has demonstrated that boys of humble origin were even coerced into female gender roles, being abused as thieves and beggars like Asian girls.

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or deleted after the latest access. Note, furthermore, that I have used traditional Chinese characters (Mnd. *fántǐzì* 繁體字) throughout this article uniformly, following sinological conventions. The original may use simplified characters (Mnd. *jiǎntǐzì* 簡體字). When discussing the Chinese script, I provide Mandarin readings as examples. Cantonese readings are only provided where phonology is relevant.

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