

Life under the palms

Anushka Kahandagamage

This book is the biography of Jacob Haafner, a Dutch traveler of German origin. He spent more than 20 years in South Africa, India, Sri Lanka, and Mauritius. According to the author, unlike the memoirs of many travelers, entrepreneurs, colonial officers, Haafner captured the cruelty and oppression of colonialism in his writings. Haafner's narratives shows the cruel side of the slave trade, the maltreatment of slaves as animals and the abandonment of colonial subjects to death by famine.

The book consists of five chapters, including an introduction. The Introduction maps the expeditions of Haafner and his writings. Further, the author locates himself in the study and within the world of Haafner by elucidating how he became attracted to Haafner's writings. The author of the book, Paul van der Velde, is a historian and an expert on the Dutch in Asia. The book is translated from Dutch to English by Liesbeth Bennink.

The first chapter is marked as 'A Wandering Existence', which includes Haafner's first expedition to the East and his experiences and adventures. As an adolescent, Haafner secures the opportunity to sail to East with his father,

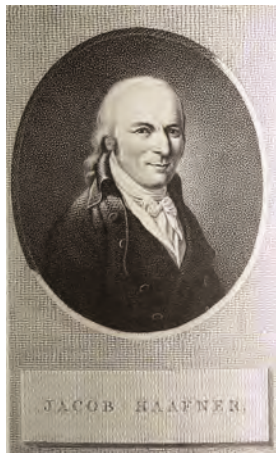
Reviewed title

Life Under the Palms: The Sublime World of the Anti-colonialist Jacob Haafner

Paul van der Velde. 2020. Translated by Liesbeth Bennink

Singapore: NUS Press
ISBN 9789813250826

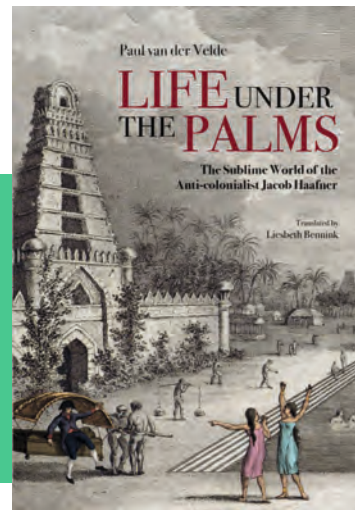
a medical doctor. However, he does not sail solely as the doctor's son but as a ship's boy on the vessel. The second chapter is assigned to explain the troubled life he had in India. This chapter consists of his interactions with different colonial rulers who traveled to the East, and reveals details about famine in India, Haafner's struggles to make money and survive in these difficult times by doing



Jacob Haafner in 1805 by Dr. Thomas Kohl. Image in Public domain on Wikimedia.

different jobs. The third chapter, 'Where can our Soul Shelter', is dedicated to his expedition to Ceylon with his young wife and life in Ceylon. The penultimate chapter is about his return to India, and the closing chapter concerns his final sorrowful years in Europe.

This title introduces the 19th century Dutch traveler, Haafner, and his writings to the world. The book opens a window onto the 19th century colonial world by including excerpts and examples of Haafner's original writings and his sketches. The book provides an approachable point of view on the available sources to a learner interested in studying the colonial past. Further, the author's expertise and in-depth research in the field ensure an authentic account of Haafner's writings. Haafner practiced drawing from a young age and his sketches can be seen in his written accounts. By including these drawings in the book, the author subtly draws the reader



into the past provoking curiosity to research this history further. Haafner glorifies the multi-cultural and multi-religious co-existence in the East by highlighting the stimulating interactions and meetups he had with divergent ethnic, cultural, and racial groups. Although his father was a medical doctor, migrating to the Netherlands from Germany posed the Haafner family with challenging financial conditions. The situation led Haafner and his father to join and work on a Dutch East India Company ship, which sailed to the East. Haafner's father dies on the journey, and Haafner becomes an orphan. Due to these conditions, he ends up in a lowly position in the world of colonial masters. The author unearths the different layers of colonial subjects and the colonial masters through the life story of Haafner, going beyond the simple categories of the colonizer and the colonial subject. Haafner glorifies the mixed cultural milieu in the colonies over highly hierarchical Dutch society. He is able to see and depict the oppressive nature of colonization because he is from a lower layer of the colonial endeavor.

What makes the character of this book special is that it exposes the reader to a lesser known colonial writer with a markedly different perspective. In addition, the book introduces new sources that can provide the historian with a more nuanced and a subtle analysis that goes beyond imposing the present socio-economic and political structures on the past.

This is the English translation of the Sinhala review published on the Patitha website, 4 November 2020.

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Foodways of Macao

Robert Antony

Having lived in Macao for over 15 years, I thought I knew quite well what Macanese food was all about. That is, until I read Annabel Jackson's new book, *The Making of Macau's Cuisine*. Trained in anthropology and a recognized food critic, the author carefully examines the history, nature, and roles that food has played in Macao and in other Portuguese settlements in Asia. The inclusion of the other Portuguese creolized foodways of Goa and Malacca provides not only useful comparisons but are also important for understanding the close interconnections and similarities between these cuisines.

Although not well known outside eastern Asia and often misconstrued, Macanese food is one of the world's earliest fusion cuisines. When the Portuguese founded Macao nearly 500 years ago, it was a relatively barren stretch of sand dunes and low hills, with only one or two fishing villages and an A-Ma Temple. In building the city the early settlers, who were all males, needed to import nearly everything from outside, including food and women from other Portuguese colonies in Africa and Asia. So right from the start, Macao's foodways borrowed from and adapted to the foods, spices, and cooking styles of a large variety of peoples.

Reviewed title

The Making of Macau's Cuisine: From Family Table to World Stage

Annabel Jackson. 2020.

Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press
ISBN 9789888528349

In recognition of its unique cuisine in 2017 Macao became a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy and its cuisine has since entered the world stage.

Fusion cuisine

As Jackson explains, because Macanese food had its origins in the fusion of many diverse cuisines and has continued to evolve over the centuries, it is impossible to pinpoint what exactly constitutes Macanese food. Even within the Macanese community at large, there is little consensus as to what comprises Macanese cuisine. For purists, in fact, it has become a lost art, yet for most ordinary tourists, who want to enjoy a different cuisine, it is simply the food prepared in restaurants in Macao. Indeed, today in most restaurants in Macao, whether categorized as Portuguese or Cantonese, they all include dishes on their menus purporting to be Macanese.

This raises the question of authenticity. What is Macanese cuisine? What locals and tourists nowadays eat at home and in restaurants is a far cry from what the people living in Macao ate several centuries ago. People and their tastes have continually changed over the centuries and so have ingredients, flavors, and cooking styles. As the author rightly explains, the nature of Macanese food is adaptation.

Cuisines are always evolving. From its origins in the Portuguese colonies, Macao's early foodways followed the spice trade from Africa to India to Southeast Asia to Macao and Japan. Take the iconic Macanese dish, African Chicken, which likely was invented only in the 1940s, believed to have been created by chef America Angelo at the former Pousada de Macao. In its earliest forms, it was blackened and spicy with a marinade of butter, garlic, and chilies, but today in most versions it is baked in a tomato and peppery peanut sauce. It is a typical creolized dish that combines flavors from Mozambique, Goa, and Malacca, and each of these places also have their own versions of the same dish with different names. Today Macanese cuisine has progressed from its traditional Portuguese foundations to a creolized mixture of Portuguese and Asian cooking, to what is more recently heavily influenced by Chinese cuisines. For Macao fusion food represents something new and distinct.

Macanese food and identity

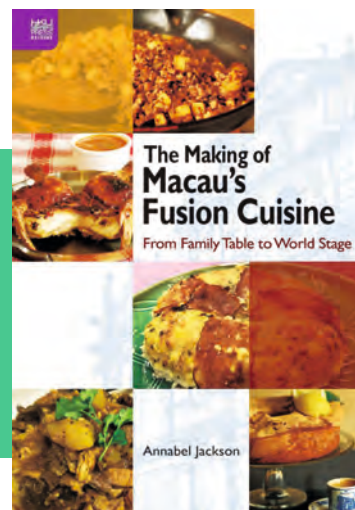
Another topic discussed throughout the book concerns questions of identity. Who are

the Macanese and what role does food play in their identity? Food is an important cultural marker for most groups of people. To be considered a true Macanese, as the author points out, one must have some Portuguese ancestry. Like their cuisine, the Macanese people are an eclectic mixture of different and evolving ethnic groups. At first the Macanese were the offspring of the original male Portuguese settlers and females from their colonies in Mozambique, Goa, and Southeast Asia. Later, in the 20th century, the so-called Neo-Macanese are the progeny of Portuguese or Macanese fathers and Chinese mothers. Thus, in terms of foodways, family recipes included a large mixture of different culinary tastes and techniques yet were nonetheless considered Macanese. As food styles changed over time so too did perceptions of one's identity.

Interestingly, today there are more people who identify themselves as Macanese who live outside Macao than inside the city itself. There is a large Macanese diaspora spread across the globe. As a critical part of her research, Jackson conducted a large number of interviews and surveys of Macanese living in Hong Kong, Europe, North America, and Australia. Because many diasporic Macanese people have a sense of rootlessness, memories of home foods and recipes have become important identifiers of their common culture and values. In creating an identity, in fact, the sharing of recipes and the production of cookbooks have become crucial. As the author explains, today Macanese food has moved away from being everyday food to something more symbolic and ceremonial. How one remembers the aromas and tastes of certain foods is as important as the actual foods themselves. At the same time, with the diaspora Macanese cuisine has diffused around the world in trendy ethnic restaurants. For most Macanese both at home and abroad, food is decisively embedded in their notions of identity.

In conclusion, this is a concise and fascinating book on a little-known and often misunderstood fusion cuisine that should be of interest to anyone wanting to learn about Macao and the dissemination of food culture in general. There is indeed more to Macao than merely casinos and gambling.

Robert Antony,
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Above: Portuguese Custard Tarts © Macau Photo Agency on Unsplash. Left: Galinha à africana, African chicken © muloahu on flickr under a CC license.