

TRANSLATING AND POPULARIZING CHINA'S PAST IN PORTUGAL: DOUBLE FOREIGNNESS IN JOSÉ DE FREITAS'S *A CHINA ANTIGA E MODERNA* (1941)

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ABSTRACT: This article proposes 'double foreignness' as a methodological prompt for analyzing the writing of a foreign country's history, where spatiotemporal distance is compounded by cultural-linguistic distance. It examines José de Freitas's *A China antiga e moderna* (1941), a Portuguese popular history volume that connects China's past to the Second Sino-Japanese War for early-1940s readers. Through Lefevere's ([1992]/2017) concept of rewriting, the study shows how Freitas selectively rewrites francophone sources into Portuguese within a popularizing editorial framework. Drawing on Maitland's (2017) model of cultural translation, the analysis traces Freitas's interpretive gestures through which China's past is made more intelligible to Portuguese readers and framed sympathetically, notably through familiar reference frames and recurrent images of the Chinese as 'pacifist' and 'traditionalist.' The case suggests that double foreignness can be productively analyzed through the interplay of intertemporal, interlingual, and cultural translation. **KEYWORDS:** History as Translation, Double Foreignness, Cultural Translation, Rewriting, Popular History, Chinese History in Portugal

1. Introduction

Recent scholarship at the intersection of Translation Studies and Historiography has conceptualized historical writing as an 'intralingual translation of reality' (Vidal Claramonte, 2018; Savchenkova, 2024) and as a 'translation of the past' (Alonzi, 2023b). Comparatively less attention has been paid to the historical writing of a foreign country, although this seems to be where translation scholars are well positioned to offer insights. To address this gap, I build on the familiar metaphor of 'past as a foreign country' from novelist Hartley (1953) to propose a descriptive label, 'double foreignness': the spatiotemporal foreignness of the past is compounded by cross-cultural and cross-linguistic foreignness when a history is narrated from outside its cultural-linguistic continuum. As a methodological prompt, 'double foreignness' foregrounds not just intertemporal translation but two additional types – interlingual and cultural translations – as analytically central.

In this paper, I address 'double foreignness' by studying a Portuguese popular history publication on China, *A China antiga e moderna* (1941), written by Portuguese journalist José de Freitas (1910–1976?, according to Aresta, 2021). I choose this volume for two reasons. First, it explicitly aims to present China's history to the Portuguese general reader to help them understand the then-ongoing Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) as the Chinese struggle for their freedom (Freitas, 1941, p. 7), and thus provides a case for observing how popular historical writing negotiates double foreignness. Second, despite over four centuries of Portuguese presence in China (especially in Macao), mid-twentieth-century Portuguese discourses and representations of China remain under-discussed in existing scholarship. Against this background, studying *A China antiga e moderna* brings

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into view José de Freitas, a rarely studied figure whose writings appear to have shaped some Portuguese readers' perceptions of China from the 1940s to the 1970s (see Seabra, 1972, pp. 24-25; Cardina, 2010, p. 202).

To explore how double foreignness is negotiated in this case of popular history, I ask: through what body of sources does Freitas translate China's past in *A China antiga e moderna*, and how is that past rendered through interlingual rewriting and cultural translation? A guiding hypothesis of this article is that, in popular historical writing, double foreignness is managed less through explicit explanation of its specificities than through forms of mediation oriented toward intelligibility. The analysis is based on a close reading of the volume and comparison with the works it cites, approached through Lefevere's ([1992]/2017) concept of rewriting and Maitland's (2017) model of cultural translation.

Section 2 develops the conceptual framework by clarifying the interlingual and cultural translations in the analysis, before concluding with a brief discussion of popular history. Section 3 situates *A China antiga e moderna* in the editorial, political, and discursive context of early-1940s Portugal. Section 4 examines Freitas's network of sources and analyzes how *A China antiga e moderna* rewrites and culturally translates them for Portuguese readers.

2. Conceptual framework: translating a foreign country's past

White ([1987]/1990, p. 89) suggests that, depending on how the past is connected to the present ('distinct' or 'continuous'), it can appear either 'alien' or 'knowable.' Historical writing, as Burke (2019, p. 21) positions it, lies between "faithfulness to the past" and "intelligibility in the present" (Alonzi, 2023a, pp. 673-674) further argues that historical writing is an inevitably anachronistic act of translation, in which present language renders past words and concepts by synchronizing meanings sedimented across different times. This line of critical historiography has also been explicitly taken up within recent Translation Studies scholarship, where historical texts are approached as translations of past events (e.g., Vidal Claramonte, 2025).

Building on this framework of 'history as translation,' I use 'double foreignness' to foreground an underexplored situation: the historical writing of a foreign country. 'Double foreignness' refers to an encounter with two distinct, though inseparable, forms of alterity: the pastness of the historical object and the linguistic-cultural world in which that past is embedded, both of which may remain foreign to the target reader. 'Double foreignness' foregrounds the intersection of spatiotemporal and cultural-linguistic alterity as a constitutive condition of writing about a foreign country's past, one that poses methodological challenges both for historical writing and for its analysis. In historiographical research, 'double foreignness' thus calls attention not only to intertemporal translation but also to interlingual and cultural translations as forms of mediation required to render that past legible.

Interlingual translation refers to the translation from one perceived language to another. In Lefevere's (2017) terms, interlingual translation is a form of rewriting that

involves selection, condensation, reorganization, and reframing for a new readership. Rewriting is shaped primarily by ideology and, secondarily, by the dominant poetics of the receiving system, while patronage names the powers and institutions that enable or constrain rewriting by regulating its ideological acceptability (pp. 11-12). From this perspective, what matters is not only how words are translated, but also how translational choices relate to the ideological, formal, and institutional conditions of their production.

Although *A China antiga e moderna* is not a translated volume, interlingual translation plays a central role in its construction. Freitas draws mainly on francophone sources (see Section 4.1), but these may themselves already mediate Chinese materials, concepts, and historical knowledge. The process is therefore better understood as a layered Chinese-French-Portuguese mediation. In this article, however, I focus on how Freitas rewrites the sources he cites within the institutional framework of publication in which the volume appeared, that is, within one expression of patronage that enabled and constrained this rewriting. This interlingual translation is also likely shaped both by Freitas's own ideological positioning and by broader assumptions in his milieu about how China and the Chinese could or should be represented to Portuguese readers. This interlingual layer forms one important basis for Freitas's broader cultural translation of China in his handling of double foreignness.

Before 2000, 'cultural translation' was primarily used in two broad fields: in anthropology, it refers to the mediation of another community's symbolic world to readers at home and to a reflexive critique of how such representation is shaped by institutional power; in postcolonial studies, it was used to think through the negotiation of cultural difference under conditions of migration and (post)colonial contact (Conway, 2022, p. 47). Since 2000, the term has become widely debated in Translation Studies not only because it remains diffuse and often under-theorized, but also because its theoretical expansion has raised broader concerns, as Maitland (2017, pp. 18-25) summarizes: its position vis-à-vis interlingual translation is often unclear; it risks marginalizing interlingual translators and linguistic difference; it may become so metaphorically broad as to lose analytical precision; and it has been criticized for potentially 'ossifying' cultural difference.

In response, Maitland (2017, p. 27) argues that cultural translation should be grounded in the practice of the interlingual translator, in the sense that interlingual translation theory provides conceptual tools for understanding and explaining human action and other public cultural phenomena (see also Maitland, 2024, p. 33). Maitland (2017, p. 28) defines cultural translation as the "traceable presence of hermeneutic gestures of reading and writing in the construction and reception of a range of cultural phenomena present in the public sphere." In this model, the cultural translator is both reader and writer, engaged in interpreting what resists immediate understanding and rearticulating that interpretation for an audience (Maitland, 2017, p. 10). Maitland (2024, p. 40) states that "[n]ot everything is cultural translation": for cultural translation to occur, one must be able to discern at least the structures of author, text, translator, translation, and audience, together with contestable meaning and a critical recontextualization of the

action in question. Her model treats cultural translation as a historically and socially situated process that involves interpreting an object, reading it across spatiotemporal distance, resituating it within the translator's own sociocultural horizon ("incorporation"), and reshaping its meaning for a specific purpose ("transformation") (Maitland, 2017, pp. 10-11).

Using Maitland's model of cultural translation, I examine the traceable interpretive gestures through which Freitas renders China's history intelligible in ways that may also encourage sympathy towards the Chinese among Portuguese readers. In this case, Freitas functions as the cultural translator, while the 'author' and 'text' are best understood as the source authors and texts he cites and rewrites.

To recap, this article uses 'translation' at three related but distinct levels. First, at the intertemporal level, I use 'history as translation' in a broad sense to describe the mediation of the past for present readers. Second, at the interlingual level, I draw on Lefevere's notion of rewriting. Translation then refers to how Freitas rewrites specific French-language passages into Portuguese, as shaped by patronage (e.g., the editorial agenda of the collection) and ideology (e.g., assumptions about China and the Chinese). Third, at the level of cultural translation, I follow Maitland's model, understanding the term to refer to the interpretive gestures through which Freitas renders China's past, as mediated in his sources, intelligible to Portuguese readers.

A final consideration within this theoretical framework is the role of popular history, particularly given that the case concerns a work of historical popularization. Extant scholarship on popular history suggests that what counts as 'popular' is historically and socioculturally contingent, which makes it necessary to situate each case in its specific context (De Groot, 2012).¹ Nevertheless, in the Portuguese context, it still remains underexplored how popular historical writings functioned in the early 1940s. Analyzing *A China antiga e moderna* may therefore help clarify how popular history operated in that setting.

3. Context: publishing and narrating China in early-1940s Portugal

As Maitland (2017, p. 62) notes, every text is read in a different time and place from that in which it was written and, hence, carries a "double historical reference" between the world of the writer and the world of the reader. In *A China antiga e moderna*, this means that China's past reaches Portuguese readers only through a situated act of mediation shaped by the world in which Freitas and his audience were located. From Lefevere's (2017) perspective, moreover, such mediation is not autonomous but conditioned by patronage

¹ The movement from historical, sinological, and politically inflected sources to popular history could also be approached through the lens of 'inter-epistemic translation,' particularly insofar as it entails the repackaging of relatively specialized knowledge for a non-specialist readership (Bennett, 2024). Here, however, 'double foreignness' is operationalized as the combined spatiotemporal and cultural-linguistic distance involved in writing a foreign country's past. Popularization is, therefore, considered primarily in relation to how China's past is made intelligible to Portuguese readers, rather than as a transfer across epistemic systems.

and ideology. This section, therefore, reconstructs two contextual dimensions: first, the institutional framework of publication which, as a form of patronage, might have enabled or constrained the ways in which Freitas rewrote his sources; second, the political and discursive environment, including Estado Novo book censorship and wartime Portuguese representations of China, which help situate the ideological horizon within which Freitas rewrote his sources for Portuguese readers.

A China antiga e moderna is the first volume published in the 'Povos e Civilizações' section of Biblioteca Cosmos, a collection published by Edições Cosmos between 1941 and 1948. The stated goal of the collection, as shown at the end of the volume, is "to present [...] a synthesis of all the advances made by modern science in recent years, in a simple and clear manner, accessible to everyone [...]" (Cosmos, 1941, p. 116).²

The Biblioteca Cosmos collection was edited by Bento de Jesus Caraça (1901-48), a prominent mathematician known for his anti-fascist commitments. This political stance could be sensitive in early-1940s Portugal, given Estado Novo's official neutrality in World War II and its book censorship. Nevertheless, a censor's report on *A China antiga e moderna* authorized the volume without substantial explanation (R. 1619/42).³ More broadly, between 1938 and 1944, the Estado Novo's censorship examined 15 books related to the Second Sino-Japanese War; all were approved.⁴

Although research on Portuguese representations of China during World War II remains limited, the available evidence suggests that a strand of Portuguese public discourse was sympathetic to China, as Freitas also appears to be. To name just a few examples, an article published in 1936 in the biweekly magazine *Ilustração* praises the Chinese government for adopting a "pacific solution" to avoid war with Japan (*Ilustração*, 1936, p. 16). By 1938, *Ilustração* predicts that a Chinese victory would offer 'less danger' than a Japanese one, because China's self-sustainable territory and its philosophical tradition of "resignation" (Benarús, 1938, p. 17) made colonial ambitions unnecessary. Similarly, some prefaces to Chinese volumes translated into Portuguese in the early 1940s encourage a sympathetic view of China and the Chinese (Cheung, 2024, pp. 111-122).

² Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Portuguese to English in this article are my own. The original text of the above quote reads: "[P]ropõe-se a Biblioteca Cosmos apresentar [...] a síntese de tudo quanto as ciências modernas teem adiantado nos últimos anos, de maneira simples e clara, acessível a todos" (Cosmos, 1941, p. 116).

³ An index of censors' reports is compiled by Teresa Seruya and Maria Lin Moniz; Available at <https://fch.lisboa.ucp.pt/system/files/assets/files/indice-rel-censura.pdf>. The reports themselves can be accessed at Portuguese National Archives, Torre do Tombo. Digital versions are available on its Digitarq platform: <https://digitarq.arquivos.pt/documentDetails/eab995eedc0948438028df7b86a47260> (14 August 2025). For the in-text reference, the 'R.' stands for 'report,' the first set of digits is the number assigned by the censorship, and the digits after the slash indicate the year of issuance.

⁴ The reports include R. 687/38, R. 1311/41, R. 1619/42, R. 1705/42, R. 1708/42, R. 1759/42, R. 1792/42, R. 1832/42, R. 1844/42, R. 1853/42, R. 1859/42, R. 1884/42, R. 1885/42, R. 2672/44, and R. 2704/44. Since the censorship seemingly did not have a direct impact on *A China antiga e moderna*, this paper does not elaborate on how the censorial mechanism functions. For a panorama of the Estado Novo's book censorship, see Seruya (2025), which discusses, *inter alia*, how censors react to books related to other countries involved in World War II.

In summary, the editorial framework within which Freitas (re)writes likely encouraged simplification as a mode of intelligibility. At the same time, the available censorship records and print evidence suggest that a sympathetic framing of China was not only publishable in early-1940s Portugal, but also legible within existing Portuguese reference frames.

4. Analysis: a Portuguese translation and popularization of Chinese history

José de Freitas worked as a reporter for mainstream newspapers (including *Diário de Notícias*, *República*, and *Diário Popular*) and rose to prominence in Portuguese journalism in the 1950s. During World War II, he wrote five books on the then-Chinese leader's life, the war in the Far East, and Japanese imperialism and expansionism, but information related to him offers little to explain this sustained interest.⁵ There is no evidence that, during the 1940s, Freitas had any direct contact with the Far East or knew Chinese. Therefore, his historical account of China was likely shaped by his reading and imagination.

In *A China antiga e moderna*, Freitas frames contemporary China against a historical narrative stretching back nearly five thousand years, since his chronological outline begins in 2852 B.C. He presents modern China as “a people fighting for their existence, struggling for their complete liberation from all foreign yoke” (Freitas, 1941, p. 7).⁶ Structurally, the book is divided into two parts: ‘China, velha China’ (46 pages portraying the period from 2852 BCE to 1911) and ‘A caminho da libertação’ (45 pages portraying the period from 1840 to 1940). The temporal distribution is disproportionate, with an overlap between them (1840-1911). This overlap, alongside the headings of the two parts, suggests a narrative of transition since the West's intervention in the 1840s: an ancient, oppressed China gives way to a modern Chinese people engaged in emancipation from colonial domination. In other words, Freitas seemingly reduces five thousand years to a disproportionate old/modern binary, flattening the double foreignness of China's past into a more homogeneous pole.

Based on this understanding of Freitas and his book, the following analysis further examines how he works with the double foreignness by citing francophone sources, rewriting them into Portuguese, and culturally translating China's past for the Portuguese readership.

4.1. Sources: a China translated through French

As a journalist by profession, with no formal training in history or sinology, José de Freitas might have encountered credibility issues when writing about Chinese history. In the preface to *A China antiga e moderna*, he adopts a self-deprecating stance, appealing to the authority of “eminent internationalists and historians” and claiming that his goal is “simply

⁵ Fragments of José de Freitas' biographical information can be found in Caeiro (2016, p. 51) and Aresta (2021). His published books are available for consultation at the Portuguese National Library.

⁶ The original sentence describes the Chinese as “um povo luta pela sua existência, bate-se pela libertação completa de todo o jugo estrangeiro” (Freitas, 1941, p. 7).

to compile, in a tolerably elaborated summary," the Chinese past and present (Freitas, 1941, p. 7).⁷ Despite this claim, he does not provide a bibliography. Some names appear in the main text and footnotes with minimal reference (author and/or title only).

In Table 1, I present all authors cited in the volume, both in the text and in the peritext (including the preface and footnotes). I also collect additional data on them for this discussion, including language, publication date, authors' birth and death dates, and the pages on which they appear. The asterisk after the title indicates that I could access an edition of that book during this research.

Table 1. Sources indicated in *A China antiga e moderna* (table prepared by the author)

Author	Title and year	Language	Page(s)
Frey Gaspar da Cruz (1520-1570)	<i>Tratado das cousas da China</i> (1569)*	Portuguese	10
Jaime do Inso (1880-1967)	<i>Visões da China</i> (1933)*	Portuguese	10, 23
Félicien Challaye (1875-1967)	<i>La Chine, le Japon et les Puissances</i> (1938)	French	12, 75, 90
Henri Maspero (1883-1945)	<i>La langue chinoise</i> [Conference] (1934)	French	21, 23
Ferreira de Castro (1898-1974)	-- [cited without title]	Portuguese	22
Lin Yutang (1895-1976)	<i>La Chine et les chinois</i> (1937), trans. of <i>My Country and My People</i>	French (trans. S. & P. Bourgeois)	21, 22, 24
Jean Escarra (1885-1955)	<i>La Chine - Passé et présent</i> (1936)*	French	22, 29, 93
Marcel Granet (1884-1940)	<i>La pensée chinoise</i> (1934)*	French	24
Giuseppe Ferrari (1811-1876)	<i>La Chine et l'Europe</i> (1867)*	French	36
C. P. Fitzgerald (1902-1992)	<i>Li-Che-Min – Unificateur de la Chine</i> (1935), trans. of <i>Son of Heaven</i>	French (trans. G. Lepage)	47
Alexandre Bonacosi (?-?)	<i>La Chine et les Chinois</i> (1847)*	French	60
G. Shmith (?-?) (unidentified)	<i>Croquis Chinois</i> (unidentified)	French	70
Georges Maspero (1872-1942)	<i>La Chine</i> (1925)	French	75, 78
Anton Zischka (1904-1997)	<i>El Japón sobre el mundo</i> (1938), trans. of <i>Japan in der Welt</i>	Spanish (trans. E. Suda)	78, 102

⁷ The original text reads: "O problema do Extremo Oriente está já estudado por eminentes internacionalistas e historiadores. É nosso objectivo, apenas, num simples trabalho de compilação, reunir, em resumo sofrivelmente elaborado, os principais aspectos da vida chinesa, a sua civilização, a sua transformação social realizada por Sun-Yat Sen" (Freitas, 1941, p. 7). Sun-Yat Sen is considered a leader of the 1911 Revolution, which ended the Chinese monarchy.

Carlo Sforza (1872-1952)	<i>L'énigme chinoise</i> (1928)*	French	88
Wang Jingwei (1883-1944)	<i>Problèmes Chinois et leurs solutions</i> (1935), trans. of <i>China's Problems and Their Solution</i>	French (trans. J.-Em. Lemière)	90
Roger Lévy (?-?)	<i>Extrême Oriente et Pacifique</i> (1935)	French	100

A total of 17 authors are identified, with 27 references (i.e., instances in which an author or work is cited). 22 (81.5%) of them are paraphrases (without quotation marks), and only 5 (18.5%) are direct quotes (with quotation marks). Among these authors, 3 (17.65%) are cited in Portuguese, 13 (76.47%) are in French (three translations from English), and 1 (5.9%) is in Spanish.

Qualitatively, the only Spanish work appears to be more connected to Japan, as the title, *El Japón sobre el mundo*, indicates. The Portuguese references function more as anecdotes than as sources of Chinese history. Dominican friar Frey Gaspar da Cruz is invoked to claim that the Portuguese were the first to bring the name “China” to European attention (Freitas, 1941, p. 10). Naval officer Jaime do Inso is paraphrased to report a remark attributed to Mussolini about his ignorance of the “Chinese question” (p. 10), and later to recount a mythic origin for the Chinese classic, *I Ching* (p. 23). Writer Ferreira de Castro is quoted for characterizing the Chinese: “The Chinese suffer with a smile” (p. 22).⁸

By contrast, Freitas anchors his historical narrative primarily in established French sinology. Prominent figures include Henri Maspero (specialist in Daoism), Marcel Granet (sociologist of ancient China), Jean Escarra (jurist of Chinese law), and Georges Maspero (historian of China and Indochina). He also relies on French translations of non-French authors – notably C. P. Fitzgerald (British sinologist) and Lin Yutang (Chinese Anglophone writer) – and cites Italian political figures, Carlo Sforza and Giuseppe Ferrari, in their French works.

Freitas's dependence on francophone sources appears understandable given the absence of Portuguese sinology and, as Seruya (2024, p. 258) observes, the Francophile tendencies in Portuguese translation and culture of that period. Nonetheless, the double foreignness of China's past, despite being mediated in these francophone sources, still required further mediation by Freitas for his Portuguese readership, especially within the volume's popularizing editorial framework.

4.2. Interlingual translation

In this section, ‘translation’ is used in the interlingual sense, referring to Freitas's rewriting of francophone materials into Portuguese, ranging from close quotation to freer paraphrase and unmarked textual reuse. Freitas rarely indicates the interlingual works involved, aside from a single note on the absence of a particular “Portuguese or French” translation (Freitas, 1941, p. 81). Nonetheless, he must have performed interlingual

⁸ The original reads: “[Os chineses] sofrem a sorrir” (Castro, cited in Freitas, 1941, p. 22).

translations. Since not all of those francophone sources were accessible for this study, and Freitas's citation practice does not specify editions or page numbers, it is difficult to recover all the passages he uses for his rewriting. Accordingly, the analysis below is illustrative rather than exhaustive, based on cases where the source text could be located with reasonable confidence.

4.2.1 Without explicit reference

To trace how Freitas might cite or translate certain words without referencing any work, I compared their tables of contents and chapter headings. The results mostly show generic or loose structural similarities, except for Jean Escarra's *La Chine – Passé et présent*. Its first part is largely paralleled by the first half of *A China antiga e moderna* in structural terms, but Freitas often presents finer subdivisions. Table 2 presents Freitas's division in order, along with the corresponding chapter or subchapter in Escarra's book.

Table 2. Structural correspondences between Freitas and Escarra (table prepared by the author)

<i>A China antiga e moderna</i> – index of Part 1	<i>La Chine – Passé et présent</i> (corresponding parts)
Os limites territoriais	Données géographiques
A população	Le peuple / La société
Orografia e hidrografia	Données géographiques
O clima	Données géographiques
O povo chinês	Le peuple / La société
A língua	La langue
A literatura	Littérature. – Arts. – Sciences
As artes	Littérature. – Arts. – Sciences
As ciências	Littérature. – Arts. – Sciences
A religião	La vie religieuse et la pensée philosophique
Os filósofos	La vie religieuse et la pensée philosophique
Resumo histórico	Résumé historique
Quadro das dinastias chinesas	Résumé historique

The comparison between their contents also shows similarities. For example, in *La Chine – Passé et présent*, Chapter II 'Données géographiques' ('geographical data') opens with a list of Chinese self-designations (e.g., 'Empire du Milieu') and notes that "'China' is a foreign name whose origin is unknown" (Escarra, 1936, p. 20).⁹ Freitas also opens his Part 1 by listing those same Chinese self-designations but in Portuguese. But then, Freitas provides an answer to Escarra's 'unknown origin' of the word 'China': "According to the most reliable sources, the word *China* was heard by the Portuguese in India, where the kingdom had been known for many years by the name of *Tchina*" (Freitas, 1941, p. 10).¹⁰

⁹ The original text reads: « Le mot *Chine* est une appellation étrangère dont l'origine n'est pas connue » (Escarra, 1936, p. 20).

¹⁰ The original text reads: "Segundo as indicações mais seguras, a palavra *China* foi ouvida pelos portugueses na Índia, onde havia já muitos anos se conhecia o reino pelo nome de *Tchina*" (Freitas, 1941, p. 10).

In short, the examples above illustrate that, without explicit reference, Freitas rewrites Escarra's text by reorganizing and rendering it into Portuguese, while also reframing it through Portuguese reference points.

4.2.2 Paraphrases with reference

Here, I focus on Freitas's two paraphrases in reference to Escarra's book. In the first instance, Freitas reworks a descriptive passage about the Chinese character (see Table 3). Compared with Escarra's relatively succinct phrasing, Freitas makes the imagery scenically specific, introducing the 'golden cage' and the 'public square.' He also recasts key details: whereas Escarra emphasizes mistreatment of dogs and donkeys, Freitas foregrounds their more affectionate and quasi-familial place in Chinese domestic life. These shifts intensify a starker moral antithesis in the representation of the Chinese (familial tenderness vs. public brutality).

Table 3. Comparison between Escarra's and Freitas's texts (table prepared by the author)

Escarra (1936, p. 66)	Freitas (1941, p. 22)
L'homme d'une grande bonté envers les siens ne manifestera aucune émotion en face des souffrances des autres. Celui-là qui prend mille précautions pour le confort de son oiseau favori torturera son chien ou son âne et assistera impassible au supplice d'un criminel en riant des souffrances physiques et morales qui lui sont infligées.	O pássaro que canta na sua gaiola dourada é sempre bem tratado pelo dono que com êle perde horas, acariciando-o delicadamente; o cão é respeitado e ninguém lhe bate; o burro e o boi, velhos amigos e companheiro do camponês na sua dura faina pela existência, representam no lar o mesmo que um filho. Mas este mesmo chinês que ama a família e respeita os animais, pode rir-se com prazer infantil e selvagem de horíveis sofrimentos físicos e morais aplicados, numa praça pública, a qualquer criminoso caído sob a alçada da antiga justiça chinesa ⁽¹⁾ . (¹) Jean Escarra – <i>La Chine – Passé et présent</i> .
[A man who is very kind to his own kin will show no emotion in the face of others' suffering. The man who takes a thousand precautions for the comfort of his favorite bird will torture his dog or donkey and watch impassively the torture of a criminal, laughing at the physical and moral suffering inflicted on him.]	[The bird that sings in its golden cage is always well treated by its owner, who spends hours with it, caressing it delicately; the dog is respected and no one beats it; the donkey and the ox, old friends and companions of the peasant in his hard struggle for existence, represent in the home the same as a son. But this same Chinese, who loves his family and respects animals, may laugh with childish and savage pleasure at the horrible physical and moral suffering inflicted in a public square on any criminal who has fallen under the jurisdiction of ancient Chinese justice ⁽¹⁾ . (¹) Jean Escarra – <i>La Chine – Passé et présent</i> .]

In the second instance, Freitas (1941, pp. 28-29) loosely rewrites Escarra's (1936, pp. 133-137) overview of Chinese literature. Given the length of the two passages (approximately 366 and 1,077 words), I do not reproduce them in full and instead summarize their main points of convergence and divergence. Freitas broadly preserves

Escarra's typology of literary genres (e.g., poetry, Buddhist literature, and the novel) but omits his discussion of Chinese lexicography and textual criticism. Freitas also drastically reduces the number of authors and works mentioned, retaining only two of the most canonized poets, Li Bai and Du Fu. Whereas Escarra (1936, p. 134) notes that these poets are known in Europe "thanks to translations," Freitas (1941, p. 29) repeats this point but adds that such translations "only provide an imperfect idea of their extraordinary poetic delicacy."¹¹ Freitas also replaces much of Escarra's detail (e.g., descriptions and lists of specific authors and works) with sweeping characterizations: "All Chinese are pantheists, and almost all the verses of Chinese poets describe fields, trees, and flowers" (Freitas, 1941, p. 29).¹² Escarra, by contrast, explicitly stresses the thematic plurality of, for instance, Tang poetry: "Tang poetry draws on many sources of inspiration. It is by turns heroic, elegiac, descriptive, religious, amorous, and bacchic" (Escarra, 1936, p. 133).¹³

To sum up, the two examples above illustrate how Freitas rewrites Escarra's passages through selection, condensation, and generalization, even when the French author is explicitly acknowledged as the source.

4.2.3 Direct quotations with reference

In this part, I analyze two direct quotations. The first passage is originally from Marcel Granet's *La pensée chinoise* (1934) (see Table 4). Freitas's version simplifies Granet's phrasing, eliding the idea of language as an 'organ' and recasting it in plainer terms. The Portuguese translation also amplifies praise by rendering the Chinese language as "the greatest instrument of culture of the entire East" (1941, p. 24), rather than only "the entire Far East" (1950, p. 63) in the original.

Table 4. Comparison between Granet's and Freitas's texts (table prepared by the author)

Granet ([1934]/1950, p. 63)	Freitas (1941, p. 24)
Le chinois est une grande langue de civilisation qui a réussi à devenir et à rester l'instrument de culture de tout l'Extrême-Orient. Elle a, de plus, servi d'organe à l'une des littératures les plus variées et les plus riches.	O chinês é uma grande língua de civilização e o maior instrumento de cultura de todo o Oriente. Serviu a uma literatura das mais variadas, das mais ricas.
[Chinese is a great language of civilization that has succeeded in becoming and remaining the instrument of culture of the entire Far East. It has also served as the organ for one of the most varied and richest literatures.]	[Chinese is a great language of civilization and the greatest instrument of culture of the entire East. It has served one of the most varied and richest literatures.]

¹¹ Escarra's French text reads: « Mais ceux de Li T'ai-po, ou Li Po et de Tou Fou, sont connus du grand public grâce aux traductions » (1936, p. 134). Freitas' Portuguese text reads: "[...] Ta-Fu e Li Pó, conhecidos na Europa devido a traduções que só dão uma ideia imperfeita da sua extraordinária delicadeza poética" (1941, p. 29).

¹² The original text reads: "Todos os chineses são panteístas e quasi todos os versos dos poetas chineses descrevem os campos, as árvores e as flores" (Freitas, 1941, p. 29).

¹³ The original text reads: « La poésie des T'ang relève de nombreuses sources d'inspiration. Elle est tour à tour héroïque, élégiaque, descriptive, religieuse, amoureuse, bacchique » (Escarra, 1936, p. 133).

Another direct quotation is a long passage on the origins of Chinese philosophy that Freitas takes from Giuseppe Ferrari's *La Chine et l'Europe* (1867).¹⁴ Freitas's (1941, pp. 35-36) Portuguese translation (124 words) is almost half the length of Ferrari's (1867, pp. 283-84) French original (246 words) because of its many unmarked omissions, including Ferrari's philosophical elaborations, descriptive clauses, and rhetorical intensifications. For example, Freitas suppresses Ferrari's personification of philosophy as a restless liberal spirit: "And all assertions seem so unbearable to philosophy that it never ceases to overturn its own convictions to reclaim its freedom at every moment" (Ferrari, 1867, p. 284).¹⁵

The two direct quotations discussed here show that Freitas rewrites his sources through selective quotation, unmarked omission, and simplification. More broadly, the examples examined here in Section 4.2 suggest a recurrent pattern of rewriting: francophone materials are selected, reorganized, condensed, and reframed for a Portuguese readership. These patterns are also consistent with the volume's editorial framework, which privileged intelligibility for Portuguese readers. Moreover, where Freitas departs more clearly from his sources in order to praise China, his rewriting may also be read in Lefevere's (2017, p. 30) terms, as one way in which ideological considerations appear to prevail over more strictly linguistic transfer. This sympathetic tendency becomes clearer in the following analysis of cultural translation.

4.3. Cultural translation

Building on the interlingual translation examined above, this section shifts the focus to cultural translation as a broader interpretive mediation. Drawing on Maitland's (2017) model of cultural translation, I read *A China antiga e moderna* as a historically and socially situated mediation of China's past for Portuguese readers. The following close reading traces the interpretive gestures involved in this rearticulation through passages that tend to render China and the Chinese more familiar and to frame them sympathetically. This analysis is based on my reading of the volume and supplemented by targeted keyword searches in a digitized copy of the volume. The recurrent, relevant keywords include 'Europa', 'Portugal', 'pacifismo', 'tradicionalismo', and related terms. On this basis, I identify two macro patterns of interpretive traces in *A China antiga e moderna*, which are presented below. Because there are many examples, the following exposition includes the Portuguese text in a footnote only when my translation may be considered significantly different.

4.3.1 European and Portuguese reference points

One recurrent trace of Freitas's cultural translation lies in his tendency to explain China through European and Portuguese points of reference.

¹⁴ The catalogue entry from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France shows that the book is by Joseph Ferrari, and he is actually Giuseppe Ferrari.

¹⁵ The original reads: « Et toutes les affirmations lui [philosophie] semblent tellement insupportables, qu'elle ne cesse de bouleverser ses propres convictions pour reconquérir à chaque instant sa liberté » (Ferrari, 1867, p. 284).

Freitas repeatedly explains Chinese realities through comparison with European ones even in Part I of the volume about 'old China,' when direct contact with Europe was limited. He explains that the Chinese census is not done in the "rigorous European way" (Freitas, 1941, p. 17) and casts the "old Chinese mentality" (p. 20) as scarcely intelligible to Europeans. He further suggests that China is not a "nation" in the European sense (p. 20), while praising the Chinese language as a unifying instrument that Europe desires (p. 21). Chinese theatre is judged "monotonous" for "European taste" (p. 29), and major Chinese poets known in Europe, as mentioned, are said to be accessible only through "imperfect translations" (p. 29). Confucian reverence is compared to the "European cult of the Unknown Soldier" (p. 34).

For Portuguese reference points, China is said to be 126.5 times the size of continental Portugal (Freitas, 1941, p. 13), with roughly 3,000 Portuguese residents at the time (p. 14). Regarding Chinese languages, Freitas states that a Chinese northerner learns a Southern "dialect" (p. 21) more easily than a Portuguese learns French. He also notes that the Portuguese settled in Macao during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) (p. 53), claiming that the Portuguese first introduced opium to Canton; soon after, English contraband grew, leading to the Opium War (1839-42) (pp. 66-67). In this war, he writes ironically, a long self-isolated China fired the very weapons that the well-known Portuguese traveler and writer Fernão Mendes Pinto (1509-1583) sold in the 16th century (p. 62). He mentions that Western pressures sparked Chinese uprisings, including the assassination of Macao's Portuguese governor João Ferreira do Amaral (1801-1849) (p. 69).

Taken together, Europe serves as a broader horizon for civilizational comparison, while Portugal provides more immediate points of reference that both ground the narrative for Portuguese readers and highlight Portugal's own historical entanglement with China. Some of these comparisons can be read, in Maitland's terms, as a form of "incorporation": a process that "both preserves and overcomes distance" (2017, pp. 99-100), with a contradictory desire to approximate and reduce the other. In this sense, Freitas renders China's past more familiar by relocating it within cultural frameworks already available to Portuguese readers, though often at the expense of historical specificity.

4.3.2 Timeless images of the Chinese

Freitas (1941, p. 61) claims that the enduring traits of Chinese civilization help explain both the country's slower adaptation to Western customs than Japan and the succession of military and diplomatic defeats it had suffered since the Opium War. Taking this claim as a point of departure, I identify two recurrent discursive images of the Chinese in his account: 'pacifist' and 'traditionalist'.¹⁶ Both are relevant to his attempt to portray China as the victim of the then-ongoing Japanese imperialist invasion. They also reveal interpretive

¹⁶ Freitas's image-building of China is indeed an interesting topic for an imagological approach, typically involving textual, contextual, and intertextual analyses (see Flynn et al., 2015, p. 3), but that lies beyond the scope of this research, whose primary framework is 'history as translation.' I use 'image' instead of 'stereotype' or 'ethnotype' because there is insufficient evidence to establish how far such characterizations functioned stereotypically in Portugal in the early 1940s.

gestures of simplification and continuity that connect China's past to its present, making it more intelligible to Portuguese readers.

The first trait Freitas emphasizes is 'pacifist.' He invokes a Chinese proverb and Confucian teachings to claim that the Chinese are "anti-militarist" and "peaceful," and that they "despise brute force" (1941, p. 22). He buttresses this with a citation from Lin Yutang, who lists "pacifism" among the core traits of the Chinese (p. 22). As cultural evidence, Freitas notes popular Chinese songs exalting "hatred of the war" (p. 29). Historically, he states that foreign conquerors in China always ended up "dominated" by a Chinese preference for a "peaceful life" (pp. 42-43). Doctrinally, he claims that "pacifism and hatred of war" are traits of Chinese civilization (p. 59) and that all Chinese philosophy condemns war and devalues the military arts. Freitas justifies this claim with Chinese social temperament – attachment to land and peace (p. 60) – and a geopolitical-economic rationale: Chinese abundance and frugality made their expansion unnecessary, resulting in a defensive rather than a conquering posture (p. 61). Finally, he attributes British success in the Opium War to a Chinese "ancestral hatred of resorting to violence" (p. 62).

The second 'trait of the Chinese' in Freitas's perception is 'traditionalist.' By this, he probably means a shared attachment to inherited customs and opposition to innovations. Freitas portrays ancient China as "jealously guarding its spiritual treasures" (Freitas, 1941, p. 9), invoking Lin Yutang to attribute a "conservative spirit" to the Chinese (p. 22). Chinese popular theatre and songs are said to exalt respect for forebears (p. 29), and the ancestral cult is described as extraordinarily widespread (p. 34). Politically, the Qing dynasty is characterized by efforts to preserve the country's stability and isolation from the world (p. 66). In an anecdote, the Chinese destroyed a recently constructed train because it disrupted their "centuries-old routine" (pp. 70-71). Freitas emphasizes that the then-Chinese government has adopted a policy to restore those older customs (p. 72). On one occasion, he explicitly identifies "traditionalism" (p. 91) as one significant obstacle to China's modernization. He also notes that, during the 1930s, even the patriarchal regime remained intact among Chinese peasants, and that the new Civil Code could not yet be applied to Chinese clan structures (p. 96).

While portraying the Chinese as 'pacifist' and 'traditionalist,' Freitas does not ignore many historical shifts, such as those between Chinese dynasties. However, he describes these changes as "cycles" (1941, p. 41): a pattern of successive dynasties marked by revolutions, civil wars, uprisings, and the eventual decline of each dynasty. In fact, this is a concept known as the "dynastic cycle" (Dillon, 1997, p. 87) in traditional Chinese historiography. Yet, Freitas does not find this phenomenon interesting, and he explicitly characterizes the "cycle" as "monotonous" and "uniform" (1941, p. 40).

In short, Freitas repeatedly casts the Chinese as 'pacifist' and 'traditionalist' and reduces political change in Chinese history to a recurrent 'cycle.' These passages substantially simplify both Chinese history and the image of the Chinese, a gesture that is consistent with the volume's popularizing drive towards intelligibility. In Maitland's terms, Freitas's interpretive gestures also suggest a movement from incorporation towards

“transformation” (2017, p. 10), that is, a purposeful rearticulation of meaning. In this sense, China's past is brought within intelligible interpretive frames and, above all, reshaped into a continuous narrative that encourages sympathy for the Chinese among Portuguese readers during the then-ongoing war. This narrative also resonates with the sympathetic strand in wartime Portuguese discourse on China.

5. Conclusion

This article has examined José de Freitas's *A China antiga e moderna* as a translation of the Chinese past for the Portuguese readership in the early 1940s. I have described such a situation using the concept of ‘double foreignness,’ which encompasses not only spatiotemporal (past-present) but also cultural-linguistic (Chinese-Portuguese) distance. Hence, interlingual and cultural translations become important to examine alongside the intertemporal layer.

The study shows that Freitas relies chiefly on francophone sources. His paraphrases from French are free, and even direct quotations contain unmarked omissions and translational shifts. Read through Lefevere's (2017) notion of rewriting, the French texts are selectively reshaped into *A China antiga e moderna* in ways that are consistent with the popularizing agenda of the volume's editorial framework, Freitas's sympathy towards the Chinese, and a modest yet discernible pro-China tendency in wartime Portuguese print discourse.

Drawing on Maitland's model of cultural translation, the study also identifies two main patterns of interpretive gestures: Freitas frequently uses European or Portuguese points of reference to approximate Chinese history; his image-building of the Chinese as ‘pacifist’ and ‘traditionalist’ consolidates a simplified, intelligible continuity between China's past and present. Therefore, Freitas incorporates China's past within interpretive frames available to Portuguese readers, often at the expense of its historical specificity. He also transforms it into a narrative that encourages sympathy towards the Chinese. The result is a popular historical account that provides an immediate yet homogenizing interpretation of the Chinese as a historically coherent group. The principal distinction Freitas draws between China's past and present is the old/modern binary, already announced in the volume's title, *A China antiga e moderna*.

In theoretical terms, although this case study of a single volume has limited generalizability, it suggests that double foreignness in popular historical writing may be managed through intertwined intertemporal, interlingual, and cultural forms of translation oriented toward intelligibility. Intertemporally, the foreign past may be reorganized into more legible contrasts, such as an old/modern binary; interlingually, foreign sources may be selectively rewritten into the target language through operations such as selection, omission, condensation, and reframing; culturally, the past of the foreign country may be recontextualized within cultural frameworks available to target readers, for instance, through familiarizing comparisons or essentializing image-building.

Thus, the historical writing of a foreign country entails not only translating the past, but also translating the languages and cultural frames through which that past becomes readable in the present. The concept of double foreignness foregrounds the intertemporal, intercultural, and interlingual work, enabling a critical reading of the historical accounts thus constructed: not to dismiss them, but to see more precisely the foreign worlds as they are translated into a present that is itself socially and historically situated.

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