

## 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Birth of Camilo Pessanha

Camilo de Almeida Pessanha (1867-1926) is a famous Portuguese symbolism poet, he was born in Coimbra, a university town in Portugal. He is an illegitimate child whose father is a judge while his mother comes from an ordinary family. The lack of warmth in the family has formed his sensitive, timid and depressed personality since childhood. At the age of 18, he studied at the Faculty of Law at Coimbra University, whereas he has keen interest in literature. After graduation, he encountered affectional frustration. In April 1894, he came to Macao with the wound of love that will never heal. He then taught at Liceu de Macau and its subsidiary commercial school, thereafter he worked as the Director of Real Estate Registry, lawyer and judge. He had been living in Macao for 32 years, and finally passed away in Macao with his body being buried at St. Michael Cemetery, leaving a poetry anthology entitled “Clepsidra”. He had also translated 8 poetries of the Ming Dynasty with the help of his Chinese friends, which were published with “Eight Chinese Elegies” as the title. In fact, Camilo Pessanha chose Macao for his exile, where he was attracted by China; he adored Chinese poetries and characters, at the same time, he also looked at different things and issues of China from the Eurocentrism point of view.

Camilo Pessanha was unconventional and independent-minded in Macao, he could never be compatible with the upper class and took his hat off to them. Although being a teacher and judge allowed him to be a member of upper class, he would rather isolate himself from others. During his leisure time, he enjoyed wandering around streets and alleys, collecting both genuine and fake antiques from China, or entering the kingdom of poetry to compose perfect poems that express his emotional pains and struggles, and he has left this thin anthology “Clepsidra” as a legacy in the history of literature. “Clepsidra” is deemed as a paragon among Portuguese symbolism poetries, which has a profound and far-reaching influence on Portuguese poets in the later days. This book has also been translated into Chinese version for publication.

While being in Macao, Camilo Pessanha no longer showed affection to other Portuguese women, yet he had been living with Chinese ladies. In fact, he was taking the same path as his father’s, he lived with women whose social status is considerably different from his, and he did not marry them. Perhaps, his spirit and physical body were separated in his relationships with oriental ladies; or perhaps, he was in love with a Chinese lady but did not express the flames in his heart through writing. Therefore, at the time of commemorating the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Birth of this poet, we are more willing to believe the love story depicted by Carlos Marreiros through his outstanding imagination and delicate brush strokes: Camilo Pessanha and his beloved lady (it is said to be named “Silver Eagle”) may be embracing each other with passion and pouring their heart out; they may be holding hands together and flying freely like phoenix, and travelling over the mirror sea in the sky and clouds far away.

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Translation: NTC Communication & Translation Services