

# Macao 澳門

**Hengqin:  
The road  
to greater  
prosperity**

**PORTRAITS  
OF THE PAST**

**MOZAMBIKAN  
SUPERFOODS,  
A FAMILY STORY**



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**COVER IMAGE**  
Aerial view of Hengqin Free Trade Zone.  
Photo by Weiming Xie

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# A shot at a better future

Vaccinations are the best way to reopen borders and revitalise the economy as safely as possible.

Text **Gonalo C sar de S **

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Macao has taken prudent measures to prevent major Covid-19 outbreaks and protect the lives of its citizens. Local health authorities have restricted foreign arrivals, imposed strict quarantine measures, and rolled out an efficient vaccination programme with more than enough shots for the entire population.

As time progressed and the world learned more about the virus, the government’s measures have become more strategic and sophisticated. Over the past three months, for example, the government acted immediately after identifying several imported cases. In response, authorities mandated citywide nucleic acid testing (NAT) three times so far.

Each round (the first on 4 August, followed by 25 September and 7 October) tested about 700,000 people – an effort that showcased the government’s track-and-testing capabilities, quick decision-making and enormous capacity to mobilise residents. These mass testing events also ensured that no Covid-19 cases circulated among the population, bringing a sense of calm to Macao.

As an additional precaution, on 5 October, the government paused civil service work for three days, and closed entertainment and leisure services until 19 October.

About 20,000 civil servants, police, firefighters, doctors, and nurses worked tirelessly to conduct the mass testing operations throughout the pandemic. Meanwhile, hundreds of members of civil society – including schools, churches, professional associations, and cultural institutions – have shown their support for the government’s stringent preventative measures.

As a result of these efforts, the territory has recorded just 77 imported Covid-19 cases and zero fatalities as of 27 October. By comparison, Hong Kong has reported 12,331 cases and 213 deaths; Singapore, 179,095 cases and 339 deaths; and Japan, 1.72 million cases and 18,142 deaths.

“An important point people seem to forget amid all the local Covid-19 measures is that Macao is one of the few places in the world with zero – yes, zero – Covid deaths since the outbreak,” says local filmmaker S rgio Basto Perez.

A health worker wears personal protective equipment at a cordoned-off hotel during the latest wave of Covid-19 cases in Macao





“With all the difficulties everyone is going through – the economy, the border closures, not being able to travel – most of these [sacrifices] were in place to achieve this important milestone. I praise any place or policy that places human lives above anything else.”

Robert William, who works at a resort in Macao, also expressed gratitude for the haven that the government has created. “It is complicated [for the city] to be closed for over a year and a half,” he says. “But the measures taken, even though they may seem excessive in some cases, have at least ensured that we are fine and alive, unlike many other cities with serious cases and deaths.”

While closing the borders has kept residents safe, it has created some challenges for the economy. In the tourism sector, Macao welcomed just 5.9 million arrivals in 2020, compared to 39.4 million in 2019. This drop in tourists, who are primarily from mainland China, over the past 18 months has caused substantial economic losses and forced many small- and medium-sized companies to close or lay off staff. However, the government has supported the community with subsidies, loans and consumption vouchers to buoy the economy during this unprecedented time.

## THE PATH FORWARD

There is only one way for the city to reopen and business to rebound – and that is to increase vaccination uptake in Macao significantly. The city’s pandemic health measures follow mainland China’s “zero Covid” policies.

“Only after Macao’s vaccination rate significantly increases can we consider the living-with-the-virus approach while ensuring that there won’t be cases resulting in a serious condition and many fatalities,” said Leong Iek Hou, who coordinates the Health Bureau’s (SSM) Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center.

Officials have echoed this sentiment time and time again. “Macao is not prepared to live with a virus due to the very low rate of vaccination. The population needs to get vaccinated,” urges Novel Coronavirus Response and Coordination Center spokespeople in its press statements.

In mainland China, which has a population of more than 1 billion, vaccination rates have already reached over 80 per cent as of 27 October. To put it another way: A total of 2.25 billion doses have been administered in the mainland. The vaccination programme puts China in the lead among the world’s biggest economies. More than 97 per cent of adults in the capital of Beijing are fully vaccinated, and in the financial hub of Shanghai, the rate is approaching 80 per cent. Whereas only 50 per cent of Macao’s 682,500 residents have been fully vaccinated as of 27 October, making the city the lowest vaccinated population in all of China.

During a September visit to Macao by a delegation from China’s National Health Commission, health experts praised the measures taken by the Macao government to control the epidemic. However, when leaving the city, they expressed concern about vaccination rates and urged the government to speed up its inoculation efforts.

Macao Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng shares the central government’s concerns, iterating the need for residents to be fully vaccinated. In early October, for example, Ho called on members of the public who have yet to be vaccinated to get the shot and fulfil their civic duty.

“Only when the majority of the community has been vaccinated will the community have a degree of safety in the event of any outbreak,” said Ho. “That would help in terms of revitalising the local economy by making it possible for a greater number of visitors to come to Macao.”

The vaccine, he continued, does not guarantee immunity from Covid-19; however, it offers significant

“

Only when the majority of the community has been vaccinated will the community have a degree of safety in the event of any outbreak.

– Ho Iat Seng

The second citywide nucleic acid test program kicked off on 25 September with a total of 52 testing stations open round the clock until 28 September



protection from the novel coronavirus and has been proven to reduce the chances of severe conditions and hospitalisation associated with infections.

Some groups – such as pregnant women and those with existing health conditions – cannot be inoculated yet. However, the Chief Executive urges those who are eligible to get the shot to do so as soon as possible with an aim to vaccinate at least 80 per cent of the population. If the city does not reach this target, it is unlikely that the central government will relax restrictions and enable more mainland travellers to visit.

“Without a high vaccination rate, it is difficult for the Macao government to ask the central government for the resumption of the electronic application process for a travel visa to Macao and the resumption of tour groups to Macao,” Ho said, adding that tourism is essential for the city’s economic recovery.

After the city completed its third mass NAT programme in early October, Leong reaffirmed this message. Only after Macao reaches a Covid-19 vaccination rate of 80 to 90 per cent will the government consider shifting its policies.

At the Macao Health Bureau’s weekly press conferences, officials repeatedly call on the public to get vaccinated quickly. “The vaccine is the next phase,

and we’ll get there,” says Perez. “The government’s earlier measures gave us time: time for better medicine, time for better understanding of the virus and how to treat it, and time to get prepared and plan a proper economic recovery.”

Perez also praises the health workers, health coordinators and government workers who have kept Macao people safe. “Now, let’s aim to recover, get vaccinated, and get ready to live in a world where Covid will live among us,” he adds.

Of course, vaccination is not a silver bullet that can solve Macao’s economic woes. But it is the fastest and more realistic way forward for the city at this time. To revitalise Macao’s economy, welcome tourists again, return to the pace of development pre-pandemic – and keep the public safe at the same time – the vaccine is the best tool we have as a community.

As many other places begin to live with the virus, reopening is essential for Macao’s economic and social stability. The city stands to see enormous opportunities in the recently inaugurated Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin and the rest of the Greater Bay Area. With open borders and better integration across the region, Macao’s economy will see even greater potential to grow, diversify and thrive in the future. ●

During three citywide NATs, dedicated medical volunteers worked around the clock to ensure all testing was completed within three days



All photos on this spread by Government Information Bureau





POLITICS

# Macao lawmakers plan for progress

The city's lawmakers represent a cross-section of society bringing both experience and fresh perspectives to further growth.

Text **Christian Ritter**  
Photos **Government Information Bureau**



When voting ended on 12 September, polling staff opened ballot boxes to begin tallying the results of the Seventh Legislative Assembly

(Opposite page) Macao Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng casts his vote



Following elections in mid-September, Macao unveiled its Seventh Legislative Assembly since it became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) under Chinese administration in 1999. The city's law-making body faces one of the most challenging periods in the Macao SAR's short history, given the social and economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Following the One Country, Two Systems policy, Macao has the power to legislate its own local laws and regulations, including taxation and budget expenditure, while the central government remains responsible for defence, foreign affairs and other nationwide issues. This gives the Legislative Assembly the most prominent role

in shaping Macao's development by enacting, amending and repealing local laws.

Serving a four-year term, the assembly comprises 33 members: 14 directly elected members, 12 indirectly elected members representing functional constituencies, and a further seven members appointed by the Macao SAR Chief Executive.

The term limits and member categories strive to ensure that no significant section of the city's community is left unrepresented.

The 14 directly elected members can come from any walk of life and must be nominated by an association or a candidacy committee in Macao. All eligible voters who register by

January of the election year can cast their votes on polling day.

The indirectly elected members, on the other hand, are drawn from specific interest groups within the community. The indirectly elected sectors are industrial, commercial and financial; labour/trade unions; professionals; social and educational services, as well as culture and sports. Each group has its own electoral colleges, which carry out the voting. To be on the ticket, candidates must be nominated by at least 20 per cent of the college.

So, who exactly are these lawmakers, whose decision-making will prove crucial to Macao's recovery?



DIRECTLY ELECTED LAWMAKERS

The 14 directly elected lawmakers were drawn from seven electoral lists. One list took three seats; five lists won two seats each; while the final list took just one assembly seat.

The biggest winner at the September polls, with 26,593 votes and three seats, was the Macao United Citizens Association (ACUM) list, headed by incumbent lawmaker and civic leader Si Ka Lon, 43. The list's No. 2 candidate, incumbent legislator Becky Song Pek Kei, 36, was re-elected, while its No. 3 candidate, Lei Leong Wong, 35, was a first-time winner.

This was the first time that the ACUM list won three seats, since the 2013 direct elections. ACUM entered the electoral arena in the 2005 direct elections when it was headed by prominent businessman Chan Meng Kam. However, Chan did not seek re-election four years ago.

The ACUM list was set up by the Alliance for Common People Building Up Macao (API) – one of the city's biggest community

associations. API is generally regarded as the main representative of Macao's sizeable Fujianese community, which accounts for about one-quarter of the city's population. Many Macao citizens proudly trace their roots to Fujian, a southern Chinese province neighbouring Guangdong.

The Union for Development (UPD) list, headed by incumbent lawmaker and trade unionist Ella Lei Cheng I, 40, won the second-highest number of votes, 23,760, enabling Lei and her fellow legislator, Leong Sun Iok, 44, to be re-elected.

The UPD list is the electoral vehicle of the Macao Federation of Trade Unions (MFTU) which is one of the city's biggest community associations. The list has won one or two seats in every direct legislative election since it first took part in 1992, when Macao was still under Portuguese administration. Both Lei and Leong are MFTU senior board members.

Lawmaker José Maria Pereira Coutinho, who has been a directly elected lawmaker since 2005,

succeeded in his re-election bid. The New Hope list, headed by Coutinho, 64, won two seats, so its No. 2 candidate, Che Sai Wang, 55, a public servant, was elected for the first time. Coutinho heads the Macau Civil Servants Association.

Zheng Anting, 47, who has been a directly elected legislator since 2013, also succeeded in his re-election bid. This time Zheng headed the Macao-Guangdong Union (UMG) list. The list's No. 2 candidate Lo Choi In, 48, a senior bank executive, was elected for the first time.

The Progress Promotion Union (UPP) list, the electoral vehicle of the influential Macao General Union of Neighbourhood Associations, won two seats, enabling Leong Hong Sai, 54, and Ngan Iek Hang, 37, to be elected for the first time. Alan Ho Ion Sang, 60, who had headed the UPP list since the 2009 direct election, did not seek direct re-election but instead became an indirectly elected lawmaker.

The Macao Women's General Association ran the Alliance for a Happy Home list and won two seats.

Nurse Wong Kit Cheng, 39, was re-elected, and the list's No. 2 candidate Ma Io Fong, 37, a teacher, was elected as a lawmaker for the first time.

The Power of Synergy list, which ran in the direct election for the second time after almost winning a seat four years ago, won a single seat. Current affairs commentator Ron Lam U Tou, 40, was elected as a lawmaker for the first time.

The only incumbent lawmaker who failed to be re-elected was Agnes Lam, who is an associate professor at the University of Macau's Department of Communications. A former journalist, she has headed the Civic Watch list since 2009.

The voter turnout in the direct election was 42.38 per cent (137,279 voters) with 3,141 blank votes and 2,000 invalid votes.

NO CONTEST

The indirect legislative election in the functional constituencies for 12 seats was held at the same time as the direct elections. However, unlike the directly elected sector, in this electoral category, the polling was uncontested. A total of 7,000 indirect-election voters cast their ballots, amounting to a turnout of 87.33 per cent.

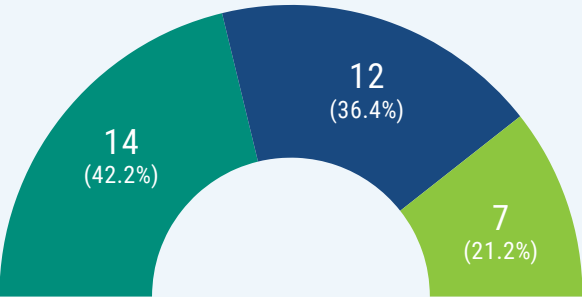
Two lawmakers, Chan Hong and Victor Cheung Lup Kwan were replaced by former directly elected legislators Alan Ho Ion Sang and Angela Leong On Kei, 60.

A single candidacy list ran in each of the five indirect-election sectors. The five lists were:

- 1) The Union of Macau Business Interests (OMKC) for the industrial, commercial and financial sectors
- 2) The Joint Candidacy Committee of Employees Associations (CCCAE) for the labour sector
- 3) The Union of Macau Professionals' Interests (OMCY) for the professional sector
- 4) The Social Service and Education Promotion Association (APSSE) for social services and education
- 5) The Rising Sun Cultural and Sports Union for culture and sports

MEMBERS OF THE SEVENTH LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

The Macao Legislative Assembly is made up of 33 members, comprising 14 directly elected members, 12 indirectly elected members and a further seven members selected by the Macao Chief Executive.



DIRECTLY ELECTED

- |                                |                    |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Si Ka Lon                   | 8. Leong Sun Iok   |
| 2. Lei Cheng I                 | 9. Che Sai Wang    |
| 3. José Maria Pereira Coutinho | 10. Lam U Tou      |
| 4. Zheng Anting                | 11. Lo Choi In     |
| 5. Leong Hong Sai              | 12. Ngan Iek Hang  |
| 6. Wong Kit Cheng              | 13. Ma Io Fong     |
| 7. Song Pek Kei                | 14. Lei Leong Wong |

INDIRECTLY ELECTED

- |                  |                    |
|------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Kou Hoi In    | 7. Chui Sai Cheong |
| 2. Chui Sai Peng | 8. Vong Hin Fai    |
| 3. Ip Sio Kai    | 9. Chan Iek Lap    |
| 4. Wang Sai Man  | 10. Ho Ion Sang    |
| 5. Lam Lon Wai   | 11. Chan Chak Mo   |
| 6. Lei Chan U    | 12. Leong On Kei   |

APPOINTED BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

- 1. Ma Chi Seng
- 2. Iau Teng Pio
- 3. Pang Chuan
- 4. Wu Chou Kit
- 5. Kou Kam Fai
- 6. Chan Hou Seng
- 7. Cheung Kin Chung



Polling stations were set up across the city to ensure the population could easily and efficiently cast ballots; (Right) Individuals with disabilities were assisted by polling staff to ensure no member of society was left unrepresented



The legislature's 12 indirectly elected seats include representatives from different sectors: four from industry, commerce and finance; three from professional; two from labour; two from culture and sports; and one from social services and education.

The OMKC fielded incumbent lawmakers Kou Hoi In, 68; José Chui Sai Peng, 61; Ip Sio Kai; and Wang Sai Man, 51, as its candidates for the four seats in the industrial, commercial and financial sector.

Kou, president of the outgoing legislature, is a local deputy to the National People's Congress of China and president of the Macao Chamber of Commerce. Chui, a civil engineer, is the cousin of former Chief Executive Fernando Chui Sai On, while Ip is the deputy director of the local branch of the Bank of China. Wang, a textile manufacturer, is also a board member of the Macao Chamber of Commerce.

The Joint Candidacy Committee of Employees Associations fielded the same first- and second-ranked candidates as in the 2017 election: trade unionists Lam Lon Wai, 46; and Lei Chan U, 46. Both are senior board members of the MFTU who became lawmakers four years ago. Lam is one of the two vice-principals of Lou Hau High School, which is run by the MFTU.

The Union of Macau Professionals' Interests fielded incumbent lawmakers Chui Sai Cheong, who is the elder brother of former chief executive Chui Sai On, 67; the vice-president of the outgoing legislature, lawyer Vong Hin Fai, 63; and paediatrician Chan Iek Lap, 64, as its candidates for the sector's three seats.



The Social Service and Education Promotion Association list fielded Alan Ho Ion Sang for the sector's single seat. Ho, who has served as a directly elected lawmaker since 2009, is a senior board member of the Macau General Union of Neighbourhood Associations.

The two candidates for the cultural and sports sector were restaurateur Andrew Chan Chak Mo, 70, and casino executive Angela Leong On Kei. She replaced Victor Cheung Lup Kwan, 83, who has retired.

**APPOINTED MEMBERS**

Of the 33-member Legislative Assembly, which has a four-year term, it is customary for seven to be handpicked by the Macao Chief Executive. This year, Ho Iat Seng

welcomed three new members and four were re-appointees – all of whom are men.

The newcomers were educator Kou Kam Fai, 56, principal of Pui Ching Middle School; arts scholar Chan Hou Seng, 58; and Cheung Kin Chung, 49, general manager of Macau CTS Hotel Management.

The re-appointees were businessman Ma Chi Seng, 43; Iau Teng Pio, 57, assistant dean of the University of Macau's Faculty of Law; Pang Chuan, 50, vice-rector of the Macau University of Science and Technology; and Wu Chou Kit, 53, chairman of the Macau Institution of Engineers.

In short, the new Legislative Assembly brings together a promising combination of experience and new faces, who will lead the city through these uncertain times with confidence. ●



Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng administers the swearing-in ceremony of all members of the Seventh Legislative Assembly

(Opposite page) The results of the Seventh Legislative Assembly were announced over the course of one week in mid-September 2021

**New leaders of the assembly**

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng swore in the 33 lawmakers of the Seventh Legislative Assembly of the Macao Special Administrative Region on 16 October during a brief ceremony held at the China-Portuguese-speaking Countries Commercial and Trade Service Platform Complex.

As widely expected, the lawmakers elected Kou Hoi In and Chui Sai Cheong as president and vice-president, respectively, of the Legislative Assembly. Kou – Macao's longest-serving incumbent lawmaker – received 32 of the 33 votes cast, while Chui Sai Cheong, the elder brother of former Macau Chief Executive Chui Sai On, garnered 30 votes.

Born in 1953, Kou has headed the legislature since 2019, having replaced Ho Iat Seng when he successfully ran for the position of chief executive that year. After his re-election as president, Kou promised to maintain a dialogue with his peers and improve the legislature's government monitoring.

Rounding out the leadership team, lawmakers elected civic leader Ho Ion Sang and businessman Si Ka Lon to serve as first and second secretary of the legislature, respectively.



GREATER BAY AREA

# In the zone: Opportunity knocks in Hengqin



Scan the QR code to read the central government's Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone Master Plan, which highlights industry diversification and collaboration between Hengqin and Macao

The central government recently revealed its master plan for the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone, which aims to increase integration across four sectors: science and technology, traditional Chinese medicine, tourism and finance.





Ho Iat Seng delivers his speech at the inaugural ceremony

Text **Rafelle Allego**  
and **Christian Ritter**  
Photos **Government**  
**Information Bureau**

(From left to right) Macao Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng attended the inaugural ceremony of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone with Edmund Ho Hau Wah, the Vice Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference; Han Zheng, Deputy Prime Minister; Li Xi, the CCP Secretary of the Guangdong Provincial Committee; Xia Baolong, Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council Director; and Governor of Guangdong Ma Xingrui

Zhuhai might be the smallest city in Guangdong province at just over 1,700 square kilometres, but its economy is one of the strongest. In 2020, the city recorded a per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of US\$ 20,693 (roughly MOP 166,000). Among the nine mainland cities in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) area, Zhuhai ranks second only to Shenzhen in terms of per capita GDP.

A special economic district in Zhuhai, Hengqin is a major contributor to the city's economic strength despite its relatively tiny population of 3,000. In 2019, the island, which is three times the size of Macao at 106 square kilometres, was home to 90 per cent of the city's 6,750 financial institutions and a raft of development projects, said Zhuhai Deputy Mayor Yan Wu.

On 5 September, the Central Government published the Master Plan of the Development of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone covering the entire island of Hengqin. Often dubbed the “backyard” of Macao since it's right across the water, the new cooperation zone has already attracted attention from both international and local companies.

According to Niu Jing, a member of the Zhuhai Government Party Committee and the party secretary of the Hengqin New District Party Committee, the island expects to see its GDP skyrocket to RMB 1.8 trillion (MOP 2.2 trillion) by 2025, and rapid population growth on the order of hundreds of thousands

during the same time span. As Hengqin and Macao become more deeply integrated, Niu predicts that between 30,000 and 50,000 people from Macao will be living or working on the island in the next three to four years.

Integration and collaboration between the two cities is well underway. Ever since the State Council of the People's Republic of China leased part of Hengqin to Macao in 2009 to build the University of Macau campus, the island has been intertwined with the SAR's economic development and diversification efforts.

Taking these efforts one step further, the newly revealed plan further blurs the boundaries and

strengthens the links between Macao and Hengqin, while simultaneously making an effort to move the SAR away from its reliance on the gaming industry.

#### HOW IT WORKS

With the new master plan in place, the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone encourages more cross-border collaboration and investments under the “One Country, Two Systems” principle. Despite the differing legal systems between Guangdong and Macao, the two will co-administer the zone under a pilot governance scheme. Macao will implement civil and commercial

laws, while mainland authorities handle public security matters.

Macao Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng and Governor of Guangdong Ma Xingrui will jointly manage the zone as part of a dual-director system, alongside an administrative committee that will coordinate and make decisions on major issues. This will create a new development model with “Chinese characteristics” showcasing the advantages of “two systems”, as Ho said during the zone's inauguration on 17 September.

What's more, Ho said the “innovative initiative” will “inject new dynamics, provide new space, and create new opportunities for Macao's long-term development.”



“

Major industrial projects will be mapped out to facilitate the formation of innovative and technological platforms.

– Ho Iat Seng

And in the long run, he continued, the zone has great potential to contribute to the social well-being of residents and Macao's "long-term integration into national development."

#### FOUR SECTORS IN FOCUS

According to the government's blueprint, the zone will focus on four industrial sectors – finance, traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), scientific and technological research, and tourism and MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences,

exhibitions) – to spur diversification and collaboration across the GBA.

"Major industrial projects will be mapped out to facilitate the formation of innovative and technological platforms," Ho said. "New technologies, new industries, new ecologies, new models will be developed in order to create impetus for the sustainable development of Macao's economic diversification."

In terms of science and technology, the zone aims to develop a high-end manufacturing industry that covers everything from research and the development of integrated

circuits to electronic components, new energy, big data, artificial intelligence, Internet of Things and biomedical engineering.

To support the industry's growth and fuel innovation within the GBA, the University of Macau and the Macau University of Science and Technology will set up bases where industry leaders can collaborate with academics to research, improve technology and innovate production methods.

The cooperative zone also strives to develop a world-class TCM hub, where premium

"Made in Macao" goods can be manufactured and exported. Authorities plan to optimise the existing 500,000-square-metre Guangdong-Macao Traditional Chinese Medicine Technology Industrial Park, which debuted in 2011. In this expansive setting, TCM leaders can develop state-of-the-art innovations and rewarding trade connections within the GBA.

The central government has already designated Hengqin as an International Leisure Tourism Island, so it's only natural that one of the zone's key sectors will include

the development of tourism. It's a broad umbrella – including independent, group, wellness, sport, health and business travel – and one that can support Macao's continuous development as a tourism and leisure centre.

Business travel, in particular, will play a major role in the zone. To encourage more MICE events, both Macao and Zhuhai will issue more travel visas that enable exhibition staff, convention participants and visiting professionals to travel more seamlessly.



Embracing technology and innovation, the new cooperation zone is set to create lasting ties between Hengqin and Macao





(Above) Macao Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng (centre) with senior Macao officials at a meeting to discuss the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin

Finally, the master plan envisions the cooperation zone as a financial service platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. The zone not only provides new opportunities across the GBA, but will also support Macao firms by making it easier to set up businesses in areas like wealth management, bonds and leasing. At the same time, the government plans to establish multi-currency investment funds that will support the finance industry.

#### **MORE COOPERATION, MORE OPPORTUNITIES**

Designed to help Macao diversify its economy and integrate further into the GBA, the new zone must achieve its development goals to enhance the region's economic strengths and technological competitiveness by 2035. According to the government's

plan, the zone will progress in stages.

First, the government expects joint administration and shared benefits to run smoothly by 2024, which coincides with the 25th anniversary of Macao's transfer of administration to China. By 2029, the zone should see improved cohesion across systems, such as cross-border regulations, public services and social security.

When it comes to everyday life, Macao residents with a home return permit (回鄉證) can enter the island visa-free (others can obtain a visa at immigration). In addition, the central government is currently considering waiving tariffs on qualified goods and simplifying customs declarations procedures. That means daily necessities available in Macao will remain similarly priced when imported to Hengqin, assuaging concerns about cost of living.





# Who's who?

These officials have been appointed to the Administrative Committee for the Guangdong–Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone, serving alongside Macao Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng and Governor of Guangdong Ma Xingrui, who oversee the zone as part of a dual-director system.

## Administrative Committee Executive Deputy Director:

- André Cheong Weng-chon, *Macao Secretary for Administration and Justice*

## Guangdong–Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone Deputy Directors:

- Wong Sio Chak, *Macao Secretary for Security*
- Elsie Ao Ieong U, *Macao Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture*
- Lin Keqing, *Guangdong Vice-Governor*
- Zhang Xin, *Guangdong Vice-Governor*
- Guo Yonghang, *CCP Zhuhai Municipal Committee Secretary*

## Secretary-General of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone:

- Lei Wai Nong, *Macao Secretary for Economy and Finance*
- Nie Xinping, *Guangdong Provincial People's Government's Hengqin Office Director and Executive Committee of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone Deputy Director*

## Executive Committee Members:

- Lei Wai Nong
- Nie Xinping
- Fu Yongge
- Niu Jing
- Hoi Lai Fong
- Su Kun
- Ng Chi Kin



Exceptions include foreign products like automobiles, which will be subject to customs duties. Meanwhile, the personal income tax for Macao residents working in the zone will remain at a similar rate to the SAR. Online content viewable in Macao will also be accessible in Hengqin, provided that materials don't contain "extreme content" opposed by the central government.

As it evolves, Ho believes the cooperation zone will provide new job opportunities for the people in Macao while supporting existing industries and investments that are already operating in the SAR. The six gaming operators based in Macao, for instance, have been welcomed to invest in non-gaming businesses, such as in cultural and sports facilities, in the new zone.

What's more, investments from Macao-registered companies in the zone will also be included in Macao's GDP. Additionally, enterprise income tax rate will be 15 per cent for companies – notably lower than mainland China's standard rate of 20-25 per cent.

"The zone will provide a high-quality living space and make everyday life easier for Macao residents, and create an environment conducive to life and work similar to Macao's," Ho said. With significantly more land and development opportunities, the cooperation zone in Hengqin will not only aid Macao's economic diversification and growth, but it will also provide a more "convenient and livable space" for Macao residents to explore in the long run. ●

The zone aims to welcome Macao residents and businesses, providing high-quality living spaces and new job opportunities





GREATER BAY AREA

# Businesses join forces

Macao businesses are well-positioned to reap the benefits of an increasingly integrated Greater Bay Area, with next-door neighbour Hengqin setting the pace.

Text **Rafelle Allego**

New policies in Hengqin will make it easier for Macao professionals to find new business opportunities on the neighbouring island

With one of the largest economies in the world and a combined population of more than 70 million, the Greater Bay Area (GBA) of southern China already dwarfs most United Nations member states. The central government has increasingly ambitious plans to transform the region – comprising Macao, Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Foshan, Dongguan, Zhongshan, Jiangmen, Huizhou and Zhaoqing – into a global business hub.

While enticing, the objective presents considerable logistical and practical challenges. Existing ‘bay areas’ in New York, San Francisco and greater Tokyo share legal and economic systems. By contrast, the GBA’s 11 cities cover three legal systems, three tariff zones and three currencies. But recently, more relaxed regulations, new training initiatives and cross-border certification processes have enabled professionals to practise in other

GBA jurisdictions or pool expertise via joint ventures. And with more integration and collaboration, Macao professionals will be able to unlock new business opportunities in the GBA, particularly across the water in Hengqin.

**RAPID GROWTH IN BANKING**

Banco Nacional Ultramarino (BNU) became the first Macao bank to set up in mainland China when its Hengqin branch opened

in January 2017. “The Macao SAR government has encouraged local enterprises and the financial industry to expand their business in Hengqin, and we have responded to the call,” says Banco Nacional Ultramarino CEO Carlos Cid Álvares. The well-established Macao financial institution is already reaping the rewards of increased cooperation across the GBA. BNU’s Hengqin branch currently provides mortgages, corporate loans and

deposit services mainly for Macao companies and entrepreneurs operating in the mainland, as well as mainland-listed companies. “Over the past four years, despite the recent impact of Covid-19, the Hengqin branch has maintained rapid growth,” adds Álvares. “A total of more than MOP 1 billion in credit has been issued, and the total assets have reached MOP 1.2 billion. It is currently profitable, and we are very satisfied.”



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If measured by GDP alone, the area is already 40 per cent as large as Germany and 70 per cent as large as Italy.

– Carlos Cid Álvares

As part of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone, which includes Zhuhai's Hengqin island, the central government plans to enhance links between the region's financial markets. The plan also aims to simplify cross-border direct investment transactions and reduce corporate income taxes to 15 per cent for eligible enterprises registered in the zone. However, a timeline has not been specified.

BNU's success in Hengqin rests on its familiarity with the different mainland cultural and legal systems, says Álvares. The branch currently has about 14 employees, the majority of whom are from the mainland.

These staff members have a thorough understanding of anti-money laundering practices,

compliance, and risk management in the mainland. They are also skilled at handling relationships with mainland Chinese customers and government agencies. In addition to its Hengqin branch, BNU also has an office in Shanghai, which specialises in market research and business contacts.

“The mainland market is very large, so we are now focusing on the GBA, which is one of the fastest-growing regions in mainland China,” says Álvares, who is enthusiastic about the region's potential. “If measured by GDP alone, the area is already 40 per cent as large as Germany and 70 per cent as large as Italy. It's going to provide numerous opportunities for Macao's banking industry.”

According to Álvares, BNU plans to expand its branch in Hengqin gradually and will consider opening new locations across the GBA when the time is right. The bank, which has had a presence in Macao for more than a century, is well known in the city as one of the territory's note-issuing banks. However, to expand further as the GBA develops, BNU must raise its profile in the mainland market.

Álvares says the financial institution has actively participated in business exchange activities in the mainland organised by the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM). These include visiting cities in the GBA to strengthen ties with mainland enterprises.

“Although the results of these initiatives may not be seen immediately, we will continue to work closely with IPIM to attract more corporate customers and investors through its activities and network,” Álvares explains.

## A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR ARCHITECTURE AND CONSTRUCTION

In addition to banking, Hengqin also serves as a stepping stone for other professional industries, such as construction, building design and architectural firms. In December 2019, for example, Zhuhai issued new regulations for the construction industry, allowing relevant qualified professionals in Macao to bid on new construction projects in Hengqin and accept jobs on the island so long as they file for cross-border professional recognition.

At the end of 2020, Companhia de Construção e Engenharia OMAS, Limitada successfully invested in the Changlong Dormitory Project

(a housing complex for Chimelong employees), becoming the first Macao construction company to cooperate with the mainland government on a venture in Hengqin. As of May 2021, 50 Macao enterprises and 233 professionals have filed for professional recognition in Hengqin since the programme began.

Macao-based JWCC Architecture is among the firms that have filed for cross-border professional recognition to practice in Hengqin. Co-founder Christine Choi says the firm registered the business on the island, which was a smooth and convenient process, and each individual architect also had to apply to work as a professional on the island.

JWCC co-founder Christine Choi says the recently updated Hengqin policies have enabled Macao-based firms to expand

(Opposite page) Banco Nacional Ultramarino CEO Carlos Cid Álvares says the BNU Hengqin branch has been doing well despite Covid-19

All photos on this spread by António Sanmarful





“As a Macao architectural design firm, we don't limit our vision to the local market. Although we have thought of seeking new opportunities overseas [in the past], our professional qualifications were not recognised,” says Choi. “However, this new policy in Hengqin provided an additional platform to expand our business and understand of the mainland market.”

Since Hengqin is still in the development stage, she continues, there is no shortage of opportunities. “There are a number of construction projects that are now or will soon be underway,” says Choi. “With the qualification, we are ready to seize the opportunity.”

Now that the firm is certified, Choi says the team is learning different construction, engineering, administrative, taxation and design systems in order to operate smoothly and efficiently in Hengqin.

Due to the large scale of Hengqin developments, however, Choi believes many companies may choose to collaborate with mainland Chinese firms at first.

“I think it's better to find the right partner and to bring our value and expertise to the project than to do it alone,” she says.

#### NEW JOINT VENTURES IN LAW

As exchanges between Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao become more frequent, businesses will need better legal support that understands all three regions and their systems.

Since 2004, the Closer Economic Partnership Agreement – a free trade agreement between the mainland, Hong Kong and Macao – has enabled legal professionals to create joint ventures with mainland counterparts to provide more

comprehensive services. So long as they are part of a joint venture, qualified Macao lawyers may provide legal services to clients in the mainland.

In 2016, Rato, Ling, Lei & Cortés – Lawyers from Macao, Fongs Lawyers from Hong Kong, and Zhong Yin Law Firm from Beijing partnered to establish the first joint-venture, cross-border law firm in Hengqin. Since then, a few others have followed suit, including Manuela António – Lawyers and Notaries which teamed up with Beijing-based Jingsh Law Firm. Meanwhile, MdME Lawyers opened a Hong Kong branch in 2018 with plans to expand into Hengqin in the near future.

In November 2019, the Department of Justice granted Vong Hin Fai Lawyers & Private Notary permission to set up its Renhe Qibang Xianhui (Hengqin) Joint Law Firm in partnership with Hong

Kong's KB Chau & Co Solicitors and mainland-based Renhe Law Firm. As a joint venture, the three firms serve both mainland and international clients.

“With the development of the GBA, clients from mainland China, Hong Kong and Macao demand integrated legal services,” says Vong Sok Hei Rosita, a partner at Vong Hin Fai Lawyers & Private Notary. “For example, when Macao enterprises want to expand cross-border business in mainland China, a joint venture [law firm] can provide more efficient one-stop services, saving them time and money.”

Apart from providing legal services, Renhe Qibang Xianhui (Hengqin) also regularly arranges for lawyers from the three regions to participate in training activities and other collaborative exchanges.

“We mainly discuss civil and commercial litigation, since the

three legal systems have their own characteristics,” says Vong. “The lawyers in each place want to understand the other systems, so we can build a team of mutual trust and better serve the clients in the GBA.”

Macao firms bring much to the table as well. Thanks to centuries of Portuguese influence in Macao, many lawyers in the city communicate proficiently in Chinese, English and Portuguese. They also tend to be familiar with the legal systems of Portuguese-speaking countries, such as Brazil and Portugal. And since Macao has signed several international treaties on economics, trade and law, Macao lawyers are often well-versed in global legal norms.

Beyond Hengqin, new regulations passed in 2020 enabled Macao legal professionals to practice in nine mainland cities in the GBA, so long as they pass the relevant examinations and obtain the required credentials.

Vong Sok Hei Rosita, a partner of Vong Hin Fai Lawyers & Private Notary, says that joint ventures have enabled legal professionals in Macao to work with new clients and offer a broader range of services

(Opposite page) By lowering the total year-end assets required to enter Hengqin, the central government will allow more banks to set up branches and joint ventures on the island

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This new policy in Hengqin provided an additional platform to expand our business and understanding of the mainland market.

– Christine Choi



Weiming Xie



António Samraful



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New technologies, new industries, new ecologies, new models will be developed in order to create impetus for the sustainable development of Macao's economic diversification.

– Ho Iat Seng

The recently announced Hengqin Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone will bring new models, technologies, tax incentives, and more

Vong believes this will bring Macao lawyers even greater opportunities. Alongside four members of her firm, Vong took the 2021 GBA Legal Professional Examination. The inaugural exam was initially scheduled for 30 January 2021; however, it was postponed until 31 July due to Covid-19. On 30 September, the results were posted, and all five lawyers passed the exam. “We are all very delighted with this good news,” she shares.

Although qualified Macao lawyers will be able to practice in the GBA in the future, Vong stresses that the mainland's legal system, culture and economy are very different. It will be challenging for Macao law firms to operate across the border independently, so she foresees an uptick of joint ventures with mainland law firms.

As Macao participates in more cross-border projects centred in Hengqin, such as the Macau New Neighbourhood project (two training bases for Macao university students

and recent graduates to learn about the GBA construction industry) and the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone (a masterplan for better systems integration, tax incentives, and business opportunities), Vong anticipates that many of these issues will be resolved.

“The systems are very different, and they need to be inclusive,” Vong says, adding that it will be important to strengthen cooperation when it comes to arbitration and mediation centres across the GBA. “On top

of that, innovation is needed to promote integration. If we maintain the current system, the situation will remain the same.”

Far from an afterthought, innovation is an essential part of the master plan, according to Macao Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng. “Major industrial projects will be mapped out to facilitate the formation of innovative and technological platforms,” said Ho at the inauguration ceremony of the cooperation zone in September.

“New technologies, new industries, new ecologies, new models will be developed in order to create impetus for the sustainable development of Macao's economic diversification.”

For many professions and businesses, these new developments and signs of economic cooperation bring hope for new horizons and broader business opportunities in a post-pandemic world. Given the potential rewards of GBA integration, Macao's talent pool is uniquely positioned to lead the economy into an exciting new stage of growth.

Professionals – particularly those in banking, finance, architecture, construction, design, law, and healthcare – have been encouraged to live and work across the region, not only to drive Macao's economic diversification but also to reap the rewards of a more integrated GBA.

Covering 106 square kilometres, the zone provides much more physical space for development, as well as many new opportunities for Macao's industries to thrive. From finance to technology, high-end manufacturing, traditional Chinese medicine, tourism and MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions), both existing and emerging businesses will see a world of opportunity across the zone in coming years.

Not only does the new cooperation zone support the city's economic diversification, but it will also provide an accessible, convenient and space to live and work for Macao residents. As the GBA becomes further integrated, the vision for Macao's future becomes clearer and more accessible than ever. ●





## SOCIAL AFFAIRS

# Macao's new express gateway to mainland China

**A new high-tech cross-border pedestrian checkpoint between Macao and neighbouring Zhuhai will ease travel congestion and boost Greater Bay Area connectivity.**

Text **Gonçalo César de Sá**  
Photos **Government Information Bureau**

A new addition to the city, the 168,000-square-metre Qingmao pedestrian border is open round the clock, facilitating 200,000 crossings per day

**M**acao added a new 24-hour express crossing point between the city and the mainland Chinese city of Zhuhai on 9 September. The Qingmao pedestrian border post will drastically cut transit-processing times to as little as 20-30 seconds for those travelling between the two neighbouring cities.

The automated Qingmao crossing will only be open to eligible residents of Macao, Hong Kong and mainland China. Foreign visitors and Taiwan residents will also benefit: the main Gongbei Port crossing, which is just 800 metres away and has processed up to 400,000 crossings per day at its peak, will see substantially reduced queues and crowds as the new facility relieves congestion.





Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng and the Governor of Guangdong Province Ma Xingrui review the plan for areas adjacent to the new Qingmao Checkpoint

Qingmao is the latest in a series of major infrastructure projects designed to elevate Macao's regional role and increase interconnectivity with Guangdong province and Hong Kong, as part of the Greater Bay Area (GBA) initiative.

Macao Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng says the Qingmao pedestrian border checkpoint will strengthen the infrastructure of the GBA and improve connections between the 11 GBA cities. A key part of the Outline Development

Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area is to upgrade the regional transport network.

Chief Executive Ho also draws attention to the fact that the new checkpoint uses the "joint inspection and one-time release" immigration and customs clearance system. This system requires just one single set of border controls to pass through, making travel between Guangdong and Macao more efficient and convenient.



Guangdong Governor Ma Xingrui, who was present at the opening of the new checkpoint, believes that it will strengthen cooperation between Macao and his adjacent province. The Qingmao crossing connects directly to the Guangzhou Intercity Railway in Gongbei, allowing Macao residents to travel easily within Guangdong.

Chief Executive Ho concludes that the Qingmao checkpoint is a remarkable achievement in Macao-

Guangdong cooperation, with each side working within their own legal frameworks, and is a concrete example of "One Country, Two Systems" in practice.

The new checkpoint is good news for cross-border students, commuters and entrepreneurs. Macao resident Ally Li Hui-yin, who has business interests in both Macao and the mainland, travels between the city and Guangdong at least once a week.

(Left) The highly efficient "Joint Inspection and One-Time Release" system is the modus operandi at the newly opened border

(Top and bottom right) With 50 automated channels each for inbound and outbound travellers, immigration has become a lot easier

(Bottom left) Travellers participate in a series of Covid-19 prevention measures at the border



(Bottom right and left) In development for the past two years, the Qingmao Checkpoint is the fifth border connecting Macao to mainland China

She says that Qingmao may become her preferred option for border crossings as she lives five minutes' walk from the new checkpoint. The young entrepreneur says the faster clearance procedure and modern facilities will make her weekly border crossings more convenient.

Leong Tai, who works in Macao but lives in Zhuhai, also welcomes Qingmao: "It's the best thing that has happened to me in the last few years. I cross the border in just minutes and, since the opening, I am at home much earlier."

The Qingmao crossing provides this fast-track solution because it uses 50 automated channels both

for inbound and outbound crossings. Each channel is capable of clearing passengers in just 20 seconds. There are also two staffed counters for each direction of travel.

However, the new Qingmao Border Post can only be used by mainland China, Macao and Hong Kong residents with valid visas and permits. It cannot be used by Taiwanese residents or foreign nationals, who will have to use one of the other land crossing points, such as Gongbei, Hengqin Port and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge. The long-established Gongbei border gate is by far the No. 1 point of entry, accounting for 3.85 million of Macao's 5.9 million arrivals in 2020 and 20.9 million of the record 39.4 million

arrivals in 2019. The second newest border point, at Hengqin Port, opened in 2020 and has the capacity for 220,000 daily crossings.

The Qingmao project has cost the Macao government around US\$500 million (MOP 4 billion). It hired Guangdong Nam Yue Group Corporation Limited, which is owned by the Guangdong provincial government, to handle all aspects of its construction. Nam Yue has been established in Macao for many years with a diverse portfolio of businesses, including importing fresh food products. Nam Yue began work on Qingmao in 2018, completing the project in May 2021.

The project comprised three parts, namely the Macao-side checkpoint

building, the Zhuhai-side checkpoint building, and the redevelopment of the Duck Channel – the body of water which runs along the Macao-Zhuhai border. The building area covers 168,000 square metres.

Macao's investment in the project is expected to pay long-term dividends. Tong Kai-chung, president of Macau Institute of Management, says the flow of people between Macao and Guangdong, and economic and trade opportunities, will grow once the cross-border facility becomes widely used. He believes that more border crossing points with the mainland, including for air and sea travel, will assist the city in further integrating into China's overall national development. ●







ARTS AND CULTURE

# Faces to Remember

Scholar and painter Ung Vai Meng has devoted more than 20 years to studying commemorative Chinese portraiture. His work culminates in *Ancestor Portraits in the Ming and Qing Dynasties*, a definitive book on the genre published last year.

Text **Vivianna Cheong**

One day in 1997, Ung Vai Meng was walking along Rua de São Paulo at the foot of St Paul’s Ruins. Suddenly, he caught a glimpse of Chinese ancestor portraits in one of the many antique shops that line the street. In that instant, Ung felt hooked.

“I’m a painter, so I am sensitive to colours, motifs and imagery,” he recalls. “They are beautiful, especially the portraits of children at home. I returned to the antique shops from time to time and gazed at the portraits. But I couldn’t find any books on them. I wondered, ‘How come no one pays attention to these paintings?’”

That day marked the beginning of Ung’s decades-long exploration of Chinese portraits. Since then, the revered painter and art historian has become an expert on the genre while leading the Macao Museum of Arts (MAM), the Cultural Activities and

Recreation Department of the Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau and the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) over the past 20 years.

In June 2020, his work culminated in a Chinese-language illustrated book, *Ancestor Portraits in the Ming and Qing Dynasties* (《明清祖先像圖式研究》), which serves as a definitive guide to the art form. A testament to Ung’s tireless investigation of this centuries-old genre, the 256-page book showcases many examples of Chinese ancestor portraits alongside art theory and historical context. Ung also dives into provincial painting techniques, symbols, motifs and history.

“I had a lot of questions and tried to get the answers from the paintings,” says Ung, who estimates that he studied more than 2,000 ancestor paintings during his research. “The portraits also tried to tell me many tales.”



“

I started researching ancestor portraits during my master's because I had so many questions.

– Ung Vai Meng

### A LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

Born and bred in Macao, the 64-year-old painter has spent much of his adult life practising Chinese and Western art. He studied sketches and watercolours under respected painter Kam Cheong Ling, who died in 1991, and completed a painting course at Ar.Co Centro de Arte e Comunicação Visual, an independent school in Lisbon, in 1992.

In 1997, two years before Ung became the director of the MAM, he began collecting ancestor portraits from local antique markets. At the same time, he was studying for his master's in traditional Chinese painting theory at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts in 2002.

“I started researching ancestor portraits during my master's because I had so many questions: ‘Why are the female ancestors’ feet covered? Why are male ancestors dressed in Qing-dynasty robes, but the wives are in Ming-dynasty styles? Why are the women dressed in different colours?’” he recalls.

During this time, Ung met art dealer Zhan Qing He, who taught the scholar more about these portraits. Ung went on to earn his PhD in art history at the Chinese Academy of Art eight years later in 2010, during which he dove even deeper into this lesser-studied art genre.

Typically, Chinese paintings focus on landscapes and flowers, says Ung. Unlike Western paintings, they rarely depict realistic scenes, which is what makes these portraits so special. The style dates back to the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), when

China experienced an economic boom, and the arts flourished. During this era, Italian Jesuit painters visited the mainland, bringing many techniques that influenced Chinese painting.

When the Manchu conquered the country and established the Qing dynasty, which ran from 1644 to 1912, the new empire invited further cultural exchange between East and West. Most notably, photography emerged, which Ung believes contributed to the realism seen in Chinese ancestor portraits.

As an act of filial piety, wealthy families often displayed the paintings at home to bless their ancestors and descendants. They also showcased family portraits in ancestral halls during private commemorative rituals, such as the anniversary of an ancestor's birth or the Qingming festival.

After the fall of the Qing dynasty – when many Chinese artworks were stolen or exported – these portraits began appearing in antique shops, museums and art galleries in Western countries.

“These Chinese ancestor paintings are so realistic, but there is little research on them,” Ung adds of his motivation to study them.

Ung's recently published book fulfils a lifelong dream and serves as an extended version of his doctoral thesis. “As I have gathered a lot of information, I felt obliged to put them together for future scholars,” he says. “I was really hoping to publish the book before I died. Otherwise, it would be a major regret. Once I retired [from IC in 2017], I got to work on it.”

### UNCOVERING CHINESE PORTRAITS

Curious, hard-working and passionate, the scholar has covered a lot of ground during his 20 years of research. “I read books written by many experts, learned about the genealogies of Chinese clans, gazed at the portraits and visited ancestral halls and their surroundings,” he says.

He also spoke to various experts to learn how they viewed and analysed the portraits in a historical and cultural context. He visited museums and galleries in four Western countries, such as the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum in the UK, the Royal Ontario Museum in Canada, the National Museum in Prague and the Freer Gallery of Art in the US.

In addition, he ventured through numerous Chinese provinces, including Liaoning, Shandong, Shangxi, Guizhou, Sichuan, Hubei, Yunnan, Guangdong and Fujian. “I backpacked through cities and the countryside to explore museums, galleries, antique markets, villages, and ancestral halls [in search of the portraits],” he says. “My journey was enriching, not only for my research but also for my life.”

The first stop of each research trip was typically ancestral halls. “I started with Fujian province where many buildings were established for worship in their *Hakka* villages, such as *tulou* [an enclosed earthen structure with an ancestral hall, built to house multiple clan families] and *Hakka* houses,” he recalls. “Ancestral halls are important buildings, where people worship their deceased

forebears. In these rituals, ancestor portraits play a key role.”

During the course of his research, Ung visited more than 300 ancestral halls and took photos of portraits he found along the way. If he came across an extraordinary portrait, he often bought it for his collection. “I tried to collect some special portraits,” Ung says, adding that each cost anywhere from a few thousand to MOP 20,000. “If I missed the chance, I feared I wouldn't be able to find them again.”

“Once, I went with Zhang, the art dealer, to collect some paintings he had bought from a seller in Fujian.

The portraits were so valuable, we were worried about getting robbed,” says Ung, recalling his adventures. “So, we met the seller in a disco, where we had to view the portraits with torches.” If Zhang made the transaction in a dimly lit environment, they felt it would draw less attention.

After Zhang made the purchase, Ung stayed behind in Fujian and spent a night in a *tulou*. “The sky seemed so low; it felt like I could touch it. I could hear the cicadas and pigs; everything was so natural,” he says. “That feeling is what one calls ‘the unity of man and universe.’”



The cover of *Ancestor Portraits in the Ming and Qing Dynasties* uses position and colour to denote family status





## 1 PORTRAITS DECODED

### Mixed Wardrobes

When the Manchu conquered China and established the Qing dynasty, the empire required Han men to wear Manchu outfits. However, women could wear Ming-dynasty style dresses

### 2 Out of the Shadows

Painters historically used lines to depict details on faces because shadows were associated with death according to Chinese beliefs. But after the introduction of photography in China, that superstition eventually faded

In this 19th-century portrait from Anhui province, a male ancestor dressed in a *chaofu* (Qing dynasty court attire) and a fur coat sits in between his wife and concubine

(Opposite page) In this ancestor portrait, the wife looms large in red, towering over a diminutive concubine. The work's colours, positions, gestures and proportions indicate the women's social ranks

## COMMUNICATION, DIGNITY, RELIGION

In his ambitious art book, Ung features documentation, photos, illustrations and discussions, alongside interesting interviews with scholars and art dealers in mainland China, Macao and Hong Kong. "I want to explore the stories and facts about these ancestor portraits from multiple angles," he says, adding that his research trips were partially funded by publisher Social Sciences Academic Press (China).

The book opens with a dramatic visual – a beautifully detailed group portrait of a man sitting above two women (pictured, left). The dignified trio don splendid costumes and highly realistic expressions, which can be attributed to photographic influences in the late Qing dynasty.

According to Ung, the painter likely referenced a photograph to create the subjects' faces, while their costumes and accessories signal their social status. In the Qing dynasty, officials had various tiers of social and political ranks – each tier must wear a robe of specific colours and motifs.

"This portrait is fascinating. To draw a face in three dimensions – it requires light and shadow, which represent *yang* and *yin* in Chinese cosmology," he explains. "*Yin* suggests death; *yang*, life."

In the old days, he continues, Chinese society did not like to see a shadow on a person's face because it's associated with *yin*, and thus, death. "For a long time, traditional Chinese painters used lines to show the details of a face," says Ung. "But after the cultural exchange with the West and the introduction of photography during the late Qing dynasty, people started changing

their minds about the application of light and shadow."

Another illustrated portrait in the book sheds light on the use of colour in Chinese portraiture. The painting depicts two women: one sits in a red robe on a *quanyi* (an armchair with a rounded back) with a much smaller woman standing to her right.

The colour, gestures, proportions and positions impart information about the women's ranks. "In Chinese paintings, green, red, yellow, white, and black are the main colours," explains Ung, adding

## 3 Cosmic Colours

The use of colours tends to be based on the five elements (wood: green; fire: red; earth: yellow; metal: white; and water: black). On clothing, colour can communicate status and power



## 4 Covered Feet

At the time, women from affluent families had to cover their feet to eliminate sexual desire, so they are rarely seen in ancestral portraits

they align with the five Chinese elements. In the image pictured above, the woman in red is the wife, while the dramatically smaller woman in pink trousers is her husband's concubine. "Pink is a mixture of red and white, so it is a secondary colour, used to show her lower rank."

What's more, the wife's position on the left (painting on the opposite page) symbolizes superiority. "In many ancestor group portraits, the superior ancestor always lines from their left to right," adds Ung.





## Art in motion

Ung Vai Meng, along with curator João Miguel Barros and artist Chan Hin lo, will represent the city at the **Venice Biennale 2022**. Out of 24 exhibition proposals by 60 curators and local artists, their group exhibition, “Allegory of Dreams”, stood out. Blurring the boundaries between dreams and reality, the exhibition will explore Macao’s distinct collective history and cultural globalisation through photography, sculpture, video and performance art.

He also draws attention to the wife’s covered feet. “In old times, women from affluent families had their feet bound, while working women didn’t,” he notes. “In these portraits, the female ancestors’ feet are covered to [eliminate] sexual desire. Once a woman was married, she stayed at home and was hardly seen by others.”

Readers may also notice the intense gazes captured by Chinese portraiture. “Ancestors usually sit in a *quanyi* chair and face their

worshipping descendants. The subjects look back at the viewers – it’s a communication between ancestors and their descendants,” says Ung.

The position also carries religious symbolism, while the type of chair speaks to Chinese cosmology. “The *quanyi* chair is deliberate. It makes the subject look dignified, almost towering, while the round back and rectangular footrest demonstrate the Chinese concept of ‘round heaven and square earth,’” adds Ung. “Their upright sitting positions are like those of Buddha. Ancestor portraits carry three significant [qualities]: communication, dignity and religion.”

Another highlight of Ung’s book is a 20th-century group portrait depicting a man wearing a modern military uniform and badge of honour. He’s seated in front of other family members dressed in ancient clothing.

“I’ve done a lot of research on that badge. It shows that the man fought and died in the Korean War, resisting the US aggression and aiding Korea,” says Ung. “While he is not dressed in ancient clothing, the purpose of the painting – remembering one’s forebears – still remains.”

While these portraits were once privately worshipped to recollect a family’s beloved and deceased ancestors, Ung hopes to share their stories with greater society. “I hope to draw academics’ and scholars’ attention to this excellent but ignored genre of paintings. They have a rich cultural context and unique artistic values,” says Ung. “I hope my research can fill in the blanks. My next dream is to introduce these portraits to the Western world.” ●



The man in the centre of this ancestor portrait fought in the Korean War, based on his honorary badge. His more modern uniform and central position communicates respect, honour and glory

(Opposite page) In group portraits, male and female ancestors usually stand in alternating lines. In some cases, the painter adds their name on the subject’s shoulders to note their identity





ARTS AND CULTURE

# Dive into sustainability

As part of Art Macao 2021, 海洋 LA MER takes visitors under the sea to raise awareness about sustainability and celebrate the ocean.

Text **Emma Russell**  
Photos **Melco Resorts  
& Entertainment**

Rising sea levels. Melting glaciers. Dangerous weather events. Climate change is no longer a possibility, but a pending global emergency. In recent years, forest fires have swept across Australia and parts of Europe, while devastating floods have occurred in China and the Philippines due to the earth's warming atmosphere. Severe storms have become a regular occurrence, while estimates

show that in less than 80 years, 50 per cent of all the world's species could go extinct.

Frederic Winckler, Chief Creative & Brand Officer of Melco Resorts & Entertainment, hopes to give people more reasons to care by focusing on the beauty of mother nature. Enter “海洋LA MER”, which was the only exhibition focused on sustainability at Art Macao: Macao International Art Biennale 2021.





“

Start to think and meditate if you want to – it’s a moment of peace. A moment for yourself is a rare thing in Macao because everything is so dynamic and active.

– Frederic Winckler

When conceptualising the exhibition, Frederic Winckler, Chief Creative & Brand Officer of Melco Resorts & Entertainment, says he wanted to celebrate the ocean's power, life and beauty

## MOMENTS OF PEACE

The exhibition takes inspiration from “Songs of the Humpback Whale”, a set of hauntingly beautiful tracks created by husband-and-wife duo Roger Payne, a marine scientist, and Katy Payne, a bioacoustic researcher. In 1979, *National Geographic* magazine distributed the records for free to magazine subscribers, helping to change human perspectives about the underwater world.

“At the time, there were a lot of issues with whale hunting and conservationists being very violent against fishermen,” Winckler says. “The singing made the whales human, and people started to care. I also thought it would be interesting to explore the ocean as a theme

because water is so important to Macao – it was a link to the outside world, crucial for trade, and we’re all surrounded by the sea.”

For the exhibit, Winckler also wondered how they could weave in sustainability without making people feel guilty or depressed. “How can we give people a moment to enjoy the sea in a way that makes you come out and go, ‘Ah, yes, we do need to look after it and care for it?’”

Running until the end of October at the Dancing Water Theater at City of Dreams, LA MER compiles artwork by three forward-thinking multimedia artists under the Art Macao theme, “To Create for Well-being”. The trifecta of imagination includes pioneering video work by contemporary French painter,



photographer and filmmaker, Ange Leccia, who documents the soft, rhythmic crashes of waves hitting the beach in his piece.

Meanwhile, French composer Thomas Roussel immerses visitors in visual illustrations and digital recordings of some 35,000 marine species created by an artist collective. “We originally wanted to record [the videos] with a philharmonic orchestra, but we could not get into London because of quarantine,” says Winckler.

Instead, Roussel wanted the ocean to be the conductor for his piece, dubbed “W/A/V/E”. The unique audio-visual experience remasters the sounds of the sea using artificial intelligence to create an ever-evolving symphony that, like

the sea, is constantly changing 24 hours a day and 365 days a year.

Finally, the “SEPHIROTHIC FLOWER” installation by botanical sculptor Makoto Azuma effectively transports visitors to the depths of the ocean. The film, music and photography experience depicts the Japanese artist transporting elaborate, colourful floral bouquets more than 1,000 metres underwater.

“All the pieces we chose showcase moments of serenity,” says Winckler. “We’re inviting people to come and sit in the theatre and think about nothing and just enjoy it ... Start to think and meditate if you want to – it’s a moment of peace. A moment for yourself is a rare thing in Macao because everything is so dynamic and active.”

The exhibition features SEPHIROTHIC FLOWER, in which Japanese botanical sculptor Makoto Azuma releases floral bouquets in the ocean



## AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE

The multimedia art experiences also deliver something else: An important message about the state of our environment. “With LA MER, we hope to make people aware of the importance of protecting the ocean by showcasing its beauty and allowing room for people to think about how fragile and precious the ocean is,” says Jennifer Lai, Director of Innovation and PR at Melco Resorts and a Cultural Ambassador of Macao.

“Art plays a significant role when it comes to impacting people’s perspectives. We hope

it inspires visitors to think about what they can do to help to protect the ocean.”

In addition to specially curated artwork, LA MER offers interactive experiences that aim to spur awareness. For instance, Melco invited legendary artistic director Franco Dragone to transform the Dancing Water Theater into OCEANS, a dramatic spectacle that dives deeper into the issue of marine pollution, to kick off the exhibition in July. And every Saturday at 7:30 pm, guests have been able to enjoy the “LA MER” Film Festival featuring a few of the world’s best movies about the sea – think “The Big Blue”, “Finding Nemo” and “Life of Pi”.

Melco also hosted a performance called OCEANS, a film festival and Flow Body Mindfulness classes (pictured)

(Opposite page) Jennifer Lai, Director of Innovation and PR at Melco Resorts and a Cultural Ambassador of Macao, says art is a powerful tool that can help change perspectives



“

We hope it inspires visitors to think about what they can do to help to protect the ocean.

– Jennifer Lai

Then there’s the House of Dancing Water Underwater Discoveries, which promise a unique opportunity to explore the underwater stage through videos featuring the show’s divers. Last but certainly not least, visitors have been able to attend Flow Body Mindfulness classes every Saturday. In these sessions, The House of Dancing Water’s Head of Performer Wellness has guided guests on a healing meditation guided by sounds of the sea.

The hotel group has partnered with Parley for the Oceans, an NGO that works with big-name artists to turn plastic waste in the ocean into artwork, to sell beautiful bags made from approximately five intercepted plastic bottles with all proceeds benefiting the Parley

Global Cleanup Network’s efforts to remove marine plastic.

Melco Resorts has also committed to achieving zero emissions and zero waste by 2030, having already replaced 244,000 plastic bottles and 9.5 tonnes of plastic related to food and beverage operations with biodegradable alternatives in the last few years. And in 2021, the group has introduced a refillable water plant that will keep 14.8 million plastic bottles from being produced in the first place.

“I hope the exhibition makes people want to see more art, learn about art, bring their kids...” says Winckler. “I’d also love for visitors to think about their behaviour when it comes to sustainability and plastics. If [LA MER] could get people to think a little bit more about this, that would be amazing.” ●





ARTS & CULTURE

# An intellectual who helped rebuild a nation

The Mandarin’s House in Macao is one of the city’s architectural and cultural marvels, and its intellectual owner has played a key role in the revival of modern China.

Text **Mark O’Neill**

Zheng Guanying was an entrepreneur, government official and patriotic political activist. His influence was so profound that his writings on modernisation inspired Chinese emperors, reformers and revolutionaries alike

Despite its small size, Macao is packed with historical and cultural treasures. In recognition of its unique tapestry, UNESCO designated Macao’s Historic Centre as a World Heritage Site in 2005. Among this compact cluster of streets and buildings is the Mandarin’s House. This ancestral mansion is architecturally outstanding and its painstaking restoration took nearly nine years. It is not only widely regarded as one of the best remaining examples of the Lingnan (south China) design style but it was also the home of one of China’s most important intellectuals, Zheng Guanying.

Zheng was a senior Chinese government official, a successful businessman and also a passionate advocate of China’s modernisation and reform. His hugely influential work *Words of Warning to an Affluent Age* was actually written in the Mandarin’s House. Its well-honed and passionate arguments attracted the attention of the Chinese emperor as well as the future founders of both the Republic of China, Sun Yat-sen,

and the People’s Republic of China’s Mao Zedong. It was a book of such outstanding brilliance that it appealed to both rulers and revolutionaries.

Not surprisingly, the Mandarin’s House has become one of Macao’s most popular tourist sites, and prior to the pandemic, it had welcomed more than 116,000 visitors in 2019. With rooms and courtyards covering 4,000 square metres, this imposing private mansion gives a sense of the grandeur of a bygone age. The house offered Zheng a haven for reflection and writing, in the middle of a public life full of challenges and setbacks.

The mansion was built in 1869 by Zheng Guanying’s father Zheng Wenrui – a teacher, scholar, intellectual and collector of old books. The house itself was one of the largest private residences in Macao at that time, with a complex of courtyards extending more than 120 metres along the street. The Zheng family lived in two enclosed courtyards – one was two stories high, the other three. There were also gardens and a one-storey servant quarters.





António Samartul



Cheong Chi Fong

The Zheng family came from the Zhongshan (then known as Xiangshan) prefecture, just over the border from Macao in the mainland's Guangdong province. Zhongshan was the most open to the outside world, and during the late Qing Dynasty and early Republican period, it produced many distinguished industrialists, entrepreneurs, writers and diplomats. The most famous was Sun Yat-sen, another was Zheng Guanying.

Macao, which at the time was under Portuguese administration, was the favoured destination of the rich and the intellectual elite of Zhongshan. It was one of the most modern cities in the region.

Zheng was born on 24 July 1842 in Yongmo township of Sanxiang in Zhongshan. He spent his early years in his hometown, moving to Macao when he was seven or eight.

Following the First Opium War which ended in 1842, the ports of Shanghai and Guangzhou were forced open to foreign commerce. Those who became part of a new business sector – importing foreign products and exporting Chinese ones – made fortunes. One of Zheng's uncles and one of his cousins had gone to Shanghai to work in this field, as compradors, or middlemen, for foreign companies.

Zheng Wenrui decided that his son would have a better future in business than as a scholar. So, in 1858, when Guanying was only 16,

his father sent him to Shanghai to live with his uncle and work with him in a foreign trading company. The young man sat in the office of his uncle, listening and learning, and beginning his English studies.

In 1859, thanks to the introduction of a relative, he went to work in Butterfield & Swire, one of the biggest British trading firms at that time. He eventually established branches of Butterfield and Swire in Jiangxi province and Fuzhou and invested in a new joint-venture shipping company.

#### FOUNDING CHINA MERCHANTS

After nine years, Zheng went into the tea business on his own account and became a partner in the

Gongzheng Shipping company. In 1872, he became the superintendent of a salt bureau in Jiangsu province. The next year he became one of the founding shareholders of Swire Shipping and a shareholder in China Merchants Shipping (CMS), established by the Qing government to challenge foreign firms that dominated China's import and export business. Today the firm is an international conglomerate with its headquarters in Hong Kong.

In 1874, Zheng accepted the post of general manager of Swire Shipping, setting up branches and financial offices in ports on the Yangtze river. From then on, the firm's business boomed. In addition, he diversified his personal investments. From being a comprador, he had become an independent capitalist. He had a close relationship

with Li Hongzhang and other leaders of China's Self-Strengthening Movement, a reformist group.

There were few men in China with Zheng's curriculum vitae. He had worked at a high level in one of the foreign trading firms and knew its management methods, accounting and personnel management style. CMS was established as a model, using Western methods and management techniques. It needed people like Zheng to run it.

Wu Zhiliang, President of the Macao Foundation, argues that this time in Shanghai was vital for Zheng: "His experience as a comprador in Shanghai deepened his understanding of the political, economic and social situation of modern China, which was then plagued by domestic instabilities and foreign invasions."

This aerial photograph shows the main open courtyard of the Mandarin's House, when it was built in 1869. The original complex of courtyards ran 120 metres along the street

(Opposite page) The Mandarin's House welcomed more than 116,000 visitors in 2019, making it one of Macao's most popular tourist sites





(Above) Wu Zhiliang of the Macao Foundation believes Zheng's 'footprints' in the city reflect the interweaving of Macao's own local history with that of the rest of China's national heritage

(Opposite page) *Words of Warning to an Affluent Age* was the Chinese bestseller of its age, with 20 different editions published so far. Its passionate arguments for reform were ignored after a conservative coup in the late Qing dynasty

In 1880, Emperor Guangxu appointed Zheng to manage both the Shanghai Machinery and Weaving Bureau and the Shanghai Telegraph Bureau. The same year, Zheng completed *On Change*, a compilation of 36 essays on political and social reform and his advocacy of market competition. He aimed to reach decision-makers at the highest level of the government, including the Qing court.

Zheng's essays advocated the study of Western knowledge and methods, and the translation into Chinese of Western books on science, technology, industry and the military. It also proposed the introduction of machine production, the development of industry and commerce, and the boosting of private investment in industry, including mining, shipbuilding and railways.

He expressed anger at a tax system that unfairly favoured foreign companies in China over domestic firms. He also proposed political reform and constitutional government. In 1882, he left the Swire company and turned his energy to CMS. Profits improved and in 1883, Li Hongzhang promoted him to chief executive of CMS.

During the Sino-French War (1884-85), Zheng was sent by the Chinese government to Southeast Asia (today's Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand) to collect intelligence and encourage local people to oppose the French.

When the French attacked Taiwan, he went to Hong Kong and chartered a ship to carry troops, grain and ammunition to Taiwan. His book *Travels to the*

*South* is a memoir of this journey. He wrote another book *Diaries of Seafaring* about tours of Southeast Asia and Southern China.

Within the traditional Confucian system, officials looked down on merchants. Zheng therefore had to obtain an official rank to improve his status and gain a larger audience for his ideas. Initially he did this, like other wealthy merchants, by buying official titles. But later the government awarded him further titles because of his contributions to disaster relief and to public services.

#### ENTREPRENEUR TURNS ACTIVIST

In 1885, financial problems plagued his companies. Zheng was exhausted by these difficulties and his family urged him to retire. He took their advice and moved back to Macao, where Zheng resumed living in the Mandarin's House. He developed and enriched the ideas expressed in *On Change*. Freed from daily management and political infighting, he was able to concentrate on writing and arranging his thoughts in a more systematic manner.

The new book covered politics, economics, diplomacy, culture and military affairs and reflected what he had learnt during more than three decades in government and business. In 1894, he published the first five chapters of what became his most famous book: *Words of Warning in Times of Prosperity*. He changed the title from *On Change* to give it a greater sense of urgency. The title was ironic since the 1890s was not at all an era of prosperity for the Qing empire.

In 1894, China became embroiled in a war with Japan that resulted in humiliating defeat and the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, under which China ceded the province of Taiwan and other territories. The defeat created public protest against the Qing government and China's treatment by foreign imperialists.

Zheng's book summarised his experiences as a businessman and as an observer of a declining dynasty confronted by aggressive foreign powers equipped with advanced weapons, technology and political systems. One year later in 1895, Zheng published an additional 14 chapters and, in 1900, a revised eight-chapter version.

Zheng's book captured the spirit of his time and described the feelings of thousands of

intellectuals. It was a reformist's bible, an indictment of a great country in decay and a programme of how to save it – a constitutional monarchy, a new examination and education system, a dense network of roads, railways and telegraph, and the study of western science, medicine and electronics.

It analysed the close relation between a nation's military strength and its commercial prowess. The book went through more than 20 editions and sold more copies than any other title during that period.

He achieved his objective of being read by the most powerful people in the land. Emperor Guangxu read it in 1895 and liked it so much that he ordered 2,000 copies to be distributed to his ministers and other high officials. It helped to inspire a sweeping programme of reforms – including

many of those advocated in the book – in June 1898.

The book's readers also included Kang You-wei and Liang Qi-chao, two of the leaders of the 1898 reform, who only escaped execution by fleeing to Japan. This proved to be the last attempt by the Qing government to reform itself.

On 11 September 1898, the conservative Empress Dowager Cixi Tailhou organised a coup d'état, forced Emperor Guangxu into seclusion and executed six of the chief advocates of reform. It became known as the Hundred Days' Reform.

Despite this setback, Zheng continued to hold important positions in China, including in railway and shipping companies. He divided his time between Guangdong and Shanghai, working as a businessman and writer.





(Top) The Mandarin's House in the 1960s. After Zheng's death the house was rented out despite the lack of adequate amenities to multiple families, leading the building to fall into squalor and disrepair for many years

(Bottom) Macao's government committed to several years of painstaking restoration work to bring the mansion back to its past glory, an elegant component of the city centre's UNESCO World Heritage programme

(Opposite page) Built by Zheng Guanying's father, Wenrui, the ancestral mansion is one of the best preserved examples of the Lingnan (southern Chinese) style of architectural design in existence



Like most Chinese people, he rejoiced in the overthrow of the Qing dynasty in 1911. But he was disappointed that the revolution led to warlords taking power in many provinces of China. So he devoted his final years to education. He was chairman of a public school founded by China Merchant Steamship (CMS) in Shanghai and honorary director of the Shanghai Commercial Middle School. In April 1921, he retired as chairman of the CMS school and died in May 1922 in Shanghai. A year later, his coffin was taken to Macao for burial.

He left behind written works totalling 1.5 million characters. Perhaps his most lasting legacy was his impact on two of 20th-century China's political giants: Sun Yat-sen and Mao Zedong. Sun adopted many of Zheng's ideas in his plans for a modern Chinese republic after the overthrow of the Qing dynasty in 1911.

Mao Zedong, founder of the People's Republic of China, wrote in 1936: "I very much liked this book. The author was an old reformist who believed that the weakness of China was due to the fact that it did not have the instruments of the West – railways, telephones, telegraphs and steamships." After the 1949 revolution, Mao followed Zheng's advice and made the rapid industrialisation and modernisation of China one of his priorities, a policy carried through to the present day.

### CHANGING FORTUNES

With six wives and several concubines, Zheng left behind a large family. Few remained in Macao; most moved to other parts of China or abroad. For years, the house was rented out as cheap accommodation for dozens of families, despite an inadequate infrastructure. It had no modern toilets and each morning a man arrived with a cart to remove the human waste. Running water was in short supply and families had to share kitchens.

The number of residents peaked during World War II, when Macao's population tripled to 450,000, due to refugees fleeing the mainland and Hong Kong.

From 1991, Macao's Portuguese administration began to negotiate the purchase of the house from the developer, but without success. In 1992, the Mandarin's House was listed as a "Building of Architectural

Interest" under Macao's Heritage Law. During this process, many valuable items were stolen from the house.

Following Macao's return to Chinese administration, the Macao government finally took over the badly damaged structure in 2001. Decades of disrepair and a fire demanded a painstaking restoration process that allowed the Mandarin's House to reopen its doors in 2010, five years after it had been included in UNESCO's list of sites in the "Historic Centre of Macao".

The Macao Foundation's Wu says the Zheng Guanying and the Mandarin's House illustrates the interweaving of Macao's history with that of the rest of China. "The history of Macao is a miniature of Chinese modern and contemporary history. Many historic incidents in Macao were closely related to certain major segments in Chinese modern history. Many important historic figures left their footprints in Macao during this process. If we study deeply the important functions of these figures in the history of Macao and China, the content of Macao's history can be enriched, and the importance of Macao's history can be highlighted."

The storied history of the Mandarin's House is a tale of lost grandeur, neglect and decay followed by a long-awaited rebirth – themes which, as Zheng Guanying would no doubt recognise, reflect China's own path to revival. ●



### Travellers to Macao can visit Zheng Guanying Memorial Museum dedicated to his life and work

The museum's four sections – "Ideas on Reform", "Practice in Self-Strengthening Movement", "One Hundred Years of Change in the Mandarin's House" and "Charity Work" – reflect the breadth of Zheng's interests. They are illustrated by exhibits of Zheng's personal and family belongings, including writings, documents, correspondence and family history.

**Zheng Guanying Memorial Museum**  
No. 10, Travessa de António da Silva, the Mandarin's House  
Open: 10 am to 6 pm (Closed on Wednesdays; Open on public holidays)  
Free admission





Q+A

# From karate kid to National Games star

Macao karate practitioner Kuok Kin Hang just won a bronze medal at the China National Games. He opens up about life, the city’s budding martial arts scene and what comes next.



Text **Cathy Lai**  
Photos **Government Information Bureau**

(Left) This September, karate champion Kuok Kin Hang won Macao’s first-ever medal in any sport at the 2021 National Games of China (also known as Shaanxi 2021)

Kuok has been practising karate since the age of 12 and has many international medals under his belt

Macao resident Kuok Kin Hang was just 12 years old when he started practising karate. That was nearly two decades ago, yet he still remembers the excitement he felt when tying on his white robe and performing *katas* – a series of choreographed martial arts movements – for the first time.

Little did he know that those kicks and punches would catapult him onto the international stage a decade later.

Years of practice, patience and persistence have transformed Kuok from a keen novice to a veteran athlete who regularly frequents international tournaments, such as the Karate 1 Premier League and East Asian Games.

This September, the 29-year-old *karateka* (karate practitioner) made history when he won a bronze medal in men’s karate at the 14th National Games of China – a first for the Macao Special Administrative Region.

This was the sixth time that Macao’s team participated in the quadrennial National Games, hosted by Shaanxi province from 15 to 27 September. The delegation comprised 102 athletes who participated in 20 sports, including swimming, shooting, table tennis and badminton.

While the medal may be a first for the city, it is not Kuok’s first karate win. In 2010 and 2012, he placed third in the men’s division at the Asian Karate Championships. In 2013, he took home a gold medal at the East Asian Games, as well as fifth place at the Asian Games.

In the interim, however, Kuok didn’t win any medals. Yearning for a breakthrough, the athlete says the National Games medal was an important boost of confidence.

We sat down with Kuok to talk about his latest achievement, how he prepared for the games, and his karate journey.

## Why did you start practising karate?

I was inspired by a TV series when I was around 12 years old. A scene depicted a suspicious man following a woman into the bathroom. To my surprise, the woman emerged, holding the man down with her hands. She explained that she had been practising karate for years – that’s why the man couldn’t hurt her. I found that very cool, so I started looking for a karate *sifu* (meaning “master” in Chinese) in local studios.





The Macao delegation at the National Games included more than 100 athletes across 20 specialities, from swimming to shooting, table tennis, badminton and karate

**Who has inspired you most?**

I have had two sifus: John Che, the chairman of the Macau Karate-do Federation, is one of them. Not only did he teach me karate, but he also taught me how to be a good person. He has been a significant influence on both my karate skills and personal development.

He has been by my side, encouraging me when I competed in tournaments around the world. In fact, he was the person who pulled me back into the sport when I thought about giving up.

Another sifu is Jasmine Chan. She is a qualified international karate referee. She takes good care of us athletes, making arrangements for training and tournaments. She also shares a lot of helpful advice on improving my katas and preparing for international competitions.

**How did you juggle school and training?**

I joined the training team representing Macao when I was still in high school, but it was not too challenging for me to juggle practice and school. I followed a disciplined schedule and could maintain both quite well.

In 2014, I completed my bachelor’s degree in Communication and Media studies at the University of Saint Joseph, then joined the Macao government’s elite athlete training subsidy plan launched in that year. I was among the first cohort of full-time athletes to benefit from this programme.

Without the subsidy plan, my career as an athlete would have been much more challenging because I would have had to work to support myself. I wouldn’t have been able to devote so much time and energy to training. As a full-time karate athlete, I train for at least five hours every day except for Tuesdays. My routine includes agility and fitness training, as well as technical skills.

**How did you prepare for the National Games?**

We couldn’t join any overseas tournaments over the past two years due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, we missed the chance to compete internationally and gauge our performance levels. We watched tournaments online to find out how the athletes from other countries or regions performed.

The referee panel at a karate tournament assesses performances according to technical and athletic presentation. So it is crucial to analyse other athletes and find out which katas score best. For instance, for male athletes, we often choose katas that showcase more powerful strikes to impress the judges.

**How did it feel to win bronze at the National Games?**

I can’t describe how happy and excited I feel. I hadn’t won a medal for eight years – since the 2013 East Asian Games. Although I had never received any pressure from the government or my team, it was hard. I really wanted

to repay their support with a strong performance and good results.

I was nervous the night before the match. I had no appetite for dinner. The next day, I woke up at 4 am and couldn’t fall back to sleep, even though the match didn’t start until 9:45 am. So it was tough. Fortunately, the anxiety faded when I arrived at the competition venue, and I was focused entirely on the competition.

I felt quite confident that I would win a medal when performing the katas in front of the judges. I knew I had nailed it and delivered my best performance.

**What’s next for you?**

I am already preparing for the Asian Games in Hangzhou next year. Due to my age, the Asian Games will be the last competition I join as a professional athlete. After my retirement, I am thinking about becoming a coach because I want to keep contributing to karate in Macao and help train young athletes.

Alternatively, I will apply for the Macao government’s Education Subsidy

Program for Retired Elite Athletes and pursue a bachelor’s degree in Japanese Studies. I have made some friends in Japan during my training and tournaments there, so I want to learn the language.

**What have you observed about karate in Macao?**

Things have changed a lot since the Macao Karate Youth Academy was established in 2013 by the Sports Bureau of Macao and the Macau Karate-do Federation. More children and teenagers are learning karate at the academy and local studios.

The students are very active in the local tournaments, and their parents are supportive. By winning the bronze medal at the National Games, I hope that I can inspire more young people in Macao to join the karate world. ●

*This interview has been edited for style and length.*

China celebrates the opening of the 14th National Games of China, held in Shaanxi province from 15 to 27 September



Xinhua News Agency





PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

# Macao’s blue-sky thinker develops green trade routes

Bringing superfoods from Mozambique to Asia, Ekithi natural food specialist strengthens trade links and provides a platform for social welfare.

Text **Rafelle Allego** and **Gonalo C sar de S **

Rui Pereira (right) and his daughter Luana strengthen trade relations between Macao and Mozambique through Ekithi. The social enterprise works with farmers in Mozambique to produce natural superfoods, such as cashew nuts and moringa powder

Macao and Mozambique may be oceans apart but they share a common Portuguese heritage supported by centuries of international trade. Pilot and social entrepreneur Rui Manuel Pereira personifies these connections.

Born in Portugal, Pereira was raised in Mozambique and can trace his family line back to Goa when it was still a Portuguese colony in what’s now India. For the past two decades, he’s made Macao his home but hasn’t forgotten his roots. In fact, he has successfully managed to link his two favourite places with his pioneering, family-run social enterprise: Ekithi Agr cola.

Pereira launched Ekithi, which means “Green from Nature” in Swahili, in 2017. The company specialises in superfoods – think cashew nuts, moringa and peanuts, with dried mangoes coming soon – cultivated naturally in Mozambique.

Ekithi, which sells its products online and in Macao, is not only a platform for trade and business between Portuguese-speaking territories, but also a social enterprise that aims to elevate underprivileged farmers in Mozambique.

## AN IDEA TAKES FLIGHT

Ekithi’s focus on nature, sustainability and superfood ingredients is not surprising. Pereira grew up on the Island of Mozambique, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that lies in the Indian Ocean off Mozambique’s northern coast. The mainland is also scenic, with wide open fields, untouched wilderness and year-round blue skies. Growing up amid such landscapes inspired Pereira to treasure nature’s bounty from a young age.





Mozambique Island district stretches into the mainland where the farm is located

## What is Moringa?

The *Moringa oleifera* plant – known by some as the “Miracle Tree” or “Tree of Life” – is native to northern India and parts of Asia and Africa, growing as tall as 12 metres. The plant often appears in folk medicine to treat diabetes, joint pain and cancer, among other ailments.

It’s a pantry staple in Southeast Asian countries and Africa. Packed with more vitamin C than an orange and more potassium than a banana, moringa leaves (and flowers) are often brewed into a soup or eaten raw. They also contain calcium, protein, iron, and amino acids that support muscle growth and healing.

Exploration became a major theme in his life and, as a young adult, he took up flying. Pereira completed flight training and earned his Mozambican aviation licence while still a teenager. At the age of 19, he started piloting small planes, followed by a 10-year stint at Linhas Aéreas de Moçambique before earning his European aviation licence, which is valid internationally.

While in Portugal for training, he met Air Macau pilots who suggested he visit Macao. “Macao is a nice place – small and quiet – like village life in a city,” he recalls them saying.

In 2002, he moved to the city and, after undergoing a 40-day training course at the Airbus aviation centre in Beijing, Pereira’s family joined him. Pereira, who was promoted to Air Macau captain in 2005, has been in Macao for nearly 20 years.

In his new home, inspiration struck. Pereira realised he could build a bridge between Asia and Africa, as well as a platform for social good by tapping into his love for the environment. “Nature is so beautiful in Mozambique,” says Pereira. “It is our duty to protect the land surrounding us.”

The Pereira family already owned a farm on mainland Mozambique, as well as properties on both the mainland and the island. The local people had fewer resources than those on the island so Pereira’s father built a small community with a primary school, a healthcare centre and four wells that provide clean drinking water.

When his health began to deteriorate, Pereira’s father – a history professor at Maputo’s Universidade Eduardo Mondlane – passed the baton. “It’s your turn,” Pereira recalls his father saying.

Upon inheriting 850 hectares in 2017, the pilot knew he had to continue improving living conditions in the villages.

That first year, Pereira got to know the land and people by driving across the property on his annual visit to Mozambique. “That’s when we started thinking about selling the natural products planted by the local communities on the mainland in Macao,” recalls Pereira.

If he exported the locally produced nuts and plants, Pereira reasoned, he could invest more in the community and encourage

sustainable, natural farming practices. “We hoped to improve their living conditions, and provide better farming tools and methods they can benefit from,” he says of the plan.

To kick start the business, Pereira invested around US\$50,000 (roughly MOP 400,540) initially followed by another US\$35,000 (about MOP 280,380) on new infrastructure and processing power on the family farm. He visited Mozambique four times a year until Ekithi officially launched. He also farmed alongside the village residents, which surprised them, as he recalls.





All photos on this spread by Rui Pereira

## Moringa Health Benefits

While researchers have only tested plant extracts on animals thus far, early studies point to the following health benefits:

- Insulin-like proteins within moringa may lower blood sugar, which can benefit those with diabetes.
- Leaf extracts can slow the growth of pancreatic cancer cells.
- Antioxidants found in the plant may help with stress, inflammation and memory.

Rui Pereira (centre, back) and the Ekithi team in the moringa fields of Mozambique

(Centre) Ekithi cashew trees; (inset) cashew fruits

(Right) Agira ‘Queen’ Muterra granted Ekithi access to her land so they could move easily through the fields. Later, she joined Ekithi as a produce processing supervisor

Ekithi is a truly family-run enterprise, with Pereira’s daughter, Luana Neto Pereira, and sisters in Mozambique joining the venture early on. “We have a nutritionist, an environmentalist and an agronomist [in our family] – all of whom are looking after this project,” he adds.

### FARMING FOR GOOD

The majority of the farming takes place in Ampapa, a locality in the Mozambique Island district (which is on the mainland). In this area, residents rely on fishing as their major source of income, but struggle to survive during the off-season. “There are about a hundred families who previously [made a living] from fishing and now work [on our farms],” Pereira says.

Around 20,000 people have lived on the land for centuries and the Pereiras do not charge rent. The families can also use Ekithi’s seeds, tools and chemical-free organic insecticide from Ekithi to

cultivate crops for their personal consumption. Ekithi has 1,000 adult cashew trees and another 4,000 have recently been planted. Each tree can yield up to 7-11 kilogrammes of raw cashews per year; of which they keep 2kg per tree to export to Macao.

“If [the farmers] use our spray, they don’t use any chemical pesticides,” says Pereira’s daughter, Luana, who is a company shareholder. “We can then buy their products to increase the volume of our production.”

If the farmers have excess produce, Ekithi will also buy it from them and sell it abroad. Local families often send children or teenagers to sell any extra crops on the streets. So this arrangement not only provides additional income for the families but also keeps children in school.

Thanks to the efforts to keep the produce chemical-free, two NGOs

began supporting Ekithi and the local communities living on the land. One is OIKOS, which grants funds annually to improve the living conditions for those working on sustainable, environmentally conscious projects. The other, Helpo, invests in training to improve the living standards of vulnerable communities.

Luana Pereira says Ekithi strives to support the community with a sustainable business that everyone can contribute to. This year, for example, Ekithi sprayed the cashew trees of five farmers (each of whom has anywhere from 50 to 300 trees) with an organic insecticide. “We also aim to promote a healthy lifestyle,” she says, alluding to the nutritional value of the plants they cultivate.

The family also improved its production processes in terms of energy consumption since launching in 2017. Currently, they use 80 per

cent solar energy, and the family hopes to reach nearly 100 per cent soon. Over time, Ekithi strives to provide a small solar panel for each family in the community, build clay brick homes for villagers and support the Ampapa Primary School. They also hope to strengthen trade relationships between China and Portuguese-speaking countries and provide a platform for social welfare in the process.

“My dad told me as I was growing up that ‘You cannot live well if people around you have nothing – if you have breakfast and your friend doesn’t have anything to eat, share,” recalls Rui Pereira. He says this lesson in generosity guides the family and serves as the foundation behind Ekithi: “We must use what our land has to offer and give back to the people who look after it with so much care.” ●



PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

# Forum Macao looks to development with optimism

For nearly two decades, Forum Macao has played a pivotal role in developing relationships between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. Now it's looking forward to even greater success.

António Sammartini

Text **Gonçalo César de Sá**

Ding Tian who has been Deputy Secretary-General of Forum Macao since 2017 says he hopes to bring countries closer together in what he calls "communications of hearts"

Nineteen years ago, Forum Macao was created to link China and eight Portuguese-speaking countries through enhanced economic cooperation, investment, cultural and educational exchange.

After nearly two decades, the Forum's success is reflected in the fact that trade between China and its Asian, European, African and Latin American partners has increased 13 times during its existence. With ambitious plans for the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area underway, Forum Macao is ready to raise this multilateral cooperation to new levels.

Connected to these countries by centuries-old trade routes and a common Portuguese heritage, Macao is perfectly placed to spearhead China's growing influence in all regions of the world economy. The eight partners – Angola, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Timor-Leste – are already reaping the benefits of increased trade with the world's second-largest economy, with a surge in Chinese investment.

Ding Tian, Deputy Secretary-General of Forum Macao, points out that when the Forum was created, trade between China and Portuguese-speaking countries was around US\$11 billion (MOP 88.2 billion) but has risen to around US\$146 billion (MOP 1.2 trillion).

Chinese investment in the eight partners has also seen impressive results. "China's investment in Portuguese-speaking countries increased from US\$60 million

(MOP 481.3 million) in 2002 to US\$50 billion (MOP 401.1 billion) in 2018. This reflects the increase in cooperation and multilateral relations," Ding says.

Macao's unique character as a Chinese territory with strong historic Portuguese links has been recognised as a national asset.

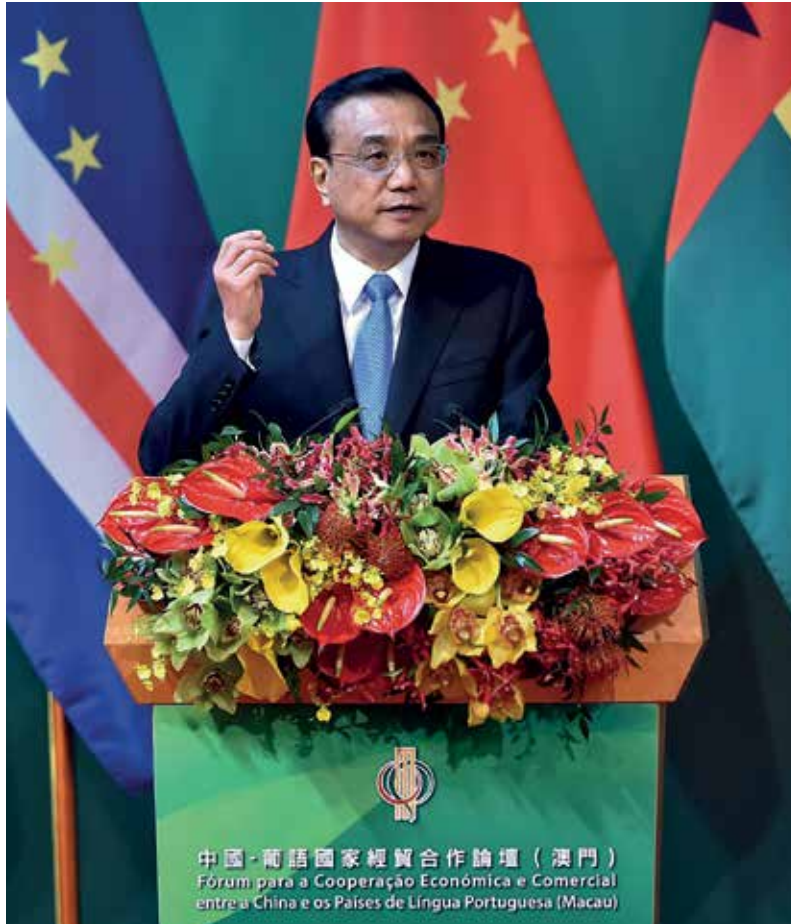
"The central government has always supported all initiatives aimed at creating and strengthening all forms of cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. It benefits not only Macao but also its residents who in the future will gain from a more developed economy, new job opportunities and a more modern and sophisticated society," he stresses.

Forum Macao today brings to life the words of Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, when he said in 2016: "Macao is a bridge, a window and a platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries."

Ding notes that in 2020 the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) prepared a report, on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of Forum Macao. The report found that the Forum increased economic and trade cooperation between China and the eight Portuguese-speaking countries.

Particularly important is Macao's role as a service platform for three centres: Business Services Centre for Small and Medium Enterprises of Macao Forum Participants; Convention and Exhibition Centre for Macao Economic and Commercial Cooperation between participating countries; and a Portuguese-speaking Countries Food Products Exhibition Centre.





At the 5th Ministerial Conference in 2016, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang outlined a host of measures to enhance collaboration between China and Portuguese-speaking countries

(Opposite page) Since its establishment in 2003, Forum Macao has proven to be a valuable platform for international collaboration and integration with mainland China

When circumstances permit, Forum Macao will organise seminars and inspection tours to Hengqin so foreign delegates can see the great opportunities offered by this development zone.

Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, large-scale meetings with officials from China and Portuguese-speaking countries are difficult. The Forum will therefore organise a special conference on the theme, “Working together to fight the epidemic and find new forms of common development“, to bring together senior officials from China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

In October, there will be a virtual session in Macao attended by senior ministers from China and Portuguese-speaking countries. A second session, also in Macao, will invite the ambassadors of Portuguese-speaking countries in Beijing and ministers of the People's Republic of China to discuss economic and commercial sectors in person.

“This is a format that, although different from the previous Ministerial Conferences, can bring broader results as it will allow for a deeper debate on issues related to relations between China and Portuguese-speaking countries,” says Ding.

Participants will not sign an action plan for Forum Macao for the next few years but will instead issue a joint declaration containing the content of the debates and decisions taken.

This CASS evaluation also emphasised a need to simplify trade and investment promotion, improve the development of small- and medium-sized enterprises, diversify cooperation, boost financial innovation, strengthen cultural cooperation, develop international cooperation and promote national integration.

“The report not only allows us to see what has been done over the years with regard to cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, but also points out what the future direction of the Forum’s development should be,” Ding argues.

At the heart of future progress lies tremendous opportunities offered by the Greater Bay Area initiative. This is a plan to intensify

the integration of Macao with Hong Kong and nine cities in the mainland’s Guangdong province, forming a potential powerhouse of the global economy. Already Macao is working closely with neighbouring city Zhuhai and the Guangdong provincial government to develop Hengqin Island.

The recent creation of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone, in Hengqin, creates opportunities for Macao, Ding believes.

“We are awaiting more details on how the new cooperation zone will work and will then organise meetings with representatives of Portuguese-speaking countries and Chinese companies to find the best forms of cooperation to work in this new area,” he says.

## COOPERATION IS KEY

During the 5th Ministerial Conference held in Macao in 2016, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang announced 18 measures to promote cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. These included making Macao a service platform for financial institutions, establishing the Confederation of Entrepreneurs of China and Portuguese-speaking Countries, and setting up in Macao the Service Platform Complex for Commercial Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries.

Enhancing cultural exchange, language links and skills among young people are other focuses. Li outlined plans to establish a training base for bilingual professionals in Chinese and Portuguese, creating the Cultural Exchange Center and the Exchange Center on Innovation

and Youth Entrepreneurship between the China and Portuguese-speaking Countries.

Macao has now become one of the most important centres for training bilingual specialists. As Ding notes: “The Forum has supported the Macao government’s enormous effort to create a base for training bilingual professionals who will be important in creating talent to support future cooperative relations between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. In the academic year 2020/2021, there were 25 Portuguese courses in Macao’s universities, with a total of 1,170 enrolled students, of whom which 167 were from Portuguese-speaking countries. In the local primary and secondary schools, there were 6,600 students learning Portuguese.”

Ding also hopes to bring countries closer together in what he calls “communication of hearts.”

This could take the form of cultural and gastronomic weeks, parades and arts festivals that demonstrate deep connections between cultures.

Over the years, Forum Macao has evolved, increasing China’s areas of cooperation with Portuguese-speaking countries from seven in 2003 to 20 today. Sectors that saw the most growth include investment, commerce, culture, tourism, public health, traditional medicine, production capacity and intergovernmental cooperation.

Today, nearly two decades after its creation, Forum Macao has become an integral part of the city’s development, showing its global and regional vision.

Looking back over Forum Macao’s past 19 years, Ding describes the institution as an “indisputable reality, where the existence of cooperation mechanisms is real and the results obtained are excellent”. ●



António Sanmarul





ARTS AND CULTURE

# Glazed in History

The Portuguese may have brought *azulejo* tiles to Macao, but the city has made this ancient art form its own.





Azulejos, which take their name from the term for “polished stones” in Arabic, came to Macao by way of ancient Mesopotamia, Spain and Portugal

Text **Inara Sim**  
Photos **António Sanmarful**

**A**zulejos: You might not recognise the name, but you’ll know them when you see them. Walk around Macao and you will find these glazed ceramic tiles decorating alleyways, foundations, schools, churches and flowering courtyards. Most often a combination of blue, white and yellow, the tiles depict graceful palm fronds, strapping Portuguese heroes, biblical scenes amongst others.

Since the Portuguese introduced azulejos more than 400 years ago, they have since become an iconic part of Macao’s architecture and culture. In fact, in August 2020, the Cultural Affairs Bureau of Macao added Portuguese-style tile making and painting to its growing inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Macao.

To better understand how they became a symbol of Macao’s multicultural past, we take a look at the evolution of azulejos and the story behind this beautiful local craft.

## FROM BABYLON TO MACAO

Derived from the term for “polished stones” in Arabic, azulejos – particularly the blue, white or yellow varieties – have become synonymous with Portugal. But the use of glazed and decorative ceramic tiles actually stretches back to ancient Assyria and Babylon – two of the most prominent Mesopotamian empires.

These ancient worlds were filled with colour. Archeologists have discovered countless decorated tiles and bricks on the walls of ancient Assyrian palaces, as well as the Gate of Ishtar, built in 575 BC at the entrance to Babylon; the Step Pyramid of Djoser, built in 2630 BC in Egypt; and the 6th-century Blue Mosque in Turkey.

In empires where Islamic culture flourished, geometric-patterned wall tiles served as important elements of artistic and religious expression. Islamic potters developed lustre tiles

for palaces, mosques, and holy shrines, which gave these buildings a distinctive iridescent finish.

In the 8th century CE, the Moors brought Islamic mosaic and tile art to the Iberian Peninsula when they settled in the area. But it wasn’t until the 1500s, when King Manuel I of Portugal visited the Alhambra palace in Grenada, in southern Spain, that the Portuguese adopted this style of tile work. After falling in love with the palace’s dazzling geometric and colourful ceramic tiles, the ruler imported azulejos from Seville, a Spanish city west of Grenada, to decorate the “Arab Room” in his palace in Sintra, Portugal.

Azulejos as we know them today took shape during two major historical periods: the Reconquista, a 770-year-long series of civil wars between Christians and Muslims, and the Italian Renaissance.

After Christian forces wrestled control of the Iberian Peninsula from the Moors in the 15th century, tile painters began painting animals and humans (formerly banned by Islamic law), historical and cultural events,

religious imagery, flowers, fruit, and birds.

Meanwhile, in Italy, the technique of *majolica* – tin-glazed pottery – made it possible to paint directly on the tiles. This made it easier for artists to depict more complex designs, and Portuguese tilers quickly picked up the skill. The Azulejos evolved from an almost industrial repetition of patterns to artistic creations.

Not long after the majolica technique emerged, Portuguese tile artists began experimenting with white-and-cobalt blue patterns inspired by Ming dynasty Chinese porcelain. After Portuguese aristocracy commissioned ornamental, blue-and-white tile designs for palaces and churches in the 17th century, the bicoloured style gained widespread popularity.

A particular style of azulejos that is unique to Portugal began to appear around the 18th century: *figuras de convite*, or invitation figures. These ornate life-size figures – generally of footmen, noblemen or finely dressed women – decorate the staircase landings of courtyards or entrance halls, welcoming guests inside.



## AZULEJOS IN MACAO

The ceramic tiles that had been used for centuries to decorate buildings and public areas in Portugal spread to its colonies and settlements, and Macao was no exception. When the Portuguese settled in the territory, they introduced their food, religion, architecture, and of course, azulejos, which now form a very important part of the visual and cultural fabric of the city.

Scattered throughout, the azulejos of Macao can be found in churches, in courtyards, and various building façades – even street names are printed on signs that resemble the blue-and-white tile design.

Over the past four centuries, Macao has embraced these tiles as part of local culture. From the techniques to the motifs, they have come to symbolise the city's Chinese and Portuguese characteristics. They also serve as an artistic embodiment of the peaceful coexistence between Chinese and Portuguese cultures.

At Casa de Portugal (CPM) – a non-profit association that aims to promote and preserve Portuguese culture in Macao – a large studio welcomes people of all ages and skill levels to join workshops focusing on the creative industries, including painting azulejos.

Intricate azulejos add colour and life to the façade of the Portuguese School of Macao

(Opposite page, left) José Matos teaches azulejo-painting workshops at Casa de Portugal (CPM)

(Opposite page, right) Teresa Cheong has been exercising her creative muscles at CPM's workshop for over a decade



“

Azulejos have become a part of Macao and its history. It's important that we keep the art alive.

– José Matos

Workshop instructor José Matos, who joined the association in December 2019, says it's a place for people to connect with Portuguese culture. “This Portuguese style of painting on tiles is so symbolic, and that's what people here really enjoy,” he says. “Azulejos have become a part of Macao and its history. It's important that we keep the art alive.”

In the beginner's course, students learn to draw pictures in the majolica style – birds, fruits and flowers – and then paint on the tiles, which is harder than it sounds. When bathed in a glaze of silica, water, lead and tin oxide, the tile absorbs the water while the powder forms a thin layer covering the tile's surface. “It's very different than painting on paper,” says Matos. “When you paint on paper, you

have much more control. But when you are painting azulejos, you are painting on a powder, and it is difficult to control.”

While students come and go, some keep returning to delve deeper into the art. For example, mother Paula Bernardino, daughter Sara Figueira, and fellow student Teresa Cheong have been attending classes at CPM for more than a decade. They also participate in fairs and markets to showcase their work.

“We love Portuguese tradition – that's why we have come here almost every day for the past 10 years,” says Figueira. “We have taken all kinds of ceramic classes, but azulejos are our passion. We are Portuguese and we need to remember our culture. Painting tiles is part of who we are.”





Regulars at CPM, Paula Bernardino (top) and daughter Sara Figueira are long-time azulejos artists who showcase their work at fairs and exhibitions

“Painting tiles takes patience,” she continues. “You need to practice, practice, practice.”

For Bernardino, all that practice paid off in June, when her masterpiece of a full-size *caryatid* – a female figure that doubles as a column or pillar – was featured at the Casa de Portugal’s “Didactic Exhibition of the Portuguese Azulejo”. With the support of Macao Foundation, the exhibition was held from 8 to 20 June to commemorate the “June Month of Portugal in the MSAR”. It was also dedicated to the art of tile-making, with an aim to increase awareness about azulejo techniques and artistic expressions.

Curated by Matos and Paulo Valentim, an azulejo master, the exhibition took place at Lou Lim Ieoc Garden, and welcomed over 4,000 visitors. “Our initial plan was to feature works from masters in Portugal, but of course with the pandemic, that was not possible,” says Matos. “A lot of works have been made [at the workshop] over the past 10 years, so we were able to showcase different techniques and examples.”

Everyone who attends classes here wants to know about azulejos and how they are made. This exhibition was a simple but perfect way of explaining it.”

Ten years may seem a long time to some, but for artists creating azulejos, it’s just the beginning of a lifelong passion. “Once you start painting the tiles, you cannot stop – it’s very addictive,” says Figueira. “It’s nice to see azulejos around Macao, but really, we should have much, much more, and not just printed tiles, but hand-painted, unique pieces. They add so much culture and make the city richer.”

The azulejos found around Macao are more than just beautiful pieces of artwork. They communicate the city’s history and heritage, as well as illustrate the significance of a Portuguese presence in Macao and the city’s development. “It is so important for us to continue this tradition,” Figueira says. “If we don’t, it will die out.” ●

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ZOOM

# Airshow China: PLA Air Force unveils military hardware

This year’s Airshow China, hosted in Zhuhai, showcased 100 aircraft and welcomed visitors from nearly 40 countries and regions.

Photos Xinhua News Agency



A J-20 stealth fighter jet zips across the sky, climbing high, dipping low, only to join five other jets in a choreographed aerial routine. This acrobatics performance marked the opening of the 13th China International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition (also known as Airshow China 2021) on 28 September.

The six-day event in Zhuhai, just across the water from Macao, drew around 700 companies from nearly 40 countries and regions, both online and in person. During the show, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Air Force unveiled more than 100 aircraft across 460,000 square metres of exhibition space, dazzling attendees with demonstrations of China's warfare capabilities and homegrown innovation.

The new aircraft ran the gamut from J-20 stealth fighter jets to a large Y-20 transport aircraft, a new J-16 electronic warfare aircraft, a large AG600 amphibious aircraft, an H-6K bomber, and a WZ-7 high-altitude reconnaissance drone powered by a domestically produced turbojet engine. ●

- ① To kick off the six-day Airshow China 2021, the Bayi Aerobatic Team performed air acrobatics in J-20 stealth fighter jets
- ② The biennial event is China's largest showcase of aviation technology, homegrown innovations and military capabilities







- 3 The Aviation Industry Corporation of China pavilion displayed a J-20 stealth fighter jet model
- 4 The show also featured the WZ-7, a high-altitude reconnaissance drone, which is powered by a domestically produced turbojet engine
- 5 Visitors got an up-close look at a full-scale Shenyang FC-31 model, among the best stealth fighter jets in the world
- 6 An AVIC AG600 amphibious aircraft displayed its fire-fighting abilities with a 9-tonne water drop during the event





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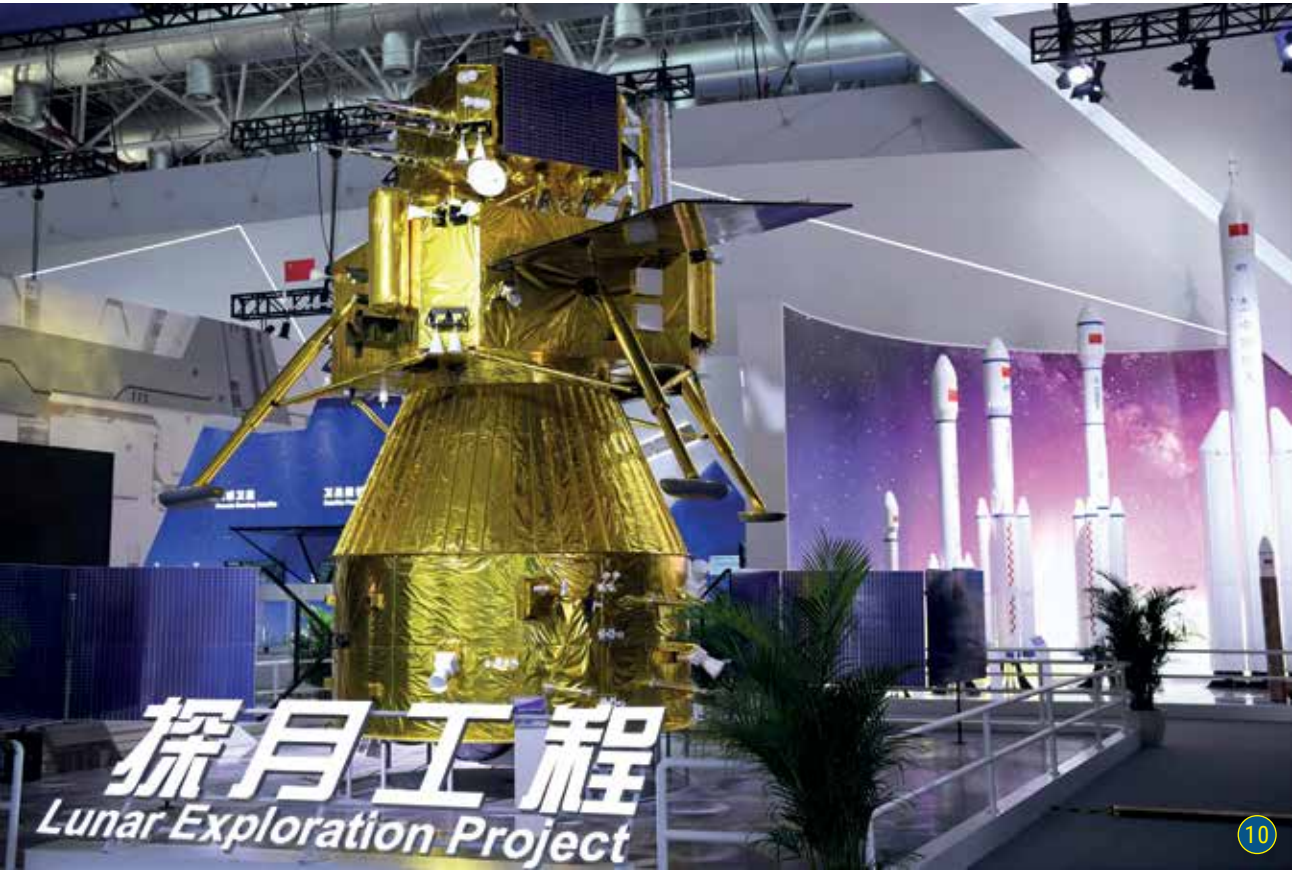


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- 7 The J-20 stealth fighter jets in the opening ceremony featured domestically built engines. This will boost the aircraft's performance and speed up mass production
- 8 A JL-10 training plane also performed during the opening ceremony. These nimble planes help pilots improve their technical and strategic abilities
- 9 The Y-20 heavy transport aircraft took part in airborne and air delivery training at the airshow
- 10 The Lunar Exploration Project booth exhibited projects by China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC), including a 3D model of the China space station complex
- 11 CASC's display of the lunar probe and re-entry capsule from Chang'e-5 (China's fifth lunar exploration) attracted thousands of visitors



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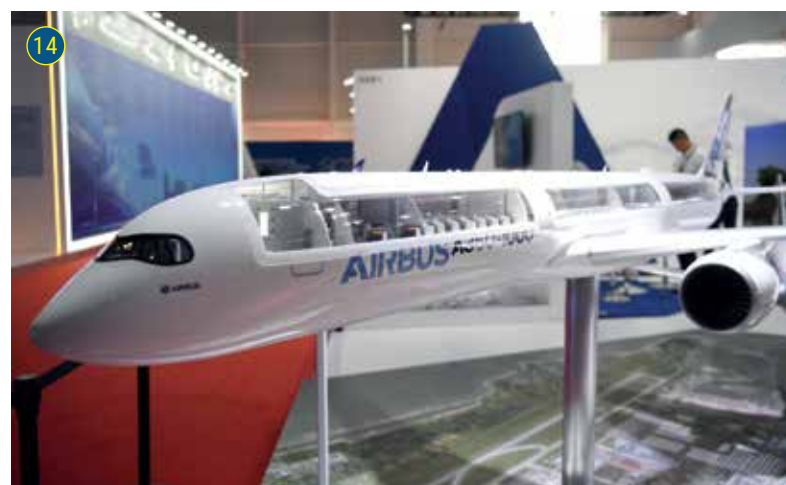
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⑫ China's new electronic warfare aircraft J-16D revealed four jamming pods – under the wings and air inlets – and two missiles

⑬ To meet high demand for cargo transportation, US aircraft manufacturing giant Boeing and Guangzhou Aircraft Maintenance Engineering (GAMECO) announced plans to establish two B767-300 passenger-to-freight conversion lines in Guangdong in 2022

⑭ The Airbus A350 XWB made its China debut at the airshow. Meanwhile, the European aircraft manufacturer announced plans to deliver five wide-body jets from its Tianjin Delivery Centre to Chinese airlines



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