

Macao 澳門

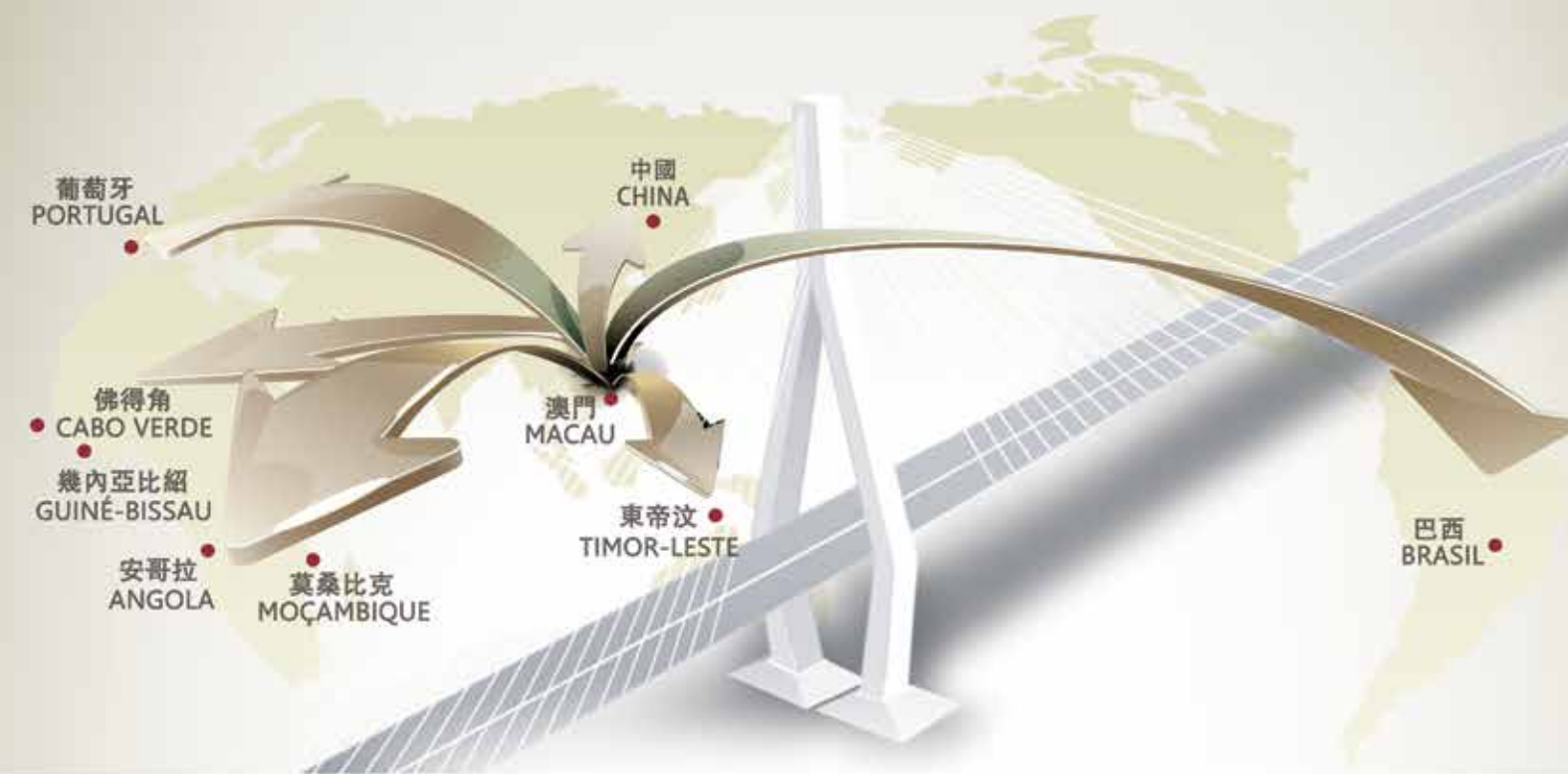
THE PLATFORM



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ON THE COVER Macao is increasingly becoming a hub for China and Portuguese-speaking countries across all sectors

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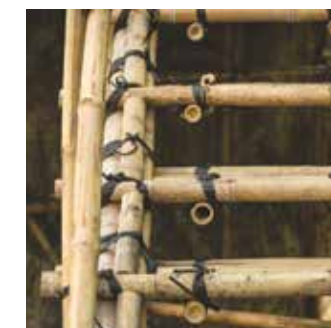
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A VISION FOR MACAO AS A PLATFORM

When the Macao Special Administrative Region was established, Beijing defined the territory's role as that of a bridge between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. The local government has since worked to create conditions for Macao to act as a platform for those relations.

Closer relations have been achieved, more co-operation mechanisms created and the future envisaged taking into account new technologies and the new world economic order.

A decade and a half after that key decision, Macao is now ready to enter a new phase in its role as a platform based on the experience since acquired, which enables future strategies to be reassessed in line with the expectations of all stakeholders.

In this issue of the Macao Magazine, Economy and Finance Secretary Leong Vai Tac recalls the path taken since the platform was created, the challenges encountered, strategies implemented and actions to be developed in the future.

This issue also reviews progress in recent years in the areas of finance, business, education, culture and media, as well as the work of Forum Macao, and includes a wider perspective by the economist Lu s Sales Marques, who considers the platform from the standpoint of China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative.

Regarding relations with Portuguese-speaking countries, Macao Magazine highlights Chief Executive Chui Sai On's visit to Portugal, where the aim was to enhance relations between Macao and Portugal. The work of the Macau Productivity and Technology Transfer Centre, an institution that has been supporting Macao's platform initiatives for the last 20 years is also placed under the spotlight.

A key characteristic of Macao's construction industry is covered in an article about the age-old tradition of using bamboo scaffolding for the buildings that continue to multiply in this constantly growing city.

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Macao's role as a platform between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries brings new challenges to the SAR. A greater mission that Macao is willing to take on

A GREATER MISSION

NEW CHALLENGES FOR THE "PLATFORM"

TEXT JOSÉ LUÍS DE SALES MARQUES
PRESIDENT OF INSTITUTE OF EUROPEAN STUDIES OF MACAU (IEEM)

Macao will soon host the 5th Ministerial Conference of the Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs), commonly known as the Forum Macao, on October 11th and 12th 2016.

Representatives from the Chinese Central Government as well as PSCs, with the exception of São Tomé and Príncipe, will gather to review their multilateral co-operation and approve a new triennial strategic plan for 2017–2020. The Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) government will also take part in the Ministerial Conference as it holds key responsibilities in the implementation of the forum's strategic plan.

The Central Government of the People's Republic of China, together with PSCs and MSAR's government, launched the Forum Macao in October 2003. The forum's objective is to foster trade and economic co-operation between China and PSCs and to transform Macao into a commercial and trade services platform, taking advantage of the city's unique historical, cultural and linguistic components. As a platform built upon a mutual language, the Forum Macao is able to enhance the scope of co-operation to new dimensions.

From inception, the Forum's DNA went beyond the material limits of trade and economic co-operation. As a very small economy with limited international exposure in either trade or financial sectors, a shortage of human capital and virtually no experience in or relationships with international business networks, the Portuguese connection is Macao's most valuable asset and the only card it can play at the international level with win-win outcomes for all parties involved, that is, China, Macao SAR and PSCs. In hosting the Secretariat of the Forum as well as the Ministerial Conference and participating in many of the activities listed in its action plan, Macao is taking on a number of opportunities and responsibilities to build a service "platform" upon which relationships between China and PSCs may be forged and strengthened. It is important to note that this platform role is an overall development goal requiring not only the efforts of the Macao Government but also full participation of the SAR and the people of Macao.

THE PORTUGUESE CONNECTION IS MACAO'S MOST VALUABLE ASSET AND THE ONLY CARD IT CAN PLAY AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

THE SCOPE OF THE FORUM'S ACTIVITIES

The scope of the forum's activity plan has long exceeded the boundaries of trade, finance and overall economic co-operation to encompass culture, education, training and interpersonal relations. It includes information sharing of bilingual talent (Chinese and Portuguese), business co-operation and exchanges known as the "three centres" that sustain the platform.

By taking on roles and functions that help lower transaction costs of the main players in this multiregional, multicontinental and multicultural co-operation, Macao retains its usefulness to the Forum Macao, a unique bilingual platform with two main working languages: Chinese and Portuguese.

Concurrent to carving out its place in the international scene, Macao should also provide businesses and professional opportunities in order to develop its own economic fabric, including professional services, financial institutions, private investors or even small and medium enterprises (SMEs) poised to expand and compete internationally.

ASSESSING THE FORUM MACAO AND MACAO'S ROLE

Now in its 13th year, the Forum's achievements as well as Macao's performance in its role as a platform have varied.

Notwithstanding the global economic slowdown and downturn of commodity prices, trade in goods between China and PSCs stood at a very respectable US\$41.7 billion as of the end of the second quarter. However, the year-end total will fall short of the US\$160 billion dollars predicted in 2013 at the 4th Ministerial Conference when the world economic outlook was more optimistic and a number of major economies of PSCs were performing better.

Therefore, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, from a trade angle, the next three years will continue to be challenging as Brazil, the major Portuguese-speaking economy, is expected to continue under deep recession through 2017; the oil-producing economy of Angola is suffering through a slump; Portugal is still struggling with the financial crisis and persistent economic weakness; and China is experiencing a period of structural adjustments to its economic model.

However, the Forum Macao is much more than a trade and economic multilateral co-operation platform. Its action plan, approved in 2013, includes participation in the US\$1 billion "Fund for Co-operation and Development between China and PSCs" managed by the Commercial and Development Bank of China.



4th Ministerial Conference, Macao 2013

Co-operation in training is well under way, with several initiatives carried out every year in Macao and in the mainland. Macauhub, the media portal created by Government Information Bureau in 2005, has consistently provided updated quality information on several dimensions of relations between China, Macao SAR and PSCs along with the most recent developments in the forum's partner countries. Recently, calls have been made for enhanced cross-cultural co-operation.

Initiatives organised annually in Macao – such as the Lusophone Festival and Gastro Week as well as private initiatives like "The Script Road," a union of literati from PSCs and various Asian nations—have contributed significantly to these dimensions. However, as of yet, they have only taken place in Macao, without any significant undertaking to promote the culture of the Forum Macao in other partner countries.

Public opinion in Macao frequently voices its scepticism about the Forum's results as well as whether the role Macao is playing is measuring up to expectations. Commentators are keen to point out that trade between Macao and PSCs remains low and that participation of local businesses in commercial and investment initiatives in PSCs is still marginal, with each successful case being an exception rather than the rule.

But one has to evaluate the Forum's success from a different perspective. From an institutional point of view, the Macao government is fulfilling its role as the host of the secretariat and provider of back-up services and necessary funding. In this context, the Macao Trade and Investment Institute (IPIM) takes a lead role in organising all business-related events including the establishment of all "three centres," overseas promotions and trade missions and all other related activities under the scope of its mission of promoting trade and investment: Economic Services is involved in all aspects of the Forum Macao's interaction with CEPA (Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement) and mainland China; and the Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau (IACM) addresses cultural activities. Additionally, Bank of China (Macau Branch) is developing co-operation between local banks and banks in PSCs to foster internationalisation

of the RMB and opening RMB clearing houses in several PSCs.

Overall, Macao's contribution is improving; however, its rate of implementation may be insufficient. What seems to be lacking is greater initiative in seeking out opportunities that could increase the city's contribution to the Forum Macao which functions under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce of the Central Government.

BUILDING SYNERGIES BETWEEN THE FORUM MACAO, PSCS AND OBOR

The Forum Macao and to a certain extent the Macao SAR itself are in the process, respectively, of finding their optimum positions amidst the diversity of international platforms and co-operation organisations, including the Central Government's most recent initiative, the Belt and Road initiative, also known as OBOR.

The Macao Government has clearly committed Macao to actively participating in the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Maritime Silk Road through co-operation with ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) members and PSCs. Portugal and other PSCs were not included when the corridors of the OBOR initiative were first announced, as stated by the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) in 2013, but since then, they have been invoked on several occasions by officials from mainland China as well as MSAR Chief Executive Chui Sai On.

OBOR establishes a framework that provides significance and focus to the Forum Macao's growth and development initiatives. As a platform based on language, culture and historical connections, the Forum Macao provides the necessary software for OBOR's successful investments in connectivity and infrastructure, overall a win-win scenario. Meanwhile, the forum should continue seeking out new motivations and responsibilities.

The role Macao plays is manifold. It must increase efficiency in running forum-related activity plans and associated initiatives. It must also aim to attract more private partners and facilitate their interaction between China and



Fisheye view of Macao

PSCs, for instance, by training and matching bilingual professionals with interested parties. Macao could also enhance its value by building language communication and education platforms in the region, or even in Hengqin, particularly for co-operation among forum members in cultural and creative industries. Value added via professional services in, for instance, legal and architectural services, would also be welcome.

Cultural initiatives in PSCs promoting stronger mutual understanding and interpersonal relations must be properly supported and promoted. IACM has extensive experience dealing with cities from PSCs which could be tapped along with resources provided by the Forum Macao to foster inter-city co-operation.

Last but not least, OBOR-supporting financial infrastructure such as the Asian International Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Road Fund could provide technical know-how and opportunities for sound investment in infrastructural projects in PSCs for Macao's private and institutional investors as well as the future Macao Fund. ●

MACAO COULD ALSO ENHANCE ITS VALUE BY BUILDING LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION PLATFORMS IN THE REGION, OR EVEN IN HENGQIN, PARTICULARLY FOR CO-OPERATION AMONG FORUM MEMBERS IN CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES



財政司司長辦公室

GABINETE DO SECRETÁRIO PARA A ECONOMIA E FINANÇAS

BEYOND ECONOMY

Secretary for Economy and Finance, Leong Vai Tac speaks about the significant achievements of Macao as a platform resulting from co-operation on commerce and trade, training, language, culture, education, finance, infrastructure and traditional medicine.

TEXT WING-SZE LEE
PHOTOS MACAOLINK

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCES: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

This is a signature of Macao!

Positioning Macao as a service platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs) has been a major initiative of China's Central Government following Macao's handover. As we are still in the early years of this transition, Macao has yet to diversify its economy. The Central Government advocated for and initiated Forum Macao, held in Macao, with the hope of scaling up economic and trade co-operation and exchanges between China and PSCs, utilising the deep historical and cultural connections Macao has maintained with such nations.

This platform between China and PSCs highlights Macao's advantage in regional co-operation and provides a path for its own unique economic development.

From the 1st Ministerial Conference in 2003 to the 4th in 2013, Macao has gradually evolved from a platform mainly for civil and cultural exchanges to an integrated service platform providing excellence in experience and professionalism as evidenced by four successful Forums as well as continued support of and assistance in tasks implemented by the Permanent Secretariat of Forum Macao.

A strategic plan for economic and trade co-operation is signed at each Ministerial Conference. Since 2003, the number of cooperative aspects of these plans has steadily increased. The 2013 Strategic Plan covers 15 aspects of co-operation including Macao-related content such as economy and trade, investment, education, tourism and culture. Specific directives pertaining to the Macao Platform are also included.

At the 4th Ministerial Conference of Forum Macao in November 2013, Vice Premier Wang Yang issued a clear statement supporting Macao's endeavor to establish itself as a "Commercial and Trade Service Centre for Small and Medium Enterprises between China and PSCs", a "Food Product Distribution Centre for PSCs", and a "Centre for Conventions and Exhibitions for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China

and PSCs" (the "Three Centres"). Additionally, he proposed eight new initiatives supporting the development of PSCs, including the establishment of a Macao-based bilingual information-sharing platform for corporate co-operation and exchange between China and PSCs.

To date, there have been significant achievements resulting from co-operation on commerce and trade, training, language, culture, education, finance, infrastructure and traditional medicine.

THE ECONOMIC AND TRADE PLATFORM

The online and offline establishment of the "Three Centres" for the Co-operation Platform between China and PSCs has progressed in phases.

The Economic & Trade Co-operation and Human Resources Portal between China and Portuguese-speaking countries was launched in April 2015. The Portal provides online trade and professional information on individuals and institutions in China and PSCs.

Apart from economy and trade, pooling talent, including bilingual professionals or those with Portuguese proficiency, etc., also needs to be promoted in order to keep our modern commercial services industry on track with economic and trade trends, which requires inter-departmental coordination and collaboration.

ESTABLISHING THE "THREE CENTRES"

Macao's new positioning, assigned by the "Guiding Opinions on Deepening Pan-Pearl River Delta (PRD) Regional Co-operation" issued by the State Council in March 2016, foster the city's role as a financial service platform for commerce and trade co-operation between China and the PSCs. Macao has long been implementing policies towards marketisation, an internationalised economy, trade and finance system, simple and low tax rates, free currency conversion, and free flow of capital, enabling a more internationally competitive business environment and creating ideal conditions for enterprises from sectors such as China-PSCs industrial capacity co-



TALENT, INCLUDING BILINGUAL PROFESSIONALS OR THOSE WITH PORTUGUESE PROFICIENCY, ETC., ALSO NEEDS TO BE PROMOTED IN ORDER TO KEEP OUR MODERN COMMERCIAL SERVICES INDUSTRY ON TRACK WITH ECONOMIC AND TRADE TRENDS

co-operation to set up platform companies in Macao for developing markets in China and PSCs. By combining these advantages with successful efforts of the "Three Centres," acceleration of the provision of large-volume financial services and higher comprehensiveness and efficiency are achieved, including featured financial services such as those catering to industrial capacity co-operation and financial leasing for PSCs.

There is a huge demand for investment in areas such as infrastructure, energy and minerals, agriculture and high-tech co-operation between China and PSCs. As an important node on the Maritime Silk Road, Macao can fully utilise the advantage of being a service platform between China and PSCs to assist with economic and trade co-operation between the two.

Key among these advantages is language. Chinese-Portuguese bilingualism is an important component in the development of economy and trade between China and PSCs, especially in terms of culture. Macao has been playing a vital role as a bridge of economic and trade co-operation between China and PSCs, providing solid support for the continued co-operation. As such, the SAR Government has been promoting bilingual education and training to cater to the demands of the market and human resources.

SYNERGIES OF THE PLATFORM BETWEEN CHINA AND THE PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING COUNTRIES AND THE PAN-PEARL RIVER DELTA

Supported by China, Macao has been an important external gateway, especially for PSCs, into provinces and cities in mainland China.

Moreover, participation in the State’s “Belt and Road” establishment plays to Macao’s unique advantage as a bridge connecting the PSCs, coordinating with enterprises in mainland China to actualise the “going out” strategy.

In order to thoroughly implement the “Guiding Opinions on Deepening Pan-Pearl River Delta (PRD) Regional Co-operation,” IPIM organised delegations from the PRD to Portugal and Belgium. On the one hand, this is an opportunity for PRD delegates to enhance exchanges with Portuguese small and medium enterprises and the commerce chamber of Portugal. On the other hand, it is also a step forward encouraging the PRD to “go out” as a region.

“Coming in” is promoted through conventions and exhibitions held in Macao, especially the Macao International Environmental Co-operation Forum & Exhibition (MIECF), a green platform of technology and information sharing and business expansion provided for the PRD and international environment industry. Aside from economy and trade, Macao can also provide services especially in technology transfer, an important advantage of the Macao Platform. In recent years, we have made a bigger effort to invite PSCs to participate in MIECF.

Value-added co-operation via exploiting “+Macao”, that is, the “going out” of provinces and cities in mainland China by means of “+Macao” is vitally important. We also have to continue working on helping PSCs find different kinds of opportunity in the mainland market. Apart from

The “Go Out” or “Going Out” policy is the People’s Republic of China strategy of encouraging Chinese enterprises to invest overseas.

The “Coming In” policy is the People’s Republic of China strategy of welcoming foreign enterprises to invest in China.



promotional efforts by the government, we also need local enterprises, professionals and young people to collaborate with forces from mainland China to “go out, come in” organically under these policies.

STRENGTHENING MACAO WITH THE “BELT AND ROAD” INITIATIVE

Participating in China’s construction of “Belt and Road”, Macao should utilise its unique advantage as a bridge connecting PSCs and assist in the “going out” of mainland enterprises. In this way, PSCs may enhance their participation in the “Belt and Road” construction through Macao. This could be achieved by developing economic and trade ties with countries along the “Belt and Road” by means of “coming in, going out,” thereby expanding overseas markets—especially the huge potential of PSCs—and development opportunities together.

The High-Level Seminar on Finance and International Co-operation for Productivity held during the 7th International Infrastructure Investment and Construction Forum (IIICF) was attended by infrastructure ministers of PSCs as well as executives of international financial institutions and contractors who have had in-depth discussions regarding enhanced co-operation on a financial and industrial capacity. Angola, Brazil, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Portugal have sent delegates to the Seminar. This is one example demonstrating how Macao can make full use of its role as a service platform between China and PSCs in the area of infrastructure co-operation. The

8th IIICF will continue efforts to invite PSCs and countries along the “Belt and Road” and facilitate co-operation by organising PSC-themed activities.

MACAO AS THE FINANCIAL PLATFORM

As a free and open economy with a stable investment environment, low tax rate, free entry and exit of funds, and financial and legal systems in line with international standards, Macao has accumulated a certain level of financial strength. Coordinating with the State’s economic development policy, Macao can provide various categories of financial services, such as renminbi clearing, and arbitration and investor-investment matching enterprises from China and PSCs.

ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT AND GENERAL PUBLIC

The development orientation for Macao, as stated in China’s 12th and 13th Five-Year Plans, aims to transform Macao into the commerce and trade co-operation platform between China and PSCs. To achieve this goal, a collaborated effort from each and every sector of Macao society is needed. How do we help society comprehend how this could assist Macao to establish a moderate diversified economy and integrate into the nation’s development strategy which could benefit local small and medium enterprises development and career planning for young professionals. Encouraging a group mentality and uniting different sectors of society will create a ‘win-win’ situation. It is imperative to the success of the platform that its benefits are promoted publicly so that society collectively grasps this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

THE FUTURE OF THE PLATFORM

It is a responsibility delivered to Macao by the nation as well as a gift presented to Macao.

With Macao entering a new period of economic adjustment, it is believed that all sectors of our society recognise the importance of a diversified economy. Furthermore, it is extremely crucial for future development to figure

out how to exert the unique advantages of Macao and elevate the status and promote the functions of Macao in national economic development and opening-up process.

Committing to supporting Macao to build the Sino-Portuguese commerce and trade co-operation service platform is again clearly stated in the nation’s 13th Five-Year Plan. Macao should fully grasp this opportunity to make good use of the national support policies, particularly bonding with the nation’s construction strategy of “Belt and Road” Initiative building strategy and the 13th Five-Year Plan, and strengthening and accelerating the construction of the “Sino-Portuguese Platform” on the basis of progresses made.

Aside from the Macao government’s efforts to promote construction of the “Commerce and Trade Service Platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries,” we encourage local enterprises, professionals and young people in all circles of society to improve their knowledge and understanding of these new initiatives, which will likely provide both residents and companies with new opportunities. We are determined to make the best of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Macao. ●

AS A FREE AND OPEN ECONOMY WITH A STABLE INVESTMENT ENVIRONMENT, LOW TAX RATE, FREE ENTRY AND EXIT OF FUNDS, AND FINANCIAL AND LEGAL SYSTEMS IN LINE WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS, MACAO HAS ACCUMULATED A CERTAIN LEVEL OF FINANCIAL STRENGTH

CHINA AND THE PORTUGUESE- SPEAKING COUNTRIES PLATFORM

The first Five-Year Development Plan of the Macao Special Administrative Region (2016-2020) aims to deepen and speed up construction of One Centre and One Platform, promote development of the economy, improve citizens' wellbeing and take steps to create a more democratic and harmonious society.

The plan, now under public consultation, indicates that Macao seeks to actively integrate China's development and reinforce its role in economic development and the process of opening China to the exterior.

With respect to China's 13th Five-Year Plan, Macao will foster the creation and development of industries associated to tourism, conventions and exhibitions, trade, finance, Chinese traditional medicine and other emerging ones, with a view to helping local companies diversify and boost their competitiveness.

The plan considers that construction of "One Platform" is one of the factors for developing Macao's economy and a key component of the strategy for achieving the desired level of economic diversification.

The document recalls that "the government of Macao created the Commission for Development of the Services Platform for Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, whose mission is to study and draw up measures and policies needed to promote construction of that platform."

As "One Platform," Macao aims to become a provider of professional intermediation services in the language, finance, legal and accounting areas, in initiatives involving mainland China and the Portuguese-speaking countries.

Those initiatives encompass humanistic and cultural exchanges, trade and investment, industry and regional co-operation. The ultimate objective is to promote co-operation based on mutual benefit, and to achieve joint development involving mainland China, Macao and the Portuguese-speaking countries.

Over the next five years the government will establish a Portuguese language training programme for professionals and encourage more people to obtain certification in Portuguese. It will also attract resources and implement preferential policies to train bilingual personnel in Chinese and Portuguese in the language,



FIVE-YEAR PLAN Chui Sai On and Leong Vai Tac (left to right)

finance, legal and accounting areas (...) in order to fulfill the role of "One Platform."

The government will speed construction of centres for commercial services for SMEs from China and the Portuguese countries, for distribution of food products from those countries, and for conventions and exhibitions to promote economic and trade co-operation between China and those countries.

In Macao's Five-Year Development Plan, the government states that it "aims to annually organise large-scale activities in Macao addressing the Portuguese-speaking countries, promote more participation by companies from Macao and mainland China in conventions and exhibitions held in those countries, and support participation by more companies from those countries in conventions and exhibitions held in Macao and mainland China."

Also regarding efforts to enhance Macao's role as a platform, the government intends to promote the local financial industry, developing financial leasing and asset management services while supporting participation of Portuguese language countries and their institutions in RMB financial operations and playing the role of a platform for renminbi clearing between mainland China and those countries, thereby working together to promote internationalisation of the Chinese currency.

The plan also indicates that the government aims for the total value of trade between Macao and the Portuguese language countries in 2020 to have grown by 10 per cent over the 600 million patacas (US\$75 million) recorded in 2015.

A COMMISSION FOR EXPANDED CO-OPERATION

The Macao government has established a Commission for the Development of the Service Platform for Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, according to an executive order published on 21st February 2016.

The goal of this commission is an "integration of the various services and government entities involved, in order to widely bring together expertise and, together, move towards the targets set as part of [the] construction of the platform in question." This "integration" being the result of the registering progress for the "Service Platform for Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries" and the "next phase of this work [which] requires acceleration and increased efficiency."

One of the commission's primary tasks includes conducting studies on increasing Macao's role as a service platform for trade co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries as well as developing the corresponding measures and policies required. Another is coordinating and preparing the plan for the future development of Macao, which builds upon this "service platform for trade co-operation."

This commission is chaired by Chief Executive Chui Sai On; its vice president is Secretary for Economy and Finance, Leong Vai Tac. Other members include Secretary for Administration and Justice, Chan Hoi Fan, Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Tam Chon Weng, the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute, the Supporting Office to the Permanent Secretariat of Forum Macao and several other government departments.

Administrative, technical and logistical support as well as operational costs are provided by the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute. ●



HIGH-LEVEL MEETINGS

Chief Executive Chui Sai On visited Portugal
and expects even better relations in the future

TEXT PAULO G. FIGUEIREDO
PHOTOS GCS AND XINHUA NEWS AGENCY

During his September visit to Lisbon, Portugal, Macao Chief Executive Chui Sai On could hardly have been given stronger incentives by Portuguese authorities for the Special Administrative Region's (SAR) role in articulating cultural and economic ties between China and the lusophone countries. The chief executive's expectations are therefore particularly high for the upcoming Macao Forum Ministerial Conference, where Portugal will be bringing a high-level delegation.

Upon the conclusion of his 2-day visit, Chief Executive Chui Sai On met with journalists to express his satisfaction with the outcome, in particular, new roads of co-operation with Portugal and Macao's increasing role in the growing relationships between China and countries like Angola and Mozambique. In response to a question posed by Macao Magazine regarding the upcoming Macao Forum, the chief executive did not shy away from expressing great confidence in its success, highlighting the platform's track record in multilateral co-operation. "We are pleased. Our hopes for the Forum include a retrospective as well as looking forward toward even better results so that we can grow. Our expectations are high."

During the visit, Portuguese Prime Minister António Costa confirmed his attendance to the 5th Ministerial Conference of the Forum Macao to be held October 11th and 12th. Portugal, who was represented by Deputy Prime Minister, Paulo Portas, at the 2013 Forum, is thus elevating the status of its delegation.

Chief Executive Chui's visit kicked off 12 September with the 4th Macao-Portugal Bilateral Commission Meeting, where the Portuguese government was represented by Minister of Foreign Affairs Augusto Santos Silva and Secretary of State for Industrialisation (and former Macao resident) Jorge Costa Oliveira, as well as diplomats and several ministerial officials.

Increased co-operation in teaching Portuguese language within Macao was key to discussions at the commission. "Macao is an excellent platform for the dissemination of the Portuguese language in China," stated Minister Silva regarding the government's public

presentation of its new plan for language promotion abroad. The minister expressed Portugal's willingness to assist in training language teachers in conjunction with an increase of scholarships by the SAR which has yet to be evaluated.

After meeting with the Portuguese minister, Chief Executive Chui highlighted the "many conditions and opportunities being created so that residents and future generations can access Portuguese language training," stressing the SAR's efforts in promoting the learning of Portuguese in both public and private schools.

Science was also at the center of these 12 September talks. A meeting between the Macao Fund for the Development of Science and Technology and Portugal's Foundation for Science and Technology is to be scheduled with the aim of boosting co-operation. Fostering bilateral entrepreneurship and start-ups was yet another focus.

Lisbon increasingly appears on the map of international tech entrepreneurship. Starting in November, it will host the annual Web Summit – a major international start-up event – and the government is keen that the summit will boost the city's appeal. Prime Minister Costa emphasised this goal in a 1-hour meeting with Chief Executive



Chief Executive Chui Sai On and Prime-minister António Costa



4th Macao-Portugal bilateral commission meeting

Chui. Talks also focused on economic and trade co-operation. Prime Minister Costa "highlighted Macao's importance as a platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries," according to officials from his cabinet.

At the closing of a tightly-scheduled first day, Chief Executive Chui Sai On met with President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa to discuss further economic co-operation with Portugal given Macao's current efforts to diversify its economy. Macao's government, he added, is sparing no efforts in promoting sectors outside the gaming industry, including creative services, traditional Chinese medicine, financial services, conventions and exhibitions, among others.

Given his talks with President Rebelo de Sousa, Chief Executive Chui Sai On is confident that the upcoming Macao Forum meeting will further strengthen Portugal-China and Portugal-Macao relations. Since 2011, Chinese companies have accumulated significant stakes in not only key Portuguese utilities, including EDP (China Three Gorges) and Redes Energéticas Nacionais (China State Grid), but also in banking (Haitong) and health services (Fosun). Millennium Bcp, Portugal's largest private bank is in talks with Fosun over a partnership that could increase the Chinese fund's stake as high as 20 to 30 per cent.

With financial ties growing not only between Portugal and China but also countries like Angola and Mozambique, where Macao-operating Portuguese banks such as Caixa Geral de Depósitos have a significant presence, the SAR will have a growing role in RMB clearance. This was recently highlighted by Lisbon's head of the Macao Monetary Authority, Anselmo Tang.

One of the major projects under consideration, according to Chui Sai On, is a center in Macao which would house all SAR institutions connected to economic commercial activities, trade promotion, event organisation, meetings, cultural exhibitions and professional training under one roof.

At the 4th Macao Forum Ministerial Conference in 2013, Deputy Prime Minister Wang Yang launched the "one platform, three centres" initiative, entrusting Macao with creating specific centres linking China with Portuguese-speaking countries, specifically in the areas of commercial services for small and medium enterprises, food product distribution and conventions and exhibitions for economic and trade co-operation.

As part of the ongoing work of building Macao as a platform, Chief Executive Chui reiterated the SAR's commitment to this initiative at the end of his visit. "There is the need to develop this centre, and the central government has given us this opportunity."

The SAR is open to hosting businessmen from Portuguese-speaking countries in an approach to the "great market" of China, in particular, opportunities offered by Chinese free trade zones, the chief executive added. He further welcomed Portugal's presence at the upcoming Macao International Fair from October 20th to 22nd.

Summarising his 48 hours in Lisbon a "great success", Chief Executive Chui promised that the "bridge" between Portugal and China will grow and strengthen via the Portuguese-speaking SAR. "We are very pleased with the Portuguese government's support... [and] we will keep on and further this friendship. ●

COMMERCE AND TRADE PLATFORM

The Macao government has been accelerating the development of Macao as a Service Platform for Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, by actively taking part in regional and international co-operation initiatives. Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute and the Permanent Secretariat of Forum Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries (Macao) have been playing major roles in developing the commerce and trade platform.

MACAO TRADE AND INVESTMENT PROMOTION INSTITUTE

The Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) has worked over the years to promote and publicise China's investment opportunities among the Portuguese-speaking countries by organising visits, supporting companies, taking part in exhibitions and organising business gatherings.

In recent years, the IPIM established centres to exhibit products from Portuguese-speaking countries in the cities of Fuzhou, Hangzhou, Chengdu, Shenyang, Guangzhou and Wuhan, and plans to open new promotion fronts in Jiangmen, Changsha, Tianjin, Chongqing, Haining and Shanghai in China and later in Lisbon, Portugal and São Paulo, Brazil.

Since 2004 IPIM has jointly organised more than 20 missions to Portuguese countries with Chinese entrepreneurs. From 2005 to this year it has sponsored with the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) meetings with entrepreneurs from China and those countries which led to deals in the areas of infrastructures, food, real estate and agriculture.

The IPIM took part in the launch of the Commercial and Trade Service Centre for SMEs between China and the PSCs, the Food Product Distribution Centre for PSCs and the Centre for Conventions and Exhibitions for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and the PSCs.

It has also organised important fairs in Macao, such as the Macao International Trade and Investment Fair (MIF), where participation by Portuguese-speaking countries has increased.

Also noteworthy is how the IPIM has been co-ordinating activity with Forum Macao since 2003, showing that institutions can complement each other to optimise channels for publicising the Macao platform in China and the PSCs.



20th MIF, 2015



Visit the
Portal
website



A DATABASE FOR FUTURE RELATIONS

In 2015, an online database for Co-operation in the Areas of Economic, Commercial and Human Resources between China and Portuguese-speaking countries was launched.

The website's main purpose is to provide a comprehensive and searchable database for information on food products from PSCs (including wine, preserves, coffee, tea, beverages, olive oil, sweets, dairy products, condiments and spices), Portuguese/Chinese bilingual professionals and professional services, conventions and exhibitions in China and PSCs, economic and trade data, as well as commercial law of PSCs.

FOOD PRODUCTS FROM PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING COUNTRIES ON PERMANENT DISPLAY IN MACAO

In March, IPIM inaugurated the Exhibition Centre for Food from Portuguese-speaking countries. Occupying 390 square metres across two floors of a building in Tap Seac Square (known as the Casa de Vidro, or Glass House), the exhibit features roughly 700 food products from Angola, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal and Timor-Leste, including natural foods, snacks, canned goods, coffee and alcohol, among others.



Inauguration of the Exhibition Centre for Food from PSCs, 2016

FORUM MACAO

The Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries (Forum Macao) was established in 2003 by initiative of the Chinese central government in co-ordination with seven Portuguese language countries (Angola, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal and Timor-Leste) and with collaboration of the government of the Macao Special Administrative Region.

Forum Macao is a multilateral co-operation mechanism. Its goal is to consolidate economic and trade exchanges between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries, using Macao as a platform for linking China and those countries.

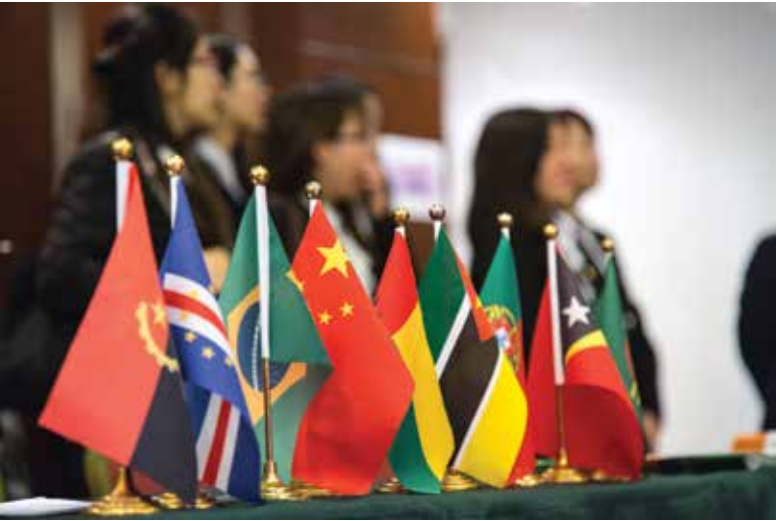
Four Forum Macao ministerial conferences have been held in Macao, in October 2003, September 2006, November 2010 and November 2013. They approved action plans for economic and trade co-operation which determined areas for co-operation between governments as well as in trade, investment and business, agriculture, livestock and fisheries, infrastructures, natural resources, environment, education and human resources, tourism, transport and communications, finance, culture, radio, cinema and TV, health and sports.

On October 11th and 12th 2016, senior leaders from China and the Portuguese-speaking countries will meet in Macao at the Fifth Forum Macao Ministerial Conference.

That conference will focus on the theme of "Working Toward Stronger Sino-Portuguese-speaking countries' Trade and Economic Relations – Combining Efforts, Jointly Building a Platform,

Sharing Fruits of Development," and count the participation of official delegations from China and seven PSCs.

The ministerial gathering is based on the Belt and Road initiative, focusing on the maximum common denominator, i.e. development in order to promote economic and trade relations between China and the PSCs, while at the same time supporting Macao in efforts to establish the region as a services platform for trade co-operation between China and those countries.



Training Centre of the Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and the PSCs



Meeting of Forum delegates in Macao

MINISTERIAL FORUM HIGHLIGHTS

2003

1st CONFERENCE

Marked the beginning for co-operation among the Forum's participating countries in areas of intergovernmental co-operation.

2006

2nd CONFERENCE

Expanded the scope of co-operation, enriching content and introducing new focus areas, including a willingness to study the possibility of setting up a specific Forum Macao financing mechanism, as indicated in the action plan.

That action plan established Macao's role as a platform by introducing in the text a paragraph on the Macao Platform.

2010

3rd CONFERENCE

Marked by the participation of senior leaders, including the then Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao. The meeting witnessed the announcement of measures for China to support the Portuguese-speaking countries.

It also introduced, for the first time, the issue of bilingual human resource training. The high point was China's announcement of the launch of a US\$1 billion fund to finance Forum Macao projects.

2013

4th CONFERENCE

Chinese Vice Premier Wang Yang announced six measures to support Portuguese-speaking countries from 2014-2016:

- 1 - Grant preferential loans in the amount of RMB 1.8 billion to Forum members in Asia and Africa, primarily to support construction of infrastructure and projects of productive nature;
- 2 - Share successful experiences of establishing special economic zones and economic development zones with Portuguese-speaking countries, encourage Chinese enterprises to build areas of economic and trade co-operation in the countries concerned based on the principle of self-determination and in accordance with market rules;
- 3 - Deploy an educational training complex in each Asian and African member country and offer each of them solar energy lighting project and radio, television and media equipment;
- 4 - Train 2,000 professionals from Asian and African member countries in various areas, including part-time masters degrees;
- 5 - Provide Portuguese-speaking countries with 1,800 Government Scholarship vacancies with a view to encouraging them to carry out student exchanges with China;
- 6 - Send 210 doctors to the members of the Asia-Africa Forum to strengthen exchanges and co-operation in the field of medicine and health.

WHAT THE FORUM SAYS ABOUT THE PLATFORM

XU YINGZHEN
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE PERMANENT
SECRETARIAT OF FORUM MACAO

In recent years, Macao has endeavoured to diversify its economy and build a service platform for trade co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs) with the goal of fostering mutually-beneficial relationships. The platform offers bilingual services in both Chinese and Portuguese, business services, conventions and quality exhibitions as well as its own unique cultural environment designed to support and optimise building business partnerships. It also actively promotes interactive information sharing through portals provided by the Portuguese/Chinese Bilingual Personnel and Companies Exchange, the Centre for Business Services for Small and Medium-Sized Lusophone and Chinese Companies, the Convention and Exhibition Centre for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries and the Centre for Distribution of Food Products from Portuguese-speaking countries.

As the executive body of the ministerial conferences and a key element in bilateral trade relations between China and PSCs, the Permanent Secretariat of Forum Macao has witnessed and documented significant developments in the action plans for economic and trade co-operation and along the lines of the “One Platform, Three Centres” initiative. Support has also been provided by governments of participating countries of Forum Macao, Macao and various sectors of society. The Secretariat has focused its efforts on trade promotion, cooperative human resource training, and cultural and language exchanges, thereby enhancing Macao’s role as a service platform for trade co-operation between China and PSCs.

Macao has become essential in various areas of co-operation between China and PSCs as an indispensable liaison providing a favourable



**MACAO HAS BECOME ESSENTIAL IN
VARIOUS AREAS OF CO-OPERATION
BETWEEN CHINA AND PSCS AS AN
INDISPENSABLE LIAISON PROVIDING A
FAVOURABLE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT
WITH A CHINESE-PORTUGUESE
LINGUISTIC ADVANTAGE**

business environment with a Chinese-Portuguese linguistic advantage. Hosting events specific to young entrepreneurs has also strengthened ties between the Forum’s participating countries. Successful Forum Macao ministerial conferences have been held in 2003, 2006, 2010 and 2013, during which four respective economic and trade co-operation action plans were approved outlining diverse content and goals among participating countries.



CRISTINA MORAIS
DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL
OF FORUM MACAO

Macao continues developing activities meant to consolidate and deepen mutual knowledge, especially the establishment of diverse partnerships between economic players of the Forum Macao participating countries.

Macao’s platform role and the results obtained since 2003 in promoting and boosting trade and more recently in co-operation in human resource training, finance and cultural exchanges show that the Macao platform is being gradually and very successfully achieved, with support from the People’s Republic of China, the Portuguese-speaking countries, the Macao Special Administrative Region government and associations and business stakeholders from the participating countries.

Macao’s advantages are due to its historic relationship with the Portuguese language. Language, history and culture are aspects that most obviously come to mind, though Macao does have other facets such as a legal, banking and tax system grounded in Portuguese that will provide a major and increasingly assertive contribution to framing this economic and trade relationship.

Those factors, among others, together make Macao this platform for a privileged relationship between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries. The Macao-based Forum seeks to showcase and enhance these attributes.



BELARMINO BARBOSA
REPRESENTATIVE OF ANGOLA

The Macao platform is an instrument meant to boost economic and trade exchanges between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, serving as a hub for multiple forms of co-operation in different sectors of the economy such as trade, industry, transport, investment, agriculture and fisheries, health, mineral resource exploitation, infrastructure construction and tourism, among others.

Angola is a producer of petroleum, on which its state budget is very dependent. Owing to the downturn in crude oil prices on the international market the country is currently undergoing an economic diversification process, leveraging other areas of the production chain to create alternatives that can help achieve a well-balanced economy.

Angola accordingly considers co-operation with China to be important for accomplishing that aim, using the Macao platform as a two-way instrument to publicise and thereby foster interchanges and closer ties between economic and commercial operators from Angola and China.

The establishment in Macao of the framework for One Platform, Three Centres means there will be physical spaces that showcase products from our countries, which economic operators from China, Macao and the Portuguese-speaking countries can access (also electronically) to promote business. This mechanism therefore seems to have come to stay, to prevail for a long time.



AUGUSTO BATISTA DE CASTRO
REPRESENTATIVE OF BRAZIL

Relations between Brazil and China are solid and date to before Forum Macao was established. The countries had already formalised a strategic partnership in the 1990s. However, the last 15 years have seen trade between Brazil and China grow at a very fast pace.

The trade relationship is quite intense, as China has become Brazil’s main trading partner. There are many cross-investments, especially Chinese investment in Brazil, and in that regard we have to value the Macao platform, an economic and trade promotion instrument that brings both countries closer together.

Brazil understands that Forum Macao is based on three pillars: economic and trade promotion, cultural promotion, and human resource training and education. It is a useful tool that has particularly helped Brazilian SMEs enter the market of Macao and China.

Regarding cultural promotion, events held in Macao are a useful means to promote artists and performers from Brazil and other Portuguese language countries.

As for the matter of academic exchanges, personal training and human resource education, Brazil also values efforts to train bilingual professionals, which narrow ties not just between Brazil and Macao but also between Brazil and China by providing intermediaries for bilateral negotiation, besides enhancing knowledge about the countries.

When a language is learned, so is a culture. Learning Portuguese provides a key to knowledge about various Portuguese-speaking countries.

In short, we see a great deal of potential in the three pillars on which the Macao platform is built.



MÁRIO VICENTE
REPRESENTATIVE OF CABO VERDE

As a mechanism to complement relations between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, Forum Macao has been fulfilling its role of promoting the image and business opportunities of the different participating countries. We view the Forum with confidence and optimism.

Cabo Verde is a small country, in terms of both territory and respective market. It has sought to use this platform to promote the country in various Chinese provinces through activities of the Forum as well as actions co-ordinated by our embassy in Beijing. The aim has been to publicise investment potentials in our country, based on competitive and comparative advantages. I specifically refer to strategic geopolitical location, political, economic and social stability and excellent foreign investment conditions. It must also be stated that Cabo Verde enjoys special conditions for accessing markets like ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), maintains a strategic partnership with the European Union and takes part in the AGOA (African Growth and Opportunity Act) project with the United States and Canada.

The Forum has fulfilled its role of stimulating trade between its member countries.

As Cabo Verde's representative in Macao, in Macao I aim to enhance bilateral co-operation between the governments of Cabo Verde and Macao by means of co-operation agreements and protocols in various fields of potential development with mutual advantages: tourism, gaming, notary records, education, culture and health. Some have been signed and others are nearing completion. We have been creating conditions to implement specific actions.



MALAM CÂMARA
REPRESENTATIVE OF GUINEA-BISSAU

The advantages Macao offers have facilitated agreements between institutions in Guinea-Bissau and public and private services in Macao. Several of these agreements have accordingly been signed in areas pertaining to culture and the dissemination of economic and business information.

However, Macao's role could be reinforced further. The territory should maximise its advantages to foster more participation from institutions and the business sector via the platform.

In order to strengthen that role, Macao should accomplish the following: implement existing agreements between Macao and participating countries of Forum Macao, making policy a reality; establish more agreements between public institutions and participating Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs); use Macao as a logistics platform for importing products from PSCs based on the CEPA agreement; further boost its role as a platform by taking advantage of measures set out by the Central Government at the Fifth Ministerial Conference regarding productive capacity; and transform Macao into a cultural centre for both East and West through culturally-themed weeks throughout the year, as many Portuguese-speaking associations in Macao have been urging for some time.



FRANCISCA REINO
REPRESENTATIVE OF MOZAMBIQUE

The Republic of Mozambique considers Macao's role especially important owing to its heritage and the shared historical, linguistic and cultural values with those of Mozambique.

As a platform, Forum Macao could do more at the economic level to promote a space where associations and companies from PSCs could further their international development.

We recognise that such efforts have been made to establish suitable mechanisms, for example, creating platforms like the Three Centres. But in order to boost China-Mozambique trade exchange beyond the current relationship of supplier and consumer, respectively, it is urgent for China, rather than prioritising trade, to establish flexible financing mechanisms for the production sector with the goal of creating a basis for the supply of diverse products.

Identifying and implementing specific projects promoting partnerships between companies from China and PSCs is an important step in this relationship.

Human resource training is also vital to achieving basic conditions for social development and sustainability, working together to achieve economic diversification of relations among Forum Macao participating countries.

"Macao, a free market" should therefore serve as a springboard for entrepreneurs from PSCs to China and vice versa.



VITOR SERENO
REPRESENTATIVE OF PORTUGAL

The People's Republic of China has become an indispensable market for Portugal, and Portugal is likewise a key partner for China, especially with respect to Portuguese-speaking countries and Europe.

Bilateral relations, specifically at the trade and investment level, have witnessed a sharp upturn in recent years. From 2010 to 2015, Portuguese exports to the Chinese market grew at an annual rate of 36 per cent.

The future is being made today, and Macao's role undoubtedly is and shall continue to be very important in the Portugal-China bilateral relationship.

Especially significant is co-operation in education and human resources in the context of Forum Macao, which emphasises the importance of teaching both languages as well as training bilingual personnel. Clear communication is central in successful international relations and plays a crucial role in deepening inter-market relationships.

Thus this is a time-sensitive and top-priority project which would help achieve closer economic and trade relations among participating countries of Forum Macao, and one of a number in various economic activity sectors currently being worked on within the context of the Forum, with eyes on the future.

There are some aspects we deem critical throughout this process and which should be noted, such as mobilisation of more and better companies and products entering China, with the aim of diversifying supply and sectors; improved promotion of Portugal's exports and services; lowering current barriers to entering the Chinese market (formal and informal); boosting mutual knowledge of the markets and players; multiplication of channels and means of entering the market; more intense institutional and business networking and establishment of partnerships.

In the current international climate of overt competition, relationship management is critical. An economy's growth depends on its position in a web of connections. Partnerships are thus very strategic and are factors for regulating globalisation and the projection of economies at an international level, especially for small markets like Portugal. The shared history, language, common values, complementary resources (knowledge, capital and networking) and aligned goals between Macao and Portugal could position, legitimise and enhance Macao's value as a strategic partner of Portugal in both present and future access to the Chinese market.



DANILO HENRIQUES
REPRESENTATIVE OF TIMOR-LESTE

The Permanent Secretariat for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries (Macao) plays a vital role in strengthening economic and trade ties between Timor-Leste and China.

With regards to economy and trade, business figures and statistics, imports and exports, financial values vis-à-vis amounts of investment and co-operation naturally come to mind as some of the more obvious measures of ties between countries. But there are less obvious measures which could also yield beneficial rewards.

For example, an agreement with the authority of the Social Market Economy Special Zone to develop a tourism resort in the Oecusse-Ambeno enclave, and the signing of an agreement at the 2015 Macao International Fair whereby a Timorese company began exporting its high-quality candlenut oil to Macao.

The Macao platform currently actively connects representatives of government authorities, companies and other bodies from Timor-Leste and the Macao Special Administrative Region in various events organised by Forum Macao and the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute. These contacts contribute positively to facilitating business and efficient administrative processes, among others.

FINANCIAL PLATFORM

Co-operation in the financial area is a major aspect of the platform between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries and is included among directives of the Chinese State Council that call for enhanced co-operation in the Pan-Pearl River Delta region.

Macao can further develop its participation in the financial sector by providing new services and supporting companies from China and those countries.

The territory's issuing banks, Bank of China and Banco Nacional Ultramarino, are the banking institutions geared to supporting Macao's platform role in relations between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries.

PEDRO CARDOSO

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, BANCO NACIONAL ULTRAMARINO

Macao Magazine: The Macao Government has argued that Macao could be a financial platform for Portuguese-speaking countries and a business center in RMB. In your opinion, what kind of platform would that be?

Pedro Cardoso: It is known that Macao is strategically positioned as a platform for promoting economic co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs).

This advantage is leveraged by Macao having not only historically friendly relations with PSCs but Portuguese as one of the territory's official languages. Companies of PSCs can also take advantage of Macao's privileged geographic position in the Pearl River Delta and its proximity to Guangdong, one of the highest-contributing provinces to China's GDP. The recent establishment of free trade zones in Nansha and Hengqin opens up even more opportunities.

Macao's uncomplicated and low-tax system draws multinational businesses to host events annually attended by representatives of PSCs. These events are designed to promote

trade and business partnerships with Chinese companies by providing trade co-operation and investment opportunities in China. An important example is Macao International Trade and Investment Fair (MIF) where one pavilion is usually dedicated to PSCs.

Macao's service platform role is also enhanced by the territory's participation in the Fund for Co-operation and Development between China and Portuguese-speaking countries as well as the launch of three strategic centres' initiatives: a business and trade service centre for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in PSCs; a distribution centre for goods from PSCs; and a convention and exhibition centre for economic and trade co-operation between China, Macao and PSCs.

The Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) between Macao and the mainland, which was further enhanced in June 2015, lowers the threshold for locally-incorporated companies entering certain industries within China's market and entitles them to the same treatment as local entities. This puts Macao in an excellent position to attract the interest of Portuguese-speaking companies when contemplating entering the Chinese market. For example, Macao banks, like BNU, can start operating in RMB once its branch is authorised and established in China, a vast change from past regulation.

MM: What does BNU offer that others do not to position Macao as a business platform between China and PSCs?

PC: BNU is part of the Caixa Geral de Depósitos Group (CGD) which has a direct presence in seven PSCs, with a leading position in five of these. In China, we are present in Macao, Zhuhai and Shanghai and preparing to open a new branch in Hengqin by year's end, thus establishing an even stronger platform connecting PSCs to China.

BNU has been actively involved in supporting the initiatives of the Monetary Authority of Macao (AMCM), Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM), Agência para o Investimento e o Comércio Externo de Portugal (AIECP) and other agencies by participating in organised events throughout China, Macao and PSCs.

BNU has also facilitated meetings between government officials and business enterprises, introduced entrepreneurs from PSCs to Chinese business delegations, participated in seminars in China with the aim of showing the work of the CGD Group and supporting the expansion of Macao entrepreneurs to PSCs, among others.

MM: How will the BNU's newest branch in Hengqin contribute to better performance?

PC: BNU has already been authorised to establish a branch in Hengqin. The branch's main business strategy will be to provide support to clients of the CGD Group who would like to invest or already are investing in and trading with China. A significant number of our clients have investments in mainland China, particularly in Guangdong province. We believe that the economic development of Hengqin will bring more opportunities to us down the road.

Additionally, the bulk of trade and investment relations with PSCs are through mainland China. Therefore, with the opening of our Hengqin branch, BNU will play a more active role in promoting business in China, Macao and PSCs.

MM: BNU has signed a co-operation agreement with the Bank of China regarding PSCs. What does it entail and how does it benefit the bank?

PC: In June 2015, BNU and Bank of China (Macao Branch) signed a protocol to promote business between China and PSCs. The signing, witnessed by CGD board members, represents the beginning of a deeper and more comprehensive cooperative relationship between the two banks. Through global CGD and Bank of China networks, a platform of communication and information channels has been created to share market knowledge on China and PSCs by cross-referencing client geographic areas as well as to strengthen co-operation in various sectors.

Another area that we are working very closely with Bank of China (Macao Branch) on is promoting usage of the RMB as the settlement currency as Bank of China (Macao Branch) is authorised by the People's Bank of China as the RMB settlement bank for PSCs. RMB is one of



BNU headquarters, Macao

the major settlement currencies in world trade. It is expected that RMB will be more widely used in trade between these countries and China in the coming future. But what will give life to this platform are certainly relationships between companies and individuals operating in these markets to which BNU can contribute.

MM: BNU has created a “business space” for specific relations with PSCs. Is this a wise move? Are there concrete results?

PC: Macao is an important platform between China and PSCs. BNU has a unique position in this area in which we play a very active role having committed to this mission.

We established an International Desk (iDesk) at BNU some years ago to further develop relations with our banking partners in PSCs. Information is the key to success, and consequently, we set up a specialised team to obtain information and develop new business opportunities between PSCs and China. We have been referring business opportunities to our banking partners in those countries. Also we use our knowledge of the local market to identify potential partners, suppliers and/or potential customers for these companies.

The iDesk team also works in conjunction with the commercial unit and other CGD units in developing different products to serve client needs.

MM: How do you envision future development of this platform in the context of the relationship between China and PSCs with Macao acting as a hinge?

PC: Macao can be used as a preparation platform for adapting products and services entering the Chinese market, through partnerships, strategic alliances and privileged contacts with companies located in the Pearl River Delta.

BNU's role is crucial in supporting the implementation of Portuguese-speaking companies in the territory, whether by facilitating contacts or providing financial services, particularly in the area of trade finance. We think the biggest challenge that may arise will be the cultural and linguistic differences between Chinese and Portuguese-speaking markets. BNU is particularly well positioned to bridge the gap and assume a facilitating role.

Portugal is one of the European markets in which Chinese companies have invested in recent years. This fact alone demonstrates the great confidence China attributes to Portugal and its development potential. We would like to see more Portuguese products in the Chinese market, and Macao can play an important role in establishing commercial relations with Chinese companies taking advantage of not only cultural affinities but also the excellent fiscal conditions that the territory offers.

With the establishment of China's “One Belt One Road” policy, we have seen more and more co-operation between China and PSCs, not only with Portugal but also African countries.

Accordingly, we feel quite confident in terms of business potential with PSCs.

**WANG JUN**

DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER, BANK OF CHINA (MACAU BRANCH)

Macao Magazine: The Bank of China Macau Branch (BOCM) has set up a special sector in charge of economic and trade relations between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. What specifically will this entail?

Wang Jun: The Bank of China Macau Branch is actively cooperating with the Macao government to build a commercial and trade co-operation service platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries to promote industrial diversity, to support the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to cultivate young talent and encourage young entrepreneurship, and to contribute to the stable and sustainable development of Macao's economy and finance.

In 2014, BOCM was designated by the head office as the cross-border RMB clearing platform within Bank of China for Portuguese-speaking countries, and that same year, the Portuguese-speaking Business Working Team was established. The team focuses on financial service co-operation and business development between China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

BOCM, with the approval of the People's Bank of China, began, in 2015, to provide RMB clearing services for Portuguese-speaking countries. At the beginning of 2016, BOCM established a financial institution sector, based on the work of the former Portuguese business working team, which continues to facilitate the bilingual benefits of Chinese and Portuguese and lead the work of Portuguese business development within various departments of the branch.

Currently, the bank employs bilingual professionals fluent in both languages across various business areas of the branch. The goal of BOCM is to establish the branch as a “financial services platform of commercial and trade co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries”, provide a full range of financial services for the Special Administrative Region (SAR) government's “commercial and trade co-operation services platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries”, and promote the use of RMB in trade settlement between China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

MM: What are some concrete areas/issues that Bank of China deals with in Portuguese-speaking countries? Can all entrepreneurs in these countries seek funding from Bank of China for their business operations?

WJ: In recent years, visits to Angola, Brazil, Mozambique, Portugal and other Portuguese-speaking countries with the Macao

Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) delegation have provided BOCM with opportunities to give presentations on its RMB business as well as Macao's "platform" advantage on several occasions. In 2015, BOCM also organised a number of promotional seminars regarding RMB business in Macao, Lisbon and Porto (Portugal) targeted at financial institutions and corporate clients in Portuguese-speaking countries. In October of this year, the Macau Branch will hold RMB business promotional activities in conjunction with Banco Nacional Ultramarino (BNU) in Lisbon.

BOCM currently has corresponding relationships with more than 30 banks in Brazil, Portugal, Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde and East Timor, and most of the banks have opened RMB, US\$ and Euro clearing accounts with the Macau Branch. BOCM has established a safe and efficient financial clearing channel between China and Portuguese-speaking countries for commercial clients. Recently, BOCM has been handling RMB remittance clearance to mainland China for the banking industries of Portugal, Brazil, Angola and Mozambique, reflecting Macao's important role as a platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

The SMEs in Portuguese-speaking countries, including Macau, can definitely seek their funding from Bank of China Macau Branch.

MM: Bank of China and BNU have signed a co-operation agreement regarding Portuguese-speaking countries; however, how would this agreement manifest were both enterprises interested in the same field or even the same region?

WJ: The signing of the protocol, which details building information exchange platforms and communication channels and sharing market trade information between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, has paved the way for the two parties to lay down the foundation for promoting mutual business referrals, agency settlements and granting credit.

In general, our two banks are more complementary than competitive: our respective client groups have different needs and

distinguishing qualities. But if competition were to arise, we would seek a mutually beneficial result through friendly co-operation.

MM: What are the conditions for receiving Bank of China financing for SME projects in Portuguese-speaking countries?

WJ: For corporations and projects in full compliance with regulations and banking policies, BOCM is willing to provide cash management, financing, operation insurance, international settlement, integrated financial management and other professional, personalised, high-quality and fully-integrated financial services.

MM: Since the establishment of the special department of trade and economic relations in Portuguese-speaking countries, can you highlight any projects as examples of the kind of assistance Bank of China offers?

WJ: BOCM has assisted many Chinese companies in setting up platform companies in Macao, helping to expand their business with Portuguese-speaking countries by taking advantage of tax incentives as well as more fluid communication between Macao and Portuguese-speaking countries, thereby providing credit support for qualified clients and projects.

MM: In the past few months, trade between China and Portuguese-speaking countries has been in decline. Does Bank of China believe it will recover?

WJ: We believe that this decline is in line with international trends. Back in 2009, there was also a near 20 per cent drop in bilateral trade between China and Portuguese-speaking countries. The economies of China and Portuguese-speaking countries are highly complementary, so a drop in trade volume does not necessarily mean a reduction in the overall quantum of trade. Take Brazil, for example: in 2015, the bilateral trade volume between China and Brazil dropped by 17 per cent; although the trade volume of three major products—soybeans, crude oil and iron ore, which accounts for about 70 per cent of the total volume of bilateral trade—had declined, the quantum of trade actually increased yearly by 25 per cent, 0.49 per

cent and 135 per cent, respectively. Based on this, we can see the depreciation of Real (the Brazilian currency) and the fall of bulk commodity prices both have played a positive role in stimulating bulk commodity exports from Brazil to China.

Overall, although there has been a decline in trade volume between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, the trade quantum of major commodities has remained stable or even increased. Along with global economic recovery, the long-term trend of growth in bilateral trade will persist. We will also assist companies in finding new development opportunities in science, technology and innovation, and standard of living.

MM: Will Macao set up an RMB clearing house? If so, when? Which banks will join? What significance will this clearing house bring to the plan of establishing RMB as an international payment currency?

WJ: In 2015, the RMB clearing volume in Macao reached RMB 1.57 trillion, with an annual growth rate of 22.8 per cent, ranking it ninth globally.

On 7 March 2016, the RMB Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) system constructed by the Monetary Authority of Macao was officially put into operation providing real-time settlement services for RMB remittance and inter-bank RMB fund transfers. This marks further improvement of Macao's financial infrastructure: not only is it conducive to the management of RMB settlement risk and an improvement on settlement efficiency, it also further promotes continued regional financial co-operation, simplifies expansion of cross-border use of RMB, and facilitates Macao's transformation into an RMB clearing platform for trade between China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

Establishing RMB clearing houses in Macao is still under discussion at this stage. According to Report on the Development of Chinese Banking Industry (2016), trading volume of the

RMB will steadily expand in central bank reserves among all countries, and in the next five to ten years the RMB is likely to become the third-largest international payment currency behind only the US\$ and the Euro.

We believe that with this accelerated internationalisation, it is highly likely that RMB bills will be introduced into Macao as well as the exchange of electronic notes, which will necessitate the construction of RMB clearing houses.

By then, Macao's financial infrastructure will have further improved, and the 24 banks in Macao currently dealing with RMB business should have the opportunity to participate.



Bank of China (Macao Branch) headquarters

TRAINING, LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND EDUCATION PLATFORM

Macao's role in cultural relations between China and the Portuguese language countries is involved in music, theatre, dance, folklore, culinary arts and painting exhibitions. Private government-backed initiatives have meanwhile occupied niches in the area of literature.



The Script Road, 2016

CULTURAL WEEK

Macao has organised a Cultural Week focusing on China and the Portuguese-speaking countries since 1998. The handicrafts, music, theatre, cooking and painting of each respective country are showcased in this major cultural event. This year's eighth Cultural Week will run from the 21st to the 23rd of October.

LITERARY FESTIVAL

The Script Road – Macao Literary Festival takes place in March and has been organised since 2012 by the newspaper Ponto Final, with support from the Macao Cultural Affairs Bureau. It brings to the city writers from the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and the Portuguese language countries. During this two-week event authors present their latest works and discuss issues associated to literature in their home countries. Concerts, conferences and film screenings are also held. It has gained renown as a cultural highlight and is now included on the international literary festival circuit.



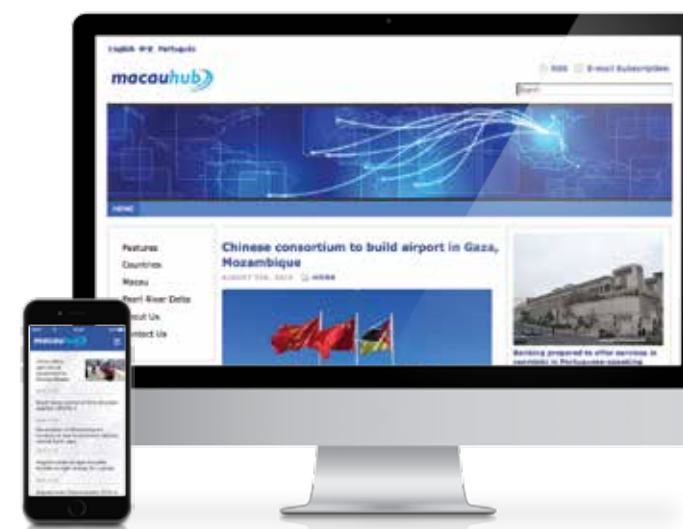
Cultural Week, 2015

ASSOCIATIONS

The associations linking Macao to the Portuguese-speaking countries play an important role in organising cultural activities, thereby facilitating more multicultural contact.

Casa de Portugal (House of Portugal), Casa do Brasil (House of Brazil), Amigos de Moçambique (Friends of Mozambique), Macao-Cabo Verde, Macao-Timor-Leste Friendship and Angola-Macao associations have helped disseminate the culture of the countries they represent through tours and exhibitions.

MACAUHUB: AN INFORMATION PLATFORM



The Macao Government Information Bureau established the Macauhub economic information service (www.macauhub.com.mo) in 2006 to publicise the city's role as a platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries.

The Macauhub portal is a free service providing information regarding China's relations with Portuguese-speaking countries. Its mission is to enhance public awareness of the current economic climate, explore business and investment opportunities and provide updated legislation for countries. The portal is available in Simplified Chinese, Portuguese, English and French.

Established three years after the founding of the Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries, Macauhub is an integral part of Macao's strategy as set out in the Special Administrative Region's Five-Year Plan to transform the territory towards "One Centre and One Platform," thereby complementing China's 13th National Plan which designates Macao a global tourism and entertainment hub.

The portal publishes over 1,500 news articles annually with a yearly viewership of some 2.1 million readers, mostly from China and Portuguese-speaking countries and is also available as an app for both IOS and Android operating systems. It has become a major source of information about economic relations with China for thousands of users from all sectors, including government, universities, international organisations, business and media outlets.

TDM: TRAINING COURSES AND CO-OPERATION

The Teledifusão de Macau (TDM) broadcasting network has over the years organised training courses for radio and TV journalists and technical staff, drawing to Macao employees of TV networks in some Portuguese-speaking African countries for internships and professional contacts, in turn leading to co-operation agreements and programme exchanges between Macao and China on the one hand and the PSCs on the other.



Agreement signing ceremony between TDM and TPA – Televisão Pública de Angola, 2014



TRAINING, LANGUAGE,
CULTURE AND EDUCATION

Since the Forum Macao Training Centre was established in 2001, dozens of training courses have been offered in the areas of traditional medicine, tourism, Chinese language teaching, administration and management, along with practice-oriented programmes for tourism, traditional medicine, television and gaming.

HIGHER EDUCATION

The University of Macau, University of Science and Technology, City University of Macau and Macao Polytechnic Institute have offered an increasing number of courses in language teaching and translation, with a view to training more translation and language specialists (deemed vital in business relations) to meet growing demand in China and the Portuguese-speaking countries. ●





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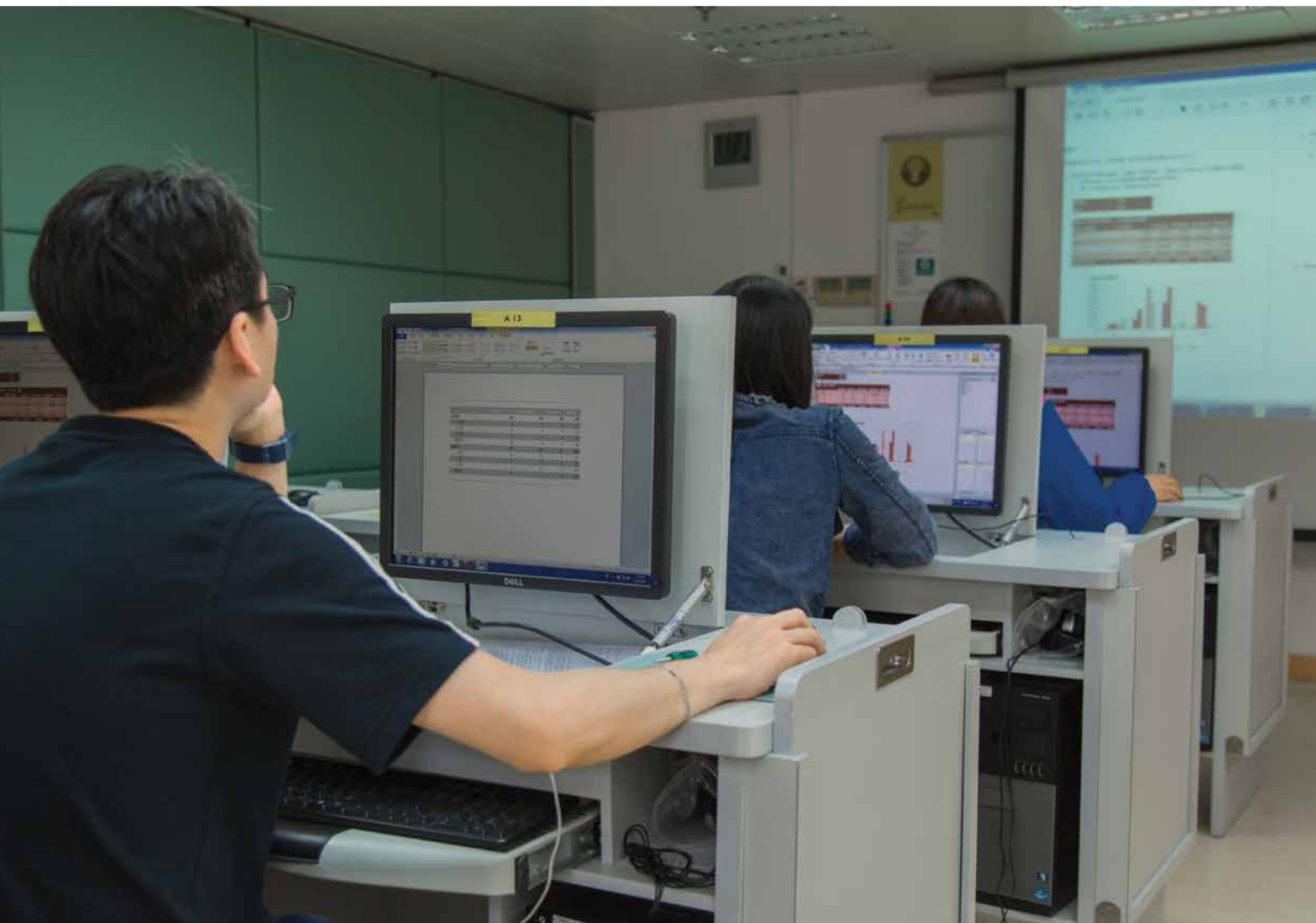
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CPTTM: 20 years of service

Productivity centre
guides small and
medium enterprises
through changing
world

TEXT MARK O'NEILL
PHOTOS ANTÓNIO SANMARFUL

The Macau Productivity and Technology Transfer Centre (CPTTM) was established in 1996 to support and promote Macao's then thriving garment industry. Two decades later, with the economy completely transformed, so too has the centre's mission. The organisation now dedicates its resources to helping the city's 50,000 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) adapt and thrive in the modern business world.

As CPTTM celebrates its 20th anniversary, it reflects back upon two decades of accomplishments, including some 11,600 training courses and seminars organised and attended by more than 230,000 students in fields such as enterprise operation and management, information and technology (IT), fashion and creativity and business languages. Class enrollment has risen steadily in the new millennium, from roughly 4,300 in 2001 to more than 20,000 in 2012. In more recent years, attendance has averaged around 17,000. CPTTM is also the authorized centre for a range of public or professional examinations, with the cumulative number of candidates topping 28,900 since the formation of the Professional Examination Resources Unit in 2005.

CPTTM facilitates company seeking internationally recognised certifications (such as ISO standards) and provides full-service advice and support to SMEs. It has also established its own

fashion and creative department.

Meant to replace the Centre for Supporting Industrial Development under Macau Economic Services, CPTTM is a non-profit, partial government organisation with the government holding a 60 per cent stake and a consortium of private companies the remaining 40. As a result, "We are more flexible than government departments," asserts Director-General Shuen Ka-hung. "We work to improve the productivity of a specific firm's profitability and transfer of technology—tasks which may not be convenient or feasible for a government department."

The centre also possesses an endowment fund of 24.75 million patacas established by its private investors upon its inception. CPTTM has an annual working budget of approximately 95 million patacas derived from public and private funds as well as revenue generated from tuition and service fees.

CPTTM is comprised of 110 full-time employees staffing three locations: the head office houses administration and examination venues as well as classrooms for enterprise operation & management and business language courses; Cyber-Lab hosts professional IT courses; and the House of Apparel Technology, housed in an industrial building near the border-gate with mainland China, is home to the centre's fashion program.

SUPPORTING SMEs

The CPTTM's priority is advancing the growth of SMEs which collectively employ the largest proportion of the city's working population and are the most in need of assistance amidst a rapidly changing business environment.

"Most SMEs are family businesses," asserts Chang Chak Io, senior manager of the External Co-operation and Marketing Department. "It is difficult for them to understand the outside world, and their information is limited. We provide advice on product placement in the market, that is, how to promote and package. More generally, we aim to promote a firm's image. We act as middlemen between SMEs and buyers or other partners. We also advocate services provided by the government and help firms apply for them, including interest-free loans, guarantees and services for young entrepreneurs and start-ups."

Chang points to an example of an SME that needed to purchase a bulldozer from a firm in Guangzhou. The transaction demanded cash up-front which the SME was unable to provide, so the CPTTM found a large trading firm to handle it.

Another example involves a western bakery franchise that was losing money and sought assistance in 2005. "We advised them to centralise production and take semi-finished goods to its various locations," recalls Chang. "We took them to a training centre jointly operated by the Institute for Tourism Studies and the Macau Polytechnic Institute and introduced them to machinery that mass-produces bread. Now they have their own centralised production and more than 10 locations. The service we provided was free."

A very popular Macanese brand of cakes and biscuits also sought out the CPTTM. "We helped them initially in designing, packaging and marketing their products," says Chang. The company's decision to employ large-scale machinery production has enabled them to become Macao's market leader in Chinese traditional bakery products. Thousands of tourists purchase their products every day, and they have a prominent outlet in Hong Kong's Tsim Sha Tsui tourist district.

The environment in which Macao's SMEs now operate is wholly unrecognisable from two decades ago. Multinational gaming firms comprise the city's

We work to improve the productivity of a specific firm's profitability and transfer of technology, said Shuen Ka-hung, Director-General of CPTTM

biggest companies, employing tens of thousands of people from all over the world. In order to promote economic diversity, the Special Administrative Region government has encouraged them to conduct business with local SMEs.

UPGRADING THE QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT

Upgrading the quality of management at local firms has been a key part of CPTTM's agenda, the main goal being to help companies adopt a systematic approach to management and obtain International Organization for Standardization (ISO) certification where necessary. The ISO publishes a series of internationally recognised management system standards, and obtaining such certification can give firms a competitive edge when bidding for orders or contracts, especially from international companies.

According to Helena Lei, senior manager for the Standards, Management, Training and Assessment Department, local SMEs are inclined to view international management system standards as out of reach.

"We help them understand that such standards represent best management practices and envision the possibility of incorporating them into daily operations. We strive to support Macao firms in conducting business with larger companies. Over the years, we have served local enterprises from different sectors in obtaining ISO certification, from garment factories and construction companies initially and then increasingly to the service sector, such as property management, security management, exhibition services and catering services."

ISO management system standards cover a range of areas, including quality management,



SHUEN KA-HUNG
Director-General
of CPTTM

The overarching theme of CPTTM's language offerings is 'business-oriented', providing and assisting with whatever is needed in the workplace

environmental management, occupational health and safety, food safety, IT service management, information security, event management, etc. Accordingly, CPTTM offers a range of guidance to local companies working towards system implementation and certification. "We provide advisory and technical support services. Firms may not have sufficient knowledge of the process and standards, so we provide information about standards as well as management toolkits on implementing them," Lei adds.

CPTTM subsidises audit fees for first-time certification which is valid for three years subject to surveillance and renewal audits.

Since the licensing of more five new companies within the gaming sector in 2001, Macao's tourism industry has boomed. Last year, the city welcomed 30 million visitors, 50 times its resident population. This, in turn, has led to a boom in the retail sector in which thousands of SMEs operate.

"There is a wide range of retail shops, both in terms of types of products, such as pharmacies, fashion boutiques, and food and beverages outlets, as well as in terms of scale and capacity, from mom-and-pop shops to chain stores," says Lei. But for these small shops to thrive, they need to improve their management approach which is often facilitated by updated IT.

"As an example, many small shops do not even have proper bookkeeping or accounting in place, or they still rely on manual calculation and paper records. We try to make IT easily accessible by providing them with accounting and POS software at a very low cost while also providing workshops on basic computing, accounting and inventory management; as an enterprise grows, we offer training in customer service, promotion, marketing and brand management to help build

and sustain customer loyalty, in logistics to ensure on-time and quality delivery, and in retail operation standards and franchising to manage chain operations."

Visitors from mainland China, who account for a significant proportion of retail customers, have their own purchasing and spending propensities. "We have training courses to help retailers understand the cultures of different customer segments. Using Mainlanders as an example, at the language level, the use of words in Cantonese and Mandarin can be quite different. You must identify the characteristics of different market segments and determine how to sell to them. This is relevant not only for brick-and-mortar sales but also online; therefore, our courses on the Internet, Facebook or social media marketing also emphasise the need for a tailored approach when marketing to different groups of target customers."

"We have a course in applying psychological techniques in the sales pitch: we teach students to recognise a customer's needs or propensities through the use of words and behaviour. For example, customers purchasing food and pharmaceutical products are probably seeking safety, whereas souvenir and luxury product purchases satisfy social and self-esteem needs. As in all our sales and marketing courses, we emphasise ethical practices which are very important for repeat business."

Many companies in Macao employ multinational staff who need to communicate with and understand each other. CPTTM offers courses designed to help bridge cultural gaps, including deciphering linguistic differences and honing interpersonal skills in a cross-cultural work environment. Classes on business customs and etiquette are also available for gaming sector employees. A variety of language courses are offered: Mandarin, Portuguese, Cantonese, English, French, German, Japanese and Korean.

One could say that the overarching theme of CPTTM's language offerings is 'business-oriented', that is, providing and assisting with whatever is needed in the workplace or with a particular occupation or profession: for example, Customer Service English for security staff, restaurant servers and hotel receptionists; Japanese/Korean for retail or hospitality staff; Cantonese/Mandarin for non-Chinese employees; Professional English for executives or managers.

THE CYBER-LAB

With information technology an essential component for any modern business, CPTTM's Cyber-Lab, located in the centre of Macao, is dedicated to improving professional IT knowledge and skills.

Liem Tao, senior manager of the Information Systems and Technology Department, recounts the rapidly increasing demand for IT instruction in the last few years. "The gaming sector needs qualified IT people, but there is a shortage of specialists. Ten years ago, we held around 130 IT-related courses with an enrollment of approximately 2,000; in 2015, it grew to around 195 courses with an approximate enrollment of 3,000—an increase of roughly 50 per cent. Now 77 per cent of our IT courses are public, with the remaining 23 per cent are in-house corporate training."

Liem asserts that "SMEs CEOs usually are middle aged and have little experience in using IT applications. They do not realise that IT could really enhance their business operations. The government has been encouraging gaming operators to turn to local SMEs as vendors, so CPTTM created a webpage for this purpose with procurement information listed for these SMEs."

"After registering as vendors for these operators, some SMEs may need to learn how to submit quotes and bids online, so CPTTM provides free workshops demonstrating that process. We also offer open-source software for accounting, wage calculation and retail POS. Other vendors may want to improve their service or product quality, such as food safety and quality management, in order to maintain competitiveness; CPTTM offers courses in these areas too."

CPTTM also provides instruction for middle-aged citizens on basic computer usage, Internet browsing, social media websites, basic Microsoft Office and smartphones so that they can enjoy the rich functionalities of modern communication services or, if they own a business, conduct business more efficiently and effectively.

Cyber-Lab spends great effort in encouraging secondary school students to engage in the field. Each year it hosts three IT-related competitions in the areas of networking, 3D modeling and general IT knowledge to encourage students to pursue IT, discover their potential and develop their passion.



CYBER-LAB Professional IT courses

TRAINING MACAO'S FASHION DESIGNERS

CPTTM's Creative Fashion and Image Department is located in the heart of what used to be Macao's textile and garment district on the 10th floor of an industrial building once entirely occupied by textile firms. The department is equipped with fashion-making machinery, including sewing machines, knitting machines, fabric-printing machines, a new laser-cutting machine and classrooms for tutorials in beauty, hairstyling and nail art.

"In 1996, we were serving the garment industry to improve their competitiveness," says Victoria Alexia Kuan, head of the department. "After the quotas ended in 2005, most of the factories moved to China and Southeast Asia. After that, we focused on developing training in fashion design and image."

For the past 20 years, the centre has offered training courses in fashion and image design, fashion and accessories making as well as retailing and branding. It has trained almost 500 students focusing in fashion design throughout the years, with roughly 20 graduates of its own diploma in fashion design each year.

"Local designers face the same problems as those in other countries: they need factories willing to produce small batch quantities and they have to deal with administrative work. We support them by organising fashion events, helping with administrative tasks and liaising with production companies."

"Geographically, we are close to the mainland with access to fabrics and accessories within 24 hours. Our technicians work with designers, helping them create prototypes in our centre here, demonstrating how to cut fabric and use machinery. There are a number of full-time fashion designers in Macao, most of them associated with CPTTM."

CPTTM partners with the Cultural Affairs Bureau to run the Macao Fashion Gallery in the Sao Lazaro district, open Tuesday to Sunday. "Designers can exhibit their fashion lines for free for three months and sell on consignment while we take a small percentage of sales. Currently we

are showing wedding gowns," says Kuan.

Graduates of CPTTM's fashion program often go on to work in boutiques and large stores seeking their expertise. Others work in the gaming companies, who have large design departments, on uniforms and entertainment events. ■



JANE CHAN Macao fashion designer



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Bamboo: the symbol of integrity and versatility

Backbone of building works
in Macao for decades, today
its days may be numbered

TEXT ANA ISABEL DIAS
PHOTO ANTÓNIO SANMARFUL





THE SPIDER-MEN OF CONSTRUCTION

Bamboo scaffolding workers are known as spider-men. The explanation is obvious: *taap pang* (in Cantonese) workers move nimbly like spiders among the interconnected bamboo poles forming the scaffolding framework for 10-, 30-, even 80-storey buildings.

The poles can be up to eight metres long and weigh five kilos each. To hold them together, nylon strips are wound several times around each joint; the ends are then twisted and held fast between the bamboo poles. No nails, screws or glue are used.

This technique has remained virtually the same for the past 1,500 years with only slight improvements and adjustments, like nylon replacing plant stalks, and has been passed down from generation to generation without written texts or records. Everything is from memory with improvisations made as specific cases and problems arise.

Not too long ago, *taap pang* was taken up as a profession as a last resort by those whose only recourse was to learn the art of assembling bamboo scaffolding. A *taap pang* worker would then have to wait many years before earning recognition as a ‘spider’. Spiders are masters: the keepers of knowledge and experience who move with the most agility and thus receive the highest pay. All *taap pang* workers start out as apprentices and eventually become spiders only if they possess the skills.

Leung Shao Guang was once such an apprentice. Today he is one of Macao’s grandmasters and a proud spider. Leung began working in bamboo structures in 1966, when he was only 13 years old. He didn’t like the job initially, but with no advanced schooling, there weren’t many alternatives for him. In 1976, China’s economy was just starting to open up, and life for Leung, who at the time lived in Zhuhai, Guangdong province, was still quite difficult. So he decided to join family in Macao at the age of 23.

Leung recalls the huge difference in wages between Macao and Zhuhai. “I earned 70 patacas a day. That was very good pay. You could only earn

A *taap pang* worker would wait many years before earning recognition as a ‘spider’. Spiders are masters: the keepers of knowledge and experience who move with the most agility and thus receive the highest pay



LEUNG SHAO GUANG

Bamboo grandmaster

Bamboo is an integral part of China’s history and culture, symbolising virtues like humility, flexibility, loyalty and resilience that are prevalent in poetic and artistic expression. It has been depicted throughout the ages in paintings and poetry as one of the ‘four men of honour’ or ‘four gentlemen’ along with the chrysanthemum, orchid and plum blossom.

There are more than 1,400 species of bamboo native to China, some reaching heights of 25 metres to form dense forests. Depending on the species, a plant can take up to five years to sprout, but once it does emerge from the ground, it can grow at an incredible rate, in some cases up to a metre a day. It’s no wonder that bamboo holds the record for fastest growing plant in the world.

The utilisation of bamboo depends on the

flexibility of its particular species, making it suitable for a wide variety of applications, from books and paintbrushes to food for livestock to interlaced construction scaffolding.

Over the course of Macao’s history, few buildings have been built without the aid of bamboo. So it has been for centuries and so it continues, yet the days of bamboo scaffolding may soon be numbered. What is now commonplace for buildings under construction may disappear within a mere decade or two.

It is not that bamboo itself is becoming obsolete. Rather, bamboo masters who give form to bamboo scaffolding have no one to pass on their know-how to, and mastery of this age-old tradition has fallen into disuse in mainland China. Can bamboo scaffolding survive the 21st century?

that much if you had more years of experience, and I already had 10. It was a lot of money compared to the 45 renminbi per month I earned in China.”

Leung is one of the few bamboo masters remaining in Macao. “When I arrived in Macao, there were more than 200 masters. Now there are only around 30 or 40, and they are getting old.” He attributes this drastic decline in numbers partly to the fact that Macao’s development has provided much easier options for young people, enabling them to avoid the often irregular income associated with bamboo scaffolding.

While acknowledging the hard work involved in construction compared to positions in hotels or casinos, Master Leung insists that it is not the physical risks deterring young people from pursuing the profession. He doesn’t believe the work is actually very dangerous. Rather, young people nowadays simply have more choices, and studying to be taap pang workers is not high on that list. So as masters like Leung continue to retire, their positions remain vacant with no one to fill them.

BAMBOO VERSUS METAL

Although bamboo scaffolding’s outlook appears grim, it continues to be the most popular choice for construction and building maintenance throughout Macao and Hong Kong where the traditional method is still used on nearly 90 per cent of construction builds. Metal scaffolding is not popular in these two regions, but the situation is quite different in mainland China where bamboo scaffolding is seldom seen.

According to Honorary President of the Macao Construction Association, Lo Kai Jone, beyond the shortage of masters, it is not metal structures that threaten the survival of bamboo scaffolding or even bamboo’s alleged safety shortcomings which some construction sectors have questioned. Lo explains that new construction methods and trends leave little margin for the survival of small and medium-sized enterprises like those of the bamboo spider-men.

“It’s true that metal structures are easier to set up and more systematic than bamboo structures. But they are not safer and are much more expensive, doubling or even tripling the cost. In mainland China, new buildings are now being built with new methods that don’t use scaffolding at all; rather, they use a system of slides and gondolas.



LO KAI JONE Honorary President of the Macao Construction Association



CHARACTERISTICS OF BAMBOO

- Flexible
- Light
- Cheap
- Safe
- Sustainable



CHARACTERISTICS OF METAL

- Rigid
- Heavy
- Expensive
- Safe
- Reusable

Those construction methods are highly technical and use very sophisticated and heavy equipment; that’s why they’re in the hands of large companies and multinationals. Normal construction companies don’t stand a chance of competing; as a result, there are increasingly fewer of them.”

The days of bamboo scaffolding as an integral part of the construction process may be numbered, but no one can deny the advantages it has demonstrated over the course of history. Lo certainly still considers it the most suitable option considering Macao’s space limitations and climate. “Metal structures require a lot of storage space, and many warehouses are required to safeguard such construction equipment. Macao has space limitations, and storing metal structures can be expensive. Bamboo is much easier to deal with. It also resists strong typhoon winds well, whereas metal is much heavier and thus much more dangerous should accidents occur.”

BAMBOO FOR MACAO

The architect João Palla was driven by curiosity when he set out to explore bamboo in the 1990s. Even his imagination failed to anticipate the charm and secrets of this vast and heretofore unrecorded world. He chose Macao, his current home, as the location for his study “Bamboo as Construction Material.” This report, published in 2002 by the Lisbon School of Social and Political Sciences in the first volume of the Studies about China collection coordinated by the anthropologist

Ana Maria Amaro, includes a metric survey of bamboo construction, photos and interviews with masters and contractors.

“The study identifies the significance of each type of construction on a case-by-case basis through drawings and thorough graphic records. Floor plans don’t exist because contractors don’t use plans to build the structures. The documentation process was actually backwards: I drew plans based on finished constructions,” reports Palla.

“One exception being the monumental construction of the bullring in the late 1990s. Because it had to be a very precisely regulated structure, the design was blueprinted beforehand. Interestingly, the lines were actually drawn on the ground, a traditional technique used as with old cathedrals.”

Through his research, Palla came to understand that the technique used in bamboo construction is purely empirical and that secrets ensuring its continuity are passed on from generation to generation, from family to family.

This study, still the only one of its kind in Macao, provides a thorough survey of the types of bamboo construction used at the time. Twenty years later, many of those constructions have notably disappeared or have been replaced by metal structures, such as the Macao Grand Prix grandstands and spectator seating for the dragon boat races which are now fixed in place.

The decision to move away from bamboo “is not due to a shortage of bamboo or labour but



JOÃO PALLA Architect

For many years, people associated bamboo with poverty when it's just the contrary. The Chinese used to say long ago that bamboo was a dear friend because it supplied everything: food, shelter, raw material for tools and medication, said architect João Palla

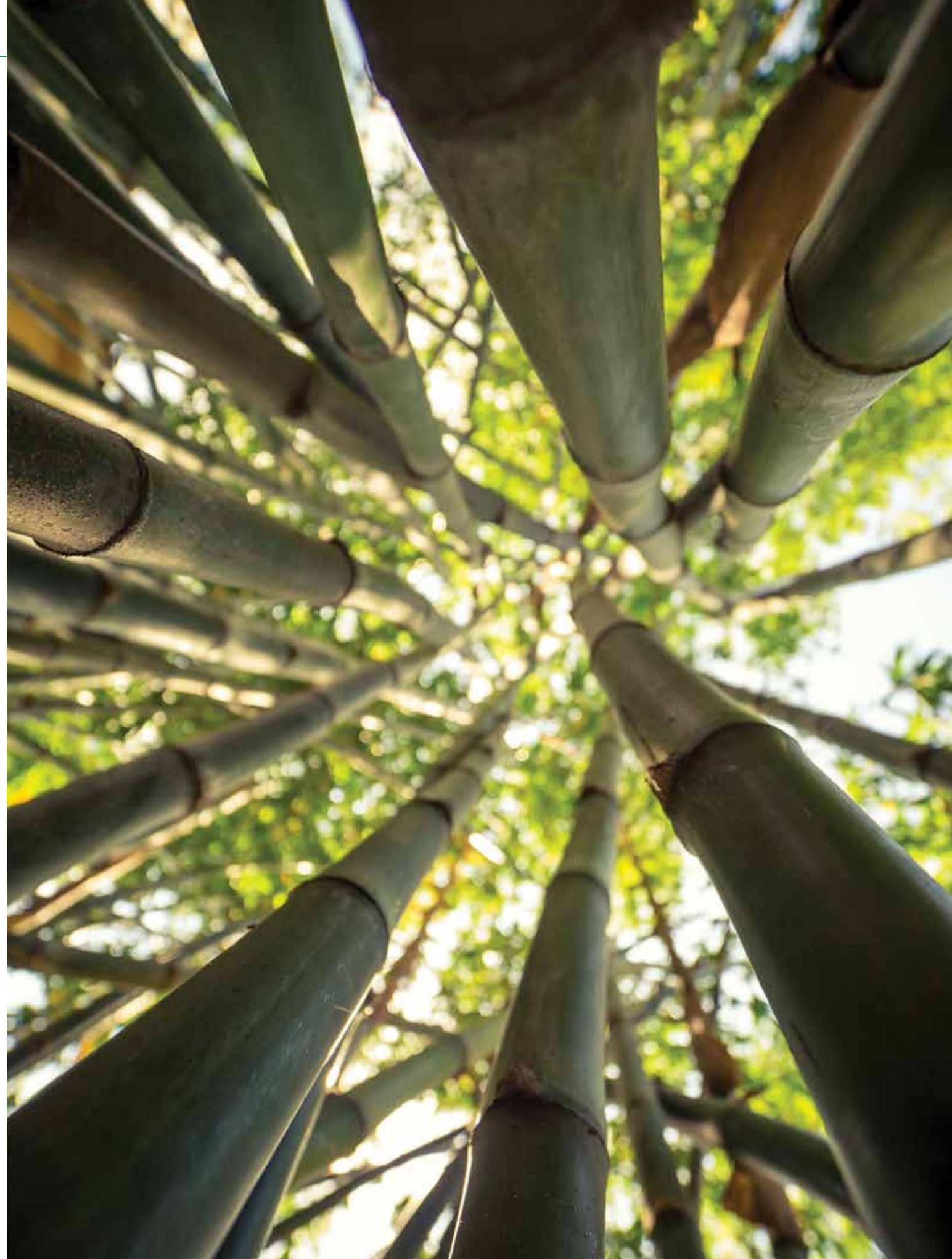
rather the imposition of new technology. This is all because in some people's minds bamboo structures are not safe," the architect explains.

Although much has already been lost, the most significant cultural buildings built with bamboo structures remain: the three main Chinese opera pavilions situated in Barra, Taipa and Coloane that also function as acting temples and celebrate Chinese divinities.

Leung also feels a special affection for the Chinese opera pavilions as he was master spider for the Tam Kung temple pavillion in Coloane in 2013. Under his direction, a team of six or seven worked for nearly a month to complete the project.

Recently, Palla launched the Bamboo for Macao project. Partly a result of his previous study, the initiative aims to seek out new prospects for bamboo's future. One of Palla's goals is to reverse the current trend of its dwindling usage. To that end, he proposes a few measures that will not only revamp bamboo's image but enhance that of Macao's. "Creating a focus group to research the current traditions of Macao and Hong Kong; establishing a comprehensive and systematic understanding of bamboo construction as dictated by master builders; and promoting a positive brand image that links this significant tradition with modern design and sustainability."

"For many years, people associated bamboo with poverty when it's just the contrary. The Chinese used to say long ago that bamboo was a dear friend because it supplied everything: food, shelter, raw material for tools and medication," concludes Palla who believes in the power of bamboo and continues to fight for its cause.



BAMBOO CRASHING THE URBAN ART SCENE

Bamboo's use in urban art is one option currently being explored. In collaboration with art and architecture students from the Science and Technology University and the University of Saint Joseph, Palla tests and considers bamboo's many facets as exhibited in diverse forms across the city, demonstrating conceptual approaches together with traditional bamboo joining techniques.

Also looking to reinterpret bamboo and redefine its value are two young Macao architects João Ó and Rita Machado. Their Treeplets project has been distinguished with the 2015 Silver A Design Award in the category of architecture, building and structure design. Treeplets, a sculptural piece made of bamboo representing three intertwined trees is a joint project initiative promoted by the Babel cultural organisation.

In 2013, Ó and Machado formed their company Impromptu Projects. From its conception, they were on the lookout for a means to incorporate the plasticity they wanted their projects to exude. Conventional building materials and techniques proved problematic. Ultimately, they found the answer in bamboo. "We wanted to use a material and concept that was already present in the territory and give it new meaning. We didn't want to invent anything; we wanted to use what was already here and to reinterpret," Machado explains.

But the creative process also requires gathering information and knowledge, and Macao had little to offer in the way of research. "We spent a year investigating bamboo construction. We realised there wasn't much information, unless from individuals like João Palla and some others, but they are very isolated cases. We went to Hong Kong, did some workshops in Colombia and even went to Korea to conferences focusing on bamboo," says Ó. "What we realised when we went to a global conference was that everyone had the same problem we have in Macao, that is, a lack of information, documents and analysis. That feeling was common among all architects, urban planners, landscapers and engineers," Machado adds.

As Ó and Machado discovered, Macao's bamboo construction tradition has one major advantage over that of other countries' which is in the scaffolding itself. Therefore, when they contacted local bamboo masters to build Treeplets,

TREEPLETS PROJECT

University of Macau
(2015)

JOÃO Ó AND RITA MACHADO

Macao young architects



Photo by Improptu Projects

the architects aligned their architectural strategies with the masters' experience, conceding to their wealth of empirical knowledge, as previously noted by Palla.

"We have our drawings, but the masters don't understand drawings, plans, sections, elevations: it's all so technical. We realised we'd have to build a model, a scale model of Treeplets. Rita made the model and explained it to the bamboo masters, with the added problem of not speaking Chinese. The common communication point with them was the model. They counted squares. Four squares to the top and one more for the side, another one up and that's how things got done," Ó explains. "It's all empirical. When they saw the model they reacted right away: let's get going, but look at the model," Rita adds.

Although pessimism prevails regarding the survival of bamboo scaffolding, Ó remains optimistic that it will not disappear completely. His calculations factor in the cost effectiveness

of bamboo along with the speed and skill with which it can be constructed, pointing to repairs on the Macao Science Centre as an example. "The Science Centre, that round form, was entirely wrapped in bamboo. The speed with which they built it, the way they can adjust to any form — if the scaffolding was metal they couldn't have done it, they'd have to do a stepped form. Bamboo has that quality of being very versatile."

Machado believes art will help ensure the survival of the spider-men. Citing under-utilised creative qualities, she sees great potential for the future of bamboo construction and its master craftsmen. Machado asserts that acknowledgement and recognition of their skills and artistry by the public and cultural institutions could make all the difference. "It would be good to have these masters working on art. I remember when we were building Treeplets, they were fascinated by the process because it was outside their routine."

Toward the end, one of the masters stayed behind with me because he wanted to see how it looked at night. They were very curious and wanted to understand everything." She adds, "I think that bringing bamboo to these art forms could be uplifting for the masters. The installations and recent documentaries about the masters have lent prestige and recognition to a job we see every day without really noticing it."

Master Leung's appreciation and admiration for bamboo certainly go beyond construction. Due to its lightweight, flexible and beautiful qualities, "It can take anything; if the wind is strong, bamboo bends and resists." He also points to the long history of bamboo in Chinese culture and society, where it is considered one of the "four men of honour". The root of the bamboo plant represents firmness, the culm (stalk) honour, the hollow interior modesty, the smooth exterior with its nodes loyalty and union.

Like other masters, Leung works without plans or drawings. "The plan is in the heart; it

doesn't need drawings. If I have to, I'll make a plan, but it's not necessary. Even if I do draw a plan, no one but me would understand it." Ó and Machado heard the same from one of the masters they worked with. In his poignant words, "The eyes are the measuring tape and the plan is in the heart."

In Macao, there is renewed awareness of bamboo's importance despite opinions underrating its immense value. The city's architects agree that the time has come for transformation, to give bamboo a place of honour. Palla has no doubts as to the valuable qualities of bamboo whose future lies in the hands of those who know how to use it. "It has a huge future as a sustainable material, but it will depend on how it is used and treated."

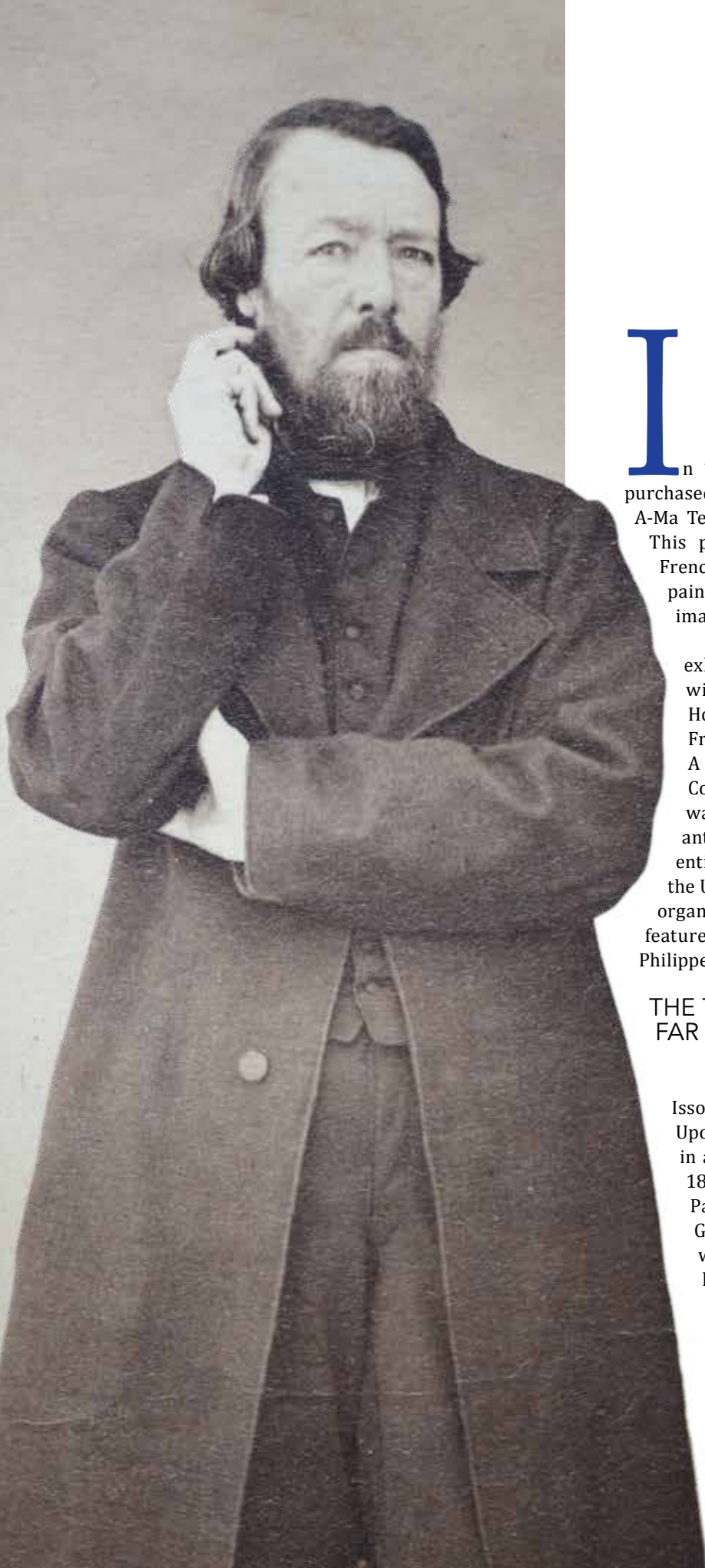
Bamboo indisputably has many virtues, both practical and poetic. It is ecological, sustainable and above all, perseverant. But does the future need bamboo more than bamboo needs the future? The answer to whether bamboo scaffolding can survive the 21st century remains to be seen. ■

Borget: the travelling artist

French artist brings
Macao to the French
royal court and beyond

TEXT OU NIAN-LE
PHOTOS COURTESY OF MACAO
MUSEUM OF ART





In 1841, King Louis Philippe I of France purchased and displayed a painting of Macao's A-Ma Temple at the 1855 World Fair in Paris. This piece of work, which so dazzled the French king and his people, was by the French painter Auguste Borget who brought the images of China back to Europe.

The Macao Museum of Art hosted an exhibition of his work held in collaboration with the Consulate-General of France in Hong Kong and Macao and the Alliance Francaise de Macao. "Auguste Borget: A Painter-Traveller on the South China Coast" showcased over 120 sketches, watercolours, oil paintings, prints and antique books on loan from nine cultural entities from Macao, Hong Kong, France and the United Kingdom as well as seven private organisations and collectors. Over 40 pieces feature 19th-century Macao, including King Philippe's "A-Ma Temple, Macao."

THE TRAVELLING ARTIST FAR FROM HOME

Borget was born 28 August 1808, in Issoudun, France, to a middle-class family. Upon finishing his studies, he went to work in a bank but found it not to his liking. In 1829, he left his hometown to study art in Paris with Baron Jean Antoine Théodore Gudin, a well-known landscape painter, whom he greatly admired. At this time, he also began a long friendship with Honoré Balzac, one of the most famous French authors of the 19th century.

AUGUSTE BORGET



FISHERMEN'S BOAT AND DWELLINGS NEAR CANTON 19th century

Following his teacher's example, Borget pursued his art abroad, travelling to Switzerland, Venice, Rome and Naples. Everywhere he went, he took his drawing notebooks, sketching everything in sight.

On 25 October 1836, he began the greatest voyage of his life – a four-year odyssey that took him to North and South America, China, the Philippines and India – returning to France in July 1840 only on doctors' orders.

Borget tirelessly sketched as he travelled: fishermen, farmers, street life, commerce, the scenes of everyday life all caught his eye. It was with this spirit that he came to China.

He arrived in the Far East from Peru via islands in the Pacific, weathering a terrible typhoon in the South China Sea which nearly cost his life. However, as a westerner, he did not have the right to enter the Middle Kingdom; so he spent August 1836 exploring the Chinese coast and Hong Kong. He then settled in Guangzhou, from the end of August until 20 October, where foreign businessmen were allowed to take residence.

"China lies before me, China calls me; tomorrow I will have left the impression of my footsteps on the shores of this celestial Empire," he wrote to a friend. He knew it was to be the highlight of his global tour.

From the October 1836 until May 1837, Borget lived in Macao where he met the English painter George Chinnery. Borget's fluent English facilitated a working friendship with Chinnery who helped him improve his technique, especially the use of oil and colours.

Borget found something of interest at every turn in Macao—every village, every street corner, every monument, festival and procession. Be it city or countryside, rich or poor, the daily life of ordinary people was ample fodder for his works.

China lies before me, China calls me; tomorrow I will have left the impression of my footsteps on the shores of this celestial Empire, said Auguste Borget

This perspective is aptly demonstrated in “A-Ma Temple”. Rather than simply featuring the portrait of a religious building, it depicts the life of its worshippers in meticulous detail. The painting is rather like photo realism, resplendent with trees and ships in the harbour.

Always searching for images that would enrich his portfolio, Borget relished the opportunity to see the Chinese at close quarters for the first time in his life. “I followed them, going up and down as they did, but at a distance,” he wrote to a friend. Although frustrated by his inability to communicate with the locals, he nonetheless felt more at home in Macao than in Brazil and Argentina where he was repulsed by the treatment inflicted by the ‘civilised’ Europeans on native Indians and African slaves.

Other works depicting life in Macao include “Residence of the President of the British East India Company,” “Passage from Macao to Canton” and “Macao Landscape.” They, too, are accurate and realistic representations. Borget also enjoyed drawing fishermen, depicting people and vessels as one in meticulous detail, as in “Boats and Fishermen’s Dwellings near Canton.”

BRINGING MACAO
BACK TO FRANCE

From Macao, Borget went on to Manila and then Calcutta. After travelling extensively in India, he fell gravely ill in late 1840, and his doctors advised him strongly to return home if he was to save his life.

He settled once again in Paris with all the souvenirs, sketches and notes he had collected during his travels and set to work, creating paintings of all the things he had seen and heard during his travels, especially in China.

Borget achieved great success when King Louis Philippe I bought “A-Ma Temple” at a major 1841 exhibition at the Paris Salon. This 25-metre-wide by 15-metre-tall masterpiece was then prominently displayed at the 1855 World Fair in Paris.

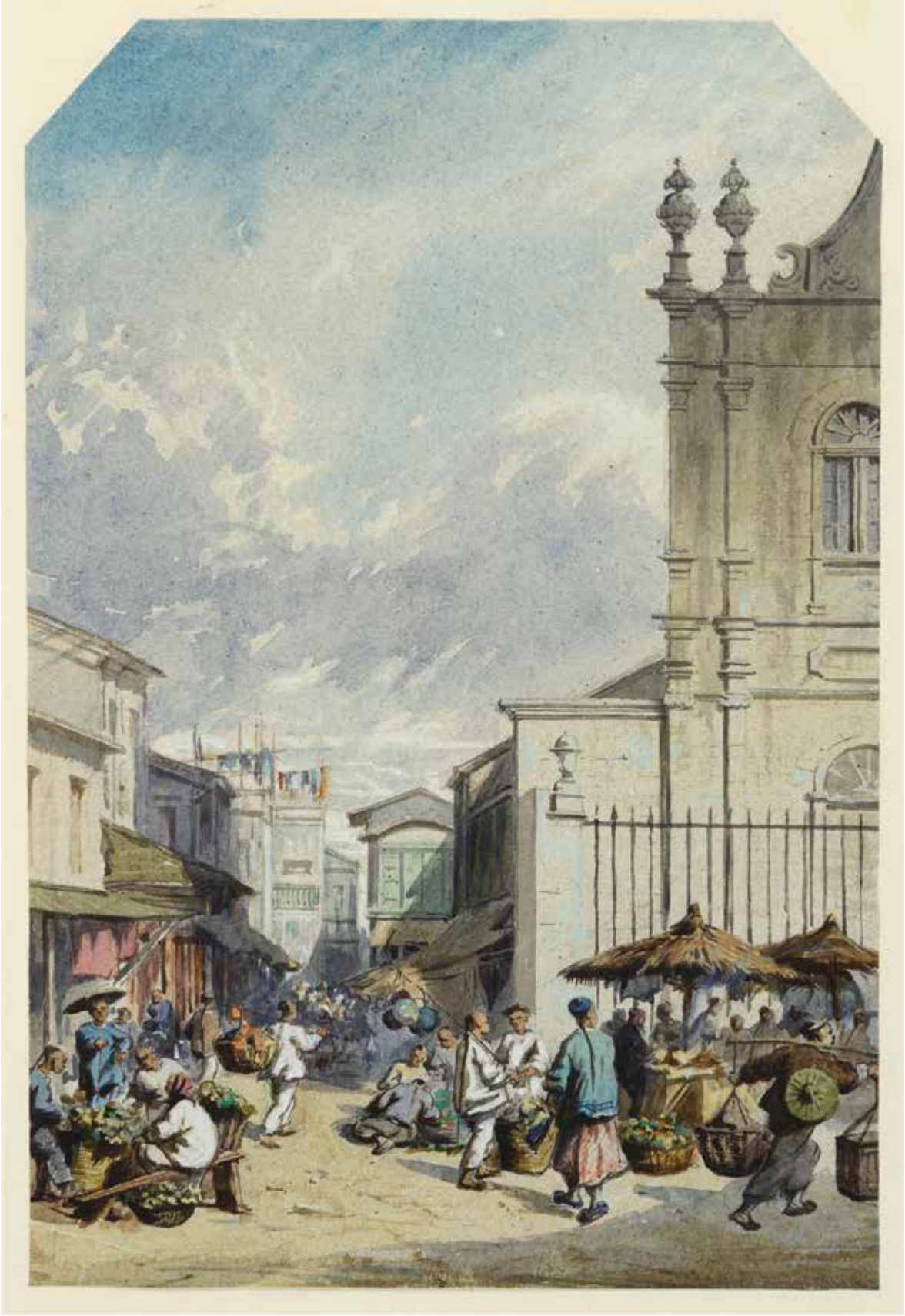
In November 1842, a Parisian publisher released “China and the Chinese,” an album of 32 lithographs complete with 26 pages of descriptions with paintings of Borget. The French edition was followed by an English version a month later, establishing Borget as an ‘Orientalist’



EXHIBITION
INAUGURATION
Macao Museum of
Art, 2016



“CHINA AND
THE CHINESE”
Album of 32
lithographs



FOOD STALLS IN FRONT OF THE ST. DOMINIC’S CHURCH
Graphite pencil and water colour on paper, 1839



A CHINESE FAMILY Oil on wood, 1856

painter of China.

In 1845, Borget produced "Pieces from a Voyage around the World" and "The China Open." His works became very popular, and his designs were often reproduced on porcelain. He continued to exhibit his work regularly at the Paris Salon through 1859.

Borget's meticulous drawings, paintings and books depicting the life, customs and landscapes of Macao and China helped spread knowledge of China's arts, culture and manners at a time when the French were curious about the Far East and all things Chinese. His work was therefore widely covered by the media at the time.

In 1844, a journalist for the arts magazine *L'Artiste* wrote: "You can today have a very enjoyable visit to China in the studio of Mr. Auguste Borget. Already, this young artist in 'China and the Chinese' has revealed the customs, arts and monuments of the Chinese, as a faithful painter and vivid writer... in his studio, you can learn in great detail of this most unique corner of the earth."

AN ARTIST AND A HUMANIST

In 1851, Borget left Paris for Bourges in his native region in central France. There he became a devout Catholic as a member of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul for the last two decades of his life. Devoting himself to charity, he worked

Borget's meticulous drawings, paintings and books depicting the life, customs and landscapes of Macao and China helped spread knowledge of China's arts, culture and manners

to relieve the poor and earned a modest living by giving drawing lessons at local institutions. He continued to paint and exhibit at major exhibitions in Paris, but the centre of his life had shifted.

Borget died 25 October 1877, after a long illness. He was surrounded by his works and souvenirs of his voyage around the world and is buried in the family cemetery in Issoudun.

He is remembered, then and now, as both an artist and humanist. Eugène de Montlaur, a critic of the time and close friend described him in the journal *L'Art en Province*: "A text as only M. Borget knows how to write, in a pure and colourful style, accompanied by admirable plates of exquisite finesse; so we continue, untiring, with a spiritual travelling companion, from the banks of the Hudson to the Philippines, passing through the Sandwich Islands, crossing Canton, on a market day, travelling along Clives Road, in Calcutta, and finally coming to sit in the shade next to the foundations in Arequipa (Peru)." ■



THE BARBER

Ink and water colour on paper, 19th century



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A Dream of Fragrancy

Macao's first opera celebrates China's Shakespeare at Macao's International Music Festival

TEXT MARK O'NEILL

PHOTOS ANTÓNIO SANMARFUL

OPERA REHEARSAL
D. Pedro V theater

In the winter of 1591, Tang Xian-zu – the Shakespeare of China – made a short visit to Macao. He was amazed by the beauty and expressiveness of the Portuguese women and the variety of products brought from the west.

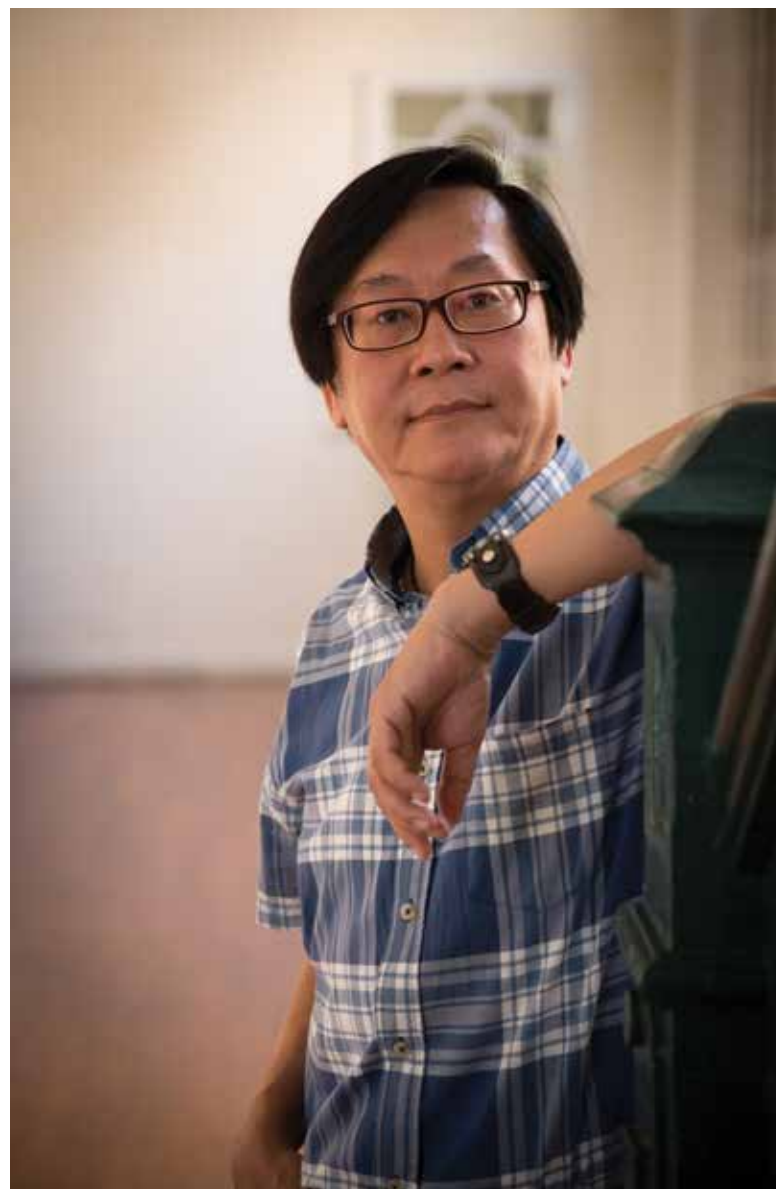
This brief encounter between East and West inspired Lawrence Lei and a group of Macao artists to create the city's first Chamber opera – “A Dream of Fragancy” – a fictional account of Tang's visit here.

The one-hour opera will be performed three times in mid-October during the 30th Macao International Music Festival at the Dom Pedro V Theatre, which seats around 200. After the two scheduled performances were sold out within a week, the troupe decided to stage a third one, to meet public demand. It will be performed in Mandarin, with subtitles in Chinese, Portuguese and English.

“Tang was in my mind from an early age,” said Lei, the author. “From my childhood, my father took me to see his works, in different dialects of Chinese. I saw them on the stage and in the movies. He was the first great Chinese playwright to visit Macao. So the idea came to my mind to write something to commemorate the 400th anniversary of his death and something responding to Tang's works.”

This year China is celebrating Tang by holding an exhibition of his works and those of William Shakespeare in 26 venues of the Chinese Cultural Centre around the world from September to December. Similarly, Britain is organising many events across the world to celebrate Shakespeare's anniversary.

“We have no details of Tang's visit to Macao. In the opera, we assume it was three days. It is entirely fictional, although the background is real,” said Lei.



LAWRENCE LEI Playwright author

In the opera, Tang meets a Portuguese lady named Maria who agrees to be his guide during his visit. She shows him the sights of the city, including St Anthony's Church, A-Ma temple, a flea market, 'Largo do Lilau' and 'Praça de Luís de Camões.'

“Tang is very curious, about the customs of the city and Jesus who sacrificed himself for other people. He and Maria develop a warm friendship. It is very ambiguous – not love, but a fusion of love and friendship. Tang has a wife at home, while Maria has a boyfriend in Portugal to whom she is devoted. When she finally comes to see him off at the A-Ma temple, he hides his feelings for her,” said Lei.

“One things that struck Tang very much in Macao is how the Portuguese express emotions to each other – kissing and holding hands. At that time, Chinese men and women had to keep a distance; they could not even shake hands,” he added.

Tang is played by Xia Xianhai, who is a music teacher in real life. “It took me four months to learn the part. It was very hard to master it,” he said. “Now I have, I feel it is very beautiful and moves people.” Since he has a full-time job, he could only rehearse in the evenings.

Director Tam Chi Chun said that dreams were a common theme in Tang's work. “We use this also. In the first act, we use smoke to make it feel like a dream. As the smoke fades, Macao appears. In this work, the performers are not singing popular music but opera. Not so many people in Macao can do that.

“In his time, Tang was a pioneer in romantic themes. The women in his operas dared to express their love. That was daring at the time,” Tam added.

Many artists in Macao contributed to the play, including Liu Chenchen who composed the music and Un Sio San who wrote the lyrics.

Tang himself had a dramatic life. He was born in September 1550 in Linchuan, Jiangxi province, into a family of senior officials. An excellent student, he failed several times in the exams to enter the government; but he passed finally in 1583, at the age of 33, and was assigned to a post in Nanjing, capital of the Ming dynasty.



1. LIU MING YAN
2. XIA XIANHAI
3. TAM CHI CHUN

“The Peony Pavilion” has 55 scenes and can run for up to 22 hours

In 1591, he wrote a report criticising failings in the government and calling for action against those responsible. This greatly angered the Emperor, who banished him to a humble post in Xuwen county near Zhanjiang city in Guangdong.

It was en route to Xuwen that he visited Macao in late November or early December 1591. Later he was appointed to a post in Suichang county in Zhejiang. A diligent and honest official, he could not tolerate the corruption around him and, in 1598, resigned from the government and returned to live in his native Linchuan. There he devoted himself to writing and literary pursuits and writing until his death in 1616.

Macao appeared in one of his most famous operas “The Peony Pavilion,” which was first performed in 1598 and became one of the most popular dramas of the Ming dynasty. It has 55 scenes and can run for up to 22 hours.

The Suzhou Kunju Opera Theatre performed it in Britain from September 24 to October 4 this year, as part of the 400th anniversary celebrations.

Tang composed more than 2,000 poems and essays in addition to his operas. Dreams are a characteristic of the plays; they enable Tang to introduce themes and settings that are not realistic and in which he can express the full range of emotions.

Lei said that dreams were one of the four elements he used in writing “Dreams of Fragrance,” together with the Peony Pavilion, passion and poems about Macao.

“Many outstanding Macao creative people took part in the writing. The city’s first original opera remembers the voyage of Tang Xian-zu to Macao and is a mark of respect to this outstanding Chinese dramatist,” he said. ■



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The art of combat

Wushu Masters Challenge brought amateurs and professionals together in Macao

TEXT ANDREA LO
PHOTOS ANTÓNIO SANMARFUL





Popularised by the entertainment industry, wushu is often portrayed on screen by the likes of Donnie Yen, Jet Li and Jackie Chan, and in recent years, it has gained traction as a mainstream sport



What's the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word "wushu?" To most, the sport conjures up images of fighters battling it out in martial arts movies.

Fans of martial arts, however, are no longer limited to watching wushu on screen. The inaugural Wushu Masters Challenge took place in Macao from 11th to 14th August 2016, drawing in amateurs and professionals alike both in the Special Administrative Region (SAR) and across the world.

Wushu, which translates directly to "martial arts" in Chinese, consists of full-contact combating as well as an element of performance. Popularised by the entertainment industry, wushu is often portrayed on screen by the likes of Donnie Yen, Jet Li and Jackie Chan, and in recent years, it has gained traction as a mainstream sport.

Competitively, the sport is chiefly comprised of two disciplines: *sanda*, which refers to full-contact combat; and *taolu*, a set of offensive and

defensive wushu movements.

The action-packed four-day Wushu Masters Challenge kicked off with a parade from the Ruins of St. Paul's Cathedral to Tap Seac Square, followed by traditional wushu performances and competitions featuring both *sanda* and *taolu*. Between intense combat sessions, there were also parades featuring Chinese "mythical creatures" as well as lion and dragon dances.

Highlights of the event include the Suncity Group Chinese and Western Sanda Masters Championship. Having taken place at the Tap Seac Multisport Pavilion, it featured some of the top fighters in the region, who took to the ring in

a series of competitions. On its concluding night, the Wushu Masters Challenge came to a crescendo with a closing ceremony. Overall, the event attracted some 400 athletes.

Jointly organised by the Sports Bureau and the Wushu General Association of Macao, the event was put on to promote and encourage participation in Chinese martial arts across the SAR. In recent years, the wushu scene in Macao has been developing at rapid speed, with more and more local athletes competing in international championships.

Macao's wushu athletes also came out in droves for the event, and while you might expect participants to be full-time fighters, many of them are enthusiasts who take up the sport as a hobby.

Take local Macanese Nong Wong-sun, for example, who participated in a *sanda* competition. A salesman by day, Nong has been practising wushu for around three years and plans to go professional eventually. "I got into it out of interest, and also because I love watching martial arts films."

He hopes for more people in Macao to take up the sport, which, he says, will help to boost the wushu scene. "I want to see it continuously improve, while also taking inspiration from other countries across the world."

His fellow athlete Tam Si-long, who won a round of *sanda* in the female category against a mainland Chinese opponent on the second day

MASTER FROM MACAO

Participation is something that Nikola Maricic knows a thing or two about. The Croatian native has been practising wushu since 1985 and is known as one of the top wushu masters in Macao, having taken part in countless competitions across the region.

Maricic wasn't able to participate in the event as he was scheduled to take part in a qigong competition in China. His decades-long professional experience, however, is an example of just how far wushu athletes can go in the field. He shares his insight with us.

ON WUSHU IN MACAO...

"Macao's wushu scene has a pretty high quality. I've seen lots of young athletes competing at a high level, as well as beginners who are really putting their heart into it."

ON WUSHU AT EVERY AGE...

"For children, wushu provides an excellent form of exercise. It teaches young adults to be a part of a team while also training them to be stronger. Even after 30, when most people think a sporting career is no longer an option, it is [still possible]. You can do it even at 90, practicing styles such as tai chi."

ON WUSHU TRAINING...

"Wushu masters have made lots of mistakes along the way [to get to where they are]. They would give students guidelines that might seem ridiculous at first, but in the end, the master knows why he or she gave out those orders. It's important for masters to train you properly, as opposed to adjusting to your abilities and letting you do it the easy way."





SIO CHI-HONG President of Macao-China Kickboxing Federation



Every competition has a winner and loser, but most importantly, athletes should look to challenge themselves, as well as work towards their goals, said Sio Chi-hong

of the competition, feels the same way. "In order for this sport to go to the next level, it has to become a lot more common," she says. "The Wushu Masters Challenge is a great start. The fact that this is an open-air event where regular people can come and watch [will encourage more understanding of it]."

Tam asserts that wushu is something that people in Macao can easily get involved with – and she herself is an example of that, having started training around five years ago. "At the beginning, I did it to de-stress from work. Eventually, I started enjoying it a lot more." Since then, she has competed in mainland China, where standards can be considerably higher.

The president and head coach of the Macao-China Kickboxing Federation, Sio Chi-hong, was a wushu athlete for seven years before becoming a trainer. For the Wushu Masters Challenge, he was responsible for training three participants. "Every competition has a winner and loser, but most importantly, athletes should look to challenge themselves, as well as work towards their goals."

Nong agrees. "The most valuable part of practising wushu is to motivate yourself, and to see how far you can go."

So why should people pick up the sport? Sio says there are two elements to it. "Wushu is about training your body, while also protecting yourself. To strengthen your body, you can pick up any sport – but in terms of protection, wushu is your pick."

Ultimately, Sio thinks taking the plunge into wushu is key. "I think participation is an accomplishment in itself." ■



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Macao hosts visit by Chinese Olympic medal-winners

PHOTOS GCS AND XINHUA NEWS AGENCY

A group of 42 athletes from China who competed at the Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games visited Macao in August, and were welcomed as national heroes by the government and local population.

The visit was well covered by both press and television. Its headliners included star swimmer Fu Yuanhui, the darling of the Chinese Olympic delegation due to her irreverent manner and contagious enthusiasm, along with top badminton player Lin Dan and champion sprinter Su Bingtian.

The delegation also included the women's volleyball team, which won the gold medal at the games. Many of its players are familiar faces in Macao, having played in World Grand Prix volleyball matches held in the territory.

Admirers crowded the streets as Macao government officials took China's Olympic athletes to the Ruins of St Paul's and to museums, schools and a retirement home. Experiences were shared during meetings with local students and athletes; a spectacle called "Our Pride" was also performed to express support and gratitude to the 'national heroes' for the medals won in Rio de Janeiro.

During the meetings with young students, most of the athletes stressed the need for much sacrifice and constant training to achieve



LANG PING (left) Chinese women's volleyball head coach and her team members



FU HAIFENG Chinese badminton player

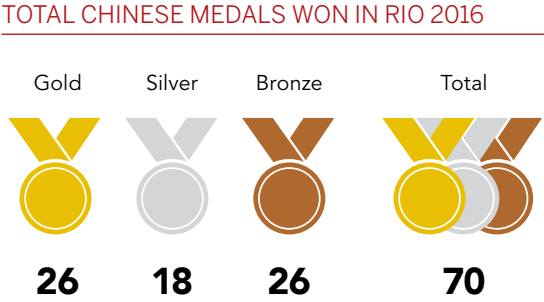


ZHENG SHUYIN Chinese taekondo fighter

the results obtained at the Olympics. Many acknowledged that competitive sport is the priority of their lives.

The most applauded athlete was Fu Yuanhui, who encouraged the young students she met to never back away from problems, because all difficulties can eventually be overcome.

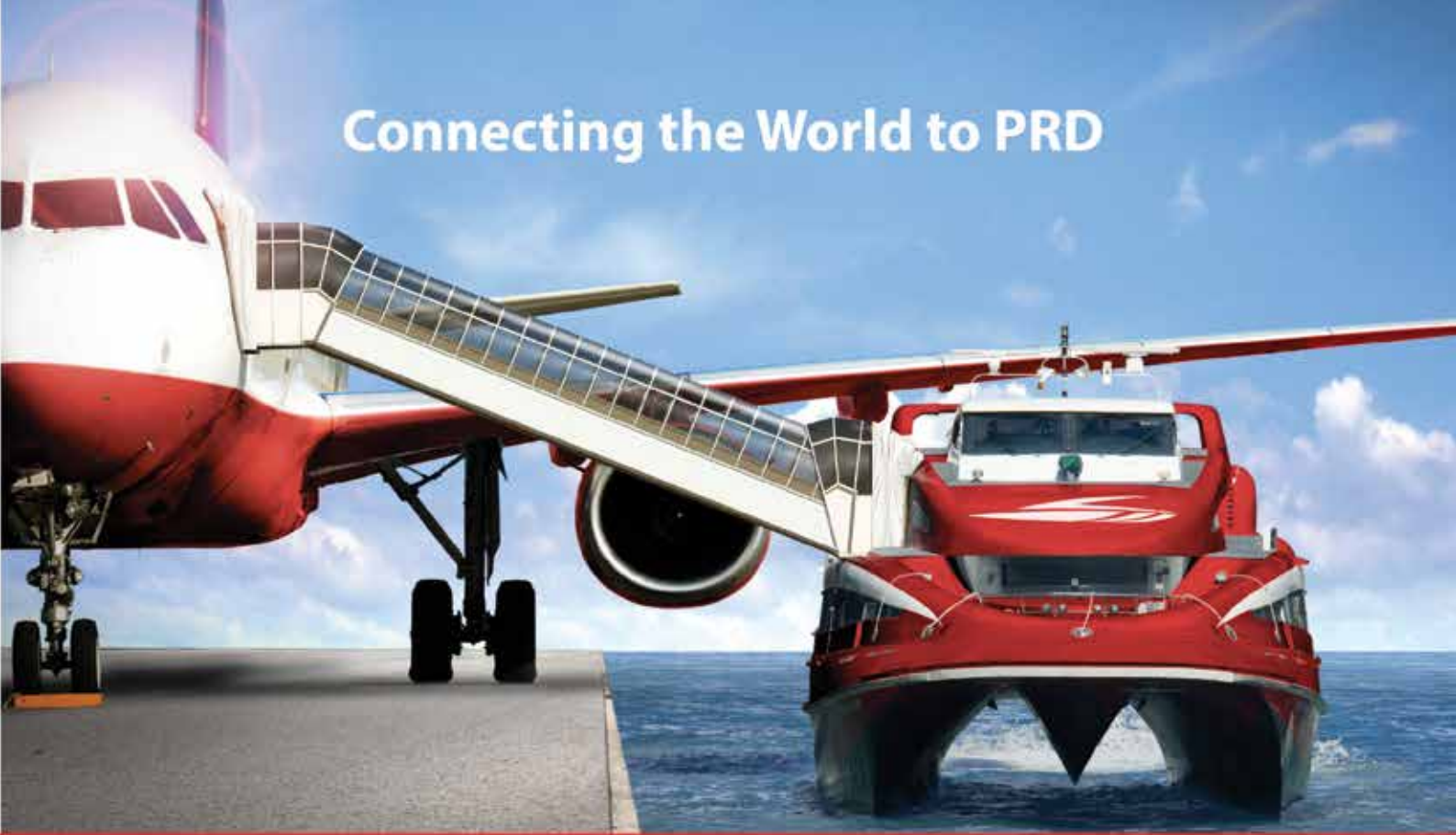
At the banquet offered to the athletes, Macao Chief Executive Chui Sai On presented a cheque for 14 million patacas (US\$1.7 million) offered by associations and foundations to the Rio Olympics Mainland Olympics Delegation. During a later meeting with the athletes, Chui Sai On said they were an inspiration for local youth. He explained that the government was boosting support and allocating more resources to develop sports in Macao, particularly competitive sports. ■



FU YUANHUI Chinese swimmer



DING NING (left) Chinese table tennis athlete



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A new birth

"The Birth of Venus"
Opera House to grace
Zhuhai's coastline

TEXT MARK O'NEILL
PHOTOS ERIC TAM





ZHUHAI OPERA HOUSE
Yeli island

A new landmark will open on Zhuhai's seafront on October 7th – the 90-metre high Zhuhai Opera House in the shape of two shells is the creation of architect Chen Keshi who was inspired by Sandro Botticelli's 15th century painting The Birth of Venus. "I was standing on the shore in Zhuhai, and the first idea that came to me was the sun rising over the eastern sea. But the building needed two parts, so I thought of the moon shining over the sea. However, you cannot have the sun and the moon in the sky at the same time... then I saw the painting of The Birth of Venus," Chen recalls.

And thus was created the design of the Asian moon scallop, scientifically known as amusium pleuronectes, local to the Pearl River Delta. This beautiful specimen is also found in the South China Sea as well as throughout coastal areas of Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean.

The opera house is built on a 57,680-square-metre plot of reclaimed land on Yeli island,

opposite the city's main seafront. The larger of its two shells stands 90 metres tall and houses a 1,550-seat concert hall, a lobby, an auditorium and a stage. The smaller rises 60 metres and contains a 500-seat theatre. The structure itself is 59,000 square metres and cost RMB 1.08 billion.

"I am delighted that it has been completed," exclaims Chen. "It is of inestimable value to Zhuhai and will make [the city] internationally famous. It will become a symbol of the city, like the Sydney Opera House, attracting many tourists as well as lovers of opera. It will be there forever."

A graduate of the College of Architecture at Tsinghua University, Chen also holds a Ph.D. from Edinburgh University's College of Social Science. For the last 12 years, he has run his own architectural design company in Shenzhen, employing 150 people. He is also Vice-President of the School of Urban Planning and Design at Beijing University.

A LONG AND BUMPY ROAD TO COMPLETION, FROM INITIAL BID TO FINISHING TOUCHES

From the opera house's original concept to its completion has been a long journey spanning eight years. Now that the completed creation is finally within sight, Chen feels a sense of relief as well as joy. "In eight years, a person [can go] from being a student to a Ph.D. A lot can happen. It was the same with this project. Many things changed – changes in personnel, in companies and in differences of opinion. The greatest difficulty was in getting it built."

Chen first visited Zhuhai nine years ago, after being invited to join the committee selecting the site for an opera house and music school. The money for the music school did not materialise, and the city government wished to make a major cultural investment, so the site was left entirely for the opera house.



CHEN KESHI Architect



The city then launched a global tender, attracting bids from 33 major architectural firms from the U.S., Great Britain, Germany, France and Switzerland among others. Proposals were submitted by many renowned architects and firms, including Paul Andreu, who designed Beijing's National Grand Theatre, as well as the consortiums that respectively designed the capital's famous Bird's Nest and Water Cube structures.

The chairman of the selection committee urged Chen to also submit a proposal. Although responsible for several other ambitious projects across China – including the Lulang International Tourist Town in Tibet, a project funded by the Guangdong provincial government as part of its aid to the region, and "Dream City of China," a ultra-modernist set of skyscrapers in Shenzhen – Chen was not the most obvious candidate to design an opera house. "I had no experience building opera houses, but the idea intrigued me." With the inspiration of the two scallop shells in mind, Chen and a team of 30 submitted his design.

Chen's vision made the first round of cuts and was selected as one of the top nine. Two weeks later, it was shortlisted in the top three. "The three designs were put online, and the people of Zhuhai were invited to vote. When one person pointed out that the design in first place, by an American architect, was a copy of a memorial museum in Hawaii, it was dropped and we won."

Opera houses are notoriously difficult and

This was the first time a Chinese firm won an international bid for an opera house. We won for three reasons: our creative and artistic input and our connections to Zhuhai, said Chen Keshi

complicated structures, and of those in China, the vast majority have been designed by foreign architects. "This was the first time a Chinese firm won an international bid for an opera house. We won for three reasons: our creative and artistic input and our connections to Zhuhai."

Chen's ambitious design received its fair share of criticism. Some doubted the feasibility of the structure while others questioned its capacity for withstanding the typhoons that strike Guangdong every summer. But Chen's team designed the structure to have a lifespan of 100 years and to weather tropical cyclones of intensity up to 12 on the Beaufort scale, 8-point earthquakes on the Richter scale and wind pressures of 90 kilopascals. To supplement his lack of experience with opera houses, Chen travelled to Paris, London, New York and other international cities to visit over 50 opera houses.

Once construction began, Chen ran into more hurdles. "I have worked in Hong Kong. There, the leading consultant is truly the leader and in control of the project. But not [in mainland China]. In reality, there were many changes, such as those made by the contractors. For example, we wanted to use an Italian marble stone on the outside of the building. It is common in buildings in Hong Kong. But the Beijing contractor on the job did not agree and chose an aluminium material instead. There were also big changes to the interior design. I was in charge only in theory, but that is the system here. There was nothing we could do about it."

Another amendment was the addition of an underground mall with shops and restaurants. "That is the custom of people here, to shop and have a meal before seeing a performance. You do not find this in the West where there is nothing but pure art in the opera houses."

While the leadership within Zhuhai's government changed several times during the eight years of construction, its support for the project never wavered, enabling Chen to hire a German company to design the stage and the machinery used which has experience working on opera houses in Berlin, the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow and the Copenhagen Opera House.

The structure is comprised of 10,000 tonnes of thin steel which took 400 days to transform into the two shells (ordinary steel would have required only two to three months). The façade of the larger shell is covered with an LED lighting system which will project operas live on the outside of the building. The big hall will host large-scale performances such as symphonies, chamber music, operas, ballets, musicals and plays. The smaller theatre will host artistic events, fashion shows, art promotions and corporate meetings. Above the concert hall is a floor for sightseeing, a restaurant and bar and a catwalk for fashion events.

IS IT WORTH IT IF STATE SUBSIDIES ARE NECESSARY?

Many in Zhuhai are sceptical that the opera house will break even. With a population of just 1.5 million, only a small proportion has the means to afford the price of high-quality opera and music performances. "All opera houses rely on subsidies," according to Chen. "That is normal for performances of high art. Traditional Chinese opera was in decline a few years ago in favour of Western opera but has made a comeback in the last one or two years. This project is for public interest. You cannot only consider commercial return. Its influence will be very big and will attract tourists."

Chen believes the building will create great value for Zhuhai due to its design and location adjacent to the sea. "When the sun rises in the east, it is very beautiful. Culture equals competitiveness. Some cities are very wealthy but are not famous because they are not known for anything. Why do millions of people go to Paris and New York? It is because of culture, which is everlasting. Great Britain used to make cameras, then the Japanese took the technology from them. Germany made cars; now we Chinese make them. But culture cannot be stolen."

Long Guangyan, Vice Mayor of Zhuhai, agrees that the opera house is a major project in terms of cultural significance and local spirit, showing off the city's romantic side and enhancing its attractiveness. "It will be the foundation for making a culturally strong city." She anticipates that the Zhuhai Opera House will attract visitors from Hong Kong, Macao and the Pearl River Delta, thereby expanding the city's influence throughout the region. ■



Watch the Zhuhai Opera House under construction



KU SOI LAN (1st place)

Glimpses of Macao

Panoramic views of Macao, details of the city, the people who live here and those who come to visit, were some of the images that were part of the photo contest “Precious moments in Macao.”

It was co-organised by the Government Information Bureau (GCS), eight photographic organisations and five media associations with the aim of showing the development and life of Macao over the past year.

The image of “Passing the baton” submitted by Ku Soi Lan, captured the attention of the jury and won first prize, while “Colourful clouds over the peninsula” by Wu Yisheng and “NAPE in the evening” written by Lam Sao Wa, won second and third places respectively.

Besides showing Macao’s day to day life, the competition also featured the theme of “Our Waters” in which the photographs included the different cultural, professional and recreational activities related to the 85 square kilometres sea area that Macao now administers.

The 64 selected and awarded works will be part of the annual “Macao 2016,” published by the GCS.



WU YI SHENG (2nd place)



LEI KENG HONG



LAM SAO WA (3rd place)



PUN TAK CHEONG



SIO CHOI LENG



MARIA LEONOR FERNANDES DO ROSÁRIO



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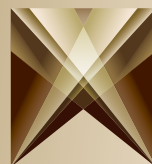
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