

Macao 澳門

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Masthead

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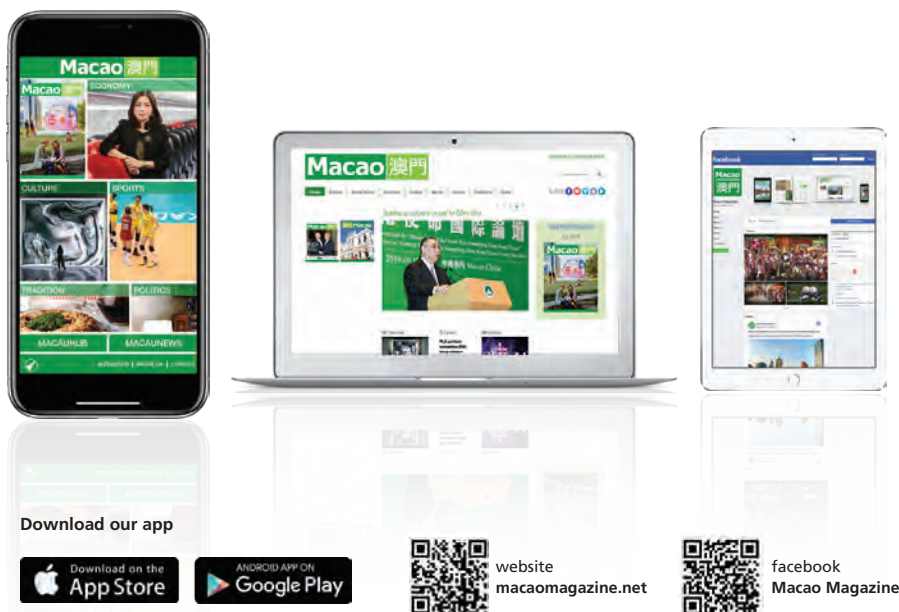
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Chef Hans Rasmussen at Macao's
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ALL THAT'S GOLD DOES GLITTER

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Heading towards a more sustainable Macao

Over the past few years, Macao residents who are concerned about the environment – particularly the younger generations – have been actively raising awareness, starting petitions and talking to government leaders about how we are negatively impacting the waters and lands around us in our city. To respond to these calls to action, on 18 November the government will implement its new ‘anti-plastic bag law’, that fines retail businesses which provide free plastic bags to shoppers.

We have found alarming figures on plastic waste over the course of putting together this issue: 160,000 plastic bags are used every second across the world and only about nine per cent of all the plastic ever made has likely been recycled. The need to protect and address our environment to ensure the quality of life for Macao residents was, in fact, one of the messages given by the Chief Executive-designate, Ho Iat Seng. He will take up the post on 20 December 2019, a date that also marks the 20th anniversary of the Macao Special Administrative Region.

To understand the wide scope of sustainability, we dive into what’s being done in our city about plastics, as well as food and local farming. In this regard, we speak to chef Hans Lee Rasmussen

from the Institute for Tourism Studies and other chefs at the entertainment complexes about how they are working to minimise their carbon footprint by growing more vegetables and herbs locally and by sourcing produce from across the region. Not only is sourcing an important step but what comes after is just as important. We learn about how they deal with food waste using new technologies such as AI and food dehydrators.

We also interview the president of the Macao Foundation, Wu Zhiliang, about his outlook on society, the city and Lingnan culture – a culture which leaders from the region have expressed is the culture of the Greater Bay Area and, hence, the culture of Macao. It is a culture of openness and in our interview Wu explains why this is the future.

Derby Lau, postmaster general of the Macao Post and Telecommunications – or CTT – also chats to us about the organisation’s 135th anniversary, and we look into the life of Pedro Lobo, who in the mid-20th century was one of two shadow governors of Macao and one of the most important figures in the city. His biography written by his grandson is expected to be published by the end of the year. From exploring the worlds of sustainability to looking into the past, there’s a lot to read in this issue!



Gonçalo César de Sá
Editor-in-Chief





SUSTAINABILITY SPECIAL

SUSTAINABILITY AND THE CITY

Macao is going greener. Be it the culinary eco-warriors who are lessening food waste and home-growing more or the businesses and people who are battling the plastic problem, the city is looking forward to a more sustainable future.





SUSTAINABILITY SPECIAL

Growing greener solutions

Text Sam Sinha Photos Cheong Kam Ka

Food waste hurts the environment and importing ingredients pushes up the carbon footprint. But thanks to Macao's culinary eco-warriors, the city has been coming up with solutions – and it's now on the road to becoming more gastronomically sustainable.

When you were young, at mealtimes, did your parents tell you not to waste your food? Even if your stomach was bloated and you couldn't manage another mouthful, you still had to finish those final few morsels because there are 'starving children out there who have nothing to eat'. And your parents were right. There are starving children out there. Millions of them – and the amount of food waste that is produced every day by the human race could feed them and then some. But help is here – there are businesses and people in Macao who are trying to do

something to help make our planet more sustainable when it comes to food, sustenance and gastronomy.

Every year, according to a report published last month by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 25 to 30 per cent of all the food in the world that's purchased for human consumption – equating to about 1.3 billion tonnes – is lost or wasted. And it's not just that all that food could feed the starving – it's the effect all this waste has on the planet. Global food waste and food loss is responsible, it is claimed, for up to 10 per cent of all human-

The plants in MGM Macau's herb garden are fed and watered regularly





Photo by Eduardo Martins

Freshly caught fish from Macao's Inner Harbour

made greenhouse gas emissions, which trap heat in the atmosphere and accelerate climate change.

As a world-leading gastronomic destination that receives more than three million visitors every month, Macao shoulders a ton of responsibility when it comes to limiting the environmental impact of its hospitality industry – in particular, the amount of food waste it creates on a daily basis. But the city faces major challenges: primarily, the lack of space in the SAR for farming and, as a result, an almost total reliance on importing foods, thus creating a significant carbon footprint. Another challenge is dealing with the food waste itself and all that packaging, especially as Macao's landfill sites and incinerators are already running at capacity.

Welcome to the movement

Today, there are businesses, people and organisations in Macao – which has been a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy since 2017 – who are facing these challenges head-on and trying to battle food waste and the carbon footprint and, at the same time, creating a more sustainable gastronomic approach in the SAR. This includes the government, which, over the past few years, has committed to several initiatives in a bid to encourage the city's many hospitality providers to minimise their impact on the environment.

One of the most important initiatives in terms of gastronomy – an industry which the government sees as a key lever for nurturing cultural diversity and supporting

sustainable growth in the city – is its four-year action plan for forging Macao into a Creative City of Gastronomy. This plan, which was discussed at the second 'Macao – Creative City of Gastronomy' annual work meeting only a few weeks ago, includes promoting Macao as a 'city of gastronomy' at home and across the world, organising culinary educational programmes and supporting the development of the local catering industry.

Another more targeted initiative when it comes to sustainability is its collaboration earlier this year with National Geographic, launching 'The Great Green Food Journey', a campaign aiming to locate, support and promote sustainable practices in the city's food and beverage sector. Under the campaign, themed videos were produced – one of them



Chef Florita Alves; the minchi at La Famiglia uses locally sourced foods

dedicated to sustainability – and they were broadcast across multiple channels as well as on LED screens at Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO)’s Tourist Information counters.

So the government – including the MGTO, which is planning to create a database of Macanese dishes to help maintain the unique and rich culinary heritage of the city for future generations – is part of a growing movement dedicated to gastronomic sustainability in the city. But there are also businesses and individuals who are playing their part. Restaurants and educational organisations, for instance, are in the thick of the movement. From eateries growing their own vegetables and herbs to catering establishments who are using new technologies to deal with their food waste, Macao is becoming a hotbed for those working towards a more sustainable future.



People in Macao are becoming more and more aware of the importance of sustainability.

Chef Alex Gaspar

Sustainable sourcing

One of the major players pushing the gastronomy sustainability movement forward is Macao’s Institute for Tourism Studies (IFT). The IFT runs higher education programmes and gives its students industry training in its restaurants, which are run by its chef de cuisine, Hans Lee Rasmussen, who believes sustainability is ‘fundamental’ in the kitchen. He says: “All the kitchens that I’ve worked in practice full utilisation of all the ingredients. That means if you buy a chicken, you use the carcass for stock, the breasts perhaps for a lunch dish and the legs for a mousse or for the cold larder section.”

Chef Rasmussen also sees the sourcing of ingredients as critical to sustainability. “It is challenging to find local ingredients in Macao,” he admits, “so I prefer to call [our sourcing] regional. We can go down to the fish market and buy fresh local fish, but it’s the vegetables that are more of a problem. I prefer to explore the China market because the distance of travel is shorter than getting it from France or Australia.”



Chef Hans Rasmussen at the IFT shows off his homegrown and locally sourced produce

Chef Florita Alves, from Taipa Village's Macanese restaurant La Famiglia, explains that they deal with the sustainability problem in a similar way. "We always try to find ingredients that are sustainable and/or organic whenever we can," she says. "We try to get the most out of all of our ingredients and minimise any waste. With meat, we keep the parts that do not go into a dish to make stock which we then use to make sauces and other dishes. For our minchi, we use meat sourced from the local fresh produce market. The potatoes and eggs are from China."

Another way to reduce the carbon footprint is to grow as much as possible in-house – or, at least, in-garden. Lacking the space needed to grow large quantities of vegetables, the IFT has come up with an innovative solution to grow herbs with zero impact. Chef Rasmussen explains: "We have a garden where we grow common herbs like basil, parsley, chives and so forth. They are started by aquaponics. We have a system outside the restaurant – fish eat the nutrients and excrete them in the water, and that is picked up by the plants."

Chef Rasmussen also makes a key point: education is important when it comes to being more sustainable. "For our students," he says, "it's good for them to see that herbs don't only come from plastic bags in supermarkets. If it takes three weeks to grow one branch of basil, then you think a little bit more before you throw away a branch because it's a little bit dark on one of the leaves. So it's about having a new state of mind."

As raising animals to produce meat uses up so many natural resources, another way to reduce the environmental impact of a



A gardener tends to MGM Macau's herb garden

restaurant is to use plant-based alternatives. Chef Rasmussen reveals that, for educational purposes, he's going to try Impossible Meat – imitation meat from American plant-based protein company Impossible Foods – on his menus. “I may do something called the ‘Impossible Minchi,’” he says. “It’s really a Macao dish. But I hope the people of Macao aren’t going to kill me! However, I’m going to do the traditional minchi as well – and then people can order one of each and see if they can taste the difference.”

High on herbs

The gaming operators are a hugely important cog in the city’s sustainable gastronomy movement. At MGM Macau, herbs are grown in a special garden on its rooftop to limit the carbon footprint of shipping in fresh produce from overseas. The team is also focusing on education to empower team members to think more about sustainability. Geoffrey Simmons, culinary director at MGM, says: “We

are growing 12 species of herbs, including rosemary, basil and Italian parsley. Our cold production kitchen team is responsible for the maintenance of the garden and we have a plan that involves all aspects from the planting stage all the way to the harvest. By doing so, we also allow our team members to understand the process of growing the herbs and to create a stronger connection with the dishes we create and cook.”

“So far,” continues Simmons, “the herbs are used in three outlets at MGM Macau – and with the positive responses from our culinary team, we are planning to create a herb garden at MGM Cotai as well.”

At Sands China, executive chef Alex Gaspar explains that in terms of responsibly sourced ingredients, they have a commitment to be ‘as local as possible’. “We have several suppliers within 300 miles that offer fantastic produce, especially in terms of organic vegetables, which are sourced from near Shenzhen. We are currently also

considering the possibility of building our own hydroponic farm. This very exciting initiative would be focused not only on reducing our carbon footprint and being completely sustainable, but also on offering our guests the freshest vegetables possible – and would allow us to grow very interesting heirloom varieties of herbs and lettuces.”

Gaspar also praises Macao’s residents for their attitudes when it comes to caring for the environment. “I think that people in Macao are becoming more and more aware of the importance of sustainability,” he notes. “I see it daily with things like recycling and finding biodegradable substitutes.”

Root, a two-year-old restaurant just down the road from the Macao Cultural Centre, is another eatery



that's taking steps towards a sustainable future. Chef Anthony Tam overcomes the challenges of sourcing local ingredients with creativity and forward planning.

He explains: "Currently there is not a large amount of sustainable and responsibly sourced ingredients available in Macao. This can be a challenge, so when we are looking to create new dishes, we have to be creative with the ingredients available throughout the seasons."

By offering set menus, the team can better plan ahead, reducing the chance that any food will be wasted. "We believe that asking our customers to choose the menu beforehand not only allows us to give them a wonderful experience with fresh ingredients," says the chef, a native of Macao,



Gastronomy connects people, communities and food. The Macanese community is still alive because of the kitchen.

Chef Hans Rasmussen

"but it also allows us to greatly reduce food waste. Many of our dishes are created by using the whole ingredient – for example, dehydrating fish skins to make a wonderful delicate crisp to add texture and flavour. We have recently created our own vegetable straws made from vegetable peel. We enjoy growing our own herbs, which feature in many of the courses. We are constantly looking for new ways to reuse and reduce."

Waste not want not

Sands China doesn't just deal with sustainability by trying to source as locally as it can. It also employs another two-pronged approach, through using innovative technologies as well as educating staff. Chef Gaspar explains: "We utilise various technologies for processing food waste, which are currently helping us to divert around 60 tons of food waste per month."



(Above) Chef Anthony Tam is dedicated to lessening food waste at his Roots restaurant; (left) chef Alex Gaspar and his foods at The Venetian that are 'as local as possible'

Macao: a story of gastronomy

The SAR is a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy.

6.6 per cent of the workforce in Macao is employed in the gastronomy field.

28.6 per cent of those workers are young people aged 25–34.

Macao holds regular major food events, such as the annual Macao Food Festival. The next edition will be held between 8–24 November at Sai Van Lake Square and is likely to attract more than 800,000 food fans.

The city is home to its own ‘fusion’ cuisine – Macanese cuisine – as well as hundreds of restaurants, many in the entertainment resorts.

The Environmental Protection Bureau indicated in its 2018 environmental report that the amount of collected food waste in Macao last year increased by 50 per cent year-on-year to more than 355,000kg.

That includes seven food digesters across our properties and three Dehydra dewatering machines that reduce the volume of our food waste by as much as 70 per cent. We are also excited to be piloting Winnow soon, to see its AI technology in action.”

Winnow is a smart waste bin linked to a computer and a screen which uses sophisticated AI to analyse food waste and automatically keep track of what is being thrown away. This allows the management team to get a handle on exactly what is being wasted in order to make plans to reduce the amount of food that’s thrown away.

Chef Gaspar says: “In the end, training is the most important aspect when it comes to incorporating these technologies into the day-to-day operations of a busy kitchen. Once the members of a team understand the importance of sustainability, they will have a sense of ownership and everyone can celebrate the positive results together.”

MGM, on the other hand, implemented a ‘Clean Plate Scheme’ at two employee dining rooms over three days to encourage staff to reduce food waste by only taking what they could eat from the buffet. Simmons explains: “During this event, we reduced the waste by 817kg. It was very satisfying and something we will definitely continue with in the future.”

“Knowing how food waste could create a negative impact on the environment,” continues Simmons, “we have purchased a composting machine to help reduce food waste and it has proven to be very effective. We collect the food waste and kitchen scraps and put it all into the compost machine twice a day. Microorganisms inside the machine break it all down into compost – which we use to fertilise our rooftop farm.”

MGM works with local businesses in order to get the most out of the compost that’s produced. Florist Sei Kuai Un Lam has been working with MGM since 2007. Its owner, Chu Lo Man, says MGM – and his business – supports ‘the idea of turning kitchen scraps into a nutrient-rich landscaping compost’. Since March, the entertainment complex has been supplying Chu’s enterprise with around 300kg of compost every month.

Chu says that by using the composting machine’s produce, his florist has reduced fertilising costs by up to 25 per cent. “I intend to share this great initiative with the industry,” he claims, “for the good of the environment and also for business. I will also be increasing [our] use of organic fertilisers.”

Back at La Famiglia, chef Alves takes a preventative approach to reducing food waste. By training staff thoroughly on the menu and encouraging them to offer suggestions to guests on what to order, they help their diners to choose only what they can eat. Alves explains: “To deal with food waste, we encourage the customers not to over-order. We suggest what will be enough. If the food is not enough, they can always order again. For any kitchen waste, normally it will be shared between our staff.”



One of the organic dishes at Roots



Sustainable heritage

There is a balance to be struck between using local ingredients for the sake of the environment and keeping cultural traditions alive. Take the Grand Lisboa's Casa Don Alfonso restaurant, which is committed to using organic products but takes them from a farm, Le Peracciole, which is based on the west coast of Italy.

Executive chef at the eatery, Giovanni Galeota, says: "At Don Alfonso, all our ingredients are organic. We import our raw materials from Italy because we have specific standards. The 'Peracciole' farm was the reason behind the success of [the restaurant's previous incarnation] Don Alfonso 1890."

Galeota continues: "[The farm] produces precious extra virgin olive oil, most of the vegetables for the restaurant and the famous lemon liqueur – all the ingredients that make our dishes unique. For me, it is essential to work with Italian organic products. They have a special taste. So I think with the transport of organic products, we help the gastronomic culture to grow in Macao." So there is a carbon footprint in the ingredients at Don Alfonso but the Grand Lisboa has also implemented schemes in other areas, like a food waste processor, water saving measures and using biodegradable straws, to help limit its environmental impact.

At the IFT, chef Rasmussen tells us that sustainability goes beyond ingredients and kitchen practices. It's also about teaching the next generation of chefs in Macao about the cuisine and culture of the city in order to keep local traditions alive. "We do Macanese dishes in order to maintain the heritage," he says. "It's also about educating chefs. That's why we have the Friday buffet for Macanese and Portuguese dishes only."

"Gastronomy connects people, communities and food. The Macanese community is a small one but it thrives and lives. It is still alive because of the kitchen. This is also one of the reasons for our educational restaurant. It's not just about teaching students to put a knife or a fork on the table. It's also to keep our cultural heritage."

Despite the enormous challenges facing the industry, it's comforting to know so much is being done in Macao to promote sustainable practices, in terms of implementing new technologies and educating the next generation. There's a long way to go yet but with the major players pulling together, there is hope of a sustainable gastronomic future for the next generation. So, like your parents said, don't waste food. Follow Macao's lead instead. ●

(From top) One of the food digesters at The Venetian Macao in action:

1) The food waste arrives in a bin; 2) It is loaded into the digester; 3) Food waste is being poured into the digester; 4) Employee makes sure the waste is all in; The food waste is being "digested" into water.



Just underneath the surface of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch lies plastics that could threaten the ecosystem for years to come

An underwater photograph showing a large amount of plastic waste, including clear plastic bags and fragments, floating in dark blue water. The scene is dimly lit, emphasizing the pollution.

SUSTAINABILITY SPECIAL

The plastic revolution

Text Emily Pottier

While plastic waste is driving many to despair, several encouraging initiatives are giving us hope in Macao. Led by people and businesses who focus on both action and education, these projects are the first step towards cleaning up our city's environment.

Unless you are diving into the deepest depths of the Pacific or exploring the most secluded parts of the Amazon rainforest, you'll probably be within a bottle's throw of plastic. No matter where you go in the world, you can't escape it – whether you're swimming in the ocean, hiking on a mountain trail or taking a stroll through a town or city.

In June last year, the United Nations focused its annual World Environment Day on plastic waste, giving it the theme of 'beat plastic pollution' and showcasing a shocking environmental interactive report that chronicled the evolution of plastic from the 1950s up until the present day. From the comparatively minimal amount of plastic produced in the mid-20th century to the more than 300 million tonnes of plastic – practically equivalent to the total weight of the entire human population – produced

every year since 2014, it was clear that plastic waste is choking our planet.

The report also noted that of all plastic waste ever produced, only nine per cent is recycled and 12 per cent is incinerated – with a whopping 79 per cent destined for landfill or, worse, the natural environment. The UN also said that around the world, one million plastic drinking bottles are purchased every minute – while up to five trillion single-use plastic bags are used worldwide every year. It said that half of all the plastic produced is designed to be used only once.

Alarmingly, from the same report, the most common type of plastic waste is the cigarette butt. This is due to tiny plastic fibres in the filters – but it's followed closely by water bottles and caps, food wrappers, plastic bags, lids, straws and stirrers. Items you've probably used already today.

Major rivers that run through countries such as China, India and Egypt contribute to more than 90 per cent of the plastic waste found in the oceans. Furthermore, the 2018 report stated that 'if current trends continue, our oceans could contain more plastic than fish by 2050'. For instance, in the North Pacific Ocean, between the west coast of North America and Japan, there is a growing collection of marine debris called the 'Great Pacific Garbage Patch'. This leviathan of floating trash is made up of plastic waste that's been spat out by rivers or discarded from ships. As of last year, the size of the 'patch' was 1.6 million square kilometres – or about three times the size of France. Although the patch has identifiable plastic refuse, such as fridges and TV sets, it is almost entirely made up of degraded plastic called

'microplastics' which can't always be seen by the naked eye. And these are devastating for our oceans' ecosystems.

Plastic Macao

But what about closer to home? Macao could be in just as much deep water as the rest of the globe. Earlier this year, David Gonçalves, dean of the University of Saint Joseph's Institute of Science and Environment, found, in a study done by a Master's student, that Macao's waters at Cheoc Van and Hac Sa beaches showed concentrations of around 800 microplastics per one litre of sediment – a measure that the dean says is 'worrying'. Gonçalves – who notes that the impacts to marine life or human health are still not clear as more studies are needed to understand the physiological effects of

microplastics – also discovered that samples from the Sai Van Bridge area registered more than 1,700 microplastics per litre.

"It has been demonstrated that as microplastics are ingested by small marine organisms, [they] enter the food chain," says Gonçalves. "The consumption of marine products by humans is one way that microplastics get into our bodies. Also, microplastics adsorb chemical contaminants in the water and this is one further way they can harm the organisms that ingest them."

With regards to microplastics in the SAR's waters, at the end of last month, Susana Wong, director of the Marine and Water Bureau, announced that by the end of the year, the authority will complete an investigation on the concentration of microplastics in the water. Macau Water also guaranteed that



in their water supply installations, it's already possible to effectively remove microplastics with diameters of more than 0.9mm – and that through 'ultrafiltration' membranes, it's possible to remove materials of more than 0.1 micrometre in diameter, meaning that the drinking water in Macao is safe for consumption.

Wong also added that the World Health Organisation doesn't include microplastics and other substances in their health parameters. She considers that research on the toxicity and impact of microplastics is still insufficient and promises that the government will continue to follow international research on the matter. A study released last year by Macao's University of St Joseph concluded that the Taipa coastal zone is the most polluted with microplastics, making up 41 per cent of all the researched zones.

David Jones, a British ocean researcher and conservationist who founded Just One Ocean, says that the billions of microplastic particles already in the oceans act as transport vectors for a range of toxins and pollutants which accumulate and amplify on the plastics. As these microplastics are mistakenly ingested by marine animals, the toxins enter the food chain and become more concentrated as they progress through it. We are at the top of the chain and, according to Jones, around 17 per cent of the world's population relies on seafood as its main source of protein.

These findings imply that all local marine life is being impacted by plastic pollution, thus affecting local seafood consumption too. Macao's Statistics and Census Bureau shows that over the past 10 years, the consumption of live or fresh seafood has increased by 100 per cent.

Plastic: sorting myth from fact

By Rafelle Allego

MYTH

It takes 450 years for plastic to completely decompose



REALITY

In truth, we're not 100 per cent sure. It could be 450 years, it could be more – but, either way, it takes hundreds of years and may never completely break down to nothing. Plastic is created to last forever – and since it only really came into widespread use in the 1960s, there's a lot we still have to find out.

Biodegradable plastic is a better alternative



Biodegradable plastic – plastic which is made from all-natural plant materials and can be decomposed by living organisms – is itself a myth. There is still no plastic that has ever been invented that can be 100 per cent decomposed.

All plastic can be recycled many times



Plastic can only be down-cycled – recycled into a lower quality plastic with less value – once. Every time plastic is recycled, virgin plastic pellets need to be added to create the new object, leading to more plastic in circulation.

The colour doesn't matter



It does. Intensely coloured plastics in orange, blue and purple are difficult to reuse – and black ones are the worst of all. White or transparent plastics are the only ones worth putting through the recycling process while all the coloured ones go to landfill.

Drinking from a plastic bottle causes cancer



Probably not. Or not that we know of – it has never been proven scientifically.

The Great Pacific Garbage Patch is a solid island



Some may think this is an island but of course this vast area of trash is hardly solid – it is floating. It is made up of tiny particles and microplastic fibres that are tiny enough to be ingested by small marine life. And from there, it's up the food chain and on to our dinner plates.



The fisherman's tale

Ho Kam Seng, a local fisherman who was born on his family's boat and has been in the industry for more than 30 years, found that between the 1980s and 2000s, there wasn't what he calls 'an overwhelming amount' of plastic garbage in the sea. But by about 2010, he says, he found what he terms as 'a 1,000 per cent increase' in ocean trash. Ho says he notices more plastic in the oceans 'especially during the winter monsoon months, October and November, where every net I haul contains many plastic bags, plastic bottles and household waste such as shoes, clothes and other items'.

In 2016, says Ho, he and his fellow fishermen witnessed what he claims to be the 'intentional dumping' of several barges in their fishing area, located between China and Macao, which led to there being so much surface garbage that their boats couldn't move – plus, they couldn't catch any fish. The recently retired fisherman believes that governments have the responsibility to create legislation to regulate the correct disposal of trash as well as instil a 'fear' of harsh consequences into citizens who disregard the environment.

Ho's sentiments are being echoed across the world. Over the past few years, there has been a call to action for countries and individuals to reduce their consumption of single-use plastics and follow a more sustainable path. For example, in 2017, China banned the importation of 24 kinds of solid waste – including plastic, scrap paper, discarded textiles and metals – from overseas. This has had a snowball effect with other Asian countries following suit. Furthermore, Macao has, over the

past couple of weeks, passed a law aimed at restricting the distribution of plastic bags which will come into force in November but, at the time of print, the exact cost per plastic bag had not been established. What is established is a clear deterrent: a fine of MOP1,000 per bag will be issued to retail businesses who violate this law by giving out plastic bags free of charge.



For sustainability, there's no end to the conversation. The conversation should be ongoing – every day and in everything, for all sorts of people.

Annie Lao

Corporate initiatives

Many countries and regions, including Macao, suffer from an almost unending rise in the volume of single-use plastic waste such as cups, straws, takeaway boxes and water bottles. In Macao, this can be an even bigger problem due to its year-round high numbers of tourists. For instance, the city's entertainment complexes are no strangers to giving out a seemingly never-ending stream of bottled water to thirsty gamers.

But the integrated resorts are starting to do something about it. Two of the plastic pioneers are Sands China, which operates five complexes, and Melco Resorts and Entertainment Limited, whose



(From top) Cornstarch containers and cutlery being rolled out at Sands China properties; Sands China's reusable straws

three major Macao gaming-based properties are Studio City, Altira Macau and the City of Dreams. In Sands China's 2018 Sustainability Report, the company – which saw nearly 100 million visitations to all of its properties in Macao last year – states it is 'pushing to be an industry leader in environmentally responsible operations' through initiatives that will minimise its environmental impact.

Meridith Beaujean, director of sustainability for Sands China, says that the reduction of single-use plastics is a priority for the company – and she notes that the operator has already cut the number of plastic straws it uses by an estimated 2.2 million over the past 12 months. She says: "We have been looking at our single-use plastic practices and how we can progressively change them without affecting our guest satisfaction or the operation in general. The big second step – indeed happening now – is to kind of remove all those food and beverage takeaway containers made of plastic and to replace them with biodegradable material made of cornstarch." If disposed of correctly, packaging material made from cornstarch will break down into carbon dioxide and water in just a few months.

Meanwhile, to reduce the amount of mini plastic water bottles that are handed out on the mass gaming floors at The Venetian Macao, a pilot programme for a simple water dispenser with a filtration system has been installed. Here, guests can refill their own bottles, so waste is once again minimised.

With regards to Melco – which also sees a high number of visitations to all of its properties in Macao every year – in April, the company initiated 'Above and Beyond', a sustainable strategy

that commits to four key goals by 2030 – being carbon neutral, achieving zero waste in all its resorts, being an employer of choice and best partner to the community, and seamlessly integrating sustainability into guest experiences. And Melco has also become the first hospitality company in Macao to sign up to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's 'New Plastics Economy Global Initiative' in collaboration with UN Environment which aims to 'build momentum towards a plastics system that works'.

Denise Chen, Melco's chief sustainability officer, says: "We realise that the amount of plastic that is consumed at integrated resorts is considerable and could really make a difference, so we signed up to that initiative. The big categories that we're looking to replace right now would be bottled water, amenity kits to the extent that we can, food and beverage utensils

and containers – which we're already in the process of doing. That includes straws."

By the end of the year, Melco pledges to have eliminated all single-use plastic water bottles for employee-only heart of house areas and have them replaced with filtered water and non-single-use plastic alternatives, such as Bonaqua reusable dispensers.

Individual actions

It isn't just the government and businesses at the forefront of change in Macao. People are too – like Capricorn Leong Ho-fei, who earned the title of 'eco-activist' when she and Benvinda dos Santos began the programme 'Waste No Mall'. This programme teaches residents how to separate their plastics and paper effectively so that they can be repurposed – however, its main goal is to get people to understand the nature of rubbish, including the different types of plastic, how to

Melco's coastal clean-up volunteers at work





Members of the Waste No Mall group (from left to right): volunteer Silvia Ng Ka I, Capricorn Leong Ho-fei, Benvinda dos Santos, Annie Lao Ka-weng, volunteer Flora Fong Lai-wa

prepare them for proper recycling and how to avoid their overall use.

Consulting the Waste No Mall Facebook page, interested residents learn about the 'collection depots' where the programme takes place once every month. Leong believes that around 70 to 80 per cent of the items thrown out by people daily could be recycled or reused. "For example," she says, "the paper or plastic – which is the most [waste] we create every day – if we treat it correctly, it could be recycled into plastic raw material again." After the plastic and paper are collected, the recyclable waste is then shipped to a factory in Thailand where it is further processed.

Leong believes that Macao should be responsible for its own waste. "If you find it's difficult to separate so much rubbish," she says, "then you have to try to minimise the rubbish in your life." Two years ago, when Typhoon Hato hit the city, Leong credits the storm for raising awareness on the impact of rubbish in Macao. "The changing point was Hato, where people could see and feel the amount of trash [generated in the city]," she says.

However, Leong sees the difficulty of managing Macao's territory-wide waste because of the large number of visitors who, she claims, 'do not seem to share the same concern about the local environment as many residents do'.

Another local similarly concerned about the situation in Macao is Wong Cheong-hong, the managing director of Kashun Environmental Protection Limited, a company that recycles plastics and crude oil. Wong says that an estimated 80 tonnes – nearly the weight of a Boeing 757-200 plane – of recyclable plastic refuse, which hails from businesses like laundromats and restaurants, is received by his company every month. He says this can include broken or old blue and green garbage bins that service Macao's waste.

All the plastic received by Wong's company is broken down into smaller pieces, before being washed and then turned into rice grain-like pellets that are packaged and sent to China as raw materials. Kashun is one of only two plants in Macao that deals with recycling plastic – and he worries that he'll not

be able to continue soon due to the costs of running the machines and paying the factory space rents.

"I began my company in 2008," he says, "and the recycling factory opened in 2017, but now the landlord wants to increase the rent and I don't have the heart to try and stay. If I don't have the space to work, then I don't work." The recycler has found that the amount of plastic in Macao has increased over the years – with much of it unfit to be recycled. He says sometimes the volume is also too much for his company to handle.

The eco-warrior

With every year comes a new batch of eco-warriors. And one such young eco-activist in Macao is Annie Lao Ka-weng. In August last year, she raised an online petition to ban the use of single-plastics in the SAR. Her petition has garnered, to date, around 8,000 signatures and contains facts from a 2017 Environmental Protection Bureau report which noted that, on average, each person in Macao produces 2.16kg

of solid waste per day – a number higher than that of Hong Kong or Singapore, where the daily rate was 1.41kg and 1.49kg respectively.

Since the petition began, Lao has been brought closer to like-minded people who are collaborating to protect the environment through activities such as beach clean-ups and pop-up recycling events. As such, she believes that a ‘green economy’ – one that the UN describes as focusing on ‘sustaining and advancing economic, environmental and social well-being’ – should replace Macao’s existing economy that is mainly focused on profit and income. “If we don’t have a sustainable perspective on everything,” she says, “it’s not going to work in the long run.”

Lao also remarks that in today’s disposable and heightened consumer culture, we should try to live as people used to in the past, by using any one single item until it literally falls apart before new things are bought. “For sustainability,” she says, “there’s no end to the conversation. The conversation should be ongoing – every day and in everything, for all sorts of people.” Lao says that Macao could benefit from the ‘repair café’ culture that’s taking root in the UK. These cafés offer expert advice from ‘fixperts’ and skilled enthusiasts to people who bring in broken household items such as bicycles, tea kettles, toys and umbrellas, and have them repaired and reused rather than thrown out.

Whatever methods Macao could take on to battle the plastic waste problem, it’s clear the movement is starting to step up its game with people and businesses which are launching new initiatives all the time to help in the fight. And that includes Macao’s Chief Executive-elect, Ho Iat Seng, who, following his election win in August, said that Macao would carry out its own good environmental work by not simply transferring recycled rubbish to other countries or regions for processing – which he described as ‘fake environmental protection’. He also urged residents to increase their awareness of the environment and encouraged them to use fewer ‘non-eco-friendly’ products like bottled water.

So, if you want to become more sustainable, listen to the advice of the next Chief Executive of Macao. Also listen to the eco-warriors like Annie Lao and Capricorn Leong, support recyclers like Wong Cheong-hong, bring your own containers to the store to avoid shelling out for plastic bags and applaud the efforts of businesses like Melco and Sands China. Plus, get educated on the subject. As Gonçalves notes: “Improving environmental education to alert citizens about this [plastic] problem is critical. A reduction in the consumption of plastic products – in particular of single-use plastics and of plastic products that can be easily replaced by better alternatives – is a start that all of us should adopt.” ●

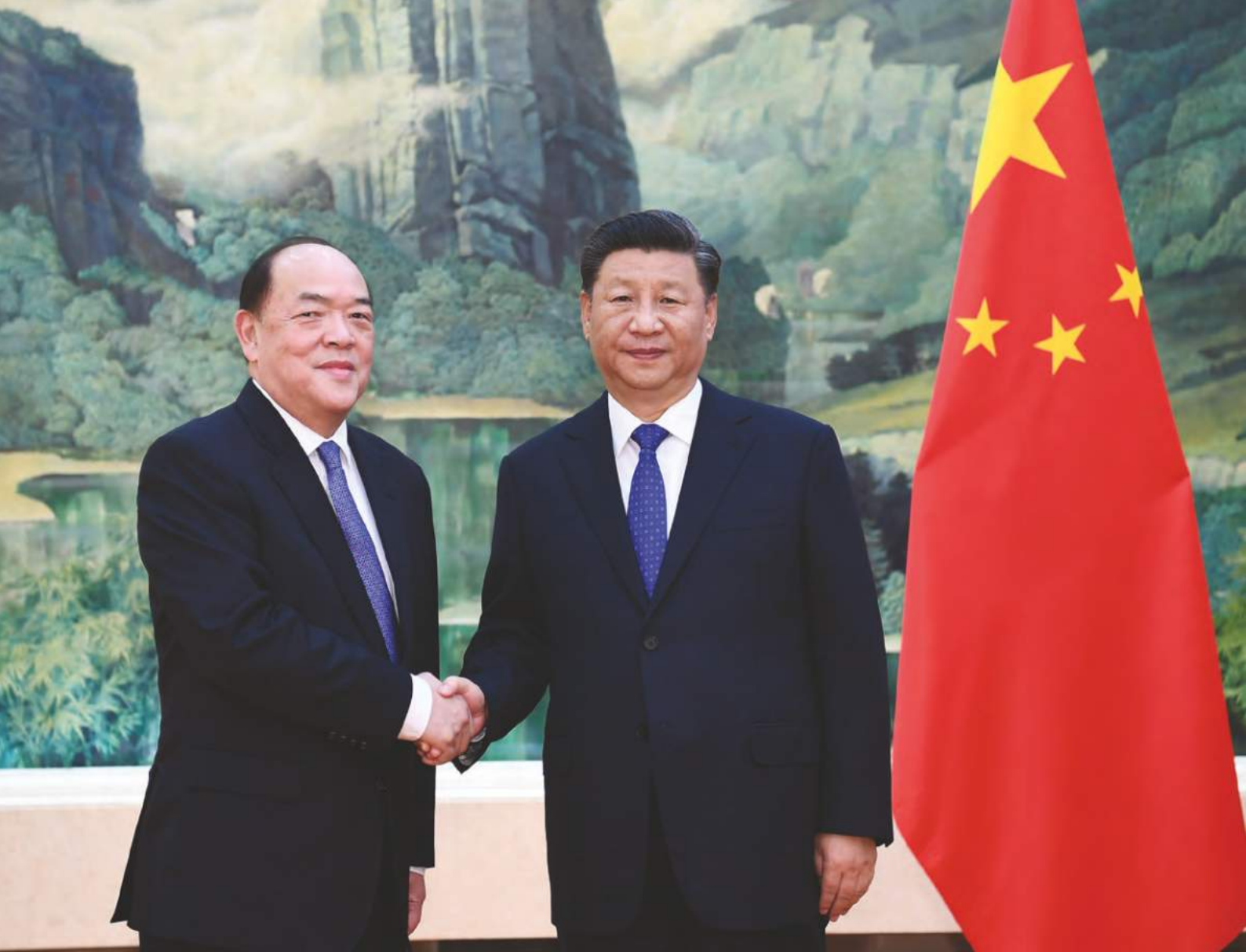
Wong Cheong-hong and his plastic recycling company which turns plastics into tiny pellets



Photos by Wong Siu Kuan



Visit Waste No Mall’s Facebook page (澳門不是垃圾站 Macau Waste-No-Mall) to find out more about the community campaign that aims to promote waste reduction and proper recycling in Macao.



President Xi Jinping and Ho Iat Seng

Politics

'One Country, Two Systems': A workable solution

Text Mariana César de Sá Photos Xinhua News Agency and Cheong Kam Ka

**Ho Iat Seng has been designated as Macao's Chief Executive.
He will be sworn in on 20 December.**



Premier Li Keqiang and Ho Iat Seng

Ho Iat Seng, former president of the Macao Legislative Assembly, will be sworn in on 20 December, the same day Macao marks the 20th anniversary of its status as a Special Administrative Region.

On 11 September, Ho received a State Council decree (officially known as Decree No. 719) from Premier Li Keqiang designating him as Macao's fifth-term chief executive (CE). The decree-bestowing ceremony, chaired by Vice Premier Han Zheng, was held at Ziguang Hall of the Zhongnanhai leadership compound in Beijing.

During the meeting, Li said that since Macao's return to the motherland, the city has been enjoying social harmony and stability,

its residents' living standards have been continuously improving and its exchanges and cooperation with the mainland have been continuously strengthened.

Li said that he hopes and believes Ho will make good use of the opportunities brought by the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, promote Macao's economic diversification, constantly improve residents' livelihoods, and make new achievements in the implementation of the "One Country, Two Systems" principle in Macao. He also added that the central government will fully support Macao's new government in administering the city in line with the law.



Afterwards, President Xi Jinping met with Ho Iat Seng and said, “You [Ho Iat Seng] have long adhered to the position of loving the country and loving Macao, enthusiastically served Macao’s society, worked wholeheartedly in public positions including as a member of the National People’s Congress Standing Committee and president of the Macao Legislative Assembly, and made contributions to the country’s reform and opening-up and its modernisation, and Macao’s prosperity and stability,” adding that the central government fully recognises his efforts. “Your nomination and election with overwhelming support fully shows that you have won broad endorsement in Macao.”

On 25 August, all 400 members of Macao’s Chief Executive election committee voted for the region’s next CE. Ho Iat Seng gained 392 votes, 98 per cent of the total. Among the 400 votes, 392 were in Ho’s favour, with seven abstentions and one invalid vote.

During the meeting President Xi also said that, “This year marks the 20th anniversary of Macao’s return to the motherland. For the past 20 years, under the leadership of two chief executives Ho Hau Wah and Chui Sai On, the Macao SAR government has united people from all walks of life”. “One Country, Two Systems” principle

ROOTED IN MACAO

Ho Iat Seng was born in Macao in 1957 and comes from a successful local business family. His father, Ho Tin, was widely known as ‘the first Macao industrial entrepreneur’ and his elder sister Ho Teng Iat is a former member of the Legislative Assembly, as well as being the current president of the Women’s General Association of Macao.

Ho Iat Seng studied electronic engineering and economics at Zhejiang University and was a member of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference in Zhejiang province for about two decades. In 1999, he replaced Edmund Ho as the sole Macao member on the standing committee of the National People’s Congress (NPC). From 2004 to 2009, he served as a member of the Executive Council of Macao and in 2013, he was elected president of the Legislative Assembly of Macao only to be re-elected in 2017. In April this year, he announced his decision to run for the CE election and submitted his resignation to the NPC Standing Committee and the legislative assembly of Macao.

“has proved to be a workable solution welcomed by the [Macao] people” he said.

President Xi Jinping called for Ho to accurately grasp Macao’s real situation and the country’s strategic development needs, and unite and lead his new government and people from various segments of Macao’s civil society to strive for the city’s long-term development.

Ho Iat Seng told the president that he was honoured to be appointed as the fifth-term chief executive of the MSAR. He pledged that he will [...] firmly implement the “One Country, Two Systems” principle, safeguard the authority of the nation’s Constitution and the Macao Basic Law, maintain the favourable relations between the

central government and Macao, uphold the central government’s overall jurisdiction and defend the country’s sovereignty, security and development interests.

Ho Iat Seng pledged not to disappoint the central government and Macao residents. In a recent interview with state-broadcaster CGTN, Ho Iat Seng promised that solving Macao’s housing problems would be his government’s top priority and that they would make every effort to enable the young generation to buy property and give them a promising future. At the same time, he said that “If young people [from Macao] want to do business, they should go to the Chinese mainland because the largest market is there.” ●

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An open-door policy

Text Mariana César de Sá Photos Cheong Kam Ka

The ‘Lingnan culture’ is characterised by its openness and connectivity – and it’s this culture that should bring all 11 cities of the Greater Bay Area closer together under one ‘cultural circle’. President of the Macao Foundation, Wu Zhiliang, tells us what this means.

Last month, Macao hosted the International Forum on the ‘Culture Mission of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area’. The forum lasted two days and saw more than 400 guests and scholars participate. During its opening ceremony, Chief Executive Chui Sai On said that ‘a shared cultural identity was an important common denominator to address challenges’ that are associated with the ‘one country, two systems, three separate customs territories’ background. He added that this is ‘in order to ensure the sustainable development of the Greater Bay Area’. The CE also emphasised that the cities in the GBA region all belong to the cultural circle of ‘Lingnan’.

We have all heard of ‘Lingnan culture’ – but what does it actually entail? What are the tenets of this culture and how does it connect with Macao and the GBA at large? We sit down with the President of the Macao Foundation, Wu Zhiliang, one of Macao’s best researchers and historians, to find out more.

Can you briefly explain what Lingnan culture is?

We all know that Lingnan culture originated from the Zhongyuan culture which spread not only to Guangdong but also to the Guangxi and Jiangxi provinces. Guangdong is a coastal province which meant more exposure to travellers which, in turn, led to a higher degree of openness. Many people in Guangdong and Fujian also went to Southern Asia for trading at that time and were exposed to foreign cultures, which further influenced the Lingnan culture. Its openness and great tolerance shaped its dynamism for social and economic development.





I think what makes Lingnan culture distinct from others is the way it uses Western culture as a reference. In Hong Kong and Macao, we are always engaged with Western cultures, where we are exposed to new ideas, philosophies and technologies. In that way, we are able to learn about our pros and cons and make up for our shortfalls. We are able to know when something we deem as advanced is actually trailing behind and we have a clearer picture of the world by having this reference point which makes us more confident when we work too. That's why Guangdong people are willing to change and innovate. There is a notable difference when we cooperate with other provinces in Mainland China – provinces more inland tend to need more explanations whereas coastal cities like Xiamen and Shanghai are easier to communicate with.

Are events like the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) Literary Week, which was held in Guangzhou in July, part of efforts to merge the GBA cultures together?

That's exactly right. We had the first conference in Shenzhen in 2017 and the second in 2018. I went for literature because two years ago I proposed to the Guangdong Writers' Association that 'literature comes first'. The reason I proposed literature is because I think literature, like other forms of arts, is more direct and emotional. Instead of going for the economy and technology industries which are rather competitive, literature could be a better starting point because it is less competitive. After this Guangzhou event, we are planning one in Macao as well. From an economic standpoint, the gaming and tourism industries are Macao's primary strengths and it is impossible to cooperate with other cities in the GBA in relation to gaming. Of course, we can cooperate on the level of tourism – but as a history student, to me, our culture is the most valuable. That's why we want to bring this to Macao.

If we go back hundreds of years, Macao was one of the first cities in China to open up to the world and even then it protected traditional Chinese culture from wars and revolutions and it never lost its cultural essence. The Portuguese also did not restrict the development and practice of Chinese culture. We can easily see Macao's harmonious society based on our culture and traditions. We are in the same boat and we help each other. This is not a slogan but a reflection of reality. We do not fight because the boat would sink. We also kept the openness of the Lingnan culture and didn't reject Western cultures. We lived peacefully with not only Portuguese but also the Japanese and many others.

I think Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao are like a family. As the saying goes: 'Guangzhou city, Hong Kong town, Macao street' [廣州城、香港地、澳門街]. The centre is in Guangzhou, Hong Kong was only developed around 50 years ago making it a small place and Macao was developed even later making it an even smaller place. Although Hong Kong and Macao were colonies for many years and were cut off from Mainland China, they are now under the 'one country, two systems' and for the past few decades we have mutually experienced reform and the opening-up policy.

In the beginning, Shenzhen was mostly developed by Hong Kong. Today, we wouldn't be able to understand each other unless we had gone through that experience of working together. We eat, we drink and we do business together. Most of the time, Guangzhou and Hong Kong act as competitors whether in economy or technology. Macao has no power to compete with anyone and so we can serve as peacemakers instead.

Do you think it's the Portuguese and British historical past that shaped the uniqueness of Macao and HK respectively?

We all know that the SAR's values are our uniqueness. In Macao, we have two values: the first is the protection of the traditional Chinese culture and the second is the peaceful integration of Chinese and Western cultures and religions, which is a rarity in our world. If we [who are based in Macao] tell a Chinese story, compared to someone from Nanjing, we are able to tell the story in a more understandable and effective way to outsiders even though we don't speak fluent Portuguese or Mandarin. This is why Macao can

play the role of an intermediary for the further development of China in the future. These are the two cultural advantages we possess. Another one is the large social community of Macao.

We are connected, we know our neighbours and we have good relationships with each other. Social practices and governance are very important. One of Macao's advantages is that our culture still contains Portuguese features. For example, we are able to handle things without the help of the government. When things need to be dealt with, our associations and industries unite and tackle the issues. These are the values that we should be promoting to other cities in the GBA. Two years ago when Typhoon Hato hit Macao, I saw numerous associations come out to help the community. I was so touched by the scene. You can find the spirit of cooperation in Macao. It is cooperation that helped Macao survive our history. It cannot be taken for granted as not many cities can survive for over 500 years – they are all historical heritage now.

Macao was given the role of being a platform for the Portuguese-speaking countries because of its Portuguese history and relations. Do you think this is the ideal opportunity to promote Lingnan culture in the PSCs?

I think we should promote not only Lingnan culture but also Chinese culture in general to the Portuguese-speaking countries. Macao mainly functions as a cooperation platform for trade and economy. But its advantages are also its cultural and historical connections. A lot of us have families in Africa, Southeast Asia and Brazil and that creates an emotional connection. We should also start bringing the cultures of



the Portuguese-speaking countries to Mainland China to understand each other better. Over past years, Macao has focused on developing its economy and trade, but I think we should develop the cultural, educational and technologies industries to achieve all-round successful concord, which will make Macao more valuable. It is not an advantage if we do not make good use of it, so I think we should put more efforts in this direction.

Will the Macao Foundation increase its efforts in promoting the Lingnan culture?

Yes, we will. However, our efforts are not under the umbrella of the Lingnan culture – they are under the GBA initiative. For example, we are the only organisation that offers funds to African students and offers scholarships to encourage students in Macao and Guangdong to pursue different levels of academic studies in Portuguese-speaking countries. It

粵港澳大灣區發展建設的 文化使命國際論壇

“Fórum Internacional da ‘Missão Cultural da Grande Baía Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau’
International Forum on ‘Cultural Mission of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area’

2019.8.12 澳門 Macau China



Chui Sai On and officiating guests gather on the stage during the opening of the International Forum in Macao

is a pity that we only received three applications when we are offering 10 – although we understand that Macao has better living conditions than some of these places. We really want to invest in more resources that can push Macao’s society forward and that’s the aim of the Macao Foundation: to provide financial aid to projects we deem are essential to society.

Does the Macao Foundation have any projects or cooperation agreements with other organisations in the GBA?

We are connected but we aren’t necessarily working with them because we have different objectives and the Macao Foundation is a special case. Most of the others focus on one specific area while we tackle them all. At the moment, we have connections with the government and non-governmental organisations and focus on areas like education, social sciences, charity and culture.

Is the Cantonese language – one of the characteristics of the Lingnan culture – an element you want to promote?

Sure. We use Cantonese as our common language even though we have Hakka and Teochew dialects and people who come from different parts of the country learn Cantonese when they move here. We also have more or less the same lifestyle. Cultures in the GBA are unified and under one ‘cultural circle’. It is not only about accessing different cities within an hour but without a common cultural identity it is meaningless. That’s why I keep stressing that it is not economy but culture coming in the first place. The bond and connection of culture and values is already the most important. We often use Mandarin in Macao but Cantonese is still in common use, so I don’t think language in that sense is of critical importance – although I do think Cantonese has its element of openness.

Do you think young people in Macao should look to the GBA as a place to develop their professional careers?

I think the main issue of young people in Macao is that they don’t have to worry about employment. Life is too stable for them to get out of their comfort zone. Working and partnering with the GBA will give them wider perspectives and knowledge so they aren’t limited to such a small city – the GBA at the end of the day is like a family gathering. Young people in Macao should understand that we cannot protect our labour market forever and [that they should] not take everything for granted and blame others for grabbing ‘our’ employment chances. This is not right because competition is good for a society.

We have to open our society and city up and that’s what I have been emphasising to the younger generation. You cannot accuse people for coming to your city

“

We shouldn't confine ourselves to stability. This is not the spirit of the Lingnan culture.

Wu Zhiliang



and worsening it – we have to change our mindsets because at this pace, our society won't work in the long term.

It is just like putting a shark in our waters so we can swim faster. We cannot ask cities to open up their doors but then close ours – this is marginalising us. We are in a lucky position that the gaming industry feeds us all. You cannot find any other cities with low tax rates and a good welfare system at the same time.

It is a fact that our city is crowded but we cannot close those doors because that's where our money comes from. We should create a pluralistic economy that offers young people more choices. We have a lot of brilliant young students who choose to leave Macao for a better and more compatible career path and that's why we need to create opportunities to bring them back. We should arm ourselves when we are stable and prosperous and not when it's too late. Just like we should do body checks when we are healthy and not when we are sick.

What's your definition of 'Macao people'?

I don't think we should define it narrowly by blood relations. I think people who are working here on a long-term basis should be considered as 'Macao people'. We are an immigrant city – one of different races, religions and nations. The people of Macao are mainly made up of Chinese, for sure, but the Chinese we are talking about includes all the people from the north to the south of China. This is why we should maintain cultural diversity. Shenzhen is a successful example. You can't deny that such a big city has adapted to the world with foresight. We cannot follow their path exactly but we should learn from them. Use our advantages and be prepared for competition. We shouldn't confine ourselves to stability – this is not the spirit of the Lingnan culture. It is short-sighted to give priority to local labourers to limit competition. It's dangerous to confine ourselves because some day we will lose everything.

What advice do you want to give to the young generation in Macao?

Young people cannot stay in their comfort zone but must have wider horizons – see things from a global perspective and love our country. The world is fast-changing and this is the only way. Macao can't survive without China. We have to increase our confidence and prepare for competition. Things will come unpredictably and it is only a matter of time. We should be prepared to face the world. I'm afraid that people have lost their competitiveness when they are only in their 30s or 40s. If we don't seize our time to prepare for the fight, we are going to lose when the door is wide open. ●



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三二
十十

20th Celebrations for
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EM MACAU

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Sea Area in front of the Macau Tower



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Portuguese-speaking countries

A new beginning

Text Paulo Figueiredo Photos António Amaral

Dance, music and multiple potential investments – the 14th Entrepreneurs Meeting for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries in São Tomé and Príncipe saw the African nation open itself up to a bright new future



Justin Foulkes / Lonely Planet

Cão Grande Peak

Singing and dancing is an important part of São Tomé and Príncipe's culture. The pretty African island nation, which sits in the Gulf of Guinea, off the coast of Gabon, has a long history of musically inspiring performances that tell stories and move audiences. However, singing in Chinese is hardly an everyday occurrence.

It is a unique experience then when a group of two dozen teenagers break into traditional Chinese songs on 10 July, at the official inauguration of São Tomé's Confucius Institute – just hours after the two-day 14th Entrepreneurs Meeting for Economic and Trade Cooperation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries has ended. An audience – which includes the nation's Prime Minister, Jorge Bom Jesus, as well as Chinese ambassador, Wang Wei – stands mesmerised by the young vocalists before they witness performances by Chinese singers and martial arts groups, as well as a rendition of Hubei province's Dance of the Lions.

Unique it may be to see this performance, however it may not be an out-of-place sight for long as relations between São Tomé and Príncipe – which gained independence in 1975 – strengthen. In fact, these performances highlight how important the links that are being forged between the island nation and China are becoming, particularly since December 2016, when diplomatic relations were re-established between the two after almost 20 years following the archipelago's decision to sever diplomatic ties with Taiwan.

The teenagers form the first class of locals who are learning the Chinese language at the Confucius Institute. They have been studying since April and another class is to start in the next few months. It serves as a great parallel to the fortunes of the country as a whole – from some tough times and uncertainty, a new dawn with exciting new opportunities may just be beginning.

Investment is key

The Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe – the smallest Portuguese-speaking country in the world – has experienced plenty of uncertainties over past decades, including political and economic problems. The nation, which has a population of around 200,000 people spread across 1,001 square kilometres, was labelled as having a 'fragile economy' by The World Bank earlier this year. It said the developing island state was 'highly vulnerable to exogenous shocks'. All this has meant that attracting foreign investment has become vital.

Agriculture and tourism are hugely important to the nation's economy – and that includes the production of cocoa and, thus, chocolate. In the early 1900s, the 'Chocolate Islands' were the biggest producer of the sweet stuff in the world and there's still a huge focus on the industry today. So, the chance for foreign private bodies to invest in the industry, as well as other sectors like tourism, is at the heart of the Entrepreneurs Meeting. The government and the São Tomé Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (APCI) have been giving the two-day event on 8 and 9 July the utmost priority.



Not only is it the first time the event has been held in the nation – the second-poorest per capita in the Portuguese-speaking world after Guinea-Bissau – but for many of the entrepreneurs and delegations from China and Portuguese-speaking countries, it is their first proper look at the country. For Bom Jesus – who is extremely keen on bringing in foreign investment, particularly from China – and his newly elected, reform-minded government, it is also the first time they can show off their country's vast potential to potential future investors.

More than 300 people, including up to 150 potential investors, attended. At the opening, in the National Assembly building, Bom Jesus tells the delegations of attendees to 'feel at home' in the nation – but the investors are also challenged to look beyond 'the world's best chocolate'. The islands, according to the prime minister, should be seen as a gateway to the Gulf of Guinea sub-region at a time when 'new pages are

[being] written on the relaunch and boosting of the historical and brotherly relations between the countries and peoples of São Tomé, China and Africa' in a 'multilateral perspective of mutual respect'.

“

We want to improve the infrastructure of this country and have better connections with the outside world. It is one of São Tomé and Príncipe's dreams.

Ambassador Wang

Bom Jesus also notes in his address that investors should look to the human capital of the islands – a young population 'thirsty for training' as a way to cut

'the vicious cycle of poverty and underdevelopment'. He highlights that sectors like telecoms, trading, tourism, oil, education and health are all worthy of investment.

The agreements

Not long after the Prime Minister takes to the stage, the first six bilateral agreements are signed. APCI director Rafael Branco – in his role for only a few months – and president of the Macao Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM), Irene Va Kuan Lau, sign a cooperation agreement. The Portuguese-speaking Countries Business Forum (FELP), headed by Maria João Gregório, also signs a framework agreement with the São Tomé e Príncipe Chamber of Commerce and Industry. In the legal sector, the Alliance of Legal Services for the Interior of the People's Republic of China, Macau and the Portuguese-Speaking Countries sign an agreement with São Tomé and Príncipe law firm

A cherub on a plinth in São Tomé



The Cathedral of São Tomé





São Tomé's Presidential Palace

OADL & Associados. There's an air of positive change already.

Lao Kam Chio, general manager of Macao Plops Investment and Promotion, signs an agreement with Mozambique's Ministry of Health. Established in Macao over a year ago by investors from Guangzhou, Macao and Hong Kong, Plops is installing water purification systems in Portuguese-speaking countries, mostly for the health industry, according to Lao.

Under the new agreement, two new systems will be donated to hospitals in Mozambique's

capital, Maputo, serving around 2,000 people. So far, the company has made donations to Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau and – more recently – São Tomé and Príncipe. Lao adds that the company will service the donated equipment. Lao also signed an agreement with African bank BGFI, with the aim of supporting the bank's establishment in Asia – namely for facilitating the import of Chinese goods in Central African countries. In Portugal, Plops is involved in food trading and with bringing Portuguese goods into Macao.

Business opportunities

Other business leaders and entrepreneurs are in São Tomé looking for opportunities – and many are quick to find them. One such person is Rita Santos, former deputy secretary-general of the Forum Macao, who negotiates with local chocolate producers Diogo Vaz. The businesswoman says that a recent agreement she signed in Macao with the Zhuhai High-Speed Railway Company foresees the creation in every station of a 'Portuguese-speaking countries

products corner' – and Diogo Vaz chocolate has what it takes to feature as a delicacy from São Tomé and Príncipe.

"I hope to close this deal by lunch-time," she says at the event's fair of local products. São Tomé and Príncipe 'is virgin, new', so now 'is the time to start', she adds. "When it becomes a developed country," she says, "it will be harder to penetrate. In the

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Foreign investors have a strong desire to cooperate with local businesses and to help the people of São Tomé to rise from poverty and have a better life.

Ambassador Wang

beginning, it's not easy, but with persistence I think you can get there. For Macao's SMEs, I think it is better to start with import and export and – as they become aware of investment opportunities and the local market – they will know more people."

Other entrepreneurs are sniffing for coffee, like Jessica and Simon Tong of Macao-based Seng Pan Food Company, which has been in the coffee industry for more than 30 years. It's Simon Tong's first time in São Tomé and he is impressed with the local coffee. "It's good quality," he says. "If they want it to be excellent quality, they have to import the processing, the selecting and the sorting,





to choose the best beans and improve the plantations. We can give them instructions and improvements because we have a huge network in the coffee industry.”

Living in São Tomé for over a decade, Wang Zhanbo, secretary of the local Chinese Businessmen Association, says visas are now easier to obtain and Chinese interest and investment is growing. But the economy has slowed and there are still barriers for investors. “Infrastructure still limits investment and travel,” he says. Currently the owner of a service-providing company for tourists and business delegations, Wang says trading is the main activity for Chinese people living in São Tomé. According to him, since diplomatic relations between both countries were re-established, the number of Chinese living in the islands has doubled to around 200 people.

Connecting to the world

Most of the infrastructure in São Tomé dates back to the pre-independence period. This is now widely considered to be one of its main constraints to growth. The country dreams of becoming a regional trading platform, with a state-of-the-art deep-water port, but has fallen behind other countries in the region, which were quicker to develop such infrastructure.

With the support of China, the first infrastructure projects have been launched over the past two years, according to ambassador Wang Wei. The priority has been the rehabilitation of three roads, along with the draining of a swamp close to the capital. All were donations from China, the diplomat says.

Next will be the construction of social housing – and work on the modernisation and enlargement of São Tomé’s airport is expected to begin over the next few months.

(Clockwise from top left) Prime Minister Jorge Bom Jesus addresses the meeting; Minister of Finance and the Blue Economy Osvaldo Vaz takes the stand; there’s a packed house at the meeting; local sellers get involved on the trade floor; the PM meets visitors (photos by Lourenço da Silva)

“We are studying how we can help execute this work as quickly as possible,” says Wang Wei, “to improve the infrastructure of this country and have better connections with the outside world. It will practically be one of the most important projects in this country since independence. This, too, is one of São Tomé’s dreams.”

More – and more improved – air connections should facilitate tourism, as well as making it more attractive and accessible for business delegations. Wang observes that foreign investors have ‘a strong desire to cooperate with local businesses and to help the people of São Tomé to rise from poverty and have a better life’. “They had the first contact [at the Entrepreneurs Meeting],” he says, “which is essential. Contact is a precondition for finding opportunities for cooperation.”

During the two-day event, more than 80 business meetings between Chinese and local businessmen are organised by IPIM and APCI, with dozens of investment projects being presented. On the sidelines, São Tomé politician Carlos Tiny mentions that the São Tomé and Príncipe-China Chamber of Commerce will be launched soon. “In addition to state-to-state relations,” he says, “the private sector interested in cooperation with China – and especially in the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative – can and should be structured to also foster this relationship.”

Tiny is particularly excited about the Belt and Road Initiative – which is a global development strategy by the Chinese government involving infrastructure development and investment across the world, including Africa – and laments that most people in São Tomé do not know about it yet ‘because there have been no bilateral diplomatic relations over the last 20 years’.

A bright future

In an interview with *Macao Magazine*, Jorge Bom Jesus says that China and Angola are now his country’s two ‘most dynamic’ economic partners. Not only is China supporting the nation with a donation of CNY200 million – about US\$30 million or almost MOP230 million – but it’s also pushing forward with the major infrastructure projects. The plans for the



Banks on both sides:
(above) the Banco
Internacional de São Tomé
and Príncipe; (right) the
Banco Central de São
Tomé and Príncipe

airport are ‘already quite advanced’, says the prime minister, with construction beginning ‘by the end of the year or early next year’.

As for the nation’s port, the government is discussing financing projects with the public and private sectors. “There is also [an] openness [to financing] by private funds,” says Bom Jesus, “backed by China, Chinese banks and credit lines. Other than that, we are open and we have been persuading investors in the areas of energy, roads, telecommunications and housing.”

The prime minister notes that the government also wants to extend cooperation to the rehabilitation of the city of São Tomé, which dates back to the 15th century, ‘to make it available to tourists and posterity’. And, according to the head of the government, another hotspot could be a recently reactivated project to create an offshore free trading zone. And then there’s the gaming industry. Former Prime Minister Rafael Branco says the APCI



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The nation's private sector interested in cooperation with China – and especially in the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative – can and should be structured to also foster this relationship.

Carlos Tiny

investment agency has already been receiving projects for the offshore zone, which should include gaming. He says he wants to 'identify sizeable players to launch' the gaming industry in the archipelago.

All in all, the whole event in early July was 'very positive', says Branco, adding that the investors did not leave 'blank' as they learned about São Tomé and Príncipe's 'environment, regulations and potential'. He also says there are up

to a dozen potential projects now on the table as a result of the event which could become a reality.

Rodrigo Brum, Forum Macao's deputy secretary-general, agrees. "I would say this is a first step – the first event for a country that became a member [of Forum Macao] only two years ago," he sums up. "Opportunities were pointed out, presentations were made and businessmen became aware. No doubt there will be repercussions." ►



Prime Minister's questions

Jorge Bom Jesus answers a few of our queries.

You say investment is a priority to relaunch São Tomé and Príncipe's economy. But that will involve improving the business environment...

Yes, easing some legislation in terms of access to credit and private property... there is a lot we have to work on because we have a very low [business environment] ranking in many cases. We really need to improve legislation to attract investors. They will come not because of beautiful eyes or for the beauty of the country but in a win-win perspective. If they settle, the state can collect taxes to invest in education, health and social protection.

Will oil be an investment hotspot in the foreseeable future?

In oil exploration, in our exclusive zone, there are prospects for one of the companies to make a first drilling next year – and hopefully it will be successful. There are big companies that are present – BP, Kosmos, Total, Galp, some Nigerian companies... We will see. We are praying that everything will work out but we know that oil dividends have to be applied in other areas – agriculture, infrastructure – because oil is an exhaustible resource and hence we are also working to enhance it in other ways.

And will security be a focus?

We will continue to focus on security as well. São Tomé is already a country that has peace in its DNA but we must work on political stability, on the security of people and goods. In fact, if we have a peaceful country – and hospitality as a hallmark – we must continue to educate and raise awareness of hospitable behaviour because tourism is truly cross-cutting. Everyone can win.

What about the gaming industry?

You know, investments pull for each other. From the moment you have resorts and major hotel chains, of course gaming will appear. There is already an embryo in Hotel Pestana – not very developed but I believe that this will all be part of these investments around tourism.

In terms of gaming, what about collaborations with Macao?

Of course, Macao is a reference in this area. We will bring here the best practices of each country and indeed for Macao in the area of gaming. We are even willing to send delegations there for training.

Are you planning to go to Macao soon?

There are prospects. I'm told that next year there will be a ministerial meeting at Forum Macao and that I will be invited... ●





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The entrepreneurs of tomorrow

Text Claudia Aranda Photos Cheong Kam Ka





Macao is home to many young entrepreneurs who are set to make up the next generation of business leaders, company founders and partners in innovation in the city. We meet six of these movers and shakers.

Creative, passionate, enthusiastic, ambitious and ready to face new challenges. They are a new generation of business-orientated young adults trying to achieve their entrepreneurial dreams. Some went abroad for postgraduate studies and are now back in their hometown. Others remained and decided to jump straight in after graduation from local schools and universities. In common, they all have the same goal – to do what they love and to create something unique.

Meet Macao's young entrepreneurs. The small size of the city and the often underdeveloped nature of its entrepreneurial community create plenty of challenges for those who want to shoot for the moon – however more under-30s are coming up with creative concepts and then enlisting government help to try to turn their ideas into successful businesses. Just like this sextet of the young, the ambitious and the bold.

Start up a movement

Stephanie Chiang (pictured), partner and marketing director at marketing agency Mutual Aid and Resource Sharing – or MARS – Creative and the co-founder of Macao Startup Club, is a 'start-up community builder'. Born in Costa Rica and raised in Mainland China, the entrepreneur returned to Macao after finishing her studies in international trade at Beijing's University of International Business and Economics. She dabbled in customer services in the entertainment industries but discovered that wasn't her passion so she then studied marketing and communication, working as a digital marketer in Paris. However, she returned to Macao in 2016 and decided to launch her own business. Collaborating with IT and business experts, MARS Creative was born – an arm of business services provider MARS Group that provides customised digital marketing and event solutions to small to medium enterprises (SMEs).

Being one of the founders of Macao Startup Club, launched and operated by young start-up entrepreneurs and professionals, Chiang aims to 'build up Macao's start-up community', as well as 'strengthen and globalise its start-up ecosystem'. "Since 2017," says the 29-year-old, "we have organised 25 events, with more than 1,000 participants." She also organises and facilitates Startup Weekend Macao events. The first edition of the GBA Female Entrepreneurs Summit, an event focusing on celebrating female entrepreneurship and diversity, is scheduled for 28 September. Chiang says: "It is challenging but there are more opportunities now to be an entrepreneur in Macao. The government provides us with different programmes and resources, which is encouraging."



Come up with unique ideas

Starting and running a business based on a passionate idea that matches skills, creativity and interests was also the leitmotiv for Kammy Cheong Ka Man (pictured), who founded Barra Studio, a start-up established in 2017 that focuses on Augmented Reality (AR), interactive design and promoting AR marketing, retail and entertainment solution to brands and enterprises.

The project is a partnership with 24-year-old Felix Tong Weng Hou and 25-year-old Alex Leong Ka Chon – both computer science graduates. It has been awarded seven prizes in local and regional start-up contests, including, first, the Start-up Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition organised by Macao's government. “That’s how the story started,” says Cheong, a 24-year-old psychology graduate from the University of Macau. “We wanted to start up a project that would do something different to what we had seen before in our studies. The goal is simple: we hope to do something fascinating for people.”

The company, which is launching a new product for online sales called Mr Tired that goes out for crowdfunding this year, is being nurtured by the Macau Young Entrepreneur Incubation Centre – which promotes events to connect start-ups with customers – as well as the university’s Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. Earlier this year, Barra Studio produced an AR videogame for MGM show ‘Fuerza Bruta’ aimed at ‘warming up the audience’ beforehand. “This was quite challenging for our team,” says Cheong, “because we had a limited time to produce it – from zero to finish it, we just had 20 days with our three-man team.”

“We are looking at this start-up journey,” continues Cheong, “as a kind of learning process. We have just graduated, really, and we have no experience, so we are always learning. And AR is extremely interesting to us – it’s a kind of technology that can increase creativity. My strength is to have ideas and think differently – and AR can help me and others to do just that.”

Kammy Cheong addresses a packed business event





Together Story and Together Culture are James Si Tou's pride and joy

Go after your dreams

Similar entrepreneurial dreams have motivated James Si Tou (pictured above), the 21-year-old creative who takes Steve Jobs' quote 'stay hungry, stay foolish' as his inspiration. "I used to be a magician when I was 12 years old," he says, "and because of magic, many things changed in my life." It taught him that you must pursue what you love in your life.

Si Tou studied business at the City University of London. There, he realised he wanted to become an entrepreneur – and that dream came true in June last year, when he returned to Macao and founded Together Culture, which connects business talent with

companies, and Together Story, a sub-brand that 'tells the stories behind the scenes'. The firm has four goals: 'discover, promote, gather and connect'. It also helps businesses with branding, design, market research and even video production – and will soon boast a platform that matches companies with potential employees.

Together, which is based at a co-working space in Macao, doesn't want to limit itself to its hometown. "This platform can go to other places," says Si Tou. "Our primary targets are Taiwan and Hong Kong because Taiwan has many talents who don't have opportunities, while in Hong Kong and Macao, companies need talent but they can't find it."

Si Tou is also the general manager at Iridescent Firework, a family business led by his mother, May Lam. Thanks to his determination, the firm has won two public tenders to provide the pyrotechnics for Macao celebrations – the 20th anniversary of Macao's return to China on 20 December and, for the first time, the city's Chinese New Year celebrations in 2021.

While the fireworks industry booms, Si Tou is carefully managing Together's limited resources, developing a business

growth strategy and recovering from an initial investment on technology. “If you want good software and hardware technology,” he says, “you need to spend a lot of money before making money.” He says he applied for a loan from the government through the Macao Economic Bureau, which approved the amount of MOP150,000 (US\$18,636) – however, he says he and his family have covered any shortfalls.

Si Tou, despite his own progress, notes that the entrepreneurial environment in Macao can be ‘underdeveloped’. “The business community is very small,” he says, “and our abilities are too low compared to Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China. We are just a small town and many people are just happy with what they’ve achieved and their salaries. But, like Steve Jobs said, you need to stay hungry, stay foolish.”

Think globally

Lucas Kuan (pictured below), a law graduate from the Macau University of Science and Technology with an interest in the IT industry, agrees that the entrepreneurial community can be ‘underdeveloped’ in Macao – so he moved to Hong Kong seven years ago. “Back then,” says the 30-year-old, “Macao was not that developed and most of the interesting work was coming from Hong Kong, so if I wanted to develop my skills and be in this industry, I needed to go to a bigger market. So, I self-taught programming and started making mobile apps, got a job in Hong Kong and started my own company.”

In 2017, Kuan co-founded together with a partner, Cyrus Chow, the start-up oneCHARGE. The company offers Smart





Electric Vehicles charging solutions and plans to expand in Hong Kong, Macao and South Korea, targeting private car parks and shopping malls. It benefits from the Cyberport Incubation programme and has joined the Macau Young Entrepreneur Incubation Centre. Kuan believes that 'electric vehicles will dominate the market in five to 10 years'. "If we embrace it earlier," he notes, "we will get ahead of our competitors with our technologies."

The oneCHARGE smart equipment (pictured above), which is manufactured in Taiwan,

integrates technology that allows internet connections. "It can find the car parking space in shopping malls and department stores," says the firm's chief technology officer, Kuan, "and we help them to install car chargers in their parking lots and, when an electric vehicle comes, the driver can use our charger by scanning a QR code and paying with our app. While it is charging, the user can shop, dine, go to the cinema. The car park owner benefits from the data we provide – they know how many vehicles used their place for shopping and how many customers return and how much revenue they generate from the EV chargers."

Kuan admits that Macao has 'totally changed' in recent years. "Start-ups are popping up and going to the Mainland and global markets," he says. "And Macao has become much more digitalised." The entrepreneur believes that the city's governmental support is 'most important' because 'it can support businesses at different levels, financially, providing offices and co-working areas and also trials, to see if an idea works or not'. "If the government can support at the early prototype stage," he says, "this will be a great push for start-ups."

Consider niche markets

Model Alicia Ung has found the value of a niche market in Macao – a professional modelling school that trains adults and children to work as models. Alicia U – Model Training Centre, based in Areia Preta, has been running for two years. Ung is now a ‘modelling trainer’ certificate holder, who has trained more than 100 models in Macao – and she says she’s ‘flattered’ that the start-up has achieved so much in such a short amount of time as her students have already won ‘dozens of significant awards at national modelling competitions’.

After taking part in Miss Supranational Macau 2016 and Miss Scuba Macau 2015, Ung realised that, as a model who strives for success in the industry, ‘only knowing how to pose is not enough’. “He or she should also be well-versed in creating his or her own portfolios,” says the 24-year-old. “I train and allot suitable models according to the needs of my clients – mostly for PR events. Apart from catwalk shows, models who have graduated from my school have also been trained for TV commercial shoots and styled photo shoots.”

“I provide most of the essential training to my students,” continues Ung (pictured right), “but to be a model one also need skills like dancing, acting and singing.” Ung’s students can now be seen at different exclusive events, in TV commercials and in short films. Ung’s next challenging milestone, she says, is to extend her business and establish branches of her schools in Zhuhai and across the Greater Bay Area.



Like Ung, Ronnie Chou has also taken advantage of niche market opportunities in Macao. The 26-year-old interior stylist and spatial storyteller, who holds a Master's degree on 'Narrative Environments' from arts and design college Central Saint Martins in London, focuses on designing human-centric experiences for households, brands, museums, urban and community environments. Her aim is to 'tell stories through text, image, sound and physical space'.

Chou's interior styling market niche sees her using furniture, artefacts and decorative objects that are 'tied to the users' memories to shape the identity and character of an interior space and tell the story of that particular space – therefore, to create better user experiences across the board' – a concept she claims is 'rarely seen in Macao'. Before all this, however, she too worked in the city's gaming industry, also involved in the operation of conventions and exhibitions, but she claims she soon she felt limited in her creativity. "That's why I went to London to continue my studies," she says.

In order to share and benefit from a collaborative environment, both Chou and Ung have become partners of MARS Group, where Ung has a brand, MARS U, that hires models for the groups' PR events, while Chou contributes to MARS Décor projects.

A 'strong entrepreneurial ecosystem'

Professor Alexandre Lobo, coordinator of the 'bachelor of business administration' programme at the University of Saint Joseph's School of Business and Law, considers that Macao's community of young entrepreneurs is growing





The interiors of MARS Group's new premises are modern and chic

well. But he admits that Macao's size – at just 32.9 square kilometres and around 667,400 people – can make it tougher for businesses to find success. Therefore, he recommends, 'to overcome the small population and size, the innovative entrepreneurs must look outside Macao'. But he adds that 'the connection with Portuguese-speaking countries' also positions the city 'as a unique platform'. "This connection," he notes, "must focus not only on providing solutions for the Portuguese-speaking countries but also on identifying possibilities of cooperation and partnership and bringing solutions from those countries to Macao and the Greater Bay Area."

Macao, says Lobo, has 'a powerful tourism and entertainment market' and he says the young entrepreneurs that stay in the city should 'look close to this' because 'there are innumerable services and businesses that can be created around this market and we already see some startups and SMEs focusing on this niche'. He also says that 'government support is essential' to young entrepreneurs – and that means 'much more than only providing funding'. "The whole support [network] around start-ups and SMEs is essential," he says. "And this includes legal framework, education and a positive environment."

But, overall, Lobo sees the future as bright. "At the present moment in Macao," he says, "we can feel that there is a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem being established, with different incubators, co-working spaces, events about innovation and a strong support from government agencies. This will help young entrepreneurs to share their difficulties and work together to solve or support those issues, increasing the chances of success." ●

Young entrepreneurs in numbers

Entrepreneurship aspirations and the rapid and sustainable development of innovative businesses are seen by the Macao government as ways to diversify the economy and 'inject new impetus into the economic development' of the city. The Young Entrepreneurs Aid Scheme was implemented through the Macao Economic Bureau – and here are some facts:

- **Launched:** August 2013
- **Applications:** 1,975 as of June, this year
- **Applications approved:** 1,468 as of June, this year
- **Total amount of supporting funds:** more than MOP338 million (US\$42 million)
- **Individual supporting funds:** interest-free financial assistances of a maximum amount of MOP300,000 (US\$37,150) per application
- **Maximum repayment period:** 8 years
- **Main beneficiary companies:** retail (45.7%), catering (12.3%), commercial services (10.6%)
- A Young Entrepreneurs Incubator was established in 2015 to provide free working spaces, one-stop company registration services, consultation services and training programmes.
- In 2017, the Macao Young Entrepreneur Incubation Centre was launched. Until May this year, it received 215 membership applications, of which 164 cases were approved.
- The University of Macau Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship also positions itself as 'an entrepreneurial education provider', providing services like temporary office spaces, consultation and advice. It has teams specialised in traditional Chinese medicine, medical science, information technology and more.

**Sources: Macao Economic Bureau and the University of Macau*



History

The lost civilisation

Text **Matt Fleming** Photos **Cheong Kam Ka**





Once forgotten, the culture, art, architecture and history of China's Western Xia region is brought to life in a Macao Museum exhibition that runs until next month. We take a look at what makes this region a 'glorious' Chinese cultural and historical treasure.

What do you know about the ancient Egyptians? You've at least heard of pyramids, mummies and the curse of Tutankhamun. You're also probably familiar with the Romans and their armies, the Greeks and their philosophy, the Aztecs and their temples and the Mongols and their fierce warriors. When it comes to China, you've surely heard tales of the emperors, the inventions and the revolutions. But what do you know about Western Xia? Unless you're a historian or scholar, probably not much.

And this would hardly be a surprise. For hundreds of years, little was known about this ancient civilisation that dominated vast swathes of land in northern China. However, now, with the help of historians on the Mainland, the world is beginning to learn more about one of China's most 'glorious' civilisations.

Macao, over the past couple of months, is one such place that has been learning about Western Xia. 'Reminiscences of the Silk Road - Exhibition of Cultural Relics of the Western Xia Dynasty' is an exhibition that has been on show since 14 June - and runs until 6 October - at Macao Museum. It's been organised in collaboration with the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region Museum - which is based in Ningxia, a small autonomous region in north-central China that is at the heart of what was once Western Xia - and celebrates this year's 20th anniversary of Macao's return to China.

The exhibition takes visitors around 148 relics from the ancient culture and features a film that details its history, as well as an array of interactive exhibits. If you enter with no idea about Western Xia and its people, then you will leave with an excellent potted history. But it may be worth boning up beforehand.



(Photos from the Macao Museum exhibition, clockwise from top left) Green-glazed statue of Kalavinka with a pentagonal flower crown; gilt bronze statue of Hanshan, a monk and poet in the Tang dynasty; polychrome-painted clay statue of an 'arhat', a 'perfected person' in Buddhism; brown-glazed vase with carved peony design; head of a stone 'chi', which is an architectural part of a roof

The birth of a civilisation

Wind the clock back nearly 1,000 years. Western Xia stretches out to the harsh sands of the Gobi Desert in the north, the Xiao Pass in the south, the Yellow River in the east and the Pass of the Jade Gate in the west – covering a region that is now populated by Ningxia, as well as Gansu province and eastern Qinghai, northern Shaanxi and northeastern Xinjiang, and parts of Mongolia. This is a huge land, spread out over 310,000 square miles. You could fit modern Macao into the region 6,982 times.

Western Xia was founded by the Tanguts, a Sino-Tibetan tribal union that moved to northwest China some time before the 10th century. They spoke the Tangut language, one of the ancient Qiangic languages. The Tang Empire ruled China for most of the years between 618 and 907AD. However, in the late ninth century, it was weakened by the Huang Chao rebellion, which was spearheaded by smuggler Huang Chao and eventually failed in its aim but caused chaos across much of the Middle Kingdom. In 881, however, the Tanguts assisted the Tang in suppressing the rebellion and, as a reward, Tangut general Li Sigong was granted the three prefectures of Xia, Sui and Yin as hereditary titles. This is a key moment as, from here on, the Tanguts had a base from which to expand their realm southwest towards their old homelands.

In 1002, more than 40 years after China fell under the rule of the Song dynasty, the Tanguts conquered Ling Prefecture, setting up their capital of Xiping there, and by 1036 they had annexed the Guiyi Circuit, an area headquartered in Shazhou Prefecture and containing Shazhou city – which is now Dunhuang in Gansu province – and even pushed into Tibetan territory, conquering Xining, now the capital of Qinghai province. Thus, with the lands in place, the Tanguts proclaimed the state of Western Xia in 1038. Dr Tai Chung Pui, assistant professor at the University of Hong Kong's School of Chinese, says: "The Tanguts were a hugely important people in China at the time and when they proclaimed the state of Western Xia, they were powerful, influential and proud."

Western Xia in the 11th century (over a map of modern China)



The founders of the Western Xia dynasty could be said to be Li Jiqian or his son, Li Deming. Li Jiqian was the leader of the Tanguts but died in battle in 1004, so his eldest son became leader – and, for the next 20 or so years, he was a great figurehead, considerably expanding the Tanguts' territory. But he was hardly a conservative ruler and allowed his people to absorb the Chinese culture that surrounded them as well as allowing them to keep their original identity as Tanguts.

In 1028, Li Deming, who died in 1032, named his son Li Yuanhao as crown prince. Under his rule, Western Xia was officially founded – thus, he is most aptly described as its founder. Li Yuanhao was more conservative than his father, so he sought to restore and strengthen the Tangut identity by ordering the creation of an official Tangut script. He made Xingqing – now Yinchuan city, the capital of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region – the capital city of Western Xia and he also instituted laws that reinforced traditional Tangut customs, such as making his people wear traditional ethnic clothes. "Li Yuanhao," says Tai, who has

written papers on Western Xia, “also made men shave their heads or, at least, have short hair – but it is still a point of debate as to whether this practice was a Tangut tradition or was created from this point to show off their unique identity.”

The end of an era

The Mongols and one of the most famous leaders in global history are heavily involved in the story of Western Xia – or, at least, its end. In the 13th century, Genghis Khan, who had unified the northern grasslands of Mongolia, led his troops into many attacks against Western Xia. It was during the final round of attacks, in 1227, that the land of the Tanguts was overrun and the Mongols devastated its buildings and written records. Much was burned to the ground and tens of thousands of people were massacred, included the last Tangut emperor.

Genghis Khan also died in Western Xia, during the fall of Yinchuan in 1227. His death remains a mystery – some say he died of an illness, others say he fell from his horse. Some legends even say he died from a wound that was inflicted in the final battles. Whatever the cause, one of the most famous leaders in world history perished in Western Xia. And Western Xia itself was also no more – this vast, once-prosperous region and its unique civilisation becoming largely forgotten for centuries.

During the 20th century, however, archaeologists and historians began to unearth documents and relics in great numbers which show the Tanguts’ spiritual life, demonstrate their wisdom and vivify the unique charm of Western Xia’s culture. This includes its square, sophisticated writing characters, its magnificent Buddhist architecture and its stone carvings. These discoveries have allowed scholars to build up a picture of the Tanguts and their culture, as well as a picture of what life must have been like in Western Xia. Tai says: “These documents and relics unearthed in the 20th century are mostly from Khara-Khoto, a Tangut city in what is now Inner Mongolia. It was a thriving centre of Western Xia trade in the 11th century and historians are so

grateful that it has given up so many secrets and relics about the Tanguts.”

And that forms the basis of the exhibition at Macao Museum. Loi Chi Pang, museum director, says: “This themed exhibition of relics primarily showcases the archaeological finds in the Western Xia region. A fine selection of 148 pieces offers a compendious interpretation of the Western Xia civilisation, with some rare items making their first appearances outside the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region.”

“The pieces,” continues Loi, “include examples of the language and printing techniques in Western Xia, as well as Buddhist scriptures and statues. There are also goldwares, woodwares and glazed artistic examples of pottery, as well as eaves tiles –

“

The history of Western Xia is so glorious that its cultural uniqueness is worthy of deep understanding.

Loi Chi Pang

Loi Chi Pang at the entrance to the Macao exhibition



known as ‘wadang’ – and stone architectural statues.”

So far, according to Loi, since its inauguration on 14 June, the exhibition has attracted more than 40,000 people. “We hope that,” he says, “by means of showcasing the Western Xia relics, the public can understand more about Chinese history. The culture of Western Xia is a part of Chinese history and its uniqueness fully demonstrates that worldwide cultural diversity existed in China for a very long period. The history of Western Xia, in fact, is so glorious that its cultural uniqueness is worthy of deep understanding.”

Speaking the lingo

One of the sections in the exhibition that demands attention is the display of Western Xia’s Tangut language. Building on the historical foundation of Chinese characters, the Tangut script from Western Xia includes about 6,000

logographs and was created by scholar Yeli Renrong around 1036 under Li Yuanhao’s ordain.

In terms of their composition, Tangut characters can be classified into ‘simple-component’ and ‘compound’ and constitute a rather complete system and regulation. Loi says: “Each character has a square-shaped complicated structure with balanced left-and-right vertical proportions, consisting of many presses and throws. The Tangut language was widely used for official documents, laws, judicial records and trade contracts, as well as literature, history scrolls, dictionaries, stele – stones or wooden slabs – inscriptions, seals, talismans and translations of Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist scriptures.”

“The Tangut language,” adds Loi, “was used throughout the entire Western Xia period. Even after the state was defeated, the language continued to be used until the mid-Ming dynasty in

some areas.” The Tangut language lay dead for many centuries but in 1804, Qing dynasty scholar Zhang Shu discovered the previously unknown writings on the ‘Restored Stele of Gantong Pagoda of Huguo Temple in Liangzhou’ were, in fact, Tangut – and the language was once again exposed to the world.

Remnants of steles have been found in what was once Western Xia and one excellent piece is on show at the exhibition in Macao – the ‘Remnant stele with Tangut characters from the Shouling Imperial Tomb’. Ruins of sixteen stele pavilions, having been looted many times, were found in nine mausoleums of the Western Xia Imperial Tombs, the royal mausoleums located near the eastern slopes of the Helan Mountains, about 35 kilometres away from Yinchuan City. The remnants of the steles found here are severely broken, mostly with only three or five characters. Those with more than a dozen are rare.





Remnant stele with Tangut characters from the Shouling Imperial Tomb

So the 'Shouling' remnant in the exhibition is special – it pieced together five fragments to become the one that contains the most Tangut characters. The inscription of the stele in 11 lines and 44 Tangut characters is in regular script with balanced structures that show adept engraving skills. All the characters are painted with gold – some of which remains.

Incredible tombs

The Western Xia Imperial Tombs, near to the Gobi Desert, perfectly represent the Tangut culture. They are the best-preserved historic cultural heritage that the civilisation left behind, occupying an area of some 50 square kilometres and including nine imperial mausoleums, 271 subordinate tombs and one site of a large architectural complex. The tiered tomb walls and high towers make for a magnificent sight.

A view of the Helan Mountains from the Western Xia Imperial Tombs





Aerial view of the Western Xia Imperial Tombs

Many of the relics on show in Macao hail from these mausoleums. One of the most striking is the parcel-gilt bronze ox that's lying down with knees bent and eyes peering into the distance, which was unearthed from No M177 imperial tomb in Yinchuan city in 1977. "It was produced through many crafting processes," says Loi, "such as smelting, moulding, casting, polishing and gilding, showcasing Western Xia's high-level bronze castings and epitomising Western Xia's metal artistry."

"Named the 'eastern pyramids'," says Loi, "Western Xia's Imperial Tombs not only inherit the tradition and architectural techniques of the Han and Tang dynasties in the Central Plain but they are also integrated with the depth of nomadic culture and so they present a unique architectural style with regional and ethnic characters. Whether in size or momentum, the tombs epitomise the art of Western Xia's architecture."





Rectangular carved bamboo intaglio, also at the exhibition

Parcel-gilt bronze ox, a centrepiece of the Macao exhibition



Art and architecture

There are many artistic and architectural pieces on display at the exhibition. Black, white and brown are the major colours of Western Xia ceramics – and they are often decorated by coloured dots or floral patterns. The Tanguts created many artistic ceramics in Western Xia, as well as goldwares, silverwares, bronzewares and ironwares – and textiles such as silk and damask. Then there are intaglio pieces – such as a highlight piece on display: a rectangular carved bamboo intaglio which is incised with a scene of people's everyday life in the Central Plain. This is surmised to be a treasurable item from the cultural exchange between Western Xia and the Song people.

As for Western Xia architecture, decorated with beautiful and rich patterns, 'wadang' tiles and drip tiles are most common. "Western Xia's architectural relics comprise primarily of pagodas, mausoleums, temples and architectural parts," says Loi. "Its architecture, on the one hand, adopted different styles of the Central Plain and, on the other, was influenced by Tibetan Buddhism. Their shapes, structures and ways of building were full of variety."

Loi says much work was done with experts from Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region Museum in the curation of the exhibition. “It took no less than one year to curate the exhibition of Western Xia history,” he says. “Many colleagues in Macao Museum – in the collection, education and relic preservation sections – were engaged in the process of organising it and selecting the relics. Besides this, the Ningxia museum gave us tremendous support in every aspect of the curation, such as providing the background historical information, allocating human resources when we were creating the installations and helping to organise educational activities.”


The Silk Road

Western Xia occupied the area around the Hexi Corridor, a stretch of the Silk Road – the most important trade route between China and Central Asia. “Western Xia has been – and still is – an important historical symbol of the ancient Silk Road,” says Loi. “The creation of its splendid culture

benefitted from the most valuable exchanges among ethnic groups and exhibited the loftiest aspirations [of the Western Xia people] in its time.”

Loi says that Macao and Ningxia are, respectively, located ‘at the pivot of the Maritime Silk Road and the Silk Road’. “They have also undergone long-lasting historical transformation,” he adds, “contributing to the unique and splendid civilisation created by cultural encounters and exchanges. After more than 900 years, Western Xia’s artefacts still carry on its historical mission of exchange and are exhibited in Macao, a trade port that enjoys more than 400 years of history on the Maritime Silk Route. They exude new charm in the new era and will give us a more straightforward and more in-depth understanding of the Silk Road in history.” ●

Reminiscences of the Silk Road – Exhibition of Cultural Relics of the Western Xia Dynasty is on at Macao Museum until 6 October. The museum, at Mount Fortress, is open from 10am to 6pm each day, except Mondays.



Polychrome-painted clay sculpture of a Buddha head, with hollow interior



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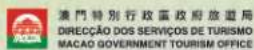
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Macao's golden grandfather

Text Mark O'Neill

To coincide with the launch of a new biography written by his grandson, we look at the life and times of Pedro José Lobo.



Pedro José Lobo was one of the most important figures in the modern history of Macao. He headed the Economic Affairs Department for 27 years, negotiated with the Japanese during World War II to feed thousands of starving people and managed a gold monopoly that made him a fortune.

And now – due to the love and affection that many people in Macao still have for him – the first biography on the great man, who died aged 73 in 1965, is to be published by his grandson, Marco Lobo. The consultant and writer, who has lived in Tokyo for the past 20 years, says that ‘something would have been lost’ if he had not put pen to paper and documented his grandfather’s colourful life.

Pedro Lobo was, with businessman and politician Ho Yin, one of two shadow governors of Macao in the mid-20th century. They conducted difficult and complex negotiations with the Japanese military and the Chinese government as the Portuguese governors lacked their knowledge, experience and language skills – their time in Macao was a stepping stone in a long career in the colonial service, so they were happy to entrust some of their duties to the two men. But, despite this life of politics, gold and business, Pedro Lobo’s early days were just like any other little boy’s living in a Portuguese-speaking country far from the shores of the motherland.

Island beginnings

Pedro Lobo was born on 12 January 1892 in Manatuto, Timor-Leste, which was then under Portuguese authority. He had Chinese and Portuguese blood and his adoptive father was a doctor, Belarmino Lobo, a native of Goa who had moved to Dili, Portuguese Timor capital, becoming vice-mayor and then mayor of the city.

In 1902, at the age of nine, Lobo travelled to Macao and became a boarder at St Joseph’s Seminary. There he became fluent in Portuguese and he also spoke Cantonese and English. Many Portuguese people in Timor – now known as Timor-Leste or East Timor – sent their children to Macao because, in short, they believed its schools were better.

“My grandfather greatly enjoyed his years at St Joseph’s,” says Marco Lobo. “Among the things he learned was musical composition.

Pedro José Lobo



The story of my grandfather, Pedro Lobo, is very complex, with truth mixed with fiction.

Marco Lobo

After graduation, he did not want to return to Timor. He felt part of the community in Macao. After spending 30 years in Timor, his father Belarmino retired to Goa.”

After graduating, Pedro Lobo became a teacher of mathematics at Escola do Pedro Nolasco before joining Banco Nacional Ultramarino (BNU), where he worked for seven years, learning about currency and money. On 16 October 1920, he married Branca Helena Hyndman in Hong Kong and they had six children – three boys and three girls. He joined the Macao government in 1927 and worked in the Economic Affairs Department, rising to become its director in 1937, a position he held until his retirement in 1964.

The war years

The Second World War, however, was a period of great difficulty for Pedro Lobo, as it was for Macao and the rest of the globe. “It was a very delicate time for Portugal, whose most important historical ally was Britain,” says Marco Lobo. “Like Portugal, Macao would only remain independent if it was useful to everyone. It was like Lisbon and Casablanca – a centre for spying. A place where everyone could read international newspapers.”

“Macao had to be friendly to everyone,” continues Marco Lobo, “including the Japanese and the rich Hong Kong businessmen who moved there. The Japanese opened a consulate there in 1939.” Macao’s population at the time tripled to 450,000 because of the refugees from Hong Kong and the Mainland who flocked to the only place that was not under Japanese occupation. There was not enough food and other necessities. Hundreds starved to death.

“Every morning, people saw corpses on the streets,” says Marco Lobo. “They became used to it. Governor Gabriel Teixeira used all the revenue from the gaming and the opium concessions to procure food. The stability of the pataca was critical. It was made the official currency.”

Diplomatic and generous

Marco Lobo says that his grandfather kept in contact with all the different players in Macao, including the two foreign consuls – Japanese and British – and was extremely well informed. Sometimes, says Marco Lobo, his grandfather ‘had to keep secrets from Governor Teixeira’ so that if the governor ‘was asked by the Japanese, he did not know’. “It was a dangerous time,” admits Marco Lobo. “Grandfather was only four foot, seven inches tall. He used it to his advantage – he did not appear threatening to anyone.”

On behalf of the government, Pedro Lobo – who donated generously to support hundreds of penniless refugees who had taken refuge in Macao – nationalised all the food in the city’s private businesses and warehouses. He bought at market price products like rice, cereals and tinned goods and stored them in government warehouses. To obtain more supplies, he set up the Macao Cooperative Company, which was one-third owned by the Macao government, one third by the Japanese army and one third by several rich businessmen, mostly from Hong Kong. It managed the trade between the city and the Japanese, who controlled the import and export of goods, including the food.

On 16 January 1945, US bombers attacked petrol warehouses in the Outer Harbour – the petrol there was to be sold to the Japanese that day. Pedro Lobo had negotiated the deal and was in the warehouse at the time. He ran to his car and was machine-gunned but managed to survive by abandoning the car and throwing himself to the ground.

The golden years

In the late 1940s, while keeping his official post, Pedro Lobo went into business on his own account with several associates and set up the Heng Chang Company in 1948. One of the associates was Ho

Yin, the leader of the Chinese community, which was apt as Lobo was the leader of the Macanese community.

The firm's main business was gold trading, which turned out to be extremely lucrative. Portugal did not sign the 1944 Bretton Woods Agreement, which, in an effort to stabilise the global economy after the war, fixed the international price of gold at US\$35 an ounce. The Macao government effectively gave Heng Chang a monopoly on gold trading.

The company imported gold, legally, to Macao. Officially, it was not supposed to be exported. But, in reality, many people bought gold at a rate of up to US\$70 an ounce. The decade after 1945 was a tumultuous one for Chinese people at home and in Southeast Asia, so many bought gold as a financial security.

In 1948, Pedro Lobo set up the Macao Air Transport Company (MATCO) which served the route between Macao and Hong Kong. Gold arrived in Hong Kong from different countries but could not be sold there because Britain had signed the Bretton Woods Agreement so, every Saturday, a MATCO plane left Hong Kong for Macao carrying plentiful amounts of gold.

This gold trading business made Pedro Lobo, who was also a director of the Macao Water Supply Company, and his associates extremely rich – and it also brought a substantial income to Macao's government, which levied a tax on the trade. It also made Lobo a media star – he even appeared in *Life* magazine. In 1959, British author Ian Fleming – the man behind the famous James Bond spy novels – interviewed him in Macao. Ever since Fleming's iconic 'Goldfinger' novel came out, some believe the author based the titular villain on Lobo – a man with a Midas touch.

The siege resolver

Pedro Lobo played a key role in resolving a dispute between Macao and the Mainland government in 1952. After the outbreak of the Korean War, the Western powers imposed a trade embargo on the PRC but Macao remained a point of entry and exit for Chinese and foreign goods. From May to July 1952, there were small-scale armed conflicts



Pedro Lobo and Ho Yin enjoyed a golden relationship

between Portuguese and Chinese soldiers at Portas do Cerco on the northern tip of the Macao Peninsula. The border between the two sides was not well defined.

In July, China imposed a blockade on land, sea and river trade with Macao, causing a major shortage of basic goods – mainly food. In August, however, Pedro Lobo led intense negotiations with the Chinese side to resolve the issue. He offered his personal regret for the incident and the Macao government paid a small amount of compensation to the Chinese victims of the shootings. China lifted the blockade on Macao after Lobo had displayed his excellent diplomacy skills in his part as a crucial player in the skirmish's peaceful resolution.

The culture vulture

In 1950, Pedro Lobo set up Macao's first commercial radio station, Radio Vila Verde, which was named after his own home where the studio was located. Back then, he supported the station financially and it broadcast in Portuguese and Cantonese. Lobo, who wrote musical compositions and directed operettas, also set up the Vilaverde Orchestra – and there used to be a radio programme each day broadcasting its works.

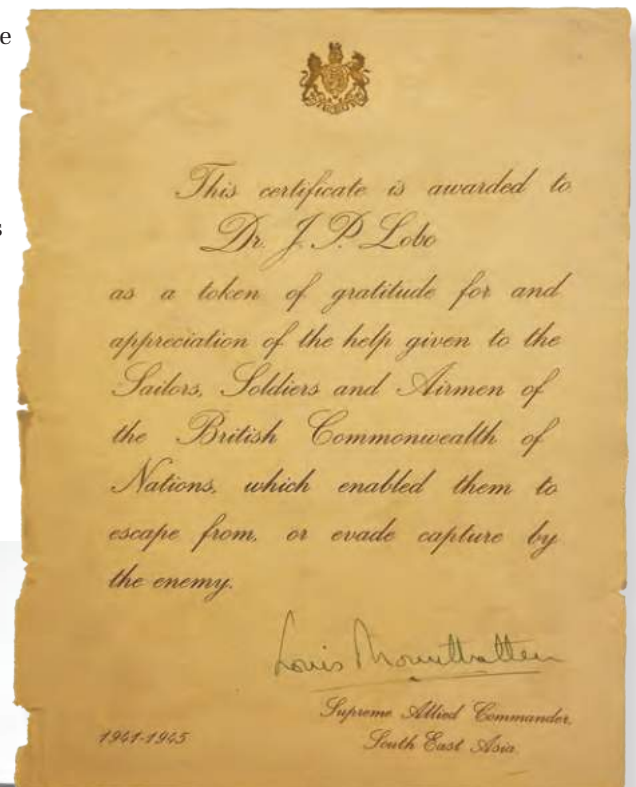
That same year, Pedro Lobo also set up the Macao Musical and Cultural Association 'to promote the dissemination of art and culture, especially in Portuguese, and make Macao, in its many aspects, better known in Portugal, the colonies and all parts of the world where the mother tongue is spoken'.

Each month or quarter it published a cultural magazine *Mosaico* in Portuguese, Chinese and English. He also set up the Euro-Asian Film Company, which produced Macao's first film, a love story.

From 1959 to 1964, Pedro Lobo was president of Leal Senado – the Loyal Senate of Macao. He was also a member of the Holy House of Mercy and of the Congregation of Our Lady of Fatima, which brought devotees to the shrine in Portugal. In 1952 and 1964,

he received awards from the Portuguese government – the Commander of the Order of the Colonial Empire and the Commander of the Order of Prince Henry.

Pedro Lobo donated generously to education and charity. He was a man of many talents as politician, businessman, artist and philanthropist. He died of illness on 1 October, 1965 in Hong Kong and was buried in the city's Happy Valley cemetery, leaving behind his family and a plethora of memories with thousands of people, be it for his diplomatic war exploits, his golden touch or his devotion to Macao.



Louis Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied Commander of the South East Asia Command between 1943 and 1946, honoured Pedro Lobo for the 'help' he gave during the Second World War

One of the MATCO planes that would be laden with gold



A life in words

Pedro Lobo – who has a street named after him next to Jardim San Francisco in Macao – was a colourful character who is about to have his life put into the pages of his grandson's forthcoming biography.

“Fifty years after his death, people are still talking about him,” says Marco Lobo, who was born in Hong Kong in 1954, the sixth of 10 children, his father being famous businessman and politician Sir Rogério Hyndman Lobo. “[My grandfather’s] legacy is owned by the people of Macao. If I do not write this book, something will be

lost. The more time goes on, the stronger I feel about this.”

“This will be my fifth book,” continues Marco Lobo, “all about the Portuguese diaspora. After nine months of work and six months of solid writing, I will deliver the manuscript in October to the Instituto Internacional de Macau. It is in English, the majority language of the Macao diaspora.”

Marco Lobo says that, in his younger years, he and his family would head to Macao during the holidays, weekends and the summer. “Grandfather lived in a large house which he named Vila Verde,” he says. “In the same

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My grandfather’s legacy is owned by the people of Macao.

Marco Lobo

street, there were six houses, three on each side. Each belonged to one of his children. There were goats in the street in those days. Vendors arrived with bread and other foods. The pace of life was very slow.”



(From far left) Many listeners did indeed 'tune into' Vila Verde; Pedro Lobo sports a medal as he stands proudly next to his son, Sir RH Lobo

Pedro Lobo lived in a complex that included his house, his office and the radio word station he founded – a site that is now dominated by supermarkets and shops at the junction of Rua de Francisco Xavier Pereira and Avenida do Ouvidor Arriaga. “I did not know him as a maker or shaker but as a grandfather,” says his grandson. “After breakfast each day, all of us grandchildren went to see him in his ante-room. He was in casual clothes or a dressing gown. He gave us all 10 to 20 patacas every day. He was very generous. We would jump into a pedicab and go to the toy shop. We talked to him in Portuguese and English.”

Marco Lobo notes that his grandfather was, at the same time as being fun, a stern disciplinarian, demanding that his grandchildren study hard. “This was a result of the training he had received from his own father and the St Joseph’s Seminary,” he

says. “He knew all about each one of us and what we were doing. He corresponded with my mother. I still have those letters. He died in 1965, one year after his retirement.”

In March last year, Marco Lobo returned to Macao to attend the city’s annual literary festival and people asked him about writing the biography. “Ours is a very private family,” he says. “The story of [my] grandfather is very complex, with truth mixed with fiction. Initially, I did not want to do it. But I changed my mind when I realised the affection people still felt for him.” ●



Marco Lobo’s biography on Pedro Lobo – which is as yet untitled – has been commissioned by the International Institute of Macau. It is expected to be published by the end of this year.

Keeping us posted

Text Mark O'Neill



The main Post Office building taken shortly after it was built in the 1930s

Macao Post & Telecommunications – the CTT – has been connecting the city with the world for 135 years. We celebrate its birthday by looking at its history, its importance and what it offers today.

In today's fast-paced world, when we think of communications, we think of emails and instant messages on our mobile phones. We don't immediately think of letters, parcels and telegrams. But, 135 years ago, there was no instant messaging. If you wanted to communicate with others who were not in your neighbourhood, your local postal service was of paramount importance to your life.

And that's just what Macao Post & Telecommunications was – of paramount importance. From the day it was founded on 1 March 1884, it was – and has remained ever since – Macao's window to the outside world, sending and receiving mail from across the globe while also creating some of the most beautiful stamps in Asia. Life may have

changed beyond almost all recognition over the past 135 years – but the postal service is still just as important. It has changed dramatically over the years as it modernises to keep up with today's world.

Macao Post & Telecommunications – also known as CTT, which comes from the former Portuguese name of 'Correios, Telégrafos e Telefones', meaning 'Post, Telegraph and Telephone' – has been celebrating its 135th birthday throughout this year by issuing commemorative stamps and publishing a philatelic book entitled 'CTT Headquarters' Building – History, Architecture, Functionality'. But what makes this historic organisation so important to Macao – and how does it manage to keep up with the ever-changing world?

Sorters going through the mail in Macao in the 1950s



Photo courtesy of CTT

Still financially strong

The organisation was founded as a separate entity from China Post in 1884, as a sub-member of the Universal Postal Union, a specialised agency of the United Nations that coordinates postal policies among member countries. The CTT has seen countless changes over the years but it says it is confident of the future, despite a fall over time in the traditional postal business. Last year, it posted a profit of MOP80 million (US\$9.92 million) on revenue of MOP562.7 million (US\$69.79 million). Approximately a third of the revenue comes from telecommunications, a third from postal services and stamps, and a third from other sources.

The CTT belongs to the SAR government. It has close to 600 workers who are civil servants – but it is an entity with autonomy over administration, finances and property. From January 2017, its staff increased by more than 100 when the government gave it the task of regulating telecommunications and managing the radio spectrum – a job it had previously done before 2000 – earning it the name CTT, or the Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau in English. It also runs the Communications Museum, which opened in 2006.

Derby Lau became the organisation's first Chinese – and first female – postmaster general in 2010, a post she has remained in ever since. "Looking ahead, we face several challenges," she admits during an interview in her office inside the iconic Macau Post building off Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro, next door to Senado Square in the centre of the city. This grand building was built between 1925 and 1931 and it is one of the most recognisable structures in Macao, entering the Macao Heritage List – which includes renowned monuments with architectural or historical value – in 1992.

"We must keep pace with the rapid changes in technology and laws in the telecom market," says Lau. "We must develop our business in a market of only 700,000 people. Our labour costs are equivalent to 73 per cent of our expenditure because we are a government body and our staff are civil servants, following all the rules and regulations within the



Postmaster General Derby Lau

regime of public administration. It is hard to hire expert staff for the regulation of telecommunications. We cannot match the salaries paid by the private sector. And we have a broad responsibility of civil protection operations in the SAR – in typhoons and natural disasters, we must ensure the continuity of our services to the public."

Posting a letter

The CTT began life 135 years ago as a small post office which was also the residence of its director. Now it has a network of 16 post offices across the SAR, including four that have opened over the past few years. It also operates a handling and delivery centre that deals with the inbound and outbound distribution of mail, as well as 42 automatic stamp vending machines and two postal kiosks around the city and in government and commercial buildings. In 1934, it started the first direct airmail dispatch and, in 1979, it launched the

Express Mail Service (EMS) for faster postal deliveries.

Lau says that the volume of domestic mail in the SAR is 'stable' from one year to the next, with most of it coming from government departments, businesses, banks and insurance firms. "But the volume of international mail is falling by between 5 and 17 per cent a year," she claims. "This is a result of the development of telecommunications and electronic media – and also the keen competition from the private sector."

The CTT's 2018 annual report records decreases in outgoing international mail and outgoing air mail from 2017 by 4 per cent and 17 per cent respectively. The total volume of international mail last year was 6.28 million items, down from 6.42 million in 2017 and 7.58 million in 2013. But the volume of local mail last year was up at 30.6 million items, compared to 29.66 million in 2017 and 30.52 million in 2013.

Lau notes that the postal market is extremely competitive – especially when it comes to private courier companies. "We have a stable business with our EMS from countries like Japan and South Korea," she says. "But the growth of our business is slower than that of the private companies. Our costs are high and their management is more flexible. We cannot compete on price but we do believe that the quality of service is guaranteed."

Being a government department, the CTT cannot hire non-Macao citizens, which the courier companies can. "This ban applies to all departments," says Lau. "If the government removed it, the unions would protest. This issue touches on major policy issues, such as what kind of people the government wants as the citizens of Macao in the future."

Collecting stamps

Philately has always been an important service of the CTT. Visitors to the main Macao Post building are surrounded by panels showing the rich variety of commemorative stamps which the department has issued over 135 years.

Prior to 1999, Macao's postage stamps bore the Portuguese words 'Republica Portuguesa' but they now bear the words 'Macao, China'. The city started selling stamps in

1884 – and they were originally designed and printed in Portugal and sent to Macao. From 1982, the CTT started to use Macao designers and themes, as well as international and Chinese elements. And from 2000, it initiated international tendering so it could obtain more qualified international printers and more specialist techniques, meaning the SAR's stamps could look even more beautiful than before. None of the stamps are printed in Macao, however – they

(From top) Postmen in Macao made their rounds on bicycles in the 1950s (photo courtesy of CTT); soldiers march past the main post building on 28 May 1950 (photo courtesy of Arquivo de Macau)



are printed by companies in China, Australia, France and Holland. Interestingly, more than three quarters of those who collect the stamps are Chinese.

Each year, the philately division draws up a list of designs and subjects that are approved by Macao's Chief Executive for its annual issue plan. Each stamp can cost as little as MOP2.50 and the recent printing quantity of an ordinary issue is 200,000 sets, with 250,000 for those that focus on the Lunar New Year. The two record years for sales were 2015 and 2016, with the CTT's income from the stamps being MOP370 million and MOP170 million respectively. This was, according to the CTT, because of some heavy spending funds in the Mainland which saw the stamps as 'excellent investments'.

In 2017 and 2018, sales of stamps returned to their normal level of MOP40 million and MOP50 million respectively – in fact the CTT says that 'average normal sales from philately' is around the MOP40-50 million mark. Last year, the CTT issued 15 sets of stamps and in September it hosted the 'Macao 2018 – 35th Asian International Stamp Exhibition' at The Venetian Macao, attracting 9,000 visitors from across the Asia-Pacific region.

Many foreign postal administrations, dealers, agents and printers came to the CTT's booth, with the organisers labelling the entire event – the first one ever held in Macao – a 'success'. "We mobilised the staff in all our departments," says Lau. "We invited judges for a competition. We had visitors from Australia, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Hong Kong, the Mainland and elsewhere. Our purpose was not to make money but promote Macao philately."

Among this year's stamp issues are ones marking the 'Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area', which are being issued jointly with Hong Kong and the Mainland on 26 September. Then there will be stamps marking national achievements issued on 1 October for National Day – and, of course, on 20 December, special stamps commemorating the '70th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China'

and the '20th Anniversary of the Reunification of Macao with the Motherland' are to be issued.

For Lau, the stamps are not only an important source of revenue but also works of art, enabling local designers to show their skills. The stamps show many themes – including the '65th Macao Grand Prix', the 'Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge', a series of Chinese zodiac stamps and the '60th Anniversary of



Images courtesy of CTT

GBA, 135th anniversary of the CTT and 70 years since the founding of the PRC celebration stamps out this year

The iconic Post Office Headquarters in 3D

Macao's Post Office Headquarters is a historic building that's been captured by artists and photographers for almost 90 years. And the city's most recent artistic impression, which is now being sold as a 3D image on a postcard, has a beautiful story behind it. The image was designed by autistic artist 0.38 – real name Leong Ieng Wai – and the postcard was created by the people who use the Fuhong Society of Macao's services. Fuhong is a charity organisation funded by the Social Welfare Bureau that provides a vocational training centre for people with disabilities and autism.

Charlie U, manager of Fuhong's centre for vocational training near Macao's border gate, says: "Basically, because we cater for people with special needs, especially intellectual disabilities, who are unable to work like us but who have graduated from special schools and need a job so they can gain self-confidence and contribute to society, we have built a centre where they can work and gain a salary. So many of the users design and create pieces of art."

The Post Office Headquarters postcard is one of a collection of five that is being sold in Macao. Whoever buys the postcards sees their money going directly to Fuhong – and directly into the salaries of those with disabilities and autism. But why this building? "It was a coincidence, actually," says Charlie U. "We found these amazing drawings of cars in the centre and couldn't work out who had done them for a long time but we eventually found out it was 0.38 when he was putting them in a bin without us knowing. From there, we asked him to create designs of great Macao landmarks and one of the designs he chose was the Post Office Headquarters as it is a listing building that is iconic in the city. The rest is history!"

To purchase one of the postcards, head to Fuhong's shop on the 58th floor Observation Lounge of Macao Tower.

Photo by António Sammarful



the Publication of Macao Daily News'. The CTT uses a variety of technologies and raw materials to make the stamps – including embossing and varnishing – to increase their value as collectors' items. Many awards have been won on an international or regional level for Macao's stamp designs over the years.

More than just mail

Visitors to the main room in the Macao Post building may notice a queue of foreign workers – including people from the Philippines – at one end on most days. This queue has formed because they are making use of the CTT's International Money Transfer Service, which it operates with the

Philippine Postal Savings Bank and Western Union. This enables the workers to send money back to their families at home.

The department launched its Postal Savings Services – also known as 'Caixa Economica Postal' or CEP – in 1917. Its services now include deposits and loans. It also manages a government fund, the Housing Credit Assistance Fund, and it runs a savings and loan division for civil servants and employees of private companies such as utilities and hospitals.

A relatively new service that has taken off is SEPBox, a secure electronic postal box which the CTT launched in October 2013. It's an app-based platform for all manner of electronic deliveries, so people can receive electricity,

water and other bills, bank statements and promotional material safely through a closed and secure system. The users know who sent the bills and who received them. The CTT, in this case, is the neutral carrier that provides legal proof of sending and delivery.

And yet another new feather in the CTT's cap is its eSignTrust Certification Services – the first and currently only Certificate Authority that's accredited by the government. The eSignTrust services are managed by the CTT in accordance with the SAR's Electronic Documents and Signatures Law, issuing electronic certificates for businesses and focusing on services related to Public Key Infrastructure – the technology for authenticating users and devices in the digital world.



To further promote electronic signatures, CTT has launched the eSignCloud Service to provide a safe, reliable and user-friendly online signing tool capable of providing real-name authentication for government departments, business organisations and individual users. The eSignCloud Service enables users to sign electronic documents on mobile devices anywhere and at any time.

Looking back

Life has definitely changed over the past 135 years. But the CTT has adapted with the changes and although the services it now provides may seem a world away from those it ran in 1884, it still all boils down to one priority: giving the people of Macao the best when it comes to communications. But why take it from us? See all these changes, adaptations and improvements for yourself at the CTT's Communications Museum on Estrada de Dom Maria II, across the reservoir from Macao's ferry terminal.

Unlike the rest of the department, the museum receives a subsidy from the government. It presents exhibitions in two major areas – 'post and philately' and 'telecommunications', with experimental and interactive features throughout the space. It aims to serve the Macao population – especially primary and secondary students – stimulating their interest in stamps and promoting the scientific and technical knowledge of telecommunications. It also aims to attract visitors to the city.

But no visit to the museum should go without a trip to the main Macao Post building, with photographs outside and a long look within those historic walls. Lau walks gently through the spacious ground floor of the building, which has adapted itself many times since it opened in 1931.

Asked if she would prefer to move to new custom-built headquarters, she says that's out of the question. "This is classed as a historic building," she says. "We could only leave it as it is. Many people in Macao are attached to the building as part of the city's – and their – Macao memory." ●

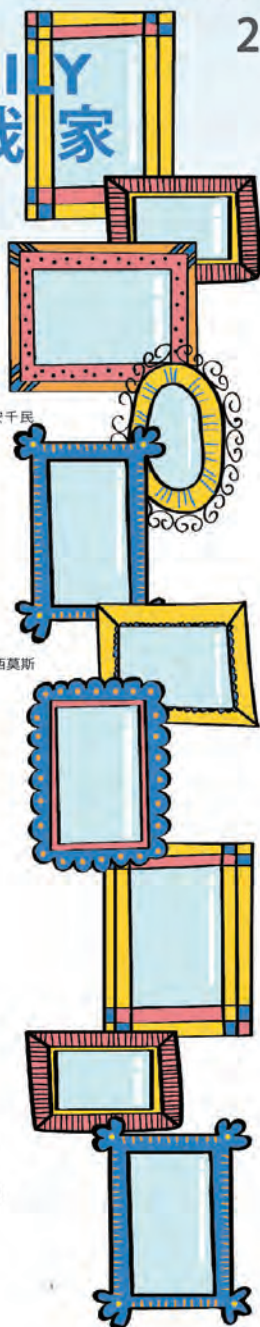
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China

The lychee: a fruitful history

Text Mark O'Neill

Perhaps the most Chinese of the world's exotic fruits, the lychee isn't just full of flavour and nutrition – it's also full of history

Yang Yuhuan – or Yang Guifei, as she was also known – was the best-loved concubine of Emperor Xuan Zhong, whose reign of 43 years between 713 and 756AD was the longest of China's Tang dynasty. Yang was one of the 'Four Beauties of ancient China' and is famous for her love for the emperor. She is perhaps less known, however, for her love for the lychee, her favourite fruit. She adored it so much that the emperor had couriers ride night and day to bring her the sweet treat from Guangdong, some 1,900 kilometres away from her home in the capital.

Today, however, lychee enthusiasts don't need to go to such great lengths to obtain a punnet of their favourite fruit. Lychees are available in markets and supermarkets across the globe, from Tokyo to Toronto. The king of China's exotic fruits remains as popular and adored as it was in Yang Yuhuan's day – and it's being consumed in greater quantities worldwide every year.

China is, of course, the world's biggest producer of the fruit, accounting for more than 60 per cent of the global output. Guangdong ranks first in the country, with more than 266,667 hectares of lychee orchards scattered throughout the province. Last year, 1.5 million tonnes were produced in the province and its exports were estimated to be worth more than US\$10 billion – or MOP81 million – with 80 per cent going to the United States, Canada and Europe.

Global production of the fruit has nearly doubled over the past 15 years – most of it in China. New and more sophisticated technology enables producers to store longer and ship over greater distances. The growers see many new markets to conquer – and that includes the producers in Guangdong, who are ambitious to say the least.

Lychees are delicious and juicy – and they are also low in calories and rich in fibre. A 100g serving of fresh lychees provides 86 per cent of the daily recommended vitamin C, hence their popularity worldwide. The fruit can be eaten fresh, dried or canned. And they are steeped in history.

Made in China

The lychee tree is believed to have originated more than 2,000 years ago in the northern mountain forests of southern China. Then, rivers and migratory birds carried the fruit to areas of Guangdong and Fujian provinces on the banks of rivers or close to the sea, where growing conditions were ideal. Some villages in South China have trees that are more than 1,000 years old.

China therefore became the first country to cultivate the fruit. In 111BC, during the Han dynasty, the royal record described a trial of planting lychee trees in the palace on the order of Emperor Hanwu – but it ended in failure as the plants couldn't survive the northern climate. However, down south, cultivation took root – and the Chinese love affair with producing lychees has never dampened over 2,000 years. In 1059AD, for instance, imperial documents during the Song dynasty note 32 lychee cultivars in Fujian Province. In 1780, 43 cultivars are mentioned in Fujian, as well as Sichuan, Guangxi and, of course, Guangdong.

In 1760 and 1860, two lychee varieties were introduced from the Mainland to northern Taiwan. Large-scale production for commercial purposes began at the end of the 1920s in the south of the island, where the land and climate was more suitable. The trees there are sheltered by the central mountains from the strong winds of the Pacific Ocean.

In the 1800s, Chinese emigrants took the seeds with them to Southeast Asia, the West Indies, South Africa and Madagascar – and gold miners from the Middle Kingdom transported trees with them to Australia in the 1850s. Australia now has the longest lychee production season in the world, growing the fruit from late October to late March.

One interesting story of lychees spreading far and wide in the 19th century involves Reverend William Brewster, a missionary working in China. Between 1903 and 1906, he imported Royal Chen Purple lychee trees – named after the Chen family, a famous lychee growing family in Guangdong – from northern Fujian to south and central Florida, USA. They were the first lychee trees to be introduced to the country and they were a hit – the Brewster variety is still grown there and is hugely popular in America. Some of the trees have reached an enormous size and the sweet Brewster is now loved across the world.

Over the years, lychees have also been taken across Asia and the Middle East. It has become an important commercial crop in Thailand, for instance – and even Israel has become a prominent producer. In the 1870s, the trees arrived in South Africa and there

has been a growth in their industry over the years, with production today at about 18,000 tonnes per annum, with most of the fruit being sold in Johannesburg but around 1,000 tonnes heading to Europe every year, where there is a large demand from countries like the UK and France. From its Chinese roots, over 2,000 years, the lychee has become an international fruit.

Growth in the China market

In the first three decades of the PRC, lychee cultivation in Guangdong grew slowly within the planned economy. Farmers mainly grew it for their own consumption and to sell to local markets. Between 1949 and 1982, the average annual production was only 40,000 tonnes.

Agriculture in Guangdong has always been different to that in the rest of China. The Pearl River Delta (PRD) is the most famous region of the province but this fertile area accounts for only a fraction of Guangdong's land area. Of this area, 80 per cent is hilly, with poor soil and vulnerable to erosion. The farmers of the PRD, however, have aimed not for subsistence agriculture but to exploit their comparative advantage, in fruit, sugar cane, fish farming and flowers – products that yield a higher profit than grain or cotton.

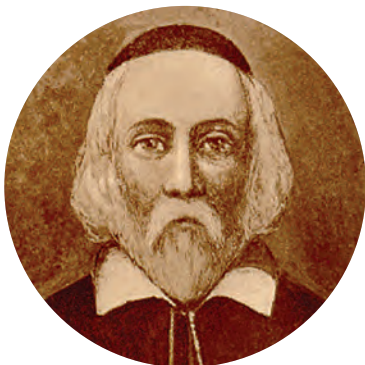
So, with the start of reform and open-door policies in the early 1980s, the farmers of Guangdong – like their brothers and sisters in industry and commerce – were quick to seize the new market opportunities. Since then, there have been dramatic improvements in production technologies in Guangdong. This was due to widespread reforms in rural areas and the introduction of a market economy. Under the reforms, farmers could choose what to



grow on a certain portion of their land – and they found that growing lychee was more profitable than most other crops. At the same time, market demand increased strongly.

Before 1990, most orchards were managed by a family, with several trees or several hectares. Since then, large corporations have invested in the fruit, creating orchards of up to several hundred hectares. This growth in demand has been possible only because of dramatic improvements in the road, rail and air infrastructures, enabling food products to be delivered rapidly to consumers in the cities. Lychee is best eaten fresh, so delivery time is critical. These large corporations have the capital and expertise to build cold storage and warehouses for the lychees so they don't need to be delivered to market all at once.

More than half of all the lychees produced are consumed fresh, with about 30 per cent being used to make lychee nuts or dried lychees and a small portion of which are frozen, canned or fermented. Although different varieties vary considerably in the time of maturation, the peak period of harvest lasts for only about one and half months from late May to early



Reverend William Brewster

July. Most of the fruit that is produced in this time has to be transported to market immediately after picking, with only a small portion that is then cold-stored.

For local markets, where transportation takes only a few hours, the fruit is not treated – it is usually packed in bamboo baskets or cardboard boxes. For long distance markets, where transportation takes more than a dozen hours, the fruit is commonly packed in plastic bags and foam boxes with added ice.

Huang Xuming, professor of fruit physiology at the College of Horticulture at South China Agricultural University, Guangzhou, says that global production increased from 1.45 million tonnes in 2005 to 1.9 million in 2011. He adds that it's now up to between 2.6 and 2.8 million. "The domestic market is the most important," he says. "High labour costs, lack of cold chain facilities and low incentives for the growers have been the major non-technical constraints in the industry. Since 2005, the Chinese government has strongly supported research and development of the industry."

"The government established the National Lychee and Longan Research System in 2008," continues Huang, "with 16 researchers doing research. In six provinces, 12 experimental stations have been set up to provide field experiments, technology demonstrations and training for growers. This system is considered a very important contributor to the sustainable development of the industry."

Top of the crops

One of the top exporters in China is Foshan Fuyi Food Company, established in the Gaoming district of the city in 2004. It preserves, processes, stores and exports fruits and vegetables. It is also one of Guangdong's biggest exporters of lychee and longan – another tropical fruit related to the lychee – to the US, as well as selling to Canada, Britain, Australia, Holland and Italy. Its biggest external markets are Hong Kong and Macao – markets it can reach by road or boat down the Pearl River.

The firm has three large workshops for drying, clearing and packing and six cold storage units for finished products. It also has three special production lines to classify and preserve lychee and longan, with daily production of more than 60 tonnes. The company says that the government established a strict regimen to inspect lychee

Lychees: the facts

- Lychee is a tropical plant, originating in China, that belongs to the soapberry family.
- There are three subspecies of lychee but only one is cultivated as a source of food.
- Cultivation of the lychee began 2,000 years ago. It grows in well-drained, slightly acidic soil and requires cold weather during the winter for the successful development of flower buds and warm, moist weather with high temperatures during the summer for the production of the fruit.
- Lychee is a medium-sized tree that can reach up to 50 feet in height. It blooms from November to February in the northern hemisphere and from April to August in the southern. The flowers are fragrant and attract bees, the main pollinators.
- It is a perennial plant and can survive for up to 1,000 years in the wild.
- The fruit's skin is rough but its edible flesh is succulent, white and translucent. Each fruit contains one large, shiny brown seed.
- Lychee is a rich source of dietary fibres, vitamins C, B1, B3, B9 and minerals such as copper and potassium. A 100g serving contains 66 calories.
- The seeds contain toxic compounds that can induce unpleasant side effects in the digestive system after consumption.
- Lychee is a natural diuretic which can alleviate pain associated with kidney stones and can reduce the formation of blood clots. It can also prevent the development of breast cancer.
- In Chinese traditional medicine culture, lychee is a 'hot fruit' which can warm up your kidneys and can help your reproduction system. Don't have too many, though – it is not suitable for those with gout or diabetes.
- It is known across the world as the 'Chinese strawberry'. In the Middle Kingdom, it is the symbol of love and romance.



orchards that produce for export as well as inspection of packaging equipment in the factories.

Fu Yi chairman Chen Yaodong says that, even before a lychee tree is planted, customs officials come to the orchard that aims to export. “They inspect the ground and water quality,” he says, “to see if they are up to standard. Orchards and packaging plants that have not registered with the customs cannot export. The whole inspection procedure is strict.”

“After the lychees have passed domestic inspection,” continues Chen, “they must then be inspected by the importing country. The US, Japan and the European Union all have detailed inspection procedures. The US inspection items are many and their demands are very high.”

Eating lychees in Europe

While China remains the most important market for Guangdong’s lychee growers, foreign countries offer enormous potential. Lychees are growing in popularity in Europe but consumption is limited. The growers want to reach beyond the traditional market of overseas Chinese – especially Cantonese – who have carried their love of the lychee with them.

In a report published in February this year, the Confederation of British Industry says that, in Europe, the lychee is most popular in France, with Madagascar and South Africa supplying the majority of lychees during the winter season from October to February. “Supply during the summer season is much more limited,” it notes, “but offers opportunities for countries such as Vietnam, Thailand and Israel.”

The report places the import market in Europe at between 20,000 to 25,000 tonnes of the fruit a year. “Lychees do not ripen after harvesting,” it says. “Therefore, lychees should only be harvested when they are fully ripened. To prevent the fruit from deteriorating after picking, it can be fumigated with sulphur dioxide. This treatment makes sea transport possible, as long as the fruit is kept in cooled conditions. It will also change the colour of the fruit to yellow, while European buyers prefer its natural red colour.”

The lychee is indeed adored in China and across the world – and this love is clearly growing every year, with producers reaping the benefits. Madame Yang Guifei may be the most famous lover of the lychee – but many people, at home and abroad, share her passion and may also go to great lengths to indulge in their favourite fruit. ●



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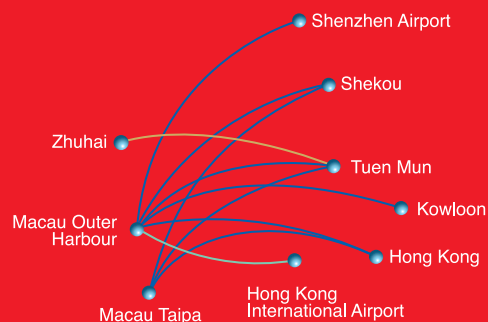
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Lords of the dance

Text **Matt Fleming** Photos **Courtesy of Macao's Education and Youth Affairs Bureau**

Macao's International Youth Dance Festival 2019 was a feast for the eyes, ears and soul when it took over the city for six days this summer.

Every year, Macao's International Youth Dance Festival makes for a colourful scene – but this year's event, between 20–25 July, was special. The festival, which took place outdoors and in venues across the city, was part of the SAR's first Art Macao, a large-scale cultural extravaganza lasting more than five months.

The dance festival's theme was 'Marvellous Dance for the Celebration of the 20th Anniversary of Macao's Return to the Motherland' and young performers from countries covered by the Belt and Road Initiative staged some incredible performances for audiences. Sixteen dance groups from outside the SAR and 10 local troupes took part – with one highlight being a parade that started in front of the Ruins of St Paul's and then moved through the city centre.

The event overlapped with the International Youth Music Festival, which took place between 17–21 July and included workshops, as well as outdoor and indoor performances by young musicians from 10 countries and regions.

A dramatic performance of 'Boatmen of the Canal' by Macao's Kao Yip Middle School Dance Team at a youth dance festival indoor performance on 24 July. The dance tells the story of a group of ordinary boatmen during the revolution period, demonstrating the awakening and growth of the people at the bottom of society



The Macao Youth Cantonese Opera Culture and Art Development Association, established in 2003 to foster young people's interest in Cantonese opera, performs at the youth music festival on 20 July



Performers from Italy's Akragas Folk Dance Group do the 'old tarantella and feast in the country' at the indoor closing performance of the youth dance festival on 25 July



The opening dance featuring representatives from all the groups taking part in the youth dance festival was a sight to behold in front of the Ruins of St Paul's during the annual parade on 20 July



Hou Kong Middle School Dance Team from Macao performs a dance during the youth dance festival parade



The Tokos Band from Hungary delight the crowds with traditional music from their homeland at an indoor youth music festival show on 20 July

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