

# Macao 澳門

## A-Grade Achievers

The past, present  
and future of Macao's  
education system

Macao's 15th  
anniversary on the  
UNESCO World  
Heritage List



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## IN THIS ISSUE



### Getting an education

For more than 450 years, Macao has been getting a world-class education. In this issue's Education Special, we go back to school and learn all about the city's education system from the Jesuits up until the present day. We then investigate what lies in store for the SAR's schools, colleges and universities of the future before taking a class with Portuguese-speaking students who chose Macao as their preferred place of learning. **p.10**



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**Cover image** Model against Ruins of St Paul's backdrop  
by Ant nio Sanmarful



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## From the Editor

### The return to life as we know it (almost)

After months of interruptions to schools, colleges and universities across the world, a new academic year has finally begun in Macao. This month, actual in-person classes have resumed for all nursery, kindergarten, primary, secondary and tertiary schools and institutions. To mark a return to life as we know it – almost – we have dedicated our September issue to the importance of education in nurturing young people and training them to be tomorrow's leaders.

In this issue, we look back over more than 450 years, from the early days of education in Macao to the modern multifaceted school and higher learning system. And then we look beyond all that at the future of education in the city. Today, almost 101,000 students out of a population of 685,400 are in some form of education. This is down to the significant efforts made by the government, as well as social and religious groups, to ensure education is accessible for all. In our in-depth stories in this issue, we find out exactly how the city has evolved and advanced, learning from successes across the world as it's been building its own A-grade education system.

A significant investment in education often leads to creating a society full of good and honest characters. Six 'good and honest' people in Macao – and another now living in London – are the stars of two of our stories in

this issue. These articles tell the tales of these 'young heroes' who have gone above and beyond to help others, whether it's nursing children in refugee camps in Africa, saving COVID-19 patients in Wuhan or chasing down robbers on Macao's streets.

This year is a year we will remember for centuries to come due to the COVID-19 pandemic – but on a local and more positive side, 2020 is also an important year for Macao as it marks the 15th anniversary of UNESCO's decision to include the city on the World Heritage List. In another article in this issue, we detail what this means for the city, what it has brought and how we can protect Macao's heritage so that it remains alive and an important local tourism attraction.

With life in Macao returning to normal and visitors from Mainland China being allowed back to the city from the end of this month onwards, the new Hengqin Port border checkpoint – which was inaugurated last month – represents a major development in the context of Macao's deeper integration into the Greater Bay Area. It's also a boost for bringing more tourists in to use the city's services and attend the many events that are being organised between now and the end of the year, as we detail in another story. With schools going back and more visitors coming into Macao, life really is returning to normal this month. Almost.

**Gonalo C sar de S **  
Editor-in-Chief



POLITICS

# Opening up again

A new border crossing opens, tourists from the Mainland start coming back in and Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng brings good news from his trip to Beijing. The rest of the year looks bright for Macao after its brush with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Text Christian Ritter and Gonalo C sar de S  Photos courtesy of Government Information Bureau



Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng is joined by government officials and guests at the opening ceremony of the new Hengqin Port

For decades, the main passenger channel between Zhuhai and Macao has been the Gongbei Checkpoint, also known as the Border Gate, in Macao's northern district. However, it has been running far beyond its capacity for many years. The checkpoint has seen the highest number of annual border crossings in the whole of China for the past eight consecutive years, with a total of 145 million people crossing it just last year.

All this changed, however, on 18 August when the groundbreaking Macao-Mainland joint Hengqin Port in Zhuhai was inaugurated. The new 24-hour border crossing point, known simply as Hengqin Port, has been created to help ease the pressure on the Gongbei Checkpoint, along with Macao's other border

crossings, as tourist numbers are expected to rise over the coming years. The new checkpoint between Macao and Zhuhai has a daily capacity of 222,000 people, so it also allows an increase in the daily capacity of travellers between Guangdong and Macao from 750,000 to 900,000 people.

The new checkpoint has a 450,000-square-metre main working area – equivalent to 63 football fields. There are 48 joint e-channels – which combine both Macao and Chinese IDs in one easy, fully electronic channel – as well as eight joint manual channels – where Macao IDs are checked in electronically and then an immigration officer deals manually with the Chinese IDs – and 13 conventional manual channels – all dealt with by

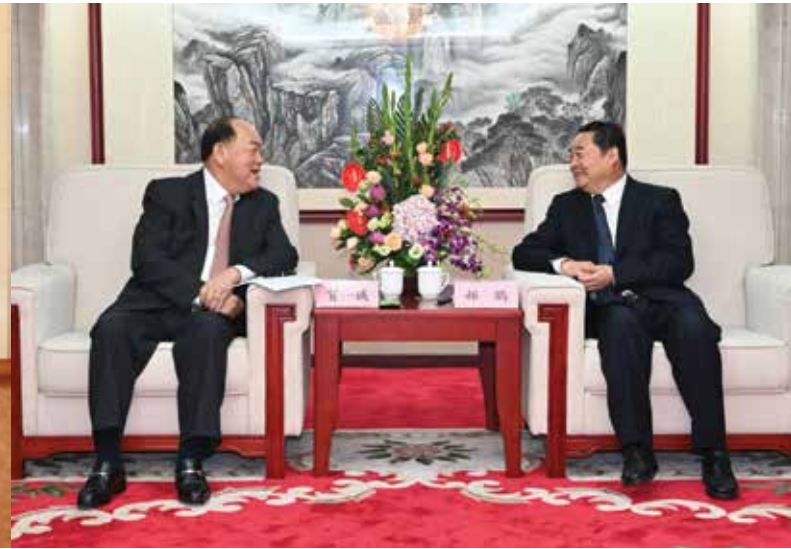
immigration officers. On top of this, there are eight e-channels for vehicle clearance services.

To get to Hengqin Port from Macao, travellers must go along the Lotus Bridge from Taipa, following the directions. The port checkpoint and its nearby area provide 11,474 parking spaces for cars, motorcycles and heavy vehicles, according to Hengqin New Area Administrative Committee director Yang Chuan. He says that a new link – by access roads and a bridge – between the University of Macau (UM) campus on Hengqin and the checkpoint itself is expected to be completed by 2022. “Moreover,” he says, “an area has been reserved for the extension of Macao's Light Rail Transit [LRT] and other kinds of transportation to the checkpoint.”





Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng and Public Security Vice Minister Xu Ganlu, who also heads the National Immigration Administration, in Beijing; (right) Ho Iat Seng shakes hands with General Administration of Customs Minister Ni Yuefeng, also in Beijing



Ho Iat Seng meets with Secretary of the Party Committee of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC) of the State Council, and Chairman of SASAC, Hao Peng, also in Beijing; (right) Ho Iat Seng and the Chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission, He Lifeng, in a meeting in Beijing



“

*The new Hengqin Port is a benchmark project in the development of the Greater Bay Area. Its launch has created favourable conditions for further exchanges between Macao and Guangdong.*

During the border’s opening ceremony, Guangdong Governor Ma Xingrui said that ‘the new Hengqin Port is a benchmark project in the development of the Greater Bay Area [GBA]’. He said: “Its launch has created favourable conditions for further exchanges between Macao and Guangdong for closer Guangdong-Macao ties and for the advancement of the GBA.”

The inauguration took place one day after Macao Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng’s six-day official visit to Beijing where the development of the GBA, which includes nine cities on the Mainland as well as Macao and Hong Kong, was reportedly heavily discussed. Other topics of discussion were reportedly Macao’s economic diversification strategy

and the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Co-operation Zone (GMICZ), which aims to deepen the co-operation between Guangdong and Macao, from the legal mechanisms at play between both areas to crafting a healthy business environment that serves both well. Support for this zone was announced by the central government towards the end of last year.

At the inauguration ceremony, Ho said that ‘the opening of the Hengqin Port checkpoint is an enormous opportunity for the Macao government and it will take advantage of the support and policies provided by China to further deepen co-operation with Zhuhai and Guangdong’. He also said that the joint Hengqin Port has

implemented a ‘Joint Inspection and One-Time Release’ principle for customs clearance, where travellers are required to pass border controls only once as opposed to passing through two separate immigration checkpoints when completing their departure and arrival formalities, thus drastically reducing the travel time. This is possible due to the Zhuhai and Macao customs sharing information. The same clearance methods are currently being used at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, which opened in 2018.

#### High-profile meetings

Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng visited Beijing between 12 and 17 August. He met, among many

other senior central government officials, with Public Security Vice Minister Xu Ganlu, who heads the National Immigration Administration (NIA), to exchange views on a wide range of issues, including Macao’s effort to promote its economic diversification, policies aimed to increase cross-border movement efficiency and tackling cross-border crime. According to a statement put out by the Government Information Bureau (GCS) on the same day of the meeting with Xu, Ho indicated in that meeting that he looks forward to additional assistance from the NIA in implementing these policies.

According to the GCS statement, Ho also met with General Administration of Customs (GACC) Minister Ni Yuefeng to discuss the

development of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Co-operation Zone initiative. During the meeting, the Chief Executive said that the zone was crucial to Macao’s future prospects, as the SAR faces a raft of challenges concerning its limited land resources – Macao’s current land area amounts to just about 33 square kilometres – and high cost of labour. He also said that Macao enterprises would be able to take advantage not only of the land resources available in Hengqin to develop their businesses but would also benefit from favourable customs clearance regulations, under an arrangement called ‘Opening the first line and controlling the second line’. Responding to Ho during the meeting, Ni supported the idea of





A passenger uses one of the joint automated inspection channels at the new Hengqin Port; (right, top) a Macao police officer instructs a passenger at Hengqin Port; (right, bottom) passengers head easily through immigration at the new border crossing point



All images on this page by Xinhua

setting up a ‘separate management model’ in Hengqin. He was also quoted by the GCS as saying that the GBA was an important part of the ‘dual circulation’ economic policies laid out by President Xi Jinping. According to state media reports, ‘dual circulation’ refers to a new model of development in which ‘domestic and external demand complement each other’.

During the visit to Beijing, leading officials from the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council (SASAC) and the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) pledged their continued support for Macao’s ongoing effort to diversify its economy and exchanged views on

how state-owned enterprises (SOEs) – in particular centrally administered SOEs – are supporting Macao’s economic development.

Hao Peng, chairman and party committee secretary of the SASAC, was quoted in an official GCS statement as saying that the council would support the establishment of the GMICZ, as well as projects that could enhance Macao’s public services, infrastructure and people’s well-being. He also said the SASAC could offer internship opportunities at its organisation for Macao’s young people who are looking to enhance their professional competitiveness. Hao also said that the two sides could work even closer to strengthen co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking countries

(PSCs) by making use of Macao’s platform role and its historic links with the PSCs. Ho Iat Seng added that Macao was looking forward to additional assistance from the SASAC regarding promotion of its traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) sector and the development of infrastructure projects.

In a separate meeting with NDRC chairman He Lifeng, Ho Iat Seng expressed his appreciation for He’s guidance on the development path for Macao and Hengqin, as well as the development direction for the GBA. Ho told the NCRC chairman that, during his various meetings in Beijing, the Macao government had received positive feedback and strong support for the development of the GMICZ in Hengqin. Ho also

said the impact from the COVID-19 pandemic had brought to light the problems brought about by the city’s over-reliance on a single economic sector (gaming) which reinforced his government’s determination to press ahead with policies promoting the city’s economic diversification. In the second quarter of 2020, the city entered a period of recession when its gross domestic product (GDP) dropped by 67.8 per cent year-on-year. This recession meant that the government’s total current revenue fell 61.9 per cent year-on-year to MOP 28.53 billion (US\$3.57 billion) in the first seven months.

After more than half a year of enforcing strict travel measures in Macao due to the COVID-19 pandemic – causing a drop in visitor arrivals of 86 per cent year-on-year to just 3.34 million people – the central government in Beijing announced that by the end of this month, all Mainland Chinese residents will be able to apply to visit Macao through individual and group travel visas. With Mainland Chinese visitors representing 28 million of the nearly 40 million visitors that Macao receives on an annual basis, this will help Macao’s economic recovery in the latter half of the year, said the Chief Executive at a press conference held at Macao’s airport just before he departed on his visit to Beijing.

Between the borders of Macao opening up to all of Mainland China and the inauguration of the Hengqin Port checkpoint, the last quarter of the year is expected to be eventful and it is hoped that the streets of Macao will once again be busy with both locals and visitors. ●

## The shows must go on

Big tourist events in Macao are still scheduled to take place this year, although they will be for an exclusively Chinese audience.

Over the past few weeks, the steps taken by the Chinese health authorities on relaxing border restrictions between Mainland China and Macao have been phased out. First, entry to residents from Zhuhai municipality into Macao was allowed from 12 August onwards, followed by residents from the Guangdong province from 26 August onwards and finally all residents from Mainland China are expected to be allowed entry into the city by 23 September.

Going the other way, Macao residents are now also able to enter Mainland China. The director of the Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO), Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes, said during an interview with a local newspaper that ‘we can’t expect that tomorrow, millions of tourists would come’ to Macao. She also said ‘that would not happen’ because ‘people would still have that little bit of fear of travelling, so we need time to overcome that’.

Although tourists from the Guangdong province – with a population of 113 million – represent between 42 and 45 per cent of all Mainland Chinese tourists in Macao, Senna Fernandes remains conservative in her estimates on the influx of future visitors given the new health and travel restrictions. She also said that the MGTO will focus its initiatives and campaigns on the Chinese market as Macao still remains closed for foreigners.

In the second half of this month, the MGTO launched its first tourism campaign since the start of the pandemic. This campaign will be promoted across Beijing with the main theme being the 15th anniversary of the inscription of the Historic Centre of Macao on the UNESCO World Heritage List (see p.48 for the full story). The campaign will feature Macao’s six gaming concessionaires’ hotels and restaurants and will also include local companies. For the remaining months of the year, annual events such as the Macao International Music Festival, which began on 22 August and is scheduled to finish on 31 October, and the Grand Prix, which is scheduled for between 19 and 22 November, are expected to go ahead, however it is likely that some of these events will not have much participation from other countries, said the MGTO director.

Despite the recent measures to facilitate the entry of tourists to Macao, Ho Iat Seng also admitted just before his visit to Beijing that the government ‘is unable to predict how many visitors from Mainland China will come to Macao’. The city is in the ‘last kilometre of the fight against COVID-19’, he said but he also reaffirmed the need for all residents to continue to take measures to prevent the outbreak of virus cases. “It is better to be able to go around with a facemask than not being able to go out at all,” said the Chief Executive. “We must continue to use the digital health code [the online declaration forms used to show the current health status of residents and visitors] to enter government and private establishments because it ensures that we are in good health.” To date, more than 150 million masks have been sold under a government scheme in Macao, ensuring everyone can safely walk the streets.



EDUCATION SPECIAL

# TOP OF THE CLASS

From kindergarten to university, Macao's education system gets top marks. Over the following pages, we look at the city's rich educational history, its successful present and its bright future, as well as its stellar work with Portuguese-speaking students from across the world.



EDUCATION SPECIAL

# Macao: a history class

**Today, Macao has a stellar education system – one that has been formed over more than 450 years. We look back at the city’s rich history of learning, teaching and schools.**

Text **Rafelle Marie Allego** and **Kary Lam**



An 1834 illustration by artist George Chinnery that shows the St Paul's College and Church buildings in Macao. Except for the façade, these were destroyed by fire a year later.

**I**nfluential Chinese philosopher Confucius once said that ‘if jade is not cut and polished, it can’t be made into anything’. What he ultimately meant was that training and discipline are necessary to properly bring up children. Education, as such, plays an important role in shaping society and its people. And no matter how much time has passed, what Confucius said around 2,500 years ago still holds true. Macao is no exception and the city has taken great pride in its education system ever since the arrival of the Portuguese in 1557.

For more than 450 years, Macao – which transferred its administration to China in 1999 – has been massively influenced by many cultures and methods of education. Most influences have come from the Mainland or Portugal, however other Western countries like England have also helped shape the culture. Throughout the years, much of Macao’s educational success has been down to the fact that it has adeptly meshed ideologies and teaching methods from both the East and the West and set up institutions to mirror these influences. This has ultimately cultivated an educational landscape which promotes open cultural exchanges.

While education was once a commodity available only to a select few, learning in Macao is now highly accessible to everyone, with plenty of schooling options available in the city. But before the 1990s, according to the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ), education in Macao wasn’t always guaranteed. We need to go right back to the start of the city to get an accurate picture as to how Macao’s education system formed the way it did and eventually became the successful model we see today.

## The early years

As soon as the Portuguese settled in Macao in 1557, the city started growing as more traders set up their homes in the ensuing years. Education would not, on the whole, have been formalised and only children from rich families would have been home schooled, however there was a Reading and Writing School established in 1572, which had a Latin class added to it



*Many years ago in Macao, the Chinese had to rely on their own solidarity and efforts to provide themselves with a proper education.*

a few years later. It’s said that 200 children – many who were the sons and daughters of businesspeople – were enrolled at the school in 1592. This was just the beginning of a formalised education system, though. The big leap forward wouldn’t happen until 1594, when an institution was set up that would influence Macao’s education system beyond recognition and put it on the global map for higher learning. The first Western university in East Asia opened its doors in that year: St Paul’s College.

Following successful missions into China, Catholic followers of the Society of Jesus – known as the Jesuits – decided they needed a place to teach and train missionaries who would later be sent out across Asia, carrying the word of God with them. They chose Macao and St Paul’s College was born. It was founded by Italian Jesuit Alessandro Valignano and would go on to train countless Jesuits from both East and West. The school model that was used was inspired by Portugal’s University of Coimbra and it focused on teaching science, literature and the arts. Funded by Portuguese businessmen, the college offered a range of courses, from theology, philosophy and languages – Chinese, Portuguese and Latin – to subjects like astronomy and mathematics. “In 1728,” says the Rector of the University of Saint Joseph (USJ), Stephen Morgan, “some of the teaching [from St Paul’s] was moved to the new Royal Seminary of St Joseph.” He adds that St Paul’s College was closed in 1762 and the buildings then used as an army barracks.

In 1835, after firewood that had been stored in a kitchen in the barracks caught light, the former college buildings burned down. The inferno also claimed the Church of St Paul that once stood next to it. The only remains are the stone façade of the church, now known as the Ruins of St Paul’s. Following the fire, the only higher education institution that was left in Macao was the Royal Seminary of St Joseph, which focused on training missionaries who would head into China. The seminary would much later evolve into the present-day USJ and it still serves as a base for its Faculty of Religious Studies and Philosophy.



Before its untimely demise, the College of St Paul's successfully introduced Western instruments, books, arts, advanced science and technology, and academic achievements to China. It even contributed to the introduction of Western medicine to China, training Jesuits in the ways of the medicine, according to the University of Macau's Faculty of Education's associate professor Dr Cheng Chun Wai. He says that some of the Jesuits even sent medicine to Qing Dynasty ruler Emperor Kangxi as a present.

By introducing these Western teaching methods, books, instruments and medicine to Macao, the college became a major part of the so-called 'Eastward transmission of Western sciences' that swept through China at the time. From the 16th century, it helped Macao gain a name for being a place of learning that effectively combined the educational values of East and West.

### A tale of two systems

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the education system in Macao was pretty much split in two – children were either taught under the religious Western or the Chinese system. Aside from St Paul's, for the city's Portuguese-speaking community, the church played a key role in education. Three churches – St Anthony's, St Lawrence's and St Lazarus' – were prominent at the time as bases for teaching young people. Catholic schools were set up at these sites and literacy classes were instructed alongside the religious teaching, usually on Sundays. The majority of the city's Chinese population didn't attend these schools, though, as most of the churches in Macao, right up to the mid-19th century, were exclusively for the Portuguese-speaking population.

At the same time, Macao's Chinese children followed a totally different education system. Chinese-run schools were set up and the locals took it upon themselves to educate their kids at these establishments. Dr Cheng says that where St Paul's College was 'an institution training Jesuit missionaries', it was 'not an educational institution for the locals'. "The Chinese had to rely on their

own solidarity and efforts to provide themselves with a proper education," he says, noting that this went on until the 20th century and adding that this was 'especially true during the wartime period in the 1940s'. Dr Cheng also explains that between the 17th and 20th centuries, each wealthy Chinese family in Macao would hire its own teacher to instruct their children in a way that was based on the education system practiced on the Mainland. This system actually differed, whether it was prior to 1644, under the Ming Dynasty, or between 1644 and 1911, under the Qing Dynasty.

In the 19th century, the lines began to blur a little when a spate of religious-based schools started sprouting up for the Chinese population, such as the Morrison School of Macau, which opened in 1839 and is sometimes described as 'China's first Western-style school'. Established in honour of Robert Morrison – considered the father of the Chinese Protestant Church – the school used a bilingual education system and taught students arithmetic, geography, history and physiology. However, it moved to Hong Kong in 1842. In 1864, however, the lines blurred even more as the Colégio da Imaculada Conceição opened its doors. This college taught Catholicism to Chinese, Macanese and Western girls all under the same roof. Other subjects that were taught included French and Portuguese. It closed in 1894.

Also in 1894, the Portuguese-curriculum secondary school Liceu de Macau was inaugurated with 31 students – Portuguese, Macanese and children of Chinese government members – on the books at the St

Augustine convent, which was based at St Augustine's Catholic Church in the heart of Macao. After numerous relocations over the following decades, the school's last building – where the Macao Polytechnic Institute now sits – opened in 1986 before closing in 1999 when most of its students transferred to the new Macau Portuguese School (EPM). It may not be here any more but it was one of the most important school openings of the 19th century.

The biggest changes in Macao's education system, though, came in the 20th century, beginning with the opening of Pui Ching Middle School in January 1938, at a time when the city's population was at 68,086 people and only 51.2 per cent

of them were literate. This Baptist school, the first school in China to be founded by local Christians instead of foreign missionaries, originated in Guangzhou in 1890 before a second iteration was opened in Hong Kong in 1933. The Guangzhou school was moved to Macao five years later due to the onset of the Second World War – with some teachers from the Mainland fleeing after the Japanese invaded to the relative safety of Macao as a result – and only reopened in Guangzhou after the war, also continuing in Macao up until the present day.

In the early days, the school's campus was on a piece of rented land at Lou Lim Ieoc Garden in St Lazarus' parish, a garden which

was once part of local merchant Lou Kau's residence but now serves as a popular public park. In 1952, two prominent parents purchased some of the garden's land for the school and it has been on that ground permanently ever since. It was officially named Pui Ching Middle School (Macao) in 1950. "At that time," says the private school's current principal, Kou Kam Fai, "the vision of education was traditional. But Pui Ching looked for breakthroughs in education, so it developed science and astronomy education, which was innovative in the city."

For hundreds of years before Pui Ching Middle School opened, Macao had already been offering an education based on a 'diverse culture



of East and West', as Kou puts it. He says that the school was instrumental in furthering this in the local education system as it innovated new teaching methods and subjects – and this was taken up by other Chinese schools in the city and became part of Macao's teaching culture. "Today," says Kou, "thanks to Macao's rapid development – and with the support of teachers, parents and students – Pui Ching has laid a solid foundation in Macao." While still maintaining its Christian influences, the school, which has a kindergarten as well as primary and secondary schools, now accommodates an average of 3,000 pupils between the ages of three and 18 years old alongside about 300 members of staff every year.

Other changes for Macao's Chinese population in the 20th century included the opening of many private Chinese schools. As a lot of parents in the city wanted their children to receive a traditional

Chinese education, Macao's Portuguese-administered government sought to understand and regulate the Chinese-run schools. From about 1910, the church also began putting more importance into Chinese language education and began creating schools – such as Escola Dom João Paulino in Taipa, which was established in 1911 and survives today – that catered to the Chinese population. These schools adopted Chinese teaching methods. During the 1930s and 40s, local Chinese schools were urged to register under the Chinese educational system. Pupils would then be able to receive the Mainland government's seal on their graduation diplomas.

### Sweeping reforms

In the 20th century, there were still two education systems in Macao but reforms happened early on. After the Portuguese revolution in

1910, when the European country became a republic, Portugal went on to reform its government, including the education sector. These sweeping reforms also made their way to Macao. The city's government centralised early childhood education up to secondary school age, creating a system under the jurisdiction of the main government branch in the Leal Senado building – the 'loyal senate' in English, which handled affairs on the main Macao peninsula – as well as the city's municipal government which handled the remote parts of Macao, principally Taipa and Coloane. These events led to the formation of two schools for the Chinese communities on both islands in 1919: the Escola Municipal da Taipa and the Escola Municipal de Coloane. These schools closed in 1949.

According to the government's Macao Yearbook, which chronicles events and changes in the city over the years, there were 129 schools in Macao in 1927. Two of them were run by the government, eight fell under the municipal authorities, eight were Catholic and 107 were privately owned Chinese schools – all of them teaching under a single-language curriculum. That leaves four others – each one an important new type of school for the city. Three of these were Luso-Chinese schools, which were created to teach Portuguese pupils both Portuguese and Cantonese at the same time. And the other school was the Associação Promotora da Instrução dos Macaenses (APIM) – Association for the Promotion of Education for Macanese people – Commercial School. This was created to cater for the growing Macanese – predominantly mixed Chinese and Portuguese – population.

Twelve years on, in 1939, according to Dr Cheng in his 'Macao Education in the 1940s' book, there were 112 schools in the city. As schools got bigger in size, the total number fell further by 1952 to 98 schools. Six of them were public – meaning they came under the management of the government or municipal authorities – while the rest were all private or church-run. A total of 22,287 pupils were in education in 1952 – 19,211 were in Chinese-owned private schools, 2,109 studied at religious institutions and just 967 were enrolled in government-run schools.

Over that same period of time, pupil numbers rose and fell on a number of occasions. At the outbreak of the Second World War, when large numbers fled China as the Japanese invaded and headed for the safety of neutral Macao, an influx of children came in and needed to be educated. But these numbers declined rapidly at the end of the war as families returned to China, only to increase again in 1950 with

the outbreak of the Korean War, when the north and south of the Asian country were in conflict for three years. The Korean refugees in Macao had to be educated but there were many children in the city not in school at this time due to the vast population. This was the same after many refugees left around 1958 as economic depression hit the city. Religious groups, however, stepped in at this time, with Christian churches and charities pouring in resources to help open low-cost schools.

Due to those population increases, wars and economic depressions, in the 1950s, 60s and early 70s, many religiously affiliated private schools opened in Macao, including Colégio Mateus Ricci and Chan Sui Ki Perpetual Help College in 1955 and Saint Paul School Macau in 1971. All three survive today. In contrast, in the 1970s, many private schools not affiliated to churches were forced to close their doors as Macao's birth rate dropped during the decade, causing a decrease in pupil numbers. In 1969, 59,438 children were at school in the city, dropping to 33,935 by 1977. Class numbers fell and schools went into financial difficulties before closing up. Again, the Catholic church came to the rescue and kept its schools open, soaking up local pupils whose school had suddenly shut. "We should be thankful," says Dr Cheng, "for the elementary education provided for the Chinese by those religious bodies."

The church in Macao kept up its strong support of the education system in the 1980s. In 1985, the Escola São João de Brito was opened by the Macao branch of Caritas, a

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*It was not until Macao's return to the motherland that education experienced a journey from government support to free universal access*

António Sanmarful



**NAME:** Agnes Lam

**AGE:** 48

**ROLE:** Assistant dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the UM and member of the Macao Legislative Assembly

**STUDIED AT:** The newly renamed UM in 1991

"It was great timing when I entered university – then still the University of East Asia – since this was the period the Portuguese government started investing in educating more people to prepare for the 1999 transfer of administration to China. As for the future, with universities in Macao becoming more industrialised under the new government, this will help lead to a diversified economy. Fundamental education is also improving, with a recent announcement to make music and art compulsory non-tertiary education. This would equip locals with the knowledge to understand Macao's own culture and history, as well as their role in the world."

Catholic relief, development and social service that spans the globe. Its current principal, Paul Pun Chi Meng, says it was founded in the hope of 'bringing out-of-school youths back into classrooms'. Also the secretary-general of Caritas Macau, Pun says there were less than 20 pupils at the school, which educates children between the ages



Image courtesy of Pui Ching Middle School (Macao)

Pui Ching Middle School (Macao)



**NAME:** Camille Calangi**AGE:** 'Early 30s'**ROLE:** Client meeting and reservations assistant**STUDIED AT:** Macao Institute for Tourism Studies (IFTM)

"[I was] nurtured through the impulse of economic growth from 2008 to 2012, [when] education grew and better opportunities came with a university diploma – such as the one I have – although luck and connections can also pave the way to a better future."

of three and 18 years old, when it first opened but now there are around 350. He notes that the school is open to children who have faced difficulties in their lives and also says that the school's motto is to 'accept all without pre-judgement'.

Other important schools to open in the 1980s included the School of the Nations (SON), a Bahá'í-inspired school that opened in 1988. The Bahá'í faith is a religion that teaches the essential worth of all religions and the unity of all people. Macao's SON opened with just five children enrolled in its kindergarten, which itself was established in an effort to address the need for an English-language school in Macao. By the end of the following academic year, the school was at capacity. As demand continued, the SON started renting out commercial property as it looked for a permanent solution, which came when the

government allocated its current space on Rua do Minho in Taipa. Construction began in 2008 and the new school building was ready a year later. As SON's principal Vivek Nair explains, the school has always been 'closely reactive to changes in the community'. This means that at the time of their establishment, when Cantonese was being mainly taught in the city, SON was teaching Mandarin. "It's not just about educating students for one segment," says Nair, "but educating children for the world."

It's worth mentioning that pupil figures for the whole of Macao are available for the 1989/90 academic year, whereas they are not on public record for the rest of the 1980s. In that year, there were 70,518 pupils enrolled in all the city's kindergarten, primary and secondary schools, and 2,644 students attending the city's higher education institutions.

### A new dawn

On 26 March 1987, the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration was signed by Portugal and the People's Republic of China over the status of Macao, establishing the process and conditions of the transfer of administration of the city to China. From this day, in preparation for the 1999 full transfer of administration, the education system underwent a fairly dramatic transformation. Prior to the treaty, the non-intervention policy the Macao-Portuguese government had in place – except in its own government schools – allowed different education systems to blossom. DSEJ director Lou Pak Sang explains that the Chinese accounted for the majority of Macao's population in the 20th

century – as they do now. He says that education for the children of Chinese families before the 1987 declaration was signed 'was basically undertaken by private organisations or individuals, resulting in a diversified school system and different conditions for running schools'. He adds that these Chinese pupils' 'rights to receiving education weren't guaranteed' prior to 1987.

The education landscape, after 1987, began to change in preparation for the transfer of administration on 20 December 1999. Lou says: "It was not until Macao's return to the motherland that education experienced a journey

from government support to free universal access." Lou notes that between 1987 and the moment Macao became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) in 1999, the transition over 12 years had allowed the city to establish its own education system by adopting and learning 'the education systems of other places'. Following the transfer of administration, in 2000/01, Macao became home to 96 private and 17 public schools and it also had a government that had, over a number of years, put much effort into creating what Lou says is a legal system that supports the city's education as one entire structure with the 'construction of education

planning and long-term measures', as well as what he phrases as 'long-term policy and financial support to guarantee the development of public and private schools'.

When it comes to higher education institutions, one of Macao's most important moments of modern times also came in the 1980s. The University of Macau (UM) was established in 1981 under its former name of the University of East Asia (UEA). The UEA was a private university with the bulk of students originally hailing from Hong Kong but in 1988, the Portuguese Macao government acquired it and it was renamed the UM in 1991. It was

transferred to the new government in 1999 and a new 1.09-square-kilometre campus – 20 times bigger than the original – on nearby Hengqin Island opened in the 2014/2015 academic year. The UM has become Macao's only public research university. As Dr Cheng explains, up until its establishment, the city simply had secondary schools. "Those looking for higher education would leave to go elsewhere," he says, adding that those who remained often couldn't afford to go to university.

The government acquisition of the UEA in 1988 was itself an important moment for higher learning in Macao, according to Dr Cheng. He says at that moment, 'the government started to take responsibility in providing educational services with the co-operation of some of the local educational bodies as well as the UEA'. This was followed by setting up an education reform committee to address how learning was done in the city at the time, he says, adding that the UEA's School of Education was established in 1989 – renamed the Faculty of Education in 1992 – to train Macao's first batch of home-bred professional tertiary education teachers to educate future students. "When we took the entrance exam," says the assistant dean of the UM's Faculty of Social Sciences and member of the Macao Legislative Assembly, Agnes Lam, "it was still called the University of East Asia. It was great timing when I entered [the] university since this was the period the Portuguese government started investing in educating more people to prepare for the city's transfer of administration to China. People from poor families like me wouldn't have gotten this opportunity if not

Image courtesy of Archives of Macao



Pupils at Instituto Salesiano in 1963



Courtesy of Chloe Wong



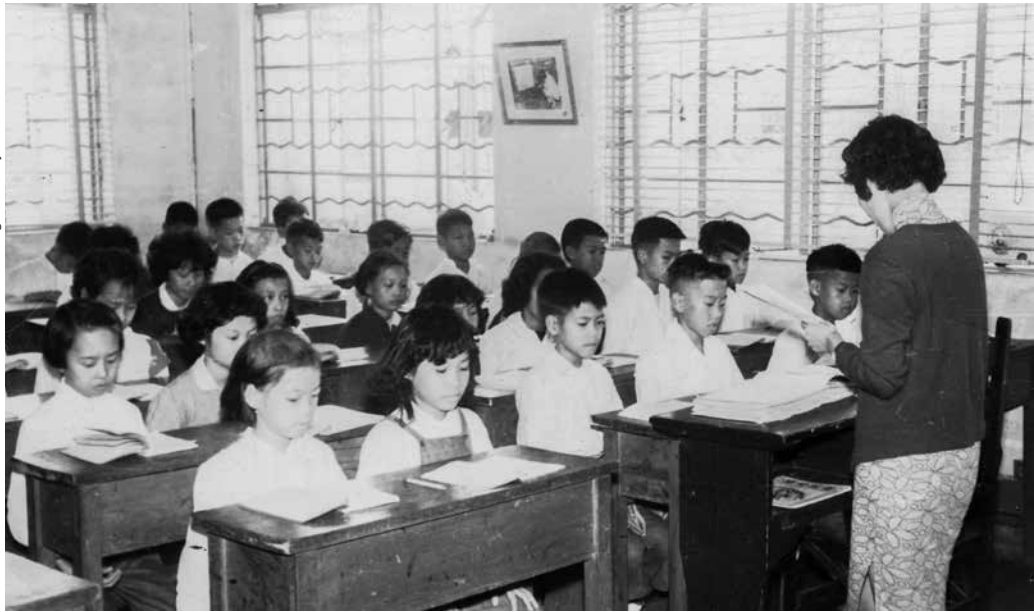
**NAME:** Chloe Wong  
**AGE:** 24  
**ROLE:** Photographer  
**STUDIED AT:** Sacred Heart Canossian College (English Section)

“Besides study, we students were able to develop different kinds of soft skills. For instance, the extracurricular activities programmes [at Sacred Heart] provided lots of opportunities for me to discover my interests during high school. I was a member of the sports club, which was a place for me to learn sports games regulations. I even organised the school’s sports day in order to develop my leadership and communication skills. Books can’t teach us this kind of stuff but these [extracurricular] skills are useful in life.”

for the scholarships and discounts being given out, both of which I was fortunate to have received.”

In the 1990/91 academic year, a total of 1,996 students were enrolled at the UM, accounting for all of the tertiary level students in the city. But by the 1995/96 academic year, there were 2,894 students at the UM and, with other higher education institutions opening in that time, there were 6,786 higher education students in the city, showing the massive growth Macao’s tertiary education system experienced in just

Image courtesy of Archives of Macao



Pupils attending class at a local school

five years. When the UM was bought by the government and renamed in 1991, though, it technically split into three institutions – the UM, the Macao Polytechnic Institute (MPI) and, a year later in 1992, the Asia International Open University (Macao). This branch was renamed the City University of Macau (CityU) in 2011. Today, the MPI and CityU share the old UM campus in Taipa with the Macao Institute for Tourism Studies (IFTM), which was opened by the government in 1995 and offers degrees in tourism, heritage and hospitality.

The government’s move to ‘take responsibility’ of higher learning in 1988 – and the further work the post-1999 government has done in creating a world-class higher education system in Macao – paved the way for other institutions to open and flourish in the city. The Macau Institute of Management (MIM) was

founded in 1988, the same year the Academy of Public Security Forces was established to train the city’s police. Despite evolving out of the old Royal Seminary of St Joseph, the USJ was only officially founded in 1996 before moving to its current main campus in Ilha Verde just three years ago. In 1999, the Kiang Wu Nursing College of Macau (KWNCM) was established, followed by the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) in 2000 and the Macau Millennium College (MMC) in 2001. All these institutions stand today, showing quite how far the city’s higher education sector grew in under 40 years.

Dr Cheng says that the whole educational landscape in Macao changed between the late 1980s and the years following the city’s 1999 transfer of administration to China. He says that a law called the ‘Macao Education System’ law in English was

passed in 1991 that ‘implemented the framework for the whole of Macao’s educational system’. He says that law was ‘crucial in establishing what Macao’s education is like today’ and, in the years following 1999, he says ‘the government started granting lands to selected groups and institutions to establish new schools in several phases’. According to Dr Cheng, this was done to increase the number of school places at different educational levels. “Financial subsidies to local private schools were also increased,” he adds. This all led to new school openings as Macao’s economy grew, such as the International School of Macao (TIS) and the Macau Anglican College (MAC), both established in 2002 – the former with a Canadian curriculum and the latter as an English-language Christian school.

Over more than 450 years, Macao’s education has come a long way. The College of St Paul laid a foundation for the city to be viewed as a pioneer in education and, throughout the years, Macao has improved its education systems, whether primary, secondary or higher learning. The reforms in the 1980s and the transfer of administration in 1999 were key turning points leading to the creation of a city with world-class higher education institutions and a school system that is inclusive to all and teaches a wide range of East and West subjects, teaching methods and ideologies. As Dr Cheng says, Macao’s hard work over the years in improving its education system meant ‘it was always on a good trajectory to today’s exceptional education system that the city can – and should be – incredibly proud of achieving’.

## The scholastic survivors

Macao’s five oldest schools that are still teaching children in the city

### Instituto Salesiano

*Founded: 1906*

*Location: Opposite St Lawrence Church on the Macao peninsula*

A Catholic primary and secondary school, the Instituto Salesiano is the oldest school in the city that’s still standing today. It’s a member of the Macau Catholic Schools Association and uses English as the basis of its teaching.

### Escola Kao Yip

*Founded: 1910*

*Location: On Avenida Xian Xing Hai on the Macao peninsula*

Hong Kao Middle School – Escola Kao Yip’s predecessor – was founded in 1910 by the Confucius Association. In 1975, it merged with Ngan Yip Primary School – itself founded by the Macau Association of Banks in 1949 – with prominent Macao businessman Ho Yin as the new school’s founding principal. Today, it teaches kindergarteners through to secondary students.

### Escola Dom João Paulino

*Founded: 1911*

*Location: Next to Our Lady of Carmel Church in Taipa*

Another member of the Macau Catholic Schools Association, this kindergarten and primary school was established by the Canossian Sisters, a religious organisation of nuns founded in Italy in 1828. They started teaching Catholicism in classes to children at a nearby church from 1895 but these classes expanded into the full school in 1911. Its first intake was 70 pupils.

### Yuet Wah College

*Founded: 1925*

*Location: On Estrada da Vitoria in St Lazarus’ parish on the peninsula*

An all-boys school founded in 1925, this Macau Catholic Schools Association member serves pupils from pre-school through to secondary. Accredited by the Salesians of Don Bosco Catholic religious organisation, which was founded in Italy in 1859, this school has a long list of notable alumni, including currently serving Macao politicians.

### Colégio Diocesano de São José

*Founded: 1931*

*Location: Three campuses: one in Adro de São Lázaro, one in Travessa dos Anjos and one in Rua da Sé, all on the peninsula*

The Colégio Diocesano de São José covers kindergarten through to secondary school, with its site scattered across three campuses. It also belongs to the Macau Catholic Schools Association, with its supervisor being Macao Catholic Diocese Bishop Stephen Lee Bun-sang.





Students are taught in a classroom at Macao Institute for Tourism Studies

EDUCATION SPECIAL

# Forward thinking

**We’ve learned that Macao has been an educational powerhouse for hundreds of years. But what’s next? What’s in store for the city’s education system of the future and how will it help produce the leaders of tomorrow?**

Text **Rafelle Marie Allego** and **Kary Lam**

Macao’s education system has undergone great changes over the years, from the first school established by Jesuit missionaries in 1594 to today’s 77 schools spread throughout the city. But what does the future look like? As the city’s education system has rapidly risen up the rankings over the decades, what great changes are expected over the next few years and beyond?

Before we look at that, though, it’s important to outline where Macao’s education system stands right now. In the 2018/19 academic year – the last year on record with full data for the whole education

system – there were a total of 113,285 pupils and students attending all the education institutions in the city, from kindergarten – also known as ‘infant education’ in Macao – to university. Based on last month’s projected 2020/21 statistics from the Education and Youth Affairs Bureau (DSEJ) ahead of schools returning this month, there are an estimated 85,014 pupils in public and private schools in the city. That’s around 12.4 per cent of the total population of 685,400, meaning that more than one in 10 people in Macao is a kindergarten, primary or secondary school pupil.

There are far fewer tertiary students – those in higher education after leaving secondary school – in Macao. Based on 2019/20 statistics from the Higher Education Bureau (DSES), a total of 15,969 people from Macao study at local higher education institutions, which translates to about 2.33 per cent of the city’s total population. Many locals who graduate from secondary school in the SAR head to the Mainland or overseas to continue their education. According to 2018/19 data, a total of 12,353 locals study in the world’s top 500 universities. And interestingly, also



Cheong Kam Ka



Young pupils at Pui Ching Middle School

according to data from the same academic year, there were more non-local students studying in Macao than locals, with 20,138 non-local students enrolled in Macao's tertiary education system. In total, that means there were 36,107 people studying at all of the higher education institutions in the city in the 2018/19 academic year.

So, roughly, one in six people living in Macao is in some form of education. And, in recent years, these young learners have been excelling. In 2003, the city first participated in a worldwide study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) which measures the

educational performance of 15-year-old pupils every three years. This is called the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and, over the years, Macao has been rising up the rankings. In the PISA's most recent rankings – in 2018 – the SAR moved up to third place for all three of the assessment's core subjects of maths, science and English reading. It was ranked behind China and Singapore and just ahead of Hong Kong in a list that includes the UK, the US, Japan and Portugal. According to the OECD, Macao showed not only high academic quality but also fast educational progress over the years in the past decade.

A key item that was discussed by Macao's Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng in the government's 2020 Policy Address in April was education. Ho said during the address that the government would optimise the structure of its education department, as well as optimising talent-cultivation policies while also strengthening education and youth services. He also said a patriotic education base would be set up in Macao and that the government would support teaching, scientific research and the applied use of research conducted by tertiary institutions. Even before he became the Chief Executive in December last year, Ho had been

talking about positive change to the city's education system. As he mentioned in August last year, Macao's government spends at least MOP 1.5 million (US\$188,000) on each student from when they enter school until graduating from university. This applies to all the students on Macao's free education network, which exempts pupils from paying tuition fees for 15 years from the time they first start school. He also pointed out that a successful education should help students engage in different industries and think independently.

Following the policy address, the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong U, said the government will reorganise the division of labour in the education department and will also merge the DSES and the DSEJ. She also said that the education department will be restructured and staffing will be 'adjusted', as well as the 'management mechanics' being 'straightened out'. She said the new-look education department, which is expected to be reorganised in the future, will 'promote the co-ordinated development of education according to future needs.' So the government is working on an even better future for the city's education system but first we need to go back to school to look at the present-day picture – and that starts at nursery.

Early learning

Macao's youngest children learn to be independent early on. The city boasts a relatively low unemployment rate at 2.7 per cent, so most of the population is in employment. And many of these

people have children. This means that the city needs a substantial amount of nurseries to support working parents during the daytime. Macao has 64 nurseries in total, including 41 that are subsidised by the government and managed by the Social Welfare Bureau (IAS).

The IAS says that nurseries play a major supporting role in the care of young children for families that are vulnerable or in crisis, such as 'single parents, the disabled or those who are chronically ill'. Prices at subsidised facilities can start as low

as MOP 1,000 (US\$125) for half-day services to MOP 4,800 (US\$601) for full-day services per month. There are also some with no fee at all, save for MOP 100 (US\$12.50) for meals. At non-subsidised nurseries, prices can be much higher depending on the place, running from MOP 2,400 (US\$300) for half-day services to MOP 6,800 (US\$852) for full-day services per month.

Children aged four or below are allowed to enrol in the nurseries, with government-subsidised nurseries prioritising Macao



Image courtesy of UM

KNOW YOUR UNIVERSITY

**Name:** University of Macau (UM)  
**Founded:** 1981 as the UEA, 1991 as the UM  
**Based:** Main campus is on Hengqin Island

Formerly known as the privately owned University of East Asia (UEA), it was established in 1981, catering to a Hong Kong student majority. It was renamed the University of Macau in 1991, becoming Macao's first public university. It moved to Hengqin in 2014. There were 10,974 students enrolled at the UM in the 2019/20 academic year across seven faculties – Arts and Humanities, Business Administration, Education, Health Sciences, Law, Science and Technology, and Social Sciences. The university was ranked in the 301-350th place bracket on the new Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2021.





## KNOW YOUR UNIVERSITY

**Name:** Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST)

**Founded:** 2000

**Based:** On the edge of the Cotai Strip, Taipa

MUST, sitting right next to Macau International Airport, is the largest university in terms of students in Macao. It boasts 11 faculties and departments – the Faculty of Information Technology, School of Business, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Chinese Medicine, Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Faculty of Humanities and Arts, Faculty of Medicine, School of Pharmacy, University International College, School of Liberal Arts and Department of General Education. In the 2019/20 academic year, there were 12,131 students enrolled at MUST. It was ranked in the 251–300th place bracket on the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2021.

residents. If any of them have space after Macao residents have applied, though, then they will open up to non-resident children as well. Each nursery has its own enrolment requirements and parents are oftentimes waitlisted simply because of high demand. The IAS aims to stimulate the potential of the youngsters in these nurseries and develop ‘good living habits’. This ultimately prepares the children for life at any one of Macao’s kindergartens.

Education is compulsory in Macao between the ages of five and 15 years old. Similar to Hong Kong, kindergarten, primary and secondary education is normally combined in one single school. Some schools even include the nursery years under the same roof. There are a total of 77 schools in the city based on 2019/20 figures, three of which are international schools. There is also the new Escola Oficial de Seac Pai Van – in English, ‘Seac Pai Van Official School’ – a public school that

will eventually cover kindergarten, primary and secondary ages. For the academic year we have just entered, the school only has seven classes from kindergarten to primary, with 193 pupils enrolled in total. According to its principal, Hon Lok, the school will also provide secondary education in the long-term and can accommodate up to 1,365 pupils. It opened in the first week of this month along with the rest of Macao’s schools.

Macao is a melting pot of many different education systems. There are schools running on purely Chinese curriculums, others with Portuguese as the main ‘medium of instruction’ and a handful of international schools that offer up an array of curricula. There are also those fully subsidised by the government, those partially subsidised by the government and those not subsidised at all by the government – in other words, private. Based on 2019/20 figures, there are 10 public schools in Macao and 67 private schools – 46 of which are part of the Macau Catholic Schools Association. Private schools are classified into two types: those that follow the local education system and those that follow non-local ones. Non-profit private schools that run the local education system model are allowed to enter the free education network. At present, 75.3 per cent of all the schools in the city come under the free education network.

Students with learning disabilities are well catered for in Macao. Based on data from 2019/20, 43 of the city’s schools – nine public and 34 private – provide an ‘inclusive education’ programme for special needs children. Another four schools

– one public and three private – offer separate classes solely dedicated to special education.

With 15 years of free non-tertiary education available to locals since the 2007/08 academic year, Macao’s DSEJ director Lou Pak Sang points out that the government’s financial support for schools in Macao has continually grown, from paying for education in 85.4 per cent of all the city’s schools in the 1999/2000 academic year to 93.2 per cent of them in the 2019/20 academic year. The bureau has also made sure that teachers are well-equipped to handle their classes. Lou says that the proportion of formally educated teachers with a bachelor’s degree or higher has also increased from 53.2 per cent in the 1999/2000 academic year to 96.4 per cent in the 2019/20 academic year, while – over the same period of time – the proportion of those with a teaching certificate has increased from about 78 per cent to 97.5 per cent.

## Further learning

When it comes to tertiary education in Macao, the landscape is a little easier to navigate. There are 10 higher education institutions in the city: the University of Macau (UM), the Macao Polytechnic Institute (MPI), the Institute for Tourism Studies (IFTM), the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST), the City University of Macau (CityU), the University of Saint Joseph (USJ), the Escola Superior das Forças de Segurança de Macau police academy (ESFSM), the Kiang Wu Nursing College of Macau (KWNC), the Macau Institute of Management (MIM) and the Macau

DSEJ director Lou Pak Sang





Millennium College (MMC).

When it comes to subsidies for tertiary education students, every student in Macao needs to pay tuition fees at university, unless they have a scholarship or loan. But, for those who need financial aid, the government runs the ‘Learning Material Subsidy for Higher Education Students’ scheme during each academic year. Under this scheme, in the 2019/20 academic year, Macao students undertaking a degree or other higher education qualification for at least two years received MOP 3,300 (US\$414) per year to ‘support students in the purchase of reference and learning materials’.

On top of that subsidy scheme, students can also get help with their tuition fees and other costs by applying to the ‘Continuing Education and Development

Programme’. This is a scheme for any local resident aged 15 or over who undertakes any form of further education in the city, including university or even specialised classes like dancing or art. Anyone accepted under the scheme is entitled to MOP 6,000 (US\$752) between this month and August 2023. According to the Secretary for Administration and Justice, André Cheong Weng Chon, the government has prepared a budget of MOP 800 million (US\$100 million) to cover the entire scheme.

### A bright future

So, in a nutshell, that’s how Macao’s education system stands at present. But what about the future? According to the DSEJ, the bureau is focusing its efforts on kindergarten, primary and secondary students’

futures, especially with regards to ‘emphasising the balance of affection, attitudes and values, as well as the cultivation of knowledge and skills in the new era’, according to Lou. Lou also shares that there are four key points the bureau will focus on in education. First, it intends to ‘cultivate patriotic love’ while ‘nurturing’ the city’s ‘place internationally’. The second point Lou outlines is to ‘develop students’ soft skills’. The third point is to enhance the happiness and satisfaction of students and the fourth point is to strengthen education pertaining to creativity and technology.

To achieve these goals, Lou says that the bureau will ensure funding continues for the education system while also assessing and equipping teaching staff with up-to-date training. As the education authority has included in its outlined

plans for higher education, the government will ‘provide assistance in research policies or resources’, ‘support colleges and universities in constructing technological innovation’ and ‘further promote the work of local higher institutions in co-operation with industry, learning and research’.

Chair Professor Liu Liang is the MUST president as well as an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering. He says: “The purpose of education is cultivating the new generation and their talents as professionals for the community.” Based on a strategic policy implemented in 2013 – the year Liu became the president of MUST – the institution has made sure teaching and research are of ‘equal importance to one another’ to create quality results, he says. Liu also says that ‘students with a positive attitude toward learning’ also contribute to the ‘research quality’ of the city as ‘not only are they trained to serve society once they leave, but they are also vital in research manpower thanks to their youthful energy and creativity, as well as their productivity’. “The academic team together with the students drives the university forward,” he adds.

“Even if Macao is small,” continues Liu, “and our two State Key Laboratories [SKLs] have less than 400 team members across both – comparatively smaller than some research teams in China – our university’s research publication numbers are much higher, particularly in high-quality publications.” He adds that the students alongside the academic staff at MUST have produced more than 200 research patents over



António Sanmarful

### KNOW YOUR UNIVERSITY

**Name:** Macao Polytechnic Institute (IPM)  
**Founded:** 1991  
**Based:** Opposite Lotus Square on the Macao peninsula

Originally a polytechnic college under the privately owned UEA, it split away and was established as the IPM in 1991, becoming an independent higher education institution. A total of 3,515 students were enrolled in the 2019/20 academic year across its School of Arts, School of Applied Sciences, School of Business, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Health Sciences and Sports, and School of Languages and Translation.

the past year. He says: “We can show the international community that we also do research [at MUST] and help improve Macao’s academic reputation.”

For the future of MUST – and the entire tertiary education system in Macao – Liu highlights the importance of ‘creativity, quality, innovation, multidisciplinary learning and collaboration’ in cultivating an environment rich in knowledge. He also highlights that MUST has two SKLs – important state laboratories that focus on key research for China – and that this is a great advantage to

the city. The SKL of Quality Research in Chinese Medicines and the SKL of Lunar and Planetary Sciences are both based at MUST. Liu says he’s ‘very happy’ with the ‘knowledge sharing’ between MUST and the ‘postdoctoral fellows from overseas’ who take part in research at the SKLs. He also points out that research and economic growth are connected. “By researching and creating new technology, we create new industries,” he says, citing the research and development of mobile phones that has led to an industry that’s widely popular today. “Research happens

MUST president Liu Liang with students in one of the State Key Laboratories



Image courtesy of MUST





António Sanmarful

## KNOW YOUR UNIVERSITY

**Name:** University of Saint Joseph (USJ)

**Founded:** 1996

**Based:** In the north of Macao, next to the China border

Founded in 1996 as the Macau Inter-University Institute, the USJ was then renamed to its present moniker in 2009. It may officially be only 24 years old but it actually evolved out of the historic St Joseph's Seminary, which dates back to 1728. It's the only private Catholic university in Macao. In September 2017, its main campus moved to Ilha Verde but the Faculty of Religious Studies and Philosophy still sits on the ancient seminary site in St Lawrence parish. In the 2019/20 academic year, there were 1,228 enrollees across the USJ's five faculties – the Faculty of Social Sciences and Education, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Faculty of Business and Law, Faculty of Religious Studies and Philosophy, and the Institute of Science and Environment.

before industry,” he says. “This is why we emphasise innovative research, which can lead to new industries and help with economic growth.”

### Across the GBA

As the Greater Bay Area becomes more connected over the coming years, so will its universities and places of higher education. This includes the University of Macau

(UM), which aims to be in the thick of it all for research and collaborative programmes. Rector of the UM and an electrical engineer, Song Yonghua, tells us that the UM last year launched ‘the first GBA industry-academy collaboration base’ – where students and faculty members co-operate with businesses for research projects – called the Zhuhai UM Science and Technology Research Institute (ZUMRI), on

Hengqin Island alongside its main campus. This institute, set up in partnership with the Zhuhai Hengqin New Area Management Committee, already has three of the university's SKLs based there.

According to Song, ZUMRI, over the coming years, will establish five major research and development (R&D) centres, as well as advanced training centres across a variety of fields – namely microelectronics, traditional Chinese medicine, smart city technology, translational medicine and advanced materials. He says: “These centres will introduce R&D projects from the UM with good prospects for industrial application.” Song also says the ZUMRI will ‘connect the university's scientific research team with the high-quality scientific and technological innovation elements of the Greater Bay Area in order to create innovative products with high added value and technical services’ for the GBA. He adds that future plans include expanding the base into a 10,000-square-metre ‘platform’ for ‘technological innovation’ between Macao and the Mainland.

The UM has also been collaborating with Beijing's Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS). Together they have established five laboratories in the fields of brain and cognitive sciences, artificial intelligence and robotics, spatial information, marine environment and ocean engineering, and cancer research. “In the future,” says Song, “CAS and the UM will establish an institute for technological innovation in Macao to strengthen the training of innovative talent and contribute to society.” Also, the team at the university's Natural Language

Processing and Portuguese-Chinese Machine Translation Laboratory (NLP2CT) have created technology for language translation, including an online Chinese-Portuguese-English computer-aided translation platform called UM-CAT and a system that translates between Cantonese and Mandarin in, as Song puts it, ‘a bid to strengthen Macao's position within the GBA’.

Another important higher education establishment in Macao is the USJ, which belongs to a large network of Catholic universities worldwide and is uniquely positioned as being the only private Catholic university in China. USJ rector Stephen Morgan says the university teaches an ‘English medium’, allowing students to experience a ‘Western university’ mode of education that's focused on ‘humanities, arts and social sciences’. “We have a very clear view of what our graduates will be like,” he says. “They should possess high integrity and be able to think creatively, critically and collaboratively.”

The USJ rector says that each of the higher education institutions in Macao brings something different to the table. “What we have are different perspectives from different backgrounds and that leads to synergy,” he says. He adds that, in the future, the university will focus on more arts, humanities, social sciences and science research work, plus more work in nature conservation and preserving the mangroves in Macao. Further to this, the Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Elsie Ao Ieong U, attended the USJ's 2019/20 graduation ceremony, where she mentioned the institution's important role for its



Rector of the UM  
Song Yonghua;  
(inset) the Zhuhai  
UM Science and  
Technology Research  
Institute (ZUMRI)



Image courtesy of UM



USJ rector Stephen Morgan

Image courtesy of O'Clairm

‘nearness’ to Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs) which has been achieved through ‘great efforts to promote secular co-operation’ between China and the PSCs.

Another educational focus for the future in Macao is in the medical field. MUST revamped its Faculty of Health Sciences last year – changing its name to the Faculty of Medicine – but it's not the only tertiary institution looking at the future of the health sector. Founded

in 1923, the private the Kiang Wu Nursing College of Macau (KWNC) provides its students with nursing experiences outside the classroom setting. The instructors supervise them and the whole teaching system gives the students an edge as they are trained first-hand to take care of patients. Associate Professor Alice Tsang Sau Mui, the academic vice-president at the KWNC, says this is an important aspect of any nursing student's training as they must be



able to have confidence when they make their rounds as professional nurses and contribute to society.

“Nursing manpower is in shortage globally, no matter where you are,” says Tsang, with the global pandemic in mind. As healthcare services expand in Macao in the future, she also states that one of the KWNC’s missions is to prepare more nurses to fill any gaps created in manpower. At the same time, she says that the university also needs to make sure that enough new nurses graduate every year and then go into Macao’s existing healthcare system.

In December 2018, the KWNC began a master’s course in nursing. While the institution’s yearly intake of nursing students

is 80 to 90 people, Tsang says it can be challenging to find enough appropriate candidates for their four-year master’s course. She says that while the current public healthcare ‘nurse to patient ratio’ in Macao is ‘deemed adequate’ at four nurses to 1,000 patients, the possibility of new healthcare facilities in the city in the future ‘could lead to a nursing shortage’. However, Tsang believes the health bureau has ‘plans to take care of this along the way’. She also believes in the quality of the KWNC’s students. “We have a motto that says ‘from personal to benevolence’,” she says, meaning that graduates are instilled with the values of being caring, patient and loving throughout their

four years at the KWNC.

“We’re planning to start more programmes not only for nurses but also for other healthcare professionals,” says Tsang. While the KWNC already has a postgraduate certificate course in applied gerontology – the study of old age and the problems associated with it – upgrading it to a master’s programme, says Tsang, would allow the institution to prepare more healthcare professionals in different disciplines to serve the elderly, from physiotherapists and social workers to doctors and teachers. She further explains that the elderly population in Macao is increasing and preparing professionals for their care is important.




KWNC vice-president Alice Tsang Sau Mui (centre) in a class with nursing students

António Sanmarful

## Fast facts


We’ve done our homework: a few interesting facts on education in Macao.

**GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES** Since the 2009/10 academic year, the government has financially aided Macao primary or secondary pupils who meet certain ‘requirements’. This month, in time for the 2020/21 academic year, it has increased its financial aid to cover schooling costs...




*The government now provides annual tuition assistance for temporary and permanent Macao residents up to a maximum of...*

- \*MOP 4,000 (US\$501) per kindergarten (infant) and primary pupil
- \*MOP 6,000 (US\$752) per junior secondary – which covers grades seven, eight and nine – pupil
- \*MOP 9,000 (US\$1,128) per high school student



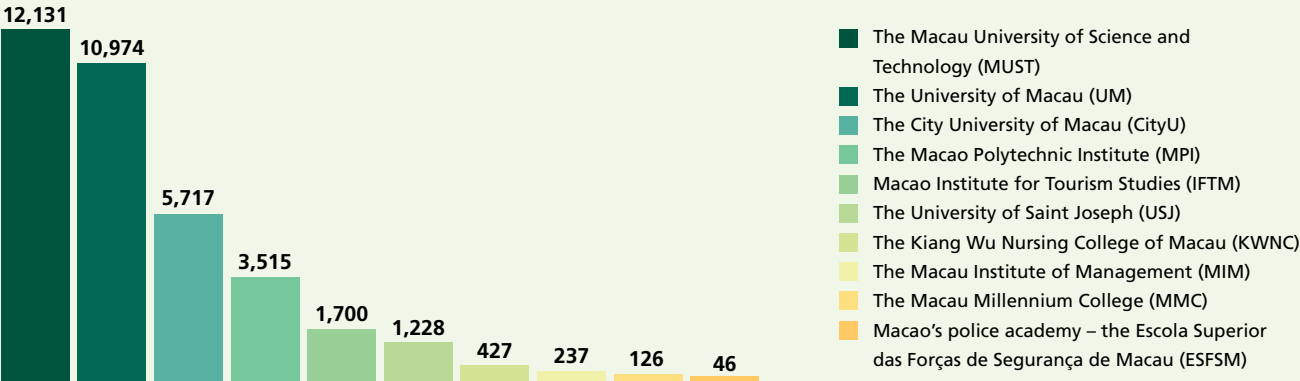
*The government now, for ‘school supplies’, also subsidises...*

- \*MOP 2,400 (US\$301) per kindergarten (infant) pupil
- \*MOP 3,000 (US\$376) per primary pupil
- \*MOP 3,550 (US\$445) per junior secondary and high school student



*All pupils are also able to receive MOP 3,950 (US\$495) for school meals.*

**HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT NUMBERS** All based on figures from the 2019/20 academic year...



**JOBS FOR THE STUDENTS** Here are the top five industries that Macao’s university and college graduates work in within a year, according to DSES figures for last year...

Industry	Number of graduates	Percentage of all 2019 graduates
Education	230	12.9%
Tourism, exhibition, hotel and catering	196	11.0%
Banking, finance and insurance	194	10.9%
Entertainment and gaming	175	9.8%
Medical care	156	8.8%
Total number of employed graduates	1,782	



## Excelling overseas

Students from Macao study at some of the best universities in the world. Using the government education authority’s data for the 2018/19 academic year, here’s a table showing how many students from the city are at 15 of the globe’s most prestigious universities, as ranked by the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings...

Rank	University	Undergraduates	Masters	Doctorates
1	Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), US	–	1	–
3	Harvard University, US	–	2	–
5	University of Oxford, UK	3	1	4
6	University of Cambridge, UK	9	6	4
8	Imperial College London, UK	16	8	1
9	University of Chicago, US	1	–	–
10	University College London, UK	29	33	3
11	National University of Singapore	2	4	2
12	Nanyang Technological University, Singapore	3	3	1
14	Cornell University, US	–	2	–
15	Yale University, US	2	–	1
16	Columbia University, US	1	2	–
17	Tsinghua University, China	58	15	15
18	The University of Edinburgh, UK	24	22	3
19	University of Pennsylvania, US	–	–	1

### Teaching tourism

Moving away from health to tourism, the public Institute for Tourism Studies (IFTM) offers degrees in heritage, tourism and hospitality. With regards to the future, it is collaborating with the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), a United Nations agency that’s responsible for the promotion of sustainable and universally accessible tourism, in training tourism officials and professionals for UNWTO member states – covering most of the globe. IFTM president Fanny Vong says the partnership ‘will further enhance IFTM’s international status’.

Vong says the IFTM has established a base in Hengqin – the island in neighbouring Zhuhai which Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng has said will be a prominent platform for Macao to play an active part in the GBA – adding that the IFTM ‘has been entrusted by the Macao SAR government to be responsible for working with other stakeholders to develop Macao into the Greater Bay Area’s tourism education and training base’. Also in relation to the GBA – which encompasses nine cities in China along with the Macao and Hong Kong SARs – the KWNC is strengthening its ties. Student nurses at the college already have the opportunity to study Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and can gain knowledge in TCM nursing if they choose to do so but Tsang tells us that the KWNC has partnered with the Guangzhou University of Chinese

“

*The Hengqin base launched last year was a milestone for IFTM as a new platform for tourism education training in the GBA, as well as to advance co-operation between various parties.*

Medicine, giving an opportunity for students to experience the university hospital attached to it. Guangzhou is one of the cities in the GBA and Tsang says this partnership ‘opens up an avenue for a single semester exchange programme’ which would see students from Macao studying in Guangzhou and vice-versa. She adds that this ‘could just be the start of these sorts of educational exchanges across the GBA in the future’.

Whether it’s more partnerships within the GBA, more student nurses in Macao or more developments for Portuguese language learners, it’s clear that the city has plenty of plans to improve its already strong educational system in the future. As for primary and secondary education – whether private or public, Chinese or English – Macao’s schools will continue to prepare pupils for



further education and the world at large, particularly with the free education network that will continue to help subsidise those pupils who need it. As for the future for higher education, the government’s education authority has outlined that it will ‘support local institutions integrating with the development of GBA’, ‘promote co-operation between local and Mainland institutions’, ‘encourage and support local higher education institutions to strengthen foreign co-operation’, ‘offer diversified higher education courses’, ‘promote student mobility’ and ‘broaden their horizons’, as well as actively

promoting tourism-related courses to ‘cultivate tourism professionals’ in the future.

Lou concludes that the education system in the city will train a new era of ‘law-abiding and ethical citizens who possess creativity, innovation, a healthy life and artistic aesthetics’. Considering the city’s strides in education over past years, coupled with its ambitious plans for the future that are already in place, Macao could one day be known on an international scale not just for its tourism, history, heritage and gaming establishments – it could one day be an influential educational hub at the heart of the GBA. ●



From left: Mamadu Fati, Pablo Titosse and Pedro Paulo



EDUCATION SPECIAL

# Learning with the Lusophones

**More students from Portuguese-speaking countries are taking up higher education courses in Macao every year. We meet a handful of these young learners and find out why they chose to study so many miles away from home.**

Text **Paulo Figueiredo** Photos **António Sanmarful**

A crossroads between European and Asian cultures. That’s how Macao has been described for hundreds of years. And with this crossroads comes a world of education – the city is the perfect place of learning about both East and West. Ever since the world’s first Western university in Asia was founded in Macao in 1594 by Jesuits – St Paul’s College – the city has become a hotbed of learning for all ages. But Macao also holds another feather in its educational bow: it is a perfect centre of learning for the world’s eight Portuguese-speaking countries. Thousands of students from PSCs have flocked to Macao to learn over the past 450 years. Today, nearly 300 students from the world’s PSCs – namely Portugal, Brazil, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Cabo Verde, Timor-Leste, São Tomé e Príncipe and Mozambique –

attend Macao’s universities and higher education institutions. This is twice as many students compared to just five years ago – and education authorities in the city say the number of Lusophone students studying for PhDs is increasing at an even faster rate. It’s no secret that Macao wants to be a knowledge hub for students for PSCs and, so far, it’s achieving its aim. The real stories, however, come from those students themselves. Some come from extremely poor backgrounds. Others have had to make massive life-changing decisions before they opted to leave their homeland and move to Macao to give themselves more opportunities to make their lives better. A few of these students from different PSCs have spoken with Macao Magazine and told us why they chose to learn at China’s Portuguese-speaking crossroads.



### An exact science

Hundreds of courses are on offer in Macao – and that includes ones devoted to teaching. The city is known for its higher education offerings, so it’s no wonder that many students from PSCs travel thousands of miles to a new, unknown culture just so they can get ahead in the world of teaching. In the case of Pablo Titosse, however, it wasn’t just his desire for an outstanding education that brought him from Mozambique to Macao. It was also his pursuit of love that led him here.

Titosse, who is 22 years old, is studying for a bachelor’s degree in education at the University of St

Joseph (USJ). His journey began in 2018 when he was using Instagram in Mozambique. He came across a girl from Angola who he liked and got in touch. It turned out she had left her homeland and was studying for a psychology degree at USJ in Macao. The couple hit it off, so during Christmas in 2018, Titosse travelled to Macao so they could meet in person. Immediately, he fell in love with both his new partner and this incredible city. By the end of his trip – and impressed with the education opportunities at USJ – he’d made up his mind to move to Macao.

The trip back to Titosse’s hometown of Beira, which is on the east coast of Mozambique, was short and sweet. “I went to Mozambique

only to say goodbye,” he recalls. He applied for a scholarship at USJ last year and, fairly swiftly, was accepted. He then moved to be with his partner and to start his new course. He says that the fact his girlfriend was already in the city, plus he’d already got to know her friends, made it easy to settle in.

Since those first few days living in Macao, Titosse says his course at USJ has been ‘opening up his horizons’. He admits his Chinese classmates have taught him a lot, as have the teaching staff who hail from Europe. He says the course, classmates and teachers have been setting him up for ‘a life as a teacher or maybe even a writer’. He also says he’s happy in

Macao despite finding it hard to communicate with many locals. “I thought that Portuguese was spoken widely in Macao,” he says, “but I’ve discovered that you seldom find someone who speaks the language.” He is trying to learn to speak Cantonese but admits the lessons have been tough and he’s had problems remembering words and phrases. He does, however, speak basic English.

Education and his girlfriend are two of Titosse’s great passions. His third is poetry. For him, Macao presents both opportunities and inspiration for his art. “I spend a lot of time writing my poetry,” he says. “Macao gives me a lot of inspiration. I have a lot of freedom in Macao to think what I want to think and say what I feel. Being here helps me to organise my ideas and I fit well into the city’s multicultural setting.” The aspiring poet, whose recent piece on Macao is on the opposite page, says he wants to use his poetry as a way of promoting the African PSCs in Macao. “People often only know about Portugal and Brazil,” he says, “but not many know Mozambique or Angola.”

Titosse cites acclaimed poet and writer Mia Couto, who won the Camões Prize in 2013 – the most important literary award in the Portuguese language – and much-loved writer Ungulani Ba Ka Khosa as two Mozambican men who he admires for ‘going deep into what Mozambican culture is all about’ and for promoting their country’s literature on an international scale. Titosse says that in two years’ time, once he has finished his degree, he plans to stay in Macao for a few more years so he too can work on a literary masterpiece. “I love to use reality to transmit what I think,” he says. “I create my own little world.”

### Open for business

Another student from Africa – this time the west coast – who travelled to Macao to further his studies is 28-year-old Mamadu Fati. He left his computer engineering course at a higher education institution in his native Guinea-Bissau just so he could further his education in Macao. He also studies at USJ on a business management course. “At the time [of applying],” he says, “business was the only opening available and I did not want to miss my once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to study abroad.” Starting his second year, he plans to return to his homeland in a couple of years’ time, once he’s got his degree.

The nephew of a former Guinea-Bissau ambassador to Beijing, Fati learned about the opportunities given to students from PSCs in Macao a couple of years ago and, after some thought, decided to make the move in what became his first ever trip overseas. He says that adapting to Macao life was not easy – not because the city is hard to live in but because he missed home so much. “After my first few days here,” he says, “I started feeling the longing you get when you’re distant from those people you love. I was always thinking about my friends and family’s love and affection which I don’t get in Macao.” Fati says that has passed, though, and now life in Macao is easier and he ‘feels

stronger’. He says he has now found a new ‘family’ in Macao among his colleagues from all over the world.

“The quality of teaching in Macao is far better than in Guinea-Bissau,” says Fati. Being exposed to a multicultural environment, in college and everyday life, is also a major plus for him. When not studying, Fati spends time with other African students in Macao – many from other PSCs. He listens to music, watches movies and studies but he does admit that life in Macao isn’t all about the business books. He says he likes to go out and learn from the different people and cultures in the city so he can gain experience to take back home. He adds that, for now, he is concentrating on ‘improving his skills and links’ in business so that when he goes back to Guinea-Bissau he can start up his own company – perhaps an information technology enterprise. “I want to support the development of a stronger and more united society to the advantage of everyone in my country,” he concludes.



Mamadu Fati



### Talisman (Macao)

A poem by Pablo Titosse

There is no darkness to cover you,  
You are only light but sometimes a missing peninsula,  
That is born on the edge of a great body,  
The perfect island for a castaway.  
No matter, you’re charisma!  
Your body is a crossroads in itself,  
Poetry that ‘narrates’ but sometimes,  
An indecipherable code... you are charisma.

Your steps are trails that do not disappear,  
There from the East, straight hair and milk skin,  
You can so well obscure yourself,  
But sometimes, you can’t even hide,  
You have so many faces that I don’t even know you,  
And I’m just a heart that slows down and speeds up...  
I lost control, you are so good... Macao!  
But it doesn’t matter, you are charisma... you are fascination.



From CV to PR

China has always been on Sofia Blacky’s radar. Hailing from Praia, the capital city of Cabo Verde, this practical and focused 19-year-old always wanted to study abroad in a ‘culture that was as different’ as possible to her native Portuguese-speaking African homeland. In her mind, that culture was always going to be the Chinese one. She says her goal has always been ‘to learn as much as possible’ from her Asian experiences.

Blacky is now in her second year of a media degree at the University of Macau (UM). She travelled almost 8,500 miles to get here after learning about a scholarship opportunity at the UM but she admits she knew nothing about the city beforehand. But she searched online and says she was surprised to learn about this Portuguese-speaking corner of China. “It was a perfect match,” she says.

Adapting to Macao life was ‘no big deal’, says Blacky. “I managed to settle in quickly,” she says. “There was no cultural shock whatsoever. I was ready because I did my research before coming to the city and I learned about the culture. I already knew that the people in Macao, for instance, are more reserved than we are in Africa.” She says she’s spent this summer in Macao due to the travel restrictions in place during COVID-19 and, as a result, she’s tried new culinary experiences like eating sushi and has also started to learn Mandarin ‘using an app and YouTube courses’. This month, she says she will start ‘real’ Mandarin classes at her university.

Blacky’s goals are clear: first, to begin a career in a public relations (PR) company and in the future to ‘be the CEO’ of her own PR



company, either in Cabo Verde or Nigeria, where her parents were born. She says she will not stay in Macao in the long-term because she prefers the African or European ‘social lifestyle’. As for the quality of teaching and facilities at the UM, Blacky is full of praise. “The teachers are perfect,” she says, “as are the research materials. We also have a huge library and state-of-the art computers. I know I will leave Macao well-prepared for my future.”

Outstanding scholarships

To strengthen the exchange between local higher education institutions and their counterparts in the PSCs – and to attract outstanding students from these countries to study in Macao – the government’s Higher Education Fund last year launched a Scholarship for Outstanding Students Studying in Macao programme which is aimed exclusively at both students

from PSCs and members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which covers 10 countries in Southeast Asia. Seven students are already on the programme, each hailing from São Tomé e Príncipe, Mozambique or Guinea-Bissau and each studying at either the Macao Polytechnic Institute or the USJ.

This comes after the USJ, the University of Macau and the Higher Education Bureau joined forces in October 2018 and organised the First Forum for Heads of Higher Education Institutions of China and Portuguese-Speaking Countries, an event that attracted higher education institutions and organisations from across the PSCs, as well as from Hong Kong, Macao and 10 provinces and cities on the Mainland. A joint Declaration of Collaboration in Higher Education in Macao was signed at the University of Macau event by institutions from China and the PSCs. Its intention was to strengthen the

co-operation between all parties and to promote educational, cultural and economic exchanges.

A statement from the Higher Education Bureau sent to Macao Magazine says: “As a business services platform between China and the PSCs, the MSAR government has attached great importance to nurturing Chinese-Portuguese bilinguals.” It also says that, in recent years, many efforts have been made ‘to build Macao into a training base for Chinese-Portuguese talents and to strengthen the exchange and co-operation between local institutions and PSCs’.

Platform for change

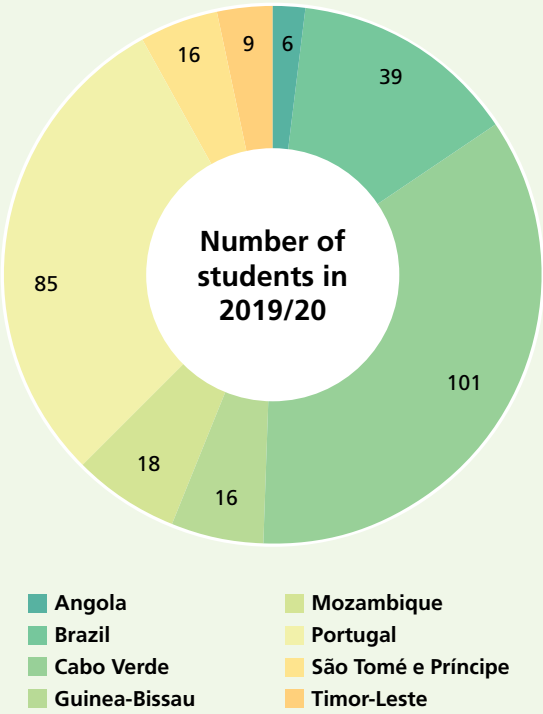
In March last year, an online platform known as the ‘Information Platform for Higher Education in China and the Portuguese-speaking Countries’ was launched with all of the institutions that participated in the October 2018 forum – along with more than 40 universities from the Mainland that offer programmes in Portuguese studies – being invited to register as members. The platform provides information on academic activities, teacher-student exchanges, co-operative research projects and higher education support measures. It also offers communication and translation services to its members. It is hoped that members will detail their exchanges and co-operative projects on the platform thus improving communication between them all.

The statement from the Higher Education Bureau says: “Over the years, the MSAR government, higher learning institutions and related Portuguese organisations have fostered a healthy relationship in

Fast facts on students from PSCs in Macao

Number of students from Portuguese-speaking countries per academic year:

2019/20	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17	2015/16
290	269	226	185	129



**Higher education institutions they all attend:** The University of St Joseph, the University of Macau, the Macao Polytechnic Institute, the Macao Institute for Tourism Studies, the City University of Macau and the Macau University of Science and Technology

**Most popular courses they study:** Language and literature, public administration, law, translation, gaming management, business management, engineering, journalism and communication, religion and theology, tourism and entertainment services

\*Figures from the Macao government’s Higher Education Bureau



promoting exchange and co-operation with the PSCs.” This relationship was shown in December when the bureau signed a co-operation agreement with Portugal’s University of Porto and the Instituto Português do Oriente – in English, the Portuguese Institute of the East, a Portuguese public entity based in Macao that promotes the Portuguese language and Lusophone culture in Asia – for Macao students to study in Porto. The Higher Education Bureau statement continues:

“Macao will also enhance the interface of academic and research projects, and co-operation and exchanges between teaching staff, research personnel and students in the PSCs and other regions.”

Other government schemes that add weight to the educational links between Macao and the PSCs include the Specialised Subsidy Scheme for Chinese and Portuguese Bilingual

Talent Training and Co-operation of Education and Research. This scheme, which aims to encourage higher education institutions in Macao and the PSCs to jointly organise exchange programmes that enhance the professional capabilities of academic and research staff, now funds a wide variety of academic projects. Through the promotion of research initiatives and with the co-operation of higher education institutions around the world, it aims to expand the capabilities of academic staff in Macao.

Also being implemented is a scheme that provides financial incentives and support for Macao students to enroll at the University of Porto every year for a range of courses, with those selected receiving financial support for both the preparatory and bachelor’s degree courses. There are five subsidy recipients this year, whose majors

include law, applied linguistics and dental medicine. Also being arranged between educational institutions in Macao is an ‘alliance’ that will promote the training of Chinese-Portuguese bilingual professionals. This is expected to be a major topic at the Second Forum for Heads of Higher Education Institutions of China and Portuguese-Speaking Countries, which is scheduled to take place in early November.

### Learning from Macao

One student from a PSC – Portugal, in fact – has gone so far as to get involved in Macao’s drive to connect China with the PSCs. Pedro Paulo, a PhD student at the City University of Macau (CityU), believes Macao has all it takes to be a major regional knowledge hub: the people, the brains and the financial means. Eight years ago, he was studying in London but left for China to teach English in a school in Hangzhou, a city he could not even place on a map at the time. A year later, he decided to leave and a new opportunity arose in Hainan. Before taking up the new job, he went back to Portugal for a holiday and a friend told him about an opportunity to teach English in Macao. He took it and enjoyed it so much in the city that he ended up staying and applying to teach at local universities. He never went to Hainan.

Paulo studies and teaches English at CityU, helping to set some of its curriculum. Now into his second year of his PhD in Portuguese-speaking countries studies, he is doing research on the Forum for Economic and Trade



Co-operation Between Portugal and the Portuguese-Speaking Countries – also known as Forum Macao. He has started publishing research about the forum, entering conferences and even taking interviews about it on local TV. Paulo says that with financial support from the government for research and a healthy competition between the city’s academic establishments, Macao has ‘all the ingredients to be an Asian research centre’.

Another CityU second-year PhD student, Anthony Lobo, is looking to replicate Macao’s success in bridging continents and cultures when it comes to education. He wants to take what he’s learned about this success to his homeland of Goa, a state in western India that was a Portuguese colony prior to 1961. While he was on holiday in Macao a couple of years ago, he became fascinated with the local institutions that connect the city to the PSCs. When he learned about CityU’s Institute for Research on Portuguese-Speaking Countries,

he saw it as an opportunity to make new contacts with people across the PSC spectrum and see if they could help with Goa. “It was impressive to see that Macao was trying to reconnect with its Lusophone heritage,” he says. “I feel Goa has not been able to take advantage of what was left by the Portuguese but there is so much potential there.

Actually, Goa could learn from Macao and then take advantage of its Portuguese heritage like its architecture and traditions. And Goa could also set up platforms and forums for educational exchange, just like Macao has done. Its features are very similar to Macao’s.”

According to Lobo, Goa should develop links to key trade institutions in Macao. Moreover, he points out that there is a community in Macao that has its roots in Goa – one that includes lawyers and businessmen. Some of these people, he says, have ancestors who moved to the city more than 300 years ago.

“*These students from the PSCs are taking back with them an astonishing range of skills and the ability to operate in different languages and environments.*”

“I’m really getting engaged with this idea of replicating Macao’s success in Goa,” says Lobo, “and later, I want to establish links between Goa and my university on a purely educational level. I would like to do a lot more research.” He adds that he hopes his ideas will be taken up by the authorities in Goa and they will realise ‘how much they can benefit if they can adopt a similar strategy to Macao’.

The new rector at the USJ, the Rev Deacon Stephen Morgan, welcomes the growing number of students from PSCs to Macao’s shores. “These students,” he says, “are taking back with them an astonishing range of skills and the ability to operate in different languages and environments.” He adds that when the students leave Macao after they qualify, they leave with ‘a broader and deeper vision of what it is to be human in the modern world’. The USJ has more than 40 nationalities represented in its student body and up to 15 more represented by its team of academics. Morgan says many of these come from the PSCs, ‘operating in English and in a very Chinese environment’.

“Macao,” concludes Morgan, “has for a long time been an absolutely unique cultural encounter – initially between Portugal and the great Chinese culture but now with the wider Lusophone world too. This is a place to encounter the Chinese and Lusophone worlds, making Macao special. We all gain massively from it.” At least 290 students are ‘gaining massively’ this year from Macao’s successful drive to attract students from across the Portuguese-speaking world. ●

Pedro Paulo





A female pirate is arrested on Coloane island by Chinese and Portuguese troops in 1910



Q+A

# Pirates of the Pearl

**Ahoy there me hearties! The Archives of Macao has opened an exhibition on pirates that uncovers historical treasures around the city’s shores. We speak with one of the learned landlubbers behind this spellbinding swashbuckling show.**

Text **Rafelle Marie Allego** Images courtesy of the Macao Archives and reproduced by **Denzel Calangi**

Pirates have been romanticised over the years. We love to dress up as swashbuckling adventurers at costume parties and we adore watching certain wildly popular Hollywood blockbusters based on the theme of piracy. But not too long ago, pirates were anything but romantic. They were often seen as menaces, roaming the high seas looking for treasures. But they were also often integral parts of society and thus are now integral parts of history. Macao, in the second half of the 19th century and into the 20th century, was as plagued by these seafaring vagabonds as much as anywhere else in the world which had a coastline and a steady stream of trading ships regularly sailing past with plenty of riches onboard.

Many people in Macao probably don’t know about the city’s old battles with piracy. Which is why, after four years of planning, the Archives of Macao has set up a special exhibition to teach locals all about the SAR’s swashbuckling past. The Archives, a treasure trove in St Lazarus’ Parish which collects, processes, protects and makes old records available, has organised ‘Pirates in the Waters of Macao (1854-1935)’, an exhibition that seeks to educate the public as simply as possible on a subject that is actually much more complex than you would think.

The exhibition, which opened last month and will be running until 31 January, features a selection of more than 100 preserved documents, maps and photographs documenting piracy in Macao’s waters over many decades. To help us give a better flavour of the exhibition, we speak with the Archives of Macao’s head researcher Alfredo Gomes Dias, who illustrates the significance of pirates in the city’s long history. He says that piracy was a political, economic, social and cultural phenomenon in Macao from the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century. And, now we’re in the 21st century, this part of history is more than worth learning about as it helped shape the city we know today...

## How long did it take to put this exhibition together?

I started working on this exhibition in July 2016 with the help and dedication of the entire Archives of Macao team. The work was organised into three phases. The first phase focused on document collection. This meant the identification and selection of archive files related to piracy, as well as the transcription of more than 400 documents which we gathered into two volumes for the exhibit. This was followed by the construction of a catalogue to accompany the exhibit. This catalogue – part of what’s called the Document Collection – doesn’t just present the documents but it also includes a study that gives clues for further research on the subject. Finally, the third phase consisted of defining the concept and planning the exhibition which was to be presented to the public, as well as fine-tuning the selection of documents to be displayed. It took us four years of intense and passionate work.

## Tell us about Macao’s pirates...

This exhibition is about a social group that was organised into different communities, each with their own hierarchy, living on Macao’s water-lines and the surrounding islands, scattered throughout the Pearl River Delta region. Despite exclusion, the pirates did not fail to interact with society, from their victims and accomplices to the political and military power that repressed them. It is worth remembering that their actions also



**GET TO KNOW:**  
**Alfredo**  
**Gomes Dias**

Archives of Macao  
head researcher

Dias, who hails from Lisbon in Portugal, began his studies on Macao history in 1987, visiting the city for the first time in 1994. At the time, his research focused on its modern history, particularly mid-19th century Macao. In 2008, he started visiting Macao once or twice a year as he began his PhD research on the ‘Macanese diaspora’ and the ‘Portuguese from Shanghai’ community. His constant presence as a researcher at the Archives of Macao opened the door to this recent collaboration. Lau Fong, Archives of Macao director, invited Dias in 2013 to begin his research for the ‘Shanghai Portuguese Refugees in Macao (1937-1964)’ exhibition, which was inaugurated in 2015 and was also presented in Portugal, in the cities of Lisbon and Guimarães. Afterwards, he collaborated on the Archives of Macao and National Archives of Torre do Tombo (Lisbon) joint exhibition called the ‘Chapas Sínicas – Stories of Macao in Torre do Tombo’.





GET TO KNOW:

## Lau Fong

Archives of Macao director

Director of the Archives of Macao for more than eight years, Lau is a graduate of history who devoted several years to the collection 'Official Records of Macao during the Qing Dynasty (1693–1886)'. This collection received global recognition in 2016 by the United Nations. Her competent understanding of the classical language – which is substantially different from the modern Chinese introduced in the mid-1910s – helps her get to grips with classical documents. In 2013, she invited Dias to work on an exhibition at the Archives of Macao: the 'Shanghai Portuguese Refugees in Macao (1937-1964)'. This was the start of the collaboration with Dias.

Fong says that the current exhibition on pirates 'is part of the Archives of Macao's strategy to promote and enhance its role in the study of the city's history through documentary findings'. She says: "In fact, the Archives has presented many exhibitions in the past on a range of different themes to demonstrate its great variety of documents. An exhibition is often an effective way of developing archival resources. It is also a significant approach to raise public awareness of archival culture and preserve the collective memory of society. The Archives of Macao will continue to organise exhibitions on different themes and draw upon the richness of its holdings to promote the history, culture and identity of Macao."

transformed them into silent victims of the political and social powers of Macao, Hong Kong and Canton [now Guangdong]. Organised thematically, the exhibit presents an array of different ways to analyse the presence of pirates in Macao. It enlightens us not only about the geopolitical impacts of piracy but also the economic and social impacts. While they remained silent for so long – as all documents are essentially the version of history that those in political power and social elites of the city maintain – this exhibition is a way to give them visibility. Studying this social group and documenting their part in history finally gives them a voice.

### Are there any surprising pieces in the exhibition?

The documents that are most surprising are the letters written by the pirates themselves, which can be read in the original Chinese as well as Portuguese translations. However, the richest documents are the reports prepared by the Portuguese military in their joint expedition with the Canton military forces in 1912 to the islands of Dom João and Montanha [which have since been joined and now make up Hengqin Island]. They made very interesting descriptions of the islands' terrain, climate and vegetation, as well as their military actions. These cartographic illustrations themselves are small pieces of art. These documents also illustrate an interesting episode of collaboration between the Portuguese and Chinese military forces in the fight against piracy. Due to contention over the claims of these two islands, the two countries planned a simultaneous landing to ensure this initiative would not be used diplomatically by either country to claim ownership of the islands. The description of the meetings between the two forces and joint statements of the two military groups are particularly revealing of the ability of the representatives of Portugal and China to establish a friendly relationship when they came together around a common objective.



Many pirates lived at one time in Coloane. This is a scene of devastation in the village after a bombing in 1920



Chinese and Portuguese troops land on Coloane island in 1910 to conduct military operations during the time of piracy in the area

### What pieces were a challenge to acquire for the exhibition?

Aside from all the documents, photos and maps that are already part of the Archives of Macao's documentary assets, we also found news about piracy published in newspapers. While some newspapers were accessible at the Archives of Macao, we also consulted titles in other archives and libraries, both in Macao and Lisbon. We collected dozens of news items about the incidents of piracy that occurred at sea or on the streets and seashores of the city. The most relevant records, in addition to those already on display, have been compiled in the Document Collection [owned by the Archives of Macao].

### What is the significance of this exhibition in Macao?

It addresses a particularly relevant topic that is strangely underdeveloped. Macao's social history still has many areas that need to be developed if we want an in-depth look at Macao. The most important thing in the study of Macao's history is getting to know its people from different backgrounds who were engaged in an array of activities and who built this city over the past five centuries. The pirates also made their contribution to Macao's social fabric.

### What are the key takeaways for visitors to this exhibition?

Each person who visits the exhibition can draw their own conclusions. In general, we would like everyone to better understand the complexity of this issue and not to reduce pirates simply to a band of criminals. It is important they are recognised as human communities. Although they were peripheral social groups, they nevertheless maintained bridges with societies. [This exhibition was] conceived to inspire those who study the past and present of Macao, in its many areas, and we hope to encourage new investigations into the pirates in the waters of Macao. ●

### PIRATES IN THE WATERS OF MACAO (1854-1935)

The exhibition at the Archives of Macao runs from 10 am to 6 pm daily, except on Mondays and public holidays, until 31 January. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, facemasks are required, as well as a temperature check and showing the visitors' Macao Health Code results upon entry. For details, call +853 2859 2919 or email [readingroom.ah@icm.gov.mo](mailto:readingroom.ah@icm.gov.mo).



Macao's Senado Square, which is on the World Heritage List, set against the backdrop of the city

Cheong Chi Fong

CULTURE

# A monumental birthday

**Macao has just marked the 15th anniversary of the inscription of its Historic Centre on UNESCO's World Heritage List. The government, as well as many citizens, have worked tirelessly to protect the city's historic heritage but there's still plenty to do over the coming years.**

Text Cláudia Aranda

On 15 July 2005, Macao received one of the biggest boosts it could ever get to its status as a regional tourism hub. On that day, the Historic Centre of Macao was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List – a list reserved for some of the globe's most important sites of cultural, historical or scientific significance. It was a day of celebration, marking the Macao government's tireless work in preserving and promoting a site that not only includes fascinating old buildings and monuments like the Ruins of St Paul's, the A-Ma Temple and Mount Fortress but also attracts millions of tourists to the city every year.

Fifteen years on and the government – along with the people

in Macao – has just celebrated an important milestone with a series of activities throughout July and the beginning of August, conveying the concept of 'Appreciating Our World Heritage Together'. The 15th anniversary of the inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage List was marked by a weekend event called the World Heritage Open Day, as well as a WeChat game, for the public to appreciate the Historic Centre of Macao. Residents from across the city flocked to the World Heritage Youth Education Base, located in the Mandarin's House and Lilau Square, to take part in history-related activities, thematic exhibitions and special workshops, as well as to watch song and dance performances and buy cultural products.





The Ruins of St Paul's, pictured here at dusk, is at the heart of the Historic Centre of Macao; (right) the A-Ma Temple; (far right, top) the Holy House of Mercy; (far right, bottom) St Augustine's Square



Last month, the celebrations continued with the ‘Heritage City Tours – Guided Tours and Illustration Workshop’, which were held across a number of days and featured walks around World Heritage buildings led by professional guides with plenty of stories to tell.

The celebrations weren’t just about re-emphasising the importance of the UNESCO listing after 15 years, though. They were another example of the Macao government’s successful work over the past decade-and-a-half to increase residents’ awareness of the value of the city’s cultural heritage and the importance of conserving it. This work has contributed to the establishment of local heritage

advocacy and defence groups. In a way, the 2005 addition to UNESCO’s list was just the beginning. In a statement from the Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) to Macao Magazine, an IC spokesperson says: “Macao people have become more aware of and concerned about the cultural heritage around them through publicity, education and promotion over the years, and their awareness of cultural heritage conservation has been raising gradually as well.”

### Centre of it all

The Historic Centre of Macao is home to more than 20 buildings, monuments and sites. In 2005, UNESCO described the centre,

‘with its historic street, residential, religious and public Portuguese and Chinese buildings’, as providing ‘a unique testimony to the meeting of aesthetic, cultural, architectural and technological influences from the East and West’. It became, at the time, the 31st UNESCO World Heritage site in China.

UNESCO, back in 2005, described Macao as ‘a lucrative port of strategic importance in the development of international trade in [the] Chinese territory’. It was a Portuguese trading post from 1557 and it then became a Portuguese city, staying that way until 1999, when its administration was transferred to China. The historic centre was formed over all these

years and now, as outlined under the World Heritage listing, it comprises two distinct areas. There’s Zone 1, which contains sites between Mount Hill and Barra Hill, and there’s Zone 2, which refers to the heritage venues on Guia Hill. Aside from the likes of the A-Ma Temple and the Ruins of St Paul’s, it also contains historical gems like Senado Square, St Augustine’s Square, the Holy House of Mercy, the Lou Kou Mansion and Guia Fortress, which includes Guia Chapel as well as the famous Guia Lighthouse. Even a section of the old city walls is included.

When describing the Historic Centre of Macao’s ‘outstanding universal value’, UNESCO refers to the different nationalities that

settled in the city, along with the missionaries ‘who brought with them religious and cultural influences, as illustrated by the introduction of foreign building types’ like China’s first Western-style theatre, Dom Pedro V, as well as the city’s churches and fortresses, many of which are still in use. UNESCO also highlights that ‘Macao’s unique multicultural identity can be read in the dynamic presence of Western and Chinese architectural heritage standing side by side in the city’ and ‘the same dynamics often exist in individual building designs, adapting Chinese design features in Western-style buildings and vice-versa’. An example of this is the incorporation

of Chinese characters as decorative ornaments on the Ruins of St Paul’s Mannerist church façade.

The Macao Government Tourism Office (MGTO) has been using the fact that the historic centre is on the UNESCO World Heritage list for 15 years to raise awareness internationally and to successfully attract tourists to the city. “The Historic Centre of Macao,” says the IC statement, “constitutes a unique urban landscape of Macao, creating a distinctive urban personality that attracts tourists from all over the world every year.” The statement adds that this landscape serves ‘as an essential foundation for Macao to build itself as a destination for international leisure and tourism’.





Antonio R.J. Monteiro

## Building an identity

Initiatives over the past three years that have added to the UNESCO World Heritage list status in building Macao’s strong international identity.

- The ‘Official Records of Macao During the Qing Dynasty (1693-1886)’ – or ‘Chapas Sínicas’ – were added to the UNESCO Memory of the World Register in October 2017.
- Macao was then designated as a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy in November 2017, adding to the city’s already strong brand identity.
- Last year, the MGTO launched the ‘Guide for Travelling with Civic-Mindedness’, which offers tips and recommendations to tourists on sightseeing etiquette as well as raising their awareness on the concerted effort on heritage protection. The MGTO said ‘it is vital to protect and preserve the historical sites so that they will be able to carry on the story and continue to act as the presentation of Macao’s cultural identity for the long-term’.
- Also in June, 55 new items were included in the government’s ‘inventory of intangible cultural heritage’. There are now 70 items of intangible heritage – which means ‘untouchable’ heritage like beliefs and customs – including religious processions, Portuguese folk dancing (pictured above) and local foods like dragon’s beard candy.
- In August, Macao officially became a member city of the Organisation of World Heritage Cities, an international non-governmental organisation that gathers around 250 cities with UNESCO World Heritage sites together.

Based on the findings of several visitor profile studies conducted by MGTO over the past five years, the Ruins of St Paul’s ranks as the most popular attraction for tourists. Last year, more than 2.9 million visitors travelled to the iconic site, according to the IC. “Indeed,” says the statement, “the signature façade can be considered as the landmark of Macao and a must-visit spot for tourists and residents alike.”

“We are proud of such heritage,” says Chan Tak Seng, one of the founders of the Concern Group for the Protection of the Guia Lighthouse, “and we should preserve such heritage for our next generations.” Chan, who is also a former member of the Urban Planning Committee (CPU), says the Historic Centre of Macao is a ‘unique testimony to the encounter between East and West, in particular between China and Portugal’, and he highlights the Guia Lighthouse as ‘an important monument’ that demonstrates ‘the prominence of Macao in the international trade’ at the time it was built, which was around 1865.

Last month, Macao officially became a member city of the Organisation of World Heritage Cities, an international non-governmental organisation that gathers around 250 cities with UNESCO World Heritage sites together. This means the city can have access to more international information on World Heritage preservation and can participate with the organisation in relevant events.

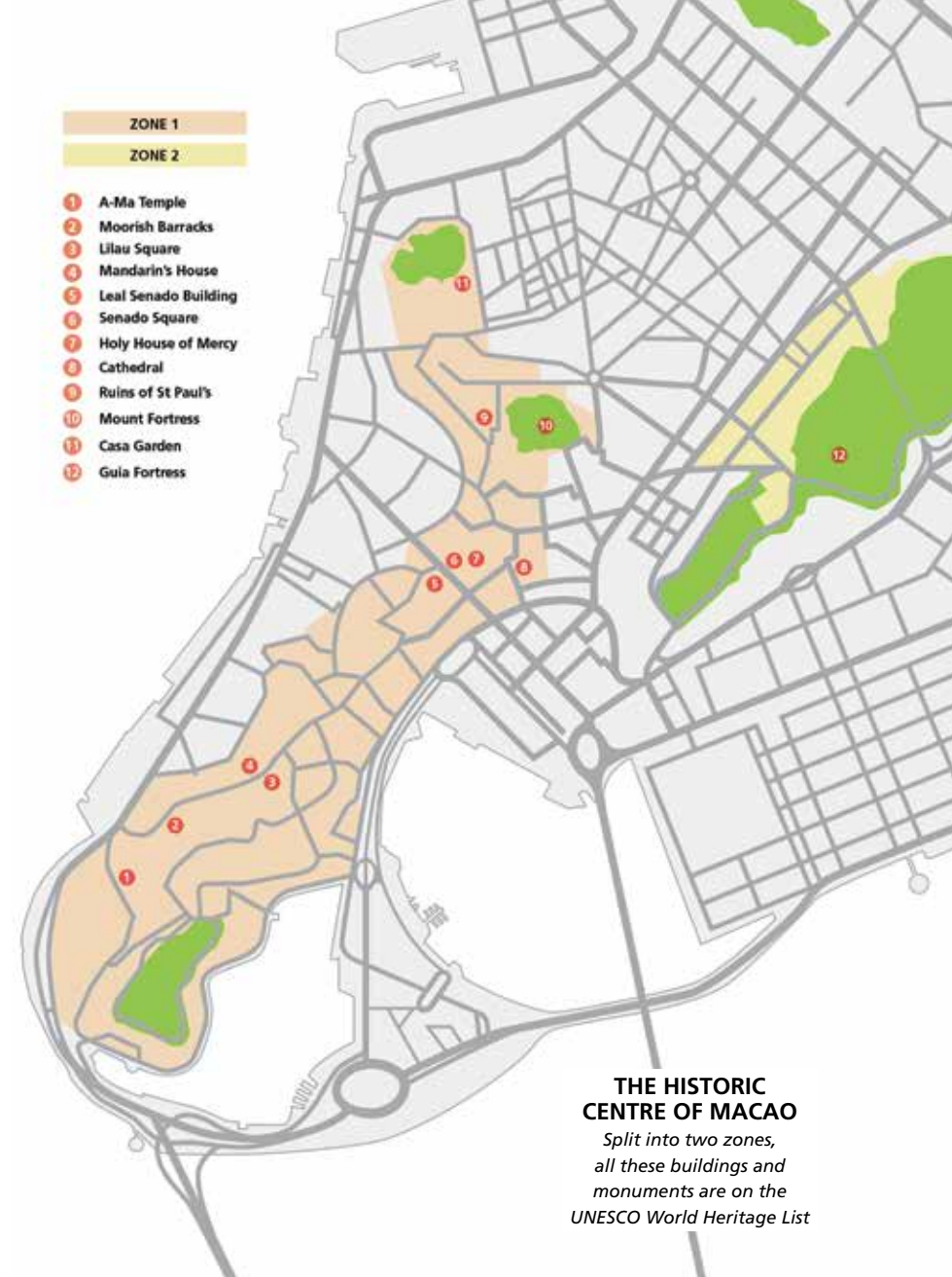
### River relationship

Architect Maria José de Freitas, who is the CEO at AETEC-Mo Architecture and Engineering

in Macao – and a member of the International Scientific Committee of Shared Built Heritage (ICS-SBH) part of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) network of experts – notes that the great value of Macao is that it’s a ‘port city that was developed in a relationship with the river estuary’. She says the Portuguese part of the city was, from the start, ‘built in parallel with the Chinese quarters’ allowing Macao to have ‘its own characteristics’, revealing a culture ‘that’s very genuine and very authentic’. It is this ‘cultural mix and this hybridism’, she says, ‘that is translated into the architecture and the urbanism that made Macao noticed and evaluated by UNESCO’. “Macao’s [nearly] five centuries of history of multiculturalism, interrelation and communion,” she says, “makes the city distinctive in the Pearl River Delta.” De Freitas says that these multicultural values are now ‘more important than ever’, creating ‘Macao’s added value within the Greater Bay Area’. She notes that the ‘city could set an example’ as a multicultural place and in the way it deals with its heritage.

Agnes Lam Iok Fong, legislator and the director of the Centre for Macau Studies at the University of Macau – which offers a ‘philosophy in Macao studies’ master’s degree that includes a component on the historical heritage of the city – stresses that this historical heritage is definitely a part of the SAR’s identity. “It is this aspect that makes Macao different from any other city,” she says. “This makes it unique and allows the locals to understand that this is not just a casino city but a city with a deep history and culture.”

The importance of Macao’s heritage to the city’s identity is



also ‘decisive’ for journalist and Macao history researcher João Guedes. “This is because,” he says, “it aggregates the Chinese and Portuguese dimensions. The former is overwhelming in its size and breadth. The latter is as small as it is vital to ensure that same identity. This marriage of convenience, which essentially defines the nearly 500 years of Macao’s history, inevitably results, in my view, in a city which is either unique or has few parallels across the world.”

Guedes attempts to compare other places of miscegenation between East and West cultures, such as Goa or Malacca, with Macao. But he notes that ‘those antique places only preserve monumental remnants which are partially missing the cement of a truly present and living culture to complete their character’. He concludes that Macao has this ‘truly present and living culture’.

Guedes recognises the relevance of all the sites and monuments on the World Heritage list in Macao.





Guia Fortress, with its lighthouse and chapel within its walls, is a highly valued World Heritage site

However the researcher highlights the Guia Lighthouse as having a special significance. “Not so much for its apparent usefulness,” he notes, “which was to guide vessels to a good port, but mainly because it stands as an indelible mark of the unique scientific and cultural development that Macao experienced in the last three decades of the 19th century.” Macao did indeed grow culturally and scientifically between 1870 and 1900. Guedes cites the construction of the Conde S Januário Hospital, built in 1874 and still open now, as being constructed ‘in an entirely modern mould for the time’. He adds that that period also saw ‘the advent of scientists and men of letters’ in Macao – like Portuguese writer Wenceslau de Moraes and Portuguese symbolist poet Camilo Pessanha – as well as ‘the beginning of the engineering intervention in the Inner Harbour’.

Development vs heritage

Over the past 15 years, Macao’s government has adopted, according to the IC statement, ‘strict conservation measures to preserve and perpetuate the integrity of the Historic Centre of Macao’. But despite this, some experts say that one of the main threats to the city’s listed legacy has been the sheer amount of developments which have rapidly sprouted up, including housing projects like high-rises. Maria José de Freitas uses Guia Lighthouse as an example, saying its ‘visual integrity started to be disturbed’ when nearby high-rise constructions were being built. She adds these high-rises ‘started to cause a change in the skyline that came to disturb the viewing angles from the lighthouse’.

As a result of this pressure from

developments such as new gaming establishments, housing areas and transport links, groups of concerned citizens have appeared over the past 20 years with the purpose of defending the city’s historic heritage, such as the Guia Lighthouse group and the Association for Macau Historical and Cultural Heritage Protection. De Freitas highlights the importance of a greater awareness of the city’s heritage in the public domain which has led to the

and would obscure the view of the lighthouse from the sea. In 2008, following input from UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee (WHC), the government, then under Chief Executive Edmund Ho, enacted an order that restricted building heights around the lighthouse area. It was a win for the concern group and it highlighted just how serious the city was when it came to preserving its tangible historic heritage. The concern group continues today.

Protecting the heritage

UNESCO’s WHC has, in the past, noted the efforts made by Macao’s government in building a legal system to strengthen the protection of the city’s historic centre, notably through the adoption of three laws in March 2014: the Cultural Heritage Protection Law, the Urban Planning Law and the Land Law. The protection of the Historic Centre of Macao will be further enhanced in the near future with the promulgation of the Safeguard and Management Plan of the Historic Centre of Macao – referred to as the ‘Management Plan’ – as stipulated by the Cultural Heritage Protection Law. This Management Plan, which is still in the preparation stage, will include action plans and regulations to protect visual corridors – designated areas which must not contain new buildings or obstructions to the view of the sky – in and around the heritage sites, including regulations to limit the height of any new buildings within the boundaries of the site and in the ‘buffer zones’ – areas around the site that have also been given an added layer of protection as developments there could also affect views – according to a ‘state of conservation’

*We are proud of our historic heritage in Macao. We should preserve such heritage for our future generations.*

formation of these groups and she notes the relevance of organisations like the Macao Heritage Ambassadors Association, a non-profit group created by young people in the city that promotes education on the SAR’s cultural heritage.

De Freitas also highlights the work of the Concern Group for the Protection of the Guia Lighthouse, which was created in 2007 to alert people, authorities and even UNESCO to development projects involving high-rise buildings in the area. It was argued that the projects would affect the historic centre’s visual integrity



The Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady is an architectural gem that's protected under the World Heritage List



Jack Hong

report submitted by Macao to UNESCO in November 2018. In the same year, during the Management Plan public consultation, it was proposed to protect the existing 11 visual corridors.

Last year, the WHC highlighted that ‘there remain concerns about building height and various new developments that may have an impact on the outstanding universal value of the Historic Centre of Macao, including developments located outside the property and its buffer zone’. The WHC also remarked that the level of land reclamation that has occurred near the listed heritage also requires careful management to balance the opportunity that new urban areas provide to reduce pressure on historic areas. The WHC last year noted, however, the government progress that’s been made towards the development and completion of the comprehensive ‘Management Plan’ and its related regulations

through a consultative process. It requires the submission of the plan to the WHC for review prior its implementation. It also recommended the preparation of ‘Heritage Impacts Assessments’ to ensure that the potential impact of new developments, including their visual impacts, continue to be evaluated.

According to the statement by the IC, at the end of last year the bureau ‘completed the compilation of the draft administrative regulations of the Management Plan and will continue to take forward the legislative work this year’. The IC spokesperson in the statement explains that, to ensure the adequate protection and management of its World Heritage sites and to fulfill international commitments under the UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, it has been working on the Management Plan ‘in an orderly and phased manner’ since

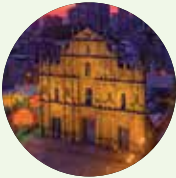
the Cultural Heritage Protection Law came into force in 2014. The IC says it completed two public consultations on ‘phases’ of the plan – its ‘framework’ and then its ‘content details’ – between 2014 and 2018. The IC statement says: “A total of 7,963 comments and suggestions were received in two public consultations, forging a broad social consensus for the Management Plan.” Furthermore, in both 2017 and last year, ‘additional immovable assets were officially listed as monuments and as sites of cultural and archaeological interest’ and the ‘establishment of the respective buffer zones was stipulated’.

Chan Tak Seng says that the city’s ‘Portuguese and Chinese heritage should be preserved, including the names of streets and places in Portuguese’. Agnes Lam believes that more attention should be paid to the 20th century architecture in order to preserve it. “Buildings from the 1950s to the 1980s should start to be considered,” she says, “or we might lose that part of the city’s memory soon.”

Guedes believes that the existing list of heritage sites is already consistent but he also agrees with Lam. He says those who have worked to include historic heritage sites on lists of protection like the UNESCO World Heritage list ‘have done their homework’. It must be remembered, however,” he adds, “that what today is just a newly built site may always be a candidate in the future to be included in new heritage lists.” The Historic Centre of Macao may have earned its inclusion on the UNESCO World Heritage list in 2005 but who knows what other buildings could be added to the list and preserved in the city over the next 15 years? Only time will tell. ●

## Special tourist attractions

How many people have visited these six World Heritage sites in Macao over the past five years and what makes them so special? Take a look...



**The Ruins of St Paul's** The ‘ruins’ are the façade of what was originally the Church of Mater Dei which was built between 1602 and 1640 and the ruins of St Paul’s College, which was once adjacent to the church. Both were destroyed by fire in 1835. The façade, which the IC says now ‘functions symbolically as an altar to the city’, is Mannerist in style with some distinctively oriental decorative motifs.



**Lou Kau Mansion** The mansion is believed to have been built in 1889. It was the home of Lou Kau, a prominent Chinese merchant who owned several imposing properties in the city. The IC says the site ‘depicts the diverse social profile present’ in the centre of the ‘old Christian city’ where ‘this traditional Chinese residence stands near Senado Square and Cathedral Square’.



**Mandarin’s House** Built in 1881, this was the traditional Chinese residential compound home of prominent Chinese literary figure Zheng Guanying. This traditional Chinese residential complex illustrates, says the IC, ‘Macao’s multicultural background in this mix of architectural features and the building’s immediate and contrasting urban environment’.



**Sir Robert Ho Tung Library** This three-storey building is, as the IC puts it, ‘a mansion in typical Macanese style’. It was constructed before 1894 and Hong Kong businessman Sir Robert Ho Tung purchased it in 1918. He died in 1955 and, in accordance with his will, the building was presented to Macao’s government for conversion into a public library.



**Guia Lighthouse** Built in 1865, the IC calls this the ‘first modern lighthouse on the Chinese coast’. Macao takes its co-ordinates from the exact location of the lighthouse, which stands inside the Guia Fortress, itself built between 1622 and 1638. Also on the site is the Guia Chapel, which was built around 1622.



**Dom Pedro V Theatre** Built in 1860 as the first Western-style theatre in China, the IC says that ‘this is today one of the most important cultural landmarks in the context of the local Macanese community and a venue for important public events and celebrations that remains in use to this day’. It is neo-classical in design.

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Ruins of St Paul’s</b>	2,874,306	2,641,779	2,551,582	2,608,629	2,905,291
<b>Lou Kau Mansion</b>	272,357	261,552	300,666	315,309	355,019
<b>Sir Robert Ho Tung Library</b>	311,850	306,941	283,687	256,633	243,115
<b>Mandarin’s House</b>	95,268	134,791	115,356	111,997	116,798
<b>Guia Lighthouse</b>	110,872	127,738	85,470	125,262	81,378
<b>Dom Pedro V Theatre</b>	84,825	87,708	95,361	89,504	79,134

Source: The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC); note: these are the annual total numbers of visitors at each site. These six sites have been chosen as they come under the auspices of the IC. Other World Heritage sites in the city do not come under the auspices of the IC.



From left: Ram Bahadur Kutal Chhetri,  
Sheena Flor Tamayo, Ada Lo,  
Vivi Cheung and Delic Tang

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

# Heroes of the day

Only a handful of people are ever labelled as ‘heroes’ – and most of these probably wouldn’t call themselves one. But nevertheless, thousands of kind-hearted souls across the world have done something extraordinary to help others in times of difficulty. We meet a group of young heroes from Macao whose stories are moving, inspiring and motivating.

Text Cathy Lai Photos Denzel Calangi





The world has been fascinated with heroes ever since tribes began swapping stories around the campfire in the early years of man. And this fascination continues to live with us today in movies, books and comics that focus on superheroes who inspire us, encourage us to do good and represent the qualities we would all like to possess. However, we also have an equally fervent interest in real heroes: those people who go the extra mile to help or save others in times of difficulty or danger. A hero can be anyone – a normal person who, in the face of danger, combats adversity through feats of ingenuity, courage or strength to help someone else.

What characteristics or qualities make a hero? According to American psychologist Philip Zimbardo – who is perhaps best known for his controversial 1971 Stanford Prison experiment, which focused on the struggle between prisoners and officers – we all have inner heroes and the potential for heroic actions. “Simply put,” said Zimbardo during a talk in 2011, “the key to heroism is a concern for other people in need – a concern to defend a moral cause, knowing there is a personal risk, done without expectation of reward.”

Based on this definition and our own moral compass, we have selected a group of young people living in Macao who we consider heroes. These men and women, all under 35 years old, each have an inspiring story to tell and we are proud to call them both selfless and courageous. They come from ordinary backgrounds and have regular jobs. They have each helped other people in a time of crisis, be it fighting crime, volunteering for charity or saving animals’ lives. Meet our selfless, inspiring young heroes...



### The crime-fighting hero

When you think of the term ‘hero’, you may conjure up an image of a crime-fighter who doesn’t think twice about their own safety when it comes to tackling a dangerous offender. In the case of Ram Bahadur Kutal Chhetri – a security officer at the Wynn Macau entertainment resort – you’d be right. In 2018, the brave, young Nepalese man, who moved to Macao only eight years ago, was stabbed as he tackled a thief. The thief got away but Chhetri’s hot pursuit of the criminal led to both an arrest and a crime fighting award.

Chhetri was walking along the busy Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro near Senado Square on a summer’s evening in August when he suddenly heard a woman shouting for help. He turned and saw a man running off down the street with what looked like a handful of money, dodging the pedestrians along the way. Without a moment’s hesitation, Chhetri took to his toes and ran after the thief. The chase went on for several minutes, until Chhetri caught up with the offender at the end of a street and wrestled him to the ground. But the thief struggled frantically and produced a knife. He stabbed Chhetri twice on his left arm before getting back to his feet and taking flight. Chhetri also got back on his feet and chased the offender into a car-park, where he realised the thief’s face would be caught on CCTV.

Chhetri stopped pursuing the thief. His arm was covered in blood. The offender ran off as Chhetri nursed his own injuries. “I couldn’t feel any pain

when he stabbed me,” says the 32-year-old. “All I’d wanted to do was to capture him.” Chhetri gingerly got back to his feet but didn’t think about his own safety as the blood flowed down his arm. Instead of first going to hospital, he went straight to a nearby police station and reported the crime. The information he provided at the station proved vital. The police officers immediately went out into the city and caught the thief. Without Chhetri’s accurate details and quick-thinking in going straight to the police station, the arrest may never have happened. It was only once Chhetri had relayed all the details that he finally thought of himself and was sent in an ambulance arranged by the police to hospital where his knife wounds were stitched up.

Last year, Chhetri received a Good Citizenship Award from Macao’s Public Security Police Force for his brave actions that led to an arrest. He believes that he was acting on instinct when he fearlessly chased after the thief and he reckons he only ‘gained this instinct’ when he started working as a security guard. “Because I occasionally receive training from my current company on how to tackle criminals while also protecting myself,” he says, “that’s why I have no fear in chasing bad guys anywhere on the streets. There are always bad people in our society but if we take action immediately, we can reduce crimes and help a lot of people. ‘Keep helping others’ is my personal motto.”

Chhetri at the Wynn Macau entertainment resort; (opposite page)  
Chhetri receives his award from Macao’s Public Security Police Force



All photos on this spread courtesy of Wynn Macau





Courtesy of Delic Tang

Tang and his pets, Happy and Sugar

### The hero of the voiceless

For those who can't cry for help, there are heroes waiting to come to their aid. Heroes like Delic Tang. In 2017, the Macao resident came across a post on Facebook about lost dogs in the city. He read it and realised that when owners lose their dogs, sometimes they don't search for and reclaim the animals, leaving them to effectively become strays. And the dangers on the streets are numerous for these lost pets. "They can starve to death or be hit by cars," stresses the 29-year-old. "Even if they are taken to the government's Municipal Kennel, they may face euthanasia if they don't have a microchip and nobody comes to claim them within seven days."

The Facebook post inspired Tang to become a volunteer animal rescuer – and that doesn't mean he joined a group or charity. He does this entirely off his own back. In late 2017, he started hitting the streets himself in a bid to save as many lost animals as he could. He says he has enjoyed many memorable experiences since then and believes he and the city's other animal rescuers have done a lot of good in saving the lives of lost pets.

One experience Tang recalls happened in 2018. He says he saw another Facebook post saying that a dog had been lingering around the bottom of a staircase at the foot of an old building for a few days. So he headed off at night, taking several leashes, towels, food, gloves and a small cage with him. "It was like a negotiation scene that you see in the movies," he says. "I handed out food and water to the dog but I was also afraid of being bitten because I was rather inexperienced at that time." It took Tang an hour to coax the dog into the cage. The next day, the pet's microchip was scanned at a veterinary clinic and the owner was contacted. "She was very emotional when she was finally reunited with her dog," says Tang. "She cried and thanked me again and again."

Tang has helped many street animals in Macao to be rehomed or reunited with their owners. He says he loves pets and now keeps 10 rescued animals in his apartment, including cats, dogs, birds, rabbits and guinea pigs. "I have learned a lot from taking care of different kinds of animals," he says. "Each animal has helped me to understand that it's important to think about things from their perspective. My personality has changed a lot since I became a rescuer."

Tang, a former photographer and clothes boutique manager, founded a vegan café called Rara Poesia Vegana in the heart of Macao earlier last year. It continued as a takeaway and delivery service for a couple of weeks during the COVID-19 outbreak in the city but Tang says it's been doing good business. "By serving healthy and tasty vegetarian food," he says, "I want to demonstrate that we can maintain a healthy diet without hurting animals. Giving your life to saving and helping animals may be a heroic act. If it is, there are lots of heroes out there trying to do some good."



### The storytelling hero

People can go to great lengths to provide a good life for their families. Some see this as no less heroic than tackling thieves or saving stray dogs. Growing up in Tondo – a poor district in Manila, capital of the Philippines – Sheena Flor Tamayo had a tough start to her life. But she was determined to give her three younger sisters a chance to better themselves. So in 2016, Tamayo moved to Macao so she could get a better salary than she could in the Philippines and so she could pay for all three of her sisters to go to university.

A tourism management graduate

from the University of the City of Manila, Tamayo now works in the housekeeping department of a local hotel. The 30-year-old admits that life was difficult in her early days in Macao due to the language barrier, cultural differences and unfamiliar food. But she says the biggest challenge she’s consistently faced is her work. She says – during ‘normal times’ and obviously not during the current pandemic – that she needs to clean 14 rooms every day in order to keep up with the frequent check-ins. She claims that sometimes the guests leave the rooms in a bad condition, with litter, vomit and even urine all over the place. “Sometimes,” she

says, “I cry and ask myself ‘why do I have to deal with this?’”

These experiences inspired Tamayo to write ‘The Cinderella in Macao’, a short story about her life as a housekeeper in the city. Written in the Filipino language of Tagalog, the story earned her the Jury Prize and the Macao Special Award at the sixth Taiwan Literature Awards for Migrants last year. Established in 2014, the annual awards aim to recognise the literary and creative talents of migrant workers living in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, Singapore, Malaysia, Japan and Korea. Tamayo’s story beat hundreds of other entries to take the Jury Prize.

“I wait for the next room to be cleaned, like opening my gifts one by one. It can be a wonderful surprise or a painful experience’,” quotes Tamayo. “That’s straight out of my story. I called myself Cinderella in the story because she is one of my favourite characters of all time. But in my story, Cinderella does not dream of becoming a princess. She just works hard for herself and for her family.”

Tamayo may not be a ‘hero’ for writing her story and gaining awards – although she’s certainly gifted with a pen and her imagination. Tamayo is a ‘hero’ because, thanks to her hard work and facing her difficult job with a smile on her face, she has so far been able to put two of her sisters through university in the Philippines. They have finished and excelled, with just one sister left to go. Plus, Tamayo was able to buy the family a new home in the Philippines last year. “My family is happy that I’ve been able to help,” she says. “It’s all been worth it to help my sisters get a good start in life. And now hopefully they can help others too.”



Sheena Flor Tamayo is a literary talent; (opposite page) Zoe Sou in full protective gear

### The COVID-19 hero

She may not live in Macao any more but Zoe Sou has been on the frontlines in Wuhan since the start of the pandemic.

Since the turn of the millennium, few international events have affected the lives of almost every single person on the planet quite like the COVID-19 pandemic has done. Hundreds of thousands of people across the world have died from the virus and it’s still running rampant in some countries. Macao may not have been greatly affected in terms of individual lives – but at the start of the year, as the first cases were reported, thousands of medical professionals in the city had to make impossible choices and put the safety of other people before the concerns of both themselves and their families. One of these brave people was Zoe Sou.

Sou, who grew up in Macao, has worked in the anesthesiology department of Wuhan University’s Renmin Hospital since 2013, after graduating from the university. She is a former Macao resident who now lives and works in Wuhan with her husband, a doctor in the same department. The pair, who have a five-year-old son and two-year-old daughter, met at the university before they were married in 2013.

Prior to COVID-19, life was rosy for 34-year-old Sou but in January, her life was turned upside-down. She had returned to Macao with her son and daughter to celebrate the Chinese New Year with her parents while her husband stayed in Wuhan. However, when the central government announced the lockdown of Wuhan in an attempt to stop the spread of the virus on 23 January, her festive mood was replaced by overwhelming worries about the rapidly worsening situation in Wuhan.

Sou stayed in Macao, monitoring the situation for a couple of months. But in early March, the doctor had to make an impossible decision. Did she stay in Macao with her family or take her children to a possible COVID-19 danger zone for what could be months so she could help her colleagues in Wuhan save lives? On 16 March, Sou made her courageous decision and took her son and daughter by train to Wuhan to rejoin her husband and to join the fight against COVID-19. The next day, she was back at her post in the hospital in full protective gear. She admits that her parents were against the decision but she told them ‘as a doctor, I need to take care of my patients. This is my identity and my

responsibility’. She also says that her children went into isolation at her Wuhan home and were kept safe during the outbreak.

According to Sou, the most dangerous job she did in March was to conduct intubations. This involves inserting a tube into a patient’s body after they have been anaesthetised. Sou says that some of the patients she dealt with were in such a critical condition that they needed to be intubated immediately, without having the time to take a virus test – meaning that, in many cases, the doctors had no idea as to whether a patient had COVID-19 or was suffering from another condition. It added an extra layer of stress for all the doctors, according

to Sou. “I conducted intubations three to five times a day,” she recalls. “We only have 15 seconds to insert a tube so we needed to be fast and accurate but the patients all had a strong will to survive. We needed to help them buy time and prolong their life.”

China finally ended its months-long lockdown of Wuhan in April. But Sou continued to work at the hospital. She admits her work ‘remained challenging’ even as no new cases were reported. “A lot of patients with severe illnesses, such as brain cancer,” she explains, “could not come to the hospital during the peak of the outbreak. So as soon as it was over, they all came in for treatments en masse, which made it an equally challenging time.”

Sou is still working on the frontlines in Wuhan. There were ‘clusters’ of cases in the city a few months back but she says the situation has been ‘stable’ of late, adding that it hasn’t been as worrying as it was towards the start of the year. She says, however, that she remembers the fear she experienced when she thinks about the scenarios in the hospital during the outbreak’s peak. The patients who were dying and the families that could not be with their loved ones. But she also recalls how the fear would subside once she put on her doctor’s gown. “There was just no time to think once I started work each day,” she says. “Everything I ever do is driven by my instinct as a doctor, which is to save people.” This attitude is what makes Sou a young hero. But she’s not alone – all the doctors and nurses across the world who have fought COVID-19 are heroes.



Courtesy of Zoe Sou



## The hero of a community

Emma Chan has also made a great effort to support her family – but by ‘family’ we mean her community. When Typhoon Hato wreaked havoc in Macao in August 2017, she joined hundreds of young people who stepped up to voluntarily rebuild their hometown. “The damage Hato did to Macao was unprecedented,” says the 27-year-old, recalling the flood waters that rose above waist height and all the debris that lined the city’s streets – not to mention the 12 people who lost their lives during the disaster and the many more who were hurt. “I was shocked. I wanted to do something to help.”

Immediately following the devastating storm, Chan volunteered for a local group which was helping out in the Ilha Verde district and the areas around nearby Rua do Patane – areas that make up the community near her own home. These places lost power and water for more than a week after the typhoon. “We visited every apartment with an elderly resident,” she says. “We found out who they were thanks to a list we were given by social workers who worked in those areas. We checked on the residents’ wellbeing and found out whether they needed help with food or their water supply – or even just getting their rubbish to the local bins.”

Not just content with giving every second of her time to the elderly and vulnerable in the wake of Hato, Chan,

who is unemployed but nevertheless gives her time to unpaid voluntary projects, also took on any tasks she could around those neighbourhoods. “I basically helped out with everything I could,” she says. “If I could see something that needed doing or another volunteer or worker who needed help, I’d pitch in. This ranged from providing lights for water trucks that tried to enter dark alleys to clearing rubbish from the streets.”

Chan praises the efforts of many secondary school students who pitched in at the time. She says she met them when she was doing her regular home visits. “I would carry food or spare rubbish bags up to the elderly,” she says, “but these young people would often carry really heavy water buckets up 20 or 30 floors to the elderly and vulnerable. I lost count of how many times a secondary school pupil would say they had no money to donate to the elderly so instead they would do all the hard physical work to make up for it. They were the real heroes.”

Chan says the senior residents were grateful for the work, time and effort that young volunteers like her put in following the tragedy of Hato. “They always welcomed us and tried to give us food to say thank you,” she says. “They were so grateful that society had not forgotten them at that difficult time for the city. To be honest, anyone who helped get Macao back on its feet after Hato should be remembered as a hero.”



## The hygiene hero

This year’s COVID-19 pandemic has seen many people across the world achieve ‘hero’ status. Some are battling on the frontlines in hospitals and care homes but others may not be so obvious. For instance, every shopkeeper who deals with the public every day could be described as a

hero. They don’t have to man their counters and sell their goods but they continue to do so in a bid to make sure other people are able to get their essentials. Vivi Cheung, the charitable founder of healthy lifestyle store Still Natural Organic Shop near the Rotunda de Carlos da Maia in the heart of Macao, is one of these ‘heroes’. During the height of the COVID-19

outbreak in Macao, she went above and beyond in her role as shopkeeper.

In the earlier days of the outbreak, some hygiene products disappeared from shelves in the city due to high demand. Soaps, hand sanitisers, disinfectants and other items became hard to obtain for some residents but Cheung was one of those kind-hearted shopkeepers who went out

of her way to order as many products from overseas as she could for her local community. She brought in facemasks, sprays, sanitisers and as much as she could get of anything she thought could be of use.

As Macao went into lockdown, Cheung, who prefers not to mention her exact age, spent hours on the phone and on her computer. She called and emailed whoever she could across the world before eventually nailing down a supplier in Turkey. She admits she spent ‘days and nights’ pursuing products for her community, knowing she would be selling some and then giving the rest away to charity. She even travelled to Hong Kong by herself several times before the borders were closed, purchasing as many products as she could carry home, especially when she learned that some of her orders from Turkey would not be arriving in Macao on time due to flight cancellations. “For more than 10 days,” she says, “my assistant and I barely slept for more than three hours a day. It was exhausting but it was worth it so we could get as many products as we could for those people in our community who needed them.”

In March, Cheung had managed to stock her shop with 150,000 bottles of hand sanitisers, 60,000 facemasks and 2,000 bottles of anti-virus disinfectant sprays. After settling the pre-orders from her clients, she donated 20,000 facemasks and more than 5,000 bottles of hand sanitisers to charities such as the Fuhong Society of Macau, which caters for people with intellectual disabilities and mental illnesses, and the Macau Federation of Trade Unions, which represents workers in different industries in the city. At the same time, she also set up a WhatsApp group for medical workers in Macao. Many joined and were given priority for the purchase of facemasks, hand sanitisers and many other essential products. Cheung only sold them at cost price. “I just wanted to express my gratitude to their contributions to our society,” she says. “They were fighting on the frontlines and faced the biggest risks.”

“Putting my best efforts into helping others – this is my motto,” continues Cheung. “I did not want to just open a shop to make a living. I wanted to give back to society. That’s why I’ve tried so hard to render my contributions during the COVID-19 outbreak. The real heroes are on the frontlines but if you’re calling all of the shopkeepers who tried to get essential products out to customers and charities ‘heroes’, then collectively we appreciate the recognition. Soon, though, I hope the pandemic is over so I can then take a break and go on holiday!”

Vivi Cheung;  
(opposite page)  
Emma Chan takes  
a trash bag down  
flights of stairs to  
help the elderly





Ram Bahadur Kutal Chhetri, Sheena Flor Tamayo, Ada Lo, Vivi Cheung and Delic Tang pose next to Sai Van Lake after discussing what it means to be a hero



## Sources of inspiration

Macao Magazine has regularly published stories on the city's talented young people over the past year, from the creative young artists to the entrepreneurial young businesspeople. In this issue, we wanted to mark the extraordinary efforts of those young people who stepped up and became a 'hero' through an act or acts of utter selflessness. Ada Lo, a charity professional who has worked closely with various local NGOs in the city since 2003, agrees with us. She says that publishing 'the heroic stories of these young people' can 'spread positive energy and inspire more acts of kindness in society'.

"It takes a lot of courage," says Lo, "to take proactive steps to help others. But the stories Macao Magazine has published here demonstrate that being kind-hearted is not a lonely path. It's a path filled with other kind-hearted people who also care for society and for each other. These young people who do something extraordinary for someone else provide hope for those in need. They are all real-life heroes."

Lo is the general-secretary of the Macau Special

Olympics, an organisation that serves athletes with intellectual disabilities, as well as the vice-chairperson of the supervisory board for the Women's General Association of Macao, which aims to promote the rights and welfare of women and children in the city. She says she comes across young heroes every day, adding that many of Macao's young people 'understand that it's better to give than receive'. "You can gain so much satisfaction from what you do for others," she says. "It will motivate you to keep going and overcome bigger challenges, making your life more complete."

As for how to cultivate kindness and selflessness in a commercial city like Macao, Lo believes it all starts from an early age. "Parents and teachers need to start imparting these values to children before they reach 10 years old," says the mother-of-three. "They need to engage them in charity and volunteer work and explain to them what values these acts represent. By doing this, we can plant a seed in their hearts and guide a whole generation of young people to become extraordinary heroes, serving the good of Macao and its people for years to come." ●



# Unlock That Door

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Macao **ABROAD**

# The world is not enough

**Nothing stops Dr Catarina de Oliveira Paulo from trying to save lives. Just like a real hero, no obstacle is too big for the former Macao resident and no place is too far.**

Text **Raquel Dias** Photos **Rafael Lopes**

If COVID-19 has taught the world anything over the past few months, it's that all medical professionals are heroes. One such person is Dr Catarina de Oliveira Paulo, a woman who was born and raised in Macao but now, after spending many years practicing as a doctor in Porto, Portugal, is starting work as a doctor in London. This is a medical professional who, on the face of it, has no fear and travels to some of the most dangerous places in the world with just one intention in mind: to help as many people as she can with both her medical expertise and her already extensive life experience. And she's only 33 years old.

Dr Oliveira Paulo, who prefers to be known by her nickname of 'Kika', was at the heart of Portugal's fight against COVID-19 until her move to London just a few weeks ago. But prior to the pandemic, she's travelled to all corners of the globe to help people who are

dying of malaria, injured in vicious storms, stuck in terrifying refugee camps or stranded in boats while they flee war-torn countries. This former Macao girl is dedicated to saving lives – but she just sees it as 'doing her best' for other people.

Throughout her life, Dr Oliveira Paulo has enjoyed a strong connection with Macao. She says her mother and grandparents moved to the city from Portugal when her mother was just 14 years old. "My mother," she says, "later met my father in the city – so I was planned, conceived, born and raised in Macao. And despite the fact that I moved to Lisbon to study medicine in 2005 and also the fact that I've been living in Porto, in the north of Portugal, over the past 10 years, I still think of Macao as my home."

The devastating Boxing Day tsunami of 2004, in which more than 230,000 people lost their lives

in Indonesia, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand, inspired Dr Oliveira Paulo, then 17 years old, to pursue a medical career. She says that during her teenage years in Macao, she wanted to become a 'marine biologist or a veterinarian'. "However," she says, "in my last year of school, my family and I spent the Christmas of 2004 – as we often did when I was growing up – in Phuket, Thailand. We had so much fun that my two sisters and I convinced my parents to extend our stay at the resort." Dr Oliveira Paulo says her parents tried but weren't able to stay longer as their hotel was full, so they flew home instead. "We landed in Bangkok at midnight on 26 December, just hours before the tsunami hit Phuket. We could have still been there had that hotel not been full. The tsunami left behind total devastation and sorrow. I was in shock. It was right there and then that I decided to become a doctor – and I did."





Dr Oliveira Paulo holding a baby who was rescued during her Sea-Watch mission in the Mediterranean Sea in January last year; (right, top) Members of the Sea-Watch team with their 'guests' in January last year; (right, bottom) Dr Oliveira Paulo observes a child in Mozambique in a temporary tent in March last year



All photos on this spread courtesy of Dr Oliveira Paulo

In 2005, Dr Oliveira Paulo moved to Portugal and undertook her medical degree at the University of Lisbon. Immediately afterwards, in 2011, she joined International Medical Assistance (AMI), a Portugal-based NGO that organises emergency and development missions for medical professionals in poor countries. She says: “Just as I finished my degree and before my medical residency in Portugal, I applied to go to the interior of Brazil on a mission with AMI. I was accepted and I absolutely loved it.” The doctor says she worked for a few months in a poverty-stricken area in the northwest of the South American country, dealing with all sorts of cases, from people with diseases to victims of violence. “Brazil is a country full of disparities,” she says,

“but I felt at home.”

The seeds were sown in Brazil: Dr Oliveira Paulo knew how she wanted to spend her life helping others. In 2017, she took unpaid leave and applied to join Doctors Without Borders – known in French as ‘Médecins Sans Frontières’ (MSF) – a humanitarian medical organisation of French origin that’s known for its work in conflict zones and in countries affected by disease. Dr Oliveira Paulo passed an exam and got a job with MSF as a specialist in infectiology, which deals with the diagnosis, management and treatment of infectious or contagious diseases. “This allowed me to work with very sick patients,” she says. Her first assignment was in South Kivu province, an area in Africa’s Democratic Republic of the Congo

where malaria is endemic. She admits she was thrilled to be working out in the field but she also says this is when she ‘had to grow up’. “I left Portugal as an idealist,” she says. “And I soon changed. I was not affected so much by the deprivation I encountered because I’d seen that in Brazil. But I felt that MSF was too big an institution for me to have a voice in. It wasn’t what I thought it would be and I eventually felt that I would make more of a difference working at a regular hospital back in Portugal.”

Dr Oliveira Paulo prepared to return to Portugal in December 2017 but fate had another twist in store. “The migrant crisis worsened in Europe,” she explains. “Migrants were fleeing Africa and were trying to find refuge in European countries. Italy did not allow those leaving Libya,

travelling across the Mediterranean Sea and seeking shelter to disembark at their ports.” ‘As it happens’, says Dr Oliveira Paulo, a friend had recommended her to Sea-Watch, a German non-profit organisation that conducts civil search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean. “I went straight to the Mediterranean and joined the team,” she says. “My life was changed again. This was a dedicated international voluntary team who worked together to save lives on the high seas.”

Dr Oliveira Paulo says she was part of the Sea-Watch team ‘not just as a doctor but as a person too’ with ‘lots to contribute’. She worked on a ship throughout the Christmas period which had 32 ‘guests’ on board – the name they gave to the rescued migrants. “We were able to disembark our guests into smaller boats in the middle of the high seas,” she says, “and we couldn’t dock them in Malta or any other port so we just stayed in the boats with nowhere to go. Some of the guests feared we were going to return to Libya so they jumped overboard because they were

so afraid of going back to a country torn apart by civil war. We got them back in and waited until early last year, when Italy opened its borders. It was a historic moment. We all cried. Then other countries followed, including Portugal, which made me proud. Over the past year or so, I’ve visited some of the guests in Portugal. They’re doing well.”

The experience that Dr Oliveira Paulo had as part of Sea-Watch shaped her, she says, ‘as a person, doctor and woman’. She quickly finished her final exams in Portugal before flying to Mozambique in March last year, just after Cyclone Idai had struck the Portuguese-speaking African country, killing more than 1,300 people. She was part of a team organised by both INEM, a Portuguese Ministry of Health agency responsible for co-ordinating and providing emergency medical services – including doctors and paramedics – and Health4Moz, a Portuguese organisation dedicated to providing humanitarian assistance to the country. Here, she put her medical

knowledge to the test as she helped countless people who had been injured during the cyclone or in the devastating floods that followed.

Then came Dr Oliveira Paulo’s ‘scariest mission yet’. She joined CADUS, a German charitable aid organisation, and travelled to the al-Hawl refugee camp in Syria, which is close to the Syria-Iraq border, again as an individual medical volunteer. The camp hosts more than 75,000 people – mainly women and children – who have been displaced from territories which are occupied by Islamic State groups. She says that she was stationed in a part of the camp called the Annex, which holds many foreign women who are the wives of Islamic extremists. “I was genuinely scared when I arrived,” she confesses. “At one point, a young Russian girl pointed at me and said ‘die infidel. Just die’. A lot of the women in the camp would get together to sabotage the work we were doing. But we helped care for the women as best we could. As a woman myself, I have never felt as strong as I did there.”

“

*In a Syrian camp, a young girl pointed at me and said ‘die infidel’. But I helped care for the women in that camp as best I could.*



Women being treated in the Annex part of the al-Hawl refugee camp in Syria



A beautiful garden and some sunshine is just what Dr Oliveira Paulo ordered as she relaxes in Lisbon during one of her rare days off work



Towards the end of last year, Dr Oliveira Paulo returned to Portugal. And then came COVID-19. As we went to print, more than 71,000 cases of the coronavirus had been registered in the country along with more than 1,900 COVID-19 deaths. And Dr Oliveira Paulo was there on the frontlines in Porto for months. She says: “I was working incredibly long hours alongside my colleagues. Some shifts lasted for 24 hours.” She says she dealt closely with people

who were dying in hospital but she does not go too deeply into the stressful and upsetting situations she encountered every day. “It was exhausting,” she says, “but it was necessary work and I’m glad to be of service to my second home during these difficult times. I must admit I was proud to see how Macao has handled the situation.”

Over the past few weeks, Dr Oliveira Paulo has moved to London. “I just felt I needed a more permanent

change in my life,” she explains, “one that would allow me to grow and experience all I still have to discover. I did the interview with the Royal Free Hospital of London, half expecting it would go nowhere. It was a real surprise when I got the call.” The doctor went into two weeks of quarantine and started her new position last month.

Over just 33 years, Dr Oliveira Paulo seems to have lived an entire lifetime. She was once inspired to do good in the medical field because of the devastation caused by the Boxing Day tsunami. Since then, she’s come to the aid of malaria sufferers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, helped migrants in the Mediterranean escape their war-torn homelands, nursed people who were injured in a cyclone in Mozambique, cared for women in a terrifying refugee camp in Syria and now, after fighting COVID-19 in Portugal, she’s doing the same in London. If anyone is an inspiration, it’s Dr Oliveira Paulo, a hero in the truest sense of the word.

“My missions into other countries,” concludes Dr Oliveira Paulo, “are not the most important things I’ve done. It’s the education that counts the most – trying to pass down to other people a legacy of peace and understanding. I try to make people more accepting of others. It’s not about just going somewhere, showing up and helping medically. That’s just a temporary solution. We must look at the big picture. Only educating people can help us change the world for the better.” ●

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# Paradise (can't be) lost

**A delicate balancing act is needed when it comes to the ecotourism industry in Guinea-Bissau's Bijagós archipelago. What lies in store for this idyllic island biosphere reserve?**

Text Paulo Figueiredo

The Bijagós archipelago in Guinea-Bissau is full of paradise bays with mangroves and golden sands

More than 8,000 miles away from Macao, sitting pretty on the west coast of Africa, is the nation of Guinea-Bissau. This Portuguese-speaking country, which is home to more than 1.8 million people, is, as the World Bank last year put it, 'one of the world's poorest and most fragile' nations due to being 'coup-prone' and 'politically unstable'. At the same time, though, Guinea-Bissau, which gained independence from Portugal in 1974, is a land of great beauty. And there's nothing more beautiful than the Bijagós archipelago, a sparsely populated biosphere reserve that lies just off the country's coast.

The forested Bijagós archipelago, which is home to 88 mangrove and palm-fringed islands, is referred to

as the 'bemba di vida' – the 'barn of life' – by the 30,000 or so locals in their native Creole language. These locals are animists – people who believe that all natural things, from plants and animals to rocks and thunder, have spirits and can influence human events – and they reckon that anyone who harms these islands will face the wrath of their gods. That includes anyone who harms the habitat of the rare saltwater hippo, an animal that can be spotted around the main island, Bubaque, which forms part of the Orango Islands National Park. This hippo is considered a deity.

Over the millennia, the ethnic Bijagó tribes have shown great respect for their natural surroundings. This, along with the

fact that their islands exist in relative isolation from the mainland, has contributed to the preservation of the spectacular concentration of wildlife here, which includes the worshipped hippos, as well as crocodiles, manatees and turtles. Today, however, there is a challenge to this archipelago as the development of the islands for the purposes of tourism looms on the horizon. The country has seen what new developments have done to other tropical paradises across the world and its leaders want to make sure the fragile man-nature balance is kept here. There's a call for eco-businesses that create wealth and jobs locally – but these have to be planned and carried out with care so that Bijagós does not become a paradise lost.

## Biosphere of influence

Next year marks a quarter of a century since UNESCO declared the Bijagós archipelago as being one of the world's biosphere reserves. That status was given to the islands in 1996 and now they make up one of 701 biosphere reserves in 124 countries across the globe. A biosphere reserve is defined by UNESCO as a 'learning area for sustainable development' and thus it is regularly monitored for preservation purposes. It is a site for 'testing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes and interactions between social and ecological systems, including conflict prevention and management of biodiversity' and

'each site promotes solutions reconciling the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use'.

One of the main reasons the archipelago received biosphere reserve status was the fact that the fauna in its mangroves and on its mudflats is so diverse. According to UNESCO, the archipelago has been recognised as the most important site in Africa for green turtles to lay their eggs, with nearly 10,000 adult females visiting its shores every year. Many other species of turtle also reproduce in the mangroves and other frequent visitors include the rare migratory birds that nest on its shores. The timneh grey parrot is an endangered species. Then there's the locals themselves who need the islands to be as natural as

possible as they work in agriculture, forestry, animal herding, fishing and ecotourism. In a report published in May – 'Natural World Heritage in Africa: Progress and Prospects' – the International Union for Conservation of Nature lists the islands as a future world heritage site. Guided by the World Heritage Convention adopted in 1972, these sites are considered remarkable landmarks or areas with cultural, historical or scientific significance, protected by international treaties and designated as such by UNESCO.

Miguel de Barros, one of Guinea-Bissau's most renowned sociologists and environmental activists, has been fighting to preserve the islands. He tells Macao Magazine that the local ethnic groups have served as



‘protectors’ of the flora and fauna on the archipelago for many years as they have ‘a culture of low use of the natural resources’ and ‘value the biodiversity’. “The cultural diversity of the Bijagó people is inseparable from [the islands’] biological diversity,” he says. “And it is based on the knowledge and rules that are directly related to that biodiversity.” Barros, who is a consultant for multiple international organisations in Guinea-Bissau, adds that respect for nature is a strong part of the locals’ cultural expression, seen in their masks, dances and sculptures that often mimic or show native animals.

The archipelago is under state protection but there are threats to the reserve. According to Barros, the challenges faced include illegal and artisanal – small-scale with low technology – fishing, as well as the hunting of wild animals, including endangered species like the turtles and parrots. Then there’s the threat of deforestation for agricultural land and even the growing trend of cashew cultivation. Cashews are the country’s main export crop that are quickly replacing other, more traditional crops because they are hugely profitable for farmers. On top of all this, says Barros, the archipelago is also threatened by the privatisation of islands for tourism and future offshore oil exploration projects. Looming too, adds Barros, is the threat of climate change. It is predicted that there could be a significant sea level rise in the region over the coming decades. This could cause coastal erosion and increase the vulnerability of the low-lying islands.

Barros also says that the local culture itself is under threat. He says that the traditional ‘openness’ of the community to the outside

world, especially by the young Bijagó natives, is leading them to question the tribes’ traditional practices and beliefs. This, for Barros, is ‘disintegrating their ties with biodiversity’. He worries that, in the long run, this will ultimately harm the ‘balance’ on the islands because up to now their culture has been a successful ‘mechanism of management and conservation of biodiversity’.

“

*What seems to have been lost in other parts of the world is alive and well here in the Bijagós.*

Earlier this year, Guinea-Bissau’s government adopted a National Ecotourism Strategy and the country’s Institute for Biodiversity and Protected Areas (IBAP) published the Regional Responsible Tourism Master Plan for the Bolama-Bijagós Archipelago Biosphere Reserve. Both of these initiatives have the support of conservation partners and the private sector in the country. The government has drawn up a sustainable development model that includes a special place for ecotourism, which is seen as an important tool for the development of the local economy, as well as a way to preserve both the natural wellbeing of the islands and the local cultural heritage. In the government strategy, tourism minister Fernando Vaz says

the government and its partners agree that ecotourism is a good fit for the Bijagós islands, supporting the ‘economic development of communities’ in ‘fragile and intact natural areas’. This concept, he says, answers ‘concerns with the development of local communities’ while ‘valuing’ the key feature of ‘biodiversity heritage’.

So there’s a clear drive to increase and improve tourism around the archipelago but this brings new risks, says Barros. The tourism industry is already the biggest employer on the islands, he says, and he notes that it is mainly run and promoted by foreign investors, primarily from Portugal, Italy and France. He claims that the activities on offer include recreational fishing, animal watching and cultural activities which see visitors mixing with the locals when they indulge in activities like eating their indigenous dishes or watching cultural dances. Barros notes that the islands offer the ‘most authentic experience in the country’ to tourists and he worries that these experiences will ‘easily turn into a for-profit show for visitors’.

### Fighting for the future

Adelino da Costa is a fighter – both literally and metaphorically. Born in Guinea-Bissau and raised in Lisbon, he became Portugal’s national kickboxing champion in 1999. In 2002, he left in search of the American dream and wound up in New York, where he fought his way up to the title of NYC Middleweight Thai Boxing champion. After that, he became a boxing coach at gyms across the city and later a personal trainer until, in 2006, he opened Punch Fitness Centre in Manhattan. It went well but, according to Costa,

all the while there was a ‘calling’ for him to return to his native and rather more tranquil Guinea-Bissau. At the turn of the decade, he decided he’d had enough of the big city, sold his gyms and returned to Africa. In 2016, Costa committed to his first projects in Guinea-Bissau, opening new Punch gyms – which are free for children – as well as an eco-resort in the Bijagós. The Dakosta Eco Retreat in Bubaque was a hit and became a hotspot for martial arts retreats. Today, the 43-year-old says he couldn’t have been happier with his choice to return to his homeland.

“What seems to have been lost in other parts of the world is alive and well here in the Bijagós,” says Costa, adding that the islands’ local communities ‘still live off what nature gives them’ and also ‘heal at Mother Nature’s hospital’ using ‘plants that have been effective through the ages’. “Our job is to keep things the way they are,” he says, whether that means preserving the traditional ceremonies

or protecting the mangroves, which can store up to 10 times more carbon per acre than a typical terrestrial forest. Costa, who runs programmes teaching guests at his resort about the local way of life, says the mangroves ‘suck up carbon emissions and are used by turtles to lay their eggs’.

Employing 72 people, Costa’s resort is about ‘responsible and conscious tourism’ as much as it is about ‘bringing value’ to the islands and their precious habitats. For instance, the resort’s menus only feature locally sourced products like oysters, fish, rice, corn and even peanuts. Costa says this way of sourcing creates a ‘development circle’ where villages – known as ‘tabancas’ in the local Creole – and their inhabitants become actively involved in the process. This then helps both tourism businesses and the locals themselves to work together to further protect the islands, he says. “The Bijagós,” he concludes, “have to be protected not

only for Guinea-Bissau but for the whole world.”

Another entrepreneur in Guinea-Bissau’s tourism industry is Portuguese national Jorge Horta. Eight years ago, he launched his Africa Princess cruise ship business and it’s been offering accommodation, dining, fishing and sightseeing experiences onboard ever since. He tells Macao Magazine that caution is always exercised, so the environment is not harmed. This includes measures like keeping groups of guests to a maximum of eight people, using the strong currents where possible to transport the vessels in order to save fuel and generating electricity through a series of solar panels fitted to the upper decks. Plastics are also pretty much banned with the boat crews instead making use of the local ‘glass container chain’. This is where all glass bottles are reused to contain drinks which the locals make, like cashew juice and palm wine.



Diana Jarvis

A rare saltwater hippo; (right) endangered timneh grey parrots; (right, bottom) a green turtle



Juniors Bildarchiv



Nature Picture Library



Special precautions are also taken by Horta and his team when it comes to holidaymakers coming into contact with the local population. He says the locals show the visitors the traditional gastronomy, for instance, but in no way does money change hands. “So as not to encourage begging by the [local] people,” he says, “and to support their livelihoods, we never, ever give money to the ‘tabancas’.” Instead, says Horta, the company pays for improvements to the villages, such as building water wells or giving them tools, books or clothes. Sometimes, before the rice crop is harvested, when stocks are low, the company donates bags of rice. On the island of Canhabaque, where Africa Princess has its operational base, the crew and their visitors are sometimes invited by the locals to attend traditional dances – but he says the locals are never paid to stage these shows. He says that would provide an incentive for the ceremonies to be organised for cash and would thus, over time, make them less authentic, harming the overall culture in the long run. Horta adds that to visit certain islands that are considered sacred by the locals, permission is always requested from the village chiefs.

Last month, the government’s Regional Responsible Tourism Master Plan was finalised and within its pages, ecotourism – as opposed to general mass tourism – was defined as the main leisure activity in the islands. “It’s an incredibly important step,” says Horta. The plan proposes a set of governance measures that include the creation of a national board for ‘responsible tourism’ until 2021, as well as an update to the national tourism legislation. It also identifies financing sources such as fees for tourists and tourism service companies and funds from international environmental NGOs.

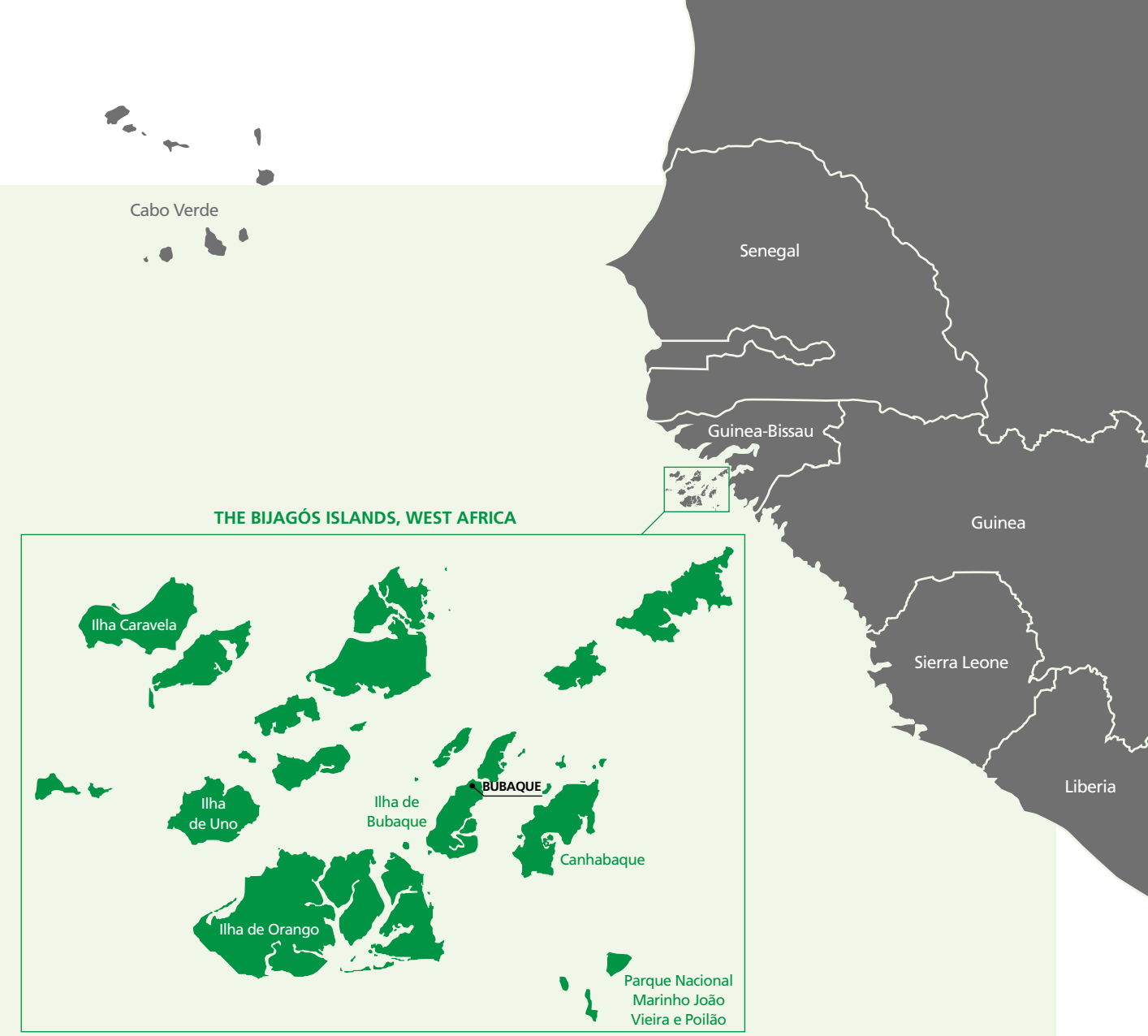
### Pandemic pressures

In the Bijagós, like everywhere else in the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has put a halt on tourism this year. Africa Princess, for instance, went from not being able to accommodate all its booking requests in the early months of the year to cancelling all reservations after March. Prior to the pandemic, the demand for holidays on the islands had been growing in spite of a lack of official advertising. Airlines that fly to the country like Portugal’s EuroAtlantic Airways promote the archipelago but it still boasts that

‘hidden gem’ feel. Transportation can be an issue, however. While Africa Princess guests board the cruise in Bissau to the archipelago, those who venture out by themselves must spend at least one night in the country’s capital city before travelling on a speedboat to their final island destination.

Eleven years ago, when it was even harder to get to the islands, Nicolau Almeida came up with a bold plan: to hold a music festival in Bubaque. For most people, this would have been unthinkable but Almeida is an energetic, determined and fast-talking cultural entrepreneur. He and a small team made it happen. Today, the Bubaque Festival is at the top of Guinea-Bissau’s cultural calendar. Lovers of African music fly from neighbouring countries, as well as Europe and Asia, for a few days of celebration in a unique, lavish natural setting. Many African musical heavyweights have performed at Bubaque, including Angola’s Don Kikas and Super Mama Djombo, a legendary local ensemble dating back to the 1960s who authored – in Creole – some of Guinea-Bissau’s greatest classics, like ‘Dissan Na M’bera’.

Usually held in April, the festival brings together local Bijagós



## Paradise found

Quick facts: the Bijagós archipelago

<b>Where:</b> About 48 kilometres off the coast of Guinea-Bissau.	<b>Turtles:</b> João Vieira e Poilão National Marine Park is home to five of the seven species of sea turtles: the green sea turtle, the olive ridley sea turtle, the hawksbill sea turtle, the loggerhead sea turtle and the leatherback sea turtle. The island of Poilão is considered the most important green turtle nesting site in Africa and one of the most important in the world.
<b>How many islands:</b> 88.	<b>Medicinal plants and herbs:</b> So far, 45 species have been identified in ‘sacred forests’ on the islands. These are reserved for traditional, cultural and religious events.
<b>How many ‘main’ islands:</b> 15.	
<b>Total area:</b> 12,958 square kilometres.	
<b>Administrative capital:</b> Bubaque.	
<b>Population:</b> Around 30,000 people.	
<b>Notable animals:</b> Saltwater hippos, monkeys, crocodiles, dolphins, turtles, timneh grey parrots and migratory birds.	
<b>Fish:</b> At least 155 species.	



A woman relaxes in a hammock at the idyllic Dakosta Eco Retreat in Bubaque; (right) the Africa Princess cruise ship offers a range of ecotourism experiences



musicians with bands and artists from across the continent. Attendance has been growing steadily every year and it's now in the thousands. Almeida says that the initial idea was to 'help end the isolation' of the islands. He says that, other than showcasing Bijagós music and culture, the festival has actually helped influence the government to improve transportation and facilities. New hotels have been built in and around Bubaque, creating employment opportunities. The local youths have also been encouraged to 'show off their creativity and craft', says Almeida. This year's edition of the festival took place without an audience, thanks to the pandemic. With only eight musical performers, it was held in a local studio and was broadcast live on Facebook. It was a stark contrast to previous editions when the island's hotels were sold out. But next year's edition is already being planned.

### Open for business

Guinea-Bissau's authorities are eager to attract investment into the country's tourism sector and China is clearly a major target. At the seventh Macao International Travel (Industry) Expo in April last year, the African nation was represented by Raquel Mendonça Taborda, at the time a high ranking government member for tourism and handicrafts. She presented several areas of possible investment in the country – including the Bijagós islands. "Only 20 islands are inhabited," she told the press, "and we are now trying to attract some investments and boost the tourism sector in Guinea-Bissau." She added

that 'clearly the Chinese market is one of the largest in the world' and that the African nation already has 'some Chinese investments'.

Along with agriculture, fishing and mining, tourism is one of the four pillars of the Guinea-Bissau government's development strategy, as it outlined as far back as 2014.



Local folk dancing is performed across Guinea-Bissau and its islands. Here, men in traditional costumes dance during a festival in Bissau city

Malam Camará, the country's representative on the Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation Between China and the Portuguese-Speaking Countries – or Forum Macao – recognises there is still a lot of work to do to put the nation's tourism sector on a par with its unique natural and cultural beauties, like the Bijagós. He says that opportunities may arise for investors in the tourism industry, as well as in infrastructure developments – particularly in relation to the islands'

airport and maritime connections – and in health facilities. Camará highlights that the government is offering investors exemptions of customs duties for three years on all imports concerning investment projects. He also says that tax breaks are given even after businesses are launched and if an investment is worth more than US\$80 million (MOP 639 million), the government may even lease land.

The strategy is to combine this tourism development with the sustainable management of the islands, making them a world-class eco-destination. Camará even mentions that the archipelago's resorts and hotels could run gaming operations in the future. In fact, the idea of a casino-resort on Caravela – the northernmost of the Bijagós islands – was explored in 2007 by Geocapital, an investment company which had late Macao gaming mastermind Stanley Ho as a main shareholder. Nothing came of it in the end and today there are no concrete plans out there for such a project.

The tourism industry in and around the Bijagós islands biosphere reserve will undoubtedly grow and improve over the coming years, however it will be done sustainably and with the protection of flora, fauna and the local culture at the forefront. "The rich diversity of the islands can make it a great international destination for sustainable tourism," says Camará, "and the government intends to capitalise on those aspects to make the Bijagós spearhead the country's tourism development." If it all goes to plan then this paradise won't just be for holidaymakers – it'll remain a heavenly home for the local humans and hippos too. ●

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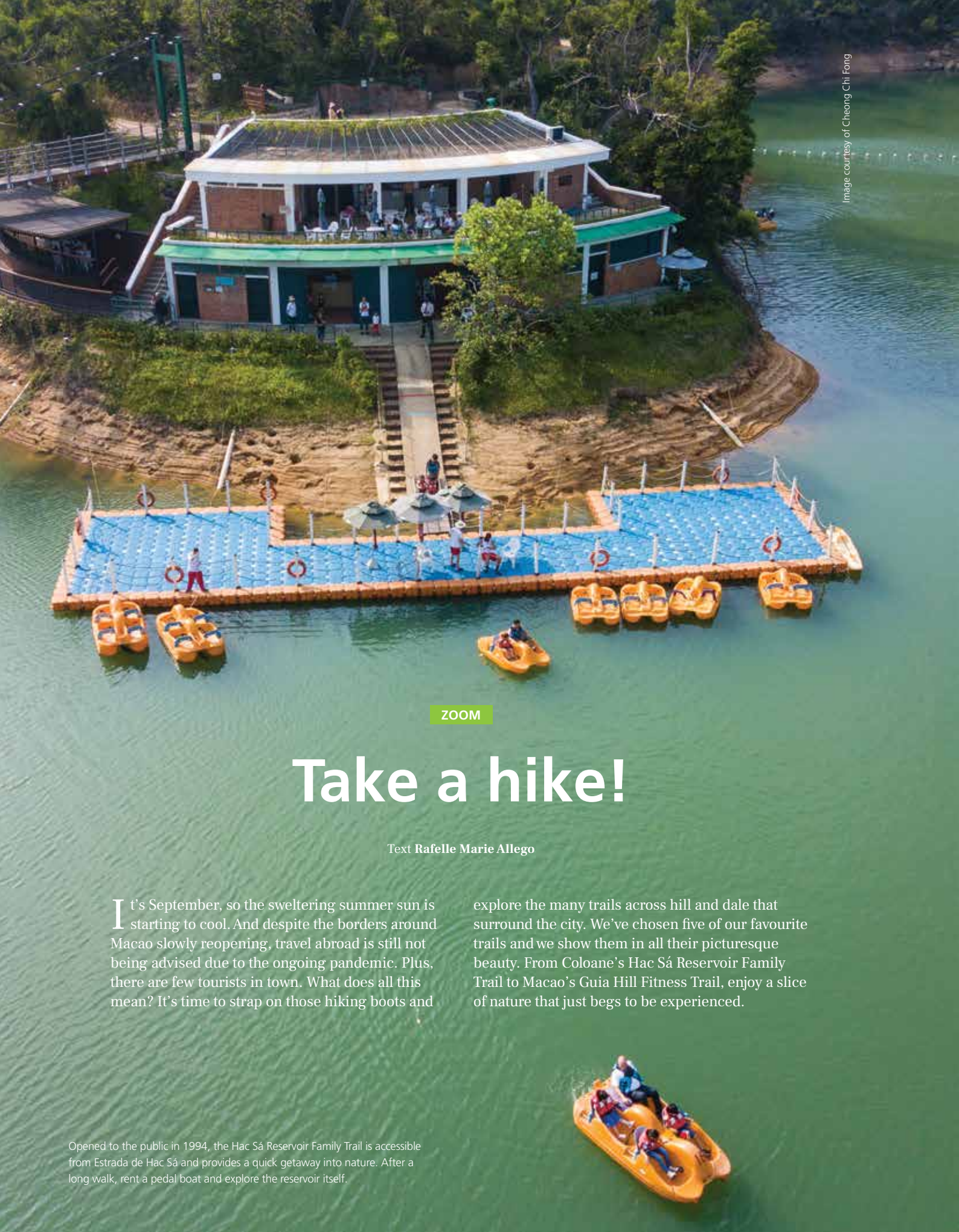


Image courtesy of Cheong Chi Fong

ZOOM

# Take a hike!

Text **Rafelle Marie Allego**

It's September, so the sweltering summer sun is starting to cool. And despite the borders around Macao slowly reopening, travel abroad is still not being advised due to the ongoing pandemic. Plus, there are few tourists in town. What does all this mean? It's time to strap on those hiking boots and

explore the many trails across hill and dale that surround the city. We've chosen five of our favourite trails and we show them in all their picturesque beauty. From Coloane's Hac Sá Reservoir Family Trail to Macao's Guia Hill Fitness Trail, enjoy a slice of nature that just begs to be experienced.

Opened to the public in 1994, the Hac Sá Reservoir Family Trail is accessible from Estrada de Hac Sá and provides a quick getaway into nature. After a long walk, rent a pedal boat and explore the reservoir itself.

Zoom



Image courtesy of Xinhua News Agency/Cheong Kam Ka

The 2.65-kilometre-long Hac Sá Reservoir Family Trail, which boasts some fab views of the reservoir and plenty of fauna, is a good choice for those looking for something remote while still easily returning to the city.



Image courtesy of Antonio Leong

A view taken from one of the paths along the 4.29-kilometre-long Coloane North-East Hiking Trail Network. It is categorised into three trails – the Coloane North-east Hiking Trail, the Acacia Woods Walk and the Golf Course Walk, each with varying difficulty levels.





The Taipa Grande Trail is located in the Taipa Grande Natural Park on the eastern side of Taipa. Situated right across from the Edifício Do Lago social housing area, it is popular with families wanting to get back to nature.



Image courtesy of Municipal Affairs Bureau

The Taipa Grande Trail is four kilometres long, with gazebos and rest stops for hikers to enjoy the scenery around them. Parts of the trail are wide enough for joggers and walkers to share the path.



António Sammarful

The Guia Lighthouse sits atop the Guia Hill Fitness Trail, which is 1.2 kilometres long. Near enough to the centre of the city, it's a convenient stop for some fresh air and a short stroll, with a decent hike up to the famous lighthouse at the end.






Families can enjoy the views of the sea and incredible rock formations along the 1.2-kilometre-long Hac Sá Long Chao Kok Coastal Trail that ends at the Chuk Wan Hou Yuen villas.



Starting from Rua de Hac Sá Long Chao Kok, the Hac Sá Long Chao Kok Coastal Trail boasts some spectacular coastal views. Here, a gazebo juts out from the trail, providing a mesmerising seaside vista at sunset.



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# BNU Anti-Epidemic Measures

To protect the economy, the MSAR Government has introduced a number of measures to protect the livelihood of its residents. As a note-issuing bank of Macau, BNU also cooperates to prevent the spread of the virus and recuperate the economy by developing a set of anti-epidemic initiatives to help the community.

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