

# Macao 澳門

**A new dawn:  
Macao reopens  
to the world**

**Past meets present at  
Iec Long firecracker factory**

**The right recipe:  
Lord Stow's success story**





SANDS CHINA LTD. WISHES YOU

A HAPPY CHINESE NEW YEAR

FILLED WITH HOPE, JOY AND GOOD HEALTH



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**ISSN** 2076 – 5479 All rights reserved

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**COVER IMAGE**  
The sun rises over Macao's Peninsula.  
Photo by Antonius Photoscript

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# 'Light of hope': Macao rejoins the world

Residents breathe a sigh of relief as their city welcomes back friends, business partners and tourists.



António Sanmarful

Text **Gonçalo César de Sá**

After almost three years of disruption caused by Covid-19, Macao is gladly ushering in its post-pandemic future. On 8 January, the city fully reopened its borders to all nationalities and ended all Covid-19 related restrictions that have been in force since early 2020. The move is in line with the mainland's decision to downgrade management of the virus from a Class A-type disease to Class B.

Macao's government began revoking restrictions in earnest in late December, when Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng returned to the city after meeting with President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang in Beijing. While there, Ho received the leaders' full backing of his government's decisions regarding the fight against the pandemic.

Macao "will continue to open, and not return to the past, allowing everyone to get back to normal as quickly as possible," Ho said. "The government will fight, together with the population, the epidemic situation and overcome the difficulties."

The main difficulty has been the inevitable onslaught of Covid-19 infections and the dozens of deaths they've caused. Ahead of the city's reopening, Macao Health Services (SSM) Director Alvis Lo repeatedly warned residents to prepare for the virus to hit about 80 per cent of the population – a milestone the Special Administrative Region (SAR) reached quickly. The SSM maintained that



Xinhua News Agency

Macao was ready for this community spread of the highly transmissible Omicron variant.

Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Elsie Ao long U has urged the population not to fear Omicron, as it's not nearly as deadly as previous variants. Omicron's relative mildness is part of the reasoning behind leaders' call to reopen the country.

Nevertheless, Ao long said it was more important than ever for people to get vaccinated against Covid-19 – especially anyone elderly, frail or chronically ill. "The transmission period has come to an end but it doesn't mean the battle of Covid is also over," she said. "Our prevention centre will still keep an eye on the situation."

## 'Finally'

In spite of the resulting Covid-19 outbreak, Macao's reopening has been met with relief and gratitude across sectors – as well as by individuals.

"Finally, Macao can return to a normal life," said retired local resident Leandro Gonçalves. "I think that, at this moment, we cannot fail to praise the health services for what they have done over the last few years, preventing the community from being seriously affected by Covid-19. They were extreme and rigorous measures but it was for the good of the population."

Young Macanese cinematographer Sérgio Perez acknowledged that Macao's full recovery will take time, but expressed confidence in the city and its people. "Macao is more united and stronger than ever after all this," he said.

"Let's now fight hard to rebuild and bring back the magic, and show the world what we are made of. Let's regain our spotlight and show the world what makes us special. If there's anything this has proven is that we, the citizens, are damn good fighters. And we will fight back."

The return of tourists is key to the city's economic recovery

(Opposite page)  
Macao population looks forward to a bright future



With regards to Macao's relatively abrupt reopening, local resident and analyst Alidad Tash said he was "glad we're going through the tunnel at this dizzying speed."

"The sooner we get through this, the sooner we'll catch up to the rest of the world."

Tash also noted that "critics" of the government claimed the city could have lifted its restrictions a year earlier, and that its transition from closed to open could have been smoother but nevertheless understands that this measure was needed to protect the population.

### Returning to work and travel

In December, Macao's government ended mass testing for the virus, replaced time-consuming nucleic acid tests (NATs) with rapid antigen tests (RATs), and ended mandatory hotel quarantines for anyone entering the city. People no longer have to show their Macao health codes in commercial premises, though they do when visiting public services such as hospitals. The government also ended spot lockdowns, where if one Covid-19 case was identified in a particular area, that whole area would go into isolation.

Around 37,000 civil servants took a step-by-step approach to returning to work throughout December and January. The six gaming concessionaires' staff also headed back to their jobs, and normal student life resumed for the city's almost 120,000 school and university students.

In late December, bus travel resumed between Macao and Hong Kong after being indefinitely paused in 2020. Thousands of people travelled between SARs immediately, in both directions. On New Year's Eve

alone, for instance, 28,100 visitors from Hong Kong and the mainland entered Macao.

At the same time, Macao's airport reopened for international flights. Ferry services between Macao and Hong Kong began operating again in early January.

Checkpoints between Macao and the mainland are back to their pre-pandemic numbers of arrivals and departures. Travellers entering Macao from Hong Kong and Taiwan no longer need to test for Covid-19. However, if they intend to go to the mainland within seven days of entering Macao they must take a NAT within 48 hours before they depart. People reaching Macao by plane (including via Hong Kong International Airport) no longer face any quarantine requirements.

In response to surging demand for travel, Air Macau began operating flight routes between the SAR and Japan, Vietnam, Taiwan and Bangkok in December. Singapore and Manila are the next

new destinations on its radar. The flag carrier had only flown domestically between Macao and the mainland since the pandemic began.

Tourists, particularly from the mainland and Hong Kong, are considered key to the city's economic recovery. Director of the Macao Government Tourism Office Maria Helena de Senna Fernandes said she was "extremely optimistic" about their return and what it signified for Macao.

Her sentiments were echoed by representatives from international chambers of commerce based in Macao, who issued a joint statement welcoming "the government's decision to waive mandatory hotel quarantine for arrivals from overseas, Hong Kong, and Taiwan."

Chan Chak Mo, a lawmaker and the president of United Association of Food and Beverage Merchants of Macau, admitted there were difficulties immediately after reopening – including the worst Covid-19 outbreak the city had ever experienced – but ultimately

expressed confidence. "We will overcome the situation," he said. "It's a short period that we need to face for a better and bright future."

The banking and gaming sectors also voiced approval of the government's decision to reopen the city and the impact visitors would have on the city's economy. Carlos Cid Álvares, president of Banco Nacional Ultramarino (BNU) – Macao's oldest bank – welcomed the end of Covid-19 restrictions. He said the SAR's reopening would have a positive impact on banking, the economy, small and medium-sized companies, and the number of people visiting Macao.

### 'The light of hope'

Over the past three years, while China's "Dynamic zero-Covid" policy was in force, Macao's local government supported the city's residents and businesses with around MOP 15.1 billion in subsidies, free Covid-19 vaccinations and tests,

and free masks. Its aim was to protect the SAR's economy and people, and to build foundations for the recovery period that is now in progress.

While obeying Macao's heavy restrictions on personal movement did come at an economic and psychological cost, such measures ultimately prevented widespread deaths. The collective effort by Macao's health professionals coupled with the resilience of its local population during the pandemic have been praised by medical experts in China as well as abroad.

Obviously, the challenges posed by Covid-19 are not yet over. As positive cases peak in the wake of Macao's opening, the city's health services are under enormous pressure. Chief Executive Ho said, in December, that "one can already see the light of hope, but everyone still has to overcome the difficult days in order to reach the normalcy of life."

The city is poised to bounce back, however. Tourism's much-needed return, further development of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone, and initiatives set to diversify Macao's economy are all underway – shaping the path for a prosperous future. ●



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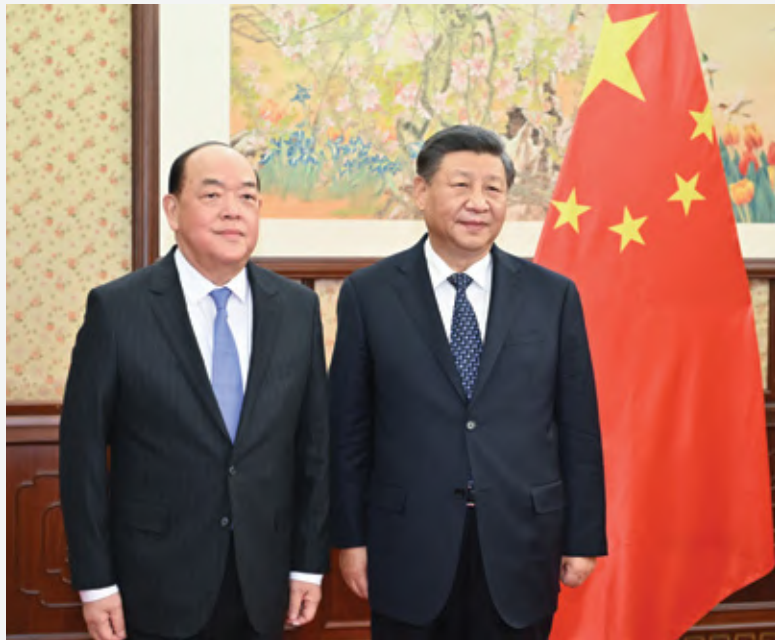
Tom Wang

Normal life resumes after three years under pandemic restrictions



# Ho Iat Seng meets with China's leaders

**Macao's chief executive updated President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang on the city's progress over 2022, and reaffirmed Macao's commitment to "the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation" under the "One Country, Two Systems" principle.**



President Xi Jinping met with Macao Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng

Text **Gonçalo César de Sá**  
Photos **Xinhua News Agency**

President Xi Jinping has vowed to fully support Macao to better play to its strengths in terms of implementing the "One Country, Two Systems" principle within the Special Administrative Region. The president was speaking in Beijing, before Christmas, at a meeting with Macao Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng held at Yingtai – within the Zhongnanhai leadership compound.

There, President Xi congratulated Macao's chief executive for having

"led the government in maintaining stable governance and in adopting practical efforts to maintain the city's overall stability."

Ho Iat Seng had travelled to the capital to report on the current situation in Macao, and on how his government "would enable Macao to make further contributions in building China into a great modern socialist country."

During the meeting, Xi acknowledged Ho's government's dedicated effort to study, promote, and implement the president's report to 20th CPC National Congress, which was held in October.

In response, Ho said that the path outlined by Xi at the National Congress "had encouraged the Macao public to share the pride felt at the country's development and faith in the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle." He noted that "Macao people's sense of patriotism and confidence about being Chinese had also been strengthened."

Xi also commended Ho for Macao's amendments to its Law on Safeguarding National Security; his prudent handling of the revision of the gaming laws and regulations; how the public tender and contract-signing for Macao's new gaming concessions played out; and for the pragmatic advances the city had made with regards to developments in the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone, on Hengqin Island.

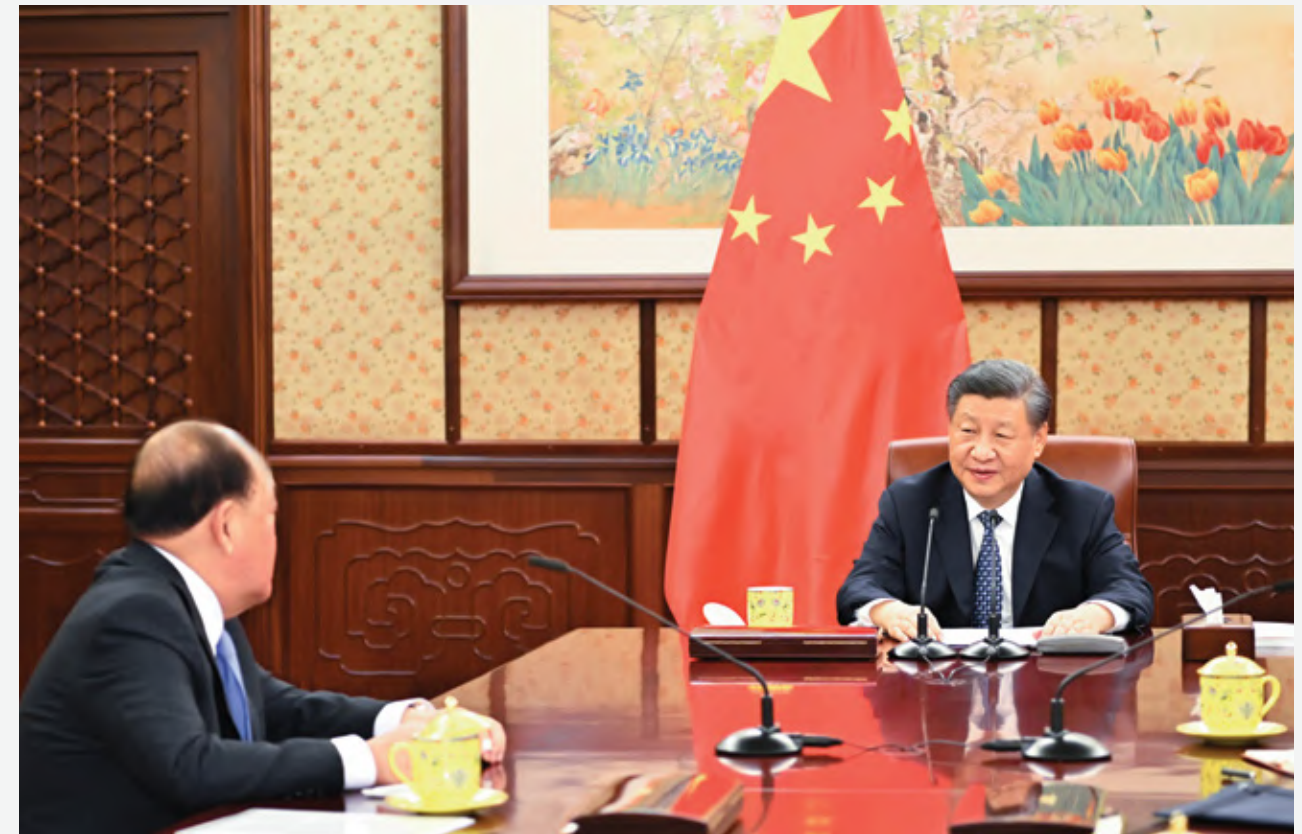
On the subject of Covid-19, Ho told Xi that recurring outbreaks had "battered Macao's economy, the livelihoods of its people and local employment, creating unprecedented pressure on Macao's macroeconomic environment."

"In the face of such a complex situation, the government had taken swift measures to curb epidemic conditions, easing the downward pressure on the local economy, and relieving hardship related to people's livelihoods," he said. "With the strong support of the central government, and from the mainland provinces and cities, Macao had seen gradual recovery of its socioeconomic situation, with fresh progress attained in various sectors."

Looking ahead at 2023, the chief executive told Xi that his government would make good use of the policies

and measures introduced by the central government in support of Macao's development. Ho said his efforts would be focused on facilitating the city's economic recovery; actively improving people's livelihoods; solving deep-rooted problems relating to social development; expediting economic diversification; and further developing the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone.

Ho also promised the president that there would be "concerted effort to translate the plans of the CPC's 20th National Congress into actual deeds, push forward development of the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle with Macao characteristics, and make fresh contributions to the Chinese dream of national rejuvenation through the Chinese path to modernisation."





### Premier Li Keqiang praises the Macao's government's work

During Ho's trip to Beijing, he also met with the Premier of the State Council Li Keqiang at the Ziguan Pavilion – another venue within the Zhongnanhai leadership compound. Li praised the Macao government's work over the past year. He noted that efforts to stabilise the economy, ensure employment, and secure benefits for Macao people "helped maintain Macao's good momentum in terms of steady development."

Li told Ho that the central government would "continue to comprehensively, accurately, and unwaveringly adhere" to the principles of "One Country, Two Systems" and "Macao people governing Macao". He also guaranteed "a high degree of autonomy for the city."

"The central government will continue to enhance the mechanisms and systems relating to Macao and the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, and to the Basic Law and fully support the law-based administration applied by the chief executive and the government," the premier added.

Li reiterated Xi and Ho's aims for Macao's better integration into China's overall national development, a successful Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone, Macao's economic diversification and long-term stability, and the enhanced well-being of Macao people.

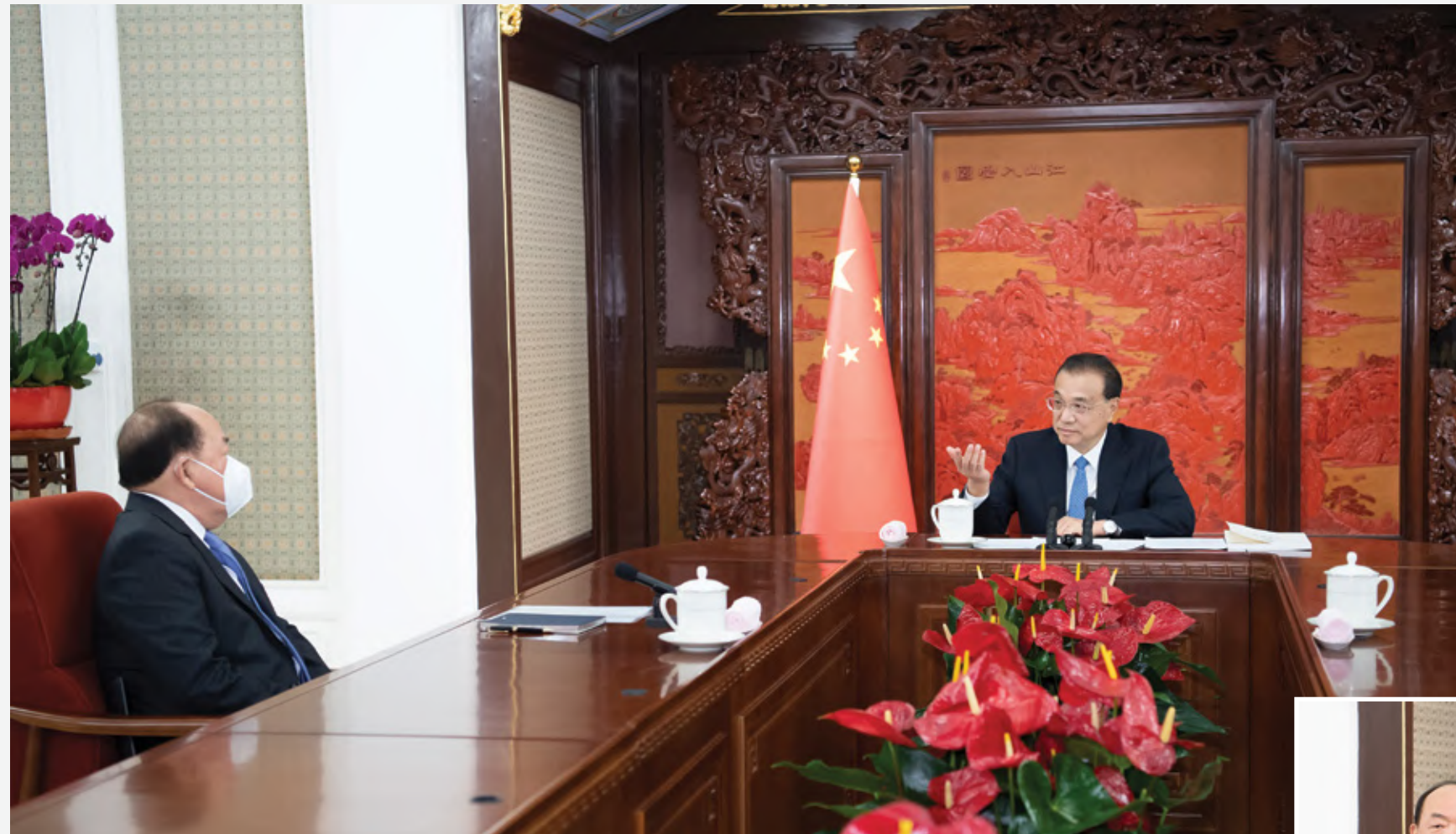
During their meeting, Ho told the premier that Macao's government had realised its policy aims, maintained social stability, and made fresh progress across various

sectors during 2022 – in spite of a series of Covid-19 outbreaks that seriously impacted the city. "These achievements were indivisible from the strong support given by the central government, and the united effort made within the community," he said.

"The Macao government spared no effort in coordinating epidemic control and prevention work, while boosting economic recovery, with a view to foster adequate economic diversification," Ho added.

Ho told Li that Macao devoted full efforts to major national strategies, including the Belt and Road Initiative, as well as strategies centred around Macao, such as "One Centre, One Platform, One Base".

At the end of the meeting, Ho reaffirmed that "Macao will spare no effort in steadfastly safeguarding the country's sovereignty, security, and development interests ... in order to advance the practise of the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle with Macao characteristics." ●



“

These achievements were indivisible from the strong support given by the central government, and the united effort made within the community.

– Ho Iat Seng



Premier Li Keqiang with Macao Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng during a meeting in Beijing





Looking ahead to 2023, Ho said the local government would implement the '20 adjusted measures' and the '10 new measures' announced by the country's State Council in November. These amount to a general loosening of Covid-19 controls that affect travel, quarantine, lockdowns, testing, and more.

Ho emphasised that "the focus of Covid-19 control has changed from infection prevention and control, to medical treatment – thereby safeguarding people's health and preventing serious cases." He promised that the government would closely monitor all Covid-19 developments and allocate medical resources as needed. "Our aim is to lower the risk of fatalities, in order to safeguard people's lives and health, and to minimise the impact of the pandemic on Macao's socio-economic development," Ho said.

Ho underlined that Macao's government had launched multiple rounds of financial relief to stave off pandemic-related

hardships experienced since Covid-19 began to affect Macao. The government spent MOP 68.3 billion (US\$8.5 billion) on "maintaining regular welfare for local residents" and MOP 32.3 billion (US\$4 billion) on providing financial assistance in direct response to the pandemic – a total of MOP 100.6 billion (US\$12.5 billion), said Ho.

He added that Macao's government would "always uphold the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle", as well as when upgrading the quality of public administration and in the fine-tuning of economic development. Ho also underlined his government's ongoing effort to adhere to the rule of law, effectively safeguard national security, and continuously improve the overall quality and standard of governance in Macao. He added that the government had also ensured firm implementation of the "patriots governing Macao" principle, and facilitated amendments to the Law on Safeguarding National Security.

Around 250 government officials and other guests attended the flag-raising ceremony

## Looking ahead on MSAR's 23rd anniversary

**There's plenty of cause for optimism, says Ho Iat Seng. From the loosening of Covid-19 controls, to Macao's economic diversification.**

A flag-raising ceremony at Golden Lotus Square commemorates the anniversary

Covid-19, Macao's economic diversification, and its integration with the mainland were the main subjects of Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng's speech commemorating the 23rd anniversary of the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR). During the reception, held on 20 December, Ho called on Macao's support in achieving the central government's goals for the city's stable post-pandemic development.

In his speech, Ho acknowledged that Macao's economy, the livelihoods

of its people, and the local job market had been greatly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic over the past three years. He stressed that Macao had adhered to the national Covid-19 prevention policy throughout the pandemic, to prioritise people's safety and health as well as unite all sectors of civil society.

"The concerted efforts ensured that Macao has been able to safely overcome the severest challenges, including the 18 June outbreak," Ho noted.





### A brighter economic future on the horizon

During the reception, the chief executive guaranteed that Macao was set to overcome its current economic predicament. He cited the gradual restrictions on people's movements, the fact Macao's new gaming concessions had been finalised (six gaming operators were granted licences in December), and orderly implementation of the "1+4" strategy for economic diversification as causes for optimism.

The "1+4" strategy, announced by the government in November, aims to enrich Macao's function as "One Centre" for integrated tourism and leisure, while

facilitating the development of four nascent industries: big health, modern financial services, high tech, and the sectors of conferences and exhibitions, commerce and trade, and culture and sport.

Helping pave the way for economic prosperity, Ho said his government made several key accomplishments during the pandemic. One was implementing the "five-rung housing ladder" policy. Another was facilitating big health's development through advancement of the Islands District Medical Complex, and by utilising traditional Chinese medicine research and development as an entry point. There was also the government's revision of its gaming laws and regulations, plus new



The flag-raising ceremony was followed by a reception where Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng spoke

(Opposite page) Chief Executive Ho emphasised government efforts to protect people and improve economic stability



legislation around hiring offshore talent – making it easier to employ people with specialised skills needed for the development of the industries identified in the "1+4" strategy.

"The government has completed its legislative work on schedule; finished restructuring 28 public departments and 13 autonomous funds; launched the 2.0 version of the Macao One Account service for the convenience of the public and businesses; and gradually deepened public administration reform," Ho said in his speech.

#### Proactive integration is key for Macao

Ho said that his government is determined to integrate Macao more proactively into the country's overall national development plan.

The 2nd Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development of the MSAR has already been published, and aligns comprehensively with the national development strategy, he noted.

Macao has already been an active participant in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the Belt and Road Initiative, as well as in the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone's development.

Ho said that in 2023, "the local government will fully implement the spirit of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, and President Xi Jinping's raft of important instructions."

"In line with the overall policy direction, Macao will effectively seize the opportunities arising

from national development; make good use of the policies and measures introduced by the central government in support of Macao's development; focus on promoting economic recovery; actively improve people's livelihoods; tackle the deep-rooted conflicts and problems in economic and social development; expedite appropriate economic diversification and the development of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin; and better integrate the Macao Special Administrative Region into the overall national development plan."

Ending his speech, Macao's chief executive reiterated how his policies "will help Macao continue to break new ground in various undertakings, and make new contributions to realise the Chinese Dream of national rejuvenation through the Chinese Path to Modernisation."

On the day, a flag-raising ceremony was held at Golden Lotus Square followed by a reception of around 350 people at the China-Portuguese-speaking Countries Commercial and Trade Service Platform Complex. ●



# Government honours outstanding contributors

The 26 recipients of Macao's medals of honour, merit, and distinguished service include banks, charities, and a former judge.

## Medals of Merit and Distinguished Service

There are several types of merit and distinguished service medals awarded annually in Macao. In 2022, the winners and their categories were:

- **Professions** (Medal of Merit) – Macau Water Supply Company, Companhia de Electricidade de Macau (CEM), and Traditional Chinese Medicine doctor Mo Hui.
- **Industry and Commerce** (Medal of Merit) – Chinese insurance company Taiping, which has been operating in Macao since 2019; bus company Transmac, which launched in 1952; and Macanese businessman Humberto Carlos Leitão Rodrigues, CEO of F. Rodrigues.
- **Tourism** (Medal of Merit) – the Macau Hoteliers & Innkeepers Association.

(Below) The awards for Decorations of Honours include the Grand Lotus; the Golden Lotus; and the Silver Lotus. These awards are given to individuals or entities that have made outstanding contributions to Macao



Text Christian Ritter and Gonçalo César de Sá

In December, the Macao government awarded honours to 26 different organisations and individuals for their outstanding contributions to society.

The highest Decoration of Honour awarded in 2022, the Gold Lotus, went to local charitable society Tung Sin Tong. Established in 1892, Tung Sin Tong supports the underprivileged, provides free education and healthcare,

and cares for the city's elderly and disabled citizens. The NGO has 20 buildings across the city from schools to kindergartens, activity centres and medical clinics. In 2002, Tung Sin Tong was awarded the Medal of Merit in Altruism.

Three organisations and one individual were each awarded Silver Lotus Decorations. These were Portugal's Banco Nacional

Ultramarino (BNU), which opened its first branch in Macao in 1902; local Tai Fung Bank, founded in 1942; the Macau Red Cross, which dates back to 1920; and former judge Lai Kin Hong, who recently retired as the president of the Court of Second Instance.

The Grand Lotus Decoration – the highest distinction on offer – was not awarded in 2022, and hasn't been awarded since 2020.

- **Education** (Medal of Merit) – Hou Kong Middle School; director of the Affiliated School of the University of Macau, Lou Lan Heng Monica; and director of Macau Baptist College and vice-director of the Chinese Educators Association of Macau, Lei Cheok Kin.
- **Culture** (Medal of Merit) – the Confraternity of Macanese Gastronomy; artists Lok Hei and Kuok Keng Man; and film director Chan Nga Lei.
- **Philanthropy** (Medal of Merit) – Caritas Macau Secretary-General Paul Pun Chi Meng.
- **Sports** (Medal of Merit) – Green-Wave Swimming Club, one of the oldest swimming clubs in Macao.
- **Dedication** (Distinguished Service Medal) – the Information Department of the Government Information Bureau (GCS); and the Financial Infrastructure and Information Technology Department of the Macau Monetary Authority (AMCM).
- **Community service** (Distinguished Service Medal) – the Macau Construction Machinery Engineering Association.
- **Honorable Title** (Merit) – First-year doctoral student in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the University of Macau, Chan Pak Ian, who was one of 89 recipients of the 2022 China's Young People's Science and Technology Innovation Award (the only Macao university student to receive this award); and high school student studying at Keang Peng School, Choi Ka Wai, gold medalist in art at New York's GENIUS Olympiad in 2021 and 2022 (also the first representative from Macao to win this award). ●



## Strolling through Macao's brand new pedestrian tunnel



Murals in light and a distinctively tiled floor help tie this new construction to Macao's oldest architectural treasures

**The MOP 235 million Guia Hill Pedestrian Tunnel is a boon for commuters, but an attraction in its own right – and a space where people gather to socialise.**

Its elegant and inviting design has made Guia Hill Pedestrian Tunnel popular with young and old alike

Text **Gilbert Humphrey**

Four-year-old Lei Pak loi has walked through the 400-metre long Guia Hill Pedestrian Tunnel twice a day since it opened in October, accompanied by either his parents or nanny. The kindergartener declares that it's not only a handy shortcut to school, but an aesthetically pleasing experience in itself.

"I like the tunnel because I can go to school faster now; and I think it looks good," Pak loi says. He's of the opinion that the passage beneath Guia Hill has the potential to become

as popular as some of the city's major landmarks – like "Tai Sam Pa", he suggests, using the Cantonese name for the Ruins of St Paul's.

That is, in fact, along the lines of what the Macao government was aiming for when it began planning the tunnel. Sure, it would be a shortcut between Avenida de Horta e Costa, one of the city's main streets with residential buildings, and the Reclamation Zone of Porto Exterior (ZAPE), where several hotels and office buildings are located. But at the same time it's a recreational destination for residents of the surrounding areas.

### Developing Macao's pedestrian network

The Macao government has made significant improvements to the city's pedestrian network in the past decade. Particularly via structures like tunnels and bridges that allow people to get from A to B on foot, faster.

These projects include a footbridge connecting ZAPE to the Guia Hill Hotel Macau, which opened in 2016. And another that opened in Taipa last summer, running alongside Avenida de Guimarães for 700 metres – above the busy Rua de Nam Keng, Rua de Coimbra, Rua de Seng Tou, Rua de Bragança and Rotunda do Estádio.

In June 2020, the now-defunct Land, Public Works and Transport Bureau (DSSOPT) received 10 bids through public tender from companies eager to design and construct the Guia Hill Pedestrian Tunnel. The bureau, since renamed the Land and Urban Construction Bureau (DSSCU), eventually settled on Consórcio de San Kei Ip – China Railway International – China Railway First Group for the job.

The design process began in the fourth quarter of 2020, and excavation works on Guia Hill kicked off later that year. Construction workers digging beneath the hill from either side met in the middle in October 2021, a major milestone in the innovative project that cost the government MOP 235 million to build.

### A tunnel is born

The Guia Hill Pedestrian Tunnel officially opened to the public almost exactly a year later, on 1 October 2022. It became an instant hit with commuters like young Pak loi, who use it to get from home to work or school. But people flock there to socialise as well; the entrances provide pleasant park-like spaces to hang out in. Elderly folk in particular enjoy relaxing on benches outside the tunnel in the morning and afternoon sun, while non-resident workers gather there on Sundays to catch up with compatriots. Visitors from the mainland have also been spotted taking selfies inside and in front of the new tunnel, treating it as a tourist attraction.







The tunnel has quickly become part of people's daily commutes, the shorter distance making for a pleasant walk

Running parallel to the two-lane Guia Hill vehicular tunnel, in use since 1990, the pedestrian version runs north-south beneath the hill. It has cut the route between Avenida de Horta e Costa and the petrol station in Avenida Dr. Rodrigo Rodrigues down from 1,100 metres to around 400 metres. Meaning what once required a 15 to 20 minute walk around Reservoir Road is now a three minute stroll.

Two footbridges on the ZAPE side connect the tunnel's entrance to Rua de Malaca and the Jai Alai hotel complex respectively. At the opposite entrance,

there are public toilets and two elevators carrying pedestrians up to the Flora Garden – a sizeable park featuring 'the Cute Animal Zone', located on the Guia foothill. The elevators also provide direct access to Guia Hill's popular walking and running trail, known as Estrada do Engenheiro Trigo.

Strolling through the tunnel itself is a visually stimulating experience; innovative murals created by lights depict landmarks from the city's UNESCO World Heritage-listed Historic Centre and scenes from the olden days. There are aerial maps



Inviting inside and out, many have taken to using the tunnel area as a place to gather and meet with friends

(Below) Residents praise the tunnel's accessibility to older and disabled people, particularly the elevator to Flora Garden



of the tunnel and its surrounding neighbourhoods inside, too, with information about the city available in Chinese, Portuguese and English. The new tunnel is 6.7 metres wide and has a ventilation system that turns on automatically if temperatures exceed 30 degrees Celsius, to ensure pedestrians stay comfortable.

**'It's much more convenient'**

One 60-year-old retiree, who gave his surname as Un, told Macao magazine that the tunnel – especially its elevators – was really great for Macao's elderly and disabled. "It's much more convenient after the opening of this tunnel," he said. "Before, if [people with mobility issues] wanted to go up to the Flora Garden, they had to use the cable car, which is very inconvenient. But there's a lift now, which makes it easier for people who are in wheelchairs or older to go up."

Mani Fong, a 36-year-old office worker, uses the tunnel every day to get home from work. "Walking home

has become like daily exercise for me," she says, noting that the tunnel cut her journey in half – a good incentive to make it on foot. "In the past, I always took a bus home and sometimes it took quite a long time for me to get home because of the traffic; and waiting for a bus can take a while too."

Fong had one concern, however: she thinks the ventilation system could be improved. "In winter, the tunnel's fine. But during autumn, it was a bit stuffy inside and it made me dizzy."

A non-resident worker named Tuginah, who is from Indonesia and lives in the Tree Lamps District, recently walked through the Guia Hill Pedestrian Tunnel with her friends. "I

think the tunnel's good in terms of cutting the time taken to make a journey from one side to the other," the 49-year-old says. "So, if we want to go to the area around Rio and Casa Real Hotels, we don't need to go around the hill or use public transport anymore."

The Guia Hill Pedestrian Tunnel is a taste of more convenience to come, according to Macao's Secretary for Transport and Public Works, Raimundo do Rosário. He said the government will continue its quest to improve the city's walkability by building more pedestrian access routes across Macao over the coming decade. ●





## BUSINESS

# A kick of inspiration

**Maccrew is not your average shoe brand. Founder Allen Choi has set out to bring custom sneakers to Macao and propel the city to the forefront of fashion.**

Text **Craig Sauers**  
Photos **Lei Heong Ieong**

Allen Choi put his stamp on Macao with Maccrew, the city's first custom sneaker studio

Allen Choi is on a mission to elevate sneaker culture to Macao with his pioneering local company: Maccrew. Opened in 2019, the city's first custom sneaker studio brings fresh, artistic and totally one-of-a-kind shoes to the city's fashion lovers.

You may have even seen the designs brightening up the city's streets already. From Nikes covered in technicolour snakeskin to white Adidas blooming with hand-drawn lotus flowers, Maccrew's artwork transforms everyday sneakers into a canvas of personal style.

"With sneakers, there is no limit [to what you can do]," says Choi. "You can add different colours, patterns or unique elements. Let's say leopard print – you add whatever you like to them."

Not only do bespoke designs enable a world of exciting artistic possibilities, but

Choi says he saw an excellent business opportunity, too. "The trend is so hot in the US and Europe because of some famous NBA players" and singers like Justin Bieber, Choi explains. "Custom sneakers have been very popular in foreign countries and the mainland for a while. I know there are quite a lot of people in Hong Kong and Singapore who are very into custom sneakers as well. But it's still the beginning stage in Macao."

In just a few short years, Maccrew has had a hand in creating more than 10,000 sneakers, the most expensive of which fetched MOP 67,000. Although customisation might seem to be a service centred on the wealthy, the store's baseline starts at a more approachable MOP 300. By offering bespoke services at affordable price points, Choi has carved out a unique concept in Macao.







MaccREW turns mass-produced sneakers into bespoke artwork, personalised for each customer

(Opposite page) With both professional artists and personal workshops, MaccREW customers can choose the price and timeline that work for them



## SPORTS TO FASHION

Born in Zhongshan, in Guangdong, Choi moved to Macao with his family when he was 7. As a child, he says he got into sports with his dad and brothers. “Because of them, I developed a hobby of playing basketball,” he says, and he found an idol in Allen Iverson, the scrappy guard who turned the Philadelphia 76ers into a perennial title contender in the NBA.

“I got my English name from Allen Iverson,” he adds. “He isn’t a strong or tall athlete like other NBA players – he became famous because of his work ethic and passion for basketball.”

When he was young, he also picked up *sanda* (full-combat Chinese boxing) and became so skilled that he has become a star Macao competitor, representing the city abroad for over a decade. He will also likely partake in the upcoming Asian Games in September 2023.

A passion for athletic pursuits led him to study sports management at Beijing Sport University and Tsinghua University, where he earned a master’s degree. Meanwhile, his love of the NBA provided a gateway into sneaker culture that would lead him to where he is today.

“From the NBA, I learned about American pop culture and street culture. From that, I learned about Kanye West and Virgil Abloh and drew a connection from sports to fashion. Then I realised in the mainland or Macao, no brand connected the two,” explains the 27-year-old. So why not do it himself?

Indeed, sneaker culture and sports are intertwined. In the past, bespoke fashion was typically reserved for luxury men’s tailoring. However, in the 1980s, American hip-hop culture began to pave the way for customization in the world of sneakers. In 1986, Run-DMC, an influential American hip-hop group, struck a sponsorship deal with Adidas after releasing the track “My Adidas”, cementing the music genre’s role in the rise of sneaker culture.

With the rise of the NBA came a wellspring of signature shoes endorsed by celebrity players like Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant and LeBron James. None has had a greater impact on fashion than the Nike Air Jordans – a shoe that transcended its celebrity endorsement and became a cultural icon – but many other shoes backed by basketball stars have become sought-after items, too. Even Choi admits the first sneaker he owned was Reebok’s Answer 1, the shoe made for basketball star Allen Iverson.

As early models like the Nike Air Force 1 started soared in price and desirability on the resale market, luxury brands and, now, custom workshops have carved out space in the rapidly expanding industry. The sneaker market is expected to reach US\$102 billion (MOP 822 billion) by 2025.





Customers visiting Maccrew's Taipa Village shop can also browse hats, phones cases and apparel while enjoying a refreshment from the café

(Opposite page)  
Customisation options range from hand-painted designs to entirely new materials like denim or exotic leather

### 'AN EXPERIENCE STORE'

Eyeing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build a company that combines his love for sports, sneakers and style, Choi launched Maccrew with a mission to bring customisation to Macao and make it more accessible in the process.

At his spacious shop in Taipa Village, just off Rua Gov Tamagnini Barbosa, Choi says he offers “an experience store” – not a typical boutique. Graced by natural light, the airy duplex features fine art collages of fashion icons made with materials from deconstructed shoes. There's also a café where customers

can enjoy a refreshment while exploring the customised sneakers, hats, phone cases, and apparel on display.

If they are keen to kick-start the design process, customers can discuss the options with Maccrew employees or sign up for a workshop. For the latter, participants either bring a pair of sneakers from home or buy them from the store (Nike Air Force 1, Nike Dunk SB, and Converse All-Star are all popular models, adds Choi). Maccrew employees then offer tools, such as paint and draft paper, and guide them step-by-step, from the blueprint to the finished product.

Choi says the workshops are popular among customers who want to save time. For example, if one of Maccrew artists customises a pair of shoes, it could take one to three weeks from start to finish due to the work involved. The designers disassemble each pair, then rebuild them with custom paint jobs, laser engravings or textural elements ranging from leather from Louis Vuitton handbags to old denim. But if customers attend a workshop, they can add some basic custom elements in three to four hours. It's also a more affordable way to take home bespoke shoes.

“You can get a blank white Warrior shoe from the mainland and just pay for the customisation, like the paint job,” he explains. “Around 90 per cent of sneakers are customisable.”

With Maccrew's success in Macao, Choi is planning to expand in the Greater Bay Area, beginning with a store in Shenzhen tentatively scheduled to open in mid-2023. In addition to customisation services, he's also open to embracing other forward-looking trends to stay a step ahead of the curve.

“Sneaker culture will be a combination of the digital world and real world,” says Choi of the future of his industry, referencing the digital fashion in the metaverse, NFTs (non-fungible tokens) and smart features like auto-lacing as potential growth areas. Whatever Maccrew does next, Choi is sure to bring his passion, discipline and work ethic – and hit the ground running. ●





CULTURE

# Remembering the firecracker generation

Two men whose childhoods were dominated by Macao’s firecracker factories have helped document this bygone era in their later years. Their work is being showcased at the newly restored Iec Long firecracker factory, a heritage site now open to the public.



Text **Joey Chew**  
Photos courtesy of **Albert Lai**

A string of braided firecrackers

(Top, left) Iec Long’s factory manager Yu Zik Hing (second right) welcomes Kwong Hing Tai’s manager Chan Lam (first left) and other visitors with a group photo at Iec Long’s main entrance, in the 1960s

(Top, right) Children crimping firecrackers to help support their families

In a city that’s an international hub for tourism, it’s a little odd to remember that firecrackers were once the backbone of Macao’s economy. But up until the casino boom of the 1970s, firecracker factories employed a massive swathe of the city’s population – including young children – to make explosive pyrotechnics for export.

The Cultural Affairs Bureau (IC) has been working to shine a light on this lost industry through the restoration of the old Iec Long firecracker factory. Iec Long, which operated from 1926 until its closure in 1984, is part of Taipa Village. It officially reopened to the public as an industrial heritage site in late December 2022.

A trip to Iec Long is a journey into Taipa’s manufacturing past. Visitors follow a 400-metre-long walkway through the old fuse-glueing and firecracker-crimping workshops, past a pond, alongside waterways, and into an exhibition hall. Here, people can learn about how firecrackers were made at the factory, and the industry’s development in Macao. Artefacts including old tools, the factory’s original wood and stone signboard, and Iec Long’s firecracker packaging are on display, as well as historical photographs and interactive video demonstrations. An audio tour is available, too. Iec Long’s on-site souvenir shop stocks eco-friendly bags and other memorabilia, as well as books about the firecracker industry.



Macao painter Lio Man Cheong brings the firecracker making process to life with his art

(Below) The 400m-long walkway within the renovated site gives visitors a tour around the Iec Long premises

Local author Albert Lai had been looking forward to Iec Long’s restoration for more than a decade. The 73-year-old, who grew up making firecrackers and has written several books about the industry, took on the role of an academic advisor to the new Iec Long exhibition – which includes photographs from his personal collection. When Lai was a child in Taipa, making firecrackers was the main source of income of almost every family he knew. Both adults and children worked for the factories, either on-site or from home. While Lai recalls this period of his life as tough, his memories are tinged with nostalgia. He considers the firecracker era to be a collective memory of Taipa that should not be forgotten.



Joey Chew



António Sanmarful



Joey Chew

“To be able to see Iec Long well preserved to this day, reopened for the public to tour, there are no words to express my gratitude,” Lai says with emotion. “I want to thank the Macao government and IC for working towards this over the past 10 years.”

Lio Man Cheong, a 71-year-old painter, also worked for a firecracker factory as a child and is pleased to see the restoration complete. Lio sees Iec Long as an important educational tool; a way to teach younger generations about the historically significant firecracker industry and its role in shaping modern Macao. His painting, “Macao Firecracker Factory Map”, is currently on display at the exhibition.

## REMEMBERING THE FIRECRACKER FAMILIES

While China’s history with firecrackers dates back some 2,000 years, Macao didn’t enter the fray until the late 19th century. By the 1920s and up until the 1970s, firecrackers were one of Macao’s top three exports (not incongruously alongside incense and matchsticks).

There were six firecracker factories in Taipa in those days, namely Kwong Hing Tai (the largest), Iec Long (the longest running), Him Un, Kwong Yuen, Him Son, and Po Sing. While the Macao Peninsula also had firecracker factories, the disastrous Toi Shan factory explosion – which killed more than

100 people and left 300 more injured – in 1925 led officials to limit the bulk of the industry to Taipa.

Lai recalls learning how to braid strings of firecrackers together by their individual fuses at age 6, working alongside his mother, brother and sister at home in Taipa (his father had moved to Hong Kong to find work). “We worked in front of our own small tables, so our firecrackers wouldn’t get mixed,” he says. “During the night time, we had to push the tables closer together, near the kerosene lamp, otherwise it would be too dark for us to see what we were doing.” This was in the 1950s.

A copy of Lio’s “Macao Firecracker Factory Map” now on display at the exhibition





Lai demonstrates firecracker braiding – a craft he did as a child – inside the Iec Long premises

(Above) The exhibition provides visitors with a 'snapshot' of Iec Long's packaging development

(Opposite page) Visitors can find Lai's books on sale at the souvenir shop



Each morning, Lai's mum would deliver their efforts to the Kwong Hing Tai factory by foot. She'd exchange two baskets of braided firecrackers for two baskets of unbraided firecrackers (with more than 8,000 individual firecrackers in each) to take home. The family regularly stayed up past midnight to complete their task, meaning Lai can barely remember doing any homework.

"We often got sleepy, our mother would scold us, we'd cry, but we still had to carry on braiding because we relied on it to eat, to sustain our living," Lai says.

Making firecrackers was risky work. While the most dangerous parts – like inserting gunpowder – took place inside the factories, 'safer' jobs like braiding could still go badly wrong. The firecrackers Lai's family worked with entered their home with their fuses attached;

these could accidentally ignite and cause serious burns.

Lai admits there were times in his childhood that were dark. His mum was under immense pressure to provide for her family, and could be harsh. But Lai chooses to focus on the lessons and wisdom she imparted. "My mother used to tell us, 'help people whenever and wherever you can,'" he remembers. "She also emphasised the phrase '力賤得人敬，口賤得人憎' ['Speak with your actions, not with your words']."

Lio has similar memories. As a child, his job was to roll cardboard firecracker tubes at home. "Most children would quickly finish off their homework then take part in the labour to help support the family," he says. "But the incomes [from firecracker making] were not high, often only enough to cover the electricity and water bills."

## DECLINE AND FALL

Macao's fireworks industry started to falter in the 1960s. Lai thinks it came down to people's perceptions of the products' danger catching up with reality: both making them and using them was perilous. "In Macao, Hong Kong and across the world, a lot of the fire alarms and accidents were caused by firecrackers, so they were banned in many countries," he says. "Sales began to drop."

Lai recalls speaking with Kwong Hing Tai's former factory manager about how firecrackers made in Macao were often faulty compared to those made in the mainland. "[The manager] told me the ratio of functional firecrackers was around 80 per cent good to 20 per cent bad here, compared to 90 per cent good for firecrackers manufactured in the mainland," Lai says.



(Bottom left) Iec Long's firecracker packaging portrays two ducks dabbling in a lotus pond, signifying happiness and auspiciousness

(Bottom right) Specific tools for fuse glueing – a procedure preceding firecracker braiding – were made of bamboo

(Opposite page) Making firecracker tubes required special rolling instruments, and was carried out in the Macao Peninsula due to its safer nature

Other industries were also on the rise in the city, offering safer employment opportunities. Lai says making plastic flowers and bead embroidery started becoming more attractive alternatives to pyrotechnics.

Lio, meanwhile, views the decline of the firecracker industry as an inevitable consequence of society's progression. "As our society evolves, some things are just bound to be eliminated, we can do nothing about that," he says. "The firecracker factories just remain a part of our memory, a city memory."

#### PRESERVING A COLLECTIVE MEMORY

While the firecracker era was fraught with toil and danger, Lai and Lio both found themselves – later in life – working to preserve that chapter of Macao's collective memory.

Four of Lai's seven published books are about the industry. When he was researching his first book, "Reminiscence of Old Taipa" (《氹仔情懷》), which was published in 2010, he realised that nearly everyone he interviewed had worked for a firecracker factory at some point in their lives. "To write about Taipa's history pretty much meant writing about Taipa's firecracker industry, so there came my second book, 'The Firecracker Industry in Taipa' [《氹仔炮竹業》], he says. That was published in 2013.

"Iec Long Firecracker Factory" (《益隆炮竹廠》) followed in 2015, after Lai uncovered some little-known information about the factory and its late owner, Tang Bick Tong. "In 2015, it was the 90th anniversary of Iec Long, so I released this book then," Lai says.



All images on this spread Joey Chew



For his next book, Lai wants to document the factory that dominated his childhood: Kwong Hing Tai, the largest in Taipa. "It is especially worth mentioning Kwong Hing Tai's owner, Chan Lan Fong," says Lai. "Everyone used to call him the 'King of Firecrackers' – he had a reputation worldwide, not only in Macao and Hong Kong. If in my remaining lifetime I am able to complete the book, 'Kwong Hing Tai 'King of Firecrackers,' Chan Lan Fong,' that would be great."

Lai, who does all the research for his books himself, admits that time is against him. But he is determined: "People of our generation have an especially deep connection to Taipa, so no matter what, I will give it my all to accomplish what I want to do," he says.

Lio held an exhibition titled, "Macao's Firecracker Industry - New Works by Lio Man Cheong" in 2018. His ink wash paintings depicted the various procedures involved in firecracker making. "This industry has now disappeared, but it used to be one of Macao's largest industries – so I think it is worth recording," the artist says.

Regarding Iec Long's recent reopening, Lai says he is relieved the factory will serve as a monument to Taipa's firecracker history. He believes it's appropriate for the site to become a tourist attraction: a melding of Macao's past with its present. "For tourists visiting Taipa, after exploring the Cotai Strip, Rua do Cunha and the Taipa Houses, I hope they also come to see Iec Long," Lai expresses. "After all, it has had such an impact on Macao." ●

#### Plan your visit

Iec Long firecracker factory is located on Rua de Fernão Mendes Pinto, in Taipa. While the walkway is open to the public from 6 am to 7 pm every day, the exhibition hall and souvenir shop are open from 10 am to 7 pm. Admission to Iec Long is free.





CULTURE

## The Curse of the Lost City:

A new novel exploring the First Opium War

Award-winning author Joe Tang spins the true story of Lin Zexu's 1839 trip to Portuguese-administered Macao into a thrilling assassination plot. In doing so, he encourages readers to reconsider the city's role in the First Opium War.

Text **Gilbert Humphrey**  
Photos **António Sanmarful**

Full-time civil servant and  
part-time author Joe Tang

It was the Chinese commissioner Lin Zexu's staunch opposition to the opium trade that sparked the First Opium War. Macao-based author Joe Tang explores the moments before the war began – when Lin Zexu was visiting Macao – in his latest work of historical fiction, “The Curse of the Lost City”.

The 49-year-old's novel opens in 1839, with Portuguese-administered Macao's Governor Adrião Acácio da Silveira Pinto considering a request from the commissioner. Lin Zexu was eager to meet Pinto at the Lin Fong Temple and discuss Portugal's stance on the opium trade. His main goal was to convince the

Portuguese administration to ban opium in Macao. But he also wanted to find out whether it would remain neutral when faced with a conflict between the Chinese Qing dynasty and Britain.

The war started on 4 September, the day after Lin Zexu met with Pinto. It went on to end in British victory in 1842, with Hong Kong being ceded to Britain as a crown colony.

Tang's book delves into fascinating historical facts about the role Macao played in the war, weaving a fictional assassination attempt against Lin Zexu into its plot.





Image courtesy of Pin-to

## A MELDING OF HISTORY AND FICTION

Tang invented a cast of characters to write about in “The Curse of the Lost City”. “It was tricky, because I had to write in a way that would not twist the history, yet it had to make sense,” Tang says. “But it was more challenging for me to imagine what people thought and felt, how they lived during that time, and whether or not the war could have been avoided.”

The main character is a Portuguese-Chinese woman named Maria, who receives an ominous message from a fortune teller – the exact same ‘curse’ centering on an uncertain destiny that both her Chinese mother and grandmother received many years earlier. Tang’s plotline accurately depicts Macao people’s lives in that era, when many fortune tellers plied their trade up and down the streets of southern Chinese cities.

Tang says the ‘lost city’ in his book’s title refers to “a period of confusion” that Macao experienced before the First Opium War. “People were lost, not knowing what the future would be like, or if the war would have a good or bad impact on Macao and its people,” he explains.

He hopes his book will give readers a deeper understanding of this chapter in Macao’s history, as well Macao’s role in the battle against imported narcotics – which had a debilitating effect on the Chinese populace.

Tang likens Macao to a “door hinge” in the First Opium War: important yet obscured. “When you go buy a door, you look at how big or small, cheap or expensive, or what it’s made of,” he says. “But the door hinge is something you don’t even bother to look at. It’s invisible and nobody really cares about it, but if a door hinge is broken, the door is worthless.”

He adds, “I’ve done quite a lot of research on the First Opium War and Macao is barely mentioned anywhere. But it actually plays a role in that if you miss it, then you’ll miss the big picture. If there was no

Macao, things might have turned out quite differently.”

## TWO DECADES OF RESEARCH

Tang says he’d always been fascinated by the story behind Lin Zexu’s visit to Macao. In 1999, after visiting the Lin Fong Temple and its neighbouring Lin Zexu Memorial Museum of Macao, he began what would become two decades of research.

He spent his spare time reading books about Lin Zexu, scrolling the internet, visiting places of relevance, and interviewed people

with knowledge of the First Opium War – all in preparation for writing “The Curse of the Lost City”.

One major road bump was the language barrier. Most information about 19th-century Macao is in Portuguese, including biographies on colonial officials involved with the war. Tang does not speak Portuguese, so had to seek help from translators.

Another challenge was the assassination plot he was determined to splice into the story. “It was difficult for me to write this part because I needed to imagine as if I were a killer,” he says.



A four-metre-tall statue of Lin Zexu cuts a commanding figure outside the Macao museum bearing his name

### Interested in grabbing a copy?

“The Curse of the Lost City” is currently available in Chinese only and can be found in Plaza Cultural Macau Bookstore, Seng Kwong Bookstore, Pin-to Livros & Musica, Cuchi-Cuchi Bookhouse and Livraria Uma





For those interested in learning more of the history of this pivotal period, the Lin Zexu Memorial Museum is a must-visit

(Opposite page) After two years of intense writing, Joe Tang is ready to relax for a bit

### A MOONLIGHTING WRITER'S LIFE

Finally, in early 2020, Tang began writing. This coincided with the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and Macao entering its first two-week lockdown. “We all had to stay home, so I used those two weeks to write,” says Tang.

The father of two remembers that period of intense writing as rather therapeutic; he says he felt “more peace” than most people in Macao, who were panicking over the new disease spreading across the world. He also recalls “tasting the feeling of being a full-time writer” for the first time – a sensation he found exciting.

Despite having authored many works, writing is not Tang’s day job. He is, in fact, a full-time civil servant who’s been moonlighting as a published author since 2008.



“I usually had other work priorities because in Macao, we cannot make a fortune from writing only, right?” he says. “But because of the lockdown, I suddenly found I could be totally immersed in writing my story. From morning to the end of the day.”

Looking back, Tang jokes that he’s almost grateful for the pandemic. “If it wasn’t for Covid, maybe it would take me three to five more years to finish my book.”

Tang was born and raised in Shanghai, studied in the UK (where he earned a degree in business administration from London South Bank University), then moved to Macao at the age of 22. His mother’s side of the family are from Macao, so he wasn’t totally new to the city. Once here, he went on to study a master’s degree in Chinese literature at University of Macau.

His first historical novel, “The Lost Spirit”, was published in 2008 and won the Macao Novel Prize. It tells the story of the 1622 Dutch attempt to attack and capture Macao.

Tang is best known for his short stories, however. His 2005 novella titled “Assassin” won the Macao Literature Award. “Assassin” is based on the 1849 murder of Macao’s then-Portuguese governor, João Maria Ferreira do Amaral. Unlike the fictional assassination attempt in “The Curse of the Lost City”, this one actually happened.

The novella was included in “Floating City”, a collection of short stories published by Beijing’s China Writers Publishing House in 2014. It was also published as a trilingual monograph a year later, in Chinese, Portuguese and English, by Praia Grande Edições. In addition to his books, Tang has written several plays set in Macao, which have been performed during various events including the Macao Arts Festival.

Writing is not Tang’s priority at the moment, however. He says he wants to relax after “The Curse of the Lost City”, which was an incredibly consuming project. Though he does have an idea in mind for his next subject: “Macao during the Age of Discovery [the 15th to 17th centuries].”

“I’m relieved it’s all done for now,” says Tang. “I’m looking forward to talking about my latest book, and discussing with readers what they think about the story.”

He admits he’d love to see “The Curse of the Lost City” turned into a movie. “But I think it’s going to be very expensive to make this story into a film,” he laughs. “It’s a Hollywood-scale production I think.” ●





FOOD AND DRINK

# Baking Macao's edible icon for over three decades

How did a British pharmacist invent a pastry that's unique to Macao and beloved by the world? The founder of Lord Stow's Bakery simply wanted to please the people in a city he loved.



Text **Sara Santos Silva**  
Photos **Lei Heong Jeong**

(Opposite page) Audrey Stow (left) is proud to carry on her father's legacy with the help of his sister, Eileen Stow

Andrew Stow made a name for himself in Macao with his beloved egg tarts

When British-born Andrew Stow – who was neither baker nor lord – filled in the paperwork for a bank loan to establish a roadside bakery in Coloane Village, he had to list all the goods he'd be selling. Stow, who was 34 at the time, wrote down various types of bread, Chelsea buns, birthday cakes, and so forth. Then, right at the bottom, he scrawled two fateful words: egg tarts.

Fast forward 33 years, and these egg tarts have earned the status of edible icon. In fact, in 2020, the confections were added to the inventory list of Macao's protected Intangible Cultural Heritage. They've won the hearts and taste buds of locals and tourists alike in their journey to becoming a symbol of the city's gastronomic culture. Any local tour guide worth their salt will point visitors in the direction of Lord Stow's Bakery – biting into what Stow used to call “the perfect marriage between crispy shell and wibbly wobbly filling” while soaking in the peaceful charms of Coloane Village is a quintessential way to experience Macao.



Sadly, the man behind the brand died unexpectedly in 2006, following an asthma attack. Since then, his sister Eileen Stow has run the business alongside Andrew's daughter, Audrey Stow. They've faithfully continued their beloved brother and dad's legacy: today, Lord Stow's Bakery is one of Macao's most successful businesses and employs more than 130 people.

What started as an unassuming roadside bakery is now a thriving business empire with three locations (soon to be four) in Macao, one franchise in Osaka, Japan, and another franchise in Manila, Philippines. The beloved egg tarts are also available at Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong's Cake Shop, which has the only Lord Stow's licence in Macao's sister Special Administrative Region. This empire didn't go unnoticed to the British Monarchy either. In 2021, Eileen was honoured with one of the most prestigious distinctions when she was invested with the Order of the British Empire by the late Queen Elizabeth II herself.





ONE CITY, THREE TYPES OF EGG TARTS

Sweet (and innocuous) egg tarts may be, they spark fevered debates in Macao. The tiny territory is home to three types of egg tarts: the Macao egg tart, which Andrew pioneered; the traditional Portuguese pastel de nata; and the Hong Kong-style dan tat, a British-inspired dim sum. Which type is the best, and which is the most authentically Macao, are popular subjects for discourse.

Wondering how to tell which tart is which? Lord Stow's and pastel de nata both use puff pastry and feature a brûléed layer on the surface of their respective custard fillings, while dan tat are made with shortcrust pastry and do not have the dark marks. The difference between a Lord Stow's egg tart and a pastel de nata is more subtle: the latter are sweeter and often flavoured with cinnamon and/or a hint of lemon.

Although Andrew Stow christened his creation eponymously, the egg tarts inevitably became known as pòu tát (Chinese for 'Portuguese egg tarts'). "The Macao people were very well aware of the dan tat [Hong Kong egg tart] in their dim sum history, so their way of describing Stow's egg tarts the local Chinese or their friends in Hong Kong was to call them a pòu tát [Portuguese egg tart], in order to differentiate them from the local version of a dan tat," Eileen Stow, Andrew's younger sister and director and chief executive of Lord Stow's, explains.



(Opposite page)  
Eileen Stow now serves as director and chief executive of Lord Stow's Bakery

(Below) Andrew Stow with his daughter Audrey (left) and younger sister Eileen (right)

CRAFTING A UNIQUE EGG TART

According to Eileen, Andrew's plan to sell egg tarts at his new bakery was simply "to give the Portuguese here at the time a taste of home." As such, he went with the puff pastry of pastel de nata instead of the shortcrust pastry used for the tarts of his homeland (and Hong Kong). As he didn't have a Portuguese recipe on hand, he created his own unique recipe – with the fillings more like English custard (less sweet and without cinnamon).

Andrew, a pharmacist by trade, moved from the UK to Macao in 1979 to work at Anglo French Laboratories. His scientific background showed itself in the precision of his cooking, says Eileen. It took him just five test runs to settle on what is now Lord Stow's egg tart recipe. Essentially, it's a secret ratio



of eggs to milk to cream and sugar forming a silken mixture that's then baked in a puff pastry shell at a heat high enough to scorch the milk. Andrew's original recipe has stood the test of time; not a single adjustment has been made since the bakery was established in 1989.

But in spite of Andrew's well-meaning intentions, Macao's Portuguese community was not immediately won over by Lord Stow's egg tarts. "The Portuguese were horrified and told Andrew, 'This is not a pastel de nata!'" Eileen recalls with a laugh. She says he offered them a simple solution in response: "Well if you don't like it, don't buy it."

The bakery's subsequent success indicates sweet teeth may have decided these egg tarts were even better than pastel de nata.







### AN EGG TART FRENZY

As the buzz around Lord Stow's grew to a roar, Andrew found himself in need of an extra pair of hands. So, in 1993, Eileen moved halfway across the world to join her brother in Macao. She remembers witnessing an egg tart frenzy: wannabe pastry moguls approaching Lord Stow's staff at the bakery with cheque books in hand, hoping to entice them away and/or share that coveted recipe. "It was the most shocking time to go through," Eileen recalls.

Andrew Stow never expected his business to become the gold mine it has done. "He had envisioned himself getting up every morning to bake, staying in the shop until he sold the day's goods, then going out to have a glass of brandy somewhere before heading back home to put his feet up," Eileen says. "It wasn't anything other than that, that's why he took the low rent premises in Coloane Village."

As Eileen sees it, all her brother wanted was a business that enabled him to stay in Macao, a city he loved. She took over the business after Andrew died, and has gone on to double Lord Stow's operations and production – while honouring the iconic pastry her brother created. "We've had people that come back ten or twenty years after trying our egg tarts for the first time and say, 'They're still the same, exactly as I remembered it,'" Eileen says with pride. "That's what Audrey [Andrew's daughter and director and executive of Food and Beverage for Lord Stow's Bakery] and I have been working for, to protect Andrew's legacy."

Scan the QR code below to watch the video:



The confections' puff pastry is made at their small factory in Hac Sa Wan, by a quick-working team. "The process starts with snipping off the corner of a bag of flour at one end of the factory, and ends with trays of finished pastry shells ready to be shipped over to our bakeries in the city," Eileen explains. The first eggs are cracked early in the morning, using a specialised machine able to separate up to 8,000 egg yolks from their whites per hour. At Lord Stow's bakeries, the pastry is worked into moulds, filled up with custard and baked in the oven for half an hour.

At peak times before the Covid-19 pandemic, the three Lord Stow's Bakeries in Macao sold a total of about 22,000 egg tarts each day. During the pandemic, however, daily sales at times dipped as low as 3,000.

### A NEW HOME AT THE LONDONER MACAO

But now, after three long years, Lord Stow's is readying itself to expand once again. A massive, 4,500-square-foot space is set to become the egg tarts' salubrious new home at The Londoner Macao, Macao's British-inspired integrated resort.

As customers step into the new branch, they'll see the bakery's vast show kitchen. This will be their first opportunity to witness Lord Stow's egg tart bakers in action. The new kitchen has space for nine egg tart ovens. There'll also be a café area, where people can enjoy Macao's most famous pastries in situ.

Eileen says the sizable new store "reflects a vision for the next 10 years" and is a vote of economic optimism for 2023. "Hopefully, when it opens in September this year, we can expect better business in Macao." ●

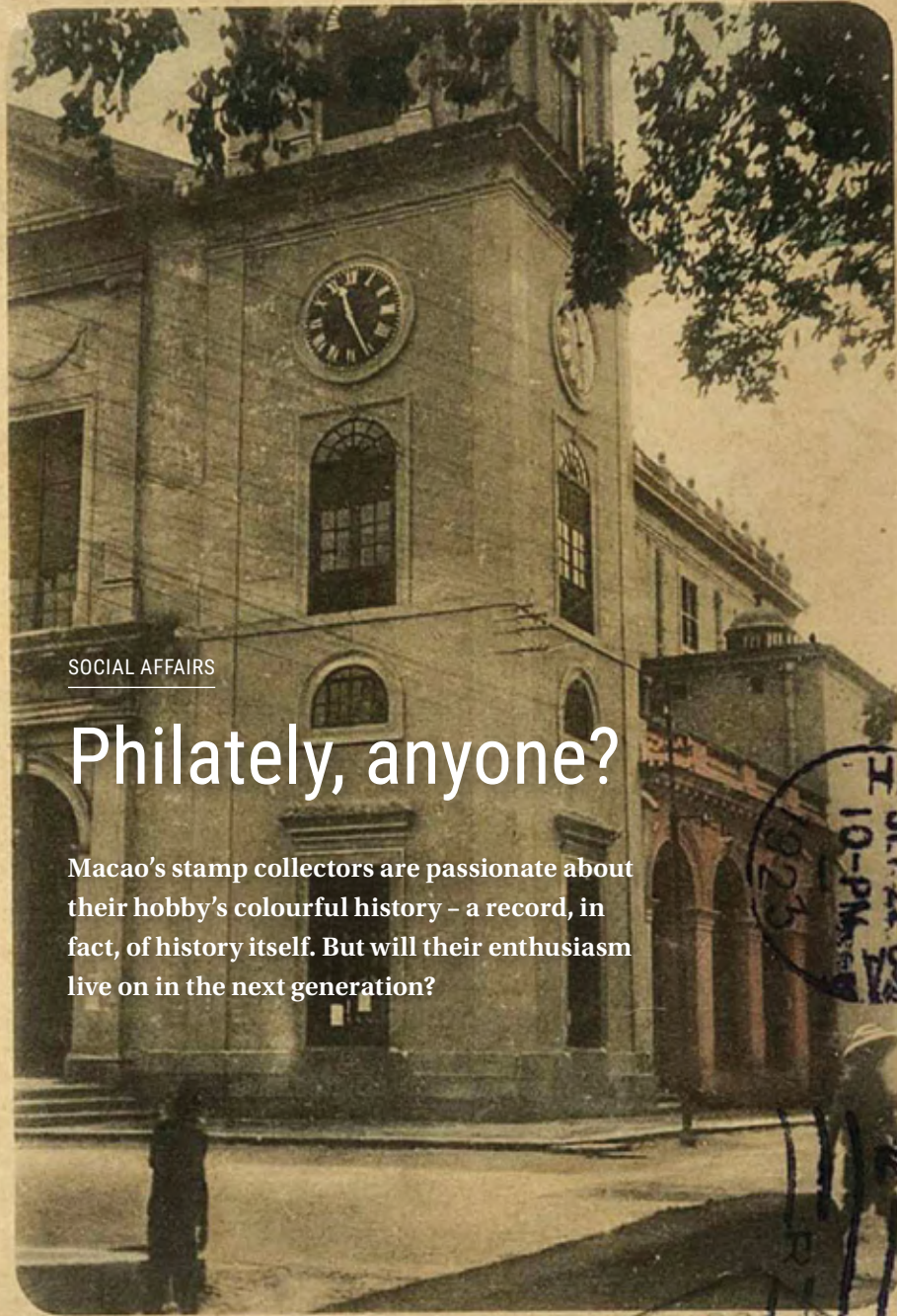
The original Lord Stow's Bakery, opened in Coloane Village in 1989, still welcomes customers daily



SOCIAL AFFAIRS

## Philately, anyone?

Macao's stamp collectors are passionate about their hobby's colourful history – a record, in fact, of history itself. But will their enthusiasm live on in the next generation?



St. Cathedral, Macao



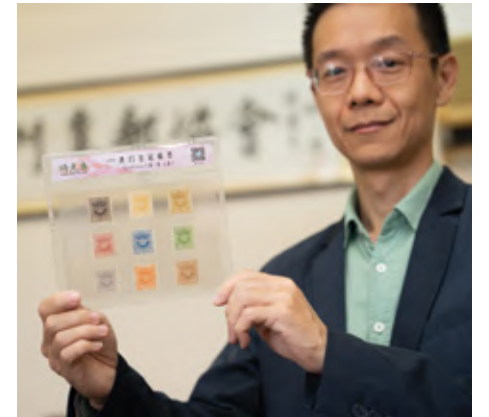
Text **Vivianna Cheong**  
Photos **Lei Heong Jeong**

(Right) Huo Hui Xiao holding the pride of his collection: Macao's first ever stamps, released in 1884

Members of the Macao Philatelic Club (left to right): Cheong Keng Sang, Chan Kuok Kun, Io Hong Kuong (the club's president), José de Sousa, and Huo Hui Xiao

Every Monday, in a room above the Communications Museum, Macao's dedicated philatelists gather to discuss and exchange postage stamps. Philately – the study of such stamps and postal history – is alive if not exactly kicking in the city. Founded in 1980, the Macao Philatelic Club has about 150 members. Only around 20 are active, however; they're in their late 30s to late 70s. All are passionate hobbyists who care about stamps for their nostalgic value, aesthetics, and uniquely tangible role in documenting history. These collectors are not in it for financial gain (though very rare stamps can sell for a lot), nor for stamps' actual purpose: ensuring letters and parcels reach intended recipients.

The club's general director, Huo Hui Xiao, has made a detailed study of Macao's philatelic history. He personally owns a set of the first stamps ever issued in Macao – printed in 1884 (the same year Macao Post was established).



Macao's stamps have evolved through several major phases. The first was between 1884 and Portugal's 5 October 1910 revolution, when they depicted the Portuguese crown or monarch. After the monarchy was overthrown and Portugal's First Republic was established, stamps had the word 'REPÚBLICA' printed over the deposed king's portrait. In 1913, all Portuguese overseas territories including Macao received a fresh set of stamps known as the 'Ceres series' (depicting the Roman goddess Ceres). Then came a series featuring a picture of Vasco da Gama's ship, São Gabriel. In 1948, designs showing scenery from across the Portuguese territories emerged. And after 1976, the city's stamps began to reflect local geography and culture.

Before Macao returned to Chinese rule in 1999, stamps bore the words 'REPÚBLICA PORTUGUESA' in small print. After 1999, these were replaced with 'MACAU, CHINA'. The variety of pictures on these stamps broadened to include local cuisines and landscapes, themes from the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, landmarks from the mainland, and depictions of events from around the world.







Derby Lau, Director of Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau

(Opposite page) Painter Poon Kam Ling has been designing stamps for Macao Post since 1992

All images on this page by Denzel Calangi



## THE POSTAGE STAMP BUSINESS

Benefiting from the philatelic market boom in mainland China, the Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau, which is responsible for producing and selling Macao stamps, earned over MOP 300 million from stamp sales in 2015. The sale of philately products – from definite stamps, to commemorative stamps, to stamp albums – peaked between 2015 and 2016, says the director of Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau, Derby Lau. Macao Post (a branch of the bureau). A stark contrast to an annual average of MOP 40-50 million these days. Stamp sales channels include Macao's 16 post offices, 44 stamp vending machines,

philately shops, the bureau's website, and its agents both in the city and abroad. Then there are the annual stamp subscriptions people take out via the Bureau's website and service counters.

"Stamp collecting is an economic thermometer," Lau says. "Normally, we have a significant number of regular customers from Hong Kong and Guangdong, but due to Covid-19, we've seen a drop in sales from these areas. However, subscription sales remain steady."

Macao Post releases a diverse range of philatelic designs with themes centered on Chinese and Western culture and customs as well as major events in Macao and mainland China – leaning heavily on local culture – to engage

collectors, dealers, and the letter-sending public. One of the most popular is an annual series of stamps depicting the relevant animal of the Chinese zodiac (already in its fourth cycle). As 2022 is the year of the tiger, these stamps were illustrated with different tiger species. Stamps also cover the changing of seasons, showing seasonal flowers found in Macao. Another 2022 series featured local schools, some of which are century-old historic structures. "We've selected some famous ones, including Pui Ching, Santa Rosa de Lima, and Lingnan – these schools are part of our collective memories," says Lau.

There are usually 250,000 stamps printed for each series, though strong demand can see that figure rise.

## STAMPS AS AN ARTFORM, AND INSPIRATION FOR ART

Each stamp printed in Macao bears its designer's name. One of Macao Post's most prolific designers is the painter Poon Kam Ling, whose first stamp series dates back to 1992. Poon, who is in her 60s, specialises in portraits of literary and religious figures. She says the lead time on stamp design is about half a year. First, Macao Post will assign her a theme. Then, Poon proposes the sorts of images she'll create. Once approved, she starts drawing.

One of Poon's favourite stamp series had the Chinese literary classic "Dream of the Red Chamber" as its theme. Poon studied the book meticulously before settling on a scene depicting the two lovers reading a banned book. "They read a banned book together secretly, showing they are soulmates," the artist explains. "The blooming blossoms behind them are an expression of their love."

Poon enjoys the artistic process behind stamp design, and says philatelists' responses to her work warms her heart. She had a particularly successful design in the 1990s, depicting the goddess of mercy Kun Iam. "The stamps sold out very quickly, especially in the

mainland," Poon recalls. "It has something to do with the spiritual meaning of the subject."

Each year, Macao Post holds the Draw My Story of Stamps Contest. Participants select a stamp design and recreate it. The competition's original aim was to get younger generations engaged with the Communications Museum of Macao, but it ended up attracting entrants from all age groups. Lau says the quality of work produced is very high and that designs can be "remarkable". Some entrants have even gone on to become official stamp designers. "We aim to promote stamps through this contest, in which participants must study our stamps and research their context," Lau says.



All images on this page courtesy of Poon Kam Ling



José de Sousa, holding one of his cover collection marking the stamps and postage mark valid on the last date of Portuguese rule of Macao

(Opposite page) Philatelic enthusiast Chan Kuok Kun, keen on collecting covers of political themes

WHY COLLECT STAMPS?  
THE REASONS ARE PLENTY

The Macao Philatelic Club’s members collect stamps for numerous reasons. A big one is the sense of history stamps themselves convey. But many members believe a ‘cover’ – the outside of an envelope, postcard, or package that displays stamps, postage marks, names, and addresses – is a more interesting journey to the past, or documentation of the present. Covers’ merging of postal and personal histories is a source of fascination for philatelists.

Philatelic covers are often contrived. Stamp collectors buy stamps, stick them to a slew of envelopes, then post them off to friends, family, and fellow philatelists around the world. Each recipient is supposed to send the letters back with stamps and postage marks from their own place of residence. Creating a collectable philatelic cover takes careful planning. The idea is to gather dates, place names, and images with special meaning. When the letters return, the original sender chooses the best cover for himself and swaps the remaining envelopes within the club.

One of the Macao Philatelic Club’s members, 71-year-old José de Sousa, has a cover that was posted on the exact day of Macao’s handover to China. It bears a special commemorative postal chop that was only valid for 17 days. He also owns a cover bearing two stamps produced during Portugal’s rule of the city, with a postage mark from the last day of that rule.

“Creating covers is a rewarding experience,” de Sousa says. “Whenever I flip through my covers, they are like a photo album of fond memories. They’ve travelled the world for me.”

Chan Kuok Kun is a club member in his 60s with an interest in political themes. During the 1980s and 1990s, he and a late member, Lee Man Yuk, worked closely together to create politically meaningful covers. They’d post letters at critical moments in

history, for example, to collect postage mark dates of significance. Chan also recalls buying a small printer and some coloured ink to “print a small decoration [image] alongside the address to elevate a cover’s aesthetic value.”

On 31 March 1993, Macao’s Basic Law was adopted by the National People’s Congress in Beijing. That day, via a friend in Beijing, Lee and Chan posted letters to each other from the post office inside the Great Hall of the People, where the congress took place. The covers featured Chinese stamps and a printed image relevant to their subject.

Over the years, Chan has been interested in Sino-Portuguese relations. He’s created covers commemorating important historical events in China and Portugal’s shared history, such as the signing of the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration on 13 April 1987,

which established the process for Macao’s handover. On that day, Chan posted a letter with Macao stamps and the wording of the event on an envelope to the law maker Zhou Nan. At the time, Zhou was the mainland’s vice-minister of Foreign

Affairs and the top representative during negotiations for the transfer of Macao administration from Portugal to China. He signed Chan’s envelope and sent it back; the cover remains one of Chan’s prized possessions.







Denzel Calangi

“

The millennials have no idea of stamps, not even the writing style on an envelope. The trend is that stamps will simply become a historical record.

– Huo Hui Xiao

#### A FUTURE IN JEOPARDY

Philately is experiencing a boon amongst younger generations in some parts of the world, according to an article in the Guardian. They see it as a hobby tinged with nostalgia for the pre-digital era while simultaneously appreciating the highly ‘Instagramable’ nature of stamps and covers. But Lau from Macao Post says there’s only been a slight increase in younger philatelists in Macao in recent years. She points out that a good stamp collection takes time and money to build from scratch or buy at auction. Stamp

collector de Sousa says youngsters he knows seem more interested in the amount of money a collection could fetch than stamps’ nostalgic or historic value. “We live in a fast-food culture, and they no longer know that thrill of anticipation [for a letter],” he says.

Huo, the Macao Philatelic Club’s general director, feels pessimistic about philately’s future: “The millennials have no idea of stamps, not even the writing style on an envelope. The trend is that stamps will simply become a historical record,” he says, with regret.

In 2018, the Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau and the Macao Philatelic Club teamed up to host the Macao 2018 – 35th Asian International Stamp Exhibition. The event showcased 42 booths of international, national, and local philatelic products and collections, from 23 countries and regions. It attracted a decent showing of stamp dealers and collectors, proving that philately has indeed captivated many hearts in the region. Whether this will translate to a new generation of philatelic followers in Macao, however, remains to be seen. ●

A set of 18 stamps featuring the Eighteen Arhats, issued in December 2022 by Macao Post



## SOCIAL AFFAIRS

## For the love of classic cars

Eddie Lam wasn't a classic car fan, but then he fell in love with a 1978 Chevrolet Camaro. Since then, the graphic designer has built an association of like-minded individuals who collect, protect and exhibit classic cars.







Text **Erico Dias**  
Photos courtesy  
of **Eddie Lam**

The staging for the 2021 Macau Vintage Car Show, organised by MVV, recalls Eddie Lam's childhood Hot Wheels toys

If you've strolled the streets of Macao, you've probably stumbled upon a newlywed photo shoot: princess dress, handsome groom, and maybe a tiny, coffee-coloured Mini Sprite (circa 1992). Or perhaps a white 1985 Mercedes-Benz sporting a red bow? If so, there's a high chance the happy couple was posing with a car owned by Eddie Lam, founder of both the Macau Vintage Vehicle Culture Association (MVV) and Iconic, a company that rents out such cars.

While classic car clubs are found around the world – Hong Kong's is very active – Macao's faces something of a challenge: the city's residents are barred from importing second-hand vehicles. This rule was introduced by the Macao government during the mid-90s, as officials deemed there were too many vehicles in the city. It means Lam and others at the MVV play a role rather like zookeepers – protecting, curating, and celebrating their endangered inventory.

Lam, who was born in Macao in 1978, didn't get interested in cars until later in life. He played with Hot Wheels toys as a kid, but was perfectly content driving his dad's cast-offs as an adult. He studied graphic design in Canada, where he, his dad, and his sister lived together between 1995 and 2000. Then, Lam worked for an advertising company in Macao until the SARS outbreak closed the company down in 2002.

"When SARS occurred, I pondered my future," Lam says. "I loved graphic design, so do I keep working in this field or switch to another one? Or go back to Vancouver and find something new there?"

In the end, Lam stuck with Macao. He set up his own design company, Burgundy Workshop, and landed Lord Stow's Bakery as his first client. Its cheery yellow egg tart boxes are his work. In 2013, Burgundy Workshop became Deja Vu Graphic Design House. And in 2014, Lam's love of classic cars was ignited.

#### IT STARTED WITH THE CHEVROLET

That was the year he stumbled upon an underground car dealership (now closed), near Jardim da Montanha Russa, and laid eyes on a bright yellow muscle car parked in a dark corner. Lam can't explain what it was about the 1978 Chevrolet Camaro that sparked his interest, but suspects a combination of the fact they were born in the same year and the Camaro's propensity for popping up in films – from *Charlie's Angels* (2000) to *Transformers* (2007).

"I asked the shop owner, 'Why has nobody [already] bought this iconic car?'" Lam remembers. "He explained [to me] that nobody was willing to fix

it, and said, 'Don't you talk to me about the air conditioning ... that will never work again.'"

Lam brushed off the car seller's lack of enthusiasm. He went straight to a mechanic friend and asked for advice. The mechanic gave Lam two options: buy the car and drive it for a year or two, then resell it or scrap it, or spend a lot of money fixing it.

Lam chose the latter and christened 'her' Bumblebee after the car's doppelganger in *Transformers* (the two cars are the same model and colour). This Bumblebee was drivable, but only just. It took Lam five years of work to get her up to scratch – though the salesman was right when he said Bumblebee's air conditioning was beyond repair. Finding the right replacement parts was tough in Macao, so Lam ordered a new battery, transmission and tyres from an online shop in the US.

He says he loved the Camaro's timeless "sexiness", and grew to appreciate older cars in general. "Why? Because the designs and

engines are iconic," Lam says.

"Nowadays, every modern vehicle you see has almost the same face." Since buying Bumblebee, he's built up a collection of distinctive, older models: the aforementioned 1985 Mercedes-Benz 380SEC and 1992 Mini Sprite, a 1981 Cadillac Seville, a 1998 Toyota Celica, a 1994 Peugeot 306 Cabriolet, and a 1997 Subaru Domingo van.

Some he buys for the novelty, others as an investment. Lam reckons that Bumblebee, for instance, has rocketed in value since he bought her for HKD 60,000 eight years ago. Are there any cars he still dreams of buying? A 1970 Lincoln Continental. "It's beautiful, a car you see in many Hollywood films," Lam enthuses. "The car's speedometer is made by Cartier – crazy, right?"

In 2020, Lam started a new company called Iconic – a side-hustle to monetise his collection of groovy cars. More specifically, Iconic lets people rent his vehicles to use as props for wedding photos.

Despite having no actual 'vintage' cars, the MVV brings together a wide range of classic cars from decades past







Visitors to the 2021 Macau Vintage Car Show walked among the vehicles, getting an up close view of these prized possessions

(Inset) This Austin-Healey Sprite is older than many of the cars in the MVV, only produced from 1958 to 1971



### MACAU VINTAGE VEHICLE CULTURE ASSOCIATION IS BORN

After Lam purchased Bumblebee but before he started Iconic, Lam launched the Macau Vintage Vehicle Culture Association (MVV). The name is a little awkward. To be classified as ‘vintage,’ a car must have been made prior to 1930 – which none of Lam’s vehicles actually are. They are technically ‘classic’ cars, defined as more than 25 years old.

However, ‘the Macau Classic Car Association’ had already been registered by the time Lam entered the scene. He decided to settle for the MVV. The MVV has about 140 members, each with two classic cars on average. These vehicles include Lam’s own sizable stable, as well as a 1980 Datsun Fairlady 280zx, a 1973 Super Beetle 1303s, a 1984 Mitsubishi Pajero, and a 1992 Mitsubishi



Eddie Lam with Bumblebee, the car that started it all

3000 GT. Lam rents a big space on MVV’s behalf in Hac Sa, where the members meet up with their cars. The MVV’s leadership committee works to organise classic car events in the city, like the 2021 Macau Vintage Car Show held at Lisboeta. MVV also has an active Facebook group where members post photos of classic cars spied around Macao. Lam says the group has identified about 1,200 different classic vehicles to date. “We try to share the story of our cars and their past owners,” says Lam. “How did they get it? How did the new owner find it? And how do they repair her? It’s really interesting.” Bumblebee, for example, was once owned by the family that brought the American fast-food chain McDonald’s to Macao. Another car in the club, a 1974

Volkswagen Super Beetle, was found – like Bumblebee – in an underground auto shop in Macao. The Beetle was in terrible shape, so its new owner sent the car to Hong Kong to be restored by a famous ‘Beetle master’ who rebuilt the car. Lam says parts were sourced from a ‘sister’ Beetle in Wales, and “just like that, a beautiful car is back.” Today, electric or hybrid vehicles are taking over the city. Lam, who actually drives a modern Mazda CX-5 in his day-to-day life (you need good air conditioning in Macao), is even considering buying a Tesla. But that won’t stop him from collecting iconic, older vehicles. “They make me feel whole,” he says. “If we take good care of them, and keep them running, they bring us a lot more memories.” ●



## SPORTS

# Head to the hills

Natural beauty is everywhere in Macao, you just have to know where to look. That's why we asked Eric Leong, co-founder of Associação de Juventude San Ngai de Macau hiking club, for his insider tips.

Text **Amanda Saxton**  
Photos **Lei Heong Leong**

Eric Leong encourages others to explore Macao's many hiking trails with the club he co-founded

“Macao is known for its world heritage sites, intangible cultural heritage, festivals and grand events. But out in nature, you can see an alternative, beautiful side of Macao. A small town with a different perspective.”

So says Eric Leong, who co-founded the local hiking club, Associação de Juventude San Ngai de Macau (San Ngai Macau, meaning ‘Mountain Will’) in 2017. A firm believer that nature has the power to heal our bodies and clear our minds, the 36-year-old spends much of his time exploring the hills and trails that snake across the territory.

He knows where to watch the sunset over a seaside pagoda, how to retrace the footsteps of ancient villagers through the forest and which mountain boasts the highest peak at 170 metres – experiences that you wouldn’t typically associate with Macao. And yet, the city is full of natural beauty, including more than a dozen lovely hiking trails that wend their way across the main peninsula, Taipa and Coloane. Macao’s trails give locals and visitors alike a chance to explore the city’s green side.

“I have been hiking in Macao for around 10 years,” says Leong, who was a boy scout growing up and spent years mountaineering around Asia. “The reason why I continue to hike with unfading passion is because I am continuously learning more in the mountains – all of which can be integrated into our lives. The interaction between humans or the changes in nature we observe, these are not felt in the city.”

One area of Macao that he returns to time and time again is Coloane island, in the far south. In particular,

he gravitates towards the Hac Sá Long Chao Kok Coastal Trail. Promising stunning sea views, coastal ecology and dramatic rock formations, the family-friendly route undulates between flat stretches and steep staircase. Meaning “Dragon Claw Rock”, Long Chao Kok offers a nightly treat, too: On clear evenings at 7 pm, you can see an impressive fireworks display, courtesy of the aquatic theme park Chimelong Ocean Kingdom in Hengqin.

“Long Chao Kok is one of Macao’s ‘New Eight Scenic Spots’, named by the Chinese Cultural Exchange Association, [a non-profit organisation] with a goal to promote Macao’s culture,” Leong says. “And the fact that it is easy makes it a great relaxing morning walk.”

Another benefit of Macao’s approachable trails is that hikers do not need to invest in expensive equipment or worry about serious injuries. Simply throw on some sportswear, grab a water bottle and set off. From start to finish, Leong says the trail takes about a half-hour to complete. You can find the trailhead near Hac Sá Beach on the eastern coast of Coloane and follow it all the way to Coloane Va Ian Cemetery to the south.

Depending how often you stop to take photos, that is. Known for its photogenic appearance, Hac Sá is Macao’s biggest beach and has distinctive bi-coloured sand: part black, the beach’s natural hue, and part yellow, thanks to imported sand used to stop erosion. Along the way, many hikers stop to take photos from a picturesque wooden pagoda that seems to float over the water.







This trail along Hac Sá Beach offers an easy hike with picturesque views

A 10- to 15-minute walk from the trail’s finishing point will lead you to Cheoc Van Beach, a palm-fringed cove with a golden, sandy coastline and public swimming pool. If you reach the beach at dinner time, dig into a homemade pizza and fruity sangria at waterfront La Gondola Restaurant.

Another relatively easy trail on Coloane island takes you from Hac Sá Reservoir Fitness Trail to the A-Ma goddess statue. This well-worn route traces Hac Sá Reservoir, a star-shaped body of water surrounded by trees in Coloane, and is known for its fresh air and a dramatic 60-metre-long swing bridge that hovers above the water. “The best two words to describe this trail are: ‘beautiful landscape,’” Leong says.

The Hac Sá Reservoir Fitness Trail itself is short, taking just 30 minutes to complete as a loop, but it’s common for Macao’s dedicated hikers to connect

the fitness circuit with longer, more challenging treks around the city.

To go the extra mile, quite literally, climb up Coloane Peak to visit the immense A-Ma goddess statue. Standing precisely 19.99 metres tall, the gleaming white jade statue commemorates the sea goddess, revered by fishermen and sailors, as well as the year Macao returned to mainland China, 1999. There’s also a major payoff when it comes to views: you’ll be treated to a glorious 360-degree panorama of the South China Sea, Cotai Strip and even parts of Hong Kong.

For those who love history and exotic plant life, Leong recommends the Coloane Seac Min Pun Ancient Path to Hac Sá Beach. You can find the trailhead on Estrada de Hac Sá. If you encounter a rugged, relatively steep path that looks like it’s been around for centuries, you’re in the right place.

Up until the 1960s, before Coloane had paved roads, people traversed this trail to move between villages on the south side of Macao. “The connection with different historical cultures and characteristics from ancient times to the present makes this walk worthwhile. It’s what makes our trails unique,” Leong says.

Today, you’ll find lots of scenic gazebos where you can catch your breath and admire the views. Along the way, you may also spot several rare flora in the surrounding forest, including unusual fan-like furcate screw pine trees and the tropical uvaria shrub (known for its red, star-shaped flowers and yellow fruits).

While the path only takes around 35 minutes to complete, you can continue by following the Coloane Trail to the A-Ma Cultural Village or Seac Pai Van Park, then continue to Hac Sá Beach to create a three- to four-hour hike.

Sprawling across 7,000 square meters, the A-Ma Cultural Village is a popular landmark that plays host to the ornate Tianhou Palace, an impressive entry arch and a bell tower. As an added bonus, the village is just a five-minute walk uphill to see the A-Ma goddess statue.

Another popular option is Seac Pai Van Park, where you can meet Macao’s giant pandas, Kin Kin and Hong Hong, and an array of other animals – think red pandas, monkeys, snakes. The 20-hectare park is something of a refuge, providing a safe home to animals that had been illegally smuggled into Macao and rescued by the government.

After exploring Chinese architecture or visiting with rehomed animals, follow the trail down to Hac Sá Beach, where you can refuel with chu pa bao (pork chop buns), barbecued eggplant and other local snacks at one of the food stalls.

## Explore Macao's trails

Whether you live in Macao or are planning a visit, check out these beautiful paths to see another side of the city.

### HAC SÁ LONG CHAO KOK COASTAL TRAIL

Macao Photo Agency



**Starting point:**  
Rua de Hac Sá Long Chao Kok  
**Ending point:**  
Estrada de Cheoc Van  
**Distance:** 1.2 kilometres  
**Time:** 30 minutes

### HAC SÁ RESERVOIR FITNESS TRAIL to THE A-MA GODDESS STATUE

Municipal Affairs Bureau



**Starting point:**  
Hac Sá Reservoir Natural Park  
**Ending point:**  
Hac Sá Reservoir Natural Park (circular trail)  
**Distance:** 3.2 kilometres  
**Time:** 1 hour 40 minutes

### COLOANE SEAC MIN PUN ANCIENT PATH to HAC SÁ BEACH

Municipal Affairs Bureau



**Starting point:**  
Seac Min Pun Ancient Path  
**Ending point:**  
Seac Pai Van Park  
**Distance:** 3.5 kilometres  
**Time:** 2 hours

Of course, fresh air, great views and delicious food are just a few of the many payoffs that come with exploring Macao’s green side. For Leong, spending time in nature is a way of life that he hopes to share with as many people as possible. “A lot of tourists have already seen a lot of the city, but Macao’s natural scenery is something new,” he says. “Especially Macao’s mountains and the natural environment – they can really leave visitors with a completely different impression.” ●



## HISTORY

# Portugal and Japan: 480 years of cooperation

Throughout these sometimes rocky centuries, Macao has provided a base for the two countries' diplomatic and trade relations.

Text **Eduardo Kol de Carvalho**,  
architect and author

Portuguese Black Ship in Japan during  
16th-century Nanban period

(Below) Oda Nobunaga

One hundred and fifty years ago, in 1873, the governor of Portuguese-administered Macao, Januário Correia de Almeida, became Portugal's first envoy to meet Emperor Mutsuhito – the first monarch to effectively rule Japan since the 1330s. Januário Correia de Almeida stopped by Nagasaki on his way to the Empire of the Rising Sun's brand new capital, Edo (now Tokyo).

At that time, Japan was still emerging from Sakoku (1639-1853), a period of more than two hundred years where the country barely interacted with the rest of the world. But Portugal and Japan's relationship dated back almost a century before Sakoku began.

In fact, it was Portuguese merchants and missionaries who transformed Nagasaki from a fishing village to a centre for trade in the late 1500s – around the same time as the growing maritime power was establishing itself in Macao.

In 1543, three Portuguese adventurers were the first Europeans to set foot in Japan. A typhoon drove them into the Ryukyu Archipelago and, in a chance encounter that ended up shaping the future of Japan, their Chinese junk got shipwrecked on one of its islands, Tanegashima.

Those Portuguese interlopers introduced locals to matchlock-style firearms, an early form of musket that used a length of burning rope to ignite the gunpowder within. The island happened to be home to skilled swordsmiths who were able to quickly reproduce the gun; their version of it became known as 'tanegashima' and was adopted by the Japanese samurai. Ultimately, the weapon allowed the feudal lord and military leader Oda Nobunaga to reunify what was then a torn-apart country.

Japan's reunification took place during the so-called Nanban period of trade, another direct result of the 1543 shipwreck.







Leong Ka Tai

The Portuguese introduced matchlock-style firearms to Japan, which were adapted and reproduced as tanegashima

Portuguese traders went on to ply a route connecting isolated Japan with southern China (Nanban, incidentally, means ‘southern barbarian’). They’d buy Chinese silk at the fairs of Canton to sell in Japan, where they stocked up on gold, silver and copper for their return voyage to China. Just a few years into this highly profitable era of mercantilism, Portugal claimed conveniently located Macao as its base for trade with the Far East.

Nobunaga, by then Japan’s effective ruler, encouraged free trade and offered protection to the Portuguese merchants sailing in from Macao. And where European traders go, Christian missionaries follow. Japan was no exception.

Francis Xavier, one of the founders of the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) reached Japan in 1549 as an Apostolic Nuncio and it was in that capacity that he presented himself to the daimyo of Yamaguchi. Jesuits brought with them Catholicism, but also the latest scientific advances and culture from Europe. From European fashions and food to Western medical knowledge and architectural techniques, the Japanese absorbed it all. The missionaries founded Japan’s first ‘modern’ hospital, orphanage, and Western-style art school. They also published the first Japanese dictionary and grammar books.

While Nobunaga led Japan, merchants and missionaries enjoyed full support from Japan’s authorities.

A detailed street map of the city of Edo (now Tokyo) in Japan

(Below) Toyotomi Hideyoshi; Tokugawa Ieyasu (left)



But this gradually decreased under the rule of Nobunaga’s successors, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and then Tokugawa Ieyasu. The spread of Catholicism, courtesy of the Jesuits, concerned them – these leaders suspected religious conversions were a covert way for Europeans to take over the country.

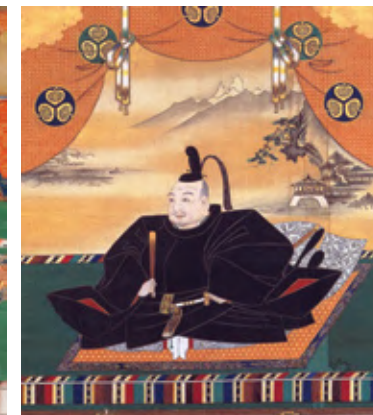
Toyotomi eventually ordered 26 Japanese converts to be arrested and crucified in Nagasaki as a warning to their compatriots. The executed Japanese Catholics are now known as the 26 martyrs of Japan. Under Tokugawa’s rule, Catholics continued to face repression, persecution, and often death. The Tokugawa shogunate progressively closed Japan off to the outside world and by 1639, the Nanban period had well and truly been replaced by Sakoku. Trade and diplomatic relations were severely curtailed; virtually all foreigners were barred from entering

the country, and the Japanese public weren’t allowed to leave.

Japan’s return to isolation was the start of a long and relatively peaceful chapter of the country’s history. The Tokugawa shogunate ruled between 1603 and 1868 (this time is also known as the Edo

period) and oversaw a ‘Japanese Renaissance’. Traditional arts and cultural practices such as ikebana (flower arranging) and chanoyu (tea ceremonies) were refined, while numerous new forms of art were developed – including porcelain, haiku (poetry), kabuki (musical theatre), ukiyo-é (prints) and ukiyo-zuchi (popular fiction). The Japanese used techniques and skills learned from the Portuguese to fine-tune these practices and products. In fact, historians argue that there’d be no Japanese renaissance without that earlier Portuguese influence.

The Edo period was also marked by famines, natural disasters and peasant unrest. And in its later years, increasing Western intrusions highlighted the technological divide between Japan and the West, where the Industrial Revolution was well under way.







Isidoro Francisco Guimarães

### JAPAN'S RETURN TO THE WORLD

In the 1850s, the US was a newly minted Western power on the opposite side of the Pacific Ocean. Its representatives forced Japan out of Sakoku, with the Treaty of Peace and Amity (1854) and the Treaty of Amity and Commerce (1858). The new treaties piqued the interest of Portugal's then king, Pedro V, who instructed the governor of Macao, Isidoro Francisco Guimarães, to hurry to the Japanese capital and negotiate a trade deal benefitting Portugal.

But political turmoil in Japan, coupled with complicated home

affairs in Macao (Portugal was in the midst of wresting control over Taipa and Coloane Islands) meant that Guimarães' mission didn't leave Macao until 1860. He and his fellow diplomats arrived in Edo that July, aboard the corvette D João I and under the command of Feliciano António Marques Pereira. On 19 July, the Portuguese plenipotentiaries secured an audience with the Governor of Edo and representatives of the ruling shogun. At the Government Palace, they made their presentation in Portuguese, which was translated first into Dutch (Japan's language of commerce with the Americans and Europeans), then into Japanese by interpreters. Tea, sweets and cigars were served at the end of the ceremony.

A few weeks later, on 3 August, the two countries signed the Treaty of Peace, Amity and Commerce. Guimarães signed on behalf of Portugal's king, while Midzogoetsi Sanoekino Kami, Sakai Okino Kami and Matsdaira Dzirobe signed on behalf of the Japanese shogun. To celebrate, the Portuguese hoisted the Japanese flag on their ship and fired off a series of salvoes. A day later, they delivered a letter from the king to the shogun; this was reciprocated by a special Japanese meal delivered in lacquer boxes. Before leaving Japan, Guimarães appointed Macao-born José da Silva Loureiro to serve as the Portuguese consul in Kanagawa (part of Edo).

Once the treaty had been ratified, many Portuguese families from Macao moved to Japan to establish the likes of banks, insurance companies and trading companies. This period of Portuguese expansion overlapped with the 1868 Meiji Revolution, which restored power to the Emperor of Japan. The Meiji Revolution spelled the end of the isolationist Tokugawa shogunate and the start of Japan's rapid modernisation and industrialisation – helped along by the Europeans now allowed to live and work there. It was into this climate of change that Isidoro Francisco Guimarães' successor, Januário Correia de Almeida, entered Japan in 1873.



Januário Correia de Almeida



Vicente Emílio Braga



Venceslau de Moraes

### ANOTHER CENTURY OF PORTUGUESE INFLUENCE IN JAPAN

The subsequent wave of Portuguese reaching Japan from Macao, Hong Kong and Shanghai mainly settled in Yokohama and Kobe. There, they founded Portuguese clubs and schools and were considered to be one of the more influential foreign communities in Japan. The Macao-born accountant Vicente Emílio Braga, for instance, introduced Japan to double-entry bookkeeping. In the 1870s, he was transferred from his role as chief accountant at the Imperial Mint in Osaka to teach accountancy at Japan's Ministry of Finances.

Up until the 1920s, Portugal's main exports to Japan were wine and cork, the latter used in naval construction. Portuguese diplomats promoting trade and relations

with Japan at that time included José da Silva Loureiro, Eduardo Pereira, Venceslau de Moraes – who later became consul in Kobe and a prominent writer on Japanese culture – and Batalha de Freitas.

During the earlier Nanban period, the Portuguese language had been widely used across Japan. But the first Japanese education provider to introduce Portuguese in its curriculum was the Tokyo Commercial High School (now the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies), when Professor João Abranches Pinto started teaching the language in 1917.

When Japan sided with Germany and Italy in World War II, Portugal – as a neutral country – maintained its diplomatic relations. While Japan's Imperial Army occupied Guangzhou and Hong Kong in the 1940s, as well as Portuguese Timor, Macao avoided this fate.



Corvette D João I



The importance of trade and the Portuguese influence in Japan has strengthened the two countries' ties throughout the centuries



### PORTUGAL-JAPAN TIES IN THE MODERN ERA

A turning point for Portugal and Japan relations came in 1964 when Portugal sent 20 athletes to compete in Tokyo's Summer Olympics. The Portuguese ambassadors Armando Martins and Almeida Coutinho also improved the two countries' cultural and commercial ties, laying the foundations for several significant developments between the late 1960s and early 1970s. Japanese universities, for example, began offering courses in the Portuguese language.

The Portuguese company Salvador Caetano started importing Toyota vehicles, while the Portuguese shipping company Soponata used Japanese shipyards for its huge oil tankers. At Expo '70, the 1970 world fair held in Osaka, the Portuguese pavilion boasted a replica of a monument on the island of Tanegashima (where the first Portuguese to reach Japan were shipwrecked) representing friendship between the nations. Japan was also the first country to buy petrol from then-Portuguese Angola.

The 1970s were also a time of major political, social, and economic upheaval in Portugal. As its anti-colonialist Carnation Revolution overthrew the authoritarian Estado Novo regime in 1974, Portugal's African territories gained independence – sparking a mass exodus of Portuguese citizens, who became refugees. Macao remained under Portuguese administration until its 1999 handover to China; incidentally, the 1990s also saw the Japanese public become increasingly interested in Portuguese music, art, cinema, and sports.

There were many state and private visits between the countries' respective leaders. As an example, Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko went to Portugal on an unofficial visit in 1998.

After 480 years, Portugal will always be Japan's oldest friend in the West. The fact that Portuguese-administered Macao served as the nexus for the two countries' ties throughout the centuries, picking up again after the end of Sakoku, makes for a strong connection between the Macao Special Administrative Region and Japan today. ●



## PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

# Chocolate's return to São Tomé and Príncipe

Here's how cacao – the key ingredient in chocolate – went from boom to bust to economic balm in the tiny island nation, a former Portuguese colony.



Scott Ramsay

Text **Fei Pou Lou** and **Manuel Barros**

Local producers are eager to usher in a new era of cacao, the key ingredient in chocolate, with a modern approach

For centuries, chocolate sweetened the fortunes of Africa's second smallest country. São Tomé and Príncipe consists of two volcanic islands off the coast of Gabon, in the equatorial tropics, with a near-perfect climate for cacao trees – their bitter beans are the main ingredient in chocolate. Driving inland, around the former Portuguese colony's misty green hills, cacao pods can be spied growing wild between coconut palms, bananas and coffee plants.

Cacao was introduced to what was then an uninhabited archipelago by Portuguese settlers who arrived in the late 15th century. By the 19th century, intensive cocoa production (cacao is called cocoa after beans are fermented, the first step in processing them into chocolate) was taking place in

massive, semi-industrial plantations known as roças. These functioned as villages, each with their own churches, hospitals, and housing for thousands of imported African labourers (slaves until slavery was abolished in 1875, then indentured workers).

In the early 20th century, São Tomé and Príncipe was the biggest cacao grower in the world and known for the fine quality of its product. But by the time the islands gained independence from Portugal, in 1975, the industry was in decline. This turned to freefall when the Portuguese landowners abandoned their roças, which subsequently fell into neglect. Mismanagement by the centralist new government, depleted soils, floods, droughts, and general lack of

investment caused the cacao harvest to dwindle. Then, in 1998, a sharp drop in global prices compelled São Tomé and Príncipe's leaders to finally proclaim that “the era of cacao has ended.”

Today, however, it's on its way back. Given one-third of the islands' 223,000-strong population live below the poverty line, anything with economic potential is a godsend – especially after the harsh blows dealt to São Tomé and Príncipe's fledgling tourism sector during the Covid-19 pandemic.

António da Graça Dias, 60, is part of the country's new wave of successful, sustainable cacao growers. He's the executive director of CECAB (Cooperativa de Exportação de Cacau Biológico) – São Tomé and Príncipe's biggest cocoa producer – and the islands' former

minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries. Dias, who is also an agronomy professor at the public University of São Tomé and Príncipe, applies 21st-century growing methods to surviving plantations that had been unproductive, or at least underperforming, for decades. Ways of pruning, the introduction of pest and disease resistant cultivars, and organic farming techniques, for example. Between 30 and 40 years will be added to the plants' life, Dias says, and they're also more resistant to the effects of climate change. “It is with these techniques that we have been rehabilitating farmers' plantations, and the results have been satisfying.”



Laurenço Silva

António da Graça Dias





Image courtesy of Kaoka

The cacao produced in São Tomé and Príncipe is a perfect fit for the demanding standards of high-end French chocolate company, Kaoka

Along with sustainable production practices, the cooperative is also dedicated to fair working conditions for everyone in its workforce. For an industry that’s been synonymous with slavery, and with gruelling working conditions after slavery was abolished, this is an incredibly meaningful development for São Tomé and Príncipe.

Founded in 2004, CECAB is a cooperative of 37 associations of small-holder growers of organic cacao, based in the centre and north of São Tomé Island. The co-op is considered a role-model in the industry, says Dias. “We have been invited to promote consultancy initiatives in Gabon, Togo, Liberia – and share our experiences with cooperatives in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.”

CECAB currently sells to a single partner: Kaoka, a high-end French chocolate company that only buys organic, ethically sourced cacao. Since the cooperative grows more than Kaoka can buy, Dias decided it was time for CECAB to become a fully local ‘bean-to-bar’ chocolate producer.

The brand new chocolate factory has already been built in Guadalupe, 12 kilometres north of São Tomé’s namesake capital city. Dias is just waiting on some additional machinery to arrive, and everything should be up and running by the end of the first quarter of 2023. The initiative has the government’s support and funding from the African Development Bank, within its Project for the Rehabilitation of Infrastructures to Support Food Security framework. It is a major investment for the scale of the islands

– the project will cost more than EUR 450,000 (MOP 3.83 million) in total – and the largest in CECAB’s history (the cooperative will contribute around a fifth of the total). The new factory is forecast to produce 10 tonnes of chocolate a year.

Dias is proud of the progress to date: “we are realising a dream,” he told Macao magazine, happily. At first, CECAB plans to sell its chocolate to the domestic market only (while continuing to supply Kaoka with cocoa). But entering global markets is both the long-term goal and “the big challenge,” says Dias.

Exporting chocolate instead of cocoa moves the company up the value chain, boosting the margins it can charge for its product. But it also means CECAB will have to find buyers for its chocolate bars, inside and outside the country. This will take skills beyond making great cocoa and supplying a single buyer, Dias notes. The cooperative will have to develop its marketing capabilities to make its chocolate bars appeal to consumers, and a whole raft of additional business expertise.

Another challenge on the horizon is new standards set by the European Union that will affect organic cocoa producers. The new rules, expected to come into force in 2024, prevent cooperatives with more than 2,000 members from getting organic producer certification. CECAB currently brings together 3,100 farmers, so will have to split in two in order to export to Europe.







São Tomé and Príncipe is home to three other cocoa cooperatives: Sociedade Santomense de Cacau (Satocao, Lda), Cooperativa de Exportação de Cacau de Qualidade (CECAQ-11), and Diogo Vaz. Along with CECAB, the co-ops' combined cocoa production is just over 3,000 tonnes per year. CECAB produced more than half of that – 1,650 tonnes – in 2021, up around 40 per cent from 2020. It estimates 2022's haul will be 1,450 tonnes. Cocoa production is prone to fluctuations, mainly due to levels of rainfall. Pests and diseases can also have a major effect on crops. But the fluctuations are more acute when production is small-scale and producers' ability to invest is low, as is the case in São Tomé and Príncipe.



That last point is a key reason cocoa production today is a mere fraction of what it was in colonial times. Back then, with the enormous roças in full swing, the islands could produce around 35,000 tonnes of cocoa a year. Getting back to those levels would take significant investment and is a politically fraught issue, as most of the old roças have been occupied by families using the land for subsistence farming.

While cocoa production to the scale it once was seems impossible, moving up the value chain is not. CEBAC won't be the first chocolate maker in São Tomé and Príncipe – it's been happening in a boutique fashion since around 2000. The

pioneer was Italian agricultural engineer Claudio Corallo. He arrived in the early 1990s, eager to apply his experience growing coffee in the Democratic Republic of Congo to growing cacao in São Tomé and Príncipe. A bean-to-bar chocolatier who uses cocoa produced at his own plantation to make premium chocolate products, Corallo has an eponymous shop on São Tomé that has been running for more than a decade. It's incredibly popular with tourists and has become something of a national monument. Corallo's chocolates are also sold around the world via his website, and in Lisbon's Príncipe Real district by his Portuguese wife Betina.



Image courtesy of Claudio Corallo

Claudio Corallo pioneered chocolate production in the islands in the '90s with his namesake chocolates

(Left) With a strong foundation in producing quality cacao, São Tomé and Príncipe is ready to move up the value chain





Images courtesy of Diogo Vaz



At Roça Diogo Vaz, French investment breathes new life into a local historic roça with its organic chocolate brand (inset)

Following in Corallo's footsteps, French investors recently created Diogo Vaz – a locally produced organic chocolate brand using cacao grown at one of the islands' historic roças. This cooperative has a flagship store in São Tomé. Diogo Vaz's technical director, French chocolatier Olivier Casenave, won the 2016 award for Best Tablet in the World at the Salon du Chocolat competition in Paris.

Agriculture accounts for 20 per cent of São Tomé and Príncipe's gross domestic product, 80 per cent of its export earnings, and more than 60 per cent of its employment. Aside from cacao, the islands' grow high quality pepper, vanilla, coconuts and palm oil. While cocoa has traditionally been the

biggest agri-export, palm oil has been growing fast and overtook cocoa in 2021.

Agri exports have been a lifeline during the Covid-19 pandemic, which halted the usual flow of tourists seeking pristine tropical beaches. Now that the borders have reopened, the tourist dollar will help support the development of São Tomé and Príncipe's value-added chocolate industry. Not only can tourists visit the islands' once-famed roças, where decaying colonial mansions are being swallowed up by jungle, they can purchase a growing array of homegrown chocolate products as souvenirs from their trip. A sweet treat emblematic of the country's shift into a new era of global trade. ●

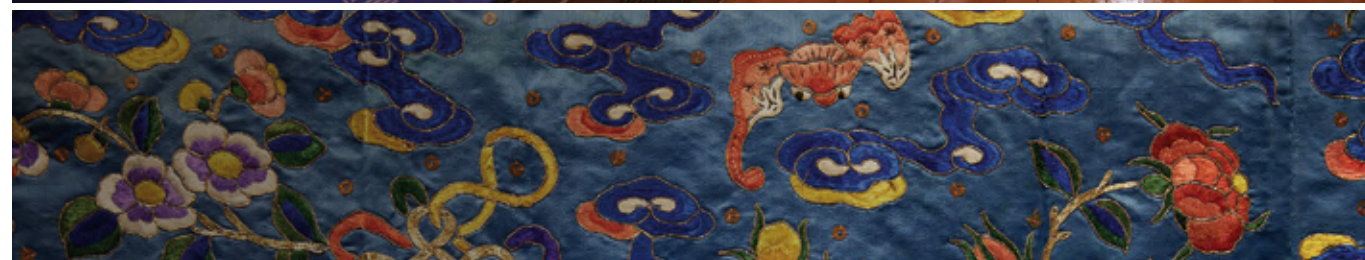
Learn how the **Permanent Secretariat of the Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (Macao)** uses Macao as a platform by visiting their website: [forumchinaplp.org.mo](http://forumchinaplp.org.mo)





ZOOM

# Auspicious Beginning: Spring Festival Traditions in the Forbidden City

Text **Erico Dias**Photos **António Sanmarful**

- ① Taiping youxiang (great peace in the world) patterns decorate this cerulean blue python robe from the Guangxu reign (1875-1908) of the Qing dynasty
- ② A 1738 painting of Emperor Qianlong and his sons admiring the snow during the New Year combines the skills of several court painters – Giuseppe Castiglione, Tang Dai, Chen Mei, Sun You, Shen Yuan and Ding Guanping

To mark China's biggest annual celebration, the Macao Museum of Art (MAM) has teamed up with the Palace Museum to exhibit "Auspicious Beginning: Spring Festival Traditions in the Forbidden City". The Forbidden City, following its completion in 1420, served as the imperial palace for the Ming and Qing dynasties. For this exhibition, however, MAM and the Palace Museum chose to focus on artefacts associated with Spring Festivals held during the Qing dynasty (1644-1922).

The collaborative exhibition aims to deepen understanding of Spring Festival traditions and customs during this period, presenting aspects of worship rituals, family activities, court affairs, and recreations in a novel way.

More than 120 artefacts are being displayed, including calligraphic works, paintings, ancient books, royal seals, robes, ornaments, ritualistic objects, musical instruments, and handicrafts. This generous loan of artefacts from the Palace Museum includes many which are on display in Macao for the first time.

One of the highlights, according to MAM Director Un Sio San, is a painting by the Italian artist Giuseppe Castiglione and other court painters depicting Emperor Qianlong (1736-1795) celebrating the Lantern Festival.

"Like a family photo, the painting accentuates the continuation of the Chinese traditions and institutions from former dynasties," he says. "The work not only reflects the emperor's wish for his descendants' prosperity and his subtle considerations in choosing an heir, but also establishes Emperor Qianlong as an ideal role model for self-cultivation, family management, state governance, and ensuring world peace."

MAM's broad goal is to promote Chinese culture and art, and Un says "Auspicious Beginning" has been curated to help Macao locals better understand cultural traditions.

The Spring Festival, also known as Chinese New Year or Lunar New Year, is on 23 January 2023. "Auspicious Beginning: Spring Festival Traditions in the Forbidden City" runs from 17 December to 5 March. ●







③



④



③ Designated for the 'dance of promotion', this red satin python robe is embroidered with cloud and dragon designs

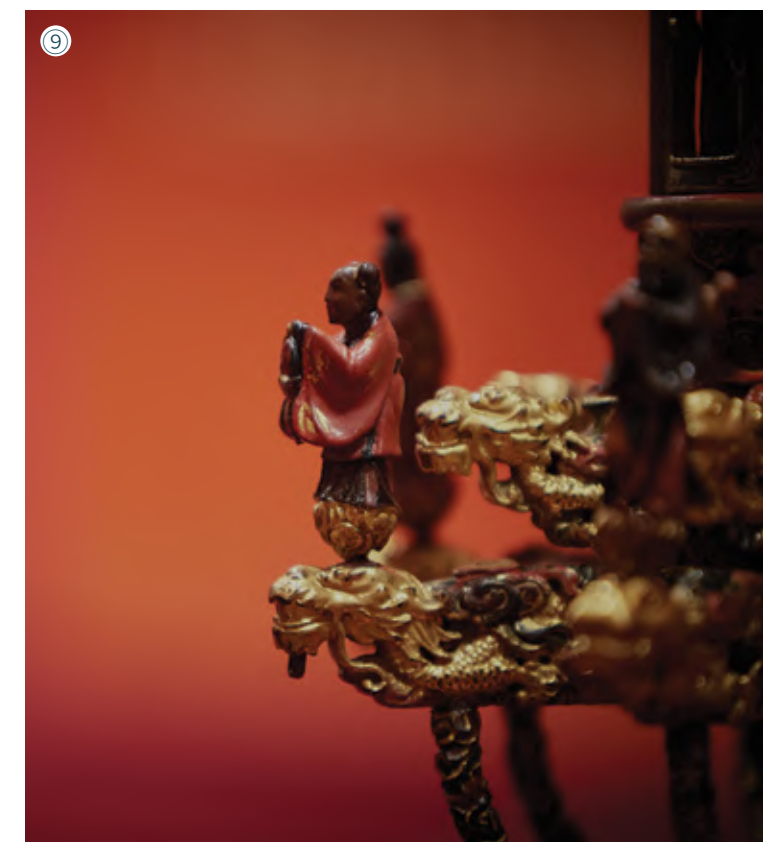
④ Expertly rendered sea wave, cloud and dragon patterns decorate this cloisonné enamel water pot, dating from the Qianlong reign (1736-1795)

⑤ The 'one hundred boys' design, seen here in a carved red laquer box, expresses a wish for numerous sons. First popularised in the Song dynasty (960-1279), this example dates from the Qianlong reign (1736-1795)

⑤



- ⑥ Crisp details mark this bronze abstinence figurine from the Qing dynasty
- ⑦ The tradition of hanging lanterns during the new year first appeared in the court during the Qianlong reign (1736-1795)
- ⑧ The elaborately decorated longevity lanterns feature streamers running down the sides and a pavilion sculpture (right) at the top
- ⑨ Around the base of the pavilion, a series of tiny detailed figures stand atop dragon heads





10



11



- ⑩ Smaller artefacts find a home in this golden pavilion, encouraging visitors to take a closer look
- ⑪ Perched on a delicate wooden base, this carved jasper shanzi (a traditional mountain sculpture) from the Qing dynasty depicts children at play



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# 2023 年農曆新年花車匯演

Parada de Celebração do Ano do Coelho  
Parade for Celebration of the Year of the Rabbit

# 兔躍盛世

歡

樂

春

節

正月初三  
**01.24**  
20:00-21:45

路線 Percorso Route

西灣湖廣場  
Praça do Lago Sai Van  
孫逸仙大馬路  
Av. Dr. Sun Yat Sen  
澳門科學館  
Centro de Ciência de Macau

正月初七  
**01.28**  
20:00-21:30

路線 Percorso Route

沙梨頭北街  
Rua Norte do Patane  
青洲大馬路  
Av. do Conselheiro Borge  
拱形馬路  
Estrada do Arco  
黑沙環馬路  
Estrada da Areia Preta  
慕拉士大馬路  
Av. de Venâncio de Moraes  
黑沙環第四街  
Rua Quatro do Bairro da Areia Preta  
長壽大馬路  
Av. da Longevidade  
市場街  
Rua do Mercado de São Hon  
祐漢街市公園  
Jardim do Mercado Municipal do São Hon

主辦單位  
Organizador  
Organizer



澳門特別行政區旅遊發展局  
DIRECÇÃO DOS SERVIÇOS DE TURISMO  
MACAO GOVERNMENT TOURISM OFFICE



協辦單位  
Co-organizers  
Co-organizers



支持單位  
Entidades de Apoio  
Supporting Entities



活動合作伙  
Parceiros do evento  
Event Partners



贊助單位  
Patrocinadores  
Sponsors



媒體合作伙  
Parceiros da Comunicação Social  
Media Partners



大會指定合作專用  
Marca de Água Oficial  
Official Co-branded Water

