

Macao 澳門

Chinese astronauts light up young minds

**LI YI: SHAPING THE ESSENCE OF WUSHU
FOR A NEW GENERATION OF CHAMPIONS**

**UNION HOSPITAL INAUGURATION:
THE FUTURE OF MACAO'S HEALTHCARE**



SANDS CHINA LTD. WISHES YOU

A HAPPY CHINESE NEW YEAR

FILLED WITH HOPE, JOY AND GOOD HEALTH



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Macao 澳門

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COVER IMAGE

Late last year in Macao, a space enthusiast explored a display showcasing China's achievements in space exploration and navigation. The exhibition, which sought to encourage technological innovation in Macao, included the official commissioning of the "Macao Science 1" satellites and the signing of their long-term operation agreement. For the first time, organisers presented lunar soil in Macao. Photo by Xinhua News Agency

Contents

04 President Xi Jinping praises Ho Iat Seng for pragmatic governance
As Macao approaches its 25th anniversary as a Special Administrative Region, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng travelled to Beijing in December 2023 to present a detailed account of Macao's developments over the past year to President Xi Jinping.

08 Macao's Union Hospital: A milestone for the city's health system
A long time in the making, Macao's newest hospital is a massive medical upgrade for the city. It boasts state-of-the-art equipment that can't be found anywhere else in the GBA and its staff have access to training at one of the top hospitals in China.

12 China's astronauts drop in on Macao
Macao recently played host to a delegation of Chinese astronauts, here to inspire the next generation of space explorers and scientists. The illustrious guests were "deeply impressed" by their Macao compatriots' enthusiasm for the wonders of the universe.

16 Dancing with dragons
As we prepare to welcome a new Year of the Dragon, it's worth reflecting on what this powerful (yet usually benevolent) mythological creature means to Chinese culture.

22 A wushu champion eager to lead the next generation
Li Yi is one of Macao's top *wushu* athletes, and a recent recipient of the Silver Lotus award. After winning gold at last year's Asian Games, Li says it's time to retire from the arena and start passing her skills down to emerging talents. She wants to grow her beloved sport in the city.

30 Tibetan Buddhist art unveiled at the Macao Museum of Art
The Macao Museum of Art showcases Tibetan Buddhist treasures that were gifts exchanged between the Qing court and successive Panchen Lamas in Xizang.

38 Inside Macao's Gen Z fashion scene
This generation is fashion forward, with a nod to the past. And they're well catered to in Macao, where local boutiques and designers are tailoring attire to meet the quirks of those born between the late 1990s and 2010s.



46 Football and fine art: Afonso Biscaia's winning game plan
Meet the Macao-raised football fanatic who's landed his dream job at the Portuguese Football Federation and celebrates his family's artistic legacy in his spare time.

50 Macao's best tofu is made the old-fashioned way
Lei Iat Wah is reaching the end of a decades-long career crafting tofu, just like his dad did. What's kept this second-generation artisan going for so long? Morning swims, he says. And plenty of karaoke.

58 Condiment city
Macao's proud culinary heritage merges with human history, at least where its beloved sauces and spicy pastes are concerned. We spoke with four local businesses about how mastering the art of the condiment has shaped the families involved.



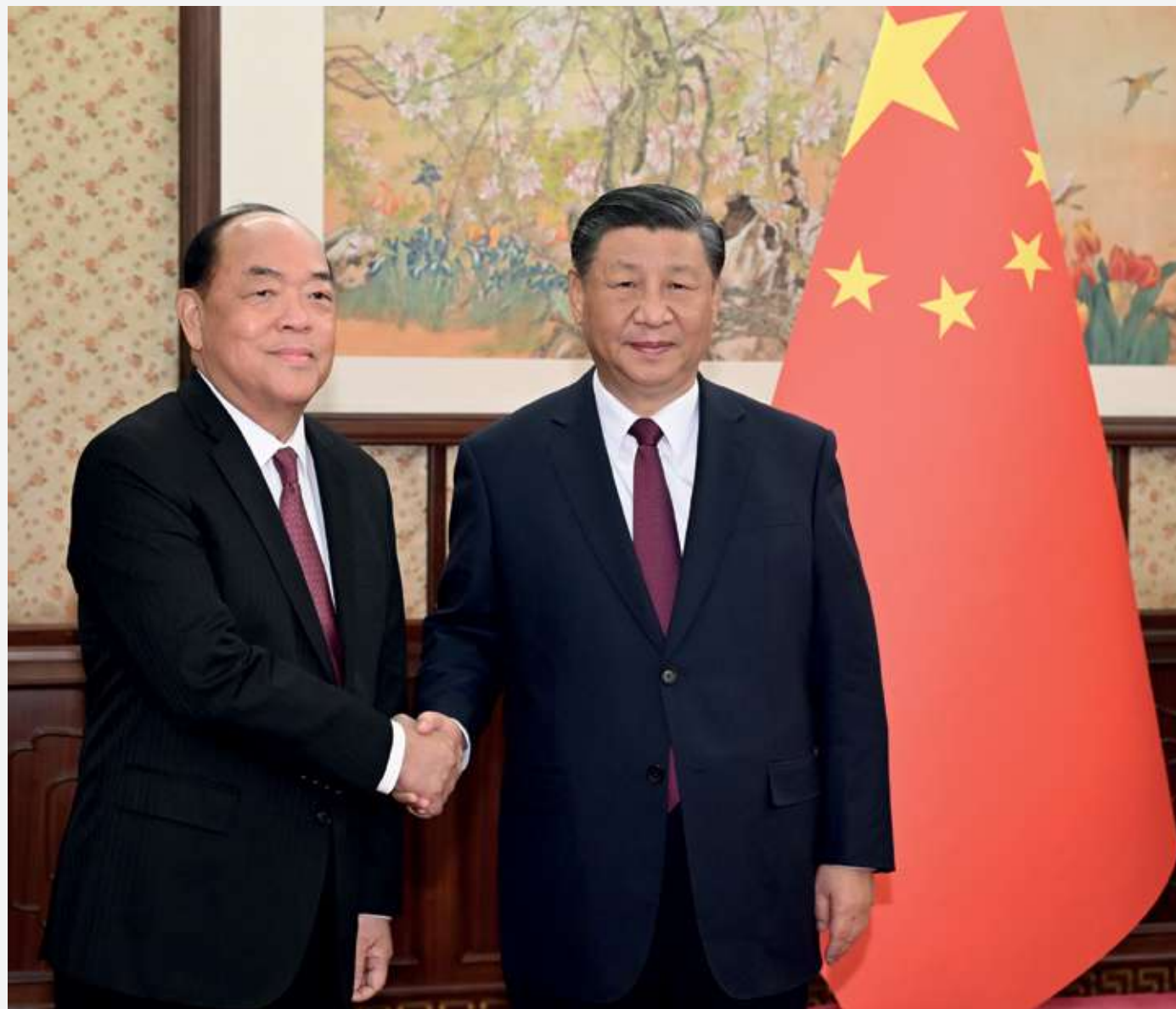
66 A wealth of numismatical history
Members of the Macau Numismatic Society are all avid collectors of money, though not as legal tender. For them, the value of coins and banknotes lies in their ability to tell a story of the past.

74 Fast Tracks: China and Portugal's commercial relationship is on the move
China and Portugal are cooperating on a large number of transportation related projects, including Chinese-made trams that are about to start ferrying passengers around Porto.

80 A showcase of Philippine culture and piety
The Sinulog Festival, a vibrant Filipino celebration honouring Santo Niño with origins in Cebu and observed in Macao, showcased its post-pandemic revival with traditional dances and a historic statue.

President Xi Jinping praises Ho Iat Seng for pragmatic governance

As Macao approaches its 25th anniversary as a Special Administrative Region, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng travelled to Beijing in December 2023 to present a detailed account of Macao's developments over the past year to President Xi Jinping.



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

At a meeting between the state leader and Macao's chief executive in December, President Xi Jinping acknowledged the good work carried out by the Special Administrative Region Government over the past year. He noted that Macao's Chief Executive, Ho Iat Seng, would continue to have central authorities' full support – and said he looked forward to new development achievements in the lead up to an important milestone: the 25th anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland.

Xi's comments came after Ho presented a report on Macao's current situation and the local government's efforts to the president in Beijing. Xi praised Ho's government for diligently performing its duties and exercising governance in a pragmatic way.

"Under Ho's leadership, the MSAR government has strengthened the management of the city's gaming industry in accordance with the law and completed drawing up Macao's first comprehensive official plan for its appropriate economic diversification drive," Xi said.

The meeting with President Xi Jinping was also attended by Premier Li Qiang.

He also commended amendments Macao had made to its Law on Safeguarding National Security, as well

as electoral laws. Its work promoting regional cooperation via Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin was praised, too. So were its efforts to engage internationally.

Xi congratulated Macao for successfully maintaining social harmony and stability during its post-pandemic economic recovery, while praising the speed of the latter.

During the meeting the president underlined how people across the nation are embarking on a new journey to promote the construction of a strong country and the great cause of national rejuvenation through Chinese-style modernisation.

He told Ho that the central authorities would continue to fully, accurately and unswervingly implement the principles of "One Country, Two Systems" and "patriots governing Macao".

"The central authorities will continue to fully support Ho and the local government in uniting and leading people from all sectors of civil society in grasping the historic opportunities created by the nation's development, continuously promoting the successful implementation of the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle with Macao characteristics, and embracing next year's 25th anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland with new development achievements," he said.

President Xi Jinping (right) welcomes Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng to Beijing

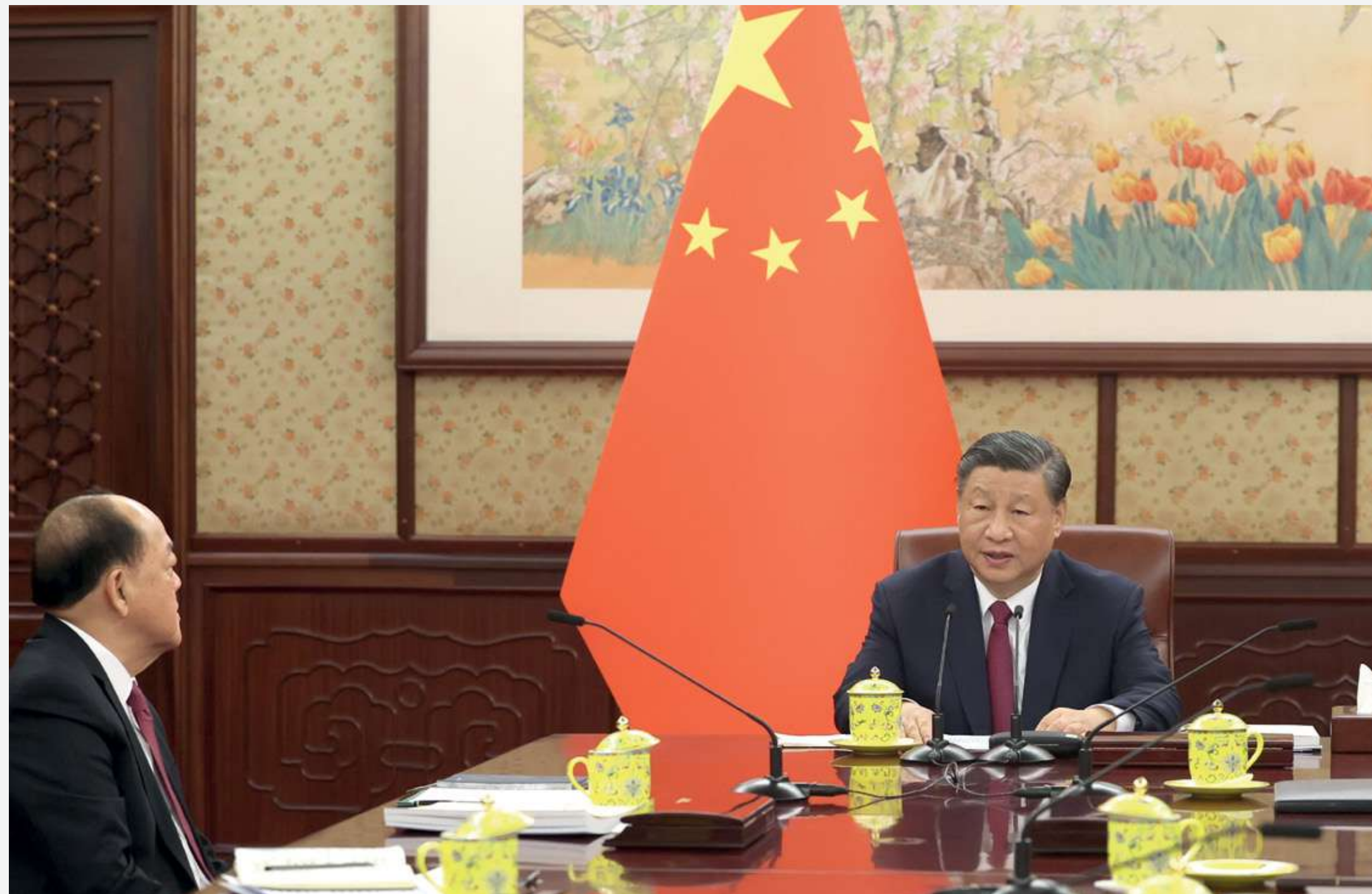
Ho Iat Seng stresses Xi's important instructions

At the meeting, Macao's Chief Executive told Xi that his important instructions were instrumental in Macao's continuous development. Ho vowed that the Macao government would continue to: unite and lead all sectors of society; earnestly study and implement the spirit of President Xi's important instructions; strive for greater achievements and firmly safeguard national security and social stability; and solidify the national security shield and proactively enhance its deployment, for in-depth defence of the country's bottom-line core interests.

There would be further efforts to promote appropriate economic diversification in accordance with a recently published plan, while increasing efforts to attract talented people to the MSAR, maintaining confidence in achieving the goals of the first phase of the development plan for the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin, while promoting development of Hengqin in a comprehensive manner.

Ho also said that the Macao government would continue to work together with all sectors of society, in order comprehensively, accurately, and unwaveringly to implement the principles of "One Country, Two Systems" and "Macao people governing Macao", with a high degree of autonomy. They would firmly safeguard national sovereignty, security, and development interests; uphold the overall jurisdiction of the central government; fully implement the principle of "patriots administering Macao", and better seize the historic opportunities brought by the country's development.

Finally, the government would ensure high quality celebrations of both the Macao Special Administrative Region's 25th anniversary and the 75th anniversary of the People's Republic of China, he assured Xi. ●



President Xi Jinping praised Macao's government for their diligence and pragmatism over the past year

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Macao's Union Hospital: A milestone for the city’s health system

A long time in the making, Macao’s newest hospital is a massive medical upgrade for the city. It boasts state-of-the art equipment that can’t be found anywhere else in the Greater Bay Area. Its staff have access to training at one of the top hospitals in China. No wonder the Macao Union Hospital is considered a beacon of the territory’s future healthcare industry.

Text **Kenny Fong**

The Macao Union Hospital is a window into the promising future of healthcare in the SAR

For the past 150 years, the people of Macao were served by only one major public hospital: Conde São Januário, which was established by the territory’s Portuguese overseers in 1874. While the city also has private hospitals such as Kiang Wu, Yinkui, and the University Hospital, the recent soft opening of the Macao Union Hospital in December marks a significant advancement for the local healthcare industry.

Located in Cotai, the Macao Union Hospital represents several important milestones in the territory’s healthcare journey. For starters, it’s the first public hospital in Taipa and Coloane. It’s also by far the largest hospital in Macao, with a land area of 76,000 square metres (more than twice that of Conde São Januário). Macao Union Hospital’s first phase boasts 800 beds and 26 operating theatres. When its second phase, a specialist rehabilitation hospital, opens in 2027, an additional 300 beds will be on offer. The medical complex also boasts the new campus of the Kiang Wu Nursing College of Macau, which is 2.3 times larger compared to the old campus in Kiang Wu Hospital, and features more resources and facilities to train the SAR’s next generation of nurses.

It’s worth noting that Macao Union Hospital is not fully public, as it will also offer private medical service to tourists, with an emphasis on patients from the Greater Bay Area (GBA)

and Southeast Asian countries. The government hopes that by partly allocating the hospital to medical tourism, it will be able to take full advantage of the complex’s resources, as well as diversify Macao’s economy.

BUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS

The groundbreaking facility’s genesis can be traced back to 2009. At that time, the government began considering building a second public hospital in response to the demand for more healthcare services in Taipa and Coloane. A year later, the location of the hospital was pinned down (on the northeastern corner of Cotai’s Seac Pai Van Reservoir). But it wasn’t until October 2019 that construction of the complex’s three main buildings kicked off.

During the construction period, Macao’s government began thinking up ways to equip its new hospital with world-class healthcare services and management. This was important: the hospital needed to fulfil its mandate of “promoting the development of the medical system and medical and health services in the Macao Special Administrative Region.”

Relying on local resources was not a viable option. There simply weren’t enough doctors in Macao to man a vast new hospital, and the city was already beset by long waiting times and a lack of specialist doctors.





The SAR government and the Peking Union Medical College Hospital established an official partnership for the new hospital after signing an agreement in Beijing last year

(Opposite page) Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng and other guests tour the hospital on 20 December 2023

To combat this personnel shortage, the government decided its best option was to partner with an existing medical team from outside of Macao. In 2020, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng made his first official trip to Beijing. He prioritised meeting with the head of China's National Health Commission, Ma Xiao Wei, to discuss collaboration opportunities. The mainland official suggested a partnership between Macao's government and the prestigious Peking Union Medical College Hospital (PUMCH), a Class A tertiary hospital in Beijing established in 1921. The hospital had a strong reputation for training high-quality medical personnel, as well as treating complicated and rare illnesses.

A lengthy series of meetings between officials from Macao and PUMCH's leadership team followed, culminating in an agreement signed on 16 October 2023. The formalised partnership would see the Beijing-based hospital take

charge of the Macao Union Hospital's daily operations and management, with Macao's government handling its financial matters.

This partnership is aimed at elevating the quality of healthcare in Macao. According to Ho, "the [new] hospital should ... leverage the brand effect of the PUMCH and stay committed in developing into a Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area first-class medical centre with international influence."

A STATE-OF-THE-ART MEDICAL FACILITY ENTERS THE SCENE

The Macao Union Hospital is expected to be a trailblazer in terms of implementing the latest healthcare advancements in the city. Its goals are threefold, according to the territory's chief executive: to bring new medical techniques to Macao, to promote the local healthcare industry's development and to improve local doctors' professionalism.

To these ends, the healthcare complex has installed state-of-the-art medical equipment – including a radiotherapy system that recalibrates itself using artificial intelligence (AI). Director of the hospital's preparatory office Lei Wai Seng has described it as "currently the most advanced in the Greater Bay Area". He said it provided highly precise treatment for cancer patients that significantly reduced side effects usual with radiotherapy.

Other advanced equipment includes a linear accelerator (also used to treat cancer), CT scanners for accurate body imaging, nuclear magnetic resonance machines used in diagnostics, as well as devices for oncological imaging.

The hospital also houses Macao's largest operating theatre at 113 square metres. It's being praised as a hybrid suite allowing for combined surgical procedures

that enable doctors to work more efficiently and reduce patients' recovery times.

PEOPLE ARE EVERYTHING

Cultivating better-than-ever crops of Macao-based healthcare professionals is a top priority for the new hospital. To achieve these, an agreement between PUMCH and Macao's government stipulates that local doctors will have ample opportunities to train at the Beijing hospital – where they can receive first-hand experience in dealing with complex and severe illnesses.

The Macao Union Hospital has been gradually hiring more

staff since its soft opening last December. It's proving very popular: in the hospital's second recruitment campaign, for 80 positions available only to Macao residents, it attracted almost 4,500 applicants.

Right now, the general hospital intends to employ 400 medical personnel during its initial stage of operation. In an effort to lower the barriers in the recruitment of highly experienced medical workers, employees of the hospital will be governed by private sector laws, rather than public ones. The Macao Union Hospital also recently became home to the islands' only accident

and emergency unit, which had been operating out of the Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) Hospital.

General consensus has it that the Macao Union Hospital heralds the opening of a new chapter for healthcare in Macao. Not only will it better serve local residents' health needs, but healthcare is one of four emerging industries in the city – along with modern finance, technology and the staging of large-scale sporting, cultural and business events. The hospital, therefore, is part of the government's efforts to diversify its economy. ●



SCIENCE

China's astronauts drop in on Macao

Macao recently played host to a delegation of Chinese astronauts, here to inspire the next generation of space explorers and scientists. The illustrious guests were “deeply impressed” by their Macao compatriots’ enthusiasm for the wonders of the universe, reported the deputy head of the China Manned Space Agency.

Text **Christian Ritter/Xinhua**
Photos **Xinhua News Agency**

(Opposite page) Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng salutes astronauts Zhang Lu, Liu Boming, Chen Dong and Wang Yaping for their successes in the China space programme

Wang Yaping (2nd right), a crew member for China's Shenzhou-13 space mission, talks with Wong Ging Pui (1st left), a senior high school student from Tong Nam Middle School in Macao

Astronauts from China's manned space programme visited Macao in December, sharing inspirational insights into the country's endeavours in the cosmos. The spacefarers Zhang Lu, Liu Boming, Chen Dong and Wang Yaping – all of whom have travelled aboard Shenzhou spacecraft – detailed the latest advances in China's space station construction, its manned lunar missions, and the day-to-day experiences of living in orbit.

The China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) delegation spent three days in Macao. During that time, the astronauts held a lecture for 400 local secondary school and university students at the Forum Macao Complex in Nam Van. There, they briefed their audience about life in space and the challenges of being an astronaut.

Shenzhou-10 and Shenzhou-13 astronaut Wang Yaping is well known

in Macao for being just the second Chinese woman in space, but also because she has given talks in the city twice in the past decade. She told the audience she was thrilled to know that some students who attended her previous lectures were now engaged in space missions. Wang said she enjoyed “sharing the beauties and wonders” of space with people.

Shenzhou-15 astronaut Zhang Lu, meanwhile, shared details of arduous training regimes in a spacesuit that (combined with his own body weight) weighed more than 200 kilograms. He also described going up to 10 hours without food on missions outside of the spacecraft, floating in orbit. Zhang said that, despite the physical discomforts of space exploration, students with a passion for the universe beyond Earth would find joining China's space programme highly rewarding.

A third astronaut, Liu Boming of Shenzhou-7 and Shenzhou-12, said that space missions generally went smoothly because crews were well prepared. “Remote monitoring and control from the ground are also important,” he added.

CMSA Deputy Director Lin Xiqiang, who headed the delegation, told the students that astronauts needed to be physically and mentally fit, possess incredible amounts of professional knowledge and always be able to control their emotions. He said that anyone dreaming of a career in the cosmos must study hard and do more exercise.





Ho Iat Seng (2nd L), chief executive of Macao, Zheng Xincong (1st L), director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in Macao, and Zhang Kejian (2nd R), head of the China National Space Administration, look at the lunar soil during the opening ceremony of an exhibition of China's achievements on space exploration and navigation

(Centre) Ho Iat Seng during the visit to an exhibition of China's achievements on space exploration and navigation held in the Macao Science Center

(Opposite page) Signing ceremony of an agreement on the long-term operation of the "Macao Science 1" satellites

The delegation also visited the Macao Science Center during their three days in the city. There, Lin said the astronauts were “deeply impressed by the enthusiasm of Macao compatriots for the nation’s manned space flight projects, especially youngsters’ curiosity about [our country’s] astronauts.”

At the end of the visit, Lin said he hoped more people from Macao would feature in China’s space projects – including the country’s first moon landing, which the CMSA aims to carry out by 2030. “We hope that the visit will reinforce Macao compatriots’ understanding of the nation’s manned space projects, so that local youth would further enhance their interest in exploring scientific knowledge and space engineering” he said.

At a welcome ceremony for the astronauts, Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng said their visit meant a lot to

Macao's science education. He said it showed support for local youth, inspiring them to study science and technology subjects that could someday lead to space missions of their own.

“[The delegation] encourages Macao's higher education institutions, several state key laboratories and the Science Center to maximise synergy among themselves, in order to actively contribute to the training of qualified personnel in the scientific and technological field,” he noted.

‘MACAO SCIENCE 1’ SATELLITES OFFICIALLY PUT INTO USE

Macao has already made contributions to China’s space programme, of course. A week before the astronauts’ arrival, two Macao Science 1 space exploration satellites were declared fully operational.



Jointly developed by the mainland and Macao, the satellites are now in orbit where they monitor the geomagnetic field and space environment of the South Atlantic Anomaly (SAA).

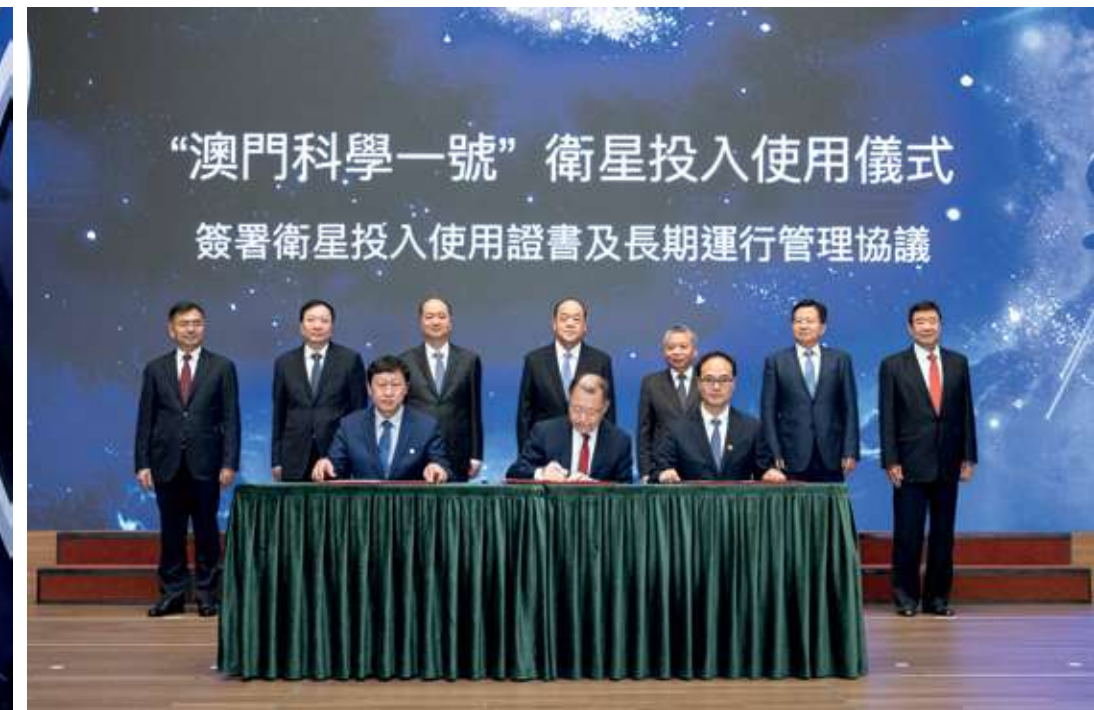
The SAA is a shape-shifting region where the Earth’s magnetic field is at its weakest. Li Guoping, chief engineer for the China National Space Administration, has described the Macao Science 1 satellites as the first exploration satellites in the world focused on observing the anomaly. There are high hopes for the satellites, which are considered a boon for both Macao and the mainland’s space programme.

“The satellites will boost Macao's scientific and technological innovations, help with the transformation of Macao’s economic and social development models, break new ground for scientific and technological cooperation between

the mainland and Macao, and set new examples for scientific and technological development in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area,” Li has explained.

The mission uses a twin-satellite approach, in which Satellite A carries payloads like high-precision vector magnetometers and standard-scale magnetometers to detect the earth's magnetic field. Satellite B includes high-energy particle detectors and solar X-ray instruments to obtain data on the space environment, such as solar radiation and high-energy particles, that serve the ends of geomagnetic field detection.

Launched in May last year, from northwest China’s Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center, the satellites provide valuable data on high-precision changes of the geomagnetic field in low altitudes.



The satellites’ platforms were manufactured by the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation and China's Northwestern Polytechnical University, while the scientific instruments on both satellites were provided by Macau University of Science and Technology.

A ceremony marking the satellite’s official deployment coincided with an exhibition of China’s achievements in space exploration in late November, at the Macao Science Center. There, lunar soil was put on display in Macao for the first time.

At that ceremony, the director of Macao’s Economic and Technological Development Bureau, Tai Kin Ip, expressed his belief that scientists from Macao and the mainland would continue working together on Macao Science 1-related projects as well as to nurture space talent. ●



CULTURE

Dancing with *dragons*

As we prepare to welcome a new Year of the Dragon, it's worth reflecting on what this powerful (yet usually benevolent) mythological creature means to Chinese culture. Dragons are said to control the rains, bring luck and protect wealth. So, how did they come to play this auspicious role in society?



Wind Moon

Text **Gonçalo César de Sá**
Research by **The Chinese Language Institute in Guilin, Guangxi**

Loud drumming encourages rowers as they race their narrow, dragon-shaped boats in the annual Dragon Boat Festival

(Opposite page) A dancing dragon winds its way down the famous steps of the Ruins of St Paul's

Dragons may be mythological, but they hold important significance to the Chinese – and the impact of these scaly, serpentine phenomena is far-reaching. Understanding Chinese dragons undoubtedly brings a person one step closer to understanding traditional Chinese culture.

In China, dragon imagery is everywhere. You'll see the fantastical creatures in movies, incorporated into architectural designs, on banknotes, in sports teams' logos, in people's homes and more. Dragon tattoos are also popular. All this is because dragons represent an assortment of mostly auspicious things: power, good fortune and protection.

NOT YOUR TYPICAL EUROPEAN DRAGON

It's worth noting that the Chinese dragon, or 龍 (lóng), is very different from its European counterpart. The latter are often depicted as bad-tempered, fire-breathing monsters – it's no surprise that slaying them is considered a heroic deed in European folklore. Most Chinese dragons,

on the other hand, are believed to be wise and benevolent. They typically breathe clouds, not flames.

The two different 'species' of dragon have contrasting personas, but also quite different anatomies. Chinese dragons have been described as having camel-like heads, the body of a snake and four tigerish paws. Their faces are whiskery, and horns often poke out from the tops of their colourful heads. While these dragons' wild eyes do get described as fierce-looking, the fabled beasts are seldom portrayed as vengeful or cruel. European dragons, on the other hand, are thought of as winged and reptilian – like fierce, flying dinosaurs sowing chaos wherever they go. Chinese dragons fly, too, incidentally, but don't appear to need wings to do so.

No one knows exactly when the legends about dragons originated, but their imagery dates back to at least 3000 BCE. According to one theory, the legendary Chinese dragon evolved out of ancient totem-worship. Ancient people may have created the ideas of dragons by combining the attributes of several

creatures, the likes of tigers, snakes, eagles and carp – accounting for their otherworldly appearance.

A theory posits that emperor Fu Xi, a legendary Chinese leader from predynastic times, was a sacred being with a serpent's body. Hence the dragon totem in ancient China is believed to have originated from Fu Xi. In Chinese mythology, Fu Xi is considered mankind's first male ancestor and is credited with the invention of writing, fishing and domestication of animals.

As time progressed, many Chinese came to believe that Fu Xi was one of their ancestors, which by extension meant that they were also descended from dragons.

DRAGONS' ROLES IN CHINESE CULTURE

During Chinese New Year, a festive dragon dance kicks off most celebrations. 'Dancing' dragons are really giant, tubular puppets manipulated by puppeteers holding poles on the ground. They are a plea to the dragon gods for a prosperous new business year.

In the olden days, Chinese farmers asked the dragon gods for a bountiful harvest. Their dragon dances were to encourage a downpour from the heavens. Some people also believed dragons could protect their lands and harvests from flood damage.

The Dragon Boat Festival, celebrated across Greater China in late spring or early summer, is another embodiment of the mythological creatures' importance in Chinese culture. Narrow, dragon-shaped boats (often decorated with dragon motifs for luck) are raced through waterways – typically accompanied by loud drumming.



Chao Chi Hun

This amalgamation of old traditions and festivals occurs on the fifth day of the fifth month of the Chinese calendar, and is said to ward off evil spirits.

The Dragon Boat Festival's origins are murky, dating back millennia. But it is closely associated with the patriotic poet and government minister Qu Yuan, born in 340 BC. Qu Yuan drowned himself in a river as an act of protest against political corruption. Local villagers raced their dragon boats out into the river to search for his body, in an attempt to save him – an act that became tradition. Many people believe the dragon boat racing began even before Qu Yuan's time, however.

WHAT DO CHINESE DRAGONS SYMBOLISE?

In China, dragons are seen as powerful, protective figures. They lean towards old-fashioned definitions of masculinity, and a strong, wise man in traditional Chinese society could be considered a physical manifestation of the mythical dragon.

Both male and female dragon iterations exist in Chinese folklore, however. Males have more to do with the skies; they're able to soar into the heavens and bring rain. Females control earthly waters like rivers, lakes, seas and wells. With their strong connection to water, dragons are said to wield influence over seasons and harvests.

Dragon imagery is often printed or engraved on sentimental or valuable objects. People believe these auspicious items will bring good fortune and luck to their homes and businesses.

According to Chinese astrology, those born in the Year of the Dragon will be prosperous and charismatic, strong-willed and decisive. They tend to be confident leaders and successful business people. Some couples deliberately try to give birth in dragon years, which come around every 12 years, to encourage these traits in their children. The last dragon year was 2012, meaning 2024 is also a dragon year.

The distinct appearance of Chinese dragons seems to combine elements of familiar creatures like tigers, snakes, eagles and carp

THE SYMBOLISM BEHIND A DRAGON'S COLOURS

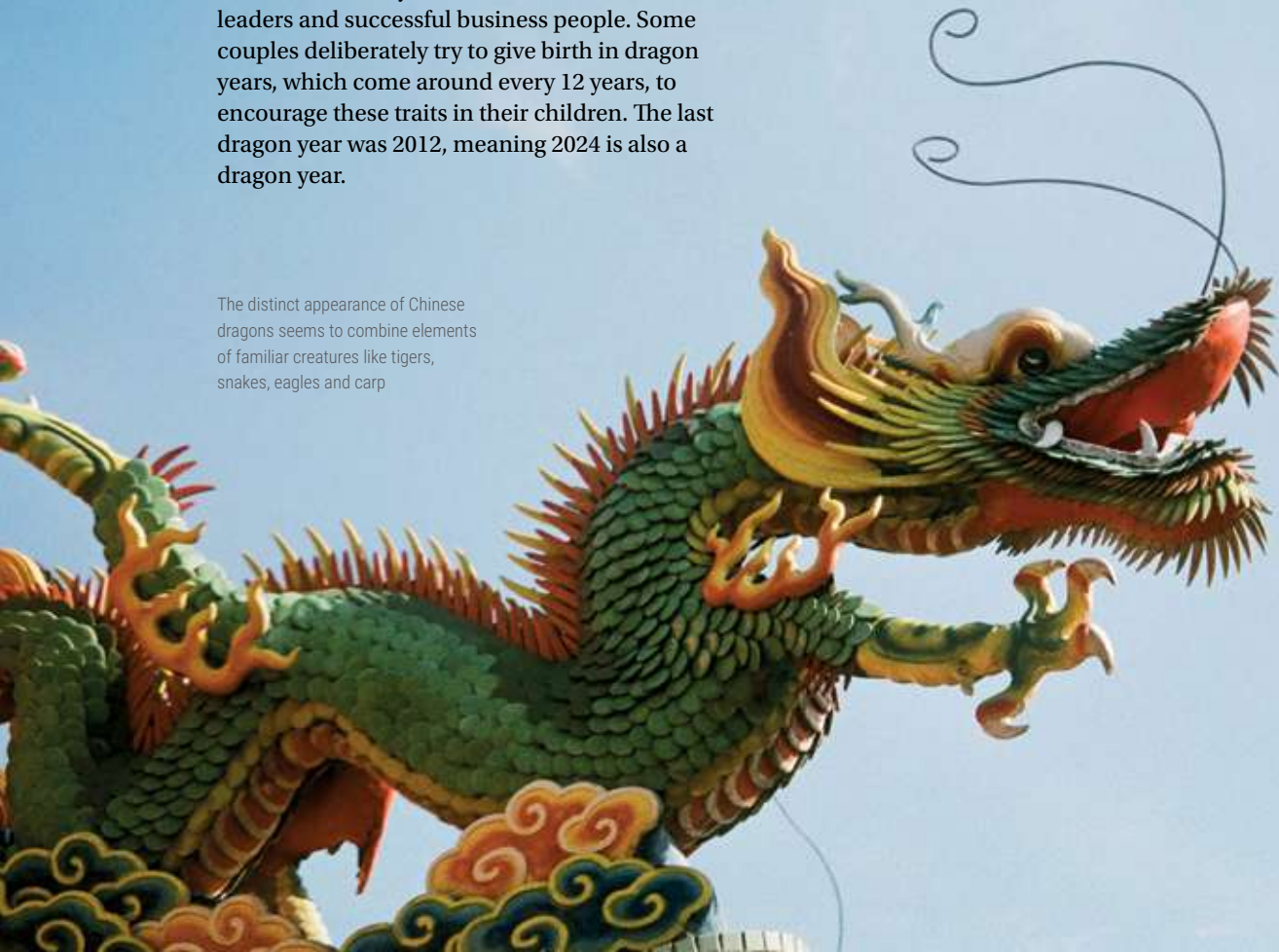
Blue and green: Dragons these colours are associated with nature, health and tranquillity. They can also symbolise healing and rest.

White: In Chinese culture, white symbolises purity, just like in the West. But white dragons can be associated with death and mourning, so some people view them as bad omens.

Red: Red is the colour of good fortune and prosperity. For this reason, red dragons are popular at weddings and other celebrations to encourage luck and happiness.

Yellow: Another colour representing good fortune, but also power. Yellow dragons are the most revered, and the ancient Chinese saw them as a symbol of the empire. They have more general connotations of warmth, wisdom and wealth.

Black: Black dragons do not have the positive associations of their peers, and are often linked to catastrophes such as storms and floods. They are associated with vengeance.



Huang Shun Ping

DIFFERENT TYPES OF CHINESE DRAGON

The Dragon King or Dragon God is considered the most powerful of all dragons. He can appear in a variety of shapes and is, in fact, often depicted as human. He is thought to reign over the seas of China in all four directions (east, west, north, and south).

The blue Spiritual Dragon controls both the rain and the winds. His job is to ensure that humans benefit from these two elements.

The Horned Dragon is one of the most powerful dragons in the Chinese tradition. Sometimes depicted as having evil tendencies, the horned dragon is also associated with precipitation.

The Winged Dragon also symbolises rain and, at times, floods.

The Celestial Dragon resides in the sky, where it prevents the gods from falling to earth.

The sea-dwelling Coiling Dragon controls time. While most dragons possess the ability to ascend to the sky, the coiling dragon is restricted to water.

The Treasure Dragon protects the likes of precious metals, money and wealth.

The Underworld Dragon controls rivers, streams, and seas. Some believe it's the feminine version of the spiritual dragon and for this reason, the two can copulate.

As the Macao Special Administrative Region celebrates its 25th anniversary in the Year of the Dragon, we are reminded of the profound significance of the dragon in Chinese culture – a symbol of auspicious power, prosperity and protection. ●

Yellow dragons, with their symbolism of power and good fortune, were seen as a symbol of the empire in ancient China



Shutter M

SPORTS

A wushu champion eager to lead the next generation

Li Yi is one of Macao's top wushu athletes, and a recent recipient of the Silver Lotus award. After winning gold at last year's Asian Games, Li says it's time to retire from the arena and start passing her skills down to emerging talents. Her goal is to grow her beloved sport in the city.



Text **Erico Dias**
Photos **Lei Heong Jeong**

Li Yi kisses her gold medal at last year's Asian Games in Hangzhou

(Inset) Macao's Chief Executive Ho Iat Seng presents Li with a Silver Lotus medal for her contribution to the SARs developing sport scene

Wushu has a long history in China, where the martial art is performed in both exhibition and full-contact formats. Its popularity in the mainland is mirrored in Macao. The Special Administrative Region (SAR) has seen increasing success in regional and even international wushu tournaments in recent years. In fact, wushu has earned Macao more medals than any other sport. At the 2023 World Wushu Championships in Dallas, US, the SAR won a total of 11 medals – five gold, two silver and four bronze – just four less than the mainland.

One of those gold medallists was Li Yi, a 32-year-old champion who's been training since she was a young child. She was born in Beijing and spent part of her childhood in Hebei before moving to Macao in 2010, under the government's Talent Recruitment Programme. Li then

studied at the Macao Polytechnic University and graduated with a master's in sports and physical education.

Macao's government recently honoured Li with a Silver Lotus medal, Macao's third highest decoration after the Grand Lotus and Golden Lotus. It came in recognition of her outstanding contributions to the territory's developing sports scene. "The medal has given me confidence and made me more determined to promote and pass down wushu to the next generation," she says.

Other wushu athletes were also included in last year's honours list. Kuok Kin Hang and Cai Feilong, who secured silver medals in *sanda* and karate at the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, received official Medals of Merits, along with the entire Macao men's karate *kata* team.

A SHORT HISTORY OF WUSHU

Chinese martial arts have ancient origins that can be traced back to the Bronze Age. The fighting techniques began in self-defence, to be used against fellow humans as well as animals. By the Warring States period (475-221 BC), it was common for people from across society to practise martial arts for self-defence, health benefits and entertainment.

Distinct styles and schools emerged over time, during different dynasties. These were often passed down through families or through monastic traditions. Shaolin kung fu, for example, developed at the Shaolin Temple in Henan Province from around the 5th century. The Buddhist monastery remains a

centre for this iconic, animal-inspired martial art that includes techniques ranging from extreme kicks to one titled ‘horse stance.’

The first Chinese National Wushu Games was held in Shanghai in 1923. Then, in 1936, a delegation of Chinese athletes showcased their home-grown martial arts at the Berlin Summer Olympics. After the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, the government worked to standardise and modernise traditional wushu – effectively transforming its practice into a sport. In 1985, the first International Invitational Wushu Tournament took place in Xi’an, China. The International Wushu Federation was established five years later, and the World Wushu Championships have been held biennially since 1991.

Wushu was added to the Asian Games in 1990, the same year Macao first participated in the quadrennial event. That year, Macao won a single medal, a bronze in the men’s *nanquan* wushu event. Twenty years later, the renowned Macao wushu athlete Jia Rui earned the territory its first gold medal at an Asian Games.

As a sport, wushu has two main formats. *Taolu* is more like performance art; it uses precisely choreographed routines and is often performed solo. *Sanda*, meanwhile, is a full-contact act of combat. Each format is performed either barehanded, with a short, spear-like weapon, or with a long weapon (one of various types of sword). These categories are further divided into a multitude of styles, including *nanquan*.

AN 8-YEAR-OLD’S JOURNEY

Li currently competes in three different *taolu* styles of wushu. *Changquan*, which translates to ‘long fist’, is a barehanded and acrobatic martial art that tests an athlete’s flexibility. In *jianshu*, she gracefully wields a traditional Chinese sword. When practising *qiangshu*, Li demonstrates offensive and defensive motions with a spear.

She was first scouted by a wushu coach named Chunyan Jin at just 8 years old, when Jin was going from school to school and seeking out potential athletes. He’d put students through their paces, assessing how fast they could move, how high they could jump, and whether they had enough crucial flexibility.

While Li says she didn’t have any interest in wushu back then – “because I didn’t know what it was about” – Jin quickly identified her

as a talent. The coach persistently called Li’s parents, enthusing over her potential and urging them to sign her up for classes. They eventually convinced Li to give the sport a shot. Today, she thanks her parents for setting her on a path that’s been tough, but highly rewarding.

Li remembers walking into her first training session and feeling confused. All she could think to do was mimic the senior apprentices. To her surprise, the moves came easily. Her parents were very encouraging, especially when her own motivation lagged.



Xinhua News Agency



Xinhua News Agency

Li performing changquan at the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou

“They told me once you decide to do something, you should persevere,” Li says. “And after you choose your path, no matter how difficult it will be, you should not give up easily.”

Jianshu was the first wushu style Li chose to specialise in. “When the coach asked me which weapon I wanted to choose, I said the *jian* [a traditional sword], after watching the senior apprentices,” she says. “The movements were so smooth and beautiful, and it looked so cool!”

Li quickly progressed to competing in large-scale competitions, including the 8th Asian Wushu Championships in Vietnam, just two years after she started training. “That was the competition that gave me a lot of confidence,” she says.

The athlete now has a slew of medals from major wushu events from around the world. And there are more golds than silvers or bronzes in her collection. Last year, Li won three golds and one bronze medal. Of them, Li says her gold in the women’s changquan at the 19th Asian Games “stands out for sure!” Li was the first woman from Macao to earn a coveted gold medal at the highly prestigious competition.

The lead up to last year’s Asian Games was unusual, Li says. They were supposed to take place in 2022 but got postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic (that’s why, though they happened in 2023, they are still referred to as the 2022 Asian Games). Li says it was particularly challenging working her full-time job as a physical education teacher while keeping up with a demanding training regime during the pandemic, so she had to build coping strategies into her daily routine.

“I kept encouraging myself by talking positively, writing posts on my social media and counting down the days to the Games,” she says. Rest is also key for athletes, something Li is well aware of. After work, instead of driving to her training centre, she would catch a bus and nap while on her way.

An unusual aspect of any Asian Games is that wushu athletes can only participate in one event, rather than the usual three or four. “That means you only have one chance,” Li says. She put a lot of thought into her decision to opt for changquan, a call she doesn’t regret. Li won Macao’s only gold out of six medals at the 19th Asian Games, beating Hong Kong’s Liu Xuxu by 0.03 points in the women’s category.

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After you choose your path,
no matter how difficult it will be,
you should not give up easily.

– Li Yi



WUSHU IS A FAST-DEVELOPING SPORT IN MACAO

That wushu is gaining popularity in Macao comes as no surprise to Li, who insists that older practitioners who have nurtured the sport over decades are to thank. “I’m so lucky to be born in this generation, because our well-developed and beautiful wushu scene was built by the older generation,” she says.

The city is home to both facilities and people dedicated to wushu’s

expansion. The government-built Athlete Training and Development Centre that opened in 2020, for instance, gives wushu practitioners easy access to the likes of high-quality training mats, physiotherapists and psychiatrists. The centre even houses a canteen and a dormitory.

In terms of people, Li offers her current coach and former team-mate, Iao Chon In, as an example of someone working hard to grow the sport. Li says

that Iao gives his students a lot of freedom in their training. He’s also compassionate, she adds, frequently checking in to make sure everyone’s doing ok.

“With the Macao government’s support, wushu has become very approachable in the SAR – we have the Martial Arts Youth Academy and wushu is available as an extra curriculum in many schools,” Li continues. As a physical education teacher herself, Li is also involved in nurturing the next generation of wushu talents. Her school, Escola dos Moradores de Macau, recently won first place in an inter-school wushu competition. Li says she could not be more proud of the young people she sees achieving their goals in the sport she loves most.

This year, Li plans to retire as a full-time athlete and focus on training Macao’s future wushu champions. Her advice to those interested in following in her footsteps? “You have to be strong-willed.” She says that’s the case for any sport, not just wushu. “Performing at such a high level consumes a big amount of strength and energy, which sometimes pushes you to your limit – it requires perseverance to keep it up,” she says. Li warns that results can take years, even decades to come to fruition. “But I would say good things take time and as long as you are hard-working and strong-willed, you will achieve your goals.” ●

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Good things take time and as long as you are hard-working and strong-willed, you will achieve your goals.

– Li Yi



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ARTS & CULTURE

Tibetan Buddhist art unveiled at the Macao Museum of Art

The Macao Museum of Art showcases Tibetan Buddhist treasures that were gifts exchanged between the Qing court and successive Panchen Lamas in Xizang.

Text **Vivianna Cheong**

Cloisonné enamel Sumeru Mandala, Qing dynasty (1644-1911)

The Macao Museum of Art (MAM) is currently playing host to more than 130 exquisite treasures usually housed between Beijing's Palace Museum and the famed Tashi Lhunpo Monastery. This unique, collaborative exhibition showcases the art and wares of Tibetan Buddhism's Gelug lineage – for whom the 15th-century monastery, high up in the Xizang Autonomous Region, holds deep religious significance.

Tibetan Buddhism began playing an increasingly important role in China's history in the 17th century, as the Chinese Empire encouraged integration with Xizang. The strategic alliances formed between these leaders resulted in the intricately crafted, lavish offerings currently on display in MAM's "Golden Eminence" exhibition. Each piece was a gift, exchanged between Panchen Lamas (the second-highest spiritual leaders in Tibetan Buddhism) and Qing emperors over the course of several centuries.

The museum's director, Un Sio San, says "Golden Eminence" celebrates Chinese culture's inclusivity. Macao marked the 24th anniversary of its

return to the motherland in December, and Un says this feels like an appropriate moment to acknowledge the country's multifaceted cultural makeup. Macao's own culture, for instance, is a fusion of Cantonese and Catholic Portuguese characteristics dating back to the 1500s. While the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) was founded by northeastern China's Manchu people, who followed Confucian principles. Then there's Tibetan Buddhism, which began developing in the 7th century and remains the dominant religion of Xizang today.

"Golden Eminence" is the latest iteration of a tradition dating back to December 1999, when Macao's handover from the Portuguese administration to the People's Republic of China took place. Each December, MAM collaborates with the Palace Museum to put on a new exhibition that remains on display right across Lunar New Year ("Golden Eminence" winds up on 17 March). "This show is an auspicious blessing for the festive period," says Un.



Lei Heong leong

(Left to right) Irene Chio, the exhibition coordinator, and Un Sio San, director of the MAM

(Opposite page) Tashi Lhunpo Monastery under the fifth Panchen Lama (17-18th century)

WHAT IS THE GELUG LINEAGE?

Founded in the early 15th century by the scholar Je Tsongkhapa, it took the Gelug lineage around two centuries to emerge as the dominant school of Buddhism in Xizang and Mongolia. The Gelug school is also known as the ‘Yellow Hat Sect’ due to the hue of its monks’ distinctive headwear. The word ‘Gelug’ means virtuous; its monks abide by a very strict code of ethics.

During the Ming and Qing dynasties, the imperial courts conferred official titles to the Gelug lineage’s monks – recognising their spiritual authority in Xizang and Mongolia. This was part of Ming and Qing emperors’ efforts

to promote stability across the region through strengthening their political relationships.

The Qianlong Emperor (1711-1799) forged especially close ties with the Buddhist leaders over his six-decade reign. In 1779, to celebrate the emperor’s 70th birthday, the sixth Panchen Lama visited Qianlong in Beijing. Knowing him to be an avid art collector, the Panchen Lama brought with him a wealth of treasures crafted by Tashi Lhunpo Monastery workshops – indeed, birthday presents fit for an emperor. Many of these paintings and statues are currently on display at MAM, in a section of the “Golden Eminence” exhibition titled “Treasures of the Sixth Panchen Lama”.



Tashi Lhunpo Monastery

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The size is not huge, but it demonstrates a very high artistic level.

– Irene Hoi Ian Chio

REALISTIC AND SPECTACULAR *THANGKAS*

A *thangka* is a sacred artform in Tibetan Buddhism. They are painstakingly detailed, richly coloured paintings (or embroidery) on silk, typically depicting Buddhist deities or scenes. An exhibition highlight is a thangka titled *Tashi Lhunpo Monastery during the Fifth Panchen Erdeni’s Period*, believed to have been painted in the late 17th or early 18th century. It’s one of the earliest paintings of the monastery.

The exhibition’s coordinator Irene Hoi Ian Chio thinks very highly of this piece. “The size is not huge, but it demonstrates a very high artistic level,” she says. The top of the thangka depicts the fourth Panchen Lama’s towering *mchod-khang* (a chapel which still stands to this day) and residence. Dozens of robed, yellow-hatted

monks fill up the rest of the painting. They appear to have been captured at a moment of energetic discourse, each with a different expression on his face.

Chio points to the “magnificent” work’s meticulous brushstrokes, noting that viewers can “see the lifelike depiction of monks debating scriptures.”

The 15th-century thangka master Menla Dondrup spent many years at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, studying Buddhist doctrines and teaching art while there. He founded one of the three major thangka painting schools, called Menri. It is known for its Persian influence and attention to tiny details. Later, in the 17th century, a ‘New Menri’ style developed with elaborate colour schemes and an emphasis on curves.

Both old and new Menri styles can be glimpsed in “Golden Eminence”. A 16th-century work titled *Arhat Bakula* is an example of the former, while the 19th-century *thangka* *Shakyamuni Buddha, Eight Arhats, Hvashang and Two Celestial Kings* belongs to the latter.



Statue of Shakyamuni Buddha made in zi-khyim

(Opposite page) A gold amulet box with turquoise inlay featuring Green Tara

‘PURPLE GOLD’ STATUES FOR THE SOUL

Along with paintings, Tashi Lhunpo Monastery’s craftsmen are famed for making fine statues, or *tashilima*, out of copper, brass, gold and a special alloy called *zi-khyim* (which translates as ‘purple gold’ in Chinese). Zi-khyim statues have a dark, purplish surface that shimmers with iridescence and are said to emit multi-coloured rays of light. The alloy is only made in two places: the Potala Palace in Lhasa, the capital of Xizang Autonomous Province, and Tashi Lhunpo Monastery. At the latter, zi-khyim is made in the Tashikitsel and Cupusi workshops.

The sixth Panchen Lama brought zi-khyim statues with him on his journey to Beijing, where they greatly impressed the Qianlong Emperor. *Tashilima* depict Buddhas and bodhisattvas (people who strive to attain buddhahood). They are objects of reverence, but also serve as aids to meditation and conveyors of spiritual teachings.



Golden Eminence features a particularly beautiful *tashilima* of a cross-legged Shakyamuni Buddha (the original Buddha). His body and thin *kasaya* (robe) are made out of zi-khyim while his head is gold. A turquoise stone has been inlaid into the statue’s base. This Buddha is performing the ‘land touching’ gesture with his right hand, representing the moment when the Earth witnessed his enlightenment.

GIFTS TO BE TREASURED – BUT ALSO EMBELLISHED

Another exhibited gift believed to have been highly prized by the Qianlong Emperor is an unusually

large amulet box made of gold and inlaid with gemstones. Used by Tibetan Buddhists as portable shrines that housed small statues of deities, amulet boxes are worn around necks or across the shoulder. “This amulet box is incredibly luxurious and blissful,” enthuses Chio, who describes it as “giving off a brilliant, shining effect.”

The deity inside this amulet box is a Green Tara, a manifestation of the bodhisattva of compassion’s tears. According to Chio, Green Tara’s wisdom and empathy is especially evident in this example of Gelug craftsmanship. “Take a closer look; the artistic beauty and the power of compassion will blow you away,” she urges.

Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara
Amoghapasha with four arms



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This is surely a unique opportunity to see them at the exhibition.

– Irene Hoi Ian Chio

While Tibetan Buddhist objects were highly valued by the Qing Imperial Court, they were also occasionally embellished by the court workshop. Take the tashilima of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara Amoghapasha, which is on display in Golden Eminence. This 28-centimetre-tall, four-armed figure started off as “a typical statue made in Tashi Lhunpo Monastery,” explains Chio. After being gifted to the emperor, the Qing Imperial Workshop added an embroidered garment bejewelled with rubies and sapphires. The garment is adorned with the eight auspicious emblems of feng shui, along with ocean waves – imagery typical of Qing court productions of the time, though certainly not of the Tibetan Buddhists from landlocked Xizang.

The court also crafted a red sandalwood shrine, with a glass door, for the tashilima. This depiction of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara Amoghapasa is not only extremely rare regarding its bi-cultural creation, but also for the fact its subject is holding four implements used in Buddhist rituals. “The statue is extremely exquisite and the garment is vulnerable,” says Chio. “This is surely a unique opportunity to see them at the exhibition.”

CELEBRATING THE DIVERSITY OF CHINESE CULTURE

The “Golden Eminence” exhibition is a rare chance to see these artefacts, many of which have never left the mainland.

Even for people who have travelled to Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, which sits at an impressive altitude of 3,800 metres, few have laid eyes on the meticulously crafted pieces usually housed there.

Indeed, the exhibition is proving popular: between mid-December and early January, more than 8,500 people visited MAM to admire the precious treasures. Beyond the physical objects themselves, the stories behind each object only add to their appeal. Each one has been held by and admired by emperors, and travelled thousands of kilometres over land between Xizang and Beijing.

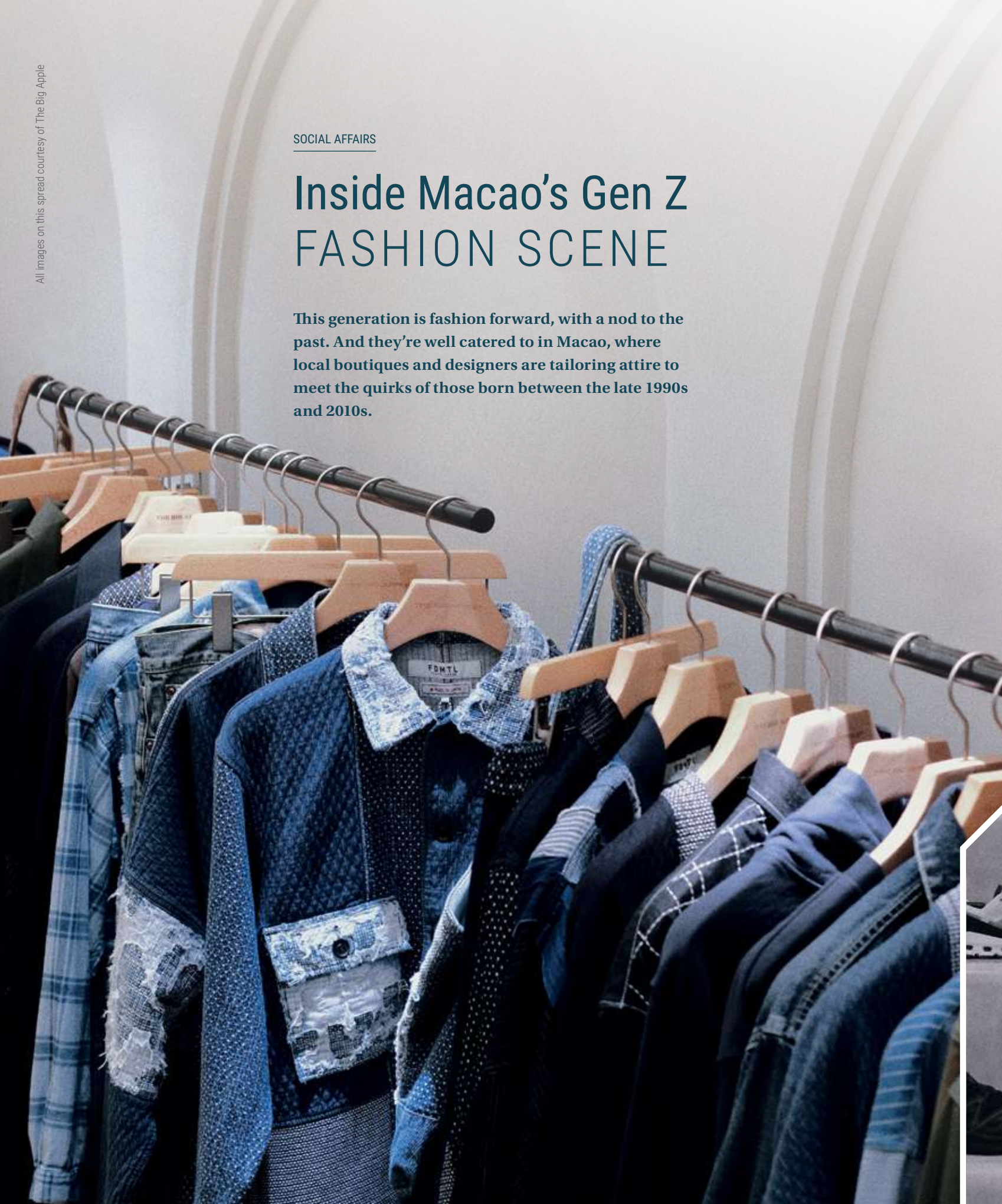
“Golden Eminence” is not just for looking at. MAM is committed to art education, its director says, noting that the museum is hosting workshops, lectures and performances to introduce elements of Xizang and Tibetan Buddhism’s culture throughout the exhibition period. These are an opportunity to learn about ‘singing bowls,’ for instance, which are shaped like inverted bells and used for music therapy. When a mallet is rubbed around the bowl’s metal surface, it produces an ethereal, vibrating sound that Tibetan Buddhists associate with deep relaxation.

“Macao, Beijing and Xizang have different customs and religions, but all are excellent examples of Chinese cultures,” says Un. “This exhibition connects them and allows them to share a strong ethnic bond.” ●

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Inside Macao's Gen Z FASHION SCENE

This generation is fashion forward, with a nod to the past. And they're well catered to in Macao, where local boutiques and designers are tailoring attire to meet the quirks of those born between the late 1990s and 2010s.



Text **Sara Santos Silva**

Whether you're looking for the latest in streetwear, mid-century craftsmanship or comfortable essentials, the city's fashion mavericks are answering the call

There is no doubt that Generation Z dresses distinctly. But there's also something familiar about these digital natives' fashion sense, too. They have a habit of borrowing trends from bygone eras and other age groups. Take the Y2K aesthetic, harking back to the year 2000: low-rise jeans, trucker caps and crop tops? They're back. In contrast to that turn-of-the-century skimpiness, Gen Zs have also embraced a look known as the 'coastal grandmother'. Here you've got loose, neutral linens and sun-smart bucket hats.

Whatever's going on above the ankle, sneakered feet are pretty much ubiquitous. And so are sustainability values. Gen Z is – at least in theory – willing to pay a premium for clothing produced in ways that benefit the environment and society. There's also strong demand for low-key yet high-quality essentials that are made to last. Vintage garb is popular, but so is brand new gear designed to look vintage.

Fortunately for the style mavens of Macao, a homegrown fashion scene has emerged in recent years. *Macao* magazine sat down with the visionaries behind three local brands.

Tailoring their wares for Gen Zs (defined as people born between the late 1990s and 2010s) – who find much of their outfit inspiration via social media – these local boutiques will also appeal to anyone who appreciates clean cuts and comfortable footwear.





António Sanmarful

BIG-NAME BRANDS AT THE BIG APPLE

With five boutiques across Macao, The Big Apple has come a long way since a trio of friends opened a Facebook-based clothing business in 2014. “There was nowhere Macao people could find streetwear at that time – they had to either shop online or go to Hong Kong,” says 33-year-old Billy Kouk, who co-founded The Big Apple alongside Pinky Hong and Jeff Tang.

“All three of us are into pop and street culture, including fashion, movies, music like hip hop, rap and R&B, breakdance

and skateboarding,” he shares. It was these niche interests that inspired the group to bring streetwear to Macao.

True fashion connoisseurs, the co-founders often travel to Tokyo to find the latest in Asian street trends, and to the French capital for Fashion Week. Their careful curation can be perused at the brand’s flagship store on Rua do Campo, in the heart of Macao Peninsula. Inside the three-storey boutique, there are vibrant trainers displayed on the walls, Japanese and US labels hanging on racks, and themed installations highlighting the latest in Gen Z aesthetics.



Image courtesy of The Big Apple

The Big Apple is home to an obsessively curated selection of brands and designers, with its founders (left to right) Jeff Tang, Pinky Hong and Billy Kuok often travelling to hunt for the latest trends streetwear trends

So-called blokecore is one of these, which Kuok explains is sporty fashion inspired by ’90s-era British football culture and escalated by the 2022 FIFA World Cup. An outdoorsy look is also popular at the moment, he says, apparently reflecting Gen Z’s desire to spend time in nature after weathering extended pandemic lockdowns indoors.

The Big Apple is the only retailer in Macao stocking several major brands favoured by Gen Zs around the world, including On running sneakers (from Switzerland) and the US’s Oakley apparel. It’s also the only place in the city where you can buy the Sportstyle collection of Salomon sneakers.



Founded by Ryan Wong (left) and Jack Tam, Pure Zone's aesthetics is characterised by comfortable, logo-free, monochromatic essentials



All images on this spread by Cheong Kam Ka

LESS IS MORE AT PURE ZONE

In contrast to The Big Apple, Pure Zone's apparel revolves around minimalist, logo-free essentials. It's where local Gen Zs get their monochromatic tees, hoodies, polos and button-downs – often cut to be oversized and/or gender-neutral. Clean lines and simplicity are championed by this Macao-grown brand.

Its co-founders Ryan Wong and Jack Tam – both Gen Zs themselves at 26 years old – met while enrolled at a local secondary school. Near the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, they discussed what was missing from Macao's fashion scene: 'Why isn't there a local version of Uniqlo,' they wondered. And with that, an idea was born. "We wanted to show people that we can make something of that quality, or even better, locally," says Wong.

So, he and Tam launched a website selling clothes from different factories and designers. A few months later, they rejigged the business to start their own product line, Pure Zone.

In April 2021, the entrepreneurs opened a brick-and-mortar Pure Zone shop in the Barra area. Entering the boutique, the brand's focus on quality is apparent.

In addition to a loyal following in Macao, Pure Zone has seen growing demand from the mainland after partnering with Chinese influencers on Little Red Book (Xiaohongshu) – one of the most influential social media platforms driving Gen Z trends.

While Tam and Wong keep close tabs on emerging trends, they don't feel the need to jump on every fleeting fashion moment. "Our oversized jackets, pants and faded washed tees can complement trends [such as Y2K], but that's not our brand's style," says Tam, adding that he's more concerned about making minimalist pieces that stand the test of time.





All images on this spread courtesy of Atelier Estorninho

ATELIER ESTORNINHO

Macao-born and raised Hugo Estorninho founded his eponymous clothing label in 2022, after studying global design at IADE (Faculty of Design, Technology and Communication) in Lisbon, Portugal. A penchant for slow fashion inspired the 26-year-old to celebrate mid-1900s textile craftsmanship in his pieces, which can be difficult for modern machinery to emulate.

“The idea was not just about designing clothes but also leveraging the textile industry in Portugal, namely in northern Portugal, which is very advanced,” says Estorninho, who currently lives in Lisbon. “I sought out the best artisans from the top workshops to materialise my vision to revive pieces lost in time.” Atelier Estorninho is an online shop specialised in a vintage-inspired look incorporating James Dean-esque chinos and Ivy League-style cardigans. Its clean-cut uniform aesthetics are only available through an online boutique.



An online boutique launched in 2022, Atelier Estorninho celebrates slow fashion through premium craftsmanship and vintage-inspired pieces

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These trousers are not something you throw away, but something you pass on. They’re made to last.

– Hugo Estorninho

Sustainability is of great importance to Estorninho, who strives to be the antithesis of fast fashion. The designer sources GOTS-certified cotton from Spain, uses corozo fruit shells for buttons, and does not offer sales because – he believes – they can promote overconsumption.

He also takes pride in the fact his creation process is very, very slow. Every detail in Estorninho’s clothing has been carefully considered and painstakingly assembled, typically taking months to move from concept to conception. He points to his chinos as an example: “These trousers are not something you throw away, but something you pass on,” he says. “They’re made to last.”

Estorninho’s philosophy resonates with Macao’s Gen Zs on many levels. This is a generation who want to look good, acknowledge the past, and build a better future – through fashion. ●



Macao **ABROAD**

Football and fine art: Afonso Biscaia’s winning game plan

Meet the Macao-raised football fanatic who’s landed his dream job at the Portuguese Football Federation and celebrates his family’s artistic legacy in his spare time.

Text **Sara Santos Silva**
Photos courtesy of **Afonso Biscaia**

After earning his postgraduate degree on Sports Law from the prestigious Universidade Católica de Portugal (Catholic University of Portugal), Biscaia landed a job as a paralegal at Federação Portuguesa de Futebol (Portuguese Football Federation)

(Inset) Young Afonso Biscaia training at Benfica Macau’s football academy



Afonso Biscaia has been passionate about football for as long as he can remember. Growing up in Macao, he first started practising football at Benfica Macau and later played for the Consulate General of Portugal’s team, while cheering on the Macau Football Team at every opportunity.

But unlike many young players, he didn’t aspire to a life on the pitch. “I don’t have the mindset of a football player,” admits the 25-year-old with a smile, alluding to his full social calendar. Instead, Biscaia took a shot at law – a field that offered many career possibilities.

Once he started studying, things moved fast. In his second year at the prestigious Universidade Católica Portuguesa (Catholic University of Portugal) in Lisbon, Biscaia jumped at the opportunity to take a course in sports law. “That course meant that my college degree and passion could cross paths,” he tells *Macao* magazine.

Soon enough, he had a new ball in play. After completing a Law degree, he continued with a postgraduate degree in sports law. It was the right decision at the right time – one that would set him up to score his dream job.

HE SHOOTS, HE SCORES

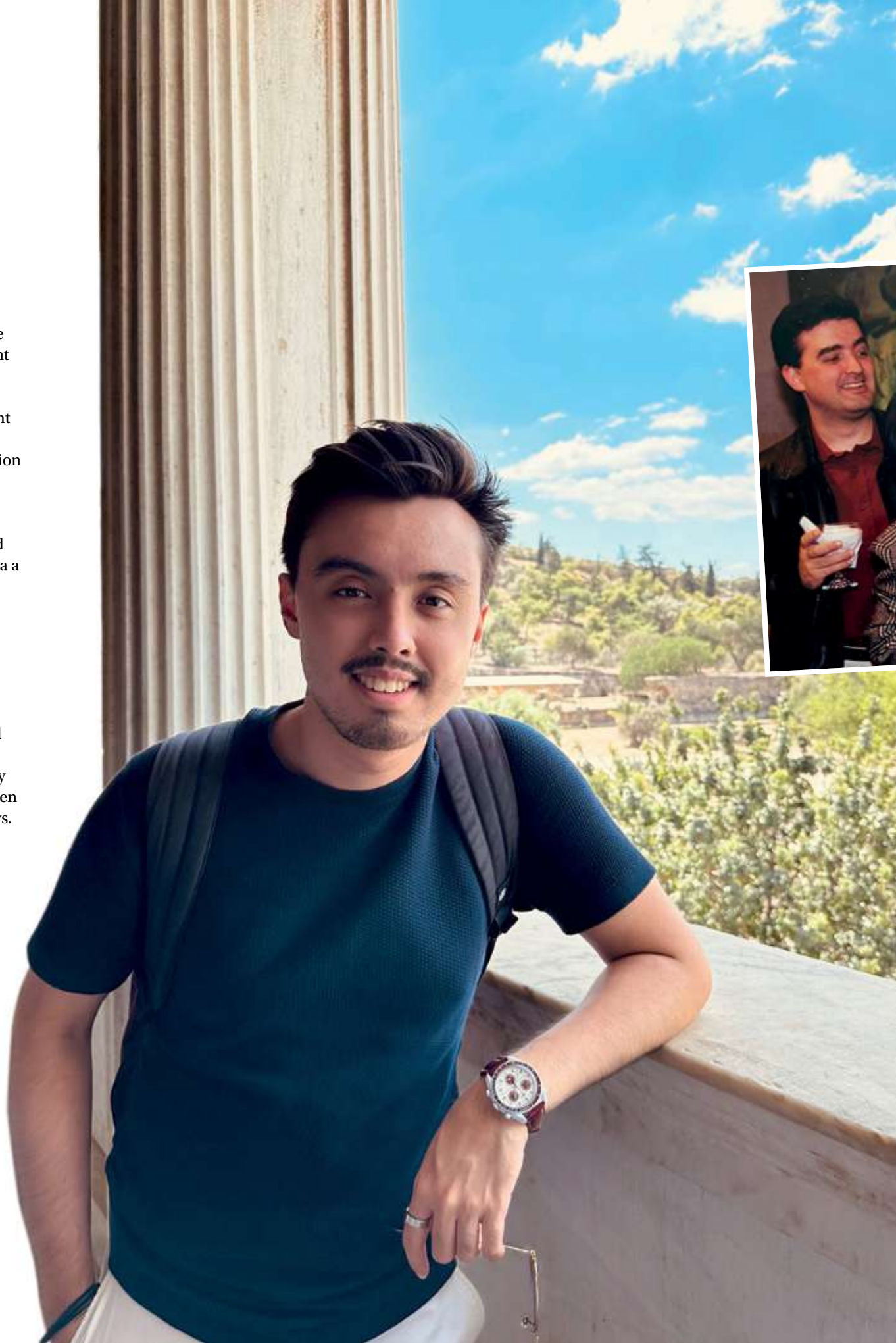
After graduating in August 2022, Biscaia applied to work at the Federação Portuguesa de Futebol (Portuguese Football Federation). The governing body oversees football in Portugal and recently won a bid to co-organise the FIFA World Cup in 2030.

It was the only job he applied to, and Biscaia says he was overjoyed when he received an offer to become a legal officer at the federation. “Just coming into work in the morning and being able to smell the grass on the football pitches outside feels like a metaphor for me – to breathe football,” Biscaia said. “It’s a dream!”

For some, applying to a single job may seem like a leap of faith. But Biscaia said it felt like the “natural course” thanks to his track record. During university, he coordinated the sports department of the students’ association and moderated sports discussions. Biscaia also served as the president of the Council of Justice for the Higher Education Sports Association in Lisbon, which provided him with valuable insights into sports administration. This experience, combined with his law degree and passion for the sport, made Biscaia a strong candidate.

As a legal officer for the federation’s legal department, Biscaia liaises with sports agents and clubs, provides legal advice on contracts, drafts and reviews legal documents, and handles brand registrations nationally and internationally. Working at such a prestigious institution in a country known for its football fever has been nothing short of “amazing,” he says.

(Opposite page) Biscaia pictured as a baby with his parents and maternal grandparents, artist Un Chi Iam and the late artist Mio Pang Fei



Naturally, there are many job perks. For instance, Biscaia occasionally interacts with football players of several national football teams. He hasn’t met his idol, Cristiano Ronaldo, yet but hopes that day is coming soon.

“I grew up watching his career unfold. It’s an honour to be a part of Federação Portuguesa de Futebol while he’s still playing,” says Biscaia of the five-time Ballon D’or winner, who plays as a forward for both the Portugal national team and Saudi Arabia’s Al Nassr Football Club.

PASSING IT FORWARD

Football isn’t Biscaia’s only passion. He has also cultivated a deep appreciation for the arts, inspired by his family’s creative legacy in Macao. Born in Lisbon in 1998, Biscaia spent most of his childhood – from ages 1 to 17 – in Macao, where his family still resides.

“Macao is home to me – I have a very strong connection with the city,” he says. “Everything I’ve learned that shaped my personality and my lifestyle... it’s all thanks to Macao and its characteristics.”

While growing up in the city, Biscaia learned about fine art from his mother and maternal grandparents, who moved from Shanghai to Macao in 1982. His grandfather, the late Mio Pang Fei, became one of the region’s greatest contemporary painters. Best known for his Neo-Orientalist style, which merged Chinese tradition and Western techniques, Mio exhibited worldwide and represented Macao at the 56th Venice Biennale in 2015 with an exhibition titled “Path and Adventure”.

His grandmother, Un Chi Iam, is also an acclaimed artist and professor who has toured the world to showcase her modern ink and landscape works. Meanwhile, his mother, Mio U Kit, followed in her parents’ footsteps, working as an art restorer and painter.

While Biscaia says he lacks the talent to create art, it’s still in his DNA. Proud of his family’s legacy, Biscaia established an Instagram account after his grandfather’s death in 2020 as a way of honouring his work and helping it reach new audiences. He spends much of his free time running the account, which has attracted more than 8,000 followers from all over the world.

To share more stories about his grandfather, he’s also invested in making the documentary, *Mio Pang Fei*, directed by Pedro Cardeira of Inner Harbour Productions, available online. When asked about the future, Biscaia says he is fully focused on the present, but one thing is clear: Whether sharing his family’s creative heritage or working for the Portuguese Football Federation, Biscaia knows how to take the ball and run with it. ●



FOOD AND DRINK

Macao's best tofu is made the old-fashioned way

Lei Iat Wah is reaching the end of a decades-long career crafting tofu, just like his dad did. What's kept this second-generation artisan going for so long? Morning swims, he says. And plenty of karaoke.

Text **Kenny Fong**
Photos **Lei Heong Jeong**

At 65, Lei Iat Wah has been hand-crafting tofu for nearly half his life

Making tofu by hand is laborious. Just ask Lei Iat Wah, owner of the Inner Harbour restaurant Sopa de Fitas Ving Kei. He's been crafting these creamy blocks of soybean goodness for the past 30 odd years – in much the same way his parents did over half a century ago.

Once the 65-year-old is finished preparing his tofu, he adds it into a range of different dishes, from noodle soups to fried meat with vegetables. Then he serves it up to his loyal customers. *Sopa de fitas*, the Portuguese words in the name of Lei's small eatery, actually means 'noodle soup' (you see a lot of sopa de fitas around Macao). The Cantonese *Ving Kei* – a play on his father's nickname – is what differentiates the restaurant from similar businesses.

But Ving Kei's signature dish is not noodle soup. That honour belongs to hot and cold tofu puddings, known as *dau fu fa* in Cantonese. These pale desserts may look unassuming, but their delicate, melt-in-your-mouth textures and sweet syrup toppings have certainly helped put Sopa de Fitas Ving Kei on Macao's culinary map.



Lei's father peddled in historic streets such as Rua de Nossa Senhora do Amparo

FROM LITTLE THINGS, BIG THINGS GROW

Lei's parents, Lei Kuong Men and Tam Chao, started their culinary careers as hawkers, selling an assortment of food items in the Inner Harbour area (on the western shore of Macao Peninsula). Then, in the early 1960s, one of his father's friends made a life-changing proposition.

"My dad had a friend who knew he could make tofu pudding," Lei recalls. "He asked my dad if he wanted to be his own boss, making and selling tofu himself. At first, my dad didn't have any money, so that friend paid for a special stone grinder [a key tool for making tofu] and gave it to my dad."

Now with the means to produce their own tofu, which involves grinding soaked soybeans into a smooth paste, Lei's parents proceeded to rent a small store. It was there they made their tofu puddings, to sell on foot along nearby streets. It was hard work, says Lei. Not only physically, but "there was no business when the weather was cold, as nobody would buy tofu pudding."

His father decided to diversify the business. That's when he began selling steaming bowls of tofu noodle soup (with vegetables and fish balls) for the cooler half of the year, and tofu puddings the rest of the time.

Back then, Lei's parents sold their tofu from a heavy food cart they pushed along the streets. His older brother noticed the toll the cart was taking on his dad, so convinced the elder Lei to set up a permanent shop from inside their little tofu kitchen. He did, and that lasted for five or so years, until the building in which



Driving a scooter is a big improvement over the heavy cart Lei's father used decades ago

(Inset) Lei persists in cooking his tofu the old fashion way



they rented was demolished. Ving Kei moved to its current location on Rua Da Tercena in 1973.

Lei Kuong Men retired exactly 10 years later. At the time, Lei and his three brothers weren't sure about following in their father's footsteps. They were already earning decent livings as taxi drivers and it didn't seem worth exchanging those cushy jobs for what they knew to be back-breaking labour. But the senior Lei pushed them to return; if none of his sons would take on Ving Kei, the restaurant would lose its licence to operate. Unwilling to see

their father's life's work undone, all four acquiesced.

They stuck at it together for a while, but each of Lei's siblings eventually moved on to other things. "They just couldn't handle it any longer," says Lei. Tofu making is monotonous, and – at least the beginning – the family were working 16-hour days. His oldest brother immigrated to Canada in 1995 and the two younger ones stayed in Macao, but found other work. While they're no longer permanent fixtures at Ving Kei, both still help Lei out from time to time.

Ving Kei has occupied the same storefront in Rua de Terceira for 50 years

(Inset) Lei Iat Wah, carrying on the legacy of Macao's finest tofu passed down from his father



A FATHER'S WAYS – AND PRESIDENT'S VISIT

As the remaining second-generation owner of Ving Kei, Lei takes pride in keeping many of his father's tofu making techniques alive. For instance, he continues to cook the soybean paste over an open flame while other tofu cooks have switched to using electric stoves. "When customers eat our tofu, they will notice that it still has a little bit of a smoky flavour," the restaurant owner

remarks. "It's not like the tofu heated using electricity, which is smooth and white, but completely lacking in flavour."

Of course, Ving Kei has updated some aspects of the process. Especially when it comes to labour-saving innovations. That hefty stone grinder that first catalysed the business, for example, has been replaced with a more efficient electric one. "Before, when my father made tofu, it would take three hours to

make a bucket-full," Lei says. "Now it takes probably one hour."

Since taking over the establishment, Lei has expanded the family business by opening up additional restaurants. Before the Covid-19 pandemic struck, there were five Sopa de Fitas Ving Kei branches around Macao. One closed due to staff shortages during the pandemic, but Lei plans to reopen it soon.



Ving Kei's storied past includes several noteworthy highlights. One such moment was in 1999 when, Portugal's then-president, Jorge Sampaio, paid the eatery a visit, just prior to Macao's administrative handover to China that December. A framed photo of Sampaio and Lei shaking hands across Ving Kei's kitchen counter adorns the restaurant's wall, along with many other photographs documenting the shop's rich history.

Recalling the high-profile meeting, Lei says that Ving Kei was selected over other restaurants in the area because its kitchen at the time was situated right on the roadside. This meant the Portuguese leader could greet its chef without violating security protocols by actually entering the premises.

While their encounter was brief, Lei feels "very fortunate" that it happened. "Because of that meeting, many people recognise me. Portuguese people know about me as well," he says.

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

The tofu maker attributes his fitness to two daily habits: early morning swims, in the sea off Coloane's coast, and singing karaoke after work. On the question of his retirement, Lei acknowledges that he cannot continue working indefinitely – and even admits that a heart condition is starting to slow him down. "At my age, I can do this for ten more years before I retire," he says. "[But] I really have to retire. It's not possible for me to say I don't want to retire."

Ving Kei's silky smooth tofu pudding has stood the test of time

(Inset) Lei has his eye on a potential successor to take over the historic eatery



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TO WATCH THE VIDEO

As for who will take over the store once he stops grinding tofu, Lei makes it known that he does have a potential successor in mind – or "half a successor," as he playfully calls this person. However, before revealing their identity, he wants to be sure they are up to the task. Ving Kei is a historic eatery, after all, and Lei needs his parents' legacy to be in good hands.

What will he consider a mark of his successor's success? "If they, like me, end up having people interview them," Lei quips. ●





FOOD AND DRINK

Condiment city

Macao's proud culinary heritage merges with human history, at least where its beloved sauces and spicy pastes are concerned. We spoke with four local businesses about how mastering the art of the condiment has shaped the families involved.

Text **Kenny Fong**
Photos **Lei Heong leong**

Collectively, these four brands have a history of over 300 years

When it comes to culinary souvenirs from Macao, visitors often turn to the crumbly almond cookies of Koi Kei or Lord Stow's creamy egg tarts – and with good reason. Both represent aspects of the city's food culture, where global flavours have converged for centuries.

If you're after something more unusual, however – perhaps you're picking up something for a seasoned gourmand or looking to add a dash of exotica to your own pantry – consider Macao's impressive array of locally made condiments. The city boasts an impressive selection of *jiangyuan*, or shops that exclusively make and sell sauces.

Macao's sauces have histories that date back many decades. Some, over a hundred years. But it isn't fair to think of them as culinary relics; these concoctions, which lean towards the Asian side of Macao's heritage, are still being enjoyed today. The wide spectrum of flavours on offer includes sweet, umami and spicy, meaning that there is something to suit everyone's

palate. They are also highly versatile and can be used to add interest to just about any dish, be it a bowl of noodles, a piquant curry or quick stir-fry.

DOING THINGS THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY AT KONG HING LOONG

Famed for its pungent shrimp paste, Kong Hing Loong was founded back in 1900 and has been part of the Pong family for three generations. The first generation settled in Taipa after moving there from Guangdong's Nanhai District. Much like other settlers on the island, the Pongs initially eked out a living through selling fresh seafood, although they also manufactured oyster sauce and shrimp paste on the side.

"Later on, the waters became too shallow, and the fishing boats couldn't enter the shores here," the second generation owner, Pong Kin Hon recounts. "Gradually, [the boats] moved to places like Hong Kong and Vietnam." As a result, the 90-year-old adds, most of the fresh seafood businesses shut down.

Pong says that the late 1940s were a “very difficult” time for Kong Hing Loong, too, noting that his family business wasn’t able to break even. When Pong took over the business from his father in the early 1950s – at the tender age of 18 – he made the call to focus on artisanal sauces. This proved to be a wise choice, enabling Kong Hing Loong to weather the economic turmoil brought by the exodus of fishing boats and carry on trading to this day.

Pong has since passed the mantle down to his own son, Paolo. “In recent years, I feel my health hasn’t been too good...” the elderly man acknowledges. “So I called my son to come and help ... it’s better than having this traditional craft production die out.”

Today, in keeping with tradition, Kong Hing Loong eschews machinery. Its shrimp paste is sun-dried after fermentation, then packaged in jars that are labelled by hand. “Other people use machinery to produce 1,000 jars [of shrimp paste], but we produce 100 jars [by hand],” remarks Pong. Paolo, who was born in the shop, describes the shrimp paste-making process as a complex – even arduous – art that requires intense attention to the weather, ingredients and moisture.

In its early years, Kong Hing Loong’s customer base consisted of locals and a smattering of Hong Kong visitors. These days, the rapid growth of Macao’s tourism industry means mainlanders now make up a large chunk of the clientele. In this sense, the business is a mirror of Macao’s development.



Paolo Pong carries on the long-standing family tradition of hand-making shrimp paste

(Inset) The Pong family have worked in the same estate for three generations



Having worked for Lee Kum Kee for over seven decades, Uncle Vai is the very definition of a loyal employee

FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS TO GLOBAL SUCCESS: LEE KUM KEE

Lee Kum Kee is an internationally recognisable Chinese condiment brand, with a history dating back even further than Kong Hing Loong's. While the company is currently headquartered in Hong Kong (in fact, it has 'Hong Kong' printed on its famous gold label), Lee Kum Kee spent 30 years operating out of Macao. And its legacy here remains strong.

Established in 1888, the company started out in Nanshui, Guangdong Province. When its original premises were destroyed by a fire in the early 1900s, Lee Kum Kee's founder relocated the business to Macao. Even after shifting headquarters to Hong Kong in 1932, however, Lee Kum Kee maintained its Macao presence – and still operates a 105-year-old shop here today, in the heart of the city. Macao is where the company's longest-serving employee, the affable Chang Chin Vai, is stationed.

Chang is 88 years old and has worked at Lee Kum Kee's Macao branch for 74 of them. Known to locals as Uncle Vai, he dutifully opens the store every morning and smiles as he helps loyal customers locate their favourites of the brand's 200-plus products (oyster sauce is perhaps the most popular). Each transaction is hand-recorded in Chang's trusty notebook.

In the downtime, Chang can be found sitting comfortably behind his desk and either reading the paper, listening to the radio or, occasionally, singing. Despite being well past retirement age, the conscientious worker has no intention of hanging up his gloves any time soon. "Personally, I feel very happy to have been able to serve the company from its humble beginnings all the way to its success," Chang says. "In the old days, there were only two products. It wasn't until the third generation [of family ownership] that the company flourished and achieved its present worldwide fame."

Chang says that locals and tourists visit the store, which sits on a rounded street corner behind large white pillars. "Nowadays, it's mostly tourists who come ... locals will go to the supermarkets," he elaborates. Those who do visit don't regret it, as the Lee Kum Kee head office has granted Chang permission to dole out special discounts to the company's customers in Macao.



TAI LEONG CHEONG KEI'S SECRET RECIPE

Using a family recipe passed down through generations, Sio Ng and his aunt make, package and sell aromatic curry pastes from their modest store-cum-workshop. Tai Leong Cheong Kei was founded by Ng's grandfather, the man responsible for concocting the spicy condiment that the brand is best known for, about 40 years ago.

Ng never got to know his grandfather, who hailed from Guangdong Province and passed away shortly after Ng was born (in 1990). But the patriarch relayed his curry paste recipe to his daughter, who has since let Ng in on the secret. Nephew and aunt now work together at Tai Leong Cheong Kei, living in the storey above. The premises are located in Macao Peninsula.

While Ng had been heading towards a career in banking, he felt compelled to take the helm of his family's business when his

elderly forebears started to retire. To his delight, that's proving to be a commercially savvy move. Demand is so strong for Tai Leong Cheong Kei's curry paste that there's often a line of customers outside the store waiting for their turn to buy a jar. To make sure there's enough of the artisanally made paste to go around, Ng enforces a quota of three jars per day for each customer.

Tai Leong Cheong may have a tiny footprint, but its customer base has spread beyond Macao. According to Ng, the business has grown by "five or six-fold" in recent years; its distribution network stretches into Hong Kong and Zhuhai, and its iconic curry pastes are also for sale on online platforms like Taobao.

MYANMESE-INSPIRED BELACAN FROM GOLDEN TOWER (金塔牌)

Golden Tower is another local condiment brand being run by someone who hadn't ever planned to work in the sauce sector. Patrick Ho is an IT professional who took over from his father, Golden Tower's Myanmar-born founder, Ho Veng Ian, 18 years ago.



Tai Leong Cheong Kei's curry is so popular that they are sold out within a matter of hours

(Opposite page) Golden Tower continues to be a popular brand for residents seeking localised Southeast Asian sauces



The senior Ho was an entrepreneur who started the Nam Va Trading company in 1974, having relocated to Macao the decade prior. Like many of his compatriots, Ho resided in the Three Lamps District (Rotunda de Carlos da Maia) and struggled to find work due to language barriers. He wound up opening his own store, initially selling imported products from Myanmar and Malaysia.

In the 1990s, however, Ho developed his own take on Myanmar-inspired sauces – believing their special balance of salt with spice would better cater to Macao tastes than other Southeast Asian sauces available in the market. Patrick Ho explained how his father's assiduous research took him back to Myanmar, where he spent months studying with Myanmar chefs. "He started learning how to produce *belacan* [a type of shrimp paste] and how to make *mohinga* [a type of fish soup]," the junior Ho notes.

Equipped with new-found knowledge, Ho Veng Ian returned to Macao and launched Golden Tower as part of Nam Va Trading. The brand's signature condiment is called 'Myanmar Scallop Belachan' – a product locals tend to pair with Golden Tower's handmade noodles, Patrick Ho says.

He didn't start his career in IT expecting to someday be at the helm of his father's rather traditionally run enterprise. But a chance meeting with Ho senior's business partner inspired him to turn his hand to the brand. For almost two decades, Patrick Ho has been working to revitalise Golden Tower through a variety of measures. He revamped product packaging in a bid to appeal to younger customers, for instance, and has standardised the company's manufacturing processes to ensure consistent quality is delivered in every jar.

Patrick Ho also actively participates in trade expos, like the Macao International Trade & Investment Fair and the Guangdong and Macao Branded Products Fair, aiming to boost brand recognition. His current ambition is to get his father's carefully developed belacan into the mainland and beyond.

These four condiment companies offer unique tastes of Macao – and through their stories, precious insights into the city's history. Each one embodies a story of survival through thick and thin. Most are multigenerational tributes to hardworking families who've made Macao their home. Their products add a little zing to the dinner tables near and far, but also a topic of conversation. ●

A wealth of numismatical history

Members of the Macau Numismatic Society are all avid collectors of money, though not as legal tender. For them, the value of coins and banknotes lies in their ability to tell a story of the past.



Text **Vivianna Cheong**
Photos courtesy of **Macau Numismatic Society**

Dragon dancers decorate one side of this 50 avos coin from 1993

(Inset) David Chio

Leo Origami



Lei Heong leong

Macao is fast becoming a cashless economy, with mobile banking and online payments gaining traction across society. Case in point: by the end of 2022, 90 percent of residents were registered with the online payment platform MPay. According to the director of the Macau Numismatic Society, David Chio, physical money could be relegated to relic-hood within the next decade. The society, incidentally, is dedicated to the study of coins and banknotes.

While the younger generations of today have already lost the habit of slipping pocket money into a piggy bank, Chio and his fellow numismatists remain firmly dedicated to cold hard cash – and the older it is, the better. These avid currency collectors view their spoils as puzzle pieces through which history can be visualised, not as money looking to be spent.

The Macau Numismatic Society publishes literature, hosts forums on numismatic trends, runs workshops for local schools, and organises an annual three-day exhibition of members' collections. Most of its 600-odd members are from Macao, though about a fifth hail from the mainland and other parts of Asia, says Chio. Age-wise, they range from in their 30s to pushing 70. Founded in 1988, the society welcomes experts and hobbyists who gather monthly to show off their latest finds – for instance, a rare example of Macao's earliest printed banknote (a five pataca bill from 1905) – and discuss how money has evolved throughout the territory's long history.

The latter is a subject most numismatists are passionate about. It's also an area where official information can be sparse in Macao, according to Chio. The 66-year-old says there are lost pockets of legal tender that the group has heard of, but have never been able to get their hands on. "We try to collect samples of everything," he says. "But some we haven't even been able to find at museums." The society's vice director, Lawrence Loi, offers an example: "According to news coverage at the time, a 500 pataca banknote was produced locally in 1944 – but we've never seen the real thing."

Each member has their own special interest. Some collect antiquated Chinese coins issued by, say, the Qianlong Emperor (who ruled for much of the 1700s), while some focus on gathering as complete a compendium of Macao patacas as possible. Other numismatists seek examples of pre-pataca currency that were once traded in the city. Auction houses and antique shops are their main sources of bygone banknotes and coins, and many also have friends keeping their eyes peeled in other parts of the world.

The most serious collectors get their collections evaluated by third-party organisations like the US-based Paper Money Guaranty (PMG). PMG authenticates and grades banknotes based on their condition,



Lei Heong Leong



rarity, and other factors. Many of the society's members also collect other items, like ink pens, vintage lighters or stamps.

FROM PIRATE SILVER TO MACAO'S FIRST OFFICIAL BANKNOTE

While Macao's own currency, the pataca, has existed for more than a hundred years, commerce has been happening here for far longer. Back in the 16th century, Portuguese traders used a variety of coinage to buy and sell goods – from the fabled Mexican eight reales, also known as the pataca mexicana (silver coins minted by the Spanish Empire and highly prized by pirates) to shoe-shaped sycees of the Qing dynasty. By the turn of the 20th century, Hong Kong dollars, Straits Settlement dollars, and the old Chinese coins known as qian had been added to the mix.

At that time, Macao's Portuguese administrators were struggling to keep track of all the different types of money in circulation. So, to make bookkeepers' lives easier, Portugal declared it was time Macao had its own currency. In 1902, Banco Nacional Ultramarino (BNU) opened its first branch in the city. Three years later, it began issuing Macao's first official money.

The original five pataca bills were printed like cheque books. Loi says that BNU's local director personally signed each note, then tore it out of the book (creating a single perforated edge) to make it valid. "Back in 1905, five patacas was worth a month's salary," he adds.

For their first few years of existence, patacas featured an image of the Portuguese crown. This was removed in 1910, after the October revolution overthrew Portugal's monarchy and replaced it with a republic.

Crown or not, early pataca banknotes were of such poor quality that locals



refused to use them. Macao people couldn't believe these flimsy slips of paper – which had been printed in London – could possibly hold the same value as silver or gold, so continued using a medley of foreign currencies to pay for their day-to-day needs. A 1914 report from BNU noted that even civil servants rushed off to exchange their paper pataca salaries for coins, at shockingly low exchange rates.

This five pataca banknote was issued by BNU in 1905. Each note was personally signed by the director

Around this time, deposit certificates issued by private Chinese banks joined the melee. Unlike patacas, these so-called *pangtan* could be swapped on demand for real silver. They were used like banknotes in Macao up until 1944, when the territory’s authorities banned them.

People’s aversion to local currency did not stop innovations in the pataca printing process (perforated edges were phased out between 1919 and 1924), and nor did it prevent an increasing range of banknotes from being developed. The first avos – the equivalent of cents – were issued in 1920, with one hundred avos making up one pataca. According to Loi, paper avos’ design barely changed over the next 20 years aside from bank directors’ handwritten signatures.

Through studying notes printed over this period, local numismatists have determined there were probably seven different BNU directors between 1920 and 1941.

WWII SAW PATACAS PRINTED LOCALLY FOR THE FIRST TIME

Macao’s banknotes were printed in Europe until the territory’s 1999 return to China, aside from a short period during World War II. While Macao, like Portugal, was neutral during the war, it couldn’t help but be affected by the widespread geopolitical turmoil – and that led to a severe currency shortage. The city’s population tripled due to an influx of refugees (many from Hong Kong, which was occupied by the Japanese), while a



This five pataca banknote was issued by BNU in 1924 and doesn't have a perforated edge



This one pataca banknote was issued by BNU in 1912



British blockade of Japanese-occupied areas decimated trade. An incoming shipment of freshly printed patacas was also unable to reach Macao from Europe. To ensure there was still cash on hand to spend, officials in Macao devised a stop-gap dubbed ‘emergency money’ that was printed locally.

Creating money is a highly complex operation, requiring specialised materials and tools. “[But] thanks to the locally renowned businessman and philanthropist Ho Yin acquiring some special printing paper from Hong Kong, Macao was able to print its own emergency banknotes,” says Chio. “The war was going on, it was very dangerous, but eventually the notes were printed by a local company called Litografia Sin Chon & Cia.”

Even back then, professionally printed money contained anti-replication techniques designed to prevent counterfeit notes entering circulation. Since this was impossible to achieve on the fly, local

officials came up with their own security measures. Each note, for instance, had to be hand-signed by two men: the head of BNU’s Macao branch, and the director of the Financial Services Bureau. Printing staff were also made to eat and sleep at their place of work, watched over by Portuguese soldiers.

“Macao experienced a short burst of economic growth thanks to emergency money, because the rich people were able to spend it at the restaurants, casinos, and bars of Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro,” says Loi. Emergency money was phased out after the war, once Macao’s stock of genuine banknotes had been fully replenished.

It’s hard to find money that was printed before the end of World War II in Macao, according to Loi. “The turbulence of the first half of the 20th century led to a poor economy where people focussed on spending any money they had on food, not on saving it,” he explains.



Issues of Bank Notes by BNU for Macau

The first 1,000 pataca banknote was released on 8 August 1988

(Opposite page) Ho Seng Nam (top) and U Sio Ieng



During that period, Macao's administrators also nullified old currency in circulation three to six months after each new batch of bills got issued. Residents rushed to change their soon-to-be defunct banknotes into usable ones, seldom thinking it worth hanging onto the old ones for posterity. They could hand soon-to-be defunct notes in at any bank in Macao, and that bank would deliver the money to BNU.

POST-WAR PATACAS, AND AVOS

After the war ended, Macao's new banknotes got prettier. They began featuring historical figures and local landmarks: the likes of Portuguese poet Luís Vaz de Camões and the influential ombudsman Miguel José de Arriaga Brum da Silveira; the Ruins of St Paul's and Guia Fortress.

On the eighth day of the eighth month of 1988, Macao received its first 1,000 pataca banknote. Eight, of course, symbolises good fortune in Chinese culture – and this was the year after Portugal and China had signed a joint declaration paving the way for Macao's handover. The yellow banknote featured a dragon motif on one side, and Governor Nobre de Carvalho Bridge on the other.

The first pataca and avos coins appeared in 1952, minted in Portugal. An array of different metals have been used to make them since then, including bronze, cupro-nickel, silver and brass. Most of Macao's coins have been circular, but 12-sided 20 avo and and five pataca coins were produced for a brief period in the 1990s.

These days, Macao's coins are minted locally while its banknotes are printed on the

mainland. Issuing rights now belong to the Monetary Authority of Macao, for which BNU is an agent bank, as well as the Bank of China.

COINS FOR LUCK, NOT COMMERCE

A couple in their sixties, Ho Seng Nam and U Sio Ieng are also members of the Macao Numismatic Society. Their interest in currency is less about the history of commerce, and more about ancient coins' roles in Chinese folk beliefs. The pair began collecting these decorative coins in the 1970s, when many metal items – including old coins – were being melted down to make new products.

"I worked in Shenzhen and discovered there was a mint in Fushan that was melting down many such numismatic charms," says Ho. "So, I went there to rescue some of them. I sometimes also visited some antique markets, such as the Beijing Panjiayuan Flea Market, to find old coins."

His favourites date back a thousand years to the Song dynasty (960-1127 BCE). Song era coins tend to feature elegant calligraphy and auspicious symbols. Ho is interested in how coins have been used in feng shui (where they are believed to attract positive energy), to expel evil spirits, and bring about good fortune.

U, meanwhile, says she always carries a numismatic charm as a talisman. "I just feel comfortable when I have it with me," she explains. The couple have also inspired their son, who is in his 30s, to collect coins. His special interest lies in those issued by Emperor Xianfeng during the Qing dynasty ruler's troubled reign in the mid-1800s.

With Macao's own currency's tumultuous 120-year-long history, several centuries of 'anything goes' before that, and more than a millennia of Chinese qian – the territory's numismatical history is rich. Even if the city does forgo cash in the future, the Macao Numismatic Society currency lovers will make sure it isn't forgotten. ●



Lei Heong Ieong



Lei Heong Ieong

PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

Fast tracks: China and Portugal's commercial relationship is on the move

China and Portugal are cooperating on a large number of transportation related projects, including the fact that Chinese-made trams are about to start ferrying passengers around Porto. Such projects bode well for the countries' 45th anniversary of bilateral relations, set to take place this year.



Lusa



ESB Professional

Text **Fei Pou Lou**

Aerial gondolas traverse the blue skies over Porto

(Opposite page) Metro do Porto

This year marks the 45th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Portugal. Over that period, transportation has taken an increasingly central role in the two countries' bilateral ties. Chinese mobility solutions that get people moving in a more environmentally friendly way have helped shape Portugal's urban infrastructure, boosting tourism and local businesses along the way.

Porto, Portugal's second biggest city, has become the country's epicentre for Chinese mobility systems. In December, 15 new Chinese-made trams entered into Porto's service – the first batch of an 18-tram deal between Metro do Porto and China's CRRC Tangshan. One of the trams had two important passengers on its inaugural trip: Portugal's newly resigned prime minister, António Costa, and the city's mayor, Rui Moreira.

The four-carriage trams are “a necessary response to a growing demand,” Moreira

has noted. He praised their comfort levels, spaciousness, and accessibility. “When we have this network prepared and complete, it will surely be a huge gain for the population, for the future of our city,” he said. The final three trams are set to be commissioned before the end of 2024.

A 50 MILLION EURO DEAL

The history of CRRC Tangshan dates back to the 1880s and the Beijing-headquartered company now manufactures more rolling stock than anyone else in the world. As well as trams, CRRC Tangshan builds high-speed trains and subway cars. Its Porto trams are considered to be China's first urban metro project exported to the European Union. The first ones actually arrived at the end of 2022, then were subjected to a year's worth of extensive testing before opening their doors to the public.

The deal between Metro do Porto – the entity running the city’s light rail public transportation network – and CRRC Tangshan was reportedly worth about 50 million euros. Signed in 2020, the contract requires the Chinese company to carry out maintenance on the trams for the next five years. The new trams have seven double doors on each side, a big improvement on Porto’s old trams that have between four and six. While CRRC Tangshan’s models make up a small percentage of Porto’s 120-strong fleet of trams, their more aerodynamic designs will make them stand out. Metro do Porto’s president, Tiago Braga, has said by the end of the year, the city’s trams will be serving almost 80 million customers.

A few days after his ride on the Chinese tram, the demissioned prime minister returned to Porto to sign a contract that will see a brand new light rail line built for the city. Costa used the occasion to underline investment’s “absolutely critical” role in the future of urban mobility. Stressing that cities took about 50 years to adapt to the car, the prime minister warned that Portugal “has much less than 50 years” to prepare for cities without cars.

Costa also revealed plans to invest a further US\$1 billion into key city’s public infrastructure. “This means investing more and more in alternative modes of mobility and, in particular, in public transportation,” he said. Costa noted that it was essential to keep public transport affordable for locals, which meant being financially savvy. “Quality public transportation allows us to reinvent the city, reinvent travel in the Metropolitan Areas without excluding anyone,” he added.

ZHONGTONG BUS: FUELLING THE ELECTRIC REVOLUTION

There’s another Chinese company near the heart of Portugal’s public transportation system: Zhongtong Bus. In January 2023, Porto’s public bus operator STCP contracted Zhongtong Bus through its Portuguese representative, Energia Fundamental-Mobilidade Elétrica, to supply 48 fully electric buses and a charging station with 24 double chargers. The contract is worth almost 20 million euros.

The city of Coimbra, in the country’s centre, is set to receive its first electric Zhongtong Bus in

February. The 18-metre, articulated bus will be part of Coimbra and surrounding areas’ new fully-electric public transport system, known as the Mondego Mobility System (MMS), after undergoing an initial test phase. Energia Fundamental-Mobilidade Elétrica’s contract to supply electric buses and charging stations for MMS is worth 40.5 million euros. It plans to start operations with a fleet of 35 buses, with the option to purchase an additional five buses from Zhongtong Bus if required.

According to Costa, MMS will help “deeply transform” the urban fabric of Coimbra through improving

the city’s public transport system. He added that the electric-nature of its buses would “remove something like 17,000 tons of CO2 that we continue to emit annually” and therefore be a win for the planet.

Owing to the inroads it is making with Portugal’s mobility projects, Zhongtong Bus has become the best selling bus brand in the country, according to recent figures from the Portuguese automobile association. With 209 units delivered in 2023 – mainly for public transportation – the Chinese company has surged past popular European bus brands Mercedes-Benz and Iveco (which have seen sales decrease by 74 and 70 percent, respectively, in Portugal).



Miguel Nogueira



leaks

Coimbra, a central city of around 100,000 people, will receive its first electric Zhongtong Bus this month

(Top) The fully electric Zhongtong Buses will provide quality transit while cutting CO2 emissions in the city



CITIC Dicastal are localising production with the opening of a factory in northern Portugal

(Opposite page, top)
Zhao Bentang, China's ambassador to Portugal

Beijing Capital Airlines currently operates the only direct flight between China and Portugal

INDUSTRY FOLLOWS EXPORTERS TO PORTUGAL

Chinese companies aren't just exporting their ready-made vehicles to Portugal. One manufacturer – CITIC Dicastal – is preparing to build an automotive components factory near the city of Águeda, in northern Portugal. This 180 million euros investment by the Qinhuangdao-headquartered group will reportedly create up to 600 jobs in the region, something Águeda's mayor has hailed as "great news".

Xuzhou-headquartered XCMG Machinery, meanwhile, is also expanding its Portuguese presence. In August last year, the state-owned heavy machinery manufacturer signed

a Memorandum of Cooperation with Martifer, a Portuguese construction company with a focus on renewable energy sectors.

XCMG's vice president, Liu Jiansen, said the partnership would boost the Chinese company's already respected reputation in Europe and demonstrate its commitment to greener global development. "XCMG will fully follow the path of international and sustainable development and will take the lead in reducing carbon and promoting a roadmap towards carbon neutrality," he said. China's ambassador to Portugal, Zhao Bentang, has said that XCMG's partnership with Martifer represented a new milestone in Sino-Lusophone commercial cooperation.

MOVING PEOPLE CROSS-BORDERS

As China and Portugal's transportation ties flourish, tourism between the two countries is also rebounding in the wake of a slump caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Last year saw more than 200 percent growth in the number of Chinese visitors to Portugal, when compared to 2022 – according to data from the Chinese embassy in Lisbon. Meanwhile, the number of visas issued by the embassy to Portuguese nationals wanting to visit China jumped by 500 percent. That latter figure was double the number of visas issued between 2020 and 2023.

The Chinese authorities are aiming to boost the country's foreign travel links, including with Portugal. As such, the number of direct flights between Lisbon and Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang Province, is set to increase to four per week – on Tuesdays, Thursdays Saturdays and Sundays (up from the current two). Beijing Capital Airlines operates this route, the only direct flight between China and Portugal.

Ambassador Zhao has promised travellers that the process around getting a visa for China is being simplified. Applicants can now submit the documentation directly to the consulate's Visa Centre during opening hours, and should be granted a visa within four days.



Image courtesy of Revista Macau



Rui Cardoso

Expedited emergency services are also available. "Many of our Portuguese friends shared that, previously, [obtaining a Chinese visa] was time-consuming, but now they can apply and get a visa in less than a week, making travel to China much more convenient," Zhao told the Portuguese press.

Portuguese passport-holders, along with a wide selection of other nationals, can now also transit through many Chinese cities without

the need to apply for a visa. "China's doors do not stop opening, and the Chinese government and people welcome people from all over the world who continue to come to China for business, investment and tourism", Zhao said.

Business is evidently booming between China and Portugal, with a number of ambitious commercial mobility endeavours afoot – along with surging numbers of bilateral tourism. ●

A showcase of Philippine culture and piety

The Sinulog Festival, a vibrant Filipino celebration honouring Santo Niño with origins in Cebu and observed in Macao, showcased its post-pandemic revival with traditional dances and a historic statue.



Text **Kenny Fong**
Photos **Eduardo Leal**

- ① The queen of the Debutantes de Macau dance troupe poses for a portrait before the start of the Sinulog procession
- ② A colourful procession, featuring performers, devotees and members of the Philippine community, is the heart of the Sinulog Festival

The vibrant Sinulog Festival, a celebration of the Child Jesus (Santo Niño) by Filipinos, peaks on the third Sunday of January, with this year's event falling on 21 January. Originating in Cebu City, Sinulog is marked by processions and dance rituals worldwide, including in Macao, where locals maintain ties to their faith and roots.

Post-pandemic, the festival resumed vibrantly in Macao, starting with Mass at Saint Augustine's Church and culminating in a dance contest at Praça da Amizade with five groups, including Bisdak Macau Association, competing fervently despite

their busy schedules. The Orient Premier Tribe triumphed as this year's champion of the dance competition.

Leading up to the event, the esteemed Santo Niño statue, darkened perhaps by centuries of candle smoke and bestowed by Fernão de Magalhães in 1521, was honoured at Saint Augustine's. This 16th-century Christian icon, a 12-inch Flemish-style statuette richly dressed and regaled, is now carefully protected behind bulletproof glass within its chapel in the Basilica del Santo Niño, serving as the cherished emblem for the annual Sinulog Festival, a symbol of Filipino culture and devotion. ●



③ The National Philippine Guardians Incorporated dance troupe concludes its performance at Sinulog



④ A member of the Orient Premier Tribe dance troupe arranges the hair of the group's queen before festivities begin

⑤ A member of the National Philippine Guardians Incorporated dance troupe checks herself in a mirror before performing at Sinulog

- ⑥ Vibrant dancers in costumes move in unison, their spirits high as they honor the Santo Niño
- ⑦ The queen of the Orient Premier Tribe dance troupe swoons as her group finishes its performance at Sinulog 2024
- ⑧ Clad in a kaleidoscope of colours, a devoted dancer holds up the sacred figure of the Infant Jesus





⑨ Colourfully dressed Sinulog performers are seen against the unmistakable backdrop of Macao's skyline

⑩ Two members of the Sinulog Festival's organising committee help carry a litter with a figure of the Infant Jesus through the streets of Macao

⑪ Members smile exuberantly as they perform at Sinulog



⑫ The queen of Orient Premier Tribe dance troupe holds a small statue of the Infant Jesus as she leads her group in a performance

⑬ The Sinulog Festival parades a revered icon of the Santo Niño, or the Child Jesus, through the thoroughfares of Macao, immersing participants and onlookers alike in a vibrant cultural spectacle

MEET@MACAO



Macao, with an excellent safety record, offers a unique blend of Chinese and Portuguese cultures, a comprehensive range of small to large facilities, all conveniently located within a compact events precinct and providing ease of access to the world's most dynamic economic development region. All good reasons to Meet@Macao"

慶祝澳門特別行政區成立25周年
2024年農曆新年花車匯演



HAPPY
CHINESE
NEW YEAR
歡樂春節

騰龍運鑽

歡樂春節

Celebrações do 25.º Aniversário do Estabelecimento da R.A.E.M.
Parada de Celebração do Ano do Dragão 2024

Celebrations of the 25th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Macao SAR
Parade for Celebration of the Year of the Dragon 2024

12/02

正月初三

20:00 – 21:45

路線 Percurso 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

澳門漁人碼頭
Doca dos Pescadores
de Macau

17/02

正月初八

20:00 – 21:30

路線 Percurso Route

聖若瑟大學及
聖若瑟教區中學第六校
Universidade de S. José e
Colégio Diocesano de S. José

青洲河邊馬路
Estrada Marginal da Ilha Verde

青洲大馬路
Av. do Conselheiro Borja

拱形馬路
Estrada do Arco

長壽大馬路
Av. da Longevidade

黑沙環第四街
Rua Quatro do Bairro
da Areia Preta

慕拉士大馬路
Av. de Venceslau de Moraes

黑沙環馬路
Estrada da Areia Preta

市場街
Rua do Mercado
de Iao Hon

祐漢街市公園
Jardim do Mercado
do Iao Hon



指導單位
Endeavor Organizador

中華人民共和國
文化和旅游部
Ministerio da Cultura e Turismo da
República Popular da China
Ministry of Culture and Tourism of
The People's Republic of China

主辦單位
Organizador



協辦單位
Coorganizador

澳門國際旅遊中心
Macau International Centre

澳門旅遊局
Turismo de Macau

澳門基金會
Fundação de Macau

澳門特別行政區旅遊發展局
Turismo do Governo da Região Administrativa Especial de Macau

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Centro de Ciência de Macau

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Doca dos Pescadores de Macau

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Centro de Ciência de Macau

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Centro de Ciência de Macau

支持單位
Entidade de Apoio

澳門國際旅遊中心
Macau International Centre

澳門旅遊局
Turismo de Macau

澳門基金會
Fundação de Macau

澳門特別行政區旅遊發展局
Turismo do Governo da Região Administrativa Especial de Macau

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Centro de Ciência de Macau

場地合作夥伴
Parceiro Local

澳門國際旅遊中心
Macau International Centre

澳門旅遊局
Turismo de Macau

澳門基金會
Fundação de Macau

澳門特別行政區旅遊發展局
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贊助單位
Patrocinador

澳門國際旅遊中心
Macau International Centre

澳門旅遊局
Turismo de Macau

澳門基金會
Fundação de Macau

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