

Macao 澳門

Two SARs reaffirm ties

| *Ne Zha 2* meets Na Tcha culture | Remembering Hong Kong's Portuguese



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COVER IMAGE

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai meets his Hong Kong counterpart during his first official trip outside Macao as the Special Administrative Region's leader - Photo by Government Information Bureau

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POLITICS

‘Like Brothers’: Macao and Hong Kong’s Leaders Meet

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai and Hong Kong’s leader, John Lee Ka-chiu, reaffirmed their commitment to the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ principle, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and each other in February.

Text **Gonçalo César de Sá**
Photos **Government Information Bureau**

Macao Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai (left) travelled to the neighbouring SAR for his first official trip since taking office

In February, Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai visited Hong Kong to meet with his counterpart in the neighboring Special Administrative Region (SAR), Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu. It was Sam’s first official trip outside of Macao since he took office in late December last year. Together, the two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ principle and discussed ways to strengthen cooperation between the two SARs to promote high-quality development in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA).

During their meeting at Hong Kong’s Government House, both men emphasised the institutional advantages of ‘One Country, Two Systems’, praising its contributions to the long-term prosperity and stability of Macao and Hong Kong.

Sam expressed his gratitude to Lee and the Hong Kong authorities for their continuing support of Macao’s development. He noted that

the SARs, with all their differences, complemented each other strongly. “Enhancing cooperation on the existing solid foundation would lead to greater development for both regions,” Sam added.

Macao’s chief executive raised important instructions from President Xi Jinping, who visited the SAR as it celebrated the 25th anniversary of its return to the motherland on 20 December. Xi had urged Macao and Hong Kong to align with the country’s overall development strategy and seize opportunities presented by the rapidly developing GBA – improving the well-being of their respective populations in the process. The president’s speech had injected new momentum into cooperation between Hong Kong and Macao, Sam noted.

Lee, meanwhile, described the two cities as being as “close as brothers”, highlighting shared histories and frequent cultural and economic exchanges.



Sam (centre left) brought with him a high-level delegation tailored to the topics under discussion

(Opposite page) The Macao delegation also toured the Hong Kong Palace Museum, home to over 900 treasures generously on loan from the Palace Museum

KEY AREAS OF COOPERATION

The leaders discussed a wide range of topics aimed at deepening collaboration between the two SARs. Many of the subjects aligned with Macao's '1+4' appropriate economic diversification framework, including innovations in science and technology, developments in Traditional Chinese Medicine, and sports events.

Both spoke of the importance of cross-boundary infrastructure, such as the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, which has significantly improved connectivity between the

cities as well as the mainland. Lee noted that the bridge has created new opportunities for closer communication and economic ties, supported by measures like the 'Mutual Use of QR Code between HKSAR and Macao SAR Clearance Service', introduced in July 2024 to streamline boundary controls for eligible residents.

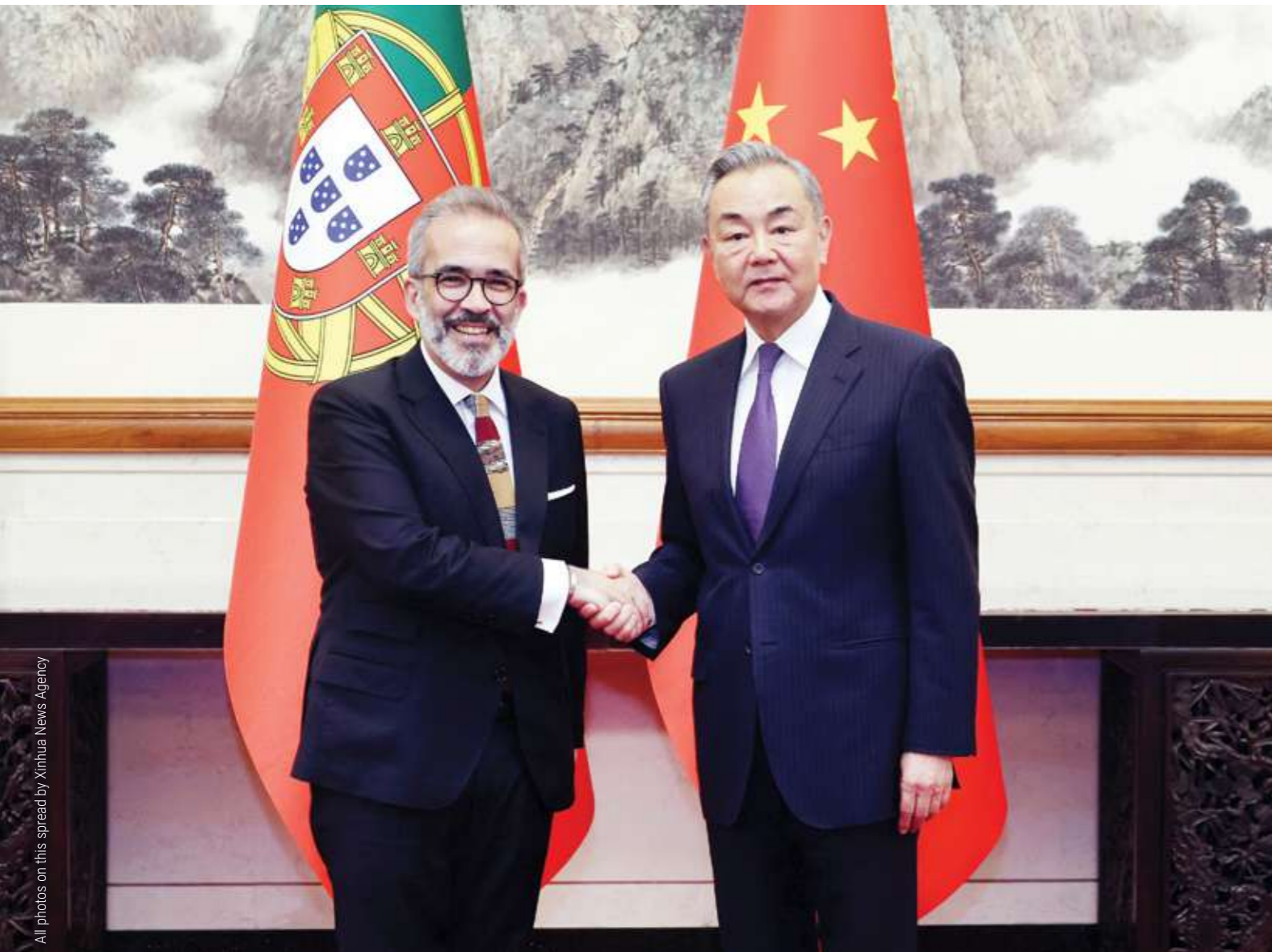
Tourism was another important topic, with both sides agreeing to collaborate on twin-destination tourism campaigns and work toward building a regional and international tourism brand for the GBA.

The two leaders also discussed advancing judicial assistance between the SARs, implying the importance of strong legal cooperation to complement their economic and cultural partnerships.

Sam and Lee pledged to continue working closely to improve the well-being of residents in both SARs and contribute to the nation's overall development.

Before meeting with Lee, Sam and his high-level delegation visited the Hong Kong Science Park and the Hong Kong Palace Museum. Their visit aimed to garner insights into Hong Kong's advancements in innovation and technology, as well as its achievements in cultural and heritage collaboration with the mainland. ●





Text **Amanda Saxton**

Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi holds the second China-Portugal strategic dialogue at the foreign ministers' level with Portugal's Minister of State and Foreign Affairs Paulo Rangel in Beijing

(Opposite page) Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi shakes hands with Portugal's Minister of State and Foreign Affairs, Paulo Rangel, during a meeting in Beijing

Portugal's Minister of State and Foreign Affairs, Paulo Rangel, met with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Beijing in March to discuss deepening economic and political cooperation.

His four-day visit to the country – which included a stop in Macao after attending the Boao Forum to Asia Annual Conference 2025, in Hainan Province – was the first official trip to China by a member of the Portuguese government over five years.

While there, Rangel praised the enduring diplomatic ties between China and Portugal and highlighted Macao's role as a vital bridge in broader Sino-Lusophone relations.

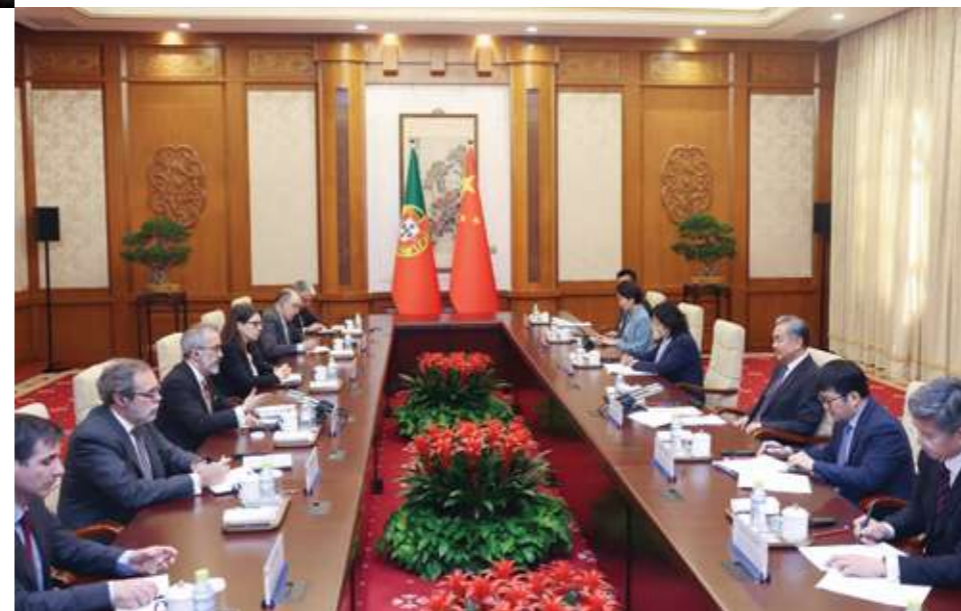
Portugal and China celebrated 45 years of formal diplomatic relations in 2024, and this year marks the 20th anniversary of their comprehensive strategic partnership.

However, Rangel emphasised that the countries' connection ran much deeper. "The relationship with China is 500 years old," he told the media in Beijing, referencing Macao's long history with Portugal. "Over the last 45 years, it has seen great development, deepening and enrichment."

During Rangel's discussions with member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to mutual cooperation in trade, investment and green energy. Rangel expressed Portugal's keen interest in expanding economic engagement across multiple sectors, including technology, finance and healthcare.

Wang, in turn, voiced his hope that Portugal would "play an active role" fostering constructive relations between China and the European Union (EU). He underscored China's readiness to collaborate with Portugal in building a stable, dynamic partnership based on mutual trust and shared achievements, reinforcing its significance within the broader EU-China framework.

Wang and Rangel discussed Macao's ongoing role as a bridge between China and Portuguese-speaking countries (PSCs), with both acknowledging the Special Administrative Region (SAR)'s importance in cultivating cultural and economic exchanges. Rangel said he was pleased to see the success of the 'One Country, Two Systems' policy, while Wang described Macao's peaceful return to the motherland in 1999 as a model for resolving historical issues through diplomatic dialogue.



POLITICS

Portugal's Minister of State and Foreign Affairs Visits Beijing and Macao

Rangel's visit to China was the first by a Portuguese government minister in over five years. It also marked Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai's first meeting with a foreign minister since taking office in December.

'INVEST AND THRIVE'

China has become the fourth-largest foreign investor in Portugal over the past decade, with state and private investments topping US\$12 billion (more than 96.3 billion patacas) across a wide variety of sectors. During his meeting with Wang, Rangel extended an invitation to more Chinese companies to “invest and thrive in Portugal”, according to a statement released by China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

At the same meeting, Wang emphasised the traditions of “mutual respect and support” between the two countries. He also noted that Portugal was one of the European Union countries receiving the most Chinese investment per capita.

Multilateral trade between China and PSCs collectively topped US\$225 billion in 2024, with bilateral trade between China and Portugal alone coming in at US\$ 9.2 billion, according to figures released by Forum Macao.

LANGUAGES OF THE FUTURE

While in the capital, Rangel delivered a lecture to more than 100 students at Beijing

Foreign Studies University (known as Beiwai) – encouraging them to consider learning Portuguese. It is the most spoken language in the southern hemisphere, he pointed out, largely thanks to Brazil’s population of more than 211 million people. Rangel predicted that there would be more than 600 million Portuguese speakers in the world by 2100.

“Portugal is an ancient country, but Portuguese is the language of the future,” he told the students.

Beiwai is home to China’s first Portuguese language degree programme, established in 1961. It remained the only one in the country for decades, according to Portuguese state media, though the past 25 years have seen the Iberian language surge in popularity due to expanding relations between China and PSCs. Today there are more than 50 universities in the mainland offering Portuguese courses.

Rangel shared with the students his three favorite Portuguese writers: Luís de Camões, Fernando Pessoa and Father António Vieira. Camões, of course, is believed to have lived in Macao for a period of time in the mid-1500s (and it’s understood he wrote part of his epic poem, *Os Lusíadas*, here). Pessoa’s work, meanwhile, is part of Macao Cultural Affairs Bureau project to translate Portuguese literature into Chinese.

Rangel also urged the Chinese authorities to further promote Chinese studies overseas, particularly in PSCs.

MEETING IN MACAO

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai and a number of top-level Macao officials met with Rangel at Government Headquarters on 28 March, the final day of the Portuguese foreign minister’s visit to the country.

It was the first time Sam had received a foreign affairs minister since taking office in December, reflecting the strong relationship Macao and Portugal continued to share thanks to their deep historical connections, the chief executive noted.



The Chief Executive, Sam Hou Fai, met with Portugal’s Minister of State and Foreign Affairs, Paulo Rangel, at the Macao government headquarters during the Portuguese official’s stay in the territory

All photos on this spread by Government Information Bureau

The meeting between Sam Hou Fai and Paulo Rangel was also attended by Secretary for Administration and Justice André Cheong Weng Chon, Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture Wallis O Lam, Portugal’s Ambassador to China Paulo Nascimento, and the Macao-based Consul-General of Portugal, Alexandre Leitão



Sam and Rangel discussed cooperation in the judicial, economic and educational fields, as well as developments being rolled out in the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin. Sam also described how, under the ‘One Country, Two Systems’ principle, Macao “continued to retain continental European legal traditions, traditional culture and customs”

Sam during the meeting also said to Rangel that he looked forward to visiting Portugal in the near future.

Afterwards, at a reception hosted by the local Portuguese Consul-General, Rangel described his

meeting with Sam Hou Fai as “very productive”. Rangel also reiterated his belief that improving Chinese language education in Portugal was important for the European country’s future.

On the subject of Portuguese studies in Macao, Rangel expressed satisfaction with the large numbers of people learning the language from the Chinese community. “That is something that can only foster good relations,” he said.

Significantly, Rangel announced that Portugal’s government would increase financial support to the Portuguese School of Macau (known by its Portuguese initials, EPM) –

which the foreign minister visited while in the SAR.

The Portuguese state holds 51 percent of capital in the EPM Foundation, and Rangel described the school as playing a fundamental role for Portugal in Macao.

The Portuguese Foreign Minister’s visit reinforced Portugal’s commitment to strengthening economic and cultural cooperation with China, with Macao serving as a key link in those efforts.

As the SAR continues to foster connections with the Lusophone world, the enhanced collaboration signals a future of greater engagement and mutual benefit. ●



Cheong Kam Ka

EDUCATION

How Hengqin is Helping Realise Macao's Higher Education Ambitions

The University of Macau is set to build a new campus in Hengqin, a few kilometres from its current site. The development is just one example of how Macao's academic institutions are finding the space they need to flourish in the neighbouring cooperation zone.

Text **Christopher Chu**

The University of Macau's current Hengqin campus is spacious, flat and green, in stark contrast with the cramped premises it once occupied in Taipa

Kevin Maher, a senior instructor in the University of Macau (UM) arts and humanities faculty, remembers when the institution operated from its hilltop campus in Taipa. Even from the second-floor corridors of most buildings, staff and students were treated to an unobstructed view of the Macao harbour – and embraced the cool sea air that came with it.

Panoramic scenery aside, the campus' usable land area of just 54,000 square metres was limited. What UM lacked horizontally had to be compensated vertically, meaning narrow stairways connected adjacent buildings to facilitate the traffic flow of students, faculty and staff, the US-born educator tells *Macao* magazine. The steep topography meant

each building's ground floor was at a different level, which Maher describes as being a little disorienting during his first year at the university, in 2013.

UM spent more than three decades at the Taipa site, including its 10 years as the University of East Asia (the name change came in 1991). In 2014, it relocated to the mainland island of Hengqin – just across a narrow body of water from Macao. Given Macao's shortage of land, the Special Administrative Region (SAR) government had agreed to lease a sizable plot from mainland authorities to help the university spread out. This was before the establishment of the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone, which saw that region in Hengqin become an effective extension of Macao from 2021.

Kevin Maher is a senior instructor in the University of Macau's arts and humanities faculty who remembers its original campus, in Taipa

(Opposite page) The groundbreaking ceremony for the university's new Hengqin campus took place this past December



Image courtesy of Kevin Maher

UM's current Hengqin campus is roughly 20 times the size of its Taipa grounds, covering more than a square kilometre of reclaimed land. That allows for a far wider variety of buildings, and fewer stairs to climb. Maher remembers being "thoroughly impressed" by the on-site dormitories when he first surveyed the water-side location, an amenity the Taipa campus could not accommodate.

A NEW HENGQIN CAMPUS IS ON ITS WAY

Over the past decade, those dormitories have helped house a student body growing ever bigger and more diverse. With over 15,000 students now attending UM, its roll has almost doubled in size since 2013. Growth has coincided with UM's rising collegiate recognition: it now ranks 180th in the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings, up from being in the 401th-500th category in 2016 (as far back as the rankings go). THE also has it as the 36th best university in Asia. These days, UM students regularly bag accolades on the global stage; the university is known for hosting talks by Nobel Laureates and staging exhibitions of paintings by French Impressionists; and it recently opened a state-of-the-art testing service for Traditional Chinese Medicine, demonstrating its commitment to being on the pulse of Macao's economic diversification efforts.

As Macao works to diversify its economy and tighten ties within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), UM continues to increase its academic offerings – which in turn attracts more students. In fact, the university is on track to outgrow even its current campus. UM has reaffirmed its belief in the cooperation zone's potential by planning a second campus 7 kilometres west of where it is now; the groundbreaking ceremony took place this past December.

The new campus, expected to be ready by 2028, will add about 380,000 square metres to UM's land bank and allow the university to accommodate more than 25,000 students between the two sites.

Last year, UM Rector Song Yonghua told media that the development would eventually house the university's medicine, engineering and information technology faculties, "to meet the demand for the development of high-tech, big health and finance in Hengqin."

MACAO STUDENTS OF ALL AGES ARE MOVING TO HENGQIN

While both UM campuses will be geographically in Hengqin, the new one will be the university's first outside the Macao government's jurisdiction. This creates a potential roadmap for other Macao-based institutions experiencing growth amid space restrictions within the

city, Tim Simpson, an associate professor at UM's social sciences faculty, tells *Macao* magazine.

"The SARs and SEZs [special economic zones] – such as Zhuhai and Shenzhen – function as experimental sites for testing out new laws, regulations and policies," he describes, adding that Hengqin has also been designated as a special site for ground-testing various economic policies.

Macao and Hengqin are complementary spaces, Simpson continues. He points to increasing integration between the regions both in terms of infrastructure (for example, there's a new Hengqin station in Macao's light rail system) and policy initiatives. Last year, Hengqin was officially designated an autonomous two-tier customs territory, easing the movement of people, goods, capital and information between it and Macao, which remains a separate customs jurisdiction to mainland China under the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle.



Government Information Bureau



Image courtesy of University of Macao

Tim Simpson, an associate professor at UM's social sciences faculty, sees Macao and Hengqin as highly complementary regions

UM is not alone in leveraging these ties. The Macao University of Tourism (known by its Portuguese initials, UTM) has shown interest in expanding into Hengqin, too. With its main campus situated atop Macao Peninsula's Mong Há Hill, the constraints on physical space mirror the challenges UM faced a decade earlier. Student enrolments at UTM increased by nearly a third last year, after the education provider originally called the Macao Institute for Tourism Studies upgraded its status to a university and expanded its postgraduate offerings.

The Macao University of Science and Technology (MUST) is also planning to establish presence in Hengqin. The university already operates one outpost on the mainland island, the Zhuhai MUST Science and Technology

Research Institute (promoting participation in the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong-Macao Science and Technology Innovation Corridor). This houses the State Key Laboratory of Quality Research in Chinese Medicine and the State Key Laboratory of Lunar and Planetary Sciences, two national research platforms supported by China's Ministry of Science and Technology.

The SAR's schools are starting to venture into the cooperation zone, too. Last year saw the Hengqin School Affiliated to Hou Kong Middle School (a Macao institution founded in 1932) open within the cooperation zone's Macau New Neighbourhood housing estate, and welcome more than 250 pupils. Macau New Neighbourhood is an integrated community encompassing residential, educational, health and social services, built primarily for Macao residents.

Policymakers estimate that by 2035, about 80,000 Macao residents will be working in Hengqin, and around 120,000 residents will be living there. As such, there's a growing need for Macao-affiliated, Hengqin-based education providers.

'THERE'S A LOT OF ROOM FOR GROWTH'

Maier no longer has a view of Macao's harbour, but he enjoys gazing across at the city's bright lights and bustling bridges from Hengqin. When not at work, Maier spends his time documenting the street life of both Macao and Hengqin - the former full of history and heritage, the latter strikingly

modern. He shares educational videos of his adventures on his YouTube channel, Sidetracked.

"I'm a particular fan of the larger boulevards in Hengqin, which are common in major Chinese cities," Maier enthuses. "I'm hoping that Hengqin can bring that feature closer to Macao, along with the energy that comes with it, allowing Macao to preserve its unique blend of old European and Chinese architectural styles."

Maier says he's looking forward to what the future holds for Hengqin

and Macao. He sees the former as essential to allowing Macao to expand its educational offering, as well as for lifestyle and business opportunities for SAR residents.

"There's a lot of room for growth, and it's fascinating to witness this transformation in real-time, particularly at the starting point of that journey," he shares. In the meantime, Maier appreciates the flat topography of UM's current Hengqin campus, where the ground floor of each building is reassuringly on the same level. ●

UM's growing student body should be able to expand into a new campus within the next four years

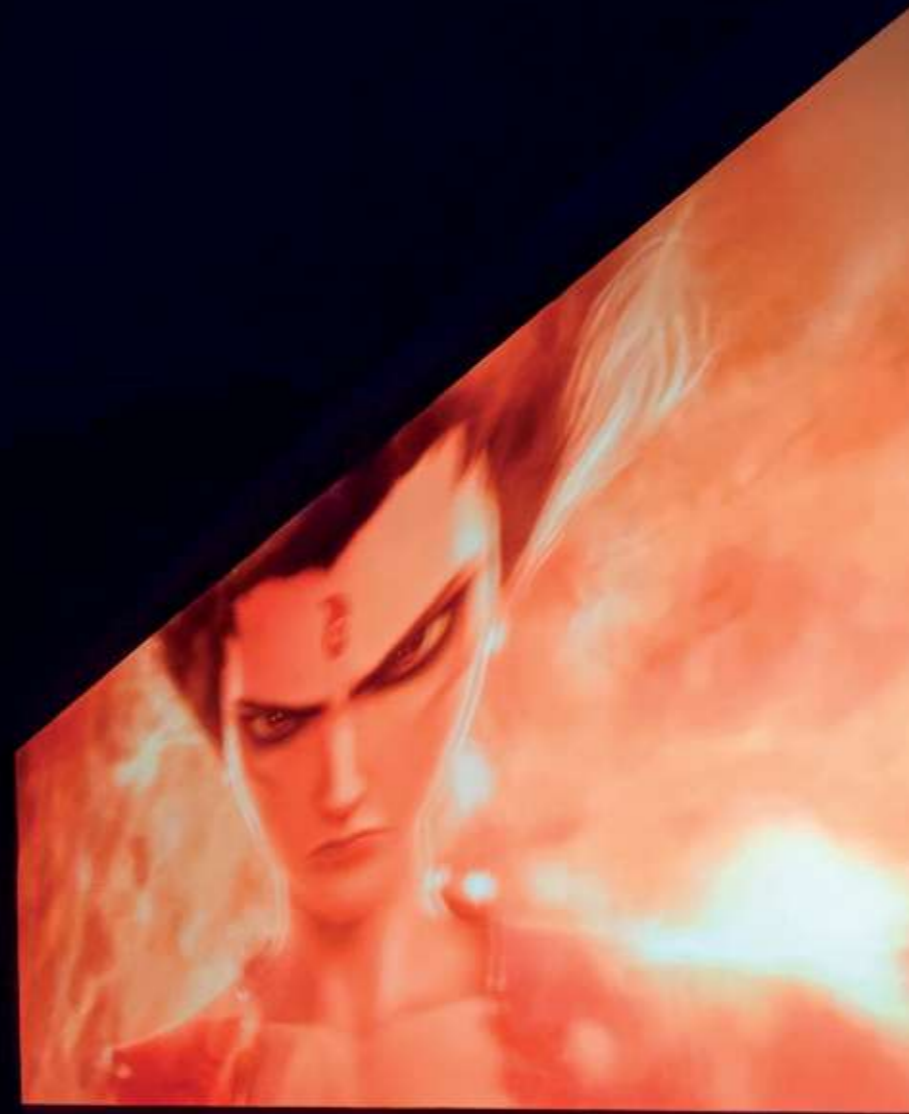


Cheong Kam Ka

ARTS & CULTURE

Ne Zha 2 has Special Resonance in Macao

The Chinese animated movie *Ne Zha 2* has set multiple box office records worldwide. For Macao, its arrival not only reconnects residents with their city's rich cultural traditions surrounding Na Tcha, but can serve as inspiration for the local film industry.



Compelling characters, spectacular animation and a novel take on a mythologically familiar plot all helped make *Ne Zha 2* one of the highest grossing films of all time

Text **Don Lei**

Photos **Xinhua News Agency**

As a lifelong devotee of the legend of Na Tcha, Macao man Ip Tat was thrilled when the animated fantasy film *Ne Zha 2* arrived in the Special Administrative Region's cinemas earlier this year. The 77-year-old thought the blockbuster "conveyed the spirit of Na Tcha incredibly well", which was important to him. After all, Ip is the person responsible for safeguarding Macao's customs related to the deity and ensuring they are passed down to future generations.

'Ne Zha' and 'Na Tcha' are alternate spellings of the same child deity in Chinese folklore, and he's typically depicted as a protector. Over millennia, different versions of his story have developed across the Chinese-speaking world. The film, a sequel to 2019's *Ne Zha* (both directed by Yang Yu, also known as 'Jiaozi'), is loosely based on the 16th-century novel *Investiture of the Gods*. Attributed to Xu Zhonglin, the book is a fantastical retelling of the overthrow of King Zhou, the last Shang dynasty ruler. It features an elaborate cast of deities, immortals, demons and humans.

The *Ne Zha* films focus on one character in particular. In *Ne Zha 2*, after being struck by divine lightning, the mischievous titular character and a dragon prince named Ao Bing must share a body while completing three dangerous trials to restore Ao Bing's form. Meanwhile, the Dragon King of the East Sea wages war on humanity and a hidden conspiracy threatens to upend the celestial order.

In a final battle, Ne Zha harnesses an inextinguishable flame to defeat his enemies and restore balance to the mortal realm. The young god is recognisable by the flaming wheels he zooms about on.

Amidst mythological mayhem and martial arts galore, witty banter abounds. The film is both a joyful romp and an exploration of friendship, sacrifice, redemption and identity; a winning combination that has resonated with audiences near and far. Indeed, *Ne Zha 2* became an instant box office hit, smashing record after record in the weeks after its Chinese New Year release.

After just nine days screening in the mainland, it became the first movie ever to earn over US\$1 billion in a single market. It then surpassed *Inside Out 2* (2024) to become the highest-grossing animated film of all time. As if that wasn't enough, *Ne Zha 2* also made history as the first non-Hollywood film to exceed US\$2 billion in global earnings.

As of 4 March, the movie had grossed over US\$330,000 in Macao and over US\$3.93 million in Hong Kong (on a per capita basis, those earnings aren't so far apart). The figures were more than enough to make it the highest-grossing film in the history of both places.



NA TCHA IN MACAO

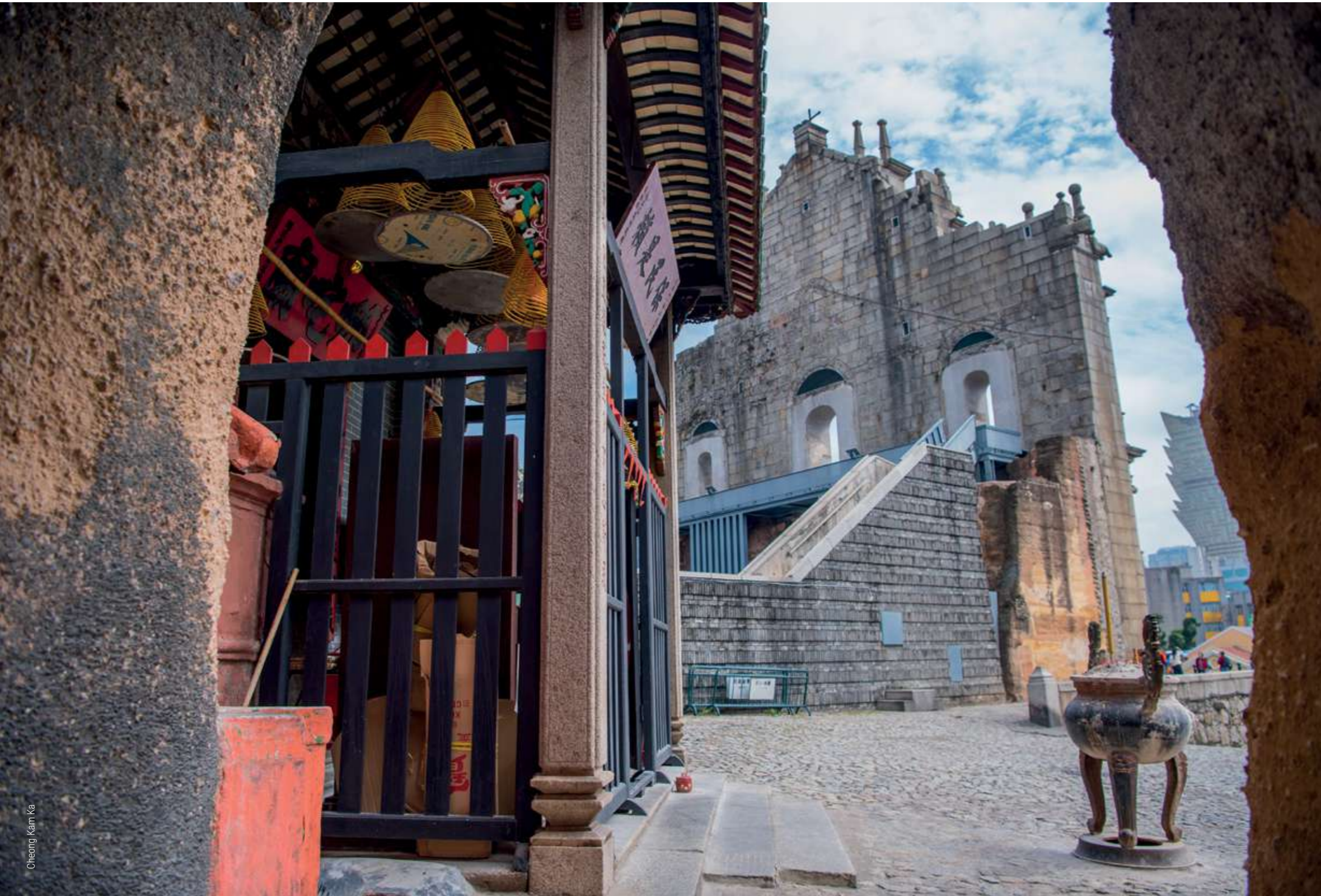
According to local media, *Ne Zha 2*'s success in Macao may be linked to the city's deep-rooted connection to Na Tcha – as well as the movie's gripping plot and spectacular visuals. But Ip believes the connection works both ways. He tells *Macao* magazine that *Ne Zha 2* could encourage more residents and tourists to discover the unique Na Tcha culture found right here.

Na Tcha's history in Macao dates back over 300 years. The 'Belief and

Customs of Na Tcha' are inscribed in the city's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, where the deity is described as "a child with almighty powers riding on 'Wind Fire Wheels' to drive demons and disasters from the face of the earth". Here, as across Greater China, he is considered the patron of children. But the Cultural Affairs Bureau notes that Macao's "cult of Na Tcha" has significant differences from neighbouring regions, with rituals and ceremonies found only in the city.

Ne Zha – also spelled 'Na Tcha' – is a mischievous child deity from Chinese folklore, who's gaining a new wave of followers thanks to *Ne Zha 2*

(Opposite page) Eager audiences flocked to the movie's Macao premiere on 20 February



The Special Administrative Region is home to two temples dedicated to Na Tcha. One was built in the early Qing dynasty on Calçada das Verdades, near Monte Fort; the other was constructed in 1888 very close to what's now the Ruins of St Paul's. The temples are just a 10-minute walk from each other.

According to local legend, the first temple pays homage to a young Chinese boy who used to play on the steep slopes of Mount Fortress, where he'd guide local children across the rocks to safety. His image – draped in a *dudou* and topped with a traditional hairstyle – was said to resemble the deity Na Tcha, inspiring villagers to build a temple in his name. Some stories even claim the boy was seen bidding farewell to the children before leaving the area on Na Tcha's signature fire wheels.

The newer temple was built in the wake of a devastating plague, Ip explains. Around 1885, amid the crisis, a child appeared in a dream to local residents, advising them to use herbal medicine and spring water to heal themselves. Believing this to be Na Tcha's spirit, they built the temple in his honour.

Macao also celebrates the Feast of Na Tcha on the 18th day of the fifth lunar month each year. The festivities play out over several days, and include a Taoist blessing ceremony, the Prince Na Tcha Parade and lion dance performances. Locals like to take this opportunity to call upon the powers of Na Tcha to ward off bad omens and deliver good health. It's said to be the deity's birthday.

The Ruins of St Paul's loom near the newer Na Tcha Temple, both part of Macao's Historic City Centre

An antique sedan-chair normally on display in the 1888 Na Tcha Temple's exhibition room makes its way through Macao's streets during the Feast of Na Tcha

(Opposite page) Ip Tat followed his father into Macao's Na Tcha Temple Association, and helped get the city's unique Na Tcha customs recognised as part of China's intangible heritage

'I GREW UP WITH NA TCHA'

Ip, who has lived near the 1888 Na Tcha Temple for most of his life, is deeply devoted to both the building and legend. His father was a director of the Na Tcha Temple Association, and Ip himself was elected its chairman in his 30s. Over the past 40 years, he played instrumental roles in securing its recognition as a

UNESCO World Heritage Site, ensuring Na Tcha's beliefs and customs were inscribed as part of Macao's Intangible Cultural Heritage, and even getting them included on China's National Intangible Cultural Heritage List. He is one of two official 'representative transmitters' entrusted with preserving and promoting Macao's beliefs and customs relating to the deity.



Cheong Kam Ka



Cheong Kam Ka

"I have been exposed to the story of Na Tcha since I was six years old," Ip says, reflecting on his first time attending the Feast of Na Tcha as a small boy, and recalling doing his homework inside the temple with other kids of the neighbourhood. "Now I am over 70 years old, I can say that I grew up with Na Tcha."

So eager was he to see *Ne Zha 2* that he crossed into the mainland

to watch it before its Macao release, then saw it several more times in local cinemas. "Even if the animation differs somewhat from [our] stories, as long as the spirit of Na Tcha is conveyed, it is valuable," Ip notes. To the representative transmitter, the character of Ne Zha embodies Na Tcha's core values: loyalty, filial piety, righteousness, benevolence and honesty.



All images on this spread by António Sammarful

INSPIRATION FOR MACAO'S OWN FILM INDUSTRY

At *Ne Zha 2*'s Macao premiere, David Ding Kai of the Sil-Metropole Organisation, the film's co-distributor, described it as "bringing Chinese culture to life [and] conveying the essence of Chinese culture through art." Afterwards, Cultural Affairs Bureau Director Leong Wai Man noted that *Ne Zha 2* not only reconnects local viewers with a special part of their own culture, but has the potential to positively influence Macao's movie industry. She encouraged local filmmakers to incorporate more Chinese cultural themes into their work, recognising *Ne Zha 2*'s global success as proof of their storytelling potential.

Ken Sou Io Kuong, chairman of the Macau Artists Association, agrees. He praises *Ne Zha 2* as both high-quality entertainment – "entertaining and educational, suitable for all ages, with both laughter and tears," he says and something of an inspiration. Sou, a filmmaker and composer himself, tells *Macao Magazine* that the movie "serves as a great learning example, highlighting that Macao has many cultural elements worth exploring."

As an example, Sou cites a musical project he is currently working on about Chinese composer Xian Xinghai, best known for his *Yellow River Cantata*. "he's an important figure in Chinese music, but even as a Macao resident, I didn't know he was born here. This shows there are many untold stories in Macao."

According to Sou, the city's unique Sino-Portuguese history has created something of a "treasure trove" for the arts in general, film included. Plus the Macao SAR government is very supportive of its burgeoning film industry, he notes. The Cultural Development Fund offers financial assistance to both local and international talent, while workshops and competitions for experienced and emerging filmmakers alike take place regularly. In addition, the Cultural Affairs Bureau recently announced plans to build an online platform to serve as a communication and cooperation hub for production companies and filming teams interested in working in Macao.

But perhaps the most fitting advice for budding filmmakers is a quote from *Ne Zha* himself: "My fate is determined by me, not by heaven." ●



(Top) Lion dancers, acrobatic displays and Chinese opera add to the Feast of Na Tcha's festive atmosphere

(Opposite page) Playing the child god take a certain fearlessness, striking dramatic poses while balanced high above the parade goers



GREATER BAY AREA

The Future of Urban Mobility Has Arrived

Hengqin is one of China's fastest-developing hotspots for autonomous driving vehicles. And the island's close proximity to Macao gives local residents the chance to experience this long-dreamed-of mode of transportation in person.

Text **Kenny Fong**

Photos courtesy of Urban Planning and Construction Bureau of the Guangdong-Macao In-Depth Cooperation Zone in Hengqin

Hengqin is currently testing robobuses that operate without steering wheels, marking a new level of autonomy for public transport in the city

Once the pipedream of science fiction writers, autonomous driving vehicles are now reality. From self-driving taxis to autonomous buses, China is leading the charge in this technological revolution: many of the nation's citizens routinely use robotaxis on their daily commutes, tens of thousands of kilometres of the country's roads are now open for autonomous driving vehicle testing, and more than a thousand Chinese companies are involved in bringing what are officially known as 'intelligent connected vehicles' (ICVs) to the world.

Excitingly, the Guangdong-Macao Intensive Cooperation Zone in Hengqin has emerged as a key region in this national scheme. Every single one of the 106-square-kilometre island's roads – 330 kilometres of infrastructure in total – has been approved for ICV testing and demonstrations, accommodating everything from robotaxis to heavy-duty autonomous driving trucks that clean the streets. This means that Macao residents, who increasingly treat Hengqin as an extension of their own city, are also getting up close and personal with the futuristic leap in smart mobility.

Hengqin's autonomous driving vehicle programme was first made public in the central authorities' 2021 general

plan for the island, Cheong Kok Kei, an official overseeing the fast-developing sector, told *Macao* magazine. The plan also shifted Hengqin's administration from Guangdong Province alone to joint-command by Guangdong and Macao authorities. The ICV programme was part of a broader scheme to develop an artificial intelligence sector complementary to Macao's drive for economic diversification.

Cheong is the director of the Intensive Cooperation Zone's Urban Planning and Construction Bureau. His team began researching existing ICV testing areas in Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan and Guangzhou in 2022. In August of that year, they established a "leading group for intelligent connected vehicles and driverless driving". On-road tests and demonstrations officially started just one month later.

The ICV industry isn't only on the move in China, though the country is considered by analysts to be experiencing significant growth compared with other markets. The size of the global autonomous driving vehicle market is poised for incredibly rapid expansion, according to forecasts from Statista. Valued at US\$287.75 billion in 2024, it's expected to be worth US\$2.21 trillion in 2030 – an increase of over 670 percent.



Hengqin's autonomous fleet also consists of sprinkler trucks and sweeper vehicles that help to keep the city pristine

MASTERING DRIVERLESS TRANSPORTATION

Currently, Hengqin's autonomous vehicle fleet consists of 15 robobuses, 10 cleaning robots, five robotaxis, four compact street sweepers, two sprinkler trucks and one sweeper truck. The vehicles – which all boast a 'highly driverless' level 4 ranking based on the Society of Automotive Engineers' (SAE) six levels of automation – come from four different companies, namely QCraft, WeRide, COWAROBOT and ONTIME Mobility. These pioneering ICV firms are headquartered

around China, with WeRide located nearby in Guangdong Province's Guangzhou.

The SAE standard for driving automation, which is recognised globally, describes level 4 automation as vehicles that can operate entirely without a driver – though human override is still an option. They also operate under certain parameters, including pre-specified routes and speeds.

Robotaxis were the first autonomous driving vehicles off the mark in Hengqin. Testing commenced in September 2022,

followed by the first manned demonstration of robobuses' abilities a few months later. Two years later, both types of vehicle launched commercial operations in Hengqin.

Several robobus lines currently transport passengers to various locations on the island, including the Hengqin Port, the Macao New Neighbourhood housing estate and Chimelong International Ocean Tourist Resort. Robotaxis, meanwhile, are operating around the Macao New Neighbourhood, Gang'ao Avenue, the Government Affairs Service Centre and the Hengqin Port.

The opening up of all Hengqin's roads to ICVs was another 2024 milestone. This was also achieved in September, after a gradual rollout over the previous two years. Allowing the vehicles to traverse the whole island should be a drawcard for the local autonomous transportation sector, as it facilitates in-depth data collection, says Cheong.

"These roads cover various traffic conditions in Hengqin," he explains. "This not only further tests the autonomous driving vehicle's perception and functional capability, but also helps the car companies to collect even more comprehensive road data." The civil servant notes that such information can be used to "optimise the autonomous driving algorithm and further strengthen the public's confidence and acceptance of autonomous driving technology."

On the latter point, Cheong points out that robobuses and robotaxis give residents "even more options" for moving around Hengqin. Most importantly, he describes the transportation experience they provide as "smart, safe and comfortable".

AN INDUSTRY PROMOTING INTEGRATION

According to Cheong, the commercialisation of robotaxis will "help promote Hengqin's coordinated regional development and drive the [Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area] GBA's building of intelligent transportation."

Macao plays an active role in developing Hengqin's autonomous driving vehicle sector, he adds, pointing to his department's close collaboration with the University of Macau (UM). A team from UM is involved in coordinating the vehicles' visual perceptions, decision-making and control mechanisms. The sector also benefits from Macao's well-developed exposition landscape: Hengqin's autonomous driving vehicles have been showcased at the Special Administrative Region's Beyond Expo, for instance – an international stage enabling a broader audience to engage with the emerging technology.



Robotaxis began commercial operations in Hengqin last year

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO GO DRIVERLESS?

The technology may be complex, but the act of travelling by robobus or robotaxi is remarkably straightforward. They stop when required, allow passengers to climb aboard safely and perform exactly as a conventional vehicle would on the roads – changing lanes smoothly and pausing for traffic lights – before letting you out when you reach your destination. They just do it all without a human at the wheel. The experience can feel a little uncanny at first, but quickly becomes routine.

Booking a robotaxi is an intuitive process that works in the same way as a normal ride-hailing service like Uber or DiDi (both available in Hengqin, though not Macao). All potential passengers have to do is download a compatible mobile app, like ONTIME Mobility, select the unmanned Robotaxi option, enter their location and destination, and wait for the vehicle to arrive. The only major difference is that upon boarding the vehicle, instead of greeting your

driver, you confirm your ride through an onboard monitor system.

While the idea of travelling in an autonomous driving vehicle may still sound nerve-racking to some, Hengqin's robobuses and robotaxis all conform with regulatory guidelines formulated to ensure passenger safety. Surveillance cameras feed real-time footage to the platform monitoring each vehicle, for instance, while a 'T-Box' – similar to an aeroplane's black box – allows for real-time data collection covering practically every other aspect of the vehicle's movements. "This includes data relating to the vehicle's position, speed, driving status and the monitoring of a safety personnel's actions," Cheong explains.

According to Cheong, autonomous transportation is rapidly gaining acceptance in Hengqin. As of December 2024, the vehicles had travelled a cumulative distance of more than 480,000 kilometres and carted more than 60,000 people – including upwards of 16,000 Macao residents.

THE FUTURE OF AUTONOMOUS DRIVING VEHICLES IN HENGQIN AND BEYOND

Aside from Hengqin, other GBA cities including Guangzhou and Shenzhen have also been embracing ICVs. In 2024, Guangzhou introduced a pilot programme for the commercialisation of autonomous driving cars in its Nansha district, and began drafting legislation to support the industry that same year. Shenzhen, meanwhile, launched its first four autonomous driving public bus routes last year. The city has also opened up 1,560 kilometres of its public roads for ICV testing.

When asked how Hengqin's autonomous driving transportation sector compares, Cheong says that the island is "on par" with the larger Chinese cities in terms of the types of vehicles in use, progress in their commercialisation and the extent of roading network able to be accessed.

The civil servant concedes that there's one area where Hengqin is lagging: there aren't many ICV companies and research outfits based there. Cheong says this is something local authorities are working to improve and hopes are high that recent developments will raise Hengqin's profile within the wider industry. Along with the roads opening up last

year, plans are afoot to widen the current contexts under which autonomous driving vehicles are used.

"Hengqin will make use of its unique strengths arising from its geographic advantages and implementation of early and pilot policies to establish itself as an important platform for domestic autonomous driving enterprises wishing to enter into the international market," Cheong says.

If the dynamic pace at which Hengqin's industry has developed over the past two years is anything to go by, it's well on its way to achieving this goal. ●

Data collection is an important part of Hengqin's ICV sector



FOOD & DRINK

There's a New Egg Tart in Town, the Portuguese *Pasteis de Nata*

In a city famous for its custardy confections, it's about time real *pasteis de nata* entered the scene. They've arrived courtesy of the celebrated Lisbon bakery Manteigaria - a brand dedicated to preserving the sweet legacy founded by 18th-century Portuguese monks.



Macaolink



Text **Sara Santos Silva**
Photos courtesy of
Manteigaria

Manteigaria brings the original Portuguese treat to a city long-dominated by close cousins like Lord Stow's egg tarts

(Opposite page) Pasteis de nata may look familiar but the taste is uniquely Portuguese

There's a near obsession with egg tarts in Macao. Take a stroll down the narrow lanes of the old city: you're bound to pass dozens of stores peddling takes on the beloved pastry. The tarts sit snugly in heated display cases, waiting to be packed into colourful cardboard boxes for buyers to take home. "Confection of custard tarts" is, in fact, inscribed on Macao's official list of intangible cultural heritage. They've become a symbol of the city: tourists remember their trip to Macao when glancing at a tart-shaped fridge magnet or pulling on their tart-themed socks.

Egg tarts may be ubiquitous in Macao, but they're not uniform. Connoisseurs divide them into two broad categories: the Hong Kong-style *dan tat*, commonly found at

dim sum restaurants, and a local reimagining of Portugal's famous *pastéis de nata*. Here's a quick way to tell them apart: the latter have caramelised tops, identifiable by dark scorch marks on their custard filling, while the former - *dan tat* - are a shiny, unblemished yellow.

Somewhat confusingly, the Portuguese-style iterations go by a few different names. You've the official 'Lord Stow's egg tarts', named by and for the Macao-based English baker, Andrew Stow, who developed them in the 1990s. Some people refer to Stow's creations as 'Macao egg tarts' to distinguish them from their Hong Kong counterparts. Others go with *pôu tát*, the direct translation of 'Portuguese-style egg tart' to Cantonese.

Casual observers might mistake Stow's tarts for genuine pastéis de nata (there are scorch marks on both – that's the Portuguese *style*, after all). But a Portuguese tongue would know the difference. The localised version consists of crispy puff pastry more similar to that of the dan tat, encasing a wobbly, pudding-like custard baked raw. In contrast, the filling of a real *pastel de nata* is first cooked on the stove, where it's infused with a cinnamon stick and lemon rind. Its shell is softer, more buttery, allowing its custard to ever-so-slightly permeate the pastry layers.

Curiously, given the city's centuries of Portuguese influence and passion for custardy confections, Macao has long lacked

a definitive representation of the pastel de nata. That was until the arrival of cafe Manteigaria, known for tarts made strictly to a recipe developed by Portuguese monks back in the 18th century.

News that a local branch of one of Portugal's best-loved bakeries could be setting up shop in Macao broke last October, generating excitement within the city's Luso community. After what felt like a long wait, Manteigaria's narrow, two-storey Avenida da Praia Grande premises opened in the heart of Macao's finance district in January.

NOT JUST ANY EGG TART

Established in Lisbon's hip Chiado district in 2014, Manteigaria

initially faced fierce competition in the Portuguese capital – where pastéis de nata are routinely eaten alongside an espresso. But it quickly rose to the top thanks to artisanal preparation techniques and the use of premium ingredients. Today, Manteigaria is the second highest-rated Lisbon coffee shop on TripAdvisor. *Macao* magazine was one of the new Macao branch's first visitors.

"We don't sell egg tarts," insists Diogo Vieira, managing director of Manteigaria and a managing partner in the Portugália group in Macau that operates the franchise. "This is a Portuguese pastel de nata."

The Macao-based Portuguese native explains that the shop's mission is not only to treat the taste buds of its patrons – but to debunk

misconceptions they may have. Macao's culinary landscape, recognised by UNESCO as the birthplace of fusion cuisine, often blurs boundaries, he notes. Take the Macanese dish African chicken. Served nowhere in Africa, it's named for the Mozambique-sourced *peri-peri* peppers used liberally in its sauce. Vieira wants people to recognise the differences between dan tat, Macao egg tarts and pastéis de nata – and appreciate the sweet uniqueness of each.

Espresso makes an excellent companion to these buttery tarts infused with cinnamon and lemon

(Opposite page) Managing Director Diogo Vieira greeted customers and even served espresso at the opening of Manteigaria in January



To ensure authenticity at Manteigaria in Macao, its Portuguese head pastry chef Pedro Quintaneiro spent three months in Lisbon training under the brand's master baker. Now Manteigaria's Macao customers can watch him and his colleagues – in their white chefs hats and aprons – hard at work in the new premises' show kitchen. Making pastéis de nata by hand is a labour-intensive process that requires both patience and passion, and the bakery is eager to have these attributes on display.

“At Manteigaria, we're going back to old methods,” Quintaneiro says. “We

mix the cream by hand, for example. We use whole eggs and proper butter.” Traditional Portuguese bakers, he adds, frown upon the use of margarine.

Keen eyes might notice some of Manteigaria's tarts are a *little* darker on top than others, indicating they've spent longer in the oven. This is the bakery's only concession to the local palate. Macao's Chinese community tends to gravitate towards the lighter, less caramelised custards, while those interested in sampling pastéis de nata as the monks would have served them opt for the darker batches.



Head baker Pedro Quintaneiro is proud of Manteigaria's commitment to using traditional methods and ingredients

Sticking with a Portuguese tradition, whenever a fresh batch of tarts emerges from the oven, a Manteigaria staffer steps outside the bakery's door to ring a bell. This is the signal it's time to indulge: authentic pastéis de nata are best enjoyed warm and with a fresh sprinkling of cinnamon (those buying theirs to go get a takeaway packet of the aromatic spice to sprinkle at their leisure).

The store has been designed primarily for takeaway, though customers do have the option to perch at the standing counter – enjoying their pastry with coffee in an environment that looks strikingly similar to Manteigaria's European branches.

A CULINARY BRIDGE

Manteigaria in Macao is the brand's first branch in Asia, and the Special Administrative Region is its third market outside of Portugal (there are two Manteigarias in Paris, France, and a Spanish one opened in Madrid just a day before Macao's).

“The plan was always to start with Macao for the expansion of the brand in Asia,” Vieira says. “There's still a deep connection between Macao and Portugal, and we always believed that this product was something we should bring to Macao, especially since it's done in a traditional way as we do.”

The Macao iteration of the bakery has already proved popular enough for Manteigaria's head office to consider opening a second branch in the city. It's also mulling expansion across the estuary, to bring pastéis de nata to Hong Kong. In the meantime, anyone seeking egg tarts that are not just Portuguese in style, but Portuguese through-and-through, will find them on Avenida da Praia Grande. ●



▶ SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH THE VIDEO ●



FOOD & DRINK

Riding the Bamboo Pole

The Wong family have been making *jook-sing* noodles for almost 80 years. Those decades have seen their business, Wong Chi Kei, grow out of a small store in Guangdong Province into a multifaceted operation in Macao. Here's how the third generation of this foodie family turned their grandfather's dream into a reality.

Text **Vivianna Cheong**
Photos **Lei Heong Ieong**

Wong Yu-fei is part of the third generation to run the nearly 80-year-old family business

(Below) Wong Chi Kei's original Macao eatery has undergone a lot of changes since opening its doors in 1959

In Wong Yu-fei's family, every son learns the art of jook-sing noodle making at the age of 15. "This is when we are tall and strong enough to manage the bamboo pole," he explains, describing the highly physical practice of straddling a thick bamboo stem to roll out noodle dough. Every daughter, Wong adds, learns how to make meat fillings for dumplings.

Wong, in his 30s, is part of the third generation to run Wong Chi Kei, a traditional jook-sing noodle company founded by Wong Woon-chi in 1946, in Dongguan, Guangdong Province. In 1959, what was then just a small eatery moved to Rua de Cinco de Outubro in the heart of Macao's historic old town. Wong Chi Kei opened its second, far larger restaurant in 2000, in a three-storey building on Senado Square – one of the city's tourism hotspots. A jook-sing noodle factory followed in 2006, testament to strong demand for the Wong family's time-honoured skills.

You'll find their high-quality, made in Macao products in local restaurants, Hong Kong supermarkets like City Super, and in a dedicated store at Hong Kong's international airport. The business's premium Yea Yea Noodles brand, featuring well-loved landmarks like A-Ma Temple and the Guia Lighthouse on its packaging, is even sold in dedicated vending machines at ferry terminals. Unlike the more generic noodle brands grabbed off shelves by home cooks, Yea Yea Noodles target people – often tourists – seeking a bona fide way to take Macao's culinary heritage to home.



Traditional jook-sing noodle making is, in fact, a protected part of the city's intangible cultural heritage. While named after the bamboo pole they're flattened with, these noodles are also defined by two key ingredients: duck eggs and lye water, which impart a characteristic fragrance. This recipe and technique have been passed down from generation to generation by skilled artisans, though jook-sing noodles' labour intensive nature means the tradition is struggling to stay afloat. The Wong family are one of just a few still "riding the pole" – as the dough rolling practice is known.

A FAMILY LEGACY IN EVERY BITE

Wong grew up in Hong Kong, but visited Macao almost every weekend as a kid in the 1990s. He'd spend most of that time with his elderly grandparents – Wong Chi Kei's founders – in their Rua de Cinco de Outubro restaurant.



"I remember there was a string between the two floors," he recalls. "When we received a food order upstairs, we wrote it down on a piece of paper and attached it to the string with a peg. It would slide straight to the cashier." Wong's grandfather was in charge of preparing and cooking the jook-sing noodles, while his grandmother managed the cashier. Sadly, she died in 1996, a year before her husband, Wong Woon-chi, passed away.

The old restaurant contains many memories for the family. Wong, a cheeky child, remembers scribbling nonsense on bits of paper on the eatery's upper floor, then sliding them down to his grandma. His cousin, Ken Li, who's now in charge of producing Wong Chi Kei's noodles, says he essentially grew up in the store. He recalls

the steep learning curve experienced when his turn to master the bamboo pole came around. "It was tough as I had to manage everything by hand, including cutting and moulding each roll of noodles," he says. The only way to guarantee jook-sing noodles' bouncy, silken texture is to practice, practice, practice, Li emphasises.

Of course, the family business' noodle-making operations have long outgrown that kitchen and a 900-square-metre factory in Macao's Iao Hon District is Li's current domain. While he still uses a bamboo pole to flatten the dough, other parts of the process – the rolling, folding, cutting and stretching – are handled by two large machines purchased from Japan. Li also has a large team of staff members to help him these days.

Ken Li oversees the family's noodle factory, opened in 2006

(Opposite page, left) It's easy to see why people refer to jook-sing noodle makers as "riding the pole"

(Opposite page, right) Eggs are one of the two ingredients required for true jook-sing noodles





Yea Yea Noodles are an ode to Wong Yu-fei's beloved grandfather (their name is Chinese for 'grandfather'). This box's imagery depicts a young boy and his granddad

(Opposite page) Dumpling making is passed down through daughters of the Wong family

The factory produces between 500 and 1,000 rolls of jook-sing noodles every day, both plain and sprinkled with shrimp roe. It also churns out an array of condiments including *bacalhau* XO sauce, sakura shrimp sauce, chili sauce and dried crab roe. Half of the noodles are destined to be cooked immediately in the two Wong Chi Kei restaurants and other eateries around Macao. The other half gets dried, packaged up and sold as Yea Yea Noodles.

Even though Wong was involved in the business as a child, and watched his dad take it over from his grandfather, he hadn't planned to follow in their footsteps. Instead, he studied business management and finance in the US. Wong drifted

back into the fold after spending his early career in Hong Kong's food and beverage industry. As his dad reached retirement age, the elder Wong wanted to spend more time writing than running a demanding business. So, in 2014, the younger Wong stepped in to take his place.

NOODLES WORTH THE WAIT

At the Senado Square eatery, Wong points out two large pieces of calligraphy written by his father to celebrate Wong Chi Kei's 70th anniversary. "Next year, for our 80th anniversary, he may write another pair," Wong notes. He also recalls the exciting day this restaurant opened, when he was just a kid. "There were crowds and lion dancing," he says.

The crowds have remained: Wong Chi Kei's Senado entrance often has a queue outside it. The eatery's reputation for bouncy jook-sing noodles as well as heart-warming broths, shrimp roe and congee has travelled well beyond the Pearl River Delta, and tourists from countries including Thailand and South Korea seem more than willing to line up for the Wong family's famous dishes.

The large restaurant's old-timey ambience is another drawcard, with its dark panelling, traditional Chinese paintings and round wooden tables. The original, more compact Wong Chi Kei – a 15-minute walk away – is still running too, but has been renovated to have a more modern vibe, and serves a slightly different menu.

A GRANDFATHER'S DREAM

Macao residents always joke about the city's close connections. Everyone seems to know a friend, colleague or relative of everyone else; "Macao is so small" is something you tend to hear a lot. Wong, now the face of his multi-generational family business, feels this interconnectedness strongly. It's not unusual for someone to approach him out of the blue and say, "I eat your noodles all the time," or, "I met your grandparents at the Rua de Cinco de Outubro restaurant." Recently, a regular customer told Wong that five generations of his family had been frequenting Wong Chi Kei's eateries.

These sentimental reminiscences helped convince Wong to launch the Yea Yea Noodles brand back in 2016. But he also wanted to turn one of his grandfather's dreams into a reality. "When my grandpa was still alive, he dreamt of producing dried noodles," the younger Wong says. He himself used to crave his family's jook-sing noodles while studying in the US, so producing a more portable version of them seemed like an obvious way to expand the family business.

As for why he opted for the souvenir-style offering, Wong points out that noodles are celebrated for their prominent places in many countries and regions' cultures. "From Italian spaghetti to Japanese ramen to the Shin Ramyun brand in South Korea," he says. With this inspiration, he envisioned tourists viewing his family's jook-sing noodles as more than just food. He wants them to feel like they're buying a delicious piece of Macao's rich culinary heritage, and something they could take home to a kitchen anywhere in the world. ●



HISTORY

Mapping Macao: A Gateway to Global History

Maps do more than depict geography, they tell the story of a place and its role in history. Through its ambitious Global Mapping of Macao project, the Macau University of Science and Technology is uncovering new insights into both Macao's past and its connections with the wider world.



Text **Tang Io Weng**
Photos courtesy of
**Macau University of
Science and Technology**

Cantino Planisphere in 1502 is the earliest known map displaying Portuguese discoveries in the east and the west

(Inset) Tang Io Weng, former assistant professor at MUST



Macao may be a small place, but its role in the history of globalisation and international exchange is profound. This can be seen in historical records from China and abroad dating back to the Ming dynasty, as well as through the evolution of cartography. Maps, of course, do more than depict geographical features; they incorporate symbols, annotations and stylistic choices that reflect the perspectives of their creators, the societies that produced them and the historical contexts in which they were made.

The Macau University of Science and Technology (MUST) has been collecting maps of Macao since 2013. Today, it holds over 11,000 cartographic artefacts – mostly scanned or digital versions of the historic originals. The collection spans world maps, maps of China and the Pearl River Delta, and detailed renderings of Macao itself. Through assembling this impressive archive, MUST has not only enriched its own holdings but transformed the material into accessible data available for scholars worldwide to study. As its in-house researchers meticulously categorise and analyse the Global Mapping of Macao archive, they prepare fertile ground for new academic findings.

In December last year, MUST held its third exhibition showcasing a selection of its treasured maps, *Global Mapping of Macao: Exhibition of Old Maps of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and Macao*. The exhibition gained special significance when, on the eve of the 25th anniversary of Macao's return to the motherland, President Xi Jinping visited the university's Taipa campus to view the collection. While there, Xi met with students at MUST's library. He expressed his delight in seeing them "full of vitality and confidence" and encouraged them to set ambitious goals for the future.



A JESUIT'S JOURNEY

MUST's mapping initiative took root after a 2012 exhibition hosted by the Macao Museum, titled *Journey to the Ends of the World: Michele Ruggieri and Jesuits in China*. Commemorating the China-European Union Year of Intercultural Dialogue, the show displayed maps drawn by Jesuits that had been preserved in the National Archives of Rome for centuries. One of these was Ruggieri's *Atlas of China*, its annotations written in Latin.

Born in the Kingdom of Naples (in today's Italy, then part of the Spanish empire) in 1543, Ruggieri reached Macao via Goa in 1579. It was here that he began assiduously studying the Chinese language, efforts that eventually saw him described as the first European sinologist. He and fellow Jesuit Matteo Ricci went on to compile the first Portuguese-Chinese dictionary – considered an early milestone in cross-cultural communication. Both Ruggieri and Ricci spent time in Portugal and set sail to Asia from Lisbon together. In 1583, Ruggieri became the first European missionary allowed to reside in the mainland.

During *Journey to the Ends of the World*, a teacher at MUST emailed the director of the university's library, Dai Longji, pointing out that these early maps seemed like valuable materials for the study of Macao. Dai, formerly the director of the Peking University Library and an avid collector of atlases, agreed with the teacher's assessment. He promptly began planning the creation of a special collection of ancient maps of Macao.

The goal was to “gather maps, geographic charts, and related data about Macao scattered across libraries, museums and archives worldwide, and to develop and utilise these materials to support research on Macao,” Dai noted in the afterword of a book of theses he later helped compile as part of the project.



COMPILING A CARTOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

Professor Zhang Shuguang, then-director of the Institute for Social and Cultural Research (ISCR) at MUST, was one of the project's early leaders. He has described the long-term initiative as having three main objectives: first, to expand the global history of Macao as a research field; second, to create a special collection of world maps that feature Macao; and third, to develop a public database of Macao maps for educational purposes.

The Global Mapping of Macao project officially launched in September 2013, with initial funding of 1,000,000 patacas from the Macao Foundation. The research team included staff from the MUST Library and its Department of General Education, such as Professor Xu Ping, Assistant Librarian Yang Xunling, and the English lecturer Xiang Fang.

Their research unfolded in several key phases. The first involved reviewing literature on Macao and its historical connections with the rest of the world, especially around the city's emergence as a hub for international trade between China and Portugal in the 16th and 17th centuries. This phase examined Macao's role in East-West exchanges and its significance in the broader narrative of early globalisation (for a long time, Macao was China's sole gateway to trading with the rest of the world).

The second phase focused on studying books about historical maps and cartography, with special attention given to maps of Macao and their authors. The goal here was to uncover the backgrounds of the mapmakers, the sources they used and how they processed their data.

Scholars involved in MUST's Global Mapping of Macao project at the Pearls in Paradise symposium in 2015

(Opposite page, top to bottom) Antique maps depicting Macao, copies of which form part of MUST's collection

The third phase involved hunting down cartographic catalogues in online archives around the world, notably from China, the United States, Portugal, the Vatican and other places in Europe. The MUST researchers then visited key locations in person, to scan or photocopy these maps. During their travels, they gathered additional information and compiled detailed bibliographies.

The maps were then categorised and digitised, making it possible for scholars everywhere to use MUST's collection to study the history of Macao. It is worth mentioning that assistance from the Harvard-Yenching Library, the US Library of Congress,

the Vatican Apostolic Library and the National Archive of Torre do Tombo in Portugal was instrumental in completing this part of the project.

UNCOVERING HISTORICAL INSIGHTS

Over the past 12 years, Global Mapping of Macao has yielded a remarkable record of achievements. The project has produced four atlases, two volumes of academic theses and three exhibitions. A highlight was the *Pearls in Paradise* symposium and exhibition held in July 2015, which featured maps from the Vatican Apostolic Library's archives. The event attracted scholars from Macao,

Hong Kong and beyond, including Archbishop Jean-Louis Brugues, then-librarian of the Vatican Apostolic Library, and the esteemed Chinese historian, Professor Qian Chengdan.

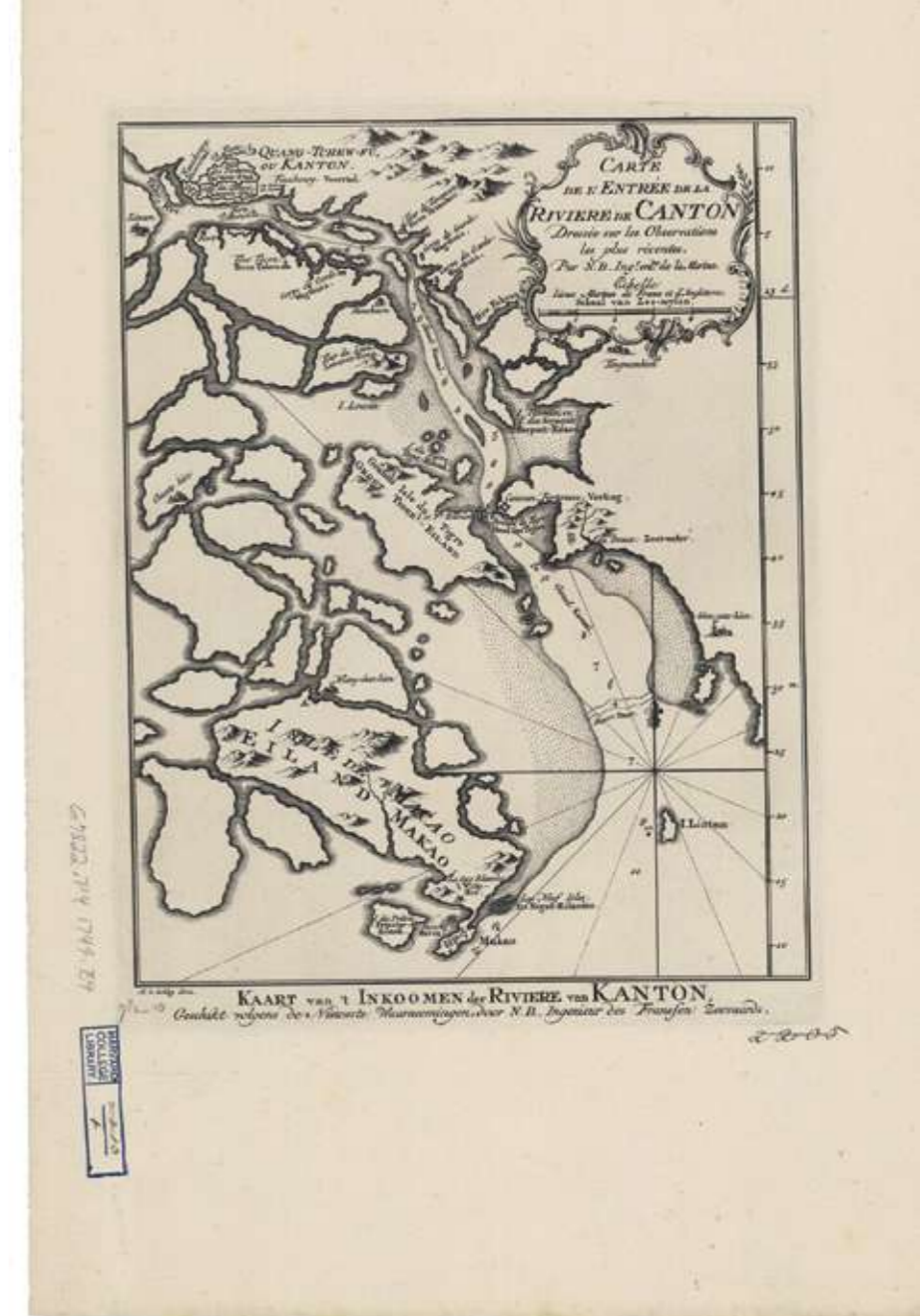
MUST published its first atlas relating to the project in 2014. *Sailed to the East: Global Mapping of Macao* included 50 ancient and valuable maps collected from libraries around the world. A second atlas followed in 2017, based on the *Pearls in Paradise* exhibition. It featured almost 100 maps, images and documents from the Vatican archives. Two further atlases were released in 2020 and 2024, respectively titled *Global Mapping of Macao: Xiangshan* and *Global Mapping of Macao: Macao City & Harbor*.

The papers published by the project's team have helped advance academic dialogue relating to Macao's position in global history. "History in Cartography: Macao in the 16th-19th Century Collision of Eastern and Western Civilizations", for instance, put forward two key scholarly arguments. The first was that Macao's unique geographic position allowed it to become a gateway for Westerners to understand Chinese culture, a trading port for the West to China and Southeast Asia, and a strategic location for military operations in nearby seas.

The second argument held that the development of Western maps of Macao was closely tied to maritime power struggles. Between the 16th and the 19th centuries, the shifting dynamics of countries such as Portugal, the Netherlands, Britain, France, Germany and the United States – as well as their naval competition in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea – were clearly documented in maps of Macao and its surrounding areas.

(Opposite page) Antique maps of the Pearl River area, included in MUST's collection

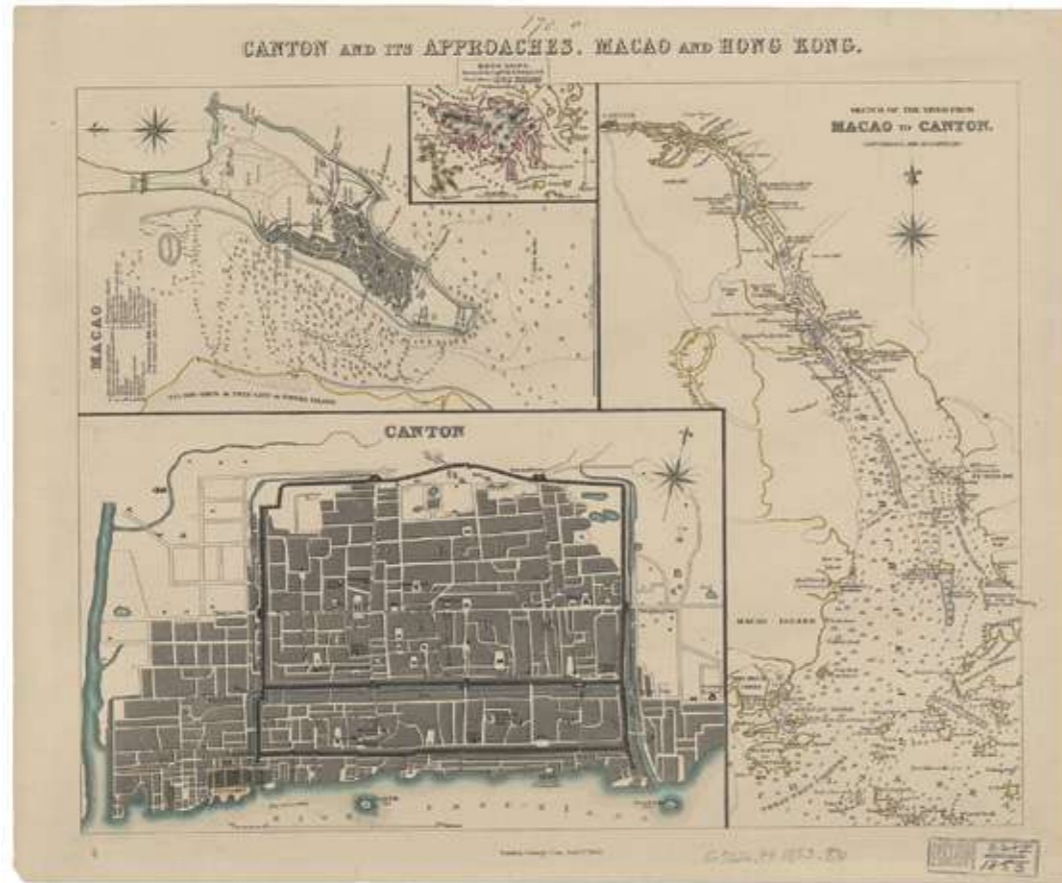
A 2015 exhibition of maps and other cartographic materials from the Vatican Apostolic Library at MUST



An 1853 map by Edward Belcher depicting Canton, Macao and Hong Kong

(Centre) Four publications based on research from the Global Mapping of Macao project

(Opposite page) MUST's library displays several of the project's maps on its wall



For instance, maps of the region created in 1853 by Sir Edward Belcher, a Canadian serving in Britain's Royal Navy, show Britain's maritime dominance by the mid-19th century. One of his maps features Macao in great detail, from the locations of its churches, hospitals, canons and local government, to its bodies of water. Through Belcher's precision, scholars infer that the British had collected massive information about the Pearl River Delta and its constituents' urban planning by that time.



MAPPING THE FUTURE

The numerous papers published based on studies of MUST's antique maps are testament to the significant academic value of this collection. As Zhang has noted, scholars have shifted away from traditional paradigms treating all antique maps as reliable historical documents, and towards a more critical line of thinking that sees scholars and cartographers approach maps as products of their time – shaped by political, economic and ideological influences. Zhang also advocates for

extending the study of ancient maps into the field of international history and globalisation.

As Macao continues to evolve, its historical role as a centre of trade and cultural exchange remains relevant. Under the 'One Centre, One Platform, One Base' strategic framework, the city is positioning itself as a World Centre for Tourism and Leisure; a trade hub between China and Portuguese-speaking countries; and a base for cultural exchanges with an emphasis on Chinese heritage. This framework can be described as a modern continuation of its centuries-old legacy. ●

ARTS & CULTURE

How the Portuguese Helped Shape Hong Kong

The Portuguese began arriving in Hong Kong in the mid-19th century, many of them crossing the Pearl River Delta from Macao. A new exhibition at the Hong Kong Museum of History pays tribute to this community of high-achievers' contributions to the city, through stories that are often buried beneath the city's strong Sino-British narrative.



Text and photos
Elói Carvalho

Estórias Lusas – Stories of the Hong Kong Portuguese is an ambitious, cutting-edge exhibition diving deep into the city's Luso community

(Right) Francisco Da Roza, the Macanese former president of Club Lusitano, helped pull the exhibition together

Hong Kong is a city of layers. Its skyline, a jungle of gleaming towers, has chronicled the city's ascent as a global financial centre, while the bustling streets below brim with Chinese and British heritage. Nestled within these well-established narratives is an often-overlooked story – the enduring influence of the Portuguese (and Macanese) in Hong Kong over the past 150 years.

A new permanent exhibition at the Hong Kong Museum of History, *Estórias Lusas – Stories of the Hong Kong Portuguese*, shines a light on this small but adaptable community's legacy. It presents artefacts, personal testimonies and historical documents that show how the Portuguese helped shape Hong Kong. The exhibition opened in late November, as part of the museum's Multifaceted Hong Kong Exhibition Series.

Spread across 10 rooms, *Estórias Lusas* is structured to guide visitors along the journey of the Portuguese community. It begins with the arrival of the first Portuguese in the mid-19th century.

According to Francisco Da Roza, the former president of Club Lusitano (the oldest Portuguese social club remaining in the city) and a strong protagonist for *Estórias Lusas*, it was an exciting time in the Pearl River Delta region. "The potential of the city attracted different peoples who came to work, to settle and to make contributions," he told *Macao* magazine in a past interview. "This is the foundation that made Hong Kong the international city it is today." The banker's family is Macanese, with mixed Portuguese and Chinese heritage.



The Portuguese newcomers shifted right into the heart of Hong Kong. The exhibition displays an 1872 map of the Graham Street neighborhood that delineates residences by ethnicity, marking 18 Portuguese households among roughly 100 – though that number would soon swell due to a wave of migration from Macao. Da Roza's great-great-grandfather, Simão Vicente, made the move a few decades earlier: he was already working in a printing firm on Hong Kong's Pottinger Street by 1846. Da Roza himself was born in Macao, but has been based in Hong Kong for decades.

While comparatively few Portuguese or Macanese live in Hong Kong these days, street names still bear the names of old Iberian-linked families. Two in Kowloon – Soares Avenue and Braga Circuit – pay homage to Francisco 'Frank' Paulo Vasconcelos Soares and José Pedro Braga, for instance. Both men were instrumental in developing what's become the most densely populated area of Hong Kong.



FROM INTERMEDIARIES TO ENTREPRENEURS

Many of the early Portuguese came to Hong Kong as intermediaries, using their skills and experience to bridge cultural and commercial gaps between the region's Chinese and British populations. The Portuguese were known for their ability to deftly navigate cultural differences and linguistic barriers.

They worked as translators and civil servants within government departments. Or as compradores, managing trade relations between British firms and Chinese suppliers. Others were entrepreneurs, with families like the Noronhas and Xaviers establishing thriving businesses in printing (Noronha and Co.'s lithographic stones for printing bills can be seen in the exhibition). The aforementioned Braga belonged

to the Macanese Noronha family, and was born in Hong Kong in 1871. He started out working for his grandfather's printing business, then embarked on a successful career in journalism before founding his own printing company. In his later years, he served as chairman of both the Hongkong Engineering and Construction Company and the China Light and Power Company. A highly respected leader within Hong Kong's Portuguese community, Braga was appointed as a *Comendador da Ordem de Cristo* by Portugal's government in 1929, for services to the country. Six years later, he was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE). These lofty titles were testament to Brago's cross-cultural nous and strong sense of civic duty. After the Japanese occupied Hong Kong in 1941, he relocated to Macao where he worked on his

book, *The Portuguese in Hongkong and China*. Braga died in Macao in 1944 and is buried in São Miguel Cemetery.

Another 20th century entrepreneur of Macanese (and Spanish) descent highlighted in *Estórias Lusas* is Frank Gardner, founder of the Plastic Manufacturing Corporation (PMC) – one of Hong Kong's pioneering toy exporters. Toy manufacturing became a major industry in the city, and much of its output – particularly from the 1950s and 1960s – is considered collectable these days.

Gardner's daughter, Angela Gardner, helped the museum illustrate her father's success by contributing a number of vintage PMC products to *Estórias Lusas*, showcasing their evolution over the decades. Many visitors will feel nostalgic seeing his battery-operated rickshaw man with a red-painted rickshaw in tow. The toy's original cardboard box reads, "Hong Kong Rickshaw: With Realistic Movements Just Like a Real One".

The Luso community was also influential in Hong Kong's religious and legal practices. The exhibition boasts a large installation shaped like the entry arch of a classic Portuguese church, introducing important Catholics like Father Lionel Xavier, former principal of Rosaryhill School, and Sister Marie Remedios, former principal of St. Francis' Canossian College. Representing Portuguese contributions in the field of law is a gown worn by the Hong Kong-born barrister Leonardo d'Almada e Castro Jr when he became an Honorary Doctor of Laws in the 1960s. D'Almada e Castro Jr was the first of Hong Kong's Portuguese community to be appointed King's Counsel, a title of recognition for excellence in advocacy within the Commonwealth.

Many other prominent figures emerged from Hong Kong's Portuguese community. Januário António de Carvalho was another prominent figure in the legal realm, serving as a Justice of the Peace (as well as chief cashier of the city's Treasury). Born in Macao in 1830, his family was among the first wave of Portuguese to arrive in Hong Kong.

The Hong Kong-Portuguese lawyer Leonardo d'Almada e Castro Jr wore this gown when receiving his Honorary Doctorate of Laws in the 1960s

(Opposite page) Noronha and Co.'s old lithographic printing stones along with some of the paper money they printed are on display in the exhibition



Estórias Lusas dedicates a whole room to Portuguese and Macanese cuisine, equipped with a *Dona de Casa*



FOOD AND SPORTS AND SOCIALISING

The Portuguese made an imprint on Hong Kong's everyday life. *Estórias Lusas* dedicates a whole room to culinary traditions and features recipes familiar to anyone acquainted with Macanese cuisine. These dishes are a culmination of spices, techniques and ingredients harvested from the Portuguese's travels around the world, with an emphasis on Sino-Luso fusion. Take *tacho*, a hearty stew that evolved from traditional *cozido à portuguesa* to incorporate Chinese sausages, daikon and shrimp paste (decidedly East Asian elements).

Upon entering, visitors are welcomed by a hologram of the *Dona de Casa* ('Lady of the House' in English), who conjures a projected feast up onto a large wooden dining table. Voices in *Patuá* – the Macanese creole – echo from behind her chair, explaining the day's menu and each dish's origin.

The exhibition also explores the role of social clubs in preserving Portuguese identity in Hong Kong. Two major ones are Club Lusitano, founded in 1866, and Club de Recreio, a social centre founded in 1906 that now has a strong emphasis on sports. Where Club Lusitano's membership is open to anyone of "Portuguese nationality or extraction,"

The exhibition explains the roles of 15th century figures like Henry the Navigator in Portugal's early maritime expansion, leading its entry into Asia

(Inset) Arnaldo de Oliveira Sales co-founded the Hong Kong Olympic Committee



Club de Recreio began opening its membership up to people of all nationalities in 1968.

Several Portuguese-Hong Kongers have made their mark in the city's sporting arena, including Arnaldo de Oliveira Sales, co-founder of the Hong Kong Olympic Committee. Sales was ethnically Portuguese, but born in Guangzhou in 1920. His family moved to Hong Kong when he was 8 years old, and he went on to play influential roles in both sports and municipal affairs. Sales, who was also heavily involved in Club Lusitano, died in Hong Kong at the age of 100.

Another prominent sportsman of Portuguese descent in the city is Hong Kong-born horse racing legend Tony Cruz, whose stellar career as a jockey has been followed by massive success as a trainer. One of *Estórias Lusas'* rooms pays tribute to his achievements, featuring statues of the renowned thoroughbred Silent Witness alongside other racing memorabilia. Under Cruz's guidance, the bay gelding secured 17 consecutive wins and was ranked the world's top sprinter for three consecutive seasons (2003–2005). Cruz was born in Hong Kong in 1956.



IN DECLINE, BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

One of the most poignant aspects of *Estórias Lusas* is its exploration of the community's gradual decline. The tumult of World War II caused upheaval; many Portuguese fled to the safe port of Macao while others stayed in Hong Kong, contributing to the war effort. The D'Almada Barretto family donated a collection of old photos depicting men in uniform during this period, training in the New Territories as part of the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps. Post-war immigration saw many Portuguese families leave Asia in search of new opportunities.

Those remaining continued to contribute in different ways throughout the later 20th century, however. *Estórias Lusas* pays special tribute to artists with Portuguese ancestry,



like the singer Joe Junior (born José Maria Rodrigues Jr in 1947, in Macao), who became a household name in the 1960s with hits like "Voice of Love" and "Deborah". Visitors will find an array of musical memorabilia on display: from vinyl records to concert posters, instruments to radio transcripts. Another key figure of Portuguese descent in Hong Kong's music scene was legendary radio DJ Ray Cordeiro, known as 'Uncle Ray'. Cordeiro was born in Hong Kong in 1924, and hosted the city's longest running radio show – an easy-listening programme called *All the Way with Ray* – until 2021, when he retired at the age of 96. He died two years later.

While the 1961 census recorded nearly 9,400 Portuguese speakers in Hong Kong, estimates today suggest

that today's population comprises a tiny fraction of that number. The Portuguese community's contributions remain woven into the city's history, however – something *Estórias Lusas* makes clear. In a Hong Kong that continues to evolve, the exhibition reminds us that a city's identity is not just about those in the spotlight now, but also those who have gone before.

Estórias Lusas is part of a broader effort to recognise Hong Kong's multicultural heritage. Alongside it, exploring other overlooked communities, the Multifaceted Hong Kong Exhibition Series includes *Yau Tsim Mong – The Urban Transition and Community Bonds* and *Sojourning in Gold Mountain – Hong Kong and the Lives of Overseas Chinese in California*. ●

The exhibition makes use of dramatic lighting and innovative displays, creating an immersive experience for visitors

(Centre) *Estórias Lusas* includes many photos donated by Macanese and Portuguese families

(Left) Macao-born Joe Junior was one of Hong Kong's most popular singers in the 1960s

ARTS & CULTURE

A Portal Between Worlds: Carlos Marreiros at Arte Sella

The Macanese architect was invited to contribute an installation to Northern Italy's ever-evolving open-air art museum back in 2019. Now, "Fragments of Light" stands alongside work by Pritzker Prize-winners and pioneers in environmental art within the spectacular Val di Sella.



Text **Amanda Saxton**
Photos courtesy of
Giacomo Bianchi,
Marco Imperadori
and **Carlos Marreiros**

Jutting out of the canopy, the sculpture recalls the trunk of an old giant, stripped of limbs and bark

(Below) The architect's sketch shows the locations of a nearby creek and mountains; he aligned his installation with them to promote good Feng Shui

There's a little bit of Macao in Italy's Trentino region. You'll find it in a forest-fringed meadow tucked between towering mountains. This landscape couldn't be more of a contrast to the highly urbanised Special Administrative Region (SAR), lending an air of intrigue to what the Macanese artist and architect Carlos Marreiros describes as his unlikely "portal" connecting the two places.

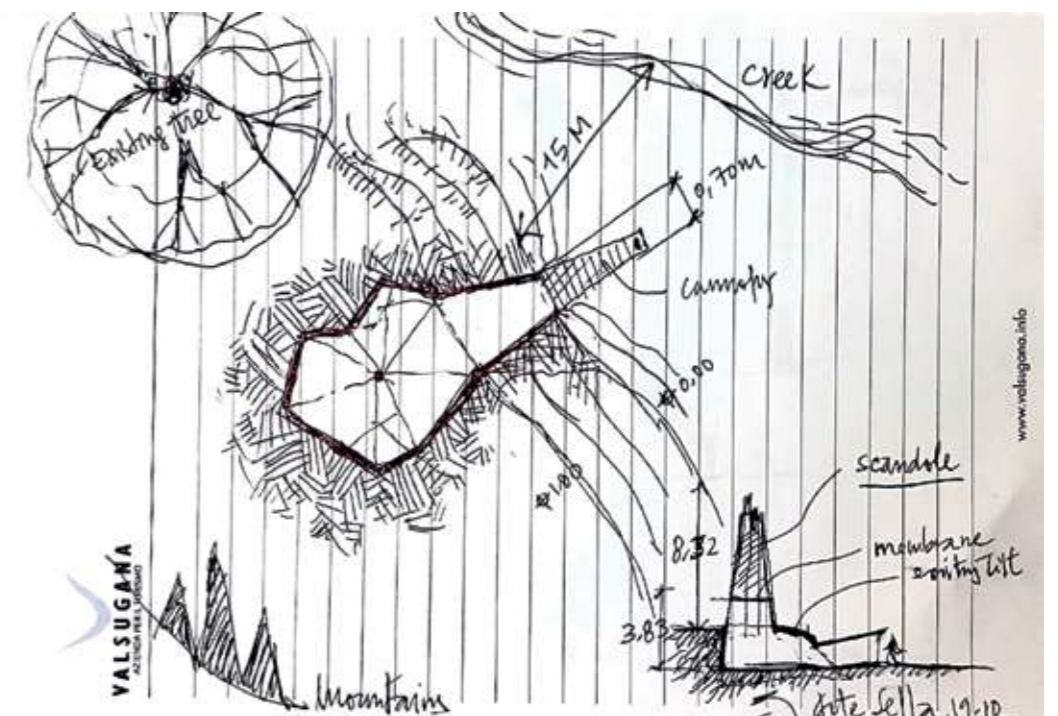
The Val di Sella's Arte Sella is an internationally acclaimed open-air art museum. Its sculptural installations – including one designed by Marreiros – are a far cry from the coddled pieces displayed in conventional galleries. Here, Mother Nature lends a hand: exposure to sun, snow, wind and rain make Arte Sella's exhibits change with the seasons – a concept that's central to the museum's philosophy.

The valley is home to works from many illustrious names from around the world, including the the German

environmental artist Nils-Udo, the South Korean sculptor Lee Jaehyo, and Italy's Michelangelo Pistoletto, a radical proponent of Arte Povera.

Macao's Marreiros and Hong Kong's Rocco Yim (the estimable architect behind Macao's StarWorld Hotel and Guangdong Museum) were the first Arte Sella contributors from their respective SARs. The pair were invited to design sculptures for Arte Sella's permanent exhibition in 2019; Yim unveiled his in September 2022, Marreiros' was revealed a year later.

"It was something very special to be invited, I felt honoured," Marreiros, 68, tells *Macao* magazine. The architect, who heads Marreiros Architectural Atelier as well as a culture centre, also holds a Portuguese passport. There's just one other Portuguese artist with work in Arte Sella, he says – Eduardo Souto de Moura, winner of the 2011 Pritzker Prize (considered the highest international award for architects).



“

I must create something very organic, something deeply connected to this environment, using materials provided by the mountains themselves.

– Carlos Marreiros

A LANDSCAPE OF GIANTS

When Marreiros first visited Arte Sella in late 2019, the drama and scale of northern Italy struck him intensely. He was moved by its raw, majestic beauty, but also by cultural traditions embedded within its mountainous terrain. “This is a place of giants,” he explains. “Not literally, but in the folklore of people who have lived here. Seeing those massive mountains, I couldn’t help but imagine them.”

Marreiros spent several happy, wholesome days at a house within the Arte Sella grounds, picking mushrooms and eating hearty meals prepared by a chef using locally sourced ingredients. He collected leaves, made countless sketches of his designated site, and recalls feeling instantly inspired. He told himself: “I must create something very organic, something deeply connected to this environment, using materials provided by the mountains themselves.”



‘IT JUST FELT MAGICAL’

It didn’t take long for Marreiros to decide what his sculpture would look like from the outside. Tall and jagged, made of local larch wood. When freshly milled, this wood is a light brown tinged with red (like a blushing cheek, the architect describes), but it weathers into a shimmery, silvery grey. A similar colour to the sheer rock faces surrounding Arte Sella.

The sculpture’s interior was harder to settle on. Marreiros searched his memory bank for inspiration, and came up with something as far from Italy’s alps as imaginable: the 17th-century cisterns of Macao’s Monte Forte. The ‘monte’, for the record, is not a mountain, but a 52-metre-high hill (for comparison’s sake, Trentino’s highest peak stands at almost 3,770 metres). It’s also very urban. Located within Macao’s historic old town, the fortress was the city’s principal military defense structure between the 1620s and 1960s. It’s now the site of the Macao Museum.

Marreiros spent a lot of time around Monte Forte growing up; his grandfather had a house there. While the fortress’ centuries-old cisterns had once been essential for storing rainwater, ensuring a reliable water supply during sieges or periods of isolation, to Marreiros and his friends, they were a subterranean playground. “We discovered all the secret entrances and exits,” he remembers. “Even when the fortress was locked at night, we could still get in.”

The architect’s finished sculpture is called “Fragments of Light”

The drainage ducts were built out of massive granite blocks, Marreiros says. These tunnels – no longer accessible – were about 1.5 metres by 1.5 metres, the perfect size for 12-year-olds to scamper around in, playing tricks on each other. But what the young Marreiros loved best was the way light behaved within them. Filled with quartz, the granite caused his torch beam to fracture and scatter. Its light would bounce around the space, almost like a kaleidoscope.

“At that time, we couldn’t rationalise what was happening because it just felt magical,” the architect says. “This memory stayed with me throughout my life.”

Marreiros wanted to recreate that sensation for people stepping inside his Arte Sella sculpture. Rather than line it

with granite and provide torches, he left gaps between the structure’s wooden panels that allow slivers of sunlight to enter. These create a dappled, disco ball effect within the installation’s interior. Marreiros named his creation “Fragments of Light”.

“So, the exterior of my installation was designed to mimic the mountains, rocks, and cliffs, with a very organic structure,” he says. “The interior was inspired by my teenage memories in the granite tunnels of Monte Forte.” A portal between Italy and Macao indeed.

REPRESENTING MACAO ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE

Of course, as a Macanese, Marreiros is no stranger to cultural intersections. Raised in Macao by a family proud of both their Chinese and Portuguese heritage, he later studied architecture in Lisbon, Portugal, where he also immersed himself in the history of Chinese civilization. Though Marreiros speaks Chinese, he cannot read it – so he revelled in Europe’s libraries, poring over books that examined the very culture he had grown up in.

These two worlds’ dual influence is evident across Marreiros’ creative oeuvre. “My entire artistic production is hybrid, because I am hybrid,” he says. For his Arte Sella piece, he consulted a Feng Shui master, ensuring that the structure aligned with ancient Chinese principles of design. Its south-facing opening, proximity to a stream and the mountain at its back are all auspicious elements promoting a natural flow of energy, or qi.

An architect by profession, Marreiros has been a multidisciplinary artist for even longer. His first

exhibition of drawings, paintings and etchings was held in Macao in 1976, just before he left for Portugal, and over the years he’s expanded into sculpture and installations, all while maintaining his own architecture practice. Marreiros’ art has been exhibited in Asia and Europe, and he represented Macao at the 2013 Venice Biennale.

The architect, who worked as a civil servant in Macao’s government in the 1980s and early 1990s, believes very strongly in the importance of cultural heritage. During his tenure as president of Macao’s Cultural Institute, he spearheaded efforts to help establish regulations to protect the city’s unique fabric. He also co-founded the *Círculo dos Amigos da Cultura de Macau* (‘Circle of Friends of Culture of Macao’ in English), a group that promotes contemporary art and heritage preservation. Now, Marreiros serves as president of *Albergue da Santa Casa da Misericórdia*, a creative hub housed in a century-old yellow complex. That’s where he office is, its walls practically papered with his drawings. “Unfortunately, these days, I paint less, but I still draw a lot,” he says. “Every day, I draw.”

Through the many different strands of his work, Marreiros helps keep his hometown’s cultural and urban heritage alive. Part of that is representing it on the global stage. His installation at Arte Sella joins sculptures by some of the world’s most important artists, serving as a reminder that Macao’s unique voice has a place in international artistic dialogue. ●



Marreiros has a notebook filled with sketches of the installation he envisioned for Arte Sella

(Opposite page) Carlos Marreiros’ sculpture in Val di Sella weathers deep snow during the Italian winter





SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Macao in Miniature

Local artist Alan Lou breathes new life into Macao's past, one model at a time. At The Bright Dawn Studio, he recreates the city's most iconic landmarks - from preserved heritage sites to lost architectural gems - using 3D printing. Lou's models can be viewed as a tribute to Macao's ever-evolving urban fabric.



Text **Don Lei**
Photos **Lei Heong Ieong**

The lightbox sign outside The Bright Dawn Studio beckons visitors and residents alike

(Opposite page) Alan Lou takes pride in handcrafting each piece, capturing the history of his city with painstaking detail

In a semi-basement workshop, in the historic São Lázaro district, the artist Alan Lou sits at a long table, brush in hand, meticulously painting tiny replicas of Macao's most iconic buildings. A lightbox above the shop doorway bears the legend: 'The Bright Dawn Studio.'

Lou presides over a miniature version of old Macao, scaled down 150 times. In it, visitors find many of the same structures they see strolling around the city, Guia Lighthouse, the pink and white tower of São Francisco Garden and the Taipa Houses, for example. But this Macao also contains landmarks from the past, like the now-demolished Hotel Estoril. Lou's also brought the former Judiciary Police headquarters back to life.

The Bright Dawn Studio, co-founded by Lou in early 2021, specialises in creating and selling 3D-printed models of Macao's tangible heritage. "The studio's fundamental development philosophy is to promote Macao culture and preserve the community's memories by presenting things that belong to the Macao culture in miniature," is how it describes itself online.

Demand is strong and the team – comprising Lou, his girlfriend Mabel Ho, one part-time employee and an orange cat – is busy. Lou says it's hard to stay away from the work he loves; the 29-year-old admits to being at the studio seven days a week.

BRINGING HISTORY INTO THE PRESENT

Lou's passion for history saw him earn a master's degree in the subject from the University of Macau, where he focused on the cultural history of Macao's streets and buildings. His academic background, coupled with work at the Macao Heritage Ambassadors Association, shaped his commitment to making history accessible to the public. Lou loves the idea he can enhance people's understanding of this city's intricately layered urban fabric through his work. At first, he imagined that would be through the papers he wrote as a researcher, but academia's limited audience made him rethink. "This sense of loss prompted me to look for a better way to make more people see what I was doing," Lou says.

The question of how best to do this took some time to answer. Through animated films, perhaps, or video games? In the end, Lou settled on 3D model making, a craft he had seen Japanese artists use to create anime figures. But first he had to figure out how to do it. "Five or six years ago, almost no one in Macao was doing 3D printing, so there was no one to teach me," he recalls.

In 2019, Lou bought his first fused deposition modeling (FDM) 3D printer, which melts and extrudes filament layer by layer. He taught himself how to operate it through online tutorials. Lou's first completed 3D project was of Tak Seng On Pawnshop's iconic sign; the model was displayed in an exhibition about Macao's traditional pawn shops during his tenure with the Heritage Ambassadors Association.

Shortly after, Lou launched his first model-making company, Good Farmer

Production, with two friends. The Bright Dawn Studio emerged out of that initial collaboration. Four years on, the studio is churning out between a few dozen and several thousand individual models each month, depending on their complexity. Sold directly by the studio, Lou says his products are purchased mainly as mementos – as a way for people to "hold Macao in their hands".



THE ART OF 3D PRINTING

While 2D printing and 3D printing produce strikingly different results, Lou says their fundamentals are similar. The former is a single layer of ink on paper, while 3D printing stacks multiple layers of feedstock to build a three-dimensional object. Feedstock can be plastic, metal, resin or other types of suitable material that can withstand very high temperatures.

The American inventor Chuck Hull developed the first commercialized 3D printing

technology, stereolithography (SLA), in the 1980s. This process uses a laser to cure liquid photopolymer resin, building solid objects layer by layer. By the 2010s, 3D printing had expanded beyond its initial industrial applications and was becoming more accessible to the public. In the early 2010s, mainland factories began mass-producing the printers, driving down costs and lowering the barrier to entry into the field.

The 3D printing process involves two key steps: first modeling, then the printing



▶ SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH THE VIDEO

itself. Lou starts off by capturing multiple photographs of the building he's about to miniaturise, from different angles, then processes and converts the images into a digital 3D model using specialised software. The finalised model gets sent to his 3D printer for fabrication.

Lou's since moved on from his original FDM machine, as he wasn't satisfied with the extensive post-printing processing its plastic models required. He invested in a high-precision SLA machine that uses ultraviolet light to print resin structures, resulting in smoother finishes. That printer, measuring about 25cm-by-25cm, takes roughly three hours to produce a 5cm-by-5cm model and can print up to eight models simultaneously.

SELLING MEMORIES, ONE MODEL AT A TIME

The Bright Dawn Studio has released over 100 unique models to date, categorised

into two main themes: architectural landmarks and familiar elements of daily life in Macao – the likes of street signs, mailboxes and bus stops. Prices range from tens to hundreds of patacas, depending on size and intricacy. Tourists often purchase replicas of the city's unique Chinese-Portuguese street signs as souvenirs, while locals tend to favour historic buildings. The latter are especially popular with older generations, who come seeking "memories of the past," Lou says.

The most difficult project he's ever embarked on was a model of the Ruins of St Paul's, Macao's most recognisable landmark. "It was very complicated because we had to work on the reliefs one by one," Lou explains. A typical batch of new building models takes around two weeks to complete, taking in the whole process of data collection, photography, software modelling, printing and then colouring. The Ruins, in comparison, took all of six months.

The former residence of Macao philanthropist Lou Lim Ioc (left) makes a fitting pair with the city's oldest charitable organisation, the Holy House of Mercy

(Opposite page) The striking pink-and-white Neoclassical tower is usually found in the heart of São Francisco Garden, one of the oldest public gardens in the city



The Chapel of St Francis Xavier is charmingly petite in real life as well

(Centre) Hand-painted mailbox magnets offer a useful and unique memento of Macao

Guia Lighthouse towers over the former Lok Kok Restaurant. Once among the greatest tea houses in Macao, the treasured heritage site now serves as boutique hotel

The now-demolished Hotel Estoril was perhaps the studio's most significant project. This Modernist structure, built in the 1960s and boasting a celebrated mural depicting the Roman goddess of luck, was pulled down last year to make way for a new central library. When demolition plans were announced a few years ago, The Bright Dawn Studio sensed public interest in the old hotel and mobilised to release a miniature version of it. The model became a bestseller, raising awareness of both architectural conservation in Macao and the studio's unique products.

Another unexpected hit was the old Judiciary Police headquarters on Rua Central. "We sold almost a hundred of those models, and many judiciary police officers came to buy them," Lou recalls. The original building was torn down a few years ago.



Lou is able to recreate buildings that no longer exist if there is enough visual material available from when they stood, intact. Two particularly valuable resources in this endeavor are Liu Xian Jiao's book, *The Architectural Heritage in Macao* and the Cultural Affairs Bureau's website, he says.

The Bright Dawn Studio continues to release new models regularly; recent projects include the former Hotel Bela Vista, a striking 150-year-old structure perched on Penha Hill, and the former Yuet Wah School building at 55 Calçada da Vitória, now home to a centre for culture and performing arts.

Lou says he has no interest in handing his models over to a factory for mass production, as he believes it's the "emotion and warmth" of handmade craftsmanship that his customers appreciate.

'DON'T BE AFRAID TO TRY'

Lou is a very busy fellow. In addition to manning the studio and running model painting workshops, he teaches 3D printing and history part-time at the Macao Polytechnic University. But he's still always on the lookout for more ways to spread awareness of the city's history and heritage. His latest endeavour? Video games – one of his original interests before choosing 3D models. For over a year now, he has dedicated an hour a day to learning the art of game development. Lou plans to release his first game, set in 1870s Macao, in the second half of this year.

His philosophy is reflected in The Bright Dawn Studio's name, Lou notes. "Every sunrise is a new beginning. Be brave and don't be afraid to try," he says. ●



ARTS & CULTURE

The 100 Day Concert

The Macao-based maestro Oswaldo Veiga Jardim had always dreamed of conducting his own independent orchestra. That recently became a reality, thanks to a government grant and the deep pool of musical talent simmering beneath the surface of the Greater Bay Area.



Text **Christopher Chu**
Photos courtesy of
Macao Baptist College

Local conductor Oswaldo Veiga Jardim organised an ambitious performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony as part of the Macao Special Administrative Region's 25th anniversary celebrations last year

Around the middle of last year, a colourful flyer from Macao's Cultural Development Fund (known by its Portuguese initials, FDC) started circulating among the faculty a local high school. The FDC was soliciting applications from anyone interested in pulling together a large-scale event – musical or artistic – to commemorate 2024's two big anniversaries: 75 years of the People's Republic of China, and 25 years of the Macao Special Administrative Region (SAR), set to be celebrated together in December.

The bulletin received its fair share of attention at Macao Baptist College, but not from Oswaldo Veiga Jardim, a Brazilian-born conductor affiliated with the school. He was focused on spending the summer holidaying with his wife, who happens to be its vice principal. When colleagues spoke to him about the FDC's request, Veiga Jardim smiled and shrugged. In his opinion, the challenges of recruiting enough good musicians and pinning down a suitable venue would prove too difficult on such a tight deadline.

Veiga Jardim arrived in Macao in 1989, when he was in his late-20s. He started off as a conductor, then transitioned into education – which saw him mentor many of the city's talented musicians over the decades. But his passion for conducting was always there, and Veiga Jardim never stopped dreaming of someday building an independent orchestra. Something akin to the Vienna Philharmonic, which is managed by its own artists.

While he'd initially brushed off the FDC's invitation, Veiga Jardim's mind kept returning to it. Could this be the opportunity he'd been waiting for? Moreover, 2024 also marked the 200th anniversary of Ludwig van Beethoven's

Ninth – his final symphony – which premiered in Vienna in 1824. It seemed like a sign: Veiga Jardim found himself submitting a grant application just before his holiday. "It was hard to ignore the overlapping appeal of celebrating all three anniversaries at the same time," the conductor tells *Macao* magazine.

HOW TO BUILD YOUR OWN ORCHESTRA

In late August, after Veiga Jardim had returned home to Macao, his wife received a phone call from the FDC. He says he could interpret the conversation through watching the smile appear on her face. "An emotional wave suddenly came over me," Veiga Jardim recalls. Shock and excitement were quickly replaced by the uncomfortable sense he was already behind schedule, given his deadline was little more than a hundred days away.

It was time to scramble. The opulence of Beethoven's Ninth requires a full-size orchestra – typically between 80 to 100 instrumentalists, plus another 90 or so singers – and Veiga Jardim wasn't entirely confident Macao's tiny population could deliver.

He immediately enlisted his colleagues to help reach out to every musician in their collective circle. One of the first to sign up was the clarinetist Kose Ko, a teacher at Macao Baptist College. Much to Veiga Jardim's relief, she also pitched in with the many administrative tasks. "Coordinating the rehearsal schedule was by far the biggest challenge," Ko tells *Macao* magazine. "Fortunately, our school has a highly competent and dedicated music department, and everyone worked collaboratively to accomplish this undertaking."



Image courtesy of Macao Strings Association

The violinist Katy Weatherly juggled concert preparations with her full-time job at the University of Macau

(Below) Veiga Jardim during a rehearsal

(Opposite page) The concert's grand finale moved audience members to their feet

The Macao-born violinist Katy Weatherly learned about the concert in September. She says she was immediately attracted to the concept, but found the logistical concerns and end-of-year calendar obligations hard to ignore.

“Besides mastering the technical complexity of Beethoven’s Ninth

Symphony in a relatively short time, all the musicians were engaged with outside commitments,” Weatherly notes, underscoring that while some had busy work schedules, others were full-time students. She herself is an assistant professor of music and music education at the University of Macau.

Nevertheless, Weatherly threw herself into rehearsals as a key asset of the orchestra, having trained at the US’ prestigious Juilliard School.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

In the end, Veiga Jardim was able to muster a respectable amateur orchestra of 60 players (more than half of them from Macau Baptist College) along with a choir of 80 singers. The youngest participant was just 16 years old; the oldest was 70. The conductor acknowledges it wasn’t quite as large an ensemble as he’d hoped for, but says he was blown away by the quality of musicianship on offer in



the city. Due to the time constraint, no auditions were held, meaning those enlisted were assumed to have already achieved a certain level of musical proficiency.

“A deep musically talented community resides in Macao,” Veiga Jardim notes with pride. “The question was not about their ability, but rather, their availability.”

He wasn’t on the home straight yet, however. Just a month before the concert, the choir withdrew from the project. A major blow given the prominence of the choral parts in the symphony’s final movement, “Ode to Joy”, which is supposed to represent triumph over adversity. The irony did not escape Veiga Jardim, who, even knowing that the setback put the entire concert in jeopardy, continued to hold sectional rehearsals.

At the eleventh hour, the broader musical community of the Greater Bay Area (GBA) came to his rescue: members of the Zhuhai School of Arts Chorus (珠海藝術職業學院師生合唱團) and the Hong Kong Oratorio Society stepped in to replace the singers who’d stepped down.

The final obstacle was the concert’s venue. As the clock ticked, as the ensemble rotated between different rehearsal spaces in the city, effort after effort to secure an acoustically suitable concert hall fell flat. Veiga Jardim remained determined: “If it were necessary, I would have held the concert in the middle of the street,” he insists. Luckily, it never got to that point.

The solution the conductor settled for was not perfect, but it was a meaningful venue for many of the musicians: Macau Baptist College’s gymnasium. The violinist John Ma,



who had studied under Veiga Jardim at the school, saw performing at his alma mater as a homecoming. “As a kid, I could never imagine playing Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony alongside fellow alumni under the tutelage of Veiga Jardim, my life mentor,” shares Ma, who now lives in Hong Kong. “I consider the event a memorable moment and milestone in Macao’s artistic development.”

SHOWTIME

The band was ready, the venue secured. Finally, on 7 December, the first and only full-dress rehearsal took place. It sounded good, Veiga Jardim recalls. And thank goodness – the concert was set for the next day.

To those in the audience, including this reporter, the eyes saw plastic chairs and the usual amenities associated with a school gymnasium. But as the concert started, our ears were treated to something epic and transcendent,

fully befitting the celebrations we were there to mark. As the concert drew to a close, echoes of the “Ode to Joy” finale moved the audience from our seats. We stood there, absorbing the glorious music that Beethoven himself had likely never heard (most scholars believe the composer had gone completely deaf by the time his Ninth Symphony premiered). The concert was a success. Testament to the depth and breadth of the GBA’s musical talent pool.

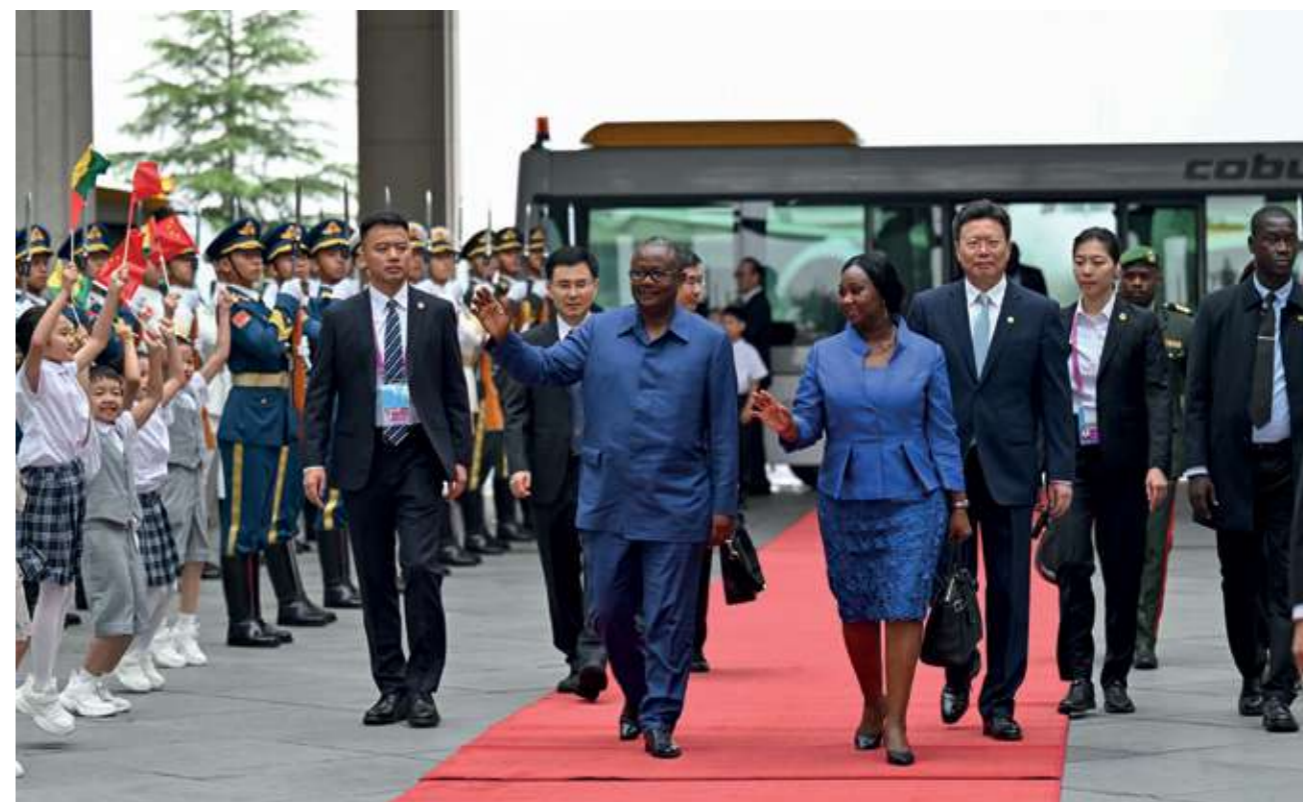
For 100 days, Veiga Jardim lived his dream, managing his own independent orchestra. He says the experience fuelled him with renewed energy to pursue ambitious musical endeavours in Macao. When asked if he would apply for another FDC grant, Veiga Jardim answered “yes” without hesitation.

“It was an incredible performance,” he reflects. “Imagine what we could accomplish if we had two full rehearsals.” ●

PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

Foundations for the future

With formal relations stretching back more than 50 years, China and Guinea-Bissau recently upgraded their alliance to a strategic partnership. Fisheries and rice production are at the heart of this fruitful collaboration, viewed as an example of Beijing's commitment to economic cooperation with Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa.



Text **Amanda Saxton**
Photos **Xinhua News Agency**

Guinea-Bissau President Umaro Sissoco Embaló arrives in Beijing for the 2024 Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in September of 2024

(Opposite page) Contuboeil farm, the Chinese Agricultural Technical Assistance Team's research center for comparative rice variety trials, in Bafata region, Guinea-Bissau

In the coastal waters of Guinea-Bissau, a Portuguese-speaking West African nation of just over 2 million people, Chinese fishing vessels have long been a familiar sight. This coming May marks the 40th anniversary since the state-owned China National Fisheries Corporation (CNFC) launched its first vessel into Guinea-Bissau's fish, lobster, crab and octopus-rich sea. The inauguration came just over a decade after the two countries established formal diplomatic relations in 1974.

A sliver of land between Senegal and Guinea, Guinea-Bissau boasts abundant aquatic life, fertile agricultural land and a strategic location along the Atlantic coast. Yet, it remains one of the world's poorest nations, with a per capita gross domestic product of just over

US\$950 in 2023, according to World Bank Data. Partnering with China through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Forum for Economic and Trade Co-operation between China and Portuguese-speaking Countries (known as Forum Macao) represents a lifeline of investment and development assistance.

Last July, President Xi Jinping and Guinea-Bissau's president, Umaro Sissoco Embaló, unanimously decided to upgrade their bilateral relations to a strategic partnership – signalling Guinea-Bissau's growing importance to Beijing's ambitions in West Africa and the Portuguese-speaking world. The leaders reaffirmed their countries' deepening ties, strengthened political trust and growing cooperation during a state visit by Embaló to Beijing.



Heng Junjie (left), head of the 12th Chinese Agricultural Technical Assistance Team in Guinea-Bissau, assesses the progress of land leveling with Sana Camara, director of the Carantaba farm in Gabu region

(Opposite page) An aerial view of the seafood processing and storage facility (bottom left) of the China National Fisheries Corporation in Bissau

'SOLID AND CORDIAL' RELATIONS

During the visit, Xi emphasised China's support for Guinea-Bissau in independently pursuing a development path suited to its national conditions. He also underscored Beijing's readiness to strengthen friendly exchanges with Guinea-Bissau at all levels.

The president praised the high-quality agricultural imports China received from the West African country and said he encouraged Chinese enterprises to invest in Guinea-Bissau to help it "translate its resource potential into development momentum". He added that China would continue to send its rice experts and medical teams to assist Guinea-Bissau in ensuring food security and improving public health.

Government scholarships and training initiatives would also continue to help Guinea-Bissau cultivate more talents in various fields.

Embaló, in turn, expressed gratitude for "the sincere friendship of the Chinese people towards their African brothers". He noted that China was his country's most important international partner, and described the two countries' relationship as "solid and cordial".

"The people of Guinea-Bissau will never forget that whenever Guinea-Bissau was in difficulty, China always provided invaluable assistance without hesitation," Embaló said. The president also conveyed his respect for Beijing's stance on international relations: "[China] has always treated

small countries as equals and with respect, and honoured its words with actions," he said.

Alongside the announcement of the strategic partnership, Embaló's state visit saw the signing of multiple bilateral agreements covering economic development, customs inspection and quarantine, geology, mining and implementation of the Global Development Initiative, among other things.

The two leaders met again last September at the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), where they reinforced their commitment to expanded collaboration.

FISHING FOR THE FUTURE

Guinea-Bissau does not have its own deep-sea fishing fleet, making the issuance of fishing licenses to foreign vessels a major source of revenue for the country. CNFC was among the earliest international players operating in its waters, having dispatched its first distant-water fishing fleet to Bissau - the country's capital and largest port - in May 1985. Back then, the port was largely undeveloped, lacking in essential unloading equipment and transport vehicles. CNFC brought much-needed shipbuilding and fishing supplies across the seas from China,

captain Wang Songjie told Xinhua earlier this year, recalling stories of those early arrivals needing to do everything manually. Wang helms a CNFC ship named Yuanyu 883.

These days, CNFC operates 15 bottom trawlers and employs 242 staff members from China, Guinea-Bissau and abroad, Xinhua reported. The company is committed to training local crews and introducing modern fishing techniques while investing in the country's fisheries infrastructure. Xinhua also spoke with local CNFC staffer Issumaila Djalo, who said that China was enabling the country's marine resources to benefit its people.



In May 2023, the China-aided Alto do Bandim Fishing Port was inaugurated, followed by CNFC's completion of a 4,000-square-metre seafood processing and storage facility – the largest plant of its kind in Guinea-Bissau. The plant supplies locals with affordable seafood. In March 2024, Prime Minister Rui Duarte de Barros visited the plant to present CNFC's local office with an 'Honorary Certificate for Cooperation and Development' on behalf of the government. "The fisheries cooperation between CNFC and us is a model of economic and trade cooperation between our two countries and should serve as an example for all of Guinea-Bissau's partners," Barros told media at the time.

IMPROVING RICE YIELDS MORE THAN THREE-FOLD

Agriculture is another key area of cooperation between China and Guinea-Bissau, particularly regarding the latter's rice production. According to the Coalition for African Rice Development (CARD), the country produces less than 40 percent of the rice it consumes, with demand for the staple cereal only increasing due to rapid population growth, urbanisation and shifting dietary preferences.

China established an Agricultural Technical Assistance Mission in Guinea-Bissau's Bafatá area in 1998, dispatching hundreds of experts to introduce high-yield rice varieties, demonstrate modern cultivation techniques, conduct training sessions and provide mechanical assistance. Lush Bafatá has long been known as the 'rice

granary' of Guinea-Bissau, due to the influence of its meandering Geba River, and China's presence has helped elevate the region into something of a hub for farming innovation.

Speaking to Xinhua in July last year, Zheng Junjie, head of the current team stationed in Guinea-Bissau, said the initiative had introduced 37 rice varieties in the country. Zheng noted that rice yields in three regions, including Bafatá, had increased from 1.4 tonnes per hectare to 4.9 tonnes thanks to the mission's efforts, and said its demonstration area had achieved as much as 10 tonnes per hectare. The total area under rice cultivation had also expanded from 60,000 hectares to 100,000 hectares.

The head of Guinea-Bissau's Rice Association, Antonio Tavares, earned his masters degree in agronomy from a university in China. He spent nine years in the country learning from top agronomists like the rice hybrid pioneer Yuan Longping. Tavares credits his education with shaping his advocacy for strengthening agricultural ties with China, and he believes the results speak for themselves. "China's agricultural cooperation introduced advanced technology and high-quality rice strains, markedly improving local farmers' living standards," he told Xinhua in July.

The dedication of Chinese agricultural experts was evident earlier this year when members



An aerial view of the Carantaba farm in Gabu region of Guinea-Bissau



An aerial view of the fish market at the Bandim Fisheries Wharf in Bissau, the capital of Guinea-Bissau

of the 12th Chinese Agricultural Technical Assistance Team worked through their Chinese New Year preparations to plant the dry season's crop. Xinhua reporters witnessed this process, describing the team's unique festive period in Bafatá – where they welcomed local visitors into their homes to share in the celebrations and phoned family members back in Hubei Province. Village chief Queba Santos Seidi spoke with the reporters, saying that it was thanks to the Chinese agronomists' efforts that "even our remote village can now cultivate high-quality rice."

COOPERATION THAT TOUCHES EVERY CITIZEN

China's assistance in Guinea-Bissau is far-reaching and holistic, according to Minister of Social Communication Florentino Fernando Dias. Speaking to Xinhua in January, he noted that "any Bissau-Guinean citizen can see the investments China is making in various fields in the country." Dias pointed to a major highway project financed by China as well as extensive renovations to government buildings,

including parliament and the once-derelict presidential palace.

Media is one emerging area of cooperation between the countries. Dias has said that Guinea-Bissau was counting on China to help its national television and radio stations transition from analog to digital, while the director general of Guinea-Bissau National Television, Amadu Djamanca, told Xinhua he hoped to see his country's media capacity strengthen through content-sharing and personnel training. Djamanca said he aimed to establish long-term partnerships with Chinese media outlets to help Guinea-Bissau showcase its culture and stories on a bigger stage, particularly with Chinese audiences. He said he appreciated the way China already provided African media outlets with opportunities to share their narratives.

Djamanca visited China himself in 2024 and described his time there as inspirational. "[It reinforced] my belief that Guinea-Bissau has the full potential to achieve prosperity, and China's experience provides valuable lessons for us," he said. ●



ZOOM

A Chinese New Year with a New Chief Executive

Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai helped Macao usher in the Year of the Snake with a tour of the city, during which he encouraged residents from all walks of life to embrace the new year's possibilities together.

Excited crowds gathered under a sparkling canopy to enjoy light installations marking the start of the Year of the Snake

Xinhua News Agency

Macao ushered in the Year of the Snake back in February, along with the rest of China and many other places around the world. There may have been extra notes of both anticipation and reflection to the holiday in the Special Administrative Region (SAR), however. For the Chinese New Year came on the heels of an incredibly celebratory end of the calendar year.

The SAR commemorated the 25th anniversary of its return to the motherland in late December, marked by a special visit from President Xi Jinping. Decorations for the jubilee were still up on some city streets, intermingling with the red lanterns and snake-themed adornments of the Chinese New Year. Memories of Xi's time here remained fresh.

The anniversary also saw Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai start his term as leader of Macao's government. In his Chinese New Year message to the public, Sam noted that the snake symbolises wisdom, sensitivity, flexibility and auspiciousness in the Chinese zodiac. Having expressed his heartfelt appreciation to Macao's residents, civil servants and the Central Government, Sam urged the population to join hands and embrace the Year of the Snake together.

"With our creative and innovative thinking and our willingness to reform in order to cope with changes, we will seize all opportunities and pave our way for the future," he said.

Testament to Sam's belief in solidarity, the chief executive personally marked the new year with a lengthy walk through the city. Along the way, he engaged with the public, wishing them happiness and success in their endeavours.

His tour took in Conde de São Januário Hospital, border checkpoints, and parts of both Macao Peninsula and Taipa. Wherever he went, he encouraged people to participate wholeheartedly in the latest chapter of Macao's development.

The chief executive received positive feedback regarding government initiatives and reiterated his commitment to improving the region's economic and social conditions, in line with plans set by the Central Government. As Macao entered the new year, Sam made it clear his focus would be on collaboration and progress. ●



① A multicoloured shower of fireworks lit up the sky as Macao welcomed the Year of the Snake



② Nighttime festivities at Tap Seac Square featured a wide variety of performers parading in front of eager crowds



③ Come daylight, it was time for this dancing dragon to wind its way through the city

All images on this spread by Xinhua News Agency



④ Chief Executive Sam Hou Fai thanked healthcare professionals on duty at Conde de São Januário Hospital



⑤ Sam made time to visit front-line personnel on duty during the holiday



⑥ He greeted merchants and passersby as he toured the temporary pedestrian zone in Taipa Village

⑦ The chief executive also used the occasion to check in with merchants, listening to their views and wishing them a prosperous new year

⑧ Sam toured the Chinese New Year Market at Tap Seac Square with his wife (not pictured)



All images on this spread by Government Information Bureau



9

All images on this page by Xinhua News Agency

9 New traditions meet old ones as parade goes tried to snap a picture of the 238-metre dancing dragon with their phones

10 Dancing lions also got in on the fun, even interacting with the audience gathered for the Golden Dragon Parade



10



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