

The Barrier Gate in 1910.





# Borders within the City Retracing Macao's Identity

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## SPEAKING OF BORDERS

Following the results of one year of ethnographic work in Macao, once a Portuguese outpost and possession within China, this essay reflects on the dynamics of social exchange and interaction that have informed the city's identity in the long term through the construction and negotiation of borders. Emphasising a macro level approach, the analysis of social phenomena in Macao through specific historical events related to the city's physical and political-administrative borders proved to be a valuable exercise, since it also allowed us to shed some light on the way imaginary and cultural boundaries have informed the nature of inter-ethnic and intercultural encounters in Macao.

Motivated and shaped by historical processes, the construction of borders came to be structurally embedded in the making of the city through time, in such a way that it still resonates in the social reality of today's Macao. As people retain a sense of the past and a heritage that informs their identities, we further acknowledge that places, as social and historically constructed spaces (Gupta and Ferguson 2002) might also be ascribed the attributes of identity. Relying on a historicized view of social processes, aimed at understanding the anthropological production of space in Macao, we will therefore discuss the role

that different types of borders have played in the construction of this place, allowing us to focus on a few traits of its identity.

While distinct ideas could ascribe a sense of continuity and history when conferring an identity to a place—as in the case of Macao, the presence of the Portuguese for almost 450 years—speaking of borders appears to be one meaningful way of understanding how identity processes operate, as they bring to mind key elements of identification and identity construction through the acknowledgment of existing differences, opposites and others (Newman and Paasi 1998; Torpey 2000). Therefore, we understand the notion of borders beyond its physical and administrative implications, also to include cultural and imaginary boundaries, since these reveal the very elements within which identities work (Newman and Paasi 1998).

Cultural borders within a place translate into cultural and ethnic diversity, in which the existing heterogeneity can be maintained and asserted as an inherent, specific trait of this place's identity (Friedman 1997). As Hall (2003) has pointed out, the modern world has witnessed three major processes that can be held accountable for the production of multicultural societies: the end of the old European imperial system and the following struggles for decolonisation and national independence; the end of the Cold War, of which the outcomes were similar to those subsequent to the rupture of the imperial systems but within a more regionalized range; and, finally, globalisation. However, while disregarding the genesis of the European imperial system, Hall does not assign due importance to the

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processes that have accounted for the production of multicultural societies since the European Maritime Expansion launched by Portugal and Spain in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and later followed by Dutch, British, and French enterprises. As a product of both the Portuguese imperial system and long-term global processes, where globalisation stands as but one stage of historical processes (Friedman and Ekholm 2002), Macao has dealt with the dynamics of inter-ethnic and intercultural encounters from its very beginnings in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, allowing us to understand it as a multicultural society. While understanding the role that cultural borders play amid those ethnic and cultural others who are brought together in the same space allows us to seize the interrelation among them in the production of difference, we are able to examine the ways in which the resulting diversity directly affects the construction of place. Wherever the nature of social coexistence implies cultural diversity, the outcomes of interaction matter in that they account for the views, lived existences and experiences and ways of living of those who, by providing sense and meaning, are involved in the making of a place (Friedman and Ekholm 2002).

Thus, when it comes to the way social construction of space has occurred in Macao's multicultural society, there is at least one significant phenomenon observed that we intend to examine, which suggests that an organic relation has bound together political-administrative borders and cultural borders.<sup>1</sup> That is, whenever administrative or even physical borders have come into place in Macao, they have happened to coexist with cultural ones, which seem in turn to have persisted when the former were later extinguished. In order to understand the effects of this relation on the construction of Macao's social space in the long term, it seems crucial to first introduce these physical and political-administrative borders we are referring to, which point to two critical moments of Macao's history.

The first of these moments dates back to the somewhat polemic and long-discussed establishment of the city as a Portuguese outpost in the south of China, when the Europeans settled definitively in the peninsula in 1557 (Montalto de Jesus 1926; Boxer 1948; Sena 1996; Alves 1996; Costa 1996; Wu 1999). This was a major event, the consequences of which fostered the enclosure of the peninsula from the continent

by a border that defined the limits of the Portuguese presence in a place that, once named Haojing, came to be known as Macao (Porter 2000; Wu 2002; Barreto 2005). The second moment emerges when, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, surrounding walls were raised within the city, creating an inner border that was to keep the Portuguese and Chinese incipient social and political institutions apart until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The existence of walls signals a critical aspect of the city's long-term structural organization that tends to be disregarded or given little attention in social and anthropological reviews about Macao that draw on historical issues and processes. Whether these geographical borders have led to the creation of cultural borders or if they simply overlapped with already existing borders of a cultural nature, is therefore an issue that we intend to examine in the paragraphs that follow, in order to elucidate the organic relation suggested earlier.

## THE GATED BORDER

Although it is not our intention, nor is it the aim of this essay, to analyse the stakes involved in the establishment of the Portuguese in Macao or the conditions implied in the city's development as an important trade port in the south of China, a succinct introduction to what has long interested Portuguese and Chinese scholars (Sena 1996; Wu 1999) would seem mandatory in order to situate our discussion. We believe that the scrutiny of border-related issues will in due course explain a few other historical aspects that are important to the understanding of the questions raised. At this point, we will briefly introduce the state of affairs that made it possible for the first Europeans to settle permanently in China.

While 1557 is recognised as the year of the Portuguese establishment in Macao, it is also agreed that they had approached and explored the region much earlier, from around 1513 onwards (Costa 1996; Wu 1999, 2002). Prior to Macao, the Portuguese had been to places such as Langbai'ao (Lampacau), Shangchuan and Ningbo (Liampo), despite being repeatedly chased away by the Chinese authorities (Montalto de Jesus 1926; Wu 1999). Their permanent settlement thus occurred as a result of a series of advancing attempts that ranged from private initiative to diplomatic negotiation, eventually driven by a few unsuccessful military manoeuvres (Montalto de Jesus 1926; Souza 1986;

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Costa 1996; Wu 1999; Sena 1999). Meanwhile, under the rule of a weakened Ming dynasty (1368-1644), China encountered serious threats from its neighbours in the North and the West, burdening the Empire with significant defence concerns. While simultaneously experiencing economic decline and social instability, the arrival of the Portuguese on its shores troubled the Chinese authorities, but not enough to provoke a definitive military response (Wu 1999, 2002).

On the one hand, the Chinese reaction (or lack of it) has been partially explained by the fact that the Portuguese threat to the security of the Empire was perceived as limited (Souza 1986; Ptak 1991; Costa 1996). Although the Portuguese were well armed and assisted by the force of men from other strategic outposts in Asia, they were far outnumbered by the Chinese (Ptak 1991; Costa 1996; Wu 1999). On the other hand, Chinese offensive moves aiming at the expulsion of the foreigners—called the *Folangji* by the Chinese authorities—would have been too costly and politically exhausting. In addition, the Portuguese were, after all, important traders (Wu 1999, 2002). Having sailed their way to China and having established permanent points of commerce (*feitorias*) in Goa, Malacca, and Nagasaki, the Portuguese also regularly visited important trade cities in Asia: Ayuthia, Pegu, and the mercantile centres on the coast of Java (Ptak 1991; Flores 2005). For the Chinese, whose long trading tradition had encountered prominent agents both in the public and private spheres (Ptak 1991), the Portuguese *savoir-faire* proved rather beneficial on different fronts, namely for the financing of the Guangdong army, the increase of regional trade profits and the expulsion of pirates who had long been harassing the South China Sea coast (Montalto de Jesus 1926; Souza 1986; Wu 1999, 2002; Porter 2000).<sup>2</sup> While facing wars along its external borders and insurgencies throughout the country, the Celestial Empire had not encountered in the Portuguese its largest problem (Wu 1999, 2002).

Although a few other factors could lend themselves to explaining the Portuguese achievements in Macao, this would require a more detailed historical scrutiny, which would go beyond the scope of this essay. In any case, we believe that a careful analysis of the local processes and dynamics involved in the foundation of Macao should allow thoughtful consideration of the international conjuncture implied by the expansion of European maritime trade and imperial systems and the

evolution of China's foreign politics and trade-related policies at the time.

Nevertheless, we might first recall that from the moment the Portuguese were allowed to settle in Macao, on the condition of paying taxes and a ground rent of 500 taels per year (Montalto de Jesus 1926; Wu 1999, 2002; Porter 2000; Pina-Cabral 2002),<sup>3</sup> a geographical border carrying strong political meanings was set, isolating the peninsula from the continent for the centuries to come. This earlier, rather informal border had its authoritative nature officially asserted in 1574 by the construction of a gate, which came to be known as the Barrier Gate, or the Gates of Siege, to borrow Pina-Cabral's literal translation from the accepted Portuguese expression '*Portas do Cerco*' (Shipp 1997; Wu 1999, 2002; Pina-Cabral 2002). Leaving no doubt about whose authority it fell under, on it was engraved in Chinese characters: 'Respect for the authorities and gratitude towards the imperial benevolence' (Wu 1999: 60).<sup>4</sup> It is therefore worth noting that in addition to their original, expected loyalty to the Crown, the Portuguese also made a vow of allegiance and loyalty to the Chinese imperial government (Wu 2002: 7, 13).

As implied by its suggestive name, the Barrier Gate served either to prevent newcomers from accessing the continent or to dissuade the Chinese from entering the peninsula (Wu 1999)—a twofold role it had in common with similar constructions in China, such as the Great Wall (Lattimore 1937). By such means, Chinese authorities could prevent the Portuguese from reaching the densely populated Guangzhou (Canton), the most important trade city in the south of China, while controlling the distribution of food supplies and other necessities to Macao (Montalto de Jesus 1926; Souza 1986; Wu 1999). Later on, government officials were also able to manage the flow of Chinese who steadily sought work in the peninsula (Amaro 1998). Last, but not least, the Barrier Gate came to prove who was effectively in command of the situation, giving China the upper hand against unexpected, although at this point rather unlikely, Portuguese moves towards the mainland (Wu 1999).

From a geographical point of view, the gate also worked to reinforce what has been called the insular aspect of Macao (Barreto 2005). Historical accounts from the first Portuguese in the region inform us that the narrow isthmus joining the peninsula and the

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continent often disappeared under the tide, making it seem like an island (Barreto 2005). Yet despite both this geographical peculiarity and the erection of the Gate, the territory was never to be totally isolated from the continent, for its very existence and economic survival were tied to and dependent on the latter (Flores 2005; Barreto 2005). In due course, the gated border proved therefore relatively porous, since the Portuguese had, every now and then, been authorised to trade in the gateways of Guangzhou (Wu 1999; Sena 1999; 2001), and the Chinese were allowed to cross it back and forth on a daily basis (Amaro 1998; Wu 1999). The Barrier hence turned into a sort of checkpoint, although it was more likely to operate as a one-way border crossing for the Chinese who were willing to work and conduct trade-related activities in Macao. Their establishment as permanent residents was only to be intensified from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards (Amaro 1998; Wu 1999).

## A DIVIDED CITY

When in the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Chinese actually began to inhabit the peninsula on a regular and permanent basis,<sup>5</sup> they rapidly became the vast majority of the local population, confirming a tendency that had until then developed through a rather floating pattern of migration. Now settling in the territory, Chinese cohabitation with the Portuguese grew in intensity, although the city remained divided by an inner border set by a fortified Portuguese enclave. However, raised in a period prior to the establishment of the Chinese in permanent and growing numbers, the walls existed and clearly informed Macao's urban and social organization at that time.<sup>6</sup>

With regard to what has been assumed from the examination of historical documents, it is agreed that the first fortifications within the city were in place by the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, from around 1612 to 1638. However, they were intensified only after 1622, following the violent, but frustrated attack on Macao by the Dutch (Amaro 1998; Porter 2000). This event appeared therefore as the appropriate opportunity the Portuguese had been longing for in order to persuade the Chinese authorities that fortifying the city could prove an effective means to protect trade in Macao. Despite strong Chinese opposition to any attempts to raise walls in the city, Portuguese will was finally matched. As the result of a mutual agreement, the walls

were built not to protect the Portuguese from their land neighbours, the Chinese, but to protect the city from other venturous foreign attacks (Amaro 1998; Porter 2000).

From the moment that the walls were erected to shelter the city, though inadvertently serving the purpose of both an outer and an inner border, the cohabitation between the Portuguese and Chinese was marked by the coexistence of two cities within the same city, that is, the so-called *Christian citadel* and the *Chinese bazaar*, growing on the edges of the Portuguese enclave (Amaro 1998; Porter 2000; Pina-Cabral 2002). Following a spatial distribution that can be traced back to the geographical and historical origins of the territory's occupation, the two 'cities' or districts were south and north oriented, respectively. While the Christian citadel spread from the centre to the outer harbour, the initially condensed Chinese bazaar extended from the northern part of the peninsula to the inner harbour, later gaining more space around the enclave. Despite the idea of isolation provoked by the existence of a concrete segmentation within the city, this physical border proved, again, quite porous, as economic life routines were unlikely to restrain contact between the two populations. As far as trade and day-to-day activities provided the grounds for interaction, the Chinese were granted ways to enter the enclave, while the Portuguese also ventured outside, into the bazaar.

Nonetheless, to the extent that disjunction could not properly depict the nature of the relationship between the citadel and the bazaar, there was one significant aspect that ignored economic connectedness: the fact that each of the 'cities' operated under its own, different jurisdiction. The Christian citadel remained politically organized under the local authority of the Portuguese Senate, established in 1583 (Wu 1999, 2002; Sena 2004).<sup>7</sup> At the Chinese bazaar sat the Mandarin House,<sup>8</sup> which was founded in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, first serving the purpose of controlling and levying taxes on trade activities conducted in Macao and, from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, also ruling over the Chinese resident population, since they were authorised to inhabit the city (Amaro 1998; Wu 1999; Sena 1999; Pina-Cabral 2002). Yet emerging as administrative structures, these two bodies ultimately meant that socio-cultural specificities had been clearly stated, setting a line between the 'us' and the 'other'. However, this was not a



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separation within one centralised authority but between two distinct and independent political institutions.

Operating as local representations of those organically involved in the making of Macao, the Senate and the Mandarin House evoked the institutionalized means through which the Portuguese and Chinese, respectively, responded to the circumstances and needs resulting from the multifaceted reality that prevailed at the time. This reality entailed the local interference of two great powers of the times, Portugal and China, in that their political traditions were embodied in their corresponding administrative structures in Macao. Whereas the existence of these parallel jurisdictions defined the extent to which Portuguese autonomy could be exercised in Chinese territory, sovereignty disputes over Macao by the time of the impinging colonialism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century only added to Chinese influence and authority (Sena 1996, 2001; Wu 1999, 2002), clearly stating the hierarchy of powers that had mediated the city's existence in the long term.

On the other hand, Macao's reality expressed the accommodation of different levels of economic and political interest, at first shared among Portuguese traders and Chinese regional officials, which came into being mostly by means of private initiative (Ptak 1991; Alves 1996; Wu 1999; Sena 1999). Followed by the involvement of the imperial government and local Chinese merchants to a lesser but important extent, there also appears to have been a series of Portuguese efforts led by the Crown in addition to the participation of the Church (Souza 1986; Alves 1996; Sena 1999). Above all and despite the range of interests and agents involved, what is to be emphasized is the fact that Macao's original condition owes a great deal to the foundation and development of a private Sino-Portuguese project on trade, which established both the grounds of inter-ethnic relations and the space for political manoeuvres (Alves 1996; Wu 1999; Sena 1999). The economic activity that remained the essence of Macao's reality, was made possible by a formula that maintained a peaceful and enduring inter-ethnic coexistence—perhaps even further justified, or rather institutionalised, by the establishment of the parallel legal and administrative jurisdictions, officially recognised as such until the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Sena 1996).

Nevertheless, 19<sup>th</sup> century Macao was to experience significant changes in the nature of its dual

political and social organization following the rise of European colonial regimes aimed at assuring the territorial domination of overseas possessions that had either been taken for granted or remained politically vague. The ambitions of the imperial powers entailed the precepts of colonial systems while leading to stricter control of outposts around the globe. Thus, from among these emerged Macao, where takeover seemed not just contrary to the historical nature of Portuguese and Chinese cohabitation, but also incongruous with one of the original reasons that justified the lasting presence of the Portuguese in the city, that is, Chinese indulgence upon them. However arbitrary this move might have appeared in the face of the rather harmonious relationship between the Chinese and Portuguese, recognising that it came as the product of a global order mostly commanded by European powers aids an understanding of why Portuguese colonial intents over Macao seemed like the only possible manoeuvre to assure Portugal's economic and political stability, along with the affirmation of other dominions.

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The launching of what has therefore been understood as the colonial period in Macao is credited to the expansion of the Portuguese jurisdiction to all the population of the peninsula in 1846, thus disregarding any ethnic or national affiliation (Pina-Cabral 2002). Given that Chinese authority had become considerably weaker after the First Opium War (1839-1842)<sup>9</sup> and the consequent takeover of Hong Kong by the British, the Portuguese saw the chance to renegotiate their position in the region, expressing manifested intentions of expanded control over the territory. In addition, they stated claims

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for sovereign rights over Macao, which China later implicitly conceded, as the 1887 Treaty of Commerce and Friendship between China and Portugal attests (Wu 1999, 2002; Sena 2001; Pina-Cabral 2002).<sup>10</sup> Under the rule of a very controversial governor, Ferreira do Amaral, the balanced coexistence between the Chinese and Portuguese was to be radically redefined by the implementation of the colonial-inspired regime. Governor Amaral's rather extreme political measures, aimed at imposing Portuguese authority in the city, ranged from pulling down the walls in order to promote a deeper integration between the outer and inner harbour—intended to revitalize the territory's trade potential—to ordering the closure of the Mandarin House as well as the destruction of Chinese worship sites and neighbourhoods (Sena 2001; Wu 2002; Pina-Cabral 2002).

Despite the fact that Governor Amaral's unpopularity was to be shortly compensated for with his own head, the already proclaimed political, economic and administrative changes were to persist long after his death in 1849. Macao's political and juridical status, however, remained vaguely defined due to the lack of official Chinese recognition of the concession of the territory's sovereignty to the Portuguese (Wu 1999; 2002; Sena 2001). In any case, even if Portuguese unilateral moves were opposed to the mutual *entente* that had prevailed until then, the resulting outcomes brought a significant socio-cultural impact by incontestably placing all Macao residents under the formal authority of a Portuguese administration. Now, as subjects of Portuguese rule, the Chinese were but partially integrated into this other legal, bureaucratic system and political regime, since their reality turned out to be quite different, as we shall see in the next section. Thereafter, this larger, all-encompassing authority set several of the normative bases for the way the city was to be ruled even after 1999, when China had formally recovered, or finally made official, its sovereignty over Macao. In spite of regular adjustments made to respond to the evolution of the times, as well as the more significant changes emerging both in the conducting of foreign affairs and defence, which were handed to China's central government authority, and clearly in the governing of the city, since the Chief Executive had to be a Chinese citizen,<sup>11</sup> the previous domestic legal and administrative system remained largely the same even in the premises

of the Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China that came into effect in 1999.

## LIVING ON BORDERS

To the extent that separated jurisdictions did not constrain regular and deeper social and inter-ethnic relations, it is difficult to argue that an extended jurisdiction pushed the two populations towards greater integration. Although the establishment of a Portuguese administration in Macao meant the end of physical and political-administrative borders that had placed the Portuguese and Chinese apart, the previous state of reduced and weak inter-ethnic exchange and contact may have persisted under the manifestation of other, cultural borders. Cultural or imaginary borders here imply the means through which difference is marked and shaped (Newman and Paasi 1998). As instruments of ethnic and cultural distinction, boundaries tend to embody socio-cultural processes that define identities while limiting the spheres of interaction and inhibiting social exchange. Two processes appear, therefore, as the most critical in the production of cultural boundaries in the case of Macao.

First, we could point out the communication aspect emerging from a plurilingual society, since Macao's cultural diversity has also been manifested in the diversified use of languages. Accounting for the fact that at least the Portuguese and Chinese languages—the latter probably under a variety of forms or dialects—have been an everyday aspect of Macao's social reality, an original barrier to communication has been deeply inscribed in the city's history, further functioning as a structural condition on the construction of social space and identities. The strategic promotion of a common language has never been developed, or perceived as such, even during the century and a half of Portuguese rule over the city. During this time, the Portuguese language was neither to be widely promoted nor imposed on the Chinese population of the territory (Fernandes 1997). On the contrary, since it operated as the language of the administration, its use emerged by default rather than as a result of law enforcement. Consequently, Portuguese has only been legally defined as one of Macao's official languages since 1999, and is understood as such in the premises of the Basic Law.<sup>12</sup> With respect to the local Chinese population, having immigrated mainly from

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the provinces of Guangdong and Fujian, Cantonese Chinese has been the most widely spoken language in daily life, and has been maintained as the means of instruction in most educational institutions as well as in the working milieus. Living in the same city under one jurisdiction, the Portuguese and Chinese were still set apart by two different linguistic worlds.

Secondly, we must consider the Portuguese legal and bureaucratic system that formally applied to the Chinese residents since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. For those earlier subjects of the Chinese system, who had been responding to the Mandarin House, Portuguese laws and bureaucratic procedures proved rather meaningless and more often than not were the origin of misunderstandings (Pina-Cabral 2002). A long debate over whether Chinese ways and customs should regulate matters involving the Chinese population or whether they should be granted full civil rights whilst maintaining their cultural specificity followed from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, subsequently leading to a situation of '*jural pluralism*' (Pina-Cabral 2002).

It is therefore commonly agreed that Chinese specificities continued to subsist and be accommodated under forms different from those of the Portuguese, ranging from the traditional neighbourhood and temple associations, to the more formal Chamber of Commerce and the Private Court of the Chinese of Macao, where the Chinese usually sought assistance with the solution of legal issues (Brito 1994; Fernandes 1997; Pina-Cabral 2002). While emerging as a way to either avoid dependence on, or state opposition to the Portuguese system, which the Chinese could not properly understand or largely benefit from, these forms reinforced the cultural borders that were already in existence. Along with the original linguistic barriers, the attribution of different meanings to the construction and use of social and legal institutions tells us how those borders continued to be cultivated, despite an enlarged and allegedly inclusive form of political institution.

Furthermore, it is reasonable to claim that cultural boundaries did not emerge from the unannounced fall of physical and administrative borders, but that they were already contained in those borders, and most likely reinforced afterwards. As Brubaker (2004) has aptly pointed out, moments of tension and conflict often act to highlight the attributes of ethnic identity in the affirmation of difference. The persistence of

cultural borders thus appears either as a predictable consequence or as the unavoidable continuity of the previous state of inter-ethnic contact, which was established, above all, on economic grounds. Given the fact that people lived in different 'cities' within the same city, under concurrent jurisdictions and divided by walls for roughly two centuries, it is no surprise that cultural boundaries persisted even after Portuguese self-proclaimed intents tore down the walls in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## CROSSING CULTURAL BOUNDARIES

Bearing in mind the fact that borders—political, administrative or cultural—are socially and historically constructed, we have to assume that they do not operate as fixed entities but, rather, as dynamic processes (Newman and Paasi 1998). Accordingly, long atrophied inter-ethnic exchange, as in the case of Macao, does not necessarily imply the absence of exchange at all, given that a border's well-known function of dividing tends to be accompanied by a mediating facet (Newman and Paasi 1998). Even though unlikely to encourage exchange, borders emerge as the product of socio-cultural processes that entail continuous negotiation through interaction and contact. While separating, they can be surpassed and crossed, leading to solid, enduring encounters that could read as both intercultural and inter-ethnic in the history of Macao.

Despite the overall and accepted idea that the Chinese and Portuguese have been mostly set apart, cultural, symbolic or ethnic encounters have happened to a varied extent and nature, within different periods and lengths of time. From our perspective, three are worth mentioning as key processes in overcoming borders. Initially, we can cite the encounter that put the Portuguese and Chinese together through the establishment of Macao in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, which so far is the encounter *par excellence*. While trade was the strongest incentive pushing the Portuguese to the East, leading to the expansion of international commerce on a worldwide scale, Chinese motivations to accept the presence of foreign merchants and to further associate with them are likely to stem from the same reason. Through means of an economic nature, the Portuguese and Chinese happened not just to coexist in the same space, but also to mutually acknowledge the conditions upon which this coexistence was made



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possible. Recalling the stakes involved in the origins of the Portuguese presence in China, there is room to argue that, along with the development of global trade, leading dynamics of capital circulation and international investment were already taking place in 16<sup>th</sup> century Macao, then as processes of existing global systems (Friedman and Ekholm 2002). Enabling the crossing of borders between East and West in a specific location, these global dynamics made Macao a historical accomplishment through its surmounting of cultural borders.

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Assuming that complexity ubiquitously embraces one social and historical reality (Friedman 1997), trade was not the only wind blowing the Portuguese naus and ships to the East. The Catholic faith was also to encounter promising horizons in Macao. The role played by the Catholic Church is worth some attention as, very early on, it made the city a religious platform in the East, mostly through the work of the Jesuits (Porter 2000; Pina-Cabral 2002). Having arrived in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, they were also responsible for naming Macao ‘The City of the Name of God in China’ in 1586 (Montalto de Jesus 1926).<sup>13</sup> The second aspect dealing with the overcoming of borders arises therefore from the path of a religious encounter built through the conversion of the Chinese to Christianity.

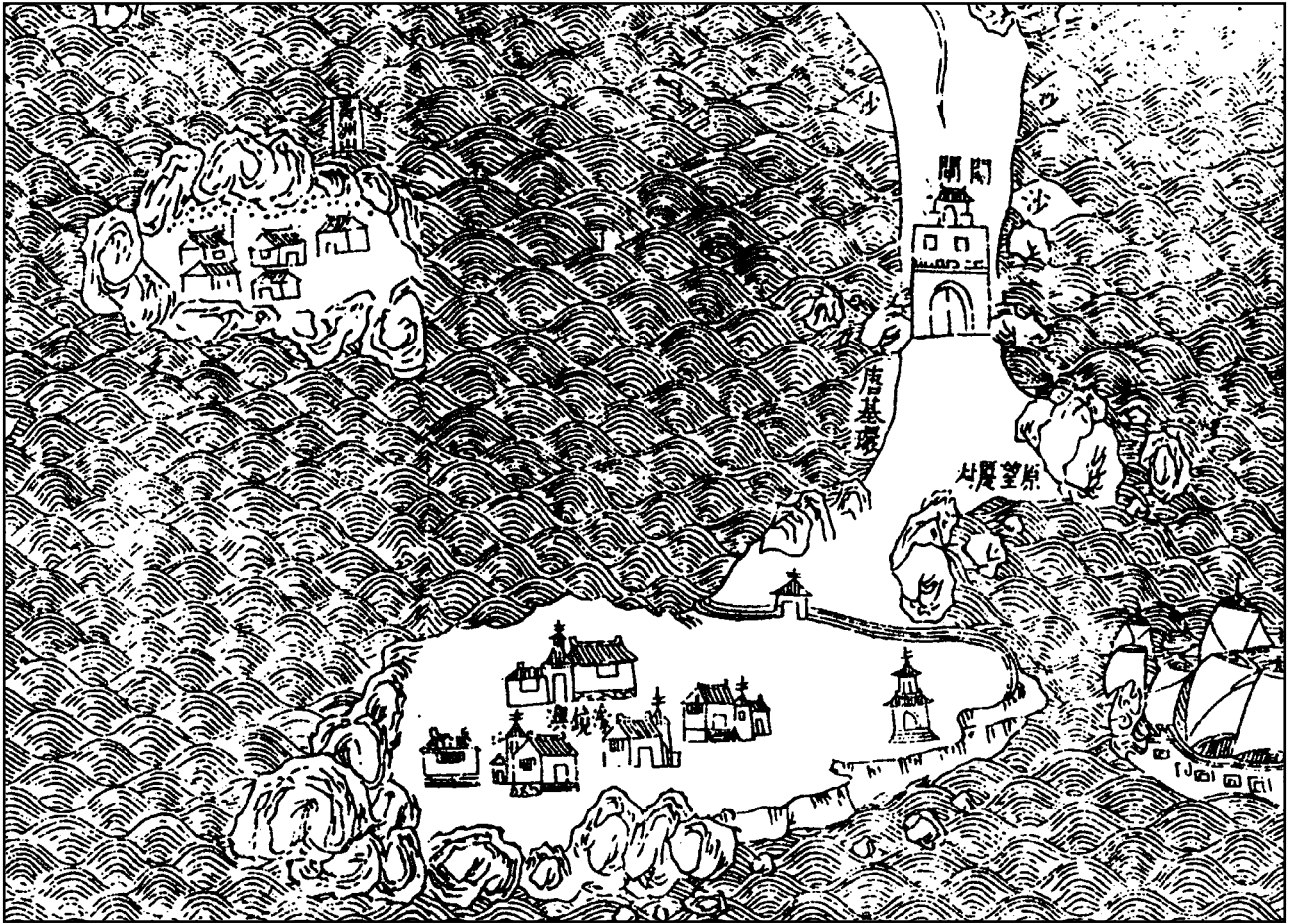
Since the arrival of the first religious orders—in addition to the Jesuits, the Dominicans, the Franciscans and later the Protestants—conversion has been a common phenomenon in Macao (Porter 2000; Pina-Cabral 2002). Nevertheless, while parallel jurisdictions prevailed, Chinese converts were supposed to cross the border from their own, separate neighbourhood

to the Christian citadel, knowing however that total integration would not occur on the inner side of the walls, nor would it be simple to achieve a family’s acceptance of one’s dual commitment (Brito 1994). However, since it was allegedly not unusual that Chinese converts accepted Christianity in the name of economic survival, or kept their original beliefs in spite of the Church’s final say on the prohibition of the practice of Confucian rites of ancestor worship in the 18<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>14</sup> the meaning of conversion, and therefore of crossing cultural borders, is in this context still open to further discussion (Brito 1994; Pina-Cabral 2002).

The third and final aspect that seems to be more deeply involved with the notion of overcoming cultural boundaries, which even borders on the concept of merging together, is intermarriage, or concubinage. Arising from the long-lasting encounter between the Portuguese and the Chinese and the early cohabitation with the Japanese, Malays, Indians and Africans—coming from Portuguese settlements in Nagasaki, Malacca, Goa, Diu, and Sofala—intermarriage resulted in the Eurasian type, known today as the Macanese (Pina-Cabral and Lourenço 1993, Pina-Cabral 2002).<sup>15</sup> Yet, since this original ethnic diversity was more likely to integrate Macao’s early society, Macanese ethnicity, and later identity, has been increasingly marked by the Chinese element (Pina-Cabral and Lourenço 1993). As a local category embodying a territorial link between Portugal and China, Macanese people stand for the historical significance of Macao as an in-between place, where the crossing of boundaries materialized in a specific inter-ethnic encounter.

Identifying themselves and being identified by others as the ‘land born’,<sup>16</sup> the Macanese have also been linked to the *patuá*, a Creole dialect that was spoken in Macao for roughly three centuries (Pina-Cabral 2002). Very similar to Creoles spoken in other Portuguese settlements from Cape Verde to Timor, the *patuá* was frequently employed as a means of communication in trade-related activities or in daily arrangements with Chinese servants, which at the time were its most contingent uses (Pina-Cabral 2002). Knowing that it filled a gap where the lack of communication was to be expected, the *patuá* worked as a crucial key for interconnecting the parallel ‘cities,’ further explaining how economic exchange and association and inter-ethnic contact were made possible

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Macao in a supplement to *Xiangshan Xianzhi* (Gazetteer of Xiangshan County) dated 1863.

among the Portuguese and Chinese during times of separated jurisdictions. Nevertheless, when Portuguese official authority was substantiated into an organized bureaucracy by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the local Creole gradually lost its importance, since the opportunities set by the new economic and social schemes benefitted those controlling the standard Portuguese—then the language of the administration.

The language skills of the Macanese have, however, long provided for and justified their role as mediators and translators (Pina-Cabral 2002). From their knowledge of the *patuá*, essential to the development of Portuguese trading enterprises with and within China, to their bilingual skill with the popular, widespread Cantonese language and the formalised, elitist Portuguese language, the Macanese people served a mediating role to legitimize the viability of a Portuguese administration in a city and environment where the Chinese were incontestably

the vast majority (Pina-Cabral and Lourenço 1993). The affirmation of the colonial machinery in Macao had an important implication for the increased significance of the use of standard Portuguese in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, further informing changes in the construction of social identities in Macao. However, it seems that this change did not deeply alter the original nature of the boundary established between the Chinese and Portuguese, as explained by a number of reasons that follow.

Firstly, while the Portuguese administration gradually embraced the Chinese residents and became a large-scale institution, it emerged as the undisputed governing body of Macao. As a result, Portuguese civil servants began to arrive in more consistent numbers, while the administration underwent a process of modernisation to respond to the needs of Portugal's colonial edifice of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this context, the Portuguese central authorities saw in the use of standard

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Portuguese language a significant strategy for achieving the affirmation of its incipient administrative apparatus. Through the foundation of the first educational institutions dedicated to instruction in Portuguese,<sup>17</sup> by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the commanding authorities not only aimed to offer both the Portuguese living in the territory and a privileged circle of Macanese families the chance to educate their children within a Portuguese milieu but also sought to substantiate the use of their language in the administrative routines, despite excluding most of the Chinese population. Then undergoing formal Portuguese education, the Macanese managed to enhance their capital as mediators and translators, hence becoming an essential part of a class of civil servants and occupying strategic posts within the administration (Pina-Cabral and Lourenço 1993, Pina-Cabral 2002).

Drawing from their bilingual control of Portuguese and Cantonese, often also followed by some fluency in English, the language skills of the Macanese embody but one expression of a locally constructed ethnicity that has emerged from the crossing of boundaries of cultural and ethnic difference. Worth noting however is that while the Macanese stand for a cross-cultural and inter-ethnic encounter that is historically embedded in Macao's cultural identity, this very condition tends otherwise to encourage the persistence of cultural boundaries within the city's social structure. Owing to the channels of communication and intermediation the Macanese have developed and carefully maintained as their specific attribute, the Portuguese administration could afford not to foster deeper integration between the Portuguese and the Chinese, resulting in inter-ethnic contact which remained a small-scale, concentrated phenomenon. We could perhaps argue that such an administration was only likely to be effective if it relied upon the persistence of borders, since these were essential to the functioning of the city under Portuguese rule whilst setting a hierarchical divide between those in control and those to be ruled over.

## THE BORDERS OF IDENTITY

Through a macro-historical approach to the issue of borders—be they geographical, cultural or symbolic—we have aimed to provide an analysis of social processes that have informed Macao's history and identity in the long term. Explicitly leaving aside

a detailed account of specific and far more complex historical events and phenomena, we sought to highlight the continuous nature of social processes related to the construction of borders that, having crossed distinct moments of Macao's history, could be understood as important traits of this place's identity. These traits become more significant when, drawing from our field experience, we realize that such traits can still be identified in the social reality of Macao today, even though they are slightly changed now, as the product of a new political and economic order which has put Macao in the hands of the PRC and at the centre of the world's gambling industry.

From our anthropological perspective, we could therefore argue that the original borders, in their geographical and cultural manifestation, were likely to persist and inform the way inter-ethnic and intercultural encounters evolved in the long term. On the one hand, borders existed as a result of Macao's origins as a product of global dynamics based essentially on trade, when a series of economic and political circumstances determined the nature of Portuguese and Chinese cohabitation in China, later grasped through the development of parallel jurisdictions. On the other hand, the persistence of borders might also be explained by the social impact brought on by an extended Portuguese jurisdiction, in which language and the legal-administrative system functioned more as barriers than as a means of improving integration. Even when cross-cultural encounters suggested the overcoming of borders on a historical basis, as for the Macanese, we could argue that they have, rather, limited intercultural exchange, therefore justifying the continuation of borders.

Cultural boundaries thus appear as an intrinsic condition, embedded in socially constructed processes, in the making of the city in the long term. As an inherent trait of a complex, multicultural society, these boundaries ultimately confer ambivalence to Macao's identity when revealing the coexistence of distinct ways of living, perceiving and constructing social reality among those inhabiting the same space. As the product of historical and socio-cultural processes shared among those cultural and ethnic others that rely on specific frames of meaning to give sense to this place, Macao's identity embraces fragmentation while standing, in turn, for a comprehensive whole, as locality and place: the city. This fragmentation within a unit has therefore

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been expressed by the persistence of cultural boundaries even after the political-administrative borders were lifted, when the two previous 'cities' became one which was governed by the same, although not necessarily inclusive, administration. From this perspective, cultural boundaries embody not only the means and limits of interaction, but also a sense of discontinuity that has been deeply inscribed in Macao's cultural identity.

The idea of discontinuity implied by the existence and persistence of borders of different natures—but mainly of a cultural nature—could therefore be seen more as a structural trait of Macao's identity than as the manifestation of specific, event-oriented phenomena, since they appear to be socially and historically contingent. As such, the structural continuity of the cultural borders has conferred a trait

of discontinuity and ambivalence to Macao's identity, since it happened both to complicate and to consolidate the paths of inter-ethnic and intercultural encounters. This one particular aspect discussed through the idea of borders, different as they are and have been up until now, seems to have much to tell about Macao's original complexity over time, as it is representative of the role difference plays in the making of a place shared among distinct cultural and ethnic others. Rethinking difference through connection (Gupta and Ferguson 2002), or exploring how coexistence evolved in spite of boundaries (Newman and Paasi 1998), could therefore sum up the path which allows us to outline a few processes through which place has been socially constructed and has asserted an identity, as in the case of Macao. **RC**

## NOTES

- 1 Here inspired by Durkheim's notion of 'organic' solidarity as structural interdependence, which lies in the division of labour in a given society, in opposition to the notion of 'mechanic' solidarity as cultural bond, which implies that individuals share the same fundamental cultural elements (Van Oorschot and Komter 1998).
- 2 According to Souza (1986), the pirates active along the China coast in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, named after the Japanese pirates, *wako*, were in effect mostly Chinese.
- 3 Although some authors claim that the origin of this obligation remains unclear (Porter 2000; Wu 2002), in his *Historic Macao*, Montalto de Jesus (1926: 24-6) defends the idea that what later came to be considered a ground rent actually corresponded to a means of bribery used by the Portuguese to ensure the favours of the Chinese authorities. The obligation was maintained until 1849, not coincidentally the year when the Portuguese succeeded in closing the Qing government's official representation in the city, the *Hopu*, adding to the rise of Portuguese colonial intents over Macao (Wu 2002).
- 4 Author's translation from the Portuguese: "*Respeito pelas autoridades e agradecimento à benevolência imperial*" (Wu 1999: 60).
- 5 A number of Chinese sources account however for the existence of small Chinese settlements previous to the arrival of the Portuguese in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, namely in the areas of the present-day *Mong-ha* and *Barra* districts. This view is backed by the existence of Chinese temples already in the 15<sup>th</sup> century in both neighbourhoods, the Guan Yin Tang and the A-Ma or Mazu, respectively (Amaro 1998; Porter 2000).
- 6 The notion of urban here used to qualify 18<sup>th</sup> century Macao reflects, on the one hand, the sense applied by Weber (1947) to the idea of city as a 'locality' and 'place of market' (*lieu de marché*) or 'trading agglomeration' (*agglomération marchande*; *Marktansiedelung*). On the other hand, it is used in opposition to the use of the term in Castells (1972) as a socio-cultural attribute of the capitalist industrial society.
- 7 The Senate was further supposed to respond to the authority of the Portuguese imperial state represented in the East by the 'State of India' (*Estado da Índia*) that, centred in Goa, comprehended all the Portuguese possessions and trading posts between Sofala (Africa) and Macao (Boxer 1963; Ptak 1991).
- 8 From the existing Portuguese expressions, *Casa do Mandarin* or *Casa Mandarin*; also currently defined as the *Hopu* or *Hoppo*, in both Portuguese and English works about Macao.
- 9 The period of 1856-1860 stands for the second Opium War.
- 10 From the Portuguese '*Tratado de Amizade e Comércio entre a China e Portugal*'.
- 11 'The Chief Executive of the Macau Special Administrative Region shall be a Chinese citizen of not less than 40 years of age who is a permanent resident of the Region and has ordinarily resided in Macau for a continuous period of not less than 20 years' (Basic Law: Chapter IV, Section 1, Article 46).
- 12 'In addition to the Chinese language, Portuguese may also be used as an official language by the executive authorities, legislature and judiciary of the Macao Special Administrative Region' (Basic Law: Chapter I, Article 9).
- 13 Current English translation, which partially corresponds to the original Portuguese name, '*Cidade do nome de Deus do Porto de Macau na China*'.
- 14 The prohibition of the practice of Confucian rites by the converts put an end to the long debate, known as 'The Rites Controversy', over whether the converts should have the right to practice Chinese rituals: 'The Rites Controversy was finally resolved in 1742 with the papal bull *Ex quo singulari*, prohibiting Christians from taking part in Chinese Confucian ceremonies' (Porter 2000: 115).
- 15 'Macaense', in Portuguese.
- 16 The corresponding Portuguese term: '*filhos da terra*'; in Cantonese, '*to saang*' (Pina-Cabral 2002).
- 17 The Commercial School and the Secondary School; author's translation from the Portuguese: *Escola Comercial* and *Liceu*, respectively.

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