

On the Border Gate

João Maria Ferreira do Amaral and Vicente Nicolau de Mesquita

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INTRODUCTION

In the ebb and flow of historical currents, Macao has been inscribed with shared memories of a series of decisive events. One of the historic landmarks that has witnessed important happenings is the Border Gate (in Portuguese, *Portas do Cerco*). It was first built in 1573 to separate the Macao peninsula from Zhongshan county, Guangdong province. Since then, the Border Gate had been the only official crossing point into China, and served as the ‘borderline’ between Macao and China. Its present yellow structure, emulating a triumphal arch in European style, dates back to 1870. In 1994, the Border Gate was renovated and inaugurated by the last Governor of Macao, General Vasco Rocha Vieira. The nearby area, known as Border Gate Square, was completely re-planned, and the road leading to the Border Gate was pedestrianised and covered with cobble stones. The Border Gate has now become a tourist attraction, while the actual border crossing-point is the Macao Immigration Building (behind the Border Gate), which was opened in January 2004.

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The Border Gate (Fig. 1) chronicles two notable dates on each side of the wall: 22 Agosto 1849 and 25 Agosto 1849. These two dates represent two momentous events incurred by João Maria Ferreira do Amaral (1803-1849) and Vicente Nicolau de Mesquita (1818-1880) in the colonial history of Macao. For Portugal, the two personages were national heroes and patriots in the colonial enterprise. As a spectacle of the Portuguese political stronghold in Macao, two monuments in their honour were inaugurated in 1940. These two colonialists were, nevertheless, singled out by history and condemned as aggressors and invaders by the Chinese authorities, since they seized hold of a collective memory that flashed up a sea of pain. That pain precisely reminded the Chinese people of the faltering past during the era of high imperialism and colonialism in the mid-19th century.

The two statues were monuments of a historical consciousness of which the adherents of historicism actually empathised with the victor. These statues were once Portuguese cultural treasures in the triumphal procession, but they recalled a history that hurt and wounded the Chinese in Macao. In these instances, history breaks the continuum of time and is reconstructed to take sides with the dominant class. While the statue of Mesquita was pulled down and destroyed in 1966, the monument of Ferreira do Amaral was dismantled in 1992 and the statue was returned to Portugal.

Mapping onto the history of Macao written by Anders Ljungstedt (1759-1835) and Carlos Augusto

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Montalto de Jesus (1863-1927) respectively, this paper discusses the ambiguous nature of history. The questions to be asked are: why were the two historians denounced by the Portuguese authorities? How did the dominant authorities manipulate history as a legitimate narration of the past in order to consolidate power politics? This paper seeks to evoke the collective memory of the irretrievable past by tracing the reasons for the inauguration and removal of the statues of Ferreira do Amaral and Mesquita. Under Portuguese administration, how did the two statues chronicle Macao's colonial vicissitudes? Why were they destined to give way to a new political order in history's triumph of progress?

HISTORY'S AMBIGUOUS NATURE

The word history came into English from the Latin *historia*. The meaning of *historia* has ranged from a story of events to a narrative of past events. In early English usage, history and story were both applied to an account either of imaginary events or of events supposed to be true. During the 15th century, the demarcation began: history moved towards a specific written account of past real events, and story towards accounts of imagined events. This established general sense of history has lasted into contemporary English as the predominant meaning of organised knowledge of the past. Despite its ambiguous meanings, history retains its sense as a narrative of the knowable past, which is a continuous and connected process.¹ In the main, history is concerned with the causal role of historical and social change on politics, philosophy, art forms, religion, and cultural phenomena.

History, as analysed morphemically, is his-story. In a playful sense, history denotes man's story and discriminatorily sides with the male gender—the dominant sex. On the contrary, like the Latin word *historia*, the French *histoire* and Portuguese *história* fall into the category of female gender. In renaissance and baroque art, moreover, History is usually personified as a winged female in a white robe who writes in a book or on a tablet. Her image was derived from the classical winged Victory, who recorded the victor's deeds on a shield.² In this way, the allegorical representations of History and Victory are intricately interchangeable. Such images perhaps give support to the argument that history always empathises with the victor.

It brings to mind Walter Benjamin's 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' in *Illuminations*. He argues that history is 'a tool of the ruling classes'. By articulating the past historically does not mean to recognise it 'the way it really was', as history is only concerned with the triumph of progress and is part of the spoils of every victory of the rulers.³ Benjamin is of the opinion that history is only concerned with victory and the triumph of progress. History may not reflect the past objectively as it is merely the unconscious ideology of the ruling party. In the same vein, Hayden White contends that there is no such thing as a specifically 'historical' approach to the study of 'the past', but a variety of such approaches—at least as many as there are positions on the current ideological spectrum.⁵ The approach to history can then be interdisciplinary from different sources.

History is often considered metaphysical and entails epistemological problems. As the human past is only accessible through the textualisation of documents, Walter Benjamin emphasises, 'There is no document of civilisation which is not at the same time a document of barbarism'.⁵ Textual documents hence constitute dialectical ways to explore and understand socio-cultural contexts, the historical past, and the discourse of ideology. Besides historical texts, visual arts can help us understand history, mainly because they are themselves history and they may in some way reflect a particular place and era from different angles.

TWO 'CONDEMNED' HISTORIANS OF MACAO

In 1832, Anders Ljungstedt (1759-1835), a Swede, published *An Historical Sketch of the Portuguese Settlements in China and of the Roman Catholic Church and Mission in China and Description of the City of Canton*, the first ever written history of Macao in English. Ljungstedt's history of Macao hit a raw nerve in the issue of Macao's ambiguous sovereignty, which had long been a debatable issue.⁶ He pointed out the absurdity of the Portuguese claim to be sovereign masters of Macao when they submitted to the Chinese demand for an annual ground rent of 500 *taels* for the right to use Macao.⁷ He asserted that Macao was Chinese territory, and writes:

As no covenant or treaty of peace ever appeared in public, it remains an absolute impossibility to

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determinate the ultimate limits of the conquest the Portuguese pretend to have made on that Island [Macao].... A town, called *Cidade do nome Deos de Macao*, rose by degrees on the peninsula not by the grace and concession of any of the emperors of China, for such is denied, but by the success of the chivalrous arms of Portugal.⁸

After the publication of his book, Ljungstedt was relentlessly rebuked by Portuguese historians who regarded his assertion as fallacious. Portuguese critics were prejudiced against Ljungstedt, chiefly because his *história* did not side with the Portuguese claim of legitimate sovereignty over Macao.

In the Foreword of the 1992 edition of Ljungstedt's history of Macao, however, Padre Manuel Teixeira (1912-2003), a renowned Jesuit historian, praised Ljungstedt's serious and disinterested work. Teixeira

contended that Ljungstedt's assertion of the sovereignty of Macao was based on research of historical documents and manuscripts, and his knowledge of Portuguese was a tremendous asset in gaining access to Portuguese documents. After a lapse of 160 years, Ljungstedt's writing was looked upon as an invaluable source in studying the history of Macao, and his reputation rehabilitated.

Seventy years after Ljungstedt's publication, Carlos Augusto Montalto de Jesus wrote another historical account of Macao in English. Born in Hong Kong (1863-1927), he was fluent in Portuguese, Spanish, French and English. Montalto de Jesus' first edition of *Historic Macao* was published in 1902. *Historic Macao* was greeted with great acclaim, since Montalto de Jesus stated that 'the Portuguese had been invited by the Chinese to settle in Macao, and that in

Fig. 1. The Border Gate with the Macao Immigration Building in the background (2010). Photo: author.



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the early days there was no ground rent'.⁹ Montalto de Jesus was hailed as a hero in the Portuguese community as his version was the Government of Macao's favourable *história*, and above all, he openly vindicated Ljungstedt's claim that the Portuguese were in Macao on sufferance. Montalto de Jesus' writing thus honoured him as a good subject, and the Senate of Macao even suggested that the author be given a royal honour for his remarkable work. But he never received such an honour.¹⁰

After some time, Montalto de Jesus published the second edition of *Historic Macao*, to which he added several new chapters to criticise the impotent Portuguese administration. He remarked that the Portuguese knew so little about Macao, cared so little, and were so incompetent in meeting Macao's wants, that it would be preferable to haul down the Portuguese flag, and for the territory to be administered by the League of Nations.¹¹ He says:

It is high time to wake up and guard against any contingency or the inevitable *coup de grace*. Thus, it would be no derogation at all if helpless Portugal wisely placed Macao under the providential tutelage of the League of Nations as a safeguard against further ruination, generously vesting the most loyal colony with full rights of self-government, under international auspices and in consonance with the exigencies of the crucial situation.¹²

It was those last chapters that instantly turned him from a literary hero into a despicable scum. The Government of Macao condemned the newest edition as a heresy and 'seized the entire edition, and burned it in public. Anyone who had purchased a copy was ordered to surrender it for destruction'.¹² Ljungstedt and Montalto de Jesus were denounced precisely because their *história* of Macao revealed the piercing 'truth' and failed to be a tool of the Portuguese ruling class to consolidate power politics. In other words, their *história* did not come to terms with the victor and the ideology of legitimate rule in colonial discourse.

Apart from textual documents by which we can understand history, shared memories are the key bearer to flash back to the past. History can be erased, rewritten and reconstructed, but a collective memory recalls an image, impression, or other mental trace of someone or something known or experienced: the content of something remembered. The time within which past

events can be or are remembered even without tangible signifiers. A collective memory is the initial witness of events that flit by and is constitutive to the narrative of accounts. Although two historic statues—of João Maria Ferreira do Amaral (1803-1849) and Vicente Nicolau de Mesquita (1818-1880)—disappeared without any traces in the not too distant past, memory would bring back as to why and how they vanished.

JOÃO MARIA FERREIRA DO AMARAL

In spite of the fact that Ljungstedt's history of Macao was not an account favourable to Portugal, it nevertheless aroused the long ignored or perhaps forgotten issue of sovereign rights over Macao. Portugal seemed never to pay attention to this issue not until after the first Opium



War that Britain officially acquired the sovereign rights over Hong Kong in 1842 by the Treaty of Nanking. Portugal only then suddenly realised that while Hong Kong was held by right, Macao was held on sufferance. Britain's acquisition of Hong Kong vicariously injected Portugal with unprecedented courage and high-handed policies to confront the stumbling Qing government of China.

In 1846, João Maria Ferreira do Amaral was appointed governor to Macao. He was described as 'one of the most outstanding governors' in a tourist pamphlet during colonial times. Ferreira do Amaral was a captain in the Portuguese navy near Bahia in Brazil¹⁴ where he had lost his right arm in service in 1823. After assuming the governorship, the naval strongman implemented a series of reforms in a wayward manner. Given Macao suffered critical financial crisis, he made gambling legalised and the first gambling house licences were granted in 1847. Since then, the gambling tax has been the principal income of Macao. In addition, he declared Macao a free port in order to compensate their loss of trade due to Hong Kong's establishment as a newly opened free port in June 1841.

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Meanwhile, this ‘man of iron’ (Montalto de Jesus’ term) aimed at lessening Chinese influence and interference politically. In March 1849 he closed the Chinese Custom House, expelled the Chinese officials from Macao, and ceased paying the annual ground rent. His strong policies soon turned out to be the core of bitter conflicts between the two peoples. Above all, he carried out a project of urbanisation that sparked calamitous clashes. For purposes of expanding the urban area, he ordered the removal of Chinese ancestors’ graves near the Border Gate, where the Chinese considered an ideal place of *feng shui* 風水 (excellent geomancy) for burial.¹⁵ Some tombs were dug up by force and inevitably destroyed. For the Chinese in Macao, such project was a detrimental transgression of burial traditions and a violation of the vital sentiments in the kinship ethics of ancestor worship.

The cult of ancestor worship is by far the most important religious element in Chinese society, since it represents a continuing reciprocal relationship and a spiritual bond between the living and the dead. C. K. Yang has maintained that geomancy is ‘partly a means of averting possible evil influence from the dead upon the progeny as well as being a means of inducing the supernatural influence of blessing’.¹⁶ It is believed that the prosperity, honours and riches of individuals and families largely depend on good *fengshui* of ancestors’ graves.

The Chinese in Macao reacted against Ferreira do Amaral’s colonial rule by posting notices in the streets of Guangzhou, openly offering rewards for his head. A juggernaut force created by him not only rolled over the Chinese but also drove him into a *cul-de-sac*. On 22 August 1849 he was assassinated by Shen Zhiliang 沈志亮 and six other Chinese people near the Border Gate. His head and only arm were hacked off and carried away for rewards.¹⁷ After some poignant negotiations and foreign succour, Ferreira do Amaral’s head and hand were finally returned to Macao in a pig basket—a gesture of utter contempt to the colonial governor. His dismembered body was later taken back to Lisbon, and finally laid to rest in the *Cemitério dos Prazeres* (Cemetery of Pleasures).

The assassin leader, Shen, was later executed under tremendous foreign pressure. All the seven assassins were hailed as patriots by the Chinese.¹⁸ As

time goes by, when China was to resume the sovereignty of Macao, Shen was recalled from history and declared to be the true hero. It was suggested that a statue for Shen be erected at the historic moment.¹⁹ However, Shen’s statue was never put up, and no voices supporting the erection were heard again.

VICENTE NICOLAU DE MESQUITA

Vicente Nicolau de Mesquita was a gunner subaltern of the artillery and served as the council’s *aide de camp* in Macao. The caption of a photographic illustration in Colin Asia’s *Bright Balconies* says that Mesquita ‘saved Macao from



Chinese invasion in 1849’.²⁰ In the wake of Amaral’s assassination, Mesquita volunteered to attack the Chinese fortress at Baishaling 白沙岭, or in Portuguese *Passaleão*. On 25 August 1849 he crossed the Border Gate and easily defeated the Chinese garrison of about 400 men with only a handful of Portuguese soldiers. His military team was equipped with formidable cannons and guns with which the Chinese could not compete. This is known as the Baishaling incident in the history of Macao.

After Mesquita’s counter-retaliation, the Chinese no longer had any dominance and influence in Macao. His storming of Baishaling in effect consolidated the Portuguese ambition to exercise sovereignty over Macao *de facto* although it did not assert *de jure* ‘the perpetual occupation’ until 1887. His heroism and triumph were greeted with an ovation, and the Portuguese community in Hong Kong even presented him with a sword of honour.²¹

The relationship between Portugal and China reached a nadir after these two incidents. It was not only until China sought co-operation from Portugal to curb the rampant opium trade that put Macao in a bargaining position in the deteriorating relations between the two countries. Had not the weakening Qing government needed the Portuguese co-operation in levying opium tax and in taking steps to control the opium trade on lines similar to those being taken

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in Hong Kong, Portugal could not have achieved the rights it so desperately demanded. On 1 December 1887, the Sino-Portuguese Treaty of Peking²² was initialled, ratified in 1888, accepting 'the perpetual occupation and government of Macao and its dependencies by Portugal, as any other Portuguese possession'.

Mesquita became a national hero after his victorious mission. Ironically, his bravery was never adequately or officially recognised. It has been speculated that it was simply because he was not a 'pure' Portuguese, but rather a Macanese—a hybrid Portuguese of Macao.²³ He was promoted only to the rank of colonel and knighted, but not with the order of *Torre e Espada* (Tower and Spade) that he so desired. Later he suffered a mental breakdown and was forced to retire.

Worse still, he was enraged by family problems. He slew his wife and an erring daughter, and wounded another daughter and a son. He then committed suicide by jumping into a well. As a result of this appalling tragedy, the maddened victim was divested of the honour of a military funeral and was even denied a burial place on consecrated ground.²⁴ It was only at the turn of the 20th century that he was reinstated to public commemoration by both civil and church authorities. On 28 August 1910, his remains were re-interred in the *Cemitério de S. Miguel* (St.

Michael Cemetery) in Macao, with full military and ecclesiastical honours.²⁵

A BELATED COMMEMORATION

After Mesquita's military success and the expulsion of the Chinese officials from Macao, one of the immediate projects for the Portuguese authorities was to demolish the Border Gate on the Chinese side, which was first built in 1573. A new one was built on the Portuguese side in 1870. The historic moments of Ferreira do Amaral's sacrifice and Mesquita's victory were well remembered. The two indicative dates were inscribed vertically on each side of the Border Gate:

22
Agosto
1849

25
Agosto
1849

On 22 August 1849 Ferreira do Amaral became a martyr of Portugal. On 25 August 1849 Mesquita turned into a patriotic celebrity. Their names and the consequent events were, however, not mentioned near these dates. Instead, Luís Vaz de Camões' famous aphorism: *A Pátria Honrai, Que a Pátria Vos Contempla* (Honour your country and your country will have regard for you)²⁶ was inscribed on the lintel of the Border Gate. This quotation metonymically

commemorates their patriotism. Nowadays, flocks of people go out and come back through the Border Gate daily. How many of them would ever notice these two dates and stop for a while to ponder what their hidden symbolic meanings are? The inscriptions of the two dates are perhaps reified as 'hidden symbolism'. They are obscure not only to the Chinese common folk, but also to some Portuguese/Macanese in Macao as well. After all, these two dates serve to evoke the memory of Portugal's past greatness in Macao.

Fig. 2. The Ferreira do Amaral monument is on the left, while the Chapel of Our Lady of Penha at the distance (1949). Reproduced from Cecília Jorge and Rogério Beltrão Coelho's *Glimpses of the Past*.



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Both Ferreira do Amaral and Mesquita were Portugal's outstanding patriots, but no memorials whatsoever were built in their honour since 1849. It was not until 1940 that two monuments commemorating these two colonialists were belatedly erected. The two bronze statues were sculpted by Maximiliano Alves in Lisbon. For Ferreira do Amaral, an equestrian monument was erected and placed in the Praia Grande (Fig. 2). It was later transferred to the newly reclaimed land between the entrance of the Lisboa Hotel and the first Macao-Taipa Bridge (Fig. 3).

For Mesquita, a monument was put up in the centre of Largo do Senado facing the former Leal Senado (the Municipality of Macao), now called the Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau (Fig. 4). The two structures thus chronicled the uncompromising clashes between the two peoples at a specific time in history. It is natural to ask why these two statues were installed nearly a hundred years after their patriotic contribution to Portugal.

The project of statue-building in public places in Macao at this particular moment was not merely meant to fill up available spaces for urban beauty; it was in fact a spectacle of power politics. The inauguration of the two monuments in 1940 had a direct reflection on Portugal's historic celebration. In 1940 Portugal celebrated its 8th centenary as an independent nation on the Iberian Peninsula since



Fig. 3 - The Ferreira do Amaral monument stands silhouetted against the sky just before the demolition (1992). Photo: author.

1139. More importantly, it was in 1940 that Portugal enjoyed, for the first time since the late 18th century, a credit balance in trade.²⁷

The whole nation was immersed in an elevated mood of patriotism in celebrating the 8th centennial anniversary of its independence, and the country seemed to revive from the prolonged economic setback. Their national revelry extended to this 'overseas province'. The erection of the monuments could be surmised as a belated celebration for the expulsion of the Chinese dominance, as well as for the Portuguese colonial conquest of Macao *de jure*. A historical materialist must be aware of such cultural process that suggests the course of history is dominated by the struggle of competing classes;

Fig. 4. The statue of Mesquita at Largo do Senado (ca. 1960). Reproduced from Colin Simpson's *Asia's Bright Balconies*.



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Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



and the ideas of doing so are predicated on a material economic base.

The two bronze statues of Ferreira do Amaral and Mesquita might well speak for some specific effects. First, they represented the Portuguese nostalgia for past glory in Macao, since they were signifiers of the strong Portuguese political foothold on Chinese soil. Secondly, on a larger scale, they re-ignited the Portuguese bygone greatness being the first world empire on which 'the sun never set'. Thirdly, they helped re-kindle national spirit in the wake of political insurgence (in 1910 Portugal overthrew its monarchy in a revolution that led to the formation of a republic) in this faraway 'province'. In a word, the two statues were a metonym of Portugal's pride, and an allegory of spiritual revival and national reinvigoration in 1940.

THE ULTIMATE FATE OF THE TWO STATUES

As the two statues manifested a proclamation of Portuguese political strength in Macao, they nevertheless provoked a sobering reminder to China of the dead weight of the colonial past. The monument of Mesquita consisted of a substantial 12-foot high fluted column roughly rectangular in section and a 10-foot high bronze statue (Fig. 5).²⁸ The statue stood gallantly on a pedestal in the act of drawing his sword to lead the heroic invasion, as he might well have done at Baishaling. For the Chinese, this representation was the very emblem of Portuguese imperialism and suppression. During the anti-Portuguese demonstration on 3 December 1966, known as the '1-2-3 Incident' in Macao,²⁹ which coincided with the fanatic climax of the Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China, the statue became a target of venting revenge and was pulled down by the local Chinese. It was then deposited near the public lavatories on Avenida de Almeida Ribeiro³⁰ as a kind of posthumous derision of this Portuguese national

Fig. 5. The statue of Mesquita stands in a high position before 1949 by Kang Biao. Reproduced from *Best Photos of the 20th Century by Chinese across the World*.

Fig. 6. The empty pedestal of the Mesquita monument stands in front of the Leal Senado (1966). Reproduced from Lindsay and May Ride, *The Voices of Macao Stones*.

Fig. 7. A fountain replacing the statue of Mesquita at Largo do Senado (1993). Photo: author.

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hero. An informant has it that it was soon dumped into the sea. The pedestal was removed in February 1967 (Fig. 6),³¹ and the same spot was soon replaced by a fountain (Fig. 7).

The monument of Ferreira do Amaral was another sheer image of the very oppressor and invader. The overall monument was approximately fifty feet high and comprised a 15-foot high equestrian bronze statue that sat on a thick quadrangular table supported at its four corners by substantial cylindrical columns. Placed on a high granite pedestal so that it could be seen silhouetted against the sky, the statue represented a fierce authority immersed with brute strength and overwhelming rage. The horse reared up on the verge of jumping out of the pedestal due to the commander's relentless whipping. It was an image of irresistible force and unlimited power. Ferreira do Amaral was portrayed valiantly riding on horseback, wielding a whip in his left (only) hand, and engaging in the climax of the battle to combat the Chinese attackers.

Towards the imminent demise of Portuguese colonialism in Asia as a whole, Lu Ping, the Director of China's State Council's Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office, said in 1990 that the bronze statue of Ferreira do Amaral was 'a symbol of colonialism' and must be removed before 1999.³² The five-ton statue was eventually dislodged on 28 October 1992 (Fig. 8) and put in storage for some time. It was finally shipped

back to Lisbon. The ultimate removal of the statue reflected the resurrection of repressed Chinese power. Apart from political reasons, the demolition was caught up in the cultural game of elliptical *feng shui*. Speculation has it that the Ferreira do Amaral monument would severely interfere with the harmonious geomancy of the Bank of China's new headquarters (completed in 1991).³³ It is said that when one looked from the entrance of the Bank of China Building, it seemed the statue's whip was flogging the Bank. From the opposite direction, when one looked from the statue, it seemed as if the horse was treading and stamping on the Bank.³⁴ The Macao Government was therefore requested, if not pressed, to dismantle the monument in order to make way for an auspicious positioning of the Bank of China Building, whose main



Fig. 9. The new Bank of China Building without the statue of Ferreira do Amaral (1996). Photo: author.



entrance was intended to face the waterfront without any 'obstruction'. (Fig. 9) In this case, *feng shui* created competition and conflict in the ordering of social relations in space. It also masked a political desire for an early erasure of the 'colonial symbol'.

The statues of Mesquita and Ferreira do Amaral were reminders of the fleeting past when the Portuguese overtly carried out colonial subjugation

Fig. 8 - The empty pedestal soon after the statue of Ferreira do Amaral was dislodged (1992). Photo: author.

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during the era of high imperialism in Macao. If the statues had been retained, they might have brushed history against the grain by serving as a lesson for future generations to learn from a tangible colonial iconography. The places where the statues once stood would have been the locus proper for school children to gather around for an out-door lesson on oppression and hegemony, rather than studying the dry textbooks in classrooms. The images of Mesquita and Ferreira do Amaral subsequently vanished. In post-colonial Macao, the surviving reminders are the broad avenue named after Mesquita in the north of the city—Avenida do Coronel Mesquita, and the isthmus leading to the Border Gate named after Amaral—Istmo de Ferreira do Amaral.³⁵

Fig. 10. The bronze statue of Ferreira do Amaral in Lisbon (2004).
Photo: author.



The Ferreira do Amaral statue now stands humbly in the garden at Alameda da Encarnação, near the International Airport in Lisbon (Fig. 10).³⁶ On the modest new pedestal, the following Portuguese words are inscribed:

João Maria Ferreira do Amaral (1803-1849)
Militar ilustre e governador de Macau de 1846
a 1849
Morto, em 22 de Agosto de 1849, perto da porta
do cerco em Macau
A estátua, de autoria de Maximiliano Alves, foi
inaugurada em 24 de Junho de 1940 e
Removida de Macau em Novembro de 1991³⁷
Representa Ferreira do Amaral defendendo-se dos
seus agressores.³⁸

In the outlook of historicism, all socio-cultural phenomena are historically determined, all truths are relative, and there are no absolute values, categories, or standards. For China, the true picture of the colonial past documented Ferreira do Amaral as the symbol of imperialism and suppression, and he was the very aggressor as he fiercely engaged in ‘a scramble for possessions’. For Portugal, Ferreira do Amaral was looked upon as an icon of national greatness, since he helped assert the perpetual occupation of Macao. History is dialectical, and the lines of true history are blurred as to whose history is concerned.

CONCLUSION

Scholars and students of various academic fields (i.e. cultural studies, literary studies, anthropology, sociology, economics, politics, etc.) would often go to the discipline of history for the study of their own special objects of interest. In doing so, they may run the risk of offending professional historians. There are, in fact, many ways to study history, and there is no particular ‘historical approach’ for the study of ‘the past’. The irretrievable past is metaphysical and entails different established fields of studies in the human and social sciences. Embracing a historical approach to the study of other disciplines, in a way, implies a distinctive philosophy of history. ‘One’s philosophy of history’ writes Hayden White, ‘is a function as much of the way one construes one’s own special object of scholarly interest as it is of one’s knowledge of “history” itself’.³⁸

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Apart from the 'official' history of Macao, visual arts, including monuments and photographs, are chronicles of past events, and they can provide a lively interest to understand the past.

In the Portuguese colonial enterprise, two versions of the *história* of Macao written by Ljungstedt and Montalto de Jesus respectively may well express Benjamin's aphorism—history is a tool of the ruling classes. The two historians did not take sides with the 'victor' and their writings revealed the contentious sovereignty and the impotent governance of Macao. They were assailed, exactly because they upset the Portuguese authorities by challenging the legitimate narration of the past for the consolidation of power politics, thus threatening the *de jure* rule of Macao.

For Portugal, Ferreira do Amaral and Mesquita were two most distinguished colonialists in Macao. The monuments in their honour were associated with the glorious Portuguese colonial history. In contrast, for China, these structures were tangible signs of colonialism and oppression, and flared up shared memories of the unpleasant past. The two statues hence constitute dialectical perspectives to explore and to understand the historical past in political clashes.

Memorials and monuments are indicators of a collective memory. Although the two statues disappeared without any traces in Macao, the Border Gate chronicles the two significant events by inscribing the two relevant dates. Moreover, old photographs of the two statues readily call forth feelings as they can render a trail of memory, which flashes up the vicissitudes of Macao.

While the statue of Ferreira do Amaral can find a final resting place in Lisbon after its *sojourn*

in Macao for 52 years, the statue of Mesquita was perhaps drowned in the South China Sea after its short 'lifespan' of only 26 years. Today it is totally out of recognition that the prominent spot of Largo do Senado and the *rotunda* facing the Bank of China Building were once the showcases of colonial conquest *par excellence*.

The removal of the statue of Mesquita could be understood as a means for the Chinese to exemplify the 'culture of resistance' to the Portuguese authorities in Macao, and the return of the statue of Ferreira do Amaral to Lisbon was a way to assert a postcolonial regeneration. During the transition of political power, Edward Said has observed, 'One of the first tasks of the culture of resistance was to reclaim, rename, and reinhabit the land. And with that came a whole set of further assertions, recoveries, and identifications...'.⁴⁰ As colonial spoils, the two statues were destined to give way to a new political order in history's triumph of progress.

History and memory are intricately interwoven to reflect a continuous and connected process in the past. The interpretations of the past may shed light in the present and pave way for a congenial future. Despite the antagonistic past, and the removal of the monuments of Ferreira do Amaral and Mesquita, Portugal and China ushered in a period of friendship during the last seven years leading up to the return of Macao. From 1993 to 1999, a total of thirteen 'Friendship Monuments' were built.⁴¹ These new monuments were dedicated to the cordial relationship of the two national authorities and the co-existence of the two peoples. Under the amicable circumstances, Macao was marching smoothly towards its reunification with China. **RC**

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NOTES

- 1 Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, pp. 146-8.
- 2 James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*, p. 154.
- 3 Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, pp. 255-6.
- 4 Hayden White, 'New Historicism: A Comment'. In *The New Historicism*, edited by H. Aram Veese, p. 302.
- 5 Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p. 256.
- 6 On Macau's long-disputed sovereignty, see Camões C. K. Tam 譚志強 *Aomen Zhuquan Wenti Shimo 1553-1993 澳門主權問題始末 1553-1993 (Disputes Concerning Macau's Sovereignty Between China and Portugal (1553-1993))*.
- 7 Anders Ljungstedt, *An Historical Sketch of the Portuguese Settlements in China and of the Roman Catholic Church and Mission in China and Description of the City of Canton*, p. 61.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- 9 C. A. Montalto de Jesus, *Historic Macao*, p. vii.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 *Ibid.*, pp. 505-13.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 514.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. ix.
- 14 Brazil was discovered by the Portuguese navigator Pedro Álvares Cabral in 1500. Since then Brazil was under Portuguese control until it declared independence in 1822.
- 15 *Feng shui* (literally, wind [and] water) is the Chinese art and science of placement that uses design, ecology, intuition and common sense in order to create harmony and to bring health, wealth and happiness.
- 16 C. K. Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society: A Study of Contemporary Social Functions of Religion and Some of Their Historical Factors*, p. 34.
- 17 It is said that the assassination of Ferreira do Amaral was not only for rewards, but also out of revenge, since Shen's ancestors' graves were destroyed during the project of urbanisation. See Yuan Bangjian 元邦建 and Yuan Guixiu 袁桂秀, *Aomen Shilue 澳門史略*, p. 143.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 141.
- 19 *Macao Daily News*, 16 July 1999.
- 20 Colin Simpson, *Asia's Bright Balconies*.
- 21 C. A. Montalto de Jesus, *Historic Macao*, pp. 346-7.
- 22 Soon after the demise of the Qing dynasty in 1911, China opened negotiations with the Western powers to abolish the unequal treaties. In 1928, the Sino-Portuguese Treaty of Peking was terminated, and a new Sino-Portuguese Treaty of Amity and Commerce was signed.
- 23 The Macanese are a creole minority of Portuguese-Asian ancestry. They often meet with ethnic prejudice not only from the Portuguese but also from the Chinese. On the Macanese, see Ana Maria Amaro, *Filhos da Terra*. See also the special issue on the Macanese in *Review of Culture*, No. 20, 1994.
- 24 C. A. Montalto de Jesus, *Historic Macao*, pp. 425-7.
- 25 On the English translation of the elegy over Mesquita's grave, see Lindsay and May Ride, *The Voices of Macao Stones*, p. 51.
- 26 Luís Vaz de Camões (1524-1580) is one of Portugal's most illustrious poets, who composed the ten-canto *Os Lusíadas* (The Sons of Portugal), which was first published in Lisbon in 1572. In 1556, Camões is said to have been sent into exile to Macao where he was appointed 'Custodian of the Property of the Dead and Absent Portuguese' between 1557-1559. Given his *sojourn* during the inception of Macao as a Portuguese settlement, he is regarded as one of its founders.
- 27 Portugal was neutral in World War II, and the Portuguese made a good profit by selling raw materials, in particular tungsten, to the warring states. See José Hermano Saraiva, *Putuoya Jianshi 葡萄牙簡史 (História Concisa de Portugal)*, p. 355.
- 28 This photo was taken in a high position. The statue of Mesquita is viewed at the back and his sword is clearly seen. A religious procession circumscribing the statue provides a stunning image: a display of Christian faith juxtaposing with the weapon for colonial subjugation.
- 29 '1-2-3' is the diminutive of the date of December 3, 1966. The '1-2-3 Incident' was the leftist insurgency against the authoritarian rule of the Portuguese as well as against the Chinese rightist forces in Macao. On the cause and influence of this weighty event, see Camões C. K. Tam, *Aomen Zhuquan Wenti Shimo 1553-1993*, p. 245-55.
- 30 Lindsay and May Ride. *The Voices of Macao Stones*, p. 53.
- 31 We can see the broken windows of the Leal Senado, which were smashed by the Chinese during the '1-2-3 Incident'.
- 32 *South China Morning Post*, 29 October 1992.
- 33 The 37-storey Bank of China Building was designed by Remo Riva, one of Hong Kong's leading architects. Being once the tallest building in Macao, the new BOC headquarters exhibited the resurgent Chinese power in Macao in the early 1990's. See Christina Miu Bing Cheng, 'Resurgent Chinese Power in Postmodern Disguise: The New Bank of China Buildings in Hong Kong and Macau', pp. 102-23.
- 34 *Ming Pao Daily News*, 29 October 1992.
- 35 There are also minor places named after Mesquita: Rua do Coronel Mesquita, Travessa do Coronel Mesquita, Beco do Coronel Mesquita and Pátio do Coronel Mesquita. And named after Amaral are: Estrada de Ferreira do Amaral, Rua de Ferreira do Amaral and Praça Ferreira do Amaral.
- 36 It was no easy task to locate the statue of Ferreira do Amaral in Lisbon. Numerous inquiries and contacts were made from time to time through friends in Lisbon. Eventually, an informant from Casa de Macau (in Lisbon) kindly found out its whereabouts.
- 37 The removal date should be October 1992.
- 38 'João Maria Ferreira do Amaral (1803-1849) Illustrious soldier and governor of Macao from 1846 to 1849 Died, on 22nd August 1849, near the Border Gate in Macao The statue, of authorship of Maxmiliano Alves, was inaugurated on 24 June 1940 and Removed from Macao in November 1991 It represents Ferreira do Amaral defending himself from his aggressors.' (My translation)
- 39 Hayden White, 'New Historicism: A Comment'. In *The New Historicism*, edited by H. Aram Veese, p. 302.
- 40 Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 273.
- 41 On the thirteen Friendship Monuments, see Christina Miu Bing Cheng, 'Macao: The Farming of Friendship'. *China Perspectives*. No. 34, March-April 2001.

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