



Fig 1. Guia Chapel.

The Chapel of Our Lady of Guia in Macao and its Mural Painting Program¹

ISABEL HORTA LAMPREIA*



In 2009 the Macao Special Administrative Region gained renewed international recognition when its historical centre was consecrated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.² In the context of the history and culture of the People's Republic of China, this classification highlights the peculiarity of the occupation of this small peninsula in the province of Guangzhou, strategically positioned near the mouth of the Pearl River.

As a result of a meeting of minds between Portuguese merchants, supported by the Society of Jesus, and the local Chinese authorities, what was until the mid-16th century a small fishing village and a temporary shelter to merchants on their way to or from Canton, then became a vibrant Luso-Chinese city. Macao established itself as an important international trading port in East Asia as well as a missionary centre.

It is against this historical background that the monuments, buildings and classified sites, ranging from the 17th to the 19th centuries, stand out.

Included in the list of classified areas are the Guia Hill and the fortress which occupies its summit.

The walled perimeter of the structure includes the lighthouse, which was built in 1865, and is the first construction of its kind in South China,³ and a chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Guia (Nossa Senhora da Guia) (Fig. 1).

Throughout the years the visibility of this sacred space has been compromised by its subordination to the fortress, as well as by the assumption that it has a purely decorative purpose, given the imposing presence of the lighthouse beside it. In the present study I will focus my attention solely on the Guia Chapel, addressing its historical and artistic dimensions, hence hoping to contribute to a more in-depth knowledge and a greater appreciation of this building.⁴

THE CHAPEL OF OUR LADY OF GUIA

The place occupied by this solid and austere chapel, in the context of the Christian Heritage of Macao is quite unique. Despite its 19th century facade, the Guia Chapel is probably the oldest building in Macao, and can be traced back to at least the last quarter of the 17th century. It is implanted longitudinally along a north-south axis, and its plan consists of a single nave, followed by the chancel and the apse. The sacristy, connected to the chancel area, is a square room projected from the west side of the building. The entire structure is covered with barrel vaults (Fig. 2).

* History degree from Lisbon's University Faculty of Arts; M.A. in History of Art from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London.

Licenciada em História pela Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa; concluiu um Mestrado em História de Arte na Escola de Estudos Orientais e Africanos (SOAS), da Universidade de Londres.

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The original facade was extremely plain and featured a large quadrangular fenestration instead of a small lobulated window. What we see today is the result of building work that took place between the months of November and December 1875 and whose purpose, according to the report, was to ‘improve the façade’, whilst keeping in line with the neoclassical postulates, as one would expect.⁵ The elements introduced (all in yellow)—the pilasters and triangular pediment, reproduced on a smaller scale in the portal—have merely a decorative function.

The interior decoration of the chapel is carefully drafted and consists of an original mural painting which occupies its walls and ceilings. Up until 1998 the interior of the chapel was completely covered with whitewash. The devaluation of the paintings—due to their deterioration or simply because they were no longer seen as appropriate—resulted in their concealment, at some unknown point in time. From there onwards, the ritual cleansing with whitewash was established, and regularly renewed, since the high levels of humidity that Macao often experiences ended up bringing fragments of painting to the surface, which were regarded simply as unwanted patches of mold. The first systematic survey of the wall surface, which took place at the end of the 20th century under the responsibility of the Cultural Institute of Macao (now Cultural Affairs Bureau of Macao S.A.R.), led to the beginning of the mural’s recovery.⁶

What came to be fully uncovered in 2001 was a mural painting program that would cover all or almost all of the chapel’s interior. Despite its fragmentary condition, it can be perceived as an essentially ornamental program, in which the Christian rhetoric is itself confined to a succession of small and medium-sized cartouches distributed throughout the nave and chancel. But the most striking feature is the integration of Chinese-inspired motifs in the decorative style adopted. The result is truly unique, bringing together Eastern and Western artistic cultures within a Christian place of worship.

THE CHAPEL AND ITS BUILDING

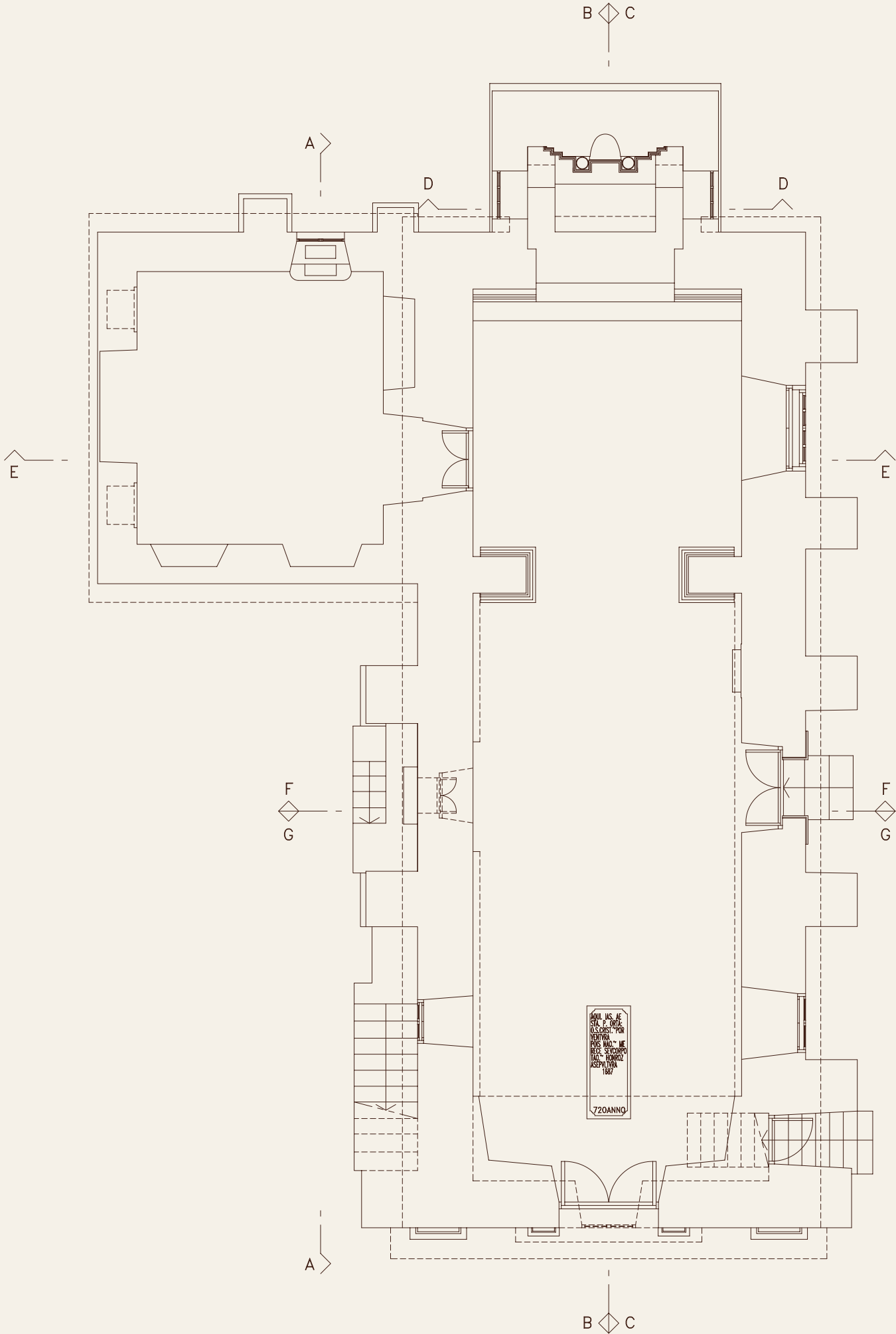
The history of these paintings is, of course, inseparable from the history of the building in which they are found. Though very little is known about the chapel, we have no reason to doubt the antiquity of its foundation. The placement of chapels or hermitages

in remote locations and on overlooks follows an ancestral Christian practice, and it is even likely that the marking of the hill with a single cross took place not long after the first informal settlement of the Portuguese merchants in the small peninsula that came to be named the City of the Name of God (Cidade do Nome de Deus).⁷

There is a strong likelihood that the foundation is a gesture of gratitude to the Virgin Mary for having led the men to safety after a maritime misadventure.⁸ The Guia Hill would not only have been a reference point to those on land, but also for those at sea, and in that sense the name ‘Our Lady of Guia (Guidance)’ could not have been more appropriate.⁹ Even if it is not clear whether it was the dedication of the temple which gave the place a name or the name assigned to the hill that came to be adopted by the building erected, what is certain is that this particular Marian dedication cannot be associated with the object of veneration of any religious order in particular. Thus, the chapel’s foundation was undoubtedly due to the initiative of lay people.

The first graphical representation of the temple, attributed to the Luso-Malay cartographer Manuel Godinho de Erédia, can be found in one of the earliest plans of Macao that we know of and was probably drawn up between 1615 and 1622. The church, already identified by name, can be easily distinguished, perched on top of Guia Hill (Fig. 3).¹⁰ However, the first written reference, found in a letter from the College of Saint Paul, allows us to go back to an even earlier date, 1604. The chapel is mentioned in passing as the final destination of a procession organised as a token of thanks by a group of people almost shipwrecked on arrival from Nagasaki (among which was the Jesuit Alessandro Valignano, Visitor of the missions of China and Japan). The distant and disinterested manner in which the priest Diogo Antunes, the author of the letter, refers to the small temple as ‘*hua ermida de Nossa Senhora de Guia, que está fora da cidade, situada em hum alto monte*’ leaves no room for doubt as to its dissociation from the Society of Jesus and their establishments.¹¹

However, although we are referring to the same place, we are definitely not talking about the exact same





building that today houses the paintings. At the time, the Guia Chapel would have been little more than a humble hermitage.

A devotional destination in Macao, the rugged elevation of Guia was also an informal watch point due to its strategic location, overlooking the Praia Grande bay and the whole village. The failed attempt of the Dutch to take over the mercantile centre on the 24th of July 1622 not only exposed its vulnerability to an armed offensive but also reinforced the need for the immediate fortification of the city, which until then had not been permitted by Chinese authorities.¹²

From 1623 onwards, and as foreseen, the Guia Hill was transformed into a defense post and the small temple, inscribed in the perimeter of a defensive stronghold, came to be under the custody of the military authority embodied in the newly created position of Captain-general of Macao.¹³ It is true that in November 1633, six Poor Clare nuns from Manila spent several days in the fort, under the supervision of four Franciscan friars of Macao. This was, however, an isolated event, that preceded their final installation in their new convent in the city.¹⁴

This first Guia bastion, a somewhat rudimentary infrastructure as can be inferred by the word ‘baluarte’ (bulwark) used by Antonio Bocarro in his description of it in his report *Livro de Todas as Plantas e Fortalezas, Cidades e Povações do Estado da Índia Oriental* (1635), gave place to a fortress in 1638.¹⁵ Its edification, which was ordered by the Captain of artillery, Antonio Ribeiro da Raia and the Captain-general Domingos da Câmara Noronha, is immortalised on a carved stone that can still be found over the arch of the entrance.¹⁶

Could it not be possible then, that the Guia Chapel was rebuilt in this ambitious construction work, either with the purpose of dignifying the temple or of reflecting the defense concerns that had motivated the reform of the compound in the first place?

Although the plain architectonic features of the chapel do not offer much clue as to when it was erected, what we know for certain is that by 1687 the building that we see today was already standing.¹⁷ This chronological order is set by the inscription that can be found on the tombstone that lies at the entrance of the nave, marking the burial, which took place that year, of the humble sacristan that guarded the chapel¹⁸:

AQUI IAS A E
STA PORTA
O S.CRIST.-POR
VENTURA
POIS NAO.-ME
RECE SEU CORPO
TAO.-HONROZ
A SEPULTURA
1687
1720 ANNO

THE MURAL PAINTING PROGRAM

When we go through the portal we are confronted with a pair of angel musicians on the triumphal arch. These two heavenly creatures, transported by Chinese-style clouds, are blowing a trumpet while holding the Imperial crown, today almost imperceptible, over the monogram 'Ave Maria', painted in the centre. Immediately, we see ratified the Marian evocation of the chapel, in which the Virgin is celebrated as Queen of Heaven (Fig. 4).



Fig 4. The nave, the triumphal arch and the chancel area.

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Fig 5. Detail of the decoration of the nave.



Both sides of the wall supporting the arch are decorated with a long and winding stem, terminating in a flower (lotus, peony) or fruit (berries or grapes and pomegranates), that would have risen from the dado to the clouds carrying the angels. During the conservation work a primitive decorative pattern was found covering just a section of this area. From what remains it seems that it was intended to forge the front of a fictive pillar by taking advantage of the protruding plinth and the impost of the arch. Despite the fact that the paintings seem to consist of just a black outline, contrasting with the colour scheme of the rest of the mural program, based on stylistic grounds, we believe them to be coeval to the ones that came to conceal them, probably in an early readjustment of the general program.

Fig 6. Choir area.



Fig 7. Detail of the decoration of the nave (left).



In a more articulated overview of the paintings, we can see that the nave and the chancel, in accordance with the spatial continuity determined by the plan, present a coherent decorative program.

The dado consists of a large pink bar, followed by a diagonal grid, resembling a checkered pattern, on the top of which is a succession of flower pots, commonly called 'albarradas' in Portuguese. This composition strives to recreate a tile panelling, and the abundant use of 'albarradas', in particular, is typical of the 18th century, when the motif gained an individual projection and was used for filling the lower registers of the walls of Portuguese churches. Yet, here they have added a local twist by using a Chinese vase and a stylised peony (Fig. 5).

The decoration of the choir area, akin to an upper-floor, is reduced to the fictive tile panelling, with the 'albarradas' clinging to the soffit of the vault due to the lack of space. And if the mural painting now seems somehow maladjusted to the area's current division of space, this is only because it was intended

Fig 8. Detail of the decoration of the nave (right side).



Fig 9. Detail of the decoration of the chancel area (Epistle side).



to conform to the original structure (Fig. 6).¹⁹ Whilst today we have a compact structure which both frames the portal and conceals the original wall, this certainly would not have been the case back then, when the original choir area consisted of a wooden balcony supported by a pillar which was not only lower but further into the nave.

In a second register of the walls of the nave, corresponding to the panel section, we would have found the theological program whose apologetic message is irretrievably lost due to the extensive trauma of the wall surface. Today, one can only distinguish the series of frames where biblical scenes or maybe Christian emblems were placed. These are inscribed in two interchanging compositions consisting of strap-work supported by pairs of columns whose plinths are sometimes replaced by Chinese lions, and completed with cherubs and fluttering angels.

Whether these compositions were drawn from the frontispiece of books or inspired by architectural treatises we cannot say; they seem, at least, to have stayed true to

the small scale of their prototype. Even though we are faced with depictions of architectural structures, the artist did not explore its volumetric qualities. The painting is essentially flat, with no light or shade contrast, and the only illusory effect that we can distinguish is the marble coating effect of the columns' shaft (Figs. 7, 8).

A more striking impact would have achieved the turgid framing, composed of large foliage, grapes, shells, and two cherubs above and below that decorate the walls around the main portal. Although the structure that supports the choir's balcony, located right above the entrance, only allowed the conservation work to uncover a small portion of this area, these frames can be found in a slightly more complete state in the chancel area, where they would have occupied the walls both on the Gospel side and the Epistle side (Fig. 9).

In the latter, and despite its state of deterioration, it is actually possible to make out the scene contained in one of them: the Holy Family with the Virgin (right) and Saint Joseph (left) taking the infant Jesus

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Fig 10. *The Heavenly and Earthly Trinities*, Hieronymus Wierix, copper engraving, 9.2cm x 6.0cm. Albertina Museum, Vienna; inv. no. HB 77.2, fol.4, 36. © Albertina Museum.



Fig 11. Detail of the triumphal arch (view from the chancel area).

by the hand, a scene which was possibly inspired by an engraving of Hieronymus Wierix (Fig. 10). The cult of the Holy Family, dating from the late Middle Ages, gained new impetus within the Roman Catholic community following the Council of Trent (1545-1549, 1551-1552, 1562-1563), now consisting of these three characters only. The rehabilitation of Saint Joseph as the father-figure of the infant Jesus paved the way for the composition of this Earthly Trinity, which would mirror in its human tangibility, the Heavenly Trinity and its metaphysical dimension.²⁰ In this case, due to the flaking of the painting, we are not able to determine if the figure of God the Father appears through the clouds, along with the Dove of the Holy Ghost hovering over Jesus' head.

In fact, it would seem that the section of the program with greater visual impact was reserved for the chancel area. There is no comparing the exuberance of the two perforated rocks flanking the triumphal arch, with the realistic depiction of its openings and protuberances, nor the vitality of the two large tree trunks that stem from them, which in

a sinuous movement fill the arch with their leaves and flowers. If there was any doubt as to whether one or more Chinese artists participated in the execution of this painting, it is completely dispelled given the resourceful and personal appropriation of the motif of the Tree of Life as observed here. The fact that it is facing the altar is particularly evocative, since in the broad semantic spectrum inherent to the universality of such a symbol, in Christianity, the Tree of Life can assume a sense of regeneration associated with the Blessed Sacrament, and also allude to the cross where Christ was sacrificed (Fig. 11).²¹

The decoration of the vaulted ceilings survived, in spite of the erosion of the pictorial layer resulting in its ornamental motifs being almost unrecognisable. The ceilings of the nave and the chancel resemble a large rug organised in a series of bands, each one holding different motifs: medallions, cartouches, egg and dart, bead and reel, small floral-inspired compositions (Fig.

Fig 12. View of the ceiling (nave).



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Fig 13. Ceiling (choir area).

12). The main difference lies in the central field: whilst in the nave we have a radiant mandorla, in the chancel we can find the depiction of delicate scrolling foliage converging to the geometrical centre of the vault, marked by a 19th century plaster medallion that most likely conceals the original painted one.

The fraction of the vault that covers the choir has an altogether different decoration, highlighting the division of spaces. This bears a medallion inscribing the moon and sun, two Marian symbols inspired in the *Song of Songs* 6:9 (*pulchra ut luna electa ut sol*), stressing, once again, the consecration of the chapel to the Virgin Mary (Fig. 13). Surrounding this medallion, and spreading to the walls which define the choir area, we find delicate stems punctuated by pomegranates, grapes, leaves and flowers.

In the sacristy, if the remaining fragments of painting do not allow us in any way to reconstitute the content of the program, at least they confirm that a distinctive scheme was planned, consecrating the different functionality of this space. Taking into consideration that the walls present open arches and

house several niches, possibly intended to accommodate small altars or simply images, we can assume that the room also served as a private chapel.

In this room the decoration of the vault (imitation panelling) is easily perceptible and almost fully complete, in contrast to the walls where the painting is in fragments. The west wall, which is the focus of our attention as we cross the door, has a round arch whose soffit is decorated with the Dove of the Holy Ghost surrounded by heart-shape contorted stems, following an ornamental layout that was most likely inspired by a decorative vignette also opened by Wierix (Figs. 14, 15).

To the left of this structure a vase projecting a single stalk with a succession of three corollas (lotus flower?) has survived, together with a rampant lion of unquestionable heraldic inspiration, but clearly Chinese in its features (Fig. 16). The two small niches which befringe the arch resume the decoration of this wall presenting the vertical stalk with three corollas and, in the soffit of the arch, exhibit a decoration pattern consisting of heart-shape stems tightened by a ring of foliage.



Fig 14. Decoration of the soffit of the arch (sacristy).



Fig. 16. Decoration on the West wall (sacristy).

On the opposite wall, in the upper centre, positioned to resemble a framed portrait, we can see a quite naïve depiction of the Virgin and Child. This is an image of the Virgin of Bethlehem, and although quite faded, we can still distinguish Mary holding the baby Jesus who, while feeding on her breast, reaches

out for her arm. The inclusion of an image of such demonstrative content in the iconographic program of the chapel conforms well to the spirituality of the post-Tridentine Church, which encouraged a pious devotion to intimate depictions of the Son of God such as these, and, if we bear in mind that this space

Fig. 15. *Holy Ghost*, Hieronymus Wierix, copper engraving, height: 5.3 cm, width: 15.3 cm (Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, Brussels, book nr. LP 9831C). © Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique.





Fig. 17. Portrait of the Virgin of Bethlehem (sacristy).

was most likely intended to be use as a private place of worship, its presence finds all the more sense.

The composition seems to have been inspired by an engraving of Marcantonio Raimondi (Figs. 17, 18), yet, its direct model was almost certainly a painting contained in a Namban oratory, which has not survived. Even though the fake framing does not seek to resemble a lacquered frame, the content, consisting of a scene inspired by the early childhood of Christ, and the size of the figures portrayed, point to the type of images included in the portable shrines made in Japan.²²

Inside the arch located further down, we find a crowned double-headed eagle with outstretched wings and carefully outlined feathers (Fig. 19). This

Fig. 18. *Virgin feeding the Christ Child*, Marcantonio Raimondi (after Raphael), copper engraving, height: 16.7 cm, width: 11.9 cm. British Museum, London, Reg. no. H.1.51; PRN. PPA61965. ©The Trustees of the British Museum.

representation, devoid of any religious connotation or mythological allusion, corresponds to a European heraldic device frequently used as a decoration motif, especially among the decorative arts commissioned by the Portuguese in India. In this case, it seems to take on a similar function, since the fragments of paint that still remain on the other walls are evidence that the motif was multiplied throughout this room, hence indicating that this was an ornamental pattern.

We can now verify that the tympanum of the portal, placed at the right end of this wall, bears a representation of Saint John the Baptist, dressed in camel's hair, holding a lamb in his arms and a banner in his right hand (Fig. 20). Contrary to what has previously been suggested, the relevance of this representation is not related to the victory over the Dutch in 1622, which

Fig. 19. Decorated arch on the East wall.



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Fig. 20. Decoration of the portal of the sacristy.

reached its decisive moment at Guia Hill on this saint's day. The placement of this image on the doorway simply obeys a convention regarding the organisation of a sacred space: Saint John the Baptist, due to being the last of the prophets, and therefore the immediate predecessor of Christ, is one of the elected figures to

Fig. 21. Decoration of the arch of the pulpit (nave).



be placed in the temple's entrance. This may not be the main portal, nevertheless it is the door through which one makes the transition from the sacristy to the temple itself.

THE SINO-PORTUGUESE TEXTILES AS A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION

If on the one hand the program's Chinese character offers testimony of the involvement of at least one Chinese artist in the execution of this mural painting, on the other hand the compositions which we can identify as stemming from European tradition do not guarantee the participation of a metropolitan artist in the works. In fact, they even seem to challenge such an assumption: we only need to look at the soffit of the arch at the pulpit's entrance to verify that the monogram of the name of Jesus (IHS), one of the most widespread Christian symbols, was inverted as a result of the painter's ignorance (Fig. 21).

The contingencies of the local artistic market partly serve to explain the originality of the painting scheme which houses this temple. However, the replacement of Western elements by Oriental ones, as if forging a parallel grammar, leads us to believe that those in charge of the commission were promoting the hybridisation of the project, assuming direct responsibility, or at least some degree of complicity in this transfiguration.

It is impossible to ascertain, due to the absence of coeval buildings, whether the application of the mural painting as a solution to coating the inside of Christian places of worship followed a common practice in the territory, or whether what can be seen today in the chapel of Our Lady of Guia is in fact the result of an extraordinary commission.²³

Nevertheless, what is undeniable is the familiarity that the local Christian community had with the ornamental vocabulary involved in the mural program.

Although, at a first glance, the selection and adaptation of these elements to a church decoration would seem to be 'at odds' with Western artistic tradition, if we look at some of the Chinese textile production from the 17th and 18th centuries, which were most likely commissioned in Macao or Canton by the Portuguese—specially by elements of the clergy under the Portuguese *Padroado*—the eclecticism of

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Fig. 22. Altar frontal, China, 18th century, embroidered silk, height: 100 cm, width: 192 cm. Museu da Ciência da Universidade de Lisboa, Lisbon, inv. no. 11. Photo: Miguel Gama.

the Macanese scheme may not then come as such a surprise.²⁴

Without being exhaustive in my analogy, I would like to highlight some pieces, most of them vestments involved in the liturgical service, that we can take as proof of this knowledge.²⁵

Firstly, in an altar frontal kept at the Museu de Ciência da Universidade de Lisboa (Lisbon) we have, in the central field, a crowned double-headed eagle holding small branches in bloom, similar to the ones

found in the walls of the Sacristy; and, in the lateral fields, two Chinese vases with peonies, which can also be designated as 'albarradas' (Fig. 22).²⁶

In another altar frontal kept in the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga (Lisbon), the central field presents a composition similar to the one decorating the soffit of the arch of the pulpit, but instead of blossoming peonies surrounding the monogram of Jesus, we have several stems ending in flowers and pomegranates (Fig. 23).²⁷

Fig. 23. Altar frontal, China, 17th century (2nd half), embroidered silk, height: 71.5 cm, width: 208 cm. Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon, inv. no. 1225/A Tec. Photo: DGPC-Luis Piorro.

Fig. 24. Bedspread, China, 18th century, embroidered silk, height: 230 cm, width: 130 cm. Museu Francisco Tavares Proença Júnior, Castelo Branco, inv. no. 70.16 MFTPJ. Photo: Miguel Gama.



Fig. 25. Chasuble (back), China, 18th century, embroidered silk, height: 109 cm, width: 67 cm. Church of São João de Brito, Lisbon. Photo: Miguel Gama.

A bedspread on display at the Museu Francisco Tavares Proença Júnior (Castelo Branco) has embroidery of a Tree of Life growing from a vase flanked by two rocks. Its strong winding branches, spreading symmetrically, with abundant leaves and flowers in full bloom is in tune with the Tree of Life depicted on the triumphal arch (Fig. 24).²⁸

In addition, the winding flowering stems clinging to the triumphal arch and occupying the vault and the walls of the choir area, as well as the fragment of a floral pattern, in what appears to be an imitation of a piece of fabric, occupying the lower register of the wall in the sacristy, present great affinity with the embroidery work of a chasuble belonging to the church of São João de Brito in Lisbon (Fig. 25).²⁹



And even the unmistakably Chinese lion found in the sacristy makes an impressive appearance in a chasuble today kept at the Peabody Essex Museum (Fig. 26).

This approach does not seek to link these textiles in any direct way with the mural painting scheme; nevertheless, such similarities cannot be seen as mere coincidence. Sumptuary goods such as embroidered silks would almost certainly have exerted an extraordinary power of seduction due to the highly decorative effect of their ornamental

Fig. 26. Chasuble (back), China, 17th century, brocaded silk, height: 118 cm, width: 66cm x 88cm. Peabody Essex Museum, Massachusetts, inv. no. AE85947.1. Photo: Peabody Essex Museum.

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solutions and of the wealth and luxury they embodied. And, in the present context, the sharing of decorative solutions between the ritual vestments used in Catholic ceremonies and the paintings that embellish the walls and the ceilings of a church is even more plausible, since we are referring to the same religious environment. Thus, textile specimens such as those selected above, or the pattern books used by the workshops which produced them, must have inspired whoever drafted the Guia Chapel’s mural decoration.³⁰

THE COMMISSION OF THE MURAL DECORATION

As for the commission of the mural decoration, in the absence of any documentary evidence that can provide us with a specific date for its execution or the names of the people involved in the work (artists and patrons), one can only advance on hypothetical grounds.

Although the chapel was already standing by the end of the 17th century, based on a purely stylistic evaluation, I contend that its paintings were the product of a campaign that only came to pass in the 18th century. And given that the fortress was under military tutelage, one can reasonably say that the decoration program would most likely have been paid for by someone at the top of the hierarchy, such as the Captain-general.

The first name that comes to mind is that of Diogo Pinho Teixeira, in command from 1706 to 1710. According to an inscription found in the Guia Chapel’s bell,³¹ Pinho Teixeira, boldly claimed to be both ‘its [chapel] President and Captain-general of this city [Macao]’: ‘ESTE SINO FOI FEITO PARA UZO DESTA ERMIDA DE N. S. DA GUIA EM O ANNO DE 1707 SENDO PREZIDENTE DELLA E CAPITÃO GERAL DESTA CIDADE DIOGO DE PINHO TEIXEIRA’.³²

Thus, the initiative of paying for the decoration of the chapel would have been an eloquent translation of the authority he claims to have over that sacred place.

Yet, one must also take into consideration the date of 1720 which also appears on the shallow grave at the entrance to the temple. Carved at the base of the stone, this date was probably added later to mark the opening or the removal of the gravestone from

its original site. These changes, however, may have taken place while a larger intervention inside the temple was being conducted, such as the decoration of its walls.

If the mural painting of the Guia Chapel was executed around that year, then Antonio da Silva Telo e Meneses, Captain-general from 1719 to 1722, would have been in charge of the commission. By showing his ascendancy over the chapel he would have simply been following in the footsteps of his predecessor who, by placing the bell at the site, had taken the initiative of occupying Guia Hill as a means of affirming his power over Macao.

Even if we are dealing with a private commission related to the temporal sphere, someone from the ecclesiastical milieu had to be involved in the project. On this person would have fallen the responsibility of drafting a theological program in the spirit of the Catholic reform, of providing the iconographic sources to be used and, perhaps, even the responsibility of supervising the works.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

More important than focusing our efforts on identifying a hypothetical patron, it is best to remember that the existence of these paintings was made possible by the multicultural reality of Macao. Here, the exposure to the Chinese culture and craft tradition was by no means a sporadic event; it was part of the daily order.

Today, given the changes in the architectural landscape in the territory, it is not possible to evaluate to what extent the Guia Chapel’s decorative scheme was consciously seeking to emulate or rival the interior of any of the other Christian temples built in Macao. From the ancient Christian buildings, only the carved facade of the church of Saint Paul’s College, erected between 1637 and 1640, stands, and although it constitutes a testimony to the permeability of Chinese ornamental tradition in Western artistic canon, it does not shed much light on how or why the interior of our chapel was engendered.

The Guia Chapel is a small temple with very restricted access, whose decoration, according to our view, derives from a private commission. It would not, therefore, make much sense to envision its hybrid scheme as a product of the accommodation

strategy adopted to better serve pastoral goals, as the paintings were executed primarily to meet the taste of its patron. In this sense, because the Guia Chapel was not a pillar of the evangelical work in Macao, its mural painting, due to the prominent place given to the vernacular ornamentation, may not only be perceived as a product of the multicultural reality of the Luso-Chinese commercial entrepot, but also as a unique testimony of the local elite’s true appreciation for Chinese craftsmanship. **RC**

NOTES

- 1 To my Macanese friend Maria do Mar. The present essay is based on more extensive research work I undertook concerning the Christian heritage of Macao supported by short-term scholarship granted by Fundação Oriente: Isabel Horta Lampreia, *Arte Sacra Cristã em Macau (Inventário: Pintura Mural, Pintura, Escultura)* (mimeo). Report presented to Fundação Oriente in October 2007, 2 vols.
- 2 The Historic Centre of Macao was enlisted in the World Heritage List of UNESCO on 15 July 2005.
- 3 César Guillén-Núñez, ‘Macao’s Heritage: The Guia Lighthouse’, in *Arts of Asia*, July-August, Vol. 22, no. 4, pp. 92-101.
- 4 The first author to draw attention to the building was Jorge Graça, who included a brief description of the chapel in the important work he dedicated to the fortresses of Macao, in the late 1960s. However, no photos of the chapel were included and furthermore, at the time, the mural painting was still hidden beneath layers of whitewash. See, Jorge Graça, *Fortifications of Macau: Their Design and History*. In 2009 a paper dedicated exclusively to Guia Chapel by the researcher Dai Lu was published in Macao. It consisted essentially of the description of the decorative scheme, and the discussion of the various technical aspects related with its execution see Dai Lu 戴璐, *Aomen dongguangyang shan shengmu xue di dian bi hua kao cha bao gao* 澳门东望洋山圣母雪地殿壁画考察报告’ (Report Concerning the Research on Fresco Painting of the Macao Chapel of Our Lady of Guia) in *Wenhua Zazhi* 文化杂志 (Review of Culture), no. 70, pp. 1-52. I would like to thank Francisco Chan for drawing my attention to this article and Professor Ana Cristina Alves (CCCM, IP) for kindly translating it at my request.
- 5 Arquivo Histórico de Macau, Processo n.º 31—Série C, ‘Construção duma fachada da Ermida de Nossa Senhora da Guia’, 25 de Novembro de 1875.
- 6 Concerning the first stage of conservation of the Guia Chapel’s paintings we rely on the report of Teresa Cabral, the mural conservation expert responsible for the works on the nave. Teresa Cabral, ‘Pintura Mural: Capela da Guia (Relatório de Exame e Tratamento de Pintura Mural)’ (mimeo). Report presented to DPC/ICM, 1998.
- 7 In 1845, José Manuel de Carvalho e Sousa states in his ‘History of Macao’ that the chapel was founded in 1560, assigning the initiative to ‘two Portuguese devotees’. However, this author does not provide any material or documentary evidence thereof. See José Manuel de Carvalho e Sousa, ‘História de Macau’, in *Boletim do Instituto Luís de Camões*, no. 3-4, Vol. III, pp. 329-393.

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- 8 This was the case of Penha Chapel which was founded in 1620, as the result of a vow made by the passengers of the São Bartolomeu. About to see the vessel being seized by the Dutch on their way to Japan, the men asked for the interception of Our Lady of Penha de França, promising to raise a small temple in Macao where her image would be revered if they escaped. António da Silva Rego, *Documentos para a História das Missões do Padroado Português*, Vol. XI, pp. 166-167.
- 9 Fact already pinpointed by César Guillén-Núñez. See Guillén-Núñez, ‘Macao’s Heritage...’, p. 92.
- 10 For the plans of Macao see Francisco Roque de Oliveira and Jin Guo Ping, ‘Mapas de Macau dos Séculos XVI e XVII. Inventário, Descrição e Análise Comparativa de Espécimes Cartográficos Europeus e Chineses’, in *Review of Culture*, International Edition, no. 17, pp. 133-169. I would like to thank Professor Francisco Roque de Oliveira for his clarification about the story and destiny of this plan.
- 11 Biblioteca da Ajuda, 49-V-5, ‘Ánua do Colégio de Macau de 27 de Janeiro de 1604’, fl. 21, in *Cartas Anuais do Colégio de Macau (1594-1627)*, p. 115. (a shrine of Our Lady of Guia, which is out of town, situated in a high mountain; my translation).
- 12 Regarding the several defensive work campaigns that took place in Macao see Pedro Dias, *A Urbanização e a Arquitectura dos Portugueses em Macau. 1557-1911*, specially pp. 87-92. On the Dutch invasion see Charles Boxer, ‘A derrota dos Holandeses em Macau no ano de 1622”, *Estudos para a História de Macau*, pp. 19-102; Rui Manuel Loureiro, ‘Macao and the Dutch Threat’, in *Macao during the Ming Dynasty*, edited by Luis Filipe Barreto, pp. 68-86.
- 13 After the Dutch invasion, the Crown, represented by the Viceroy of the State of India, sought to ensure a more effective presence in Macao, nominating a Captain-general or Governor from 1623 onwards. Assigned for a three-year period, this representative of the central government, who was also responsible for the military tutelage, had to articulate with the institution responsible for the city’s affairs, the Senate of Macao, which brought together the leading figures of the local mercantile elite. See António Manuel Hespanha, *Panorama da História Institucional e Jurídica de Macau*, and Luís Filipe Barreto, *Macao: Saber e Poder*, pp. 151-161.
- 14 Frei Paulo da Trindade, OFM, *Conquista Espiritual do Oriente*, Vol. III, p. 527.
- 15 António Bocarro, *O Livro das Plantas de todas as Fortaleza, Cidades e Povoações do Estado da Índia Oriental*, Vol. II, p. 263.
- 16 On the stone placed above the arch of the fort’s entrance one can read: ESTE FORTE MANDOU FAZER A CIDADE A SUA CUSTA PELO

ARTE

ARTS

CAPITAO DA ARTILHARIA ANT RIBR RAIA COMESOUSE EN SET´EBRO DE 1637 ACABOUSE EN MARCO D 1638 SENDO GENERAL DA CAMARA DE NORONHA (This fort was comissioned by the city at its own expense under the captain of artillery Ant[onio] Rib[ei]r[o] Raia starting in September 1637 ending in March 1638 the general then being da camara de Noronha). My translation.

17 Pedro Dias points out that this building remains faithful to Portuguese architectural models and, just like the fortress, its plan was most likely the responsibility of a military engineer. Pedro Dias, *A Urbanização...*, pp. 174-176.

18 'Here lies at this door the sacristan by venture since its body is not worthy of such an honorable grave 1687. 1720 Year' (my translation).

19 The compact structure that frames today's entry and supports the choir probably dates from the 19th century; however we do not know whether it is the product of the same building works that introduced the changes in the facade that we have mentioned previously. It is probably contemporary to the altar that stands today in the chapel and the small niche opened in the wall of the nave.

20 Emile Mâle, *L'art religieux après le Concile de Trente: Étude sur l'iconographie de la fin du XVIe siècle, du XVIIe, du XVIIIe siècle: Italie, France, Espagne, Flandres*, pp. 309-313.

21 The motif of the 'tree of life' gained a new impetus in the modern period, becoming one of the most widespread themes represented in the applied arts produced in the East to the Western clientele. Its rapid adoption and reinterpretation by local craftsman unfamiliar with the European mind frame, is due to the transversal character of this symbol, present in several cultural and religious traditions. See, for instance, Isabel Mayer Godinho Mendonça "‘A Árvore da Vida’ nas Artes Decorativas: Os Sentidos de um Imagem, entre o Ocidente e o Oriente" in *Actas do 2.º Colóquio de Artes Decorativas: As Artes Decorativas e a Expansão Portuguesa – Imaginário e Viagem*, pp. 91-113.

22 Although the production and wider circulation of Namban lacquerware was comprised between the end of the 16th century and 1640, way before the period I believe the commission of the mural painting took place, as I illustrate further down the text, these precious devotional objects would undoubtedly have been found in Macao even after its commercial relations with Japan had ceased to exist. As objects intended for Catholic worship, one would have expected to find them first and foremost in the possession of the Church members, notably the priests of the Society of Jesus established in Macao since around the 1560's. It was in the context of their Mission on Japanese soil, and with the purpose of assisting the pastoral service as instruments of conversion and devotion, that the small oratories were first produced. These consisted in small framing devices lacquered in black and decorated in gold and mother-of-pearl inlay, made to hold images of religious nature usually painted in oil on copper. However, the interest aroused by these items largely surpassed the ecclesiastic circles, as wealthy merchants and noblemen would also come to covet such exquisite artefacts of exotic provenance. Besides being used for private devotion in the domestic household, Namban oratories were collectible items in their own right, together with other lacquerware goods produced in Japan for the export market. On this subject, for which we provide here a very schematic overview given that this is not the focus of this essay, see: Maria Helena Mendes Pinto, *Namban Lacquerware in Portugal*; Oliver Impey, Christian Jörg, *Japanese Export Lacquer: 1580-1850*, specially pp. 186-189; Luísa Vinhais, Jorge Welsh, eds., *After the Barbarians II: Namban*

Works of Art for the Japanese, Portuguese and Dutch Markets, specially pp. 246-253; Alexandra Curvelo da Silva Campos, *Nuvens Douradas e Paisagens Habitadas*, pp. 194-204.

23 Teresa Cabral, in her report, called attention to the fact that the fictive tile panelling, for example, was a solution found in mural paintings programs, from the 17th and 18th centuries, decorating small churches located in the Alentejo area, in the South of Portugal (Teresa Cabral, *Pintura Mural...*, p. 13). However, it seems more promising to inscribe Guia's mural decoration in a trans-regional context, as we should recall that the city of Goa, the head of the Portuguese State of India and the heart of the Roman Catholic Church in the East, became a centre of intense artistic activity in this period. Indeed, we know that some of the churches and convents that were founded at the time were decorated with wall paintings. In-depth studies about these buildings are at an early stage, however, in the future, these should also take into consideration the decorative program of the Guia Chapel. See Pedro Dias, *História da Arte Portuguesa no Mundo (1415-1822)*, Vol. I, pp. 230-234; Vítor Serrão, 'Painting and Worship in Goa during the Period of Iberian Union: the Santa Mónica Monastery at Monte Santo (c. 1606-1639) and its Artists' in *Oriente*, no. 20, pp. 11-50.

24 The similarity between textiles and some of the motifs painted in the Chapel was initially established by Teresa Cabral in her conservation report (Teresa Cabral, *Pintura Mural...*, p. 13).

25 For a comprehensive understanding of the sino-portuguese textile production in the Modern Period see Maria João Pacheco Ferreira, *As Alfaias Bordadas Sinoportuguesas (Séculos XVI a XVIII)*; Idem, *Os Textéis Chineses em Portugal nas Opções Decorativas Sacras de Aparato (Séculos XVI-XVIII)* (mimeo). Ph.D. dissertation, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, 2 vols., Oporto, 2011. <http://repositorio-aberto.up.pt/handle/10216/56346>.

26 Maria João Pacheco Ferreira, *As Alfaias Bordadas Sinoportuguesas Datáveis dos Séculos XVI a XVIII: Contextualização, Caracterização e Análise* (mimeo). M.A. dissertation, Universidade Lusíada, Lisbon, 2002, Vol. III, entry no. 12. (This work was published in a single volume (Maria João Pacheco Ferreira, *As Alfaias Bordadas Sinoportuguesas (Séculos XVI a XVIII)*), however, the inventory of all the textile specimens collected for this study, which included a description of each piece as well as an analysis of the technical aspects involved in the execution of the embroidery, was not included).

27 Ibid., Vol. III, entry no. 11.

28 I would like to thank Dr. Maria João Pacheco Ferreira for kindly informing me about the Chinese origin of this embroidered cloth.

29 Maria João Pacheco Ferreira, *As Alfaias Bordadas Sinoportuguesas Datáveis dos Séculos XVI a XVIII...*, Vol. III, entry n.º 74.

30 Regarding these religious vestments of Chinese origin and its reception in the Portuguese market see: Maria João Pacheco Ferreira, *As Alfaias Bordadas...*, Chapter 3. 'As Alfaias Litúrgicas Bordadas Sinoportuguesas no Quadro do Relacionamento entre Portugal e a China, entre os Séculos XVI e XVIII', pp. 57-80; Idem, *Os Textéis Chineses em Portugal nas Opções Decorativas Sacras...*, Chapter 4. 'Os Têxteis Chineses nas Celebrações Sacras Extraordinárias Nacionais', pp. 276-345.

31 The bell dates from the 1824, but it reproduces the inscription contained in the original one, cast at the beginning of the 18th century.

32 "This bell was made for the use of this chapel of Our Lady of Guia in the Year of 1707 being its President and Captain-General of this city Diogo de Pinho Teixeira'. My translation.

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