

Reversed Gaze from Southeast Pacific Region Macao in Anglophone Newspapers

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INTRODUCTION

The local community of Macao has drawn the attention of the world during the last decade as it underwent the transformation of sovereignty from Portugal to the China in 1999, and then an economic miracle since 2004.¹ To explore the social and cultural histories of Macao in South China, many scholars focussed on its relationships with Portugal, China, and Japan which have generated much excellent research in those areas.² In fact, as an international port city, Macao has a long-term relationship associated with the surrounding Southeast Pacific region, especially British colonies like Hong Kong, Singapore and Australia, which reflected wide press coverage of English-language newspapers since the mid-19th century.³

To a certain extent, its international image, as well as the identities of the people of Macao, have been shaped by those Anglophone outsider's public opinions. Such observations provided important and interesting cross-references to the evolution of Macao during the last century. The author adopted the approach of 'reversed gaze' used by both historians and anthropologists to contrast the imagination and

impressions of those English data of Portuguese Macao.⁴ The selected articles from such historical newspapers dating from the mid-19th century to the 20th century will be cited and examined in this research paper. The value of the press coverage from mass media to the study of Macao's perception in the Anglophone readers will be assessed.

FROM BARRACOONS TO 'MONTE CARLO'

As most of the old newspapers available for historians researching Macao in English from Australia, Singapore and Hong Kong were printed during the mid-19th century, they witnessed the decline of the international status of Macao and the transformation of its economic structure after the Opium War between China and Great Britain. Of course, from a more international point of view, the colonisation of Macao by Portuguese since the arrival of Governor João Maria Ferreira do Amaral from 1846 to 1849 has drawn much attention to Westerners as it brought fundamental change to the nature of this oldest European settlement in China.

Unfortunately, Governor Amaral was murdered, which drew the reader's attention to the unstable political situation of Macao. The reporter of *The Sydney Morning Herald* commented on the incident just five days later to the Australian readers:

I must try and give you an idea of the painful excitement we have been thrown into during the last few days, by the atrocious murder of the

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'Assassination of the Governor of Macao'. *The Illustrated London News*, 1849.

Governor of Macao. The London papers will give you a passing notice of the catastrophe, to be forgotten, I dare say, before the arrival of the succeeding mail; but were they better informed upon the true bearings of the case, it would assuredly command the serious attention both of Ministers and Parliament....When the English were obliged, during the late war, to retire from Canton, Macao became the only neutral spot in China where property and person were secure, and, consequently, thither all the Europeans removed. During all this period, until the termination of the war, Macao was in a thriving and flourishing condition, notwithstanding the oppressive local duties with which she had to contend.⁵

As the British-established Hong Kong colony took up the commerce-leading status of Macao, it was no longer the only 'thriving and flourishing' 'neutral spot' of China.⁶ Traditional Chinese historians used to accuse the Portuguese government in Macao of encouraging the notorious coolie trade 'to contend' with the adverse economic situation. However, *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported another side of the migration story in 1850:

At the same time, reports of kidnapping and every atrocity, connected with the coolie traffic are again rife. France and Portugal have been most attacked for this, but the French vessel has now sailed, and the Portuguese government has put a stop to the traffic being carried on under its flag. In fact, all the barracoons at Macao are

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now empty, except one belonging to a French emigration agent and from a report of the Procurator now before us was that since the 1st March upwards of eighty coolies who had been kidnapped have been sent back to their friends at the expense of the Macao government, independently of those who have been given up to their families on the spot.⁷

It seems that the Macao government did try to control the coolie trade at this stage. However, with the commercial competition of Hong Kong, the serious social and economic problems forced the Macao government to adopt a new policy to deal with this embarrassing condition. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported the changes two decades later, the Australian journalist claiming that in 1871:

We find, however, that the first of this band to resort to slave labour is the last to relinquish it.... the Portuguese Government is encouraging the deportation of Chinese immigrants from Macao, in a manner totally at variance with the present state of public opinion, and disgraceful to humanity. These Chinese emigrants are wanted for Peru.... The vessels that are plying between Macao and Peru are not fitted for the free passage of voluntary emigrants, but are floating prisons.⁸

The notorious coolie traders made use of Macao as a base for them to transport the Chinese population to Latin American countries, like Peru and Cuba, for slavery. Macao became a port city notorious for such controversial business. Some Singaporean reporter even criticised the attitude of the Portuguese government to help return Macao back to its former regular trading glory.

The newly organised commercial company of Timor and Macao, with a capital of \$ 1,000,000, whose object is to promote Portuguese commercial enterprise in the Far East, has not received the support of the Portuguese Government. It appears that the Portuguese Government have no intention of assisting Macao to regain that glory which once belonged to premier foreign settlement in the Far East.⁹

Such serious criticism like 'no intention of assisting Macao to regain that glory' would hardly be found in local newspapers. Actually, there was another business that brought good revenue to Macao government: gambling. The nicknames of 'An Eastern Monte Carlo'

or 'Monte Carlo of the East', were commonly found in the newspapers of Singapore and Australia in the early 20th century.¹⁰ As both Singapore and Australia had a significant Chinese population in their countries that had also migrated from South China, some of the men from the working classes at that time were quite addicted to gambling, also. The interest of both the government of Macao and Singapore to promote their tourism by casinos is actually the same as described in *The Straits Times* in 1903. This was a century earlier than the formal liberalisation of casino monopoly in Macao and the arrival of the Venetian Group in Singapore.

Portuguese government officials, in fact, tried their best to restore social order. For example, the *Barrier Miner* reported the suppression of the Chinese pirates in Coloane (Colowan Island) in August 1910. The serious attack even attracted the attention of the Australian mass media as '[t]he Portuguese-gunboat Macao fired 400-shots in one day, and wrecked and shot fire to the pirate-village'.¹¹ Such impressions even reappeared in another Australian newspaper a decade later, when the reporter mocked the economic concession that made the 'ancient Macao to be changed to the Monte Carlo of the Far East. Macao was ceded to the Portuguese by the Chinese in return for their services in suppressing pirates. Now it is the pirates' home nest!'¹² In a word, most of these records on Macao were focussed on the decline of Macao and the rise of the coolie trade, gambling industry and piracy in this Pacific Portuguese enclave. For now, Macao had become 'an Eastern Las Vegas' which relied heavily on its leading gambling industry.

DISTURBANCE YEARS
OF PACIFIC WARS AND RIOT

In the 1930s the threat of another World War was obvious as the rise of aggressive Nazi Germany adopted an expansionist policy. As there was a rumour that the French had tried to buy Macao from Portugal in 1884 during the Sino-French War, and the Portuguese Salazar regime was, to some extent, a pro-fascist one, the rumour of selling Macao had come again from Nazi Germany, which alerted the English media in Hong Kong.¹³

Articles in the German press, suggesting that Portugal might sell Macao to some other power, which the newspapers scrupulously avoided

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mentioning have evoked an indignant denial... The Legation asserts that Portugal does not barter her territory.¹⁴

Unfortunately, the nightmare of Hong Kong came six years later, as the Japanese army, the ally of Nazi Germany, attacked there. Japan occupied both Hong Kong and Singapore after 1941 and 1942 respectively. Australian newspapers played an important role for historians providing valuable data on the war-time Macao as many of the British citizens moved there during those war years. However, the mass media of Australia did not relay much news directly from Macao even though neither of them were to fall into the hands of Japanese during the Pacific War. Under such a disconnected situation, the Australian *Sunday Times* could only express their optimistic concern to South China in an article titled 'Hongkong—Forgotten Bastion of the East' by tracing some early history between Hong Kong and Macao:

One of the most interesting peoples in Hongkong are the so called Portuguese. They are descendants of the early Portuguese garrison and settlers who founded Macao, a short journey by coastal steamer from Hongkong.... In those days white women were scarce, and the Portuguese inter-married with the Chinese. Many migrated from Macao to Hongkong, where as a Catholic community of several thousand strong they formed a hard-working, stable element.¹⁵

The above description of Macao was surely correct, but the reporter might have forgotten one very important fact: most of the Portuguese or Macanese in Hong Kong and Shanghai had fled to Macao or some other places because of the coming of war. In other words, the brave and hard-working Portuguese would hardly have been present to defend Hong Kong at that time in 1943.

Although Macao was not disturbed by the aggression of the Japanese, there was a serious local conflict between the leftists and the Portuguese colonial authority from the late 1940s to the mid-1960s.¹⁶ Just after the Pacific War, the Civil War between Chinese Nationalist and Chinese Communist from 1946 to 1949 created instability to the Portuguese enclave in South China. In 1947, the Portuguese Government gave its official reply to recent agitation in South China for the return of Macao to China. 'Colonel Duarte, Portuguese Minister of Colonies, said that Portugal

did not abdicate her rights in Macao and 'will answer violence with violence'.¹⁷

Portugal could really defend their rule and interest in Macao since neither Chinese Nationalists nor Chinese Communists would be able to reoccupy Macao during the Civil War period. The decolonisation became a major trend after the Pacific War, and the Communists were also among the supporters to encourage the people under colonial rules to rebel against the coloniser. Strangely enough, there was an interesting article from *The Straits Times* dated 17 August 1965, just eight days after Singapore was separated from the Federation of Malaysia and the independence on 9 August 1965, which asked an excellent question on the complicated political situation in the South-East Pacific—'Why China leaves Macao alone'?

The People's Republic of China yields to no revolutionary government in the world in its encouragement of African liberation movements struggling to free Mozambique, Angola and Guinea from Portuguese colonialism. They supply funds and arms for the anti-Portuguese rebels. Why then does it do nothing about Macao, Portugal's tiny colonial possession perched like a pimple on the Chinese mainland?¹⁸

The Singaporeans share a similar colonial experience, so that they were right to predict something would happen in such an atmosphere of decolonisation. They predicted the Chinese might try to achieve their goal of getting back Macao from Portuguese colonial rule. Almost twelve months later, Chinese Leftists in Macao started their anti-Portuguese campaign which was known as the so-called 1.2.3 Incident'.

The riots against Portuguese authorities came suddenly on 3 December 1966, and the Portuguese government might have somewhat underestimated the instability made by the Leftists:

The situation in Macao, the tiny Portuguese enclave adjoining the China mainland, was quiet this morning following two days of rioting by leftist Chinese protesting against alleged police brutality. According to a Radio Macao broadcast early today, there were no further incidents.²⁰

In fact, the incident became an open conflict between the Chinese and the Portuguese community. As the Portuguese colonial government in Macao tried to suppress the negative news from the city, many foreign

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journalists like the Singaporean *Straits Times* might have been misled. The incident ended on 28 January 1967 when the Portuguese government of Macao signed a statement of apology to the representatives of the Chinese Communist Party.

FRIENDSHIP AND 'COMPETITIONS'

Macao and Hong Kong are twin cities of the coastal region of the Pearl River Delta and usually the reporters liked to associate and compare these two cities with Canton (Guangzhou), the capital city of Guangdong Province, also in the Pearl River Delta. For example, an Australian newspaper article stated, 'Macao is an old Portuguese settlement, about 10 hours' steam from Canton, and something less from Hong Kong' in 1878.²¹

As there was a prominent Portuguese community in Hong Kong, Club Lusitano, a club for Portuguese and Macanese, was formed.²² There was quite a lot of press coverage of Club Lusitano in Hong Kong's old newspapers, especially the important events on 'Portugal's Days during the pre-Pacific War years:

The governor of Hong Kong has sent the following telegram to His Excellency the Governor of Macao....It is a source of great satisfaction that the ancient friendship of our countries is so happily reflected in the cordial relations existing between Macao and Hongkong.²³

Governor William Peel, the governor of Hong Kong in 1934, sent a telegram to Macao to re-emphasise the close relations between these two enclaves in the Southeast Pacific. In return, Governor António José Bernardes de Miranda of Macao replied with a message to Hong Kong. This was surprising as it was rare to see a full text Portuguese message in an English newspaper.

The reason for such a presentation might be due to the fact either that the major readers of this message were Portuguese, or they did not have a regular Portuguese-English translator in the editorial office of *The Hong Kong Telegraph* at that time.²⁴ Even on 21 June 1941, almost at the edge of the Pacific War, the close relations between Macao and Hong Kong had not changed:

His Excellency the Governor, Sir Geoffry Northcote, was the guest of the President, Hon. Mr. Leo d'Almada, Jnr, and the Committee of the

PORTUGAL'S DAY

MACAO GOVERNOR'S
REPLY TO MESSAGE

His Excellency the Governor has received the following telegram from His Excellency the Governor of Macao:

"Extremamente sensibilizado pelas amáveis palavras que vossa por si e pela Colónia de Hongkong se dignou enviarme e a Colónia de Macau em seu penhorante telegrama e ainda pelas mais provas de cordialidade com que quiz honrarnos muito reconhecidamente agradeço em meu nome e no da Colónia de Macau tao grande gentileza fazendo sinceros votos pela felicidade do grande povo ingler e em particular da Colónia de Hongkong.—Miranda, Governador."

'Portugal's Day. Macao Governor's reply to Message', *The Hong Kong Telegraph*, 6 October 1934, p. 20.

Club Lusitano yesterday, when a film recording the recent visit of His Excellency Commander G.M. Teixeira Governor of Macao, and the Madame Teixeira was screened.²⁵

Other informal activities of Club Lusitano were also reported which reflected the Portuguese community having its own tradition and history. For example, on 24 July 1937, 'On his way to Portugal after 25 years in Macao Dr. Jose [*sic* - José] Caetano Soares was given a farewell at the Club Lusitano yesterday'.²⁶ The Portuguese community in Macao and Hong Kong was actually closely linked to Portugal by such personal networks.

Surprisingly, besides the description of Macao as a close friend of Hong Kong on such formal occasions, much newspaper coverage from Hong Kong highlighted the 'competition' in sports activities. Titles of articles like 'Macao Team Held to A Drawn Game, Brilliant Defence by Visiting Side' or 'Hongkong Interport Team Wins: Beats Macao by Two Goals' could easily be found in Hong Kong newspapers which showed the community/ies of both enclaves were close playmates in sport grounds.²⁷

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CONCLUSION

In most cases, Macao was described as a place in crisis and with social-economic problems, like the coolie trade, gambling, piracy and riots in the Southeast Pacific, as reported in those Anglophone newspapers. To some extent, such records reflected the reality of historic Macao which encountered a period of hardship during the last century and a half. The comments from the newspapers of Australia, Singapore, and Hong Kong were theoretically interest-free, which made them observe this Portuguese enclave with a relatively neutral attitude. Sometimes, these Anglophone

newspapers could successfully provide a perspective on the Macao situation from a larger regional context, even though there may be some minor mistakes and misunderstandings. For example, *The Straits Times* wrongly stated that '[i]n the past, Macao used to just sit and wait for tourists. In recent years, the tourist authorities of this sleepy little Portuguese enclave on the southern rim of China went a step ahead' which ignored the fact that the Macao government started to promote Macao tourism long before the 1960s! The Anglophone newspapers provided a good reversed gaze perspective to compare with the Portuguese and Chinese newspapers when historians conduct their research. **RC**

NOTES

- 1 Such difference spellings of Macao have long confused many readers and need further clarification. Macao is the Portuguese spelling of this city and sometimes been used in English documents. Macao is the common English name for that city in most of the Anglophone world. For example, according to an Australian newspaper article published in 1941, 'Sir John Bowring, sometime Governor of Hongkong, in a rhapsodical moment once called Macau or Macao...' which showing that the spelling of Macao was never standardised even in the past two centuries. See 'Macau: Oldest Colony in The Far East. Gem of the Orient Earth. City of the Past'. *Barrier Miner*, Thursday 13 March, 1941, p. 5. It was a very common phenomenon for some other port cities of the 19th century to have many difference spellings of their name. For instance, Hong Kong was commonly written as 'Hongkong' or sometimes 'Hong kong' in the 19th century. The term 'Hong Kong' was commonly used or being 'standardised' since 1920s'.
- 2 Some of the examples of this research include: Roderich Ptak, *Portugal in China: Kurzer Abriß der portugiesisch-chinesischen Beziehungen und der Geschichte Macaus im 16. und beginnenden 17. Jahrhundert*. Bad Boll: Klemmerberg-Verlag 1980; John E. Wills, *Embassies and Illusions: Dutch and Portuguese Envoys to K'ang-hsi, 1666-1687*. Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1984; Lourenço Maria da Conceição, *Macau entre Dois Tratados com a China: 1862-1887*. Macao: Instituto Português do Oriente, 1988; Armando Cortesão, *Primeira Embaixada Europeia à China. O Boticário e Embaixador Tomé Pires e a Sua 'Suma Oriental'*. Macao: Instituto Português do Oriente, 1990; Roderich Ptak (with Peter Haberzettl), *Macau im Wandel. Fünf Studien zur Geschichte und Wirtschaft des Territoriums in der jüngeren Vergangenheit*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1990; João de Deus Ramos, *História das Relações Diplomáticas entre Portugal e a China*. Macao: Instituto Português do Oriente, 1991; Alfredo Gomes Dias, *Macau e a I Guerra do Ópio*. Macao: Instituto Português do Oriente, 1993; Camões Chi-keung Tam 譚志強, *Aomen Zhuquan Wenti Shimo, 1553-1993* 澳門主權問題始末: 1553-1993. English title: *Disputes Concerning Macau's Sovereignty between China and Portugal (1553-1993)*. Taipei: Yongye Chuban She, 1994; Ângela Guimarães, *Uma Relação Especial: Macau e as Relações Luso-Chinesas, 1780-1844*. Lisbon: Edição Cies, 1996; João de Deus Ramos, *Estudos Luso-Orientais: Séculos XII-XIX*. Lisbon: Academia Portuguesa da História, 1996; Jorge Manuel Santos Alves; pref. Luís Filipe Barreto, *Um Porto entre Dois Impérios, Estudos sobre Macau e as Relações Luso-Chinesas*. Macao: Instituto Português do Oriente, 1999; Jorge Manuel Santos Alves (coord.), *Portugal e a China: Conferências nos Encontros de História Luso-Chinesa*. Lisbon: Fundação Oriente, 2000; Alfredo Gomes Dias, *Portugal, Macau e a Internacionalização da Questão do Ópio (1909-1925)*. Macao: Livros do Oriente, 2004; Jin Guoping 金国平, Wu Zhiliang 吴志良, *Guo Shizi Men 过十字门 (Abrindo as Portas do Cerco)*. Macao: Aomen Chengren Jiaoyu Xuehui, 2004; António Vasconcelos de Saldanha, *O Tratado Impossível: Um Exercício de Diplomacia Luso-chinesa num Contexto Internacional em Mudanças: 1842-1887*. Lisbon: Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, 2006; Moisés Silva Fernandes, *Macau na Política Externa Chinesa, 1949-1979*. Lisbon: Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2006; Jorge Dias, *No Adito da Ásia: Episódios da Aventura Portuguesa no Oriente*. Macao: Instituto Português do Oriente, 1994; João Paulo Oliveira e Costa, *A Descoberta da Civilização Japonesa pelos Portugueses*. Macao: Instituto Cultural de Macau/Instituto de História de Além-Mar, 1995, and many others.
- 3 For the history of those Anglophone regions, Ming Chen 陈鸣, *Xianggang Baoye Shigao (1841-1911)* 香港报业史稿 (1841-1911) (A History of the Press in Hong Kong, 1841-1911). Hong Kong: Huaguang Baoye Youxian Gongsi, 2005; Li Gucheng 李谷城, *Xianggang Baoye Shi Xinlun* 香港报业史新论 (New Studies on History of the Press in Hong Kong. Xianggang: Li Gucheng, 1999); Paul Siu-nam Lee, *National Communication and Development: a Comparative Study of Four British Colonies: Nigeria, Guyana, Singapore and Hong Kong*. Ann Arbor: Unpublished Ph.D. thesis typescript, University of Michigan, 1986, and V. Kirkpatrick, R. Isaacs, *Two Hundred Years of Sydney Newspapers: A Short History*. New South Wales: Rural Press Ltd, 2003.

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- 5 'China Extracts. The Murder of Governor Amaral'. From a Correspondent of the *Colonial Magazine*. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Monday, 27 August 1849, p. 3.
- 6 For the changing of the status of Macao after the 1840s, please refer to Vincent Wai-kit Ho, 'Duties and Limitations The Role of United States Consuls in Macao, 1849-1869', in Paul Van Dyke ed., *Americans and Macao: Trade Smuggling and Diplomacy on the South China Coast*. Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 2012, Chapter 9, pp. 145-154 (also notes on pp. 209-215).
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 (This is an untitled article)', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Monday, 23 October 1871, p. 4.
- 9 'Latest China Share Quotations', *Straits Times Weekly Issue*, 14 May 1884, p. 2.
- 10 'An Eastern Monte Carlo'. *The Straits Times*, 31 March 1903, p. 2 and 'Macao. Monte Carlo of the East'. *The Sydney Morning Herald* Saturday, 20 August 1921, p. 7.
- 11 'Chinese Pirates. Bombarded in their Lair. Strenuous Fighting at Colowan Island'. *Barrier Miner* Wednesday, 10 August 1910, p. 7.
- 12 'Macao. Monte Carlo of the East'. *The Sydney Morning Herald* Saturday, 20 August 1921, p. 7.
- 13 For the rumor of selling of Macao to France, see Wu Zhiliang, 'Aomen Lishi de "Xiang"、"Yan" Lun' 澳门历史的“香”“烟”论, *Administração: Revista de Administração Pública de Macau*, no. 55, 2002, pp. 116-117; For the influence of the Sino-French War to South China, please refer to Lewis M. Chere, 'The Hong Kong Riots of October 1884: Evidence for Chinese Nationalism?' *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 20 (1980), pp. 54-65 and Lewis M. Chere, *The Diplomacy of the Sino-French War (1883-1885): Global Complications of an Undeclared War*. Indiana: Cross Cultural Publication, 1988.
- 14 'Sale of Macao Denied. Berlin Rumours Contradicted. Portugal Indignant.' *The Hong Kong Telegraph*, 29 May 1935, p. 19. For the relations of António de Oliveira Salazar with Nazi Germany, see Glyn A. Stone, *Spain, Portugal, and the Great Powers, 1931-1941*. Houndmills, England/ New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- 15 'Hongkong—Forgotten Bastion of the East'. *Sunday Times* (Supplement to the *Sunday Times*), Sunday 18 April 1943, p. 12. For a more detail account of the early history of Macao, please refer to António Henrique Rodrigo de Oliveira Marques (dir.), *História dos Portugueses no Extremo Oriente*. Lisbon: Fundação Oriente, 1998-2003), vol. 1 Part 1 'Em Torno de Macau' and vol. 1, Part 2 'De Macau a Periferia'.
- 16 For latest excellent scholarship of this period, please refer to Moisés Silva Fernandes, *Confluência de Interesses: Macau nas Relações Luso-Chinesas Contemporâneas 1945-2005*. Lisbon: Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros, Portugal, 2008.
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- 18 'Why China leaves Macao alone'. *The Straits Times*, 17 August 1965, p. 8.
- 19 José Pedro Castanheira; pref. José Calvet de Magalhães, *Os 58 Dias que Abalaram Macau*. Lisbon: Dom Quixote; Macao: Livros do Oriente, 1999.
- 20 'Macao is quiet as Governor acts on dispute'. *The Straits Times*, 6 December 1966, p. 3.
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- 22 For an illustrated account of the Portuguese (Macanese) community in Hong Kong, please refer to António Manuel Maria Pacheco Jorge da Silva, *The Portuguese Community in Hong Kong: a Pictorial History*. Macao: Conselho das Comunidades Macaenses /Instituto Internacional de Macau, 2007.
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- 25 'Governor of Macao's Visit Recorded'. *The Hong Kong Telegraph*, 21 June, 1941, p. 2.
- 26 'Dr. Soares Leaves. Popular Macao Physician Retouring to Portugal'. *The Hong Kong Telegraph*, 24 July, 1937, p. 5.
- 27 'Macao Team Held to a Drawn Game. Brilliant Defence by Visiting Side'. *The Hong Kong Telegraph*, 2 May, 1938, p. 8, and 'Hongkong Interport Team Wins. Beats Macao by Two Goals'. *The Hong Kong Telegraph*, 17 April, 1939, p. 32.
- 28 'Sleepy Hollow Macao Woos Tourists'. *The Straits Times*, 16 November 1979, p. 9.