



**The urban history of Macao, The Special Administrative Region**  
From a fishermen village to the “Las Vegas of the East”

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AR2A011 Architectural History Thesis  
TU Delft 2021/2022



Figure 1. Picture of Grand Lisboa Hotel (own photo)

## Abstract

With Hong Kong returning to China in 1997 after 156 years of British colonization, under the strong influences of regional politics, the neighboring town – Macao, soon followed this jurisdiction in 1999, making it the second “special administrative region” of China after Hong Kong, and the last Asia colony of Europe. After undergoing a rapid shifting of administrative and legal system change, Macao has experienced its peak of concentrating wealth and economy in the last two decades, backed by its intense gambling and entertainment industry. As a reaction to this economic phenomenon, Macao has eventually received titles like “Las Vegas of the East” and “Monte Carlo of the East” from the international market.

While celebrating the enormous wealth brought by the industry, the impacts that follow have fundamentally transformed the urban setting of Macao, including but not limited to the way people live, experience, local culture, and identity from the past. Furthermore, as this phenomenon has little connection and recognition by the local people, there has been limited research conducted regarding this topic.

This thesis will examine the **urban history of Macao**, the special administrative region, in **chronological order**, looking particularly into the two significant thresholds that shaped the urban development of the Macao SAR: 1st - The arrival of the Portuguese, 2nd the beginning of the casino era, thus, as Macao has such a unique typology that claimed only 32.9 kilometers square of land, which leads to a relatively small area of evaluation compared to the general understanding of “city.” As it concerns a limited area of studies, a longer study period would be more feasible for this thesis.

The research methodology consists of different literature reviews based on books and articles on the history and contemporary Macao and the development of the entertainment industry. Fieldwork and archival research from two government official databases, Macao Foundation and Macao Memories, will also be used as primary and secondary sources.

### Keywords:

Resilience, adaptability, flexibility, necessities, immediate challenges, Casinos, gaming, entertainment, western and eastern, urban planning, reclamation, port city, China, Portugal, Las Vegas, urbanism, Monopoly, Colonization, capitalism, vernacular.



Figure 2. Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge. Unknown Date, Cheek

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Figure 3. Picture of public square in Old Taipa - Largo Maia de Magalhaes, (own photo, 2020)

## Introduction

Macao is one of the two special administrative regions of China that holds the same title as Hong Kong in terms of its political status, practicing its fundamental law under the “one country, two systems” ideology set by the constitutional law of China. After the handover of Macao to China in 1999, the city has experienced a rapid change under the significant economic benefits brought from the gaming industry.

Even though there are different researches conducted regarding the development of Macao, the focuses are primarily on either economics or heritages (colonial past). There are almost limited to none concerning the overall urban development of Macao.

According to Macao Architect and historian Chak Keong Lui (2021), one of the reasons could be the instinctive nature of Macao development, as even in the past, most of the development was to answer the immediate challenges and necessities rather than long terms goals. Moreover, without this long-term vision, the general public does not see the necessity of classifying, analyzing, and recording Macao's urban development.

Seeing this gaps above, this thesis is dedicated to investigate and record the urban history of Macao development; asking the question of ***How has Macao transformed from a fishermen village to the Las Vegas of the East?***





## General Contest.

Geographically, the current administrative region of Macao is situated due east sixty kilometres from Hong Kong, of which the two administrative regions are currently linked by the world's longest sea-crossing bridge with another Chinese city, Zhuhai (**figure 4**). For instance, to practice this unique administrative system, borders are being placed in between each administrative zone. For a Macao citizen to enter China or Hong Kong, a series of borders and customs checks will occur, where the citizen will go through a similar process when entering to a foreign country, and vice versa.

At present, the Macao special administrative region consists of **three islands** and two reclaimed areas; **Macao peninsula** (9.3-kilometer square, connected to Mainland China), **Taipa** (7.9-kilometer square), **Coloane** (7.6-kilometer square), previous reclaimed area **COTAI** (6.0-kilometer square), and newly reclaimed district area A (1.4-kilometer square). Together, they account for 32.9-kilometer squares, proximately ten times smaller than Rotterdam (324.1-kilometer square) and thirty-four times smaller than its sistering city Hong Kong (1,100-kilometer square). It is by far the smallest administrative entity in China. With its current population of six hundred eighty-three thousand two hundred (683,200), it is one of the most densely populated cities ("Location & Time - Macao Government Tourism Office," n.d.).

Historically, the spatial order of the Macao peninsula was dictated mainly by **two geographical factors**: the border to China and the sea. These limited land-use conditions have resulted in almost two-thirds of Macao being reclaimed from the sea (Breitung, 2009).

Architecturally, the importance of the sea is also apparent as it allowed the arrival of the first Portuguese settlement in China, demonstrating a practice of western urbanism in the eastern . Nowadays, an urban phenomenon is happening beneath globalization, politics, and internationalism. The once fishermen's village has inevitably been transformed into a gaming city, with forty-two casinos across the Macao peninsula (25), Taipa, and Cotai (17) ("Gaming Inspection, and Coordination Bureau. Macao SAR," n.d.).

In the first chapter, a brief pre-colonial history of Macao before 1554 will be given to show the simplicity of the predominant lifestyle of Macao through the lens of urban development and social activities.

In the second chapter, the arrival of the Portuguese in 1554 will be discussed to provide an alternative historical background of how the Western ideology of "urban" was introduced to the Eastern land.

In the third chapter, the formal beginning of the Macao casino era in 1970 will be further elaborated on to form a critical understanding of how the small town is being developed to its current state as "Eastern Las Vegas."

In the last chapter, the future urban development of Macao will be investigated to form a general picture of what the town scape of the "Eastern Las Vegas" will be like in the foreseeable time.



Figure 4. West section of Hong Kong - Zhuhai - Macao Bridge (Titled: Taken from a TurboJET after Leaving Macao, 2018).



Figure 5. Temple of A-Ma cau.  
N. (2005). Temple of A-Ma [Photograph].

According to the Macao Foundation<sup>1</sup>, the earliest settlement of Macao was mainly in a temporary and semi-permanent nature (figure 6). A time when fishermen and farmers from the Guangdong province started their agricultural activities in the peninsula, during the end of the Southern Song Dynasty in 1279. Thus, archaeological properties in Macao soil even suggested a different period of Macao's history. Nevertheless, as little to none is officially recorded, the universal date of Macao's historical record generally started when the first temple (Temple of A-Ma, figure 5) was built in 1488, during the Ming Dynasty.

Before the Arrival of the Portuguese, there were only two small-scaled villages settled around the two temples located in the Macao Peninsula: the A-Ma temple<sup>2</sup>, and the A-Ma village<sup>3</sup>; the Guanyin Temple<sup>4</sup>, and the Mong-Ha village<sup>5</sup>.

Shelters were mainly constructed with locally found materials, like bamboo, and phragmites australis. For the fishermen, the fishing boats were essentially used for living, and in Cantonese they are called the “船屋,” “Boathouse” (figure 7) in direct English translation. Besides, the peninsula is be ringed on three sides by the sea; it contains rich seafood resources and a natural harbor for boat parking. It was instinctive that the fishing and shipping industry became the predominant daily activity for the villagers. There was this idiom that perfectly demonstrate the pre-colonial way of life in Macao - In Cantonese “靠山吃山, 靠海吃海,” in English “Mountaineers rely on the mountains, just like those by the waterside profit from water,” a pure ideology to live by during that time.

The early days of the peninsula was recognized as an undeveloped place in both Eastern and Western sense, making its history relatively insignificant compared to what was already happening during the medieval age.

As a result, the historical records of Macao in the 15th to 17th centuries are often informal, limited, and passed down through the form of storytelling, modern archaeological assumptions, and some written records, illustrations from the older generations.



Figure 6. Cabanas de Fai Chi Kei - North Patane Street

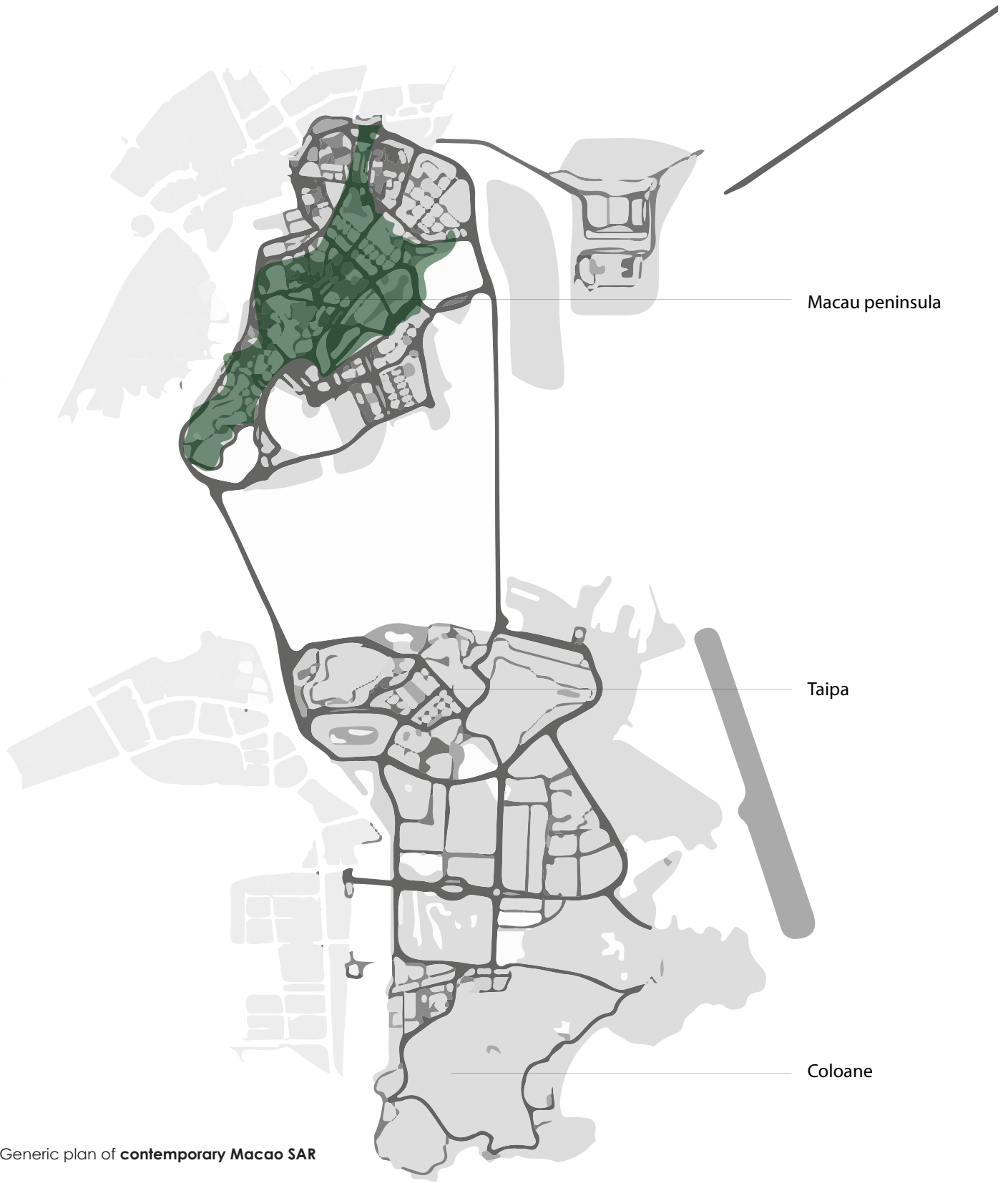
Even though the estimation year is early 20th to mid 20th century, this picture demonstrated an important aspect of how the temperate nature of early days Macao were still maintained throughout centuries. “Cabanas de Fai Chi Kei,” *Memoria De Macao*, n.d. Macao Archive, document no. MNL.09.12.051.F



Figure 7. Vida de pescadores de Macao

An imagery of fisherman and fishing boat that was captured in the early 20th century. (“Vida de Pescadores de Macao,” n.d.) Macao Archive, document no. MNL.02.39.F

1. The Macau Foundation is a public legal entity with administrative, financial and property autonomy under the administration of Macao SAR.
2. “媽閣廟,” the A-Ma temple
3. “媽閣村,” the A-Ma village
4. “觀音廟,” the Guanyin Temple
5. “望廈村,” Mong-Ha village



Macao peninsula

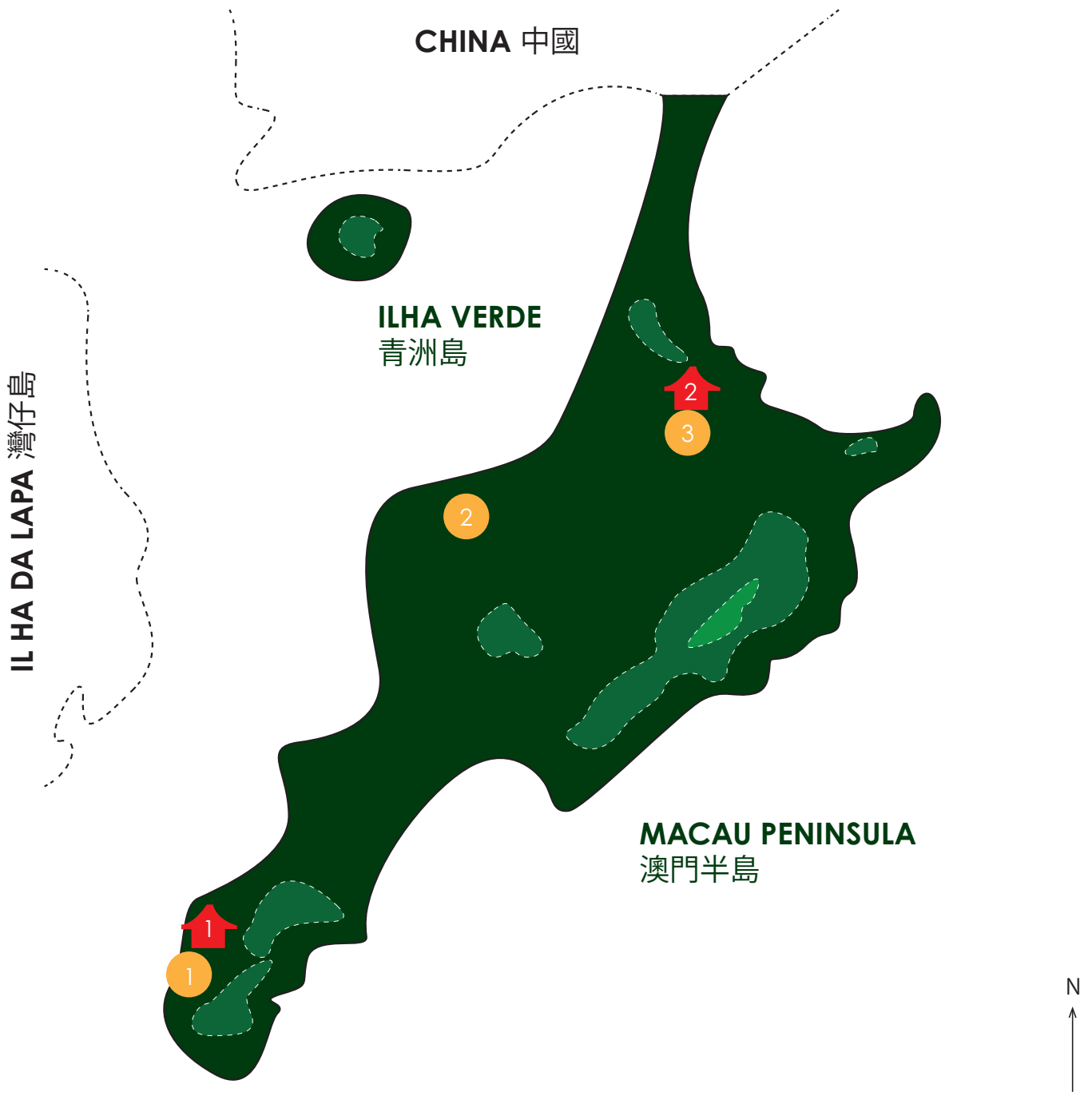
Taipa

Coloane


Generic plan of contemporary Macao SAR

# 1554 A.D

■ Macao in 1554 A.D



Generic plan of Macao peninsula in 1554 A.D

 **Chinese temple**  
 1. The A-Ma temple  
 2. The Guanyin Temple

 **Villages before the Arrival of Portuguese**  
 1. The A-Ma village  
 2. The Patane temporary settlement  
 3. The Mong-Ha village

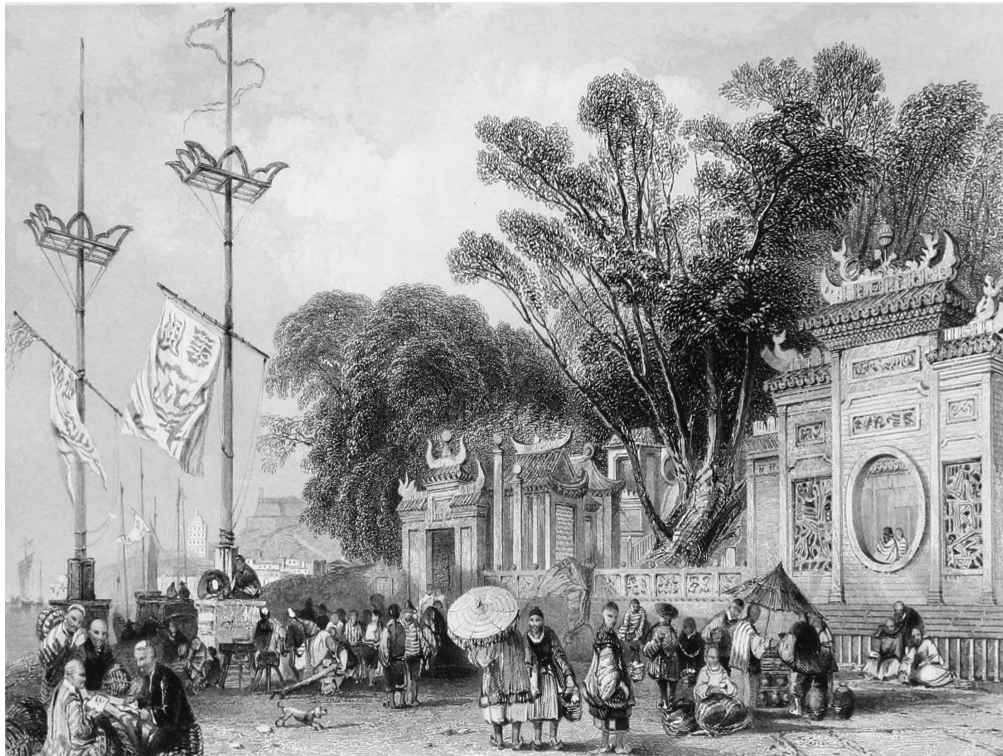


Figure 8. Facade of the great temple at Macao A. Thomas 1843.  
 "China: in a series of views displaying the scenery, architecture, and social habits of that ancient empire." <https://archive.org/details/chinainseriesofv01wrig?view=theater#page/n123/mode/1up>



Figure 9. Macao from Penha Hill / W. Heine ; J. Queen delt. ; P.S. Duval & Co., Phila. 1820  
 A view showing the harbor of Macao, with buildings situated alongside the coast. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/pga.12268/>

Unlike everywhere else, Macao has been following its development order since 400 years ago, isolated in its own bubble. Even in the present moment, the future position of this once "fishermen" town is seeing uncertainty because of its vague and culturally shallow-rooted history. Ironically, some Chinese urban historians even coined Macao as the "Wind Breeze city" to mock its temporarily and disconnections to nowhere, belongs neither to the East nor West (chak keong, 2020).

This chapter will discuss the first phase of Macao's urban development, looking at how the first formal development was triggered by the Portuguese settlers in 1550s when they scratched their first footprint on the "fishermen" village; practicing a Western township ideology on the Eastern soil; shaping the pre-dominant lifestyle and spatial order of the native Chinese.

## 2.1. 1554 - The Arrival of the Portuguese

The first arrival of the Portuguese in China can be dated back to Ming Dynasty (1368 - 1644 A.D). A time when the Portuguese empire had already established various maritime trade routes and colonies across Asia; occupying foreign land with a clear intension of spreading Christianity and seeking spices (Oliveira, 2013).

After the military occupation of Goa in 1509 and Malacca in 1511, as the commercial benefits brought from colonization became immediate, the expeditions of different Asia continents were encouraged by the Portuguese empire (figure 10) (FORTUNA, 1956). Soon after, following the news about the possibilities of establish trading relationship with China, the Portuguese once again sent expedition fleets to the far East to expand their permanent military and trading outposts in the southern Chinese province - Guangdong.

However, it was a dragging process for the Portuguese rather than a smooth occupation like before.

In 1513, the first Portuguese expedition team arrived in Guangzhou, and as they were recognized as "non-acknowledged vassals" under the Chinese imperial laws, trading with the

Portuguese was first forbidden and would be deemed "illegal." In 1521, almost a decade after being expelled by the Chinese authorities, a formation of Portuguese fleets attempted to occupy the Southern coast area by force twice They were defeated, and it cost them two boats and a few casualties on the Portuguese side (Trigo de Sousa, 2009). Despite the tension between the two authorities, there were indeed "illegal" trades activities between the Portuguese merchants and some corrupted Chinese authorities within the Pearl River Delta region, where the Greater Bay Area is situated west side of Hong Kong. Subsequently, after a long period of bribery given by the Portuguese to the local authorities, without permission from the Ming's imperial court, a permit was issued by the Chinese Imperial Maritime Defense in 1554, giving the Portuguese permission to establish a temporary settlement in the peninsular of Macao (Xavier, 2017).

Meanwhile, there was the rising concern of the Chinese government, viewing Japan as a nation having solid alliances from the far West, which included Portugal, by believing in "keeping the enemy close." In 1557, the Ming's court had finally ordered the Mandarin of Guangzhou to give official approval for the Portuguese settlement in Macao, and an official treaty drafted 16 years later in 1573, agreed by both parties that the Portuguese authority would pay an annual rent during the years of occupation (Trigo de Sousa, 2009).

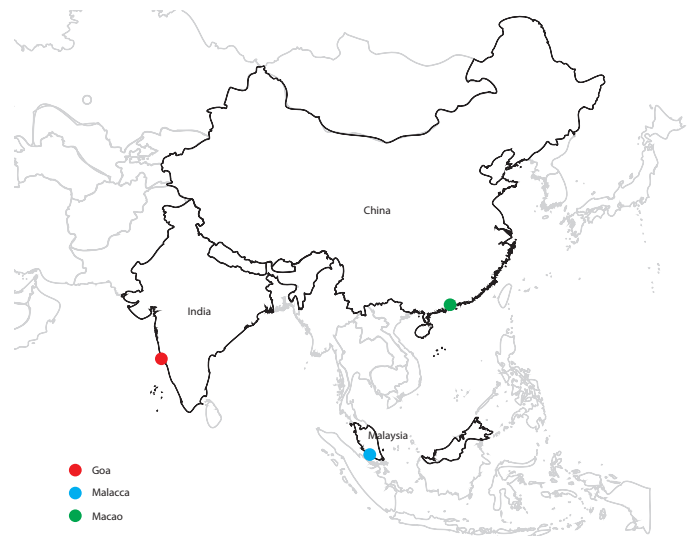


Figure 10. The Map of Asia showing the colonies of the Portuguese back in the 1550s. (own work)



Figure 11. "Bry City Map of Amacao" J. Theodor de Bry and J. Israel de Bry in 1598 for their book "the Petit Voyages" published in 1606. *Macao University of Science and Technology, 2017, pp. 102~103. ISBN 978-99937-53-53-7*

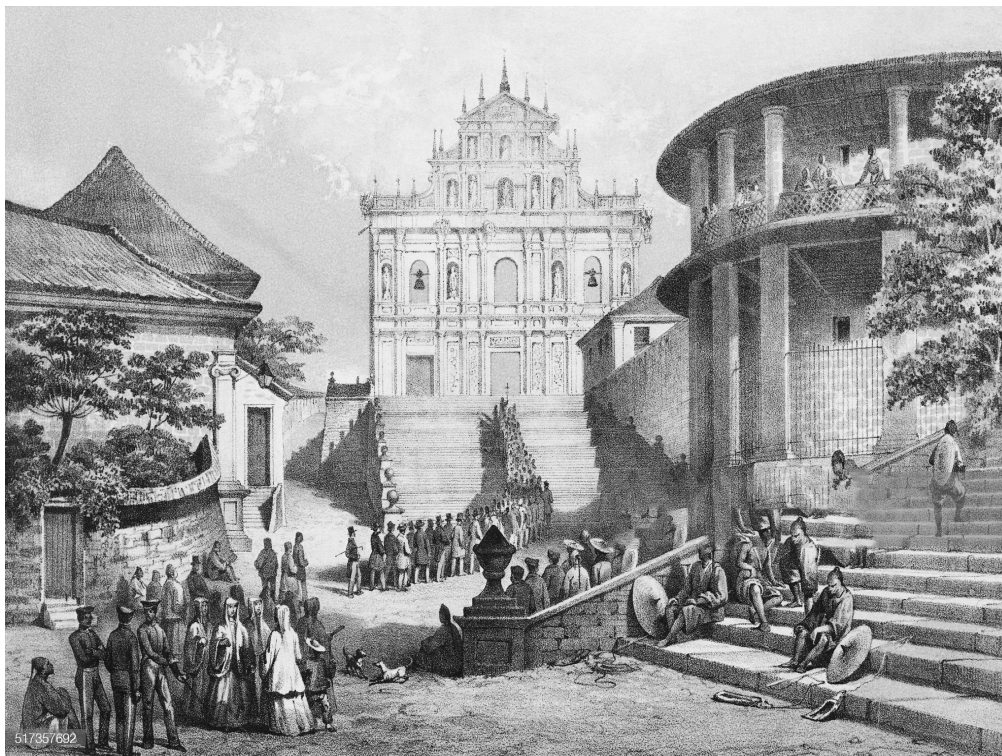


Figure 12. The façade of St. Paul's Church. *Wilhelm Heine, 1854*  
[http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/rise\\_fall\\_canton\\_04/gallery\\_places/pages/cwM\\_1854\\_AH644191\\_StPaul.htm](http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/rise_fall_canton_04/gallery_places/pages/cwM_1854_AH644191_StPaul.htm)



### 2.1.1 “Bry City Map of Amacao”

It is believed to be the earliest record of Macao urban fabrics, an engraved iconography (**figure 11**) created by the publisher’s siblings, J. Theodor de Bry and J. Israel de Bry in 1598 for their book “the Petit Voyages” published in 1606. It is a collection and recording of Europeans who traveled to the world in the 16th century, a cross-century visual record that was inherited from their father, Theodor de Bry, who was also an engraver, editor, and publisher.

There is no evidence of Theodor de Bry traveling to the Macao Peninsula in the 16th century. For instance, from the historical record shown in Macau Museum, Theodore de Bry had spent most of the second half of his life stationed and working in Britain. Nevertheless, this iconography has demonstrated some critical aspects of how the predominant setting of Macao was disrupted by the “new” kind of setting brought by the Portuguese (“Bry City Map of Amacao, ca. 1598 - Memórias de Macao,” n.d.).

The formation of “European town” in a Baroque style imported from 1500s Portugal, can be clearly seen with its religion-centric characteristics. From the illustration, a church-like architecture in masonry appeared in the center of the island, with a bell tower sitting on top, erected as the town’s highest point, immediately followed by a piazza at its front. In contrast to the surrounding, almost the rest of the space is filled with typical gable roof houses varying from one to two-story height maximum; there is also farmland located on the west side of the island. For instance, different activities had also been recorded in the illustration, while on the south-east side of the drawings, people are practicing trades on vessels, the others are meandering on streets; some are walking with an umbrella, some traveling on a litter .

This unique combination of early days Eastern vernacular and Western urban planning fundamentally shifted the way of living for the locals; transforming the once fisherman village that housed only 400 villagers to a strategic maritime trading port for the West and South-east Asia.

According to one of the official archives titled “Cronologia da História de Macao”, in 1564. The population of Macao accounted for roughly five thousand people with a diverse population from Portuguese to local Chinese, from Japanese to Indians. This economic boost pushed Macao to reach its “Golden era”<sup>7</sup> of trading and economics from the late 16th Century to the early 17th Century (Sheng, Tang, & Grydehoj, 2017).

### 2.2. A Port City with Commercial, Religious, and Militant Significance

After the Portuguese established its thriving trading outpost in the peninsula and helped create the “Golden era”<sup>7</sup> of Macao in the 17th Century, the wealth and stability brought from commercial activities led to the Portuguese’s desire to construct a permanent setting on the island. Additionally, with the aid of the religious group - Society of Jesus “IHS”<sup>6</sup> in creating “Acropolis” of the East (**figure 12**); this joined intuition pushed the development of Macao’s urban environment, resulted in the building of Baroque churches, permanent residential buildings in brick, and other urban facilities that draw references from Portugal (Loureiro, n.d.).

As the fortune made by the Portuguese was significant, it eventually caught the attention of different European kingdoms, especially those that had strong sea power.

#### 2.2.1 Case Study - Fortaleza do Monte

Foreseeing the threat that may impose to the peninsula, in 1607, the king of Portugal signed a treaty ordering the construction of a defensive castle wall - Fortaleza do Monte, with military functionality, situated on the highest point of Macao - Santo António (**figure 13**). But the story of Fortaleza do Monte actually begins 40 years before the treaty signed by Filipe II.

According to architect and architectural historian Chak Keong Lui, the record found from “IHS” indicated that the site of Fortaleza do Monte was first portrayed as a place for leisure and entertainment, serving the clergies and stu-

6. “IHS”, The Society of Jesus, or Jesuits. It is one of the oldest religious order from the Catholic Church in Rome.

7. Macao peninsula was One of the most important ports in Ming Dynasty’s “Maritime Silk Road”



Figure 13. Chinese trade watercolor painting. Unknown artist. 1845, Macao Archives, file number: MNL.05.12.20.Icon, [https://www.Macaomemory.mo/entries\\_42b-30d8e35084134886708581e89a780](https://www.Macaomemory.mo/entries_42b-30d8e35084134886708581e89a780)



Figure 14. Fortaleza do Monte (Fortress Hill). 09 Jul 2004 South China Morning Post

dents from the nearby theological seminary. But the vision was abandoned, after the arrival of a high ranked Captain Tristao Vaz da Veiga, as he depicted the potential of developing a defensive system on the highest point of Macao, also seeing the rise of pirates in the peninsula as well as the potential threats from other European kingdoms.

### A Mud Wall 1568

In 1568, the first castle wall was constructed with the help of locals and the brotherhood. A 596 meters long castle wall was built within two weeks, with a thickness of 138 centimeters at the bottom and 126.5 centimeters at the top, height measuring 3.2 to 3.45 meters. This wall eventually became the foundation of today's Fortaleza do Monte.

### Building a Castle 1607

In the early 17th, a few attempted invasions of the island were recorded, and there were some conflicts with pirates. Still, most of them were led by European kingdoms with strong marine forces, including the Dutch invasion in 1601 and 1622 (King, 2003).

In 1607, After receiving the order from Portugal, the brotherhood immediately started the reinforcement work of the existing wall. Under the guidance of priest Francisco Rho, construction drawings from Francisco Lopes Carasco (a high-ranked officer who had rich militant experience in India and Africa) were adapted for commencing the project. From archaeological findings, it is believed that the construction project had also taken advantage of some pre-existing structures of the theological seminary (chak keong, 2020).

In June 1622, the Dutch invaded the east side of the peninsula (Turnbull, 1986). As a bit of record is found regarding this incident, the size of the invasion is unknown. It is generally believed that considering the land area of Macao in the early 17th century, no more than 3 Dutch vessels would participate. Two shots were fired with the newly equipped cannon, and the defense was deemed successful after the Dutch fleet retreated. This incident

showed the importance of building a defensive infrastructure at that time (**figure 13**).

Seeing Macao's commerce and sea trade gradually mature, the defense architecture experienced another upgrade in the mid 17th century under the leadership of the first governor of Macao, D. Francisco de Mascarenhas.

### Fortaleza do Monte 1620s

In 1626, new functions were being implemented into the fortress as the first governor would like the architecture to be used as the governor's house. The upgrade included new sanitary and living facilities and arsenal and military camps built inside the parameter. According to a book written by historian Antonio Bocarrao in 1635, Livro das Planatas de Todas as Fortalezas, the fortress was built with a 460-centimeter thick foundation with 138 centimeters above the soil. More high-strength materials like cement and stone were used to construct the additional camps and shelters. Together the architecture was measured at the height of 11 meters.

A report written by a Portuguese lieutenant Carlos Juliao on 24th December 1755 showed a rough sketch of Fortaleza do Monte's floor plan, showing the overall form of the fortress (chak keong, 2020). It is a rectangular plan, with diamond protrusion located on each corner; while there was a ramp situated due south at the entrance, the North and South plot within the fortress square had camps for officers (**see generic spatial layout, page 21**).

Through the years of minor modifications and changes, Fortaleza do Monte is now an enlisted heritage site for UNESCO, standing firmly as one of the most completed historical fortresses that exists in greater China, currently functioning as the Macao Museum since its renovation in 1994 (**figure 14**).

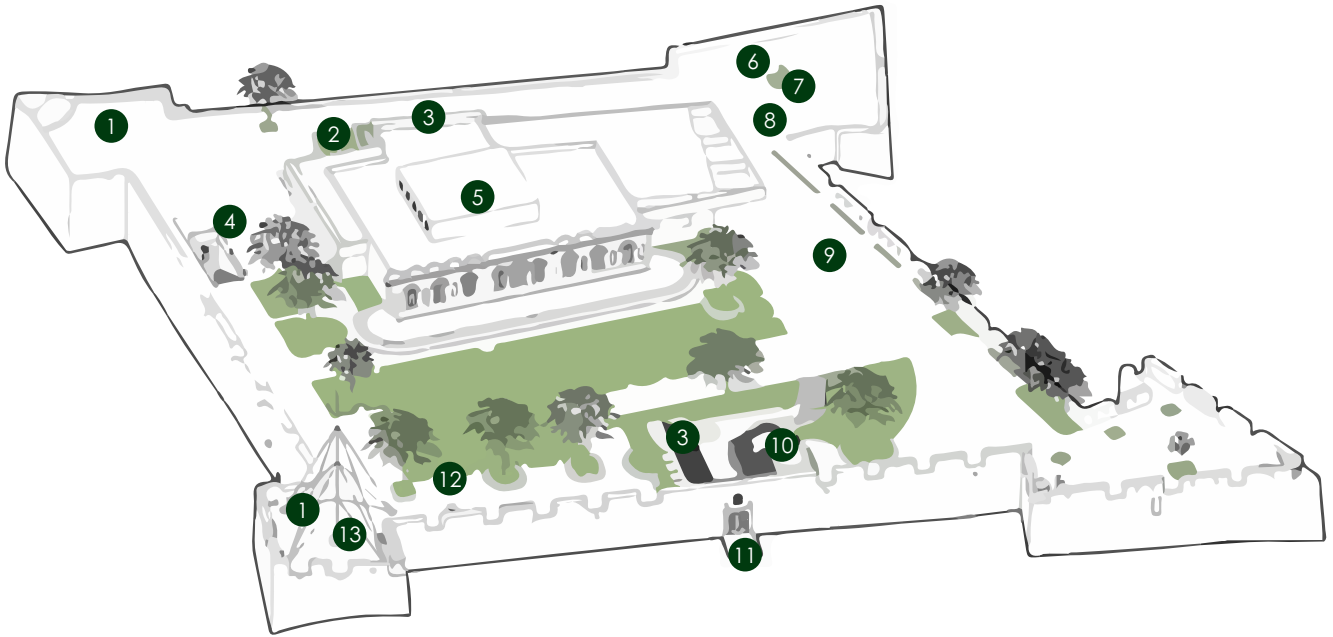
To sum up, the early intention of developing entertainment, and leisure activities can already be seen from the early Portuguese settlement in Macao. Yet, to answer the immediate challenges and necessities; **commerce**, **religion**, and **military** became the three engines that pushed the early urban development of Macao.



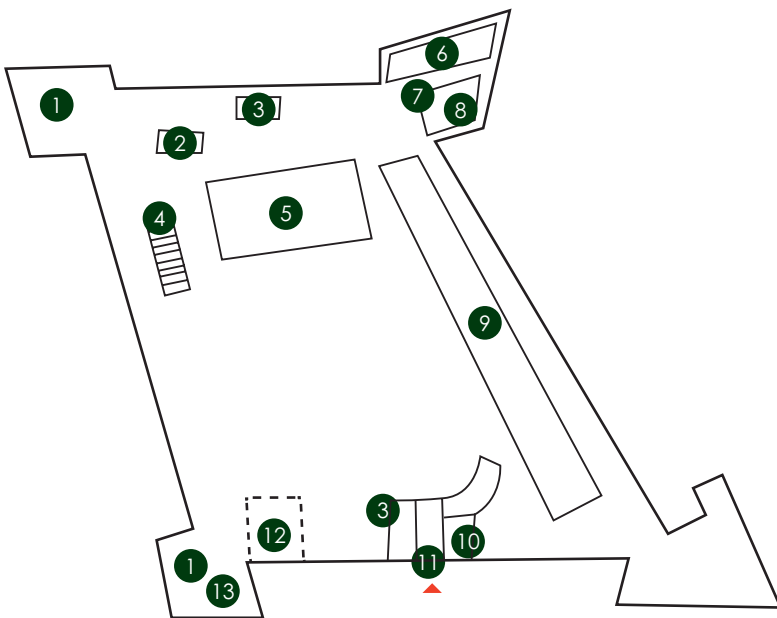
Figure 15. "Macao city view (including Grand Lisboa, center back) from Fortaleza do Monte." 18, April, 2017, *South China Morning Post*



Figure 16. "A row of cannons point through the ramparts of the Fortaleza do Monte, a fortress that was part of the Jesuit complex of Sao Paulo." 09, September, 2009, *I. Stefan*



Axonometric sketch - Fortaleza do Monte



1. Corner post
2. Spot light post
3. Laundry room
4. Gun powder
5. Command post
6. Workshop
7. Bathroom
8. Charcoal room
9. Military Barracks
10. Electromechanical room
11. Turret entrance
12. Paint and weapon workshop
13. Typhoon signal room

Generic spatial layout - Fortaleza do Monte



Figure 17. In: Coloured print. *The Chinese Empire*, 2 vols., 1858, vol. 2, p.45: Macao Architecture, p.25 – top. T. ALLOM. <http://www.icm.gov.mo/rc/viewer/20036/1334>



Figure 18. *Destroying Chinese war junks*, 1843, E. Duncan  
[http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/opium\\_wars\\_01/ow1\\_gallery/pages/1841\\_0792\\_nemesis\\_jm\\_nmm.htm](http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/opium_wars_01/ow1_gallery/pages/1841_0792_nemesis_jm_nmm.htm)

### 2.3. Urban Decade - the Century of Turbulent

In the 1630s, the historical record showed that the urban development of the Macao peninsula had paused; it was a time filled with internal and external complications for the Portuguese government (figure 17). Over time, the Macao peninsula experienced a decrease in commercial activities in the mid-17th Century, officially leaving the “Golden era” title behind.

Historians believed that there were mainly two reasons for this: first, the unstable regional politics, and second, the local conflict between the Qing Chinese authorities, atheists, and the “IHS<sup>8</sup>.” (Porter, 1993). Furthermore, it was also the time towards the end of the “Eighty Years War” (1568 - 1648), which Portugal and Spain (under the ruling of Filipe II) fought against the independence of the Dutch republic (Degroot, 2018).

This long-term military expenditure and political exhaustion of the Portuguese government eventually limited the resources for developing Portuguese overseas territories (Borges, 2014).

#### 2.3.1 Qing Dynasty Chinese Taxation office 1684

In 1684, as the economy of Macao and the power of the Portuguese government were growing weak; this provided an opportunity for the Qing Dynasty Chinese government to partition the profit generated from the soon-to-be-collapsed import and export industry in the Portuguese territory.

At first, a series of “taxation stations” were set across the ports in the Macao peninsula; taking a heavy toll on the financial ability of the colonial government. This eventually caused a domino effect, as to maintain the about-to-collapsed economy after the taxation office imposed by the Chinese government, the colonial government started asking for more tax from the citizens (Costa, 1997).

8. As geographically the peninsula is prone to seasonal hurricanes, regular maintenance was required for public facilities, especially before and after the hurricane season.

#### 2.3.2 The Ban on Christianity

When Christianity first started its activities in China, there was an opposition voice in the ruling class of the Ming Dynasty (1368 - 1644), claiming Christianity disguised itself as a religion, covered its evil intentions of aggression against Chinese tradition, and therefore should be strictly prohibited (Givon, 2019).

In 1616, the Ming Dynasty banned missionary work, and Nanjing sealed up churches and expelled priests from the country. The Jesuits (“IHS”) were forced to return to the Macao peninsula from various places to seek temporary refuges.

The ban was eased slightly in the early Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), as the Qing court adopted a policy of tolerance, of which the Emperor Kangxi once reused a group of missionaries to practice missionary works. However, due to the “Chinese Rites controversy,” Christianity was once again banned in 1720 by order of the Emperor (Marinescu, 2008).

This ban was eventually reinforced in the Macao peninsula. However, unlike cities in the Qing Chinese territory, missionaries were allowed to stay but prohibited to practice any form of religious activities; as for the Qing government, it was understandable that Macao was first found with religious importance (Hung Chiu, 2015). So to prevent the expansion of Christianity in Macao, in 1749, the Qing Chinese government enforced the ban on construction on the Macao peninsula, permitting small construction and maintenance of Chinese temples only (Costa, 1997).

The various external and internal accumulated reasons resulted in Macao taking a sharp fall in the mid-17th century to late-18th century.

### 2.4. Urban Renewal

The turning point appeared after the “Opium War” in 1840, the year when Great Britain successfully colonized Hong Kong (figure 18).



Figure 19. ““Invasion” of Coca Cola”, 1958, unknown author.  
<https://new.qq.com/omn/20191215/20191215A0454B00.html>



Figure 20. “Rua do Almirante Sergio - Asia Soda Factory” 1966, source: Macao Street Network  
[http://www.macaodaily.com/html/2021-09/14/content\\_1543209.htm](http://www.macaodaily.com/html/2021-09/14/content_1543209.htm)



### 2.4.1 Opium Trade

According to the Alcohol and Drug Foundation of Australia (2021), opium “is a depressant drug, which means it slows down the messages traveling between your brain and body.”

The earliest record of the opium trade in China can be dated back to the early 18th century. As mentioned before, Macao was experiencing a decrease in foreign trade and an economic crisis in the early 18th century. To relieve some of the losses, a group of Portuguese merchants decided to traffic opium to China; using the Macao peninsula as a base to smuggle opium from two other Portuguese overseas territories, Goa (India) and Dammam (Saudi Arabia), transit through Macao and finally into the greater China (Kaisong, 1990).

According to historian Kaisong Deng (1990), as the number of Chinese opium smokers experienced exponential growth, this high demand eventually boosted the shipment from twenty boxes a year in 1729 to more than a thousand boxes a year in 1767; monopolized by the Portuguese until 1773 when the British joined the “party.”

It brutally intensified the opium market trade competition. From 1773 to 1793, Macao was still the only port for distribution and smuggling in China. Nonetheless, since the British East India Company successfully secured a trade route to Huangpu Port (Shanghai) in 1794, it had gradually ended the Portuguese monopoly, and finally, in the early 18th century, the British became the largest distributor of opium in China.

### 2.4.2 Opium War 1840

In 1839, after witnessing the poisoning of opium among the Chinese, the Qing Chinese government sent the Governor-General of Hubei and Hunan Provinces, Lin Zexu, to the south for managing the opium trade situation; in the hope of implementing a ban on this addictive drug (Driscoll, 2020).

More than a thousand opium dealers and smokers were arrested in the same year. Soon after the operation, he declared a ban on the opium trade and performed a confiscation

act on all merchants and businesses. However, only a tiny amount of opium was handed, so in response to this action, troops were sent by Lin Zexu to confiscate all hidden opium, and in the end, more than twenty thousand boxes of opium were founded (Hevia, 2003).

Finally, at the end of 1839, all the confiscated opium was destroyed in a city located in Humen, a city located in the Guangdong province. For instance, British merchants were then banished from the Macao peninsula and prohibited from trading with the Qing Chinese government. This series of events eventually triggered the opium war between Britain and China (Cassan, 2009).

### 2.4.3 Aftermath - Macao in the late 19th Century

In 1879, seeing the collapse of the Qing Chinese government, the Portuguese claimed the ownership of the Macao peninsula to protect its economic and territory parameter ending the three centuries contract of Macao being a renting plot to a Portuguese-owned overseas territory (Costa, 1997).

In the late 19th Century, as wars continued to spread and break down in Southern China, many merchants consecutively reached the island during the transitional period of Macao; seeking refuge from the Portuguese-Macao government.

In 1840, the population of Macao accounted for approximately 25,000 people; by the end of the 19th Century, the tiny island contained more than 65,000 people (Qichen, 2012).

Under such unique historical background, the urban development of Macao once again thrilled with the wealth and businesses brought by the Chinese merchants. As for the colonial government to accommodate the sudden rise of population, there were reclamations, street management, reconstruction of service facilities, and zoning, urban green area.

For instance, this migration pattern also pushed the development of the export and import industry and local manufacturing and handicraft industry, including glass and crystal manufacturing, sewing factory, tea packaging, and fire-



Figure 21. Old Macao, "Rickshaws in a street in the old quarter of Macau, 1950, Three Lions. <https://www.gettyimages.nl/detail/nieuwsfoto%27s/rickshaws-in-a-street-in-the-old-quarter-of-the-nieuwsfotos/3328460?adppopup=true>

cracker manufacturing. e.t.c (Costa, 1997).

Seeing the need for urban remediation, the Portuguese-Macao government **established the first set of regulated building codes** after forming Macao's committee of "urban material conditions,"; led by the secretary of Public Works, Brito, Constantino José de (Costa, 1997). (see Appendix. 01)

So In order to execute the regulation efficiently, the Portuguese-Macao government conducted a series of surveys and fieldwork in the following decades while at the same time investing in the remediation of Macao's urban environment.

For example, the first-ever **reclamation**<sup>9</sup> started soon after implementing the new regulations in 1890, which can be seen as an effort of the Portuguese-Macao government's determination of urban renewal. An urban movement that was later coined by the historian as the "self-spontaneous" urban development, as it happened harmoniously, supported by the local and the Portuguese-Macao governments of that time (Yang, 2008).

A survey conducted in 1918 - 1927 by the Chief Secretary of Port stated a critical aspect regarding the future urban development of Macao Island and its neighboring island, Taipa, Coloane, and Ilha Verde, showing concerns about the ownership and management of land use development in today's "Cotai strip." It was first portrayed as a natural wetland, having extra reclamation between Macao Island and Taipa for sea breaks and artificial ports. The intention was for Macao to remain an international sea trading port between the west and east, which also benefits local businesses to export goods internationally (Pinheiro & Wan, 2007).

As it can be seen, the urban development of Macao in the early 20th Century has experienced a degree of mature development under the governing of the colonial government, foreseeing a bigger picture about the future of this overseas outpost.

## 2.5. Towards Globalization

Over time, the land area of Macao has been

doubled in the mid-20th Century in comparison to the early 19th century. For instance, with the complication of regional politics and World War 2, the urban development of Macao has ran across another important threshold of intensive development due to economic reasons, and external influences.

There are **two significant historical events** needed to be addressed before introducing the next chapter, as it helped clear a more direct path to understand the complexity of Macao development in the 1930s to 1960s.

**Firstly**, in 1937, the Sino-Japanese invasion of China had led to the announcement of colonial Macao being a "neutral" state (Wu, Tang, & Jin, 2009).

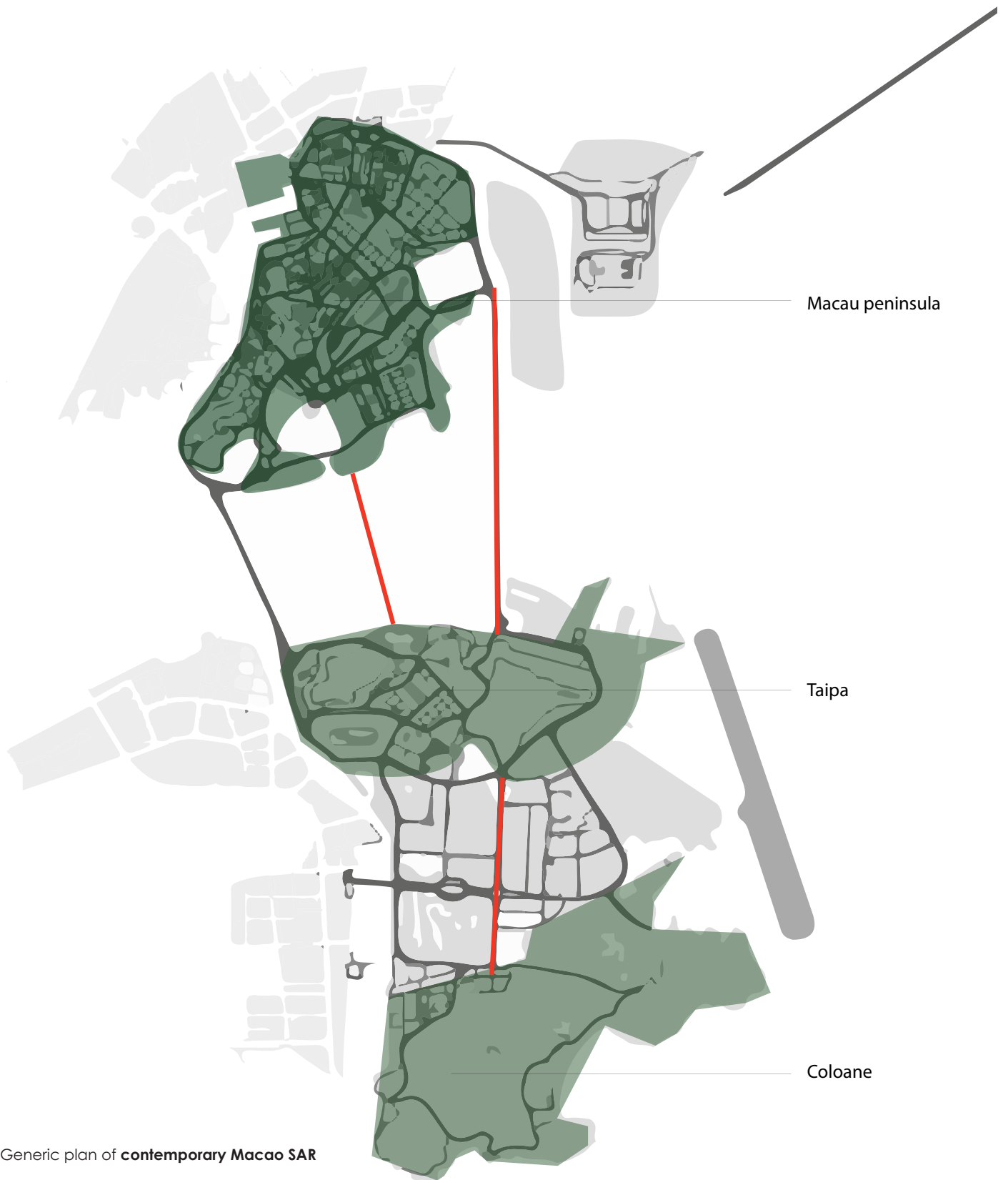
Despite there were a few minor physical conflicts near the Macao peninsula, the impact was minimal in terms of its urban form and steady development. Nevertheless, the influences brought by the War existed on a deeper layer in people relations, future decision making, and the perception of different stakeholders; questioning the position and identity of this last European colony in Asia.

Historical records even showed a complicated four-corner relationship between the United Kingdom - Hong Kong, Imperial Japan, and the Official Republic of China.

**Secondly**, an intensive relationship between the colonial government and the Republic Chinese government was being developed since the breakout of the War.

According to Macao Memory, even though the colonial government tried sending a firm message of Portuguese-Macao being a "neutral" state, there were many attempts of the Republic Chinese government having operations targeting Japanese diplomats in Macao; threatening the position of Macao in the Sino-Japanese War. Even in the Imperial Japan announced its unconditional surrender in 1945, there was a strong voice within the leadership of the Chinese government whispering about claiming Macao back from the Portuguese. (Lima, 1939)

9. **Reclamation** - will be discussed in the last chapter (Chapter 4). It involves a more generic timeline with little cultural and historical importance; a continuous urban development is still happening (2022) in Macao SAR.

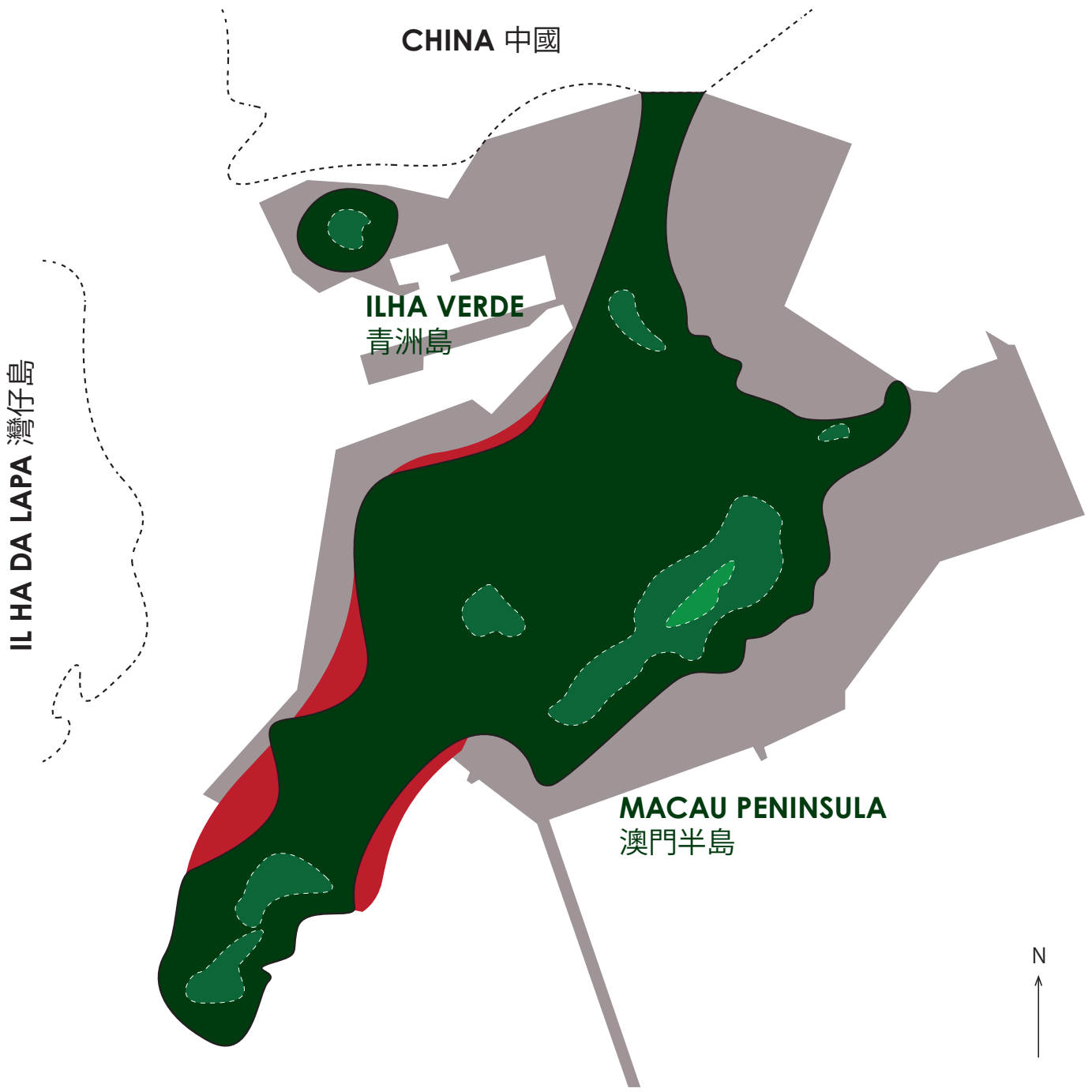


Generic plan of **contemporary Macao SAR**

Even though the administrative area was almost three times larger than Macao in the early 19th century, Taipa and Coloane remained rural areas where citizens of Macao would spend the weekend for leisure and greenery; and there was this “後花園” saying that Taipa and Coloane were Macao’s “back garden.”

# 20th Century

■ Macao in 20th Century



Generic plan of Macao peninsula in 20th Century

- Reclamation 1783 - 1991
- Reclamation 1912 - 1970



Figure 22. "Macau, casino, gamblers participate in the gambling game of throwing dice."  
1949, unknown author. [https://www.sohu.com/a/284806725\\_120073393](https://www.sohu.com/a/284806725_120073393)

As the economic models that once supported Macao was no longer relevant with China slowly opening its market and seek for economic boost after the devastating war. In the late 20th Century, under the backdrop of political tension and globalization, Macao was being overshadowed by the success of its neighboring cities, especially Hong Kong, under the leadership of the British - Hong Kong government.

So to answer the necessities of economic crisis; in 31st of February, 1961, the Portuguese-government released the first-ever regulation of the “game of chance” industry, in other words legalized gambling, in hope of solving the economic crisis.

The history of gambling in Macao were poorly recorded, indeed there were some records of mass gaming activities operated by the Chinese community, but it was never formally documented in any form. A few pieces of historical references published in both languages Chinese and Portuguese, indicated that a game called the “Fantan” was popular amongst the community and was later merchandised in some form of settlement (Godinho, 2012).

### 3.1. “Games of Chance” in East and West

The word “Games” seems vast, and some entertainment scholars even suggested “not” to coin a meaning to the word, as they believed that the meaning has a “subjective nature,” it is whatever the individuals find entertaining.

However, one crucial aspect that should not be neglected is the influences it brought to the physical environment. S. Bates and A. L. Ferri (2010) argued that entertainment had been closely integrated into all cultures; yet, considering how important it is to society, there are only a few academic studies conducted on this subject, especially in environmental science. According to Godinho (2012), one of the reasons would be the general moral prejudice towards the notion of gambling.

In modern legal concept, “games of chance” is a specific term that described mass gambling happening only in casino table games (**figure 23**) and gaming machine (**figure 24**).

### 3 most Classic Chinese table game

- “番攤” - Fantan
- “骰寶” - Sic-Bo
- “魚蝦蟹” - Hoo Hey How

### 3 best known Western games of chance

- “八家樂” - Baccarat
- “21點” - Blackjack
- “輪盤” - Roulette

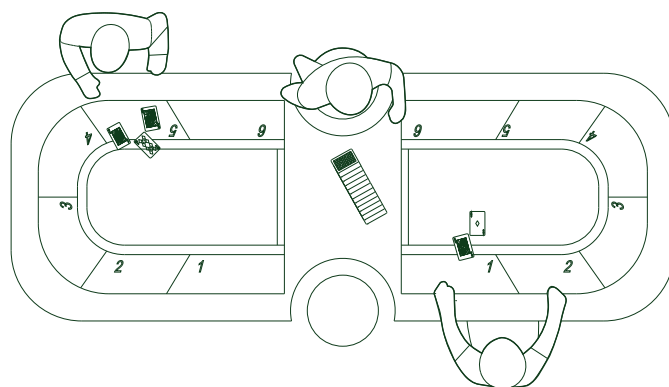


Figure 23. The 2 types of “games of chance” - Table games (own work)

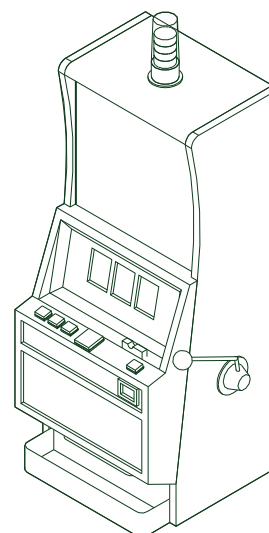


Figure 24. The 2 types of “games of chance” - Slot Machine (own work)



Figure 25. "Hotel Centro", 2007, lidxplus.  
[https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hotel\\_centro.jpg](https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Hotel_centro.jpg)



Figure 26. "The lights of Casino Lisboa in Macau, China, May 2 2015. Raul Ariano. <https://www.gettyimages.nl/detail/nieuwsfoto%27s/the-lights-of-casino-lisboa-in-macau-china-may-2-2015-nieuwsfotos/524877192?adppopup=true>



### 3.2. Gaming Before 1961 - The “Fan-tan” era

The gaming history in Macao can be traced back to the 16th century, when Macao first opened its harbor to visitors. At that time, gaming was explicitly popular among the construction workers who emigrated from Mainland China, harbor workers, and domestic helpers. As no gaming regulation was implemented, the gambling stalls were spread over streets and lanes and were operated by different individual parties.

Over time as the population increased and gradually more formal urban development took place throughout the peninsula, in the early 20th century, the “Fantan” business was centralized under the management of Tai Heng Limited in a monopolized manner (Godinho, 2012b).

Legalization did happen for the “Fantan” operation in the late 19th Century, but it was never taken into any form of large-scaled urban development consideration for the future development.

#### 3.2.1. The Pioneer of Macao Gaming Industry

In 1930, businessman Fok Chi Ting and his company “Hou Heng limited” won the monopoly concession for operating all forms of approved casino games in Macao. Immediately after winning the monopoly concession, a miniature scaled casino business was opened at the “Central Hotel” (**figure 25**) situated in the Avenida Almeida Ribeiro or the former “Victoria Cinema.”

The business model of “Hou Heng limited” was considered a success for the colonial government, as it had set a perfect example of how the disorganized industry could be improved. In addition, the idea of a “chain” business was also first introduced, offering different kinds of entertainment and food and beverage services, for example, Chinese opera shows, free drinks, and cigarettes, as well as spots for purchasing ferry tickets (Hong Kong to Macao).

#### 3.2.2. The End of “Fan-tan” era

In 1937, seeing the soon to be expired concession of “Hou Heng limited,” in the hope of centralizing and introducing new “table games” to the industry, the colonial government announced the rebidding of the gaming license.

The concession was granted to a new successor, “Tai Heng limited,” and for the first time, a Western game “八家樂” - Baccarat, was introduced in the newly refurbished “Central hotel.”

Finally, through the complex development of people relations and politics, Tai Heng limited lost the 1961 license bidding to operate the **newly regulated “game of chance”** businesses in Macao.

It was believed that the loss was due to the new conditions of building and operating a large-scaled casino-hotel for further developing the tourism sector. It was a significant change under the governing of Silverio Marques, historians coined this as the end of the “Fantan” era.

.(“Gaming Inspection, and Coordination Bureau. Macao SAR,” 2022.)

### 3.3. 1970 - The “First” Casino - Hotel Lisboa

The opening of the Hotel Lisboa in 1970 indicated a new era of significant expansion and radical modification of Macao future gaming industry; setting the elemental path of Macao being the “Las Vegas of the East” in the 21st century.

The newly formulated “games of chance” license was granted to Sociedade de Turismo e Diversões de Macau, “澳門旅遊娛樂股份有限公司”. An entertainment and leisure company that was first founded by four Chinese business tycoons who had strong family backgrounds and businesses across major Southern Chinese cities, including British Hong Kong. Indeed, there were two former operators in the industry (both in a monopolized manner); they were both outmatched in comparison to the scale of the new hotel resort.

Hotel Lisboa (**figure 26**) was the first five stars hotel in Macao; it was also the largest operator in Macao gaming history in terms of its size,



Figure 27. "Hotel Lisboa Macau" 1970, unknown author  
<https://www.macaumuseum.gov.mo/pt/exhibitions/85067?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>



Figure 28. "Las Vegas Neon Lights", 2011, Paca Romero. <https://www.gettyimages.nl/detail/foto/las-vegas-neon-lights-royalty-free-beeld/459389817?adppopup=true>

stakeholders' background, and the number of games played in the complex. The entertainment complex could house more than 600 rooms, with the gambling hall - Praia Grande, situated in the center of the plot area. According to Macao's Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau, STDM limited has more than ten approved games available since its opening in 1970 (**figure 27**). Popular games from both the East and West included Fantan, Baccarat, Boule, Sic-Bo, Black Jack, and slot machines; a unique "blending" of the two cultures in quite an unusual form.

Since then, for more than 40 years, it has smoothly experienced four significant business expansions, with more gaming halls and different entertainment and leisure-related businesses settled all over the peninsula. In 2001, two years after the handover of Macao to China, there were 11 casinos operated under STDM limited.

### 3.3.1 A West Side Story - First Casino in Las Vegas

*"...It is an architecture of communication over space; communication dominates space as an element in the architecture and the landscape". Venturi, R., Brown, D. S., & Izenour, S. (1968)*

The tale began in the 19th Century; the land-use area of Las Vegas today was an uninhabited grassland located within the region of Los Angeles. It was not until the mid-19th Century that a religious group called Mormon started occupying the land and formed the first settlement of the place named Mormon Fort (Verchick, 2005).

The town was established upon a laboring history on mining metals for weaponry for the Mormon groups to fight against the ruling of the state's government of its time. After the defeat of the religious group due to lack of natural resources and labor forces, almost fifty years later, the great railroad's work extended to nowadays Las Vegas. A station was established as a transportation node for later construction, a

further extension that was started from Las Vegas to California. This hub eventually attracted workers and travelers for transit, which the sudden growth of popularity led to the creation of the red-light district, liquid bars, and places for gambling.

In the 1920s, the state government and local authorities foreseen the Great depression, and in the hope of attracting long-term customers to visit the place for future development, the state government of Nevada finally in 1931 legalized casino gambling, which marked the very beginning of the infamous Vegas strip.

The Pari-O-Dice opened as the first casino on Highway 91, where the road would later be famously known as the "Vegas strip." At first, the concept of a themed environment had yet been introduced to its development. As from historical record, even though there were two other casinos opened soon after the Pari-O-Dice, they were not even close to being called a gigantic structure of some kind (Verchick, 2005).

Around the 1940s, an entertainment business tycoon Benjamin Siegal saw the commercial potential of the tourism and gaming sector, seeking something quoted "The goddamn biggest, fanciest gaming casino and hotel you bastards ever seen in your whole lives." The vision of Siegal was to create a "world-class" landscape of entertainment with aspiration themes from famous tourists locations across the globe.

It was an age of celebration as the world war was close to an end; America stood on the winning side, with new technological advancement, new transportation, international travel, television, the introduction of new domestic living. Under the backdrop of the popular culture, media, and consumer culture, Siegal's Flamingo Hotel and Casino had its grand open in the year 1946 (**figure 28**), the first of its kind world-class gambling and entertainment complex stood firmly in the town of Las Vegas.



Figure 29. "Signing of the Joint Declaration on the Question of Macao" 1987, unknown author  
<https://new.qq.com/omn/20210405/20210405A0819K00.html>



Figure 30. "Ten Years of Return to Macao, China", 2009, Macau Daily, p.6. ISBN 978-99937-770-4-5  
[https://www.macaumemory.mo/entries\\_f70423db1cea45678fe563b114e29257?token=e3WfgILG-b0+Uj6AX30Nv7g==&lgType=zh-cn](https://www.macaumemory.mo/entries_f70423db1cea45678fe563b114e29257?token=e3WfgILG-b0+Uj6AX30Nv7g==&lgType=zh-cn)

### 3.3.2 Handover of Macao to China 1999

Portuguese: *Transferência da soberania de Macau*, also known as the transfer of sovereignty over Macao or the Handover of Macao to China, an incident occurred on the 20th December, 1999 (daivide, 1999); officially, making Macao the last European colony in Asia pacific, and the second special administration region after Hong Kong (where the British government transferred its sovereignty back to China in 1997).

It was a tremendous effort and a long process that took more than thirty years of arrangement and negotiation between the two governments to ensure that the transition of power could go as smoothly as possible.

It all started with China sending affirmed message to United Nations and Decolonization in 1972, stating Hong Kong, and Macao should not be classified as usual "colonies", reinstated that "Macao is part of the Chinese territory" (Macao Memory Editorial Office, 2021).

On 25th April 1974, in Lisbon, Portugal, the Estado Novo Portuguese government (1933 - 1974) was overthrown by the MFA<sup>10</sup>, officially ending the controversial leadership of António de Oliveira Salazar's government as well as wars and armed conflicts in Portuguese - Africa territories (Story, 1976). This incident, famously known as The Carnation Revolution (see Appendix. 02).

Soon after the new Portuguese Republic government came to power, it declared that Macao was not a colony but a Chinese territory administered by Portugal, eventually opening the path for Macao returning to the motherland.

On 13th April 1987, in Beijing, China, after four rounds of meetings regarding the transition of Macao between the representatives of China and Portugal. The treaty "Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration" (see Appendix. 03) was signed by the former State council Premier Zhao Ziyang and Portuguese Prime Minister Cavaco Silva, stating that on 20th December 1999, Macao would be officially handed over its sovereignty to the Chinese government (figure 29) (Edmonds & Yee, 1999).

On 20th December 1999, a vast handover ceremony was held at midnight in Macao, and under the supervision of former President of China Jiang Zemin and former Premier Zhu Rongji of the state council (figure 30), the son of a prominent Macanese community leader - Edmund Ho (figure 31), was appointed as the first Chief Executive of Macao (Yiwen, 1999).

Since then, Macao officially becomes the second special administrative region, under the sovereignty of China, under the ideology of "One country, two systems." And "Fifty years unchanged (stated in the treaty that Macao would not change this social system for the next fifty years),"; practicing its own fundamental law, way of life, and the capitalist system inherited from its preexisting colonial past.



Figure 31. "Ho Hau Wah, Vice Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference", 2021, AAMACAU Media interview team.

10. Portuguese Military left-wing coup



Figure 32. "Cotai Strip Macau night" 1 January 2017, bennymarty  
<https://www.istockphoto.com/nl/foto/cotai-strip-macau-night-gm636987286-113352815>



Figure 33. Morpheus Hotel | Zaha Hadid Architects. 2019, I. DUPONT. <https://www.arch2o.com/tag/ivan-dupont/>

### 3.4. 2003 - The “Las Vegas of the East”

Instinctively, seeing Hong Kong being developed as one of the world’s most significant financial capital, Macao continues its path of developing the what-is-already-there industry, gaming, and tourism.

In 2003 (three years after the handover of Macao to China), in the hope to increase Macao’s position in the international market and promote its unique status as a low-tax and free trade region (capitalist system), under the governance of Edmund Ho, the first chief executive of Macao SAR made a decision that dramatically shaped Macao urban fabric; which is bidding the soon-to-be expired concession of STDM Ltd, at the same time, adding two more “game of chance” licenses under the new set of obligations that were written based on the constitution law drafted by the Colonial government in 1962. And for the first time, foreign companies were invited to enter the gaming market (O’Regan, 2019).

Under the new obligations, new extra rules are set to decentralize the market within Macao, and one of the significant changes was for each concessionary it follows a sub-concessionary, meaning that each license, it by law, has an additional license of which the primary concessionary holder has the right to decide what to do or whom to give the sub-concessionary. A “buy one get one free” kind of operation with the leading buyer, who has the full ownership and right to decide how it should be operated. Unsurprisingly, this caught the attention of Casino giants from the United States, taking advantage of the unique circumstances of Macao SAR being the only Chinese city that legalized gambling (Gaming Inspection, and Coordination Bureau. Macao SAR, n.d.).

As a result, five foreign operators join the market - three from Las Vegas, one from Hong Kong, and one from Australia. Despite little being known about the secret relationship between STDM, the government, and other foreign companies, the connections can be seen from the distribution and final bidding result of the “game of chance” licenses (Horowitz, 2015).

#### Main Concessionary holder

#### Sub-Concessionary holder

#### 1. SJM (STDM changed name in 2002)

1.1 MGM Grand (United States)

#### 2. Wynn Resort Macao (United States)

2.1 PBL-Melco (HK SAR, and Australia)

#### 3. Galaxy (Hong Kong SAR)

3.1 Venetian (United States)

This sudden event has further pushed Macao to firmly hold the title “Las Vegas of the East” in the international market.

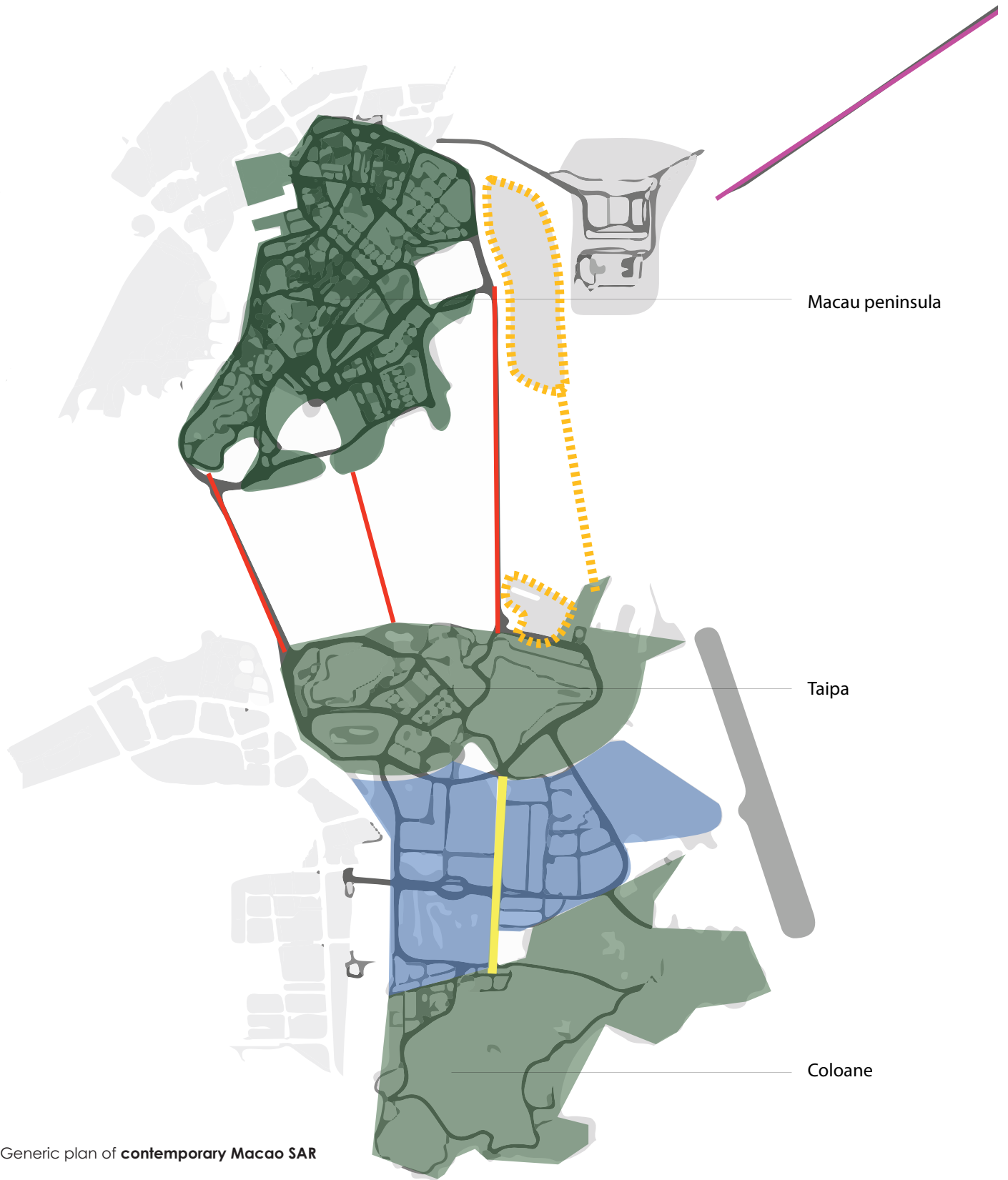
In 2011, the overall market revenue generated from just the entertainment, gaming, and leisure sector measured **ten times** compared to 2002 (Kok, Leong, & Cheong, 2013). The unprecedented economic boost has led to the realization of one of the most ambitious expansions in gaming history – “The Cotai strip.” A shared vision of all concessionary operators (**figure 32**).

It was a massive investment in construction; different large-scaled buildings were erected, and the infamous architectural firms were hired (**figure 33**). An actual entertainment precinct that sits on the soil of used-to-be wetland, reclaiming between the water bodies of Coloane and Taipa, symbolizing the chase of an idealistic world, a “themed” bubble for leisure and pleasure.



Figure 34. "Rua da Felicidade at night, Macau, Empty Street at night" Unknown date, Ignatius Tan <https://www.gettyimages.nl/detail/foto/rua-da-felicidade-at-night-macau-royalty-free-beeld/1218026370?adppopup=true>





# 21st Century

- Hong Kong - Zuhai - Macao bridge
- Bridges
- Macao in 20th Century
- In development
- Cotai reclamation
- Cotai Strip



Figure 35. "Night view of Macao, High angle view of Macao skyline.", Unknown date, Sellwell. <https://www.gettyimages.nl/detail/foto/night-view-of-macao/royalty-free-beeld/1089776328?adppopup=true>

“麻雀雖小，五臟俱全，” “The sparrow may be small, but all its vital organs are there.”

Once upon a time, Macao was an invisible village, isolated from the world, either from the East or the West; small town, weak economic output, and historically insignificant. Often overshadowed by Hong Kong, the term “港澳,” “Hong Kong - Macao,” the letter of Hong Kong comes first, and Macao comes the second.

Being “the first,” or “The first in China,” has never been something new to the city, for example, “the world most densely populated city,” or even “the first Portuguese settlement in China.” According to Chak Keong Lui (2020), the study of Macao’s urban and architectural history was never encouraged, and even its citizens have little to no knowledge about the city they live in. The amount of understanding often stopped on the surface, “the blending of the East and West.” Or Macao as a heritage city.

In 1961, after the announcement of Macao being a “permanent gaming region” under the newly regulated “game of chance” decreed law, the once fishermen’s village resurfaced on the international stage.

Since the beginning of the Macao civilization (Before 1554 A.D), the adaptation of Macao’s urban environment has been constantly molded by the necessities and immediate challenges of its time. “見步行步,” an idiom perfectly described the historical development of Macao, direct translation in English “you see the step, and you walk the step.”; a constant “let us see how it goes” approach.

In the final chapter, the current urban development of Macao will be put into the discussion as a departure point for this thesis. In particular,

*“Fishing activities on the nearby coast, seeing the need for religious protection; in 1448, there was the construction of the first temple (The A-Ma temple) on the nearby coast; and there were the two villages settled around the two temples. The story goes on and on.”*

three on going urban events will be overlooked to form a general picture of what is happening right now in the administrative region.

#### 4.1. Gigantic Structure - a “Themed” City

Before looking at the spatial consequences of the casino and hotel resorts in Cotai. It is important to understand what exactly the typology means in terms of its form, ideology and history.

The notion of leisure and entertainment has a long history in both the Eastern and Western , and most interestingly, it has been taken up into different forms, modified, and adapted to suit people’s needs in a different time.

According to Cambridge Dictionary, entertainment refers to shows, films, television, or other forms of performances and activities that entertain people or a performance of some type. Let us use this definition as a frame viewing to what extent the meaning of “entertainment” has been taken in one of the most significant tourism and hospitality cooperate in Macao, Sands China Ltd. A public limited company with its shares currently listed in Hong Kong Stock Exchange.

It all started in 2003, when the American gaming company Las Vegas Sands Ltd. opened its first casino in Asia, the Sands Macao, located on the Macao peninsula. It is operating under the sub-concession license of a Hong Kong gaming operator, Galaxy Ltd. Soon after seeing the success it brought, the company was reaching for another suitable location, hoping to build a project beyond that - a gigantic integrated resort that the ambitious CEO had envisioned and imagined, Shelly Den Adelson (Macao Daily Times, 2021).

According to the Public Work authority of Macao, with a limited amount of space on the historic Peninsula, the solution would be the Cotai area, a reclaimed site between the two islands, Taipa and Coloane. For instance, this also offers another opportunity to centralize all gaming activities in Cotai, seeing the reclaimed precinct as the future home for all of Macao’s gaming and entertainment industry.



Figure 36. "Building of the isthmus connecting Taipa Island to Coloane Island". 1971, unknown author. [https://www.reddit.com/r/OldPhotosInRealLife/comments/j4u8qf/macaubefore\\_and\\_after\\_the\\_cotai\\_strip/](https://www.reddit.com/r/OldPhotosInRealLife/comments/j4u8qf/macaubefore_and_after_the_cotai_strip/)



Figure 37. "The Parisian and Macao Cotai Strip at Night", unknown date, T. C. Noppawat. <https://www.gettyimages.nl/detail/foto/the-parisian-and-macao-cotai-strip-at-night-royalty-free-beeld/638937570?adppopup=true>

In fact, the government's original intention was to use the reclaimed land to develop residential projects. However, when the original plan fell through, the government decided to transfer it to Las Vegas Sands.

#### 4.1.1 Case Study - Venetian Macao

It is one of the most iconic gaming resorts in Macao, situated in the reclamation area - Cotai (**figure 36**), occupying more than 2.5 percent of Macao land area. When it officially opened on August 28, 2007, The Venetian Macao was in fact the fifth largest building in the world and the largest Casino in the world (Sands China Ltd, 2010).

The properties currently held different form of functions and it can be generally classified into six categories: First, Food, with 150 restaurants and food outlets. Second, Retail, with 756 stores and a total area of almost 0.2km<sup>2</sup>. Third, Living, housing 11,658 hotel rooms and suites. Fourth, MICE stands for the meeting, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions events, with its area of approximately 0.15km<sup>2</sup>. Fifth, Theatre and Arena, with a total seat of 20,351. And lastly, Gaming, with a total area of 0.12km<sup>2</sup>, 1,685 tables, and 2,722 slots (Sands China Ltd, 2020). in the world.

This resembled the spatial configuration of a "themed environment," a distinctive architectural typology that can often be seen in Amusement Park, created to maximize the duration of people staying in the properties. Hence, its spatial Concept and manipulation have drawn a deep historical reference from early 16th century Europe, where the notion of the public garden was first introduced in France for housing sports activities. (**see Appendix. 04**)

Currently, seventy casinos are located in the Cotai area (**figure 37**), operated by all concessionary holders, claiming 5.2km<sup>2</sup> of land use (**see Appendix 05**), equivalent to almost 16 percent of the total Macao special administrative region. This, as a consequence, pushes all the residential areas to Taipa, Coloane, and the already overcrowded Macao peninsula. So to answer the **necessities** of meeting the high residential demand from the citizen, more lands will

be reclaimed in the next two decades.

#### 4.2. Reclamation

The earliest history of reclamation in Macao can be dated back to 1850, when the reclamation project happened from the sea outside the Macao peninsula between Sembazai Heng Street and Ha Wan Street to have sea breaks protecting the inland.

It all started in 1846 when the colonial government implemented the plan to turn Macao into an "absolutely autonomous colonial state." under the support of António de Oliveira Salazar's government; And without the permission from the Chinese government, it occupied several villages<sup>11</sup>, including Taipa, Coloane, and Qingzhou Islands, to the north of the boundary wall and south of the customs gate.

The actions were considered offensive against the Chinese border. Nevertheless, it indeed provided extra land conditions for the development of the urban area of Macao. With the growth of Macao's population, both Portuguese and Chinese residents arrive to settle in the northern part of the Macao peninsula one after another. This led to the construction of many Chinese and Western-style houses during the mid-19th century, opening up many streets and alleys in the inner part of the peninsula. This had resulted in the inclusion of traditional villages where the Chinese have lived for generations into the urban area.

Ever since then reclamation in Macao has become a constant urban development ("The Formation and Development of the Early Macau City," n.d.).

##### 4.2.1 A Constant Urban Development

In 1863, the Macao government had ordered another land reclamation on a beach opposite the Governor's House in Nanwan, and it eventually became the earliest reclaimed land in Macao.

The next reclamation project was the coastal area near the Qingping Theater. Chinese businesspeople carried out the reclamation of the Ching Ping Cinema area in Macao...

11. Shagang, Xinqiao, Shalitou, Longhuan, Longtian, Tap Seac, Wangxia



Figure 38. Construction site (road construction) on reclamation in Zone A. (Own photo, 2020)



Figure 39. Overlooking the old area (inland of Macao) from Fortaleza do Monte, where you can see China with the high rise at the back. (Own photo, 2020)

So far, after decades of land reclamation, by 1927, about 2.5 square kilometers of land had been added to the Macao Peninsula, which was equivalent to an increase of one Macao peninsula.

This method of urban development continues up to this day. The follow list showed the **The Four most significant Reclamations** in Macao history, according to a magazine published by Public Administration Bureau of Macao SAR in 2016.

- Border gate 2001
- Industrial Area 2003
- The artificial island of HK-ZH-MAC Bridge 2009
- Residential zone A, C, and D (**figure 38**)

#### 4.3 Bigger Picture - Macao Special Administrative Region Urban Master Plan (2020-2040)

On 4th September 2020, a proposal was released by the Macao SAR government, titled “Macao Special Administrative Region Urban Master Plan (2020-2040).” the overall content circulated the future transportation, housing, and urban renewal of Macao, projecting a future population of eight hundred thousand in 2040 (Government of the Macao Special Administrative Region, 2020).

The report also stated the importance of having a systematical approach towards the future development of the city, as well as the spatial layout of the city, setting three primary goals for the special administrative region.

Firstly, promote and diversify the development of industries, which is seen as the government’s effort to minimize the economic dependence on the gaming industry. So in the future planning, the government wishes to centralize different industries into a newly developed industrial hub in reclamation zone A, encouraging start-up and scientific and technological research. At the same time, promote the communication and intellectual exchange between Macao’s younger generation and neighboring cities to further integrate the SAR into the Guangdong - Hong Kong - Macao Greater Bay Area.

Secondly, refine and reorganize the planning of transportation; the goal is to minimize the pri-

vate vehicle use on the street and enhance the public transport system through transit-oriented development (TOD). The report also stated that the government recognizes the limited land use and unchangeable preexisting land conditions of Macao as being an overcrowded and highly dense situation. However, a solution has yet to be proposed in this report section.

Lastly, conserving the natural environment and maintaining the balance between that and the economy. Again, this involved the matter of land use; the goal is to create a green city, a low-carbon footprint city, and a sustainable city or even a smart city with the help of technology; using the unique geographical location of Macao to find the possibility of developing solar and wind energy.

Like every other plan, it is as sounded as it can get; the problem of Macao lies deep beneath the surface. As Macao runs a capitalist system, urban renewal and building demolition involve legal matters like land ownership and liabilities of different parties.

Furthermore, as the center of the Macao peninsula is enlisted as a “Historic Centre of Macao” in the UNESCO database, rather than historical sites or buildings, it is a zone that starches almost the entire old area of Macao (**see Appendix 06**) (**figure 39**); meaning it requires extra attention, highly detail plan, tremendous effort, as well as resources to preserve this area (UNESCO World Heritage, 2005).

Meanwhile, natural hazards like flooding and hurricanes are getting more severe each year during hurricane season because of climate change; there is this worry that coastal Macao will go below sea level in the next ten years (Meneses, 2019). The things mentioned are just a fraction of a giant cake.

The new reclamation zone A, C, and D will be finished in the following years, and massive urban development will undergo, shaping the urban fabric, the city, and the people of Macao. Even though the current situation of Macao shows a lot of unsolvable obstacles, the little will undoubtedly survive and adapt, like what it has always been doing throughout its unique history.



Figure 40. "Macau's Booming Gaming Industry." July, 2013. Chris McGrath. <https://www.gettyimages.dk/detail/news-photo/general-view-of-residential-suburbs-on-july-29-2013-in-news-photo/175072132>



## Conclusion

This thesis is written in **chronological order** with the hopeful intention of recording the urban development history of my hometown Macao, a special administrative region in China.

### Chapter one: A Fishermen Village, a humble past

A brief history of Macao is given out, introducing the predominant setting of the Macao peninsula being a simple fishermen's village before the arrival of the Portuguese.

### Chapter two: Macao urban development

The first phase of the formal development of the Macao peninsula, has been discussed together with the arrival of the Portuguese in 1554, demonstrating how the urban environment of Macao had then been shaped by the Western ideology of urban and city; making it as a port city that had commerce, religion and military importance.

### Chapter three: The "Game of chance era,"

A unique urban phenomenon of Macao history, has been overlooked to further elaborate on how the once fishermen's village has been developed into the "Las Vegas of the East."; answering the immediate challenges and necessities from regional politics as well as the emerging globalization.

### Chapter four: Macao in the 21st century

The bigger picture of Macao SAR in the future has been introduced through "reclamation," "gigantic structure," researching the actual physical form of the current Macao urban fabric to see how the two urban morphologies shaped Macao SAR in the 21st century; in comparison to the government report looking at how have the people in power foreseen the future of Macao in the near future.

This thesis, in the end, open many doors for future scholars to investigate the how and why. As a citizen of Macao, having contacts from different social classes, it is understandable that major developments involved not only "by the book" transactions but also some "under table" dealing and "side benefits" that come with it.

This alone gives an extra layer to properly understand the complete picture behind, even in some fundamental elements of architecture, culture, and people.

Furthermore, for such a small place, throughout the history of Macao, the place consists of too many angles and involvements of different stakeholders. The combined factors, with poorly recorded history and the decentralized database, have somehow prevented scholars from different fields from conducting research; it also threatened the very existence and identity of the city, as well as the people of Macao.

To sum up, ***how has Macao transformed from a fishermen's village to the Las Vegas of the East?***

From the current COVID-19 situation and the impacts it brought to the tourism industry to talent loss due to singular economic development; many uncertainties and challenges laid ahead for this "little town." However, this "little town" is still growing and expanding like nowhere else, following its own order and unique structure.

Through this thesis studying the urban history of Macao, from a fishermen villages to the Las Vegas of the East, history showed that the urban fabric of Macao has always a little to do with the local society but the overall development of the regional politics and its geographical surrounding; shaped by **external factors, necessities** and **immediate challenges**.

Undoubtedly, shaping the urban environment with necessities and immediate challenges brings consequences for long-term development, but it objectively processes some other qualities rarely seen in other cities: **adaptability, resilience, and flexibility**.

***A city of "見步行步," a constant "let us see how it goes" approach.***

## Appendix. 01

### Comitê para “Melhoria das Condições Materiais da Cidade”

The following list showed the **twelve generic code** translations of the first building regulation published by the colonial government:

#### **1. The width and height of buildings.**

Defining laneway, narrow alley, the need of showing a solid and clear hierarchy of different streets and connections to the inner harbor.

#### **2. Public hygiene.**

The need to add public bathrooms and other health and safety facilities, e.g., underground services, should be prioritized.

#### **3. Clean water.**

Access to drinking water is minimal, as the geographical location of Macao is located between freshwater and saltwater. Committee proposed two options: A. Distributed and centralize all water treatment processes from different sources; B. Seek external suppliers out of the peninsula (China)

#### **4. Street hygiene.**

The management of the marketplace and its services are needed to sustain the increase of users and prevent infectious diseases.

#### **5. Re-purposing unused land and buildings.**

#### **6. Slaughterhouse.**

The existing slaughterhouses should follow health and safety codes, and for management purposes, they should be centralized near the coastline for post-processing.

#### **7. Jail.**

As the current conditions of cells prevent convicts from rehabilitation, disconnected from society, the committee suggested its relocation near the church of Saint Paul; considerations included the space

available for enclosed outdoor activities.

#### **8. Remediation of factories.**

#### **9. Waste management.**

Regulating the numbers and positioning of bins or another “simple” solution; forcing cleaners to deliver waste collected from town to ships and export them elsewhere.

#### **10. Regulating and managing social housing.**

This acts as a concern of society, considering Macao’s living condition and public images, seeking to improve in many aspects to suit the citizen’s needs.

#### **11. Rural area.**

The committee suggested the regulation of land use, especially in rural areas and farmland, to ensure the hygiene and sustainability of soil use.

#### **12. Greening.**

The committee realized the importance of putting more vegetation in the urban environment to “clean air, extract moisture from the soil, and create a better climate.”

## Appendix. 02

### Revolucao dos Cravos

Also known as the Carnation revolution. It started in the post war era after World War 2 when European colonial empires voluntarily or were forced to give up their overseas colonies, the António de Oliveira Salazar's government (Portugal) refused this action and attempted to maintain its control to all overseas colonies. As the socialist activities got intensified through out the Portuguese colonies (especially in Africa), as a result the colonial war broke out in 1961, fight between the Salazar's government and other colonies (Story, 1976).

The long war and huge military expenditure made the Salazar military regime lose the support of many Portuguese people, predominantly middle and lower-level officers. These mid-level and junior officers formed the "Military left-wing coup" (MFA), which launched an operation in Lisbon on April 25, 1974, along

with many civilians. During the protest, the people inserted carnations into soldiers' rifles, and that was where the name "carnation revolution" came from (Osuna, 2012).

The revolution succeeded without a shed of blood in 1974, overthrowing the 42 years of António de Oliveira Salazar's government leadership ("Portugal Profile - Timeline," 2018).

After that, the newly formed Portuguese Republic government announced the implementation of the Decolonization policy and abandoned overseas colonies, leading to the colonies' independence from Portuguese rule.



"The Carnation Revolution In Lisbon, Portugal On May 1, 1974", 1974, G. Herye. <https://www.gettyimages.nl/detail/nieuwsfoto%27s/the-carnation-revolution-in-lisbon-portugal-in-may-1-1974-nieuwsfotos/120449869?adppopup=true>

**No. 25805**

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**CHINA  
and  
PORTUGAL**

**Joint Declaration on the question of Macao (with annexes).  
Signed at Beijing on 13 April 1987**

*Authentic texts: Chinese and Portuguese.*

*Registered by China and by Portugal on 22 March 1988.*

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Vol. 1498, I-25805

## Appendix. 04

In the book titled “The Global Theme Park Industry”, the author Milman argued that the construction of early European landscape was of a complex symbolic gesture, a social and cultural reflection of its time, showing the desire of people seeking an idealized space; a festive, dreamy, and unified atmosphere in the astonishing garden (Milman, 2010).

Yet, it was as of a private matter rather than public. At first the setting of “pleasure garden” was constructed solely for European monarchy having their leisure time. It was not until the late 18th Century when the space was commercialised for the public paying their way to enjoy the attractions that publicly accessible gardens could not offer.

It was considered a new breakthrough in urbanism study, as it significantly shaped how people interact with each other, redefining the fundamental definition of entertainment by introducing a new order of space, changing what used-to-be a private luxurious experience to an informal setting of its time. This acted as a reflection of the society, progressing towards a more inclusive and civic driven mentality, which ultimately change the public perception of personal space and territoriality.

### “Vue Detaillée des Jardins de Vaux Hall”

An illustration created by John S. Muller in 1715 - 1792 to depict one of the first European ‘plea-



“Vue Detaillée des Jardins de Vaux Hall”, by John S. Nullter in 1715 - 1792

sure gardens’ located in 17th Century London, of which today it still functions as an urban landscape for the public.

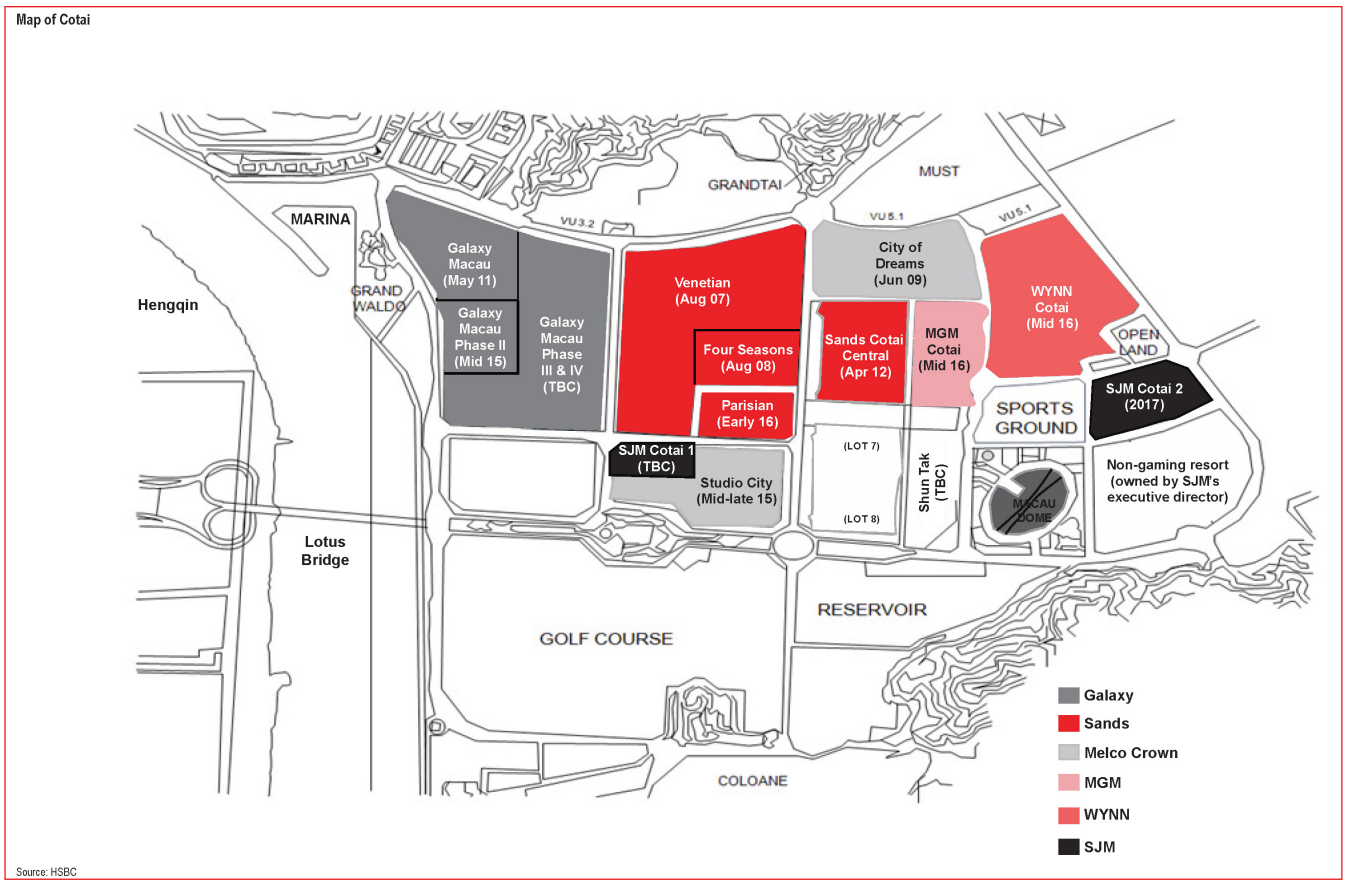
It once featured a diversity of attractions and live entertainments seasonally, offering music, theatrics performance, fireworks for visitors who paid their way in. The planning of space features a large sum of outdoor area, yet some architectures had been placed, functioning as concert hall, assembly room, and exhibition hall.

This successful business model had then been adopted in different European countries, some famous examples would be the first public zoo in France, opened in 1793, and what was believed by entertainment scholars to be the first theme park - Tivoli gardens in Copenhagen, opened in 1793; all celebrated the rise of middle class with theatrical and live performance. Again, symbolized the progress towards democratization of the society.

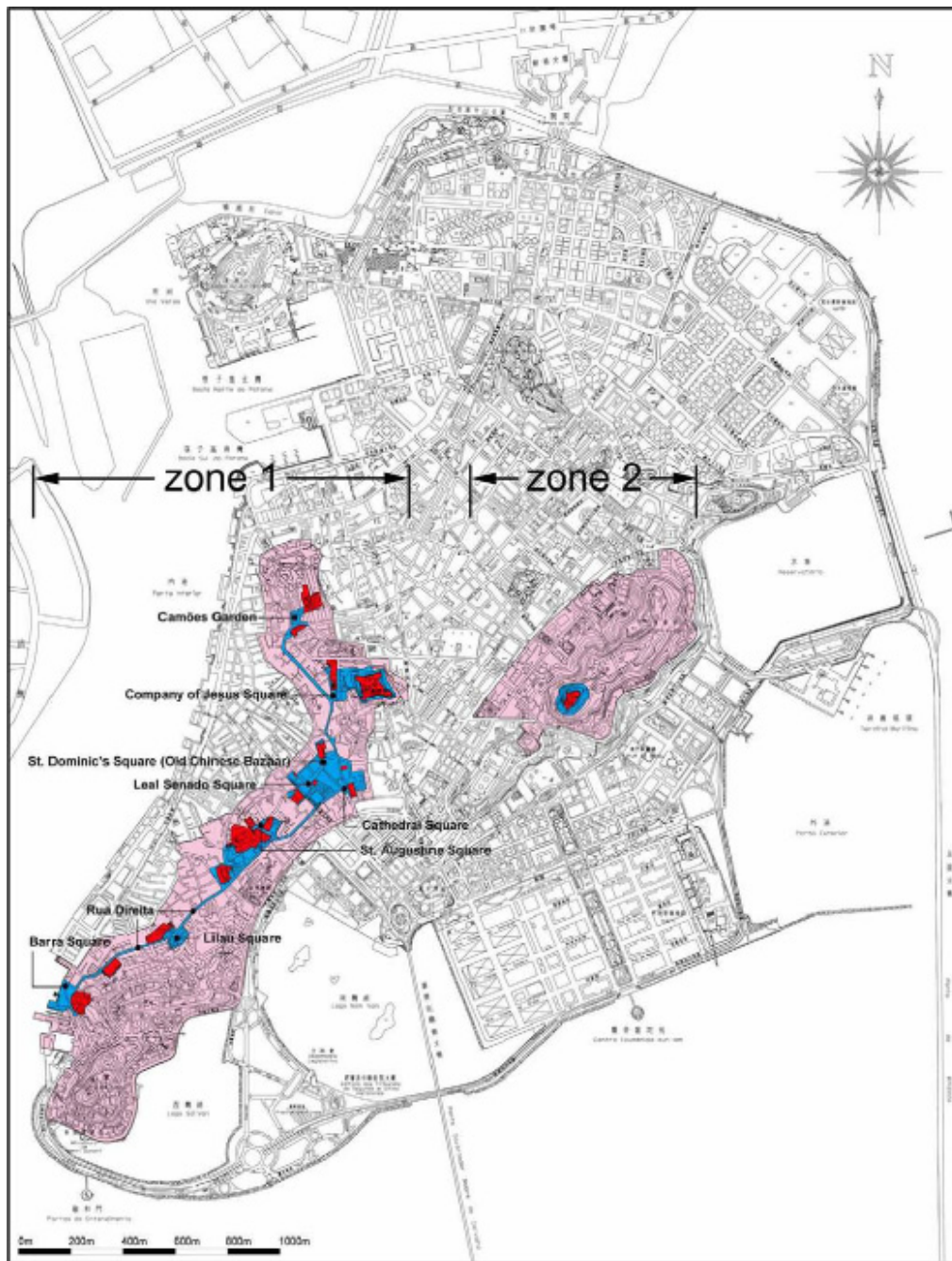
The introduction of “pleasure gardens” eventually become a new social phenomenon that dramatically inspired the curation of different event space and urban architecture of its time; Cited by Cantor (2012), a scholar named Canogar claimed that fairs and markets in the early 19th Century provides a new formula of industrial exhibition, which set as a solid precedent as a point of conceptual references for universal exposition in 1851.



“The Grand Walk, Vauxhall Garden”, by Canaletto, about 1751. [https://www.comptonverney.org.uk/cv\\_collections/the-grand-walk-vauxhall-gardens/](https://www.comptonverney.org.uk/cv_collections/the-grand-walk-vauxhall-gardens/)



The Entertainment industrial zone appeared in HSBC bank report on Macao entertainment industry.



**PROTECTED BUILDINGS, PROTECTED AREAS AND BUFFER ZONES**

**LEGEND:**

- Protected Buildings
- Protected Areas
- Buffer Zones

PLAN DOCUMENT No. 02

Map of "Nominated Core Zones and Buffer Zones" of Historic Centre of Macao in 2005 UNESCO. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1110/documents/>

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A **misleading title** of Macao being coined as the “**Las Vegas of the East.**”

As the research continued towards the very end, little was found, and the path of seeking the connections between Las Vegas and the urban development of Macao became unfeasible.

It would be wise to conclude that the urban history of **Macao and Las Vegas are weakly related**, a mysterious connection that seems unrealistic for this to happen.