

The EU and Macau.

When History becomes a Motivation for Political Co-operation.

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“Don’t even start with it, you won’t find a thing”. The reaction stems from Malcolm Subhan, vice-chairman of the European Institute for Asian Studies and lecturer of the IXth Chair Glaverbel, as I reflected upon a paper about the reminiscence of the western colonial past in Asia in European Union policy documents.

I honestly admit: after an inquiry into key words as “history”, “past” and “colonialism” in several policy documents concerning EU-Asia relationships, the catch was poor. This or that agreement or strategy might mark “a historical step” in regard to the future but accompanying considerations on the past are persistently lacking. The reason of the obvious absence is natural, even human: because past relationships between the European and Asian continent are considered as highly problematic, they do not provide a solid base for political co-operation.

While most policy documents concerning EU-Asian issues thus cautiously avoid to mention historical relationships, I was surprised to find a case in which they are abundantly quoted: Macau, a small region of only 23 square kilometre situated in the southwest of the Pearl River Estuary. Formerly Macau was an overseas Portuguese territory but since its retrocession, 20th December 1999, it became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) within the People’s Republic of China (PRC) under the “one country, two systems” formula.

Macau was the first European settlement in China, officially going back to 1557. At the same time Macau hosted the longest European presence as its retrocession only occurred just before the Millennium turn. During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century *Macao* was a vibrant Portuguese trading centre where Europeans and Chinese exchanged products and knowledge. Moreover through the first college in western style, where Jesuits were trained in Chinese language, culture and philosophy before starting missionary activities on the Chinese mainland, Macau became also a keystone in cultural exchange between East and West.

The positive European attitude on the historical relationship between Europe and Macau is striking. During a working visit in November 1998 the former European Commission president Jacques Santer praised Macau “for its long historical relations with Europe”. He

insisted on the fact and stated that Macau and Europe “share the same common values and civilisation”¹. The first annual report from the Commission to monitor the situation in Macau after the handover evocated the “long standing historical links (...) the shared values and similar approaches to progress and development” as a motivation for political co-operation².

This repeated insisting on long historical relationships from the European side is even more striking compared to the Chinese point of view. The Chinese translation of the *transferencia de poderes* was *Hui Gui*, a return of something to its original owner³. The handover of Macau, even less acrimonious than the retrocession of Hong Kong, was a for the Chinese a clear process of decolonisation, in which colonial policy-makers transferred administrative and political power to indigenous people⁴. When Macau returned to China – the term is not neutral – not only the Macau and mainland Chinese community celebrated, but all Chinese communities spread over the world⁵.

Portugal didn’t oppose to the retrocession, as it already conceded to hand over sovereignty in 1974. Nevertheless Macau remained a Portuguese “national question”, partly because it was the last administrative territory in East Asia with a Portuguese cultural legacy and partly because it was regarded as a bridge to trading with China⁶. Regarding to China, Macau constituted the last testimony of European interference, even European imperialism⁷.

The interpretation of history is fundamental to the issue of colonialism and decolonisation and following anecdotic example may illustrate this. During the transition process, after the Joint Declaration of China and Portugal in 1987 on the future status of Macau, a high ranked Chinese official criticized the Macau government for keeping a statue in honour of João Ferreira do Amaral⁸. While for local Portuguese residents this governor of Macau (1846-1849) is a hero for obtaining free trade with China, he represents for the Chinese citizens a symbol of colonialism. No rather objective view can be taken into

¹ “European Commission president, Jacques Santer, praises Macau for its long historical relations with Europe”, *Newsletter of the World Trade Center Macau* XIII (January 1999), p.2.

² European Commission, *Report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, First Annual Report by the European Commission on the Macau Special Administrative Region*, COM (2001) 432 final, 25th July 2001, p.3.

³ H. Brunning, “Solemn events for the big day”, *South China Morning Post*, 2nd July 1999.

⁴ For this definition I refer to: H.S. Yee and S.S.H. Lo, “Macau in transition. The Politics of Decolonization”, *Asian Survey* XXXI:10 (October 1991) pp.905-919, p.905.

⁵ W. Wuyi, “Small Macau Consolidates Relations with Big Europe”, *Europe-China Magazine* (September 2002): reprinted in *GC.comm* (Newsletter of the German Industry and Commerce Hong Kong, South China, Vietnam and the German Chamber of Commerce, Hong Kong) (February 2003) pp.19-22, p.19.

⁶ Yee and Lo, “Macau in transition”, *op.cit.*, p.919.

⁷ As lecturer for the IXth Chair Glaverbel Jean-Guy Daigle exposed in the course programme: Institute for European Studies, Université Catholique de Louvain, IXth Chair Glaverbel of European Studies, *Europe and Asia*, p.6.

account as a modern biography about the governor still has to be written. Portugal wisely ended up by removing the statue of Ferreira do Amaral and shipping it to Lisbon⁹.

It seems as if the European Union tries to overcome the tangible point of decolonisation by transferring the tensional bilateral political relationships on an European level. Policy documents focus as well on the length of the intercultural relationships transforming the European presence in Macau into an overall harmonious period. This one-sided positive strategy hardly takes into account that China regarded the Portuguese presence as a part of overall European imperialism.

This essay doesn't intend to define a political strategy to overcome the clash of views and interpretations of history on Chinese or European sides. Every view on history, especially on intercultural issues, remains fundamentally "coloured" by origin, language and genuine culture. But recognizing this basic fact, better historical awareness and above all better understanding of opposite views can ameliorate political co-operation.

The first part of this essay tries to reconstruct "Macanese history", which is remarkably for both Chinese and Portuguese "national history". More than giving a detailed summary of names, facts and dates, this reconstruction searches for diverging views and the underlying reasons to. It also tries to confront the European positive attitude with this "images". The second part evaluates European policy making in regard to SAR Macau, and more especially the search for preservation of European cultural legacy within the Macau territory.

I. INTERPRETING HISTORY: FACTS OR IMAGES?

If historical research on Macau has been for a long time in the shadow of contributions on Hong Kong, the former Portuguese overseas province has become a flourishing field of study during the last two decades. Zhang Haipeng, director of the Institute of Contemporary History at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, has even the impression that Macau

⁸ Yee and Lo, "Macau in transition", *op.cit.*, p.910.

⁹R. Ptak, "Macau and Sino-Portuguese Relations, ca. 1513-1514 to ca. 1900, a bibliographical essay", *Monumenta Serica* XXXXVI (1998) pp.343-396, p.392. Cf. H.S. Yee, "The Eurasians (Macanese) in Macau: the neglected minority", *Issues and Studies* XXXIII:6 (1997) 113-132, p.131 and R.L. Edmonds, "Macau and Greater China", *China Quarterly* CXXXVI (1993) pp.878-906, p.911.

research caught up with Hong Kong historical research¹⁰. But this fortunate account is not neutral.

A. Structural obstacles of historical research on Macau

Certainly “in the case of Macau, history is nearly always related to politics, and politics is tied to the complex theme of Sino-Portuguese relations”¹¹. The sudden interest on Macau’s past by Chinese scholars was a factual result of the Sino-Portuguese political negotiations which started in the eighties¹². It seems that writing on the past of Macau has rather become an “industry”¹³.

During the transition period, funds came available for historical research concerning the Sino-Portuguese heritage, in the hope that this would contribute to keep alive Macau’s identity after 1999. Unfortunately, the competition between scholars and institutions led also to “unwanted rivalries” between different research groups. Roderich Ptak, a prominent German researcher on Macau who tends to describe his position as a “neutral observer”¹⁴ reported how local newspapers - as a result of their “backward” links to the Chinese mainland pressure groups - only reported the unwanted rivalries. He pleads for future historians to disentangle this scenario¹⁵.

Further structural problems prevent smooth academic research on the Macau topic. The research is quite naturally carried out in three geographical spheres: Portugal, Macau and the People’s Republic of China. The three traditions also operate following different logics.

The axe of historical research on Macau in Portugal lays in different institutions in Lisbon. As Macau was part of the *Estado da India*, the overseas “empire” of Portugal from East Africa to East Asia, research is conducted under the perspective of this empire, tropical history or missionary history. The setting stays predominantly European as no sinological

¹⁰ Z. Haipeng, “Die Erforschung der Geschichte von Macau: Fortschritte und Probleme bei der Untersuchung der macanesischen Geschichte in Festland China” in R. Malek (ed), *Macau: Herkunft und Zukunft* (China-Zentrum Sankt-Augustin), Sankt Augustin, 2000, pp.213-228 ,p.215 and R. Ptak, “Twentieth Century Macau: History, Politics, Economy. A bibliographical survey”, *Monumenta Serica* II. (2001) pp.529-593, p.539 and 541.

¹¹ R. Ptak, “Twentieth Century Macau”, *op. cit.*, p.565.

¹² G.M.C. Ngai, “Macau’s identity: the need for its preservation and development in the next century” in A.H. Chen (ed), *Culture of metropolis in Macau: an international Symposium on cultural heritage Strategies for the 21th Century* (Instituto Cultural do governo da regio administrativa especial de Macau), Macau, 2001, pp.139-155, p.139.

Cf. Haipeng, “Die Erforschung”, *op.cit.*, pp.214-215.

¹³ Ptak, “Macau and Sino-Portuguese Relations”, *op.cit.*, p.396.

¹⁴ R. Ptak, “Macau: China’s Window to the Latin World” in A.H. Chen (ed), *Culture of metropolis in Macau: an international Symposium on cultural heritage Strategies for the 21th Century*, *Op.cit.*, pp. 329-336, p.329.

¹⁵ Ptak, “Macau and Sino-Portuguese Relations”, *op.cit.*, p.347.

institution provides links with the general Chinese history. Nevertheless many scholars provide very balanced accounts¹⁶.

The centres of historical research in the PRC are mainly Guangzhou (main neighbour city on the Pearl River) and also Nanjing, Shanghai and Beijing¹⁷. The institutional side of Macau research on the mainland is not very developed and depends essentially on individual efforts. But Chinese mainland research on Macau is intertwined with the study on the “imperialistic intrusion” of Europe on the Asian continent. Some academics only study the aspect of “imperialistic aggression”¹⁸. The results of the mainland scholarship are often very one-sided and influenced by nationalist (even nationalistic) representations. Language barriers and prejudices often prevent any acquaintance with western methodology¹⁹.

Local research in Macau is divided in studies within the framework of the *Macau Foundation* which promotes monographs in Chinese, the *University of Macau* which offers scholarship in Chinese mainland tradition and unfortunately with a low degree in internationalisation²⁰ and the *Cultural Institute of Macau* which stimulates multilingual research and cultural exchanges²¹.

The fundamental barrier between the different research traditions is frequently a question of language. The language issue is certainly not neutral. A lusophone article sees history through Portuguese eyes, as a sinophone article does it through Chinese. But the anglophone mediation between Chinese and Portuguese researchers risks to be disadvantageous too. The anglosaxon world is often influenced by images which date from the period in which Macau was still a competitor of Hong Kong and which are heavily influenced by eurocentrism. The “neutral observer” Roderich Ptak likes to call this process “image making à l’anglaise” and fears that Macau “history” will change profoundly if Chinese scholars only acquaintance western knowledge through anglosaxon research²². *Macao* is gradually transforming into *Macau*.

¹⁶ Ptak, “Macau and Sino-Portuguese Relations”, pp.344-345.

¹⁷ Haipeng, “Die Erforschung”, *op.cit.*, p.215.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p.214.

¹⁹ Ptak, “Macau and Sino-Portuguese Relations”, p.344.

²⁰ Eminent Persons Group Macau, *Macau in the Context of EU-China Relation*, 3rd March 1999, pp.1-31, p.10. The Eminent Persons Group on Macau was formed in May 1998 on the initiative of the Portuguese Institute of International and Strategic Studies and was composed of an independent group of European personalities from different EU countries who agreed, in their private capacities, to carry out a joint reflection on the role Macau might play in the context of European Union-China relations in the XXI century. The EPG also included a panel of (academic) experts who assisted the Group in its deliberations.

²¹ Ptak, “Macau and Sino-Portuguese Relations”, pp.345-346.

²² Ptak, “Twentieth Century Macau”, p.535 and above all: Ptak, “Macau: China’s Window to the Latin World”, pp.329-331.

The prosperous growth of interest in the history of Macau has certainly not balanced out diverging views. Structural obstacles as institutional and geographic influence spheres remained. Scholarship was often conducted in separate cultural settings which could feed cultural prejudices. Language barriers and mediation in English influenced the objectivity of results. At the same time open-mindedness is steadily growing. But the European and Chinese views still clash on the heart of the matter: the origins of Portuguese presence, the qualification of the Portuguese relations with China, the influence of the Opium wars and the general cultural significance of Macau in East-West relations.

B. Origins of Portuguese presence in Macau

The most debatable question remains the 16th century origins of Portuguese presence in Macau. One traditional explanation is the case in which Portuguese chased pirates away which were assaulting the Pearl River Estuary and therefore gained consent of local governments to settle down. This old theory, which is most probably an invention of Portuguese settlers, has been largely replaced by the evidence of Portuguese corruption in order to obtain permission for establishing a post in 1557.²³ The consensus remains weak in regard to its geographic acceptance. A radical mainland Chinese school has “arrogantly” stated that the “real” pirates were the Portuguese, thereby attacking all conventional accounts of Western historiography²⁴.

Not referring to the “right” historical tradition can have serious consequences in Sino-Portuguese relationships. On the last celebration of the Portuguese National Day before the handover (10th June 1999), a Portuguese parliamentarian of the socialist party, Antonio de Almeida Santos, declared that the 400 years of Portuguese presence was “a result of a meeting of desires, the natural consequence of an alliance in fighting piracy which at the time was the scourge of the Chinese seas”. Maybe because of his age (the man was in his seventies) the speaker was still impregnated with the former Portuguese nationalist views. He certainly hadn’t caught up with modern historical views. But the historical claim did not pass without bruising Beijing. Immediate response of the *Ou Mun Daily*, “a quasi-official mouthpiece of Beijing” blamed the Portuguese parliamentarian for “ignoring historical facts of gradual occupation”. In any case, the redaction of the *Ou Mun*

²³ B.V. Pires, “Origins and Early History of Macau” in R.D. Cremer (ed), *Macau: city of commerce and culture*, Hong Kong, 1987, pp.7-22, pp.9-12 and Haipeng, “Die Erforschung”, p.216-217.

²⁴ Ptak, “Macau and Sino-Portuguese Relations”, p.374.

Daily thought that the Portuguese could do better in economic and structural development than “resorting to inadequate historical claims”²⁵.

C. Qualification of Portuguese presence in Macau and its relations with China

Most Chinese authors refer to Portuguese presence in Macau as an “invasion” and “occupation” and above all as “colonisation”. Some mainland Chinese scholars did even argue that the Portuguese never obtained permission to settle down. This Chinese thesis seems untenable, even if there is discussion on the exact circumstances in which the Ming dynasty consented to the Portuguese presence on their coastal territory. Other authors conclude that the Macau trade damaged the Chinese economy²⁶.

European accounts tend to focus on the flourishing trade which brought profits “not only to Portugal, but also to China”. According to this tradition Sino-Portuguese relationships were based on “mutual benefits and mutual respect”²⁷.

The question of qualifying Sino-Portuguese relationships can only be surmounted by adequate historical division of the almost five centuries of Sino-Portuguese relations in Macau.

The period between the foundation of Macau in 1557 till the tragic end of a Portuguese goodwill mission to Japan and the Qing Manchu conquest of China in the 1640s is often regarded as Golden Age of Macau in which trade mainly between Guangzhou and Japan boosted. Several authors studied the “Macao Formula” of the Ming dynasty and the “Chinese management of Westerners”²⁸.

The “Mid-Seventeenth Crisis” (not only in Macau but also in China and Japan) was mainly characterised by Qing blockades and Portuguese missions to try to relieve Macau’s problems. After 1680 the prohibitions were mainly relaxed pushing international trade to unknown heights via the Maritime Silk Route. Qing regulations made from Macau not only a trading port but also a “service center” for many Northwest Europeans. At the end of the eighteenth century Macau had a large European community within its city walls.

There are few Chinese contributions on the Golden Age or transitional period²⁹, but some see the characteristics of true colonialism already present in this period. An eminent

²⁵ The whole incident was reported by: H.Brunning, “History Lesson for Portugal”, *South China Morning Post*, 18th June 1999.

²⁶ Haipeng, “Die Erforschung”, p.219-222.

²⁷ Eminent Persons Group Macau, *Macau in the Context of EU-China Relations*, March 3rd 1999, p.4-5.

²⁸ Ptak, “Macau and Sino-Portuguese Relations”, p.378.

²⁹ Ptak, “Macau and Sino-Portuguese Relations”, p.382.

Chinese author Fei Chengkan challenged this view by claiming that the first three hundred years the relations between China and Portugal were harmonious³⁰. Western historiography still makes some important footnotes to this “harmonious” perception, but generally speaking Sino-Portuguese relationships before the Opium Wars were based on mutual respect and equally conceived diplomacy.

D. Opium Wars and 20th Century Macau

The 19th Century brought profound changes to the Sino-Portuguese Relationships. Macau was sandwiched between China and Britain (which tried to conquer the Portuguese land) and tried to stay neutral. Even during the Opium wars no shot was made on the Macau territory.

When Britain started to bind China through formal contracts, the Portuguese decided to restructure Macau profoundly transforming it into a free port with modernized infrastructure.³¹ The already mentioned governor João Maria Ferreira do Amaral, who was responsible for restructuring Macau, has eventually been murdered by Chinese criminals. Chinese mainland research tries to beat down this conventional historical view. They omit Portuguese merits and portray the murderers of Amaral as patriotic heroes “to the extent that they have almost become revolutionary immortals”³².

It is true that Macau during to period from 1840 until 1870 was involved in the coolie and opium trade. At the same time the Hong Kong level was much higher and lead to more excesses³³. The coolies, contract workers who were mostly poor driven by Chinese mainland immigrants, were shipped via Macau towards America and South East Asia. Human considerations were not at stake, nor for the Europeans nor for the Chinese. Chinese authors do not often place the coolie trading in a greater historical perspective in which China always was involved in “exporting manpower”³⁴. They also have to realise that the coolie trade was not causing Macau’s decline³⁵.

After the Opium wars Macau never caught up with Shanghai or Hong Kong. As a result of the weakness of the Chinese imperial court and intrigues, Portugal negotiated the Treatise of Tianjin that stated that China confirmed the perpetual occupation of Macau. In 1887 followed an in Lisbon signed “Protocol Respecting the Relations Between the Two

³⁰ Haipeng, “Die Erforschung”, p.221.

³¹ A general survey: Pires, “Origins and Early History of Macau”, pp.13-15.

³² Ptak, “Macau and Sino-Portuguese Relations”, p.389.

³³ Ptak,, “Macau: China’s Window to the Latin World”, p.339.

³⁴ Ptak, “Macau and Sino-Portuguese Relations”, pp.392-394.

³⁵ Haipeng, “Die Erforschung”, pp.221-223.

Countries” which conceded the “perpetual occupation and government” to Portugal which promised “never to alienate Macau and dependencies without agreement of China”. But China never ratified these and other treaties which claimed Portuguese sovereignty³⁶.

The upward spiral of mutual respect and benefits broke and was replaced by inequality and coercion³⁷. In this stage “real colonialism” appeared, although still a lot has to be done to trace representation of international law in this century to evaluate this colonialism³⁸.

Macau managed to stay neutral during the Sino-Japanese War which gradually fled into World War II. The Portuguese territory hosted temporarily thousands of immigrants. Portugal designated Macau as a separate overseas province in 1955.

Portuguese control diminished on the Macau territory after anti-government riots in 1966. Due to the *coup d'état* in Portugal, it wanted to leave Macau and so it informed the People's Republic of China in 1974. Beijing did not agree (because of the three steps' axiom: first Taiwan, then Hong Kong and finally Macau³⁹) but from then on Chinese influence grew in Macau. In 1979 a secret agreement defined Macau as Chinese territory under Portuguese administration. Negotiations starting in 1985 resulted in a Joint Sino-Portuguese Declaration in 1987 that pointed 20th December 1999 as the date for the retrocession.

E. Cultural significance of Macau as bridge between East and West

This chronological survey of Macanese history left out the most praised aspect of its history: its role as a cultural bridge between East and West, or better defined as Europe and China. The cultural blend of both the East and West is reflected in folklore customs, music and gastronomy⁴⁰. Out of ethnic mix the Macanese population were facilitators in this process. Macau hosted since 1597 the first European university for Jesuits. Famous missionaries as the Belgian Ferdinand Verbiest received their education in Macau before departing to the Beijing court. Many influential thinkers and leaders in China came from areas near to Macau and had therefore access to Western learning. The Macau people were granted religious freedom.

³⁶ Pires, “Origins and Early History of Macau”, p.15.

³⁷ Ngai, “Macau's Identity: the Need for its Preservation”, p.141.

³⁸ Haipeng, “Die Erforschung”, p.223 and 226 and Ngai, “Macau's Identity: the Need for its Preservation”, p.141.

³⁹ M. Chan, “Different Roads to Home: the Retrocession of Hong Kong and Macau to Chinese Sovereignty”, *Journal of Contemporary China* XXXVI (August 2003) pp.493-518, p.514.

⁴⁰ For a full account on this theme: A.R. Zepp, “Interface of Chinese and Portuguese Cultures” in R.D. Cremer (ed), *Macau: city of commerce and culture, opt. cit.*, pp.125-138.

Architecture, as for example the famous remaining ruins and façade of the San Paulo Cathedral, are a mix of Western style and oriental design elements. Macau has also a long tradition in publishing. The first Western newspapers in the East were printed in Macau⁴¹.

This positive view of “cultural exchange” does not mean that western influence in Macau was a harmonious amalgam: Dutch riots often challenged Portuguese presence, as did French, German and British adventurers. Intra-European conflicts were also transferred in the Far East. But the already quoted Chinese author Fei Chengkang still retains: “In spite of five thousands years old Chinese culture, Macau is without doubt one of the most significant centers in the cultural exchange between East and West”. He even thinks that Macau had a greater importance in cultural exchange between the East and the West than the Silk Route⁴².

F. Taking into account historical relationships...

History and politics often have a difficult marriage. If Europe founds its Macau policy on base of “long historical relationships” with the territory, it should be aware of the fact that the Chinese population doesn’t perceive these historical ties with a lot of sympathy. In mainland China the 19th Century situation of opium and coolie trade is often projected on the whole period of Portuguese “occupation”. No differentiation is made with characteristics of British imperialism. A lot of people think that Portuguese occupation shrank China’s trade and that eventually coolie trade also led to the decline of the position of Macau.

Europeans often inverse the process. They project the originally “harmonious” cooperation on the full presence of “Europeans” and thereby eurocentrism blends out the issue of the 19th Century of unequal treaties and slavery trade.

Still it has to be made clear that Macau’s history is actually almost free from “unwanted historical ballast” as Roderich Ptak formulated it. Macau disposes over a “noble Latin past” (different from the British tradition!) which it can exploit⁴³. Without European presence in Macau it is very unlikely that the village of fishery ever turned into a major trading port which now has one of the highest *per capita* incomes of the region⁴⁴.

⁴¹ Ptak, “Macau and Sino-Portuguese Relations”, p.346.

⁴² Cited by: Haipeng, “Die Erforschung”, pp.223-225.

⁴³ Ptak,, “Macau: China’s Window to the Latin World”, p.331.

⁴⁴ In the same sense of argumentation: H. Bunning, “History Lesson for Portugal”, *South China Morning Post*, 18th June 1999.

Historical research on “views” and “images” on both sides, taking even into account American, Japanese and British views, may be the real challenge for future scholarship.⁴⁵ This knowledge is an essential process in intercultural learning and eventually in intercultural political cooperation. Still a lot has to be done to reach a general consensus on the role of Macau in history. Some consider it as very negative for the Chinese mainland and its trade, while others accent the positive influence of Portuguese presence on Chinese trade figures⁴⁶.

An “Eminent Persons Group” created to study on Macau in the context of EU-China relations pleaded for academic exchanges not only in the field of technology but above all in humanities and social science⁴⁷. Also voices in Macau appeal for more academic research in dept, with an emphasis on humanities, both in Chinese and Portuguese language and an increased interflow of academics⁴⁸.

But even if in future historical consensus grows, national sensibilities will remain and will have to be taken into account by political co-operation.

II. EU-MACAU POLITICAL CO-OPERATION: PRESERVING EUROPEAN CULTURAL HERITAGE?

The history of Macau is in many regards “unique”. With its 23 square kilometre (of which a great deal result out of land reclamation) and a population around 430,000 inhabitants, the Special Administrative Region Macau, China (afterwards also MSAR) is the smallest entity in Greater China. “Big brother” Hong Kong is 62 times larger and has 11 times more population⁴⁹. The small size of the territory and its lack of natural resources prohibit major economic development. Macau’s ambition is to become a second service center and a hub in the Pearl River region.

The population of Macau belongs to three major ethnic groups: the Chinese, the Portuguese and the Macanese. The Macanese, also referred to as “Eurasians”, are a minority of 2%. Unlike Hong Kong where British colonists usually didn’t marry indigenous people, Macanese are mostly Macau-born people of mixed Portuguese-Chinese origin. Individual or family links with other Eurasians, Portuguese language, catholic religion or self-

⁴⁵ Cf. Ptak, “Macau and Sino-Portuguese Relations”, p.330.

⁴⁶ Haipeng, “Die Erforschung”, pp.227-228.

⁴⁷ Eminent Persons Group Macau, *Macau in the Context of EU-China Relations*, *opt.cit.*, p.17.

⁴⁸ Ngai, “Macau’s identity”, p.141.

⁴⁹ Edmonds, “Macau and Greater China”, *opt.cit.*, p.878.

identification are basic criteria to define this group of approximately 10,000 people.⁵⁰ About 97% of the Macau population is ethnic Chinese, mainly Cantonese. Larger minorities of Chinese people are from Fujian and Shanghai. The Guangzhou Cantonese is the current language, although Mandarin won field after 1999. Less than 1% of the population are Portuguese and their number quite naturally decreased since 1999.

The relationships between these ethnic groups haven't always been smooth. If Chinese people looked down on the mixture of Macanese people, the latter succeeded in attaining government positions and thus a higher social status. But while Macanese played a prominent role in local politics, they were isolated from business and didn't catch up with economic growth in the 1980s and 1990s⁵¹. Also the Portuguese have mainly been involved with politics and have made minor effort to try to integrate into the Chinese or Macanese community⁵².

Some anthropologists have used the metaphor of a tropical "typhoon" to describe the changing social and political environment that Macau would face after 1999⁵³. The major issue of every decolonisation process and thus the one of Macau is the "localisation" of civil service⁵⁴. As being the large majority in the Macau society, the ethnic Chinese people really claim this localisation. Macanese have thus lost their dominant role in the administration and the local politics. As a result of this and a fast growing "Sinicization" the integrative forces of the Macanese community have weakened. The Lusophon tradition in daily life (not in government) risks to be disappearing in a "not-too-distant future"⁵⁵.

The tendency in the transitional period and certainly after the handover of Macau, was to overemphasize "Chineseness" and to dilute "Latinnes". The Chinese Macau citizens consider they have the right as majority to react against "imperialism" and to throw "colonial" heritage overboard⁵⁶. As we have pointed out, these feelings are not fully in line with historical accounts but they are nevertheless vehemently present within the Macau

⁵⁰ H.S. Yee, "The Eurasians (Macanese) in Macau", *opt. cit.*, p. 113-115. A more recent article cites 15,000 but this seems rather unlikely: B. Hook. and M.S. Neves, "The Role of Hong Kong and Macau in China's relations with Europe", *China Quarterly* CLXIX (2002) pp.108-135, p.119

⁵¹ Yee, "The Eurasians (Macanese) in Macau", pp.115-118.

⁵² Edmonds, "Macau and Greater China", p.901.

⁵³ Yee, "The Eurasians (Macanese) in Macau", p.114.

⁵⁴ S.J. Henders, "So What If it's Not a Gamble? Post-Westphalian Politics in Macau", *Pacific Affairs* LXXIV:3 (2001) pp.342-360. Cf. Yee and Lo, "Macau in transition", p.913.

⁵⁵ Yee, "The Eurasians (Macanese) in Macau", p.119.

⁵⁶ Ngai, "Macau's Identity: the Need for its Preservation", p.144.

society. Most Chinese don't even look upon Macau as different of Hong Kong. They use the expression "Kong Ou" for both⁵⁷.

A. Cultural heritage policy: Between Lisbon, Beijing and Macau

How should one deal with European culture within a society which is rapidly absorbing Chinese elements? The question has been first raised on the bilateral level of Sino-Portuguese relations. During the retrocession negotiations the hidden agenda of Portugal has always been to preserve Portuguese cultural heritage and to protect the Macanese minority⁵⁸ (even if the Macanese eventually felt betrayed by both Portugal and China⁵⁹). The Portuguese have always seen a distinct cultural identity of Macau as the "flip side" of their support of Macau's autonomy⁶⁰. This process is not free of more economic considerations as Macau is seen to be facilitating Sino-Portuguese trade⁶¹.

During the transition period 1987-1999, Portugal spent a lot of public funds on local museums (as for example the Maritime Museum) and archives. At the Macau University of East Asia a new master degree on Luso-Asian History have been organised⁶².

For Beijing these cultural politics are of no interest as the People's Republic of China wants to reduce foreign influence as much as possible⁶³. Several local pro-Beijing forces in Macau have largely condemned the idea of erecting seven monuments to remember Sino-Portuguese heritage as "a waste a public funds"⁶⁴. The Portuguese government has for that reason either been "unwilling or unable to pressure the Chinese authorities to take concrete steps to preserve the Portuguese language and culture in post-1999 Macau"⁶⁵.

Since the installation of the MSAR in 1999, a third - more discrete voice - has mingled within the discussion between China and Portugal. Within the "one country, two systems" formula the Macau government has developed its own cultural heritage policy in the framework of a *Cultural Institute* under the governmental Secretary for Commerce, Tourism and Culture. This cultural heritage policy wants to stress what makes Macau

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p.141.

⁵⁸ Chan, "The Retrocession of Hong Kong and Macau to Chinese Sovereignty", p.507.

⁵⁹ Yee, "The Eurasians (Macanese) in Macau", p.121.

⁶⁰ Henders, "Post-Westphalian Politics in Macau", p.356-357.

⁶¹ Edmonds, "Macau and Greater China", 905. Cf. Yee and Lo, "Macau in Transition", p.919.

⁶² Yee and Lo, "Macau in Transition", p.911.

⁶³ Eminent Persons Group Macau, *Macau in the Context of EU-China Relations*, p.16.

⁶⁴ R. Clarke, "Row over financing of public projects in Macau", *South China Morning Post*, 12th April 1993.

⁶⁵ Yee, "The Eurasians (Macanese) in Macau", p.131.

“unique”⁶⁶. An adviser to the UNESCO analysed the main asset of Macau correctly: “The phenomenon that a city functions as both a cultural and trade centre is rare in Asia”⁶⁷.

Only if Macau strengthens its heritage, the SAR can better play its role and becoming more independent of its bigger neighbour Hong Kong⁶⁸. Also this option is due to economic considerations. If Macau further integrates in Greater China, the SAR may lose the characteristic that can make the real contribution to its economic development⁶⁹. Without its unique historical and cultural character, Macau is only another Chinese town in the Pearl River region. Further “Sinicization” would impede its trading connection with a broader Lusophon and Latin world.

B. A role for the European Union?

The 1992 EU-Macau Trade and Co-operation Agreement

The outcome of the constitutional procedures regarding the Macau handover was of vital interest within the framework of Sino-European relations, mainly because of the “complex legacy of extra-territoriality” and the international role that the MSAR could take up within the People’s Republic of China⁷⁰.

But during the first Sino-Portuguese negotiations in 1985 a role for the European Economic Community, not yet disposing over an external policy, was not at stake. Also when the Common Foreign and Security Policy was already set in action, the authors Hook and Neves recently qualified the EU as “remarkably absent and silent with respect to Macau’s transitions and its involvement did not go beyond formal diplomatic statements of the European Council”⁷¹.

The statement is maybe too severe as will appear out of the list of programmes and actions undertaken by the EU. Nevertheless there is a glimmer of truth in the statement, as the United Kingdom has always refused to a *communitarization* of the Hong Kong and Macau problem, and as Portugal has tried to dissociate the Macau dossier of the tensional Sino-British negotiations⁷². The decolonisation negotiations of Macau and Hong Kong have been largely made within a bilateral framework.

⁶⁶ António Durão, “Cultural Heritage Policy in Macau” in: A.H. Chen (ed) *Culture of metropolis in Macau*, opt. cit., pp.117-120, p.117.

⁶⁷ Wuyi, “Small Macau”, p.21.

⁶⁸ Ngai, “Macau’s identity: the Need for its Preservation”, p.144.

⁶⁹ Cf. Edmonds, “Macau and Greater China”, p.906.

⁷⁰ Hook and Neves, “The Role of Hong Kong and Macau in China’s relations with Europe”, p.108-135.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p.117.

⁷² *Ibidem*, p.112.

Nonetheless Portuguese lobby action put Macau on the European negotiation table in 1992. The hidden agenda of Portugal was manifold: the Portuguese wanted to increase the visibility of Macau in Europe but at the same time they saw an EU-Macau agreement as a means to enhance Macau's European heritage. The Portuguese presidency during the first semester of 1992 gave the opportunity to sign an EU-Macau agreement⁷³.

Some more general European considerations shimmered between the lines. EU-China relations had deteriorated since the Tiananmen tragedy and the following EU sanctions. The EU also feared that human rights and democratic principles were under threat in Hong Kong and Macau and that outside support was welcome⁷⁴.

The EU-Macau Agreement on Trade and Cooperation remarkably combined two areas of interest: the economic-technical layer with a political "cooperation" dimension which involved the promotion of democracy and the protection of human rights. The 1992 Treaty on Trade and Co-operation which came into effect on January 1st 1993 represents for the MSAR "by far the most significant international treaty ever signed by Macau". The agreement was extended after 1999. A *Joint Committee* (composed of both EU and Macau civil servants) annually monitors the agreement and initiates programmes.⁷⁵

The agreement hasn't set off EU-Macau trade relations in an increasing upward dimension. The technological cooperation became dominant. Since 1995 programs aiming at business cooperation, SME and the service sector have been set up. Also the Asia-Invest plan and its annual fairs have been targeted to Macau⁷⁶. From the Macau point of view, the agreement has not produced relevant economic results⁷⁷. The EU had to conclude that it dropped from the second to third trade partner of the MSAR.

In general Macau has seen the agreement more as a cooperation chart than a real trade agreement (which caused a sense of frustration) and it considered the agreement therefore more relevant in a political and cultural perspective⁷⁸.

⁷³ Henders, "Post-Westphalian Politics in Macau", p.357.

⁷⁴ Hook and Neves, "The Role of Hong Kong and Macau in China's relations with Europe", p.112.

⁷⁵ Council of the European Economic Community, *Council Decision of 14 December 1992 concerning the conclusion of a trade and cooperation agreement between the European Economic Community and Macau*, Official Journal L 404, 31st December 1992, p.0026.

⁷⁶ Wuyi, "Small Macau Consolidates Relations with Big Europe", p.19-20.

⁷⁷ Eminent Persons Group Macau, *Macau in the Context of EU-China Relations*, p.16-20.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p.21.

Indeed, the most positive “and visible”⁷⁹ results followed out of the “second” chapter of “other fields of co-operations” of the EU-Macau agreement and its ninth article furthering the cultural dimension, which included the conservation of objects of history.

Several projects have been set up. At the start small *ad hoc* cultural projects as the preservation of historical archives or the schooling of interpreters were given priority. Immediately an European Info-Centre has been established with links to 250 European infocenters. A second wave of programs started in 1995: funding for a degree in European studies resulted in 1999 in a Macau institute for European Studies. A public administration training program sought to develop management skills for directors and improving their links with EU institutions⁸⁰. But these “visible” results haven’t had a major impact on bilateral relations. Explicit actions promoting human rights or democracy have been marginalized⁸¹.

In the transition phase the European Union has mainly, consciously or not, aimed at preserving the “historical ties”, mostly by initiatives having a cultural or political relevance. Although recognizing its “moderate positive” effects in the area, an Eminent Persons Group on Macau regretted that the European Union did not adopt a long-term strategy instead of starting up short-term programmes. Moreover the activities were mainly concentrated in the public sector and have not involved non-governmental organisations although art. 134 of the Macau Basic Law defined that NGO’s would be able to cultivate external relations, in particular to European counterparts⁸².

C. Macau beyond 2000. Still a role for Europe?

The Commission issued November 12th 1999 a Communication to the Council and the European Parliament on “The EU and Macao: Beyond 2000” outlining its engagement to monitor the “one country, two systems” principle after the handover through annual reporting⁸³. The main engagement of the Commission was to secure human rights and democratic principles within the SAR Macau, China.

Some voices have considered the approach of the Commission strategy as eurocentric, some even as “Pattenesque”, referring to the reputation of the current Commissioner on External Relations during his period as the “last governor” of Hong Kong.

⁷⁹ Hook and Neves, “The Role of Hong Kong and Macau in China’s relations with Europe”, p.131.

⁸⁰ Wuyi, “Small Macau Consolidates Relations with Big Europe”, p.19-20. Eminent Persons Group Macau, *Macau in the Context of EU-China Relations*, p.18-20.

⁸¹ Hook and Neves, “The Role of Hong Kong and Macau in China’s relations with Europe”, p.131.

⁸² Eminent Persons Group Macau, *Macau in the Context of EU-China Relations*, mainly p.13 and 22.

⁸³ European Commission, *Communication to the Council and the European Parliament, entitled “The EU and Macao: Beyond 2000”*, COM (99) 484 final, 12th November 1999.

Some Chinese see the stress on democratic principles as an attempt by “unelected Eurocrats” to spread their political concepts in an entirely different political context⁸⁴.

Three annual reports on Macau have been made up since the Commission Communication.⁸⁵ Some new programs accompanied the handover: a Macau-Europe Center for Advanced Tourism Studies, the final stage of the European Studies Programme and a Service Development programme. Currently the programme on EU-Macau Legal Co-operation is the only one still running (ending foreseen in 2005).

The recent EU-Macau negotiations give the idea that EU-Macau relationship in future will principally be of a political nature. This is partly a result of the fact that Macau no longer qualifies under OECD criteria for Development Assistance. Therefore earlier programmes have to be readapted to Macau’s changing needs⁸⁶.

The political tie is due to the human link of Macau residents with a Portuguese nationality and because of the legal system of the SMAR based on the European law tradition. The EU-Macau Legal Co-operation Programme tends to train civil servants in the legal area to maintain a stable legal system after the departure of Portuguese administrators. The European Union sees Macau a “laboratory” for testing out foreign ideas on democracy in a Chinese context.

Another highly sensible matter which was not settled down in Sino-Portuguese relationships, has been taken up in EU-Macau negotiations. Sino-Portuguese negotiations struggled on the 25% of the Macau population that had a Portuguese nationality (unlike the “Hong Kong Man” with a Dependent Territory Passport) and was thus eligible for European citizenship. All Portuguese citizens have therefore right of abode in the EU and are entitled to consular protection (including UK which does not grant this for Hong Kong people). China opposed to this principle and does not recognize the Portuguese nationality of the Macau residents and still regards them as exclusively Chinese⁸⁷.

The EU has mainly taken interest in negotiating visa procedures with the SAR Macau, China. Following a Council Regulation of March 15th 2001 the EU granted visa free

⁸⁴ H. Brunning, “Asia’s bridge to Europe”, *South China Morning Post*, 19th November 1999.

⁸⁵ European Commission, *Report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, First Annual Report by the European Commission on the Macau Special Administrative Region*, COM (2001) 432 final, 25th July 2001, 8p.

European Commission, *Report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Macau Special Administrative Region: Second Annual Report 2001*, COM (2002) 445 final, 31st July 2002, 8p.

European Commission, *Report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, Macau Special Administrative Region: Third Annual Report 2002*, COM (2003) 415 final, 10th July 2003, 8p.

⁸⁶ J. Quigley, “EU Co-operation Officer For Macau ruled Out”, *Eur.Asia Bulletin* VII:2 (February 2003) pp.14-15, p. 14.

⁸⁷ Yee, “The Eurasians (Macanese) in Macau”, p.114.

access to Macau SAR passport holders. As a result of this negotiations, an EC-Macau agreement on readmission of persons residing without authorisation was signed on 13th October 2003⁸⁸. Hereby the EU overcomes some liabilities of Sino-Portuguese (and even Sino-British) relationships and it could play a positive role in resolving residual problems⁸⁹.

On the Macau point of view, some speak of a “consolidation of relations with Big Europe”. The Macau-Europe tie is too strong to break and it should not be broken⁹⁰. The European Parliament, mainly through its Portuguese members, has been complaining on the “decline” of programmes to a “solitary judicial cooperation”. Even a tenth Joint Committee meeting for monitoring the 1992 Trade and Co-operation agreement wasn’t scheduled properly⁹¹; it eventually took place in Macau on 3rd of March 2004.

“Because of history and long-standing links of more than 500 years” (which was a little historical exaggeration as the first Portuguese presence is recorded in 1513) the European Parliament asked for a resident “Co-operation officer” for the EU-Macau Agreement to support equally EU-China dialogue⁹². The idea was mentioned in the Commission communication of 1999 but the European Commission finally decided not to nominate an co-operation officer. The one thing the European Parliament and the European Commission seem to agree on is that Macau is progressing “in a satisfactory way”⁹³.

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The lobby for Macau will always point at the function of Macau “as a bridge” between two cultures and two continents. This will remain the most important asset that Macau holds. The closer the Macau-Europe relationship is, the more interesting Macau is for Asian countries. Vice versa is a closer Macau-China relationship valuable for attracting EU interest⁹⁴.

But this lobby tends to forget that this asset can also be a liability if too strongly sought for. Preserving European heritage is seen in Beijing as an attempt of “cultural

⁸⁸ http://europa.eu.int/com/external_relations/macau/intro.

⁸⁹ Hook and Neves, “The Role of Hong Kong and Macau in China’s relations with Europe”, p.133.

⁹⁰ Wuyi, “Small Macau Consolidates Relations with Big Europe”.

⁹¹ European Parliament, *Written question E-3702/03 by Jose Riveiro e Castro to the European Commission*, P5-QE (2003) 3707, 10th December 2003.

⁹² European Parliament, *Resolution on the report from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on the Macao Special Administrative Region: First and Second Annual Reports*, P5-TA (2003) 0141, 8th April 2003.

⁹³ Quigley, “EU Co-operation Officer For Macau ruled Out”, pp.14-15.

⁹⁴ Wuyi, “Small Macau Consolidates Relations with Big Europe”, p.21.

imperialism”. Small “but visible” *ad hoc* cultural projects, as the EU initiated during the transitional phase, are a good means not to bruise Beijing frontally.

The EU seems to have left this “cultural” path and is now concentrating on political issues as visa and readmission agreements. On the other hand the EU must recognize that the MSAR doesn’t only search for political or cultural development but mainly for economic trading opportunities.

A fourth player may not been forgotten. Although there’s still no US-Macau policy act⁹⁵, U.S. reports take interest to “preservation of Macau’s unique way of life, particularly respect of civil liberties and human and labour rights”. The logic is entirely different principally aiming at preserving the market economy and human rights⁹⁶.

Due to the present European heritage in Macau, the European Union, taking into account the different preferences of its institutions and within its budget procedures, will have to decide on its future strategy towards Macau. This choice is of a political nature and therefore it leaves to job to politicians and not historians.

The decision for future strategies should be made on the base of an analysis of present accounts, taking conscientiously responsibility for Macau’s history and the different views on it. Slogans of “long standing historic ties” may be nice for promoting policies but they can also become a liability for intercultural bargaining and developing political co-operation.

⁹⁵ Hook and Neves, “The Role of Hong Kong and Macau in China’s relations with Europe”, p. 121.

⁹⁶ <http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rpt/4048pf.htm>. US-Macau Policy Act Report of March 27, 2001, released by the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs. Cf. <http://www.usconsulate.org.hk/cg/2002/a5/0801.htm>, “US-Macau Relations: Writing the Next Chapter.” Remarks by US Consul General Michael Klossen at the University of Macau, 8th May 2002.