

Introduction

Nothing is more curious and awkward than the relationship between people who only know each other by sight, who meet each other daily and all the time, who observe each other and who, owing to social considerations or mere caprice, are obliged to maintain the appearance of mutual indifference. Among them there is a restlessness and a pent-up curiosity, the hysteria of an unsatisfied and artificially suppressed need for exchange, as well as a kind of tense respect.

—Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice*¹

The final chapter of this book ends by observing the strangeness of the Macanese and their ambivalent identity, which reflects the disturbing image of ambivalent terrains on which, at the end of the day, all ‘imagined communities’ are built. This book begins with the same fascinating incongruity of Macao’s history and model of sovereignty: this is a territory that was administered by Portugal from the sixteenth century until 1999, the year when the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) was established. Macao has a land area of less than 30 km² and a resident population approaching 600,000 inhabitants, which continues to grow rapidly, making it the most densely populated territory in the world. Additionally, thousands of visitors cross its borders every day, attracted by Macao’s great gambling amusement park and all related entertainment in an ambiance dominated by kitsch, which is awash with money, allowing flights of fancy. As colossal and extravagant complexes of casinos and resorts sprang up on land reclamations, a kind of Las Vegas Strip emerged in Macao from 2002 onward, when the gambling market opened up to foreign investments, mostly coming from the USA. This increased the curiosity of tourists, and tourism exploded in 2005 due to China’s more flexible procedures in granting individual visas to travel to the MSAR, and local gambling industry revenues soon exceeded those of Las Vegas. In the same year, the Historical Centre of Macao, consisting of a set of monuments, buildings, streets and squares, a legacy of the Portuguese

presence in the territory over the course of 450 years, was recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. From then on, this ‘exotic image’ of being a harmonious meeting point between the East and the West, launched by the Portuguese and the Chinese states during the pre-transition period, became more visible inside Macao and abroad. In its quest to gain an identity based on this premise, the MSAR has sought to legitimize itself as a platform to China, both as part of the PRC’s relations with Portuguese-speaking nations, by recognizing and respecting heritage and the Portuguese language and culture in Macao, as well as at an international level, by converting Macao into a World Centre for Tourism and Leisure and by building the largest Advanced Education and Training Centre and Industrial and Technology Park for Traditional Chinese Medicine in the Pearl River Delta region in southern China.

The MSAR’s connection with Portugal has been emphasized over the course of the last twenty years, and this began, as mentioned, before the handover, with a massive campaign by the two nations showcasing Macao’s glorious past and re-creating it as a unique place in China, a



Figure 0.1. Panoramic view of the Nam Van lake, Macao 2010. Several casinos and resorts can be seen, along with one end of the Governor Nobre de Carvalho bridge (built in 1974) – which provides a road link between the Macao peninsula and Taipa island – and newly reclaimed land near the Macao Tower area. The Macao Tower was built in 2001 and with a height of 338 metres offers a panoramic 360° view of the Macao peninsula and the islands of Taipa and Coloane. Photo by the author.

symbol and product of cultural intermingling between Europeans and Asians. This connection can be seen in the promotion of a tangible and intangible heritage, which has become an ‘authentic’ tourist attraction, with groups of visitors flooding the narrow alleys of the historic downtown area, or in the numerous restaurants hawking Portuguese food and the long lines to sample Portuguese egg tarts at the small kiosk on the Senado square. Macao is also witnessing a dual process of commoditization and folklorization of a ‘uniquely Macanese identity’ in a very particular context: that of the most lucrative global gambling Disneyland. The gambling industry sustains Macao, attracting hordes of visitors and ensuring its place as one of the top five most visited destinations in the world. It has triggered inflation, animated the real estate market and transformed this diminutive territory into a concrete jungle, with towering skyscrapers and a constantly changing skyline.

The gambling industry also allows the MSAR government to earn millions in taxes and to emphasize that it is making economic development and constant improvements for Macao’s inhabitants a priority.² By implementing a social security scheme, which provides old-age



Figure 0.2. Panoramic view of Republic Avenue and the Sai Van lake, Macao 2010. The image shows one end of the eponymous third and final bridge linking Macao and Taipa. Concluded in 2004, it is the only suspension bridge in Macao and has two levels, an upper and a lower level, which operate even during bad weather and has set up the infrastructure to accommodate Macao’s light rail metro system currently operating just in Taipa. Photo by the author.

pensions and a monetary subsidy plan with annual allowances for all permanent and non-permanent residents of the MSAR and is adjusted annually according to the budget, the government has also guaranteed its legitimacy domestically, by demonstrating its constant concern for the inhabitants of Macao.

The strategic dimensions and quest for legitimacy reflected in the project to create a unique cultural identity for Macao are not, however, exclusively the domain of the MSAR or central PRC governments, in the context of expanding the PRC's economic and symbolic interests. The Eurasian Macanese ethnic minority, which enjoys a set of 'privileges' derived from its 'ethnic monopoly' (Pina-Cabral and Lourenço 1993; and Pina-Cabral 2000) and its intermediary role during the Portuguese administration, has also sensed the opportunity to try and maintain the same systems of perks – on a far more modest scale – by continuing to show it is still useful in cultural mediation between the PRC and Portuguese-speaking countries. This community has staked its claim to the model of historic and cultural identity envisaged for Macao. This study examines the Eurasian Macanese community – the local offspring – and its network of actors and social interactions in the context of building identities against the backdrop of complex political and economic processes that are simultaneously local and global, in the imagined cultural and social space of Macao. Using an anthropological approach focusing on ethnographic descriptions, in a certain sense this study is akin to Latour's vision and the 'actor-network theory' (2005), which reformulate the 'social', 'cultural' and 'technical' categories.

In the actor-network theory, the notion of network refers to flows, circulations, alliances and movements of a heterogeneous series of human and non-human elements, connected with each other and playing the role of agents. As the main proponents of this theory, Callon et al. (1999) and Latour (2005) have argued that the sociological category of actor-network must be differentiated from the traditional semiotic meaning of an actor as an individual, institution or thing causing an action – that is, having an effect in and on the world, which excludes any non-human component. It also cannot be confused with a type of bond that links stable and perfectly defined elements in a predictable manner, since the entities that comprise the network – whether natural or social entities – can at any time redefine their identity and mutual relations, leading to the production of new elements. A network of actors is, concomitantly, an actor – or actant, a term Latour also employs – aiming to establish alliances with new elements and a network that is capable of affording its members new qualities. To form such a union, it is necessary to translate, transpose and divert relevant interests to mobilize

other actors. The notion of translation is fundamental to understanding developments at the level of networks of actors. In this regard, translation does not only mean a change in vocabulary but expresses, above all, a shift, a change in course, a mediation or the invention of a hitherto non-existent relationship that, in a way, changes the actors involved in the process. The meaning of translation simultaneously encompasses a shift and an articulation of disparate and heterogeneous elements, thus involving ‘hybridism’, ‘miscegenation’ and ‘multiple connections’ rather than the repetition of key elements. The use of the internet as a means of widespread electronic communication among the Macanese community (an aspect examined in this work) is a good example of how a socio-technical system creates networks based on interaction between human and non-human elements and the incessant production of hybrids.

This book analyses three networks – public and private – of social actors in action: (1) the Macanese elite and their ‘cultural engineering projects’ currently underway in Macao; (2) the scattered and anonymous Macanese diaspora and practices to perpetuate their community and identity; (3) and the Food and Drinks Party (PCB), an informal group of Macanese living in Portugal.

The Macanese diaspora spans four continents and is estimated to be eight times larger than the Macanese population living in Macao. The diaspora’s transnational nature and regular physical and virtual contact between Macao and the various host countries, combined with its actions to ensure the continued existence of the Macanese identity, show how important the diaspora is in defining the structure of the community as a whole. Set against the backdrop of a global context, the diaspora has used associative forms, new communications technologies and original and articulated practices to highlight and promote an exclusively Macanese identity in the virtual world of the internet as well as in the physical space of the newly established MSAR. These practices have resulted in strategic benefits for the Macanese community, in terms of new forms of self-definition that have allowed the diaspora to maintain ties with Macao. The Macanese *Encontros* (meetings), including those particularly aimed at youths representing the diaspora, are held every three years, being a pilgrimage of nostalgia, recognizing family roots and reaffirming a sense of connection with Macao. Moreover, all kinds of Macanese associations – formal or informal – within Macao or abroad, promote their own social circles and activities relating to Macanese culture and identity.

The PCB gatherings are a way of integrating, organizing and maintaining the community in Portugal. This small informal group was created to bring together Macanese at events where, as its name suggests,

food plays a central role. It allows participants to nostalgically return to their past in Macao, through the friends they see again, the languages they hear and speak, the environment they re-create, and, above all, through the nostalgic Macanese delicacies that are the main attraction of these events. A testament to Macao's origins, this type of cooking combines long-standing Portuguese culinary traditions with varied Asian influences, making it one of the oldest fusion cuisines in the world (Jackson 2004); as I observed, the food consumed at PCB reunions serves as a place of memory to (re-)create a Macanese ethnic and cultural identity. Similarly, the use of a multilingual form of communication among the group represents another place of memory for the Macanese based in Portugal, and both these elements, food and language, are nowadays considered to be strong Macanese identity markers. Accordingly, I believe that in the context of PCB events – that is, in an intimate social setting, the food and language make it possible to reactivate a Macanese mindset and help the community endure over time, by recalling and disseminating a collective feeling of an exclusively Macanese identity.

Furthermore, the PCB's activities are not limited to organizing 'private' parties for the Macanese in Lisbon. It has created and maintained a website showcasing the group and its structure, and it posts information about its events and the people who attend its gatherings. It also promotes various other virtual memory palaces via Facebook and a blog. Many Macanese living around the world contribute with content and actively participate in all these forums and, by using a fluid medium such as the internet in real time interaction, they perpetuate and reinforce their sense of belonging to Macao and to a Macanese 'imagined community' (Anderson 2006 [1983]). Old photographs recalling their youth in Macao and more recent images by the designated photographer during PCB events are published on all these websites to jog the memory and curiosity of people, who try to identify individuals, places and occasions or simply reminisce. These photos are an excellent example of how ties are maintained within a community that is scattered over the globe and how collective memories are consolidated around a uniquely Macanese lifestyle and 'way of being'. In this regard, the PCB has emerged as a 'community of practice' (Lave and Wenger 2003 [1991]; Wenger 1998) due to the way it involves its members in a conscious co-participation aimed at re-creating, preserving and disseminating a Macanese unitary category, both at its reunions held locally in Lisbon as well as on a global scale through the internet and virtual channels. While the extinction of the community and its cultural, linguistic and symbolic expressions is often cited as a sword of Damocles, it is similarly this conviction that they are the 'last of the Macanese' that

makes them feel they are faithful guardians and promoters of Macao's customs and traditions.

In addition to these networks of actors and their forms of local and translocal collective actions, it is nowadays also possible to observe how the Eurasian Macanese community and its cultural identity are highlighted in official discourses by the MSAR authorities (and even by the PRC central government), as well as the practical realities of the Macanese associative structure, which enjoys political support in Macao. With a view to recovering and preserving the elements that comprise the Portuguese historic, cultural and linguistic legacy in Macao and, consequently, this unique identity, defined by a sense of belonging and pride in being Macanese, as envisaged by the MSAR executive authorities for the territory, certain Macanese elites have tried to maintain a status quo in Macanese society using a strategic logic of privileges that evolved over time according to contextual conditions.

Contemporary practices related to Macao's cultural heritage have resulted in the recognition and protection of local diversity and the subsequent production, promotion and consumption of an authentic and singular cultural identity to form a highly politicized product that can represent a series of benefits for the various interlocutors involved in the cultural engineering projects underway in Macao. The PRC's future strategic plans include diversifying and expanding trade in Portuguese-speaking markets as well as demonstrating the success of the 'one country, two systems' nationalist model propounded by Deng Xiaoping, the architect of China's economic reforms and the long-desired reunification of China. The MSAR authorities aim to promote cultural tourism by defining and objectifying a uniquely Macanese identity, thereby instilling a sense of belonging among the city's inhabitants and promoting self-identification as citizens of Macao (*Ou Mun yan*). The MSAR authorities seek to reduce Macao's excessive dependence on the gambling industry – the MSAR's economic goldmine – and ensure international recognition of Macao's world cultural heritage, which proves the city has far more to offer to its visitors than just gambling, vices and sin. Finally, the minority Eurasian community of Macao seeks to celebrate a Macanese ethnic and cultural identity that has resulted from the blending of Portuguese and Asian elements over the course of centuries. This ethnic community was produced by Macao's history and symbolically and culturally identifies with the project to promote a uniquely Macanese identity. Keeping the current scenario and the political, ideological, economic and cultural objectives of the PRC and the MSAR in mind, the Macanese community has sought to affirm itself as a cultural mediator amidst the so-called 'privileged platform between China and

Portuguese-speaking countries'. This platform was formalized in 2003 by means of the 'Forum Macao', a multilateral and intergovernmental mechanism with a permanent secretariat based in Macao. The Macanese community has also highlighted its role in helping Portugal attract greater Chinese financial investments, the internationalization of Portuguese companies and increased exports to East Asia.³

The coherence of this model for a 'new Macao' was a key element for survival, by means of a culture specific to the local offspring, and it maintained the umbilical relationship that connected the Macanese to Macao, irrespective of where they resided. This model emerged in the postcolonial period of Macao's history and was based on recognizing and showcasing a cultural heritage and the heritage of the Eurasian Macanese community. The commoditization of Macao's identity and culture is a strategy to ensure that the MSAR's political and civil society recognizes the value of this historical legacy and this creole community, which dates back to the time when Macao was founded in the sixteenth century. This was thus a conscious choice of a certain cultural orientation marked by difference – that is, to re-create a Macanese community identity that demarcates itself and its members from the other individuals and groups that form Macao's society. Accordingly, I believe that just as the Ruins of St Paul's were officially adopted as an icon of the MSAR, as a symbol of Macao's 'glorious past' and the 'harmonious intermingling between European and Asian peoples', which created a 'tolerant multicultural society' there over the course of centuries, the Macanese and their way of life – rooted in distinctive sociocultural identifiers such as the Macanese cuisine and creole language – play a role in representing the Macanese identity. Just like the surviving façade of St Paul's church, the Macanese and their intangible cultural heritage have lately been included in activities to promote cultural tourism, marketing campaigns and touristic merchandising produced by the Macao Government Tourism Office. It remains to be seen if this concept of a museum relic as a place to celebrate the personal and collective Macanese identity (making it possible to promote and highlight elements that define the community as having a creole cultural and ethnic identity) will be reproduced socially and culturally by future generations.

This hybrid, mutable and ambivalent nature of the Macanese cultural and ethnic identity falls within the category of 'mixed racial identities' in the Western classification system. The ambivalence of the Macanese identity is undoubtedly due to the power of 'racialist' and 'culturalist' discourses when constructing pure collective identities; however, it is a floating reference, which can form different configurations depending on the position and point of view of individuals in social actions.

The notion of ambivalence in Macao is related to processes that – at different moments of the historical contact between the two ends of the Eurasian continent – led to institutional disapproval or encouragement of the creation of a Macanese ethnic identity. Using the creole Patuá and its almost total disappearance as a language of communication among the Eurasian Macanese as an example, it is clear that this was largely related to its association with a form of mangled Portuguese spoken by the popular classes and the fact that it was a language used at home, especially by women. Greater access to education and academic training imparted in the official Portuguese language meant greater opportunities to embark on careers as civil servants in the Portuguese administration of Macao, which employed most of the Macanese who did not emigrate. The waves of emigration that have always characterized the community due to the limited job opportunities in Macao, their better command of Portuguese and accentuated demarcation from the Chinese population, on the one hand, reduced the probability of the Macanese being identified as Chinese and, on the other hand, brought them closer to the Portuguese. This gave them a valuable ‘capital of Portuguese-ness’ (Pina-Cabral and Lourenço 1993), which translated into social and professional prestige and, consequently, the progressive loss of their ancestral creole language (Pinharanda Nunes 2011). However, it is nowadays possible to observe the resurgence of the endangered creole Patuá, even among youths, due to initiatives to revive the extinct Patuá Theatre – with its plays, songs and videos. These initiatives have received support and been encouraged by the government Cultural Bureau. The MSAR authorities have not only funded and included a play in Patuá in the programme of the Macao Arts Festival (which the Dóci Papiaçám theatre group debuts every year) but have also encouraged the candidacy of Patuá Theatre and recognized it as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Macao.

Macanese ambivalence lies in the fact that all ethnic groups are ambivalent, since there is no consensus on how its members imagine themselves while being part of an ethnic collective. In relation to the Macanese community, it is as though this characteristic of its identity is amplified when one considers the high degree of subjectivity, personal choice and even the difficulty of identifying Macanese on the basis of physical appearance; it is a by-product of their marginal situation with regard to the two dominant ‘pure’ identity poles: the Portuguese pole and the Chinese pole. The ambivalence of the Macanese identity is, additionally, linked to racial and civilizational ‘hierarchies’ of the Portuguese colonial project. For the Chinese, the Macanese are Portuguese born in Macao; they are the *gwailou* that – just like all ‘barbarians’ – can be taught to practise

the rituals and etiquette of ‘civilized people’. The Macanese identity is the result of individual aspirations intertwined with complex networks of social actors, created by extensive processes of inclusion and exclusion adapted to the constant demands of external requirements and to such an extent that in postcolonial Macao the community is once again seeking answers that are best suited to the question: Who is Macanese?.

Chapter 1 of this book provides a succinct overview of Macao’s history and defines the main theoretical and methodological approaches of this research. It includes a dual definition of the term Macanese. Although this term and current equivalent expressions in Chinese languages are commonly used to refer to all of Macao’s inhabitants, this study exclusively focuses on the Macanese Eurasian community. This community is defined – and distinguished – with reference to a prolonged process of biological and sociocultural miscegenation between Europeans (mostly Portuguese) and Asians that gave rise to the community and a particular creole culture and identity that the ‘Macanese’ metaphor produced over the course of centuries in that oriental enclave under Portuguese rule. This community is also characterized by having created a network promoting forms of intimate sociability among community members, connected by extensive and overlapping long-term ties, who have established reflexive interactions and constructed a collective Macanese mindset that is global, multi-ethnic and multicultural. This Macanese mindset maintains its difference through their identity and manifestations of intangible cultural heritage.

Chapter 2 examines how social representations of Macanese identity are interpreted and disseminated through the type of memories associated with it. Biographic methodologies – including brief genealogies, biographical portraits and family histories – revealed how the past and the present merge together and how the future is envisaged amid the memories of the Macanese living in Portugal. It is possible to observe a Macanese familiar memory rooted in a culture, values and education based on a Portuguese matrix and the Catholic religion. These memories are mental tools that individuals use and manipulate to ensure a legitimate interpretation of their past and their acceptance by the group. Genealogical chronicles of Macanese families also revealed the agglomerating dimension of the Macanese community, which attracts and brings together people from diverse family backgrounds around a singular common identity and mutual community interests. In addition to its underlying familiar memory, the Macanese community identity is associated with an ethnic memory – constantly revisited and rediscovered in the many palaces of virtual memory that the Macanese create on the internet. This is a conscious ethnic memory that shapes the self-

identification of the Macanese as being a ‘mestizo’ or ‘hybrid’ people who are heirs to a creole culture, the result of successive ethnic miscegenation over the course of centuries.

These individual memories of experiences in the past, which are projected onto the collective, enabled the group to prepare an ‘invented tradition’ celebrated by the Macanese at one of the PCB events held in Lisbon, as described in Chapter 3. Narratives were shared in a nostalgic ambiance that reinterpreted the celebrations of the Chinese Moon Festival in Macao. These were expressed in multiple languages and complemented by Macanese food, with both defining the places of memory for those who attended that gathering at the Casa (Macao House). However, the PCB does not limit its activities to these events where people eat and reminisce together. It also maintains a website that is constantly updated with information about the group’s scheduled events, recipes and stories in Patuá, among other items, with interactive and participatory contents that are followed by the Macanese diaspora scattered around the world. By maintaining these social practices, the PCB proves the existence and vitality of the Macanese collective in Portugal while simultaneously contributing toward formulating and claiming a distinctive Macanese identity.

Elevated to the status of unique symbols of the community, Macanese cuisine and language are prime markers of the Macanese identity. On 9 June 2012, the MSAR government deemed Macanese Gastronomy and Patuá Theatre to be Intangible Cultural Heritage of Macao. The procedures and the success of the applications submitted by the Macanese Gastronomic Association (CGM) and the *Dóci Papiaçám di Macau* theatre group involved a network of actors and social interaction, which have been analysed in Chapter 4. The process of safeguarding and promoting Macao’s cultural heritage, a mix of Eastern and Western elements, with a marked Portuguese influence, reveals the legitimization strategies and the benefits that the various protagonists involved in the process seek to achieve at a local, national and international level. Thus, the process of converting Macanese cuisine and Patuá Theatre into heritage is the result of broader economic and ideological dynamics, of which the Macanese community is a part, enabling it to have political and cultural aspirations in relation to maintaining a Macanese ethnic and cultural identity.

Chapter 5 examines two different topics relating to the concept of ambivalence. The first section of this chapter contemplates a set of intersubjective dynamics from an ethnographic point of view, revealing the ambivalence of the Macanese identity to be self-constructed. The second part of this chapter deconstructs Macanese ambivalence, encompassing

the political and cultural dimensions that shape distinctive and publicly recognized 'collective identities' in postcolonial Macao. In this case, the ambivalence was implicit in the process of negotiations between Portugal and China to resolve the question of Macanese citizens of Chinese descent holding Portuguese passports and the implementation of the PRC's nationality law after Macao's reunification with China. In the previous case, the ambivalence was related to the point of view of a specific group of individual actors and their manipulation of various actions, languages and behaviours towards food. The ambivalent nature of the Macanese group was evident throughout the meal, as they constantly manipulated their ethnic attributes and the cultural knowledge they had acquired during their lives. Identity ambivalence emphasizes self-identification narratives rooted in the complex genealogical and historical backgrounds of individuals. This means that, in keeping with the stance assumed with regard to 'defining' an identity, Macanese ambivalence continuously undergoes a metamorphosis that mirrors the fluid terrain on which all 'imagined communities' are built.

Notes

1. Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice* [*Der Tod in Venedig*], translated from the Portuguese edition published by Relógio d'Água (1987 [1912]): 57–58.
2. The Report on Government Action Lines for the Financial Year 2013 was presented by Chief Executive Chui Sai On to the Legislative Assembly of Macao on 13 November 2012. The archive of all reports since 2001 can be consulted electronically, in Chinese and Portuguese versions, at the Printing Bureau website (2013).
3. On the invitation of the Secretary of State for Portuguese Communities Abroad, the Secretary-General of the Permanent Secretariat of Forum Macao, Rita Santos, who is Macanese, made an official visit to Portugal between 24 February and 1 March 2013. She met with the chairman of Portuguese Agency for Investment and Foreign Trade (AICEP) and with the Portuguese President's Economic Advisor. She also attended the Lisbon Travel Market and met with the Minister of the Economy and the Secretary of State for Regional Development. The official programme for this visit to Lisbon by the director of the Forum Macao also included a seminar on 'Macao within the Portugal-China Partnership', jointly organized by the Orient Institute and the Department for Political Science, Strategy, International Relations and Socio-Economic Development of the ISCSP, University of Lisbon. The seminar was divided into two sessions: (1) Portugal-China relations: perspectives for the twenty-first century; and (2) Macao as an economic and cultural platform. During the first session, the AICEP chairman, Pedro Reis, highlighted favourable investment conditions in Portugal and its enormous potential for tourism, emphasizing how Macao could play a vital role in attracting more foreign investors to Portugal and economic and commercial cooperation between Portugal and China. The second session included a panel of various Macanese personalities, and Rita Santos provided an overview of Forum Macao's activities during its ten-year existence.