

Rotarians served as President of the Municipal Council of the Portuguese Territory Macao

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Flag of the Macao Municipal Council

In the Rotary China History, the Rotary Club of Macau (澳門扶輪社) has been the home of three eminent Rotarians who served as President of the Municipal Council (Presidente do Leal Senado 市政廳市政議會主席) of the Portuguese Territory Macao (葡萄牙屬地澳門):

- (1) 1958 – 1964: Dr. Pedro José Lobo (羅保博士), Charter Member 1947
- (2) 1966 – 1974: Joaquim Morais Alves (歐若堅), Club President 1972-1973
- (3) 1989 -- 1993: José Celestino da Silva Maneiras (馬斯華), Club President 1985-1986



Joaquim Morais Alves



José Celestino da Silva Maneiras

Municipality of Macao before 2000

The Municipality of Macao (Concelho de Macau) was the administrative division governing the Macao Peninsula, the historic core of the territory under Portuguese administration from 1557 until the 1999 handover to the People's Republic of China (中華人民共和國).

It operated as a municipal council, akin to those in Portuguese overseas territories, overseeing civic governance under the overarching authority of the Governor of Macao. The entity's executive functions were primarily executed through the Leal Senado (literally in English as "Loyal Senate"), originally established as the Senado da Câmara (Senate of the Chamber) in 1563 by local residents under episcopal oversight, with its current building dating to 1784. The appellation "Leal" was conferred in 1810 by Portugal's Prince Regent João VI to honor Macau's fidelity amid the Peninsular War. The seat was a neo-classical building erected in 1784 at Senado Square (議事亭前地), featuring preserved original structures, a ceremonial library modeled after Portugal's Convent of Mafra, and facilities for civic functions that continued post-handover in adapted form.

Its jurisdictional scope encompassed the entirety of the Macao Peninsula, an area of approximately 9.08 Sq.Km, excluding the offshore islands administered separately by the Municipality of the Islands (Concelho das Ilhas 海島市政議會). This territory was further subdivided into five civil parishes (freguesias): Nossa Senhora de Fátima (花地瑪堂區), Santo António (花王堂區/聖安多尼堂區), São Lázaro (望德堂區), Sé (大堂區), and São Lourenço (聖老楞佐堂區), which served as the basic units for local administration, including matters of public health, infrastructure maintenance, community services, and cultural affairs.

Establishment under Portuguese Rule

The Portuguese established a trading settlement in Macao in 1557, following agreements with the Ming Empire (大明國) authorities in Guangdong (廣東) that permitted residency in exchange for annual tribute payments, though without formal recognition of sovereignty. This arrangement evolved amid growing Portuguese commercial interests, particularly in the silk-for-silver trade with Japan, necessitating organized local administration to manage civic affairs, infrastructure, and community disputes separate from the transient captain-majors appointed for defense and trade voyages. By the late 16th century, amid the Iberian Union under Spanish Habsburg rule (1580–1640), Macao's residents petitioned for formalized self-governance to preserve autonomy from Goa-based Portuguese viceregal oversight.

The Municipality of Macao, structured as the Senado da Câmara (Senate of the Chamber), was officially incorporated on 10 April 1586 through a charter issued by the Portuguese Viceroy of India, Dom Francisco de Mascarenhas, granting it status equivalent to a Portuguese city. Modeled on municipal senates in metropolitan Portugal, such as that of

Évora, the body consisted of three vereadores (aldermen), two juízes (judges), and one procurador (prosecutor), with a locally elected captain of the land for internal security, limiting the crown-appointed captain-major's role primarily to annual expeditions. This framework emphasized elective representation among resident merchants and clergy, fostering a degree of oligarchic self-rule that persisted for centuries, handling matters like taxation, public works, and harbor maintenance while navigating Chinese jurisdictional claims.

The Senado operated from provisional quarters before constructing dedicated facilities, earning the epithet “Leal” (Loyal) in recognition of its fidelity during Portugal's 1640 restoration of independence from Spain, formalized later in royal decrees. Though subordinate to Lisbon in theory, its practical autonomy reflected Macao's peripheral status in the Portuguese Empire, reliant on local initiative rather than direct colonial imposition, until the 《1887 Sino-Portuguese Treaty of Peking》 (Tratado de Amizade e Comércio Sino-Português 中葡和好通商條約) affirmed perpetual occupation. This municipal foundation laid the basis for Macao's hybrid administrative tradition, blending European corporatism with pragmatic accommodation to Chinese suzerainty.

Expansion and Reforms

The Portuguese administration of Macao initially confined the Municipality of Macao (Concelho de Macau), governed by the Leal Senado, to the peninsula, but territorial expansion began in the mid-19th century as Portuguese settlers extended control to nearby islands amid declining the Ch'ing Empire (大清國) oversight. In 1847, a fortress was constructed on Taipa (氹仔), signifying formalized Portuguese military and administrative presence beyond the peninsula's confines.

By the 1920s, infrastructure developments unified Taipa's two original islands---Big Taipa (大氹) and Small Taipa (小氹)---through land connections, facilitating agricultural and residential expansion under Portuguese jurisdiction. This process continued into the 20th century, with gradual border assertions incorporating Coloane (路環), driven by strategic competition with British Hong Kong and opportunities following the 1911 Xinhai Revolution (辛亥革命), which weakened central Chinese authority.

Administrative reforms accompanied this expansion to manage the enlarged territory effectively. On 10 April 1586, King Philip I of Portugal authorized the Leal Senado to exercise broad local governance functions, solidifying its role in civil administration independent of the Governor's direct oversight. The 1834 Portuguese constitutional reforms curtailed the Senate's powers by abolishing judicial magistrates and integrating parishes into a centralized autárquico regime, though the body retained municipal duties.

To address the islands' distinct needs, the Municipality of the Islands (Concelho das Ilhas, or Câmara Municipal das Ilhas) was established as a separate entity from the Leal Senado, handling urban planning, sanitation, and infrastructure for Taipa and Coloane. In the late

1980s, Governor José Manuel Melancia (澳門總督文禮治) reformed both councils, streamlining operations and enhancing coordination amid rapid urbanization and pre-handover preparations.

Further reforms followed Portugal's 1974 Carnation Revolution, culminating in the 1976 Organic Statute that devolved greater autonomy to Macao's local bodies, including expanded economic prerogatives and reduced metropolitan interference, while preserving the dual-municipality framework. These changes reflected pragmatic adaptations to Macao's hybrid Sino-Portuguese status, prioritizing functional governance over rigid colonial models.

Pre-Handover Operations

The Leal Senado, as Macao's Municipal Council, operated as the primary local administrative body under Portuguese governance, handling civilian affairs independently of the military and the Governor's direct oversight until the 1999 handover. Established in 1583 and formalized by Royal Charter in 1586, it managed key sectors including commercial regulation, urban planning, and public services, such as land leasing, price controls, licensing for street vendors and building permits, road and fountain maintenance, and enforcement of public order. By the 20th century, its responsibilities expanded to encompass public health initiatives, water supply systems, park development, street lighting, waste collection, and library operations, reflecting adaptations to Macao's growing urban needs while preserving traditions like organizing religious processions such as Corpus Christi.

Governance of the Leal Senado evolved through reforms that balanced election with appointment, ensuring alignment with Portuguese colonial priorities. Following the 1934 reorganization, the Council consisted of a President appointed by the Governor and four members---two elected directly and two indirectly---overseeing daily operations from its headquarters in the Leal Senado Building (*see photo on Page 7*), which housed ceremonial meeting rooms, a library modeled after Portugal's Mafra Convent, and a chapel. A 1963 amendment added two representatives from the Chinese community, addressing demographic realities amid increasing Sino-Portuguese interactions, though core powers remained curtailed since 1783 royal provisions and further limited by 1847 restructuring under Governor João Maria Ferreira do Amaral (澳門總督亞馬留). The Council maintained political negotiation roles, including external relations with China, documented in archives of letters, agreements, and reports spanning 1630 to 1975.

In the decades preceding the handover, the Leal Senado emphasized continuity in municipal functions to foster social cohesion in Macao's multicultural society, bearing the title "Não Há Outra Mais Leal" (There is None More Loyal) granted in 1810 for historical fidelity to Portugal. It coordinated with entities like the Santa Casa da Misericórdia (Holy House of Mercy 仁慈堂) for welfare and ecclesiastical authorities for cultural events, operating from its neoclassical building rebuilt in 1784 and expanded in 1876. These operations persisted without major disruptions until 20 December 1999.

Governance Structure

Organizational Framework

The Municipality of Macao, formally known as the *Concelho de Macau*, operated under the *Leal Senado* as its primary governing body, established in 1582–1583 to manage local self-government amid Portuguese colonial administration. This Council handled municipal affairs including urban planning, public sanitation, markets, roads, and cultural preservation, functioning with both deliberative and executive authority subordinate to the Governor of Macao. Its structure evolved through reforms, with the 1871 creation of the *Administração do Concelho de Macau* (Municipality of Macao) formalizing administrative operations under Portuguese overseas codes.

The *Leal Senado*'s core comprised a *vereação* (executive board) of *vereadores* (aldermen), initially numbering around six in the 19th century---typically including a president, vice-president, and others elected or appointed for three-year terms---with oversight from *juizes ordinários* (ordinary judges) and a *procurador do povo* (people's advocate). By the mid-20th century, the board expanded to eight members: four appointed by the Governor, two selected by Portuguese residents paying higher taxes, and two directly elected by eligible citizens, reflecting a mix of appointive control and limited electoral input. Further reforms in the 1970s–1980s introduced a separate Municipal Assembly, which by the 1990s consisted of 13 members---five directly elected, five indirectly elected via functional constituencies, and three appointed---responsible for electing the *vereação* and approving budgets.

Administratively, the *Leal Senado* oversaw eight departments and 28 divisions covering areas such as public works, health services, education, finance, and cultural affairs, with offices distributed across the peninsula to execute daily governance. This framework emphasized fiscal autonomy for local revenues like market fees and property taxes, though major decisions required gubernatorial approval, ensuring alignment with Lisbon's directives until Macao's 1999 handover. The system's hybrid nature balanced resident input against colonial oversight, adapting incrementally via decrees like those in the *《Boletim Oficial da Colónia de Macau》* (Macao Government Gazette 澳門政府公報).

Elective and Appointive Bodies

The Municipality of Macao, operating as the *Leal Senado* under Portuguese administration, maintained a hybrid governance model with appointive leadership roles and elective positions for councillors (*vereadores*). The President, responsible for chairing meetings and holding a decisive vote in ties, was appointed by the Governor of Macao, a practice formalized by at least 1626 and continuing through the colonial era. The Vice-President, introduced in 1968, was similarly appointed to assist the President.

Elective elements centered on the *vereadores*, whose selection evolved over time to balance direct voter input with indirect representation from associations. By 1917, the body included six effective *vereadores* and six substitutes elected directly by municipal voters.

This shifted in 1934 to four vereadores, comprising two elected directly by voters and two indirectly by civic and professional associations, reflecting efforts to incorporate broader societal interests amid Macao's diverse Portuguese and Chinese communities. Further adjustments occurred in 1963, with four vereadores elected (likely via a mix of direct and indirect methods) and two additional representatives designated from the Chinese community to address demographic realities.

These bodies handled municipal affairs such as urban planning, public services, and cultural preservation, subject to oversight by the appointed Governor. Elections for vereadores occurred periodically, though turnout and franchise were limited to registered voters, primarily Portuguese citizens and select residents, excluding full participation from the majority Chinese population until late reforms. The structure underscored Portuguese colonial priorities of centralized control via appointments while allowing limited local electoral input, a model that persisted until the municipality's dissolution in 2001 following the 1999 handover.

Key Functions and Powers

The Municipality of Macao, formally known as the Leal Senado or Câmara Municipal de Macau, exercised local administrative authority primarily over the Macao Peninsula during Portuguese rule, with powers centered on urban governance and public services. These functions encompassed the maintenance and development of roads, public lighting, and infrastructure, as well as oversight of public transport systems within its jurisdiction. The Council managed fire prevention and response through the Corpo de Bombeiros (Fire Services Bureau 消防局), ensuring public safety in densely populated areas.

In addition to infrastructural duties, the municipality handled sanitation and public hygiene, including street cleaning, waste collection, and water supply regulation, which were critical for combating health risks in a trading port prone to epidemics. It supervised public markets, cemeteries, and monuments, promoting orderly commerce and cultural preservation. Town planning fell under its purview, allowing for local regulation of building and land use, though subject to oversight by the Portuguese Governor.

The Leal Senado possessed limited legislative capacity on municipal matters not reserved for higher Portuguese authorities, such as local taxation for services and bylaws on public order, reflecting its semi-autonomous status derived from Royal Charters since 1583. This included fostering external relations with regional powers for trade facilitation, but ultimate sovereignty resided with Lisbon-appointed officials. By the late 19th century, its role expanded to include public parks and libraries, adapting European municipal models to Macao's context. Following the creation of the separate Câmara Municipal das Ilhas in 1853, the Leal Senado's powers were confined to peninsular affairs, emphasizing decentralized local administration.

Following sovereignty transfer on 20 December 1999, the municipality's structures were phased out, with Law No. 17/2001 creating the Instituto para os Assuntos Cívicos e Municipais (IACM) (Civic and Municipal Affairs Bureau 民政總署) in 2002 to absorb municipal responsibilities, marking the end of the concelho system. Commencing on 1 January 2019, the organization has been changed to Instituto para os Assuntos Municipais (IAM) (Municipal Affairs Bureau 市政署).

