

My Time at the United Nations University

Some Memories*

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Foreword

Medio 1995 I was approached with the request to consider applying for the job of senior research fellow at the United Nations University International Institute for Software Technology (UNU-IIST) in Macau. At the time UNU-IIST trained young graduated people from developing countries in doing computer science research or advanced software development, gave post-graduate computer science courses and software engineering courses in developing countries, assisted lecturers at universities in developing countries with the development of a software engineering curriculum, et cetera.

I applied for the job and was appointed for the calendar years 1996 and 1997. My work included training people in doing computer science research and giving post-graduate computer science courses. Both took place in Macau as well as developing countries. This means that for two years I lived basically in Macau and traveled frequently to developing countries. During these two years the idea developed to write down memories of my time at UNU-IIST, but my job took too much time to do so.

Prompted by my coming retirement, I took up this writing in 2012 in the form of a blog. Below, I have brought together the blog posts concerned.

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1 The Very First Days

On New Years Day 1996 and the next day, the very first days of my appointment at UNU-IIST, I travelled from Voorschoten, the Dutch village where I lived, to Macau. After a heavy good-bye of my wife and children, I went by taxi to Amsterdam Airport. Like the preceding days, there was both snow and black ice on the road in front of the house where I lived. However, the taxi ride went smoothly because the main roads were cleared.

I flew business class with Cathay Pacific from Amsterdam to Hong Kong. It was a more enjoyable flight than I expected, possibly because I had only one earlier experience with business class on intercontinental flights. The plane was a Boeing 747 and my seat was on the upper deck. I was among other things surprised by the fantastic leg room, the relatively fancy meals, and last but not least the outstanding helpfulness of the stewardesses. It was also my first flight on which I could watch a film of my choice on a private television screen.

To illustrate my surprise about the meals, I mention what I got for dinner. I could have mentioned what I got for breakfast instead. I got first marinated salmon with duck liver apple pâté, next a mixed salad and then a main course consisting of fillet of lamb with mustard sauce, rosti potatoes, carrots and broccoli. Before dinner, I got an aperitif with oriental bites to eat; and after dinner, I got small pieces of French cheese, a piece of chocolate cake, coffee and chocolates.

Much more interesting than the meals was the helpfulness of the stewardesses. It was extraordinary. The stewardesses did their utmost, each in her own personal style, but it seemed to me that they got confused if there was any deviation from what is most usual. It was the first of various strange phenomena with a common root that I experienced afterwards with people from the Far East. However, it would still take some time before the communality became clear to me.

The next morning, the plane arrived right on time in Hong Kong. I went by taxi to the terminal of the jetfoils to Macau. There I bought a ticket for the next jetfoil to Macau, and made a phone call to UNU-IIST to pass my departure time from Hong Kong before I went on the jetfoil. The jetfoil departed soon and I experienced for the first time the rather mawkish smell of the instant noodles that many Chinese people aboard the jetfoil were eating.

After a relatively short journey I arrived in Macau. There I went through the usual passport and customs checks. When I had passed customs I went to the meeting point to look for someone from UNU-IIST. I immediately saw Dines Bjørner, the director of UNU-IIST at the time. We left the jetfoil-terminal building. I had not been outdoors since I entered the buildings of Amsterdam Airport the day before. My first thought on leaving the jetfoil-terminal building was “Macau is a Turkish bath”.

Before my journey to Macau, UNU-IIST had given me detailed directions

concerning the travelling from the airport of Hong Kong to the UNU-IIST building in Macau. These directions took into consideration the possibility that I was not able to make a phone call to UNU-IIST after I had bought a ticket for the jetfoil in Hong Kong. In that case there would of course no one near the meeting point in the jetfoil-terminal building in Macau. Therefore the directions were accompanied by a picture of the address of UNU-IIST in Chinese characters to show to a taxi driver. Clearly, I did not need that picture.

Dines instructed a taxi driver to bring us to the hotel where I would stay until I had found an apartment in Macau. Arrived in the hotel, I set down my suitcases in my room and I freshened up, while Dines was waiting for me in the lobby. We went on to UNU-IIST without a break, again by taxi, in an attempt to reduce jet lag. At UNU-IIST I was introduced to those who worked or were in training there.

At the time the people from the academic staff included Dines Bjørner from Denmark, Chris George and Richard Moore from England, Tomasz Janowsky from Poland, Dang Van Hung from Vietnam, and Xu QiWen from China. The people from the support staff included Margaret Stuart from Scotland, Tian Siyuan from China, and Alice Pun, Anna Chiu, Coffee das Dores, Michelle Ho and Wendy Hoi from Macau. The people that were in training at that time were from China, Vietnam, South Korea, Mongolia, Philippines and India.

After a lunch with a number of my new colleagues, Dines showed me some spots in the middle of Macau. Later I got an advance on my salary with which I went to a bank to open an account, and by the end of the afternoon I went to my hotel to take a rest. Back in my hotel room I first quickly looked for letters from my wife and children which I expected to be hidden in my luggage, but I did not find any letter, and then I gave my wife a call to tell her that I arrived safe and sound in Macau. After a nap of one hour, I went by taxi to Dines' apartment.

Taxis were very cheap in Macau. That may be the reason why many foreigners in Macau took a taxi even in cases where the walking time is a few minutes. I myself seldom went by taxi in Macau after the first day in Macau. In the cases where I took a taxi, such as this evening, I always needed a picture of the destination address in Chinese characters because my Cantonese was not very well understood by the taxi drivers in Macau.

At Dines' apartment, I had a few drinks with Dines and his wife, and after that we went to a Portuguese restaurant together with Chris George. Dines and Chris were the only colleagues at UNU-IIST that I already knew before my arrival. At about eleven o'clock, I went back to my hotel and fell asleep.

2 Settling in Macau

The first night in Macau I slept well for about six hours. That is, I woke up at five o'clock. I could not fall asleep again and therefore I decided to get everything that I would need at work from my suitcases. Then I found the letters from my wife and children that I was looking for the day before, but could not find. I immediately started reading them. Halfway I spontaneously started to cry because I realized very strongly how much I would miss my wife and children badly.

I ought to start working on my second day in Macau. What I actually did was mainly talking with my colleagues about both their work at UNU-IIST and issues relating to settling in Macau, in particular the issue of renting an apartment. All my colleagues wanted to help me with finding an appropriate apartment and after work I went with one of my colleagues to the island Taipa, which is part of Macau, to look at his apartment. After that I first took a quick meal at one of the many McDonald's in Macau and then I walked around to get an impression of the different districts of Macau, but I did not see much difference. It was all not particularly pretty. Apartments in Macau are mainly in high-rise buildings, usually more than twenty storeys high.

Of the people that I saw in the streets of Macau, most came across as Chinese and some came across as Portuguese. Initially I did not realize that the Macanese with Chinese roots were relatively short people, like most people from South East China, but after a while I noticed that I towered above all people that I saw in the streets of Macau: they looked up to me for no other reason than my length.

Back in my hotel, I found information about the climate in Macau. The average temperature varies between 15° C in the winter months and 30° C in the summer months, with minima and maxima about three degrees lower and higher, respectively. The average degree of humidity is about 80%. The rainfall is more than 2000 mm per year, of which about 500 mm in June and 500 mm in September. It is mostly clouded.

On my third day in Macau, I occupied myself extensively with looking for an apartment. Vivian, the girl of Xu QiWen, drove me round. She showed me some nice places in Macau that I had not seen during my walk the evening before, but she told me that living there was very expensive. We also visited various apartments. Most of them looked rather dingy or smelled unpleasantly of mildew. The latter is fairly usual in Macau, and finds its origin in the high degree of humidity.

Like everyone working at UNU-IIST, Vivian spoke English. However, with her, I experienced during these visits of apartments for the first time that making a smooth conversation in English with a native speaker of Cantonese does not always mean that there is mutual understanding. In one of the visited apartments I tried to make clear to Vivian in a polite way that I was not interested in the apartment at all. However, she understood the opposite and told the renter that

I was about to rent the apartment. I found out about this misunderstanding only after we had left the apartment.

I do not know the real first name of Vivian. Like many young people in Macau, Hong Kong and China with Western contacts, she adopted a Western first name for her Western contacts. The Macanese people from the support staff of UNU-IIST did this as well. For instance, the real name of Wendy Hoi is Hoi Iok Wa. It is a strange phenomenon. I do not know about Western people with contacts in Macau, Hong Kong or China who adopt a Chinese first name for their contacts there.

Vivian also showed me some interesting spots in Macau and helped me buying some fruits on a market: a gigantic grapefruit from China, a big papaya from Malaysia, and two of a small fruit from Thailand that was unknown to me. Remarkable were the sizes of many fruits on this market: the apples, pears and grapes from China were huge as well. Here I mean the following by gigantic: after I had eaten the grapefruit late in the afternoon, I had to skip dinner although I am considered a large eater by most people.

The next day, which was a Friday, I visited still more apartments with Vivian. During the following weekend, I weighted the advantages and disadvantages of the different visited apartments against each other. I also thought hard about the need to visit still other apartments taking into account that continuing the quest for a great apartment for some time could be rather expensive: apartments are much cheaper than hotel rooms. I decided to visit once more the very first apartment that I had visited with Vivian.

The apartment concerned was near the city centre in one of the least noisy parts of Macau and about six minutes walking from the building of UNU-IIST. Dines Bjørner and Chris George, the only people in Macau that I already knew before my arrival, turned out to live very close: Chris and his wife Sue in the next apartment building to the right and Dines and his wife Kari in the second next apartment building to the left. After the second visit and an inspection of the direct vicinity of the apartment I decided to rent it.

The apartment was a partly furnished apartment on the eighth storey of a 31-storey building. I was the first occupant, and everything in the apartment was brand-new. There was already an air conditioner with dehumidifier, which is indispensable in Macau. To make it a fully-equipped apartment, I still needed a washing machine, a cooker, a fridge, and a lounge suite. I bought them with the assistance of Wendy Hoi and Coffee das Dores from the support staff of UNU-IIST. They talked rather long and with emphasis to the shopkeepers concerned. I assumed that they were bargaining about the price. Later I have heard from Wendy that this was only partly true: a lot was repeated a few times to convince oneself that the other person was well understood.

After I decided to rent the apartment there were some negotiations about

the rent of the apartment, with the assistance of Wendy Hoi, and ten days after my arrival in Macau I checked out from the hotel and moved in the apartment in which I would live the next two years when I was not working elsewhere for UNU-IIST.

3 Starting the New Job

Looking for an apartment and equipping the chosen apartment were not my only activities during my first ten days in Macau. I also began settling in to my job at UNU-IIST. I knew that my job included assisting the director, managing a research group, training young graduated people from developing countries in doing computer science research, and giving post-graduate computer science courses. However, much more was needed to do the different parts of my job right in the setting of UNU-IIST.

UNU-IIST was one of the research and training institutes of the United Nations University.¹ It aimed to help developing countries improve their capacities in the area of software technology. UNU-IIST began its activities in July 1992 after the Governor of Macau and the Governments of Portugal and the People's Republic of China provided it in March 1991 with an endowment fund which served as the basis of its financing.

The members of the academic staff of UNU-IIST, called research fellows, were divided into two groups, the research group and the development group. Each of these group was led by a senior research fellow. The people from developing countries that were trained at UNU-IIST in doing computer science research or advanced software development, called fellows, were intensively supervised by the research fellows. Each research fellow usually gave guidance to three fellows, among other things by spending each week about eight hours per fellow on doing research or development together.

Each research fellow selected his fellows himself during the computer science courses or software engineering courses that he gave in developing countries. Fellows were usually invited for a period of nine months. This meant that I did not had fellows to train at the very outset. First I had to pick and prepare a course that fit in with the aims of UNU-IIST, to pick related research topics that could be investigated by fellows, and to give the course in one or more developing countries. As the head of the research group, I found it important to strive for some coherence of the research topics concerned with the ones being investigated in the group by then.

¹UNU-IIST was succeeded by United Nations University Institute on Computing and Society (UNU-CS) in 2015.

On my seventh day in Macau, a new fellow from South Korea, named Ko Kwang Il, arrived. He would be supervised by Dang Van Hung. There is an exception to every rule, for some reason unknown to me Ko Kwang Il would stay for only two months. I conferred with Ko Kwang Il, Dang Van Hung and Xu QiWen about the way in which Ko Kwang Il could best spend his time at UNU-IIST, that is, fitting in with his Ph.D. work and the research work of Dang Van Hung and Xu QiWen. This was probably my first visible act as head of the research group.

Already on my first evening in Macau, Dines Bjørner and I discussed the strategy of UNU-IIST to achieve its goals and the details of my job. In particular, the ways in which I would assist him were initially rather unclear. We determined, for instance, that one of my tasks was to make efforts to raise funds from the European Union in the framework of programmes of cooperation with developing countries. An important reason for this was my relevant experience with raising funds from the European Union. One of the strengths of UNU-IIST at the time was that it was common practice to make optimal use of the existing knowledge and experience among the research fellows. I would find out soon more of this practice.

Another strength of UNU-IIST was that an invited fellow that accepted the invitation and his or her employer at home had to sign an agreement to guarantee that the training would take effect in his or her country. As a consequence of this and other factors, UNU-IIST had already built up an impressive network of associated scientific institutes and businesses in the three and a half year that it was active when I started. This network was geographically limited to roughly East Asia and India. We found that I could use my professional connections in Eastern Europe and Turkey to expand the network to this region.

One of my first days at UNU-IIST, I was officially introduced to everyone in a plenary meeting. I told not only about myself, but also about my wife and children. That went down well. Together with the recent pictures of them that I showed, it endeared me, in particular to the support staff. One of the striking things at UNU-IIST was the dedication of all members of the support staff. In supporting the academic staff, most of them seemed to feel most fulfilled if they could noticeably contribute to achieving the goals of UNU-IIST.

My first impression of the work climate was very good: everyone worked towards a common goal and was willing to help the others, no one used his or her elbows or worked with a hidden agenda, the fellows considered themselves privileged by the given chances, et cetera. This stood out in bold relief against what I experienced regularly in my previous jobs. Fortunately, the impression was lasting and made settling in to my new job easier.

4 In Unfamiliar Surroundings

What I knew about Macau before I arrived there for the first time was that it was the most populous territory of the world, that it was Chinese territory under Portuguese administration from 1976, and that it was composed of Macau Peninsula and the two outlying islands Taipa and Coloane. My apartment was in the Edifício Lung Tou Kok on the Avenida da Praia Grande in Macau Peninsula. On Sunday 7 January, my first Sunday in Macau, I visited the islands Taipa and Coloane for the first time, together with Dines Bjørner, his wife Kari, Peter Gorm Larsen, and his family. Peter Gorm is an old acquaintance who just arrived in Macau to give a course of two weeks at UNU-IIST.

On Taipa, we went to the recently finished airport of Macau and to Taipa Village, where we walked through the Rua do Cunha, a nice narrow shopping street, and visited the Taoist Pak Tai Temple, the Catholic Church of Our Lady of Carmel and the Taipa House Museum. On Coloane, we went to Coloane Village, where we visited the Taoist Tam Kung Temple, walked along an old wharf where wooded ships were built, and had lunch in the Portuguese restaurant Caçarola. Thus I experienced a lot of unfamiliar things in a short time period.

At that time, the airport of Macau handled only flights within Asia. Therefore, it was most convenient to travel from Voorschoten to Macau via Hong Kong one week before. The Rua do Cunha itself made a very rustic impression. However, from one end of the street, there was a view of brand-new high-rise buildings and a view of something that looked like the poorest townships of Soweto. These considerable contrasts in a small area created a bit ominous atmosphere.

Like many other Taoist temples that I would visit later in Macau, the Pak Tai Temple, where much incense and joss paper was burning, gave a untidy and quite dreary impression. Like many other Catholic churches that I would visit later in Macau, the Church of Our Lady of Carmel gave a tidy and cheerful impression, and it was a little mouldy on the outside. Although I have visited many other Taoist temples and Catholic churches in Macau, I am still not certain whether this difference of impression has a cultural background.

The Taipa House Museum, now part of the Taipa Houses Museum, offered a primitive snapshot of life in Macau in the early twentieth century for Portugueses. I could imagine that life elsewhere in the world in the early twentieth century had not been dramatically different for Portugueses, with the exception of the presence of Chinese furniture and Chinese cloisonné in Macau.

Coloane Village gave a much more authentic impression than Taipa Village, and life seemed much more relaxed. One of my first thoughts was that I would like to live in Coloane Village instead of Macau Peninsula, but the bad accessibility of the UNU-IIST building kept me from exploring this possibility further. The food in the restaurant Caçarola was excellent, although pig's ear is not one of my

favourites side dishes. Because it was a Portuguese restaurant, it was moreover quite surprising to find this dish from the Chinese cuisine on the menu.

Coloane Village would be within walking distance from China if there was no shallow water in between. At its deepest point, the depth of the water is about 1.75 meter. Once, refugees from China have crossed the water here. They still lived here. Their houses, which were mainly made of sheets of corrugated iron, stood on wooden poles.

Riding in a taxi over Taipa, I also saw a big Chinese cemetery, where I missed the dreariness of cemeteries that I was used to, and a racetrack, where horseraces were going on. I would soon find that many residents of Hong Kong came regularly to Macau to gamble at this racetrack or one of the many casinos in Macau. Riding in a taxi over Coloane, I also saw another village, Ka-Ho Village, two beaches, Cheoc Van Beach and Hac Sa Beach, and a reservoir for the water supply in Macau. What struck me most on Coloane was that a considerable part of it was nature area. Less than a week in the extremely populous Macau Peninsula, this was much relief.

A few days later, I visited my colleague Xu QiWen in his apartment, where he lived together with his two children and his parents. His first wife has left him and their children, and his parents cared for the children when he worked at UNU-IIST to earn an income. There, for the first time since my arrival in Macau, I ate dim sum in the Chinese way, namely with chop sticks and a lot of tea drinking during the meal. I was also introduced to a new way of making tea: first put tea in your tea glass and then pour very fast boiling hot water in the glass. If you do it perfectly, I was not able to do so, the tea leaves remain on the bottom of the glass. For the next few glasses of tea, the same tea is used. No fumbling with tea bags.

On Saturday 13 January, in the first weekend after I moved into my apartment, I went to a market a few blocks away. The market was mainly a street that was full of market stalls each day of the week. Many different articles were displayed in these stalls, but there were remarkably many fruit stalls. At the end of the street, there was a market hall where only vegetables, meat and fish was sold. All was very fresh, in my opinion sometimes too fresh. Poultry and fish were slaughtered on the spot for the customer.

Bargaining about the price was customary in Macau, not only on the market. However, it is difficult to bargain if there is no common language to speak. I did not speak Cantonese and the market vendors did not speak English or Dutch. Most of the few Macanese with Chinese roots that have mastered English, do not dare to speak it because they wrongly think that they cannot make themselves understood. They might lose face! I soon found that it would be very difficult for me to learn even a few sentences in Cantonese from my new Macanese and Chinese friends during my two years in Macau. I simply miss the necessary musical aptitude. However, Cantonese and Mandarin speaking people have a sign

language for numbers. I quickly learned to use this sign language, together with facial expressions, to bargain about prices.

Not yet two weeks in Macau, I could not escape the impression that Macau was a strange place to be. The Macanese lived with about 400,000 people in a small town which they could hardly leave because Macau was bounded by the sea and the border with China, which did not allow them to enter in the extreme case that they would wish so. Really all Macanese seemed to be always on the way without a known destination. It gave the impression that Macau was an overpopulated anthill, and the official figures supported this impression. Moreover, the Macanese were exceptionally noisy, did nothing right straightaway the first time, and, possibly related to that, worked day and night, seven days a week. At that time, my tentative conclusion was that Macau was an incredible territory with apart from that actually quite nice inhabitants. However, I was not yet two weeks in these unfamiliar surroundings.

5 Dining Out

Shortly after I moved into my apartment in the Edificio Lung Tou Kok, I had elaborate and sumptuous meals together with colleagues from UNU-IIST four days in a row: on Saturday 13 January, I took dinner with Richard Moore, his mother, and Sue George in a restaurant of the Hyatt Regency Hotel on Taipa; on Sunday 14 January, I took dinner with Dines and Kari Bjørner in a restaurant close to our apartments; on Monday 15 January, I took lunch with a group of colleagues in a dim sum restaurant; and on Tuesday 16 January, I took dinner with Dines and Kari Bjørner, Peter Gorm Larsen and his family at Dines' home. I ate out four days in a row. I got the impression that my colleagues lived a very luxurious life that I could probably not afford — a large part of my salary was transferred to an account in the Netherlands where I had a family to support.

Richard Moore was single at the time and had his mother staying. He lived on Taipa fairly near the Hyatt Regency Hotel and had a discount deal for the restaurants of this hotel. Sue George was without her husband Chris George who was in Vietnam giving a software engineering course. On Saturday, we had dinner in a luxurious Western restaurant of the hotel. I ordered a mixed grill of deer, ostrich and crocodile as main course. I could have taken zebra, kangaroo or something more ordinary instead. The Western character of the restaurant was conspicuous. It seemed to me as if I was back in the Netherlands. There was no sign of the unfamiliar surroundings in which I sought to live a life. However, I did not experience the character of the restaurant as something that I found pleasing. It was not my “cup of tea” as Sue would probably say.

On Sunday, Dines invited me late in the afternoon for a drink at his home.

After the drink, we had dinner in one of the restaurant close to our appartments. That is, we went to Estrella del Mar, Restaurante Afonso III or Restaurante Fernandes. The next two years, I would very often have dinner in these restaurants and that is perhaps the reason why I do not know in which one we had dinner that evening. Restaurante Afonso III would become one of my most favourite restaurants in Macau. The food and service were excellent, and it had its own special pretty atmosphere, quite different from the slick atmosphere in the restaurant in the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Afonso had set up two restaurants in luxurious hotels before he had set up this restaurant of himself. If he thought that people having dinner in his restaurant contributed to a pleasant atmosphere, they got good port on the house after dinner.

Restaurante Afonso III was popular with many people, including Macanese with Chinese roots. Virtually everything on the menu of this rather unsightly restaurant was superb. Restaurante Fernandes was mainly popular with Western expats for its delicious lamb dish. Other dishes were popular with the many people with Chinese roots that came to Restaurante Fernandes. Estrella del Mar had several delicious dishes and the Philippine waitresses were very friendly and helpful. However, despite its relatively low prices, this restaurant seemed mainly popular with visitors to Macau. Incidentally, a few months after I moved into my apartment, a rather trendy Portuguese restaurant opened one minute walking from my apartment building, and even less from Dines' apartment building. Its name was Praia Grande. It did not became as popular with Dines and me as the other three restaurants close to our appartments.

Shortly after a new staff member of UNU-IIST started working, the support staff organized a welcome lunch with a group of colleagues in a dim sum restaurant. For one reason or another, my welcome lunch was delayed till Monday 15 January. I had an enjoyable and sumptuous dim sum lunch. It included among other things baau, dumplings, spring rolls, steamed vegetables, steamed meat balls, lotus leaf rice, crispy fried squid, and chicken feet. My Macanese and Chinese colleagues explained me well how to hold my chop sticks and I could eat even peanuts with chop sticks before the end of the lunch. They told me a few things about each dish that was served, including their Chinese name. It drew my attention that virtually each dish was called very special. I did not agree in all cases. I considered some dishes rather weak stuff, but that is of course a matter of taste.

Anticipating the departure of Peter Gorm Larsen and his family a few days later, Dines invited them and me for a farewell dinner at his home on Tuesday. Dines' wife Kari put lots of work in the dinner. Like on the day of my arrival, all adults drunk a tequila as before-dinner drink. Later I found that making cocktails and drinking them is one of Dines' hobbies. While we were sitting happily together, Dines told me that I should drop by his house regularly. When I told him

that I was not used to invite myself, he said that I had to get used to invite myself. I would get used to it soon because it became very clear to me that Dines would be very direct in a tactful way if he did not feel like my company. Because of this, I would grow more and more convinced that I did not wear out his welcome.

Because the cuisine was mostly Western when I ate out the first two weeks, it may seem as if I avoided the Chinese cuisine. This was not the case. Because I was unknown with the many restaurants in Macau, the choice of restaurants had not yet been mine. Being busy with settling in Macau and starting my new job, I had not yet paid any attention to this issue. Later I would lunch and dine in various Chinese restaurants, but I cannot any longer reproduce their names. Actually, I had already difficulties to memorize them at that time. However, I still know the location of three Chinese restaurants that would become my most favourite ones. Two of them were on the Largo do Senado and the third one was close to the Largo do Senado, namely at the beginning of the street at the right side of the Leal Senado.

Anyhow, I would dine more often in Western restaurants than in Chinese restaurants. The other Western restaurants where I have had dinner include the restaurant of Hotel Bela Vista with its fine view of the Praia Grande Bay, the historic colonial-style Clube Militar de Macau, the Italian Pizzeria Toscane, and Restaurante Fernando. The last two restaurants would also become two of my most favourite restaurants in Macau.

On my second visit to the always crowded Pizzaria Toscane, I ordered Mozzarella alla Pomodore as first course, just as on my first visit about six weeks earlier. The waiter told me that I might want to order something else since the Mozzarella alla Pomodore could be less good than the previous time because dry herbs would be used instead of fresh ones due to a delayed delivery of fresh herbs from Italy. This event was typical for the attention paid to food and guests in this restaurant.

Restaurante Fernando was a Portuguese restaurant apart. It was located at Hac Sa Beach on Coloane. Its atmosphere was very relaxed, as if you are eating on a beautiful summer day with a good friend who happens to be chef de cuisine in some good restaurant as well. You want to stick around because it feels like you are in another world and you consider it too pleasant to leave. You see on the faces of the other guests that they think the same. The place is old, simple, but charming. And also important, the food is really good. Among my most favourite dishes of Fernando were Fried Prawns with Garlic and Portuguese Style Green Salad. The restaurant was popular with virtually all people living in Macau. It was usually very crowded and reservations could not be made. When you arrived and all table were occupied, you were asked for your visiting card by the owner. You could then take a drink at an outdoor bar and wait till your name was called. I have never got the impression that I had to wait too long.

By the way, it seemed as if everyone in Macau had his or her own visiting cards. My visiting cards had been printed on one of my very first days in Macau and I had been immediately instructed about the way in which I should hand them over to someone from East Asia or India. I had been told that not handing over your visiting card in the right way is considered an example of impoliteness. Therefore I have always handed over my visiting card in this ceremonial way, but I still think that it is attaching too much importance to handing over a small piece of printed paper.

On Thursday 18 January, two days after the dinner at Dines' home, the last indispensable household appliance, a gas cooker, was delivered. From that day I mostly prepared my dinner myself, although I would keep dine out much more often than ever before. I would usually buy most ingredients of my home-made meals on the market a few blocks away. By the delivery of various household appliances during that day and the days before, it had become somewhat dirty and messy in my apartment. Therefore I would clean it up thoroughly during the next weekend. I had to stay at home on the Saturday concerned for a telephone connection, by the way. Earlier I had planned to have a look at culturally or historically interesting places in Macau during that weekend. This had to wait.

6 Seeing The Sights

My first and minor contact with the Macanese culture had taken place during my visit to Taipa and Coloane on Sunday 7 January. Being busy with settling in Macau and starting my new job, I had not yet really come in good contact during the next three weeks either. It was for the first time on Saturday 27 January that I walked around on Macau Peninsula to have a good look at culturally or historically interesting places. All such places were within walking distance since Macau Peninsula was an area of seven square km. This area is for the greater part filled with buildings, and it is probably for that reason that often more space is created by knocking down a high-rise building and constructing a still higher building at the same spot.

Incidentally, there was one historically interesting place that I always saw on the way from my apartment building to the UNU-IIST building, and back, namely the palace that houses the offices of the governor and his cabinet. This pink painted palace, which was built in the nineteenth century, was about one minute walking from my apartment building.

After breakfast, I first visited the Camões Grotto and Garden dedicated to the Portuguese poet Luiz Vaz de Camões, who lived in the sixteenth century. He was exiled by the king of Portugal. The legend is that Camões spent part of his exile here. Shortly before my leave to Macau, my colleague Wan Fokkink gave me

a book with collected prose of the Dutch ship's surgeon and author Slauerhoff which contains the novel *The Forbidden Empire*, which is a historical novel about Camões and Macau. In the Camões Garden, old Chinese men carrying fragile bamboo cages with small song birds were gathered to show off their birds. Although it was not really early in the morning, other Chinese men and women were doing exercising in shadowboxing.

Next to Camões Garden is an Anglican Chapel and an old Protestant cemetery. There were many Catholic churches in Macau, but the chapel was the only Protestant church. On the cemetery, much to my surprise, I found graves of among others people who had worked for the British East India Company and the Dutch East India Company.

From the Protestant cemetery I went to Monte Fort, a fort built by the Jesuits in the early seventeenth century. Here I found out that the Dutch attempted to invade Macau in 1622. A defending cannon ball from the guns on the fort landed in the Dutch magazine and demoralized the invaders. In fact, the Dutch attempted to invade Macau five times during the seventeenth century. These Dutch attempts to nab Macau form a part of Dutch history that is not found in Dutch history books. Therefore, it was the first time that I heard about it.

Next to Monte Fort are the Ruins of the church of the Mother of God, now popularly known as St. Paul. Probably, the facade and staircase of this church form the most well-known sight of Macau. The church was built in the early seventeenth century by the Jesuits. In 1835, the church burned down. Only the facade, the staircase and a few pieces of the walls were left. These remains have been restored. So there is not much to see. However, the facade and staircase form an eye-catching sight.

After lunch, I first visited the Penha Church, a beautiful and relatively small Catholic church on top of the Penha Hill. This church was founded in the early seventeenth century by Portuguese people who survived attacks on their ship by the Dutch. This bad practice of the Dutch is also unmentioned in Dutch history books. Because of the altitude of the Penha Hill, I could enjoy a magnificent view in front and at the back of the church.

From the Penha Church I went to the A-Ma temple, which is located at the foot of the Barra Hill near the entrance of the Inner Harbour. It is at least six centuries old and by that the oldest temple in Macau. When the Portuguese settled in Macau in the sixteenth century, they called the area A-ma-gao, meaning Bay of A-Ma, after the Taoist goddess of seafarers to whom this temple was dedicated. A-ma-gao later altered to Macau.

In fact, the A-Ma temple is a complex of temples. Like in the Pak Tai Temple on Taipa, incense and joss paper was burning in these temples. However, the untidy and dreary impression was much stronger. It verged on an ominous impression. Perhaps this was the case because much more incense and joss paper was

burning. What might also have played a part was the bustle in the temples, the firework that was going off regularly on the grounds of the temples, the desultory placement of temples on the grounds, and the visible very old age of the temples. By contrast, the colourful stone carving of the junk which is said to have carried A-Ma to Macau, where she is said to have walked to the crest of the Barra Hill and ascended to heaven, was of a simple beauty. All this made the A-Ma temple very intriguing.

I was prepared for a culture shock in Macau, but still the temples in Macau, in particular the A-Ma temple, hit me hard. Later I would wonder whether the Macanese culture is a true representative of the Chinese culture. I would visit many Taoist and Buddhist temples in Guangzhou and Beijing, but those temples would not made such a strong untidy and dreary impression as most temples in Macau. There was more in Macau that made an untidy and dreary impression, e.g. shops and streets in sleepy parts of the town.

On Sunday 28 January, I went to Yao Han, the only big department store in Macau, because I still missed a lot of household goods, such as glasses, tins for coffee, tea and sugar, and a clotheshorse. There were many shops closer to my apartment, but the goods in these shops were in general to my taste either unattractive or inferior. Actually, many of the shops concerned were culturally interesting places as well. I called them “holes in the wall”. They were in fact small untidy storehouses that could only be closed off by means of a metallic folding wall. During opening hours, the folding wall was pushed open. Some eating-places were set up in the same way.

In the next weekend, on Saturday 3 February, I went to the Lou Lim Iok garden via the Avenida do Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida. On this avenue, I saw, shortly before a reached the garden, two historic painted mansions that were very much alike. One was dilapidated and one had been beautifully renovated. They were part of a series of architectural interesting buildings constructed in the early twentieth century that were now under renovation. The Lou Lim Iok garden is a pure Chinese garden built in the nineteenth century in the style of the Classical Gardens of Suzhou. I thought it was a relief to be in this garden: it was a tidy, cheerful and restful place.

There were many more sights to see on Macau Peninsula, such as the Barrier Gate, the Guia Fortress and Lighthouse, the Kun Iam temple, the São Domingos church, and the Leal Senado building. I would visit them all, but for the time being I had seen enough to give my wife a guided tour of Macau Peninsula when she would arrive in a few weeks.

7 Doing My Job

Chris George, the head of the development group, and I, the head of the research group, were replacing Dines Bjørner during his absences. The first time that I had to replace Dines was on Monday 5 February, about a month after I had started my job at UNU-IIST. The mother of Coffee das Dores, one of the Macanese members of the support staff, passed away and, as the acting director, I was expected to be present at the obituary ceremony. I did not know what I should think of it with the hideous and ominous racket that was made with musical instruments throughout the ceremony.

The next day, I accompanied a guest from the Philippines as the acting director to the University of Macau. It was my first visit to this university, and I was quite surprised. The university premises were much too large for the three thousand students that were up at the university and the numbers of unused desktop computers that I saw in rooms that I happened to pass by were strikingly large. I wondered who was responsible for this waste.

The guest that I accompanied to the University of Macau was the boss of one of the fellows from the Philippines at the time. Another fellow from the Philippines got picked up by the Macanese police a few days before, just because he was a Filipino. Like all others who worked officially for UNU-IIST, the fellow had diplomatic immunity. The rumour was that the ordinary police officers, who had Chinese roots, picked up Filipinos, as well as people from some other non-Western countries, to embarrass their superiors, who had Portuguese roots. Once Boutros Ghali had to intervene when a fellow from the Philippines was detained throughout the night in the police station.

The guest that I accompanied to the University of Macau became quite popular at UNU-IIST during his short stay: before he left, there was a farewell lunch, a farewell tea, and a farewell dinner. When he was about to leave, he gave gifts to some people from the development group and to me. I was quite surprised because I had only had some short discussions with him. The gift was a bamboo kings flute, a kind of flute which is only made in the Philippines. He also insisted on the taking of a picture of him and me.

What struck me about the fellows was they were always in good spirits and keen to learn. They were so happy with the opportunities which they were given. All this was quite different from what I had experienced at Dutch universities. The fellows often had a family with small children and an income too low to see their family during their stay of usually about nine months in Macau. However, they put up with this situation and considered themselves privileged by the given chances. I think that it is long ago that Dutchmen would put up with a similar situation.

At the beginning of March, there was a workshop on formal methods in soft-

ware development at UNU-IIST. On this occasion, there was among other things a closing dinner. We were invited to the closing dinner by the Macau Foundation, which dedicated itself to leave behind in Macau as many signs of the Portuguese influence on the Macanese culture as possible. The dinner was in the Clube Militar de Macau. I sat next to Antonio Rodrigues, the president of the Macau Foundation. He turned out to be a nice man with clear-cut views on historical and cultural matters, which he could explain in a pleasant way. Antonio Rodrigues told me that he was a Portuguese who was born in Macau, but that he had a distant Chinese ancestor. He had studied economics in Portugal, and worked on virtually all continents before he returned to Macau. Meeting interesting people such as Antonio Rodrigues was a nice incidental of my job at UNU-IIST.

My tasks at UNU-IIST was beginning to take shape. One of my tasks was to make efforts to set up collaborations with business entities and research institutes in Europe, in particular collaborations funded by the European Union in the framework of programmes of cooperation with developing countries. I already had many years' experience with this kind of work, in particular with regard to collaborations funded by the European Union in the framework of programmes of cooperation within the European Union.

I approached each of my acquaintances in the European Union of which I expected that he or she could be interested. Some I approached with the request to think of me and UNU-IIST when they again submitted a project proposal for funding to the European Union. Some I approached with the request to inform me when there were fellowships available for which fellows at UNU-IIST and former fellows at UNU-IIST could apply. And, of course, I sent a plea for financial support to the highest officials in Brussels that I knew. I also thought seriously about the possibilities to build out the research area of UNU-IIST, using my own research background, so as to increase the interest in collaboration in the European Union.

Managing the research group was another one of my tasks. That was more than seeing to it that the research fellows in the group supervise the fellows in the group well and that the new research topics of the group are in line with the preceding ones. It also implied acquisition of fellows for the research group and fund raising for incidental expenses. Still other tasks of mine would become training young graduated people from developing countries in doing computer science research and giving post-graduate computer science courses in developing countries. The idea was to use the courses to acquire fellows from the countries where the courses were given.

I prepared a course based on the results of my recent research and I planned to give the courses in spring in some Central and Eastern European countries and Turkey, all considered developing countries or, more precisely, countries in transition at the time. Thus, I could have acquired fellows to supervise before the be-

gining of September, the time that most new fellows would arrive in Macau. As soon as I had worked out the programme of the course, I approached some of my acquaintances in Central and Eastern Europe and some of Dines' acquaintances in Central and Eastern Europe with the question whether they were interested in my course and the acquisition of fellows.

All this led to a trip to Amsterdam, Hamburg, Newcastle upon Tyne, Toulouse, Ankara, Bucharest and Kiev. I would visit the first four cities as part of my efforts to set up collaborations with business entities and research institutes in Europe and the latter three cities to give my brand new course and to acquire fellows. I considered my job highly enjoyable and exciting.

8 My First Trips

On my first trip for UNU-IIST, I visited one place as a member of a delegation from UNU-IIST, and on my second trip for UNU-IIST, I visited different places in one go on my own.

On the first trip, we visited the South China University of Technology in Guangzhou with the purpose to establish a certain kind of cooperation between UNU-IIST and this university. For this end, the members of the delegation from UNU-IIST gave lectures about their research or development work and discussed relevant issues with academics from the South China University of Technology. All this led to the signing of a memorandum of understanding and to the invitation of someone to become a UNU-IIST fellow.

Our hotel in Guangzhou was the White Swan Hotel, which is situated on an island in the Pearl River. In the past, this island had been the area where Europeans were allowed to stay to do business with the Chinese. Buildings on the island reminded of England, Portugal and the Netherlands. The hotel was a five-star hotel. On each floor, there were two women at the lifts to press the button for you and to alert you to the opening of lift doors. If you returned to your room after a short or long absence, the end of the toilet roll was folded in a pointed tip. I did not know why we were lodged in this luxury hotel. I considered staying in this hotel a nice experience, but the luxury was of course overdone.

Two things struck me most in Guangzhou: the market where animals of many species were sold for consumption and the elevated highways. I am no vegetarian. I like, for example, a beefsteak. However, consuming virtually all animal species palls on me. On the other hand, for what reason do I exclude certain species that are not endangered from consumption? Guangzhou is full of elevated highways. It surprised me that so many elevated highways had been built in existing narrow streets. Because of this, many front rooms were extremely close to the elevated highways and many front rooms were deprived of sunlight. Moreover, it surprised

me that the grounds below the elevated highways were often used to grow leaf vegetables, mainly pak-choi cabbage. It seemed to me that these vegetables cannot be healthy.

On the second trip, I visited seven different places with two different purposes. All places were in Europe, except for one. This meant that I could visit my family for a few days as well. The trip began at the end of April 1996 and took about three weeks, including a few free days that I spent at home in Voorschoten with my family. I will not go into details about the meetings that I attended and the lectures that I gave. I will neither go into details of the successfulness of the visits.

I visited Bremen, Amsterdam, Toulouse, and Newcastle upon Tyne to explore the possibility of collaboration with research institutes in the European Union. My hosts in these cities were Otthein Herzog, director of the Center for Computing and Communication Technologies of the University of Bremen, Gerard van Oortmerssen, director of the Centrum Wiskunde & Informatica (CWI), René Jacquart, head of the Computer Science Department of the Centre d'Études et de Recherches de Toulouse — Office National d'Études et de Recherches Aérospatiales (CERT ONERA), and Brian Randell, professor at the Department of Computing Science of the University of Newcastle.

I visited Ankara, Bucharest and Kiev to give the course based on the results of my recent research that I had prepared recently and to watch for potential UNU-IIST fellows. My host in these cities were Kemal Inan, professor at the Department of Electrical and Electronics Engineering of the Middle East Technical University, Eugen Borcoci and Gheorghe Ștefănescu, professors at the Telecommunications Department of the University Politehnica Bucharest and the Department of Computer Science of the University of Bucharest, and Nikolaj Nikitchenko, professor at the Department of Programming Theory of the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kiev.

The visits to Amsterdam, Bremen, Newcastle upon Tyne, and Toulouse did not bring me new cultural experiences. Insofar people and culture in Germany, England, and France differ from people and culture in the Netherlands, the differences are relatively small and already known to me for a long time. This makes it difficult to observe them. The visits to Ankara, Bucharest and Kiev, however, brought me new experiences.

On the Parisian airport Orly, waiting for the delayed flight to Ankara, I got talking with a couple that was modern dressed and progressively thinking. It might have been a Californian couple. I was quite surprised to find that it was a Turkish couple. Back in my native country, most Turkish people that I bump into attract attention because they are dressed in a deviant way and have rather conservative views — which are said to go with their culture. Later I sat next to the Turkish couple in the plane and we had a pleasant conversation over many issues throughout the flight to Ankara, where we arrived late in the evening. At

the airport, I was picked up by two guys who only spoke Turkish and they brought me to a student flat on the campus of the Middle East Technical University near Ankara.

I slept well after a long day of travelling and woke up early next morning by the ringing of the telephone. Kemal Inan called me to invite me for breakfast with his family. I had a pleasant and sumptuous breakfast with Kemal, his wife and his daughter on the balcony of their house on the campus. We talked about academic issues, political issues and commonplace issues. I remember that at some point during the conversation Kemal's wife said that in general mixed-race children look more attractive than their parents with the exception of children of Black and Asian parents. I had no opinion about this issue because I had never paid attention to it before. I have forgotten how we arrived at this odd issue, but I found it intriguing. I found that, although I am not for political correctness, I even wondered whether we could discuss this racial issue.

There was a very relaxed atmosphere in Kemal's group, and I could talk extensively with all member of the group. In this way, I found something exceptional about Kemal: two members of his group, Vladimir Levin and Eleonora Bounimova, formed a Jewish couple from Russia and Kemal had assisted them to escape from Russia during the Cold War. The campus of the Middle East Technical University was a modern campus and, like the couple that I had met on the way to Ankara, most academics and students were modern dressed. However, there were, for some time, a few female students with headscarfs on the campus — although it was officially forbidden. All members of the academic staff that kept me company on walks on the campus without exception decried it when female students with headscarfs passed. A few considered it part of an inescapable trend that would ultimately restrict the academic freedom at Turkish universities.

I identified only one potential UNU-IIST fellow at the Middle East Technical University. It does not mean that I did not meet more bright young students. It does mean that I did not meet more bright young students with the competences expected from UNU-IIST fellows. For example, a certain background in computing and a certain fluency in English was expected. The relatively wealthy parents of the only potential UNU-IIST fellow had devised other plans for his future. For that reason, he never became a UNU-IIST fellow. I would be more lucky in Bucharest and Kiev.

9 Watching for Fellows

On my trips for UNU-IIST, I was often picked up at the airport. I turned out to be much more relaxed if I knew that I was picked up. So I greatly appreciated it if someone picked me up.

When I visited Bucharest, I was picked up at the airport of Bucharest by one of my hosts, namely Gheorghe Ștefănescu. Because I had a busy schedule on the day of arrival, it has gone clear out of my mind whether he brought me immediately to the student flat where I would stay the nights in Bucharest. What I remember about the student flat was that there were a lot of stray dogs in its neighbourhood. This was a growing problem that started during the Romanian revolution of 1989, when many dogs lost their master. It was a little bit scary.

The institutes of the United Nations University were financially independent from the United Nations to prevent political interference. UNU-IIST's source of income was the yield of an endowment fund, which did not give much financial headroom. Therefore, UNU-IIST asked an institute who hosted a UNU-IIST course to provide accommodation and meals for the course instructor. That is the reason why I seldom ended up in a fancy hotel. This is an advantage if you want to learn the most about people and culture of a country.

Like on many future trips for UNU-IIST, I had little time for sightseeing in Romania. I visited instead a nice open-air museum in Bucharest with buildings from all over the country copied in their original settings. It gave at least a fine impression of the rural areas of Romania. I did some sightseeing in Bucharest. It struck me that awful pompous buildings had been put straight in front of beautiful historical buildings during the regime of Ceausescu. My hosts were not keen to say much about this regime and the revolution of 1989. It seemed as if the wounds caused by the regime were still too deep and there was a lot of shame about the course of the revolution.

On my last day in Bucharest, I had dinner with my hosts, their partners and their superiors. A while after we arrived in the restaurant, I thought that they were quarrelling. It turned out that I was responsible for the rather heated discussion. On the question what I would like to eat, I had answered that I always prefer to eat specialities of the country that I am visiting. The discussion was about what were the best culinary specialities of Romania on the menu.

I identified several potential UNU-IIST fellows in Bucharest. Among them were Radu Soricut and Bogdan Warinschi, who both became a UNU-IIST fellow four months later. Eventually, Radu and Bogdan took a Ph.D. degree in computer science at the University of Southern California and the University of California, San Diego, respectively.

I flew in a plane that was not inspiring confidence in a safe flight from Bucharest to Kiev, where I was picked up at the airport by my host, Nikolaj Nikitchenko. It was Friday at about noon. After almost two weeks full of travelling, meeting and lecturing, I felt extremely tired. So I had decided to take a rest during the coming weekend. However, Nikolaj had arranged a full agenda for me from my arrival.

On Friday afternoon, he had included sightseeing in Kiev, and on Friday

evening, he had included attending an Ukrainian opera performance. On Saturday and Sunday, he had included visiting various groups of computer scientists and more sightseeing. The computer scientists that I met were still quite isolated from Western colleagues due to lack of the necessary facilities. Often their salaries were not paid for months. Nikolaj introduced me to them mainly to bring this state of affairs extensively to the attention of a Western colleague.

Nikolaj is notable for his broad cultural interest. For example, when he was linking up the work of Ukrainian painters and the work of Dutch painters, it became clear that he knew as much about Dutch painters from the Dutch Golden Age as I did — whereas I knew nothing about Ukrainian painters. What impressed me most during the sightseeing were Babi Yar, which was the scene of possibly the largest shooting massacre during the Holocaust, the magnificent monastery known as the Kiev Pechersk Lavra, and the many magnificent cathedrals in Kiev.

At the opera, I met Nikolaj's wife Tatyana for the first time. She came across as a cheerful person, even though she had not got her salary for many months and had difficulties to get pregnant for many years. On my last evening in Kiev, I had dinner with Nikolaj and Tatyana at their apartment, which was not much larger than the largest bedroom in my house in Voorschoten. We had a pleasant evening, partly because we drank a lot of vodka. The bottles of Ukrainian vodka were at the time closed by caps that must be destroyed to open the bottles. As a consequence of this, Ukrainians usually did not stop drinking vodka before an opened bottle was empty.

I gave my lectures in an impressive historical room in the Ukrainian Academy of Science. After the lectures, there were dozens of students who wanted to be interviewed for the position of fellow at UNU-IIST. Owing to the large number of students that I had to interview, the interviews could not be in-depth. However, there was one student, Yaroslav Usenko by name, who made an excellent impression by consistently managing to find the proper words at the right moment. Without going into details of his competences, I decided intuitively that he should certainly become a UNU-IIST fellow. He became a UNU-IIST fellow four months later.

When my colleague Jan Bergstra from the University of Amsterdam visited UNU-IIST and worked with the fellows that I supervised, he said that Yaroslav had a clearer insight into the subject that he was working on than each of his past and current Ph.D. students. Eventually, Yaroslav took a Ph.D. degree in computer science at the Eindhoven University of Technology in the Netherlands. The issues treated in his Ph.D. thesis were exactly the issues that he mentioned during the interview as the issues that he wanted to work on. When Yaroslav was a Ph.D. student in Eindhoven, he set up a software company in Ukraine. I am still happy with my decision then in Kiev that Yaroslav should become a UNU-IIST fellow.

10 Typical Chinese Issues

I had heard and thought about typical Chinese issues such as “feng shui”, “losing face”, and “ancestor worship” long before I arrived in Macau for the first time, but I had not assessed the impact of these issues on everyday life right. I think that this is virtually impossible; you just have to experience the impact yourself.

When I visited for the second time the apartment building in which I would eventually rent an apartment, I found that the brand-new entrance hall of this apartment building was thoroughly rebuilt. Before the rebuilding was completed, I found the origin of this: the instructions of a feng shui consultant. Most of the apartments in the new building were empty, so a feng shui consultant was engaged and in his wisdom he came to the conclusion that the entrance hall had to be rebuilt according to his detailed instructions. The bad balance of the energies — whatever that means — in the entrance hall was considered the cause of the empty apartments. In reality, the excess of apartments in Macau was the cause of the empty apartments. Soon the economic situation changed in such a way that renting a relatively luxurious apartment became affordable for more average Macanese people. As a result of that the number of empty apartments decreased, but the decrease was of course attributed to the better balance of the energies.

Shortly after I moved into my apartment in Macau. I found that the connection of a tap to the water pipe was leaking. The plumber that was sent by the landlady to repair the connection was badly trained to be a plumber. Like many Macanese working in the building industry, he used modern tools and materials wrong. Thus, he tried to wind synthetic tape around the thread at the back of the tap as in older days with hemp. However, the synthetic tape has to be wound with great care and according to certain rules in order to stem the water. In other words, each try of this plumber was fated to end in a leaking connection. The plumber, who arrived early in the evening, did not want to lose face and kept giving it a try till shortly before midnight. When he left, the plumber said that he would try again the next day. However, the next day I borrowed some tools at work, bought a small spool of the required tape, and repaired the connection myself.

Early in March, when my wife visited me in Macau, we went to a travel agency to book a package holiday in China during the summer season for the whole family. We were very politely told that we were too early. It was said that we could not yet book a package holiday in China during the summer season, but that we could book it early in May. If we would return at that time, we could certainly book the package holiday that we wanted. Thus, I returned to the travel agency in the middle of May. I was thrown into confusion: I could not book a package holiday in China during the summer season because they did not offer package holidays in China at all. The people at the travel agency denied that they had ever said something to the contrary and looked at me as if I was a fool. I left the travel

agency lost in amazement. Eventually, I organized the holiday myself with the help of colleagues.

At first, I did not have a clue about this event. Later, I told Wendy Hoi, who was the most westernized among the members of the support staff with Chinese roots, about it and she explained me that this was a matter of saving face: the people at the travel agency told a lie during my first visit in order not to lose face. If I would have had Chinese roots myself, I would have understood that I was not expected to return for package holidays in China.

During my first days in Macau, I was among other things looking for an apartment. After the visit to one of the apartments that I did not rent, it was already dark, I was witness of a strange sight with a gruesome touch. An older woman, who looked in my opinion like an old hag, was burning pieces of paper that were reminiscent of bank notes in something that looked like an iron wastebasket. She did so by the curb in an obscure alley alongside the apartment building that I had just visited. Vivian, the girlfriend of Xu QiWen accompanying me, told me that the woman was thus sending “hell money” to the spirits of her ancestors in order to make their afterlife comfortable. Vivian, who has Chinese roots herself, told me also that this burning of hell money was still a custom among Macanese people coming from rural areas in South China.

My closest neighbors in the apartment building where I lived often burned incense on a kind of altar in the corridor between the front doors of our apartments. Later, I already lived in my apartment for several months, shortly before I would go to bed I first thought that my neighbors were burning a lot of incense at the same time. However, it became worse. Eventually, smoke was coming into my room through the slit under my front door. I opened the front door and saw that the corridor was full of smoke between my apartment and at least the lift. I was scared because it looked as if the building was on fire and that it would be very difficult to leave the building. I walked in the direction of the lift and found an old hag looking at something that looked like a glowing iron wastebasket from which a lot of smoke of burning hell money came.

It took many hours before the smoke and the smell of burning hell money had disappeared from the corridor. I called the Macanese police about this incident because I thought something so unsafe was forbidden, but they made it clear that they would do nothing about it. It turned out that people with Chinese roots in Macau often burn hell money in their apartments in high-rise buildings. In the case at hand, it got a little bit out of hand. The old woman became too enthusiastic and burned too much hell money at the same time. The result was fortunately only inconvenience.

Anyhow, the mode of thought of the Macanese people with Chinese roots is quite different from the mode of thought of Western people. When I go to a market in the Netherlands just before closing time, I generally get fruits and vegetables

that are probably unsaleable the next day cheaper than earlier on the day because the market vendor want to get rid of them. However, in Macau, these fruits and vegetables become more expensive near closing time. I was told that the reason for this is that the shopper is in the fortunate position that the fruits or vegetables concerned are still available near closing time. I could communicate with people with Chinese roots about basal matters by means of gestures and facial expression alone. Therefore, I got the impression that the mutual incomprehension that I experienced in other matters originated from our different modes of thought and not from language problems. Later I have met several Chinese people who had succeeded to pick up the mode of thought of Western people during a long stay in Western countries — and I experienced no mutual incomprehension with them. I have not succeeded in picking up the mode of thought of people with Chinese roots during my stay of two years in Macau.

11 Everyday Life in Macau

Although I retain very good memories of my stay in Macau, there have been moments that I took a tremendous aversion to everyday life in Macau. On one of these moments, I wrote down the following story of a typical day in Macau.

This morning I could sleep late. The Chinese lady next door made me wake up not until half past five by opening and closing her front door, which, because it resembles a cell door, takes place almost silent. However, she correctly supposes that everybody is already wide awake at that time. Actually, she leaves sometimes earlier to her fellow witches and then she applies of course the same supposition. When I got up, I could nicely enjoy the pungent smell of the incense which she had lit right in front of her and my front door upon her departure. I agree that this is the right way to oust the spirits. Anyway, real people are not able to stand it. It was also again nice to hear that the man next door indeed enthusiastically hawked up. Probably, he was so loudly hawking up in his apartment because he knows that I enjoy it immensely.

On the way to my work, I was again fortunate to get a free shower. This time it was not due to an air conditioner whose drainage ends somewhere above the pavement, but due to a Chinese man who was watering the flowers that he had hang out in front of his balcony. Sad to say that I did not have to walk over a Chinese person. That happens at times because many Chinese people believe that Western people can disappear into nothingness. Therefore, they seldom give way to me, certainly not if I really have nowhere left to go. A nice experience that one can probably only gain in Macau. There was only one Chinese scooter driver who had a try to run over me and kill me, so it was a not particularly exciting walk to my work today. The knocking down of pedestrians is actually a sport of the

Chinese car drivers in Macau as well. Fortunately, the police in Macau allows this with eyes wide open and even take part in it.

At work, it was very pleasant today, we were not able to hear each other because of the drilling on the floors above and below us. Hammering, drilling and not to forget sawing up marble are the most important hobbies of the Chinese people in Macau. They do it 24 hours a day, seven days a week, if their health permits it. Because it concerns an obsession, the authorities have laid down some regulations which, like all other regulations in Macau and according to the prevailing tradition, are not observed. In the afternoon, we got stunned by concentrated vapour of paint from two storeys higher; we felt comfortably high. Most Chinese painters are already insane before they are twenty years old, but years earlier they already do not know what they are doing. Fortunately, this also holds for Chinese electricians, plumbers, gas fitters, et cetera.

There is little interesting to say about my walk back to my apartment. There was only a Chinese person who came out of a parking garage below an apartment building with a speed of only a hundred kilometers per hour and he passed me at a distance of still well over one millimeter. By the way, if something happens to you in Macau, the police has the pleasant habit not to deal with it. This evening there were only a few Chinese people burning hell money in the streets. Probably, there are more and more Chinese people here who, just like most Chinese people in my apartment building, do it simply in their apartment or cheerfully in the corridor just in front of their apartment. There are few other ways in which you can endanger and inconvenience so many fellow men.

When I arrived at home, one of my Chinese neighbors was already hammering and another one was drilling. Unfortunately, the hammering stopped already at eight o'clock, but I could enjoy the drilling till past ten o'clock. Luckily, other Chinese neighbors had opened their front door and turned on their television at full volume. In this way, I did not have to miss really nothing of their cheerful shouting through the sound of the television. It was already early silent this evening, I think that I felt already asleep at about half past one.

Probably, many people will not believe that this is the story of a real day in Macau. These people are right: I have not experienced all what you find in this story in one real day. I have actually experienced it in two real days.

12 Breaking Off by Lost Memories

After the three-week trip in April and May 1996 on which I visited Amsterdam, Bremen, Newcastle upon Tyne, Toulouse, Ankara, Bucharest, and Kiev, I took three short trips on which I visited only a single place, stayed for at most one week in the place concerned, and gave a course and/or attended a conference as

invited speaker. On these short trips, two of which took place in December 1996 and one of which took place in July 1997, I visited Beijing twice and Manila once. After these short trips, there came a series of trips on which I visited only a single place, but stayed for three weeks in the place concerned and gave a one-week course and a two-week research training. On these trips, which took place during the last four months of 1997, I visited Jakarta, Islamabad, Curitiba (Brazil), and Johannesburg.

When I am in a foreign country, I always try to get in contact with the local people. To get in contact with ordinary persons, I walk around in residential areas. In almost all places where I have been, there are residents that approach you for a talk. Often, they are eager to hear about the people and culture in my home country and to tell about the people and culture in their home country. I consider these contacts valuable because they give usually a better picture of the people and culture in the country concerned than the ones provided by politicians and journalists. They also convinced me that the Dutch nation has a recognizable cultural identity, just like all nations that I have visited, in contrary to the controversial comment of Queen Máxima on the Dutch identity in 2007.

During the three-week stays in Jakarta, Islamabad, Curitiba, and Johannesburg, there was more time than before to get in contact with the local people. It made me realize that everywhere the people were equally friendly and welcoming in spite of big cultural differences. This gave me the idea that I should write down my experiences with people and culture in the developing country that I visited. However, after my two-year leave, temporary jobs and unemployment comprised my professional life back in the Netherlands till my retirement. This situation led to the postponement of the intended writing till about a year before my retirement.

In July 2012, I took up this writing in the form of a blog. However, in October 2012, after 11 blog posts, I got stuck. The memories that remained after almost 15 years are not detailed enough to get the impressions that I experienced across in writing. This caused an untimely end of the blog.