

EDITORIAL

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This special issue is the result of collaboration with the Macau Scientific and Cultural Centre (also known as the CCCM). This issue is one in a series of collections of articles presented at the CCCM China Conferences. These conferences are held annually in the spring of each year, and the authors of the articles in this issue actively participated in the 2022 Conference. The CCCM itself is a scientific research centre based in Lisbon, under the auspices of the Portuguese Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education. The mission of the CCCM is to produce, promote, and disseminate knowledge about Macau and China in general, and act as a platform between Portugal and the People's Republic of China, as well as more broadly, between Europe and Asia.

On this occasion, the special issue contains a total of seven articles, two of which are in Portuguese, and the remaining five in English. The first two articles make up a section titled **Historical Perspectives**. The section commences with an article by **Teddy YH Sim** and **Dennis De Witt** that provides new and important insights into the social history of the Melaka-Singapore region in the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century.

The focus of the article is directed to a discussion of the Portuguese and inter-married Portuguese communities in Melaka during the long period after the fall of Melaka, spanning the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century, and by extension to the close lineage links between this settlement (Melaka) and Singapore, and similarly to communities in Singapore in the immediate period following its founding (1819). The article also introduces discussion of Dutch and British activities in the region and provides detailed support for the research conclusions that are reached.

The second article by **Cristina Bahón Arnaiz** focuses on the origins and development of Christianity in Korea, covering almost the entire twentieth century, from 1907 onwards, and includes reference to events that occurred in the current century. The author convincingly details the closely related origins of the core doctrine of two important and widely known Christian movements, namely the Unification Church and Jesus Morning Star (JMS). Similarly, to several other Korean new religious movements, or NRMs, the founders of the Unification Church and Jesus Morning Star both emphasized their doctrine as being new and unique.



The Unification Church was founded by self-proclaimed messiah Moon Sun-Myung in 1954 and established in the US around the 1970s, while Jesus Morning Star was launched by the self-proclaimed messiah Jung Myung-Seok in 1982. Both founders claimed to be the second coming messiah and preach what they call a “new” biblical canon or a “new” gospel that Jesus has exclusively revealed to them to complete his mission on earth. However, as the author convincingly shows, their narratives are closely interrelated, and they emanate from the same grassroots.

The **Contemporary Perspectives** section of the special issue commences with a timely article by **Anabela Santiago** that specifically examines Chinese contemporary political governance, both at the domestic and international levels, in the years from 1978 until 2022. This is a period that saw a significant overall shift in Chinese ambitions, and in parallel a change in perception of China at the international level, as a global power. The author suggests that there does not actually exist any academic consensus regarding whether Chinese governance is aiming to reshape the current global order or whether it is adapting and integrating within it and sees two different tendencies emerging from the scientific community. While one advocates a form of peaceful rise with China as a ‘status quo power’, the other perceives a growing ‘China threat’ as being the reality. The author presents an extensive and balanced study, grounded on a literature review analysis using materials accessed from the Scopus Elsevier database, together with an incisive analysis of twenty-one journal articles.

The second and third articles in this section focus on **Chinese international diplomacy**. The first of these two papers, which is co-authored by **Emilio Hernández-Correa** and **Ricardo Gúdel**, examines China's strategic utilization of its burgeoning sports industry, and specifically football, to achieve global influence, and analyses the implications of this approach. The paper clearly reveals and details how the Chinese leadership has orchestrated policies to transform the nation from one that principally hosts sporting events to a nation that is aiming to become a global powerhouse in the highly competitive world of sports. The authors point out that Chinese government initiatives also integrate the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with sports diplomacy, thus further amplifying China's soft power. China's acquisitions of European football clubs may consequently be understood as being emblematic of a multifaceted strategy, blending cultural and economic influence, and shifts in foreign investment policies and state support have noticeably influenced the trajectory of Chinese investments in foreign football clubs.

The second article focusing on diplomacy, written in Portuguese by **Li Guofeng**, deals with the active promotion internationally of **Chinese gastronomy** as a form of soft-power diplomacy. To research the vast and complex field of Chinese gastrodiplomacy, Li Guofeng develops theoretical perspectives advanced by Sam Chappel-sokol and Paul Rockower, as well as other specialists, to understand gastrodiplomacy as a long-standing and effective means to achieve nation branding. Explaining that the Chinese authorities selects delegations from cities famous for their cuisine, such as Canton, Chengdu, and Tianjin, to act as representatives of China, Li Guofeng quotes Rockower who wrote in 2014, “Highlighting the unique characteristics of China's different regional cuisines, regional and urban-level gastrodiplomacy could be a new form for Chinese diplomacy,” and continues to quote scholars who have found that there exists a degree of coordination



in Chinese promotion of its gastronomy in its diplomatic activities that is not noticeable in other nations with outstanding cuisines, such as Thailand, Japan, and Peru.

The fourth article in the **Contemporary Perspectives** section, written by **Zhidong Hao**, consists of a critical analysis of the **contemporary education system** in the People's Republic of China. The author argues that higher education system in China is simultaneously going through a process of totalitarianization, and of democratization, at present. On the one hand, the author sees the existence of organizational controls and ideological indoctrination of students, as well as cooptation of faculty members by the Party-state. On the other hand, the author suggests that democratic breakthroughs also exist, for both the students and the teaching professors. Drawing the conclusion that whatever happens within the 'ivory towers' of the university world will inevitably affect what happens outside them in society at large, the author proposes that the outcome is, yet, undecided. The result as to whether the Party-state ultimately tends towards totalitarianism or democracy depends on the result of an ongoing tug-of-war between the forces existing in the state and society. The author bases his views on an analysis of available data, viewed from the perspective of research field of the sociology of higher education.

The fifth article in **Contemporary Perspectives** section, which is also the concluding article in the special issue, turns to the field of **international banking and investment**. Writing in Portuguese, the author **João Sabido Costa** provides a detailed overview, stretching up to 2021 of the origin and development of two banks, and analyses their activities as international investment providers. The Asian Development Bank/ADB and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank/AIIB are both multilateral institutions created in the Asia-Pacific region. They aim to promote the development of their area of activity, and the AIIB is furthermore authorized by its statutes to operate in countries that are not regional members. The presence of European Union shareholder countries, or countries with similar international perspectives, in both banks, and their commitment and performance make both institutions privileged forums for international discussion on the main themes related to development. Furthermore, the fact that both Banks recognize, among others, the Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030) and the Paris Agreement as their main strategic objectives allows for a shared and rational dialogue between countries, continents, and regions, even when grounded in diverse cultural and intellectual backgrounds.

The special issue, when viewed as a whole, provides new, and original, insights into a range of developments in Chinese and Korean society, both in pre-modern times, and up to the present, and as such are fully in-line with the mission and aims of the CCCM.