

Interpreting Memory as Acting on Memory: Ethnic Identity in Macao During the Transition Period (1987-1999)

João de Pina-Cabral

João de Pina-Cabral (D. Phil., Oxon 1982; Habilit., Lisbon 2003), is Research Coordinator, Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon, and was previously professor at ISCTE (Lisbon, 1982-1996) and Research Fellow at the University of Southampton (UK, 1984-1986). He was Founding President of the Portuguese Association of Anthropology. He has numerous writings to his name, the most recent being *Between China and Europe: Person, Culture and Emotion in Macao* (Continuum/Berg, London and New York, 2002).

Portugueses

When the President of the Republic talks to the Portuguese in his capacity as President, he starts his speeches typically with the convocative sentence: “*Portugueses!*” Such also was the habit of the dictator, Salazar, in the old days, when he spoke to the nation. In Mozambique, the ex-soldiers who, at the end of the colonial occupation stayed behind in the isolated countryside living among the locals, are known as *matuga*—a Bantu pluralisation of *portuga*, military slang for *português*. In Hawaii, the “Portuguese” are an ethnic group to which is attributed native status. In Brazil, *o português* is typically the dim-witted, rural loaf of a white man who is the subject of all jokes. In Malacca, the residents of the “Portuguese Quarter” are Catholic Eurasian fishermen who have resided there since the seventeenth century. In France, these days, *les Portugais* are the socially mobile children of the 1960s migrants. In Macau, one day, a Macanese lady referred to a cousin of hers who is an upper middle-class executive in the San Francisco Bay area saying “he is indeed the uniting element of all that Portuguese community”.

In the first case, we are speaking of all the citizens of Portugal whether they live in the country or abroad. In the second case, the word applies to an odd bunch of characters who adapted themselves admirably well to traditional African ways and, in some cases, even

managed to attain a measure of local prestige and power in the isolated areas where they live.⁽¹⁾ In the third case, these Hawaiians are the impoverished descendants of early migrants who came as indentured labourers. In the fourth case, we are dealing with a phantasmagorical stereotype reflecting as much Brazilian ambiguity towards their own history as the low class extraction of the Portuguese migrants that went there in the 1920s. In the fifth case, these fishing folk of low esteem constitute one of the ethnic groups that form the multi-ethnic Malay State. In the sixth case, to do with France, we are dealing mostly with a middle class and transnational group of children of migrants. In the final Macanese case, my informant was, in this way, classifying a group of upper middle class business people originating among the wealthier Eurasian Macanese and Hongkongese families.

Note that by far the largest majority of all the people who fall into the six last categories are not Portuguese citizens and, therefore, are not included in the supposedly universal convocation of the President's expression. One might be tempted to say that only the President's usage is correct, all the others being erroneous, invalid, ill intentioned or somehow mistaken. And that might well be the case, but the fact is that in all these seven sociolinguistic contexts the word is common, is appropriately used and is perfectly well understood by local speakers. Now that includes the large majority of Brazilians, Mozambicans, Malays, Hawaiians, Frenchmen, Hongkongese and Macanese, a much, much larger population than the number of all Portuguese citizens alive today. Linguistically, therefore, or sociologically even, the formalist denial of the appropriateness of use in the six last instances is unacceptable.

So, we may conclude that the seven different usages do not refer to the same word. Simply put, these would be what linguists call "false friends", words in different languages that sound alike but have diverse meanings. That is true in a sense. But you will grant me that this nominalist solution does not settle the issue any further than did the formalist one, for there is ample evidence to the fact that the seven usages of the word "Portuguese" are intrinsically related.

So here we have a perfectly common word, used all over the world in ways that all of us easily agree to be acceptably meaningful but that do

1. José Pimental Teixeira, "Má-tuga no mato: os 'portugueses' em discursos rurais moçambicanos" in Clara Carvalho and João de Pina Cabral eds., *A Persistência da História: Passado e Contemporaneidade em África*, Lisboa, Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2004, pp. 307-42.

not seem to share any common feature. There is, in fact, nothing very special about this. I could have listed a number of other such globalised words that share a similar condition—and the word “Chinese” is among them. These are what anthropologists have been calling for a long time, following Wittgenstein’s suggestion, “odd-job words”. That is, concepts that are defined not by a set number of features, but by a historically related, moving set of associations. Rodney Needham long ago defined such concepts as “polythetic” to mean that they are constituted by a chained set of usages (as in ABC, BCD, CDE, DEF, etc.) and not by a limited set of features (all members sharing features A, B and C necessarily) as happens with the concepts used by formal logic.⁽²⁾

If the concept of “Portuguese” is, then, understood to be polythetic, that begins to solve our problem because we can easily see that what unites this chain of usages is not anything that they all have in common, but rather a process, a history, the history of the Portuguese expansion. All very well, but still, does this solution solve the problem completely? No, not fully, since the seven different populations of speakers who use the word as a term of identity recount that history in very diverse manners.

What is missing in the story is the fact that categories of identity, such as “Portuguese”, are both constituted by political events and constitutive of those events. The fact that the Portuguese went to these lands constitutes (that is gives rise to, defines) the local category of Portuguese, but then, over the years and the centuries, the existence of a category such as Portuguese affects local ways of classifying people, reflects interests among people, demarcates boundaries of friendship and animosity and, thus, forms a local reality of its own.

Pastness and Meaning

What brings together these seven usages of the word Portuguese is the fact that they bear genetically related pasts—that is their “pastness”⁽³⁾ the fact that a social entity or event is linked to past entities or events. This sets it in a genetically related context which is essential for the correct interpretation of its meaning.

The point is that, when we are confronted with categories of social identity such as the seven instances cited above, we are necessarily

2. Rodney Needham, “Polythetic classification: Convergences and consequences” in *Man* n.s. 10, London, 1975, pp. 349-69.

3. Hermínio Martins, “Time and theory in sociology” in John Rex ed., *Approaches to Sociology*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974.

forced to interpret—to make sense of what is told to us. Now, the “sense” of an act or an utterance—as many schools of philosophy have taught us over the years—is not to be found in the act or the utterance itself, but in the relation it bears with other acts and utterances. This is the definition that philosophers give to the word “holism” and, indeed, it is at the root of the basic methodological disposition that defines ethnography, the principle methodology of anthropology.

What I did, in the first two paragraphs of this talk, was precisely to attempt to situate for you the different contexts of interpretation within which one might make *some sense* of the seven different local usages. I say “some sense”, for no interpretation can be complete by definition. If, indeed, the meaning we attribute to a concept is holistic—that is, inseparable from all other meaning—then, no two persons and no two communities of speakers can ever attribute the precise, same meaning to a concept. That is what W.V. Quine called the “indeterminacy of translation”.⁽⁴⁾

We must, however, work on the presumption that interpretation is possible; otherwise, what would I be doing in speaking to you? Thus, interpretation becomes a matter of degree, and it becomes possible by means of an approximation between the person who holds the concept or makes the utterance and the person who aims to interpret it. This approximation has two facets, so to speak. On the one hand, the interpreter has to be in possession of an attitude which Quine somewhat confusingly dubbed “charity”.⁽⁵⁾ That is, he has to believe that the person before him can “make sense”—he has to give that person the benefit of the doubt and then undertake “a policy of rational accommodation” to his meaning.⁽⁶⁾

But this is not enough. They also have to share a world. That is, they have to share a context which functions as a point of reference by means of which the interpreter can assess the relative overlap between his concepts and those of the speaker. The process of interpretation, therefore, is a process of approximation. It is primarily a social activity that can only be undertaken if one accepts the inclusion of that person in one’s world. This does not only apply to linguistic phenomena but

4. W. V. Quine, *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1969, pp. 80-1.

5. see *Ibid.*, p. 46; see also Donald Davidson, *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2001, p. 211.

6. Donald Davidson, *Problems of Rationality*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2005, p. 35.

also to the interpretation of all types of human action.

In the course of their lives, constantly engaged in a process of mutual and interdependent interpretation, human beings are necessarily postulating sameness and difference by relation to other human beings, and to other groups of human beings—what we have been calling of late “cultures”. In short, the social condition is intrinsic to the task of interpretation and vice versa. Our process of engagement in social communication is a process of constant exercise of identification and differentiation, both at the personal and at the supra-personal level. These identifications and differentiations are fleeting and circumstantial. They do, however, accumulate, for the simple reason that they occur in the world. That is, all identifications and differentiations depend on the sharing of a world where our acts are inscribed—objectified—in the form of options. We agree to describe something in a certain way, do something in a certain manner and place ourselves in a certain subject position from which, in turn, we acquire a certain perspective.

Identification and differentiation, thus, are passing acts of affiliation that are always fleeting and circumstantial, which may be conscious or not so conscious, but which always imply a positioning in the world, an acquisition of perspective. In other words, over time, these social gestures come to constitute identity. A person’s “more or less conscious allegiance to a particular position” becomes inscribed in the world and, therefore, that particular position, that social identity, acquires an existence that soon is relatively independent of the person or persons that constituted it. Social identity, therefore, is always something that depends on a past, on the one hand, and that, on the other, influences people’s processes of further identification and differentiation, as these never cease.

What has often been forgotten in all of this process is that each one of us, as a person, does not pre-exist that process of interpretation. People and, for that matter, other supra-personal social entities (which are usually called “groups”) emerge out of the process of socialisation, they do not predate it. As Emmanuel Lévinas has put it, “there never was a moment when *meaning first came into the world produced by a being destitute of meaning*, external to an historical position where a language was spoken.”⁽⁷⁾

7. Emmanuel Lévinas, *Basic Philosophical Writings*, A. Peperzak, S. Critchley and R. Bernasconi eds., Bloomington, Indiana University Press. p. 38

Now, if this process of socialisation is essentially a process of communication, as I have been advocating, it is also a process of “translation” in the sense that Callon and Latour give to the concept: that is, attributing to some people the capacity to speak in the name of others.⁽⁸⁾ All socialisation, therefore, necessarily involves some process of negotiation of power, of domination. Social identity is a political process from its very inception through which the world is apportioned and appropriated in terms of categories of identity that bear within themselves a structure of power. My normal acts of communication transport identity implications, as they are forms of negotiation of who I am.

These acts of identity need not be explicitly aimed at furthering identity claims, but they often are. Social actors base their political claims on their membership of identity categories—politics and identity are never very far from each other. As Susan Sontag has put it, “to the militant, identity is everything.”⁽⁹⁾ The paradoxical aspect about this “stake-claiming notion of identity”⁽¹⁰⁾ is that such claims are ultimately evanescent. As the process of identification and differentiation continues unabated throughout one’s life, no identity is ever fully vaccinated against history; that is, the eventual process of erosion of its legitimacy or the rise in legitimacy of alternative categories is always imminent.

Pastness, then, is an essential aspect of all identity concepts. They all are based on memory, to the extent that they are all built on previous acts of identification and differentiation that lead to the social constitution of identity categories. This process involves a sharing of meanings and also a sharing of a world, both through the objectification of the categories of identity (in names, processes, reports, signs, rituals, lands, objects of all sorts, etc.) and through the process of social appropriation of the world.

The Macanese During the Transition

Let us now consider the case of the “Portuguese of the Orient” or, as they are also referred to in Macao, the Macanese or *tou saang*. I will not give here a fuller historical introduction to the matter, for which I direct you to the books I have written on the subject.⁽¹¹⁾ Instead,

8. Michel Callon and Bruno Latour, “Unscrewing the Big Leviathan: How actors macrostructure reality and how sociologists help them to do so”, in Karin Knorr-Cetina and Aaron V. Cicourel eds., *Advances in Social Theory and Methodology—Toward and Integration of Micro and Macro-Sociologies*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981.

9. Susan Sontag, *Regarding the pain of others*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 2003, p. 9.

10. Deborah Cameron and Don Kulick, “Identity crisis?” in *Language & Communication*, Vol. 25, No.2, 2005, Elsevier, pp. 107-25.

I would like to focus on the way in which identity, memory and politics penetrate people's everyday accounts of who they are.

In 1987, Portugal and the People's Republic of China signed a handover agreement for Macao. This meant, of course, that the relationship between the Territory's administration and its inhabitants was going to change radically. Furthermore, after the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, Macao had witnessed a new trend in immigration. By the time the agreement was signed, the vast majority of the residents in the Territory were newly arrived from the rural areas of Guangdong with no connection to the city's long and complex historical past.

Those who held power over the traditional institutions of the Territory, both in government and in other areas, started feeling the need to preserve the contemporary relevance of the categories of identity that were rooted in the past. This meant, among other things, writing and researching the city's history, preserving its historical buildings, salvaging its archives, printing and preserving the photographic record, and writing genealogies of families.

This sense of urgency was not limited to members of the ethnic groups that were more associated with the Portuguese presence—the Macanese and the Portuguese from the Republic—but extended itself also to the older sectors of the Chinese community and even to sectors that, having recently arrived, felt the need to consolidate local identities as a political gesture to safeguard future autonomy. The 1990s witnessed an extraordinary process of creativity in all cultural areas, including architecture, literature, history, social sciences,² and visual arts. Slowly, Macao's passive "pastness" became an actively managed patrimony.

I was called to the city as a social anthropologist in 1990 in order to write a monograph of the Macanese as an ethnic group, with a special focus on Macanese families. Now it has to be understood that the vocabulary of ethnicity is not autochthonous to Macao. The categories of identity thus described were easily recognised by all and had a very long history in the city, but the mode of describing them was new. It was new both when faced with the terms characteristic of the late colonial period in the Portuguese Empire (1961-1974) and in the terms that the People's Republic of China (1949 onwards) had found to deal with its own ethnic diversity.

11. João de Pina-Cabral, "Between China and Europe: Person, Culture and Emotion in Macao", in *Social Anthropology*, London School of Economics Monographs, Vol. 74, 2002.

A need was felt in Macao to formulate, in new terms, the historically constructed categories of identity that structured the city's everyday life and that demarcated access to a number of privileges, relating in a complex manner to class differentiation. On the one hand, the association of the Eurasians with Portugal and the local administration was in need of being rethought, as it had altered significantly over the past decade and it was apparent to all that it was going to change even more; while, on the other hand, the notions of ethnicity that characterised the Mainland might not adapt themselves well to the actual ethnic complexity in Macao. This applied both to the concept of ethnic minority (*minzu*) that was enshrined in the constitution of the Republic and to a number of other diverse inter-Han ethnic concepts and institutions, such as *huajiao*, *bandi ren*, *he jia* [Hakka].⁽¹²⁾

As it happens, these were the days of the Balkan Wars, when the international press readily discussed notions of ethnicity. The concept was in the air, coming through the television at every hour. The topic of ethnicity, largely forgotten since the 1960s, had once again come to the fore. This happened both in the political and in the academic arenas. For the people in the community, as much as for the social scientists who were coming to study the Territory, the vocabulary of ethnicity was unavoidable when debating issues of the relationship between politics and local categories of social identity.

When my colleagues and I arrived in the Territory, it was apparent to us all that what was at stake was not the drafting of a new ethnic landscape. People knew who they were and they behaved in communitarian ways as a result of who they thought they were and who others thought they were. The terms of formulation of those categories, however, and the relationships between them were changing. Local newspapers debated it daily; radio and television programs and interviews were in constant effervescence; politicians in Portugal, Macao, Hong Kong and China were constantly pronouncing themselves on the issue; tycoons and businessmen were positioning themselves explicitly in relation to it.

When we were called to study Macao, my colleagues and I had to relate to this challenge. The empirical material we gathered was

12. Emily Honig, *Creating Chinese Ethnicity: Subei People in Shanghai, 1850-1980*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992.

guided by this obvious concern of everyone in Macao. I insist that the ethnic issue then was not a specifically Eurasian problem, nor was it limited to the social sciences—there was, for example, a lot of artistic work being produced that reflected on it. It concerned all local communities equally, as they negotiated among themselves, and with very powerful external forces, over what their future would be at the end of this drawn out Transition Period (1987-1999).

In the early 1990s, my colleagues and I who came to study the Territory brought with us more contemporary analytical frameworks. Nevertheless, the context that we found was not virgin by any means. Macao had been a point of contention for a very long time, as it fell outside the more common political and ethnic stereotypes. A lot had been written about Macao and the Macanese, both by intellectuals using the modes of knowledge more characteristic of the Portuguese late colonial period—in history, geography and ethnology—and by journalists and other writers from Hong Kong and mainland China, who had their diversified, and generally hostile, agendas.

The analytical dispositions that we brought in our baggage were characteristically marked by the cognitivist and constructivist concerns that were dominant at the time internationally. Two things should be stressed, however. On the one hand, each one of us brought with him or her specific intellectual histories and specific individual inflections (for example, in my case a propensity towards an anthropology of action rather than of representation, which is grounded in my education as a social anthropologist). On the other hand, we did a lot of empirical fact gathering. We interviewed, we distributed and collected questionnaires, we studied records and archives, we gathered family histories and genealogies, we attended court cases, we visited casinos, we dined and wined, and we generally observed what was happening around us.

I do not deny that we did bring with us a new way of looking at ethnicity that had to do both with fashions in socio-scientific discourse and with the political conjuncture, but I would emphasise that we did so critically, analytically, and in a manner that allowed our dispositions to be tried and disproven by the material we gathered.

As a matter of fact, studying the Macanese at the time was a particularly interesting challenge: (a) because they did not fit with the more common images of ethnicity—they were an intermediary category; (b) because they confronted us with complex methodological

options (for one, in spite of being very few and very discernible in the cityscape, they were almost impossible to count); and (c) because the history and the politics that lay behind their presence in this land were full of misunderstandings, silent conflicts and equivocal compatibilities.⁽¹³⁾ It was not a simple story in ethnic terms, but neither was it in political terms, as Macao hardly fitted the notions of colonialism and post-colonialism, which were then also making their headway in socio-scientific fashion. The city had been, indeed, a meeting-point of cultures for over four centuries but rarely in the more positive, penetrative sense of the word “encounter”.

Note that, contrary to a cognitivistic account of ethnicity,⁽¹⁴⁾ I am distinguishing here between the categories of identity and the language in which they are formulated. The two are related but they are not identical. Social identity is objectified in language, of course, but also in a very complex set of processes and dispositions that can hardly be limited to the words used to describe them. You might argue that what was new then in the Territory was that everyday ethnicity (a peaceable fact of community life, in the sense that Brubaker specifies) became a stake-claiming notion of identity—a feeding ground for militants, as Susan Sontag would put it. But that is wrong, both because politics had always been at stake and because, even then, ethnicity was far from being reducible to politics.

Ethnicity digs into people, way beyond any circumstantial militancy: it is personal and intimate. In Macao, ethnic identity was associated with marriage patterns (and I studied how these were changing unbeknownst to the actors); it was associated with class belonging (and the city's class profile was also rapidly evolving); it was associated with linguistic dispositions, with family practices, with preferences in food, with economic behaviour, and with personal friendship patterns, among others.

Ethnic differentiation was in the process of evolving but it was rooted in the past—for it was past affiliations that generated present affiliations. As an older Macanese lady once told me, “old friendships pass from parents to children—which is a mighty interesting thing.” She and her school friends from the time of the War, she explained,

13. João de Pina-Cabral, “Between China and Europe: Person, Culture and Emotion in Macao”, in *Social Anthropology*, London School of Economics Monographs, Vol. 74, 2002.

14. For example, Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 2004.

still met regularly in their now internationalised circuits. Their children have intermarried and the links between them project lines of friendship into the future.

Still, her comment about the “interesting” nature of such friendships did not apply only to intra-ethnic relations. The position of the Macanese in the Territory’s ethnic landscape as a whole is structured by a number of personal cross-ethnic links that ensure bridges of salvation in times of trouble (the famous *incidentes*⁽¹⁵⁾) and that pave the way for silent convergence during times of peace. Her family is the bearer of one such link, one of central strategic significance to the Territory.

In the early twentieth century, her father-in-law, in his youth, formed a close friendship with an up-and-coming Chinese builder recently arrived in the city. The two were caught together in a fire during which the Macanese friend died. The Chinese man remained all his life deeply attached to the friend’s son. He paid for the boy’s studies, thus launching the latter’s prosperous career. As they both became very rich and important in Macao, their families and associates continued to maintain this personal link that, although forged in the past, remained strategically important for a very long time.

In fact, Macao is a land of “old friendships” where people constantly meet to dine with their school friends, their business associates, their relatives, their distant friends.⁽¹⁶⁾ People move in and out of Macao all the time—the Territory is a stepping stone from China to the world. So old relations are preserved and cherished, as they may be reactivated at any moment.

During the Transition Period, we witnessed a change in the terms of formulation and in the practices associated with ethnic identity. Yet that took place in a context of continuity. Such links were “continued identities”—a term I coined with family and kinship in mind,⁽¹⁷⁾ but that can be usefully employed here to apply to the personal links that build up ethnic identity. These are fleeting forms of identification and differentiation between persons and social

15. João de Pina-Cabral and Nelson Lourenço, *Em Terra de Tufões: Dinâmicas da Etnicidade Macaense*, Macao, Instituto Cultural de Macau, 1993 (Chinese edition, trans. by Monica Chan, Macau, ICM, 1995).

16. João de Pina-Cabral, “How do the Macanese achieve collective action?” in João de Pina-Cabral e Antónia Pedroso de Lima eds., *Elites: Choice, Leadership and Succession*, Oxford, Berg, 2000.

17. João de Pina-Cabral, *O homem na família: Cinco ensaios de antropologia*, Lisboa, Imprensa de Ciências Sociais, 2003.

entities but they depend on processes that, in the past, constituted those persons and those social entities as social agents and, still further back, were of relevance to the people who raised and taught those persons or who yielded power to them over those institutions.

One might say that memory is the link here—but we run the risk of using the word “memory” in too metaphoric a fashion, for, while we are dealing with memories of people, we are also dealing with records of the past enshrined as institutional markers (photographs, charters, written contracts, etc.), and with instituted ways of doing things, of appropriating the world and of moving around the commonly appropriated space.

For example, the cemetery of São Miguel near Tap Seak contains many tombs of the older Macanese families. Not all Macanese were buried there, and not all families of Macanese are present there: there were Chinese people buried there too. But the cemetery marks the land with the bodies of the ancestors of the people of today, their past presence and relationships functioning constantly as a form of legitimising the categories of identity that depend on that particular “pastness”. The same goes for such institutions as the Leal Senado and its building, for churches such as São Lourenço or the Cathedral, or for the presence in the streets of the older, colourful colonial-style houses that were restored during the Transition Period.

So the concept of memory might become a little too laden to be of analytic use, and we have to be careful. As Susan Sontag warns us, “Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as collective memory—part of the same family of spurious notions as collective guilt. But there is collective instruction.”⁽¹⁸⁾ Indeed, rather than focusing on how ethnicity is dependent on common memories, we might want to see it as a form of “learning”: the acquisition of dispositions that both form the agent and inform his or her actions.

During the Transition Period, such notions as Macanese ethnic identity, or *boon dei yan* ethnicity (*Bandi*, local people), were being engaged, not only by local people but also by the social scientists who were working with them. Rather than looking at those concepts as things that people passively receive from the past, as memories, we must look at them as things that form people, which people then use creatively to produce the future—in this sense, ethnicity too is a project.

18. Susan Sontag, *Regarding the pain of others*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 2003, p. 76.

As we studied the new formulations of identity that were making their appearance in the 1990s, we were constantly struck by the open-endedness of the process. December 1999 always loomed ahead and, as we approached the final years in the midst of the Triad War, the terms of the city's future seemed to be increasingly uncertain. The adequacy of the concepts then being formed was an uncertain matter. No wonder, "every good idea implies inadequacy, as it is good also because it expresses a truth that may become," as the Brazilian philosopher Giannotti once wrote.¹⁹

The past and the future mixed constantly in people's attempts to define themselves in the face of new challenges. It mattered what was going to become of Macao, but it also mattered where people had come from, their past links opening new doors towards the future. This applied, at the time, in equal terms to the Macanese, to the Portuguese, and to the Chinese, since Macao is a land of passage, where people come and go at a fast rate, and where there was going to be a change in the ethnic face of the Administration.

This is how a Macanese lady, in an interview recorded by a colleague of mine, formulates her ethnic position in this process of conjoining past and future:

We could be like a little bridge between China and the rest of the Portuguese-speaking world. [...] And we have a value; we represent a value for China and Macao. [...] I do not mean everyone, but some people here in Macao, who happen to occupy important positions in the Administration studied and grew up, lived together with mixed kids from Guinea, San Tome, Mozambique, Angola. All they have to do is to pick up the phone and we can go there. [...] There is already a second and third generation here in Macao that grew up together with the second and third generation of those leaders of the Portuguese speaking African countries [...] The thing is we [...] have an easier relation with those people. Then there is the issue of the language, of personal acquaintance ... we represent the kind of surplus-value that the overseas Chinese represented for China. [...] but we would have to know and recognise it and use this surplus-value, [...] to maintain and fortify thus this identity of ours,

19. Gianotti, 2003, p. 122.

which it is important to preserve. [...] It is up to us to affirm ourselves.⁽²⁰⁾

For roughly four centuries the Macanese were the guarantors of Macao's exceptionality in relation to the surrounding countryside—there was wealth and security to be gained from it. Whether they were known as *tou saang*, “filhos da terra” (literally, land-born) or as Portuguese of the Orient, this peninsula was their land. Their association with far away Portugal was, paradoxically, a means of preserving the privileges of this autochthony. After the Second World War, however, all that started changing. The Maoist uprisings in the 1960s made it patently clear to all that Macao survived only through China's decision. In 1976, when the new democratic regime in Portugal withdrew the army from Macao, and then, later on in 1987, when the agreement was reached concerning the handover, the Macanese saw that their historical role had come to an end.

From the late eighteenth century to the mid twentieth century, the pervading colonial ideas and economic practices meant that their “Portugueseness” had been an important asset both in Macao and beyond, throughout all Asia, where they played an important role as intermediaries. Many Macanese served in the Portuguese colonial army and administration in India, Timor and Africa, and others played a central role in Hong Kong's post-War financial and civil administration.

I have written at length about this elsewhere.⁽²¹⁾ Suffice to say that the Transition Period was a time in which the Macanese had to change their position in relation to their association with this “Portuguese” past. This did not mean that they wanted, or had the option, to dismiss it. It only meant that the Macanese had to find a definition of themselves that was historically linked to their past but not dependent on their relationship to Portugal.

The idiom of ethnicity imposed itself upon us all and, to that extent, all of us who studied Macao and worked in Macao during that period were participants in an historical process of reinterpretation of the memories of the past with a view to a project for the future.

20. Costa, Francisco Lima da, *Fronteras da Identidade: Macaense em Portugal e em Macau*, Lisboa, Fim do Século, 2005.

21. João de Pina-Cabral and Nelson Lourenço, *Em Terra de Tufões: Dinâmicas da Etnicidade Macaense*, Macao, Instituto Cultural de Macau, 1993 (Chinese edition, trans. by Monica Chan, Macau, ICM, 1995).

Title

History and Memory:
Present Reflections on the Past to Build Our Future

Editor

The Macau Ricci Institute
Avenida Conselheiro Ferreira de Almeida, No. 95-E, Macao, China

Colour Separation, Printing & Binding

Encre de Chine Ltd.
Huizhou City, Guangdong, China

Copyright

The Macau Ricci Institute

1st Edition

May 2008

Printing Run

Hardcover: 250
Paperback: 500

ISBN 978-99937-947-0-7 (Hardcover)

ISBN 978-99937-758-9-8 (Paperback)

This book was published thanks to the financial support of the



History and Memory

Present Reflections on the Past to Build Our Future

International Symposium
organised by the Macau Ricci Institute

Macao, December 1st-3rd 2005



澳門利氏學社
INSTITUTO RICCI de MACAU
MACAU RICCI INSTITUTE

Contents

Foreword	<i>Eric Sautedé</i>	7
Welcome Address	<i>Luis Sequeira</i>	9
Keynote Presentation Historical Consciousness and Cultural Identity	<i>Tu Weiming</i>	11
I. Epistemological Issues: The Liaisons Between History and Memory		
Memory and the Writing of History	<i>Consuelo Varela</i>	35
Ancestral Memory, Homestead Symbols and Clan History: Analysis of the Shanxi Hongdong Big Locust Tree Legend	<i>Zhao Shiyu</i>	43
History, Memory, and Narrative Ethics	<i>Vivian-Lee Nyitray</i>	75
II. Questions of Method: On the Sources of History and Towards an Interdisciplinary Approach		
A Global Inquisition and the Aborigines	<i>Juan Gil</i>	91
Documents, Interviews, and Facts: The Case Study of the Yihetuan Movement in the Connection Between History and Memory	<i>Chen Fangchung</i>	107
Science, Culture, Politics: Qing Intellectual History in Republican China	<i>Shana J. Brown</i>	145
History and the Transmission of Shared Loss: The Great Leap Famine in China and the Luku Incident in Taiwan	<i>Stephan Feuchtwang</i>	163
<i>Old Photos</i> and Historic Memory	<i>Ding Dong</i>	191
Forbidden Memory, Unwritten History: The Difficulty in Structuring an Opposition Movement in the PRC	<i>Jean-Philippe Béja</i>	203
III. Selecting and Constructing Memories		
Commemorating History in Colonial and Post-Colonial Hong Kong	<i>John M. Carroll</i>	227
The Objectivity of Historical Memory: On Reality in the Panorama of the History of Ideas	<i>Jin Guantao & Liu Qingfeng</i>	251
Interaction Between Historical Archives and TV: Taking "Retrospection: Stories in the Archives" as an Example	<i>Xing Jianrong</i>	271
Interpreting Memory as Acting on Memory: Ethnic Identity in Macao During the Transition Period (1987-1999)	<i>João de Pina-Cabral</i>	283

Seeking Footprints of Early Chinese Labourers:
Based on Sister M. Alfreda Elsensohns' *Idaho*
Chinese Lore *Zhang Kaiyuan* 297

National History Textbooks in Late Qing China:
Stories, Memories and Identities *Peter Zarrow* 313

IV. Preserving Memory and Teaching History

Remembering the Past, Shaping the Future:
Stories Focussed on Personal Objects *Haviva Peled-Carmeli* 339

Valuing the Past in the Museum of Macau *Cathryn Clayton* 349

Historical Understanding and Historical Reality:
Unconformity, Interference and Mistakes in the
Historical View of Evolutionism in Research on the
History of Chinese Art in the Twentieth Century *Lin Mu* 373

The Establishment of the "China Historical
Geographic Information System" and Its Use
in Historical Research *Ge Jianxiong* 393

Information Technology and the Job
of the Historian: An Outline of Ongoing Issues *Guido Abbattista* 409

The Future of Free Information *Lawrence M. Sanger* 425

V. The "Duty of Memory": For Whom and to What End

The Chinese Cultural Revolution:
Concealed History and To-be-discovered Memory *Xu Youyu* 447

How a "Lost Generation" Recovers its Memory:
The Political Significance of the Debate about
the Memory of the Cultural Revolution and
of the Educated Youth Movement *Michel Bonnin* 461

Can We Influence Memory? *Marie-Claire Lavabre* 471

The Duty of Memory: The Nanjing Massacre,
Memory and Forgetting in China and Japan *Rana Mitter* 477

The French Resistance: Between Memory
and History *Olivier Wieviorka* 495

Representing and Remembering the Soweto
Uprising: Constructing the Narrative
of South Africa's Liberation Struggle *Gary Baines* 513

S 21: The "Present Past" of Dehumanisation *Sylvie Rollet* 533

Index 541

Acknowledgments 551