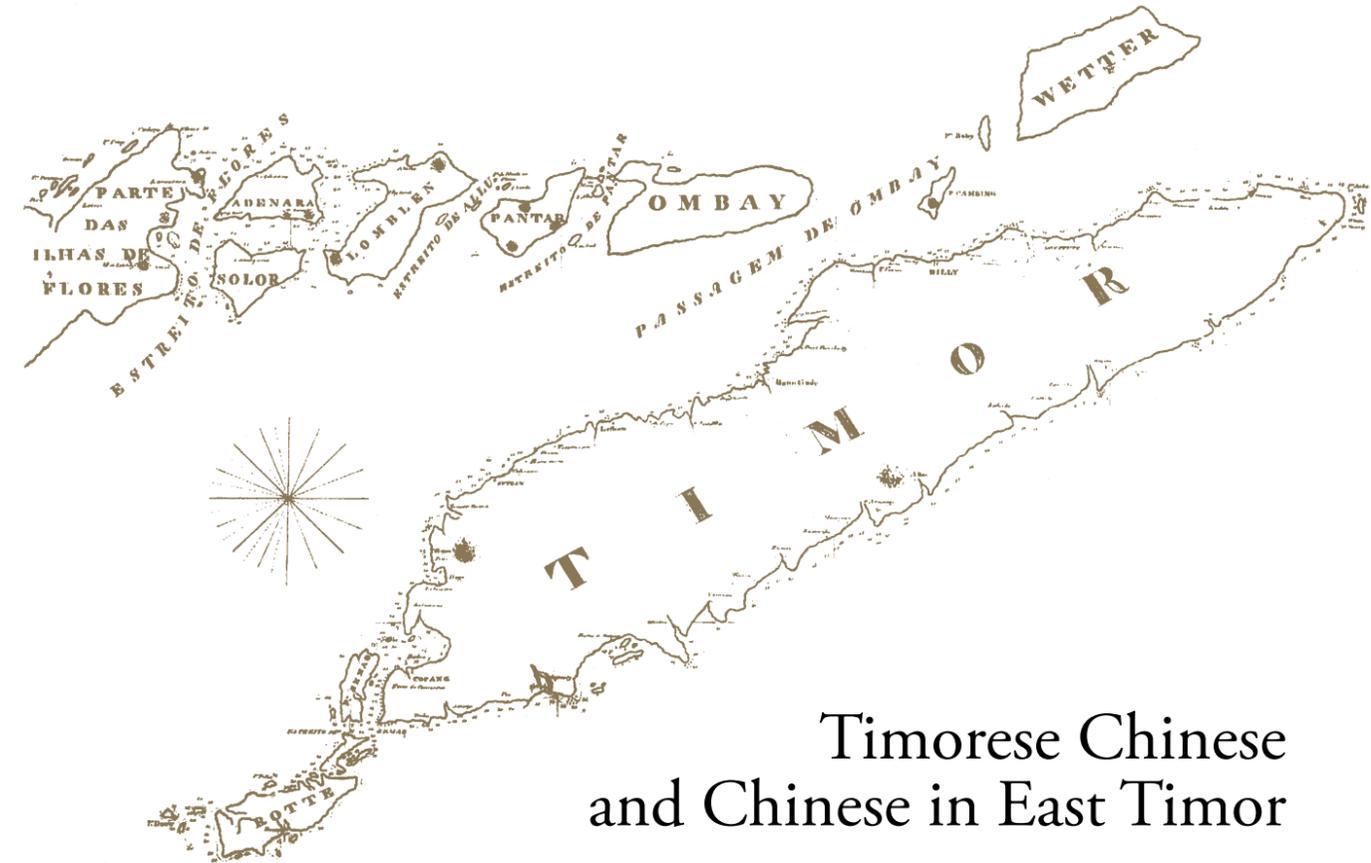


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## Timorese Chinese and Chinese in East Timor

JEAN A. BERLIE

### INTRODUCTION

During the Ming Dynasty and later, Chinese traders interested in sandalwood arrived on Timor Island, that is, many years before the first Hakka 客家 (*Kejia*) who did not start to come, from Macao and Guangdong Province till the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The great majority of Chinese in East Timor before independence in 2002 were Hakka.

Chinese from Fujian and Guangdong Provinces are numerous in South East Asia. In 1830, one million Chinese were residents of South East Asia, i.e. 3 per cent of the population. In the 1930s they had grown to three million, but represented a significantly smaller percentage. At present, overseas Chinese are probably 2 per cent of the total resident population of Southeast Asia.

Chinese in Southeast Asia (percentage of population): 1) 6 million in Malaysia (34 per cent); 2) 6 million in Indonesia (3 per cent); 3) 6 million in Thailand (14 per cent); 4) 4.1 million in Singapore (76 per cent); 5) 1 million in Vietnam (2 per cent); 6)

600,000 in the Philippines (1 per cent); 7) 300,000 in Cambodia (4 per cent); 8) 25,000 in Laos (0.8 per cent). These numbers do not always reflect the full extent of Chinese presence. Partially assimilated Chinese are often not counted as Chinese. (CSEA).

This article studies the Hakka of Timor Island and tries to understand why recently many Chinese came to East Timor to develop their entrepreneurial talent. I place in parallel the slow economic development of a new country, and East Timor's attraction for Chinese entrepreneurs and specialists. Currently, there are Chinese residing in East Timor who work as computer, factory and supermarket entrepreneurs, and as cell phones sellers and repairers, who want to take a calculated risk: travel 'global' in the new world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

After the Independence of East Timor in 2002, the Embassy of China became one of the most active diplomatic representations in the country, and coordinated the construction of the Palace of the President of East Timor.

## ESTUDOS ASIÁTICOS

## ASIAN STUDIES

Since 2002, the influence of China in East Timor has been remarkable and multifaceted. Standing between Asia and the Pacific, the geopolitical position of East Timor attracts the interest of many countries. A newly independent country, it has around fifteen years of gas and oil off-shore reserves. Its national currency, the US dollar, is backed by the USA and its own central bank. In 2001 and mainly in the post-2008 years, East Timor attracted many Chinese, both from China, and overseas, who established many small enterprises and few industries. Chinese businessmen have been particularly helpful in developing this new country, where 37 per cent of its population lives on less than one US\$ a day.<sup>1</sup> It is surprising for a country with only 1.1 million inhabitants to have a current annual budget exceeding two billion US\$.

## HISTORY

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese on the Island of Timor were among the first merchants interested in the sandalwood trade (Gunn 1999: 54-56). Many years earlier, many Hakka Chinese had arrived from Macao and settled in the Portuguese Colony of Timor. Around 1515, colonisation started in the Western part of the Island, in Lifau, Oecussi. East Timorese were always faithful to Portugal; this is the intriguing reason for the existence of this enclave in the western part of the island, which would be taken over by the Dutch, part of NTT Indonesia c. 1947.

In the Audian suburb, the Chinese Cemetery of Dili (*Cina Rate* in Tetum), demonstrates the long history of the Hakka Chinese in East Timor. Magnificent tombs in this cemetery attest to the long economic prosperity of the Timorese Chinese community.

In 1769, Dili replaced Oecussi as the capital of Portuguese Timor. Subsequently, Hakka Chinese from Guangdong Province moved to Dili, mainly between 1760 and 1940. However, Dili became a city in 1864, evidence that important Chinese immigration took place in the Eastern part of Timor Island during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and before World War II.

Before 1975 Portuguese Timor lacked direct communication with the outside world; Goa (returned to India in 1967) and Macao had played an important role during the previous five centuries. The Portuguese Governor of Macao eventually came to control Timor

for a period during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The political relationship between China and Macao influenced the Portuguese Colony of Timor. During the 1960s, Felipe Barata, the Governor of Timor from 1959 to 1963, recognised the beneficial influence of the Chinese Timorese community (Barata 1961). Its helpful presence has continued up to the present.

During the Cultural Revolution, in 1967, 40,000 pro-Taiwan Chinese departed from Macao, and the majority of the Chinese of Timor became pro-mainland (CSoc). Then in 1975, before and after the Indonesian occupation, many Timorese Chinese left East Timor. Between 1975 and 1999, Chinese influence was less important, although some Indonesian Chinese businessmen were present. However, Jakarta did not accept Chinese political influence in East Timor during that time.

In 1999, in the centre of Dili, as in Macao where the Chinese God of War is popular, the *Guandi* Pagoda stood as conclusive proof of widespread acceptance of the Chinese in Timor Island. In the month of September, the militiamen burned many buildings all over the country, but spared this pagoda and another one in Liquica.

Also in 1999, the United Nations, under the name UNTAET (United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor), assumed control for the governing of East Timor. Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysian Chinese established service enterprises and other types of companies in partnership with Australian entrepreneurs. Around 2006, Resende Hotel and Hello Mister, two non-Chinese buildings were torched.

On 20 May 2002, East Timor became independent. Slowly many mainland and overseas Chinese entrepreneurs came to Dili, the capital.

## IDENTITY

The 'Hakka-speaking Timorese-Chinese' identify themselves as Timorese Chinese or simply 'Timorese' (Wise 2006: 149-150). The last term identifies these Chinese as sons-of-their land, East Timor, but to be Hakka is a source of pride for them.

The importance of the local god (*tu shen* 土神) in this Chinese Cemetery of Dili is remarkable and reflects the integration of the Timorese Hakka with their native country, East Timor. The family name Lay 黎 (Li in

*Putonghua*) is common among Chinese Timorese. So it is not surprising that this name is also common in this cemetery.

The Hakka diet in East Timor is 'a combination of Chinese and Portuguese food' (Ibid., p. 150). It is interesting to note that among the Chinese of Macao the importance of Portuguese bread as a daily food has diminished between 1999 and 2013. However, in East Timor Portuguese bread is still a staple food.

Many Timorese Chinese who left Timor Island in 1975 did not return to their land before 2000. They established rich and powerful Timorese Chinese associations in Australia, in particular in Sydney and Victoria (维省帝汶华人联谊会 *weisheng diwen huaren lianyihui*). Since 2000 many have travelled back from Australia to Dili. Some of them, well educated, currently have companies and enterprises in both East Timor and Australia.

## EDUCATION

Timorese Chinese are proficient in Tetum and often speak one of the 14 languages of East Timor and Portuguese. Chinese *Mestiços* are numerous; some of them speak Chinese. Chinese Timorese businessmen and traders spoke Portuguese before 1976 and at present English and sometimes *Bahasa Indonesia*.

In the 1970s, the Chinese School of Dili had eight Chinese teachers in the unique Chinese Secondary School including 100 students. In other 12 Chinese primary schools all over the island, including Liquica in the Southwest and Los Palos in the East, 1000 students were registered (CS). These Chinese schools were partly closed with the departure of the pro-Taiwan Chinese in the 1970s and have not restarted yet.

Up to the 1980s the Chinese School of Dili was active. In 2000, during the slow re-opening of education following the departure of Indonesian troops in 1999, this school was one of the first to have students, but it was not a Chinese school anymore.

In recent years, the Embassy of China has coordinate the attribution of scholarships for Timorese students to join Chinese universities. This effort to develop higher education cannot be compared to Cuba which trained hundreds of Timorese in Cuba and East Timor who are now medical doctors in their own country.

## ECONOMY

The Portuguese colonial administration recognised the beneficial influence of the Chinese. Just after World War II, without Timorese Chinese it was impossible to distribute the Portuguese aid in clothes and other essential items to reconstruct the island after its occupation by Japan (1942-1945).

Chinese culture and business tradition rely on relationship and associations. The main Chinese Business Association in the capital Dili is called *Zhonghua Shanghui* 中华商会.

The first known Chinese tycoon in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century up to 1975 is the founder of the Company Lay, Lay San Ying, born in Manatuto (CT). He was associated with the famous tycoon of Macao, Dr Stanley Ho, for the construction of the Hotel Makhota, the main hotel of Dili restructured and improved under the current name, Hotel Timor. In 2000, the late Lay's family rebuilt this company and opened a new hotel in Dili. The remarkable point is that starting in the 1960s before the late Lay, no other Timorese businessmen at that time went far away to Africa, Mozambique for example, and to Timor's closer regions, in particular Hong Kong, Macao, and Australia to develop business and trade. The company Lay had the monopoly for all construction in Timor. This monopoly is at present shared between many Timorese, Chinese and Australian companies.

Since the independence of the country, Timorese Chinese, mainland Chinese and Chinese from Indonesia have become an essential part of the economic development of East Timor. There are all sort of small businesses concerning mobile phones and their maintenance in the hands of mainland Chinese using Timorese staff. Chinese hotels, cyber cafés and many Chinese retail companies are common in Dili. Other Chinese companies are also involved in construction and even the production of construction materials, such as sand. For many decades Timorese Chinese have been running grocery and bakery business, which are essential for daily life. In the 2000s, Chinese owned supermarkets, restaurants and hotels. However, the departure of the United Nations in December 2012 will reduce the economy by around 25 per cent.

An economic case study: Mainlanders and Southeast Asian overseas Chinese in East Timor, Weng Enterprise in Dili, Beduku 北都古.

## ESTUDOS ASIÁTICOS

## ASIAN STUDIES

The Chinese enterprise Weng shi qiyejituan gongsi 翁氏企业集团公司 from Fuzhou and Fuqing city in Fujian demonstrates a high degree of entrepreneurship which was exported to Dili. It sells washed sand (0.1-0.5 mm), gravel (0.5-0.8 mm heavy-duty adjustable gravel and lumber), powder, aggregate, crushed stone and other construction materials. The price for these materials in East Timor is US\$ 18 per ton, less than half of the Australian construction material. There are few companies, such as the Timorese owned company called EDS, able to rival Weng concerning construction materials.

In a remote part of Dili, surrounded by hills on the sandy bank of the River Comoro, this grinding mill and aggregate production company started to operate in 2009 in a no man's land and began its operation at the end of 2011. The declared investment is one million US\$. Most of the construction materials used to produce the construction materials are collected along the Comoro River (Mota Comoro in Tetum). The company is located after the main bridge on the Comoro on a small tributary of the main Comoro Road just before the Agriculture Ministry which runs southward up to its dead-end, at the foot of a forested hill.

This company has recruited 30 fully-trained and well-paid Timorese workers. Four Chinese staff ran this company during my research. A Chinese secretary was in charge of the registration of all the trucks going outside to deliver construction materials.

The company owns crawler excavators, digging machines, a huge grinding machine, carpet-conveyors, diesel track machines and trucks to transport the sand and aggregates to construction companies. Sand and gravel are processed and washed according to modern technology for construction materials.

Another interesting company is called Kmanek. Its manager, a Chaozhou of Singapore, invested five million US\$ between 2001 and 2012. His company is one of the most successful and popular supermarkets. The mother company of this supermarket is a trading company of Singapore. The planned departure of the United Nations UNMIT at the end of 2012 will probably reduce the activities of this prosperous company.

The following dream of Timorese farmers was developed by the Chinese Company of Singapore, Kmanek Co.

'Linking farmers to markets via the private sector involvement seems to be an effective model for improving farmers' income. Participating in the initiative reduced the risks faced by farmers in terms of having a clear market for their produce. This model removes the burden on individual farmers of finding the market for their product themselves...' to reach markets directly. Under this model, farmers can concentrate on increasing production (Correia, c. 2010).

In 2010 and 2011, the construction of a greenhouse and an investment of quality seeds to Timorese peasants, was studied by the author in Aileu and in surrounding villages. The vegetables produced were sold with success during two years by Kmanek Company. However, the intensive plantation of capsicum (a too large production) which was valued four times the price of tomatoes—not correctly reported to the Chinese company by the Timorese—ruined the project. A drastic disease of tomato plants finally forced to a stop this exemplary cooperation between this dynamic Chinese company and Timorese farmers. In 2012, it is hoped that the investment of new stores to better manage the stocks of the company will help to secure a better management scheme.

Timorese Chinese and other mainland or overseas Chinese in East Timor are a prosperous community, but their hard work and business capacity is sometimes forgotten by the Timorese. However, Timorese Chinese are well integrated in the Timorese society and it is only recently, with the departure of the United Nations, that a certain economic decline leads sometimes to more criticism: 'Organize yourselves, meet and speak together, otherwise the Chinese will rise above you... commerce... industry... if we do not have money then we will feel ashamed' (CM).

## CONCLUSION

Chinese influence on the Island of Timor has a long history. The independence of East Timor in 2002 is a key event.

It is surprising that Chinese in East Timor, after so many years in the country, currently have difficulty integrating with the Timorese, who are now more than ever over-confident and nationalistic. The overseas Chinese, as compared to the local Chinese, are less interested in learning the numerous languages of East

Timor, or even the main languages which are Tetum, the national language, Portuguese, an official language, and *Bahasa Indonesia*. This is the consequence of an education system developed during the Portuguese colonial period and the post-colonial Indonesian rule of 1976 to 1999 with the creation of a university in Dili, for the first time ever in 1981.

The Hakka of East Timor speak many of the languages of East Timor and have a very good relationship with the Timorese. English—the second language of many Chinese mainlanders going overseas—is not yet used in the whole country. Fortunately the Timorese youth want to study English; but there is a noticeable lack of English teachers in the country, despite the efforts of too-few Australian teachers. The country is limited by its Constitution, which gives priority to two official languages, Tetum (used in primary schools) and Portuguese. So it is surprising to see an article claiming—without any serious analysis—that the presence of 'too many Chinese businessmen are the cause of the Timorese unemployment'.<sup>2</sup> Unemployment is certainly critical

among youth in the country. However, this Timorese unemployment has nothing to do with the Chinese, who are exemplary entrepreneurs, and fill the gap in rare service companies, running internet cafés, supermarkets, and shops with inexpensive products useful for the local economy. The departure of the United Nations in December 2012 was a blow to the local economy, and will probably affect the integration of the Chinese in East Timor. But the Timorese Chinese will adapt themselves easily.

The Chinese interest, which in 14<sup>th</sup> century East Timor had been the sandalwood trade, had by the 21<sup>st</sup> century become local business development. Chinese trade networks are currently powerful in the capital Dili. Being Timorese, Timorese Chinese are extremely useful. Overseas Chinese and mainlanders in Timor are becoming linked to a more global type of business. East Timor is not yet global and needs the hard-working overseas Chinese. China itself is an economic giant in Southeast Asia, and its deep interest in geopolitics motivates Chinese to take interest in this region. **RC**

## CHRONOLOGY

- Oldest remains in Timor of *Homo sapiens* 20,000 years old
- Mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, sandalwood trade suggested between Timor and China
- C. 1515: Portuguese occupied Oecussi
- 1653: Dutch in Kupang. Hakka Chinese in the Island of Timor
- 1769: Dili Portuguese colonial capital
- 1859: Portuguese-Dutch treaty
- 7 December 1975: Indonesian occupation
- In mid-1999: President B.J. Habibie announces UN-administered referendum
- 30 August 1999: 80% votes for independence
- 22 March 2002: Constitution
- 20 May 2002 Independence: Mari Alkatiri Prime Minister and Xanana Gusmao President
- 26 June 2006: PM Alkatiri resigned
- May 2007: Ramos-Horta elected President
- August 2007: Xanana elected PM
- 2012: General Matan Ruak elected President and PM Xanana, re-elected
- 5<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Government of East Timor, 6 August 2012: Minister for Transportation and Telecommunication: Pedro Lay and Minister of Tourism Francisco Kalbuadi Lay (both Hakka Timorese Chinese) (GET).

## NOTES

1 Source: Non Governmental Organization Lao Hamutuk, Dili, April 2012.

2 'Negosiantes Chinezsa nakonu, hamosu dezempregu' (Chinese businessmen are 'rich', we are jobless), *Suara Timor Lorosae*, 4 April 2012, p. 3.

## ESTUDOS ASIÁTICOS

## ABSTRACTS

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## RESUMOS

**ICAS 8 e a Ascensão da Ásia**

Esta introdução destaca a importância teórica da Ásia na promoção de um entendimento mais pluralista e menos hegemónico da humanidade. Discute a perspectiva e os obstáculos no processo e sublinha o papel do ICAS 8 em tal empenho.

[Autor: Tak-Wing Ngo, pp. 6-11]

**A Ásia está em Ascensão. Mas qual a Direcção? Reflexões sobre um Discurso Emergente**

O artigo aborda uma série de questões levantadas pelo discurso da "Ásia em ascensão", e oferece reflexões críticas não só sobre a ascensão da Ásia, mas também sobre o discurso da "ascensão". Inicia-se com o reconhecimento de que o desenvolvimento trouxe transformações significativas a muitas sociedades asiáticas, nas relações inter-estatais em toda a Ásia e, no mapa geopolítico do mundo. A publicidade sobre "a ascensão da Ásia", no entanto, camufla problemas não menos urgentes de desenvolvimento desigual dentro e entre as sociedades, a marginalidade política efectiva ou marginalização de significativas populações, a transferência de recursos materiais e intelectuais a favor das transacções globais em detrimento das necessidades locais, a destruição ambiental, a pressão sobre os recursos, os conflitos étnicos, a desorientação cultural, a incoerência e o crítico conflito inter-estatal. Estes problemas são amplamente reconhecidos, mas frequentemente varridos para debaixo do tapete como distorções do passado, com a promessa de resolução imanescente uma vez a crise actual terminada e as rugas sanadas. O autor sugere, inversamente, que eles são produto da incorporação dentro do sistema capitalista global, ou que foram exacerbados por ele, e as suas complicações não são apenas nacionais ou "asiáticas", mas globais. Apesar dos benefícios imediatos reconhecidos, o desenvolvimento através da incorporação no capitalismo global neoliberal lançou essas sociedades em caminhos que não são mais sustentáveis na "Ásia" do que noutras partes.

[Autor: Arif Dirlik, pp. 12-31]

**A Internacional e o Projecto do Porto de Macau de 1922-1927**

A cidade de Macau, o governador Artur Tamagnini Barbosa e o seu irmão João, em conjunto com o general Gomes da Costa e o Dr. Rodrigo Rodrigues, desempenharam o papel de maior relevância nos movimentos políticos globais jamais relatado. Era um papel que claramente ligava a mudança revolucionária em Portugal à evolução de Macau e Sul da China. O general Gomes da Costa e o Dr. Rodrigues representavam extremos opostos do ponto de vista político português, quando ambos foram destacados para Macau de 1922-1924. Rodrigues veio como governador; Gomes da Costa como chefe de uma missão militar para o Extremo Oriente. Rodrigues chegou para facilitar a construção do projecto do Porto Exterior de Macau, quando simultaneamente Sun Yat Sen construía o KMT e dava corpo ao Exército Revolucionário em Cantão com a assistência do Comintern. O general Gomes da Costa voltaria a Portugal em Maio de 1924 e, dentro de 24, meses liderava o lendário golpe de 28 de Maio de 1926 que iria derrubar a Primeira República Portuguesa e inaugurar 48 anos de um regime de partido único, sob Salazar. Este artigo explana a razão pela qual dois adversários políticos foram simultaneamente enviados para Macau.

Dr. Rodrigo Rodrigues, adepto de longa data do Partido Democrático esquerdista de Afonso Costa, era chefe do sistema penal Português quando o novo governo republicano implementou uma campanha anti-clerical e anti-monárquica viciosa na sequência do golpe de estado de Outubro de 1910. Após o golpe militar do general Gomes em Maio de 1926, Rodrigues ficaria afastado de qualquer cargo no governo, e com o advento de Salazar em 1928, nunca mais exerceria um cargo governamental. No entanto, continuaria a publicar artigos de opinião na imprensa de Macau em língua portuguesa até à sua morte, em 1960. [Autor: Paul Spooner, pp. 32-43]

**Clandestinidade e Controle: O Congresso de Macau do Partido Comunista da Indochina (27-31 de Março, 1935)**

Sem dúvida, as organizações clandestinas têm uma longa história em Macau, se pensarmos em proto-republicanos e maçónicos na era da monarquia, associações e triádes na tradição chinesa, e o tema deste artigo, os comunistas ocultos, não chineses, mas vietnamitas. Assim como a clandestinidade pode ser definida como a qualidade ou estado de sigilo ou furtividade do controle ou vigilância, a fim de alcançar as metas, por vezes ilícitas, a derradeira Macau colonial oferecia um espaço liminar. Aparentemente desconhecidos das autoridades portuguesas, os comunistas vietnamitas escolheram este local para realizar a primeira conferência nacional do recém-formado Partido Comunista da Indochina e trazer a Macau um verdadeiro "quem é quem" da primeira geração dos líderes comunistas vietnamitas e das minorias étnicas. No entanto, não obstante o carácter clandestino da organização, os códigos de sigilo, uso de pseudónimos, etc, foram comprometidos e penetrados, não pelas autoridades salazaristas mas pelos franceses. Este artigo visa oferecer algumas verdades sobre clandestinidade como um tropo, as organizações clandestinas no final da Macau colonial, a ligação transitória entre o Vietname e Macau como sinalizado pelo encontro de delegados da conferência, a questão ainda contemporânea de extradição de casos políticos e o Congresso do Partido Comunista da Indochina em si.

[Autor: Geoffrey C. Gunn, pp. 44-57]

**Identidade de Macau, os Chineses e Outros Grupos. Uma Década Após o Retorno à China**

A identidade é um conceito chave no século XXI. A Região Administrativa Especial de Macau (RAEM) tem uma identidade única. Com base numa longa pesquisa entre 1995 e 2012, a definição da identidade dos chineses de Macau e outros residentes da RAEM