

Introduction

ANA CRISTINA ALVES*, CARMEN AMADO MENDES**

This special column on Traditional Chinese Medicine is a collaboration between the *Review of Culture* and the Macau Scientific and Cultural Centre in Lisbon. It contains five papers that focus on Traditional Chinese Medicine. The authors are scholars from several universities in Portugal and China, and each of them sheds light on contemporary topics regarding the theory, principles and philosophy of Chinese Medicine.

Currently, the topic of healthy living has gained considerable significance. A healthy lifestyle appears to fill the cultural void existing in both the East and the West, leading to intercultural encounters and to the search for philosophies where the body and well-being prevail, as it happens in Chinese civilisation through Traditional Chinese Medicine.

These papers originate from the programme of Spring Conferences organised by the Macau Scientific and Cultural Centre in 2022, where Traditional Chinese Medicine specialists shared their thoughts about the field in Macao, China and other Asian countries. Since the speakers were from different countries, the conference presentations were given in various languages, but mainly in Portuguese and English.

This column starts with “Chinese Health Culture in the Studies of Macao’s Contemporary Sinology” by Dr. Ana Cristina Alves. In this essay, the intersection of knowledge concerns China in the 21st century, particularly Macao, and is related to a philosophy for health in which emotional intelligence plays a key role. The relationship between Sinology and Traditional Chinese Medicine in Macao’s history and contemporary times is analysed by studying the works of Luís Gonzaga Gomes, Leonel Barros, Cecília Jorge and Beltrão Coelho, with a conclusion of Macao’s contribution to the construction of a philosophy for health at the level of education, in partnership with the Chinese silk road of health.

The second paper “Convivência ou Observação? Repensar a Filosofia da Paisagem e a sua Dimensão Terapêutica com François Jullien e o Pensamento Chinês” by Paulo Borges, focuses on how philosopher François Jullien rethinks the meaning of the Philosophy of the Landscape and how this experience opens the way for a health therapy based on a holistic experience of integrity, distanced from a Western European paradigm of subject–object visual separation. The beneficial effect of connecting through *Qi* — the vital breath energy, and immersion in the landscape, has a

* Ana Cristina Alves, Ph.D. in Philosophy of Culture, Religion and History from the University of Lisbon. She is coordinator of Educational Service at the Macau Scientific and Cultural Centre in Lisbon. She is also the author of a series of works on the themes of philosophy, culture, language and translation.

Ana Cristina Alves, doutorada em Filosofia da História, da Cultura e da Religião pela Universidade de Lisboa. É coordenadora do Serviço Educativo no Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau em Lisboa. É também autora de várias obras sobre filosofia, cultura, língua e tradução.

** Carmen Amado Mendes, Ph.D. in Political Studies from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. Currently, she is an associate professor with tenure at the University of Coimbra and president of the Macau Scientific and Cultural Centre in Lisbon.

Carmen Amado Mendes, doutorada em estudos políticos pela School of Oriental and African Studies da Universidade de Londres. Actualmente, é professora associada, com agregação da Universidade de Coimbra e presidente do Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, em Lisboa.

similar therapeutic effect to the breathing exercises of traditional Chinese culture and particularly Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).

The third paper, titled “WHO ICD-11 Implications for TCM Diagnosis Experience of the Traditional Chinese Medicine School of Lisbon” by José Faro and Ana Varela, deals with traditional medicine, particularly TCM and its relation to the World Health Organization (WHO). Since the eleventh revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11), the WHO started to seek a better integration for TCM diagnosis and its acceptance by the national health systems. The authors analyse how important the syndrome differentiation is to TCM diagnosis and treatment, also its impact on clinical practice, research and appropriate use of the ICD-11’s codes which function as, according to Faro and Varela, ‘the common informational language of diagnosis in different areas of health and the reference for WHO’s national health and insurance systems guidelines.’ In their conclusion, the authors point out the need for unified criteria for syndromes, symptoms and signs, by TCM practitioners.

The fourth paper is written by Simon Ming Yuen Lee and Ai-hua Lin, titled “Scientific Insights into Ginseng”, provides a careful presentation of three species of Ginseng, and the phylogenetic relations among Asian Ginseng (*Panax ginseng*), American Ginseng (*Panax quinquefolium* L.) and Chinese Ginseng (*Panax notoginseng*). The last-mentioned is only cultivated in Wenshan Prefecture in Yunnan Province. The paper itemises the benefits of *Panax notoginseng* (Sanqi Ginseng), which is popular in China and is used in TCM, food production and pharmaceutical, for its huge impact on cardiovascular diseases. The authors also present the discovery of ginsenosides, which has a wide range of therapeutic effects and they conclude with an appeal for the need to preserve this unique plant, which is being endangered by long-term domestic cultivation.

The last paper comes from a presentation of a new programme — *Science Matters* (Scimat), titled “The Scimat Program: A China–Portugal Project” by Maria Burguete. This Project is a cooperation between Portugal and China, represented by Maria Burguete in Portugal and Lui Lam in China. The Scimat Project started in 2007, holds several International Science Matters Conferences and constitutes the Science Matters Series of publications in a second stage. The project presents an entirely new way of thinking, based on innovation, interconnection and adaptability, to different cultural perspectives in this ever-changing world. This programme provides the students with a new way of thinking through adaptation and understanding of the importance of a multidisciplinary approach to the world and the opening to many scientific fields, a prime example being TCM, which provides a unified perspective for the disciplines of the Humanities and Arts, and Social and Medical Sciences.

The topics discussed in this special column converge on the need for an intercultural approach where the West meets the East in scientific fields, such as Medical Sciences, Pharmacy and Chemistry, bringing great success to both medical treatment and philosophical approaches. Nowadays, in terms of promoting Traditional Chinese Medicine as a well-developed cultural construction of Chinese soft power with strong roots in Chinese history and civilisation, no place is left behind, neither Macao nor Hong Kong. 

