

The *Echo Macaense* Journey: A Newspaper Calling for Collaborative Action — An Introduction

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Macao has a long tradition of the printing press, starting in the 16th century, with the editing of a Chinese-written book by the Jesuits. Since then, Macao has maintained the ability to print, and in 1822, Macao had the first newspaper, *A Abelha da China*, with modern characteristics. It was a Portuguese-language newspaper printed in Macao that focused on Macanese political and social situation. It aimed to have a Macao-based administration without dependence on Portuguese India (where the colonial power was centralised) and to implement liberal political orientations in the territory. Moreover, until the establishment of Hong Kong, Macao was a cosmopolitan territory where foreigners chose to live. Traders, religious people, and travellers stayed in Macao to gain access to the Chinese hinterland. Macao's periodical press also gives evidence of this Macanese role concerning Western communities. *The Canton Register*, delivered for the first time in 1827, became the most ancient English newspaper in Asia.

The coexistence between different communities gave rise to a multilingual environment. Although the official languages for documents were Portuguese and Chinese, the convergence of many nationalities in such a tiny territory gave birth to periodical publications in different languages

(mainly Portuguese, Chinese, and English), which are maintained today. This uniqueness of Macao is reflected in all aspects of the territory's life, including the periodical press. The coexistence of different peoples was also a challenge for the territory's Portuguese administration, which had to deal with several political agreements inside the territory. It was clear to local elites who represented the Macanese, Portuguese, and Chinese communities that Macao should be considered a power unit inside the Portuguese Empire. Consequently, it should have a robust local administration, although integrated into an empire driven from Lisbon.

Macao's political ambition has been expressed since the first local newspaper, *A Abelha da China*, appeared in 1822, the first modern newspaper in Asia.¹ *A Abelha da China* tried to build a Macanese perspective for local governance, involving the representatives of society's military, political, economic and religious sectors. The newspaper's main characteristics are similar to the ones of the newspapers created in colonial territories. The newspaper connected with the local public sphere, and, at the same time, it aimed to integrate a broader public sphere inside the Portuguese Empire.² The claims for local administration, more friendly duties to enlarge trade relations, and a progressive society

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constituted the pillars of this kind of periodical press. *A Abelha da China*, just like other newspapers in territories under foreign administration, fosters a dialogue between the local public sphere and power, and it also allows the territory to raise a dialogue with territories outside the Portuguese Empire.³

Although building up a local identity, the periodical press of territories under foreign administration also contributed to creating an imperial idea based on the news circulating inside the empire and the discourse addressing the central administrative powers.⁴ In this paradoxical tension between local identities and the circulating identities in the empires, a common communicational space is constructed, gathering the local public sphere within and beyond the imperial public spheres.⁵ Therefore, the periodical press either supports or challenges the foreign administrative powers, looking for local integration in political decisions.

In the case of Macao, the periodical press in each language thrived independently, without any communication or interaction. The exchange of ideas and intellectual diversity were the result of Macanese social and economic activities and the periodical press in each language. Macanese people were skilled communicators who were able to bridge the gap between different communities and cultures.

In the last quarter of the 19th century, elites living in Macao started to discuss new political ideas, such as republicanism. In China and Portugal, these ideas transformed into new social and political movements, and in Portugal, there was a republican *coup d'état* attempt in January 1893. New times brought new challenges to Macao. The establishment of Hong Kong after the Opium Wars resulted in Macao losing its role in Western trade with China. Consequently, there was an exodus from the Macanese skilled population to Hong Kong. Many of them went there to mediate as translators the relationship between the British

power and administration and the Chinese population. Therefore, it was common to find Macanese working as public servants or being hired to deliver specific services. The Macanese became a diaspora representing this mix of cultures, being resilient to the European and Chinese sides when demanding a specific identity.

The demographic and economic changes in the territory created new anxieties and prepared it to receive new ideologies. Newspapers increased their relevance in political debate, and the combination of journalists, intellectuals, and social elites entailed a new process of influencing political power. Scientific knowledge, technological abilities, legal expertise and cultural sensibility are used to connect with the public sphere and produce a local discourse. Newspapers contribute to literary and scientific culture, and newspaper directors choose culture and science to attract readers to public discussion.⁶ So, newspapers democratised scientific and cultural knowledge while trying to influence political power through the public sphere. The periodical press in territories such as Macao had an additional task. They had to participate in a more globalised world dominated by Western institutions and cultural knowledge and simultaneously claim a space for local elites. Their role was to revert the power relations inside a power system that considered them secondary characters from a waiting society, depending on their foreign orientations.⁷

Macanese periodical press waited until 1893 to have the first bilingual newspaper, *Echo Macaense*, which represented a common project between the Macanese and the Chinese communities, having the collaboration of some Portuguese living in Macao. The *Echo Macaense* was more than a bilingual newspaper. It represented a sino-lusophone project, bringing together communities and trying to deliver orientations relating Macao's issues to the Portuguese administration. Although it was not the

ESTUDOS DA IMPRENSA PERIÓDICA

first periodical project in both languages because the *Boletim Oficial de Macau* was bilingual since 1879, it was the first private periodical press project using both languages.

This section begins with an examination of the *Echo Macaense*, a publication created by the elite, and its role in Macanese society by Tereza Sena. Readers then learn about the significance of the *Echo Macaense* as a 19th-century newspaper from the paper by Lurdes Escaleira and Jorge Bruxo. The following article, by Lam Iok Fong and Wong Hio Iong, discusses the first Macanese newspaper, *A Abelha da China*, and its innovative role in expressing Macanese identity and the need

for a strong local administration to serve Macao's interests. The next article delves into the reception of the *Echo Macaense* in Lisbon by a Portuguese republican newspaper, written by Célia Reis.

The periodical press is a significant tool for researching politics and society, and the *Echo Macaense* represents a shifting moment in Macao's society. The changes Macao went through after the Hong Kong establishment, the rise of new political ideologies, a new perspective on colonial/foreign administration, and the fact that the *Echo Macaense* is the first and almost unique common project between communities to the public sphere make it a relevant yet understudied object. **RC**



Fig. 1: *Impressio Librorum* (Book Printing), plate 4 from *Nova Reperta* (New Inventions of Modern Times), c. 1580–1605, engraving by Theodoor Galle after a drawing by Jan van der Straet, c. 1550. Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum; photograph, J.R. Freeman & Co. Ltd.

NOTES

- 1 Cátia Miriam Costa, “*A Abelha da China*: A Apropriação Macaense do Discurso Político,” in *A Abelha da China nos Seus 200 Anos: Casos, Personagens e Confrontos na Experiência Liberal de Macau*, ed. Hugo Pinto and Duarte Drumond Braga (Lisboa: Centro Científico e Cultural de Macau, 2022), 23–36.
- 2 Stephanie Newell, “Paradoxes of Press Freedom in Colonial West Africa,” *Media History* 22, no. 1 (2016): 101–122, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688804.2015.1084870>.
- 3 Richard L. Merritt, “Public Opinion in Colonial America: Content Analyzing the Colonial Press,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (Fall 1963): 356–371, <https://doi.org/10.1086/267181>.
- 4 Christopher Holdridge, “Circulating the *African Journal*: The Colonial Press and Trans-Imperial Britishness in the Mid Nineteenth-Century Cape,” *South African Historical Journal* 62, no. 3 (2010): 487–513, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02582473.2010.519898>.
- 5 Simon J. Potter, “Jingoism, Public Opinion, and the New Imperialism: Newspapers and Imperial Rivalries at the *Fin de Siècle*,” *Media History* 20, no. 1 (2014): 34–50, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688804.2013.869067>.
- 6 Cátia Miriam Costa, “Literatura nos Jornais: Democratização na Escrita e na Receção,” *Via Atlântica* 19, no. 2 (December 2018): 13–29, <https://doi.org/10.11606/va.v0i34.145780>.
- 7 Cátia Miriam Costa, “Continuidades e Descontinuidades da Colonização Portuguesa: Literatura e Jornalismo entre a Utopia e a Realidade” (PhD thesis, University of Évora, 2014).

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