

Dicionário temático de Macau

As a contributor to the *Dicionário temático de Macau* (abbreviated DITEMA), or ‘Thematic Dictionary of Macau’, I should perhaps abstain from commenting on this work, but my entries are limited to five or six short pieces, and thus negligible, while the four volumes, taken together as one set, offer so much information and, indeed, are so important to the field of study now sometimes called ‘Macaology’ that I may hopefully be forgiven for having drafted these few lines.

Roderich Ptak

Maria Antónia Espadinha et. al. (eds.) 2011-2011.
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4 volumes, with a total of 1547 pages;
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In short, this is the first major alphabetically/thematically arranged Portuguese-language compendium on diverse aspects of Macau’s past and present. It carries entries related to local and international institutions, administrative and political themes, international treaties involving the territory, besides articles on Macau’s exchange with other locations, on key enterprises, the biographies of men and women associated with this city, the Catholic Church and other religions, on temples and social institutions, trade and commerce, shipping, port facilities and communication more generally, on other infrastructural issues, geographical phenomena and the adjacent islands/regions around the Macau peninsula, on linguistic, educational and cultural aspects in the broadest sense, on the medical sector and hospitals, on Macau’s tourist industry and services, daily life and ethnic traditions, historical sources, sports, exhibitions, festivities, and dozens of other things. There is a total of circa 800 entries by circa 120 authors. The entries differ in length – from half a column to several tens of pages, depending on the importance of the topic and the weight of the sources consulted in each case. As to the latter, all entries provide lists of relevant modern and primary texts, in diverse languages. Some entries also contain useful illustrations and tables.

Contributors

Work on the DITEMA started more than a decade ago. Already in 1998, before China took over the administration of Macau, António Rodrigues Baptista pushed the idea of compiling a major dictionary of this kind. The early contributions written at that point were rather short; those added during later years are usually longer. In the course of time several of the original texts had to be translated into Portuguese. All this involved complex editorial questions many of which had to be solved by Leonor Díaz de Seabra who became the chief coordinator of the project in 2000, as Maria Antónia Espadinha (*editora executiva*) explains in her short introduction (vol. 1). Especially during the later stages of the editorial process many entries underwent revision, which was achieved through the assistance of Rui Manuel Loureiro, Wu Zhiliang and others, all specialists in the field of Macau Studies. Eventually publication became possible with the support of many helping hands; the *Fundação para a Cooperação e Desenvolvimento de Macau*, one may add, functioned as ‘patron’ of the DITEMA.

The entry on *Enciclopédias sobre Macau* – this is one of many excellent contributions provided by Jin Guoping – lists several earlier handbooks and thematic dictionaries of a similar kind, yet very different in nature. Such works already began appearing in the 1990s, but they are all in Chinese, with only two exceptions, one in English and one in German. Moreover, most of these encyclopaedic publications do not carry separate bibliographical references under each entry. The Chinese compendia, it is also true, were mostly designed to serve the needs of non-specialized Chinese readers, including politicians and businessmen. They often contain many biographies of Chinese individuals, Chinese firms and Chinese institutions associated with Macau (and/or Hong Kong), while they are less strong and less informative in all matters involving the non-Chinese side. By contrast, the DITEMA mostly seems to address a learned Western (or Iberian) readership and scholars specialized in Macau Studies. This implies a very balanced approach and, where possible, citations from and references to sources in various languages. One other feature of the relevant entries is that they usually list Chinese characters of important names and terms, along with their local Cantonese transcriptions and/or the corresponding Pinyin or Wade-Giles



versions, evidently in accordance with traditional conventions and individual preferences. Not everyone may like this liberal arrangement, but it makes sense from the viewpoint of different academic disciplines which have a share in Macau Studies.

In the context of a short and general review, it would not be very opportune, perhaps even inappropriate, to single out individual entries for an elaborate discussion. Suffice it to say that the quality of most pieces is excellent, that they contain an enormous amount of condensed information, and that what one searches for is usually easily found. There are, for example, long lists of Portuguese and Chinese office holders, which can be located rather quickly under their respective headings. Such information is very valuable for historians, who are not familiar with Chinese language material on Macau’s past. Other entries introduce constitutional and administrative issues that are often difficult to encounter in ‘ordinary’ Western works. The same may be said of certain economic and educational themes.

In many cases contributors to thematic encyclopaedias are known for their publications in a particular field of study. This also applies to the DITEMA. Rogério Miguel Puga, for example, has produced a large number of finely-researched scholarly works on the British and Macau; nearly all related entries in the present compendium bear his signature. Readers interested in such themes will be very grateful for Puga’s insightful articles, although one ought not overemphasize the Anglophone presence in this city, because we all know that both the British and Americans often treated Macau inadequately. Another author who comes out with a set of highly specialized entries is Rui D’Ávila Lourido. Lourido has mostly been working on the earlier history of Macau, trying to base himself on both European and selected Chinese sources; again, this can be seen from his many contributions to the DITEMA. The two long entries entitled *Produtos alimentares* and *Produtos medicinais e aromáticos*, both by Lourido, are particularly rich in information and very useful, indeed. Alfredo Gomes Dias provides several

Above: Part of the team at University of Macau that produced DITEMA. From left, Dr. Isabel Leonor de Seabra, Assistant Professor of Portuguese; Prof. Rui Martins, Vice Rector of Research; Prof. Maria Espadinha, Emeritus Professor of Portuguese; Ms. Cindy Lam, Head of Research and Development Administration Office. (Photo by Rui Martins, used by permission)

entries related to political treaties and different events of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. António Graça de Abreu sketches the life of Manuel Teixeira, one of Macau’s most popular historians. And of course, Abreu has also written the brief entry on D. Frei Alexandre de Gouveia. Anabela Nunes Monteiro should be mentioned as well; there are dozens of articles by her, on various topics, such as Macau’s temples. These are all interesting pieces, just as the many contributions by José Manuel Rosa Madeira. Rui Manuel Loureiro mostly took care of early Luso-Chinese contacts – as expected. But one also encounters some ‘unexpected dimensions’, for example, the entry entitled *Espionagem*, by João V. B. Guedes. Here many additional entries could be cited, each with excellent data and a highly informative character; the general impression of all these short articles, there can be no doubt, is very positive.

Treasure box

Notwithstanding, a dictionary of this calibre is never totally free of formal errors, wrong spellings, and certain contradictions. But it would not be elegant to publish a list of such shortcomings, or to point out what might be missing in terms of separate articles and themes. Rather, one should congratulate the editors and the University of Macau for bringing out this ambitious collection after so many years of investigation. The DITEMA, I may say in conclusion, is a remarkable treasure box full of valuable deposits, a wonderful academic tool that many scholars and teachers will enjoy consulting. Or, to put it differently, it is a work that libraries with a focus on the Far East, as well as private individuals interested in South China and Euro-Chinese relations more generally, should have on their shelves.

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