

China–Spain relations during the Transition Period (1976–1982)

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I. Introduction

The establishment of diplomatic relations between Spain and the People's Republic of China in 1973 was a transcendental event for bilateral relations. After Franco's and Mao's death, both countries, respectively, also underwent major changes in their domestic sphere, resulting from the changes in their internal situation. In the post-Franco era, Spain was searching for a balance between "following Franco's line in diplomacy" and "expanding the international space", whilst mainland China was realizing an important turning point to its foreign policy, from an "Anti-hegemony International Front" to "casting aside the ideological fight and procuring a peaceful environment". Deng Xiaoping's Reform and Open Up policy would allow China to return to the path towards modernization, as a consequence from implementing a pragmatic style foreign policy. In the following article, the period from 1976 to 1982 has been selected, a period of "transition" for both countries, in order to have a general perspective of the links that the relationship between Spain and China have experimented, it will point out the following aspects: the visit of the Spanish royals to China, as a "key point" in the official communications; the high profile visits during the Spanish Transition; exchanges in other domains and non-official political relations.

The Spanish Royals' visit to China

Nearly five years on from the establishment of diplomatic ties, another memorable event took place in the official political relations of both countries during the 70s: the visit of the king and queen to China, a historic trip and a moment in the Asian turn that occurred in June of 1978. That trip was organised due to two main reasons: on the one hand, the interest that Spain aroused in the Chinese leaders, and also the curiosity that a distant country, so unbeknownst to most of Spaniards, provoked in Spain; on the other hand, it coincided with the strong resolution the new monarch had in strengthening the presence of Spain in the international order and explaining the characteristics of the emerging democracy in the country¹. The delegation stayed in China for six days. The Spanish ambassador to China, Eugenio Bregolat, in his second book has discussed the undoubted significance of this royal trip, that "there is a consensus that Spain has arrived late to China, but Don Juan Carlos and Doña Sofía had not been late, since they were the first monarchs to visit Deng Xiaoping's China²", such affirmation has been approved by the Chinese officials who received the official guests. Also, this visit precisely took place at a historical moment when both China and Spain found themselves in a new historical period.

According to what former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Marcelino Oreja, reveals us in his book, it was king Juan Carlos I who took the initiative because long ago he had already spoke with Oreja about the

¹See Morena Calvet, Felipe de la, *Deng Xiaoping y el comienzo de la China actual. Recuerdos de un testigo*, Editorial Cuadernos del Laberinto, Madrid, 2016, p.205.

²See Bregolat, Eugenio, *En torno al renacimiento de China*, Editorial Universidad de Lleida, Lleida, 2014, p.315.

convenience of visiting China³. The Spanish king's official trip purpose was not limited to the political sphere of offering an "open" image abroad, but rather was more inclined to economic and trade motives.

1.1. The Spanish royals arrive to Beijing

The delegation was formed by, first, the official entourage which included the prominent figures of the Spanish cabinet: Marcelino Oreja Aguirre, minister of Foreign Affairs; José Ramón Sobredo, ambassador of Spain in Beijing; Marqués de Mondéjar, head of HM King's House; Máximo Cajal López, general director of the Diplomatic Information Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Felipe de la Morena, plenipotentiary minister, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and more.⁴

Felipe de la Morena confirms us that, based on the aim of making public to the Spanish public opinion the importance of the royal visit, they also had an operations group of journalists and correspondents of all media circles (Morena Calvet, 2016: 205-206). According to the chronicle of Gutierrez Alarcón, in the press sector, the heads of the top influential journals in Spain also came along, such as *Pueblo*, *Informaciones*, *Abc*, *Arriba*, *Diario 16*, *El País*, etc. It should be noted that much of the regional press were also on the delegation's list, a novel aspect that reflected the improved situation of democratization in Spain.

The plane "Sorolla", with its first trajectory of Madrid-Beijing, arrived at the Chinese capital on the 16th of June 1978. In this historic trip, the Spanish royals were received in a remarkably warm welcome with "*the highest honours*", as amongst the Chinese political leaders who attended the welcoming ceremony were: Hua Guofeng, president of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and premier of the State Council; the world-famous Deng Xiaoping, back then vice premier Minister of the State Council and future leader of China, considered the "architect of China's Reform and Opening Up Policy"; amongst others. A Chinese style welcome surprised the European guests due to the expressions full of enthusiasm. The words of Demeterio Gutierrez would constitute the best description of this sensation: "*Never has any people – we have already expressed it but have no inconvenience in repeating it – given such a jubilant welcome to Don Juan Carlos and Doña Sofía. Neither in Spain, nor abroad.*" The welcoming scene served to break the prejudice about communism from the representatives of a capitalist state.

1.2. Foreign Policy propaganda and exchange of ideas

After the visit to Mao Zedong's mausoleum, an emblematic place for China then, they visited the People's Palace for a work meeting where some members of superior category in the Spanish delegation: Don Juan Carlos, Marcelino Oreja, Carlos Bustelo, the vicesecretary of Commerce; several general directors, as well as, Jaime de Ojeda, the coordinator of this trip (Oreja Aguirre, 2011: 256). In his *Memoirs*, minister Oreja leaves us a detailed description of his peculiar experience, when at the request of Deng Xiaoping and the king's invitation, he explained the monarch's role in the transition process in Spain and described the general guidelines for Spain's foreign policy.

The impression of Deng Xiaoping, in the eyes of the Spaniards gathered, was always one of a man with "*accurate and rigorous*" interventions; in such way, he concluded the session after delivering some words of gratitude. The formal dinner offered by the Chinese government turned itself into another occasion where each part could present their foreign policy. King Juan Carlos I delivered a great speech expressing his concern over the serious tensions between the great powers, Spain's position towards decolonization and its support for the self-determinations of indigenous peoples. Meanwhile, Deng Xiaoping talked about the history of struggle against foreign aggressions, both in Spain and China. In the diplomatic field, a turning point in the perspective of foreign policy was being envisaged after the Cultural Revolution and China, by the end of the 70s, was

³See Oreja Aguirre, Marcelino, *Memoria y esperanza. Relatos de una vida*. Editorial La Esfera de los Libros, Madrid, 2011, p.252.

⁴See Gutiérrez Alarcón, Demeterio, *Crónica del histórico viaje de los Reyes de España a China*, El poder amarillo del año 2000, Barcelona, Luis de Caralt Editor S.A., 1978, pp.237-238.

leaving behind the orbit of ideological struggle and the creation of a symbolic image and instead was gradually focusing on promoting a development that would really improve the national situation.

1.3. Good sino-hispanic image and friendship during the trip

The Spanish royals visited historic sites in Beijing, Hangzhou and Shanghai, it was a trip where “the seeds of good friendship were sowed”, as the Chinese old saying goes. Throughout all the itinerary, the Spanish royals were leaving a very positive image of “sympathy, humanity and naturalness”, traits that managed to surprise both the Chinese and the Spanish journalists who accompanied them on their trip.

Due to the significance of the historic trip of Don Juan Carlos and doña Sofía, in the Chinese newspapers, a series of records of the event was elaborated. The *Renmin Ribao*, *The People's Daily* in its English literary translation, the most read journal in the country, the 15th of June it already began covering the news about the prompt visit of the Spanish delegation, revealing the main members of the group⁵; the 16th of June the front page included three columns about the imminent arrival of the Spanish royals. The *Renmin Ribao* of the 17th and 18th of June 1978 vividly covered the news of the arrival of the royals at Beijing's airport and the visit to Mao Zedong's Mausoleum⁶, the conversations held between the ministers concerning political and trade matters, the itinerary of the royals, the mass at Nan Tang's Church and the “heroic” tour of the Great Wall, etc.

1.4. The culminating moment: Deng Xiaoping's and King Juan Carlos' speeches

The national banquet in honour of the royals and the Spanish delegation took place in the Great Palace of the People, the biggest one of Beijing which, according to Spanish journalists, was “the largest ever seen before”, with a total of over five hundred dinner guests invited. As it is known from Chinese philosophy, the concept of “dimension” is very important. Halfway through the banquet, Deng Xiaoping delivered a speech emphasizing the praise to Spain for “maintaining neutrality” and “the non-acceptance of interference and external pressures.” When he repeated the theory of guerrilla warfare, he caught the Spanish audience by surprise with his special quote that: “*guerrilla warfare is a term created by the Spanish people* (Gutiérrez Alarcón, 1978: 202)”. Deng insisted on the importance of the “Second World”, the security of Europe and the integration of Spain in the European Single Market, emphasizing the importance of the European unification for the fight against the policy of aggression and the war of superpowers and recalling the audience that “*His Majesty the king has expressed in repeated occasions that Spain cannot be outside the European Union*”. In this aspect, one could feel the great synchronicity of the political leaders of both sides in the search of possibilities so that their country could integrate into the international system. Afterwards, Juan Carlos took the lead, whose description of a “Third Worldly” China/foreign policy matched with the general guidelines of the foreign policy of the People's Republic of China. The Spanish king also noted that both governments agreed upon many general guidelines in foreign policy.

Another success in the trip was the signing of treaties concerning trade and air transport. The catalogue *China-Spain's*⁷, published by the Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, page 49 includes a photograph of Marcelino Oreja and his Chinese counterpart, Huang Hua, signing the Agreement on Civilian Air Transport between Spain and China the 22nd of June 1978.

The first trip of the royals to China marked a milestone in official bilateral communications in drastically different situations too the previous one (which previous one?) (Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2007: 5). Another success of the trip was acquiring a more direct and authentic

⁵See *Renmin Ribao* (*People's Daily*), the original Chinese version has the link: <http://www.ziliaoku.org/rmrb/1978-06-15-5#502974>

⁶*Ibidem*, p. 122. Also see the original news in *Renmin Ribao* with the following link: <http://www.ziliaoku.org/rmrb/1978-06-17-4#503037>

⁷See 中国新闻办公室编, 《中国—西班牙》, 五洲传播出版社, 北京, 2007年1月, Drafted by: Information Office of the State Council of the PRC, *China-España*, Chinese Intercontinental Press, Beijing, enero de 2007.

mutual understanding between both countries. This experience helped to establish areal closeness between two geographically distant worlds, which surprisingly possessed a lot in common, and who at least shared many common positions in foreign policy, given that back in 1978, both Spain and China had similar interests in national development and international relations.

II. High-level bilateral communications from 1979 to 1982

Looking at the China-Spain relations after the sovereigns trip to China, it is worth noting the following high-level visits: from the Chinese side, vice minister Gu Wu's visit in April 1981; the foreign affairs minister and also the state affairs counsellor, Huang Hua, in June 1982; from the Spanish side, the arrival of the new Spanish ambassador, Felipe de la Morena Calvet, in October 1978; the Counts of Barcelona visit to Beijing in 1979, when they were welcomed by Deng Xiaoping with a distinguished formality since they were the king's parents; and the minister of trade, José Antonio García Díez, visiting in March 1980.

2.1. New Spanish ambassador in Beijing: Felipe de la Morena Calvet

In his recently published memoirs, *Deng Xiaoping and the Emergence of Contemporary China: Memoirs of a Witness*, ambassador Felipe de la Morena Calvet reveals us that he was assigned the position in Beijing when he was in the Spanish embassy in Lisbon, and he was told that he would be “*the first ambassador named by the king to China* (Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2007: 9)”. In fact, Felipe de la Morena was really a key person for the Chinese-Hispanic relations, if we recall that he was the person responsible for the negotiations with a Chinese representant to establish official ties between both governments; he accompanied the royals in their official visit to China, precisely a few months before his arrival as new ambassador to Beijing. The 4th of October, Felipe de la Morena landed in Beijing. Only a week after, he proceeded to the handover of his credentials. According the “gesture politics” applied in Chinese protocol, this extraordinary quickness was a demonstration of the sympathy and friendship both to Felipe de la Morena in person and to the Spanish king who had conducted a successful visit.

During the four years as head of the Spanish diplomatic seat in Beijing, the ambassador had witnessed many major changes in China: the consolidation of Deng Xiaoping's leadership, the transformation of the orientation with the “four modernizations”. The initial phase of a policy of “reforms and opening-up”, the establishment of diplomatic relations with the United States at the beginning of 1979, the Vietnam War, the transcendental Sixth Plenary Session of the XI Congress in 1982, amongst others. The 21st of September 1982, he completed his diplomatic mission in the People's Republic of China.

2.2. The visit of the Counts of Barcelona to China

Although the trip of the Count of Barcelona and his wife to China in May of 1979 was not an official trip, that did not prevent it from being granted a special significance by Beijing, because the Count was related with the Spanish king. Therefore, to the Chinese, it would be a continuation of the interest of the Spanish crown in the oriental country (Morena Calvet, 2016: 217). For the same reason, the answer sent forth by *Zhongnanhai* in reply to the expressed interest was immediate, the next day “superordinate instructions” were already given to inform about the “satisfaction of the Chinese government for that trip”. The attitude was very positive, and the Chinese part which was in charge of the organization was the Chinese People's Institute for Foreign Relations and was willing to welcome Don Juan and Doña María in an extended stay to the one originally proposed.

It would not be hard to imagine, for China, a country where the Confucian tradition of the seniority of a father towards his son is noted, that receiving the Spanish king's father would be an honour in a certain sense as significant as receiving the king himself. When we recall the success achieved by Juan Carlos I's trip the year before, it would seem reasonable that Beijing granted a “warm welcome” to the marriage of the Counts of Barcelona. Approximately three-hundred Chinese leaders attended the welcoming ceremony, the attendance of the representants of the highest spheres of the Chinese state, had inspired a profound respect in both Don Juan and Doña María.

In the reception act, apart from receiving the Spanish guests, Deng Xiaoping explained in detail China's politics: the modernization project, the "four modernizations" and their objectives; he also spoke to XX about the situation of lagging behind that China has been suffering from in previous decades. Regarding the reform policy, Deng affirmed that positive results would appear in 10 years' time. Whereas regarding international relations, Deng insisted on the great necessity of increasing the bilateral exchanges between China and Spain, to which he offered his personal endorsement. He confirmed that he was closely following the events in Spanish politics. He emphasised his wish to see a "united and strong" Europe, where Spain's presence was essential.

In the front page of *Renmin Ribao* of the 15th of May 1979, the news announcing the arrival and welcoming were published.⁸ The visit of the Barcelona Counts to China, in Beijing's eyes, was considered positively as a continuation of the interest of the Spanish crown for the Asian country, in the same way, it was another occasion to ratify the appreciation Chinese leaders have towards Spain. This trip, along with the king's trip the previous year, specially contributed to the closeness in the bilateral relationship.

2.3. Other official visits between 1979-1982

Four months after the visit of the Counts of Barcelona, Beijing was on the eve of the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the People's Republic of China. King Juan Carlos I sent a congratulating telegram to Mr. Ye Jiaying, the then president of the National People's Congress, to send forth, on behalf of the Spanish government and people, the best wishes for all the Chinese people.⁹

The 17th of March 1980, the Spanish minister of commerce, José Antonio García Díez, travelled to Beijing accompanied by a group of Spanish businessmen. The main aim of this visit was to endorse and give visibility to the Commercial Office of the Spanish Embassy, which was created a few months ago, with the appointment of María Pérez Ribes as the first Spanish commercial counsel in China (Morena Calvet, 2016: 219). It was an excellent occasion, both for minister García Díez and for group's Spanish businessmen, of appreciating the new open business perspectives following the China's economic reforms. On the news published by the official press of Beijing, we learn that the Chinese authorities which had interviews with Mr. García Díez were, in order of succession: Li Qiang, China's foreign trade minister¹⁰; Yao Yilin, then vice premier¹¹.

Between the 6th and 10th of April 1981, the vice premier, Gu Mu, made an official visit to Spain. He was interviewed, in order of succession, with the Spanish prime minister, Calvo Sotelo, and the foreign affairs minister, Pedro Pérez-Llorca. The first agreement on cultural cooperation was signed for an initial period of five years. Consequently, Spain and China would promote exchanges and collaborations in research, academic matters, artistic and sport activities, as well as reciprocal scholarship programmes, etc.¹² In the catalogue of the

⁸See "El vice-primer ministro Deng se entrevista con los padres de los reyes españoles y les expresa el deseo de recibir más visitas de los amigos españoles para promover el conocimiento mutuo y la amistad", en *Renmin Ribao*, on 15th May 1979, page 1, web link: <http://www.ziliaoku.org/rmrb/1979-05-15-1#516429>, last date visited: 2nd December 2016.

⁹ See "El telegrama de felicidad del rey de España", on *Renmin Ribao*, 2nd October 1979, page 6, web link: <http://www.ziliaoku.org/rmrb/1979-10-02-6#523044>, last date visited: 2nd April 2017.

¹⁰See "Li Qiang se entrevistó con el ministro de comercio y turismo de España", en *Renmin Ribao*, 19th March 1980, page 4, web link: <http://www.ziliaoku.org/rmrb/1980-03-19-4#534146>, last date visited: 22nd April 2017. The original Chinese title of the news article is: 《李强同西班牙商业和旅游大臣会谈》.

¹¹See "Yao Yilin se entrevistó con el ministro de comercio y turismo de España", on *Renmin Ribao*, 21st March 1980, p.4, web link: <http://www.ziliaoku.org/rmrb/1980-03-21-4#534299>, last date visited: 22nd April 2017. The original Chinese title of the news article is: 《姚依林会见西班牙商业旅游大臣》.

¹²See "Nuestro País firmó el primer convenio cultural con España", on *Renmin Ribao*, 9th April 1981, page 6, web link: <http://www.ziliaoku.org/rmrb/1981-04-09-6#563823>, last date visited: 3rd April 2017. The original Chinese title of the news article is: 《我国和西班牙签署第一个文化协定》.

Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, the photographs of the event are presented (Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2007: 10). During the visit of Madrid's city government, Mr. Gu received the "golden key" of Madrid handed over by the mayor. Ambassador Felipe de la Morena noted in his memoirs that Mr. Gu was "surprised by the economic and industrial potential of Spain and convinced of the necessity to add us to the list of European countries, with whom China had to count on in the economic terrain (Morena Calvet, 2016: 220)".

By the end of June 1982, Mr. Huang Hua, the signatory of the agreement of cooperation between China and Spain during the royals visit in 1978, visited Spain and stayed in Madrid for three days. Mr. Huang was the first Chinese foreign office minister to be received by Spain. At that moment, he also occupied another important post in the Chinese political structure: state affairs councilor. The 30th of June, king Juan Carlos I held an interview with Huang Hua'en at the Royal Palace of Madrid (Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2007: 11).

III. Non-political sino-hispanic relations between 1976-1982

The establishment of diplomatic relations between Spain and the People's Republic of China in 1973, apart from being a political event, also had an impact on the other spheres in the bilateral relationship. In this aspect, this became more evident from 1876 onwards, after Franco's and Mao's deaths. It must be noted that those years were a very important period for sino-hispanic relations, if considered from a long-term perspective, since both governments not only underwent through significant changes in their respective political systems, but their foreign policy also experienced a great turning point. Moreover, the considerations and reactions manifested would not bear its fruits immediately, but rather in the long term. After all, bilateral communications in distinct aspects have never experienced a standstill. We agree with such a reflection and, following this line of argument, in the next pages we will succinctly point out the economic, cultural and social relations between both countries.

3.1. Economic ties

In 1978 two events favored the trade links between China and Spain: first, the then European Economic Community and the Asian country signed the first trade agreement, by which the treatment of "most favoured nation" was bestowed¹³; second, the visit of the Spanish royals to China, where bilateral cooperation treaties were signed the 19th of June 1978: *Bilateral Trade Agreements between China and Spain, Registry and Trademark Protection Agreement and Civilian Air Transport Agreement*¹⁴. These signed documents, as one main success which was achieved during the royal visit of Spain, settled the initial foundations for trade relations in the future.

The following year, at the Spanish Congress of Deputies, a debate was carried out and finally the trade treaty between the Kingdom of Spain and the People's Republic of China was authorized. As reference for further information, there is the original document of the parliamentary session of the 27th of July 1979¹⁵. The same year the agreement was authorized, the bilateral trade volume ascended to 100 million dollars¹⁶.

¹³See Giner Pérez, Graciela, *Apertura y reforma económica en China: un marco interpretativo de la inversión extranjera*, doctoral thesis of the University of Alicante, Alicante, 2000, p.29.

¹³*Ibidem.*, p.31.

¹⁴*Ibidem.*, p.31.

¹⁵See http://www.congreso.es/public_oficiales/L1/CONG/DS/PL/PL_026.PDF, fecha de la última consulta: 3 de enero de 2017, also, the audio document in mp3, with speakers: Yáñez-Barnuevo García, Luis (GS):

http://www.congreso.es/wc/wc/escucharAudio?legislatura=Legislatura_I&carpeta=Iniciativas&descargar=01_000400_1979_0727_02_110000007.mp3, last date visited: 3rd January 2017;

http://www.congreso.es/portal/page/portal/Congreso/GenericPopUp?next_page=/wc/escucharAudio?legislatura=Legislatura_I&carpeta=Iniciativas&idIntervencion=684&tipo=I last date visited: 3rd January 2017.

¹⁶See Zhang, Min, "Nueva perspectiva de relaciones comerciales entre China y España", on Chinese Academy of Social Sciences website, 1st February 2009, web link: <http://ies.cass.cn/Article/cbw/zogx/200902/1086.asp>, last day visited: 8th September 2014.

As previously stated, Spain has always granted a special importance to trade in the bilateral relationship with China. Ambassador Felipe de la Morena reveals that during his tenure in Beijing, he attempted to promote the shipyard, iron, chemical and energy (mainly coal and petrol) sectors, as well as the fishing and small and medium sized industries (Morena Calvet, 2016: 219). Thanks to his efforts, Spanish delegations from INI, SERCOBE, CEOE, FOCOES, HISPANOIL, etc. arrived at Beijing. Of course, Spain had also received Chinese delegations from those same sectors.

Guangzhou fairs continued being an unbeatable occasion for the mutual acquaintance between Chinese and Spanish traders; the official *Catalogue* of Sino-Hispanic relations includes some photographs from the autumn's meeting of 1977 (Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 200: 48-50). In Felipe de la Morena's book another fact is mentioned: 110 Spanish companies attended the spring Guangzhou's Fair (Morena Calvet, 2016: 219), which took place in May 1980, which at that time required a significant effort by the Spanish companies. Marcelo Muñoz, the famous *pioneer* of Spanish businessmen in China, arrived to this distant country in 1978, and one year later, he established the first Spanish company exclusively dedicated to the Chinese market. Four years later, ALSA arrived; two years later, the Banco Exterior. This experience is recorded in *IberChina's* interview to Muñoz¹⁷. We also have at our disposal two books where Muñoz tells us about his adventure in China and his current and future perspectives with regard to the Asian giant: *The Chinese Puzzle*¹⁸ and *China 2050*¹⁹.

3.2. Cultural, education and sport ties

In mainland China, Spanish as a university degree started from 1952 onwards²⁰. Specifically, in the University of Foreign Studies in Beijing, the prestigious *cradle of Chinese diplomats*²¹; however, the same did not occur with Chinese language in Spain. According to Andrés Herrera Feligreras, in Spain there were no subjects about Chinese civilization or literature until 1978, and they were only optional classes, offered by the University of Granada, which was the genesis of a group of experts in Chinese language and thought, lead by Pedro San Ginés²². Despite this fact, papers in Spanish about China or the translation to Spanish of Chinese literary works appeared earlier. Marcela de Juan, whose Chinese name is Huang Masai²³, apart from translating stories, poetry and theatre plays, in 1977 she published her book based on her personal experience: *The China that Lived Yesterday and Today Glimpsed*. Laureano Ramírez Bellerín²⁴, in 1982 published his first two Chinese to Spanish translations: *Ni Huanchi*²⁵ and *Sueños sobre un ascuerdas: antología de cuentos destacados* (*Dream about*

¹⁷See "Entrevista con Marcelo Muñoz, decano de los empresarios españoles en China", en la revista digital *IberChina*, web link: <http://www.iberchina.org/index.php/evolucion-a-contenidos-29/406-entrevista-con-marcelo-mu-decano-de-los-empresarios-espas-en-china> last date visited: 4th January 2017.

¹⁸See Muñoz, Marcelo, *El enigma chino. Treinta años de observador*, Editorial Espejo de Tinta, Madrid, 2007.

¹⁹See Muñoz, Marcelo, *China 2050. Los grandes desafíos del gigante asiático*, Editorial Kailas, Madrid, 2011.

²⁰See Huang, Wei, "La enseñanza del español en China", comunicación en V Congreso Internacional: ¿Qué español enseñar y cómo? Variedades del español y su enseñanza, Cuenca, 25-28th of June 2014. Web link: <http://www.mecd.gob.es/dctm/redele/Material-RedEle/Numero%20Especiales/2015-v-congreso-fiape/comunicaciones/15.-la-ensenanza-del-espanol-en-china--huangwei.pdf?documentId=0901e72b81ec605c>, last date visited: 17th February 2017.

²¹See Consuelo y Lee Marco, Jade, "La enseñanza del Español en China: evolución histórica, situación actual y perspectivas", *Revista Cálamo FASPE*, N°56, octubre-diciembre 2010, pp.3-14. El detalle mencionado se encuentra en la página 4.

²²See Herrera Feligreras, Andrés, "La nueva sinología española", en la revista *Huarte de San Juan. Geografía e Historia*, N°14, Universidad Pública de Navarra, Pamplona, 2007, p.259.

²³In Chinese characters written 黄玛赛, was the daughter of a Chinese diplomat in Spain and her mother was Spanish, she returned to China with his father and introduced Chinese literature to the Spanish people.

²⁴Sinologists and professor at the Translation Faculty of the Autonomous University of Barcelona, in 1975 started to work at the Spanish Embassy in China, he experienced the history of transition in this oriental country. After leaving his former job, he dedicated to the translation of Chinese literary works.

²⁵The original title of the Chinese work is 《倪焕之》 (*Ni Huanzhi*, according to the Chinese phonetic), it was published in 1927, it was the novel of the famous Chinese writer and teacher in contemporary literature Ye Shengtao (1894-1988).

some strings: anthology of distinguished tales)²⁶, even though Ramirez Bellerín has done most of his translations from Chinese into Spanish and most of his own works at a later time.

To avoid giving a lengthy list, I will limit myself to mention the three most renowned literary works between 1970 and 1982: Fernando Pérez-Barreiro Nolla, writer and translator, graduated from the University of Westminster with a degree in Chinese language and literature, he translated *Flowers and Firewood*, a brief collection of Chinese prose, published by Ediciones Xirais in 1982²⁷ and was known in the Beijing Renmin University²⁸. The Spanish translation of the work of the American sinologist Herrlee G. Creel, *Chinese Thought from Confucius to Mao Zedong*, was published in Madrid in 1976 by Alianza Editorial. Lastly, San Mao, the taiwanese writer born in Chongqing, in mainland China, migrated to Spain after wedding with a young Spaniard, José María Quero y Ruiz. The couple moved to Western Sahara in 1974, when they started an adventure until José's death due to a work accident. This six-year stay contributed to the writing of a large part of San Mao's work, a legendary and influential writer who inspired many Chinese students to study Spanish and go to Spain. It was her tale about the writer Zhang Tianyi (1906-1985), its original title is 《华威先生》 (*Hua weixian sheng*, its literal translation: Mr. Huawei) and it was published in 1938.

The first official celebration of cultural bilateral activities corresponded to the "Chinese Cultural Week", which took place at the beginning of March 1982, at the Autonomous University of Madrid. Over 200 participants attended the event, who appreciated the pieces of Chinese craftsmanship and photographs of archeological works. In the ensuing days, the local attendees could become familiar with the history and current affairs of this Asian country through documentaries and films. Three days after, in the *Renmin Ribao* a new was published and we can learn about the details mentioned above²⁹.

On the same month, the then president of the International Olympic Games Committee, Juan Antonio Samaranch, visited China in reply to the invitation granted by the Chinese National Committee of Olympic Games³⁰. It is widely known that Samaranch was a distinguished person in the relation of friendship between China and Spain (Bregolat, 2014: 322). Not long ago after being reelected for the presidency of the IOC on the 16th of July 1980, Samaranch said a famous phrase in support of China's seat at the Olympic games: "*China accounts for 25% of the world population, if it continues being eliminated from the international Olympic games, these would have no meaning.*"³¹ Thanks to his efforts, the People's Republic of China could have been able to return to the Olympic family after decades of being in a state of suspension caused by the problem with Taiwan. The seat of the PRC in the International Olympic Games Committee was finally restored in 1979.

With China's opening-up, the increase in cultural and sport exchanges between both countries could be noted. In the Chinese official catalogue that has been cited several times, the photographs of the following activities are recorded: the 5th of January 1977, the Chinese volleyball masculine team visited Gijón, where the Chinese are still known for their fame of being the "volleyball nation" (Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2007: 73); the 15th May 1979, Huang Zhen, Chinese minister of culture participated in the exposition of a Spanish photographer" (Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2007: 74). It was the first foreign exhibition after the end of the Chinese Cultural

²⁶It was a tale by author Zhang Tianyi (1906-1985), its original title is 《华威先生》 (*Hua weixian sheng*, whose literary translation would be: El señor Huawei) and was published in 1938.

²⁷See Insua, Emilio Xosé, "Na norte de Fernando Pérez-Barreiro Nolla" y J.D., "Fernando Pérez-Barreiro Nolla", both in the journal *Heraldo de Vivero*, page 4 and page 8, 15th January 2010.

²⁸Similar to what we mentioned on a previous footnote, it is another translation of the name of Beijing Renmin University.

²⁹See "Se inauguró la 'Semana de la Cultura China' en Madrid", en *Renmin Ribao*, 4th March 1982, page 6, web link: <http://www.ziliaoku.org/rmrb/1982-03-04-6#590293>, last date visited: 2nd November 2016. The original Chinese title of the news article is: 《中国文化周在马德里开幕》.

³⁰See "El Comité Nacional de Juegos Olímpicos de China celebró cóctel de bienvenida para recibir al presidente del Comité Internacional de Juegos Olímpicos", on *Renmin Ribao*, 31st March 1982, page 4, web link: <http://www.ziliaoku.org/rmrb/1982-03-31-4#592618>, last visited date: 2nd November 2016. The original Chinese title of the news article is: 《中国奥委会举行酒会欢迎国际奥委会主席》.

³¹See article published in *Diario Oriental de Deporte* (in Chinese 《东方体育日报》, *Dong fang tiyuri bao*), 7th May 2010.

Revolution³²; the 10th April 1982, artist María Rosa Calvo performed a recital at the Hall of Beijing's Palace of National Cultures (Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2007: 75), such concert was announced in the *Renmin Ribao* journal with the title of "the Spanish artist celebrated a recital in Beijing³³", therefore, María Rosa Calvo was the first foreign artist to sing a recital in China.

During the royals visit of 1978, as a token of gratitude and appreciation, China gave Spain two pandas as a gift: "Qiang-Qiang" and "Shao-Shao"; in an act of reciprocity, the royal family gave the Chinese people the present of two gorillas, whose names were "Español" y "Madrileña". The two special "envoys" were established in Beijing's zoo on the 16th September 1979 (Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2007: 107). In October 1982, Chu-Lin was born, the first panda offspring born in captivity in Europe. The next year, after it was half year old, the Spanish public began to become acquainted with Chu-Lin (Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2007: 108) and the Spanish people have loved him ever since. With this in mind, we can confirm that the "panda diplomacy" that the PRC implements traditionally has achieved great success.

Four months after the royals' visit, China received the visit of the "Association of Spain-China Friendship" presided by Fernando Para Suelo³⁴. In the Chinese official newspaper, *Renmin Ribao*, the visit was mentioned³⁵. This official welcome with can be considered as the start of the social relations between China and Spain, after Spain restored its monarchic system.

In the press sector, according to the records, the first permanent correspondent in the PRC sent by the Spanish government was Manuel Molares, who arrived in China the 10th of March 1978, exactly 5 years after the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. He was a delegate of EFE Agency in Beijing³⁶. It is not difficult to understand, the perspective of Spanish media in this period was under a double influence: on the one hand, the international situation; on the other, the Spanish political situation. From the mid-70s and the beginning of the 80s onwards, along with the political transition and parliamentary democratization, the leftist parties started to have a greater presence both in the domestic and international spheres.

Immigration is another significant social aspect in sino-hispanic relations, despite the period here studied does not represent the main period of immigration influx into Spain. The Chinese immigration to Spain reflected certain peculiarities defined by the historical context and the situation of both sides. Firstly, amongst the migrating Chinese population, Taiwanese occupied the larger part, given that until 1973 Spain had no diplomatic ties with the Beijing government. Secondly, after having established political links between Spain and the PRC, Chinese immigration did not experience an immediate increase, because during the Cultural Revolution, the restrictions for Chinese citizens to go abroad and settle in a foreign country were still very strict. Thirdly, the number of Spaniards who migrated to China was still a very limited number, since the lack of previous knowledge and the unfavourable policy of China were two factors that largely prevented the immigration influx from Spain to mainland China. In this aspect, the reform and open-up policy, started by

³²See 国际文化网, 《新中国摄影的国际交往活动》, "国庆六十周年——铭记共和国的文化足迹" 专刊, "Actividades de intercambios internacionales de fotografía en la Nueva China", número especial de "60 Aniversario de establecimiento de la República Popular China -- Recordar las huellas culturales de la República", web link: http://en.chinaculture.org/focus/2009-09/02/content_345791_4.htm, last visited date: 22nd April 2017.

³³See "La arpista española celebra un recital en Beijing", en *Renmin Ribao*, el 11 de abril de 1982, página 4, web link: <http://www.ziliaoku.org/rmrb/1982-04-11-4#593626>, last visited date: 2nd November 2016.

³⁴*Ibidem*, p.106.

³⁵See "El vice-presidente Ji Pengfei se entrevistó con la delegación de la Asociación de Amistad Hispano-China", on *Renmin Ribao*, 18th October 1978, page 4, web link: <http://www.ziliaoku.org/rmrb/1978-10-18-4#507545>, last visited date: 2nd November 2016.

³⁶See Méndez, Daniel, "China en los medios de comunicación españoles", chapter 10 of Ríos, Xulio (coord.), *Las relaciones hispano-chinas*, Editorial Catarata, Madrid, 2013. This chapter corresponds to pages 194-216, and the part related to the present footnote is found on page 194.

Deng Xiaoping, would at the same time provide a great opportunity for the increase of Spanish immigration to the distant China.

Professor Joaquín BeltránAntolín, professor at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, social anthropologist and sinologist, possesses many publications related to Chinese immigration into Spain. In his collaboration with the book *Spain-China Relations*, he tells us that in 1973 there were 597 Chinese residents in Spain³⁷, also, half of them were concentrated in Madrid (BeltránAntolín, Joaquín, 2013: 116). It was widely known that most of those inhabitants had ties with Taiwan, amongst whom we could note the students who were granted scholarships who came from the island and who, after graduating, settled in Spain. Even after 1973, when diplomatic relations switched from Taipei to Beijing, the students from Taiwanese origin continued to be a significant percentage, this phenomenon would not appear surprising to us if we recall that after the closure of the Embassy of the Republic of China in Spain in 1973, the Economic and Cultural Representative Office of Taipei (ORECT) was established in Madrid. Since the topic of migration did not constitute a major relevant issue for the present thesis, there is no need for greater detail about it, but rather we can simply point out the following articles for reference: “Chinese in Madrid: An Approximation from official data. Hypothesis for research” [“Los chinos en Madrid: Aproximación a partir de datos oficiales. Hipótesis para una investigación”]³⁸, “The development of the Chinese community in Spain” [“El desarrollo de la comunidad china en España”]³⁹ and “Spain’s Chinese Immigrants Thrive in Tough Economy”⁴⁰.

Conclusions

The pages above show us that Spain-China relations during the period between 1976 and 1982 have experienced a slow but steady development. The myth that there were no significant exchanges one decade after the establishment of diplomatic relations must be discarded. The bilateral relations throughout this period had been the result of the both changing domestic and international situations, which at the same time would have an impact on the development of bilateral relations. The Spanish Transition, in a certain sense, also offers an experience for China, which later would have an impact in the intellectual circles’ reflection on the democratization process of China.

³⁷See Beltrán Antolín, Joaquín, “De la invisibilidad a la espectacularidad. Cuarenta años de inmigración china en España”, en Ríos, Xulio (coord.), *Las relaciones hispano-chinas*, Editorial Catarata, Madrid, 2013. The article corresponds with chapter 6 of the book, pp.114-131, whereas the fact mentioned above is found on page 116.

³⁸See Beltrán Antolín, Joaquín, “Los chinos en Madrid: Aproximación a partir de datos oficiales. Hipótesis para una investigación”, in *Malestar cultural y conflicto en la sociedad madrileña. II Jornadas de antropología de Madrid*, Madrid, 1991, pp.295-304.

³⁹See Ma, Zhoumin, “El desarrollo de la comunidad china en España”, in *Revista de Occidente*, nº349-350, 2012, pp.259-266.

⁴⁰See Bilefsky, Dan, “Spain’s Chinese Immigrants Thrive in Tough Economy”, in *The New York Times*, 2nd January 2013.