

# Narrating and Contesting Cultural Identities in Music: The Case of Macao before and after Handover

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**ABSTRACT:** Macao has seen an incessant cultural exchange between the East and the West since the arrival of the Portuguese in the mid-sixteenth century. Different types of hybrid cultural and artistic heritage, like music, language, and poetry, have since then been created. However, as reflected by scholars, more efforts are yet to be done in documenting the aforementioned artistic development and investigating how the cultural identity of the people of Macao has evolved through history. This paper contributes to study how the memories and identities of specific groups of people residing in Macao are articulated in their music depicting Macao, specifically, through analysing the Chinese songs ‘Song of Seven Sons — Macao’ and ‘Song of Macao’, and the Portuguese pieces ‘Macao, My Land’ and ‘Good-bye, Macao’, as well as using the discourses of music and cultural identity discussed by Simon Frith, Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha, among others. The selected works concern their uses of language, musicality, and public appearance. Although one group may demonstrate contradictory narratives in terms of identity and beliefs with another, their overall musical expression about themselves and Macao constructs our communal understanding, memory, and recognition of this place. Over time, a change in terms of their narratives of identity and the audience’s reception can also be seen, resulting in a mobile identification, and shifting collective identity of the people.

**KEYWORDS:** Cultural identity; Cultural ambivalence; Hybridity; Musical identity; Narrativity of identity; Memory.

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## INTRODUCTION

Macao had been under the Portuguese administration for over 400 years before it was handed over to China on 20 December 1999. Ever since the Portuguese navigators, who had also brought with

them traces of Continental European, African, Indian, and Malay cultures, first encountered the officials from the Ming dynasty, Macao has become a place where different cultures exchanged extensively. At the same time, because of its long history, a distinctive

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culture and an identity belonging to Macao have also gradually emerged. Such a trend extends well beyond the handover into the twenty-first century. Today, we can see the Portuguese and the Chinese languages appearing side by side almost ubiquitously, Catholic churches mingling with Buddhist and Taoist temples, Western festivities and processions of local beliefs happening in the same space. Simultaneously, we can also see how Macanese gastronomy has been cherished worldwide, how the Patuá theatre has attracted different people's attention, and ultimately, how Macao's exceptional architectural styles have been globally acknowledged in being inscribed as a UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage in 2005. Macao thus reveals its own characteristics that distinguish itself from all its neighbours. Concurrently, Macao's own cultural identity results precisely from the fact that different cultures can communicate and blend with each other on this piece of land.

While this is a blessing from Macao's unique history, there also exists a certain paranoia: if we claim to have inherited all these histories and cultures, who are we actually? What are we talking about when we assert that a person is 'someone from Macao'? This interrogation is already complicated by the fact that, except in the Chinese languages like Mandarin and Cantonese where we can call ourselves directly 'Macao person' (澳門人 Aomen ren), it seems hard to yield a succinct name for our identity in any foreign term, as in the case of 'Hong Konger' or '*Lisboeta*' ('Macanese', on the other hand, has other meanings, as we shall soon see). Furthermore, the essentialist ways of defining one's identity — 'you are yellow-skinned and a Cantonese speaker, therefore you are a Chinese'; 'you are a Catholic and have a Portuguese surname, therefore you are a Portuguese' — cannot reach to an understanding of one's cultural identity and sense of Macao belonging. Thus, when 'someone from Macao' is asked to reflect on his identity, chances are that he will not label himself as a 'mere' Chinese or Portuguese

or Macanese without further explanation; and chances are that he is at once conscious of Macao's own complex history and position. A sense of collectivity is missed, albeit the existence of a specific set of cultural traits supposedly shared by 'someone from Macao'.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, as Chin Pang Lei reflects, the inscription of the Historic Centre of Macao as a World Cultural Heritage appears to be the singular event that has 'awakened' the people of Macao to rethink their cultural identity. As a result, the subsequent debates and discussions on Macao's heritage not only arouse the people's interest in their own history and culture, but also propel them to rethink what Macao's identity can mean.<sup>2</sup> This paper, therefore, serves as a humble step to continue this trend, delineating what the cultural identity of the people of Macao entails through investigating one crucial, though intangible, aspect of our culture — music, where a group's cultural identity can well be expressed.

While there exists already a corpus of literature that discusses how the identity of Macao has been shaped in political, sociological and economic terms, and while Macao's tangible cultural heritage has also been profoundly researched, as musicologist Oswaldo da Veiga Jardim Neto highlights, there still exists a lacuna in the documentation, let alone the studies of Macao's musical life, and any comparative study of music composed by different people groups in Macao is virtually nonexistent.<sup>3</sup> Lei also points out that much is yet to be done in researching the humanistic development of Macao.<sup>4</sup> This article tends to shed light on the lesser known yet complicated identity of the people of Macao, and revisits the musical facet of the city.

This undertaking explores how different people's memories and ideas about Macao, and thus, their identity towards Macao, have been articulated in their music over time. In this way, a lateral comparison among the narratives in different groups' music can reveal the different ideas towards the same space of

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Macao, and therefore, their identities. A longitudinal study of how these narratives have changed over time can, on the other hand, depict the malleability of identity and the group's altering attitude towards Macao.

This paper aims to rethink notions such as 'cultural identity' and 'collective memory', rather than fixing a one-and-only identity onto the people of Macao. One can indeed see a process of identification, fluid and extensive. Simultaneously, rather than having only one orthodox cultural memory, the people of Macao have always been able to view Macao's history and their own memory in diverse ways.

## 1. METHODOLOGY

Four songs will be investigated in this paper: 'Song of Seven Sons — Macao' (七子之歌——澳門 *Qizi zhi ge — Aomen*), sung in Mandarin Chinese, whose verse was first written by poet Wen Yiduo (聞一多) in 1925, was made into music by Li Haiying (李海鷹) in 1998. Another Mandarin song, 'Song of Macao' (澳門之歌 *Aomen zhi ge*), was written by lyricist Preston Lee (李安秀) from Taiwan and was composed by local musician Keith Chan (陳輝陽) in 2009. The Portuguese repertoire includes 'Macao, My Land' (*Macau, Terra Minha*) and 'Good-bye, Macao' (*Adeus, Macau*), the former was produced by Portuguese, or more accurately Macanese band The Thunders in 1970, while the latter was written by the Macanese musician Filomeno Jorge (Rosso) and released by Macanese music group Tuna Macaense in 1994.

While it should be acknowledged that these selected pieces of music are by no means exhaustive of the musical production of the people of Macao, within the scope of the present study, this repository is nevertheless endorsed for the following reasons. First, as seen from their titles, these pieces of music explicitly express a relationship with Macao. Second, despite the fact that the verses of these songs were written over a

long period of time, their respective musical adaptation took place between 1970 and 2010, the time when the Portuguese and the Chinese officials were engaged in resolving the issues of Macao's authority, where the transition of governance from one to the other eventually took place, and where Macao's history and culture were studied recurrently. It is, thus, during this period that Macao's identity started to be explicitly portrayed and re-portrayed, actively rethought, and revised. Third, they have continually made their appearance in significant and public circumstances, where a large public is engaged and where the audience is able to have mutual music experiences, enhancing a sense of collectivity at specific instants.

Three aspects of each song will be examined:

1) The use of language — how they utilise particular wordings and languages to represent the specific groups' relationship with Macao in the lyrics; 2) The musicality — how they make use of different styles and genres, and what these inform us about the ideas behind such adaptations; 3) The public appearances — where and when these songs have been played, so that we can postulate how they are linked with different here-and-now's in the history of Macao, and what they imply in terms of the identity of the people groups who create them. A comparative study within a group (longitudinal) and across the groups (lateral) will eventually offer us a better perspective on how the identity of Macao has never been stable, yet, like how the city's population is migratory and mobile in nature, variably narratable and vividly diverse.

## 2. IDENTITY VERSUS IDENTIFICATION

Particularly crucial is Stuart Hall's idea of the 'becoming' of cultural identity, Homi Bhabha's thesis on the 'hybridity' and the 'in-betweenness' of cultures, and Simon Frith's relation of music and identity. Hall writes in his seminal work *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* (1994) that there are at least two distinct ways of contemplating 'cultural identity'. The first, which is

common in many former colonies, can be understood as having a 'collective "one true self"', where there should be an origin of the concerning people group that makes it 'one people'. Therefore, exist an 'essence', transcending time and space, where the oppressed and marginalised group can retrieve and rediscover in the post-colonial era. In finding such an essence, the group can eventually regain the identity that should first have been possessed by the said group before colonisation, authentic and 'uncontaminated'. At the same time, such a reading of cultural identity also expects that everyone from the group has an 'imaginary coherence' with the claimed 'essence'.<sup>5</sup> In this way, we should always be able to answer the question of 'who we are' in excavating such an 'essence'.

Yet, such retrieval and rediscovery are never the mere 'unearthing' of something that is allegedly unchangeable.<sup>6</sup> Instead, for identity is precisely based on archaeology and the re-reading of one's history, it can be re-told, and thus evolves across time. This leads to the second sense of cultural identity, where we attempt to respond to the question of 'what we have become'.<sup>7</sup> For if one always has dissenting ways — however slight — to (re-)read one's history, one has different ways to retrieve one's identity. Identity, therefore, is not a given: 'Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories [...] they undergo constant transformation'.<sup>8</sup> They are the results of the constant play of powers and politics, and are influenced by how one reads his history, how one uses his language and where one is posited in space and time.<sup>9</sup> In summary, Hall rightly asserts that,

*Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.*<sup>10</sup>

In such a multiethnic and mobile city as Macao, different groups of people do not only narrate their own identities but also the others. And in so doing,

in narrating and representing 'their' position in 'our' narrative, 'aspiration and aggression' from 'our' narrative is also thrust upon 'them'.<sup>11</sup> This 'othering' and 'external gaze' may, in the end, be taken up and internalised by the narrated and represented group, eventually becoming their very own identity as seen from the outside. In turn, such an identity also becomes fixed to 'a narrow spectrum, a limited horizon'.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the co-existence of narratives, resulting from the co-existence of different groups in Macao, also means that there are discontinuity and conflicts among these narratives. Therefore, far from being fixed, the people of Macao do actually have a 'space of possibilities' where they can negotiate among different narratives and reflect on how their own identity should be told.<sup>13</sup>

This brings us back to Hall's second way of thinking about cultural identity as fluid and narratable one.<sup>14</sup> Most importantly, it is always becoming. We may derive a relatively fixed identity, or we may be imposed by others with a fixed identity, but they are always subject to change and contestation. Concurrently, we should also not blind ourselves from seeing the possibility of various narratives of the history of Macao and the identity of the people of Macao, due to the city's own migratory nature. In the end, instead of asking 'who someone from Macao is' and pursuing an identity for one and for all, we may instead attempt to find 'what someone from Macao has become' and how the people of Macao have identified themselves through the mist of history.

### 3. CULTURE DISCRETE OR CULTURE AMBIVALENT?

It is clear that Macao, accommodating various groups of people for centuries, also accommodates different cultures for centuries. Cultures co-exist and collide with one another. In this way, the Portuguese and Chinese cultures, among others, as experienced by the Macao locals, become localised over time. A special

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‘hybrid’ culture is gradually developed among the people of Macao — it becomes something ‘in-between’, ‘partially’ Portuguese and ‘partially’ Chinese.<sup>15</sup> The people of Macao, as portrayed in the introduction, experience precisely such an ambivalence, for neither can one easily explain one’s identity without further comments, nor can one readily fit into what the connotations ‘Portuguese’ or ‘Chinese’ entail, neither in terms of culture nor ethnicity.

On the other hand, such ambivalence and ‘in-betweenness’ can also be revealed in familial terms, and that is precisely the case for the Macanese. A Macanese (土生葡人 *tusheng puren*, or local-born Portuguese), in its most general sense, refers to the offspring stemming from generations of intermarriage between, among others, the Portuguese and Chinese, simultaneously expanding the bloodlines with persons of origin of Malaysia, India, Africa and even Japan — i.e., places where the Portuguese have explored. In reality, Chinese bloodline was not existent among the very first generations of those ‘Macao-born’ — it is only later that, when the Portuguese had secured their settlement in Macao, cross-marriage between them and the Chinese proliferated.<sup>16</sup> Be it as it may, it can be said that the cultures of the two greater nations exchange most intimately and collide most intensively among the Macanese, who finally yield their own poetry, music, craftsmanship, gastronomy and even language. The Macanese culture, in the end, is exemplary of a hybrid and ambivalent culture for it has become a culture of its own.

Ultimately, in Macao, no single culture can stand out from the others, and no culture can be singled out, if we are to perceive a culture of Macao. A spectrum of cultures is seen, where every culture that has at one time resided in Macao tinges, assimilates, and evolves with each other over time. Whether it is the ‘not-so-Portuguese-and-not-so-Chinese’ culture of Macao, or the Macanese culture which is born from selecting from and internalising both the Portuguese

and Chinese cultures among others, and which also constitutes a part of Macao’s culture, they both exist as a ‘connective tissue between cultures’.<sup>17</sup> We may even venture to ask: for a country as profound and vast as Portugal or China, could their namesake cultures be homogeneous?

Culture, therefore, is not discrete, but continuous with other bordering cultures. Such a reading of culture, although it may give rise to the paranoia portrayed at the beginning of this paper, also suggests the organicity and multi-voice of a culture, making possible the overlapping of different cultures and the eventual birth of a new culture.

## 4. IN MUSIC WE ARE ONE

While ‘culture’ can be hybrid and ambivalent, and ‘cultural identity’ can be fluid and narratable, the two ideas can be concretised at a specific time. While one cannot speak of ‘one experience, one identity’ for very long and with any exactness,<sup>18</sup> there are at least particular moments where we and our fellows stand close and strong together, bathed in one identity — or at least so we believe. Musical experience is one such moment where a people’s identity can be most vigorously constructed and expressed.<sup>19</sup> It is also ‘a catalyst in the social chemistry which produces the feeling of belonging to a group’.<sup>20</sup> Besides, music does not only evoke a vision of cultural identity for the insiders, but through the music, such an identity is also exerted outwards to the audience, so that ‘others’ know who ‘we’ are.<sup>21</sup>

Musicologist Simon Frith asserts that an identity can be fostered right in the making and experiencing of music. While an identity is felt by those who play music, *tutti* and in harmony, the listeners are also ‘drawn into emotional alliances with the performers’:

*Music is obviously collective. We hear things as music because their sounds obey a more or less familiar cultural logic, and for most*



*music listeners (who are not themselves music makers) this logic is out of our control...[Music] stands for, symbolises and offers the immediate experience of collective identity.*<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, in understanding a piece of music, and by seeing that our fellow music performers and listeners are conjoined together within the same musical atmosphere, a 'we' is formed, for we are enabled to 'place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives' that first allow us to understand the music.<sup>23</sup> Thus, a communal experience results, a collective identity is fostered, and an 'imagined community' is formed.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, while the understandability of music obeys the cultural symbolisms that we comprehend, and while culture is malleable and never homogeneous, one may cherish one piece of music but be indifferent to another. One may create a piece of music that sounds — figuratively and literally — poignant and perfect to some, but weird and 'wrong' to others. Just as cultural identity is narratable, musical identity is also ever evolving.

To summarise, culture is ambivalent and not closed, especially in Macao where, for centuries, people of different origins and cultures encounter each other. Cultural identity, in this way, is never fixed, but always open to change in the way people narrate and experience their sense of belonging to Macao. A process of identification thus emerges. On the other hand, one of the many ways through which a group can narrate its identity is music, where not only the insiders, but the spectators can also be impressed with, or even subsequently internalise, a group's specific narrative. It is based on these premises that the following case studies are justified and relevant, for this investigation can eventually shed light on 'what the people of Macao have become', through musical narratives, from the 1970s to the 2010s. It also allows us to rethink what a sense of 'Macaoness' or what a collective memory of Macao can mean at the present time and in the future.

## 5. CASE STUDY I — THE PORTUGUESE NARRATIVE BEFORE HANDOVER

In 1966, a conflict revolving around the expansion of a school campus escalated into wide strife between the Portuguese authority and the Chinese Communist partisans. Such is the background of the 12-3 incident, which resulted in the Portuguese surrender and the admittance of the Chinese left-wing participation in Macao's politics. The dictatorship in continental Portugal and the widespread counter-colonial struggles in other Portuguese territories were also causing social turmoil in both Macao and Portugal. These historical events all led to a sense of uncertainty felt by the Portuguese as well as the Macanese in Macao. On the one hand, their voices were increasingly undermined in the Chinese-inclining social and political ambience. On the other hand, they would also not feel secure if they had opted to emigrate from Macao, for agitation was also prevailing over mainland Portugal. It is in such a situation that abundant literature and music were created by both the Portuguese and the Macanese to express their yearning for the 'good old days' in Macao and their doubt of the future,<sup>25</sup> to a certain extent, their 'colonial nostalgia' can be entertained.

'Macao, My Land' was composed under this atmosphere. This work was produced by the band The Thunders, which was composed of both Portuguese and Macanese musicians. Its debut was released in 1970 on the album *Macao*. This album, containing four tracks, is centred around the topics of home and friends, which is already distinguished from the group's previous releases that talked more about romance and love. Though of Portuguese or Macanese origin, the band was allegedly one of the most famous bands in Macao and Hong Kong during that era, gaining its popularity among the youths. After its release, 'Macao, My Land' 'has become one of the most representative songs of Macao, and has been played in many major events and programmes'.<sup>26</sup>

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Fig. 1: A conventional rhythmic scheme of Fado. The box shows the syncopated 'half-bar' rhythm. Adapted by Rodney Gallop, "The Fado (The Portuguese Song of Fate)," *The Musical Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 2 (1933): 199–213.

The Thunders also presented the first release to the then-Governor, Nobre de Carvalho. In turn, while the song itself could be promoted and thus attract even more people to listen to its narrative, it can be argued that such an action also has a political implication. On the one hand, the band expressed their affiliation and support to the Portuguese by offering such sentimental work to the head of the Portuguese authority at such time. On the other hand, the governing party may also feel assured that their legacy had at least some echoes from the public.<sup>27</sup> But what exactly is the narrative portrayed in the song? What can the wide acceptance of this narrative tell us about how the audience reflects on their identity with Macao? A persona speaking out to Macao is portrayed in this brief piece:

*Macao, my land  
You remind me of a garden  
You are covered with leaves and flowers  
Whose colours are joyful  
Macao, land of legend  
Drapery made of stories  
You are full of historical monuments  
And you retain the Portuguese atmosphere*

To begin with, the recurring use of the informal 'you' in the Portuguese language already reflects a close appellation and personification of Macao. Directly calling Macao 'my' land simultaneously highlights the closeness between Macao and the singing persona. This

also foreshadows the augmenting sentiments towards Macao in later lines. It is not hard to see that, in these first two stanzas, the lyricist appeals to the memory and history of Macao, first inviting listeners to imagine Macao as a 'tranquil' and 'joyful' garden, where 'good old days' seemingly reside, and then arousing in them the past glory of Macao, where Macao was made a 'land of legend' by the Portuguese. But the climax of the song is yet to come:

*Macao, you always lived far from your mother  
Macao, you are the smallest in your family*

By addressing Macao as 'the smallest' child who 'lived far' from the 'mother', this song ultimately evokes a familial feeling, a sense of intimate belonging to Portugal. The sensation of nostalgia and the call for a home culminate at this moment, where an identity of Macao that links with Portugal is the most intensely expressed.

Today we are conscious that this song is a romanticised portrayal of Macao inflated by rhetorics and artistic manoeuvre. Nevertheless, these lines explicitly depict that one's — or in this case, the lyricist's or the band's — idea of memory and history is narratable. As Hall suggests, while the way Macao's past and the identity of Macao being a Portuguese one was portrayed in this song reflects the tendency to retrieve a singular and essential origin — that the contemporary Macao resulted from bathing continuously in a Portuguese atmosphere and descending as a child of Portugal, the context of this piece of music suggests that this narrative of identity is strongly historical — that it resulted from the turbulent societal context of Macao (and Portugal) where a voice of assurance and certainty was anticipated. In other words, if the time-space relationship had been distinct, one might not imagine that this song could have been written and widely accepted at all.

Yet, the lyrics constitute only a part of the



Fig. 2: A rhythmic scheme of the first stanza of 'Macao, My Land'. The boxes depict where the syncopated 'half-bar' rhythm is used. Figure by the author.

whole narrative. Musically speaking, the style of this song likens a Fado, arguably the most renowned Portuguese music genre. Fado expresses oftentimes a sense of sadness and longing for an unretrievable past. Satirical turns of fate, passionate and romantic scenes, or even rustic and pastoral ballads can all be themes for Fado. In short, Fado is always linked with another genuinely Portuguese idea — *saudade* — which can loosely be translated as a lost, nostalgic and yearning sensation. As Portuguese writer Ventura de Abrantes eagerly asserts, Fado is 'the most Portuguese of all songs and the liturgy of the nation's soul'.<sup>28</sup> Fado also entails a specific way of composing a melody line. Conventionally, common time (four beats per bar) and a syncopated 'half-bar' rhythm is employed: In 'Macao, My Land', for example, such a rhythm is felt through the whole piece.

In sum, regardless of the content or the musicality, 'Macao, My Land' clearly shows that The Thunders has indeed incorporated the elements of Fado during the song's composition. This already shows the composer's affinity to the Portuguese culture. The 'musical narrative' not only matches the lyrics, but

also reinforces the narrative expressed therein, i.e., the assurance of Portugal's close relationship with Macao and the yearning for the lost Portuguese glorious time in Macao.

It is also then obvious to see why 'Macao, My Land' could have emerged and could be broadly accepted, considering the historical and societal context of this song when it appeared. Following Hall, a narrative of identity is always historical and imaginary, and thus it serves to attain a purpose.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, according to Frith, in order to make a musical narrative understandable, it needs to obey certain cultural symbolisms that are first acknowledged by those who produce and listen to the song.<sup>30</sup> Grounded in this reading of identity, we can say that the narrative portrayed in this case conforms with the identity claimed by the band The Thunders, and its popularity implies that the public can also align with this same narrative, reverberating under the same identity. Finally, while we may not leap to the conclusion that this song can completely represent the Portuguese and the Macanese as a collective, let alone everyone from Macao, this piece of music indeed



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shows how a specific temporal and spatial background can have an impact on how people reflect on ‘what they have become’.<sup>31</sup>

## 6. CASE STUDY II — THE CHINESE NARRATIVE AROUND HANDOVER

The aforementioned narrative was in the end not able to resolve the increasing angst suffered by the Portuguese and the Macanese towards the end of the twentieth century. After 1975, Macao was the only Portuguese overseas holding. The governance as well as the status of the said groups became ever more precarious and unstable. In 1987, the *Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration on the Question of Macao* was signed, stipulating the definite handover of Macao from Portugal to China on 20 December 1999. In a sense, even years before such a destined date, the ‘future’ of Macao was already fixed. Yet, such a ‘fate’ has different meanings for the Portuguese, the Macanese and the Chinese, while this period of time also saw the most vigorous and contrasting expressions of identity related to Macao in musical terms.

If the Portuguese would need to prepare for their final retreat from the ‘Far East’ during the final decade of the twentieth century, the Chinese would allegedly have been anticipating this ‘homecoming’ of Macao for even longer.

In 1998, a lengthy documentary about Macao, *The Age of Macao* (歲月澳門 Suiyue Aomen), was produced and served to build up such anticipation. During the production, the director came across the poem series *Song of Seven Sons* written by Chinese nationalist poet Wen Yiduo in 1925 during his stay in the United States. Concerning China’s inferior international status during that time, he dedicated the poems to seven ceded territories, hoping to arouse his compatriots’ nationalist emotions. The poem that struck the director is the first one, titled ‘Macao’. Chinese composer Li Haiying was invited to adapt this particular piece into a melody, and the final work,

‘Song of Seven Sons — Macao’, would be debuted in the documentary. Li recalled that he ‘composed the work within one night while shedding tears’.<sup>32</sup> After its premiere, the song continued to be played on various grand occasions such as the China Central Television Chinese New Year’s Gala in 1999, not to mention during the period of celebration where the handover took place.

*Do you know that Macao is not my real name  
I have left you for so long, mother  
But what they have seized is my body  
You have still kept the soul in my inner heart  
[...]  
Please call my infant name  
Call me Aomen! Mother! Mother!  
I yearn to come back, mother! Mother!*<sup>33</sup>

We can indeed yield a vivid comparison between these lines and ‘Macao, My Land’. First of all, the two both portray a personification of Macao, which in turn enhances the intimacy between the audience and the subject expressed in the music, so that the listeners may eventually align with the narrative of the song. Second, which is more striking, is that an image of ‘mother’ is conjured in both pieces, though in different ways: in the Chinese version, ‘Macao’ is the sole persona in the narrative, attempting recurrently to call out an imagined ‘mother’, to whom ‘Macao’ longed to return. On the other hand, in ‘Macao, My Land’, the singing persona is posited outside the relationship between Macao and Portugal, its imagined ‘mother’. Instead of directly interpellating a ‘mother’ to listen to him, Portugal as the image of a mother was indirectly described by the line ‘you always lived far from your mother’. Finally, by explicitly negating the name ‘Macao’ and demanding to be called *Aomen*, the Mandarin name for Macao, and by distinguishing a ‘they’ — the Portuguese, who ‘seized’ the ‘body’ of Macao — from an ‘I’ and a ‘you’, the persona in this Chinese verse also challenges the

status of the Portuguese throughout the song.

Let us also not forget that the original poem was written during a time when the idea of Chinese nationalism prevailed, and when the Chinese diaspora in the world all responded to the call of preserving the integrity of a Chinese nation. Retrieving such a poem and its inherent sentiments during Macao's transition between the two countries not only has an implication about how the Chinese wanted to impose a Chinese identity onto Macao, but also shows a sense of dissensus and, to some extent, hostility towards the Portuguese legacy, attempting to attract Macao's people towards the Chinese perspective in a most passionate manner.

Besides, in terms of the song's musicality, the composer claimed to have deliberately used some typical folkloric elements of southern China.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, the melody makes exclusive use of the pentatonic scale, a compositional manner that is symbolic — or rather symptomatic — of oriental music. Furthermore, this piece is sung in Mandarin, which is not the daily language of the people of Macao — Cantonese. The work is thus arguably a representation of Macao by the mainland Chinese and, following Fanon, an external gaze — an external imposition of a Macao's identity as a 'wholly' Chinese one — is vividly revealed in this case.<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, in Macao where both the Portuguese and the Chinese narratives can co-exist, the narratability of identity, as well as how one uses one's perspective of history, language, time and space in narrating an identity, are also demonstrated, as discussed by Hall.<sup>36</sup>

While the Portuguese narrative could attain its popularity among the Portuguese and the Macanese for it makes use of the social experiences felt by the people of Macao at that specific here-and-now, the Chinese song, whose appearance occurs during the time when the Chinese were eager to 'take back' Macao after centuries, can also be understood by a large number of listeners. The two cases not only exemplify how musical identity can be attained and conveyed

by using the audience's familiar cultural symbols and memory, but also disclose that, like cultural identity, musical identity is malleable depending on whether the musical narrative agrees with the listener's memory and view at a certain context. Like 'something we put or try on',<sup>37</sup> one narrative may not be understood or accepted by every listener, but the echo of each narrative among its own audience means that they have first made sense of the specific narrative, where the narrative concords with their own understanding of their culture.

## 7. CASE STUDY III — THE PORTUGUESE NARRATIVE AROUND HANDOVER

If the Portuguese could still soothe their paranoia in Macao using the narrative of 'Macao, My Land' in the 1970s, they could not but revise their narrative to accept their final retreat in the song 'Good-bye, Macao', which was released in 1994.

In terms of its orchestration, 'Good-bye, Macao' employs mandolins, guitars, basses and percussion, following the scheme of Fado music. The slow tempo as well as the sorrowful theme of saying 'good-bye' also bears a resemblance to traditional Fado. Besides, Tuna Macaense, the group who released the song, also reflects a Portuguese influence. *Tuna* refers to a kind of Portuguese musical group, mostly composed of students, who 'flash-mobs' from home to home to play music and sing. Nowadays, Tuna Macanese assumes a significant position in curating both the Portuguese and the Macanese cultures, and their importance has been acknowledged by both the Portuguese Macao Government and the Macao SAR Government.<sup>38</sup> In sum, like 'Macao, My Land', it can be said that while the composer has shown his fondness for the Portuguese canon in his work, the fact that 'Good-bye, Macao' was produced by Tuna Macaense also reveals the linkage between the group's identity and the song's symbolism and narrative.<sup>39</sup>

The piece starts with two verses of rhetorical questions and wishes, where the sadness of departure and

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a vision to return is depicted. The chorus then enters and, like the previous cases, the singing persona personifies and addresses Macao with the intimate and informal use of 'you', expressing that Macao as the 'home', the 'passion' and the 'heart' will always be missed:

*Good-bye, Macao, my passion  
Without you, I am suffering  
Good-bye, Macao, my heart  
I keep wishing to see you*

Yet, unlike 'Macao, My Land', the persona does not stop at yielding a general portrayal of the 'good old days' of Macao, but goes even further to sing out the persona's 'own memory' of Macao:

*Away from the sun that shined during my birth  
Away from the world where I started to walk  
Away from the people whom I learnt to understand  
I know that I am going to cry*

In this way, the audience is invited to join the persona, to retrieve their memories with Macao, and to imagine — from one's childhood and through one's life — how 'warm' one's memory is. The implied contrasting reality where one would need to say 'good-bye' to his or her place of birth intensifies the sorrow even more. In turn, through such rhetorical devices, those who eventually make sense of the song's narrative may align with it more intensely. Finally, as if having such a 'warm' memory is not enough, the persona sings out the final verse, using the beginning melody, so that a circle is fulfilled — a 'home' is 'returned' musically and metaphorically:

*When the memories could not further keep me warm  
When the nostalgia was difficult to stand with  
When I miss a home to love me  
I know that I am going to return*

We can now see that in terms of emotion, 'Good-bye, Macao' attempts to appeal to its audience in a stronger way than in 'Macao, My Land'. This is remarkable and understandable, taking also into account the change in the historical context. Besides, there is also a change in the narration of the Portuguese's identity with Macao between the two songs. On the one hand, both serve to foster the hope that the Portuguese (and the Macanese) community can stand strong amidst their hazy future, and both can be related to the audience's own perception of their own identity. On the other hand, the narrative of the latter case contrasts with the former in that, since in the 1990s when the Portuguese were destined to accept that they will eventually be under the Chinese rule, the 1994's narrative includes much more emotive and melancholic wordings like 'leaving', 'separated', 'suffering', 'miss' and 'cry'. Be it as it may, however gloomy their narrative of identity has become, they still see Macao as their 'land' and 'home' — and this has a profound implication for their idea of belonging to Macao.

The narrative of 'Good-bye, Macao', on the other hand, stands in sharp contrast with 'Song of Seven Sons — Macao'. Most obviously, like the eventual handover of Macao from Portugal to China, the idea of 'mother' was also removed from the Portuguese narrative, while being taken up by the Chinese one. Besides, unlike the Portuguese narrative where the 'reality' is accepted and a later return to Macao can only be hoped, the Chinese narrative poses to be a poised and triumphal one.

Finally, while different groups have their own perception of Macao's identity, and while none of them can be wrong, their co-existence embodies that cultural identity, though sometimes conflicting, can only be polyphonic and vibrant. The longitudinal study of the Portuguese repertoire reveals the narratability of one's cultural identity, and the tendency to always appeal to one's memory and past in

order to build such an identity.<sup>40</sup> We can also see how one would narrate their identity in terms of an imagined others, such as how ‘Song of Seven Sons — Macao’ reuses the narrative that the Portuguese people have only superficially seized the body but not the soul of Macao.<sup>41</sup> Their respective production, acceptance and popularity also demonstrate how cultural identity can be conveyed and understood through music. In turn, precisely because of this fluidity and superimposition of versions of cultural identity, it is then possible for the people of Macao, whose composition is in the first place not homogeneous, to negotiate with their own identity through connecting to the different personae in these songs that they can make sense of.<sup>42</sup>

#### 8. CASE STUDY IV — THE CHINESE NARRATIVE AFTER HANDOVER

After all these dramas, Macao entered the twenty-first century. The Portuguese and the Macanese communities still make up Macao’s populace, and their two cultures have also not been wiped out under the new government. As said, the inscription of Macao Historical Centre as a UNESCO’s World Heritage in 2005, and the declaration of the Macanese own creole language, Patúa, as a critically endangered language in 2009, provided another opportunity for the people of Macao to revisit their memory, history and culture, and to reconsider about their identity. On the other hand, the aforementioned musical narratives have also been revitalised and re-signified.

First of all, Tuna Macaense received the ‘Medal of Cultural Merit’ in 2007 from the Macao SAR Government, both to praise and to encourage their contribution to Macao’s unique culture. The Portuguese repertoire has been played in various events, such as in the triennial Macanese reunion ‘Encontro’, and during the Lusofonia Festival. In particular, ‘Macao, My Land’ was also adapted in the documentary *Filhos da Terra* (澳·土· Sons of the Land) which talks about the Macanese memory and

culture, produced in 2008.<sup>43</sup> Ever more people of Macao have recognised the importance of the presence of the Portuguese legacy in Macao’s own culture, and thus, under such a societal atmosphere, even those who are not of Portuguese and Macanese origin now also appreciate their narratives of identity with Macao. In turn, shedding their original nostalgic or national emotions, the lyrics of the Portuguese repertoire have been made sense of as an indispensable component of Macao’s unique history.

Such a change in perspective and narration may also vividly be seen in the piece ‘Song of Macao’, dedicated to the tenth anniversary of Macao’s handover in 2009. It was composed by local composer Keith Chan, and Taiwanese lyricist Preston Lee, and is sung in Mandarin by Hong Kong singer Andy Lau Tak-wah (劉德華). After its debut, though, it has mostly been appreciated in mainland China, while its name became lost in oblivion in Macao. Nevertheless, its narrative can show us how the Chinese way of portraying Macao has altered after the turn of the millennium.

*Wandering around the Ruins of Saint Paul*  
*The sun is pouring golden rays*  
*On the façade, peony and chrysanthemum*  
*Are accompanying the statue of Holy Mary [...]*  
*The encounter of the East and West*  
*Emanates glowing beams*

*You should come to the A-ma Temple*  
*Visit Tian-hou the Holy Mother [...]*  
*You should have a bite of the Portuguese cuisine*  
*Take a sip of the water from the spring at Lilau*

From the above excerpt of the first two stanzas, it is not hard to see that symbols from the two cultures are depicted and placed abreast, which highlights the central idea of the narrative (which is also the narrative promoted by the Macao Historical Centre) — that Macao is the hub where the East encounters the West.

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The two cultures are embraced, which grounds Macao's uniqueness. Simultaneously, such a uniqueness is also a Chinese one, as one can see in the chorus:

*What a beautiful white lotus  
Swaying on the Southern Sea  
Her elegant, attractive appearance  
Is our pride  
What a blossoming white lotus  
Blossoming to the world  
She is not fear of wind, not even rain  
Determined, growing in mother's bosom*

First of all, through the recurring use of 'lotus', which is also a symbol of Macao by the Chinese, this narrative imposes an identity — 'elegant', 'attractive' and 'pride' — as much as a wish — 'blossoming', 'determined' and 'growing' — on Macao. Yet, Macao is also portrayed as 'our' pride and growing in mother's bosom. As we have already seen in the previous studies, the depiction of an image of a 'mother' contributes to the intensification of a feeling of an identity, attempting to draw the listeners close to the identity and the emotive relationship as conjured by the singing persona.

Comparing to 'Song of Seven Sons — Macao', 'Song of Macao' likens a pop song. Its orchestration consists mainly of synthesisers, keyboards and percussions. Having been in various countries, Keith Chan has definitely expressed his multicultural background in his composition, together with a Taiwanese lyricist and a Hong Kong singer, the production of this song is metaphorical of Macao's migratory and multicultural nature. Therefore, in contrast with the other Chinese piece, which makes use of a rather traditionalist approach in composition, it can be said that 'Song of Macao' embodies modernity and transculturalism.

In sum, like in the Portuguese repertoire, we can readily see changes in terms of the narrative of Macao's

identity in these two Chinese songs. From arousing a more nationalist emotion to embracing also the Portuguese legacy in Macao, and from representing Macao almost only from a Chinese mainlanders' perspective to portraying Macao by a more diverse production, the narrative has changed in terms of the content and the use of the musical language. In contrast with the Portuguese narratives, the image of 'mother' has always been there, always reminding the listeners of the ideas of 'home' and 'return'.

On the other hand, the Portuguese repertoire is in different ways promoted and cherished. A co-existence of different narratives is, therefore, apparent after 1999. We can see there is a change in terms of the use of these narratives — from being used to express the sadness and nostalgia felt by the Portuguese and the Macanese in face of the Portuguese authority's final departure, these narratives are now used to express the unique history and the long-living cultural diversity.

## 9. TOWARDS AN ORGANIC UNDERSTANDING OF CULTURAL IDENTITY

Now a comparative investigation among four narratives of the identity of Macao has been presented. By juxtaposing the Portuguese and the Chinese narratives, as well as by contrasting the two narratives yielded respectively by both the Portuguese and the Chinese at different times, we can see that there indeed exist some differences in terms of how Macao's identity has been variously narrated, literally and musically. On the other hand, the appearance of different narratives, and the alternating popularity of this repertoire at different times in different places, also reflect that both the creators of these songs and the audience can align with these different pieces at different times and spaces, implying a changing identity over time.

Specifically, in 'Song of Seven Sons — Macao', we can see a nationalist and feverish call to the people of Macao to retrieve their Chinese core, and to arouse among them a Chinese identity. Ten years after the



handover, in 'Song of Macao', we can instead see how Macao is celebrated as a melting pot of different cultures, and how the Portuguese legacy in Macao is appraised for compositing a significant part of Macao's singular culture-scape. On the other hand, 'Macao, My Land' portrays a nostalgic atmosphere about Macao. It also attempts to conjure a nationalist emotion among its audience, for Macao has always been the 'smallest' child, possessed by and living far away from Portugal. Around the year 1999, the narrative of 'Good-bye, Macao' depicts instead a scene of farewell, a longing to return to Macao and, still, a sense of *saudades* towards Macao's lost past. It can be concluded that, following Hall, while at a specific moment, the narrator of identity would want to fixate one's identity with several characteristics by reading one's history and memory in a specific manner, we can actually see an evolution of how an identity can variously be narrated even over just a modest length of time. Therefore, while we can plot the spot of 'who we are' at a specific time, as our history continues, we can see all these spots together, and contemplate 'what have we become'. In turn, we can now assert that identity is never stable but fluid.<sup>44</sup>

Along the same vein, while different narratives of Macao's identity have emerged, they are also differently accepted by the public — the people of Macao in general. As Frith argues, this phenomenon results from the fact that during a musical experience, one can only make sense of and resonate with a specific narrative when the cultural symbols used in the narrative accord with the listener's perspective of his own culture,<sup>45</sup> which is itself also evolving. Therefore, before the handover, the Portuguese narratives were arguably mainly acknowledged by the Portuguese and Macanese communities, for they both felt anxious about their future and yearned for their past. Around the year of the handover, the narrative that evokes the idea of homecoming gained its popularity, specifically among those who are ethnically Chinese. As time

goes by, under an atmosphere where the particularity of Macao as a meeting place between the East and the West is treasured, a narrative that entertains such a discourse succeeded. At the same time, those Portuguese narratives which first appeared decades ago were also excavated and re-signified in a way that conforms with the contemporary zeitgeist. Such an observation reveals that the cultural grammar and symbols, that first allow specific pieces of music to be made and enable the perceivers to understand these pieces of music, can change over time, making the existence of different musical identities possible.

Thus, if one's idea of one's own culture can alter over time, one has different ways to yield his own cultural identity. For the very same reason, one also has different ways to make sense of one's own culture to create and experience different music, yielding different musical identities. Either way, identity is narratable, and one can only see a process of identification when one turns to his past.

Yet, as we are also aware, these different narratives of Macao's identity do not merely appear one after another, but co-exist with each other, for the societal composition of Macao is always migratory. This small city has always accommodated multiple cultures, and has at the same time always existed in between greater nations and cultures that are more imposing. This also means that there exists a reservoir of cultural symbols, competing for people's recognition in Macao. In turn, different people make use of and make sense of them differently, align with some of them more closely than with others, and create narratives of identity from them. In the same way, always selective and differentially assimilating, the narratives of identity that we have seen make 'partial' use of these symbols — 'Macao, My Land', and 'Good-bye, Macao' provoke Macao's Portuguese legacy, 'Song of Seven Sons — Macao' conjures the fact that Macao was a ceded Chinese land, while 'Song of Macao' makes the most vivid use of a diversity of symbols that portrays Macao's image



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of being a link between the East and the West. They may not always be in accordance with each other, but they, nevertheless, reveal how specific individuals have linked themselves with Macao and have expressed their versions of an identity of Macao. This, in the end, tells us that Macao's culture is a hybrid one, accepting and internalising different traits from different cultures, because of Macao's continuous in-betweenness.<sup>46</sup> The cultural and musical identity derived from such a hybrid culture can only be negotiable and reflective, sometimes conflicting, but always vibrant. No single one is less true than the others, for they are all narratives that have truly been told that mark the history and memory of Macao.


## CONCLUSION

How the cultural identity of Macao is told is an open-ended question. At the same time, we can only expect the existence of even more narratives of Macao's identity. In this undertaking, we have only seen four of them. Elsewhere, for instance, I have also written on how the Macanese community, using their unique creole language, Patuá, which is itself already a hybrid cultural phenomenon, has reflected on their identity with Macao and their idea of home.<sup>47</sup> Simultaneously, as the composition of Macao's society has become ever more mobile and diverse, further research to investigate how different minority groups have reflected on their belonging to Macao is anticipated, which requires continuous efforts from scholars from fields like

anthropology, sociology and cultural studies, as well as the burgeoning Macao studies.

Like Bhabha has advocated, to study a hybrid culture like that of Macao, one needs to be able to 'reinscribe the past, reactivate it, resignify it'.<sup>48</sup> And in so doing, we can trace the path along which we have arrived today. We can see that there have always been multiple 'name-tags' signifying different 'identities' of Macao, and we can acknowledge that, although some of them may not be readily understood by us today, all of them are significant components of the Macao that we know and live in. A 'collective memory' of Macao is a collection of individual memories that, real and sincere, make up the Macao in which we now dwell. In turn, while such a path taken by our forefathers continues in our present and into the future, studying how the people of Macao have had different identities in the past informs us on how we can now yield an identity for ourselves, while our next generations may also 'reinscribe', 'reactivate' and 'resignify' parts of our present when they eventually think about their own identity with Macao at their time.

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*Léon Pallière in His Room at the Villa Medici* (1817) by Jean Alaux. Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.