# An Exploration of Techniques in Cross-cultural Film Adaptation — The Case of *The Bewitching Braid*

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ABSTRACT: Based on its original novel, public interviews given by the filmmakers, and related writings, this study examines and discusses the adapted film *The Bewitching Braid* through the lenses of performance studies, theories of cross-cultural adaption, and comparative analysis approach. My analysis focuses on the 'fidelity' and 'creativity' within the film adaptation of the original story, and aims to give an accurate account of the social structures behind its screenplay writing and filmmaking, as well as cultural backgrounds of the filmmakers. This article also explores different factors and rationales that have shaped the 'deletion' and 'addition' during the process of cross-cultural film adaptation.

KEYWORDS: Macanese literature; Macao feature film; Cross-cultural adaptation; Henrique de Senna Fernandes; Adapted film.

#### INTRODUCTION

In the early 1990s, when I was just a teenager and on my way to school, I witnessed a large crowd of onlookers buzzing with excitement and fascinated by the filming set in the Jardim de S. Francisco. Back in the days, film productions on the streets of Macao was a thrilling event, where people would go a long way to view it. Despite their inquisitiveness, the occasion offered them a chance to catch a glimpse

of movie stars in action. I craned my head over the crowd, and saw a girl with beautiful big eyes talking to the crew while caressing her long braid. A year later, the movie title — *The Bewitching Braid* — appeared in the hand-painted cinema billboard at the Cineteatro Macau. People who dwelled in the city all knew about the screening of the first Macao feature film produced by the Cai Brothers (Macau) Film Co., Ltd. A middle school student then, the

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Fig. 1: Film catalogue of The Bewitching Braid in 1998. Photo by author.

billboard evoked my memory of the actress in the garden. Despite being too young to watch the film when it was released, the long braid left an imprint in my memory. Looking at the billboard, I was intrigued: how was Macao being portraited on the big screen? And how were the Macanese writers' stories being adapted into a film?

Two years went by and one day as I was passing by the Travessa do Armazém Velho (Lan Kwai Lau),¹ a film pamphlet hung on the side of a shop caught my eye. The pamphlet was protected by a plastic sleeve, and bears on its cover was a picture of a romantic kiss between a Chinese lady and an occidental gentleman, with the title 'The Bewitching Braid', and the words 'The First Macau Feature Film' on the bottom right.

Though it was priced at \$10, which was part of my lunch money, I bought it from the shop owner without hesitation. Almost 20 years later during the celebration of the centennial birthday of Henrique de Senna Fernandes, I reread *A Trança Feiticeira*, both its original Portuguese text and its Chinese translation, and watched the film. From the perspective of a researcher, this article attempts to address the doubts that aroused to me in my young age.

Based on public interviews given by the filmmakers, and related writings, this study examines and discusses the adapted film *The Bewitching Braid* and its original novel through the lenses of performance studies, theories of cross-cultural adaption, and comparative analysis approach. It analyses the 'fidelity' and 'creativity' between film adaptation and original literature will be addressed, with attempts to explore the rationales behind the 'deletion' and 'addition' in cross-cultural film adaptation. In order to be aligned with the journal's working language, all quotes from the novel reproduced in this article are the English translations by David Brookshaw.<sup>2</sup>

## 1. RETHINKING THE INTERREACTION BETWEEN CREATOR AND FILM

According to Linxia Chen,

Data shows that adaptations account for approximately 40 per cent of all films produced worldwide. In China, adapted films based on literary works continue to increase, taking about 30 per cent of all feature films produced in a year. Most award-winning films of the Golden Rooster Award are adaptations. From 1981 to 1999, the 'Golden Rooster Awards' had been held 19 times, in which 12 awarded films were drawn from novels.<sup>3</sup>

The Bewitching Braid, based on the romance novel A Trança Feiticeira, was one of the adapted

films produced during the transition period before the Handover of Macao. Its film production started in 1995 and was premiered in 1996, The Bewitching Braid, with Cai Yuanyuan (main screenwriter) and Cai An'an as screenwriters, is a co-production by the Cai Brothers (Macau) Film Co., Ltd. and the Pearl River Film Company, which takes its source material from Portuguese novel A Trança Feiticeira. As shown in the beginning of the film, screenwriters are Cai Yuanyuan (main writer) and Cai An'an. The film won not only the Best Co-produced Film at the 19th Hundred Flowers Awards held in September 1996, and an award at the 25th Figueira da Foz Festival in the same year.4 The Bewitching Braid was not only the first feature film produced in Macao, but also the first to adapt its story from a local literature.

Literature-to-film adaptation involves the process of interpretation, reconstruction, modification, and even recreation of an original literary work, through which it transposes the source text into a screenplay that can serve as the basis of a film production. As Xiaoyu Wang points out, film adaptation needs to 'adhere to forms and protocols within film practice, and functions through a transposition of literary content into filmic representation, so that the output is different from any form of literary expression, this is the process of [film] adaptation'.<sup>5</sup> In other words, the practice of film adaptation does not end with a modification of textual matters, it 'is stretched until the cinematic product is finally completed'.<sup>6</sup>

Existing research on film adaptation mostly draws on the notions of fidelity and creativity. Whether or not an adapted film is 'loyal' to its novel and presents the latter 'faithfully' is the question often asked by scholars and audience who have already read the original story. However, any artistic transformation requires a creative process. For linguistic materials to be transposed into visual language, the adaptive practice inevitably involves creative inputs.

When it comes to adapting one medium to another, much of the debate revolves around the desirability of fidelity. The works of the famous *wuxia* novelist Jin Yong (Louis Leung-Yung Cha) have been repeatedly adapted to films and TV series by filmmakers in Chinese-speaking regions. He gives his interpretation on film adaptation as the follows:

Simply sticking faithfully to the original novel is not enough to bring it into a film production. The novel — Harvest, by Soviet writer Galina Nikolaeva was quite a hit when it came out, but the screenplay she wrote based on the novel was not considered successful. Why? Because the artistic form of film is very different from that of novel, what works in a novel does not necessarily work in the film. The best adaptation, besides being faithful to the main plots and characters of the novel, needs to find out deletions and additions, more importantly, present the creative work of the film itself (Jin Yong, On War and Peace).<sup>7</sup>

The aim of this study is not to discuss whether a film adaption should be faithful to its textual source, but to understand the rationales behind the 'deletions' and 'additions' through the lens of comparative analytical approach. Before analysing the 'fidelity' and 'creativity' in *The Bewitching Braid*, the social structures and cultural backgrounds of the novelist and the filmmakers are presented in the following sections.

#### 1.1 THE WRITER AND THE ORIGINAL NOVEL

The Bewitching Braid was created by Macanese writer Henrique de Senna Fernandes and published in 1993. Originally written in Portuguese, the novel tells a forbidden love story set in Macao of 1930s. This romantic relationship begins with the encounter of Adozindo, a Macanese young man from the upper

social class, and A-Leng, a water-carrier girl from the neighbourhood of Cheok Chai Un.

At his early 30s, Adozindo is the only son of the family. He lives amidst those who dote on him, and is accustomed to people's admiration for his good looks. In order to elevate the family's social status, his father decides to move from Santo António to a luxury house in Estrada da Vitória. Cheok Chai Un, a Chinese neighbourhood not far from their new home is described by the author, in the Preface, as follows:

From its very beginnings as a village, Cheok Chai Un was marked by the stigma of being a place of ill repute. It was dirty, harboured many diseases, a den of rogues and of all the dregs of humanity. Not even when it became a quarter did these labels disappear.<sup>8</sup>

A-Leng, who is at her age of 22 and a water-carrier, dwells in this neighbourhood. Likewise, she is greatly loved and cared, and the 'Queen Bee' (*Abelha-Mestra*), who possess strong authority over the well, regards her as her successor. For A-Leng,

The inhabitants of Cheok Chai Un were her people. For those outside, the quarter was a den of iniquity, a lair for prostitutes and hoodlums. But for those within, they had a code honour, there was a way of life and standards of behaviour, traditions and local customs that had to be observed, under pain of general disapproval. Indeed, there was no such thing as a whorehouse there. The folk that dwelt there were like her.

The love between the barefoot water-carrier girl and the playboy from the upper class stems from A-Leng's shining black braid. The love of the protagonists faces numerous obstacles, including rejections and exclusions by both their families and

communities, clashes caused by cultural differences and class tensions, as well as challenges living in straitened circumstances. All these led to a profusion of conflicts and hardships for the couple. Similar plots about a romantic relationship across socio-cultural boundaries can often be found in Senna Fernandes's novels and short stories.

Macanese novelist Henrique Fernandes was born in Macao on 15 October 1923. His ancestor Bernardino de Senna Fernandes (1815-1893) was the first holder of the title of Count and was appointed the King of Siam as the Consul of Siam in Macao. 10 One of the illustrious Macanese families in Macau, the Senna Fernandes family settled in the city more than two centuries ago. Henrique de Senna Fernandes received Portuguese-language education during his primary and secondary school years in Macao, and in 1946, he went to the law school of the University of Coimbra in Portugal, and upon completion of his internship he returned to Macao to practive law in 1954. He was the director of Escola Comercial Pedro Nolasco, the president of the Association for the Promotion of Macanese Education, and also held other important posts. In recognition of his life-long contributions in education, literature, and legal system, Henrique de Senna Fernandes has been granted awards and decorations, including the Medal of Cultural Merit in 2001 by the Macao SAR Government.

Henrique de Senna Fernandes developed his passion for literature during his school years. In 1950, he won a literary prize in the University of Coimbra for his short story 'A-Chan, a Tancareira'. The main protagonists of his work were often members of the Macanese and Chinese societies in Macao. With regard to the difference between the Macanese Portuguese and the Portuguese from Portugal, I have provided arguments in my previous article on the Patuá Theatre, in which I followed the theory of Portuguese anthropologist João de Pina-Cabral<sup>11</sup> and

used Macanese cultural identity as an entry point. The arguments can be summarised as follows:

Broadly speaking, Portuguese are referred to those who were born in Portugal or whose both parents were Portuguese citizens at the time of their birth, possessing Portuguese culture and regard Portugal as their homeland. However, Macanese have a distinctive cultural identity based on their culture, language and ethnicity, they are of Eurasian mixed race and with a strong sense of belonging to Macao. In the past, the Macanese were generally labelled as filho-da-terra, macau-filo or macaísta. Scholars summarised four key characteristics to define a Macanese, which includes: (1) race, must be a Portuguese decedent; (2) language, speaks Portuguese as the major language; (3) religion, is a believer of Catholic religion; (4) cultural identity, he or she must have a sense of Macaneseness. The reason behind the ambiguity of Macanese identity is the absence of a general consensus on its definition [...] Currently cultural identity based solely on genealogy composition is rarely the norm. The Macanese identity had been versatile throughout its history and the current younger generation bears a different mindset on this matter. 12

In terms of the cultural hybridity and liminality of Macanese identity, Tangqi Zhang provides a comprehensive analysis below:

This kind of hybridity of Chinese and Western cultures leads to the complex feelings of pride and inferiority among Macanese people. They feel the racial difference associated with the concept of blood impurity when encountering Portuguese, but flash out a superiority complex related to colonial legacies when coming into contact with Chinese. As a results, the Macanese forms

a sense of differentness and unique vision. For instance, the areas where they were named as the 'Christian city' or the 'Portuguese settlement', and areas where Chinese live as the 'Chinese city' or 'Chinese settlement'. This was not a mere spacial boundary, but a symbolic representation of the two socio-culturally divided worlds in the city. Simultaneously, the demarcation manifests that those living in the Christian city are more superior and nobler, with a more civilised and elegant way of living in comparison to that of the Chinese settlement [...] These racial and cultural based divisions are often brought up in Macanese literature.<sup>13</sup>

The main storylines in many of Senna Fernandes's works often centre on the romance between a Macanese male and a Chinese female. The original version *A Trança Feiticeira* was published in 1993. As pointed out by Tangqi Zhang, his work documents the history of 'prejudice and heritage fostered by the cultural differences between the Chinese and Portuguese (Macanese)<sup>14</sup> societies in Macao, and suggests that isolation, exclusion, and conflict of this kind will eventually fade out in the future'. Yet, time and perseverance are essential to overcome traditional social barriers, especially among those who are intrinsic to traditions and conventional beliefs towards marriage and race.

I recall the occasion of interviewing the daughter of Henrique de Senna Fernandes a few years ago. When entering into the house, we saw immediately a painting of a Chinese woman, whose eyes exude determination. 'This is my mother. She is beautiful, right?', said Fernandes's daughter, and then she began to recount a story of his father, a descendent of a noble Macanese family, who had coped with hurdles and challenges to marry a Chinese woman. This part of his experience has also been mentioned in many interviews and articles:



Fig. 2: Henrique de Senna Fernandes and his wife Ho Heong Sut (Teresa) on their wedding day on 26 October 1963, in their house on Rua da Penha. Senna Fernandes family archive.

On their way to marriage, Henrique de Senna Fernandes and his Chinese wife needed to face huge amount of pressures arose from the social circumstances at that time, they had to reconcile the differences between their family backgrounds, cultures, and social customs. Such road to interracial marriage was a long and bumpy one, and it not only showed Senna Fernandes's pursuance of love by triumphing over tremendous hardships but also left him with feelings engraved deep in his soul, he therefore cherished this love so much. 16

It is often said that Macao is the place where Chinese and Western cultures meet. However it also has experienced 'a stage during which each group within the settlement makes its own social boundaries in order to unite the group members, exclude and distrust the other groups and see itself more prestigious'. <sup>17</sup> No matter it is in the realm of fiction or reality, these boundaries are not firmly closed, therefore the crystallisation of cross-cultural love becomes possible — the Macanese community. It is in the same way; the author of the novel has constructed those characters by carrying such thoughts. Male protagonists in his works

usually are from a privileged Macanese family (just as the author's family background). Take Adozindo as an example. He can have everything from his rich family, and enjoy a privileged social position, which allow him to conquest the Macanese upper-class women. Chinese women characters are built with a determined soul with the spirit of perseverance. They lead the male protagonists to overcome obstacles and transcend limitations of faith, and together become the victors in the end, just like A-Leng. Even though she has to face hardships in life and distain from her own community, never has she surrendered hope when being insulted through humiliation and contempt. Nevertheless, for a man and a woman, each from different cultural backgrounds and social classes, but once their paths cross and even building their lives together, will they preserve 'faithfully' the traditions and values that they belong to? In spite of their differences, do they share any 'sameness' with each other as they grow up in the same place? The following section details the plots of the novel and the film to be discussed further.

#### 1.2 SCREENWRITER AND FILMMAKING

Sons of theatre artist Songling Cai,18 the Cai brothers were born in Sichuan Province. The two grew up in the milieu of performing art, where they participated in a children's film, Letter with Feather (Jimao xin 雞毛信). After his graduation from the Central Academy of Drama in China, he learnt Kun Opera and Peking Opera from famous artists, and was the central protagonist of the national dance drama Ning Si Bu Qu (寧死不屈). In the 1980s, the Cai brothers participated in the founding of the 'China Television Artists Association' and they started the company 'Cai Brothers (Macau) Film Co.' in 1989.19 Cai An'an expressed, during a post-screening talk in 2017, that he found the novel A Trança Feiticeira in 1994, and started filming the following year, and premiered the film in 1996. He added that:

[We] did not only produce a film of romance, but also reflected the dominant leitmotiv of modernity. Insecurity and turbulence are widely found in the contemporary world. Wars and cultural differences between regions are objective realities, how do we find a solution for cultural differences and clash of civilisations between the East and the West? I think it should be through collision [of ideas], exchange, convergence, in lieu of war and conflict.<sup>20</sup>

The Cai brothers immigrated to Macao in 1989, one year after the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration was implemented. At that time, the Macao society was actively preparing for the Handover of Macao in 1999. The 'Macao question' and 'the question of Macanese' created heated discussions, as a result, cultural awareness began to take root and people from all walks of life engaged in a variety of preservation works, literature, academic research, video production, etc., in hopes of documenting Macao prior to the handover. The policies of the Macao Government at the time, such as judicial laws, economy and education, were being adjusted to fit the upcoming administrative changes. The novel A Trança Feiticeira and its adapted film were some of the products of the transition period of Macao (from 15 January 1988 to 19 December 1999).

The Bewitching Bride featured Mandarin Chinese as its main language. Chinese actors in the film used Mandarin in their dialogues, which do not reflect the language use of Macao at the time. As Soi Man Lo states, 'Cantonese is the most common language in Macao, it is spoken by the majority of population in the territory'. In my view, there might be a business considerations behind this language choice. The Cai brothers were actively promoting film industry in mainland China, in the early days, and films in Mandarin would reach a wider audience in the mainland. Moreover, the Cai brothers, were non-Cantonese speakers and language used for scripts,



Fig. 3: Henrique de Senna Fernandes in his office on Av. Almeida Ribeiro, with the portrait of A-Leng from the film *The Bewitching Braid* by an unknown artist, c. 2000. Senna Fernandes family archive.

actors and production crew were mainly composed of non-Cantonese speakers.

On the other hand, the main characters in the film are played by non-local actors — Adozindo's role is played by Ricardo Carriço, a famous actor from Portugal; A-Leng's role is played by Jing Ning from Guizhou Province of China; other roles, such as, Adozindo's father, friends, and the lover he nearly got married to, are from Portugal; and Queen Bee in the novel was renamed as 'Mother A-Ju' in the film, and this role is played by Yi Ding, a national first-class actor. It was speculated that Macao's film industry had not yet been developed, therefore there were no professional film actors available for the film; moreover, because of

the cultural backgrounds of the film production crew and the choice of the dialogue language, the team did not look for potential actors from Hong Kong.<sup>22</sup> From this point of view, the target audiences for the film were defined from the outset.

## 2. ADAPTATION FROM TEXT TO VISUAL-AUDIO ADAPTATION

The film begins with the text 'Co-production by the Pearl River Film Company, the Cai Brothers (Macau) Film Co., Ltd. immediately followed by melody resembling a nursery rhyme. Henrique de Senna Fernandes appears on screen writing and with a voice-over saying in Portuguese:

'Esta não é uma trança comum, é uma trança feticeira. Quem a viu, nunca mais esquece dela. Eu sei.' (This is not an ordinary braid, it is a bewitching braid. Whoever saw it, will never forget it. I know.)<sup>23</sup>

These are the words Adozindo, using a first-person narrative, says to the author in the final part of the novel. The wording is slightly different, but the meaning is equivalent. The title of the film 'The Bewitching Braid' appears, the background image that shows the Ruins of St. Paul's and the sculpture symbolising the friendship between China and Portugal — 'East meets West' (*Encontro entre o Ocidente e o Oriente*).

The Ruins of St. Paul's is the façade of the Church of Mater Dei, which was attached to the St. Paul's College, the first Western university in East Asia. Asia. Mowadays the Ruins of St. Paul's is a signature landmark of the city, and it is a part of the 'Historic Centre of Macao'. On 15 July 2005, the historic centre was inscribed on the List of World Heritage Sites and became the 31st World Heritage site in China.

The sculpture on the screen was inaugurated in 1994, and named as 'East meets West'. It was made by artist Lagoa Henriques (1923–2009), who is famous for his bronze statue of Fernando Pessoa. The sculpture shows a Chinese woman offering a lotus flower to a Portuguese man. They are surrounded by a vertical circle, on top of which there is a crane bird. The lotus flower is the symbolic representation of Macao, which symbolises purity and grace; and in Chinese culture, the crane bird is associated with the cultural connotation of noble morality, longevity, and integrity. This artwork is one of the monuments that embodies and metaphorises the Sino-Portuguese friendship.

The opening credits of the film, displayed blackand-white photos that showcases Macao in its earlier days, such as a dancing party of Portuguese upper class community, a woman braiding hair on the street, a Macanese family portrait, a scenic shot of early Macao, a western wedding between a Chinese and a Macanese, and so on. The film opens with a lively and bustling scene of dragon dance accompanied by firecrackers in front of the Ruins of St. Paul's, the shot then shifts to a local band Tuna Macaense playing traditional music with mandolin,<sup>26</sup> while a group of upper-class western people are socialising with each other in a dancing party. After that, the scene switches to the protagonist Adozindo who is dressing up at home and family members and friends are making fun of his selfabsorbed obsession in appearance. The scene shifts back to the festive Chinese dragon and lion dance at the Ruins of St. Paul's, where people are screaming and cheering for dancer's outstanding skills, along with bursts of firecrackers. When the lead lion dancer takes off lion head, the glorious face of the A-Leng fills the whole screen, exuding happiness and confidence. Among many cheering on the lion dance is the male protagonist Adozindo. He is suddenly attracted by A-Leng's seductive beauty. He asks his friend where the lion dance team comes from, and he receives the reply — 'Cheok Chai Un'. The scene then shows Adozinho's entrance to the dancing party where he was immediately surrounded by occidental looking ladies. The juxtapose between the upper-class at the ballroom and the ordinary at the Ruins of St. Paul's in a few minutes' screen time, presents the difference in cultural backgrounds and socio-economic positions between the two protagonists both holding great attention and love from their respective communities.

#### 2.1. CONTEXTUAL RECONSTRUCTION

The opening shot lays a cultural foundation for the film, with big red lanterns hung at the Ruins of St. Paul's to express the cleavage and clash of religions. It presents a coexistence of two cultures in the city and reveals the possibility of social convergence. The music played at the dancing party aforementioned is *Macau Sā Assi* (This is Macao), one of the most representative

songs in the Macanese community. The local band Tuna Macaense that plays the song was originally founded in 1935, whose performance had once been suspended during the war time. After that, a younger generation took up the band's reins.

Patuá was the daily communication language used by Macanese community until the early 20th century. The language has many other names such as, Macanese patois, Língu di Macau, Dóci lingu di Macau, or Língu maquista, just to name a few. It develops from a Portuguese-based creole language with a substrate from Malay, Canarim, Cantonese, and its accent sounds melodious. It was once used for trade in previous centuries, and was a common language among the Macanese. During the late 19th-century and early 20th-century, the role of the language was greatly diminished because of the Macao Government's drive to establish standard Portuguese education throughout the territory. Even though it is no longer used as a home language in Macanese families, it has now become a representative marker of their cultural identity.<sup>27</sup> Macau Sā Assi was adapted from a Portuguese song Lisboa é Assim released in 1944, with Patuá lyric recreation by José dos Santos Ferreira (1919-1993) in 1968. In terms of setting, the song does not match the story background, but it could be regarded as one of the strategies employed by film producers to make a Macanese cultural marker in the film.

As mentioned above, the film uses Mandarin for Chinese dialogue, even when Macanese and Portuguese communicate in Chinese. Yet, there were a few scenes at Cheok Chai Un, where some Cantonese words were added, such as 'kuai-lou' and 'pok-gai' (a Cantonese vulgar word, roughly equivalent to dork). This indicates that consideration of including locally specific culture and language were taken. In one scene when the two protagonists meet again at Cheok Chai Un, A-Leng is seen sitting by the well, patting her braid, and singing in Cantonese 'Two inseparable hearts, through love and death, transforms into a pair

of butterflies and together, they ascend to heaven'. The film reconstructs Macao's context by adding Cantonese in attempt to present regional culture as well as compiling with the expectations of local audience. The novel, though written in Portuguese, contained many Cantonese and Macanese terms such as 'a-tâi' (a Patuá word used to describe Chinese young man from lower social class), 'kuai-lou' (meaning foreigner), 'min-nap' (meaning cotton-padded jacket), and so on.<sup>28</sup> In the original novel, the author incorporates a great number of local terminologies, reflecting not only his cultural background, but also that of where the story is set.

#### 2.2. REINVENTING CULTURE IN THE REGION

Scholarly research on Macanese culture, identity, and even literature often borrows theories from cross-cultural studies. For the film examined in this article, it also involves practices of cross-cultural adaptation. Rustom Bharucha proposes the term of 'intracultural' to describe 'those exchanges within, between, and across regions in the larger framework of a nation', in order to differentiate it from the 'intercultural' that is defined as 'the exchange of cultures across nations'.<sup>29</sup>

Scene patterns and plots mimicking those of Kun Opera and Peking Opera were noticed in this film, perhaps due to cultural background of the Cai brothers. Elements of authority and unshakeable bedrock of feudal traditions were presented in scenes where Mother A-Ju was present. These present the latent dimensions of taboo and punishment existing at the intersection of local and extra-local cultures.

In the film, A-Sôi, a water-carrier who is a good friend to A-Leng, fled from an arranged marriage. She was caught and brought to Mother A-Ju, subsequently condemned to the torture of kneeling on bamboo spikes, which would result in permanent damages stopping her from future water carrying works. A-Leng rushes to the ancestral shrine upon hearing the news. In that scene, there is a marked contrast

of the dim lights and dark coloured clothes with red ancestral tablets and red candles in the background. Mother A-Ju repeatedly stresses that 'Cheok Chai Un has had its own rules for a century'. The story is set in 1931, as such 'for a century' means that the rules started in 1831. Documentation states that there used to be a gate on Rua do Campo, and outside the old city wall was a Chinese village known as Pátio da Pedra, Cheok Chai Un was located within the Christian city. The name Cheok Chai Un, literally meaning 'garden of birds', has its origin to its natural environment where birds fluttered the dense bushes. In 1860s, the Macao Government began its infrastructure plans, building roads and its residential quarter in this area, and records show that a small temple located in the area, known as Fok Tak Chi, was built in 1886.30 Given changes on district division and infrastructures of the city in the last century, it is worth asking if the 'addition' of the statement that 'the rules and punishments have a history of over a hundred years' in the film bears implicit messages. The torturous and inhumane punishment imposed on A-Sôi, together with the aesthetic designs for this added plot seem to be reminiscent of the 1991 film Raise the Red Lantern, directed by Zhang Yimou and starred by Gong Li.31

In *The Bewitching Braid*, A-Sôi gives in and conforms to her parent's arranged marriage. As A-Leng later describes, 'Sister A-Sôi is so miserable, I heard that the man has a very bad temper and he looks ugly'. But in view of Mother A-Ju, this is 'a woman's fate'. The film includes the 'addition' of a conversation between them:

Mother A-Ju: For hundreds of years, there have been two types of people in Macau. One with white skin and one with yellow skin. These two kinds of people cannot be in a relationship, let alone a marriage.

A-Leng: Why?

Mother A-Ju: This is a rule set by the older

generation. One year, a water-carrier from Cheok Chai Un and a kuai-lou got along very well, the girl became pregnant eventually.

A-Leng: What happened then?

Mother A-Ju: The girl was unable to deal with her feelings and committed suicide.

However, the character of the same name<sup>32</sup> A-Sôi in the original story has a different fate and her first appearance in the novel was different too. In the novel, A-Sôi appears after A-Leng and Adozindo decided to live together. A-Sôi, a good friend of A-Leng, used to be a water-carrier in Cheok Chai Un. She was one of the few water-carriers who married a man outside Cheok Chai Un. As described, she 'left the quarter to marry the owner of a joss-sticks shop in the Rua da Barca and who supplied the Tou Tei Temple. They had been close friends and she, A-Leng, had helped her a lot in her marriage plans, giving her a much better prospect'.33 After a quarrel with Adozindo, A-Leng leaves home and goes to her friend, A-Sôi. This is the build-up with which the character is brought into the story. A-Sôi's husband treats her well and they live a happy married life. The 'addition' in the film presents intracultural adaptive approach. Cheok Chai Un is characterised as a place governed by feudal traditions and conservatism, amplifying the differences in social and cultural backgrounds between the male and female protagonists.

## 3. INTERWEAVING CULTURES: DIVISION AND CONVERGENCE

Nonetheless, both in the novel and in the film, the love between the two protagonists is forbidden in their society. In the past, the Macanese community had distinct neighbourhood comradeship and culture, this sentiment continued until 1980s when Macao underwent rapid urban and economic development, eventually changing its neighbourhood structures drastically. This particular sense of neighbourhood

distinction was influenced by freguesias (parishes) and the old city walls.

The famous Qing Dynasty poet Wang Zhaoyong mentioned in his poem that 'the boundary divides the North and the South', which refers to this matter: within the boundary wall is the residential area of the Portuguese [Christian city]; outside the boundary wall, including Tap Seac, Long Tin, Mong Há and other villages are where Chinese people live.<sup>34</sup>

The bygone boundary walls and neighbourhood comradeship based on parishes (including religious parishes and administrative parishes) divided the living spaces of different social classes. This is the reason why Adozindo's father decides to move house in order to elevate his family's social status. For Adozindo's father, it was a way to enter the inner social circle of the powerful and the rich, and anything that jeopardises this goal will not be allowed or accepted. As Jixiu Guo points out in the research on Henrique de Senna Fernandes, when commenting on the fate of the male protagonists in Senna Fernandes's two novels:

This is a question of cultural belonging among Macanese. People in Christian city who violate cultural values of the Christian city will be 'exiled' to the lower-class Chinese city to suffer.<sup>35</sup>

The Macanese male protagonists in Senna Fernandes' novels often face the fate of being ostracised and alienated from their families because they deviate from the ideological code and class-based orientation of their communities. Adozindo is kicked out from his family and betrayed by his friends when he violated the 'codes' by choosing the Chinese water-carrier. His father intends for his son to marry a wealthy widow, but Adozindo chooses to violate the ideology of same-race marriage or marrying a European, which is considered

a survival strategy at that time to ensure one's *Capital de Portugalidade* (Capital of Portugueseness).<sup>36</sup>

Concomitantly, interracial marriage in traditional Chinese community is rare and is not culturally accepted. According to a news report, 'there are no transnational marriages registered in 1978 in mainland China'.<sup>37</sup> In accordance to traditional gender roles of Chinese women, they should be virtuous, subject themselves to principles of the 'three obediences and four virtues', loyal to their families, obedient to their husbands, and must conform to their parents' expectations and arranged marriages, and do not support any interracial marriages.

The Ministry of Education of the Qing Dynasty petitioned in 1910 to prohibit overseas Chinese students from marrying foreigners. It contended that there were three major disadvantages for overseas students to marry foreign women. Firstly, it would affect their studies; secondly, foreign women were extravagant, overseas students had limited funds and could not afford their spending; and thirdly, after having a family, the burden of the family would be heavy and the pursuit of knowledge would be deemed less important. The biggest harm was that these overseas students 'would be likely to have the desire to live in a foreign country and dislike their motherland', therefore resulting in a brain drain.38

Both *Tang Code* (《唐律》) and the laws of the Qing Dynasty prohibited specific kinds of interracial marriages. Until the decline of the feudal system, interracial marriages were not regarded as conventional ones by the Chinese. Macao is a place where Chinese and foreigners coexist and blend, and national ideology and traditional customs have created limitations for social interaction between racial groups. However, Macao was nonetheless a liminal place. In spite of the

difference in terms of cultural background, social class, and childhood environment between the protagonists, Henrique de Senna Fernandes stresses the 'similarities' of the two due to their living in the same city. In the novel, 'both of them dismissed the idea of going to hospital. The only women who went to hospital were those who were poor or had been abandoned, or were in danger of dying. It would have been tantamount to formally accepting a status of unrelenting poverty, and her pride would never allow it. Such was the mentality of the age'.39 In contrast, the screenwriters emphasises the 'difference' of the two. In the scene describing A-Ling's delivery, Adozindo wants to send A-Leng to the hospital to give birth, fails to understand her refusal. A-Leng says that only prostitutes and bad women go to 'that kind of place', he responds, 'How could you have such thoughts'?

Another obvious difference between the adapted film and the novel is the circumstance on which Adozindo asks Mother A-Ju/Queen Bee to help A-Leng deliver the baby. In the film, Mother A-Ju lies on a long wicker chair, while Adozindo begs for help. A young water-carrier tells Adozindo that Mother A-Ju is ill and can't go. Adozindo squats beside her and continues to beg for her help, but she asks with her eyes half-closed, 'isn't your hospital very good?' The young water-carrier then shows Adozindo the door. He passes the door but turns back and shouts in the rain: 'A-Leng is in danger! I can't live without her! We are married, she is my wife! I beg you! Please!' He cries like a child, and then kneels down and begs for help. A voice from the house tells him to go find a doctor, and he leaves sobbing helplessly. The camera switches to another scene of Adozindo attempting to bring a Western doctor home but to no avail. When he returns home, he finds Mother A-Ju in it, and that she has successfully helped deliver A-Leng's new-born baby. On the contrary, the same scene in the novel goes as follows:

The message had been delivered and he [Adozindo] wasn't going to wait for her to make up her mind in the middle of all those people [...] He said: 'I'll be on my way. A-Leng's along. Please, if you are still fond of her, don't leave it too long,' and he gave directions on how to reach the Estrada do Repouso. He turned and left Cheok Chai Un. When he was well on his way, he looked back. With a sigh of relief, he saw the Queen-Bee's large bulk plodding along behind him. 40

Clara Gomes considers *The Bewitching Braid* as a Chinese film, targeting at Chinese-speaking audience. She contends that 'emotional expressions tend to be more exaggerated in Chinese films, which can often be seen in Hong Kong movies and TV series, and Ricardo Carriço became a victim of this technique'. As Gomes points out, the plot of Adozindo kneeling down in the heavy rain for A-Leng, crying like a helpless child, and begging Mother A-Ju to help deliver A-Leng's baby does not reflect the social reality at that time. She further argues 'men who were born in the 1930s and have received upper-class education will not act like young lads of the 1990s in pursuit of love, they would not put down their dignity in such manner easily'. <sup>41</sup>

Although both the novel and the film has a happy ending, the story leading to it differs, especially on the circumstance of how Adozindo and his farther reunited. In the novel, the father refused to engage in any contact with his son for years for the sake of reputation. Six years later, a Macanese friend of the father says to him: 'Are you still chewing over a resentment that is empty and makes no sense at all, no one out there seems to remember the affairs any anymore? Let them live as they have chosen to live. The union of their souls, so different in their background and culture, shouldn't surprise anyone. This, after all, is Macao'. The father then walks to Tap Seac and

he encounters Adozindo who is flying kites with his children, the old man approaches and joins forces with them to win a kite contest. After that, he goes with them back to Adozindo's place by holding hands of his grandchildren. 'Come in, father. This home is your home', <sup>42</sup> A-Leng says upon the father's arrival. On the screen, however, the reason for the family's reunion is that the father has changed his mind after receiving a gift by Mother A-Ju, which is a heart-shaped paper cut for lovers.

The film takes only a few minutes to narrate the plots from A-Leng's delivery to the happy ending of family union. By contrast, the ending of the novel has been built up from Adzindo and A-Leng's self-reliance and hard struggle. In visual expression of the director's vision, A-Leng has not changed culturally. In her wedding dress, A-Leng decides to take off her shoes, which implies that she has not forgotten her own habit of walking barefoot and her identity of being a water-carrier. Furthermore, when Mother A-Ju holds a banquet to celebrate the baby's first month birthday, she hands over the mansion key to A-Leng, and gives the heart-shaped paper cut to Adozindo. After that she passes away dramatically, sitting in an upright position. A-Leng, in the novel, upholds her own traditional values, while at the same time she possesses the characteristics of mixing Chinese and Western cultures, which brings her closer to the reality of Macao. As described in the text, having lived together for six years, Adozindo shares with A-Leng his knowledge of literature and film, and 'when A-Leng served up Chinese food, she would eat with chopsticks, and she would use cutlery if it was Macanese or Portuguese food.<sup>43</sup> In turn, A-Leng explains to Adozindo the Cantonese opera, Chinese history, and moral ethos, thus the latter '[has] learned with A-Leng to gain a greater appreciation of the Chinese soul and culture'.44 As the author of the novel states, 'these were habits and customs from two cultures that mingled together without any imposition on either side'. 45 In Macao, a

small place that have for several centuries undergone close intercultural exchanges, one would find not only the heterogeneity but also the hybridity, both deeply interwoven in the making of everyday life.

#### **CONCLUSION**

'Addition' and 'deletion' in literature-to-film adaptation are necessary and inevitable. As shown in Jin Yong's remarks, the important point is to present the creative work of the film itself. This article agrees with Xiuji Guo's viewpoint, the central concern of the novel focuses on 'elimination of prejudices against Chinese women and biases against interracial marriages, and affirmation of Macanese younger generation in choosing their own identity through autonomous marriage'. In addition, the novel has depicted Macanese way of life and their specific culture in meticulous details, it is a gold mine for readers to understand the multi-ethnic Macao.

The female protagonist in the novel, A-Leng, is shown as a woman who has the strength to overcome obstacles and follows her heart. Like conventional notions of a traditional Chinese woman, she is persistent, hardworking, and tender, but at the same time she has the spirit of breaking the constraints of feudalism. She is not afraid of powerful people, regardless when she faces the rejection of Adozindo's family, or is confronted by rogues, she would be '[leaping] into the middle of the street ... [with] a murderous look ... [to issue] her challenge.'<sup>47</sup> And this how she protects her man and her freedom of love.

For Adozindo, even when he has a chance to become extremely wealthy if he were to marry an affluent widow, or is being kicked out of his own home, he chooses to give up fame and fortune for the woman he loves. Even though he was so featherbedded in the past, in order to be with A-Leng, he is willing to give up his superior position in the upper-class society, face contempt from his community, and endure hatred from people in Cheok Chai Un. In the end they

overcome tremendous hardships and reconciled with their own communities. This love story is a portrayal of many interracial marriages in the city. As the Macanese friend of Adozindo's father concludes, 'this, after all, is Macao'.

The central message of *The Bewitching Braid* is that love can transcend any social conventions, cultural differences, and class boundaries. According to the film composer, Veiga Jardim, the original cut of the film runs 3 hours and 20 minutes (200 minutes),<sup>48</sup> and the final version for general release is 110 minutes long, nearly half the original length has been cut. The Cai brothers have effectively tried their best to construct the complex social and cultural backgrounds of the characters in the film within a limited time. Through dramatic structure such as exposition, rise, climax, return, and resolution, the 'differences' embodied in characters, aesthetic scenic design, the film presents a diverse image of Macao and its multicultural communities to the audiences who

are not familiar with its historical background and multicultural community.

Created during the time approaching to Macao's return to China, *The Bewitching Braid*, through adaptation of Macanese writer Henrique de Senna Fernandes' work, helps to portray the everyday life, feelings and emotions of the multi-ethnic city. The filmmakers and the author of the novel, based on their respective cultural backgrounds, have presented Adozindo and A-Leng's story in different forms of literary expression and mediums. Both parties worked towards a common goal, to transcend cultural differences and promote 'intracultural' and 'intercultural' exchanges. In this way, they help readers and audience to understand Macao' uniqueness through their emotive works of art.

\*This article is a translation of 黎若嵐、、跨文化電影改編策略探析——以《大辮子的誘惑》為例》, *Review of Culture* (Chinese Edition), no. 119 (2023), 30–43.

#### **NOTES**

- 1 Travessa do Armazém Velho is a street located between Rua da Tercena and Rua das Estalagens. The area is famous for its antique shops selling old photos, antique porcelain and furniture, where flea markets are held aperiodically.
- 2 Henrique de Senna Fernandes, *The Bewitching Braid*, trans. David Brookshaw (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004).
- 3 Linxia Chen 陳林俠, "Cong gaibian dao shengcheng: Xunzhao wenxue yu yingshi de pingheng 從改編到生成:尋找文學 與影視的平衡," Journal of China University of Mining & Technology, Social Sciences edition, no. 1 (2005): 134.
- 4 "Da bianzi de youhuo 大辮子的誘惑," in *Aomen baike quanshu* (Xiuding ban) 澳門百科全書 (修訂版), ed. Zhiliang Wu 吳志良 and Yunzhong Yang 楊允中 (Macao: Macao Foundation, 2005), 33.
- 5 Xiaoyu Wang 王曉玉, *Zhongguo dianying shigang* 中國電影 史綱 (Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 2003), 129.
- 6 Zhongmou Zhou 周仲謀, "1990 niandai yilai dianying gaibian lilun yanjiu zongshu 1990年代以來電影改編理論研究綜述 (The Study of Film Adaptation Theory since 1990)," *The Oriental Forum* 東方論壇, no. 3 (2011): 81.

- 7 Ka-wing Lam 林嘉穎, "Baoliu xiaoshuo jingshen, qingjie jiaose ke shan 保留小說精神,情節角色可刪," Wen Wei Po 文匯報, March 28, 2019, A26.
- 8 Senna Fernandes, *The Bewitching Braid*, 2.
- 9 Senna Fernandes, *The Bewitching Braid*, 35–36.
- 10 Jorge Forjaz, *Famílias Macaenses. Vol. III R-Y* (Macao: Fundação Oriente e Instituto Cultural de Macau, 1996), 543.
- 11 João de Pina-Cabral, Between China and Europe: Person, Culture and Emotion in Macao (n.p.: Routledge, 2002), 39–40.
- 12 Elisabela Larrea 黎若嵐, "Aomen de juzhong: tusheng tuyu huaju 澳門的劇種: 土生土語話劇," Artism Online, accessed September 11, 2023, artismonline.hk/issues/2022-03/499.
- 13 Tangqi Zhang 張堂錡, "Aomen tusheng puren zuojia xiaoshuo zhong de huaren nüxing xingxiang 澳門土生葡人作家小說中的華人女性形象," *Yangtze River Criticism* 揚子江評論, no. 1 (2014): 22.
- 14 Author's note.
- 15 Zhang, "Aomen tusheng puren zuojia xiaoshuo zhong de huaren nüxing xingxiang," 27.
- 16 Júlia, "Feiliqi: huiwei dabianzi de youhuo 飛歷奇:回味大

- 辮子的誘惑," Sohu News, December 24, 2007, https://news.sohu.com/20071224/n254260972.shtml.
- 17 Ana Lopes 安娜·洛佩斯, "Pingjie: zuojia he zuopin 評介:作家和作品," in Henrique de Senna Fernandes, The Bewitching Braid 大辮子的誘惑, trans. Huijuan Yu 喻慧娟 (Macao: Instituto Cultural de Macau; Shijiazhuang: Huashan wenyi chubanshe 花山文藝出版社, 1996), 5.
- 18 "Chuangye jiannan bai zhan duo: Minyin yingshi tuohuang zhe Cai An'an zishu 創業艱難百戰多:民營影視拓荒者蔡安安自述," Macau Film and Television Association, accessed September 4, 2023, mfta.org.mo/?p=208.
- 19 "Cai An'an jieshao 蔡安安介紹," Macau Film and Television Association, accessed September 4, 2023, mfta.org. mo/?p=226.
- 20 "Cai An'an ying hou fenxiang hui 蔡安安映後分享會," Cinematheque Passion, accessed September 4, 2023, fb.watch/nalVPeACNW/.
- 21 Soi Man Lo 羅瑞文, *Aomen yueyu* 澳門粵語 (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 2018), 7.
- 22 The 1980s and the early 1990s had been a golden age for Hong Kong film industry. At that time, 'Hong Kong films' were dominantly in Cantonese, which became the most competitive products in Asian film market. However, it has undergone a drastic decline since the late 1990s due to the rise of other film markets, and so on.
- 23 A narrative from *The Bewitching Braid*, directed by Cai Yuanyuan (Cai Brothers Macau Film Co., Ltd, 1996).
- 24 "Ruins of St. Paul's," Macao World Heritage, accessed September 10, 2023, https://www.wh.mo/en/site/detail/18.
- 25 "'Aomen lishi chengqu' chengwei zhongguo di sanshiyi chu shijie yichan '澳門歷史城區' 成為中國第三十一處世界遺產," Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China, accessed September 10, 2023, www.mct.gov.cn/whzx/whyw/201112/t20111201\_707302.htm.
- 26 Mandolin, similar to Chinese Pipa, is a stringed musical instrument evolved in Italy during the Renaissance period, and one of the feature musical instruments of the band Tuna Macaense.
- 27 Elisabela Larrea, "Quim Sâm Nôs? A Study of Macanese Community through Descriptive Analysis of Patuá Theatre" (PhD diss., University of Macau), 2021.
- 28 Henrique de Senna Fernandes, "Glossário," in A Trança Feiticeira. Macao: Instituto Cultural do Governo da R.A.E. de Macau, 2015), 243–247.
- 29 Rustom Bharucha, "Negotiating the 'River': Intercultural Interactions and Interventions," TDR, vol. 41, no. 3 (1997), 31–38.
- 30 "MM037-Foc Tac Temple (Horta da Mitra neighbourhood)," Macao World Heritage, accessed September 11, 2023, www. culturalheritage.mo/detail/101880.
- 31 Raise the Red Lantern is a Chinese-language film produced in 1991. Set in the 1920s, the film tells a story of the struggles among four wives in the Chen family. In order to gain the privileges, the four are locked in constant battle for Chen's attention.

- 32 Senna Fernandes, A Trança Feiticeira, 113.
- 33 Senna Fernandes, *The Bewitching Braid*, 89.
- 34 Siping Deng 鄧思平, *Aomen shijie yichan* 澳門世界遺產 (Macao: Macao Foundation; Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 2012), 151–152.
- 35 Jixiu Guo 郭濟修, Feiliqi xiaoshuo yanjiu ji qita 飛歷奇小 說研究及其他 (Macao: Plaza Cultural Macau Bookstore, 2002), 16.
- 36 João de Pina-Cabral and Nelson Lourenço, Em Terra de Tufões: Dinâmicas da Etnicidade Macaense (Macao: Instituto Cultural de Macau, 1993), 70.
- Zoe Murphy 佐伊·墨菲, "Texie: Zhongguoren kuaguo hunyin mianlin de duozhong tiaozhan 特寫:中國人跨國婚姻面臨的多種挑戰," *BBC*, October 24, 2013, https://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/trad/china/2013/10/131024\_china\_mixed\_marriages.
- 38 Yuezhi Xiong 熊月之, "Jindai Shanghai kuazu hunyin yu hunxue'er wenti 近代上海跨族婚姻與混血兒問題," China Economic History, accessed September 11, 2023, http://economy.guoxue.com/?p=3158.
- 39 Senna Fernandes, The Bewitching Braid, 131.
- 40 Senna Fernandes, The Bewitching Braid, 132.
- 41 Clara Gomes, "A Fita Possível," MACAU, II série, no. 50 (1996), 56–59.
- 42 Senna Fernandes, The Bewitching Braid, 132.
- 43 Senna Fernandes, The Bewitching Braid, 140.
- 44 Senna Fernandes, The Bewitching Braid, 144.
- 45 Senna Fernandes, The Bewitching Braid, 41.
- 46 Guo, Feiliqi xiaoshuo yanjiu ji qita, 49.
- 47 Senna Fernandes, *The Bewitching Braid*, 73.
- 48 Veiga Jardim, "Romantismo sem Fronteiras," *MACAU*, II série no. 51 (1996): 28–32.

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#### ALL ROUND THE WORLD.



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