

# Affinity and Difference between Japanese Cinema and *Taiyu pian* through a Comparative Study of Japanese and *Taiyu pian* Melodramas<sup>❖</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

The foundational infrastructure of the Taiwanese film industry is generally viewed as having been established during the period of Japanese colonization, when the Japanese colonial government in Taiwan recognized film's potential for disseminating propaganda to promote the realization of assimilation (*dōka*). In the 1960s Taiwan, the popularity of Japanese films sometimes outranked that of those imported from Hollywood, Shanghai, and Hong Kong, both during and after the colonial period. Film historians of *taiyu pian*, or Taiwanese-dialect cinema, have argued that the adoption of many of the conventions of Japanese cinema reflected a consequence of colonization, and that this indirectly boosted the popularity of Taiwanese-dialect cinema in the 1950s and the 1960s, since its main audience consisted primarily of the ex-colonized. While the influence of Japanese cinema was undeniably profound, it would be simplistic to categorize Taiwanese-dialect cinema as merely post-colonial. This paper proposes a rethinking of the affinity between Japanese cinema and *taiyu pian* by comparing Japanese melodramatic cinema and its Taiwanese-dialect adaptations. I argue that *taiyu pian* deviates from its Japanese predecessor by addressing the

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❖ This paper is part of a research study on the representations of gender and sexuality in *Taiyu pian*, sponsored by the National Science Council (NSC 98-2410-H-259-075-MY2). A previous draft of this paper was presented at the conference of "Taiwan Cinema Before Taiwan New Cinema" held at National Chung-Hsing University in 2011. A second revision in English was presented at Asian Cinema Studies Conference in 2012. The authors would like to acknowledge the helpful suggestions of the participants of the two conferences. Much appreciation goes to two anonymous reviewers for their valuable remarks that patently improve this work.

\* Received: May 17, 2012; Accepted: September 20, 2012

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culturally specific experiences of modernity in Taiwan and by incorporating other international cinemas to enhance its competitiveness. This comparative study challenges the assumed predominance of the colonial legacy that has exerted a strong influence on the construction of the history of Taiwanese-dialect cinema and reveals the social and political factors that affect the decisions on what to adopt and what to modify.

**KEYWORDS:** *Taiyu pian*, Taiwanese-dialect cinema, Japanese cinema, melodrama, modernity, women in film

# 台語電影與日本電影的 親密與殊異： 以電影通俗劇的比較分析為例

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## 摘 要

台灣電影的放映基礎始於日治時期，但在製作上的參與卻是鳳毛麟角；戰後台灣的電影製作，則由民間產製的台語電影帶動。台語電影除了以歌仔戲與民間故事為題材之外，也大規模的翻拍日本電影。因此，迄今有關台語電影的研究普遍咸認為台語電影本身即是殖民遺緒的展現，並將日本電影之所以成為台語電影主要摹仿對象的現象歸因於殖民歷史所造成的文化相近性。本文透過比較日本電影與台語電影的通俗劇類型（以家庭倫理與愛情文藝為敘事主軸），從兩者的異同之處重新檢驗單從殖民歷史的脈絡論述台語電影型塑的侷限，並論證日本電影僅是採取文化食人主義途徑的台語電影的其中一個素材來源，但不是唯一亦非主要，台語電影事實上也受到其他如好萊塢電影的影響。本文也將指出台語電影對現代性、性別、家庭等主題不同於日本電影的更動緊緊鑲嵌於 1960 年代的戰後台灣的社會脈絡。

**關鍵詞：**日本電影、台語電影、通俗劇、現代性、女性再現

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From its inception, Taiwan's film industry has been politically, culturally, and economically intertwined with that of Japan. The novelty of cinema as a new form of entertainment has intrigued the Taiwanese people since it was introduced into Taiwanese culture during the Japanese colonial era.<sup>1</sup> The foundation of the film industry was established as a concomitant effect of the colonial project of education and indoctrination through film. The earliest film production activity was launched by Toyojirou Takamatsu, who was hired by the Commissioner of Civil Affairs Shinpei Goto and was responsible for setting up the preliminary distribution system and expanding the exhibition venues (Ye, *Rizhi shiqi* 67–72). By 1925, cinema had become one of the most popular forms of entertainment on the island of Taiwan (Mamie 290).<sup>2</sup> Production-wise, it was during the colonial period that Taiwanese began to become involved in filmmaking in collaboration with Japanese crews that launched feature films and documentary productions in Taiwan in the early 1920s.<sup>3</sup> The locals, however, were only allowed limited access to film production knowledge and resources (Mamie 367; Chiu 83), even in the cases where Taiwanese sponsors provided financial support.<sup>4</sup>

It was also during the colonial era that Taiwanese elites traveled to Japan to receive training in filmmaking through formal education or apprenticeships at major studios such as Shochiku and Toho. The personal affiliations of film professionals with Japan are among the reasons why

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<sup>1</sup> The currently available historical evidence shows that the first cinématographe screening took place in 1900. A French film organization commissioned a Japanese wood businessman to hold the event, and the technician Shozo Matsuura was responsible for running the screening. However, it is still plausible that screenings occurred before this date (Mamie 272).

<sup>2</sup> According to Misawa Mamie's research, cinema was an accessible form of entertainment to people in Taipei in the mid-1910s and had become more popular than theater by the year of 1925. However, cinema was never the dominant form of entertainment across the island during the Japanese colonial period.

<sup>3</sup> The first feature film made in Taiwan by Shochiku's Kamata Studio was *Eyes of the Buddha* (dir. King Tanaka, 1922). It was the first film project that involved Taiwanese, Liu Xi-yang and Huang Liang-meng, who worked as actors, (Y. Zhang 116; Ye, *Rizhi Shiqi* 163). The first film in which Taiwanese people participated in the production process as crew members was *Merciless God* (director unknown, 1923) (Du 3).

<sup>4</sup> The first co-production between Japanese and Taiwanese locals with Taiwanese sponsorship was *Wu Feng, The Righteous Man* (dir. Ando Talo and Jiba Hiroki, 1932). It is a story that glorifies the Han people's attempt to civilize the indigenous people (Du 5; Y. Zhang 116-117), and the project of "co-production" of this film needs to be understood as occurring in a colonial context where it was used by the colonial government as an ideological conveyance to aggravate the local tensions between the indigenous people and the Han people.

postwar Taiwan's Holo-dialect films (*taiyu pian* hereafter) are generally considered to have inherited their legacy from Japanese films. *Taiyu pian* refers to films in which the language spoken is Holo-dialect and that were launched in the mid-1950s and continued to flourish throughout the 1960s. The 16mm film *Liu caizi xixiangji* (*Six Scholars in the West Chamber*, dir. Shao Lo-hui, 1955) was the first postwar *taiyu pian* with a theatrical release, but it was a box office flop. In fixing the problems of adapting a stage play into a film, as seen in *Six Scholars*, Ho Ji-ming's *Xue pinggui yu Wong baochuan* (1956) broke box office records and encouraged more people to get involved in making *taiyu pian*. For almost a decade, *taiyu pian* reigned supreme in the domestic film production, but began to show signs of lethargy in the late 1960s. Although the production of *taiyu pian* decreased dramatically in the 1970s, it did not entirely vanish. Throughout the history of *taiyu pian* production, it is those made in the 1950s and the 1960s that reveal a close relationship with Japanese cinema and are discussed in this paper. The directors of the first two *taiyupian*, Shao Lo-hui and Ho Ji-ming, were both educated in this way. Shao received his filmmaking and screenwriting education at the Imperial Film and Theater School in Tokyo and was later contracted to act at Shochiku. Ho received an even more thorough training<sup>5</sup> and worked as a camera assistant to Suzuki Kiyoji (Ye, "Zhengzong taiyu pian" 133–141).

In the 1960s, critics tended to attribute *taiyu pian*'s thematic and stylistic proximity to Japanese films to the imperative of satisfying viewers consisting primarily of the ex-colonized who favored Japanese films (Yu, "Ripan jinkou" 6). This point of view was further validated by the fact that the box office performance of *taiyu pian* was in inverse proportion to the availability of Japanese films, which was dependent on diplomatic relations and a quota system. Some critics even argued that *taiyu pian*'s blind imitation of Japanese films hampered their cinematic novelty and accounted for the gradual insipidity and staleness of the *taiyu pian* industry (Yao, "Taiyu pian" 6). Contemporary film historians of the modern age have generally agreed with the film critics of the time that there was too much obtuse copying and too little artistry in *taiyu pian*. Such a standpoint supports the argument that *taiyu pian* passively mimicked Japanese films as a consequence of

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<sup>5</sup> Ho attended the Tokyo Professional School of Photography (now Tokyo Polytechnic University), Tama Arts University, and the Tokyo TEL Film Institute.

colonization (Huang 242–243; Ye, *Riben dianying* 11–16, 54).

Although the influence of Japanese films is undeniably part of the colonial legacy, to conclude that *taiyu pian* and its popularity reflect a neocolonial mindset would be the result of a slanted historiography that conceals other pertinent historical factors such as American cultural imperialism, the Cold War, and the Nationalist Party's hegemonic nation-building project. From the perspective of the international film market, the development of *taiyu pian* was significantly affected by the postwar global power of Hollywood, Japanese cinema, and Hong Kong-made Chinese language and Amoy-dialect films. The import of Chinese language and Amoy-dialect films made in Hong Kong were strongly encouraged by the KMT government as a way to ascertain the support of overseas Chinese communities. This explains why the linguistically identical Amoy-dialect films were sanctioned for import while the production of *taiyu pian* was banned until the mid- 1950s (Taylor 95). *Taiyu pian* must be understood as “a node within a network” (23), as described by Michel Foucault, that is gridded by a system of references including, but not limited to, Japanese cinema. As a peripheral regional cinema tried to rival other (inter)national cinemas, *taiyu pian* incorporated whatever established conventions it could grasp in order to be appealing and competitive.<sup>6</sup> As the films of a “contact zone”<sup>7</sup> that incorporate the language and ideology of the dominant cinemas and thus are constantly in dialogue with them, this paper argues that *taiyu pian* adopted a similar cannibalistic approach to Brazilian Cinema Novo. Cultural cannibalism in the Bakhtinian sense means to incorporate various external and indigenous influences in such a manner so as to devour everything local, national, colonial and global in order to achieve an impure, but distinctive, form of expression (King 23). *Taiyu pian* did not ideologically intend to create a self-identity by strategically reversing European colonial discourse as in the case of Brazilian Cinema Novo, nor did it emblemize the mimesis of otherness. Nevertheless, *taiyu pian* fused and hybridized its native cultural specificities with foreign elements.

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<sup>6</sup> For example, Laurel and Hardy were the prototype of the comedy double acts Brother Wang and Brother Liu; the tramp look and slapstick jokes of Charlie Chaplin were duplicated in the Wen Xia series, such as in *Goodbye Taipei* (1969); the adaptation of “popular tales of ancient days” in early *taiyu pian* was already a convention in its Amoy counterpart.

<sup>7</sup> cf. Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” *Profession* 91. NY: MLA, 1991.

Taking notice of the references besides those of Japanese cinema that make up the hybrid quality of *taiyu pian* inexorably entails rethinking the ostensible intimacy between *taiyu pian* and Japanese cinema. This nuanced comparative study attempts to demythologize the assumed omnipresent and capillary power of the colonial influence that is said to incessantly mesmerize its ex-colonized people in shaping of the nature of their cinema. Since it is impossible to unravel the relationships between *taiyu pian* and all other international cinemas in one paper, this research will focus on analyzing how *taiyu pian* negotiated with and deviated from the Japanese paradigm, which simultaneously marks the specificities of the subcultures of the former colonial subject. The influence of Japanese films is inexpugnable, but is neither overpowering nor decisive.

The deviation from the Japanese paradigm suggests that *taiyu pian* is a product of the syncretism made possible by simultaneous borrowings from multiple international cinemas, and at the same time that the differences between *taiyu pian* and Japanese cinema are culturally symptomatic. The unabashed yet incomplete plagiarism that often begets unsatisfactory levels of sophistication in cinematic storytelling appears in relation to the different degrees of tactical negotiations motivated by the political, social and cultural contexts in Taiwan. In this manner, *taiyu pian* epitomizes what Miriam Hansen terms “vernacular modernism,” for it encompasses various everyday cultural practices and discourses that articulate and inflect the experience of modernity and responds to that experience through locally- and culturally-specific aesthetics (quoted in Russell, “Japanese Cinema” 18–24).

Given that the thriving period of *taiyu pian* occurred in tandem with the rapid industrial-capitalist modernization of Taiwan in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, melodrama forms the basis of this comparative study, as it is argued to be a fundamentally modern cultural expression specific to the experience of modern life (Singer 2; Gledhill, quoted in Russell, “Japanese Cinema” 25). Peter Brooks defines melodrama as a “modern mode” that locates and articulates the “moral occult” by recognizing and praising the sign of virtue. This melodramatic modality can be applied to *taiyu pian* melodrama<sup>8</sup> and the *gendai-geki* genre of Japanese films (Russell, *Classical*

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<sup>8</sup> A close equivalent Chinese term for *taiyu pian* melodrama would be *taiyu wenyi pian*. However, I avoid using *wenyi* as the term would open up further questions about cultural translation and cross-cultural analysis. Emilie Yueh-yu Yeh notices the problem of the convenient but problematic translation of *wenyi* to melodrama in her recent work on Chinese *wenyi* film. See “Pitfalls of

*Japanese Cinema* 12). Both genres employ the form of melodrama to create a secular system of ethics, seeking to offer a stable discourse to counter the social anxiety arising when society undergoes rapid and contradictory transformations. In the meantime, however, the modality of melodrama can “translate particular aesthetic and narrative struggles and contradictions into popular entertainment” (Russell, *Classical Japanese Cinema* 15). In the Asian context, cinematic melodrama represents “a junction of tradition and modernity, Eastern and Western sensibilities, voices of past and present” (Dissanayake 5). Japanese melodrama deals with the themes of “the conflict between feudal and democratic social values, the dilemma of social mobility, and the power of the inevitable” (Russell, *Classical Japanese Cinema* 12), which made it a fitting model to address the social anxieties resulting from the full-scale modernization of Taiwan. However, *taiyu pian*’s digression from the Japanese paradigm brings to light a locally understood and defined experience of modernity as well as other plausible cultural influences on *taiyu pian*.

Both the Japanese and *taiyu pian* melodramas discussed in my comparison are set in modern times with female protagonists who are central to the story.<sup>9</sup> When women are central to the “melodramatic imagination” in film, such type of film is often designated as the “woman’s film,” as these films tend to address the female spectator. It is the so-called “Japanese woman’s film” that was most often referred to by producers or filmmakers of *taiyu pian* as their source of inspiration and model for emulation. Yet, it was often mentioned in a broadly descriptive way, even though some *taiyu pian* have the same titles as some famous Japanese woman’s films, such as *What is Your Name?* (*Qingwen fangming*, dir. Kao Jen-he, 1964), presumably a remake of *Kimi no namae wa?* (dir. Ooba Hideo, 1953) and *Golden Demon* (*Jinse yecha*, dir. Lin Fu-di, 1964), that of *Konjiki yasha* (Koji Shima, 1954).

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Cross-Cultural Analysis: Chinese *Wenyi* Film and Melodrama.” *Asian Journal of Communication* 19.4 (2009): 438-452.

<sup>9</sup> Another possible category to refer to this type of film is “woman’s film” (*josei eiga*), which is a descriptive term in the context of Japanese cinema, referring to films about women that center on the female protagonist in most cases. However, “woman’s film” has been used as a critical term as well, and it is often associated with several Japanese auteur directors such as Kenji Mizoguchi, Mikio Naruse, Yasujiro Ozu, and Keisuke Kinoshita. Yet, since my purpose in this paper is not to discuss the cinematic treatment of women’s issues in any particular work of these auteur directors, I choose to look at the genre of melodrama set in contemporary life (*gendai-geki*) in a broader sense to avoid further confusions. In addition, the use of melodrama is closer to that of Isolde Standish’s analysis which is discussed at some length in this paper.



Nevertheless, the current unavailability of these titles makes it difficult to verify whether they are direct remakes of the original Japanese films. Moreover, since the same story of the adapted film was often made into different film versions in different periods of time, but under the same title, it is rather challenging to determine which version the *taiyu pian* counterpart may be said to be modeled after. The tendency of *taiyu pian*'s cultural cannibalism makes it even more difficult, as whatever source was available could be poached for *taiyu pian* to be made their own. Therefore, the use of "woman's film" in this paper is not and cannot be as precise as it should be, especially given the fact that there have been several emergences of woman's film in Japanese film history across a large time span. Nevertheless, Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano also reminds us that the lineage of Japanese woman's films has to be traced back to Shochiku's prewar woman's film (19). The underlying message suggests shared parameters under the umbrella term of "woman's film" despite the idiosyncrasies of each emergence of woman's film and of each director's personal touch.

The case study undertaken in this comparative study is that of *The Unusual Love* (dir. Zheng Dong-shan, 1964) and the two versions of the Japanese film that is believed to inspire it, *Aizen Katsura* a.k.a. *The Love-Troth Tree*—the director's cut edition by Hiromasa Nomura in 1938 and a remake by Noboru Hakamura in 1962—for these films are some of the most readily accessible early film texts that have a direct link with each other. Furthermore, they are believed to spring from a common source (C. Zhang 52).<sup>10</sup> Two other reasons that make Nomura and Hakamura's versions commensurate with *The Unusual Love* is the great popularity of Nomura's version since its release in the colonial era and the contemporaneity of

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<sup>10</sup> The original story of *The Love-Troth Tree* was adapted from a popular serial novel by Kawaguchi Matsutarō under the same title in a woman's magazine. The story was made into a film series by Hiromasa Nomura in Shochiku. The first one was released in 1938 and the latter two in 1939. Later, Nomura re-cut these three films into one single film. The same story was made into a film again in 1948 and in 1954 by Daiei directors Seiji Hisamatsu and Keigo Kimura, respectively. In 1962, Noboru Hakamura in Shochiku made another film series with two entries out of the same story again. Although Hakamura's version was made in the same period as that of *The Unusual Love*, the wide popularity of Nomura's version in 1938 has to be taken into account. According to a survey in 2005 that asked people who had lived through the colonial period about their favorite Japanese film, Nomura's version ranks the first (Huang 261). It is noteworthy that all of the Japanese versions of *The Love-Troth Tree* have the same narrative structure of "just miss," but this structure is not employed in the *taiyupian* version directed by Zheng Dongshan.

Hakamura's version and *The Unusual Love*.<sup>11</sup> The omission of two other versions of *Aizen Katsura* made by Seiji Hisamatsu and Keigo Kimura, respectively in 1948 and 1954, due to the current unavailability of the texts on the one hand shows a limitation of this research. On the other hand, the omission signals that the influence of Japanese cinema on the *taiyu pian* industry is largely under-researched, and some of the argument of this paper is expected to undergo revision when more research findings emerge. Most of the comparisons in this paper are based on scholarly accounts that summarize the narrative and cinematic techniques of Japanese film melodramas and my own characterization of *taiyu pian*. In addition to reconsidering the assumed affinity between Japanese film melodrama and *taiyu pian* melodrama, this paper intends to look at *taiyu pian* melodrama in a systematic way to better understand how they mediated the experiences of modernity in Taiwan in the 1960s.

## Envisioning the West through the Japanese Lens

Although Japanese cinema dominated the prewar film culture in Taiwan, after the war, its power was dependent on its relationship with the Nationalist Party under the leadership of Chiang Kai-Shek, who led the fight against Japan's aggressive invasion of China during the Pacific War. Immediately after the war, the Nationalist Party banned Japanese film imports, with one exception: previously imported films were still permitted if they passed the censorship screening. The procedure was later streamlined upon the request of exhibitors, who were impatient with the long and tedious censorship process. By the end of 1946, all of the Japanese films that had been imported before the war had been shown, and subsequently, Shanghai films dominated the box office until around 1948, when high-quality Hollywood films began to, and continued to, dominate Taiwan's film market (Ye, *Riben dianying* 26).

The exchange of films was used as a means of diplomatic negotiation during the Cold War. As Japan gained strength in the anti-Communist coalition led by the United States in East- and Southeast Asia, the antagonism between Japan and the Chiang administration began to decrease.

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<sup>11</sup> Zhang Chang-yan's research also points out the great similarity between *The Unusual Love* and the 1962 version of *The Love-Troth Tree* in terms of the character's names, the use of music, and some of the plotlines (52). It is also important to note that *The Unusual Love* was first a stage play adapted from the 1962 film version of *The Love-Troth Tree* before it was made into a film.

Anti-Communist, scientifically informative, and democratic-spirited Japanese films were imported in May 1950 under the supervision of the Allies (Huang 285; Ye, *Riben dianying* 45). Japanese cinema's re-entry into the film market in Taiwan in the early 1950s took place around the same time when Japanese cinema was expanding its market to the U.S. and neighboring Asian and Southeast Asian countries. This was part of a project for "Legitimizing Cosmopolitanism" of Japan, where the national horizon was extended into the international arena (Tezuka 3). In a short period of time, the number of Japanese films imported to Taiwan occupied 32% of Japan's total film exports (Ye, *Riben dianying* 51). In exchange, the Japanese government allowed two Chinese language films exclusively produced by the Republic of China in Taiwan to be exported to Japan on an annual basis. In response to the lobbying by Hong Kong distributors, the Japanese government loosened its import restriction on so-called "Chinese films" to include all films produced in the Mandarin language as well as those distributed by companies outside Taiwan. This proposal was eventually aborted due to protest by the Chiang administration, but the interaction of the Japanese film industry with Hong Kong, as part of its project to internationalize the national identity and nationalism of Japan, never ceased.<sup>12</sup>

The importation of Japanese films in the 1950s reflected the contradictory role of Japan as the former colonizer and the present ally of Taiwan. Twenty-four Japanese films were imported each year, which was in accordance with the quota system established in 1952 and was much lower than the number of Hollywood and British (later European) films. The rationale behind the quota system was to limit the ascendancy of foreign films in general (Xie, "Ripan jinkou" 6), but the underlying goal of the limit placed on the number of Japanese films imports was "decolonization." The same contradiction can be found in the establishment of the congenial diplomatic relationship between Japan and Taiwan in 1952 and Japan's status as the most favored nation in the Sino-Japanese Peace Treaty that propelled commodity trading between Taiwan and Japan on the one hand, but intensified the apprehension about cultural invasion by Japan on the other. The quota system, thus, became a feeble but indispensable scheme to keep the torrent of

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<sup>12</sup> The success of the Hong Kong-Japan co-productions of *Yokichi (Princess Yang Kwei-fei)* and *Madam White Snake* launched the golden age of the cinematic interchange between Hong Kong and Japan which lasted until the early 1970s (Yau, quoted in Tezuka 62).

Japanese films at bay. In 1958, talks of a bilateral trading pact between Japan and Communist China ignited an official resistance against Japan as the Motion Picture Association of Taiwan announced a boycott of Japanese films. Although the Japanese government eventually abandoned its attempt to advance its interaction with Communist China, it retaliated against the boycott by asking the Chiang administration to raise the quota for Japanese films to thirty-four per year, two of which had to be selected by the semi-official ROC-Japan Cooperation Council and be distributed through the state-owned Central Pictures Corporation (Yu, “Ripan jinkou” 6).

The political tension between Taiwan, the People’s Republic of China (P.R.C.), and Japan continued to affect the flow of film exchange. In 1963, the importation of Japanese films was officially halted for two years, after the Japanese government complied with the request of the P.R.C. to repatriate Zhou Hong-qing, an anti-Communist who had fled to Japan, back to the mainland, instead of to Taiwan. In May 1964, Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida visited Taiwan to make amends, and the ban on Japanese films was soon lifted (Ye, *Riben dianying* 113). This short period of absence of Japanese cinema made room for domestically produced films both in Mandarin and the Holo dialect. These fledgling film industries were affected again by the return of Japanese films in 1965, but the impact was not as great as in the first half of the 1960s.

The conflicting attitudes toward Japanese film were also evident in the divergence between the agony over its potential threat and the admiration of its better production quality. Carrying the nationalist sentiment, many film critics, producers, and directors criticized the importation of Japanese films as detrimental to the production of domestic films (Ye, *Riben dianying* 115-122), but it was still a common practice to produce films with the Japanese film industry or recruit film professionals. In his analysis of the postwar Japanese film industry’s engagement with other Asian countries, Yoshiharu Tezuka corrects Kinnia Yau Shuk-ting, who regards this as a continuation of the consolidation of Japanese imperialism during the Japanese imperial period. Rather, Tezuka argues that the postwar relationship “subsumes the Asian film industries within a Western sphere of influence,” and it is the look of Western modernity and technological supremacy within Japanese cinema that made it a role model for the film industries in other Asian countries (57-58). Tezuka’s insight helps us understand the motive behind the Taiwanese film industry’s

avidity to work with the Japanese film industry, which seems contradictory to the aim of mitigating the pernicious effects of colonialism. As early as 1957, the Chang-he Film Company invited Japanese director Yasunori Iwasawa to work on its films, and Iwasawa joined a panel tasked with dispensing advice on the future of *taiyu pian*.<sup>13</sup> A year later, cinematographer Shiro Miyanishi from Daiei, director Namio Yuasa, and cinematographer Gozo Matsui (a.k.a. Shintarou Chujio) from Shintoho worked together on two *taiyu pian*: *The Station of a Mist Night* (1966) and *Man to Remember* (1967). Both Yuasa and Chujio later settled permanently in Taiwan to continue their careers in filmmaking (Huang 236-242). Furthermore, in 1958, Ho Gi-ming brought back CinemaScope equipment from Japan and used it to make a CinemaScope *taiyu pian* ("Huaxing" 3).<sup>14</sup> The factors that led to the high international reputation of Japanese films were probably the same factors that made them popular in Taiwan: they used the latest Western filmmaking technologies to portray a sophisticated version of specific cultural content.

Even filmmakers who migrated from China or Hong Kong to Taiwan after the Civil War and thus lacked a colonial background, borrowed from Japanese films at times. In 1962, the state-owned Central Motion Picture Company (CMPC) initiated a series of co-productions with Daiei, Nikkatsu, and Toho. These projects began with a research trip to Japan to learn color cinematography techniques, funded by the International Cooperation Administration established by the United States (Lin 72). In the context of the Cold War, Japan was not deemed so much as a master, but a senior pupil, in the process of acculturating to technologically-centered industrial modernization. This reevaluation of the role of the postwar Japanese film industry in the 1950s and 1960s in Taiwan does not deny the power of the colonial legacy; rather, it illuminates the entanglement between the postcolonial and Cold War discourses. Gaining this understanding allows us to examine how *taiyu pian* replicate Japanese classics beyond the frame of reference of a postcolonial critique that exclusively addresses the lingering effects of the colonial history.

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<sup>13</sup> See *Investigative News* (*Zhengxin xinwen*) 19 Aug. 1957: 3.

<sup>14</sup> In the same year, CMPC also obtained a set of the Twentieth Century Fox patented CinemaScope, passed on by Italian director R. Merusi after he finished shooting in Taiwan for his film *La Grande Muraglia* with CMPC's assistance (Lin 65-66).

## Contemplation over modernity

Melodrama is a genre that most explicitly represents the textual duplication of Japanese film in *taiyu pian*. Sharing a similar rhetoric with Hollywood melodrama, Japanese melodrama also delineates social crises in personalized and emotional ways through the lens of the family (Elsaesser, quoted in Mercer and Shingler 21). Appropriating Japanese melodrama became a convenient device for *taiyu pian* melodrama to address the social distress in postwar industrial Taiwan. In contrast to Hollywood melodrama that considers the conflicts of middle-class families, *taiyu pian* melodrama aligns with Japanese melodrama, which focuses on women as agents in a narrative to deal with the confrontation between tradition and modernity.

Hong Guo-Juin argues, “Modernization, the prescriptive path of nation-building, is precisely the ‘circumstances’ that impose themselves on their subjects’ fate” (56). Therefore, it is understandable why early Shochiku films that focused on the female encounter with modernity by way of *modanizuma*<sup>15</sup> would be the model for describing the excitement and paradoxical anxiety over the eventual meteoric rise of full-scaled industrial capitalism in Taiwan in the 1950s and 1960s. As the first film studio in Japan, the Shochiku Kinema Company created a cinematic exemplification of and response to the rapid modernization of Japanese society (Standish 37). Not only did its films display new technologies and Americanized methods of cinematic storytelling, they directly spoke to and of Japan’s contradictory experience of modernity. At the center of this cinematic expression of Japanese modernity is the genre of woman’s film that dominated Shochiku’s productions in the 1920s and 1930s, in which women were the corporeal catalysts that embodied the transition and were inscribed with its impact. These films tackle issues related to the rural-urban binary, the conflict between feudal social traditions and the changing reality of industrial capitalism, and the resistance against Confucian class divisions by way of individual effort and accomplishment (Standish 31). The launch of Shochiku’s woman’s films was directly linked to the emergence of Japanese women as consumer subjects in the public sphere (Wada-Marciano 19). The studio head,

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<sup>15</sup> Isolde Standish notes that a differentiation between the *katakana* neologism *modanizumu* and the *kanji* phrase of *kindaishugi* was made in the 1920s and 1930s where the former refers to a more general structure of feeling about the advent of industrial capitalism and the latter is associated with European rationalism in the intellectual/academic sense (2006, 32).

Shiro Kido, who restructured the studio under a Hollywood-modeled directorial system, took notice of this phenomenon. Women's participation in movie-going, and consumption at large, resulted from the increased number of women in the urban labor force after World War I (Standish 53; Wada-Marciano 76). Catherine Russell argues that Shochiku's woman's films in the prewar period are illustrative of the vernacular modernism that constructed, or tried to construct, modern subjectivities and subjects<sup>16</sup> entangled in the material culture of an everyday life full of sensory dimensions (60). Through location shooting, the detail of *mise-en-scène* represented city life and public and private rituals, as well as the trope of the *moga*, the modern girl,<sup>17</sup> provokes narrative conflicts within which their final destiny allegorizes a perspective on the experience of Japanese modernity. The following sections will examine this taxonomy in order to analyze the affinities and differences of the female-centered melodramas made in Japan and those made in *taiyu pian*.

Shooting on location places emphasis on the physical environment and creates the realistic atmosphere. Location shooting is the dominant aesthetic choice in Japanese films (Anderson and Richie 324). In Shochiku's prewar melodramas made in the late 1920s and 1930s, the *mise-en-scène* depicts the social space to authenticate the urban modern lifestyle and its opposite, the traditional lifestyle of the country home (Standish 78). Similar visual symbolism and narrative tropes revolving around the clash between rural and urban living can be found in *taiyu pian* melodrama that is evinced by shooting on location. Two sub-genres of Shochiku's melodrama at that time address the city and modern lifestyle in two opposing directions. The depiction of the city that highlights the "cult of success" (to borrow Isolde Standish's term) is that of an appealing land of promise that provides an easy way of life. In the social realist genre, or what others call *shomin-geki* genre, transformations to modernity precipitated by industrial capitalism are treated unfavorably through their focus on urban desolation and alienation as exemplified by

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<sup>16</sup> In Hollywood melodrama, it is often the bourgeois subject that is interrogated and criticized as in the works of Vincente Minnelli and Douglas Sirk.

<sup>17</sup> The Japanese equivalent of the term "New Woman" would be *shin fujin* or *atarashiki/atarashii ona* that emerged sometime between the late nineteenth century to the 1910s. The idea of the New Woman was thought to strongly related to things Western and modern (Lowy 9), and she was the predecessor of the bobbed-haired, short-skirted *moga* (the modern girl) in the 1920s who flourished against the backdrop of consumerism and was "identified with the latest 'lowbrow' fads and fashions" (Sato 7).

Yasujirō Ozu's work (Standish 42).

The same binary city discourse can also be found in *taiyu pian* melodrama. The dialectics between city and country are sometimes framed by the disintegration of interpersonal relationships and by the migration of youth to cities, akin to Shochiku's melodrama in the 1920s and 1930s. In *Last Train from Kaohsiung* (dir. Liang Zhe-fu, 1963), a male student from Taipei rescues a country girl from being sexually assaulted by a villager during a trip to the countryside, and soon falls in love with her. Likewise, *The Dream of Sorrowful Couples* (dir. Wu Fei-jian, 1965) revolves around a disavowed relationship between a child bride from the countryside and her father-in-law's nephew, who has a promising career and bright future in the city of Keelung. In these films, the city offers boundless opportunities and an exciting lifestyle, with imagery that conspicuously consists of brilliant neon lights, high-rise buildings, and bustling streets. Moreover, the city epitomizes modernity in the contemporary sense, along with the images of railways and hospitals that denote the legacy of colonial modernity. In a series of location-shot montages in *The Last Train from Kaohsiung*, the couple visits the Dashin Department Store, established in 1958 in Kaohsiung—the first large-scale department store equipped with an escalator. Department stores represent a consumption-oriented modern lifestyle, and the novelty of the escalator and the modern surroundings intrigues the peasant girl. Nevertheless, Japan's configuration of modernity still looms large. Dashin's design is directly inspired by the modern Japanese department store, manifested by the interior design and presence of a uniformed service woman, a highly specific promotional device for Japanese retail (Li 381).

In contrast, films like *Unremitted Love* (dir. Shao Lo-hui, 1962) and *The Early Train from Taipei* (dir. Liang Zhe-fu, 1964) are examples that reveal a distrustful view of city life as in Shochiko's social realist genre. In the first film, the avaricious father of the heroine forces her into marrying the lecherous *táng-su-tiúnn*,<sup>18</sup> the chairman of his company from Taipei. Even though she has succeeded in finding her lover and has started a family life in

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<sup>18</sup> I use the Holo pronunciation to describe this type of character, which literally means the chairman of a company. This character appears in almost every *taiyu pian* melodrama and is never given a name. He is the villain who abuses his power to force a woman (often the female protagonist) whom he likes to be with him. Often, his plan is implemented with the help of the father of the female protagonist. Therefore, *táng-su-tiúnn* arguably represents the repressive power of capitalist patriarchy.



the mountains, she is abducted and held in the *táng-su-tiúnn*'s house in Taipei. She escapes once from the house, but is struck by a car and sent back to the *táng-su-tiúnn*. Taipei is a cursed place and is associated with peril, oppression, and decadence. *The Early Train from Taipei* sends an even stronger message, as Taipei represents everything negative in society. The female protagonist moves to Taipei hoping to earn money to settle her family's debts, but she quickly encounters misery. First, she is deceived into being a dance hostess,<sup>19</sup> and her transformation into an attractive modern girl makes her the object of desire and results in her being raped and confined by the *táng-su-tiúnn* of the dance club. Her transformation also sabotages her relationship with her lover in the country, who loves her truly and wholeheartedly. The contrast between her relationship with the *táng-su-tiúnn* and with her lover represents the stark dissonance between the country and the city, or between innocence and decadence.

### Family in crisis, or not

The rural-urban dynamics in *taiyu pian* melodrama occasionally overlap with the traditional social structure, but do not always explain the class barriers of feudalism. In other words, individual economic imbalances are not always ascribed to the geographic gap. In *Love Till Death* (dir. Xu Shou-ren, 1967), the son of an affluent family is in love with a lower-class housemaid, who lives in the same household. Likewise, the two members of the tragic couple in *The Unforgettable Station* (dir. Xin Qi, 1965) live in the same neighborhood, but the heroine's humiliating past as a hostess whose occupation was forced on her by her poor, gambling-addicted adoptive father drives them apart. In *Love at All Costs* (dir. Wu Fei-jian, 1965), the male protagonist comes from a rural area, but he is a *shaoye*, the young master of a factory owned by his family who are also landowners. In these films, there is no implied causal logic between class divisions and the modern urban lifestyle; rather, it is traditional patriarchal oppression that deprives the members of a family of their individual autonomy. When one's immediate family aids and abets an evil-doer, the family is bound to be challenged and overthrown.

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<sup>19</sup> I use "dance hostess" as the translation for "wunü" in Chinese, referring to women who dance and serve male customers. The term carries the connotation of prostitution because the profession of "wunü" in *taiyu pian* does suggest that the character is implicitly involved in prostitution forcibly or voluntarily.

The breakdown of old social institutions typified by family disunity prevails in Shochiku's prewar *gendai-geki* melodrama. Further, two sub-genres mentioned above display two different attitudes toward the impact of modernity through their portrayal of the individual-family dynamic. The optimistic, motivational sub-genre overcomes the Confucian class system by celebrating individual achievement, while the dystopic social realist genre laments the family friction that results from industrial capitalism and focuses on the survivors in their lives on the fringes of the prosperous modern urban life (Standish 39-42). However, in *taiyu pian* melodrama, ambivalence about rapid industrial and social change is weaved into a single narrative. In contrast to Shochiku's goal-oriented heroes and heroines, the *taiyu pian* protagonists often choose to submit themselves to the authority of traditional social institutions. In other words, individual resistance to patriarchal oppression is only transitory and is soon neutralized.

At first glance, the plotline of the love matches in *taiyu pian* melodrama seems to promote individualist ideology, but the authority of traditional social institutions remains intact until it is challenged by a greater power through a collective act. This sense of collectivism, a model for interpersonal relationships in a communal society, is deliberately evoked to resolve the conflict between the individual pursuit of romance and the social mandates carried out in the family setting. A comparison between the two versions of *The Love-Troth Tree* in 1938 and in 1962, and its *taiyu pian* adaptation, *The Unusual Love*, sheds light on the different narrative solutions. This paper will argue that this adaptation symbolically reflects the specific interpersonal relationship and family dynamics of 1960s Taiwan, which were shaped by the island's economic and social developments.

The 1938 Japanese version of *The Love-Troth Tree* represents the upbeat motivation genre in which love conquers all social and economic barriers. In the original story, the well-educated Kozo is about to inherit his father's hospital, but falls in love with a nurse who works there. The female protagonist, Katsue, returns his love, but conceals the fact that she is a single mother. Their relationship is met with strong objections from Kozo's sister and father, and a marriage between Kozo and Michiko, the daughter of a wealthy family friend who studied in the United States, is arranged in order to resolve the hospital's financial crisis. Kozo declines to accept his father's arrangement and decides to elope with Katsue. Unfortunately, Katsue has to

take care of her sick daughter on the day when she is supposed to leave. Because Katsue fails to notify Kozo in person before the train departs, he leaves town feeling betrayed. Thus, neither does Kozo marry Katsue, nor does he marry Michiko as planned, as Michiko, after being informed of the intimate bond between Kozo and Katsue, also voluntarily relinquishes any commitment implied in the arrangement made between them. After a series of chance happenings and missed meetings, Kozo eventually learns of Katsue's secret and her maternal sacrifice. The film implies an optimistic and hopeful sentiment toward the individualism of modernity: first, the power of ideal love overcomes the entrenched class system that has been carried over into the modern age; second, Katsue represents an affirmative and competent single mother and woman in love (Standish 54-57).

The *taiyu pian* adaptation of *The Love-Troth Tree* provides a different solution to dissolve the barrier between the protagonists, Ho-sam and Sing-ki.<sup>20</sup> Similar to the original version, *The Unusual Love* begins with Ho-sam's return from abroad, but the narrative implies that he was forced to leave by his father in order to end his relationship with Sing-ki, an ex-nurse who is now a professional singer. Some of Sing-ki's former nursing colleagues invite her to perform at Ho-sam's welcome-home party, providing an opportunity for the couple to reunite. However, Ho-sam's family once again condemns their union, and this time, he rebels. Halfway through the scene where he harshly reproaches his family and threatens to leave, his father yields, but on the condition that Sing-ki disowns her daughter and keeps her past a secret. The couple consents to the deal and Sing-ki severs all ties with her daughter.

Ho-sam's class-conscious protest against his snobbish father is not effective in vanquishing the interest-oriented patriarchal authority. The family's acceptance of Sing-ki, but not her daughter, fortifies the principle of legitimacy based exclusively on ties of blood. According to Zhang Chang-yan's interpretation of this film, Ho-sam's compliance reflects a conservative and conformist mindset inculcated by Japanese patriarchal ideology and the Confucian feudalism imposed by the KMT regime (55). Quite a few protagonists in *taiyu pian* melodrama are like Ho-sam, who hesitates to shift from *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft*, a personal growth narrated through the refusal of an arranged marriage to pursue a love match. The male

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<sup>20</sup> All of the characters' names in *taiyu pian* are translated phonetically from the Holo dialect.

protagonist Tong-san in *The Dream of Sorrowful Couples* cannot stay true to his love for the female protagonist. Instead, he feels obliged to comply with the feudal regulation of ethical responsibility. He considers it unscrupulous to fall in love with the female protagonist, for she is the fiancée of his cousin; in addition, he agrees to marry the daughter of his benevolent boss in order to return his favors. After several narrative twists, Tong-san's ultimate reunion with the female protagonist represents a reward for his conformism. On the contrary, protagonists who insist on breaking traditions are often penalized. In *The Unforgettable Station*, Kok-liông becomes mentally ill, and in *Love Till Death*, the protagonists' wedding becomes the bride's funeral—a harrowing punishment for two people in love who had shown disrespect to their differences in class.

Kozo in *The Love-Troth Tree* resolutely insists on his pursuit of romance and is unconcerned by the decline of his family's business, while Ho-sam in *The Unusual Love* appears to be more willing to compromise. There is a sense of inconsistency in Ho-sam's character between his righteous indignation against his family's snobbery and his quick acceptance of his father's proviso. Ho-sam's inconsistency symbolizes an unclear severance with the kinship corporation, which was the dominant economic body in 1960s Taiwan, where the means of production were tied to the patrilineal, patriarchal, or household lines (Gates 178). Ho-sam's acquiescence, for the sake of sustaining the status quo, allows his family to control his marital life instead of completing a tale of the triumph of individualism. Like *The Love-Troth Tree*, *The Unusual Love* evokes the individual's defiance of social norms, but only ephemerally. It soon withdraws to affirm the feudal liaison between socially-determining family occupations and the son's well-being. As Hill Gates points out, the roots of petty capitalism based on family lineage can be traced back to pre-modern China during the Song dynasty (178). Ho-sam's capitalist-oriented characterization also differentiates *The Unusual Love* from Nakamura's 1962 version, in which a protest scene against the hospital's management suggests a challenge to the exploitation and corruption underlying Japan's "economic miracle." This theme is common to many young, postwar, Japanese filmmakers (Standish 175). The nurses at Kozo's family hospital rally against a profit-oriented, non-humanitarian policy under the leadership of the acting president, whose father helps to solve the hospital's financial crisis.

There is also a plotline of group resistance in *The Unusual Love*, but with different motivations. This resistance is evoked to express disagreement with individualistic modernity while seeking resolution to the family-individual conflict. Rather than celebrating the happy promises of modernity, it issues a critique of family oppression, but not through the trope of social atomization and alienation as in social realist Japanese films. On the surface, patriarchal authority seems intact, as the couple is subjugated to it, but it is readjusted because of collective pressure. In *The Unusual Love*, the ending grants a union between Ho-sam, Sing-ki, and her little girl through the intervention of a group of Sing-ki's ex-colleagues, who mediate the impasse between the young couple and Hao-sam's parents. Despite their low-ranking position, this group acts collectively to exert pressure on Ho-sam's family and furnishes plans for a possible reconciliation between Sing-ki and her father-in-law. They protect Sing-ki not only because she is a member of the women's community, but also because they feel oppressed by the hospital director, a suitor of Ho-sam's hostile sister who helps to reinforce the old social order. The peacemaking efforts of this group suggest a sense of collective consciousness in terms of gender and class. Throughout the film, a sense of utopianism arises, not due to the range of possibilities opened up by promises of individualism, but by this expression of an earlier form of solidarity that combines social utilitarianism with the feudal patriarchal authority embodied by Ho-sam's condescending family.

Utopianism expressed through the pre-modern form of unified collectivity prevails in *taiyu pian* melodrama as a way to ease the tension between the domineering patriarchal family and the protagonist's individual pursuits. Interestingly, this sense of solidarity is commonly found among rival female characters such as in *The Unforgettable Station*, *The Dream of Sorrowful Couples*, *The Last Train to Kaohsiung*, and *The Husband's Secret* (dir. Lin Tuan-qiu, 1958). It is the mutual understanding of the plight of women that encourages the heroine's adversary to withdraw so that the heroine can fit into the traditional role of the woman as a mother or wife, without sacrificing her personal desires.

### **Conservative new woman**

The egocentrism of a mother such as Sing-ki in *The Unusual Love*, who prioritizes her desires and violates the mother's code of conduct, is a recurring

narrative motif in *taiyu pian* melodrama. This peculiar characterization of the mother figure deviates from those in Japanese *haha-mono*, mother films, which constitute a major sub-genre of postwar *gendai-geki* melodrama about contemporary life, aligned closely with Hollywood's woman's film. As outlined by Joseph Anderson and Donald Richie, the mother in *haha-mono* leads a despondent life as she suffers for her husband and children. Her anguish dissolves only when her husband changes, but this rarely happens. She may also recover her happiness due to her children's success, yet her children often have no concept of what she has sacrificed to help them achieve their goals. In some cases, a single mother must resort to prostitution to raise her children, but this morally deficient occupation results in contempt from her children, rather than appreciation. She feels totally betrayed when her children choose to leave home; therefore, the mother seeks reconciliation between all her family members, and family restoration is her ultimate panacea. Drawing from Tatsuhiko Shigeo, Anderson and Richie conclude that in *haha-mono* where the mother dominates, "the highest attainment a woman can reach is becoming a mother" (318-319). It is important to note that this image of the mother is idolized rather than pitied. The mother character reflects the *feminisuto* tradition that underlies the fundamental role of the mother in Japanese culture, where a woman is expected to suffer ungrudgingly for virtuous causes. The devoted veneration for a suffering mother downplays the "individualizing mechanism of the oedipal complex" and reinforces the attachment between a mother and her children (Russell, "Insides and Outsides" 146-147). Anderson and Richie also note that the mother figure in Japanese *hana-mono* differs from that in Western films in the degree of physical and emotional attachment that mothers have to their children (391). Interestingly, the representation of the mother in *taiyu pian* melodrama is closer to that found in Western films.

Although Anderson and Richie do not specify any Western films as examples, the image of the mother in Hollywood's maternal melodramas in the 1930s and 1940s can serve as a starting point for us to reconsider the configuration of the mother character in *taiyu pian* melodrama. The types of mothers in *taiyu pian* melodrama follow the topology used in Hollywood's maternal melodramas. They occupy the same moral position as in Hollywood films, where a bad mother "demands her own life and is punished for the violation of the desired patriarchal ideal" and a good mother is "nurturing and

self-abnegating” and often “marginal” (Kaplan 468). The following discussion examines *Stella Dallas* (dir. King Vidor, 1937), the most representative text of Hollywood’s maternal melodrama, to illustrate how mothers in *taiyu pian* melodrama are closer to those in Hollywood than in Japanese melodrama.

Similar to the characterization of Helen Morrison in *Stella Dallas*, the female protagonists in *taiyu pian* melodrama represent the ideal mother as virtuous, loyal, and devoted to their families, although, like Morrison, they are not the birth mothers. In contrast, the character of the birth mother is similar to that of Stella, who refuses the designated maternal position and whose desire exceeds her social status (Kaplan 469; Doane 75). In *A Wife and a Concubine* (dir. Wu Feijiang, year unknown)<sup>21</sup> and *Great Lamentation* (Xin Qi, 1967), Tshiu-hûn and Ing-bí both give up motherhood to fulfill their pecuniary and sexual desires, respectively. Working as a hostess, Tshiu-hûn abandons her family and child for an opulent patron, hoping to increase her social mobility. In *Great Lamentation*, after losing contact with her missing husband (who we know is imprisoned in Thailand), Ing-bí is seduced by a male friend and decides to leave her family and child. Like all of the “bad” mothers in Hollywood films, both Tshiu-hûn and Ing-bí later return to motherhood out of self-interest, which, once again, violates the patriarchal myth of the caring and devoted mother, who, once having left, is supposed to stay away from her children for good (Kaplan 474). The selfish yet regretful Tshiu-hûn and Ing-bí are not given the same second chance as Stella, who resumes the role of the good mother by pushing her child away for the sake of her daughter. Early in the respective films, Tshiu-hûn and Ing-bí are lambasted for their inadequacy because of their promiscuity and proclivity toward consumption; in the second half of these films, they are loathed for their excessive mothering. In comparison to the “good mother,” they are meant to be condemned.

If one jointly examines the three abovementioned mother characters, Sing-ki, Tshiu-hûn, and Ing-bí, all together, it becomes clear that their characterizations correspond to the general idea of the “new woman” defined in Japan and other parts of the world: young, middle-class, out of the home, with a heightened awareness of self and a hope for controlling their own

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<sup>21</sup> This is a literal translation of the Chinese title, but the story revolves around the fight between the birth mother (also the ex-wife) and the stepmother (the current wife) over the child. The title suggests that the male protagonist has never filed for divorce since his ex-wife ran away, but this point remains irrelevant to the main storyline.

destiny (Lowy 8). There are shared characteristics among the notions of the new woman in different cultural contexts, for the emergence of the new woman is closely related to a modernization that transforms the rural, agrarian society into an urban and industrial world where women are consequently given opportunities to work outside the home.

However, the mother character of Sing-ki differs from Tshiu-hûn and Ing-bí toward the end of *The Unusual Love*. While all three characters relinquish their maternal obligations, Sing-ki is given a second chance (like Stella) to resume her mother role; even better, she successfully regains her daughter. Tshiu-hûn and Ing-bí, on the other hand, are treated in a more typical way as erotic objects of desire that need to be punished for being threatening or destructive. The seemingly inconsistent development of the character of Sing-ki could be regarded as a combination of the Hollywood and Japanese paradigms of the mother character. However, I argue that Sing-ki's transformation from a "bad mother" to a "good mother" that makes her distinct from Tshiu-hûn and Ing-bí pertains to the way in which she is contained within the patriarchal and national discourses as a way to nationalize and negotiate Western-originated modernity. A similar narrative structuring device can be found in the treatment of the new woman in Japanese melodramas, and it is the specific patriarchal and national discourses in 1960s Taiwan that also make Sing-ki different from Katsue in both the 1938 and the 1962 versions of *The Love-Troth Tree*.

Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano argues that the characterization of the new woman in the woman's film in interwar Japan reflects the nationalization of and negotiation with Western-originated modernity (84-86). Wada-Marciano's argument helps to shed light on the characterizations of Katsue in the 1938 version of *The Love-Troth Tree*. Katsue in Hiromasa's 1938 version represents a utopian combination of the Japanese *feministuo* tradition and the modern ideal of a woman who has a sense of self-determination and self-sustainability. She symbolizes the image of an early version of the new woman prevalent in the Meiji period, within the parameters of "good wife, wise mother" (Lowy 4-7). Balancing her multiple roles as a mother, lover, and career woman, Katsue is a feminine ideal that "would contribute to economic growth by emphasizing frugality, hard work, and productivity along with modesty and submissiveness" (Nolte and Hastings, quoted in Lowy 4). The same character in Nakamura's 1962 version, however, chooses her care-giving duties over her



career achievements. Katsue's withdrawal into domesticity in the 1962 version helps to reinstate the dwindling masculine authority in postwar Japan (Otilia 15).

A gender discourse containing nationalist sentimentalism can also be found in the portrayal of modern women in *taiyu pian* melodrama, if we compare Sing-ki in *The Unusual Love* with other bad mother figures, such as Tshiu-hûn in *A Wife and a Concubine* and Ing-bí in *Great Lamentation*. The bad mother figures both aspire to be released from their family constraints and become some form of new woman who enjoys luxury and freedom. Their sexuality becomes the primary means by which they feel a sense of individuality as women existing outside the imposed patriarchal consciousness. Their untraditional femininity, accentuated by their flaunting of their sensuality, aggressive personalities, and penchant for material abundance, erodes masculine power and undermines the traditional family.

Raising her child alone as a working single mother causes Sing-ki to appear as a modern woman, but in effect, she is passive and self-restrained. She fits the image of the "new woman" defined by the KMT's conservative gender politics: women must be educated, productive, and even publically-involved.<sup>22</sup> Yet, this is done for the well-being of their husbands, children, families, and the nation. As mentioned above, Sing-ki differs from Katsue in the 1938 *The Love-Troth Tree* because her struggle does not contain an optimistic overtone of individual triumph. In this sense, it can be argued that she follows the characterization of Katsue in the 1962 version. However, this similarity is not necessarily a simple imitation. Sing-ki's compliance with traditional femininity represents the ideal form of the modern woman recruited into the Sino-centric national project that resurrected the root values of Chinese culture while seeking to suppress the anti-Confucian and feminist spirit developed after the May Fourth Movement. Traditional Confucian femininity, which exalts the wise mother and good wife and denies female sexuality, was officially inculcated through education and various forms of intellectualization projects (Diamond 11-16). Nevertheless, Diamond also points out that women encountered feelings of ambivalence and frustration about their roles as mothers and housewives because they involved

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<sup>22</sup> The gender policy of the KMT appeared to have a feminist sensibility since it advocated women's rights to education and to participation in public affairs, but this advocacy of gender egalitarianism needs to be understood as part of the nation-building project.

considerable social isolation (22-23). This sense of discontent is reflected in what drives Ing-bí in *Great Lamentation* and Tshiu-hûn in *A Wife and a Concubine* to leave their families, but the image of the disobedient woman signals a moment of “the return of the repressed” that cannot always be contained within the doctrine of the KMT’s gender ideology.

## **Kaleidoscopic Outlook and Beyond**

While some detectable systematic similarities and differences exist between *taiyu pian* and Japanese cinema, especially in regard to their selection of themes and content, the aesthetic qualities of each are hardly analogous. As was noted at the beginning of this article, film production in Taiwan was launched during the colonial period as part of the cultural policy of the colonial regime. While Japanese films matured in the 1950s, at that point in time, the development of *taiyu pian* was only at an inception stage. The knowledge learned from watching international films did not always successfully translate into knowing how to obtain the right look due to the general impoverishment of the infrastructure of the equipment and the low level of technical sophistication in Taiwan at that time (Liao 112). *Taiyu pian* was apparently still struggling with how to use cinematically-specific techniques, such as different shot lengths, camera movement, and editing, to tell a story effectively. Liao Jin-feng argues that, in general, *taiyu pian* cinema bears the stamp of “transitional cinema,” as it hovers somewhere between narrative-oriented classic cinema and exhibitionistic primitive cinema (134). For example, even in a narrative feature, it is common for the characters to break through the cinematic “wall” and directly address the viewer (134). In discussing the visual style of *The Unusual Love*, Zhang Chang-yan also attributes the film’s lack of three-dimensionality and its tableau style to the director’s aptitude for work for the stage as opposed to film (59-60).

One must bear in mind, however, that *taiyu pian* does not merely aspire to adhere to the directives of classical Hollywood cinema. Liao’s argument is problematic in overstressing the role that the Hollywood paradigm plays in the aesthetic development of *taiyu pian*. Given the affinity of *taiyu pian* for Japanese cinema, it could be argued that its “retarded” progress reflects a shift away from the paradigm of classical Hollywood cinema to that of Japanese cinema. It is not unusual to find characters facing the camera, disjunctive shot changes, or visual flatness in Japanese cinema. Without sufficient historical

evidence, it is difficult to pin down the origin of a particular aesthetic choice in *taiyu pian*, be it from Japan, Hollywood, the Amoy-dialect, Shanghai, or the influence of European films. A contingent resemblance is not impossible.

More often than not, one can detect a wide range of stylistic variety within one single film. For example, in *The Husband's Secret* directed by Lin Tuan-qiu (1958), one of the few prominent film directors professionally trained in Japan, one can find tangible examples of similarities to Japanese, Hollywood, and European films. Several scenes are filmed using extremely long shots of a considerable duration, in which the actors are already part of the *mise-en-scène*. These shots encourage the viewer to look at the surroundings in detail instead of immediately focusing on the main characters present in the crowd. This emphasis on the social setting that relates the action to its material context is tinged with a neo-realist look that can also be recognized in cinema across Europe. However, the camera placement in *The Husband's Secret* is relatively low, sometimes close to the ground, especially in scenes with a Japanese-styled room setting, and the viewer is immediately reminded of the films directed by Yasujiro Ozu and Mikio Naruse. Plausible traces of Hollywood influences can also be found in *The Husband's Secret*, such as the expressionist lighting of film noir and the gangster iconography, as well as a replicated composition in deep focus as seen in Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941), wherein the female protagonist lays on the bed in the foreground as the male protagonist opens the door in the background. Sometimes, it is difficult to ascertain the exact source of a particular trait of *taiyu pian*. For example, scholars hold different views on what influenced the widespread use of popular songs along with an image track that functions either as the character's monologue or a third person commentary. The same practice can be found in Shanghai film (Hong 61), Japanese film, and the folk tradition of *Ge-zai* opera (Wang 10-11). At the end of Hong Guo-juin's chapter on *taiyu pian*, which he terms Taiwanese-dialect cinema, he concludes that, due to its "unclean severance" from various transnational sources of external influence, it is, as Andrew Higson notes, "more likely to be either local or transnational than national" (62).

The use of "either-or" suggests an unavoidable choice between two alternatives, but Hong does not seem concerned about determining whether *taiyu pian* is local or transnational when he invokes Higson to oppose the qualification of *taiyu pian* as national cinema. To revise Hong's conclusion,

this paper concludes that it is the transnational quality of *taiyu pian* that makes it locally specific. What this paper tries to point out, by narrowing the subject down to a comparative study between *taiyu pian* melodrama and Japanese *gendai-geki* melodrama, is that the attachment to various international cinemas is affected by political, economic, and social circumstances. *Taiyu pian* is not a counter cinema, as is Brazilian Cinema Novo, in which cannibalism suggests a form of cultural nationalism that resists imperialism (King 113). The idea of cultural cannibalism, however, does imply a process of identity formation, and even if the personnel in the *taiyu pian* industry were not aware of their act of excessive absorption, a sense of a distinctive identity did arise. *Taiyu pian* takes a bit of everything, mixes it, and creates something unique, it reveals itself to be a partial mimicry, when compared to all its plagiarized sources. Whether this way of constructing the sense of self is benign or detrimental is a separate issue; however, a comparative study between *taiyu pian* and related international cinemas, in this case Japanese cinema, can shed some light on the factors and conditions that affect the decisions on what cinematic themes to adopt and what to modify.

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