

Taiwan's Lost Commercial Cinema: Recovered and Restored 2020 Edition The Symposium

Date: Saturday 8 February 2020

Venue: The Anatomy Museum, 6th Floor, King's Building, Strand Campus, King's College London

Schedule:

10.00 – 10:15 Registration

10:15 – 10:30 Welcome (Dr. Chen Pin-Chuan, Director of the Cultural Division, Taipei Representative Office in the UK).

Session 1:

10:30 – 11:10: Professor Ru-Shou Robert Chen (National Chengchi University, Taiwan) "Female solidarity as an implicit social revolt in Lin Tuan-Chiu's movies"

11:10 – 11:50: Dr. Corrado Neri (Jean Moulin University, Lyon 3) "May 13th: On melodrama, singsongs girls and crooks"

11:50 – 12:30: Dr. Ming-Yeh T. Rawnsley (Centre of Taiwan Studies, SOAS, University of London & Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan) "Changing representation of masculinity from the Taiwanese-language cinema to Health Realism and military films: A case study of Ke Junxiong"

Lunch break: 12:30 – 13:30

Session 2:

13:30 – 14:10: Professor Ta-wei Chi (National Chengchi University), "Shaping the Unshapely: Disabilities in *Taiyupian* Classics from the 1960s."

14:10 – 14:40: Professor Chris Berry (King's College London), "Taiwanese-Language Cinema as Cold War Cinema"

Tea & Coffee Break: 14:40—15:10

15:10 – 16:00: *Roundtable on Restoring and Curating Taiwanese-Language Cinema Today*

Participants: Dr. Chen Pin-Chuan, (Director of the Cultural Division, Taipei Representative Office in the UK, former Director of the Taiwan Film Institute); Dr. Wafa Ghermani (Cinémathèque Française); Dr. Ming-Yeh Rawnsley (Centre of Taiwan Studies, SOAS, University of London & Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan)

Chair: Professor Chris Berry

16:00 – 16:30 Closing Discussion

Friday Evening Screening (Safra Lecture Theatre, Ground Floor, King's Building, KCL) 7th of February

19:30 *The Rice Dumpling Vendors* (dir. Xin Qi, 1969, 84 mins), and *Binding* (dir. Chen Ting-Ning, 2019, 23 mins)

Saturday Evening Screening (Anatomy Lecture Theatre, 6th Floor, King's Building, KCL) 8th of February

19:30 *Tarzan and the Treasure* (dir. Liang Zhe-fu, 1965, 83 mins).

Full details of Screenings at: www.taiyupian.uk

Abstracts and Biographies (in order of presentation):

Professor Ru-Shou Robert Chen (National Chengchi University, Taiwan) “Female solidarity as an implicit social revolt in Lin Tuan-Chiu’s movies”

Abstract:

From the recent release of 4 remastered DVD movies directed by Lin Tuan-Chiu (1920-1998), one finds that suffering women once again become a major role, which can be easily found among Taiyupian (Taiwanese-language movies). However, Lin’s female characters are portrayed with a twist, especially in *An Intricate Love Affair* (*Cuo lian*, 1960) and *May 13, Night of Sorrow* (*Wuyue shisan shangxin ye*, 1965). There is a sense of female solidarity, or female bonding, permeating both films. By following genre conventions of melodrama in his films, Lin nevertheless creates situations in which female characters take the initiative and support each other. Female solidarity becomes not only a symbolic action defying their suppression, but also an implicit critique of injustice in the patriarchy society.

The reason for the role-shifting of female characters has to do with Lin Tuan-Chiu’s personal background as well as his observation of social changes in Taiwan in the 1960s. Lin started as a progressive playwright during the Japanese colonial era and then moved on to make movies. It was told that a mockery made by his Korean friend about the poor quality of Taiyupian enforced his decision to enter into the movie business. He even built a well-equipped film studio to achieve his goal.

This paper will start by briefly introducing the contribution made by Lin for Taiyupian, while focusing on difficult situations those female characters encountered in his films and how they reversed them for their own advantages, as if representing Lin’s idea of stimulating the Taiyupian film industry at that time.

Biography:

Ru-Shou Robert Chen is a Professor at the Department of Radio-TV, College of Communication, National Chengchi University, Taiwan. He teaches courses on film theories, Taiwan cinema, and sociology of everyday life. His research interest includes cinema studies, Taiwan cinema, cultural studies, and Walter Benjamin.

Dr. Corrado Neri (Jean Moulin University, Lyon 3) “May 13th: On melodrama, singsongs girls and crooks”

Abstract:

One strategy to attract public and scholar interest in the restored Taiwan cinema from the martial law period is to underscore their provocative and oppositional agenda. The huge bulk of *taiyupian* (around 1000) has disappeared and considered lost – only 200 remain. But also Mandarin productions (e.g. *End of Track*) or films with Mandarin and Taiwanese versions (*Deer Warrior*) have struggled to resurface in contemporary Taiwan, where they participate in the ongoing public debate on the KMT Nationalist Party totalitarian regime, transitional justice, Taiwanese identity and democratic process. Although filmmakers were working under strict limitations due to low budgets and censorship, it is tempting to look for strategies that use cinema as social commentaries and critiques, narratives that push the boundaries of representation and propose different family configurations or express social anxieties. This paper aims to question the claims of grassroots creativity supposedly proposing alternative models, or even criticizing official representation of society (morals, values, education, gender roles...). How is *Dangerous Youth* “scandalous”? can we consider *Fantasy of deer warrior* a “cult” movie – and if yes, can we consider it an embodiment of social anxiety? Can the pastiches like *Brother Liu* and *Tarzan* be considered a playful appropriation, a call for resistance to the healthy realism that proposes a global mash up unconcerned with national construction? Why did the cosmopolitan, Japan-educated Lin Tuanqiu only manage to shoot few films before quitting filmmaking? I propose a close reading of some interesting and apparently contradictory agendas in Lin Tuanqiu (*May 13th*, *The Husbands Secret*, *Six Suspects*) and Xin Qi (*The Bride who has returned from Hell*, *Dangerous Youth*) where contemporary audiences can discover, under heavily moralistic overtones, intriguing representations of “devious”, alternative, enticing forms of sin and sex, crime and exploitation. However, it is far from established that these narratives were actually perceived as rebellious; they do for sure show a reverse-shot to the official CMPC production, helping us to complicate our understanding of Taiwanese martial law cinema and culture.

Biography:

Corrado Neri is associate professor at the Jean Moulin University, Lyon 3, currently (2016-2017) visiting professor at National Taiwan University of the Art, Taipei. He has conducted extensive research on Chinese cinema in Beijing and Taipei and published many articles on books and magazine (in English, French and Italian). His book *Tsai Ming-liang on the Taiwanese film director* appeared in 2004 (Venezia, Cafoscarina). *Ages Inquiets. Cinémas chinois: une représentation de la jeunesse*, was printed in 2009 (Lyon, Tigre de Papier). His third book, *Retro Taiwan*, has recently been published for l’Asiathèque (Paris, 2016). He co-edited (with Kirstie Gormley) a bilingual (french/english) book on Taiwan cinema (*Taiwan cinema/Le Cinéma taiwanais*, Asiexpo, 2009); *Global Fences* (with Florent Villard, IETT, 2011); *Reinventing Mao: Maoisms and National Cinemas/La Réinvention de Mao. Maoismes et Cinémas Nationaux* (Special issue of *Cinéma & Cie International Film Studies Journal* (with Marco Dalla Gassa,

Federico Zecca) and *Politics and Representation in Sinophone Cinema after the 1980s/Politique et Représentation dans le Cinéma Sinophone après 1980* (Special #55 de *Monde Chinois Nouvelle Asie*, with Jean-Yves Heurtebise).

Dr. Ming-Yeh T. Rawnsley (Centre of Taiwan Studies, SOAS, University of London & Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan) “Changing representation of masculinity from the Taiwanese-language cinema to Health Realism and military films: A case study of Ke Junxiong”

Abstract:

Ke Junxiong (1945–2015) was one of the most prolific film actors in Taiwan. Since he joined the industry at the age of 16, Ke became the male lead in the Taiwanese-language cinema (*taiyupian*) in 1963 and acted in 50 movies between 1963 and 1965. Ke Junxiong successfully transitioned into Mandarin cinema (*guoyupian*) and played leading roles in many Health Realism and military films. Up to 2011, Ke was credited in 227 films in total, next only to Shorty Cai (229 films). More importantly, most of the prolific actors, such as Shorty Cai, usually played supporting roles with relatively low payment from the film companies. But Ke remained a male lead throughout his acting career with high fees. This made Ke Junxiong the quintessential leading man in the history of Taiwan cinema for both *taiyupian* and *guoyupian*. His performance was also wide ranging, covering different genres from melodrama, Health Realism, military and historical epic, to the exploitative works of dark social realism. In other words, it may be argued that Ke’s onscreen persona represented the most recognisable forms of Taiwanese masculinity.

This paper analyses the changing representation of masculinity from *taiyupian* to Health Realism and military films by examining six of Ke’s works: *The Best Secret Agent* (1961), *The Bride Who Has Returned from Hell* (1965), *Goodbye Darling* (1970), *Home, Sweet Home* (1970), *Everlasting Glory* (1974), and *Eight Hundred Heroes* (1975). As masculinities are sets of gender practices that are constructed and embedded in certain historical, cultural, and social contexts, this paper will provide useful insights into exploring the notion of gender and change in Taiwanese society in the 1960s and the 1970s.

Biography:

Ming-yeh T. Rawnsley is Research Associate, Centre of Taiwan Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and Taiwan's Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica. She has published widely in both English and Chinese on Chinese-language cinema and media and democratisation in Taiwan. She is the founding Editor-in-Chief of *The International Journal of Taiwan Studies*, jointly supported by the European Association of Taiwan Studies and Academia Sinica. Her most recent publications include (eds with Kuei-fen Chiu and Gary Rawnsley) *Taiwan Cinema: International Reception and Social Change* (2017) and (eds with Chris Berry) a special issue on "Taiwanese-Language Films" for the *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* (forthcoming).

Professor Ta-wei Chi (National Chengchi University), “Shaping the Unshapely: Disabilities in *Taiyupian* Classics from the 1960s.”

Abstract:

With the emerging awareness of disability rights in Taiwan, the public has witnessed a growing number of mainstream films and documentaries, which affirm the existence and dignity of disabled citizens. However, the same viewing public might have little if any remembrance of the visual culture that testified to the disabled prior to the aforesaid emerging awareness. This paper attempts to redress the amnesia of earlier representations of disabilities by locating the unshapely characters in *Taiyupian* classics from the 1960s, such as *Early Train from Taipei* (1964, dir. Zhefu Liang) and *The Rice Dumpling Vendors* (1969, dir. Hsin Chi). The former portrays a pair of star-crossed lovers, including a man who has been blinded and a woman who has been disfigured on her face. In the latter, a laborer injures his limbs after falling from scaffolds while working. Sympathetic to class underdogs while simultaneously critical of other sexually attractive (and rich) characters, the two films dramatize the distance between the poor, who are victimized by disabilities, and the rich, who are immune to disabilities. The title “Shaping the Unshapely” refers not only to both films portraying non-standard bodies in poverty but also to both films giving shape to disabilities as being connotative of class subordination and sexual unattractiveness.

Biography:

Ta-wei Chi (PhD UCLA) is an associate professor in Taiwanese Literature at National Chengchi University in Taipei, where he teaches queer theory and disability studies. His monograph *The History of Tongzhi Literature: An Invention in Taiwan* (2017, in Chinese), a tome referring to more than 100 literary texts in Taiwan, delineates the queer existence in Taiwanese literature from the 1950s to the 2010s. His science fiction *Membrane* is translated and available in France and Japan, and being translated by Ari Heinrich into English.

Professor Chris Berry (King’s College London), “Taiwanese-Language Cinema as Cold War Cinema”

Abstract

Once forgotten, the Taiwanese-language films (*taiyupian*) of the period from the late 1950s through to the early 1970s have become the subject of renewed interest and scholarship. During this period, private companies made over one thousand *taiyupian*, only 20 per cent of which survive. A lot of existing scholarship has focused on how to understand the relationship between *taiyupian* and the differences between the local Taiwanese-speaking islanders and the Mandarin-favouring forces that took over from the Japanese in 1945 and retreated to the island after defeat by the Chinese Communists in 1949. Put simply, are *taiyupian* the cultural legacy of today’s DPP independence party?

This paper seeks to open up a slightly different question: how should we understand *taiyupian* as a Cold War cinema? It seeks to answer this question in three ways. First, it

considers the impact of the Cold War on the production, distribution and exhibition circumstances of *taiyupian*, when the Minnanhua-speaking population that was their natural market was divided between those inside the People's Republic and those outside it, and when the KMT government on Taiwan's policies towards Hong Kong and Japan also impacted the *taiyupian* industry's potential in various ways. Second, how can we consider the films themselves as not just part of Taiwanese local culture or part of a new post-war cosmopolitanism, but also as shaped by and contributing to the culture of the Cold War? Finally, in East Asia, the Cold War is not over. So, how does the revival of interest in *taiyupian* participate in the ongoing Cold War, and how does it maintain its autonomy from it?

Biography

Chris Berry is Professor of Film Studies at King's College London. His academic research is grounded in work on Chinese cinema and other Chinese screen-based media, as well as neighboring countries. His publications include: (co-edited with Luke Robinson) *Chinese Film Festivals: Sites of Translation* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); (co-edited with Koichi Iwabuchi and Eva Tsai) *Routledge Handbook of East Asian Popular Culture* (Routledge, 2016); and (co-edited with Feii Lu) *Island on the Edge: Taiwan New Cinema and After* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2005).

Dr. Chen Pin-Chuan

PhD in Film studies, King's College London (KCL). Director of Cultural Division at Taipei Representative Office in the UK (TRO), former Director of Taiwan Film Institute, Assistant Professor at Chaoyang University of Technology in Taiwan. His research interests are documentary-making, documentary studies, film history, film industry, the film archive and its practice.

Dr. Wafa Ghermani

Wafa Ghermani holds a PhD from the Université Paris 3 – La Sorbonne Nouvelle in film studies. Her PhD focused on Taiwan cinema and National Identity from the Japanese colonial period to nowadays. She currently works at the Cinémathèque française where she curated the program "Taiwan "mauvais" genre cinema" and is a curator for many festivals and Taiwan film related events (Vesoul International Asian Film Festival, Warsaw Five Flavours Film Festival, Rencontres du cinéma taiwanais in Paris...)