



# Rediscovering Taiwan New Cinema in and outside of Greater China: Te-sheng Wei's *Cape No. 7* and Tso-chi Chang's *Soul of a Demon*

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## ABSTRACT

Te-sheng Wei's *Cape No. 7* and Chang Tso-chi's *Soul of a Demon* are examples of Taiwanese films set in Taiwan during the era of Japanese rule. Since the early 2000s, many of these films have been well received by Taiwanese audiences. Both *Cape No. 7* and *Soul of a Demon* address issues pertaining to Taiwanese identity and history, but their methods for approaching these issues are drastically different. In this paper, I will use *Cape No. 7* and *Soul of a Demon* to illustrate the ongoing development of Taiwan New Cinema and to answer the following questions: How does Taiwan New Cinema's younger generation of filmmakers endeavor to meet their audiences on different media platforms? How do they engage their audiences in conversations with popular topics when filmmaking today is more diversified in terms of circulation channels, funding resources, and reception?

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## INTRODUCTION

In an era when Taiwan's government faces diplomatic setbacks while China becomes increasingly influential in the international arena, the positive reception of Taiwan New Cinema (hereafter New Taiwanese Cinema) at European film festivals works to satisfy the contemporary Taiwanese desire for international recognition. Taiwanese films that collect awards from these European film festivals are able to travel to other international festivals in the West. Their travel routes have made New Taiwanese Cinema known as art house cinema among Western film festival audiences. However, because Western film festivals have continued to highlight films made by Hsiao-hsien Hou (b. 1947), Edward Yang (1947–2007), and Ming-liang Tsai (b. 1957), and have stopped introducing new Taiwanese directors, few among Western audiences pay attention to the ongoing development of New Taiwanese Cinema.

As China flexes its military muscles and threatens to annex Taiwan, the Taiwanese desire for recognition simply becomes greater. Tso-chi Chang (b. 1960) and Te-sheng Wei (b. 1969) are two filmmakers who continue to use filmmaking to raise the profile of New Taiwanese Cinema. In interviews, each has spoken candidly about how his filmmaking has been (in)directly influenced by New Taiwanese Cinema directors such as Hou and Yang (Li, Xie, and Wu 2003; Huang and Zeng 2008). Chang Tso-chi's *Soul of a Demon* (Chang, dir. 2007) and Wei Te-sheng's *Cape No. 7* (Wei, dir. 2008) are notable examples of these endeavors. *Cape No.7* was one of the top-grossing films of 2008 in Taiwan, although it received little attention among audiences elsewhere (Mello 2017, 11; Akamatsu 2016, 196; Lim 2016, 206). *Soul of a Demon*, by contrast, was nominated for the Berlin International Film Festival's Panorama Audience Award in 2008 and was selected to open both the Taipei Golden Horse International Film Festival and the Hong Kong International Film Festival. This demonstrates how Chang's *Soul* needs to travel from local to regional and international film festivals in order to find its audience. These two films traveled via different trajectories that cultivated their audiences through different media platforms. This shows that art house cinema—a cinema that primarily circulates in major film festivals held in places such as Cannes, Berlin, and Venice—is simply one of many faces New Taiwanese Cinema now carries.

Chang's *Soul* and Wei's *Cape* also share a similar interest in capturing how Taiwanese audiences respond to one contemporary social trend. Since the early 2000s, many Taiwanese films set in Taiwan during the era of Japanese rule have been well received by Taiwanese audiences. *Cape No. 7* and *Soul of a Demon* are examples of this boom. Both films also try to address the social reaction to the increasing number of residents of Taiwan who identify as Taiwanese. The proportion of such residents has grown rapidly over the past three decades. According to the annual survey by the Election

Study Center (2019), the percentage of respondents who identify as Taiwanese has grown from 17.6 percent in 1991 to 60.6 percent in 2014. This proportion remains high as China continues to regard Taiwan as an integral part of China and to block Taiwan's international recognition. Both films also highlight the history of Taiwan under Japanese rule and shared memories of the period as "the good old days." Yu-wen Fu (2014), Chialan Sharon Wang (2009), and Li-hsin Kuo (2009) argue that *Cape No. 7*'s appeal to Japanophilia is more than a simple love for the colonizer (Kuo 2009; Fu 2014; Wang 2009). *Soul of a Demon* also calls for the reexamination of Taiwan under Japanese rule, but it remains critical about this history and its influence on Taiwanese identity formation. These films were released around the same time, but there is a drastic difference in how they capture and reflect the social reaction to Taiwanese identity formation.

This paper will use Tso-chi Chang's *Soul of a Demon* (hereafter *Soul*) and Te-sheng Wei's *Cape No. 7* (hereafter *Cape*) to demonstrate how New Taiwanese Cinema has developed a different face. I will first use *Cape*'s characters to examine how the politics of emotion unfold among the film's three generations of Taiwanese. My analysis explains how *Cape*'s portrayal of this identification as Taiwanese does more than cater to mass audiences at home. The film won over local audiences because it vividly captures the politics of emotion that local audiences share and offers them an emotional outlet. While the protagonist of *Soul* shares this identification, his marginal position in society prevents him from embracing the mainstream discourse of identity formation presented in *Cape*. His marginal position enables him to embrace the disjunction between his Taiwanese identity and his use of Mandarin in Taiwan. Both films portray a Taiwanese society in which Mandarin is simply one of many languages Taiwanese speak. The characters mostly use Minnan to communicate with each other, while they speak Mandarin with a uniquely Taiwanese accent. It is not uncommon for characters to mix Mandarin with other dialects or with Japanese. It would be naive to see this extensive use of Minnan as a political act that serves to resist the hegemony of Mandarin. Rather, this portrayal honestly presents the fundamental difference between Taiwan and China. Through my reading of these two film texts, I would like to invite a conversation with audiences who watch them from different circulation networks about the mixed feelings we share as we see China grow to become one of the world leaders in the twenty-first century.

## CAPE NO. 7: UNDERSTANDING THE DESIRE FOR A TAIWANESE SOVEREIGN STATE

*Cape* is a romantic comedy about Aga, a male Taiwanese singer in a band, and Tomoko, female Japanese model

and public relations coordinator. Their romance develops as the primary story while a second plot from half a century earlier—a relationship between a Japanese teacher and his female student—is told in a series of flashbacks throughout the film. The Japanese teacher's voice-over narration of his letters to his student, written during his repatriation to Japan, ultimately weaves together these two love stories and lays the groundwork for the film's tear-jerking closing scene.

Aga's love for music has motivated him to leave his hometown in the countryside for Taipei, where he organizes a band that performs at various nightclubs for years. His hope for a career as a popular singer with his own band is self-evident. After years of struggle, he decides to give up this dream, leave the metropolitan capital, and return to Hengchun, his hometown on the tip of Southern Taiwan, to rest and figure out what his next step will be.

Aga and Tomoko meet in Hengchun, where various ethnic groups live together harmoniously. The film's portrayal of what appears to be a social paradise is built upon stereotypes of its constituent ethnic groups, which submit to the leadership of the Taiwanese Hoklo, the largest ethnic group. Aga's stepfather, Mr. Representative, is characteristic of the ethnic Hoklo population. His representation reminds audiences of the social stereotype of the ethnic Hoklo. Instead of resisting such a stereotype, *Cape* portrays how he makes use of it in order to help the community in Hengchun. Like many communities in rural Taiwan, the majority of the residents in Hengchun are seniors or young children. Although Aga returns to Hengchun, he also loses direction for his future. As Aga's stepfather, Mr. Representative finds it urgent to connect Aga with local employment opportunities. He first arranges for Aga to be a substitute mail carrier for the post office. When the opportunity arises, he even suggests that the hotel manager at a chain hotel organize an audition to assemble a band in Hengchun to open the music festival that takes place in Hengchun every spring. Mr. Representative's self-introduction at the first practice session of Hengchun's band reveals that he not only identifies with Hengchun's community but is also proud of it. He describes himself as follows:

I am the president of the Township Representatives. I am 170 centimeters tall, weigh 75 kilograms, and I am sixty-five years old this year. My hobbies are quarreling, fighting, killing, and arson. My biggest wish is to burn down the whole town of Hengchun, then call back all the young people from the cities to rebuild it. This way, we can be our own bosses and never again be subordinates of outsiders. Now, are we properly introduced? (Wei 2008)

While rapid economic development has driven many of his peers to migrate to big cities for job opportunities,

he stays and cultivates a career as “the president of the Township Representatives.” The network of relationships he has cultivated over the years grants him the power to influence the results of local elections. He uses this power to negotiate with the chief organizer of a beach concert to give Hengchun's residents, including his recently returned stepson, a chance to share the spotlight and to succeed on stage. His exercise of power as the guardian angel of this small town makes his leadership acceptable.

It is important to note that *Cape's* portrayal of Aga's identification as Taiwanese is epitomized in his return to Hengchun. As a part of the new generation of the largest ethnic group, his return home is a journey to reconnect with the community at a grassroots level. When Old Mao, a Hengchun postal carrier in his seventies, gets into a car accident, Aga takes up work as his replacement and discovers a parcel with an old address on it. During his first week, Old Mao asks Aga to return the parcel to the post office. As a member of the disappearing generation, who experienced and survived Japanese rule, Old Mao is able to read and speak Japanese even today and recognizes that “Cape No. 7” is an old address from the era of the Japanese rule of Taiwan. This catches Aga's attention. He is so curious that he opens the parcel even though he is unable to read the letters inside, which are written in Japanese. The mystery generated by the parcel becomes the object of his desire while he struggles to compose two songs for the opening of the beach concert.

Aga, Mr. Representative, and Old Mao are three generations of Taiwanese Hoklo. Their experiences of identity formation are different, but they share an emotional complex (*qingjie*) of anti-China attitudes and Japanophilia. While the experiences of identity formation Old Mao and Mr. Representative had during their formative years share the imagining of a national community, they have actually experienced two different ones: Old Mao's is Japanese and Mr. Representative's is Chinese. Old Mao's experience of surviving Japanese colonial rule and the political turmoil that ensued, caused by the change in political regime from the Japanese to the KMT-led Chinese government after World War II, creates a descending hierarchical relationship between Japan, Taiwan, and China. This hierarchical order, which contends that Japan is the best modern state and that Taiwan (under Japanese rule) is better than China as a modern self-governed state, inevitably dominates Old Mao's mindset. The filmmakers drive this home in a scene in which Old Mao uses Japanese in a written invitation to his granddaughter's wedding banquet to Tomoko; his demeanor and use of Japanese—the guest's native language—indicate how significant it is for Old Mao to have Tomoko present at his family's gathering. To Old Mao, Tomoko is not just a public relations coordinator—she is from Japan and reminds him of the good old days when he was a Japanese citizen.

During his formative years, Mr. Representative received an education at school that cultivated his Chinese identity by highlighting Republican China's War of Resistance against Japan. Two factors impede his formation of a Chinese identity: At home, he learns from his parents that their quality of life significantly improved under Japanese rule. Their narratives portray a benign Japanese government drastically different from the evil monarchy that invaded mainland China and murdered countless women and children that he learns about in school. Mr. Representative finds it hard to connect this Chinese anti-Japanese rhetoric with his parents' firsthand experience. The unequal treatment Mr. Representative encounters also suspends his formation of a Chinese identity. The rhetoric of wartime opposition against the Japanese is consistent with the revival rhetoric the KMT-led Chinese government used after its relocation to Taiwan. Initially, the KMT only intended to use Taiwan as a temporary base while it retrieved mainland China from its Communist-led government and revived KMT rule there. The revival rhetoric of this period highlights anti-communism and ignores the positive colonial experiences of Old Mao and his generation. When the hope of restoration diminished, the KMT began instituting policies aimed at securing its rule on the island of Taiwan. This included the continuation of the process of modernization the Japanese had initiated. In addition, the KMT-led government instituted compulsory Mandarin education to promote a Chinese national identity, so that Mr. Representative's baby boomer generation would identify with the KMT-led Republic of China (ROC). This promotion of the KMT's version of a modern Chinese nation is out of sync with the unequal treatment Mr. Representative faces in society.

The relocation of the KMT from the mainland to Taiwan, in practical terms, brought a large group of mainlanders (*waishengren*), including elite officers, soldiers, and civilians, to the island. The KMT was inclined to put these people in higher-up positions for governance and to prioritize them in the distribution of social resources. This governmental favoritism benefiting mainlanders endures today and makes it difficult for native Taiwanese (*benshengren*)—including Taiwanese Hoklo such as Mr. Representative, for example—to wholeheartedly embrace the KMT's version of Chinese national identity. Instead, this favoritism has spawned a mindset among native Taiwanese that regards any rule from outside the island as carrying ill intent and asserts that self-governance in the form of sovereign independence is the best means to resist such rule. The "Taiwanization" movements (*bentuhua yundong*) of the 1990s in Taiwan fed on this mindset. The fact that *Cape's* portrayal of Mr. Representative as the leader and guardian angel of his community is so popular with local audiences suggests that the majority of contemporary Taiwanese remain inclined to consider Taiwan a sovereign independent state. While, as I-chung Chen (2008) points out, *Cape* fails to

present the mainlanders as characters among the ethnic groups in Hengchun, this absence might well indicate mainlanders' inability to identify with Taiwan. As Kuan-hsing Chen (2001) asserts, the process of reconciliation between native Taiwanese and mainlanders can only begin when mainlanders come to understand what the native Taiwanese experienced under Japanese colonial rule, and when the native Taiwanese try to understand the mainlanders' experiences during the civil wars between the Chinese Nationalist party and Chinese Communist party (1927–1949) in mainland China.

Unlike Old Mao's apparent identification with Japan or Mr. Representative's shift in identification from the ROC to Taiwan, Aga has grown up in an era that acknowledges Taiwan's unique history and culture. It is easy for him to identify as Taiwanese. This identification as Taiwanese is satisfying to Aga and his generation, who are aware of cross-strait tensions and the ambiguous status of Taiwan (the ROC) in regional and trans-regional politics. The cross-strait tension between Taiwan and China tends to trigger anxiety in Aga's generation of Taiwanese. In terms of territorial size, economic power, and natural resources, the ROC cannot rival mainland China's; it is an independent sovereign state, but it is not a nation recognized in the international arena. The romance between Aga and Tomoko is thus wish fulfillment, as it contributes to what Ming-yeh T. Rawnsley (2012, 139) identifies as a "feel-good" factor. Many Taiwanese audiences share in the "feel-good" factor intentionally presented by *Cape*. It is significant that Tomoko makes an effort to learn how to speak Mandarin, one of the two native languages Aga speaks. Their romance corrects the ending of the love story set in the past, in which a Taiwanese woman—also named Tomoko—is abandoned by her Japanese lover at the close of World War II. The colonial relationship between Taiwan and Japan is also rectified when the Japanese Tomoko decides to stay in Taiwan with the Taiwanese Aga. As Chris Berry (2017, 113) states, from a patriarchal perspective, a male Taiwan and a female Japan replace the imbalanced masculine colonial power and feminized Taiwan. This rectification highlights Taiwan's colonial history and its influence on the growing number of residents who choose to identify as Taiwanese.

*Cape* intentionally deploys Taiwan's colonial history to reinforce the Japanese influence on Aga's identification as Taiwanese. Minnan is the dominant language characters use in *Cape*. Viewers who believe *Cape's* extensive use of Minnan is a successful form of resistance to the linguistic hegemony of Mandarin are credulous. Aga's return to Hengchuan allows him to reconnect with the local community at a grassroots level; this includes his extensive use of Minnan when he talks to elders such as Old Mao, his mother, and his stepfather. However, Aga does not speak Japanese. He is able to communicate with Tomoko only because Tomoko becomes fluent in Mandarin. Tomoko more than once reminds Mr.

Representative that she does not speak Minnan. Aga uses Mandarin mainly to communicate with his other band members, who are of his generation. His use of Mandarin inevitably raises the question of how his identification as Taiwanese relates to Chinese culture. Shu-mei Shih's advocacy of Sinophone studies could help us to further explore this association.

According to Shih (2007, 4), "Sinophone" is a network of places of cultural production outside China and on the margins of China and Chineseness, where a historical process of heterogenizing and localizing continental Chinese culture has been taking place for several centuries. A Sinophone community can be imagined by those who speak Mandarin with different accents and other languages commonly used in different parts of mainland China. This mixture of Mandarin with other Sinophone languages does not suggest internal harmony within the community. Instead, this imagined community has to accommodate internal contradictions and conflicts that are byproducts of how the subject develops a local identity by heterogenizing and localizing the continental Chinese culture he or she inherits. In short, how can we reject Sinophone culture when we speak Sinophone languages? *Soul* not only underlines the history of Taiwan under Japanese rule but also confronts this association directly.

## **SOUL OF A DEMON: ENVISIONING TAIWAN ON THE SINOPHONE MAP**

*Soul* is a story about Yizhe, who returns to his hometown to meet his father for the first time since being abandoned by him two decades earlier. Yizhe's hometown, Nanfangao, is a fishing town located in northeastern Taiwan; during Japan's military occupation of Taiwan, the Japanese government recruited Japanese citizens to settle in Nanfangao and help with construction. Yizhe's grandfather is a Japanese photographer who moved to Taiwan with the Japanese settlers to document their work. He fell in love with the place, and after World War II, he chose to stay in Nanfangao. Two generations later, the family's conflicted identity—both Japanese and Chinese—still troubles Yizhe's heart.

As a member of the generation whose formative years correspond to the rise of Taiwan's Taiwanization movements, Yizhe's identification as Taiwanese faces a different challenge: his father is half-Japanese and half-Taiwanese Hoklo, and his mother is a Taiwanese aborigine. This complicated genealogy leads Yizhe to question the cultural binary approach of mainstream discourse that presents Taiwanese identity and Chinese culture as mutually exclusive so as to promote resistance to China-centrism. Drawing on the older generation's memories and experiences of life under Japanese rule, this stream of discourse presents Taiwanese identity as

distinct from Chinese culture, a theme that the KMT-led Chinese government ostentatiously promoted in schools and the public sector during the era of martial law. Yizhe turns to his father and grandfather in hopes of finding ways to break through this dichotomy.

Yizhe's father belongs to the first generation of his family to be torn between Chinese and Japanese aspects of identity. During his formative years, his schooling was in Mandarin. Yet it is difficult for him to identify enthusiastically as Chinese, because the KMT-led Chinese government uses anti-Japanese rhetoric to cultivate a Chinese identity among his generation of Taiwanese. At home, he is aware of being half Japanese, and from his parents he learns about Taiwan under Japanese rule and Japan as a modern society. Later, as Yizhe's father grows into an adult, a gang of mainlanders makes life difficult for him at work and increases his yearning to visit Japan. With the help of his wife and a local gang leader, he saves enough money for the trip. There, his identification as Japanese solidifies. He anchors himself in that cultural identity.

When Yizhe's father appears on screen, he is always dressed formally, with his hair combed neatly, and he speaks Japanese, though he speaks and understands Minnan and Mandarin. The father's insistence on speaking Japanese and his deliberate adoption of Japanese manners match a stereotype with which Taiwanese audiences are familiar. These features of his character also disclose his fear of being unmasked as a fake Japanese. This fear has driven him to leave Taiwan in order to abandon his Chinese roots—the Chinese languages and cultures with which his offspring in Taiwan continues to use and to practice. He is the face of the binary approach to cultural identity in Taiwan, torn as he is between identities as either strictly Japanese or Chinese.

As part of the second generation in the family to receive a Mandarin education, Yizhe does not see his father's choices as a path he can follow. Chinese cultures and languages have become part of who he is. He uses Mandarin to communicate with his younger brother and Minnan to communicate with his grandparents and other elders in the community. He has lost the ability to even understand Japanese. This explains Yizhe's anger when his father refuses to use Minnan to communicate with him and insists on speaking Japanese. His father also refuses to apologize to Yizhe for his abandonment. He expects Yizhe to be respectful and submissive when he returns; he expects himself to resume the role of the father. His expectations simply aggravate Yizhe. In their reunion scene, which takes place in an atrium, the camera begins to circle around them as they start to speak to one another. The camera's mobility creates a visual vertigo that characterizes their conversation as a dream-like occurrence. The reunion eventually becomes a quarrel, resulting in no common point of contact between father



and son. Each speaks from his own point of view and asks the other to empathize with the position he has taken.

In contrast, Yizhe's grandfather shows Yizhe that his Japanese heritage does not prevent him from identifying with Taiwan. Yizhe's grandfather was able to successfully avoid drawing attention to his Japanese background when the political regime changed from Japanese to the KMT-led Chinese government in Taiwan. When in Rome, do as the Romans do. In the film's opening scene, he is the one who asks Yizhe to cross over burning charcoals—a cleansing ritual—when he returns home. Before Yizhe's anger turns his reunion with his father into a tragedy, his grandfather is the one who uses Minnan and Japanese to try to talk Yizhe into forgiving his father. His adoption of Taiwanese ways of living makes it difficult to distinguish Yizhe's grandfather from Old Mao's generation of Taiwanese. He demonstrates how a Japanese could become fluent in Minnan, understand Mandarin when his grandchildren speak it, and carry on local cultural practices in Taiwan. His Japanese background does not conflict with his identification with Taiwan. Instead, his identification with Taiwan and adopting Taiwanese language and culture actually enrich his Japanese identity.

Although Yizhe's grandfather is not afraid that his affinity with Taiwan will cause him to lose his Japanese identity, he is able to empathize with his son; he understands the price the latter pays for his decision to become Japanese. After being apart for twenty years, the elder father-son pair take a walk along a fishing port to enjoy their reunion. This extended shot, nearly one minute long, captures a unique sense of intimacy between them. The camera follows behind their backs. Instead of intruding into their space, the camera keeps its distance to observe how the two maintain a slow pace to enjoy this hard-earned reunion in silence for a bit longer. As they stop to gaze at a large waterway where the river meets the sea, the camera pulls away from the pair and then slowly turns to focus on the scenery of the waterway before the screen fades to black. The grandfather's composed attitude and open-mindedness correspond to the onscreen image that shows the sea can hold the water from thousands of rivers. Yizhe's grandfather is pleased to meet his son again in his old age.

Borrowing from Jacques Derrida's idea of the double bind, Taiwanese scholar Min-hsu Chan (2010, 182) argues that China's threat to annex Taiwan should not prevent Taiwanese people from acknowledging that Chinese culture is part of their Taiwanese identity. Instead, Chan says, Taiwanese should turn their trepidation about contemporary China into a motivation. As part of the first generation to develop Taiwanese identity, Yizhe acknowledges that both Mandarin and Minnan are his mother tongues. This acknowledgement is the first step in the process of breaking his identification as Taiwanese away from its association with Chinese culture. It

invites a reexamination of Taiwan's history and how it has been influenced by Chinese rule. His acceptance of Chinese culture as an element of his Taiwanese identity empowers him to accept the responsibility to carry on this cultural tradition by connecting it to Taiwan's history and the Taiwanese experience.

## CONCLUSION

Taking *Cape* and *Soul* as case studies makes it clear that whether audiences perceive *Cape* and *Soul* as mainstream films or as art pieces may depend, as much as anything, on the networks of distribution through which an audience encounters them. *Cape* was a hit at the Taiwanese box office but failed to draw much attention in other countries. *Soul* has garnered limited attention from an international audience at film festivals in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Berlin. Perhaps it takes a grounding in Taiwanese culture to understand themes such as the formation of Taiwanese identity. The identification issues that these two films address allow local audience groups to begin cross-platform conversations. Audiences from Hong Kong can hardly ignore the importance of how the formation of one's identity is closely connected to the location of culture and the history that *Cape* and *Soul* both highlight.

From the perspective of an imagined Sinophone community, *Cape* and *Soul* present Taiwan as a society where the mixture of Mandarin with Minnan, Hakka, and other aboriginal languages is not uncommon. Conceptually, this should build a connection with audiences in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, and southeastern China, where people speak Mandarin with various accents and are also fluent in other Chinese dialects. For audiences from these communities, *Cape* intentionally ignores the relation between the formation of Taiwanese identity and Chinese culture. *Cape*'s intentional neglect captures the attitude of resistance Taiwanese hold toward the KMT-led Chinese government that once suppressed the personal memories and histories of a generation of Taiwanese who experienced life under Japanese rule. *Soul*, on the other hand, showcases how the formation of Taiwanese identity can be understood as one byproduct of how continental Chinese culture is heterogenized and localized in Taiwan. The film invites audiences from these communities to ponder the task of carrying forward a cultural inheritance.

While *Cape* intentionally sidesteps the issue of Chinese culture as part of Taiwanese identity, *Soul* recognizes and remains critical about how Chinese culture is part of this identity formation. However, the films share an emphasis on Taiwan under Japanese rule—an element of Taiwanese history that is distinct from that of Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore, as well as other Sinophone communities.

In the same moment as the release of these two films, Sinophone audiences are conflicted: on the one hand, they are happy to see China's growing economic influence; on the other, they are concerned about the suppression of their personal memories and experiences as China's President Xi Jinping continues to intensify the nation's military influence, which looms as a threat that might annihilate Taiwan. It is important for New Taiwanese Cinema directors to continue to document these complicated feelings so that audiences can revisit and remember their own personal memories and histories. Personal memories and histories may prove to be the best tool to soften China's growing hard power.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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