Taiwan Cinema
Taiwan Cinema

A Contested Nation on Screen

Guo-Juin Hong
For my parents; for Edward
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I originally conceived the title of this book to be *Dire Straits*, invoking Taiwan’s place in the world as defined in relationship to the Mainland, on the one hand, and Japan, on the other. The writing and eventual publication of this book have gone through several phases and many incarnations, but my conviction remains the same. To understand Taiwan means emphatically to consider also China and Japan, as well as the larger global context. The national is the framework we cannot evade and with which we must contend. The current title says directly that my interpretive history of Taiwan’s film industry is also a history of this contested nation on the cinematic screen.

That is seemingly a very simple statement, yet I have come to appreciate its complexities with help and challenges from others. I have many people to thank who have been with me through different times and places in my life. Recounting those names is my way of affirming my gratitude. To begin, parts of the book are reworked from my dissertation and I wish to thank my cochairs, Linda Williams and Chris Berry, and two other committee members, Trinh T. Minh-ha and Andrew F. Jones, whose guidance is still keenly felt.

I was very privileged to join Duke University upon graduating from the University of California, Berkeley. The transition from a large public institution to a small private one, as well as from the San Francisco Bay area to the Research Triangle, was surprisingly smooth, even enjoyable, thanks to my colleagues both in- and outside the Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies. Many senior colleagues immediately took me under their wings so that I could test my own. I thank miriam cooke, Hae-Young Kim, Ralph Litzinger, Tomiko Yoda, Anne Alison, Jane Gaines, Walter Mignolo, Bruce Lawrence, Negar Mottahedeh, Stan Abe, Gennifer Weisenfeld, Kristine Stiles, Rob Sikorski, Robyn Wiegman, Michael Hardt, Ken Surin, Fredric Jameson, and, of course, Leo Ching. Other colleagues who joined us later have also played an important role in my intellectual life at Duke: Rey Chow, Sean Metzger, Shai Ginsburg,
Nayoung Aimee Kown, and Carlos Rojas. I am proud to call them my friends.

Under the directorship first of Srinivas Aravamudan and then Ian Baucom, and with the excellent administrative magic of Christina Chia and John Orluk, I had the good fortune of presenting my manuscript at Duke’s Franklin Humanities Institute Faculty Manuscript Workshop in the fall of 2009. Tani Barlow, Yomi Braester, Ken Wissoker, and Rey Chow offered extensive productive criticism, complemented by that of other participants from Duke, the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, and North Carolina State University: David Ambaras, Leo Ching, Shai Ginsburg, Michael Hardt, Nayoung Aimee Kwon, Ralph Litzinger, Sean Metzger, Negar Mottahedeh, Maria Pramaggiore, and Robin Visser. I thank them for their support and encouragement and I regret not being able to fully incorporate all their excellent suggestions. To do that would require half a dozen different books but, for now, I humbly present this one.

Duke Libraries have been most supportive in my research, particularly when Taiwan collections, such as Taiwanese-dialect films, have not always been easy to come by. My heart-felt gratitude goes to Luo Zhou, subject librarian for China, and Danette Pachtner, film, video, and digital media librarian, for their tireless assistance. Jui-An Chao provides me with most excellent research assistance, to whom I owe many thanks.

Many colleagues and friends outside of Duke have continued to be an important part of my intellectual and personal life: Linda Williams, Scott Combs, David Eng, Lydia Liu, Shu-Mei Shi, Jean Ma, Weihong Bao, Siyen Fei, Zhang Zhen, Michael Berry, Song Hwee Lim, Wenchi Lin, Daw-Ming Lee, Homay King, Olivia Khoo, and Chunchi Wang. Special thanks go to Martin Jay, Andrew F. Jones, Sylvia Chong, and Jason McGrath, who have read my manuscript from beginning to end without ever doubting that it would eventually all be worth it, even at those times when I was uncertain myself.

Parts of this book have previously appeared elsewhere. A portion of the introduction first appeared in the introduction to a special issue on Taiwan cinema’s “missing years” that I guest edited for the *Journal of Chinese Cinemas*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2010). Part of chapter 3 is included in the forthcoming *The BFI Chinese Cinema Book*. Lastly, a shorter version of chapter 5 was included in *Futures of Chinese Cinema: Technologies and Temporalities in Chinese Screen Cultures* (2009), coedited by Olivia Khoo and Sean Metzger, and published by Intellect.

Various drafts of chapter 1 were presented on several occasions: “Reflections on the Decolonial Option and the Humanities: An International Dialogue,” Duke University, February 2008; the Inter-Asia Cultural Studies Society Summer Theory Camp, Yonsei University, Seoul,
Korea, June 2008; and “Taiwan under Japanese Rule: Cultural Translation and Colonial Modernity,” Center for Taiwan Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara, June 2010. The Interlude has also benefited greatly from the following conferences: “Relocating Ozu: The Question of an Asian Cinematic Aesthetic,” Centers for Chinese Studies, University of California, Berkeley, February 2010; and “History, Literature, and Auteurs: Revisiting Taiwan New Cinema,” Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan, October 2010. I wish to thank the organizers of those events as well as the participants who offered invaluable feedback.

Finally, I offer unending gratitude to my family, especially my parents to whom this book is dedicated. Much love goes to Andrew F. Jones, Lanchih Po, Evan Joseph, Yu-Fen Ko, Chu-Joe Hsia, Xiao-Wei Hong, Daniel Bao, Martin Jay, Huei-Ling Christina Tsuei, Shuo Lin, Mickey Chen, and Jeng-Guo and David Chen.

To Edward I give all my love. Without him, nothing is possible.
Names and Romanization

I list personal names in Chinese style, surname first, followed by given name; for example, Lee Hsing rather than Hsing Lee. I reverse it only when the person has a name commonly known in English publications which may put the given name first, such as Yingjin Zhang, Edward Yang, and Sung-Sheng Yvonne Chang. I follow the standard pinyin in the United States except for those names commonly known in English under other romanization systems, such as Hou Hsiao-Hsien, Chiang Kai-Shek, Taipei, etc. For names originating in Taiwan, I hyphenate the given name if composed of two characters and put both in upper case; for example, Lu Su-Shang, Lee Daw-Ming, and Ye Long-Yan. The guiding principles are to comply with common usage and to be consistent throughout. Names of important historical persons and filmmakers, as well as film titles, are listed in their original Chinese in the appendices.