

## **Fieldwork Notes - Sinophone Success: The Cultural, Industrial and Geopolitical Dynamics of the Dissemination of Chinese Cinema -**

### **訪台筆記——華光異彩：華語電影流通的文化、 產業及地緣政治策動力**

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With the project “Sinophone Success: The Cultural, Industrial and Geopolitical Dynamics of the Dissemination of Chinese Cinema” I hope to begin a diachronic study of the success of Taiwanese film in Asia and more particularly in China, in other words, in continental China and Hong Kong. This study considers Taiwanese cinema’s era of splendor, namely the boom in Mandarin cinema during the 1960’s; the spread of television series in the 1990’s; and the currently budding “renaissance” of the 2010’s. It will be important, then, to call into question (to problematize) what is understood as “success:” to study archives in order to locate numbers and witnesses; to develop an approach to field surveys and to redevelop approaches to the theory of the reception of film; to analyse diffusion and distribution mechanisms in Taiwan and abroad; and to compare and test screenplay formulas with their literary sources. A rigorous study of the aesthetics of films should be studied in conjunction with distribution, marketing and broadcasting strategies, while simultaneously referring to various media, for example, written sources such as newspapers and magazines.

An exploration of “healthy realism” films, particularly the masterpieces of auteur Lee Hsing, will lead us to question Confucian values as tools of the creation of a cultural identity that transcends national barriers and borders. Analysing Taiwanese and Hong Kong co-productions, especially the films of King Hu or Lee Han-hsiang or the television series *Mr. Vampire*, will determine the strategic and commercial importance of the ties between these two

territories of the Chinese-speaking world. The same works, contextualised through their belonging to and remaining apart from the traditional representation of the fantastic, will give us the keys to be able to decrypt the part that fantasy (the irrational, religious and extraordinary) plays within Chinese culture. The broadcasting of Taiwanese series in Chinese TV, for example the very influential *Meteor Garden*, adapted from a Japanese manga, is a powerful case study that can allow for the comprehension of the tensions and the porosity of the occurrence of the transcultural. It is also a study for the representation of mainstream Taiwanese culture within the new morphologies of Chinese production as well as a place to begin a study of celebrity and the phenomenon of “fandom” in the Chinese world. “Success” can be equally determined by the receipt of international awards. Thus, responses to Tsai Ming-liang’s or Hou Hsiao-hsien’s work will be studied in order to understand both economic movements and the strategic choices behind the diffusion of such works, as well as the tensions between globalisation and local specificities that are at the center of the preoccupation of theoretic texts like *Global Art Cinema* or scientific networks like the *Chinese Film Festival Studies Research Network*.

Based on these foundations buried deep within Chinese linguistic and cultural sources, I also propose building a parallel with Hollywood films diffused in Taiwan in order to try to understand, within their economic and historical context, the varying forms of seduction and colonialism, hybridisation and juxtaposition, in which cinematic language seems to be involved. By digging into the past, I will certainly be able to develop and embellish theories about the motivations of conflicts and transformations in the recent success of the Chinese-speaking cinema’s industry and the capacity for projection in future evolutions, i.e.. the internet, IMAX...

During the second semester (January – August 2016) I continued this research in collaboration with and utilising the resources of the Taipei Film Archives directed by Professor Lin Wen-chi of the National Central University. Additionally, I continued my collaboration with NTNU, where I gave a class dedicated to Tsai Ming-liang and his museum installation. I also gave lectures in various prestigious institutions such as the Visual Culture Research Center at the Taiwan National Central University as well as the National Taiwan University, as well as the National Chiao Tung University in association with Earl Jackson Junior. These diverse institutions provided an ideal framework for the successful completion of this research project, including my being able to participate in seminars and to collaborate in other scientific and research activities.

During my field research in Taipei I also participated to different International Film Festival (Documentary Film Festival, Golden Horse, Golden Harvest), an incredible opportunity to discuss with cultural actors and analyse the reception and circulation of moving images.

In summary, this ongoing research is a process of stretching the barriers between Chinese cinematic studies and cultural studies by analysing history and the present world, by proposing new theories and readings and especially by trying, through publications, interventions and research directions, to galvanise, enrich, and complicate a research field that has the potential to be among one of the most compelling today.