

In Search of ‘Taiwaneseness’ –  
Reconsidering Taiwanese *Xing-ju* from a Post-colonial Perspective

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## Abstract

*Xing-ju* literally means ‘New Theatre’ in mandarin and denotes the non-traditional performing style in Taiwan. *Xing-ju* is regarded as the product of colonisation in Taiwan. The thesis began with the first emergence of *Xing-ju* in the Japanese colonial era at the beginning of the twentieth century, and went on to examine the development of *Xing-ju* and its sub-forms within a colonial historical context. Having gone through different colonial regimes, *Xing-ju* has developed into the local theatre form characterizing the hybridity of Taiwanese culture. My study aims to fill a gap in Taiwanese contemporary theatre history, to look at *Xing-ju* and its sub-forms from a post-colonial perspective, and to provide a continuous and complete *Xing-ju* history within a theoretical context. In addition, how *Xing-ju* has exemplified ‘Taiwaneseness’ while presenting multiple cultural characteristics is also examined.

This thesis also draws on primary source data, obtained via field research, to analyse the characteristics of *Xing-ju* performances. Finally, while addressing my research questions through theoretical analysis, I also examine them through the lens of practical work. Inspired by critical syncretism, I experiment with an alternative way to explore the nature of Taiwanese culture and theatre form. With its hybrid cultural characteristics including Japanese *Shinpa-geki*, Chinese *Peking Opera*, *Ge-zai Xi* and Western theatre styles, I discuss how a definition of ‘Taiwaneseness’ emerges through *Xing-ju*.

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## Notes on Romanisation and Terminologies

In this thesis, the *Hanyu Pinyin* system is applied to the spelling of Mandarin, with the exception of the names of Taiwanese places. The Dictionary of Common *Hoklo* Terms, edited by the Ministry of Education, Taiwan, is applied to the spelling of *Hoklo* language. The established spellings for names known internationally or in their own fields are also retained. With Chinese and Taiwanese names, I use a dash between the two characters of each given name and provide the family name first, followed by the given name, without a comma. Theatre genres or short terms in Chinese, *Hoklo*, and Japanese are italicized and their first letters capitalized, such as *Xing-ju* and *Ge-zai Xi*. Such terms are followed by their English translations, in parentheses, when they first appear. Other long terms in Chinese, *Hoklo*, and Japanese, including titles of troupes, plays, institutions and books, all appear in English translation first and followed by their Chinese, *Hoklo*, and Japanese spellings, in parentheses, when they first appear. In addition, a hyphen is put between the syllables of Chinese and *Hoklo* terms. Last, and in accordance with their current political statuses, China, in this thesis, refers to the People's Republic of China (PROC), whereas Taiwan refers to the Republic of China (ROC).

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# Introduction

## 1. Rationale for Study

Before discussing the main body of my research, I would like to briefly introduce my background, which has influenced my research interests and defined my research perspectives.

I was born and raised in Taiwan, a small island, shaped like a sweet potato, that is located on the periphery of East Asia: China is to Taiwan's West, Japan is to its north and the Philippines is to its south (see Figure 1). On world maps, Taiwan occupies a tiny space; however, because of its critical location, Taiwan has been colonised by the Dutch, Spanish, Chinese and Japanese since the seventeenth century.



Figure 1. The shape of Taiwan.

I usually introduce myself as 'Taiwanese' to my foreign friends; however, the country of origin printed on my passport is not 'Taiwan', but 'Republic of China' (ROC), which is the official name of the nation that was established in Nanjin city in China in 1912. Taiwan's complex history will be further explained in the following sections.

Before the age of eighteen, I identified myself as 'Chinese', an even more 'authentic Chinese' than 'those Chinese', who were governed by the 'People's Republic of China' (PROC). This was largely because I had been taught to believe that China, our homeland, had been 'stolen' by the Communist Party and that its people had suffered greatly as a result. In addition to being Chinese, I am also *Hoklo*. Thus, I speak the *Hoklo* language with my family. However, as a child, the speaking of *Hoklo* was forbidden at school. On holidays, our parents usually drove me and my younger brother to visit our paternal grandparents, who lived in a Japanese-style house with a tiled roof and wooden floors. When my grandparents had

conversations, they used such Japanese terms as *Kasan* (mother), *Dousan* (father) and *Nekutayi* (necktie) – rather than their *Hoklo* equivalents. In the afternoon, my grandmother played her tape recorder and sang *Karaoke*. Most of her songs were dolorous Japanese *Enka*. She also taught me a Japanese children's song, *Peach Child (Momo Tarosa)*.

My maternal grandparents maintained an even more Japanese lifestyle: even today, in her nineties, my maternal grandmother always dresses elegantly, in delicate make-up and pointy-toed shoes. She once worked in the second department store to open in Taiwan, during the 1930s, under the Japanese colonial regime. At the time, it was rather difficult to become part of a department store staff. My maternal grandfather typically stayed in his room, quietly watching Japanese channels or listening to Japanese *Enka*. After his death, when I was in my senior year of high school, my mother told me that my maternal grandfather had graduated from the Tokyo University of the Arts in the 1920s and been a film actor when he was young. My mother sometimes recalls a childhood memory of listening to different kinds of music on a phonograph, the first one on her parents' street, as her father sat by the player with closed eyes.

In 1987, martial law was lifted in Taiwan, after nearly forty years. It seemed an important event, but I did not fully understand its influence. When I was eleven, in 1989, the Tiananmen Square protests took place in China. Taiwanese TV stations broadcasted related news and commentary every day, and the Taiwanese government seriously criticized the massacre. Less than a year later, a group of Taiwanese university students also held a large-scale demonstration for democratic reform in Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall in Taipei city, which is built to memorize the dictator, Chiang Kai-shek. Soon after, the 671 members of the National Assembly of the Republic of China were dismissed by the president Li Teng-hui. At the time, my uncle had a serious fight with my grandparents and my father over my uncle's joining the first opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party (*Min Jin Dang* – hereafter,

DPP). During the summer before my senior year of high school, in 1993, I found a novel written by an unfamiliar Taiwanese writer, Lai He. Until then, I had preferred to read Chinese writers, such as Lu Xun and Shen Cong-Wen, although the scenarios they described were rather alien to me. Lai Han wrote during the Japanese colonial era. In reading his narratives, I realised that Taiwan's colonial history was not merely a history, but a real past, which had happened around fifty years before. The 'Taiwan' Lai described in the novels I found was supposed to be familiar, but it felt alien. For the first time, I realised that in addition to being Chinese, I was also Taiwanese.

After reading Lai He, I began to explore Taiwanese literature. I studied in the department of 'Chinese Literature' at the National Cheng Kung University, because there was no so-called 'Taiwanese Literature' department. At the time, in 1997, Taiwanese identity and national awareness were evolving rapidly outside the classroom. I also began to read unofficial Taiwanese history books and found that they challenged my understanding of Taiwan. I started to wonder whether the current government, which I had firmly believed in, governed in a way that was similar to that of Taiwan's Dutch, Spanish, Chinese and Japanese colonisers. I obtained my masters in the Department of Taiwanese Literature at the National Cheng Kung University in 2001, focusing my research on Taiwanese theatre. The title of my dissertation was *The Study of Liao Tian-ding Theatre in Taiwan*. Liao Tian-ding was regarded as a good-hearted bandit, a bit of a Robin Hood, under Japanese rule. I examined how his tale had been presented and interpreted by different theatre genres and how esteem for him had varied over time. In the process of conducting my research, I began to realise that contemporary Taiwanese theatre emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century. This new performing form was differentiated from other, traditional styles, such as *Ge-zai Xi* (Taiwanese opera) and *Bu-dai Xi* (Hand-puppet Theatre), by the title '*Xing-ju*', which caught on during the Japanese colonial era.

*Xing* is the Chinese word for ‘new’, and *ju* means ‘theatre’. *Xing-ju* literally means ‘new theatre’ and denotes the non-traditional of the performing style. It can therefore be seen as exemplifying the transition from traditional to contemporary theatre.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to imagine that there was a golden period of Taiwanese theatre in the early post-war era; hundreds of theatres gave repertoires day and night. Audiences walked to nearby theatres with slippers on and continued watching the sequels to plays performed the day before. Taiwanese, Japanese and *Ge-zai Xi* melodies were presented on stage simultaneously. Western and Chinese *Han* costume styles were interwoven, and the latest stage and film-making technologies were absorbed into *Xing-ju*. This was the most commercialized and flexible period of time in Taiwanese theatre history. However, as I was growing up in the 1980s, *Xing-ju* disappeared. Our general understanding of contemporary theatre is either realistic – theatre that is usually performed in a performing auditorium – or abstract – theatre that takes place in black-box studios in the basements of elite coffee shops or bookstores. In other words, ‘contemporary theatre’ is endowed with an ‘elite’ taste. Until I completed my masters, I did not realise that going to the theatre was once the most common leisure activity. Hence, I began to question why *Xing-ju*, which had been so popular, had rarely been heard of by the younger generation of the 1980s and by former researchers of Taiwanese theatre history.

In the year 2000, I saw Golden Bough’s performance of their notable play, *Taiwan Opera: The Female Robin Hood - Bai Hsiao-lan (Taiwan Nu-xia Bai Hsiao-lan)*, which was actually an imitation of *Opeila* (Opera) style. It was very different from any work I had seen before. The play was performed at my university’s campus, on an outdoor stage that had been fashioned from a re-equipped truck and decorated with flashing neon lights and brightly coloured paint. The performers spoke in *Hoklo*, which was unusual at the time. I found myself

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<sup>1</sup> Ciou Kun-liang, a Taiwanese theatre researcher, defines *Xing-ju* as an umbrella term for various forms of non-traditional Taiwanese theatre: *Gai-liang Xi* (Reformed Theatre), *Wen-ming Xi* (Civilised Theatre), *Wen-hua Xi* (Cultural Theatre), *Huang-min Ju* (Emperor Theatre) and *Opeila* (Opera) (1992: 302). Although each of these sub-genres of *Xing-ju* is situated within a unique historical context, *Xing-ju* was still applied to generally term these variation forms of non-traditional theatre forms in a lot of historical data. I will further discuss each of them in the following chapters.

sitting by the side of the road, unable to take my eyes off their performance. The lines, music, costumes and stage settings employed seemed rather folksy; however, *The Female Robin Hood* strongly challenged my understanding of contemporary theatre. For a long time, Taiwanese children were educated to regard Chinese classic and contemporary literature, written in Mandarin, as a canon and to regard *Peking* opera as the most authentic type of traditional theatre. On the contemporary stage, the majority of plays are still performed in the Western realistic theatre styles<sup>2</sup> and spoken in Mandarin. Hence, there is still a gap between what we Taiwanese see on stage and what we experience in our ordinary lives, where we employ multiple languages. It seems that we have not developed a form of theatre that is capable of embodying the presence of Taiwan.

Golden Bough and its Japanese and Taiwanese folk-flavoured performing style resonated particularly not only with older audiences, in whom it evoked a sense of nostalgia, but also with younger generations. What drew me towards Golden Bough's plays was the memory of my grandparents' Japanese-style house, *Enka*, *Peach Child*, my grandmother's delicate makeup, my grandfather's phonograph player and my family's oral conversations, with *Hoklo* and Japanese interwoven. Eventually, I realized that my 'China' was an illusion that had actually been created by Chinese nationalist ideology, whereas my ordinary life, which I had previously neglected – as have other Taiwanese – was real. In 2007 I decided to study for a Ph.D. in drama abroad in the UK and was determined to keep my research focused on the topic of Taiwanese *Xing-ju*. I hoped that a fresh perspective would emerge through a re-evaluation carried out at a distance.

Several questions emerge here: Who determined the hierarchy of culture? How was this cultural hierarchy constructed? Why were Taiwanese children not allowed to speak their

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<sup>2</sup> Prior to the introduction of Western-style theatre, traditional theatre had involved a lot of singing and codified movements. Therefore, for the Taiwanese, Western-style theatre was roughly known for having a lot of dialogue, for involving movements like those used in daily life, and for featuring contemporary costumes. Later, when avant-garde theatre became popular, Western-style theatre also referred to physical theatre.



mother tongues at school? Why did we perceive our mother tongues and cultures as belonging to the working class? Why did we consider only Chinese literature and arts to have artistic value? How the cultural and national identity constructed?

My thesis explored ‘Taiwaneseness’; however, as I conducted my research, I struggled with ‘how to identify “Taiwaneseness”’. I even doubted its existence and questioned whether my definition would be shared by the majority of Taiwanese. Taiwanese national and cultural identity has been the subject of ongoing debate in Taiwan. Hsiao points out that ‘identity is the product of people attempting to understand their circumstances and react to them. Therefore, identity is a product of human beings. Identity emerges when we are concerned with ourselves, others and society. The construction of identity is an ongoing interpretative action that is influenced by the opportunities and limitations we may confront and our characteristics’ (2000: 80-81, translation by author). For me, this research represents not only the study of a theatre genre, but also a re-examination of my cultural background and national identity. As part of a generation that experienced the lifting of martial law in Taiwan, I am aware of how much the fluidity and fragility of our national identity is part of the growing experience of Taiwanese nationals. As I have mentioned, it is evident that my identity as Chinese or Taiwanese has been determined by political changes and is the result of a changing process of self-interpretation and re-interpretation. Therefore, I believe that ‘identity’ itself is actually a fluid process, rather than a pre-determined and fixed ‘entity’. Thus, one could expect the content and meaning of ‘Taiwaneseness’ to also be fluid and vary over time. Under Taiwan’s colonial regimes, ‘Taiwaneseness’ has been compared to and shaped by different cultures. I believe that the current meaning of ‘Taiwaneseness’ is not its ultimate meaning.

The rise and decline of *Xing-ju* reflected the fact that the national apparatus determined cultural class and also reflected the colonial regime’s agenda for marginalising the colonised culture. This study focuses on Taiwanese *Xing-ju*. By reviewing historical data and using

original field research, it will clarify the history of *Xing-ju*. The relationship between the development of *Xing-ju* and colonial regime shifts are also examined from a post-colonialist perspective. In addition, I will touch on the post-colonial meaning of Golden Bough's *Opeila* plays. Last, I will reflect upon on my thoughts about post-colonial Taiwan through the facilitation of practical project, *Sleep Available*. I believe that this thesis contributes to current *Xing-ju* research in the following ways: (1) It is the first study to fully examine Taiwanese *Xing-ju* development drawing on Western theatrical and post-colonial studies; (2) In re-configuring existing historical data of *Xing-ju* from the Japanese colonial to post-colonial era in Taiwan I provide a continuous and complete 'story' of *Xing-Ju* within Taiwanese contemporary theatre history; (3) I draw on original field work, practical research in an inter-disciplinary approach to explore a potential alternative vision of *Xing-ju*; (4) I providing a post-colonial perspective on existing colonial theatre research from a Taiwanese perspective.

## **2. Research Questions**

The questions examined by this thesis are listed below. Although they underpin the overall thesis, I also indicate the chapters to which each question is particularly relevant.

1. What is *Xing-ju* and how, where and when did it originate? (Chapter 1, 2, 3, 4)
2. Can *Xing-ju* exemplify a 'Taiwaneseness', while presenting multiple cultural characteristics? (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4)
3. Can a detailed examination of the different phases of *Xing-ju* allow a re-configuration of its historical status? (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4)
4. What is the present and future of *Xing-ju*? (Chapter 1, 2, 3, 4)
5. How has *Xing-ju*, which did not originate in Taiwan, come to be identified as a form of Taiwanese theatre? (Chapter 1, 2, 3, 4)

6. How did transitions between the different colonial regimes influence *Xing-ju*'s development and performing characteristics? (Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4)
7. How were changes in public esteem for *Xing-ju* affected by Taiwan's different colonisations? (Chapter 1, 2, 3)
8. What was the role of *Xing-ju* when the Japanese colonial regime imposed modernity on the colony of Taiwan? (Chapter 1)
9. How has *Xing-ju* been perceived by Taiwanese intellectuals? (Chapters 1, 2)
10. How has the changing of colonial regimes influenced interactions between *Xing-ju* and traditional theatre genres? (Chapters 1, 2)
11. What is the distinct difference between Golden Bough's imitation of *Xing-ju* plays and the *Xing-ju* of the 1960s? (Chapter 3)
12. Do Golden Bough's imitations of *Xing-ju* plays reveal merely a nostalgic sentiment or other political meaning? How has this nostalgia been applied to explain and signify the post-colonial status of contemporary Taiwan? (Chapter 3)
13. Have Taiwan's cultures been flattened and generalised in Golden Bough's imitations of *Xing-ju* works? (Chapter 3)
14. Can the creation of *Xing-ju* performance expose new meanings that transcend an old frame work of colonialism? (Chapter 4)
15. What are the issues when *Xing-ju* performance style is used to interpret contemporary texts, and how can it be adapted to today's audiences?
16. Can the soap opera acting style and multiple cultural characteristics of *Xing-ju* be created as alternative performing aesthetics? (Chapter 4)
17. Can the application of the psychophysical actor training help solve the issues of *Xing-ju* performance? (Chapter 4)

### 3. Methods

I employ four research methods: 1. Historical research; 2. Field research; 3. Theoretical research; 4. Practical research. Before the 1970s, visual recording equipment was not popular or common, and films or images of *Xing-ju* performances were rare. Researchers must, therefore, rely on limited historical data when assessing *Xing-ju* performances. Such data includes theatre history monographs, theatre reports, reviews, advertisements in newspapers and magazines, and interviews with *Xing-ju* participants. However, certain references need to be cited carefully, and the context of writings must be taken into account. To take Lu Su-shang's *Taiwanese Movie and Theatre History* (*Taiwan Dian-Ying Xi-ju Shih*, 1961) as an example, Lu experienced both the Japanese and *Kuo-min-tang* regimes (The Chinese Nationalist Party, hereafter KMT) and had close relationships with both authorities. Hence, his writing was sometimes rather 'politically correct'. His arguments need to be placed in a more critical and objective context.

In addition to reading transcriptions of interviews made by previous *Xing-ju* researchers, I conducted field research from 2008 to 2010. I also observed *Opeila* performances by current *Ge-zai Xi* troupes, New Southern Light Troupe (*Xing-nan-guang Ju-tuan*), as well as rehearsals and performances by Golden Bough Theatre (*Jin Qi Yan She*). I have conducted a considerable number of interviews with experienced *Xing-ju* participants, including performers, directors, dramatists and technique staff.<sup>3</sup> In addition to recording their *Xing-ju* experiences, I collected original *Xing-ju* photos, scripts, story outlines and tape recordings. It is worth mentioning that when I interviewed Wang Kuan-min, head of the *Jia Le Xing-ju Tuan* (Happy Theatre Troupe), he provided me with the original story-outline poster he used in a *Xing-ju* play, *The Chain of Fate*, in 1982. Wang also kept several tape recordings of *The Chain of Fate*. These are extremely important data to be used to investigate how *Xing-ju* plays

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<sup>3</sup> I will use the interviews particularly in Chapters Two and Three. All the interviews I have conducted are listed in the bibliography.

are created and rehearsed from story outlines and to deepen knowledge of *Xing-ju* performers' speaking styles, rhythms and music.

The application of related theories provided me with perspective on my analysis of historical data and interviews. Most previous *Xing-ju* researchers have focused on the analysis and categorisation of historical data or interviews, such as Chiu Kun-liang and Yong Du, except for Teri J. Silvio, who was the first one to look at *Opeila* and Golden Bough's works from a post-colonial perspective. I also conceive of *Xing-ju* not as a voluntarily-developed theatre genre, but as a result of multiple colonisations. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss *Xing-ju* in conjunction with Taiwan's colonial history. Then going beyond these colonial structures, it is also important to look at *Xing-ju* from a post-colonial perspective, which is also an alternative approach in current *Xing-ju* research, such as the American researcher, Teri J. Silvio's research on Golden Bough Theatre. The important Indian scholar, Homi K Bhabha, suggests in his monograph *The Location of Culture* (1994) that the nature of colonial culture is an essential concept of 'hybridity culture'. Bhabha attempts to deconstruct binary notions, such as West/East, coloniser/colonised and dominant/subordinate. He claims that the phenomenon of cultural interactions and influences between two cultures should be particularly noticed. During the process of forming a hybrid culture, the subordinate and the colonised culture fight against the colonial culture by applying 'mimicry' and 'ambivalence' as their weapons (Wong, 2004: 72-73). Mimicry has been an important term in post-colonial theory because it 'describes the ambivalent relationship between coloniser and colonised' (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2000: 139). Bhabha describes mimicry as 'the process by which the colonised subject is reproduced as "almost the same, but not quite"' (1994: 86). Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin go further and suggest that 'the copying of the colonised culture, behaviour, manners and values by the colonised contains both mockery and a certain "menace"' (2000: 140). With regard to ambivalence, Bhabha describes it as 'the complex mix of attraction and repulsion that characterises the relationship between coloniser and colonised' (cited in Ashcroft,

Griffiths and Tiffin, 2000: 12). He suggests that ‘the fetishized colonial culture is potentially and strategically an insurgent counter-appeal’(1994: 91). Moreover, ‘ambivalence disrupts the clear-cut authority of colonial domination because it disturbs the simple relationship between coloniser and colonised (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2000: 13). Although Bhabha’s discussion of mimicry and hybridity risks blurring the hierarchical relationships within the colonised cultures, his perspective still helped me access the complexity of colonised cultural phenomena. Taking the Taiwanese intellectuals’ theatre activities under the Japanese colonisation as an example, they mimicked and utilised the theatre form *Xing-ju*, which was introduced by the Japanese colonisation, to deliver their thoughts of striving for a Taiwanese cultural identity during the war time when the *Kominka* Movement was strictly imposed , as I discuss in more detail in Chapter One.

Benita Perry, in exploring the concept of nativism, has pointed out that when a nation undergoes de-colonisation, its people inevitably attempt to recover a ‘pre-colonial’ indigenous culture, and this pursuit easily breeds a kind of nationalist sentiment:

[T]he multicultural nature of most post-colonial societies makes the issue of what constitutes the pre-colonial “native” culture obviously problematic, especially where the current post-colonial nation-state defines itself in terms that favour a single dominant cultural group (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2000: 160).

Perry’s observation recalls the Native Soil Movement in Taiwan, which took place after the lifting of martial law in 1987; *Hoklo* identity and culture, previously suppressed by the colonisers, rapidly rose and somehow marginalised other ethnic groups. Following a discussion of nativism in the context of post-colonial Taiwan, I suggest that Golden Bough’s imitations of *Xing-ju* plays, to a certain degree, reveal a nostalgic *Hoklo* Nativism (see Chapter Three for more detail).

An issue of particular relevance to this thesis is the fact that the construction of post-colonial theories has been mostly initiated by the West; therefore, the foundation of such theories is

still based on Western imperialism. Chen points out that ‘if modern colonialism has been initiated and shaped by the West, then the post-colonial enterprise is still operating within the limits of colonial history and has not yet gone beyond a parasitic form of critique’ (Chen, 1996). Therefore, when applying (Western) post-colonial theories, researchers from the Global South need to remain aware of the potential inequality of power relationships, which could lead the application of such theories to become an extension of neo-colonialism. The construction of an Asian post-colonial worldview by global southern researchers seems rather important.

In addition, the study of post-colonialism in Taiwanese academic circles, such as by Liao Ping-hui, Chiu Kuei-fen and Wu Rwei-ren, afforded me different perspectives within the Taiwanese and Asian contexts. Of the concepts I came across, critical syncretism, suggested by Chen Kuan-hsing in *Asia as Method* (2010), particularly inspired me. Chen points out that the difficulty that current post-colonial studies face results from ‘obsessive critique of the West, which bounds the field by the object of its own criticism.’ He continues,

The result of this impasse is to put in doubt the proposition that the world has reached the postcolonial era: if modern colonialism has been initiated and shaped by the West, then the post-colonial enterprise is still operating within the limits of colonial history and has not yet gone beyond a parasitic form of critique (2010: 2).

Chen calls for ‘critical intellectuals in the former and current colonies of the third world to once again deepen and widen decolonisation movements’ (2010: Preface). He suggests that issues should be thought of in a wider, Third World context and regards ‘Asia as method’, instead of viewing it from a Western perspective. Chen proposes critical syncretism as an alternative approach to older ways of thinking about post-colonial history. He identifies critical syncretism as ‘a cultural strategy of identification for subaltern subject groups’ (2010: 99). Going beyond older approaches, he suggests that it is necessary ‘to actively interiorize elements of others into the subjectivity of the self so as to move beyond the boundaries and divisive positions historically constructed by colonial power relations in the form of

patriarchy, capitalism, racism, chauvinism, heterosexism, or nationalistic xenophobia' (2010: 99). Moreover, to Chen, 'syncretism denotes a subject who is highly self-conscious when translating the limits of the self, whereas hybridity is simply a product of the colonial machine's efforts toward assimilation' (2010: 98). Therefore, when mentioning multicultural phenomena within the colonial context in this thesis, I use the term 'hybridity' rather than 'syncretism' because the mixed cultural phenomena are not the conscious choices of the colonisation. Expanding the view of critical syncretism, the theatrical syncretism could be viewed as a contribution to the 'understanding of what may be called the "theatrical" or "performative" response to imperialism' (Balme, 1999: 2). Theatrical syncretism is suggested by Christopher B. Balme in his book, *Decolonizing the Stage: Theatrical Syncretism and Post-Colonial Drama* (1999). Balme defines syncretic theatre as 'one of the most effective means of decolonising the stage, since it utilizes the performance forms of both European and indigenous cultures in a creative recombination of their respective elements' (1999: 1). In this book, he analyses the syncretic theatre in Africa, the Caribbean, India, and the Fourth World, by which he means 'the collective name for all aboriginal or native peoples whose lands fall within the national boundaries and techno-bureaucratic administrations of the countries of the First, Second, and Third World' (Graburn, 1976, cited in Balme, 1999: 17). He suggests a critical perspective, viewing the de-colonial resistance on stage using aspects of language, body, ritual, space and spectator aspects, in which one's cultural subjectivity is emphasized. Chen and Balme's discussions on syncretism provided me with a valuable reference point when I directed my practical project, in which I regarded the creation of *Xing-ju* performing form as a potential way to enable a process of de-colonisation. (Please see Chapter Four for details).

Interculturalism has also been a flourishing theory in the past twenty years with the large quantity of related material published by practitioners and or scholars such as Jerzy Grotowski, Richard Schechner, Patrice Pavis, Phillip Zarrilli and Rustom Bharucha. However,



international/cultural theatre exchanges cannot be regarded as pure artistic activities if these activities have formed part of the imperial expansion and colonial invasion of a country. This is because the exchanges do not take place purely on an artistic level due to the unequal power relations. Lately, several researchers have acknowledged these issues and started to raise their questions. Brian Singleton suggests that interculturalism ‘does not simply signify a shift in reading strategy of dominant first-world Euro-American theatre practices plundering the third-world ‘oriental theatre’ for inspiration, material goods, human resources, a spirituality for ‘New Age-ism’, and a formalism to challenge realism’ (1997: 93). Erika Fischer-Lichte also illustrates the different modes of intercultural exchanges as follows:

It is perhaps hardly surprising to find the phenomenon of the combination of elements of the own and foreign traditions in the theatre of Third World countries.[...] the combination of cultural elements is accorded a fundamentally different value to that given in Western or Japanese cultures. While in the West and Japan it is to be seen as the result of a deliberate desire to extend the own culture, in the third world it is the result of colonisation. Thus it functions more frequently as a kind of transitional phase by which the imposed foreign traditions will be gradually eliminated. (1996: 35)

Taiwan, having gone through successive colonial experiences, as I explain in detail later, represents the multiple layers of cultural features, which are represented in their hybrid and mixed appearance. In my hometown, Tainan City, modern buildings can co-exist with Chinese *Han* style traditional temples, the Western baroque style buildings built in the Japanese colonial era and the old gun platforms built in the Dutch colonial era. On TV, Japanese snack advertisements are broadcasted and followed by the most popular soap operas, most of which are pronounced in the *Hoklo* language. While in school, Mandarin is still the recognized official language. Similarly, numerous foreign cultural traces can be simultaneously represented on the Taiwanese *Xing-ju* stage, including *Peking* opera, *Ge-zai Xi*, *Kabuki*, Western realistic acting style and influences from the both the Western and Japanese movies. It seems inappropriate to define *Xing-ju* by the Western definition of intercultural theatre. Pavis describes post-colonial theatre as taking up ‘elements of the home culture (that of ex- or

neo-colonisation) and employing them from its indigenous perspective, thereby giving rise to a mixture of language, dramaturgies and performance processes' (1996: 9-10). It is obvious that the hybrid feature of the Taiwanese culture is the result of colonisation, which is like the accumulation of ground, layer by layer, to mold the current Taiwanese cultural soil. Only by revealing each layer, as I do so over the following chapters, can the Taiwanese culture be identified.

Indian researcher Rustom Bharucha was educated in the West, and his work strongly questions Western theatre practitioners' and theorists' de-historicization and misuse of Eastern cultures in his notable monograph *Theatre and the World* (1993). Bharucha argues that the practice of interculturalism should be discussed within the larger historical context of Orientalism (1993: 206). He points out that it is Westerners who have initiated (and controlled) East-West cultural exchange which may be seen as an extension of colonialism and an alternative form of cultural exploitation (1993: 38). The nature of avant-garde theatre movements is supposedly different from the importation of foreign cultures under colonial rule, but Bharucha criticizes a number of theatre practitioners: Artaud, for creating the term 'oriental theatre', de-contextualizing the reality of India and creating an imagined orient that gave him the source of youth and life; Craig, for establishing his oriental image from texts; and Grotowski for regarding oriental performing crafts as material for his creations. In particular, Bharucha criticizes Richard Schechner for putting other cultures in a map that was constructed by his own cognition. For example, Schechner uses the term 'culture of choices', to describe an intercultural exchanges of 'learning and voluntarily adopting a chosen culture' (cited in Pavis, 1996: 49), where he believes that 'people will be able to choose cultures that way many of us now choose food to eat' (Schechner, 1983: 325, cited in Bharucha, 1993: 39). Bharucha argues that this concept is applied entirely differently in Western nations (the First World) than in Third World nations. In colonised countries, like India, culture is not a matter to be freely chosen by the people. Bharucha also argues that Schechner isolated Eastern rituals

from their unique social contexts and applied them in entirely different cultural contexts, which de-historicized them. (1993: 35).

The arguments raised by Bharucha might seem extreme; however, as one of the first researchers to observe the phenomena of cultural exchange from the Global South perspective, he reminds theatre practitioners of the need to ‘define our relationship to the cultures in the world for ourselves. And perhaps, we can begin this task by confronting our own cultural identities in relation to the prodigiously diverse cultures at home’ (1993: 41). I kept this important point in mind as I undertook the research and reflection for this thesis.

Schechner and Barba may present an over-optimistic attitude and seem to de-historicize the borrowed cultures; however, if the shackles of colonisation, imperialism, race and gender can be broken, the intercultural activities ‘at a level of artistic equality between professionals who mutually recognize each other as travelling companion’ (Bharucha: 1993, 41) could happen someday.

Richard Schechner illustrated the ideal intercultural activities as follows:

I felt that the real exchange of importance to artists was not that among nations [...] but that among cultures, something which could be done by individuals or by non-official groupings, and it doesn't obey national boundaries. As we know, especially in the post-colonial world, national boundaries and cultural boundaries differ. (1996: 42)

Regarding interculturalism, Bharucha suggests that it is necessary to carefully apply the term because ‘interculturalism can be liberating, but it can also be a “continuation of colonialism, a further exploitation of other cultures”’ (1993: 14). He further explains that the nature of intercultural exchanges under colonialism ‘does not operate through principles of “exchange”’. Rather, it appropriates, decontextualizes, and represents the ‘other’ culture, often with the complicity of the subjects. It legitimates its authority only by asserting its cultural superiority’ (1993: 1-2). Therefore, in order to study the intercultural theatre under colonial rule, it is

essential to ‘develop a clearer, more precise, and historical awareness of our intercultural affinities’ (1993: 40); moreover, we should ‘contextualize our research within the inner necessities of our history’ (1993: 40). It seems that an ideal way of looking at intercultural activities should start from the clear realization of our own cultures.

Fischer-Lichte and Singleton also share a similar perspective on this notion. Fischer-Lichte claims that ‘in post-colonial times, after national independence, the evolution and confirmation of the local’s own cultural identity naturally became one of the most important tasks of theatre’ (1990: 35). Before any interactions between cultures, I thus believe it is necessary to clarify ‘who I am’ and ‘what we have’. On the other hand, Singleton mentions a desire for ‘the pursuit of otherness for the investigation of self’ (1997: 94). In other words, through the comparison of different cultures, the nature of one’s own culture will also be distinguished and reconfirmed through the exchanging process. Investigating Taiwanese *Xing-ju* is a journey of re-discovering my own culture sources and contextualising the society I have lived in. *Xing-ju* has undergone a fluctuating process in accordance with the political changes, as I explain. It is rare to observe a theatre form that has been defined as a colonial theatre, commercial theatre, popular theatre, post-colonial theatre and nowadays, a Taiwanese local theatre. With its hybrid cultural characteristics including Japanese, Chinese, and Western theatre styles, *Xing-ju* has enabled a definition of Taiwanese-ness to gradually emerge.

While addressing my research questions through theoretical analysis, I also examine them through the lens of practical work. I consider *Xing-ju* from a perspective that differs from that of other historical and theoretical researchers. Practice as research has been a ‘revolutionary development to occur in the university within the last two decades’ (Smith and Dean, 2010: 1).

According to Smith and Dean:

Practice-led research is employed to make two arguments about practice which are often overlapping and interlinked: firstly, as just indicated, that creative work in itself is a form of research and generates detectable research outputs; secondly, to

suggest that creative practice – the training and specialised knowledge that creative practitioners have and the processes they engage in when they are making art – can lead to specialised research insights which can then be generalised and written up as research. (2010: 5)

Candy (2006) uses the terms ‘practice-based’ and ‘practice-led’ to distinguish these two approaches. He further explains that in practice-based research ‘the creative work acts as a form of research, whereas practice-led research is about practice leading to research insights. From what has been addressed above, I conceive of the practical project in this study as a catalyst to help explore a new form of Taiwanese *Xing-ju*. It also serves as a reflection of my thoughts on Taiwan’s post-colonial status. I integrate a theoretical framework from critical syncretism and *Xing-ju* performing characteristics into performance I directed in Exeter in May 2011, *Sleep Available*. Through the *Sleep Available* project, I attempt to address whether *Xing-ju* can transcend nostalgia and come to exemplify a different type of post-colonialism in Taiwan. I also consider whether ‘Taiwaneseness’ and a ‘Taiwanese body’ can be defined through *Xing-ju*. Can *Xing-ju* be created as a specific performance form and aesthetic that embody the complexity of Taiwanese culture?

Phillip B. Zarrilli’s psychophysical actors’ training principles were incorporated into *Sleep Available*. This training is based on three traditional Asian martial arts, which “‘attune” the body and mind and awaken one’s inner energy’. Training ‘progresses through a workshop phase in which the actor’s awareness and energy are put into free play in structured improvisations, and continues as the actor fine-tunes awareness and energy in response to specific dramaturgies’ (Zarrilli, 2009: 8). Through daily training, performers cultivate and attain close body-mind connections. The *Xing-ju* acting style has often been criticized for being stereotyped and standardized. In utilizing the psychophysical actors’ training principle, I attempt to enhance and reduce the issues of *Xing-ju* acting style with an increased awareness of my position.

#### 4. Problematic Issues

In terms of methodology, I want to acknowledge some problematic issues. First is the lack of visual *Xing-ju* data. *Xing-ju* was initially introduced by the Japanese colonial regime and developed during the next hundred years and over the course of regime shifts; however, visual recording equipment did not become common until after the 1970s. Because *Xing-ju* was neglected by the KMT regime in the post-war era, it is difficult to find any film data in government archives. Most of the visual data accessible to researchers consists of photos from different *Xing-ju* troupes. Therefore, I can only imagine *Xing-ju* performances by reading literary narratives and newspaper reports, examining costumes and stage settings in photos and observing actors' tones and music in sound recordings.

Another concern regarding this study's methodology relates to ethnic groups. Taiwan is home to fourteen indigenous tribes, the *Hoklo*, the *Hakka* and Mainlanders, who migrated to Taiwan after 1949. Of these, the *Hoklo* make up around seventy percent of Taiwan's entire population and are regarded as Taiwan's biggest ethnic group. Under the rules of the Japanese and KMT governments, all of Taiwan's colonised cultures were suppressed, but power relationships between the different colonised ethnic groups existed. With the flourishing of the democratic and localisation movements after the lifting of martial law in 1987, *Hoklo* culture became easily recognizable; however, other ethnic groups remained relatively marginalised. Most of the time, what these ethnic groups confronted was a multi-layered hegemony. This study attempts to re-examine *Xing-ju* by going beyond the old colonial structure; however, because of the limited availability of data, it, focuses mainly on *Xing-ju* activities which involved the *Hoklo* people. How different ethnic groups confronted the introduction of *Xing-ju* and how their cultures interacted with other cultural forms is worth exploring in future research.

## 5. Historical Context of Taiwanese History

### Different Periods of Colonisations in Taiwan



In order to gain a further insight into the history and development of the Taiwanese *Xing-ju*, it is necessary to briefly review the geographical and historical background of Taiwan.

Taiwan is a small island with a length of two hundred and fifty miles, a breadth of less than eighty miles. It lies about one hundred miles from the Chinese mainland (see Figure 2). The ancient history of Taiwan is still unknown. Before being governed by Mainland China, several groups of aboriginal people of South-East Asian origin whose languages belong to the Malayo-Polynesian family had settled in Taiwan.



Figure 2. Taiwan's location in Asia

During the late 15<sup>th</sup> century and the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a great number of *Han* Chinese people began to migrate from China to Taiwan. The Chinese settlers started to compete for land against the aborigines who, as a result, were gradually forced to move into the mountainous district. Conflicts also flared up between the Japanese and the *Han* Chinese. It was during the early 16<sup>th</sup> century that the Western Maritime powers entered the scene (Liao, 1979: 8).

The Dutch made the Pescadores (Penghu islands now) their base for an offensive against the Portuguese who were in Macao at the time. By 1624, the Dutch came to Taiwan, settling at Anping, a southern city of Taiwan, and tried to monopolize the sugar trade and thus had

conflicts with both Chinese and Japanese and later with the Spaniards who arrived at Jilong, a northern city of Taiwan. In 1642 the Dutch successfully drove the Spanish from Taiwan and thereafter virtually monopolized the trade on Taiwan. However, the domination of the Dutch did not last long. In 1644, China was captured by the *Qing* Empire. About 25,000 loyalists of the deposed *Ming* Dynasty, led by Cheng Cheng-kung, attacked the Dutch in Anping. Thus, the Dutch ended their thirty-eight years of rule in Taiwan.

In 1683, after the deaths of Cheng and his son, the force of China's *Qing* Empire invaded Taiwan to purge loyalists of the ruined *Ming* Dynasty who had fled to the island. The *Qing* took over the island from 1683 to 1895. During the *Qing*'s ruler, *Han* Chinese kept moving to seize land from two provinces of Southern China: Fukien and Kwangtung, while the Empire forbade official immigration. Immigrants from Fukien (including 'Changchou people' and 'Chuanchou people') were usually called *Hoklo* (or *Fuklo*). The language has also been called *Hoklo* (or *Fuklo*). The third group was the *Hakka*, who migrated primarily from Kwangtung and spoke the *Hakka* language. By the turn of the nineteenth century, the Chinese population had risen to nearly three million, with eighty two percent of the settlers being *Hoklo*, and sixteen percent *Hakka* (Lamley, 1981: 291-292). As a result, the *Hoklo* language dominated Taiwan's linguistic makeup (Hsiau, 2000: 3-4).

Taiwan officially became one of the *Qing* Empire's provinces in 1886. Less than ten years after granting Taiwan provincial status, China lost control of Taiwan to Japan following defeat in the 1894 Sino-Japanese War. In 1895, the *Qing* Empire and Japan signed the Treaty of *Shimonoseki* and remained a Japanese colony for fifty years (1895-1945). For the Japanese government, Taiwan was situated in a significant military geographic location in South-Eastern Asia and the Japanese also benefitted from exploiting Taiwanese economic resources, such as sugar and minerals. The Japanese established a Governor-General in Taipei and started to govern the Taiwanese judiciary, administration, economy, culture, education and



religion.

As a result of military suppression in the first two decades of colonial rule, Taiwanese armed resistance was successfully crushed. In the 1920s, the development of Taiwanese non-violent anti-colonialism was influenced by the modern political concepts of democracy, socialism, and national self-determination. The Taiwanese Cultural Society (*Taiwan Wen-hua Xie-hui*, hereafter TCA) was one of the representative organizations. Their goal was to stimulate the people's nationalist ideology through cultural reformation (Chiu, 1992: 295).

Meanwhile, the non-*Han Qing* Empire was overthrown by the revolution of 1911, led by Sun Yat-sen, and the Republic of China (hereafter ROC) was established. The KMT, founded in 1919, was led by Chiang Kai-shek after Sun's death and became the ruling party of China.<sup>4</sup> At the close of Second World War, following Japan's defeat, Taiwan was taken over by Chiang Kai-shek's military forces and made a province of the ROC in the fall of 1945. People in Taiwan were initially elated by the news that they would be freed of Japanese colonial power, and reunited with their Chinese homeland. Taiwan's population generally welcomed the arrival of KMT government officials and troops. However, the Taiwanese became disappointed with the KMT's rule because of political suppression, economic chaos and the policy of discrimination. A sequence of violent anti-KMT actions took place in February 1947 and resulted in a severe suppression – now known as the '228 Incident'. This incident soured the relationship between the Taiwanese and the Chinese newly arrived from the Mainland (hereafter Mainlanders).

In December 1949, the KMT-controlled ROC government officially retreated to Taiwan

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<sup>4</sup> As far as the relationship between Taiwan and republic of China is concerned, the KMT's policy toward Taiwan was still unclear after the Sino-Japanese War erupted in July 1937. In the Cairo Declaration of December 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek announced that 'all the territories Japan has stolen from the Chinese, such as Manchuria, Formosa [Taiwan], and the Pescadores, shall be restored to the Republic of China.' While China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs had made a similar announcement the previous year, it was at the Cairo Conference that China's decision to recover lost territories was internationally recognized (Woody Cheng, 1991: 218-19)

because it lost the civil war to the Chinese Communist Party - People's Republic of China (hereafter PRC). At the time, Chiang was the head of the KMT, president of ROC, and commander in chief of the armed forces. The political system was basically a centralized single-party system. Political opposition was successfully suppressed. Civil and political rights were limited by martial law and wartime regulations. This suppressed period of time is called 'White Terror' (*Bai-se Kong-bu*) by the Taiwanese people.

In order to consolidate KMT's dominion, they strongly imposed a China-centric identity to Taiwan as the Chinese consciousness was viewed by the government as a necessary tool to assimilate the local Taiwanese with Mainlanders. Most importantly, it would help to legitimize the state of Taiwan as ROC (Hsiau, 2000: 55-58). Chineseness was present in every course, from history to music. There was no exception to language, the official language, Mandarin, was forcefully imposed while other dialects (including aboriginal languages, *Hoklo*, *Hakka*) were severely discouraged at schools, official institutions, and formal gatherings. The KMT ruler successfully labelled Taiwanese culture and language indecent and backward (Chang, 1997: 116). This will be further discussed in Chapter Three.

Chiang Ching-kuo became chairman of the KMT and President of the ROC after his father, Chiang Kai-shek, died in 1975. He started to moderate the authoritarian nature of the political system and this led to the appearance of Taiwanese political opposition. The Taiwanese opposition movements also evoked nationalism sentiments in an increasing number of Taiwanese writers, literary critics, linguists, and historians (Hsiau, 2000: 6). Hence Taiwanese cultural nationalism emerged during this period. In September 1986, Taiwan's first post-war opposition party, the DPP, was eventually established in 1987 when martial law was lifted. President Chiang Ching-kuo realised that a democratic atmosphere increased.

Hsiau points out the fact that 'the political interests of the people have grown more and more complex in the freer political climate, the number who identify themselves as Taiwanese has

increased remarkably and the number who regard themselves as Chinese decreased sharply, as Taiwanese cultural nationalism gained its own momentum' (2000: 3-7). In March 23, 1996, Lee Teng-hui, a local Taiwanese, became the first President of ROC directly elected by Taiwanese and his aim to seek a political independence of Taiwan became evident.

By 2000 and 2004, Chen Shuei-bian, a representative figure of opposition party - DPP, was successfully elected by Taiwanese as ROC's tenth and eleventh-term President. He is the first President out from the KMT party since the establishment of ROC in 1911. His success did not only mark an end to the KMT's fifty-year rule in Taiwan but also the first democratic transfer of power between major political parties. However, because Chen was suspected of involvement in corrupt affairs during his eight-year presidency, he caused a controversy among his supporters and opponents that moreover led to the failure of DPP in the twelfth-term President election in 2008. The following President, Ma Ying-jiou, a descendant of Mainlanders, also a rising figure in KMT, manifested his conservative direction in regarding Taiwan as a province of ROC. In the latest presidential election, the DDP party's candidate, Tsai Ying-wen, lost by less than six percent, and Ma remained president, acceding to a thirteen term. Taiwan's political status and Taiwanese identity are still ongoing issues among Taiwan to date.

## **6. Taiwan's Post-colonial Context**

Is Taiwan experiencing its own post-colonial process and is it appropriate to apply post-colonialism to describe and de-construct the Taiwanese phenomenon? This is still regarded as controversial and is part of ongoing research in current Taiwanese academic circles (Chen, 2007). According to Wu, Rwei-ren, Taiwanese colonial experiences have been characterized at different periods of time both as 'successive colonisations' - Dutch, Spanish, the *Ming* and *Qing* Dynasty, and the ROC regimes - and by dominant structural 'multiple

colonisations' such as external regimes, *Han* Diasporas and the aboriginal ethnic groups. 'Multiple colonisations' refers to the construction of Taiwan as an immigrant society with multiple ethnic groups, and consists of 'immigrant colonisations', 'exploitative colonisations' and 'mixture colonisations' (2006: 95-98).

'Successive colonisations' and 'Multiple colonisations' led to the formation of two *Han* Chinese ethnic groups with different levels of indigenization: the *Ben-sheng-ren* (Local Taiwanese), who migrated from China to Taiwan before Japan's defeat in 1945; and the *Wai-sheng-ren* (Mainlanders), who migrated with the defeat of KMT government in China after 1949. Definitions of the Taiwanese colonial and post-colonial phenomenon are dependent on the fact that each group has had 'different positions among the multiple colonisations, and hence this has closely influenced their understanding toward colonisation, anti-colonisation, de-colonisation and post-colonisation' (Wu, 1996: 96).

It is difficult to define or explain Taiwanese colonial influences from a singular perspective as variable explanations are created as a result of different positions. For example, for the aboriginal ethnic groups, de-colonisation means to attempt to re-dress many years of exploitation and subordination under different regimes and to aim for the retrieval of political autonomy. These groups had to fight against the *Han* Chinese groups mentioned in the previous paragraph. The local Taiwanese, indigenized *Han* immigrants settling in Taiwan before 1945, fought against the Mainlanders authorities. For them, 'de-colonisation means to get rid of KMT, an external regime, and reach the aim of Taiwan as belonging to Taiwanese' as their ultimate target. Therefore, the de-colonisation of Taiwanese politics begins from democratization and localization under the rule of the local Taiwanese president, Li Deng-hui, in the 1990s and finished with the successful party gaining power in 2000' (Wu, 2006: 96). For the Mainlanders, who migrated to Taiwan after 1949, on the other hand, they had already attained their de-colonisation after the KMT government took over Taiwan from Japan in

1945. These three perspectives also reflect three positions, three historical views and three anti-colonial experiences in the power hierarchy. In addition, three contemporary post-colonial critical agendas or three ‘cultural political’ stances are also determined in accordance with the positions (Wu, 1996: 97). One thing that needs to be addressed here is that China, governed by the *Qing* dynasty and KMT regime later, is not only the coloniser but also the colonised for the West. Its double roles further complicate the relationship between China and Taiwan. From what has been addressed above, the particularity of Taiwan’s status thus results in the ambiguity of a collective conclusion.

The attempt to appropriate the current concept of post-colonialism in order to fully illustrate the Taiwanese situation is incongruent because none of the former colonised nations has faced the same situation as that of Taiwan, although Taiwan does share some common conditions and has experienced multiple layers of colonial and neo-colonial culture. However, ‘the term, “post-colonial” is resonant with all the ambiguity and complexity of the many different cultural experiences it implicates’ (Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin, 1995: 2); therefore, after taking the Taiwanese historical context into account, it is still valuable to examine existing post-colonial research on other colonised nations when analyzing the Taiwanese post-colonial circumstances. Except for the influences from the external colonisations, the power conflict between the internal ethnic groups within the same colonial context is still an essential issue which needs to be examined. In addition, the ambiguous relationship between Taiwan and China has also led to difficulties in clarifying the current national issues. For example, China continues to refuse to accept Taiwan as a country in its own right and this causes difficulties for Taiwan with regard to participation in international organisations, such as WTO, as well as sporting competitions, such as the Olympics, in which Taiwan is obliged to participate under the name ‘Chinese Taipei’ rather than ROC or Taiwan. The Taiwanese colonial context, therefore, may not merely be found via the singular perspective of colonial history.

It is impossible to speak of a collective view on Taiwanese de-colonisation, because the de-colonial strategy varies in accordance with the views of different ethnic groups, gender and class, in a range of Taiwanese historical contexts. It is more important to reveal the multiple influences, to identify people standing in different positions and to clarify the relationship with local people during the process of de-colonisation. As Helen Tiffin suggests, 'Decolonisation is process, not arrival' (1987: 17), the 'realization' that emerges from the process does not necessarily result in forgiveness and a resolution of issues; however, at least the misunderstandings and conflicts might be expected to be reduced.

The local Taiwanese are still the major participants taking part in the Taiwanese *Xing-ju* activities, and has had more or less interaction with the Japanese or the Mainlanders in different periods of time. The development of *Xing-ju* also reflected the historical pedigree from Japanese colonisation, the KMT's internal colonisation and to the post-colonial era after the lifting of martial laws in 1987. In order to clearly see through the nature of *Xing-ju*, Taiwanese colonial history should be taken into account in parallel.

## **7. Literature Review**

The study of *Xing-ju* can be broken down into the following four general categories: (1) research into related theatre histories; (2) research into Taiwanese *Xing-ju* under Japanese rule (1895-1945); (3) research into Taiwanese *Xing-ju* in the post-war period (1945 – the present); (4) research into Golden Bough Theatre and its intercultural training methods. In addition, each of these can be divided into the two parts: primary material (which includes archival texts, such as contemporary newspapers, autobiographies and the memoirs of people directly or indirectly associated with *Xing-ju*) and secondary material (which includes undocumented historical narratives, articles and academic essays and theses).

There have been numerous research results regarding Taiwanese theatre, whether in modern or traditional theatres. However, the study of *Xing-ju* in the post-war era was neglected before the 1990s. This might be due to the fact that *Xing-ju* has often been regarded in the academic field as an inferior theatre genre; hence, researchers did not consider that *Xing-ju* signified an important part of Taiwanese theatre. The study of *Xing-ju* started to become more significant with the growth of Taiwanese identity. In the year 2000, for the first time since the KMT took over government after the end of Japanese colonisation, there was the first change in the party in power in Taiwan and Chen Shuei-bian, from the DPP, was elected President. Chen Shuei-bian played a large part in raising the national identity of the Taiwanese people. Consequently, research into *Xing-ju*, which was previously seen as an impure Taiwanese popular performing form, started to garner the attention of researchers and audiences. Golden Bough Theatre was considered to be the first contemporary theatre troupe, which was well-known for performing new *Opeila* plays within a post-colonial context.

### **(1) Research on Related Theatre History**

The initiation and development of *Xing-ju* were closely related to events in Japan and China. *Xing-ju* also developed out of considerable interaction with other traditional theatre genres; therefore, it is necessary to consider the history of theatre in Taiwan, Japan and China when building the background to this thesis.

Before the Japanese occupation of Taiwan, there was limited systematic research on Taiwanese theatre (Chiu, 2008: 343). Research on Taiwanese theatre started during the Japanese colonial era, when the colonial regime conducted a series of studies and surveys on local Taiwanese theatre forms; examples of such surveys are *Chinese and Taiwanese Theatre Tunes in Taiwan*, edited by the Cultural and Educational Bureau of the Japanese

governor-general in 1928, and *The Present Condition of Taiwanese Theatre*<sup>5</sup>, edited by Japanese researcher Hamada Hidesaburou (Chiu, 1992).

The most significant Taiwanese theatre history monograph in the early post-war era was *Taiwanese Movie and Theatre History* (1961), written by Lu Su-shang. In addition to 'Taiwan's *Xing-ju* Development History', it includes the following chapters: 'Taiwan's Movie History', 'Taiwan's Radio Drama History', 'Taiwan's Traditional Theatre Development History', 'Taiwan's Peking Opera History', 'Taiwan's *Ge-zai Xi* History' and 'Taiwan's Hand-Puppet Theatre History' – in total, the brief histories of eighteen theatre genres. Lu's monograph contains a considerable amount of data; however, most of this is 'directly cited from previous research without denoting the source of reference' (Chiu, 2008: 353). For example, most *Xing-ju*-related content is copied from the official Japanese data that I mentioned in earlier paragraphs. Therefore, lacking clear sources, there is a danger that readers' perspectives will be tainted by those of the coloniser. However, Lu has provided a considerable amount of data on the development of different kinds of Taiwanese theatre genres, based upon his personal experiences from the pre-war to the early post-war period. His book is by far the most often cited reference on Taiwanese theatre.

When the KMT regime succeeded the Japanese colonial government, Taiwan's theatre history began to be examined within the larger frame of China's theatre history. All genres of Taiwanese theatre were seen as 'provincial theatre'. As a result, between 1945 and 1990, only Lu's monograph mentioned theatre activities that took place prior to the KMT's arrival in 1945. The majority of theatre history monographs or theatre lectures at universities discussed theatre from the ancient *Qing* and *Han* Dynasties, of around 220 BC, to the emergence of contemporary theatre, *Wen-ming Xi* (Civilised Theatre), in China at the beginning of the twentieth century. Taiwan's theatre during the Japanese colonial era was neglected; instead,

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<sup>5</sup> The book contained '*Taiwanese Theatre History*' by Takeuchi Osamu, '*The Theatre Movement of the Young People*' by Nakayama Yu, and '*Taiwanese Xing-ju Activities*' by the Japanese Administration.



contemporary theatre development in post-war Taiwan was connected directly to *Wen-ming Xi* (Civilised Theatre) in China (Chiu, 2008: 346-347). A typical example was *China's Spoken Drama History* (1985), written by Chia I-ti and Wu Je. Another influential researcher, Ma Sen, a scholar and dramatist, proposed the idea of 'tides from the West twice' in two of his monographs, *Double Impacts upon Chinese Modern Drama from the West* (1994) and *Chinese Modern Theatre Under the Tide From the West* (1994), both of which focused on the modernisation of theatre; however, the first tide Ma referred to was China's *Wen-ming Xi*, and the second was contemporary theatre development in 1960s Taiwan. The contemporary theatre activities, in which the Taiwanese local theatre practitioners were involved in, were absent in Ma and other Mainland writers' books.

Published in 2003, Lin Ho-yi's *Taiwanese Theatre History* (2003) can be seen as the first relatively complete monograph of Taiwanese theatre history, although its content seems slightly brief. It provides succinct conceptions of major Taiwanese theatre genres, from the *Ming* dynasty (1624) to contemporary Taiwan. It is a shame that since this book, no other Taiwanese theatre history monographs have been published to date. In addition, although Chung Ming-der's *The Little Theatre Movement of Taiwan (1980-89) – In Search of Alternative Aesthetics and Politics* (1999) does not comprehensively discuss Taiwan's theatre history, it is worthy of examination for its observations on how Taiwan's avant-garde theatre movement was affected by Taiwanese politics after the lifting of martial law in the 1980s.

With regard to Japanese theatre history, I mainly focus in this thesis on contemporary theatre after the *Meiji* Restoration. Faubion Bowers' *Japanese Theatre* (1976) and Benito Ortolani's *The Japanese Theatre – from Shamanistic Ritual to Contemporary Pluralism* (1995) provide me with background to the debut of Japanese *Shinpa-geki* (new theatre) and the founder of *Shinpa-geki*, Kawakami Otojiro. In addition, Gioia Ottaviani's essay, "'Difference" and "Reflexivity": Osanai Kaoru and the Shingeki Movement' (1994), focuses on the landmark

place of theatre that emerged from the Japanese *Shinpa-geki* movement, Tsukiji Theatre, and its founder, Osanai Kaoru. It is particularly important to note, for the purposes of my thesis, that *Xing-ju* practitioner Chang Wei-hsien was deeply influenced by his observations of *Tsukiji* Theatre during the Japanese colonial era.

Regarding Chinese theatre history, the Chinese researcher Ge Yi-hong's *Chinese Spoken Drama History* (1990) provides a general perspective of the initiation of contemporary theatre at the beginning of the twentieth century. The work of another Chinese researcher, Yuan Guo-xing, entitled *The Birth of Chinese Spoken Drama* (2000), mainly focuses on the beginnings of contemporary theatre. Yuan points out that 'Japanese *Shinpa-geki* and *Xing-ju* were born under the influence of Western theatre. Chinese *Xing-ju* was derived from Japan; therefore, it was also indirectly affected by the West. Japan opened a window for Chinese spoken drama to access and to understand Western theatre' (2000: 65, Personal Translation). Yuan has an insightful understanding of how traditional Chinese theatre absorbed Japanese *Shinpa-geki* theatre and inserted itself into contemporary Chinese theatre forms. He focuses, in particular, on the fact that Western theatre was first called *Hua-ju* (Spoken Drama) by Chinese audiences and practitioners, because the main differences between traditional and Western theatre lay in their performing forms: Western theatre seemed to consist merely of spoke lines, without singing and dancing, unlike traditional theatre (2000: 46).

With regard to research on traditional theatre, I mainly review Taiwanese researcher Shu Ya-hsiang's monographs: *Chinese Traditional Theatre Troupes in Japanese Colonial Taiwan* (2000), *Truth and Interpretation: The Collection of Traditional Theatre Reports in Newspapers During the Japanese Colonial Era* (2006) and *A Historical Discussion of Taiwanese Traditional Theatre During the Japanese Colonial Era* (2006). Hsu's research is based on the contents of important newspapers in the Japanese colonial era, such as the *Taiwan Daily News* (*Taiwan Rih-rih Xing-bao*) and the *Tainan Daily News* (*Tainan Xing-bao*).

Hsu also conducted field research in both China and Taiwan. Huang Mei-shiu has pointed out that Hsu's research is written 'from the perspectives of culture and society, to analyze, judge, clarify and discuss the "Chinese theatre groups" management strategies, art features and influences on the development of Taiwanese traditional theatres' (2000: preface). Hsu attempts to construct a picture of interactions between Chinese and Taiwanese local traditional theatres and to further discuss how Japanese colonial modernity influenced traditional theatre. Lin Ho-yi's *Building on Fieldwork: An Historical Perspective on Taiwanese Traditional Theatre* (2007) discusses Taiwanese *Ge-zai Xi* (Taiwanese Opera) and other folk theatre genres' activities and development in the context of original field research. Another of Lin's essays, 'Movers behind "Living Plays": Taiwanese Opera's Prominent Scenario Tellers and Their Expertise' (2008), is also based on her field research on *Ge-zai Xi* troupes' rehearsal methods and scenarios. It serves as a valuable reference for my understanding of how *Xing-ju* plays were historically rehearsed.

*Xing-ju* troupes had considerable interaction with *Ge-zai Xi* troupes after the *Kominka* movement in the Japanese colonial era. To attract audiences, *Ge-zai Xi* troupes also performed *Opeila* (Opera) plays, in which performers wore contemporary costumes, instead of traditional Chinese costumes. The boundary between *Xing-ju* and *Ge-zai Xi* was blurred. Research on the *Opeila* plays of *Ge-zai Xi* troupes became an alternative to research on traditional *Ge-zai Xi*. Examples are Hsieh Hsiao-mei's '*From "Refined Ge-zai Xi" to "Opeila": Discourses of Ge-zai Xi under the Changing Taiwanese National Identity*' (2007). Hsieh points out that changes in Taiwanese awareness determined the direction of *Ge-zai Xi* troupes' performances. In addition, she analyses the ways in which academic circles re-defined *Opeila* as an authentic Taiwanese theatre form. Huei-Yuan Belinda Chang presents a similar argument in *A Theatre of Taiwanese - Politics, Ideologies, and Ge-zai Xi* (1997). Chang provides an insightful perspective on how esteem for *Ge-zai Xi* dramatically changed, in accordance with fluctuations in Taiwanese awareness and Chinese identity. She explains that

*Ge-zai Xi* went from being recognized as a ‘cultural poison’ to being seen as the ‘canon of Taiwanese culture’ and gradually became more refined, losing its folk spirit. By comparison, Nancy Guy’s ‘Governing the Arts, Governing the State: *Peking* Opera and Political Authority in Taiwan’ (1999) reveals the relationship between *Peking* opera’s development and politics. Guy notes that in post-war Taiwan, the KMT government’s attempts to appear more legitimate than the PROC government in China led to *Peking* opera’s being afforded the status of the ‘theatre of the nation’ (Hsieh, 2007:84).

From what has been summarised above, it is noted that there has not been a complete and systematic research on Taiwanese theatre history. The current research is usually divided into several sub-fields, such as traditional theatre, contemporary theatre, the influences from Chinese traditional and contemporary theatre, and the influences from Japan and other countries. The difficulty of providing a clear picture of Taiwanese theatre history actually also reflects the on-going post-colonial status in Taiwan.

## **(2) Research on Taiwanese *Xing-ju* Under Japanese Rule (1895-1945)**

To date, Chiu Kun-liang’s monograph – *Traditional Theatres and New Theatres: A Survey of Taiwanese Theatre During the Japanese Colonial Era* (1992) – is still the most significant work on Taiwanese *Xing-ju*. Chiu’s discussion situates Taiwan in a Japanese colonial context and provides an insightful understanding of the influence of colonial modernity on Taiwanese traditional theatre. Chiu also discusses interactions between *Xing-ju* and Taiwanese intellectuals’ anti-colonial activities but his discussion does not include a further analysis that goes beyond presenting historical data.

In addition, Young Du’s *Taiwanese Xing-ju Movements During the Japanese Colonial Era* (1994) focuses on the development of *Wen-hua Ju* (Cultural Theatre) during the Japanese

colonial era and discusses how Taiwanese intellectuals used *Xing-ju* to enlighten the working class in its fight against the colonisers. Young pays particular attention to the anarchist Chang Wei-shien and his Starlight Theatre Research Association (*Sing-guang Yan-ju Yan-jiou Hwei*), highlighting Chang's theatrical aesthetics and political points of view. Young provides a left-wing perspective on the political side of *Xing-ju*.

Shih Wan-shun's masters dissertation, *A Survey of the Hou-sheng Theatre Group in 1943 Taiwan* (2002), focuses mainly on the development of the *Hou-sheng* Theatre Group by Taiwanese intellectuals during the Second World War. At that time, as the *Kominka* Movement was imposed by the Japanese governor-general's office, *Hou-sheng* was Taiwan's most visible theatre troupe. Shih's research, which is based on a considerable amount of first-hand references, examines Taiwanese intellectuals' struggles as they participated in theatre activities. Shih also discusses theatre activities during the *Kominka* Movement in another essay, 'Glimmers from A "Dark Age": Taiwanese Theatre during the *Kominka* Movement' (1936.9~1940.11) (2008a). She describes the changes that took place in *Ge-zai Xi* performances under the influence of *Kominka* policy as *Opeilalisation*, pointing out that because *Ge-zai Xi* was a newly developed theatre form and could be seen as exemplifying flexibility, it was flexible enough, when confronting a limited environment, like the *Kominka* Movement, to adapt to change and survived (2008: 139). Shih's Ph.D thesis, *Staging 'Taiwan': Theatre, Modernisation, and Subjectivity Formation of Taiwan during the Japanese Colonial Period (1895-1945)* (2010) further discusses how Taiwanese theatre was transformed into popular entertainment with the growth of modernisation and urbanisation, which were brought by Japanese colonisation. Shih also examines the manipulation of theatre by official Japanese power and considers the ways in which Taiwanese intellectuals used theatre as anti-colonial media. Shih then uses the term 'Colony *Xing-ju*' (*Zhi-min-di Xin-ju*), to characterise *Xing-ju* as a performance style that came to consist of multilingual and hybridized cultures during the Japanese colonial era. In another essay, 'Kawakami Otojiro's

“Othello” and Taiwan Seigeki, the Field Survey for “Othello” and its Representation on Stage’ (2008b), Shih studies the founder of Japanese *Shinpa-geki*, Kawakami Otojiro, and his trip to Taiwan to seek materials for his new play - *Othello*. Shih points out that Kawakami’s Taiwan trip diaries and his adaptation of *Othello* reveal an imperial agenda of using theatre to strengthen the Japanese empire’s legitimacy. How Taiwan was represented on the imperial stage is also worth exploring.

While significant research was produced in the nineties, it was not until 2000 that *Xing-ju* research took off. The monographs and autobiographies of significant *Xing-ju* practitioners have also started to be published. Examples are the publication of the ‘Senior Theatre Practitioners’ series, which is published and edited by the Taipei National University of Arts, include the biographies of Chang Wei-shang, Lin Tuan-chiu, Lu Su-shang, Chen Da-yu and Sung Fei-wo, all *Xing-ju* participants during the Japanese colonial and early post-war era. The recent publishing of first-hand accounts will help researchers view the development of *Xing-ju* from the perspectives of individual practitioners. However, it is evident that the research on *Xing-ju* under the Japanese occupation still emphasised discovering new historical materials and a post-colonial discussion has not been further developed.

### **(3) Research on Post-war Taiwanese *Xing-ju* (1945 - Present)**

Japanese colonisation ended in 1945. During the four years that preceded the KMT regime’s official move to Taiwan from China, in 1949, all restrictions on Taiwanese theatre were lifted, and theatre prospered. A great number of troupes from China were invited to perform repertoires in Taiwan. However, clashes between local Taiwanese and Mainlanders led to the severe 228 Incident in 1947. After this event, Taiwan entered a ‘White Terror’ phase, and the KMT regime imposed austere governance measures on Taiwan. As a result, local intellectuals

abandoned theatre activities. It was evident that the four-year period was a turning point for Taiwan and also for Taiwanese theatre. The most important research on this period is Chuang Shu-chi's masters degree dissertation, *Examining Taiwanese Commercial Theatre Activities in the Post-war Era from Advertisements in Newspapers (1945-1949)* (2005). Using historical analysis of newspaper reports, Chuang identifies social influences on theatre activities (Chuang, 2005: 6). From *The People's Newspaper (Min Bao)*, *Taiwan New Life Newspaper (Taiwan Xin-sheng Bao)* and six other newspapers published after the war, she gathers statistics on performers in different theatre genres and theatres around Taiwan. Chuang provides a rather objective point of view on early post-war theatre activities and also points out that discourse on commercial theatre's development was absent during the post-war era, because local culture was suppressed and neglected by dominant culture (2005: 3). Another monograph that focuses on theatre in the post-war era is Jiao Tong's *The Theatre in the Early Post-war Era in Taiwan* (1990). In addition to exploring Taiwanese intellectuals' theatre activities, Jiao discusses anti-communist theatre in the 1950s and lists the titles of scripts in post-war Taiwan. However, local *Xing-ju* plays are absent from this list.

Compared to research on Taiwanese theatre during the Japanese colonial era, research on Taiwanese *Xing-ju* was relatively less prolific before the 1990s, because it was neglected by academia. Previous studies on the early post-war period merely explained that after the end of the Second World War, the KMT government in China retreated to Taiwan and then conflicted seriously with local Taiwanese. It has been typically supposed that after clashes, 'native Taiwanese theatre workers and intellectuals were mostly killed or arrested by the KMT government. These clashes not only destroyed theatre workers' ideals, but also diminished Taiwanese theatre practitioners' energy' (Jiao, 1990). In addition, former researchers have argued that political forces and linguistic barriers resulted in the sudden silencing of local Taiwanese theatre workers: 'Most Taiwanese theatres were transformed into anti-communist theatres, which were encouraged by the ruling regime' (Jiao, 1990). Therefore, it is usually

concluded that after the migration of the KMT government, local Taiwanese theatre performances in mother tongues were totally replaced by theatre performances in Mandarin (Chung, 1999). However, local Taiwanese theatre activities in post-war Taiwan seem not to have been undeveloped, as is typically supposed. According to *Taiwanese Movie and Theatre History* (1961), there are records not only of Chinese theatre workers' activities, but also of considerable numbers of Taiwanese *Xing-ju* performers' activities. Lu cites statistics from the *Improved Local Theatre Association (Di-fang Xi-ju Shie-jin-huei)*, which indicate that there were approximately 20 to 30 *Xing-ju* theatre groups in the 1950s.

It was not until the 1990s that the first academic research on the development of Taiwanese *Xing-ju* in the post-war era was published by Chiu Kun-liang. Chiu has taken charge of a series of research projects, collectively titled *The Research on Taiwanese Xing-ju, 1945-1970*, from 1995 to 1997. He has carried out a large amount of fieldwork, interviewing theatre participants (including actors/actresses, dramatists and technical stage staff), investigating audience receptions and collecting data related to *Xing-ju* performances (including playbills, texts and photos). In 2001, Chiu began another two-year research project, *Between Tradition and Modernity: Collecting Taiwanese Xing-ju Transcripts* (2001-2002). He widely collected *Xing-ju* texts and relevant reports, advertisements and academic essays from newspapers and magazines. Furthermore, he continued to conduct interviewing *Xing-ju* participants. He then finished a five-volume set entitled *The Anthology of Xing-ju Performance in Taiwan*. Chiu painstakingly collected and arranged historical data on *Xing-ju* in post-war Taiwan, established significant resources on *Xing-ju* for the later researchers. His latest published monograph, *Wander Stage – Taiwanese Popular Theatre Era* (2008), was a collection of his eleven short essays based upon his previous research result of *Xing-ju*. These essays look at popular theatre's development in Taiwan within the context of the management of theatres and troupes, script content and the performing styles of *Ge-zai Xi* troupes. They also consider interactions between *Xing-ju* and traditional theatre forms. Chiu describes the period between



1920 and 1960 as ‘an era in which people could participate in and create culture together’ (2008: 24). He also points out that Taiwanese theatre history has been placed within the framework of Chinese theatre history: ‘whether examining the Japanese colonial era or the period after 1949, in the half a century since, the social background to and theatre-making concepts and elements of Taiwanese theatre are different from those of China. Thus, it is not appropriate to use “Chinese theatre history” to cover’ (2008: 359). Chiu then suggests that ‘discourse on Taiwanese theatre should be developed using a narrative strategy, which should take Taiwanese social and cultural context into account’ (2008: 364). Chiu’s research on *Xing-ju* is significant both in terms of quantity and quality. It is especially important for the considerable field data it yields and for being the first to view *Xing-ju* from a popular entertainment perspective. Chiu’s work contributes to my research on the historical background of *Xing-ju*, in the Japanese colonial and early post-war eras. However, most of his research is mainly based on historical and anthropological analysis and his discourse lacks a perspective that goes beyond historical data. My study aims to fill this gap and to look at *Xing-ju* from a post-colonial perspective, and to re-frame it within a theoretical context rather than purely presenting the historical data of *Xing-ju*, which is an important contribution to current *Xing-ju* research. Furthermore, in Chiu’s research the development of *Xing-ju* in the Japanese colonial and post-war era is separately discussed; in my own study, I attempt to provide a more continuous history of *Xing-ju* from its emergence to present under the framework of Taiwanese history.

#### **(4) Research on Golden Bough Theatre and Intercultural Actors’ Training**

Golden Bough’s *Opeila* plays successfully overturned audiences’ understanding of contemporary theatre. With regard to research on Golden Bough, the most significant advances have been made by American researcher Teri. J. Silvio, who has worked as an

associate research fellow at the Institution of Ethnology in Academia Sinica Taiwan<sup>6</sup> since 2002. Silvio has conducted field research on topics in popular Taiwanese culture, including *Ge-zai Xi*, *Opeila*, hand-puppet theatre and comic book culture. Analysing the popularity of *Ge-zai Xi* and *Opeila* from the perspective of cultural studies and anthropology, she has produced such essays as: 'First as Farce, Then as Tragedy: Popular Allegory and National Analogy in Contemporary Taiwanese Opera' (2005a) and 'The Heterogenous Time/Space of *O-peila*: Reading *Koa-a Hi* Below and Beyond the Nation' (2005b). In addition to discussing the aesthetics of *Opeila* and *Ge-zai Xi* performances within the context of changes in Taiwan's political environment, Silvio also points out that 'the "hybridity" of *Opeila* plays offers a chance to re-define Taiwanese culture' (2005b: 11). She is also the first researcher to examine *Opeila* from a post-colonial perspective.

In 'The Nostalgic Community and the Reintegrated Individual: The "New *Opeila*" Performances of the Golden Bough Theatre and the Formosa Zephyr Opera Troupe' (2009), Silvio examines the theme of 'nostalgia' in two different types of *Opeila*, revealing divergent meanings. In her latest essay, '*Tai/Kuso/Camp*: 'new *Opeila*' and the structure of sensibility' (2009), Silvio gives an insightful perspective on the popularity of '*Tai-ke*'<sup>7</sup> aesthetics and the concept of '*Kuso*'<sup>8</sup> in Golden Bough and Formosa Zephyr's *Opeila* plays. In addition, she uses camp theory to explain Golden Bough's *Opeila* plays. Other than historical analysis, Silvio's camp perspective is a fresh point of view on Taiwanese contemporary theatre research. However, her argument still failed to look at the Taiwanese popular culture from within;

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<sup>6</sup> Academia Sinica is the most preeminent academic institution in Taiwan, which was founded in 1928 to promote and undertake scholarly research in sciences and humanities. ([http://www.sinica.edu.tw/main\\_e.shtml](http://www.sinica.edu.tw/main_e.shtml))

<sup>7</sup> Silvio defines *Tai* as 'a term of abuse used by Mandarin speakers to deride working class and underclass *Hoklo* and *Hakka* speakers, the term was taken up in the early 2000 as a term of pride within various youth subcultures and among avant-garde and pop-artists.' (2009b: 342) This will be further discussed in the Chapters Two and Three in this thesis.

<sup>8</sup> According to Silvio, the term, *Kuso*, 'is associated with the subcultures of computer games, and refers to various forms of self-deprecatory or deflationary parody. *Kuso* is a Japanese word for 'shit', but in Taiwan it is usually translated indirectly, most frequently in Chinese as *E-gao*, meaning something like "making mischief".' (2009b: 342)

instead, she still framed it by Western theories. My thesis, however, utilises not only post-colonial discourses from Western academic researchers, such as Balme and Gilbert, but also that from the Global South, such as Chen and Bharucha, to re-contextualize Taiwanese *Xing-ju*.

Because the founder of Golden Bough joined U Theatre in his early days, and because the training methods of U Theatre were inspired by Grotowski, Jennifer Kumiega's *The Theatre of Grotowski* (1985) and Richard Schechner and Lisa Wolford's *The Grotowski Sourcebook* (1997) provide crucial insight into the Grotowskian context of their work. Another significant study on U Theatre is Craig Quintero's 'Pilgrimage as a Pedagogical Practice in Contemporary Taiwanese Theatre' (2002). Quintero focuses on how U Theatre made religious pilgrimage part of its actors' training. Liu Chang-jang's masters degree dissertation, *U Theatre in "The Project of Tracing Back"* (2005), is based on interviews with members of U Theatre and discusses how U Theatre regarded the learning of traditional crafts as part of performers' daily training. In addition, Hsu Yu-mei's Ph.D thesis, *Eastern and Western training methods in intercultural theatre with relation to the theatres of Taiwan* (2000), explores Taiwanese troupes' application of intercultural training methods from an intercultural theatre perspective. In addition to addressing some of U Theatre's and Golden Bough's training approaches, most of the intercultural cases that Hsu mentions are Taiwanese *Peking* opera adaptations of Western scripts. In Hsu's study, Western theatre or texts are still seen as the norm for the Eastern theatre practitioners. In addition, her study failed to take the 'intercultural activities' within a colonial context into consideration.

To briefly conclude, it could be noted that *Xing-ju* research grew rapidly after the 1990s, and most of the references published since then are written in Mandarin. Relevant research published in English and in international journals is rather limited, Silvio's few essays being exceptions. To date, most research on Taiwanese theatre in Western academic circles has

focused on either traditional theatre, like *Ge-zai Xi* and *Peking* opera, or contemporary theatre troupes' works after the 1990s, like those of the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre. As I have mentioned above, this thesis attempts to introduce a broader view of Taiwanese theatre to Western theatre and post-colonial studies. It is the first significant research on Taiwanese *Xing-Ju* to be written in English and draws from both Western and Global South theoretical perspectives. The originality of this study lies not only in the research topic but also in its inter-disciplinary methods, and most importantly, a point of view from within the Taiwanese cultural context.

## 8. Chapter Structure

A brief outline of the content of each chapter is as follows:

Chapter 1 presents the background to *Xing-ju* emergence in the Japanese colonial era. It discusses how the coloniser legitimatised its rule by promoting colonial modernity and cites *Xing-ju* as an example. It also explains how the Taiwanese, as a colonised people, confronted the introduction of a new theatre genre and adapted from traditional to contemporary theatre during different phases of the Japanese colonial era. The sub-forms of *Xing-ju* that this chapter discusses are *Wen-ming Xi* (Civilised Theatre), *Gai-liang Xi* (Reformed Theatre), *Wen-hua xi* (Cultural Theatre) and *Huang-min ju* (Emperor Theatre).

Chapter 2 focuses on *Xing-ju*'s development within a different context: when Japan left Taiwan after losing the Second World War in 1945, the KMT regime, an internal coloniser, took power in Taiwan. Due to changes in Taiwan's political environment and the specificity of internal colonisation, Taiwan's hybrid culture was marginalised by Chinese cultural hegemony. This chapter looks at how *Xing-ju* gradually transformed itself into commercial theatre in the post-war era. When martial law was lifted in 1987, and because of rapid growth in Taiwanese

awareness, *Xing-ju* was recognized as a Taiwanese theatre genre that exemplified the uniqueness of Taiwanese culture. The sub-form of *Xing-ju* that this chapter discusses is mainly *Opeila*, which can be divided into two styles: *Xing-ju Opeila* and *Ge-zai Xi Opeila*. In addition, this chapter, drawing on my original field research, also presents the performing characteristics, recruitment of members, training and performing themes of *Opeila* in the post-war era.

Chapter 3 discusses a contemporary Taiwanese theatre group, Golden Bough Theatre, and its imitation of *Opeila* plays. It examines the artistic director's process of producing contemporary *Opeila* plays and his training methods, which were derived by U Theatre and Grotowski. In addition, it explains Golden Bough's *Opeila* works from a post-colonial perspective.

Chapter 4 is based on a case study that involved the implementation of an original, practical project, *Sleep Available*, which attempted to define 'Taiwaneseness' and to de-colonise by creating a new form of *Xing-ju* performance. Nowadays, when *Xing-ju* is seen as an obsolete theatre genre and when Golden Bough's works are seemingly products of post-colonial nostalgia, what does *Xing-ju* signify? I seek an alternative way of presenting theatre works, one based on the critical syncretism perspective and *Xing-ju*'s characteristics, while reflecting on Taiwanese colonial history. In addition, I apply the psychophysical actor training principle, developed by Phillip B. Zarrilli, in rehearsals, to explore a new style of *Xing-ju* performance.

# Chapter One

## On the Edge of Colonial History – Taiwanese *Xing-ju* (New Theatre) Under the Japanese Colonial Occupation

### Introduction

As I have briefly explained in the previous chapter, *Xing-ju* was first introduced at the beginning of the twentieth century, when Japanese colonisation began, and it has continued to exist for almost one hundred years. Its rise and decline were affected by political changes and I separately examine each phase of *Xing-ju* in Chapters One and Two. In addition to presenting historical data, it is necessary to discuss *Xing-ju* within a colonial context: How was *Xing-ju* introduced to the Taiwanese during the Japanese colonisation? What was the colonisation's agenda for applying *Xing-ju*? How did the Taiwanese confront *Xing-ju*? How did the inner struggle of intellectuals towards *Xing-ju* and colonisation manifest itself? What was the interaction between Taiwanese traditional theatre and *Xing-ju*? This chapter discusses the sub-forms of *Xing-ju*'s development during the Japanese colonial era, including *Gai-liang Xi* (Reformed Theatre), *Wen-ming Xi* (Civilised Theatre), *Wen-hua Ju* (Cultural Theatre) and *Huang-ming Ju* (Emperor Theatre), which were generally termed *Xing-ju* at the time as there was no clear boundary between these forms.

As there has been no research connecting the development of *Xing-ju* in the Japanese colonial era to that in the post-war era, I have chosen to include the history of *Xing-ju* in Chapters One and Two to indicate the main threads of its development, and to give a complete picture of Taiwanese contemporary theatre history, in which a colonial historical context is underpinned and can serve as the foundation for the future development of *Xing-ju*. In addition, the detailed examination of *Xing-ju* development in the Japanese and post-war era shape my argument in terms of seeking a new definition of 'Taiwaneseness' later in this thesis. By presenting the multiple cultural characteristic of *Xing-ju*, the impact of colonisation is also

emphasised.

## 1. Before the Emergence of Contemporary Theatre in Taiwan

Apart from the aboriginal people's ritual dancing and singing, theatre genres in Taiwan arrived along with the immigrants from China before the domination by Japan. (Lin, 2003: 18). As I previously mentioned, Chinese immigrants coming to Taiwan were comprised of the *Hoklo* from Fukien province and *Hakka* people from Kwangtung. The distribution of theatre genres also reflected the differentiation of each ethnic group. Theatre genres from Changchou and Chuanchou provinces in



Figure 1.1 A *Luan-tuan xi* troupe (1950)  
(Source: <http://tw.myblog.yahoo.com/jw!UuoljbeTEUBeM1m3g5bEvVLI/>)

Mainland China were the most popular ones during the *Qing* dynasty; these genres included *Li-yuan xi* (also named *Nan-guan Xi*), *Luan-tuan xi* (also named *Bei-guan Xi*, see Figure 1.1), *Jiou-jia Xi*, *Sih-ping Xi* (both were popular theatre genres originated in Fukien area, China), *Kuei-lei Xi* (Puppet Theatre), *Bu-dai Xi* (Hand-puppet Theatre), *Pi-ying Xi* (Shadow-puppet Theatre), and *Che-gu Xi* (an initial form of *Ge-zai Xi*), all of which played an important role of being people's entertainment and also part of religious activities.

The Japanese colonisation began from 1895 and ended because of the defeat of Japan in the Second World War in 1945. In the first forty years under Japanese rule, the colonial government applied a 'soft' policy, with which they did not interfere with Taiwanese ritual practices and theatre activities. The Japanese regarded these as a way to dissolve disagreements and unite people. In other words, maintaining the social stability was in the

best interests of the colonial economy (Chang, 1997: 113).

Here, I wish to draw attention to the debut of *Ge-zai Xi* (Taiwanese Opera, see Figure 1.2), a new theatre genre, which originated in Yilan County, north area of Taiwan, by the peasants and labourers, who, in their spare time, learned and performed an assortment of folk songs, which were previously popular in the southern part of Fukien province in China.

These practices gradually developed a new performance form and became the most popular Taiwanese traditional theatre form in the beginning of twentieth century. Although *Ge-zai Xi* was supposed to be classified as ‘traditional theatre’, during the process of its development, it also interacted considerably with other performing forms, such as *Peking* opera and *Xing-ju*.



Figure 1.2 *Ge-zai Xi*. Left one is *Sheng* (male leading role performed by an actress) and the right one is *Dan* (female leading role also performed by an actress) (1950) (Source: “Shadows, History and Performers of *Ge-zai Xi* Old photos”: <http://kn.ncfta.gov.tw/opera/>)

Chang briefly describes the development of *Ge-zai Xi* as follows:

The name ‘*Ge-zai Xi*’ literally refers to a theatre of songs, in its early stage of development, these folk songs were performed in the style of the farcical *Che-gu Xi* by amateurs in ritual parades. The performers, marching in the streets, told folktales by singing folk songs with vivid facial expression and exaggerated upper-torso movements. Gradually, this performance began to settle down in one stop. It was staged on the ground;....this kind of performance was called *Luo-di-sao* (coming down to the ground and sweeping). Thus *Ge-zai Xi* was established as a theatre performed in ritual setting outdoors. In 1924, or so, it was brought indoors and became popular in theatres as well. (1997: 113)

*Ge-zai Xi* was widely spread all over the Taiwan serving as the most popular entertainment at the time in around 1925 (Chiu, 1992: 186). Compared with the highly cultivated *Peking* opera, *Ge-zai Xi* appeared to be more casual and vulgar. Chang points out that *Ge-zai Xi* acquired more and more polish in the process of its development; thus, it started to borrow from and transposed elements of other Chinese traditional theatres to amplify its movements and



enlarge its musical and dramatic repertoires (1997: 113). *Ge-zai Xi* became a stylized presentation of conjoined elements, including songs, dances, mimes, music, and dialogue. Its narratives largely drew from folktales which were also widely adopted by *Xing-ju* later.

## **2. The Initial Form of *Xing-ju* - *Gai-liang Xi* (Improved Theatre) and *Wen-ming Xi* (Civilised Theatre) in the Japanese Colonial Era**

### **2.1 The Debate concerning the Emergence of *Xing-ju***

The author of *Taiwanese Movie and Theatre History (Taiwan Dian-ying Xi-ju-shih, 1961)*, Lu Su-Shang, pointed out that the emergence of contemporary theatre in Taiwan was influenced by Japanese theatre, *Shinpa-geki*. He wrote:

The initial new performing theatre – *Gai-liang Xi* (Improved Theatre) - began on 4th May, 1911. The creator of Japanese *Shinpa-geki*, Kawakami Otojiro, gave a performance in *Jhao-rih* Theatre (Sunrise Theatre)<sup>9</sup> in Taipei city. The theme of his play was social tragedy, and won great acclaim from his audience. Following his performance, the Japanese retired policeman, Shouda, and the owner of Sunrise theatre, Takamatsu Ijiro<sup>10</sup>, copied Kawakami's play and organized a Taiwanese *Gai-liang Xi* troupe. Most of the performers they recruited were young unemployed in Taipei. (1961: 293, translation by author)

The above description has been widely accepted as a major reference for later researchers and became canonical in Taiwanese theatre history research (Shih, 2009: 10). Kawakami Otojiro, mentioned in the quote above, was a crucial figure in Japanese contemporary theatre. After the *Meiji* Restoration in Japan, its politics, economy, social structure and culture were greatly influenced by the West. The West was regarded as an ideal model to help the Japanese build a

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<sup>9</sup> Sunrise Theatre opened in September in 1906 in Taipei. The owner was Takamatsu Ijiro. The theatre was one of the multi-function theatres, which broadcasted both films and theatre plays, and was known for having mobile stage mechanisms. (Hsu: 2009: 70)

<sup>10</sup> Takamatsu Ijiro, born in November 1872 in Japan. He graduated from the University of Meiji in 1897. He was invited to broadcast films by the Governor-General, Gotou Shinbeyi, to present Japanese colonial policies around Taiwan and he created the Taiwan *Ton-ren* (Taiwanese People) Community in 1904. Takamatsu filmed the first documentary to record the Japanese colonisation of Taiwan. In addition, he created several troupes and theatres in different cities in Taiwan. (Hsu, 2009: 82; Lu, 1954: 92)

more ‘modern’ and ‘civilized’ nation. Faubion Bowers points out ‘The influence of the West made the Japanese aware of the fact that a broader field of drama than *Kabuki*<sup>11</sup> was possible’ (1976: 203). The Japanese theatre industry absorbed Western theatre as their reference point and started to transform it into a refined form of the traditional theatre form, *Kabuki*. Followed by this was the emergence of a new performing style – *Shinpa-geki* (Ortolani, 1995: 233-241). The founder of *Shinpa-geki* was Sudo Sadanori (1867-1907), who had previously been both a police official and journalist. In 1884, the conservative government disbanded a major force of the opposition political party, *Jiyu* (Liberal) Party. As a member of this party, Sudo decided to continue his fight against the government by giving public speeches, writing editorials for newspapers, and making theatre. These young anti-government members called themselves *Soshi*, which meant both ‘courageous young man’ and ‘political bully’ or ‘henchman’. Some of them created the *Dainippon Geigeki Kyofukai* (Great Japan Society for the Reformation of the Theatre, in Japanese) and they regarded theatre as an instrument of political propaganda against the conservative political power (Ortolani, 1995: 234). The lack of participation by professional theatre practitioners led to amateurism and a perceived weakness in acting skill. This theatre form was thus regarded as ‘a kind of curiosity, an odd attempt by amateurs to present theatre outside the monopoly of the *Kabuki* establishment’ (Ortolani, 1995: 234). Following Sudo, Kawakami gained significant success with his *Shinpa-geki*.

According to Shih’s research, Kawakami, who was also a member of the Liberal Party and was concerned with political issues, started to satirize the political and social topics in his short talk show, *Niwaka*<sup>12</sup> and gradually developed a new theatre form. In 1891, he named his

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<sup>11</sup> *Kabuki* is a well-known popular theatre form found in Japan. It began in the sixteenth century and is still flourishing today. It is regarded as entertainment for the common people, whereas *Noh* theatre is a form of refined theatre for the aristocracy. Similar to Chinese traditional theatre forms, *Kabuki* is also characterised by its codified movement and tradition of trans-dressing performance: the women’s roles are traditionally played by men and women have never appeared on the orthodox *Kabuki* stage. (Adolphe Clarence Scott: 1999; Ronald: 1993)

<sup>12</sup> *Niwaka* means ‘on the spot’ and is an abbreviation of the full name *Niwaka-kyogen*. *Kyogen* is a short form of

performances *Shosei* (intellectuals) and later *Shinpa-geki* (translated as ‘new school drama’, and mostly in its abbreviated form *Shimpa*, new style theatre) (Shih, 2008: 7-30). *Shinpa-geki* was regarded as a refined *Kabuki*: certain characteristics of *Kabuki* performance were maintained, such as the juxtaposition of female-role actors and actresses, and the presentation of combat scenes. However, the themes of the plays were different from those of *Kabuki*. Kawakami attempted to challenge the taboo that theatre could not reflect the reality of the political issues. The political and social issues of the time became elements of his plays (Liu, 2003: 427-428). After he visited Europe three times, Kawakami introduced realist theatre and Shakespeare plays to the Japanese audiences and promoted the ‘Drama Movement’ in 1903, through which he turned against the ‘backward’ trend of ‘learning from *Kabuki*’ and suggested that learning from the Western theatre was the right direction of future Japanese theatre (Shih, 2010: 39). He introduced certain Western theatre concepts, such as changing scenes in the darkness, new lighting technology and Report Theatre (Shih, 2008a: 13). Although Kawakami was also criticized that ‘his forte was sensationalism, not art’ (Ortolani, 1995: 237), when *Kabuki* began to be seen as an obsolete theatre genre in the beginning of twentieth century, Kawakami’s plays seemed a more popular theatre form that could reflect the latest modernized society at that time (Ortolani, 1995: 237). The Japanese theatre researcher, Daisasa Yoshio, pointed out that ‘examined from the result, the Drama Movement promoted by Kawakami Otojiro was a catalyst for the birth of Japanese contemporary theatre’ (Yoshio, 1985: 58, cited in Shih, 2008b: 16). Under the influences of Sudo and Kawakami, the Japanese *Shimpa* experienced ten years of popularity; however, after the emergence of a more Westernized theatre form, *Shingeki* (New Theatre), at the beginning of the twentieth century, *Shimpa* gradually declined. ‘*Shimpa* became a synonym for light, sentimental, old-fashioned drama, geared above all to audiences made up primarily of housewives, and performed in a

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farce, which emphasized situation over character, and parodied the *Noh* plays. *Niwaka* is also a kind of comedy characterised by its parody of the grand drama of *Kabuki* and it reached a peak of popularity in the 1830s. (Powell, 2002: 20)

style in between the realism of *Shingeki* and the traditional stylization of *Kabuki*, which reflected ‘the uncertain period of Japan’s early modernisation’ (Ortolani, 1995: 241).

According to Lu’s aforementioned discussion about the emergence of contemporary theatre in Taiwan, the Japanese *Shinpa-geki* creator, Kawakami Otojiro, took his troupe to Taiwan in May 1911 and chose Sunrise Theatre for the performance of his social tragedy. In the following year (1912), the Japanese producer, Shouda, and the owner of Sunrise Theatre, Takamatsu Ijiro, copied Kawakami’s play and organized a Taiwanese *Gai-liang Xi* troupe. However, according to the reports in *Taiwanese Daily News (Taiwan Rih-rih-sin Bao)*, the dates are different from those given by Lu. As early as two years previously (1909), certain Taiwanese journalists had already been aware of the new theatre form taking place in China and Japan, thus they put forward a suggestion for those Shanghai theatre groups in China to perform *Gai-liang Xi* repertoires in Taiwan. Thus, it was no surprise when the following text appeared in the newspaper, regarding the preparation of Taiwanese *Gai-liang Xi*:

A Japanese man named Shouda created a theatre group in order to recruit passionate young people and teach them how to perform *Gai-liang Xi*. The potential plays they will perform were derived from recent news in Taiwan. (*Taiwanese Daily News*, no.3470, 1909, Personal-translation)

The ‘Shouda’ mentioned above is likely to be the same person as in Lu’s article. In the above report, Shouda recruited young Taiwanese people and trained them to perform Taiwanese story-based plays. For those Taiwanese audiences, who were used to the traditional theatre, it would have been exciting to see a fresh performing form. In the following year (1910), Shouda’s new play was performed and the majority of Taiwanese audiences were able to appreciate the novelty but still could not get used to the ‘spoken drama’ performing style (*Taiwanese Daily News*, no. 3643, 1910.6.19). This performance can be seen as the first experiment of Taiwanese *Gai-liang Xi*. According to Shih, the performance was produced by Taiwan Drama Research Society (*Taiwan Zheng-ju Yan-jiu-hui*), which was created in 1909 by the Japanese producer, Takamatsu Ijiro (see Figure 1.3), directed by the Japanese *Shimpa*

actor, Takano Junjirou, and interpreted by Shouda (Shih, 2010b: 40). Most of their plays, such as *Short-lived Man – Jhou Wen-shih*, *Hong Li-mo*, *A bandit – Liao Tian-ding*, *Jhou Cheng Crossed Taiwan*, *Patriotic Women*, drew on Taiwanese folklore or newspaper reports. Takamatsu played a significant role in introducing Japanese *Shinpa-geki* and Drama, which was promoted originally by Kawakami, to Taiwan.

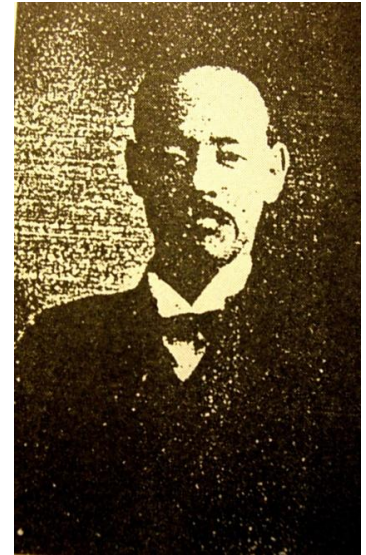


Figure 1.3 The Founder of Taiwan Drama Research Company, Takamatsu Ijiro (1912) (Source: Hsu, 2000)

In addition to being a Founder of The Taiwan Drama Research Company (1909, see Figure 1.4), he was also the founder of another well-known troupe, Taiwanese People Society (Taiwan *Ton Ren She*, 1904), which also performed a great number of *Gai-liang Xi* plays in Taiwan. According to a report related to the establishment of the Taiwan Drama Research Company, the principle was ‘based on the Japanese *Shimpa*’ and the purpose was to ‘promote the Taiwanese ethical standards, and to educate Taiwanese people in the virtues of the Japanese empire’ (*Taiwanese Daily News*, 1909. 12.21). The opening tour of this theatre company around Taiwan lasted for almost seven months (1910.8-1911.2) and resulted in ‘the popularity of Drama. In addition, *shinpa*-Taiwanese theatre, Taiwanese *Gai-liang Xi*, *Gai-liang* Drama, etc also began to appear’ (Shin, 2010b: 39). From the description above, it is evident that Takamatsu viewed the promotion of Japanese modern theatre form, *Shinpa-geki*, and Drama from the perspective of the coloniser. Shih points out that:



Figure 1.4 The members of Taiwan Drama Research Company (1909-10) (Source: Shih, 2010b)

Drama was employed as a popular theatre form by the colonial regime for the colonised people, and by giving performances, Takamatsu attempted to expand on

and mimic the experience *Shinpa-geki* in participating in the construction of a modern Japanese nation, and further aimed at cultural control over the colony, a modernized liege relationship. (Shih, 2010a, Personal-translation)

Their productions were well-accepted by Taiwanese audiences; consequently, traditional troupes also started to insert interludes in *Gai-liang Xi* performing style (*Taiwanese Daily News*, no. 3708, 1910.9.3). Certain characteristics of *Gai-liang Xi* performances will be further addressed in the later section in the chapter. In addition, theatres also began to invite Chinese *Gai-liang Xi* troupes to give a number of touring performances in Taiwan.

Comparing the reports in *Taiwanese Daily News* with Lu's monograph, it was evident that the information differs: according to Lu, the start date of Taiwanese *Gai-liang Xi* was two years later than that stated in the newspaper, which claimed that prior to 1910, the local people helped the Taiwanese form of *Gai-liang Xi* to appear, rather than having to wait until Kawakami's touring performances in 1912. This major error in date is generally cited by most of the Taiwanese theatre researchers and has led to the argument that the beginning of Taiwanese contemporary theatre was directly influenced by Kawakami. Some examples can be found in the monographs of Chiu Kun-liang, Yang Du and Lin Ho-yi. This error is also mentioned in my MA dissertation, *The Study of Liao Tian-Ding Theatre in Taiwan* (2005). In addition, another traditional theatre researcher, Hsu Ya-hsiang, also points out the fact in his essay, *The History and Interpretation: The Selected Readings of Xi-qu Reports in Taiwanese Newspapers under Japanese Colonisation* (2009), in which he addresses that it is an important clue in tracing the history of Taiwanese contemporary theatre (Hsu, 2009: 119). In fact, I argue that Taiwanese contemporary theatre emerged from both Japan and China simultaneously rather than taking place under the specific condition of one man, one time and one place. Kawakami's tour in Taiwan may have introduced the Japanese *Shinpa-geki* to the Taiwanese; however, Takamatsu was the first person to cultivate and disseminate the new technology and concept of Japanese *Shinpa-geki* and to promote the Drama Movement in Taiwan. In addition, a great number of Chinese troupes, invited to perform their repertoire in

Taiwan, also had a significant influence through introducing their performing styles and stage technology.

## 2.2 An Imperial Gaze

It is important to note that Lu's monograph, *Taiwanese Movie and Theatre History*, has served as the main source of information on pre-war Taiwanese theatre for current Taiwanese researchers; however, according to Chiu (2008: 352-353), the majority of the content in this monograph was transplanted from Japanese researchers' studies, including *Taiwanese Theatre History* (1942) by Takeuchi Osamu, *The Theatre Movement of the Young People* (1942) by Nakayama Yu and *Taiwanese Cultural Record* (1942) by Ino Kanori, without citing the source of this data. It is difficult to distinguish which part was the author's personal discourse, and which parts were cited from other authors. The lack of reference to resources can pose a risk in that the expression of the coloniser's mode of thought may be confused with Lu's Taiwanese status. The most significant difference between Japanese colonisation and Western colonisation was that the Japanese Eastern-Asia colonisations characterised as the colonial relationship between similar races (Chen, 2010: 121). Thus, I argue that only by highlighting their Westernized characteristics, could the Japanese distinguish their superiority over the colony, and legitimate their autonomy by showing their capacity for educating and developing the colonised people. Furthermore, the coloniser suppressed the colonised culture and provided them with a way to become a seemingly modernized place, like Japan. Regarding the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, Chen points out as follows:

The internal contradiction of colonial 'assimilation' is implied in its aggressive attack. It requires that you admit to the inferiority of your own culture. It forces you to abandon your existential dignity. It then wins over your active consent to learning and acquiring everything that belongs to the governing colonisers. To do this presupposes a painful process of self-negation. Once you have done that, you are told that your imitation is not quite right: you are still not like 'us'; you are, in

essence, inferior. In this sense, assimilation has become the internal contradiction of colonialism.’ (2007: 86, translation by author)

Following Chen’s perspective, Lu’s perspective in his monograph seems to be a copy of that of the coloniser. Taking his comments on the *Ge-zai Xi* during the period of *Kominka* Movement as an example, *Ge-zai Xi* and other Chinese traditional theatre were all regarded as feudal and obsolete theatre genres, in contrast, Taiwanese *Xing-ju* exemplified ‘civilized’, ‘modernized’ and ‘advanced’ characteristics. Within the conflict of traditional and new theatre genres, Kawakami, as the founder of the Japanese *Shimpa*, appeared to be an appropriate figure for assisting the coloniser to construct their authority in the field of theatre. In 1902, when Kawakami visited Taiwan for the first time, the official newspaper, *Taiwanese Daily News*, planned a series of thirteen special reports entitled *The Talks of Mr. Kawakami Otojiro* to further introduce his background and achievement in theatre to the Taiwanese. In addition to giving talks, Kawakami also went to Jibe Island<sup>13</sup> to do field research on the aboriginal people, who lived on the island, in order to provide background research for his adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Othello*, in which the protagonist is assigned the task of suppressing the ‘island of pirates’. The Taiwanese characters in his play were either the ‘surrendered’ intellectuals or uncivilized aboriginal people (Shih, 2008b: 7-30). This production reveals the imperial perspectives toward the colonised people and a colonial hierarchy within this context. It is my supposition that discourse on the beginning of contemporary theatre in Taiwan, which has been connected to Kawakami in Lu’s writings and in Japanese articles, could be viewed as an intentional narrative strategy on the part of the coloniser.

## **2.3 Characteristics of *Gai-liang Xi* (Reformed Theatre) Performance**

### **(1) *Mu-biao Xi* (Scenario)**

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<sup>13</sup> Jibe Island is one of the Penghu Islands, which are located on Taiwan Straits.



*Gai-liang Xi* troupes usually performed using the method of *Mu-biao Xi* (act-outline play; scenarios). A Chinese dramatist, Ou-yang Yu-chian, described *Mu-biao Xi* as follows:

*Mu-biao Xi* is performed simply relying on an outline without using scripts. The dramatists do not write complete scripts; instead, they took traditional novels as the references, roughly arranged the story into several scenes and assigned the characters. Sometimes, they pointed out the order of entering the stage, sometimes not; sometimes they further explained the lines, sometimes not. Before the play starts, the director/dramatist's responsibility was normally to assign roles to each actor, to assemble everyone and to explain the story and the order of entry of every role. (Ouyang Yu-chian, 1958, Personal-translation)

Generally, an unexpected storyline occurred when the show was formally presented to the audience, as most actors improvised during their performances. As a result, there could be some unexpected incidents or some ridiculous plot happens. In addition, *Mu-biao Xi* was also the main method used by most troupes in the post-war era. This will be further explained in Chapter Two.

## **(2) A Mixture of Chinese traditional theatre and Western theatre**

Although there are no known visual records of *Gai-liang Xi* remaining, the performance can be roughly imagined from the theatre reviews in *Taiwanese Daily News*. The initial performing style of *Gai-liang Xi* seems similar to the Japanese *Shimpa*, which was performed combining traditional Japanese theatre (*Kabuki*) with Western performance forms. Apart from the fact that it utilized spoken dialogue instead of singing poems and codified physical movements, *Gai-liang Xi* still followed the basic form of Chinese traditional theatre, such as the application of *Mu-biao Xi* and traditional instruments.

In terms of the stage setting and music of *Gai-liang Xi*, Lu Su-Shang described them as follows: 'They used a simple screen as the stage setting, and accompanied by Japanese traditional music' (1961: 293). However, according to the reviews in *Taiwanese Daily News*,

the participants of *Gai-liang Xi* often designed complex stage settings. Taking a review of a *Gai-liang Xi* play, *Short-lived Man – Jhou Wen-Shih*, as an example, a journalist praised the exquisite of its stage settings, props, rapid scene changing and realistic performing style (no. 3682, 1910.8.4). They even utilized the machinery to help with the scene changes.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, it could be observed that Taiwanese *Gai-liang Xi* did not follow the Japanese *Shimpa* performing model completely. Interacting with other theatre genres, the Taiwanese People Society continued to reform and developed its performances and exerted a great influence on other Taiwan *Gai-liang Xi* troupes.

Regarding the members of *Gai-liang Xi* troupes, Chang Wei-hsien, an important theatre practitioner of the Japanese colonial era, considered the members of *Gai-liang Xi* as unemployed or ‘hooligans’, who were not afraid of being belittled by others...[...]...As a result, *Gai-liang Xi* was also called *Liou-mang Xi* (Hooligan Theatre) (1954: 105). Lu Su-Shang also highlighted that ‘as the members of this kind of troupe were all hooligans in Taipei city, audiences called it Hooligan Theatre rather than *Gai-liang Xi* (1961: 294). From this name ‘Hooligan Theatre’, it could be supposed that audiences still viewed acting as an inferior occupation and thus people had a belief that all the actors were unemployed people or hooligans. It was also possible that these so-called ‘hooligans’ had more time and courage to try new things and earn money. It has been reported that the female characters were usually performed by male actors. It seemed that female actresses were not yet allowed to perform on stage at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Taiwan.

*Gai-liang Xi* was well accepted by Taiwanese audiences. There were a number of reports in the *Taiwanese Daily News* describing the full houses attending *Gai-liang Xi* performances. Obviously, this new theatre genre succeeded in drawing audiences’ attention. From these

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<sup>14</sup> A report mentioned that ‘Since the Taiwanese Drama, performed in Sunrise Theatre, used spin mechanisms, the plays do not need to interrupt anymore’ (Taiwan Daily News, 1911. Drama plays, *Taiwan Daily News in Han Language*, 17 August, p.3.)

reports, it could also be noted that women constituted the majority of the audiences.<sup>15</sup> In addition, a large number of reviews in newspapers started to appear as *Gai-liang Xi* performances increased. The reviews either commented on the acting skill or contrasted *Gai-liang Xi* with existing traditional theatre forms, such as *Peking* opera and *Ge-zai Xi*.

Generally speaking, *Gai-liang Xi* changed Taiwanese audiences' habits with its well-equipped stage settings, easily-understood spoken language, up-to-date treatment of new topics, and Western style scene changes and narratives.

## 2.4 Decline of *Gai-liang Xi*

The theatre activities of Taiwanese People Society lasted for approximately ten years until 1919. After 1920, the activities of Taiwan's People Society seemingly disappeared. The main reason might be that the founder, Takamatsu, returned to Japan in 1915 due to financial difficulties (Shih, 2010b: 687). Some of the old members then organized another group called Treasure Coming Group (*Bao Lai Tuan*). However, this group also soon disappeared due to financial problems (Lu, 1961: 294). The Taiwanese Peoples Society represented a large number of audiences, who were keen on enjoying a new type of theatre. After their disbandment, the development of Taiwanese contemporary theatre entered another stage along with the arrival of Chinese *Wen-ming Xi* troupe, Shanghai People's Prosperity Society (*Shanghai Min Xing She*) in 1921.

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<sup>15</sup> Observed from a report, the journalist pointed out that 'the dominant audiences of *Hong Li-mo* were women' (Playing Piano and Drums, 1911. *Taiwanese Daily News in Han Language*, 1 August, p. 3); another example was the report about Taiwanese People Community's tour in Jia-yi city that 'the audiences numbered hundreds, and all of them were the Japanese and Taiwanese women. Men were few'. (*Taiwanese Daily News in Han Language*, 1910. The Comments of Dramas, *Taiwanese Daily News in Han Language*, 21 October, p. 3.)

## 2.5 Variations of *Gai-liang Xi* (Reformed Theatre) – *Wen-ming Xi* (Civilised Theatre)

The term *Wen-ming Xi* first appeared in China at the beginning of the twentieth century, when items imported from the West were entitled ‘*Wen-ming*’, to call attention to their new, modern and advanced features. ‘*Wen-ming*’ was translated as ‘civilization’ in Mandarin, and this already implied a predominant concept toward the West. Therefore, intellectuals were called *Wen-ming ren* (civilized people) and Western style weddings were called *Wen-ming* weddings. Thus, Western performance was called *Wen-ming Xi* (Civilized Theatre) (Yuen, 2000: 7). Ma Sen has identified the Chinese *Wen-ming Xi* as a transitional theatrical form or performance style that is in between traditional Chinese theatre and Westernized *Hua-ju* (Spoken Drama) (2006: 71). In 1840, when the Opium War<sup>16</sup> began, harbours in China were forced to open to the Western world. Western armies started to occupy certain cities adjacent to major harbours. In a confrontation between Western and Chinese culture, intellectuals initiated the idea of refining traditional theatre, which resulted in the appearance of *Shi-shi Xin-xi* (News-based New Theatre). Performers wore Western costumes and derived the content of their plays, in part, from current news stories; however, the basic performance forms of traditional theatre, such as singing and codified movements, were maintained (Ge, 1990: 2-5).

Intellectuals were the first to see the plays performed by amateur Western or Japanese *Shimpa-geki* troupes. Subsequently, a few performances given in schools featured the dialogue and movements that typified actors’ ordinary lives. More significant refinements to theatrical forms were made in 1906 by Chinese students who were studying in Japan. Representative of these students were Tseng Xiao-gu and Li Shu-tong. They established the first amateur contemporary theatre troupe in Tokyo named Spring Willow Society (*Chun Liu She*) during the time of prosperity for Japanese *Shimpa*. They performed several plays including *La Dame*

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<sup>16</sup> The Opium War happened between China under the *Qing* Dynasty and British Empire from 1839 to 1860 because of the climax of disputes over trade and diplomatic issues.

*Aux Camellias* by the French dramatist, Dumas (see Figure 1.5), *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by the American dramatist, Elizabeth Beecher Stowe, and *Golden Demon* by the Japanese dramatist, Ozaki Kouyou. These plays garnered a great deal attention from Japanese audiences and famous theatre practitioners, such as Tsubouchi Shouyou and Osanai Kaoru.



Figure 1.5 Spring Willow Society's *La Dame Aux Camellias* 1907. The female role is cross-dressed by an actor Li Shu-tong (1907) (Source: <http://www.phlst.cn/liangua nhongtan/show.php?wenzhang=20080430150417>)

Most of the members of Spring Willow returned to China to continue producing *Wen-ming Xi* plays in Shanghai and other big cities. Their influence on developments in Chinese theatre was significant. Their performances were called *Wen-ming Xi* or *Xing-ju* at the time and were defined as Western-style by the audiences and theatre participants. Ouyang Yu-chian commented that Spring Willow 'strictly followed scripts, and they never performed any plays without a genuine script' (1939, cited in Yuan, 2000: 61, Personal-translation). Spring Willow's performing style was complimented for being carefully crafted, in comparison with other *Wen-ming Xi* troupes in China. However, because their plays did not intend to please the audiences by applying overly-comical and dramatic elements, their performances were also criticized for being difficult to understand by the audiences (Ouyang, 1939, cited in Yuan, 2000: 61).

After the debut of Spring Willow in 1906, a succession of new theatre groups were formed in China. Representative of these was Spring Sun Society (*Chun Yang She*), which was founded by Wang, Zhong-sheng in 1907. Some of Spring Sun's most famous plays were *New La Dame Aux Camellias* (*Xin Cha Hua*) and *Social Hierarchy* (*She Hui Jie Ji*). *Jin Hua Tuan* (Advanced Group), another troupe, was founded by Jen Tien-chih. Both of these troupes' plays had themes that either glorified the democratic revolution or criticized the *Qing* dynasty. Their performances were well-accepted by audiences. Their touring around China also spread

the new notion of *Wen-ming Xi*, as well as new plays.

The main characteristics of *Wen-ming Xi* performances were rather similar to those of Japanese *Shimpa* and Taiwanese *Gai-liang Xi*, which meant that *Wen-ming Xi* was still based on traditional theatrical performing styles but supplemented by Western instruments and costumes (see Figure 1.6). Spring Sun and Advanced Group accompanied their performances with traditional instruments, such as gongs and tambours, and when performers entered, they gave introductory monologues that revealed their backgrounds, a technique also employed in traditional Chinese performances. In

addition, applying scenarios remained a common way of rehearsing plays, since it made it easier to assign characters to performers and also saved time for rehearsals. As a result, a new generalized category of characters developed that was similar



Figure 1.6 A *Wen-ming Xi* performance (1920) (Source: <http://shiq8.blog.163.com/blog/static/11029336320101195184126/>)

to the concept of *Hang-dang* (role types), which was a categorisation of specific kinds of characters, such as *Sheng* (male leading role), *Dan* (female leading role), *Jing* (supporting male roles), and *Chou* (clown), in traditional theatre. Chinese theatre researcher Zhu Shuang-yun has pointed out that *Wen-min Xi* performers fall into five categories: *Lao-sheng* (older male role style), *Xiao-sheng* (younger male role style), *Dan* (female role style), *Gu-ji Bu* (clown style) and *Neng Bu* (all-round style) (1997: 22). However, differences between traditional theatre and *Wen-ming Xi* still exist. *Wen-ming Xi*, for instance, featured only spoken language (and no traditional songs). Moreover, the introduction of Western scenes changed performance styles, and performers wore Western styles of dress, instead of traditional Chinese costumes. In addition, stage design, lighting and sounds were also introduced into the new theatre form. This kind of performance was called '*Xing-ju*' (New

Theatre) or ‘*Wen-ming Xi*’ (Civilized Theatre) both in China and Taiwan (Ma, 2006: 200). In comparing *Wen-ming Xi* with *Gai-liang Xi*, it is possible to see that both of these two performing styles applied Western theatre styles to their performance but *Wen-ming Xi* was Westernised to a greater degree than *Gai-liang Xi*.

Toward the later stage of the revolutionary movement against the *Qing* Dynasty, the whole of China suffered due to a division among warlords. Many theatre troupes disbanded after 1912. It was not until 1914 that the theatre again prospered, after the creation of the Shanghai New People’s Company (*Shanghai Xing Min She*) by Cheng Cheng-chiu. The number of troupes and the scale of their performances were bigger than before. Chinese theatre researcher Ge Yi-hong has argued that the Shanghai New People’s Company was successful because it identified itself as commercial theatre from the beginning. Thus, its primary mission was to make great effort to attract audiences (1990: 27). Most of the Shanghai New People’s Company’s plays focused on either family issues or romance, both of which were easily accepted by audiences of every generation. As the Shanghai New People’s Company became popular, other troupes began to appear, including *Ming Ming She*, *Chi Ming She* and *Kai Ming She*. *Wen-ming Xi* was booming, and even Spring Willow Society, which had been regarded as a more elite troupe, began to adapt a number of popular novels into its repertoire. After 1914, there were dozens of newly-created *Wen-ming Xi* troupes, thousands of performers and hundreds of scripts (Ge, 1990: 28). Since then, Chinese modern theatre gradually transformed from a theatre for the elites into a more commercial form.

The Shanghai People’s Prosperity Company founded by Su Shi-chi, was the first Chinese *Wen-ming Xi* troupe to tour in Taiwan. Li Yi-tao, a Taiwanese journalist from the *Taiwanese Daily News*, had the chance to see a *Wen-ming Xi* play performed by Shanghai People’s Prosperity in the Chinese city of Fuzhou and he then decided to introduce their performances to Taiwanese audiences. In 1921, he signed a contract with the head of Shanghai People’s

Prosperity, Cheng Tian-guang, and invited thirty members to perform at Taipei New Stage (*Taipei Sin Wu Tai*). Original stage settings were made in Shanghai. Shanghai People's Prosperity gave repertoires that included comedy, such as *Inexplicably* (*Mo-ming Chi-miao*), *The Skeleton's Dance* (*Ku-lou Tiao-wu*), *La Dame Aux Camellias* (*Cha-hua-niu*) and *Yuan Shih-kai*<sup>17</sup>. Like other *Wen-ming Xi* troupes in China, most of the Shanghai People's Prosperity's plays focused on themes of family and romance, some of which were adapted from classic Chinese novels, theatre scripts or Western novels. These plays were also popular in China, especially in Shanghai. Sometimes, the Shanghai People's Prosperity also did juggling and circus acts in the middle of performances (Ge, 1997: 29). One of their more important gimmicks was 'acted by both male and female performers...[...]...actresses cross-dressed and performed male roles, and actors cross-dressed and performed female roles' (Ge, 1990: 28). It seemed that it was more common for women to perform on stage, if compared with *Gai-liang Xi*, in which only men cross-dressed and performed female roles on stage.

Complete performance routines usually opened with shorter comedies and were followed by drama. Their performances were also noted for having live music (Tsai, 1993: 86). In order to facilitate Taiwanese audiences' understanding of the Mandarin dialogue in the plays, the troupe arranged for a man called the *Bian-shih* (Plot Explainer), whose job was to explain the plays plots when the performances were performing. In addition, the introductions of plays were also printed in the playbills. The Shanghai People's Prosperity gained great success by applying these strategies. Their plays were well-accepted by Taiwanese audiences during their touring performances in Taijung, Jiayi and Tainan cities, with the result that they were invited to Taiwan again in 1926 (Yong, 1994: 44-46).

The Shanghai People's Prosperity's repertoires also aroused the interest of Taiwanese theatre

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<sup>17</sup> Yuan Shin-kai (1895-1916), was once the Prime Minister in *Qing* dynasty of China and the first President of Republic of China (R.O.C) in 1911.



practitioners in performing *Wen-ming Xi* and consequently led to the establishment of several Taiwanese *Wen-ming Xi* troupes. Liou Jin-fu, the owner of a theatre in Sinying and Tainan cities, invited two actors of the Shanghai People's Prosperity (Yao Siao-wu and Cyu Meng-syuan), gathered certain former members of *Gai-liang Xi* troupe (Treasure Coming Group) and formed the Taiwan People's Prosperity Company in around 1921 (Lu, 1961: 294).

The Taiwan People's Prosperity usually performed in *Hoklo* language, the most commonly used dialect in Taiwan. In addition to performing the original plays of the Shanghai People's Prosperity, such as *La Dame Aux Camellias*, they also drew new stories from Taiwanese folklore. *Taiwanese Bandit – Liao Tian-Ding* was one of their representative plays. Their performing routine also copied that of the Shanghai People's Prosperity, which usually gave a short comedy for the opening and followed by a two-hour drama. In addition to this troupe, Wu Hong-he, who was the former story teller of the Shanghai People's Prosperity, also created his own *Wen-ming Xi* troupe in 1923 entitled the Tainan Dawn New Theatre Troupe (*Tainan Li-ming Xing-ju Tuan*). Wu adapted some *Wen-ming Xi* scripts and also performed in *Hoklo* language. The troupe was disbanded in 1928 because Wu had a disagreement with other shareholders of Tainan Dawn New Theatre Troupe.

As has been discussed above, because of both geographical and colonial factors, the beginning of contemporary theatre in Taiwan was influenced by both Japan – the colonial regime in Taiwan – and China – the motherland of the Taiwanese at the time. In fact, the emergence of Chinese *Wen-ming Xi* was influenced mainly by Japanese *Shimpa* and developed into a localized style. It could be argued that Taiwanese and Chinese troupes separately learned Western theatrical concepts from Japan and communicated their knowledge of new performing styles while touring. In fact, there was a three-way interaction between Japan, China and Taiwan. It was not until the 1930s that *Wen-ming Xi* gradually declined because it was seen as merely a commercial product and seemed to abandon the original

intention of reforming theatre (Ma Sen, 1994: 74; Hsu, 2000: 89). Thus, certain theatre critics did not give a high artistic evaluation of the *Wen-ming Xi* and *Gai-liang Xi* if compared with *Wen-hua Xi*.

In spite of this, *Wen-ming Xi* troupes improved their performances by absorbing techniques from China and Japan. For example, they incorporated the news into the themes of their plays, combined short comedies and long dramas into single performances, used live music in their shows and designed a variety of stage settings. Later developments in Taiwanese theatre were also based on these two kinds of initial and transitional performing forms. The advantages were then inherited by later theatre genres. As I discussed in the introduction of this chapter, although *Gai-liang Xi* and *Wen-ming Xi* and other sub-genres of *Xing-ju* developed in different contexts and time periods, to the Japanese, Taiwanese or Chinese, these performing forms all could be classified as non-traditional theatre. Therefore, I argue, *Wen-ming Xi* here is also conceived as *Xing-ju* by theatre practitioners and audiences at the time.

### **3. A Tool to Resist Colonisation – *Wen-hua Ju* (Cultural Theatre)**

When Japanese colonisation began in 1895, some Taiwanese began to study in Japan. Their numbers increased from sixty in 1908 to 2,400 in 1923. At their height, they reached 3,000 (Lin, Liu and Lan, 1989, Cited in Young, 1994: 31). Taiwanese students abroad absorbed Western knowledge and culture, which were imported to Japan with the *Meiji* Restoration, and they developed an affinity for democracy and national self-determination (Young, 1994: 29-34). As a colonised population, it was rather ironic that they began to re-consider their colonised status by obtaining education in their coloniser's land.

In 1919, when the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement<sup>18</sup> took place in China, several Taiwanese students who had studied in Tokyo, including Chang Shen-cie, Chang Mu-nian and Chang Fang-jhou, created a troupe that premiered at the Chinese Young People's Guild Hall with the plays *Golden Demon*, written by Japanese dramatist Ozaki Kouyou, and *Melon Thief*, written by Taiwanese writer Chang Shen-cie. The importance of their performance was regarded as comparable in importance to the debut of the Chinese Spring Willow Society in Japan in 1906. Chang Shen-cie described his troupe's activities as the 'beginning of Taiwanese *Wen-hua Ju*' (1961: 116-117).

In Taiwan, the most popular performances were by Shanghai People's Prosperity at the time. However, intellectuals seemed to be unsatisfied with *Wen-ming Xi*'s commerciality and amateurism. They sought an artistic medium that could encompass critical thinking and reflect social realities and injustice. Some students who had joined troupes in Japan continued with theatre when they returned to Taiwan. For instance, Chang created the Taiwanese Theatre Research Society (*Taiwan Yan-ju Yan-jiu Hui*) and the Caotun Town Hot Beacon Youth Troupe (*Caotun Yan-fong Qing-nian Ju-tuan*). Chang Wei-hsien, founder of Starlight Theatre Research Association and People's Beacon Troupe (*Ming-fong Yan-ju Tuan*), asserted that popular traditional theatre forms, with the exception of *Ge-zai Xi* and *Bu-dai Xi* (Hand-puppet Theatre), were alien to Taiwanese audiences because they were performed in Mandarin. 'The content and style was monotone, and was far from our real life' (Chang, 1954: 105). What Chang expected was 'a theatre that was closer to contemporary life' (Chang, 1954: 105). Shao Yan, a writer for *Taiwan New People's Newspaper* (*Taiwan Xin-min Bao*), also pointed out

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<sup>18</sup> According to Peter Gue Zarrow, 'May 4th refers to the student demonstration of that date in 1919, in protest against China's signing of the Versailles Treaty. In the wake of demonstration, which Beijing's military government tried to suppress, protests spread from the capital to other cities and from the students to other classes, particularly the workers and business of coastal cities. In this sense, the May 4th incident refers to the original student demonstrations. The May 4th movement refers to the strikes and boycotts that followed over the next few months. And the May 4th era refers to the revitalisation of the public sphere in China in the early 1920s. The movement represents an entirely new type of grass-roots politics based largely on nationalist feelings. The May 4th movement is inextricably associated with political, social, and cultural liberation.' (2005: 149)

that ‘the culture has improved recently, and everyone is cultivating their artistic tastes. Thus, we have begun to abominate old theatre, and a desire to replace traditional theatre has emerged’ (1930: no. 330). On the one hand, it was evident that the younger Taiwanese generation, who grew up and were educated after the Japanese occupation, were enlightened with regard to concepts of democracy and national self-determination by their Westernized coloniser, Japan. On the other hand, criticisms of ‘tradition’ and ‘old’ Taiwanese values also emerged. The rise of *Wen-hua Ju* was based on a distinction of ‘high class’ and ‘low class’ and between ‘civilized’ and ‘barbarian’.

The emergence of *Wen-hua Ju* must be discussed in conjunction with the anti-colonial and anarchic movements of the 1920s. In 1921, Taiwanese intellectuals who had studied in Japan or China established the Taiwanese Culture Association (TCA, see Figure 1.7). They utilized demilitarized social and cultural activities for various reasons. First, they wanted to fight against the Japanese colonisation; second, they wanted to strive for the right to democracy; third, they were eager to enlighten ordinary people, and finally they tried to seek the improvement of Taiwanese culture as a tool to resist colonialism.



Figure 1.7 The members of TCA (1920) (Source: Shih, 2003)

TCA added the following clause during their third regular committee on 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 1923: ‘In order to help the masses to cultivate a dignified habit, we would like to hold touring concerts and perform *Wen-hua Ju*’ (Yeh, 1971: 294, Personal-translation). After that, theatre activities were formally regarded as one of the major strategies to resist the Japanese colonisation. In addition to TCA’s publishing of bulletins, TCA also held Cultural Lectures regularly, giving speeches, broadcasting movies and performing *Wen-hua Ju* around Taiwan.

They were eager to enlighten ordinary people by spreading ideas about democracy and building cultural identity. From 1925 to 1926, nearly 300 Cultural Lectures were held in Taiwan; consequently, *Wen-hua Ju* became a common performance form, as it was usually incorporated into Cultural Lectures. Sometimes, when TCA performed *Wen-hua Ju* plays, it inserted speeches that propagated its ideology. Along with promoting cultural enlightenment, Taiwanese theatre developed a way of intervening in society. Theatre activities that were confined mainly to intellectuals and revealed their thoughts about politics and society were called *Wen-hua Ju* (Cultural Theatre). Notable *Wen-hua Ju* troupes included New Vessel Society (*Ding Xing She*), founded in 1924 by Chen Kan, Jhou Tian-ci and some former members of Students Alignment (*Xue-sheng Lian-meng*) from Japan. New Vessel Society was regarded as the first troupe to combine political activity with theatre. Following these were Starlight Theatre Research Society, Caotun Town Hot Beacon Youth Troupe (1924), and Theatre Research Society (1930).

The performing style of *Wen-hua Ju* was similar to that of *Gai-liang Xi* and *Wen-ming Xi*, which aimed to put on plays that were mainly based on dialogue and action, to adopt contemporary scene changes and to use contemporary costumes, stage settings and lighting to represent contemporary life (Young, 1994: 97). The major difference between *Gai-liang Xi* (Reformed Theatre), *Wen-ming Xi* (Civilised Theatre) and *Wen-hua Ju* (Cultural Theatre) was the content of their plays. In addition to featuring melodramatic themes, *Wen-hua Ju* also criticized hierarchy and feudalism with such pieces as *Social Hierarchy* (*She-hui Jie-ji*) and *Conscience Love* (*Liang-xing De Lian-ai*). Many plays were also introduced from China, Japan and the West, such as *Marriage* (*Jung-shen Da-shih*, written by Hu Shih), *After Returning Home* (*Huei-ja Yi-ho*, written by Ouyang Yu-chian) and *Reviving Rose* (*Fu-huo De Mei-guei*, written by Hou Yao), all written by Chinese writers; *Father's Return* (*Fu-guei*, written by Japanese writer Kikuchi Kan) and *An Enemy of the People* (*Guo-ming Gong-di*, written by Norwegian writer Ibsen).

*Wen-hua Ju* plays were usually performed during the Cultural Lectures held by TCA; consequently, actors' skills and artistic aspects were not taken into consideration as their main target was to deliver the thoughts of the intellectuals.<sup>19</sup> Li Yi-tao, who was editor of the theatre column in *Taiwanese Daily News* and introduced a number of traditional Chinese theatre and *Wen-ming Xi* troupes in Taiwan, criticized *Wen-hua Ju* as follows:

*Xing-ju*<sup>20</sup> has three drawbacks. First, *Xing-ju* is *Wen-shi Ju* (Elites Theatre); therefore, its narratives cannot be as accessible as those of popular theatre (*Wen-ming Xi*). Second, the facial expressions in *Xing-ju* mainly function to deliver speech; thus, *Xing-ju*'s performances seem rather perfunctory. Last, *Xing-ju* performers attempt to be elegant and avoid shouting, and this leads audiences to be averse to their performances.' (*Taiwan Daily News*, no. 7558, 1921.6.19, translation by author)

From his perspective, it was notable that *Wen-hua Ju*, which was spoken, instead of danced and sung, as in traditional theatre, still alienated itself from popular taste. In addition, the idealism of *Wen-hua Ju* resulted in its being regarded as a performing form that was 'not only monotone, but also lacked artistic value. Put bluntly, it was just a variation of propagandist speech. ('The Popularity of *Wen-hua Ju*', *Taiwan People's News*, 1927: 165; 'The Drawbacks of *Ge-zai Xi*'. *Taiwan People's News*, 1927: 165).

The critics above suggested a generalized perspective toward *Wen-hua Ju*; however, not all *Wen-hua Ju* plays were concerned with only political issues. According to Yeh Rong-jhong, a history researcher, *Wen-hua Ju* troupes could be divided into two types. The first group, Propaganda Style (*Hsuan-chuan Pai*), emphasized the propagation of their political ideology with the artistic value considered of less importance. Most plays performed by TCA belonged to this group. The other group was Art Style (*Yi-shu Pai*). The representative troupes were Starlight Theatre Research Society and Caotun Town Hot Beacon Youth Troupe. The heads of

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<sup>19</sup> There were a few exceptions, such as Caotun Town Hot Beacon Youth Troupe and Starlight Theatre Research Community, which focused more on improving the artistic aspects of theatre. More discussion of Starlight's founder, Chang Wei-hsien, will follow in later paragraphs.

<sup>20</sup> The '*Xing-ju*' that Li mentioned was '*Wen-hua Ju*'. As I have addressed earlier, *Xing-ju* generally referred to all kinds of non-traditional theatre forms. Therefore, *Gai-liang Xi* (Reformed Theatre), *Wen-ming Xi* (Civilise Theatre) or *Wen-hua Xi* (Cultural Theatre) could all be called *Xing-ju* as there was no clear line between these sub-genres of *Xing-ju* at the time.

these two troupes, Chang Wei-hsien (see Figure 1.8) and Chang Shen-cie, both had been to Japan to study, where Chang Wei-hsien even learnt in the Tsukiji Little Theatre (*Tsukiji Shogekijo*, in Japanese)<sup>21</sup>. In addition to propagating political themes, pursuing an artistic value was a primary aim.

It is of particular interest to note Chang Wei-hsien's theatre experience because he was described as 'the first person of Taiwanese *Xing-ju* (*Taiwan Xin-ju Di-yi-ren*)' (Wong, 1977, cited in Young, 1994: 84). Based on Chang's article, 'My Theatre Reminiscence' (1954: 105-113), a brief description of his theatre experiences could be sketched here. Born in 1905 in Taipei, Chang travelled to China when he was eighteen and had the chance read plays that were written by the Chinese dramatists Tian Han, Xu Gong-mei, Hou Yao and Ouyang

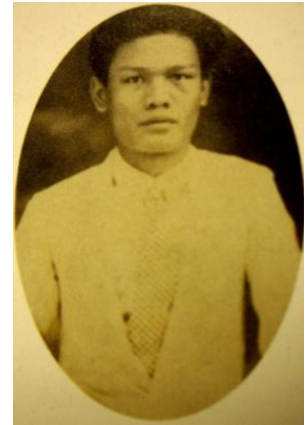


Figure 1.8 Chang Wei-hsien (1930)  
(Source: Shih, 2003)

Yuqian. He was amazed that these plays used realistic language to depict life, which was exactly he hoped for his ideal theatre form. In 1924, one of Chang's tennis partners from the Star-picking Tennis Society (*Zhai-xing Wang-qiu-hui*), Chen Tu, who was born in Xiamen, China, began to experiment with *Wen-ming Xi*. Chang, Chen and other members of the society initiated the idea of creating their own troupe, and thus was the Starlight Theatre Research Society born. It first performed *Marriage* (*Zhong-sheng Da-shi*) and *The Lotus in the Fire* (*Huo-li Lian-hua*), gaining great success. However, Chang was unsatisfied with this achievement. He pointed out that 'although *Xing-ju* has potential, it is difficult to find both qualified performers and directors' (1954: 108, Personal-translation). He then suggested that 'without further improvement, *Xing-ju* cannot replace traditional theatre and *Gei-zai Xi*, which

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<sup>21</sup> The *Tsukiji* Little Theatre was organised by Osanai Kaoru (1881-1928), who has been profoundly influenced by two European directors, namely Max Reinhardt and Stanislavsky, and was regarded as an important theatre practitioner of Japanese *Shingeki* (New Drama), a more Westernised theatre form after *Shimpa-geki*, and financed by Hijikata Yoshi (1889-1959), who was also an important promoter of leftist theatre. *Tsukiji* opened on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1924 and, built with five hundreds seats, was designed according to the latest developments in Western theatre architecture and pioneer equipment for lighting and scenic effects. *Tsukiji* became the landmark centre of Japanese *Shingeki* activity, the place where a new generation of *Shingeki* theatre people was formed. (Ortolani, 1995: 246-250; Brandon, 1997: 154-155)

attract large audiences, and will find it difficult to garner support from the elites' (1954: 108, Personal-translation). In addition, Chang's ideology changed significantly after Starlight's creation. After Starlight's premiere, Chang organized a political group named Solitary Soul Alliance (*Gu-hun Lian-Meng*) with a Japanese anarchist Inagaki Toubee. This illegal group was forced by the Japanese police to disband in 1928, which triggered Chang's idea of studying at *Tsukiji* Little Theatre in Japan. When Chang was at *Tsukiji* Little Theatre, its founder, Osanai Kaoru, had passed away, and the organization had begun to fracture. Hijikata Yoshi left and created another troupe, New *Tsukiji* Company (*Shin Tsukiji Geidan*). Because no Taiwanese students had studied at *Tsukiji* before, Chang obtained permission to study in every department, including directing, acting, lighting, stage setting and costumes. In addition to learning new technologies, he was deeply impressed by the conscientious devotion of every practitioner in *Tsukiji*, from directors to extras, to their jobs. Chang also read a great amount of the theatre collections in the Waseda University library and participated in left-wing social activities. These experiences indirectly influenced his ideas about theatrical composition and actor training later.

After studying for two years in Japan, Chang returned to Taiwan in 1930 and planned to create the People's Beacon Troupe (*Ming-fong Yan-ju Tuan*, see Figure 1.9). First, he recruited members and appointed specialists in a variety of areas to give lectures on such topics as 'Researching the Taiwanese Language', 'Introduction to Literature', 'Introduction to Theatre', 'Music', 'Painting', 'Theatre History', and 'Performance Practice'. At the same time, Chang also directed the anarchic organization, Taiwanese Working Class Society, in Taipei and Changhua.



Figure 1.9 The members of People's Beacon Troupe (1930) (Source: Shih, 2003)



He revealed his thoughts in the statement of People's Beacon Troupe's establishment:

Look! When the real artists and philosophers were dissolved by traditional society, there were always more heroes pushing to eliminate human servility and promote ideal and rational self-rule. ... Look! The so-called people's art and popular art, including literature, theatre, music and fine arts, merely served as a tool to fool people. Therefore, living in this era, our goal is to understand life and reveal the dark force that controlled art. (1930, Cited in Young, 1994: 80, Personal-translation)

Young conceived this statement as 'almost the most powerful claim about theatre in the Japanese colonial era, containing the essence of Tolstoy's 'what is art', Peter Kropotkin's idealism, and anarchic spirit' (1994: 81). Theatre was seen by the intellectuals as a media that could encompass critical thinking and serve as an educational tool, as evidenced by Chang's statement. This perspective of theatrical function was also far different from that of other theatre genres, like *Wen-ming Xi* (Civilised Theatre) or *Gai-liang Xi* (Reformed Theatre), which functioned as a popular entertaining form.

People's Beacon initially recruited more than twenty members; however, after a half-year of training, only half of these were left. Chang thus felt that 'it is difficult to train a good Taiwanese performer' (1954: 110). His disappointment mainly came from a misunderstanding that Chinese and Taiwanese theatre participants usually had of Western theatre at the time. To meet the demanding physical and acting requirements of the stage, it was always perceived as necessary for traditional Asian performers to undergo long-term and rigorous training. Therefore, when a new theatre genre was introduced that had no singing or codified physical movements and was performed basically as dialogue, a common but misconceived impression emerged that 'performers could easily give performances on stage without devoting themselves to training' because 'there was no need to have singing and dancing skills' (Wong, 1934, cited in Yuan, 2000: 161). As a result, no matter whether in China or Taiwan, those actors, who had no acting training or experience, relied on their enthusiasm and courage to help them in their performance (Yuan, 2000: 161). Observing traditional theatre, like *Ge-zai*

*Xi*, and new theatre forms, like *Gai-liang Xi* and *Wen-ming Xi*, later actors not only had no need to recite traditional poems, sing songs and perform codified physical scores, but also seemed to have no need for further acting skills or the concept of training. It could be presumed that those members, who joined the People's Beacon with great passion, may not have been able to understand the point of studying literature or Taiwanese language, as part of their pre-performance training. Thus, they chose to leave; however, Chang did not give up. He continued to seek solutions to the problems of Taiwanese theatre, noting, for instance, that 'if performers cannot freely manage their physical bodies, audiences will feel that their acting is pretentious' (1954: 110). It is worth mentioning that Chang seemed to be the first Taiwanese theatre practitioner who was aware of the importance of the relation between actor training and their performance. He realized that even *Xing-ju* performers, who were not required to sing and do specific physical scores, still needed to have long-term training, in order to manage their physical actions when they performed. This is an issue that I explore further in my own practical experimentation with *Xing-ju* in Chapter Four.

Chang thus suspended the activities of People's Beacon and decided to go to Japan again. He was determined to begin with the physical training method, Dalcroze Eurhythmics (also known as the Dalcroze Method). In 1933, he went to Japan a third time to learn rhythmic dance at Tokyo Dance College. After half a year's training, he again gathered former members of People's Beacon and initiated a new training plan. During rehearsal, he changed the emphasis of his training, using Russian writer David Pinski's *A Dollar* as main material to practice. He considered the rehearsal successful because the actors gradually realised the fact that 'each line, each movement was supposed to be presented precisely' (1954: 110). After a full year of rehearsal, the People's Beacon performed at *Yong Le Zuo* (Forever Happy Theatre) in Taipei. In addition to *A Dollar*, they put on Chinese writer Hsu Kung-mei's *Flying (Fe)*, Japanese writer Sasaki Haruo's *The Dream of a Primitive* and Norwegian writer Henrik Johan Ibsen's *En Folkefiende* (An Enemy of the People). Chang was satisfied with the feedback on

the performances. He described the audiences as mainly consisting of intellectuals, including university professors, and he conceived of this as the ‘first *Xing-ju* performance in Taiwan’ (1954: 110-111).

In 1934, the People’s Beacon was invited to give performances at the New Theatre Festival, which was organized by the Taipei Troupes Committee and was organised mainly by the Japanese. Although most of the participants at the festival were Japanese and Japanese troupes, Chang still chose to use *Hoklo* as the troupe’s performing language. He gave a talk to the actors and emphasized that ‘you should be capable of delivering the meaning of text through acting rather than language’ (1954: 111-112). On opening night, the People’s Beacon’s performance impressed its Japanese audience that there was a storm of applause for five minutes at the play’s conclusion. This performance was regarded as Chang’s landmark work, the one that would establish his status in the Taiwanese theatre world during the Japanese colonial era. Subsequently, he planned to tour the People’s Beacon in Taiwan but failed because he lacked the needed money, performers and local dramatists (Chang, 1954: 112).

In addition to emphasising actors’ training, Chang also attempted to improve stage technologies. For instance, when the People’s Beacon performed *Golden Demon*, Chang used a bulb covered by colours to create an evening-like lighting effect. During a scene at sea, a lamp was set behind-stage and a moon-shaped paperboard stuck to it. The crew moved the moon lamp to signify time changes (Chang, 1954: 107). After studying in different departments at *Tsukiji* Theatre, Chang also attempted to bring back the concept of professional divisions when preparing plays. Thus, when he created the People’s Beacon, he made different people responsible for different departments, including stage setting, stage effects and lighting. He also bought a new set of lighting equipment and prepared a portable power panel for touring (Chang, 1954: 107). The scale of his troupe was rare, because other *Wen-hua Ju* troupes lacked this professionalism.

In addition to travelling to Japan, Chang also went to Shanghai to observe theatre developments in China in 1932. He sought suggestions from the famous Chinese theatre practitioner Cheng Po-chi, who, surprisingly, told Cheng ‘you had better go back to Taiwan and keep working there, because *Hua-ju* (Spoken Drama) in China has not developed well and has progressed more slowly than in Japan for more than fifty years’ (1954: 112). In fact, Chang also noticed that Shanghai’s *Wen-ming Xi* had very little acting skill. Performers emphasized their charm, rather than their interpretations of characters. Chang thus returned to Taiwan disappointed. After the start of the Second World War, the Japanese colonial regime imposed the *Kominka* Movement to control artistic activities. Chang gave up theatre practice and turned to running a business in China. Finally, in 1948 and with the Japanese defeated, he returned to Taiwan again. However, the 228 Incident resulted in the silencing of Taiwanese intellectuals, and Taiwan entered an authoritarian phase. Seeing no chance to create a troupe and give performances, Chang left Taipei again and changed his career to do agriculture; however, he never gave up his theatre dream. In his article, ‘My Theatre Reminiscence’, written in 1954, he said that ‘whenever I am needed, I would love to join (the theatre). Perhaps when my farm is running smoothly, and I am also prepared to direct again’ (1954: 113). Later, when movies prospered in the 1960s, Chang created a film company and directed the movie *Sighing for Fireworks* (*Tan Yan Hua*). However, box office sales were not good, Chang lost his fortune and his farm was destroyed by a typhoon. He remained quiet until death, and his theatre dream was buried under his most daring and energetic era, during Japanese colonisation.

#### **4. Diverse opinions on *Gai-liang Xi* (Improved Theatre) and *Wen-hua Xi* (Cultural Theatre)**

Although the beginning date of Taiwanese contemporary theatre was clearly defined to be around 1909 according to the historical data addressed in the previous paragraphs, another

point of view was found in certain Taiwanese intellectuals' discourse. It is argued that the true starting point of contemporary theatre was not with *Gai-liang Xi*, but rather with *Wen-hua Ju*, which referred to a theatre genre created by Taiwanese intellectuals, in the formation of troupes like the Star-light, New Vessel and Caotun Town Hot Beacon Youth Troupe.

The Taipei document committee held a symposium of contemporary literature and theatre in the northern region in 1954 and gathered certain Taiwanese intellectuals such as Wu Shin-rung, Yang Yun-ping, Liao Han-chen, Long Ying-tzung, Wu Juo-liou, Lu Su-Shang and Chang Wei-hsien to have a debate on the issue of literature and theatre activities during the Japanese colonial period. At that time, Chang Wei-hsien, who established the Starlight and People's Beacon troupes, claimed that 'the beginning of Taiwanese contemporary theatre movement was ambiguous, it might be supposed to be the Starlight in Taipei city, New Vessel in Changhua city and Hot Beacon in Wufeng town. I was also not so clear which was the first one among these troupes' (1954: 10).

In another article, 'My Theatre Reminiscence', Chang described Starlight's preparation and performance as 'the first contemporary theatre in Taiwanese history' (1954: 105). Another Japanese writer, Tasuku Nakayama, who was born in Taiwan, also pointed out that Taiwanese contemporary theatre commenced with the establishment of the Hot Beacon troupe in 1936.

In this respect, Lu Su-Shang indicated the following:

Strictly speaking, Taiwanese new theatre was generated after Chang Wei-hsien's return from *Tsukiji* Little Theatre in Japan. Before his return, theatres could be classified as *Wen-ming Xi* (Civilised Theatre) and *Gai-liang Xi* (Reformed Theatre).' (1954: 56, Personal-translation)

Not only did theatre practitioners under Japanese colonial rule consider that *Wen-hua Ju* could signify the beginning of Taiwanese modern theatre, but it also seems that contemporary researchers were of the same view; depreciating *Gai-liang Xi*, and putting *Wen-hua Ju* in a very crucial position in Taiwanese theatre history. This stance is clearly illustrated by Chiu

Kun-liang as follows:

The development of *Xing-ju* had a social background, and its changes were also influenced by the political environment. *Xing-ju* (*Wen-hua Ju*), which emerged along with the rise of the national and social movement, signified the most important of the development of Taiwanese theatre. Without *Wen-hua Ju*, Taiwanese *Xing-ju* history was not worth further exploration. (1992: 302, Personal-translation )

The omission of *Gai-liang Xi* could be attributed to two reasons: first, *Gai-liang Xi* was merely seen as an entertainment form that was unable to ‘propagate nationalism’ and ‘fight against the coloniser’; as a result, it was excluded from Taiwanese theatre history.

The second reason could be related to the types of members of *Gai-liang Xi* troupes, which I addressed in the previous paragraphs - namely that the participants of *Gai-liang Xi* were mostly regarded as hooligans. During the transitional process from traditional theatre to contemporary theatre in Taiwan, actors were still regarded as the ‘*Shia Jiou Liou*’ (low nine classes)<sup>22</sup>. It was not until the intellectuals took part in producing theatre that the social structure started to collapse. For Taiwanese intellectuals, the development of contemporary theatre should follow the path of modernisation; *Gai-liang Xi*, as a popular entertainment, consequently was categorized as ‘degeneration’ and ‘old’ by them. And the distinction actually revealed the Taiwanese intellectuals’ pursuit of modernity, although this was brought with the coloniser.

The popularity of *Wen-hua Ju* signified the beginning of Taiwanese theatre’s tendency toward intellectual and social movements. The TCA included theatrical activities in its regulations and regarded theatre as an important source of innovation in Taiwanese society. This was, in

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<sup>22</sup> *Shang-jiou-liou* (high nine classes) and *Shia-jiou-liou* (low nine classes) referred to two types of social classes in early Taiwan society. The offspring of ‘low nine classes’ were not allowed to join the imperial examination of the *Qing* Dynasty and were belittled by the people from ‘high nine classes’. ‘High nine classes’ included the following occupations: private advisor (*Shi-ye*), doctor (*Yi-sheng*), painter (*Hua-gong*), strategist (*Di-li-shi*), divinator (*Bu-gua*), fortune-teller (*Suan-ming*), monk (*Han-shang*), Taoist priest (*Dao-shi*), and koto and chess player (*Qin-qi*). Nine occupations from ‘low nine classes’ included prostitute (*Chang-ji*), actor/actress (*You-ling*), sorcery (*Wu-zhe*), musician (*Yue-ren*), mating-swine worker (*Khan-ti-ko*), barber (*Li-fa-shi*), servant (*Pu-bi*), massagist (*An-mo-shi*), worker (*Tu-gong*, works for digging grave or carrying sedan chair). (Kataoka, 1921: 146-149).

part, due to the influence of Japanese colonial education, which introduced the concept of national self-determination and anarchism. In *The Taiwanese National Movement's History*, Yeh Rong-jhong notes that the Japanese Christian teacher and social activist Toyohiko Kagawa once spoke harshly to several Taiwanese students:

You do not deserve to speak of national independence, because an independent nation is supposed to have its own culture, including its own literature, painting, music, theatre, and music. If you cannot develop your own culture, even though you seem to be independent, you are still culturally another's colony. To develop your own culture is the most urgent task for you now. Once you have your own culture, the issue of national independence will be solved naturally. It is meaningless to discuss independence, and there is also no benefit to talking about it now. (1971: 285, translation by author)

Kagawa's words show how Japanese intellectuals and social activists conceived of the culture and reformation of the Taiwanese nation and society. Under Japanese influence, Taiwanese intellectuals attempted to fight the coloniser and reform society by re-defining Taiwanese culture and educating the Taiwanese people. In an attempt to catch up to the West and Japan, they employed new theatre forms, rather than traditional theatre styles. As noted in the previous section, *Wen-hua Ju* was not a theatrical movement, because it did not aim at the reformation of theatrical aesthetics, but instead attempted to spread ideas. For example, Chou Tian-qi, a member of the New Vessel Society, advocated 'casual and free acting' that allowed performers to criticise social and political issues while performing, and furthermore, to voice their own thoughts and influence audiences.<sup>23</sup> This new performing style changed the nature of popular theatre of *Gai-liang Xi* and *Wen-min Xi*, endowing it with a more 'grand' function.

According to Yong Du, 'when the activities of the TCA reached its peak, almost every troupe had more or fewer relationships with the TCA, at least several of the members were also members of the TCA, and they had many interactions or even supported each other' (1994: 54). After the 1920s, the participation of intellectuals in theatrical activities was rather

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<sup>23</sup> According to Yong Du, this kind of performing style was usually seen in the reports in the newspapers, such as *People's Newspaper*. (1994: 89)

common. Within the TCA, there were a number of groups with divergent purposes, including Solitary Soul Alliance, The Farmers Union, The Workers Alignment and The Students Alignment. Amongst these, certain significant members also belonged to different troupes at the same time. For example, Chang Wei-hsien created the anarchist political group Solitary Soul Alliance, as well as the Starlight and People's Beacon troupes. Chen Kan and Chou Tian-qi belonged to the New Vessel Society, which was described in official Japanese records as a troupe founded by proletarian and anarchist youth (Yeh, 1971: 859, cited in Young, 1994: 61). The influence of *Wen-hua Ju* extended to every big city and the country side and profoundly accelerated the prosperity of social movements and non-party groups at the end of the Japanese colonial period. According to Young, the size of TCA's following audiences once reached 113,000 (1994: 101). As TCA's touring lectures grew, so did Taiwan's peasant movement - dramatically. In 1927, TCA held 420 touring lectures in Taiwan, almost one lecture per day. Not coincidentally, 53 social movement groups were created that same year. Toward the end of 1927, due to increasing suppression by the Japanese police and the emergence of another TCA touring lecture style, *Mei Tai Tuan* (Beauty Taiwan Group), which broadcast films, instead of giving lectures and performances, *Wen-hua Ju* began to decline. However, the profound participation of intellectuals still transformed the nature of Taiwanese theatre and the backgrounds of theatre participants. Later, during the Second World War and the post-war era, the participation of intellectuals in performances still signified their 'authentic' and 'reformatory' characteristic. The beginning of this 'authentic/unauthentic' hierarchy can be traced to *Wen-hua Ju* in the 1920s.

In this thesis, an important meaning of positioning *Gai-liang Xi* as the initial form of contemporary theatre in Taiwan is to re-configure the history of *Xing-ju*, which has not been significantly discussed in existing research.



## 5. The Theatre During Wartime – *Huang-ming Xi* (Emperor Theatre)

In 1937, Japan's relations with China were tense. Japan began the Sino War and then, in 1941, launched a war in the Pacific. Because of its strategic location, Taiwan was treated as the base for Empire's southward expansion. The Japanese regime's governance policy toward Taiwan also entered another stage. The governor-general of the colonial government, Kobayashi Seyizou, thought that Japan's first mission during this period should be to transform the Taiwanese into 'real Japanese' (Dai, 1980: 208). Previously, the Japanese assimilation policy had been guided by 'Japanese extensionism' and was targeted towards assimilating the Taiwanese by reforming their education and social systems. As the war intensified, Japanese fascist forces advocated the strengthening of the colonial governing power. First, the authoritative Japanese stance in Taiwan was reinforced and monitoring of the Taiwanese populace strengthened. Second, in order to strengthen control over the colony, the *Baojia*<sup>24</sup> system was consolidated. The Japanese administration ordered the TCA to stop promoting Petition of the Establishment Taiwan Council<sup>25</sup>. To make the Taiwanese devote themselves to the war, the Japanese regime imposed the *Kominka* Movement, which incorporated the Taiwanese and Taiwan as a 'real part of the Empire' (Chen, 1996: 345). The movement can be divided into two phases: First, the 'National Spiritual Movement', from 1937 to 1940, which aimed to eliminate Taiwanese China-motherland awareness and impose loyalty to Japan. The second phase was the 'Tribute to Emperor Movement' (1941-1945), which aimed to facilitate Japanese imperial ideology and urged the Taiwanese to be loyal to the Japanese Empire. The

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<sup>24</sup> The Japanese administration continued to employ the traditional Chinese *Baojia* system of collective responsibility to help suppress crime, dissent, and organized Taiwanese nationalism. Under the *Baojia* system, rendered hook in Japanese, a neighbourhood leader has responsibility over a group of households. The government relied on the hook leaders to ensure the community met its obligations, including the payment of taxes and the supply of labour for state projects. The leader and the rest of the group could be called to account for any crime committed by a member of one of their households, which gave the whole group an incentive to suppress troublemaking. (Roy, 2003: 38)

<sup>25</sup> Petition of the Establishment Taiwan Council is a movement which was run by Taiwanese intellectuals. The main aim is to fight for the establishment of a Taiwanese Parliament. This movement is also regarded as the longest-lasting Taiwanese political campaign, which began in 1921 and ended in 1934 when the Second World War was more intensive. (Encyclopaedia of Taiwan <http://taiwanpedia.culture.tw/en/content?ID=3733>)

Taiwanese were asked to join every kind of ‘Tribute to Emperor Communities’ and were forced to assimilate the core of Japanese culture and be ‘loyal to the Japanese Emperor and Nation’ (Shih, 2008: 13). According to Chou Wan-yao, there were four main components of the *Kominka* Movement: (1) the reformation of religion and customs, which compelled the Japanization of lifestyles, including the promotion of Japanese shrine-worship, the forbidding of Chinese religious festivals and the use of Japanese-style bathtubs and tatami; (2) the promotion of a ‘national language movement’ (from 1937 to 1944, the popularity of Japanese language increased from 37.8 to 71 percent); (3) the changing of Chinese names to Japanese names and (4) the application of a ‘volunteer soldiers system’. By applying the foregoing policies, Japanese colonisers attempted to thoroughly Japanize the Taiwanese by reforming Taiwanese lifestyles and social customs.

In regard to literature and art, during the *Kominka* Movement, Emperor literature and Emperor theatre were strongly promoted, and *Han-Chinese* theatre and literature were forbidden (Chen, 1997: 344-347). *Ge-zai Xi* (Taiwanese Opera) and *Nan-guan* · *Bei-guan* (Chinese Traditional Music) were strictly prohibited by the Japanese. This period was usually called by traditional theatre workers *Jin Gu Yue* (Forbidding Drums and Music). This was mainly because the characteristics of traditional theatre went against the spirit of the *Kominka* Movement and because performers of traditional theatre were criticized for being from a lower-class background and for having acting styles that were vulgar and non-modern. In addition, Japanese officials believed that the use of the Taiwanese dialect as a performing language would interfere with the promotion of Japanese nationalistic awareness (Hsu, 2006: 256-257). A severe cultural suppression took place in the form of forbidding any kind of overtly Chinese entertainment. Folkways Reformation Society (*Min-feng Zhen-xing Xieh-hui*) was initiated in July 1936, with which the government demanded the ‘improvement’ of Taiwanese religion, customs, and theatre. People were encouraged to build more Japanese temples all over the island. The major cultural policy of the colonial government focused on

homogenizing the Taiwanese with the Japanese.<sup>26</sup>

Taiwanese theatre at this time was viewed as an agency that linked people together and disseminated political dissidence. As a result, Emperor Theatre, which emphasized the construction of an imperial spirit in *Xing-ju* style, was strongly promoted by the ruling class, and Taiwanese young people were encouraged to join a cultural volunteer army. The Taiwanese Theatre Association was then created under the guidance of Japanese colonisers in 1924 and was made responsible for governing Taiwanese troupes. A scripts examination system was also formed to monitor performing themes. Moreover, officials gathered members of the younger generation to organize Emperor Theatre Troupes (*Yan-ju Ting-Shen Dui*) to disseminate imperial spirit by giving performances around Taiwan. The Taiwanese Theatre Association also helped traditional troupes adapt their performing styles to Emperor Theatre. However, most traditional troupes disbanded because of these difficulties. A few restarted their careers by appointing Japanese directors to instruct them in performances of Emperor Theatre or by changing their names to *Xing-ju* troupe or Emperor troupe (Shih, 2002: 11).

However, it was difficult for these reformed traditional theatre troupes to transform their performing style completely. In order to avoid censorship from the officials, those troupe thus developed a new performance strategy, and this gradually became a new performing form. Although they claimed to be performing modern drama, and were accompanied by Western



Figure 1.10 The Emperor Theatre. The *Ge-zai Xi* performers wore Japanese style costumes and held the Japanese sword (1930) (Source: Shih, 2003)

orchestras, in fact they still applied the traditional scripts and performance styles of *Ge-zai Xi* on stage. The significant difference was that they used modern positional titles substituted for

<sup>26</sup> The government burned images of Taiwanese deities in temples and forbade participation in 'Taiwanese rituals and traditional holidays. People were forced to adopt the Japanese language, religion, and customs.

the titles of the traditional roles, e.g. ‘emperor’ was replaced by ‘boss’; prime minister’ was replaced by ‘manager’ etc. Some even presented a ‘double show’. The head of a *Ge-zai Xi* troupe under Japanese rule recalled, for instance, that whenever a performance was given, he and other performers would wear opera costumes under their kimonos. As soon as the police left, they took off the kimonos and started to perform *Ge-zai Xi* (Chang, 1997: 114-115, see Figure 1.10). Hsu Ya-hsiang has pointed out the reason for the emergence of this new performing form was that ‘the Japanese ignored the difference between inside/outside (Japanese) lands and rashly imposed the replacement of Taiwanese theatre with Emperor theatre, without a comprehensive strategy’ (2006: 261). On the other hand, the expedient performing strategy also provided a space within which *Ge-zai Xi* could extend its capacity. Thus, compared with *Peking Opera*, which strictly followed a standard form, for both physical scores and songs, *Ge-zai Xi* flexibly adjusted itself to changes. For instance, *Ge-zai Xi* performers took to wearing Western costumes, instead of traditional Chinese costumes, to survive the *Kominka* Movement.

During the *Kominka* Movement, however, not all performances belonged to the Emperor theatre. The attempt of *Wen-hua Ju* that ‘theatre can reflect and criticize politics’ could still be found during this period. It is worthwhile to make note of a theatre group called *Hou-sheng* Theatre Research Society, which was created by the Taiwanese intellectuals Wang Ching-chuan, Lu He-Je and Lin Tuan-chiu (see Figure 1.11). Lin had studied in Tokyo and had been a dramatist and director of *Tokyo Moulin Rouge*, which was famous for performing ‘light comedy’. Lin had also had been a director at Altamira Pictures Company. He introduced his experience in these industries to Taiwanese practitioners. Within *Tokyo Moulin Rouge*, for example, there were five major departments – acting, literature, dancing and singing, stage

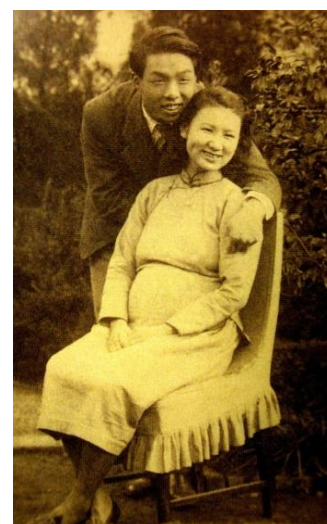


Figure 1.11 Lin Tuan-chiu and his wife Lin Qiu Bao-yue (1942) (Source: Shih, 2003)

design and lighting. The total number of staff members was around seventy to eighty. Ten days was the normal length of a routine, and each routine included three new plays. There were two to three performances per day, and each performance contained three different half-hour to hour-long plays, plus a fifty-minute dance and song revue (Shih, 2003: 49). When *Hou-sheng* prepared its first performance, Lin also attempted to assign different tasks to different professionals. Music design and scene accompaniment, for example, were designed by the musician Lu Chuan-sheng, stage design and prop-making were made by Mr. Kuo and scripts were written by the department of literature (Lin, 1943, cited in Shih, 2003: 109). The division of theatre jobs was a significant development. There was no such concept in the 1920s, as most *Wen-hua Ju* participants were amateurs.



Figure 1.12 Hou Sheng's first work, *Capon*, was their most distinguished performance during the war time. It can be noted from the photo that the stage setting was well-made. The scene was in a Chinese medicine store (1943) (Source: Shih, 2003)

The *Hou Sheng* premiered at Forever Happy Theatre (*Yong Le Zuo*) in September 1943. Its plays included *Capon* (*Yan-ji*), adapted from Taiwanese writer Chang Wen-huan's eponymous novel (see Figures 1.12, 1.13); *Di-re* (*Earth Heat*, see Figure 1.15); *Gao-sha Hotel* (*Gao-sha-guan*); *Seeing the Street Lights from a Mountain* (*Cong Shan-shang Kan Jian--shi De Deng-huo*, see Figure 1.14); *The Storm of Batavia*



Figure 1.13 A scene from *Capon*, which was set in a Chinese style living room (1943) (Source: Shih, 2003)

(*Ba-da-wei-ya De Bao-feng-yun*) and *Miss Sparrow* (*Yun-qiao Gu-niang*), which were all written by Lin. When *Hou-Sheng* performed *Capon*, it used Taiwanese folk songs that successfully resonated with audiences. In the middle of the performance, an electrical accident affected the lighting; however, audiences voluntarily opened their electric torches to replace the stage lighting and asked the performance to continue. Critics also praised *Hou-Sheng's* performances. A Japanese professor, Takita Sadaharu, of the University of the Taiwanese Empire, praised the *Hou-Sheng*:

*Hou-Sheng* Troupe's performances truly opened a new era in Taiwanese new theatre history. The significant characteristic of this troupe was that no matter the script, director, stage setting and lighting were all conducted by the members of this troupe. In addition, the writer, Lin Tuan-chiu, was highly qualified due to his previous experience in Japan. Lin's directing was distinguished. (Takita, 1943, cited in Shih, 2003: 109, Personal-translation)

Takita also pointed out that Lin designed an outdoor path onstage that could be seen from the auditorium and arranged for several pedestrians to walk the path and thereby create the aura of natural scenery. This was



Figure 1.14 A scene from *Seeing the Street Lights from a Mountain*, which was a Western style children play (1943) (Source: Shih, 2003)

obviously the application of the fourth wall concept in Western realistic theatre. Takita also praised Lin for skillfully applying the notion of ‘fed-in/fed-out’ when dividing scenes (Shih, 2003: 114).

Although the *Hou-sheng*’s first performances were highly successful, its works were still criticized by Japanese officials for ‘anti-national policy’. As the war intensified, the Japanese colonial government also strengthened its control over literary and theatrical circles. Survival space for the *Hou-sheng* was more limited, and this also resulted in its disbandment soon after its debut. However, its performances were seen by Shih as a little gem during the war time:

The emergence of the *Hou-sheng* Theatre Research Society, which was mainly founded by Lin Tuan-chiu, signified the awakening of young intellectuals during the last stage of the colonial period – although they obtained complete colonial education and were deeply influenced by Japan in their daily life and manners. With the growing awakening, they were aware of their hometown’s real situation ... They sought the improvement on Taiwanese society and culture. (Shih, 2003: 117-118, Personal-translation)

The Second World War ended with the dropping of two atomic bombs on Japan. Japan’s defeat also meant the end of its colonisation of Taiwan. Emperor Theatre thus served only temporarily as a political media and ended with the war.



Figure 1.15 A scene from *Earth Heat*, in which the unequal issue of the labours of the pit was discussed (1943) (Source: Shih, 2003)

## Conclusion

Colonisation had multiple and varied effects on Taiwan; hence, single phenomena within Taiwan's colonial history must be discussed within the entire social, political and cultural context of that era. This chapter has provided a detailed analysis of origins of *Xing-Ju* and shown that it is not a naturally developing new theatre genre, but a product that emerged during colonisation. Because of 'similar-ethnic colonisation', the colonial relationship between Japan and Taiwan is ambiguous. The coloniser, Japan, could not distinguish itself as an ethnic group; therefore, it used modernisation as a tool with which to manipulate the colonised. The Japanese regime attempted to construct the legitimacy of its rule in Taiwan by successfully Westernising the latter. Although the Taiwanese people developed a collective 'Taiwanese National awareness' under the Japanese occupation, they have struggled with modernisation. In fact, Western goods have been imported to Taiwan since Taiwan's harbours opened in 1860, accompanied by the arrival of merchants and missionaries. In the late *Qing* Dynasty, the imperial court began to purchase modern weapons from Western countries and build railways in Taiwan. Japanese colonisation, which followed the end of this dynasty, was regarded as the beginning of modernisation in Taiwan, because it had a significant influence on Taiwanese modern political development (Wu, 1990). The first three governor-generals in the Japanese administration imposed military policies on Taiwan and aimed to eliminate opposition forces. It was not until the fourth governor-general, Kodama Gentarou, who appointed Gotou Shinpeyi as the head of Taiwan's civil administration that administrative policy started to change. Gotou attempted to 'combine politics with science and treat the Taiwanese colony as an organic entity', using his 'biological knowledge' (Chen, 1986: 3). From then on, a 'colonial rationality' was applied to Taiwan's governance. Japanese colonisation used national power to construct a capitalist Taiwan. For the Taiwanese people, modernisation not only referred to Western ideas, but also to 'Japanese modernisation', which was successfully exemplified by the *Meiji* Restoration in Japan.



This chapter has emphasised the treads of *Xing-ju* history, but has also shown that *Xing-ju* can be viewed from more than the dualistic perspective of colonial ‘suppressing/being suppressed’. The emergence of post-colonialism provides an alternative vantage point and made colonial studies ‘gradually abandon the traditional and elite perspective, which emphasized political, economic, military and diplomatic issues, and begin to pay attention to the comparative cultural meanings of colonialism and the complicated connections between colonial power and knowledge construction’ (Chang, 2004: 151). It is worth mentioning the concept of ‘colonial modernity’, suggested by Tani E. Barlow (1997), who has re-examined the specific meaning of Westernisation in East Asian history and emphasized the importance of constructions of modern colonial experiences. Barlow has also explored the interaction between modernisation’s inception and colonised society (cited in Chang, 2004: 151), suggesting alternative ways of interpreting Japanese colonisation. Barlow views modernity as a dominant factor that how the coloniser privileges itself. However, colonised people also strive to stake out space in the interactions and integration of colonial modernisation and native society; Homi Bhabha describes this area as ‘The Third Space’ (1994: 25). Within the *Kominka* Movement, for example, the *Hou-sheng* troupe implicitly revealed Taiwanese awareness through performances of an ‘appropriate’ form, *Xing-ju*, that was approved by the coloniser.

In Taiwan, the development of *Xing-ju* has been a historical process that is interwoven with colonial modernity. During the early Japanese colonial era, *Xing-ju* was introduced to Taiwan with ‘improved’ and ‘civilized’ meanings. Takamatsu Ijiro successfully created his entertainment kingdom in Taiwan by setting up several *Gai-liang Xi* troupes and theatres. In addition, Kawakami Otojiro, the authentic creator of Japanese *Shimpa*, brought with him to Taiwan a fresh performance form, along with a superior colonial status, that challenged traditional Taiwanese theatre forms. Confronting the simplified dualism of ‘modern/traditional’ and ‘civilised/obsolete’, it was evident that Taiwanese intellectuals expressed their explicit or

implicit inner struggles in their works. Being influenced by rationalism, which was introduced with modernisation, the Taiwanese intellectuals attempted to construct new forms of literature and theatre that could reflect the realities of people's lives. Therefore, they began to criticize traditional theatre and advocated their ideology through *Wen-hua Ju* (Cultural Theatre). Opposition to the coloniser and an inclination toward modernity characterized the *Xing-ju* of the Japanese era. Chang Wei-hsien's study at the *Jukiji* Theatre and his eager to gain the recognition from the Japanese audiences at *Xing-ju* festival, and Lin Tuan-chiu's work at Tokyo Moulin Rouge and Altamira Pictures Company both exemplified the desire to pursue a more 'ideal' and 'improved' theatre form.

The contradiction between pursuing modernity and fighting against the coloniser was not successfully resolved with the dissolution of the Japanese regime, which also meant that de-colonisation did not begin then. This had to do with the KMT government, which retreated to Taiwan in 1949 after its defeat in China's civil war, and also to the United States' profound influence in Asia after the Second World War. *Xing-ju* remained a mix of Japanese characteristics and native Taiwanese popular cultures in the post-war era and declined in popularity as TV and film grew in Taiwan in the 1970s. Interestingly, *Xing-ju* again appeared on stage in the 1990s, after martial law was lifted, and drew attention from intellectuals in contemporary theatre, rather than from the common people. The development of *Xing-ju* in post-war Taiwan and changes in attitudes toward it will be discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter Two

# The Product of Internal-colonisation- *Xing-ju* and *Opeila* (Opera) in the Post-war Era

### Introduction

As discussed in Chapter One, the development of *Xing-ju* was largely determined by changing political circumstances. When the Japanese colonisation of Taiwan ended after Japan's defeat in the Second World War, most of the Taiwanese greeted the arrival of China Nationalist Party *Kuomintang* (KMT); however, the profound gap that existed between local Taiwanese, who had settled in Taiwan almost three hundred years earlier, during the sixteenth century, and the Mainlanders who immigrated to Taiwan with the KMT party when the KMT lost the civil war to the Communist Party in China, after 1949, resulted in the 228 Incident, in which local Taiwanese campaigned against policies of inequality, inflation and the corruption of the KMT military. The leader of the KMT regime, Chiang Kai-shek, ordered the military to suppress the locals, which resulted in a massacre.

Later, Taiwan entered a thirty-eight-year curfew phase. Local Taiwanese theatre practitioners stopped criticizing politics through theatre, and *Xing-ju* gradually transformed from a type of elite theatre into a type of commercial theatre, called *Opeila* (Opera), which had considerable interaction with *Ge-zai xi*. In this chapter, I explore how political changes affected *Xing-ju*'s development, from the early post-war period through the lifting of martial law in 1987, up to and including the present. How has esteem for *Opeila* changed as Taiwanese culture has been redefined? In addition, I further explain the performing characteristics of *Opeila*, drawing mainly on the field research I conducted with a typical troupe, New Life Troupe (*Xin-sheng-huo Hua-ju-tuan*).

## 1. Theatre Development in the Post-war Taiwan

On 15 August 1945, the Japanese emperor, Hirohito announced the defeat of Japan in World War II. The Taiwanese were ecstatic about China's recovery of sovereignty over Taiwan. In order to take over Taiwan, the KMT government, in China established the Taiwan Provincial Administration (*Taiwan-sheng Hsing-cheng Chang-kuan Gong-shu*) and appointed Chia Tao-sheng as the head of propaganda committee and the principal of the Taiwanese Theatre. At the beginning, the KMT government retained the theatre policies, which were set by the Japanese regime. Later on, the KMT lifted the embargo on Chinese traditional theatres which was forbidden under Japanese rule. Consequently, the removal of this prohibition led to the temporary blooming of theatre activities during the first two years after 1945 (Lu, 1961: 33).

The cultural policies of the first four post-war years occurred in three stages: the first was 'reform of culture' and aimed to 'de-Japanize and Sinicize the Taiwanese'; the second was 'culture and education' and aimed to strongly promote Sinicization; the last was an 'anti-communist authoritarian' phase (Tseng, 1994, cited in Chuang, 2005: 26-32). The KMT government considered that the Taiwanese were deeply 'poisoned' by the Japanese coloniser and it started to put some strategies into action to overcome this. The following major strategies were adopted: enhancing the national consciousness, Sinicizing Taiwanese people, and constructing a revolutionary new ideology (Chen Yi, 1944, cited in Chen 1989:58). In order to achieve these targets, two further steps were taken: Mandarin was advocated, and Japanese was strictly prohibited by the authorities. Before 1945, the popularity rate of the Japanese language among Taiwanese had reached 75%. To contract this popularity, The Commanding Ministry appointed Fan Shou-kang to organize The Mandarin Promotion Committee. After that, the theatre was regarded as a functional tool for promoting Chinese culture, as well as enhancing the popularity of Mandarin as a matter of urgency (Chiu, 1997: 176-77).

Consequently, certain theatre management policies were set, leading to a theatre formally monitored by the authorities. The Commanding Committee established a number of regulations on 6 March 1946, entitled the Taiwanese Provincial Movie and Theatre Management, which clearly pointed out that before the performances were formally presented, the owners should submit scripts to the Propaganda Committee to be examined (Lu, 1961: 336). On 22 August 1946, the Taiwanese Provincial Troupe Management was set up so that if anyone wanted to organize a troupe, the owners should register with the Propaganda Committee to issue a licence, after which the troupe could be allowed to perform in public. In addition, when troupes applied for permission, they needed to enclose draft scenarios or complete scripts. The troupes had been looking forward to a prosperous future when the war finished; however, their hope soon became an illusion when the monitoring system limited their freedom to make theatre.

*Xing-ju* in the early post-war stage inherited the intellectual's critical characteristic, which had existed from *Wen-hua Xi* (Cultural Theatre). The Taiwanese intellectuals reorganized troupes, such as the Theatre Research Society (*Xi-qu Yan-jiu Hui*), which was founded by Wang Yu-de and Huang Kun-bin, and performed *The Illusion* (*Huan-ying*), *Homesickness* (*Xiang-chou*) and *A New Soldier's Morning* (*Xin-sheng Zhi-zhao*), etc. The Taiwanese Art Theatre Society (*Taiwan Yi-shu Ju-she*) was founded by Sin Jin-chuan and Yang Wun-bin. Song Fei-Wo, Wang Jing-Cyuan, Chang Wun-huan and Jian Kuo-hsien corporately founded the Holy Beacon Theatre Research Society (*Sheng-feng Yan-ju Yan-jiu Hui*) in 1946 and performed plays *Wall* (*Bi*) and *The Beggars' Banquet* (*Luo-han Fu-hui*), which were all written by Jian. These two plays clearly illustrated a communist ideology and criticized the injustice of social hierarchy. Many members of the Holy Beacon had previously joined the People's Beacon during the Japanese colonial era; thus, they remained to continue their criticism of politics through theatre. However, even though their performances drew great attention, and tickets for their premieres sold out, their plays were still forbidden by the government because they were seen

as ‘spreading communist, anti-national thinking and instigating conflict between local Taiwanese and Mainlanders’ (Chuang, 2005: 70). Another significant troupe, the People’s Theatre (*Ren Ju Zuo*, 1946), founded by former members of the *Hou-sheng* Theatre, Lin Tuan-Chiu, Lai Zeng and Jhang Dong-fang, performed *The Guilt* (*Zui*, see Figure 2.1) and *Medical Ethics* (*Yi-de*, see Figure 2.2) was also well-liked by audiences.



Figure 2.1 A scene from *The Guilt*, which describes a complex relationship between one man and two women (1946) (Source: Shih, 2003)



Figure 2.2 A scene from *Medical Ethics*, which criticized the inequality of social class (1946) (Source: Shih, 2003)

In addition to local theatre activities, a great number of Chinese theatre practitioners and troupes were invited to Taiwan to give repertoires and interacted with Taiwanese theatre practitioners, a representative example of them was the New China Theatre Society (*Xin Zhong-guo Ju-she*), which performed *Cheng Cheng-gong*<sup>27</sup>, *The Herd Boy and the Weave Maid* (*Niu-lang Zhi-nu*), *The Sunrise* (*Ri-chu*) and *A Peach Blossom Fan* (*Tao Hua Shan*) (Jiao Tong, 1990: 33-38). Furthermore, certain famous Chinese dramatists, such as Ou-yang Yu-Cian and Tian Han, also went to Taiwan for a short visit or co-operated with Taiwanese troupes. Theatre seemed prosperous in the early post-war era; however, several issues

<sup>27</sup> Cheng Cheng-gong was an important military commander of the late *Ming* Dynasty in the sixteenth century. He devoted the last 16 years of his life to resisting the conquest of China by the Manchus of *Qing* dynasty. Upon defeating the forces of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) in Taiwan in his last campaign in 1661–1662, Cheng took over Taiwan in order to support his grand campaign against the Manchu-ruled *Qing* Dynasty. After his death in 1662, however, his son and successor, Zheng Jing, gradually became the ruler of an independent Kingdom of *Tungning*, the first Chinese state to officially rule the island.

gradually emerged, such as ‘the inequity of different ethnic groups’, ‘the corruption of officials’ and the ‘inflation of prices’ (Roy, 2003: 60-67). These became more severe when the KMT regime retreated from China and formally took control of Taiwan in 1949. Disappointment with the KMT government and the popularity of left-wing ideology shaped the critical literature and theatre that were characteristic of this era. However, successful theatrical developments and collaborations were terminated because of the 228 Incident in 1947, as well as the cultural and linguistic barriers between Taiwanese and Mainlanders. Afterwards, the KMT government imposed an authoritarian policy to govern Taiwan. The 228 Incident caused a deep trauma in the Taiwanese people. Numerous Taiwanese intellectuals were arrested, murdered or fled to other countries; Wang Yu-de was exiled to Japan, Jian Guo-sian was murdered during a series of purges by the KMT government in the 1950s, and Song Fei-wo fled to China to serve as an announcer in a broadcasting station and died in an unknown nursing home in Hong Kong. Chang Wei-hsien, who was known as ‘the first person of Taiwanese *Xing-ju*’, changed his career after this incident (Chiu, 1997: 181). The Taiwanese had ended one period of colonisation but were forced to accept another immediately.

## **2. The popularity of *Opeila* in the Post-war Era**

After the 228 Incident, the tradition of *Wen-hua Ju* was temporarily terminated. To be precise, after the KMT regime imposed authoritarian and martial law from 1947, and entered the so-called White Terror period, the contemporary theatre, which was made by Taiwanese intellectuals and used Taiwanese mother tongues as their performing languages, disappeared. The mainstream theatrical theme in Taiwan was replaced by anti-communist plays, such as *The Female Bandit* (*Nyu Fei-gan*) and *Between Human and Beast* (*Ren-shou Zhi-jian*) or the pure historical plays, such as *The Anecdotal History of Ching Dynasty* (*Qing-gong Wai-shi*).

In 1944, the authority introduced the concept of ‘Literature and Art of Battle’ (*Zhan-dou Wen-yi*). Literature and theatre, as a result, were used as tools for promoting the national policy of Three Principles of the People (*San-min Zhu-yi*)<sup>28</sup>. In 1950, the KMT regime established the Chinese Culture and Literature Reward Committee (*Jung-hua Wen-yi Jiang-jin Wei-yuan-hui*) which granted awards to people who contributed to anti-communist creative writing. The establishment of this committee revealed the beginning of the anti-communist and anti-Russia era.

However, within this context, one performance still dared to touch taboo social issues a few months after the 228 Incident. It was made by the Experimental Small Troupe (*Shi-yan Xiao-ju-tuan*), which originally belonged to the Fujian Common Educational Administration and in China. A passionate Chinese theatre practitioner, Chen Da-yu, re-created the Experimental Small Troupe in Taiwan in 1946 (see Figure 2.3). It could be divided into two groups according to the different languages



Figure 2.3 Chen Da-yu (1940)  
(Source: Chiu, 2006)

used: Mandarin and Taiwanese.



Figure 2.4 The Stage of *The Fragrance of Banana* (1947) (Source: Chiu, 2006)

A controversial play the company performed was *The Fragrance of Banana* (*Xiang-jiao-xiang*, see Figure 2.4), also called *Mountain and Ocean* (*A-shan A-hai*). They utilized a satirical method to describe the misunderstanding between mainlanders from China and local Taiwanese

<sup>28</sup> Three Principles of people is a political philosophy developed by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, who was regarded as the ‘Father of the Nation’ in the Republic of China (ROC). Sun played an instrumental role in the overthrow of the *Qing* dynasty during the *Xin-hai* Revolution. Sun was the first provisional president when the Republic of China was founded in 1912 and later co-founded the KMT, which he served as its first leader.

Three Principles of people contains ‘the principle of *Min-zu* (nationalism)’, ‘the principle of *Min-quan* (democracy)’ and ‘the principle of *Min-sheng* (people’s welfare)’. It is regarded as part of a philosophy to make China a free, prosperous, and powerful nation. Its legacy of implementation is most apparent in the governmental organization ROC. This philosophy has been claimed as the cornerstone of the Republic of China’s policy as perpetuated by the KMT.



people when these two groups encountered each other after 1945. Multiple languages were used to represent the reality in this play. However, a conflict broke out between mainlanders and Taiwanese audiences while the play was being performed. As a result, the remaining performances were cancelled (Jiao, 1990: 52).

In contrast, *Xing-ju* made by local commercial troupes had a different development to the theatre being made by the intellectuals. Being classified under the provincial theatre category, *Xing-ju* became even more prosperous and was normally called *Opeila* (Opera) in the *Hoklo* language (its pronunciation is derived from the Japanese pronunciation of ‘opera’) by the audiences at the time. The name *Opeila* referred to its musical and mixed characteristics, which I further explain later in this chapter. By 1952, 328 local theatres were officially registered, of which *Ge-zai Xi* troupes constituted the majority and the numbers of *Opeila* troupes were between twenty to forty. Some of the *Ge-zai Xi* troupes also performed traditional Chinese plays in the afternoon and *Opeila* in the evening. It was evident that local theatre activities were still prosperous at this time.

The number of theatre houses also increased from more than 100 in the post-war period to 480 in the 1950s. Different plays were performed day and night in theatre houses both in the cities and in remote countryside across Taiwan. Attending plays at the theatre house had become the most popular leisure activity for the public during that time. In other words, *Opeila* can be compared to the ‘soap operas’ of contemporary society.

However, *Opeila*, most of which was performed in *Hoklo* language, was still classified under the ‘Taiwanese local theatre’, which was not only regarded as useless in promoting the Mandarin Movement, but



Figure 2.5 The Yunlin Theatre. It combined with Japanese and Western baroque styles (1930)  
(Source: Chiu, 2006)

was also belittled as a vulgar form of entertainment by the new KMT regime. As a result, the KMT Central Improvement Committee was established to encourage the improvement of Taiwanese local theatre. Researchers and experts, most of them Mainlanders, were invited to attend a symposium on how to 'improve' the Taiwanese local theatre in order to introduce anti-communist ideology into their plays. As a result, they organized the Local Theatre Improvement Committee (*Di-fang Hua-ju Xie-jin-hui*), which offered assistance to local theatre groups in producing more politically correct plays and in holding annual local theatre competitions on a regular basis. Moreover, the Taiwanese Dialect Troupe (*Tai-yu Ju-tuan*), established by the Ministry of Education, appointed Lu Su-shang, the author of *Taiwanese Movie and Theatre History*, as its head. They performed typical anti-communist plays, such as *Returning the Freedom to Me* (*Hai-wo Zi-you*) and *The Female Bandit* (*Nyu-fei-gan*) touring around Taiwan, and served more than 40,000 audiences for free in order to educate the local troupes and audiences. However, the policies had limited influence on local troupes. Most of them only performed anti-communist plays in the annual local theatre competitions. Troupes still relied on the income of selling tickets at that time, and therefore they would choose more entertaining plays rather than the stereotyped anti-communist ones. The authority could not successfully subsume local theatre into the framework of the anti-communist drive, resulting in these troupes being allowed to exist naturally without being supported. Chiu has indicated that '*Xing-ju* had limited official resources; however, it was still popular from cities to countryside. They performed for ordinary people and can be seen as a miracle within Taiwanese theatre and social history' (2000: 365-366). When film and television became popular in the 1960s, *Xing-ju* was gradually replaced by these two entertainment forms and began to decline.

### 3. A Mixed Fabric of ‘*Chun-mian*’ (Pure Cotton) and ‘*Su-fu*’ (Synthetic Fibre) – Two Styles of *Opeila* in the Post-war Period

Taiwanese *Xing-ju* appeared under the influence of Westernisation in Japan and China in the 1920s, while *Ge-zai Xi* was a local theatre genre developed by the Chinese immigrants during the eighteenth century. These two theatre forms experienced their development, transformation and maturity under diverse cultural contexts. *Ge-zai Xi* was usually criticized by the Taiwanese intellectuals as a feudal, backward and obscene theatre form. On the other hand, *Xing-ju*, exemplifying the new and civilized, was supported by the intellectuals to help spread democratic and anti-feudal ideologies. It seems that these two theatre genres had the characteristics that appear opposite to each other.

However, these two theatre genres had an intersecting point during the *Kominka* Movement period in the Japanese occupation, which I have mentioned in Chapter One. In 1937, the Sino-Japanese War was underway, and the Japanese colonial administration thus imposed the *Kominka* movement, which aimed at efficiently assimilating the colonised people into Japanese culture. In fact, this assimilating policy still privileged the Japanese culture and forced the Taiwanese to give up their own cultures. In this context, the Taiwan Performance Association (*Taiwan Yan-ju Xie-hui*) was created in 1942 and was in charge of controlling the troupes, such as allocating theatres and setting up the script censorship system (Chiu, 1992: 326-331).

This period was termed by traditional theatre workers *Jin Gu Yue* (Forbidding Drums and Music). There were approximately thirty out of 200 traditional troupes which transformed themselves to *Xing-ju*-like troupes in order to survive in this difficult time. As I have addressed in Chapter One, their first strategy was to change the performing costumes, which can clearly signify the cultural characteristics, from the Chinese traditional styles to the Japanese *Kimono* or Western suits. Regarding the scripts, whenever applied to traditional

plays, an expedient way was to directly change the original titles of each roles , e.g. ‘emperor’ was replaced by ‘boss’. Because the Chinese traditional music forms were strictly prohibited, these *Ge-zai Xi* troupes employed Western orchestras to accompany the performance and played popular songs substituting for traditional *Ge-zai* tunes. This passive cultural hybrid phenomenon was also inherited later in *Xing-ju*, which was called *Opeila* in the post-war era. It was the beginning of the interactions between *Ge-zai Xi* and *Xing-ju*. The boundary between these two genres started to blur. At the initial stage of *Ge-zai Xi*’s transformation, it was still regarded as a vulgar theatre form and called Tadpole Theatre (*Ke-dou-xi*) by intellectuals (Lu, 1961: 323). The diverse criteria of these two popular theatre genres also led to the two forms of *Opeila*: *Chun-mian* (Pure Cotton) and *Su-hu* (Synthetic Fibre) in the post-war Taiwanese theatre circles.

Pure Cotton troupes were regarded as more authentic troupes, which applied formal scripts to rehearse and perform plays, and the majority of the participants were intellectuals who had studied abroad in Japan or China. Among Pure Cotton troupes, two styles can be observed: *Wen-pai* (Gentle Style) and *Wu-pai* (Dramatic Style). The main themes that Gentle Style troupes usually performed were family and romances, such as *Starlight*, *Tinkle Bell*, and *Silver Glory* (*Yin Hua*) troupes. Dramatic Style troupes were familiar with the acrobatic combat plays, thus their acting style was more exaggerated and rhythmical (Chiu, 1995: 7). On the other hand, Synthetic Fibre was the direct translation from the Japanese word, an abbreviation of a Japanese noun - *Sutepuru huayiba* (Staple Fibre), meaning synthetic fibre. Synthetic fibre is obviously a different fabric from cotton and its name also connotes its fake, minor and impure nature when compared with pure cotton. The *Ge-zai Xi* troupes surviving under the *Kominka* Movement were usually categorized as Synthetic Fibre troupes (Shih, 2002: 11-12; Chiu, 2000: 350). The division of the troupes also symbolically signified the characteristics of different performing styles at the time.

Compared with Pure Cotton troupes, Synthetic Fibre troupes were seen as inferior. The title was originally given to those Taiwanese traditional *Ge-zai Xi* troupes which survived from the *Kominka* movement (emperor movement) during the Japanese colonial time. Lu Su-Shang has criticized the performance of Synthetic Fibre troupes as follows:

Although they (*Ge-zai Xi* troupes) advertised themselves as ‘Taiwanese *Xing-ju*’, ‘Taiwanese musical’ and ‘*Kominka* theatre’, etc, these titles are only a trick to deceive and cheat the authorities. The plots of their performances are very obscene; furthermore, the structures of scripts are still the same as the original *Ge-zai Xi* scripts; the differences were that they substituted a corporation for the ancient imperial court, a chairman for the emperor, a manager for the prime minister [.....] and wore modern clothes. However, their actions and dialogues were the same as the original *Ge-zai Xi* scripts and still utilized *Ge-zai Xi* tones accompanied by a Western orchestra. (1961: 323, translation by author)

Nonetheless, Lu could not deny that their ‘vulgar’ performances were very popular with the audiences. Looking at the performing styles of the *Xing-ju* troupes in the post-war era, most of them still shared similar characteristics to those of Synthetic Fibre troupes. It can also be observed that after 228 Incident in 1947, *Xing-ju* gradually changed its nature from ‘elite theatre’ to ‘commercial theatre’ and served as the popular entertainment for everyone.

From the perspective of the KMT regime, the *Xing-ju* troupes, the transforming *Ge-zai Xi* troupes and all the other theatre forms, such as puppet theatre, song and dance ensemble and acrobatic troupes, were classified under the umbrella category of ‘Taiwanese provincial theatre’ and administered by the Provincial Theatre Improvement Association (*Di-fang Xi-ju Xie-jin-hui*), which was established in 1952. The number of registered troupes was 328, among which *Ge-zai Xi* troupes and *Xing-ju* troupes numbered between twenty and forty. Theatre activities were flourishing without much official support and attention. There were approximately 500 theatres performing various plays day and night for the whole year. Because of the influence of the 228 Incident, the intellectuals lost their platforms for criticizing and speaking to the people, and moved into other careers. Consequently, the nature of *Xing-ju* gradually transformed from the intellectual into commercial theatre.

After the *Kominka* Movement, *Ge-zai Xi* troupes were compelled to transform their acting styles, thus multiple cultural elements, derived from other theatre genres, were incorporated into *Ge-zai Xi*, which originated from the South Fukien traditional theatre and Taiwanese local opera, as I have explained. Consequently, certain performing characteristics were inherited from the *Ge-zai Xi* in *Kominka* Movement to the *Opeila* in post-war era, such as performers holding *Katana* (raid sword), wearing *Kimono* or Western suits and performing with Western orchestras, etc, and the nature of *Ge-zai Xi* even became more flexible (see Figure 2.6). Within the high competition and rapid demands of commercial markets, a significant cultural phenomenon appeared between the *Ge-zai Xi* troupes and *Xing-ju* troupes, thus creating a dynamic

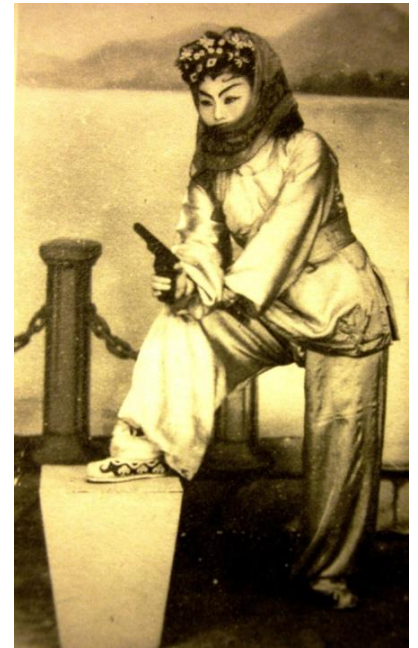


Figure 2.6. A *Ge-zai Opeila* play, in which the actress wore traditional style costumes, but held a gun in her hand (1950-60) (Source: Chiu, 2008)

interaction between these two theatre genres, not only in the performing styles, but also in the technology and concept. It became very common for a *Ge-zai Xi* troupe to perform a traditional *Ge-zai Xi* play in the afternoon and perform a *Xing-ju* play in the evening with contemporary costumes and accompanying popular songs or even juggling and circus acts. Certain famous *Xing-ju* plays, such as *The Chain of Fate* (*Ming-yun de Suo-lian*), could also be seen in the playlists of both *Xing-ju* and *Ge-zai Xi* troupes.

The term of *Opeila* started to appear during this period of time, which probably referred to this kind of mixed performing style between *Ge-zai Xi* and *Xing-ju*. Hsieh Hsiao-mei points out that the emergence of the term '*Opeila*' was around 1952-1953 and related to *Xing-ju* (2002: 167-168). A famous *Ge-zai Xi* actress, Liao Qiong-zhi, also mentioned that *Opeila* originally was applied to mention *Xing-ju* (2002: 168). On the commercial theatre stage in the post-war era, it became rather common for the audiences to use the term *Opeila* to refer to a performing style interweaving song and dance revues, and presenting the hybridity of the

Chinese, Japanese and Western cultural characteristics. The term *Opeila* was also adopted to refer to the *Ge-zai Xi* play with certain modern elements, such as popular songs, dances and modern costumes (Huang, 1995: 10-11).



Figure 2.7. A *Ge-zai Xi* play (2009) (Photo was taken by author)

Regarding the numerous dynamic interactions and appropriations between theatre genres in the post-war Taiwan, Hsieh also stated that the increase of this phenomenon was associated with commercial competition, because traditional theatre forms were no longer the only option for popular entertainment, the emergence of *Xing-ju* troupes, song and dance ensembles, films and acrobatics, etc, also led to the diversity and modernisation of *Ge-zai Xi* (2002: 168). Not only were popular songs introduced into *Ge-zai Xi* performance, but also the Western orchestras, lighting and setting technology were applied to improve performance effects. An advertising tagline ‘the exclusive modern dance and theatre troupe’, which was posted by the Southern-light New Troupe on the newspaper in 1949, proved that modernisation was one of the main targets for many troupes. Hsieh then briefly concludes that ‘the expedient strategy in the Japanese colonial era became the new rhetoric of post-war era’ (2002: 168).

Although all the plays produced by both *Ge-zai Xi* and *Xing-ju* troupes were generally called *Opeila* by the audiences in the later stage, the context of these two genres’ performances should be discussed separately. However, most of the current *Opeila* research referred to the

*Opeila*, made by *Ge-zai Xi* troupes. There was no clear definition between *Opeila* made by *Ge-zai Xi* troupes and by *Xing-ju* troupes. *Ge-zai Xi* and *Xing-ju*'s *Opeila* plays do share certain performing characteristics; however, examining them from various perspectives, such as organization, performing style and content, the distinction of Pure Cotton and Synthetic Fibre inherited from the *Kominka* era can still be observed in the post-war *Opeila*. Because the terms 'Pure Cotton' and 'Synthetic Fibre' have already implied the presumption of elite/mass and authentic/marginal, I suggest that to classify all *Opeila* plays into two categories, *Ge-zai Opeila* and *Xing-ju Opeila* under an umbrella term of *Xing-ju* would be more appropriate. The differences of these two *Opeila* styles and *Ge-zai Xi*/*Xing-ju* troupes will be further discussed in the following paragraphs.

In terms of the recruitment of performers of *Ge-zai Xi*, they were mostly from the poor families and the children from which were sold to the troupes. Few voluntarily joined the troupes. According to field research conducted by Silvio on Taiwanese *Ge-zai Xi* troupes, the most common adage collected in interviews was, 'Because parents have no background, their children are sent to learn *Ge-zai Xi*' (*Fu-mu Wu Shen-shi, Song-tzu Chu She-xi*) (2005: 16). Those children could not avoid experiencing the tough process of training as a performer: from learning lines to practicing martial arts every day. On the other hand, the members of *Xing-ju* troupes were mostly intellectuals in the Japanese era, such as Chiang Wei-shien, Lin Tuan-chun and Lu Su-shang, who had studied abroad in Japan or China. According to the field research reports conducted by Chiu Kun-liang, most of the *Xing-ju* practitioners were voluntarily motivated to attend *Xing-ju* troupes after seeing *Xing-ju* plays. Taking Guao Ye-Ran as an example, he was born in a rich family and after listening to a speech held by the TCA, he developed the idea of freedom, and decided to join the Tinkle Bell Club (*Zhong-ming Ju-le-bu*), which was established by Ou Jian-chuang. The members of this troupe were mostly the descendants of bourgeois families and used their spare time to devise scripts and rehearse. The main ideology of their collaboration was to deconstruct the feudal



ethics and rites (Chiu, 1995: 7). After the 228 Incident, some of the Taiwanese intellectuals hid themselves in troupes to avoid the suppression from the government. One example is Lin Ching-wen, who worked for the New Life troupe as a dramatist and ended up touring with the troupe for years (Lin Chin-Wen, 1991: 54). Wu La-uan joined the Heaven Horse Theatre Research Society (*Tian-ma Xin-ju Xun-lian-she*), which was founded by a famous movie illustrator - Zhan Tian-ma. Wu also joined the Peal Troupe (*Zhong-sheng*) and several *Xing-ju* troupes and, later, song and dance ensembles (Chiu, 1995: 9). Similar experiences like theirs could also be found in many interviews with *Xing-ju* practitioners.

Regarding the performing style and plot, there is a significant difference between *Ge-zai Opeila* and *Xing-ju Opeila*. Silvio points out that the ‘split chronotope’ is an important characteristic in *Ge-zai Opeila* plays. She explains that there are usually three types of chronotope juxtaposing in the *Ge-zai Opeila* plays. The setting of the plot is always based on ‘ancient China’, which is similar to the traditional *Ge-zai Xi* (see Figure 2.8). Then, as the story continues, the protagonist enters a specific circumstance without mentioning a specific time or place, where the performers are allowed to wear exotic costumes, singing popular songs or even wearing sunglasses (see Figure 2.9). The third chronotope is contemporary, in which clowns wore Western suits and satirized the news at the time to entertain the audiences.



Figure 2.8 A scene from a *Ge-zai Xi* play of the 1950s, which was set in ancient China according to the performers' costumes (1960) (Source: Lin, 2007)



Figure 2.9 A scene from a *Ge-zai Xi* play of the 1950s, which was set in an unknown chronotope because a performer wore a sailor suit while others still wore Chinese traditional costumes (1960) (Source: Lin, 2009)

These three chronotope - ancient China, nowhere and contemporary - interweave and are juxtaposed on the *Opeila* stage (Silvio, 2005a: 23, please also check the Clip 1 in the attached DVD1). However, this kind of three split chronotope rarely appeared in the *Xing-ju Opeila* plays, most of which followed a reasonable linear time to develop plots.

Regarding the rehearsal method, the majority of *Xing-ju Opeila* and *Ge-zai Opeila* troupes used the *Mu-biao Xi* (Scenarios) to rehearse. In addition to deriving from the traditional theatres, the themes of plays that *Xing-ju* troupes performed were frequently inspired by foreign, mostly Japanese, movies, novels and news (Chiu, 2008: 132). Some *Xing-ju Opeila* troupes, such as the Starlight and Tinkle Bells, had proper scripts to rehearse and perform; however, others, most of them were *Ge-zai Xi* troupes, only had a brief story outline without the detailed lines. Before the performance was given, the 'Theatretelling Teacher', who also functioned as a director, would gather together all the performers and announce the role assignment and complete story. The performers did the semi-improvised performance according to the outline. The main reason for choosing the *Mu-biao Xi* (Scenario) to perform was its labour-saving advantage. In addition, troupes would tour around the island for almost the whole year with very limited spare time to have proper rehearsals. This also resulted in the popular phenomenon of *Jian Xi* (stealing theatres) among all the troupes: certain plays were well-accepted by the audiences, so other troupes sent someone to see the plays and stole the whole story (You Mei-yun, Interview with author, March 2005). As improvisation played a major part in rehearsal, this kind of *Xing-ju* was also called *Hu-Bian Xi* (Casual Theatre) and can also be translated to *Opeila* (Opera); referring to its creative and musical nature.

In the 1920s, the plays of *Xing-ju* troupes (called '*Gai-liang Xi*' at the time) were usually appropriated from the Chinese *Wen-ming Xi* plays, such as *The Marriage* (*Zhong-sheng Da-shi*, by Hu Shih) and *A Reviving Rose* (*Fu-huo De Mei-gui*, by Hou Yao), or adapted from the Japanese works: *The Golden Demon* (by Ozaki Koyo) and *The Return* (by Kan Kikuchi),

etc. Following the Second World War, the plays of *Xing-ju* were mostly written by intellectuals and contained anti-feudal and anti-class themes. Examples of plays are *The Wall (Bi)* and *The Beggars' Banquet (Luo-han Fu-hui)*, which were performed by The Tinkle Bells troupe; and *The Guilt (Zui)* and *Medical Ethics (Yi-de)*, which were performed by The People's Theatre. In the post-war period, some of the troupes' plays were inherited from the plays of the Japanese time but mostly were new productions derived from the newspaper reports or folklore, such as *The Ghost's Revenge (Yuan-hun Fu-chou-ji)*, which was based on a criminal case in Hsinchu city. Some troupes also made costume drama, such as *A Storm in Lu-an-zhou (Lu-an-zhou Feng-yun)* and *South East Fly the Peacocks (Kong-qiao Dong-nan Fei)*, in which although the Chinese traditional stories were employed but acted in contemporary style. Some adapted foreign novels, such as *Alibaba (A-li-ba-ba)* and *The Arabian Nights (Tian-fang Ye-tan)*. A particularly notable play was *The Justice of Nanako (Nanako De Shen-pan)*, which was adapted from a Japanese novel – *The Justice of Actress Nanako* by Kobayashi Soukichi, and which was also adapted from an American musical *The Trial of Mary Dugan* by Bayard Veiller. Generally, the major themes of *Xing-ju* plays, which included family, romance, complicated relationships and criminal cases, were well accepted by the audiences in the post-war era, and were similar to the soap operas on TV nowadays.

In terms of the performing styles, *Ge-zai Opeila* and *Xing-ju Opeila* had different characteristics. *Ge-zai Opeila* was based on the traditional theatre form and performers were required to take long-term physical training, *Chang, Nian, Zuo, Da* (translation 'Sing, Recite, Do, Fight').<sup>29</sup> As a result, a significant physical 'quality' of performance was cultivated. The traditional acting methodology, which emphasized the 'allegorical' and 'symbolic' characteristics, contrasted with the 'realistic' nature of contemporary acting. As has been discussed in the previous paragraphs, in *Ge-zai Opeila*, the contemporary chronotope was

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<sup>29</sup> The four performing techniques in Chinese traditional theatre, considered the basics for an actor: singing, reciting, acting and martial arts performing.

usually interwoven with the traditional Chinese one; however, the performers' acting in the modern chronotope was still full of the traditional *Ge-zai Xi* characteristics, such as wiping tears, riding horses, drinking wine, fighting, and falling in love, all of which had codified physical movements for performers to follow and also were performed accompanied by traditional orchestras. In addition, the basic traditional performing structure was still followed in *Ge-zai Opeila* plays, such as when an actor entered the stage, he/she would recite poems or songs to give a brief introduction of his/her background to the audience. Similarly, when performers were in the modern chronotope, the traditional poems or songs would be replaced by popular songs. According to Silvio's interviews with the Taiwanese Zephyr Opera troupe, the performers mentioned that in order to perform an *Opeila* play, they needed to learn how to 'act in a more contemporary style and be more natural' (2009a: 64). One of the actresses, Chiu Yu-hsuan, also pointed out that there is a significant difference in expressing emotion on stage between performing spoken theatre and *Ge-zai Xi*:

When performing the traditional theatre, the cues of percussion will be incorporated into the performers' movements to emphasize their emotions while contemporary performers do not use this in performing contemporary plays.....We still use the ancient way to perform [emotions] (Silvio, 2009a: 64, Personal Translation).

Zephyr is a newly organized semi-amateur *Ge-zai Xi* troupe by the then members of the *Ge-zai Xi* society at the National Taiwan University. Even the young performers felt unfamiliar with *Opeila*, which seems more contemporary compared with *Ge-zai Xi*. It could be imagined that the *Opeila* performed by the professional performers in the 1960s might be still deeply 'affected by the traditional theatre forms' (Hsieh, 2002: 160).

On the other hand, most performers of *Xing-ju Opeila* have not taken any traditional or even proper contemporary actor training. According to many interviews with *Xing-ju* performers, they usually started as technical staff or helpers and occasionally had a chance to perform a supporting role and cultivated their acting skills and experiences through performances.

Certain well-organized troupes also regularly offered their performers singing and dancing lectures or *Kendo* and *Judo* in order to perform attractive combat scenes. The fundamental acting training was based on Stanislavsky's 'method', which was introduced in the Japanese colonial period by the Taiwanese intellectuals who had studied abroad in Japan or China; however, there is no systematic training method for the performers to follow.

#### 4. From Interviews of a *Xing-ju* Troupe Family to Observations of the Performing Characteristics of *Xing-ju* in the Post-war Era

##### 4.1 Meeting the New Life Troupe

When I wrote my MA dissertation, *The Study of Liao Tian-Ding Theatre in Taiwan*, in 2004, I became aware of a family troupe called New Life Troupe (*Xin-sheng-huo Hua-ju-tuan*) through historical data and interviews. In many experienced *Xing-ju* practitioners' memories, the New Life was known for performing the play *A Good-hearted Bandit - Liao Tian-ding*. Of the



Figure 2.10 A song and dance venue performed by *San-lan* Dancing and Singing Ensemble (1960) (Source: Chiu, 2008)

300 troupes that then existed in Taiwan, the New Life seemed unremarkable, although some older performers thought it made the greatest financial profits (Chiu, 1997: 5). It was neither noted for presenting luxurious song and dance revues (see Figure 2.10), as did the Black Cat Dancing and Singing Ensemble (*Hei-mao Ge-wu-tuan*) and *Yi-xia* Dancing and Singing Ensemble (*Yi-xia Ge-wu-tuan*) nor for having strict training and rehearsal sessions, as did the Tinkle Bell Troupe (*Zhong-sheng Hua-ju-tuan*), the National Style Troupe (*Guo-feng Ju-tuan*)

and the Southern Light Troupe (*Nan-guang Ju-tuan*).<sup>30</sup>

Based on limited data, it could be presumed that New Life was a typical professional *Xing-ju* *Opeila* troupe in the post-war era. Because it was difficult to make contact with older *Xing-ju* performers, I temporarily gave up the idea of interviewing troupe members. However, when I began pursuing my Ph.D. four years later and renewed my field research on *Xing-ju*, I was able to interview the daughter of New Life's founder and met several members of this troupe, including the founder's wife, who was in her nineties. Based on these original and unpublished interviews (conducted in September 2010), the following section will use the New Life Troupe as an example of the management and performing styles of *Xing-ju* in the post-war era.

My first interview subject was Lin Fo-er, whose father, Lin Ching-wen (see Figure 2.11), like many other Taiwanese intellectuals during Japanese rule, participated in theatre activities to escape political suppression and wrote scripts for troupes for the rest of his wandering life. He became famous for writing *A Good-hearted Bandit – Liao Tian-ding* for the New

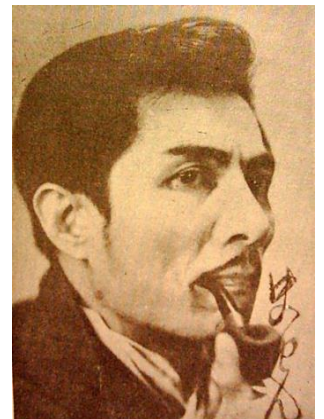


Figure 2.11 A play photo of Lin Ching-wen (1950) (Source: Chiu, 2008)

Life Troupe. Because this play was a huge hit in the

1950s, Lin extended it into a long series, while other

*Xing-ju* troupes also started to perform it. The play

was even forbidden by officials because of its huge popularity.

I thus had the chance to interview other older *Xing-ju* practitioners, such

as You Mei-yun (see Figure 2.12) and her brother You Chi-tung, who

both came from the Double Beauty Troupe (*Shuang-mei Ju-tuan*).

Mei-yun and Chi-tung's brothers, sisters and sisters-in-law had all



Figure 2.12 A play photo of You Mei-yun (1960) (Photo was provided by You Mei-yun)

<sup>30</sup> There were more than three hundreds troupes in the 1960s, some known for song and dance revues, others for circus shows, and still others for their excellent romantic plots. The troupes I mention here were particularly famous amongst all, maybe because their participants became well-known TV and movie stars later.

been members of *Xing-ju* troupes.

You Chi-tung joined several and then changed careers, moving to the film and TV industries after the decline of *Xing-ju* in the 1970s. Through him, I had chances to reach core members of New Life. The first, Kang Lung, was one of the last generation of members. After leaving the New Life, Kang worked as the host of a *Ge-wu-xiu* (Song and Dance Revue) and as an actor on many TV series. After interviewing him, I interviewed the daughter of New Life's founder, Chang Li-chu (also called A-li, see Figure 2.13). When I visited her flat in Taichung City, several family members were gathered there. As A-li recalled her memories of *Xing-ju*, her eldest brother, Chang Ching-cheng (also called Yi-lang, see Figure 2.14) added much relevant data. It became clear



Figure 2.13 A play photo of Chang Li-chu (1970) (Photo was provided by Chang Li-chu)



Figure 2.14 A play photo of Chang Yi-lang (1960) (Photo was provided by Chang Yi-lang)

that Yi-lang was the leading actor in New Life, while another of A-li and Yi-lang's sisters, Chang Hui-chu, was a popular leading actress, and a younger brother, Chang Ching-Hsiung (also called San-lang) had been a famous leading actor. Surprisingly, the ninety-year-old lady who had been concentrating on playing *Mahjong* while I

interviewed other members turned out to be the wife of New Life's founder, Chang Li-da. This family had worked and lived together for sixty years. Finally, I interviewed the troupe's last member, Wang Kuan-min (see Figure 2.15). Having participated in indoor and outdoor festivals, Wang had also created several *Xing-ju* troupes after leaving the New Life and strived to survive when *Xing-ju* declined after the mid-1970s. He claimed that his



Figure 2.15 Wong Kuan-min (2010) (Photo was taken by author)

troupe was the last *Xing-ju* troupe. It could be said that the life of the *Xing-ju* performer in the New Life reflected the course of *Xing-ju* history from the Japanese to the internal colonial era to the 1980s.

The field research that I conducted for this thesis lasted from 2004 to 2010. Fourteen *Xing-ju* participants were interviewed. Interviewees fell into two groups: the first included participants in *Xing-ju* during the Japanese colonial and post-war eras, before *Xing-ju*'s decline in the 1980s, and mainly included related members of the New Life Troupe, including the son of New Life's dramatist Lin Ching-wen, Lin Fo-er (interviewed in 2004 and 2005); Lin Ching-wen's friend, Huang Chung-hsiung (interviewed in 2005); the founder of New Life, Chang Li-da's daughter, Chang Li-chu (interviewed in 2010); and Chang Li-da's son, Chang Ching-cheng (Yi-lang, interviewed in 2010). New Life dramatist, Cheng Shen-i (Akio, interviewed in 2010), as well as New Life members Wong Kuan-min (interviewed in 2010) and Kang Lung (interviewed in 2009), were also included. In addition, certain *Xing-ju* participants from other troupes, such as You Mei-yun and You Chi-tung (Double Beauty Troupe, interviewed in 2005) and Pai Ming-hua and Pai Niao-sheng (Black Cat Song and Dance Ensemble, interviewed in 2009) were also interviewed and provided a point of comparison with New Life. The second group included mostly members of the Golden Bough Theatre, including the group's artistic director, Wong Rong-yu (interviewed in 2008 and 2009); director and actor Shi Dong-lin (interviewed in 2009); and actors Li Yun-chung (interviewed in 2009), Liu Su-chuan (interviewed in 2009), Tseng Hua-hsuan (interviewed in 2009), and Kao Ming- chien (interviewed in 2009). The following section, based on the interviews with the first group, discusses the management and acting styles of *Xing-ju* troupes in the early post-war era. I draw mainly on the first-hand material I collected from interviews, in addition to an unpublished biography of Chang Yi-lang, photos, and a live 1982 recording of an



outdoor *Xing-ju* performance,<sup>31</sup> to explain *Xing-ju* troupes' touring lives and the performance characteristics of *Xing-ju opeila* in the post-war era.

### (1) A Day in New Life

In this paragraph, I used the materials from interviews in order to present a typical day and exemplify the life style and running of a *Xing-ju* troupe in the 1960s.

After finishing the performance in the town of Gangshan, located in southern Taiwan, the members cleared away stage settings, props, costumes and personal belongings and prepared to drive overnight to Keelung, a northern city, to begin another ten-day circuit. Three big trucks were designated: one for props and stage settings, one for instruments



Figure 2.16 A Theatre of the 1950s. (Source: Ciou, 2010)

and electrical generators and one for boxes of costumes and members' luggage. Around forty to fifty members sat on their luggage, with their kitchen instruments in their arms and covered by duvets. After almost a full night's travel, they finally arrived at the next theatre at dawn. Using mosquito nets, they built temporary private spaces on the back of the stage. Only the leading actor and actress were allowed to have spaces on the side entrances of the stage, because they needed to change costumes constantly during performances.

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<sup>31</sup> The recording is provided by the head of Happy *Xing-ju* Troupe, Wang Kuan-min.

After settling down, the members slept for a few hours. When they got up at seven o'clock, they had breakfast together while sitting on the stage floor and divided into several groups, each containing five or six persons. The troupe normally offered a vegetable dish, a meat dish and a soup.



Figure 2.17 A troupe's Stepping Street before its performance (1960) (Source: Chiu, 2010)

Following breakfast, the performers dressed and advertised their new plays on the streets, which was called *Cai Jie* (Stepping Street, see Figure 2.17). The owner of the troupe usually rented several tricycles and had the performers sit on them, waving and smiling to people on the streets while being accompanied by a live band. The host announced, 'Here comes New Life Troupe again. We are preparing an exciting new play, *A Good-hearted Bandit – Liao Tian-ting*, for you in Keelung theatre. This play features the most beautiful actress, Chang Hui-chu, and the most charming actor, Chang San-lang. We are also presenting our well-known cycling circus, performed by our owner and his wife. Brilliant and entertaining – guaranteed!'

New Life usually gave two performances per day. Matinees started at three o'clock and lasted for three hours. Each performance contained three parts: An opening song and dance show (see Figure 2.18) were followed by a cycling circus, performed by the owner and his wife. The last part featured a two-hour play. Before the performance formally started, a *Si Mu* (curtain operator) knocked an instrument called *Kekashi* (woodblock) four times half an hour before the performance, to give notice to the performers and crew. As the



Figure 2.18 The song and dance show performed by Pai Ming-hua, a member of Black Cat Troupe (1960) (Photo was provided by Pai-Ming-hua)

performance time approached, the operator knocked the *Kekashi* more quickly. When the curtain opened, a sad song played as the protagonist entered the stage, introducing himself by song. They were performing a romance that featured a complicated relationship. Audiences were deeply attracted by the story, and some even cried with the heroine.

After the matinee concluded at five o'clock, New Life's members sat on the stage floor to have dinner and then began their evening performance at seven-thirty. After finishing a late-night snack, the dramatist (who also served as director simultaneously) gathered together all the performers to rehearse a new play, which would be performed the next day. The dramatist usually outlined the story first, then assigned characters to the performers, who practiced their lines and ran cues that incorporated the stage settings. Rehearsal usually lasted until midnight, and performers could go back to their spaces to rest. The next day, they repeated the same routine again, until they had to tour to other theatres in different places.

## **(2) The Recruitment and Scale of the *Xing-ju* Troupe**

According to Chiu's field research, many *Xing-ju* troupes were created as family troupes. In early times before Japanese colonisation, acting was regarded as a belittling occupation in China and Taiwan, where Confucianism was still the dominant ideology and being an intellectual was perceived as one of the most respectable occupations. A Taiwanese saying held that 'if parents do not educate their children well, their children will do theatre in the future.' Therefore, most of those who chose theatre as their occupation did so mainly because of poverty. Most *Ge-zai Xi* participants were born to poor families whose parents made contracts with troupes to 'rent' their children for fixed periods of time or to make their children adopted offspring of troupe owners. In addition, performers who toured with troupes all the time brought their family members with them or created families with other members of their troupes. As a result, the family troupe was the most common type of *Ge-zai Xi* troupe.

In regard to the recruitment of *Xing-ju* troupes, because *Xing-ju* performances did not demand as much training as *Ge-zai Xi* performances and also *Xing-ju* was regarded as a more ‘civilized’ activity, the phenomenon of ‘rented’ or ‘adopted’ children was less prevalent than it was with *Ge-zai Xi*. However, because of the need to tour widely, the family troupe was still a more convenient management method. The main advantage of this type of troupe was found in the fact that close family relationships made it difficult for other troupes to ‘head-hunt’ key members. On the other hand, it was also difficult for members who were from outside of the family to play important parts in family troupes.<sup>32</sup>

In general, *Xing-ju* performers cited four motivations for joining *Xing-ju* troupes: (1) economic factors; (2) family and relationship; (3) interest and (4) politics. Of these, economy was still the most important. Once a member joined a troupe, that troupe was basically responsible for providing food and accommodation. Although the salary for new members was low, at least they need not have worried about basic living costs. After a few years of practice, if they were fortunate to attain the status of leading actor/actress, their salary was even higher than that of an officer. In addition, because *Xing-ju* was regarded as a performing style that did not demand that performers sing and do codified movements, as traditional theatre did, it seemed easier to learn *Xing-ju* than to learn other theatre genres. As concerns politics, some members joined troupes to avoid military service. (Chiu Interview with *Xing-ju* performers, 1997: 18-33)

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<sup>32</sup> The owner of Happy New Theatre Troupe (*Jia-le Xin-ju Tuan*), Wang Kuan-min, said that he left the New Life and created his own troupe because New Life was ‘a family troupe; hence, the protagonist was always performed by their brothers, and other members had little chance to do it. I left in the end’ (Interview with author, September 2010).

In regard to the scale of *Xing-ju* troupes, bigger ones, like the Black Cat, were comprised of fifty to sixty members, while middle-sized ones numbered around twenty to thirty. Most troupes included between five to thirty musicians (see Figure 2.19), two ticket sellers, five stage-setting producers, one electrical lighting operator and one chef. Performers could be classified by four grades, according to their experience and seniority,



Figure 2.19 A small music band of a troupe (1960) (Source: Chiu, 2008)

as follows: intern, prepared core member, core member and cadre member. Their salaries also differed, according to their grades. This grading system was derived from that of Japanese *Shinpa-geki* troupes (Chiu Interview with *Xing-ju* performers, 1997: 18-33).

An intern's job was akin to that of a helper and included such activities as cleaning, making tea, sorting costumes, arranging auditorium chairs and changing scenes. Interns were also asked to observe seniors' performances. After being an intern for two to three years, performers had the chance to play insignificant roles on stage. Kang Long recalled that his first role was as part of an applauding crowd, such as a group of guests at a wedding or a gang (Interview with author, September 2009). Some fortunate or talented interns became leading actors/actresses quickly. For instance, the famous TV actress Kao Su-chu recalled that the reason she was invited to perform as a female protagonist was because the original leading actress's child went missing. Her acting ability impressed her director and allowed her to formally begin her career as an actress (Chiu, Interview with Kao Su-chu, 1995: 20-21). The eldest son of the owner of New Life, Chang I-lang, originally specialized in playing clarinet; however, when the leading actor left, Chang was also temporarily called to perform and thus began his acting career (Interview with author, September 2010). Even when I conducted my field research in a *Ge-zai Xi* troupe, New Southern-light, as an observer in September 2009, I was randomly invited to play a small part in their performance at a temple festival without

any rehearsals beforehand (see Figure 2.20).

It seems that the standards for upgrading actors' and actresses' statuses were not strict or systematised. This is because *Xing-ju*'s main characteristic, 'speaking without singing and dancing', was easily misunderstood by performers as meaning that *Xing-ju* was easy to learn and required no specific skills. As a result, learners were perceived as being able to easily obtain the chance to perform on stage if they had sufficient courage.



Figure 2.20 My participation of a *Ge-zai Xi* performance with New Southern-light Troupe (2009)  
(Photo was taken by Tzu-yun Hu)

### (3) Daily Training

*Xing-ju* performers' conceptions of training and rehearsal differed from those of performers nowadays. Character analysis and the cultivation of a performer's inner energy were not emphasized then. In addition, most performers had incomplete impressions of what it meant to be contemporary theatre performers. As noted in previous paragraphs, the primary characteristic of *Xing-ju* performance was regarded by most practitioners as being 'speaking without singing and dancing', and this resulted in lower requirements for being a *Xing-ju* actor/actress; however, in order to attract audiences and distinguish themselves from other troupes, certain types of training, most of which



Figure 2.21 A song and dance revue performed by *Yi-xia* Dancing and Singing Ensemble (1960)  
(Source: Chiu, 2008)

were corporeal, were still incorporated into *Xing-ju* performers' daily work.

Chiu's and my interviews revealed that the common daily training of *Xing-ju* troupes included Japanese *Judo*, *Kendo*, dancing and singing and juggling. To appeal to a breadth of audiences, professional troupes used as many gimmicky tricks as they could to advertise their performances. In addition to romance, acrobatic combat was a popular element of performances; therefore, having basic *Kung-fu* training seemed important to most *Xing-ju* performers. Both A-li and Kang Long recalled that after finishing an evening show or on their days off, members unfolded and practiced *Judo* on Japanese *Tatami* carpets. Sometimes, they also set up poles and practiced fighting them with a *Katana* but without touching the poles. These daily training exercises were usually led by the stage director.

Acting and rehearsal methods were not systematised or formal. Pai Ming-hua, a member of the Black Cat, described rehearsing new plays usually took place one day before they were formally performed. The most typical way of rehearsing was practicing lines with other actors. However, dance training was much tougher, as it required actors to gather on stage at eight o'clock every morning and practice until noon (Interview with author, December 2009).

*Xing-ju* performers learned acting by observing seniors' performances. Kang Long pointed out that 'reading scripts was our job. If a male protagonist was performing on stage, I would hide by the side of the stage and learn his acting style by watching. It was more important to observe' (Interview with author, September 2009).

In addition, some professional *Xing-ju* troupes not only performed theatre, but also danced and sang or took part in a circus. These troupes provided audiences with multiple forms of entertainment (see Figure 2.22). Before Chang Li-ta (also called 'A-da-la') created the New



Figure 2.22 An actress, Pai Ming-hua, was playing the juggling act (1960) (Photo was provided by Pai Ming-hua)

Life Troupe, he was the only Taiwanese bicycle circus performer in the Japanese *Yama Circus* Troupe. His advanced skills even inspired the Taiwanese saying, ‘A-da-la rides the bike without using both hands’ (*A-da-la khiâ thih-bé siang-tshiu pang*, in the *Hoklo* language), which was used to praise someone full of courage and ambition (Chang I-lan Interview with author, September 2010). The troupe that Chang created after the Japanese left Taiwan became well-known for having a three-part performance, including an opening song and dance revue, bicycle circus with Chang and his wife and theatrical piece. Other troupes known for their song and dance revues included the GGS Dancing Group, Black Cat Song and Dance Ensemble (*Hei-mao Ge-wu Tuan*) and *Yi-xia* Song and Dance Ensemble (*Yi-xia Ge-wu Tuan*). Their performances opened with short comedies that were followed by song and dance revues and a long play.

#### (4) Rehearsal and Themes of Plays

*Xing-ju* troupes in the post-war era could be said to be of two types: *Zheng-tong* (Authentic) and *Fei-zheng-tong* (Unauthentic), categories derived from the division of ‘Cotton’ and ‘Synthetic Fibre’ troupes during the *Kominka* Movement. The so-called more ‘authentic’ or ‘pure’ troupes were those that used scripts to rehearse before performing, such as the Star lighting, Tinkle Bell, National Style and New Life. By contrast, ‘unauthentic’ troupes based their rehearsals on scenarios, instead of written scripts, and improvised performances on stage (see Figure 2.23). Most of the *Xing-ju* troupes in the post-war era applied the scenario to rehearsals and created a great number of plays, called *Opeila* at the time. Because of their improvisational style, *Opeila* was

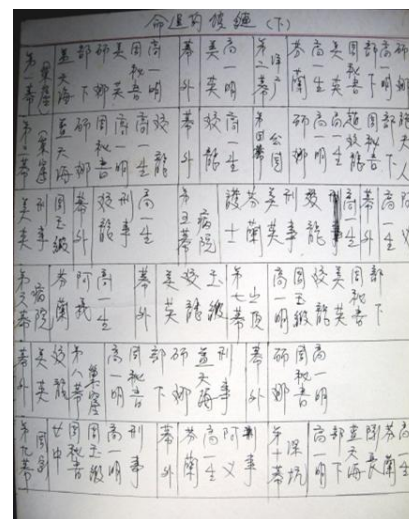


Figure 2.23 A scenario poster, which was used for performing the play, *The Chain of Fate*. The characters and places of each scene were indicated on the poster (1970) (The Poster was provided by Wong Kuan-min)



also called *Huo-xi* (Living Theatre). Kan Long noted,

There was no need to use scripts when we did *Opeila* plays, because they were living, and whatever you spoke on stage, your opponent needed to respond to improvisationally. This was also so-called *Huo-xi* (Living Theatre)' (Interview with author, September 2009, translation by author)

Whether their troupes were authentic or unauthentic, dramatists also functioned as directors simultaneously and were called 'Theatretelling Teacher' (*Káng-hì Sian-sinn*, in *Hoklo*) by the members. When troupes travelled to theatres, they usually stayed for ten days, during which time three or four plays were performed, depending on their popularity. After a troupe had toured every theatre in Taiwan, it would produce new plays and begin another tour (Interview with author, September 2009). Rehearsals always took place after evening performances finished at ten o'clock and lasted until midnight or even daybreak. The next morning, performers had another run and formally performed a matinee on stage. How could 'authentic' performers who had scripts to rehearse memorize such a formidable number of lines in a night? According to my interviews, when authentic troupes performed, a *Si-mu* (curtain operator) hid behind the stage settings or beside the stage entrance and prompted performers' lines. Performers followed the operator's instructions, speaking their lines and improvising their facial expressions and gestures. In some cases, performers did not even need to memorize any lines. However, because rehearsals were inefficient, unexpected accidents happened all the time. Pai Ming-hua recalled that once, when her troupe performed, the curtain operator was bit by a mosquito and could not help exclaiming and so the performer on stage also exclaimed. These unforeseen accidents sometimes caused the audience and the performer's counterpart to feel confused. Certain directors even crawled on the roof above-stage, which was built by bamboo cranes, to speak important lines for performers, while the performers merely lip-synced (Interview with author, November 2009).

*Opeila* rehearsals were even more efficiently saving labour power. The owner of Happy New Theatre Troupe (*Jia-le Xin-ju Tuan*), Wang Kuan-min, recalled that his troupe usually had four rehearsals for each play: ‘The first rehearsal included an overview of the story, and then performers were assigned roles. After they had a rough picture of the play, we rehearsed a second time and incorporated stage settings the third time. The fourth time was formally performing on stage’ (Interview with author, September 2010). When preparing for *Opeila* plays, dramatists/directors would transcribe the dramatis personae, including the roles and settings in each scene, onto a piece of paper. They then explained the plots of the plays and assigned roles to the performers. Subsequently, the performers practiced their parts for the first time, and the dramatists/directors gave directions regarding speaking speed, movements and facial expressions for specific lines. When plays were formally performed, a scenario poster would be pasted on the walls backstage or in the changing rooms (see Figure 2.24). The performers then followed these outlines and made up their lines and movements on their own (Wang Kuan-min Interview with author, September 2010). Producing *Opeila* not only saved labour power, but also allowed for flexible changes to the themes of plays. The rapid reflection of social circumstances created a freshness that made *Opeila* even more popular with audiences. Consequently, most *Xing-ju* and *Ge-zai Xi* troupes tended to make *Opeila*, rather than ‘authentic’ *Xing-ju*.

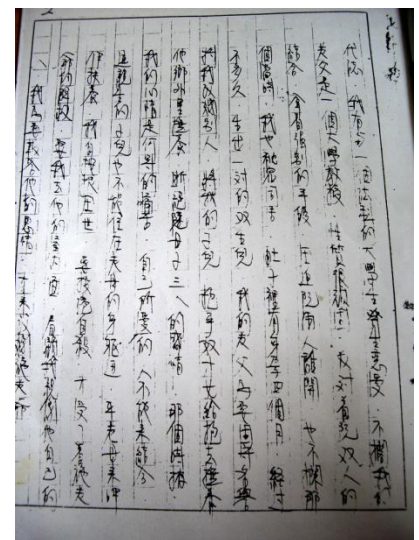


Figure 2.24 A written script by Wong Kuan-min (1970) (The Poster was provided by Wong Kuan-min)

In addition to applying scripts or scenarios to rehearsals, there was a third option – mixed scenarios. For example, for most of the time, Wong Kuan-min used scenarios to rehearse; however, for certain scenes, such as the reunion of mother and child, Wong, also a dramatist, wrote down lines word-by-word on paper and asked performers to strictly follow them while

performing, so as to conform to their director's expectations (see Figure 2.24).

In terms of performance themes, generalizations can be made by examining the plays of Liu Wan-chi, dramatist and also son-in-law of the New Life's owner, whose plays included *Sadness of Autumn* (*Qiu-yuan*), *A Justice of Nanako* (*Nanako De Shen-pan*, see Figure 2.25), *Spring Dream* (*Chun-meng*), and *Regret* (*Hui-bu Dang-chu*). From these, it is evident that family and romance were the most popular themes of Liu's time. One of the most popular stories that emerged from my interviews was as follows:

A pair of lovers or a brother and sister follow different fates after their separation. The woman becomes a public prosecutor or judge, and the man is forced to become a bandit to survive. They reunite in court because the man commits a criminal act, and the woman sends the man to prison. When the man finishes his prison term, he and the woman can finally live together happily. (Kang Long Interview with author, September 2009, Personal Translation)



Figure 2.25 The scene from *A Justice of Nanako*. It could be noted that the actress wore a justice gown (1970) (Source: Chiu, 2008)

The essential elements of *Xing-ju* plays are an intricate plot, supporting clown roles, and a happy ending. Yuen Kuo-hsing, the Chinese *Wen-ming Xi* researcher, points out that when traditional theatre began to get acquainted with Western theatre, practitioners were unable to adequately manage Western dramaturgy and, therefore, could only extract the most amusing elements from traditional theatre to supply a weak structure when writing modern scripts (2007: 164).

In order to make performances easily accepted and understood by the audiences, any element which might trigger the audience's interest could be chosen to appear on stage. Therefore, *Xing-ju* was marked by the most flexible performing characteristics at this stage. A great

amount of resource, be they native or exotic, traditional or modern, elite or folk, were broadly utilized by theatre practitioners and easily accepted by audiences. As a result, *Opeila* plays with multiple cultural elements – Western, Japanese, Chinese, contemporary, and traditional – were created on stage.

### **(5) Performing Characteristics<sup>33</sup>**

There were two major characteristics of *Xing-ju* performances: *Sio-kau Xi* (Linked Theatre, in *Hoklo*) and *Bōo-Tsîng Xi* (front-curtain theatre in *Hoklo*). Generally, troupes performed repertoires around Taiwan. They stayed at a place for around ten days and gave performances twice a day. In order to attract audiences to attend their performances every day, troupes needed to use their first-day performances to draw audiences to the theatre again, much as TV series use pilots to draw in TV audiences, the ending of each day's performance was always linked to the beginning of the next day's plot. An experienced dramatist not only arranged scene changes well, but also engineered a five-minute pre-introduction (*Tsiân Suat* in *Hoklo*) of the next day's plot that was performed before the last scene of a given day's play, to trigger audience interest. In addition, the last scene always concluded with the play's most thrilling moment – with the protagonist, for example, on the edge of danger – to make audiences feel the need to see the next day's episode. This performing strategy was called Linked Theatre.

*Xing-ju* also featured *Bōo-Tsîng Xi*. Performances took place when changing scenes and while the curtain was closed. The host entered the stage and stood in front of the closed curtain, then sang a song or told a joke to entertain the audience, in case they felt bored while waiting. The emergence of front-curtain theatre is a defining characteristic of the period when Chinese, Japanese and Taiwanese traditional theatre was profoundly influenced by Western theatre. When *Wen-ming Xi* appeared in Shanghai in the beginning of twentieth century, the first

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<sup>33</sup> For the performing characteristic of *Xing-ju*, please also check the live sound recordings of *The Chain of Fate*, performed by the Happy Theatre Troupe in 1982, in the attached DVD.

difference that theatre practitioners noted between traditional and contemporary Western forms was ‘speaking without singing and dancing’; however, except for this, they remained basically unfamiliar with Western theatrical dramaturgy. Although Chinese dramatists who tried to write *Xing-ju* scripts avoided composing lyrics and only wrote dialects, they inevitably inherited most of the elements of traditional theatrical dramaturgy. As a result, the plots of plays were still told by characters, rather than being acted by performers and exposed by plots *per se*. Dramatists still composed scripts that were based on traditional theatrical narratives. For instance, when a player entered a stage, he/she gave a brief introduction of him/herself, and the act of entering and exiting stage was not necessary to the plot. As with stage settings, the meanings of scene changes in Western theatre were not fully appreciated in *Xing-ju* performances. Furthermore, audiences were not acquainted with curtain and scene changes and thus felt easily bored when the curtain closed. This marked the emergence of ‘acting in front of the curtain’ (Yuen, 2000: 162).

The two major characteristics of *Xing-ju* addressed above were related to *Xing-ju* commercial and professional impulses in post-war Taiwan. When pleasing audiences was the priority in theatrical production, plays were designed to make audiences feel drawn to performances. Consequently, *Xing-ju* tended to look more like a variety show or light comedy. It gradually came to avoid discussing ‘heavy’ or political issues on stage, which also led to early forms of *Gong-di-xiu* (Construction Site Revue) and *Ge-ting-xiu* (Restaurant Musical Revue)<sup>34</sup> in the 1970s.

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<sup>34</sup> Construction Site Venue is a kind of variety show that was extremely popular when land and property industry was booming in the 1980s. Construction Site Venue was usually held by an estate company, and its main purpose was to appeal to buyers and promote the property in question. Construction Site Venue shows typically contained song and dance revues, short comedies, or magic shows.

Restaurant Musical Revue is an alternative form of popular entertainment that emerged after the decline of *Xing-ju* in the 1980s. Restaurant Musical Revue usually contained luxury song and dance revues, short comedies, and long dramas. The programmes were introduced and connected by a host, who was seen as key to the success of the show. To appeal to audiences, famous TV and movie stars and singers were invited to perform. Sometimes, very popular shows were performed for several years.

## (6) Lighting, Stage Settings and Make-up

In the beginning of the twentieth century, a great number of Chinese *Gai-liang Xi* and *Wen-ming Xi* troupes, which were known for having well-designed stage mechanisms and lighting technology, toured in Taiwan. Taiwanese commercial troupes thus had chances to gain new knowledge. In addition, certain Taiwanese intellectuals, such as Chang Wei-hsien and Lin Tuan-Chiu as I have mentioned in Chapter 1, participated in the famous Japanese *Tsukiji* Theatre and Tokyo Moulin Rouge and introduced the professional concept of stage technology to Taiwanese practitioners when they created their own theatre troupes in Taiwan. Until the post-war era, having mobile mechanical stage settings and using electrical lighting to improve performances was indispensable for professional troupes. Besides, each troupe also had specialists who were responsible for making lighting and stage settings.

Kung Long recalled that stage setting screens were made of canvases on which different scenes were painted, such as living rooms, seas, skies and forests, and which were fixed by wooden frames (see Figure 2.26). Several pointed wooden sticks were nailed on the screens' backs. When changing scenes, screens were pulled on stage, and fixed in place by inserting pointed sticks into the wooden floor. Different screens could be arranged together, to construct different scenes. For example, the combination of cloud and forest screens could form a countryside scene. Some screens were even three-dimensional. For instance, window frames could be expanded to allow performers to sit on them, while the doors on living room screens were moveable and could be



Figure 2.26 It could be noted that the stage settings were removable (1970) (Photo was provided by Chang Li-chu)

opened by performers (Interview with author, September 2009, see Figure 2.27). In addition, because most *Xing-ju* troupes lacked formal training in technology, practitioners sometimes devised their own special stage effects. Wang Kuan-min, the owner of Happy New Theatre Troupe, was an intern in the New Life Troupe for only a month. When he created his own troupes, he came up with a unique way of designing stage effects and developed his own directing style, which was based on Japanese movies that were popular in the 1950s. In a heavy rain scene in *The Chain of Fate* (*Ming-yun De Suo-lian*), Wong arranged for staff to carry several buckets of water onto the roof of the stage and use watering cans to create rain. Similarly, he sprinkled reversible paper from a printing factory from the roof to create snow. He also learned from mistakes, as when he tried to present the bomb explosion scene that he saw in classic James Bond movies. Not knowing that he should use diesel fuel, he used petrol, which is more unstable than diesel, and thus could not control the resulting fire, which almost burned the whole theatre (Interview with author, September 2010).



Figure 2.27 It could be noted that the stage settings were three-dimensional (1970) (Photo was provided by Akio)

In terms of costumes and make-up, most *Xing-ju* plays were set in modern times, with the exception of a few period dramas; therefore, performers usually wore Western costumes. In *Ge-zai Opeila*, performers still wore Western-style costumes, but their clothing was more luxurious, exaggerated and full of revue flavour, including gallus trousers with splendid paillette and evening gowns decorated with feathers. Costumes signified character types in *Xing-ju* performances, suggesting, for instance, via an exotic headdress that a character was not a *Han-Chinese* (see Figure 2.28, 2.29). What is more, to reduce costs, performers tried to make their costumes and even cosmetics by themselves. A-li told me that she used to cut her hair to make false eyelashes, used chicken-feather brushes to draw her eyebrows and added

food colouring to Vaseline to make blush or eye shadow (Interview with author, September 2010).



Figure 2.28 An actress' exotic style costume (1970) (Photo was provided by Pai Ming-hua)



Figure 2.29 An actress' Western style dress (1970) (Photo was provided by Pai Ming-hua)

## 4.2 The End of the *Xing-ju* Golden Age

When the first 35 mm *Hoklo* spoken movie, *Hsueh Ping-kui and Wang Pao-chuan* (*Hsueh Ping-kui Yu Wang Pao-chuan*) was released in 1956 and was well-accepted by Taiwanese audiences, film quickly became the dominant form of entertainment most competitive with *Xing-ju*. Consequently, *Xing-ju* performers gradually transitioned to the film industry. At the same time, due to the lack of professional practitioners and more commercialised tendency, *Xing-ju* gradually failed to improve itself and thus became replete with clichés. To maximize the number of tours, the cost of plays fell lower and lower than ever, resulting in more coarse works that were rashly produced. By the 1970s, *Xing-ju* was totally replaced by television's popularity. It was more convenient to watch drama and song and dance revues at home. The management of theatres and troupes was seriously challenged. Theatres began to feature exclusively broadcast movies, rather than theatrical performances. Because of the decline of



*Xing-ju*, theatre practitioners also moved to the *Hoklo* film and TV industries. Until the 1980s, other popular forms of entertainment, including Restaurant Musical Revues and Construction Site Revues, remained alternative ways of earning a living for former *Xing-ju* practitioners.

However, the lack of professional practitioners and emergence of new mass media were merely superficial causal factors in the decline of *Xing-ju*. The major reason, I argue, related to politics. The cultural hegemony that the KMT government created by promoting China- and Mandarin-centred ideologies promoted a view that performances given mainly in the *Hoklo* language were coarse or low-class popular entertainment forms appropriate principally for the Taiwanese working and lower classes. The KMT government promoted the Mandarin Speaking Movement (*Qing-shui Guo-yu Yun-dong*) and further prohibited the teaching of Taiwanese mother tongues in schools until 1965. After the official broadcast of the first TV company in Taiwan, the Taiwan Television Enterprise (*Taiwan Dian-shi Gong-si*), the Department of the Executive instituted the Broadcast and Television Programmes Guidance Policy in 1963, restricting the usage of Taiwanese dialects in TV programmes to no more than fifty percent of programmes. Furthermore, because audiences who preferred to see Taiwanese dialects spoken on TV were still in the majority, the Ministry of Education strictly limited the total broadcast time of spoken programmes that contained Taiwanese mother tongues to not more than one hour per day in 1972 (Chuang, 2005: 25-26).

Within the limitations of language policy, performers who came from Mainland China after 1949 were still dominant in theatre and film industries. Chang Yi-lang remarked on the marginalisation of *Hoklo* speaking actresses, observing that many talented movie stars, such as Huang Chun, Liu Ching, Ai A-tsai and Hu Tou had limited TV and film careers because they could not speak ‘standard’ Mandarin. Ai A-tsai, a *Hoklo* speaking movie star well-known to Taiwanese audiences, was awarded the Lifelong Achievement Award (*Zhong-sheng Cheng-jiu Jiang*) by the Government Information Office in 1991; however, when bureau chief

awarded the prize to Ai-tsai, Ai-tsai returned the reward to the chief and said, ‘Only if you don’t force out the Taiwanese language will I be satisfied.’ (Chang Yi-lang, 2010, Interview with author, September 2010). In addition, Chang also recalled that when New Life’s dramatist, Liu Wan-chi, moved to the TV industry, if his supervisors, who were also directly assigned by the KMT government, liked his written scripts, these works would be designated for broadcast in Mandarin; whereas, if these supervisors thought the works were mediocre, they would only be performed on *Hoklo* programmes (Interview with author, September 2010). Taiwanese mother tongues were suppressed for more than forty years by the KMT regime. It seems that the cultural hierarchy imposed by internal colonial ideology is responsible for the Taiwanese languages spoken in theatre, movies and TV programmes being regarded as inferior and, consequently, in these forms of entertainment also being perceived as sub-par.

Taiwanese theatre researcher Chung Ming-de has noted that the anti-communist theatre of the 1950s did not benefit from the achievements of *Xing-ju* in the Japanese colonial era and also alienated itself from Taiwanese reality. In addition, he has pointed out that ‘before the emergence of avant-garde theatre between the 1960s and 1980s, theatre activities were almost under the total control of the KMT government, and were confined within the walls of universities, and thus their works tended to be more and more monotone and dogmatic in dramaturgy, directing, acting and designing’ (1999: 15). However, anti-communist drama is still regarded as the dominant theatre genre by theatre researchers who studied the theatre of the 1950s. Ma San, an important theatre critic, has presented a prototypical discourse on developments after anti-communist theatre. Ma pointed out, ‘Taiwanese theatre voluntarily absorbed the contemporary Western theatre experience and further developed, digested and advanced it between the 1960s and 70s’ (2002: 24, Personal Translation). During this period, the Little Theatre Movement (*Xiao-ju-chang Yun-dong*) was mainly promoted by Mainland theatre practitioner Li Man-kui, and Western Modernist ideology was introduced in the

magazines *Contemporary Literature* (*Xian-dai Wen-xiao*) and *Theatre* (*Ju-chang*), which were major forces prior to the blooming of the first generation of avant-garde theatre troupes in the 1980s. Ma has identified these theatre activities as ‘twice Westernizations of Chinese contemporary theatre’, without taking into account other Taiwanese local theatre activities, such as *Xing-ju*, in development at the time. However, this problematic argument was one of the dominant perspectives on the historical narrative of post-war Taiwanese theatre. In fact, it is worth noting that the majority of theatre practitioners, whether participants in anti-communist theatre, script writers for the magazines *Contemporary Literature* and *Theatre* or members of the first generation of the avant-garde theatre movement, were Mainlanders who migrated to Taiwan after 1949. The themes of several of their most representative works, such as *He Zhu's New Match* (*He-zhu Xin-pei*), *The Jade Bodhisattva* (*Nian-yu Guan-yin*), *The Person from Wu-ling* (*Wu-ling-ren*), *He's Jade* (*He-shi-bi*), and *The Descendant of Nan-ke* (*Nan-ke Hou-ren*), also focused on new interpretations of Chinese literature.<sup>35</sup> It was not until the second generation of the avant-garde theatre movement emerged in the 1990s that the ‘theatrically-reflected here and now of Taiwan’ finally could be put into practice after the lifting of martial law in 1987 (Chung, 1999: 124).

In addition, the Westernisation phenomenon in literary and theatre circles in the 1960s also reflected what Chen Kuang-hsing has suggested is the replacement of American neo-colonisation, which immersed Asia in economic and cultural capitalism, within the post-war Cold War context. Chung has criticized the first generation of the avant-garde theatre movement of the 1980s that ‘copied the avant-garde tides from America and Japan. Their works not only theatrically represented the current colonisation (by America and Japan), but also reproduced the process of being colonised by itself’ (1999: 26).

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<sup>35</sup> There were certain exceptions at that time. For instance, in 1979, Wang Chi-mei, a lecturer at the University of Chinese Culture, led student theatre groups in the Art Department in performances of eight experimental plays. In addition to adaptations of literary works by Mainlanders Ma San, Chen Re-xi and Chu His-Ning, Wang and his students also chose works by Huang Chun-ming and Wang Zhen-han, two famous Taiwanese Native Soil writers, to adapt into theatre works. (Ma, 2002: 24)

Rapid ‘Americanization’ closed the chance to solve Japanese colonial issues in the post-war era; however, the imposition of the KMT’s internal colonial regime raised other issues for Taiwan. Because most of the leading participants in the development of contemporary theatre during the post-war era were Mainlanders, the theatrical narratives of this period ignored the accumulation of *Xing-ju* during the Japanese colonial and early post-war eras and focused, instead, on the development of anti-communist theatre in the 1950s and on little theatre movement in the 1970s. It was not until the lifting of martial law in 1987, when the prosperous non-party movement triggered critical tendencies in theatre circles, that the second generation of the little theatre movement began to criticize political and social issues. Significant troupes included The Note (*Bi-ji Ju-chang*), The Circle Remains (*Huan-xu Ju-chang*), The Left Shore (*He-zuo-an Ju-tuan*), The U Theatre (*U Ju-chang*) and Critical Point Theatre Phenomenon (*Lin-jie-dian Ju-xiang-lu Ju-tuan*). In addition to exploring the diversity of performing forms, it is worth noting that the themes of these troupes’ works ‘exceeded middle-class taste, which involved writing scripts, framing stages and the idea that “art is art, politics is politics”, and were more explicitly involved in every kind of social movement’ (Chung, 1993: 31). Taboo issues like politics could be freely criticized at the time, and more critical issues, such as environmental protection and uneven distribution of wealth, could be given greater attention.

With the growth of Taiwanese Native Soil awareness in the 1980s, *Ge-zai Xi* was seen as the theatre genre that exemplified ‘authentic’ Taiwanese culture. *Xing-ju*, however, was hard to define because of its hybrid cultural characteristics. In the 1990s, Wong Rong-yu and You Hui-fen, who were both then members of the second generation little theatre movement, represented the *Opeila* performing form on stage, and academic evaluations of *Opeila* then began to change completely. As a result, even the most ‘authentic’ *Ge-zai Xi* troupes, which were known for performing classical and traditional *Ge-zai Xi* forms, started to produce *Opeila* plays. In addition, when a group of students in the *Ge-zai Xi* club at the National

Taiwan University created an amateur *Ge-zai Xi* troupe, Taiwan Zephyr Opera Troupe, after they graduated, they also included *Opeila* plays in their repertoire. The change in attitudes toward *Ge-zai Xi* and *Opeila* will be further discussed in the following paragraphs.

## **5. The Historical Context of Re-evaluating *Ge-zai Xi* and *Opeila***

Hsieh analyzes the fluctuating evaluation of *Ge-zai Xi* and *Opeila* between 1980 and 2000. She has noted in a canonical monograph, *The Development and Change of the Taiwanese Ge-zai Xi (Taiwan Ge-zai Xi De Fa-zhan Yu Bian-qian)*, which was published in 1988 by Zeng Yong-yi, that *Opeila* was described as ‘messaging everything up, which also means it was always belittled by the people’ (Zeng, 1988, cited in Hsieh, 2007: 96). This explanation also ‘honestly exemplified the common perspectives of the academia and audiences toward *Opeila*’ (Hsieh, 2007: 96). Before the 1990s, the existence of *Opeila* was rather embarrassing for the *Ge-zai Xi* performers, researchers and audiences, who were used to watching the traditional *Ge-zai Xi*, and it was usually seen as ‘our mangy son’ (Hsieh, 2007: 86). On the other hand, the esteem for *Ge-zai Xi* was promoted from a belittled theatre genre in the Japanese period to a ‘national theatre’, which could represent the authentic Taiwanese spirit, in the 1980s. The changes in the way it was valued are closely related to the politics of the time.

As I have explained, since the migration of the KMT regime in 1949, the government employed authoritarianism to govern Taiwan and established Taiwan as the ‘base for anti-communism and retrieval of mainland China’ (Chen, 1996: 374). Anti-communist literature was encouraged with high rewards by the Chinese Literature Rewards Committee (*Zhong-hua Wen-yi Jiang-jin Wei-yuan-hui*). Within this context, *Peking Opera* was recognized as the representative theatre genre of the orthodox Chinese culture by the KMT Chinese-centric Nationalist. According to Hsieh:

To place importance on *Peking Opera* is one of the governing Taiwanese strategies in order to emphasize the superiority of the authentic culture behind it and to obtain the legitimation of their rule on Taiwan. This led to the domination of *Peking Opera* in traditional theatre and anti-communist Spoken Drama in contemporary theatre. However, the other ethnic cultures were marginalized as local and folk cultures. (2007: 84, Personal Translation).

Since the 1950s, American assistance was depended on, especially in political, economic and military aspects; consequently, American ideology, technology and life style greatly influenced Taiwanese society. It was only in the 1960s that the Taiwanese intellectuals started to feel intolerant towards the monotonous anti-communist slogans and were eager to seek alternatives to Western cultures. In the mid 1960s, the KMT government established The Revival of the Chinese Cultures Committee (*Zhong-hua Wen-hua Fu-xing Wei-yuan-hui*) and attempted to evoke a national spirit by promoting Chinese traditional cultures. This cultural movement reached its peak in the 1970s and led to a trend of returning to the Chinese tradition (Chen, 1996: 410-412). Because the movement was still motivated by political enforcement and emphasized the form rather than the meaning of culture, its influence was nevertheless limited (Li Yi-yuan, 1982: 27).

In addition, the emergence of political, social and economic problems and the failure of diplomacy in the 1970s provoked the intellectuals to begin the Returning to Native Soil Movement (*Hui-gui Xiang-tu Yun-dong*). In the economic aspect, the Arab–Israeli conflict caused the first crisis after the Second World War and the legend of the ‘Taiwanese economic resurgence’ started to be challenged and forced the Taiwanese to criticize its over-dependence on the American and Japanese economies.

Following this, another difficult event happened in October 1971 when the United Nations unanimously adopted the replacement of the Republic of China by the People’s Republic of China. The delegation of ROC formally announced its withdrawal from the United Nations (Hsueh, 1990: 154). These two major setbacks in Taiwanese diplomacy provoked a sharpening of awareness of what it is to be Taiwanese. The intellectuals started to separate

themselves from total Westernisation and increased their tendency towards ‘returning to tradition and concerning themselves with reality’ (Chen, 1996: 412-413). Native Soil Literature Movement (*Xiang-tu Wen-xue Yun-dong*) emerged in the mid-1970s. Actually, this movement did not only limit itself to literature, but also extended its influence to political, social and cultural ideologies. Based on the presupposition of the idea of ‘returning’, the social reality was more focused, the awareness of nation/native soil was increased, the trend to over-imitate Western cultures was challenged and traditional culture was re-evaluated. Some representative performance groups which developed under the trend of ‘returning to tradition’ were the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan (*Yun-men Wu-ji*), Lan-ling Theatre Workshop (*Lan-ling Ju-fang*) and Melodious Collection (*Ya-yin Xiao-ji*). One significant point is that the ‘native tradition’, which was being focused in the Native Soil Cultural movement, still vaguely referred to Chinese culture rather than the real indigenous cultures, and was regarded as the ‘double awareness of “China/Taiwan”’ (Chen, 1998: 133). It seems that the Chinese centric ideology was still prioritised over the Taiwanese ‘local’ and indigenous cultures in this returning movement.

It was not until the 1980s that the nature of the Native Soil Literature Movement significantly changed and the title of ‘Native Soil Literature’ was revised as ‘Taiwanese literature’. The key reason behind this transformation was the ‘Kaohsiung Event’ (also known as ‘Formosa Event’, *Mei-li-dao Shi-jian*) in 1979. The incident occurred when Formosa Magazine held a demonstration commemorating Human Rights Day in an effort to promote and demand democracy in Taiwan. At that time, the KMT regime used this protest as an excuse to arrest the main leaders of the political opposition. After this conflict between the KMT government and non-Party intellectuals, the local Taiwanese started to radically challenge the critical issues of provincialism and the subjectivity of Taiwanese-ness was gradually formed. After the lifting of martial law in 1987, the connection between China and Taiwan was re-established, and the Taiwanese identity of ‘other-than China’ also gradually developed when the

Taiwanese had the chance to make a comparison with China (Bosto, 1992: 192-403). ‘As the Taiwanese Native Soil Consciousness Movement gained political legitimacy, *Ge-zai Xi*’s status as “Taiwan’s local opera” gradually solidified. By the mid-1990s, *Ge-zai Xi* was widely recognized as a “theatre of Taiwaneseeness” (Silvio, 2005b: 47). Within this historical context, *Ge-zai Xi*, which was categorized as the local theatre form, was re-evaluated by the academia and aimed at ‘refining’ and ‘traditionalizing’ itself although *Peking Opera* was still taken as the paradigmatic model of *Ge-zai Xi* (Hsieh, 2007: 86). In 1981, the *Yang Li-hua Ge-zai Xi Troupe* was the first *Ge-zai Xi* troupe to perform in the national theatre, followed by the *Ming-hua Yuan*, *He-Luo* and other troupes whom also gave their performances in it. Hsieh points out that this phenomenon does not only signify a rise of the traditional theatre, but also the transformation of the Taiwanese cultural identity:

By continually imitating the ideal paragon theatre genre, *Peking opera*, the Taiwanese also experienced a therapy and rehabilitation of confidence through the process of refining *Ge-zai Xi*. (2007: 93, translation by author)

However, in the process of promoting Taiwaneseeness, the old distinction between the upper classes and commoners was still not abandoned. On the one hand, *Ge-zai Xi* successfully reformed itself as a ‘refined’ theatre genre; on the other hand, both the appearance and performing style of *Opeila* seemed neither Western nor Eastern. Its ‘non-traditional’ form results in the ambiguity of classifying *Opeila*. Silvio points out that:

Intellectuals attempting to legitimize *Ge-zai Xi* during the KMT era focused on performance style, on establishing ‘correct’ and ‘traditional’ repertoires of music, movement, language, costumes and sets. The project of repertoires of purifying, refining, and authenticating *Ge-zai Xi* implies that certain forms of the genres are, by contrast, stylistically impure, vulgar, and inauthentic (2005b: 47).

From this perspective, the following three kinds of *Ge-zai Xi* were usually privileged and obtained funding from the government: (1) the early form of *Ge-zai Xi*, such as *Lao Ge-zai* (Old Taiwanese Opera) and *Luo-di-sao* (coming down to the ground and sweeping) coming down to the ground and sweeping, also see p.54); (2) traditional *Ge-zai Xi* scripts revised from



the representative plays, such as *The butterfly lovers (Shan-ba Ying-tai)* and *Chen-san and Fifth Lady (Chen-san Wu-niang)*; (3) the refined *Ge-zai Xi* which referred to those *Ge-zai Xi* plays employing self or newly written scripts and attempting to create the realistic and natural stage settings, such as *He-Luo Opera Troupe* (Silvio, 2005a: 10). *Opeila* was usually performed at temple festivals. However, as the most popular form of *Ge-zai Xi*, it was still conceived as the ‘unauthentic’ *Ge-zai Xi* form with less meaning to the Native Soil culture.

In 1996, the KMT candidate, Li Teng-hui, was the first elected president and also the first local Taiwanese president. In 2000, another candidate, Chen Shui-Pien, who was from the opposition party DPP, was elected as president. The national awareness of being ‘Children of Taiwan’ (*Taiwan Zhi-zi*) reached its peak (Hsieh, 2007: 94). The China-centric value was strongly challenged and overturned at that time; however, as an uncertain nation situated near China and with mostly Chinese immigrants, Taiwan was anxious to seek its own identity - a Taiwanese subjective culture, which originated from China but had developed its own significant and independent character. Therefore, the old esteem for local cultures, which were regarded as the lowest cultures, was the first to collapse: ‘the most significant phenomenon was the changing attitude with regard to *Opeila*’ (Silvio, 2005a: 10). After 1996, the positive discourses about *Opeila* appeared, and the academic circle began to regard *Opeila* as one of the authentic sub-genres of *Ge-zai Xi*. The definition of *Opeila* by Shin Ju-fang was one of the representative discourses:

*Opeila* is a definitive form of mainstream Taiwanese *Ge-zai Xi* and can be said to characterise the inhabitants of the island, who possess highly open-minded attitudes toward the acceptance of imported cultures. If this kind of *Ge-zai Xi* is allowed to be representative of Taiwan’s native cultures, the meaning of Taiwanese culture can be defined in a wider and richer manner. (2002: 70, Personal Translation)

Following this argument, another researcher, Liu Nan-fang, also suggests that *Opeila* is an ‘artistic work’ rather than ‘literary work’ (1998). Liu also argues that, although *Opeila* was not a very refined theatre form, it voluntarily emerged from ordinary Taiwanese life and had a

close relationship with audiences, which is significant (1998, cited in Hsieh, 2007: 97).

Silvio points out that the changes in perspective about *Opeila* reveals the fact that the Taiwanese local cultures were no longer only referred to the *Hoklo* culture and gradually expanded its meanings. The change reflected the changing attitudes of politics, academia and the people toward the establishment of national identity. Similar phenomenon also occurred in most of the post-industrial countries and it seems that it is a common strategy to confront globalization and to regard 'local culture' as 'containing multiple cultures' (Silvio, 2005: 12a).

I argue that the *Opeila* performances which were produced by the Golden Bough Theatre in the 1990s (the focus of the next chapter) are key factors in the re-evaluation of *Opeila*. Interestingly, the Golden Bough is not a traditional *Ge-zai Xi* troupe but is regarded as a contemporary troupe. After being well known for its first *Opeila* production, *Taiwan Opera: The Female Robin Hood - Pai Hsiao-lan*, in 1996, *Opeila* seems to be enhanced by the contemporary theatre and the Native Soil consciousness. *Opeila* is no longer merely a popular entertaining form for the ordinary people; in its re-appearance it may still look like a 'mangy son', but there is something different in its constitution and meaning. During the fluid process of searching for the Taiwanese national and cultural identity, *Opeila* is a potential hope and possibility.

After Golden Bough's success, which I look at in detail in the next chapter, *Opeila* drew more attention from the academic world, and the traditional *Ge-zai Xi* troupes no longer avoided performing *Opeila* plays. The first appearance of *Opeila* in the official support event was in The Joint Performances of *Ge-zai Xi* Outstanding Performers (*Ge-zai Xi Qun-ying Da-hui-yan*), which was held by the Centre of Traditional Art in 2001. Many *Ge-zai Xi* troupes were gathered together to give their repertoires at this event; amongst them, the Spring Beauty Taiwanese Opera Troupe (*Chun-mei Ge-ju-tuan*) performed an *Opeila* play entitled *Flying Bandit – Black Eagle (Fei-zei Hei-ying)*. This play signified that *Opeila*, as a

kind of theatre genre, could also be formally approved by the authorities (Hsieh, 2007: 98). Even the *Hsin-chuan* Taiwanese Opera Troupe, which was previously known for performing the ‘authentic’ *Ge-zai Xi*, also performed an *Opeila* play, *The Night of Looking Homeward* (*Wang-xiang Zhi-ye*), and this meant that *Opeila* was finally recognized by the traditional *Ge-zai Xi* troupes (Hsieh, 2007: 98).

## Conclusion

I believe that an incomplete historical narrative of contemporary Taiwanese theatre, which did not connect the initial forms of contemporary theatre from the Japanese colonial era to the post-war development of *Xing-ju*, was constructed in post-war theatre history discourse. In other words, contemporary theatre activity, which involved the participation of local Taiwanese, has been absent in historical narratives of contemporary Taiwanese theatre.

As I have shown, Taiwan has experienced multiple, successive colonisations, and the accumulating wounds still need to be revealed, clarified and healed. Chen Kuan-hsing has observed:

The meaning of de-colonisation is not to seek a ‘pure’ and ‘essential’ subjectivity, but to ‘eliminate’ the conservative, unitary and multilayered thinking structure, and to lift the fighting sentiment that emerged during historical experiences and clashes. (2007: 28, Personal Translation)

I argue that the absence of *Xing-ju* discussions in post-war Taiwan was the result of unresolved colonial issues. Under the rule of the KMT regime, the contradiction between the inward Sinicization and outward Americanization of KMT policy increased the distance between the ruling classes and the people. Within this context, contemporary theatre was influenced by both the anti-communist plays and modernist tide of the 1960s and resulted in the first generation of the little theatre movement in the 1980s. The development of *Xing-ju*

during the Japanese colonial era and of *Opeila* during the post-war era was ignored by academic circles. Drawing attention to the inner contradictions of Taiwanese theatre history, Chiu pointed out that most published theatre history monographs in Taiwan have focused on Chinese theatre or music history and on contemporary theatre and *Peking* opera in China during the early twentieth century and in Taiwan after 1949. Although Taiwanese history has started to attract attention in academic circles recently, Taiwanese theatre history is still seen as the history of ‘provincial theatre’. Speaking about research on the development of contemporary theatre in Taiwan, Chiu explained that Taiwanese theatre was still placed under the structure of Chinese theatre history. Chiu then concluded:

If the narratives of Taiwanese theatre strive to exceed the old structure of ‘Taiwan as part of Chinese theatre history’, it is not necessary to aim at the replacement of the dominant discourse. The most important thing is to develop our own textual strategies, based on an independent narrative perspective, and to pursue specific theatre developments within a Taiwanese cultural context. (2008: 346-364, Personal Translation)

In order to see through the colonial mist and construct a clear Taiwanese theatre narrative, we must consider whether the old structure is strengthened by the building of an opposing subjectivity. Therefore, we should be aware of the pitfalls of both ‘extreme de-Taiwan Sinicization’ and ‘de-China Taiwanization’.

In this chapter, I have drawn from original, unpublished source material to explore the development of *Xing-ju* during the post-war era in relation to political status. *Xing-ju* was the most popular form of entertainment for Taiwanese people, who were born before or after the Second World War. However, it was always regarded as inferior to *Peking* opera and *Ge-zai Xi*. Its hybrid characteristics made it unacceptable from the perspective of both essential Chinese nationalism and Taiwanese nationalism. After the 1990s, the KMT regime and its China-centric cultural hegemony were challenged and began to collapse; however, this hegemony had already infiltrated every level of politics, society and education.

After 2000, the term *Tai-ke* (translation ‘Taiwanese guest’, meaning ‘Taiwanese people’) emerged. ‘*Tai-ke*’ was firstly used by Mainlanders to refer to the local Taiwanese in the 1950s. After the 1980s, this term was also used in reference to a specific group of young people who were regarded as having ‘bad taste’ and who wore fake brand-name clothes and silky, textured black trousers with white cloth shoes; they also rode 50c.c scooters. Interestingly, it was not until 2005 that *Tai-ke*’s popularity, which spread via mass media, came to signify a ‘new Taiwanese identity/aesthetics’. Silvio pointed out that ‘*Tai-ke* blurred the boundary between the definition of Taiwanese and non-Taiwanese’ (2009: 2). I argue that *Tai-ke* revealed a desire on the part of the Taiwanese to seek a wider definition of Taiwanese culture, one that contains syncretic and post-industrial characteristics, rather than a ‘pure’ culture, and that this may suggest collective resistance to Chinese or Taiwanese nationalist hegemony. Golden Bough Theatre also claimed that its *Opeila* works exemplified *Tai-ke* aesthetics after 2005. The analysis of Golden Bough’s emerging cultural context and its works will be explored in detail in the following chapter.

## Chapter Three

### A Post-colonial Interpretation of *Xing-ju* – The Golden Bough Theatre's *Opeila* Works

#### Introduction

This chapter will introduce the Golden Bough's working progress, actor training and the intercultural and post-colonial meaning of their *Opeila* productions. In addition, some issues will also be discussed as the following: What is the distinct difference between the Golden Bough's imitation of *Xing-ju* plays and the *Xing-ju* of the 1960s? From the application of multiple cultural elements in the Golden Bough's *Opeila* works, will the power relationships between these cultures also be revealed? Can the successful representation of *Opeila* productions and the feedback from contemporary audiences indicate a direction for contemporary Taiwanese theatre practitioners? Does the Golden Bough shape a new outline for Taiwanese theatre?

It was my first visit to the Golden Bough Theatre, located in Tamsui town in the north part of Taiwan. The rehearsal studio was different from a contemporary theatre studio. Turning right, I walked along a short path with orchards on both sides and then saw an ordinary farmer's cottage in front of me (see Figure 3.1). When I pushed the iron front door, there was a friendly black dog waving its tail at me. Looking around the cottage, there was another orchard, a water pool with a pavilion built across it, two detached buildings and an iron roof building, which was their main rehearsal studio.



Figure 3.1 Golden Bough Theatre's rehearsal studio (2009) (Photo was taken by author)

It was a humid summer afternoon with two industrial fans rotating in the hot iron roof studio. A number of full-time actors were either cleaning the environment, reading scripts or singing *Karaoke*. The scene impressed me with the easily accessible atmosphere (see the Clip 2 in the attached DVD1). There is a screen door in the studio leading to their kitchen and dining room with a big round table in the centre (see Figure 3.2). Going further is an office belonging to the artistic director, Wong Rong-yu, who is also called *Er-ge* (the second elder brother) by the members. Two aged plastic leather sofas, a desk and a computer are simply placed in this office and *Er-ge* was playing the ‘happy farm game’ on



Figure 3.2 Golden Bough Theatre's kitchen (2009) (Photo was taken by author)

Facebook. Going further down, there is a guest room and a small shrine worshipping the Chinese theatre god, *Tian-dou Marshal (Tian-dou Yuan-shuai)*<sup>36</sup>. If I was merely a visitor, I

might think that this was a *Ge-zai Xi* theatre rehearsal studio; however, it is a studio belonging to a contemporary troupe, Golden Bough Theatre, which is famous for its *Opeila* productions. They have performed in a variety of places, from night markets and temples to the formal national auditorium and international festivals.



Figure 3.3 Golden Bough Theatre's rehearsal studio (2009) (Photo was taken by author)

As I have discussed in the previous chapters, Taiwanese *Xing-ju* developed from *Wen-ming Xi*, *Gai-liang Xi*, *Wen-hua Ju* and *Huang-ming Ju* in the Japanese colonial era to *Opeila* which was prosperous in the post-war Taiwan. *Xing-ju* seemed to come to its end during the period

<sup>36</sup> “*Tian-dou Yuan-shuai*” is the title of a Chinese god who is in charge of the Chinese traditional theatre. The traditional troupes believe that by worshipping it will bring more performing invitations and commercial benefits to them.

between the 1970s and 1980s because of the popularity of television and movies. After that, Taiwanese theatre was taken over by Western contemporary theatre, which is considered to start from the formation of *Lan-ling* Theatre Workshop in Taiwan in 1980. Western theatrical aesthetics and dramaturgy were regarded as the dominant trend in the Taiwanese theatre circles. Entering the 1990s, the second generation of Little Theatre Movement (*Xiao-ju-chang Yun-dong*) was stimulated by many young theatre practitioners who were seeking diversity in performing forms. The number of troupes increased rapidly; however, the theatre practitioners somehow still alienated themselves from the audiences, and this issue will be discussed in the later paragraphs. One of the *Lan-ling* Theatre Workshop members, Liu Ching-Min (Liu Ruo-yu after 2004), who had studied at New York University and had the chance to join one of Grotowski's projects, established U Theatre when she returned from America in 1988. Wong Rong-yu, the founders of Golden Bough Theatre, surprisingly changed his career from being a white-collar worker to theatre practitioner and was deeply influenced by the concept of U Theatre, and which will be further discussed in this chapter. Golden Bough believes that '[t]he most touching is the culture springing from native land.'<sup>37</sup> Wong and You Hui-fen, Wong's wife and the executive director of Golden Bough, regard Taiwanese local and folk cultures as the fertilizer for their creative work and attempt to create a form of theatre which grows from the mother land. These chain reactions resulted in the unique style of Golden Bough Theatre.

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<sup>37</sup> Golden Bough Theatre official website: <http://www.goldenbough.com.tw/>



# 1. An Overview of the Establishment of Golden Bough Theatre and Their Productions

## 1.1 Wong Rong-yu<sup>38</sup>

Wong Rong-yu, who is the artistic director of Golden Bough Theatre, was born in Taichung city in 1960. His grandparents owned a traditional *Ge-zai Xi* troupe named *Cai Lian She*. Wong's mother, Hsieh Yueh-hsia (see Figure 3.4), and his mother's sisters were adopted by different troupes in their childhoods because of economic hardship. Hsieh started to perform on stage from the age of six. She was trained as a *Xiao Sheng* (male leading role) and was well-known for her magnetic voice.



Figure 3.4 Wong Rong-yu (left) and his mother (right), Hsieh Yueh-hsia (2005)  
(Source: Hung, 2005)

What Hsieh has experienced was a very typical progression for those females growing up in an impoverished family in the early Taiwan society in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. After becoming a famous male leading role, Hsieh was arranged to marry Wong's father by her adoptive parents at eighteen. Wong's father was sent to prison because of selling drugs. In order to feed her family, Hsieh was forced to leave her children at home and toured with a traditional troupe (Hung, 2005: 242-253).

Growing up in these straitened circumstances, Wong had a difficult adolescence. As a result, he could not easily forgive his mother's absence from his childhood. He has said that in his family, 'almost every man became a gangster and every woman a *Ge-zai Xi* actress'

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<sup>38</sup> The sources of Wong's life experiences are mainly based on my own interviews with him, and other members of Golden Bough, as well as other related published articles.

(Interview with author, September 2008). After he dropped out from the *Chong-shan* Medical School, Wong consequently decided to join an underworld gang and was eager to become a ‘professional gangster’. However, he quickly realized that his personality was not appropriate and he left the gang. After completing three years of military service, Wong moved to Taipei city and lived with his mother.

He was employed in a computer company through his mother’s recommendation after moving to Taipei. In order to escape his mother, Wong always worked overtime and soon got a position as chief engineer. He described himself as moving from the lower level of society to the middle class, or as he called it, ‘the bourgeoisie’. However, he realized that this career was not what he really wanted: ‘In this game of chess, my position was wrongly arranged but I did not know where my right place was.’ said Wong when he recalled his working experience. (Hung, 2005: 249) Therefore, Wong started to learn photography, ballroom dance and languages until he saw an audition advertisement posted by the *Lan-ling* Theatre Workshop in the newspaper in 1988.

Wong decided to attend this audition and he was accepted; becoming one of twenty new members of the Fifth Actor workshop. The participants were divided into two groups and were led by Zhuo Ming and Liu Ching-min separately. The participants of Liu’s group, which Wong joined, also became members of Liu’s newly established troupe, the U Theatre. They created a project entitled *Su Ji-hua* (Tracing Sources Project),<sup>39</sup> which aimed at re-discovering the meanings of folk crafts and rituals. This project will be further described later in this chapter. Consequently, Wong learnt *Tai-chi Dao-yin* (a more flexible *Tai-chi* form), *Jian-dao* (Kendo), *Bei-guan* (a Chinese traditional music form), *Dao-shi-diao* (Taoist tone, which was used at Taoist religious rituals), *Cai-gao-qiao* (Stilts Walking) and also applied some

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<sup>39</sup> According to senior member of The U Theatre, Wu Wen-Tsui, *Su Ji-hua* was born during a casual discussion in 1988 between Liu Ching-min and all the members. Li Hui-mei, who graduated from the Chinese department at Dong-hai University, brought up the word, *Su* (tracing), and everyone thought this word could convey the main concept of this project. (Wu Wen-Tsui, 1997, cited in Liu, 2004: 111)

Grotowskian training exercises during his attendance of the U Theatre. After one year's intensive training, in 1990, Wong left his job as an engineer in a computer company. Theatre provided him with a different perspective and he started to re-connect with his childhood experiences. It is worth noting that he changed his attitude toward *Ge-zai Xi*, which he had previously despised and ignored, after he joined the U Theatre. He came to realize that *Ge-zai Xi* was a unique Taiwanese artistic form and discovered that his mother was a great *Ge-zai Xi* performer.

The U Theatre suspended the Tracing Sources Project and started to change their direction from 1993. Wong left U Theatre and created the Golden Bough Theatre with another member of U Theatre, You Hui-fen, who later became his wife. In addition, they appointed Wong's mother, Hsieh Yueh-hsia, as their artistic consultant.

## **1.2 An Overview of the Productions of Golden Bough Theatre**

Golden Bough followed the concept derived from the U Theatre; On the one hand it still attempted to explore Taiwanese local and folk cultural resources, and on the other hand it emphasized the combination of daily physical training and life experiences. It aimed to change the quality of performers' physicality; moreover, derived from Taiwanese culture, it constructed a particular performing style and aesthetics with the combination of past, present and future Taiwanese experiences (Huang, 2002: 14).

In the early stages of the Golden Bough, Wong and You planned a three-year project entitled Field Research and Presentation Project (1993-1996). The syllabus of this project included part of the Grotowskian training exercises, *Tai-chi Dao-yin*, joining the annual greeting

pilgrimage trip of *Ma Tsu* (A Chinese female sea god)<sup>40</sup> and learning *Ge-zai Xi*. Productions during this period were *Rite of Passage* (*Cheng-nian Li*, 1993), *Pause* (*Ting-dun*, 1994), *The Spring Flowers* (*Chun-tian De Hua-rui*, 1995) and *Paddling through Zhuo-shui Steam* (*Liao-guo Zhuo-shui-qi*, 1996).

Most of the plays mentioned above were not directed by Wong Rong-Yu or You Hui-Fen. This might be because they lacked practical experience in directing and turned to collaborating with other artists. The performing style of their productions was also not fixed; it was obvious that they were still in search of direction. *Pause* was the first play formally directed by Wong; it is a brief overview and combination of their ordinary trainings since the establishment of Golden Bough in 1993, such as *Tiao-che-gu*<sup>41</sup> and *Tai-chi*, etc. *The Spring Flowers* invited Peng Ya-ling, who is the founder and artistic director of Uhan-shii Theatre Group, to be the director and employed Wong's mother in the leading role. Peng has described this play as 'the *Ge-zai* theatre which combines the expressive characteristic of *Ge-zai Xi* with a charm of subtle physical movements' (Peng: 1995, cited in Huang, 2001: 26). It was the first experiment by Golden Bough to apply *Ge-zai Xi* elements to their production. One play that should be mentioned is *Paddling through Zhuo-shui Steam* (*Liao-guo Zhuo-shui-xi*, 1996), which was directed by the late practitioner, Chen Ming-tsai. Chen appropriated a large number of Taiwanese folk elements on the contemporary theatre stage, which was regarded as belonging to the elites at the time. In addition, this play was also the first to exhibit the gaudy, strange and unique space installation of the Golden Bough Theatre (Huang 2002: 27). A further discussion of Chen's concept will be addressed later in this chapter.

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<sup>40</sup> Ma Tsu, the daughter of a seafarer in Fu-Jian Province (China) during the *Song* Dynasty of China, devoted her life (960-987 A.D.) to Buddhist self-cultivation before achieving apotheosis. Before her death, she was believed to have guided seafarers to safety by appearing as a beacon during storms, and for this reason, seafarers adopted her as their protector and carried her icon and incense dust from Ma Tsu temples in their vessels. After early Chinese settlers from Fu-Jian and Guang Dong provinces crossed the treacherous Taiwan Strait. As a result, more than any other religious symbol, Ma Tsu has come to stand for a level of cultural identity based on the shared experience of Taiwan settlers. (Quintero, 2002: 146)

<sup>41</sup> '*Tiao-che-gu*' is a primly form of *Ge-zai Xi*, in its early stage of development, the performers marched in the streets, told folktales by singing folk songs with vivid facial expressions and exaggerated upper-torso movements (Chang, 1997: 113).

After 1995, the management of Golden Bough's was a stable. The rehearsal site was moved to a new studio in Taipei city, which had previously been a kickboxing studio. As a result of receiving funding of one million Taiwanese dollars (equivalent 20,000 in GBP) from the Council for Cultural Affairs in Taiwan, the Golden Bough could afford to appoint a full-time administrator and five part-time actors. Moreover, Wong Rong-yu also started to direct most of their annual productions.

The Golden Bough performed their first *Opeila* production entitled *Taiwan Opera: The Female Robin Hood – Bai-hsiao-lan (Taiwan Nu-xia Bai-hsiao-lan)* in December, 1996. Wong Rong-yu said 'since the establishment of Golden Bough in 1993, I always presented Western style performances. It seemed that we merely directly adopted what we had learnt from Western world; however, I still had a feeling of alienation' (Interview with author, September 2008, Personal Translation). It seemed that Wong started to reflect upon the nature of Taiwanese theatre. Obviously, the Tracing Sources Project marked the beginning of Wong's cultural introspection. However, ironically, the concept of the Tracing Sources Project was derived from the concept of Grotowski's 'Theatre of Sources'. This will be further discussed later in this chapter.

Wong chose to trace his own cultural sources after diverse attempts at directing in the early stages. He stressed the link between his productions and the place where he was born as follows: 'I was born here. Therefore, my works should be fully understood by the people who were also born here' (Interview with author, September 2008, Personal Translation). Wong also started to recall the unique performing forms he saw in his childhood, including *Ge-zai Xi*, *Opeila*, and *Mai-yao-tuan* (Medicine Sales Troupes). With the Medicine Sales Troupes, the actors, who travelled around night markets in the countryside by truck, promoted the sales of medicines by playing a number of tricks and holding some entertainment sessions to appeal to customers such as performing a short comedy, dancing and singing, doing magic, juggling

and circus acts. Wong thought that these were the most energetic performing forms in Taiwan. Consequently, he suggested making a play, which was designed to perform for the people in night markets. The performances shown in night markets were normally classified under the category of popular entertainment, while contemporary theatre was still performed indoors. *Taiwan Opera: The Female Robin Hood - Bai Hsiao-lan* (1996, see Figure 3.5 and the Clip 3 in the attached DVD1) seemed to be the first



Figure 3.5 A scene from *Taiwan Opera: The Female Robin Hood - Bai Hsiao-lan* (1996) (Source: Golden Bough Official Website: <http://www.goldenbough.com.tw/>)

contemporary performance performing in night markets or in front of the temples. After their first premiere at the Wan-shan-tong night market in Er-chong-bu in December 1996, the Golden Bough successfully drew the attention from a variety of audiences ranging from the masses to the intellectuals. It was also Wong's first attempt to break out of the limits of being an elite theatre practitioner. He applied an understandable story, luxurious costumes and spoken-language style lines to create a theatre form which can easily resonate with the public. This play became popular and also remained in its repertoire for the following decade.

After the success of *Taiwan Opera: The Female Robin Hood - Pai Hsiao-lan*, the following two productions by the Golden Bough temporarily abandoned the style of *Opeila*. One was an adaptation of Homer's *Iliad* entitled *Troy, Troy...Taiwan* (*Gu-guo Zhi-shen—Ji Te-luo-yi*, 1997, see Figure 3.6). Although this play was adapted from a Greek classic, the Golden Bough



Figure 3.6 A scene from *Troy, Troy...Taiwan* (1997) (Source: Golden Bough Official Website: <http://www.goldenbough.com.tw/>)

still attempted to explore the Taiwanese aesthetics in terms of costumes and stage setting by

adopting considerable Taiwanese folk elements, such as colours and pattern, which were used in temples or festivals. The leading role was Wong's mother, Hsieh Yueh-hsia, who was skilled in *Ge-zai Xi*. The play was performed in an abandoned winery, *Hua-Shan Special Area (Hua-Shan Te-qu)* in Taipei city. This was done in collaboration with Chang Hao-chin, an artist who utilized large-scale sculptures, wall-paintings and pillars to develop the atmosphere of the archaeological ruins (Chiang 1997). The dramatists, You Hui-fen and Wong Wen-de, used the decay of Troy to imply a similar situation to that of Taiwan.

In 1999, *Butterflies (Qun Die)* was produced. Adapted from newspaper news, this play tells the story of a Taiwanese woman who mistreated her children until they died. Golden Bough applied the non-realistic costumes and stylized physical movements to signify the cruel social criminal event. This play was also invited to give performances in the art festivals of Hong Kong, Korea, Japan and Singapore.

In the following years, the Golden Bough regularly produced a play each year. The performing style during the period from 2001 to 2010 shifted between *Opeila* and site-specific theatre. First, *She is so Lovely... (Ke-ai Yuan-chou-ren, see Figure 3.7)* was made in 2001, using many Taiwanese popular songs from the 1930s to the 1970s to create a nostalgic musical atmosphere. Second, *Dice (Guan-yin-shan En-chou-ji)*, which was made in 2002, was performed in a semi-open space called Shell Brand Warehouse (*Ke-pai Cang-ku*), which was an abandoned historical building. Because this performance was designed to be performed in accordance with the terrain of the environment, the Golden Bough also defined this play as 'the forest theatre'. In 2004, *Yu-may & Ten-lai (Yu-mei Yu Tian-lai)* returned to *Opeila* style



Figure 3.7 A scene from *She is so Lovely...* (2001) (Source: Golden Bough Official Website: <http://www.goldenbough.com.tw/>)

with numerous Taiwanese local elements, which will be further explained in the later paragraphs. In 2005, the Golden Bough revised *Troy, Troy...Taiwan* and re-staged it under the name of *Troy, Troy...Taiwan (Ji Te-luo-yi, 2005)* in The Gun Platform in Tamsui Town (*Tamsui Hu-Wei lao-pao-tai*), which is also a heritage site and was built under the ruler of Chinese *Qing* Dynasty in 1886.

From 2006, Wong planned to present a series of *Opeila* plays each year entitled *Happiness (Fu-lang-gong Kai-hua,* transliteration ‘Gibberish is Blossoming’, see Figure 3.8 and the Clip 4 in the attached DVD1) with the same characters and plots. The series works were in the more sophisticated *Opeila* style of all the



Figure 3.8 A scene from *Happiness II...* (2007)  
(Source: Golden Bough Official Website:

works performed by the Golden Bough. The third episode of *Happiness* has already been performed in 2009 and Wong has planned the series to continue in the future. In 2010, they



Figure 3.9 A scene from *Sayonara My Love* (2010)  
(Source: Golden Bough Official Website:  
<http://www.goldenbough.com.tw/>)

presented a large-scale *Opeila* production, *Sayonara My Love (Da-guo-min Jin-xing-qu,* see Figure 3.9). This play is classified by Wong as a ‘Taiwanese style musical’. Their latest work is *Golden Pirate King (Huang-jin Hai-ze Wang,* 2011), which is also a large-scale musical whose storyline draws on early Taiwanese history, before the *Qing* Dynasty.

In addition, the Golden Bough also continued trying various ways of creating different performing styles. In 2007, Shi Dong-lin, who has regularly collaborated with the Golden



Bough for years, directed *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (*Zhong-xia-ye Meng*), which was an *Opeila* version of Shakespeare's play. In celebration of the fifteenth anniversary of the Golden Bough's establishment in 2008, Wong directed an epic work, *My Ancestors' Stories* (*Shan-hai-jing*, transliteration 'Mountain and Sea Classics', see Figure 3.10), and still chose the Gun Platform in Tamsui Town as their stage. The content of this play derived from four Chinese ancient myths: *The Sun-Chaser* (*Kua-fu Zhu-ri*), *The Metamorphosis* (*Nu-wa Hua-niao*), *The Sun Shooter* (*Hou-yi She-ri*) and *The Battle* (*Xing-tian Zheng-shen*). In addition, some Taiwanese aboriginal myths



Figure 3.10 A scene from *My Ancestors' Stories* (2008) (Source: Golden Bough Official Website: <http://www.goldenbough.com.tw/>)

were also incorporated into ritual, poems in *Hoklo* language, *Tai-chi* and Five Element and Eight Trigrams (*Wu-sin Ba-gua*) to present a production with Taiwanese cultural sources.

From 1996 to 2010, the size of Golden Bough also increased gradually through the appointment of six full-time actors and five administrators. Its main income relies on national cultural funding and box office receipts.

### **1.3 Intercultural Actor Training Methods Applied by the Golden Bough Theatre**

#### **(1) The U Theatre Experiences of Wong Rong-yu and You Hui-fen**

As I have already mentioned in the earlier part in this chapter, attending an audition for the *Lan-ling* Theatre and then joining the U Theatre were both vital decisions for Wong to move from a white-collar worker to a theatre practitioner. Wong and You then had the opportunity to participate for three years in the U Theatre's Tracing Sources Project, one of the most

significant research projects in Taiwanese theatre history, and this project deeply influenced their later direction. After the establishment of Golden Bough Theatre, Wong and You followed a similar concept to the Tracing Sources Project, which will be further explained later in the chapter. It seemed that the U Theatre experience broadened Wong and You's creative vision and provided them with an alternative way to explore Taiwanese culture. Therefore, I would like to give a brief introduction to the U Theatre, the founder, Liu Ching-min, and her training methods.

Liu Ching-min (Liu Ruo-yu after 2004) was born in Puding Ri-xin-xin village in Hsinchu city in Taiwan. Liu's parents were part of the diaspora from mainland China following the KMT's retreat to Taiwan after 1949. Liu grew up in a *Juan-cun*, the village which comprised mostly Military families, whose residents came from mainland China after 1949. Therefore, she had limited opportunities to become familiar with local Taiwanese culture. Liu studied in the Department of Chinese Traditional Theatre at the University of Chinese Culture and where she met important theatre partners including Jin Shi-jie, Du Ke-feng and Huang Cheng-huang. When Jin took over the running of Cultural Theatre Group (*Geng-xin Shi-yan Ju-tuan*), which was the predecessor of *Lang-lin* Theatre Workshop, Liu also became a regular member. Their first experimental piece, named *Her-Zhu's New Match* (*He-zhu Xin-pei*), quickly raised public awareness because it successfully transformed the elements of *Peking* Opera into a contemporary context.



Figure 3.11 A scene from *Her-Zhu's New Match* (1979) (Source: Liu, 2005)

Liu was well-known for performing the character of Her-zhu (see Figure 3.11). After that, she studied abroad in the Department of Educational Theatre at New York University in 1982 and joined a two-week workshop held by Grotowski at the University of California-Irvine. After the workshop, she asked to work with Grotowski as an observer for a year, while Grotowski

was conducting a research project entitled *Object Drama* from 1983-1986. Grotowski defined the goal of this exploration as follows:

To re-evoke a very ancient form of art where ritual and artistic creation were seamless. Where poetry was song, song was incantation, movement was dance. Pre-differentiation Art, if you will, which was extremely powerful in its impact. By touching that, without concern for philosophical or theological motivation, each of us could find his own connection. (cited in Osinski 1988: 97)

In a *Research and Development Report* in 1984, the project was described as follows:

‘Object Drama’ is Jerzy Grotowski’s term for those elements of the ancient rituals of various world cultures which have a precise, and therefore objective, impact on participants, quite apart from solely theological or symbolic significance. Mr. Grotowski’s intention is to isolate and study such elements of performative movements, dances, songs, incantations, structures of language, rhythms, and use of space. Those elements are sought by means of a distillation process from the complex through the simple and through the separation of elements one from the other. (Focused Research Program in Objective Drama, cited in Lendra, 1991: 129)

Obviously, learning traditional techniques was essential for the participants involved in this research project. In the process of tracing Liu’s own cultural sources, she was shocked by what Grotowski had said to her: ‘you are a Westernized Chinese’ (Liu, 1992, cited in Liu, 2005: 9). She suddenly realized that she had lost her cultural identity. As a descendant of a diasporic group, exiled from China and re-settled in Taiwan encountering multiple cultures, she started to question what her cultural roots were; as a result, the idea of tracing her own culture emerged and it developed into a three-year research project - Tracing Sources Project when she returned to Taiwan.

After returning to Taiwan, she produced *Medea is in the Mountain* (*Medea Zai Shan-shang*) and *The First Physical Training* (*Di-yi-zhong Shen-ti Xun-lian*) with the then members of *Lan-ling* Theatre. Collaborating with one of the core members in Grotowski’s Object Drama Project, Jiero Cuesta, Liu started to introduce part of Grotowski’s training exercises to her

performers: for example, *Vigil* (1976), which was one of Grotowski's Paratheatre Projects<sup>42</sup>, was applied in *Medea is In the Mountain* and *Training, Motion, Watching, Songs and Individual Work* were applied in rehearsing *The First Physical Training*.

After these two plays, Liu visited Grotowski's Work Centre in the village of Pontedera, Italy. During the visit, she came up with a new perspective on Grotowski's training; she realized that Grotowski's concept always changed with time; therefore, to grasp the core of his training is not to exactly follow what he has done, but to find out the reasons for doing it (Liu, 1992, cited in Liu, 2005: 13). In addition, Liu also realised that most of the knowledge/craft she had previously learnt was from the West. Consequently, Liu decided to trace her own cultural roots through learning her own traditional crafts. At that point in time, she met a Taiwanese novelist, Chen Yu-hui, who named Liu's newly founded troupe *The U Theatre* (*U Ju-chang*). 'U' in Mandarin also literally refers to the performers in ancient China.

## **(2) The Tracing Sources Project of U Theatre**

Having established the U Theatre, Liu planned a new work, *The Death of Zhong Kui* (*Zhong Kui Zhi Si*),<sup>43</sup> in order to further explore her cultural identity. Furthermore, she led the members of U Theatre to access and learn traditional folk rituals, such as *Tiao-jia-guan*<sup>44</sup>. Regarding the choice of traditional rituals as the beginning of their training, she pointed out that rituals could preserve the essence of traditions (Liu, 1992). Through learning folk rituals, Liu attempted to transform the cultures into a performative form, and then create an 'Eastern

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<sup>42</sup> Para theatre Projects (1970-1975) comprised of three parts: *Vigil* (1976-77), *The Mountain of Flame* (1977) and *Three of People* (1979). The major aim of this project was to discover 'a structure which would permit the spectator-become-participant to reach quickly to a similar level of de-conditioning to their own' (Kumiega, 1985: 163).

<sup>43</sup> *Zhong Kui* is the name of a Chinese ghost god.

<sup>44</sup> *Tiao-jia-guan* is a pre-show ritual that precedes traditional Chinese theatre performances. It is traditionally performed by an actor wearing a mask, a red robe, and a pair of black boots and holding a cloth streamer, on which the celebratory words are written, 'The heavenly official has brought us good fortune'.

body with Eastern thoughts and attitudes' (Liu, 1989, cited in Liu, 2005: 21). However, her 'Eastern body-mind' still referred to a generalised Chinese body philosophy, rather than being based on a Taiwanese perspective. This issue will be further discussed in the later paragraphs.

In order to systematically conduct this attempt, Liu consequently set up a research project entitled *Tracing - Finding Zhong Kui: A Survey of Chinese Traditional Crafts, Rituals and Contemporary Performing Art* (*Su - Xin-zhao Zhong Kui: Zhong-guo Chuan-tong Ji-yi Ji-yi Yu Dang-dai Wu-tai Biao-yan Yi-shu De Tan-jiu*, hereafter *Su Ji-hua*, Tracing Sources Project). At the same time, in 1988 the Council for Cultural Affairs in Taiwan commissioned the *Lang-lin* Theatre Workshop to hold the fifth actors' workshop. All the participants were divided into two groups of twenty members each and were separately led by Zhuo Ming and Liu Ching-min. The participants of Liu's group included Wong Rong-yu, Huang Jun-hua and Huang Chao-yi, who were also members of the U Theatre and attended the Tracing Sources Project later.

Tracing Sources Project officially started in June 1989. The whole project was comprised of a series of themes:

- i. Lectures – specific researchers were invited to give talks on the themes of Taoist culture, music and ritual;
- ii. Field research - Liu led the members to learn folk religious crafts, such as *Tiao-zhong-kui* and *Dao-shi-xi*;
- iii. A three-stage presentation - the first stage aimed at creating a Western style performance in order to master the procedure of making a performance; the second stage aimed at collecting folk customs, cultures and rituals and resulted in a performance in an open public space; the third stage was to give a presentation based on the previous working stages. (Wong Yi, 1989, cited in Liu, 2005: 20, Personal Translation)

Apart from the themes listed above, the U Theatre was also eager to establish its own daily actors' training. The following exercises were incorporated into their daily trainings: Grotowski training exercises, *Tai-chi Dao-yin* taught by Xiong Wei, *Long-men Qi-gong* taught by Jing, *Kendo* taught by Lin Zheng-xiong, Chinese traditional music (*Bei-guan*) taught by Qiu Huo-rong, Stilt Walking (*Ca-ga-qiao*) taught by Shi Wen-zhan and *Tiao-che-gu* taught by Wu Tian-luo.

According to Wu Wen-cui, a member of U Theatre, the Grotowskian training exercises used by U Theatre were as follows: Training I and Training II, Motion, Watching, Individual Work, Songs, Sculpturing and Diving, Plastiques, and Slow Walk and Quickly Running. (cited in Liu, 2005: 24-26). I will further discuss the function of these exercises later in the chapter. It seemed that Grotowskian training exercises were still the core training for the U Theatre.

It is also worth noting that before the U Theatre, none of the contemporary theatre groups applied Taiwanese or Chinese traditional crafts as part of actor daily training. Having been influenced by the Grotowskian concept of tracing one's own cultural roots, Liu came to learn about the place where she lived and particularly Chinese traditional cultures, which were transplanted along with the migrants from mainland China since three hundred years ago. The trace of Chinese traditional cultures led to the attempt to build a 'Chinese Body'. Liu explained this as follows:

During the process of our training, in addition to conducting field research and learning folk crafts, our inner status was also gradually transformed. We practiced *Tai-chi*, *Qi-gong* and *Kendo* rather than *Peking* opera or *Ge-zai Xi*. The reason for this was that I attempted to begin with the Chinese philosophy, or the Chinese body philosophy, and to find a Chinese body rather than a performing form. *Peking* opera, in its nature, is a very physical training form; it is about doing *Wai-kung* (External Corporal Training) instead of *Nei-kung* (Internal Mind or Energy Training). The difference between *Nei-kung* and *Wai-kung* is that the latter is a skill. The codified physical movements of *Peking* Opera can also be regarded as a skill, similar to doing Western ballet, which is all about training the body to exceed the physical limitations. Although the skills cannot be done without any training, they are still different from *Tai-chi* or any other Asian martial arts. We attempt to seek the physical and spiritual status simultaneously by mastering the

training. (1992, cited in Liu, 2005: 21, Personal Translation)

It can be seen that the aim for Liu was not only to create a Chinese physical body but also a body which moves from a Chinese cultural perspective. I discuss what this means in practice in a moment.

In 1989, U Theatre held a campaign, A Hike to *Ming-shan* Temple (*Ming-shan-si Zhi Xing*, see Figure 3.12) as an examination of their training progress. The event could be divided into two parts: hiking and mountain training. Fifteen members spent four days walking from Taipei to *Ming-shai* Temple in Yilan county and then continued an eight-day training there. Before their departure, Liu led all the members in a Taoist ceremony and set up a shrine to *Tian-Du* Marshal (*Tian-du Yuan-shuai*), who is the Chinese theatre god, to signify their formal beginning of training. During the hike, they ‘walked with *Qi-gong*’ (*Dai-gong Xing-zou*) in order to test the impact of learning *Qi-gong*. The syllabus of the mountain training included Grotowskian training exercises (Walking, Watching and Vigil), *Tai-chi Dao-yin*, *Qi-gong* and *Kendo*. Four months after the hiking, the production, *The Death of Zhong Kui* (*Zhong Kui Zhi Si*, see Figure 3.13), was presented as a review of their training at the end of 1989. The plot of this play was adapted from Chinese folklore about a Taoist god, Zhong Kui. According to the legend, Zhong was once a candidate for a royal court exam in the *Tang* Dynasty of China; however, he failed in the final exam because of his extreme ugly appearance. Ashamed, he then committed suicide in front of the king. After his death, the king was moved by his loyalty and gave him the title of Exorcism God. U Theatre appropriated Zhong’s tale to signify the inner struggles of an intellectual in the modern society. The folk song and dance, the Guiding Spirit Song (*Khan-bông Kuo*, in *Hoklo*) in the Taiwanese funeral ritual, and the psychic ritual dance of the Taoist temples festivals were also incorporated in the performance. In addition, the performers wore Taiwanese Hand-Puppet Theatre style costumes, a mask and used *Hoklo* language as their performing language (Liu, 2005: 48-53).



Figure 3.12 A Hike to *Ming-shan* Temple (1989) (Source: Liu, 2005)



Figure 3.13 A scene from *The Death of Zhong Kui* (1989) (Source: Liu, 2005)

After finishing *The Death of Zhong Kui*, Liu injured her legs. Consequently, she appointed a member of U Theatre, Chen Ming-tsai, to help with the next production, *Rainbow Creek Lo-te-san* (*Qi-cai Si-shui Lo-te-san*) (1990). This play was the second stage of the Tracing Sources Project, which was to be performed in the open public space. This play was concerned with the environmental protection issue. The performing style of this play was totally different from that of *The Death of Zhong Kui* mainly because of the different family backgrounds between the two directors: Chen's father was a soldier who migrated from mainland China with the KMT government, and his mother was born in Yuanli town in Taiwan. Growing up with the local *Hoklo* culture, Chen had a strong connection with Taiwan. On the other hand, Liu was a member of the so-called second generation of Mainlanders after 1949 and had a limited awareness of Taiwanese culture. As a result, the body philosophy that Liu and Chen attempted to build up was based upon different perspectives: what Liu traced was a Chinese body under a Chinese philosophy system, whereas Chen considered how to move like a Taiwanese. Chen has further explained his concept in an article entitled 'Stepping like a Taiwanese' (*Ta-chu Taiwan-ren De Jiao-bu*):

Whether *Che-gu*, *Bu-ma*, or *Gang-da-jiao*<sup>45</sup>, you can see a similar character in

<sup>45</sup> *Che-gu* and *Bu-ma* are both local Taiwanese theatre forms that came out of the *Qing* Dynasty. Basically, they are presented as folk dances with simple characters and stories. *Gang-da-jiao* literally means 'carrying the sedan chair on the shoulder' and is a religious activity in which disciples carry gods on sedans on tours of the



these traditional crafts: their steps always softly touch the ground. (This is also similar to Taiwanese aboriginal dancing).....There are feelings of humble, timid reverence within the steps. Taiwanese, what are your relationships with the ground?

People are closely attached to and care for the ground. People living on this island should show their gratitude to the ground through farming. A deep emotion, such as that between friends, mother and son, god and people, will be cultivated. Does the soft touch between feet and the ground also reflect the same feeling?

Do people from the same ethnic group share similar physical habits? Taiwanese steps are obviously different from the Chinese steps in the Chinese waist-drum folk dance, in which the dancers usually kick powerfully.....

Shall we view this from cultural and geographical perspectives? It can be explained that the particular living conditions (weather, temperature, water and soil quality, and different physical labour...) result in this kind of soft steps. However, were the soft steps just soft, thin and light? It seems that it lacks depth, like 'Japanese feet' (i.e. *Noh* Theatre), and the beauty of 'Western feet'. If the nature, soil, people and time were all taken into account, the depth of the steps could be found although they still step on the ground gently. The local theatre practitioners, who have started to concern themselves with the body culture, have probably contemplated the same question from culture, history and theatre perspectives like me. (*Rainbow Creek Lo-te-san* program, Chen, 1990, cited in Liu, 2005: 55, Personal Translation)

It seems that Liu attempted to build the Chinese body from conceptual and philosophical perspectives; however, for Chen, the cultural body he was seeking not only referred to an abstract concept, but also to a combination of physical habits, which were cultivated by different cultural backgrounds.

Liu's concept of the 'Chinese body' and Chen's 'Taiwanese steps' not only signify the differences in the body philosophies of these two practitioners, but also reveal the influence of KMT's internal colonisation. Growing up as part of the second generation of Mainlanders, Liu was deeply influenced by KMT's Chinese-centric and anti-Communist education, as were other intellectuals at the time (Hsiao, 2000: 89). Liu was also familiar with the concept of 'authentic China and Chinese culture' and clearly identified as Chinese. Her ideal 'Chinese body' implied a 'Chinese cultural hegemony', which was actually inherited from the ruler.

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towns to which the gods are hoped to bring good fortune.

Although she led the members of U Theatre to adopt certain traditional Taiwanese techniques and made *Hoklo* the troupe's performing language, in fact, under Liu's guidance, Taiwanese folk cultures were still positioned within the framework of Chinese culture, and the application of Taiwanese cultures exemplified the notion that 'Chinese culture can contain every neighbourhood's cultures'. Therefore, the existence of Taiwanese cultures was viewed as a gesture to Chinese culture.

In contrast to Liu, Chen criticized the inequity of Taiwan's cultural position. He was aware that what he sought was a body philosophy focused on the subjectivity of Taiwanese culture. In *Rainbow Creek Lo-te-san*, Chen utilised Taoist tones and *Che-gu*, a type of Taiwanese folk craft. However, these were not used to serve the 'Chinese body philosophy'. Taiwanese culture was the subject of this work. Thus, I argue that the most significant differences between Liu and Chen's works is their positioning of Taiwanese culture.

*Rainbow Creek Lo-te-san* utilized an initial form of *Ge-zai Xi, Lo-te-San* (translation 'coming down to the ground and sweeping', see Figure 3.14) as the main performing style, which also meant that this performance would not be performed on a formal stage, but casually in an open space. In order to attract the audiences' attention, before the beginning of each performance, the members imitated *Xing-ju* troupes, marching in the city centre with their performance costumes, and beating drums and



Figure 3.14 A scene from *Rainbow Creek Lo-te-san* (1990) Source: Liu, 2005)

striking gongs. Sometimes, they also did stilt-walking with the Taoist temple parade formations. U Theatre chose the public space in front of temples as their performing stage. In addition, Chen intentionally utilized Taiwanese traditional dancing, *Tiao-che-gu* and *Hoklo* language to distinguish the nature of Taiwanese theatre. However, the attempt at

popularization did not receive a positive response in the countryside; surprisingly it attracted more attention in the metropolitan city. A review in the newspaper commented on the performance as follows:

These performers' inexperienced movements signified the fact that they did not have such sophisticated skills as *Ge-zai Xi* performers, and the folk acrobatics or *Kung-fu* practitioners. With the attempt to transform traditional crafts into contemporary performance, the U Theatre should abandon imitating the form. They should just take off the jackets of the villagers and expose the bones of the elite. The old performing forms, such as traditional theatres and folk crafts, should be interpreted and imagined in a modern way. (*The Independent Evening Newspaper*, 1990, cited in Liu, 2005: 68, Personal Translation)

Although the result of constructing a Taiwanese body did not seem so successful, *Rainbow Creek Lo-te-san* still provided the Taiwanese theatre practitioners with an opportunity to consider an alternative way for Taiwanese theatre. The play blurred the boundary between contemporary theatre and Taiwanese traditional theatre and demonstrated that contemporary theatre is not exclusively made for the elite, and the traditional theatre is not necessarily the popular theatre belonging to villagers only.

The U Theatre planned to finish the Tracing Sources Project in two years; however, during the process, Liu gradually realized that the emphasis of this project was not on how to create a great play, but about tracing her tradition and having dialogues with her ancestors (Chen, 1993). Therefore, learning the traditional rituals and crafts should be seen as a lifelong pursuit. In addition, because of changing members and financial difficulties, the project was extended to three years, and then to four years until September 1993. Liu finally decided to discontinue the Tracing Sources Project, and her pursuit of the Chinese body.

After 1994, the U Theatre invited Huang Zhi-qun to teach the members drumming, and Liu renamed the group as *U-ren Shen-gu* (translation 'Actors' Drumming'). Their daily training was changed to meditation, *Kung-fu* (based on *Jin-wu-men* style), Chinese boxing, *Tai-chi* and drumming. It seemed that the U Theatre attempted to use an alternative approach to continue

exploring the inner presence of the performers rather than the external physical form. At the same time, Wong Rong-yu and You Hui-fen decided to leave the U Theatre and established their own troupe, Golden Bough Theatre, in 1993.

### **(3) Golden Bough Theatre and Its Grotowski Based Intercultural Actors Training**

#### **(3.1) Grotowski as a method and foundation**

As I have explained, the two founders of Golden Bough, Wong Rong-yu and You Hui-fen, started their theatre career by attending the U Theatre; therefore, they basically followed the actors training principle they have learnt from the U Theatre. As discussed above, the core concept of U's training is based on Grotowskian training exercises. As I stated, Liu Jing-min realized that the meaning of doing training is not to imitate what Grotowski did, but to find out the reason for doing these exercises. Therefore, through regularly practicing certain Grotowski training exercises, Liu further extended the principle of Grotowskian concept into U Theatre's own training approach, which was based on Chinese and Taiwanese cultural sources. This self-examination of local culture also led to the three-year Tracing Sources Project.

Wong and You were deeply influenced by their 'U experiences'; therefore, the training of Golden Bough was based on Grotowskian exercises in the early stage. Looking at their training from 1993 to 2010, it is noticeable that the direct application of Grotowski exercises only happened in the first few years of the establishment of Golden Bough: in later years they gradually transformed their understandings of Grotowski and U Theatre experiences into a new 'Golden Bough' way of training.

Taiwanese reception of intercultural actor training needs to be examined here. Applications of

Asian cultural elements by Grotowski and other Western theatre practitioners have typically been regarded as a-historical appropriations or even as extensions of neo-colonialism. However, the clash between Western and Asian cultures has also prompted Western theatre practitioners to re-consider the Western theatrical tradition and, further, to develop alternative theatrical aesthetics and actor training approaches. However, when Asian cultures were digested by Western perspectives and introduced to Asia, Asian theatre practitioners still treated them as Western cultures. Therefore, I argue that if the Western application of Asian cultures has been regarded as de-historicalisation, the reception of these digested Asian approaches by Asian theatre practitioners could be viewed as ‘double de-historicalisation’. In Taiwan, a variety of intercultural actor training approaches have been introduced to workshops that last several days. Taiwanese theatre practitioners have usually undergone many kinds of training; however, only a few continue to further explore a specific method or spend sufficient time practicing methods after workshops. As a result, these trainings can very easily become only imitations of external forms. The U Theatre and Golden Bough troupes also had this issue during their early stages, due to their practicing of Grotowskian exercises. However, they later gave up imitative learning and developed their own training methods, which are more worthy of examination.

In previous research, Grotowski, the U Theatre and Golden Bough’s training approaches are usually discussed separately; however, both U Theatre and Golden Bough’s trainings exercises are derived from Grotowskian exercises. It could be said that Grotowskian training approaches and concepts informed the Taiwanese theatre practitioners’ works and re-shape the perspective of their own cultures. Therefore, I would like to discuss the relationship between Grotowski and the intercultural actor training of the U Theatre and Golden Bough Theatre.

### **(3.2) ‘Training’ of Grotowski and ‘*Tai-chi Dao-yin* and *Qi-gong*’ of the U Theatre and**

## Golden Bough

According to the theatre practitioner, Wu Wen-tsui, U Theatre and Golden Bough usually applied a series of exercises that were drawn from the Grotowskian approach, which included the First Training and Second Training but are generally referred to as Training by the Taiwanese theatre practitioners. First Training contains some warm-up exercises; Second Training is a series of movements involving the imitation of animals, such as birds, monkeys, lizards and cats. In addition, tumbling is also included in the Second Training (Liu, 2005: 24-25). According to the research in relation to Grotowski, the basic training exercises diverge in accordance with different research aims. From the descriptions above, the exercises that U Theatre did were perhaps a brief version of the basic exercises that Grotowski created in the 1960s: Exercises *Plastiques* and Exercises *Corporeals*. Eugenio Barba has described the exercises in detail as follows:

The *corporeals* are a series of sharp acrobatic-like headstands, handstands, shoulderstands, and high jumps, done rapidly, continuously and frenetically. The 'cat', the basic corporeal exercise, is designed primarily for energy and the suppleness of the vertebrae...The *plastiques* are fast rotations back and forth of joints: head, shoulders, elbows, wrists, hands, fingers, chest, hips, torso: also exercises of joints going in opposite or contradictory directions...The exercises represent neither a formula nor a system; they are merely an approach, a way of leading one to find one's biological impulses. (1965: 213/163)

*Plastiques* and *corporels* are known as the basic exercises of Grotowski, through continuous movements to liberate the blockages and resistances of the body. The Taiwanese theatre researcher, Liu Chang-jang, points out that the purpose of doing these exercises was to help the practitioners maintain a high level of awareness of surroundings, always observing the space, partner and themselves, and following the leader's rhythm. The aim was to achieve a harmonic body-mind status of 'once you move, every part of the body moves; once you stop, every part of the body stops' (*Yi-dong Wu -you Bu-dong, Yi-jing Wu-you Bu-jing*) (2005: 25).

According to the rehearsal notes made by Huang Shu-yuen, who participated in a play of

Golden Bough, and Chen Ming-tsai, who was a regular member of U Theatre, each training session before doing rehearsals ran for around forty-five to sixty minutes without intervals. Some key points that Wong and Liu reminded them were as follows:

1. Keeping highly sensitive awareness of every detail of the body, movement, leader, space and the whole space.
2. Avoiding doing general and imitating movements and finding surprising responses.
3. Concentration will lead to spontaneous reactions and can stimulate inner impulses.
4. Prioritizing elimination rather than establishment. The point is not to create a form, but to eliminate individual barriers, such as cliché movements or thoughts, and try to build up more possibilities.

(Cited in Huang, 2001: 19-20, translation by author)

It seems that Grotowskian exercises could make one sensitively aware of the environment and partners by doing efficient training continuously. Unloading one's habitual physical movements and unnecessary thoughts, and reacting to the changes of environment spontaneously was the main purpose. This is also an ideal status that an Eastern martial arts practitioner attempts to pursue after a long-term period of training. Maybe it was also the reason that the U Theatre and Golden Bough both chose *Tai-chi* as part of their daily trainings other than Grotowski exercises. In fact, a large number of theatre practitioners in the 1990s also chose *Tai-chi* as their foundational actor training. Taking another famous Taiwanese group, the Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, as an example, *Tai-chi Dao-yin* was profoundly applied in its classic production, *Water Moon (Shui Yue)*, in which the martial art was successfully transformed into a performing form and was well-accepted by both Asian and Western audiences.

From 1989, the U Theatre appointed Hsiung Wei to teach the members *Tai-chi Dao-yin*. Golden Bough also utilized *Tai-chi Dao-yin* as their warming-up exercise. *Tai-chi* was created by Chang Shan-feng from the *Ming* Dynasty (1368 A.D) in China. Chang elaborated on the

movement of five creatures and transformed them into a systematic sequence. After hundreds years of development, variations of *Tai-chi* forms have been created and *Tai-chi Dao-yin*, which is currently flourishing in Taiwan, is one of them. *Tai-chi Dao-yin* was created by Hsiung Wei, who was born in China and migrated to Taiwan with the KMT government after 1949. Because of a severe disease, he started to learn martial arts. After following several masters, he realized that most of the martial arts disciples pay more attention to the external forms rather than comprehending the principles. Hsiung thus began to find out a collective principle of different styles; he started to practice individual movement separately and surprisingly resulted in successfully loosening his muscle tension. As a result, he collected the essence of every *Tai-chi* styles he had learnt and reconstructed them as the *Tai-chi Dao-yin* Twelve Forms, which also can be divided into two parts: *Yin-ti* (Guiding Body) and *Dao-qi* (Guiding Energy). Guiding Body roughly refers to doing rotating movements of body; Guiding Energy is related to inhalation and exhalation of breath (Hsiung, 2001, cited in Liu, 2005: 32-37). Rotating and loosening every joint and muscle characterised the *Tai-chi Dao-yin* movements.

Liu has addressed the reason for asking the members of U Theatre to learn *Tai-chi* as follows:

I think *Tai-chi* is a martial art without a fixed form. *Tai-chi* provides our bodies with the fluid energy, and gives it a 'root' without presenting a concrete form. *Tai-chi* is not similar to other martial arts or dances, which shape the body into a form. After the members practice *Tai-chi*, their bodies have bases to rely on. Comparing *Tai-chi* with *Tiao-che-gu* and *Ba-jia-jiang* (the Dance of the Eight Taoist Celestials), both have specific forms to follow.

We learnt *Tiao-che-gu* after learning *Tai-chi*, and this resulted in a different quality of movement if compared with those made by an experienced *Tiao-che-gu* teacher. Because we already possessed an invisible base of *Tai-chi*, *Che-gu* became merely a form, like a cloth. (Liu, 1996: 61-64, Personal Translation)

Wong has also demonstrated his understanding of *Tai-chi*:

What is *Tai-chi*? It is a fluid and ever-changing presence. *Tai-chi* is not merely a dead figure. It is an organic entity, which always flows, like the cosmos. Black can be seen in white while white also contains black. (Liu 2005: 35, Personal



Translation)

From what has been observed above, an important reason for choosing *Tai-chi* as their training rather than any other martial arts is that *Tai-chi* pursues an entire relaxing body-mind status, which is also an ideal status for a performer to appropriate control his/her bodies without using unnecessary force on stage. Another key point of *Tai-chi* is the ‘grounded’ feet, which can offer the whole body a strong foundation. In addition, to slightly bend the knees is the basic position to keep the whole body grounded. Similarly, in Grotowski’s exercises, the participants are also usually asked to keep the knees bent and aware of the touch of both feet in many practices. It seems that Grotowski exercises and *Tai-chi* share certain similar principles and purposes; however, via different approaches and cultural contexts.

As Liu began to notice the connection between breath and *Qi* (energy), the members of U Theatre started to learn Dragon Style (*Long Men*) *Qi-gong* from Master Lai Jing in 1989. Masters usually use their *Qi* to activate beginners’ *Qi* circulation, a process called ‘*Dian-guan*’ (Activating Acupoint). When this energy is activated, the receiver achieves *Qi-gong* and is enabled by the circulation of *Qi* within the body to perform such actions as rotating or running. Liu explains her experience practicing *Qi-kong*:

You do not know where the huge impulse comes from within your body, such that you can keep rotating without stopping, if you relax yourself entirely and just follow the energy. You can sense that the *Qi* that supports your rotations is within your body, and the *Qi* that is filled with the cosmos actually exists. Once you let yourself move with the *Qi*, you are like a piece of paper or a leaf that is blown by the wind and starts to spin. (2004, cited in Liu, 2005: 41, Personal Translation)

According to *Qi-gong* expert Lin Hsiao-tsung (2003: 26), this kind of voluntary *Qi*-supported movement occurs when a person has *Qi-Gong* Status (*Qi-gong-tai*) – that is, when her consciousness is exactly between full awareness and sleep. In Indian yoga, this status is called *Kundalini*. It is believed that the brain is semi-resting, while the body-mind is controlled by the hypothalamus, and *Qi* and blood circulate fluently (Lin, 2003: 26). After the members of

U Theatre learned how to be in the *Qi-Gong* Status, they applied it in conjunction with Grotowskian exercises. For example, when doing the Walking and Vigil exercises, U Theatre's members simultaneously used *Qi-Gong* Status to maintain a balance of energy. Long-term training both in Grotowskian exercises teaches practitioners to cultivate a sensitive and present body-mind. U Theatre and Golden Bough also aim at this, albeit through *Tai-chi* and *Qi-gong*.

### **(3.3) 'Hike' of Grotowski and 'Bai-sha-tun<sup>46</sup> Ma Tsu<sup>47</sup> Pilgrimage' of U Theatre and Golden Bough**

Liu Ching-min had joined the Objective Drama Project that Grotowski held in the United States. In the project, she was asked to do field hikes at midnight. After she returned to Taiwan and established U Theatre, the Hike was also listed as one of their core trainings. Liu explained: 'Walking itself does not directly improve one's acting skill, but a good quality will be accumulated in one's heart after doing hike' (Ku, 1998, cited in Liu, 2005: 26). In addition to holding A Hike to *Ming-Shan* Temple, which was previously mentioned in this chapter, one thing that should be particularly noted is that U Theatre was the first Taiwanese contemporary troupe to join folk religious pilgrimage activities. After the U Theatre, a growing number of contemporary troupes started to join religious pilgrimages regularly as well, troupes such as the Golden Bough Theatre, Chi Body (*Ji-ti Ju-Tuan*), Riverbed Theatre (*He-chuang Ju-tuan*), Shakespeare's Sisters (*Sha-shi-bi-ya De Mei-mei Ju-tuan*), Critical Point Theatre (*Lin-jie-dian Ju-xiang-lu*), and Sun's Son (*Hei-Yan-Jing Kua-Ju-Tuan*) (Quintero, 2002: 56). Quintero pointed out that 'in postcolonial Taiwan, pilgrimage has become a vital performative site and praxis in the native Taiwanese theatre community's struggle to reclaim indigenous histories and

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<sup>46</sup> Bai-Sha-Tun, a small town located in the central part of Western Taiwan.

<sup>47</sup> Please check footnote 39.

construct a contemporary Taiwanese identity' (2002: 56). Joining a pilgrimage was not only a healthy exercise for the theatre practitioners at the time, but it also signified a post-colonial phenomenon through which the theatre practitioners attempted to trace the Taiwanese historical past and cultural identity by joining the traditional rituals.

The idea of joining pilgrimages emerged while U Theatre finished the presentation of *The Death of Zhong Kui* in 1989. The members were eager to continue conducting field research and learning folk crafts, and were also sought to join local religious activities. They did not choose to join the most famous pilgrimage in Taiwan, the Da-jia<sup>48</sup> *Ma Tsu* pilgrimage because of its over development and commercialised tendency. When two members of U Theatre, Wu Wen-cai and Huang Jun-hua, saw a tiny report for the Bai-sha-tun *Ma Tsu* pilgrimage (see Figure 3.15), another smaller scale of *Ma Tsu* pilgrimage, in a newspaper, they decided to join it and found it could serve as a proper form of training. Consequently, joining pilgrimages became a significant training not only for U Theatre, but also for other Taiwanese theatre practitioners at the time.



Figure 3.15 *Ma Tsu* (2000) (Source: baishatun Field Research Studio: <http://baishatun.ngo.tw/>)

Quintero explained the Bai-sha-tun *Ma Tsu* pilgrimage in detail as follows:

For over 100 years, *Ma Tsu* followers from the agrarian community of Bai-sha-tun in Miaoli County have carried the *Ma Tsu* icon from their local temple to the Beigang temple to rejuvenate its *Ling* (power).<sup>49</sup> To facilitate the transportation of the goddess, temple elders select a group of able-bodied volunteers to carry the icon in a traditional spirit sedan. *Ma Tsu* followers participate in the processional to give thanks for the goddess's blessings and pray for her continued guidance and assistance in the future. Temples, private homes, and businesses along the route from Bai-sha-tun to Beigang set up roadsides altars, light firecrackers, provide free food and beverages for the pilgrims, and stage elaborate performances to

<sup>48</sup> Dajia, another small town located nearby Bai-sha-tun town.

<sup>49</sup> When the Bai-sha-tun temple was built in the 19th century, the originating temple in Beigang transferred 'some of the magical power' from its *Ma Tsu* image to the Bai-sha-tun icon through the ritual branching process dividing incense (*Fen-hsiang*) or dividing power (*Fen-ling*). (Sangren P. Steven, 1988: 681, cited in Quintero, 2002: 146)

demonstrate their dedication to the goddess and entire her to enter their property and bless it. . . . The main characters are the goddess and the pilgrims who accompany her on the 300 to 350 kilometre (depending on the route taken) journey from Bai-sha-tun and back. (2002: 134)

The distinguishing characteristic of the Bai-sha-tun *Ma Tsu* pilgrimage is that the beginning and ending dates, as well as the route, differ every year but are generally held in March, February or January of the lunar calendar, and last from seven to twelve days. On December 15th of the rural calendar every year, the administrator of Bai-sha-tun temple



Figure 3.16 The sedan of Ma Tsu and the pilgrims (2000) (Source: Bai-sha-tun Field Research Studio: <http://baishatun.ngo.tw/>)

usually holds a lot-drawing ceremony, allowing the pilgrimage date and time to be decided by the providence. In addition to the unfixed date, the participants also cannot expect an exact pilgrimage route or know beforehand where to spend the night along the way. *Ma Tsu*, who is carried on the sedan, will decide the route and schedule while walking the pilgrimage by giving messages to the sedan bearers. The disciples only have to follow the sedan. This

mysterious and non-human process is the most significant feature of the Bai-sha-tun *Ma Tsu* pilgrimage (Liu, 2005: 75).



Figure 3.17 The sedan of Ma Tsu and the pilgrims (2000) (Source: baishatun Field Research Studio: <http://baishatun.ngo.tw/>)

The whole group is led by the head flag and *Ma Tsu* sedan (see Figure 3.16, 3.17). Most of the pilgrims follow the sedan by walking. Some who are unable to walk can ride in cars. As Quintero explained above, from Bai-sha-tun to

Baigang, there are thousands of disciples of *Ma Tsu* preparing a great amount of food and beverages for the attendant pilgrims for free. The temples they pass through on the way to their destination also prepare fresh fruits and flowers to greet and show their respect to *Ma Tsu*. The Taoist ritual music, lion dancers, *Ba-jia-jian* performers (the Dance of the Eight Taoist Celestials), self-mortifying shamans, and scantily clad female *Karaoke* singers on electric flower cars (*Dian-zi Hua-che*) enliven the procession and promote a carnivalesque atmosphere (Sangren, 1993: 566). According to the participants, when they walk accompanied by gongs and drums, they find that their bodies sway voluntarily with the rhythms.

Because the route and schedule are all assigned by the providence of *Ma Tsu*, what the pilgrims confront is a 'complete unknown status' (Liu, 1991: 143-146). The *Ma Tsu* sedan guides the pilgrims, walking through fields, city centres, and even wading into streams (see Figure 3.18). The duration of every day's walking lasts from midnight until 8 pm on the next day. Usually, when the group arrives in a small town, the exhausted pilgrims will expect this to be a place to take a rest; however, the sedan sometimes surprisingly turns around, goes back to the previous town, and finally stops there. Therefore, Liu Ching-min points out that if the participants do not prepare themselves to be active and ready to walk, they may not be able to handle the always changing unknown (cited in Liu, 2005: 77).

During the process, the pilgrims suffer from the unknown status, but their physical capacity always can go beyond their expectations. In a pilgrimage, Liu saw that when the sedan started to run, all the pilgrims followed it immediately without any hesitation. The scene she saw has deeply impressed her:

I saw a group of people running in the same rhythm and moving as an undivided entity. They neither walked nor ran. What I could see was the fluid and collective energy, which pushed the people to keep moving forward. How could the crippled young man, older ladies and gentlemen, housewives and me, who were all exhausted, become an ensemble at the same time, move in the same rhythm and support ourselves walking with the strong energy?

Meanwhile, I felt as if my body did not belong to me and was guided ceaselessly by the collective energy. However, my consciousness is clear, although my thinking speed was much slower and calmer than my physical body. I did not see anyone stopping or getting a ride. Hundreds of people ran in the same rhythm with the sedan's moving, for two hours. (Liu 1991: 144, translation by author)



Figure 3.18 The sedan of *Ma Tsu* and the pilgrims were crossing a stream (1990)  
(Source: Bai-sha-tun Field Research Studio: <http://baishatun.ngo.tw/>)

Compared with Liu's previous hike experience with Grotowski in a pasture in California, Liu thought that she had benefited more from the attendance of Bai-sha-tun *Ma Tsu* pilgrimage. She further explained that 'it is not because the California training was not ideal enough. Actually, it was the training method with the least 'artificial force'. However, what the pilgrimage impressed upon me was that the sedan helps every pilgrim overcome their weaknesses, and led thousands of them to complete a journey, which goes beyond physical and spiritual limitations' (Liu, 1991: 1-2, Personal Translation).

Wong Rong-yu and other theatre practitioners, who have attended the Bai-sha-tun *Ma Tsu* pilgrimage, were all deeply influenced by attending the pilgrimage, which can also be seen as a process of seeking Taiwanese culture by folk rituals. From the creation of Golden Bough in 1993 to the present (2012), no matter how busy their schedule is, Wong still insists to lead the members to join the pilgrimage every year. For Wong, the pilgrimage has already been

regarded as an important activity to help them understand their own culture (Wong, Interview with author, September 2008). Like learning *Ge-zai Xi*, *Che-gu*, and *Ba-jia-jian*, he attempts to seek a cultural body and a Taiwanese identity by learning and joining traditional crafts and rituals.

## **2. An Analysis of Golden Bough Theatre's *Opeila* Productions from a Post-colonial Perspective**

From the first production of Golden Bough, *Rite of Passage*, in 1993 until 2011, there were eight out of eighteen productions classified as *Opeila* style as follows: *Taiwan Opera: The Female Robin Hood* - Pai Hsiao-lan (*Taiwan Nu-xia Bai Hsiao-lan*, 1996), *She is so Lovely...*(*Ke-ai Yuan-chou-ren*, 2001), *Romeo and Julia* (*Luo-mi-ou Yu Zhu-li-ye*, 2003), *Yu-may & Ten-lai* (*Yu-mei Yu Tian-lai*, 2004), *Happiness Part1 Part2 Part3* (*Fu-lang-gong Kai-hua I, II, III*, 2006, 2007, 2009) and *Sayonara My Love* (*Da-guo-min Jin-xing-qu*, 2010). The development and influences of Taiwanese *Xing-ju* within the specific historical context of successive and multiple colonisations will be examined in the following paragraphs. Golden Bough was the first contemporary troupe to deliberately represent an antique popular theatre form, and its motivation and dramaturgy are both worth further observation. Therefore, Golden Bough's *Opeila* works will be discussed and compared from a post-colonial perspective in the following section.

### **2.1 The New *Opeila* of Golden Bough Theatre**

As I have discussed in Chapter Two, the *Opeila* plays before Golden Bough Theatre can be classified in two categories: *Ge-zai Opeila* and *Xing-ju Opeila*. Because of the interactions

and appropriations between these two theatre forms, both of the two different styles *Opeila* shared certain characteristics; however, observed from the structure of troupes, themes of plays and acting styles, the differences still were clear. In the Japanese colonial period, these two kinds of troupes were also called Pure Cotton and Synthetic Fibre. The name of Pure Cotton suggested it was more 'authentic', 'formal' and 'scripted'. Because the members of these kinds of troupes were mostly intellectuals, Pure Cotton also signified its elitist theatre direction. In the post-war era, although the names of Pure Cotton and Synthetic Fibre were abandoned, certain troupes, which employed scripts to rehearse and perform, still named themselves more authentic troupes. On the other hand, *Ge-zai Xi* troupes always confronted the problem of lacking intellectual participation (Hsieh, 2007: 90). Except for a few *Ge-zai Xi* troupes, such as *Gong Le She*, which appointed dramatists to write scripts for performances, most troupes still employed scenarios to give semi-improvised performances. Golden Bough Theatre, as a contemporary company, appeared after the second generation of Little Theatre Movement took place in the 1990s. The artistic director, Wong Rong-yu, inherited the *Ge-zai Xi* tradition from his mother, Hsieh Yueh-hsia, and thus chose *Ge-zai Opeila* as his main direction and characteristic. However, the *Opeila* plays, produced by Golden Bough, suggested different meanings under the divergent historical and cultural context from those in the 1960s, and also reflected the change of time. The significant meaning of their productions will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

## **2.2 The Nativism Nostalgia and Cultural Hybridity in the New *Opeila* of Golden Bough Theatre**

As I have described above, the founders of Golden Bough, Wong Rong-yu and You Hui-fen, joined the U Theatre in the early 1990s and were inspired by Grotowskian concept there. They left U Theatre and created Golden Bough Theatre in 1993. Wong and You were obviously



influenced by their U experiences and started the journey of returning to their own cultural roots. It was the second generation of the emergence of experimental theatre troupes in Taiwan in the 1990s. If compared with the first generation, which emphasized the revolution of the theatre aesthetics, the troupes of the second generation which appeared around the time of the lifting of martial law in 1987 were freely allowed to challenge Taiwanese politics, cultural taboos and theatrical traditions (Chung, 1999: 23). Examined from the three major directions of the second generation's works, post modern theatre, site-specific theatre and political theatre, these were more or less influenced by the Western theatre. Although the productions of the second generation revealed the radical themes and concepts, most of them were still not familiar to the audiences. Chung Ming-de generalized the main reasons for this as follows: 1) the anti-naturalist and non-dialogic elements in their works resulted in confusion for audiences; 2) these troupes refused to be connected to the national apparatus; thus on the one hand, they did not accept any financial support from the official departments, on the other hand, they did not care about box office sales (1999: 127-128). The nature of the second generation troupes was still close to the elites and attempted to awaken social revolutionary awareness. Compared with other troupes of the second generation, the first few works of Golden Bough were obviously divergent. Except for the first production, *Rite of Passage*, others continued the main direction of the U Theatre to seek the revival of the traditional crafts, such as *Tiao-che-gu* and *Tai-chi*.

One significant point is the play, *The Spring Flowers*, which was created in collaboration with the artistic director of *Uhan-shii* Theatre Group - Peng Ya-ling. This was the first time that Hsieh Yueh-hsia, Wong's mother and also a famous leading actress of male roles in the *Ge-zai Xi* troupes in the 1960s, played the leading role in Golden Bough's works. Wong had not forgiven his mother for her absence from his childhood; however, during the process of searching for his own cultures, he suddenly found out there were plenty of cultural resources deserving further exploration in his mother's works. He started to realize, 'How amazing my

mother's *Ge-zai Xi* is! [...] No matter observing from which perspective, my mother is such a splendid performer' (Interview with author, September 2008, Personal Translation). Wong's *Ge-zai Xi* touring experiences with his mother in his childhood were associated with his pursuit of his 'mother culture'. Therefore, Golden Bough chose an anti-elite direction, which was different from other contemporary troupe's radical anti-hegemony routes.<sup>50</sup>

There are two reasons why Wong chose *Opeila*, or, to be precise *Ge-zai Opeila*, to facilitate his concept. One might be because the performing style of *Opeila* had never appeared on the contemporary theatre stage before, and the other was the influence from his theatre partner – Chen Ming-tsai, who was also the director of *Rainbow Creek Lo-te-san* in the U Theatre and *Paddling through Zhuo-Shui Steam* in Golden Bough Theatre, which I mentioned above. Chen preferred to employ the most folk Taiwanese cultural elements into his works. The appearance of Golden Bough's performing styles successfully distinguished itself from all the second generation troupes. Observed from the development of the contemporary theatre from the Japanese colonial time, most of intellectuals were inclined to be 'Pure Cotton' style theatre practitioners. In the 1980s, the first generation of troupes attempted to combine the Eastern with Western theatrical concepts, in which the 'Eastern' actually specifically referred to the aesthetics of *Peking* opera. It was not until the second generation that the Taiwanese folk cultures started to be re-evaluated by the theatre practitioners; however, this was still exercised under a China-centric cultural framework. It was evident that Golden Bough was the first troupe to re-evaluate *Opeila*, neither an Eastern nor Western theatre form, and to represent it on the contemporary theatre stage.

Beginning with *Taiwan Opera: The Female Robin Hood - Pai Hsiao Lan* in 1996, through

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<sup>50</sup> Wong points out that 'for me, there are three possibilities to make theatre: first is making by brain; second is making by emotion; third is making by spirit. I think they (other theatre practitioners at the time) all make by brain because most of them are intellectuals. I wouldn't say it's bad, but the fact that everyone makes in the same way makes me feel bored. Thus, I'm eager to find my own way. (Interview with author, September, 2008, Personal Translation)

*She is so Lovely*, *Romeo and Julia*, *Yu-may & Ten-Lai*, and *Happiness Parts 1, 2 and 3*, and up to *Sayonara My Love* in 2011, there have been eight works in total claimed to perform in *Opeila* style by the Golden Bough, almost half of their total productions. Two characteristics are significant here: 1) the narratives of these plays are all related to the Taiwanese history and are full of nostalgia; 2) the plays employ numerous cultural hybrid elements. The two characteristics were usually presented simultaneously, which reflected a desire that what a colonised country sought was a nostalgic scene involving hybrid cultural elements. These two points will be further discussed in the following paragraphs.

### **2.3 A Time Capsule – What Meaning does the Nostalgia in Golden Bough’s Plays Reflect Today?**

*Taiwan Opera: The Female Robin Hood* - *Pai Hsiao Lan* is set during the Japanese colonial era; *She is so Lovely*, *Yumay & Tenlai* and *Happiness* are set in post-war Taiwan between the 1960s and 1970s; *Sayonara My Love* is set in 1945, the year when Japan announced its defeat in the Second World War. These period settings meant that the stage sets, costumes and acting styles were saturated with nostalgia, which became a distinct characteristic of Golden Bough’s works.

In terms of the de-colonisation process that the post-colonial nations must necessarily go through, we may point out that ‘the simplest nostalgia could also be motivated by a utopian impulse, which attempts to reveal a true history of the oppressed people’ (Liao, 1999, cited in Chiu, 2001: 134, translation by author). Golden Bough was established after the lifting of martial law, which also signified the decolonisation of politics and the beginning of mental decolonisation. Without restriction from politics, every ethnic group and class was allowed to freely speak out and fight for their rights. Various social and cultural movements boomed

during this period of time, such as the movement for the retrieval of the mother tongues of the aboriginal ethnic groups, *Hakka* and *Hoklo* ethnic groups. It can be noted that Wong also began his de-colonial journey by making plays. He talked about his previous perspectives toward *Ge-zai Xi* in an interview, saying,

I conceived of *Ge-zai Xi* as a kind of popular outdoor entertainment, rather than an artistic form. Previously, I believed the commonly-held idea that only performance presented in the National Theatre should be called an art. An outdoor performance could not be qualified as an artistic form. This was also the commonest concept of art in old times, while the people still regarded speaking *Hoklo* as crass behaviour, and therefore belittled *Ge-zai Xi* and looked down upon it. (Interview with author, September 2008, Personal Translation)

After the 1990s, he entirely changed his attitude toward *Ge-zai Xi*, which was also a common phenomenon amongst local Taiwanese intellectuals. From the year 1949, KMT started to enforce its internal-colonial rule on Taiwan and prioritised Chinese cultures, but marginalized local Taiwanese cultures. After the lifting of martial law in 1987, the China-centric ideology collapsed and intellectuals increased their tendency towards a re-evaluation of the marginalized cultures and attempted to reform what Crow and Banfield called a ‘cultural certitude’ (1996: 9). Other post-colonial nations also experienced a similar process of ‘returning to their roots.’ According to Crow and Banfield, the positive aspect of the ‘return’ was described as follows:

This has to do with the urgent need of subjugated peoples, as an essential part of the process of decolonisation, to recuperate (*sic*) their own histories, their own social and cultural traditions, their own narratives and discourses – all in the service, not of a myth of racial essence. (Crow & Banfield, 1996: 10-11)

However, it also means that the old mode of thoughts would be overturned in the process of return. The Caribbean poet and dramatist, Derek Walcott, explains, ‘That return journey, with all its horror of rediscovery, means the annihilation of what is known’ (Walcott, 1986: 25-26). Wong determined to return to the period between the 1950s and 1970s, which was also his childhood. He attempted to fight against China-centric hegemony and encourage oppressed

Taiwanese awareness by using a nostalgic performing style and symbols. It seems that his nostalgia is not only a recollection of the old times, but also a reflection of the present and future Taiwan.

Wong not only attempts to return to and re-build the previous Taiwanese memory and aesthetics, but also put his nostalgic concept into practice in the management of the troupe. Although Golden Bough is classified as a contemporary troupe, their rehearsal and mode of living are more similar to that of the traditional *Ge-zai Xi* troupe or ‘a traditional big family’ (Silvio, 2009a 57). The members always sit around a round table in the kitchen when it is meal time, just like the way in traditional *Ge-zai Xi* troupes. Before a new play is performed, the members gather together to pray to the Chinese theatre god, *Tian Dou* Marshal, and wish for the success and smooth sailing of their performances. All the full-time members usually stay at the studio to rehearse or help with cleaning and organizing data when they are free from rehearsals. Interestingly, similar to a traditional family business, the line between business and private affairs is also rather vague in Golden Bough. In an interview, You Hui-fen mentioned that after his son, Wong Ping-guo, was born, all the members became temporary nannies who took care of Ping-guo while Wong and You were busy. Ping-guo also began to act as a guest performer at four years old (Silvio, 2009a 57-58). In a *Ge-zai Xi* troupe, because the members usually bring their families when touring around Taiwan, actresses often rush to feed their babies during scene changes, and then back to the stage, continuing the performance. Although Wong escaped from the touring life of his mother’s *Ge-zai Xi* troupe when he was young and chose to be a white-collar worker, he ultimately, but differently, returned to that lifestyle when he created his own troupe.

On playing the role of A-tsai in *Happiness*, the actor Li Yun-chung explains the process of deciding how to portray this character from another time as follows:

Wong Rong-yu told us that ‘we are supposed to create an atmosphere’. It was not

only because the performers deliberately acted nostalgically, but also through the establishment of the whole environment including the music and costumes...etc. As long as the acting style is not too modern, the performance could be seen as nostalgic. (Silvio, 2009a: 53-54, Personal Translation)

The construction of the nostalgic atmosphere can be discussed in several aspects: costume, character, plot, acting style, music and stage setting.

### (1) Costume

Various styles of costumes appear in eight of Golden Bough's *Opeila* plays: the dress of Japanese soldiers (see Figure 3.19), bandits, imperial army officers, Chinese warriors and a *Kong-fu* master; also included were the S&M-style leather suit of a Madonna-esque figure, *Ge-zai Xi* style luxury costumes, a singer's evening dress, an Agogo style suit with flared



Figure 3.19 The Japanese soldiers in *Sayonara My Love* (2010) (Source: Golden Bough Official Website: <http://www.goldenbough.com.tw/>)

trousers and large-collared shirts (see Figure 3.20), Taiwanese common people's casual



Figure 3.20 The variety styles of costumes in *She is so Lovely...* (2001) (Source: Golden Bough Official Website: <http://www.goldenbough.com.tw/>)

clothes; Japanese and Taiwanese mixed-style police uniforms, hip-hop style clothes and bikinis etc. It seems that there are no regulations or restrictions on the choices of the costumes, and it was evident that the performing effect is a more important matter to pursue. This tendency seems to be inherited from the tradition of *Ge-zai Opeila*.

According to Hsieh, the costume style of *Ge-zai Opeila* usually overlapped with cabaret style. A

slang term, 'Wearing the wrong thing is better than wearing something shabby' (*Ning-ke chuan-cu, bu-ke chuan-po*), could appropriately exemplify the preferences and tendency of

*Opeila* costumes. Visual effect is prioritized over chronological accuracy (Hsieh, 2002: 160).

The theatre scene was very competitive in early post-war Taiwan, and thus presenting the most luxurious costumes was also a ploy to attract more audiences. Although Golden Bough's *Opeila* plays are not as exaggerated as traditional *Ge-zai Xi* troupe's performances, and still provide consistent settings and characters, they present their costumes in a highly stereotyped visual style, using shorthand to imply information about the characters. For example, the main character in *Happiness*, A-tsai, is an unemployed wanderer in the 1960s. Thus, he wears a large-collared patterned shirt and flared trousers, which is the audience's typical image of that era (see Figure 3.21). The female singers usually wear splendid evening dresses decorated with vivid sequins, which is also the commonest image of women in popular cabarets or *Niu-rou-chang* (translation 'Beef Meat Market,' meaning 'Strip Clubs') in 1980s Taiwan. The villainous characters are either presented as Japanese samurai holding a *Katana* and wearing *Kimono* and Japanese *Sandals*, or as Chinese gangsters wearing *Kong-Fu* outfits. Interestingly, these two images of the villain also signify the two colonisers in Taiwanese history. In addition to playing on the audience's preconception of what the characters should look like, details of the costumes are also carefully considered in order to strengthen the portrayed images. For example, the supporting character in *Happiness*, Uncle Tako, is supposed to be a mainlander from China. He wears a long-sleeved undershirt, on which is printed the logo 'The official *Ma Tsu* temple' (*Da Tian-hou-gong*). In Taiwan, older males usually join religious activities of the nearby temples; the temple committees give the participants hats or shirts with the temple logos as a gift. Hence, it is common to see groups of older Taiwanese males gathering together, all wearing these kinds of shirts. Golden Bough collects and represents



Figure 3.21 The look of A-tsai from *Happiness* (2006) (Source: Golden Bough Official Website: <http://www.goldenbough.com.tw/>)

various types and images of the Taiwanese local people, which have existed in the Taiwanese collective memory. In addition, these types of people are not regarded as important people in the grand historical narratives but merely the most common people you will bump into in daily life.



Figure 3.22 A scene from *Happiness* (2007) (Source: Golden Bough Official Website: <http://www.goldenbough.com.tw/>)

## (2) Character Types and Plots

Regarding the setting of characters, according to Silvio, the ‘modern’ characters in Golden Bough’s plays such as the gang-leaders, singers, swordswomen, wanderers still belong to the old times (2009a: 52-53). *Opeila* was one of the most flexible commercial theatre genres and could always absorb the popular elements into it. The latest movie, theatrical, and staging technologies could therefore be freely adopted in the *Opeila* plays. However, the representation of *Opeila* of Golden Bough seems like a time capsule, in which the old appearance of *Opeila* in the 1960s is frozen. *Opeila* is represented at the moment when it was enjoying its glory days in Golden Bough’s works. Thus, the young performers sometimes find it difficult to interpret the characters, who were only alive in their parents’ memories (Silvio,



2009a: 55). The performers construct their characters by interviewing their parents to add to their own imagination of the old times.

Similarly, in terms of the plots, *Golden Bough* also followed the typical narrative way of the 1960's *Opeila*, when the popular themes of *Ge-zai Opeila* included family ethics, romance, *Kong-fu*, revenge, underworld, etc. In *Taiwan Opera: The Female Robin Hood - Pai Hsiao-lan*, the story describes a swordswoman, Pai Hsiao-lan, and her chivalric activities, such as how she investigated the corrupt act between Hei-da and a Japanese official, and rescues a poor adopted girl, Tsai-ying, from suffering at the hands of Hei-da and her foster mother, also the owner of a *Ge-zai Xi* troupe.

The plot of *She is so Lovely* is very typical and can be found in many popular '60's Japanese movies and *Xing-ju Opeila* plays. The male protagonist, Chien-li, and a barmaid, Tzu-yun, fall in love but they are forced to separate because of the financial difficulties of the times. Tzu-yun is to be forced to marry a rich business man and Chien-li disappointedly goes abroad to study in America, where Chien-li meets and befriends a priest, and it is arranged that he will marry the priest's daughter. However, the priest is accidentally murdered, and in order to avenge the murder, Chien-li is trained as a professional killer called Crying Freeman and secretly returns to Taiwan. Then he saves Tzu-yun's sister and fights for Tzu-yun, who is kidnapped by a villain. Chien-li and Tzu-yun finally can be together forever.

The series of *Happiness Parts 1, 2 and 3* focuses on the stories of the protagonist, A-tsai. The plot of this play is derived from a famous long series of Japanese movies, *Men's Life is Bitter* (*Otoko Wa Tsuraiyo*, in Japanese). A-tsai is an unemployed wanderer and every time he returns to his hometown, various unexpected events always happen to him and his family and friends. This series of plays describes the Taiwanese local people's stories interwoven with grief and joy (see Clip 3 in the attached DVD1).

*Sayonara My Love* is an absurd story about a Taiwanese army troop, which is led by a Japanese commander at the end of the Second World War. Because the Japanese commander refuses to admit the defeat of Japan, he decides to lie to the soldiers and leads them on a gold-digging expedition in a mountain in order to support his homeland, Japan, in winning the war. In the mountain, they meet a Taiwanese female *Ge-zai Xi* troupe and a romantic and bitter story about the cruel truth of war is then triggered. This kind of ‘grand theme’ had never been seen before in the 1960’s *Opeila* plays. After Japan’s defeat in the Second World War was announced, and after the KMT government took over Taiwan, China, formerly an enemy country, suddenly became homeland for Taiwanese soldiers, who had participated in the war as Japanese soldiers under Japanese rule. Even now, Taiwanese identity is divided, as there are divergent and controversial perspectives on Taiwan’s history and what it means to be Taiwanese. Wong points out that the conflict over Taiwanese identity also reflects and insinuates the circumstance of ‘one country, two worlds’ in Taiwan in 2010. It is obvious that Golden Bough has a bigger intention in representing *Opeila*. In addition to telling popular romantic and gangland stories, it seems that Golden Bough also attempts to reveal the confusion and anxiety of the cultural and national identity within the multiple colonial history contexts.

### **(3) Acting Style**

As well as creating the nostalgic style in their performing themes and forms, how does Golden Bough represent it through their acting style? According to Silvio, the key point is the collaboration of ‘realistic emotions’ and ‘stereotyped movements’. She further explains that the performers still pursue the realistic inner world of the characters, but the 1950-70s ‘*cliché*’ performing style, such as stressing and exaggeratedly articulating the important lines or key words: ‘**YOU!** How can **YOU ABANDON** me?’ (see the Clip 3 and 4 in the attached DVD1),

which seems obsolete from the perspectives of contemporary theatre, was frequently employed and exaggerated (Silvio, 2009a: 54). When the performers read these capitalised words, they will particularly slow down the speaking speed and strengthen the voice tone to express the characters' stronger inner emotions. The movements also become more artificial with big hand gestures. These characteristics of the performance are inherited from the acting during the period of indoor stage (*Lai-tâi-hì*, in *Hoklo*) in the 1960-70s. Many older *Xing-ju* performers have mentioned that, because the theatres were huge, the performers were usually asked to enlarge their movements and voice volume in order to enable the audiences even in the last rows to enjoy the performance. After the decline of *Xing-ju* in the 1970s, many performers moved into other careers, such as film and TV circles; some older performers still can be found in certain movies or TV programmes nowadays. Most of these older performers had to be familiar with the acting styles of TV, thus they were always corrected by TV directors for their over exaggerated actions.

Some *clichéd* TV soap opera acting styles are deliberately used in Golden Bough's plays. Two typical examples are the following: A couple is talking. Each person wants to blame him/herself for something, but whenever he/she tries to do so, the other person press him/her lips with their fingers to stop him/her from speaking. In the other example, a long-separated couple meets again, and the performers imitate the type of slow motion seen on TV by slowly running to each other (see the Clip 4 from 3'00" to 3'40" in the attached DVD1). These scenes are typical of the popular soap operas produced by Chiung Yao<sup>51</sup> in the 1970s and 1980s. Golden Bough satirizes the China-centric tendency seen in TV programs in the post-war era by parodying Mandarin TV series and also challenges audiences' familiarity with theatrical aesthetics by representing typical acting styles. Su Pei-kai points out that Golden Bough constructs a theatre form that differs widely from the 'modern', 'Mandarin' and 'Western

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<sup>51</sup> Chiung Yao is a popular romance writer in Taiwan. Her works have been adapted into TV soap operas and are well-known by audiences.

synchronization' forms seen in contemporary Taiwanese theatre. In addition, their performances:

Always seduce audiences by breaking boundaries between upper/lower class, modern/outmoded and civil/grass-rooted. We are frequently aware of the sense of the vulgar while watching; however, we also wonder, where does this sense of vulgarity come from? Is it the nostalgic sentiment within a contemporary context? (*Happiness* programme, 2006: 18, Personal Translation)

These seemingly outmoded theatrical aesthetics, which were emphasized in Golden Bough's *Opeila* works, actually enable audiences to reconsider the criteria by which upper/lower class are evaluated.

Although imitations of *Opeila* performance styles successfully create nostalgic atmospheres, Golden Bough performers do not have the long-term training in traditional theatre, as did *Ge-zai Xi* performers in the 1960s, and this has limited their ability to freely represent the allegorical acting style of *Ge-zai Opeila*. This issue will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

#### **(4) Music and Stage Setting**

Music also plays an important role in creating the nostalgic atmosphere in Golden Bough's works. Most of the musical arrangements selected are *Hoklo* songs that were popular in the 1970s and 1980s. Many of these songs were derived from Japanese melodies and re-written with *Hoklo* lyrics. Because they were well-accepted by the Taiwanese working class, some were also employed by the political opposition campaign in the 1980s as vital propaganda that recalled Taiwanese identity and memory. These songs are still broadcasted from campaign vans during election seasons today.

In *Taiwan Opera: The Female Robin Hood – Pai Hsiao-lan*, the entrancing song of Pai Hsiao-lan, *A Female Dragon in the Sea of Tribulations* (*Khóo-hái Lú-sîn-liông*, in *Hoklo*)

properly signifies the protagonist's concern with justice and female's oppressed status. This song was originally the theme song of a very popular TV Hand-Puppet Theatre TV series produced by the Huang Chun-hsiung Hand-Puppet Troupe in the 1970s, and the lyrics skilfully describe the grief and helplessness of women's bitter destiny.

In the series *Happiness*, several popular *Hoklo* songs – such as *The Poor Brothers* (*Bô-tsînn Hiann-tī*, in *Hoklo*), *Formosa Mambo* (*Pó-tó Bān-pho*, in *Hoklo*) and *The Youth Summit* (*Tshing-tshun Niá*, in *Hoklo*) – were used to create a plebeian and easily-accessible atmosphere. Some songs, *Drinking Song* (*Kan-pue Kua*, in *Hoklo* language) and *Apple Flower* (*Phōng-kó Hue*, in *Hoklo*), which applied the Japanese melodies with *Hoklo* or Mandarin lyrics, signified the legacy from the Japanese colonisation. In addition, because a *Ge-zai Xi* troupe was arranged in *Taiwan Opera: The Female Robin Hood – Pai Hsiao-lan*, melodies from traditional Taiwanese opera have also been adopted.

When describing conflicts between Taiwanese and Mainlander gangs in *Yu-may & Ten-lai*, Golden Bough uses Mandarin anti-communist propaganda songs, such as *I Love the Chinese Nation* (*Wo-ai Zhong-hua*) to create the time aura. In addition, popular contemporary Mandarin songs and Western music are also freely adopted in its plays.

In *Sayonara My Love*, a famous Taiwanese folk singer and composer, Chen Ming-chang, was invited to design the entire score. Chen's rise comes after the flourishing of the Taiwan Native Soil movements in the 1990s, and his works are recognized as representative of Taiwanese local culture, especially *Hoklo* culture. In the programme for *Happiness*, he explains that he designed the music for *Sayonara My Love* with an eye to *Xing-ju*'s concept of hybridity. Thus, elements from *Nan-guan*, *Bei-guan*, *Ge-zai Xi* and contemporary music are evident in his score, as are the mixed playing styles of contemporary bands, traditional orchestras and

Taiwanese *Nakasi*<sup>52</sup>. Compared to Golden Bough's former *Opeila* works, in which popular songs are frequently used, the music in *Sayonara My Love* is more consciously chosen with the spirit of *Opeila* in mind.

Golden Bough's stage designs frequently draw on colours and images with a strong Taiwanese working-class flavour and, the most typical impressions of the popular entertainment revues in different eras are also exemplified on stage. In *The Female Robin Hood – Pai Hsiao Lan*, Wong transforms a truck into a stage, thus extending and mobilizing the stage. He also decorates the stage with hand-painted naked girls, a variety of fluorescent colours and sparkling bulbs, to create the sense of a Taiwanese variety show. The idea originated with Medicine-selling Troupes (*Mai-yao-tuan*) in the early times of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which toured night markets in Taiwan giving performances that promoted the sale of medicines. In *Yu-may & Ten-lai*, a Taiwanese local and an American-style bar are presented side by side on stage, which suggests the deep influences from the American aid in the cold-war era of the 1950s to 1960s. In *Happiness*, the stage setting is focused on a Taiwanese-style *Karaoke* bar in the 1980s, a typical entertaining space comprised of rotating lights, wall mirrors and spotlights. In *Sayonara My Love*, large-scale mobile layers make up the mountain scenery (see Figure 3.23) and are accompanied by numerous brightly-coloured slides, on which a mix of Japanese and Taiwanese images are carefully chosen to appear. Gaudy colours and decorations are profoundly employed in Golden Bough's stage designs.



slides, on which a mix of Japanese and Taiwanese images are carefully chosen to appear. Gaudy colours and decorations are profoundly employed in Golden Bough's stage designs.

Figure 3.23 The stage setting of *Sayonara My Love* (2010) (Source: Golden Bough Official Website: <http://www.goldenbough.com.tw/>)

<sup>52</sup> *Nakasi* refers to a kind of popular music band in Taiwan. It emerged in the Japanese colonial era and was usually associated with working-class culture, such as the old tea parlours and drinking bars. The term is borrowed from the Japanese word *Nagashi*, which means flow, but also means accompaniment. A *Nakasi* band usually contains an accordion, and drums to accompany the singers.

## 2.4 A Hybrid Cultural Nostalgia

The concept of hybrid culture is regarded as one of the most significant issues in post-colonial discourse. Homi Bhabha (1985: 154) observes that ‘the effect of colonial power is seen to be the production of hybridization rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of native traditions’. The hybridity enables the colonised to imagine and live with what Bhabha calls ‘the Third Space’, where ‘the transformation value of change lies in the re-articulation, or translation, of elements that are neither the One ... nor the Other ... but something else besides’(Bhabha, 1994: 25). The ambiguous space can also be found in the works of Golden Bough. The application of hybrid cultures in Golden Bough’s *Opeila* plays is focused in recent studies of Golden Bough, such as Teri J. Silvio’s articles.

Drawing on numerous cultural elements, Golden Bough presents nostalgic scenery, rather than modern scenery that reflects the globalization that Taiwan and many other nations are currently experiencing. Golden Bough deliberately chooses to juxtapose ‘old’ elements that elicit feelings of nostalgia for the Japanese and post-war eras. On the other hand, the *Opeila* of the 1960s, in addition to exploiting popular culture, also delivered a nostalgia sentiment; this, however, was mainly for the previous coloniser, Japan. It seems that *Opeila* plays, no matter of the post-war era or the 1990s, are always characterized by the nostalgic sentiment. Therefore, the issue can be raised of whether the ‘hybrid cultural nostalgia’ in old and newly-produced *Opeila* plays has a meaning that goes beyond resistance. What is the utopian impulse behind the nostalgia in Golden Bough’s works?

The application of Japanese cultural elements in *Opeila* plays of the post-war era could easily be criticized for reflecting the ‘residual poison’ of Japanese assimilation policies. However, Taiwanese historian Chen Pei-fung has articulated a different argument. In his research, which focuses on popular Taiwanese songs of the pre- and post-war eras, he points out that the songs popular under Japanese occupation mostly originated from Taiwanese folk songs, such as

*Ge-zai Xi* melodies and *Hakka* mountain songs. It seems that the composers of these songs were not deeply influenced by Japan and did not highlight the ‘similarity’ of their pieces to Japanese *Enka*, but, instead, emphasized their ‘diversity’ (Chen, 2008: 103). Interestingly, a great number of imitations and appropriations of Japanese *Enka* songs emerged during the post-war period were widely accepted by the Taiwanese and became mainstream. Chen notes that Taiwanese attitudes toward popular songs changed dramatically from the Japanese era to the post-war era. Rather than keeping a distance from Japanese *Enka*, as they had in the colonial era, great numbers of Taiwanese voluntarily listened to and sang *Enka* with their former coloniser, Japan (2008: 98). Moreover, a clear Taiwanese identity was clearly expressed when Japanese lyrics were translated into the *Hoklo* language, in order to differentiate Taiwanese from Mainlanders (Chen, 2008: 98-121).

The dramatic changes that occurred between the pre- and post-war eras also reflect a post-colonial issue in Taiwan. Under the rule of the KMT government, the majority of *Xing-ju* participants were local Taiwanese. Thus, it might be asked whether the Taiwanese have also recalled their former coloniser by recalling numerous Japanese cultures, in order to differentiate Taiwanese culture from the internal coloniser’s culture, which exemplified orthodox Chinese culture, in the 1960s. To be precise, during the confrontation between Taiwanese and Mainlanders, a desire to construct a ‘Taiwanese-exclusive’ cultural identity was evident in local forms of entertainment, such as *Enka* and *Opeila*. *Opeila* seems to freely grasp multiple cultural elements without any rules or restrictions; however, the imitation of Japanese culture could also be evidently noted in their music, costumes and plots. Did this implicitly suggest people’s real attitude toward the KMT regime?

In the attached DVD 1, Clips 3 and 4 exemplify two different kinds of cultural hybrid nostalgia. Clip 3 includes several scenes from *Taiwan Opera: The Female Robin Hood – Pai Hsiao-lan*. The nostalgic elements of this play were close to the Japanese colonial and early



post-war era styles. For example, the gangsters in the opening scene of Clip 3, who wear round black sunglasses, red lipstick, flat hats and over-sized Western suits, and the head of their gang, Hei-da, who wears Japanese *Yukata* (bathrobe) and clogs, are dressed in very typically Japanese and Taiwanese mixed styles of costume. The *Ge-zai Xi* troupe and the villain called 'govern-governor' also clearly denote the plot's Japanese cultural background. Note a few key characteristics of Clip 3: the performance venue is outdoors, in front of a temple; the stage is a transformed truck; the play opens with a traditional ritual - *Pān-sian* (in *Hoklo*, transliteration 'Performing gods' ); the play is accompanied by a live traditional theatre band; the lines are coarse, with many erotic implications; and several songs and dances are casually inserted into the play. These features re-created a nostalgic performing environment and the atmosphere of the post-war era at a time when indoor performances were extremely popular. What Clip 3 reveals is not a complete result of cultural interaction, but rather a sort of cultural collage that represents local Taiwanese and Japanese cultural elements. Chinese culture was not yet the dominant element in *Taiwan Opera: The Female Robin Hood* – *Pai Hsiao-lan*. At the end of the 1990s, while traditional theatre became more and more reformed and contemporary theatre became more and more intellectualised, Golden Bough moved in a totally different direction, revealing its intention to overturn the norms of theatrical aesthetics. The nostalgia of the pre- and post-war eras in Golden Bough's works, thus, had a post-colonial meaning of returning to root culture and declared Taiwanese cultural dignity to be in opposition to Chinese cultural hegemony, although definitions of Taiwanese culture were still mostly made in reference to the *Hoklo* ethnic group.

Clip 4 reveals a different stage of nostalgia. Compared with *Taiwan Opera: The Female Robin Hood* – *Pai Hsiao-lan*, *Happiness* focused on Taiwan's first economic resurgence, between 1960 and 1980. In the opening song and dance, *Bao-dao Man-po*, seen in Clip 4, rotating electric and neon lights denote the obvious influence of industrialisation. The most distinct characteristic of *Happiness* was still its collage of multiple and popular culture. However, the

influence of Japanese culture had waned, while the influence of Chinese culture had increased, such that the performers in *Happiness* not only spoke *Hoklo* and Japanese, but also Mandarin and, sometimes, English. In addition, effects borrowed from television were used extensively, including slow motion running (see 3'04" in Clip 4) and 'pretentious' speaking, which was a feature of the mainstream acting style in Mandarin-speaking TV series after the 1980s. One of the female roles, Mei-chi, wore a very Western-style dress and a curly golden wig. In *Happiness*, even a character from the working class could say, in English, 'Would you like some *Chi-a-bin* (*Hoklo* for 'ice cream'))?' - thus drawing attention to bilingualism. Going to Mexico to sell ice cream and to Las Vegas to get married seemed common-sense scenarios for characters to imagine. The line 'I love you!' in English was also, at all times, accompanied by the theme song of the foreign film *Romeo and Juliet*.

It is worth mentioning that the Western cultural elements in *Happiness* actually referred more specifically to American culture. As American economic and political aid to Taiwan increased after the 1960s, the American influence became part of a sort of neo-colonial scenery after the Second World War. In addition, the characters in *Happiness* began to speak 'standard Mandarin' and recited traditional Chinese poems. The influence of American economic neo-colonisation and the KMT's internal colonisation were represented in this play; however, whether these representation could be seen as reflecting the critical perspective of the director is unclear, because the characters from the lower class still spoke *Hoklo*, while the characters who seemed more high class or elite usually spoke Mandarin. It seems that an explicit cultural hierarchy still existed, unchallenged.

The strong sarcasm and grass-rooted energy in *Taiwan Opera: The Female Robin Hood – Pai Hsiao-lan* became a source of light amusement in *Happiness*. The power of representation diminished. Actually, this change also reflected political changes and changes in Golden Bough's status. *Taiwan Opera: The Female Robin Hood – Pai Hsiao-lan* was produced in

1995, when Golden Bough was created, and although martial law had been lifted, political power had not changed hands yet. Although Lee Dong-hui was the first local Taiwanese president, the KMT was still the ruling party. The characters in *Taiwan Opera: The Female Robin Hood – Pai Hsiao-lan* satirised political reality in Taiwan. For example, they used a slang ‘the govern-governor’s underpants could lead to national bank’ to criticise the colonial regime’s corruption. *Happiness* debuted after 2000, when the opposition party DDP first gained ruling power and issues of Taiwanese awareness and identity became a legitimate topic of popular discourse. Local Taiwanese cultures, which had been marginalised before, drew attention again from both the public and academic circles. At the time, Golden Bough’s management was more on track: its funding from official departments increased, while the scale of its tours and performances also expanded. *Taiwan Opera: The Female Robin Hood – Pai Hsiao-lan* was performed on a small scale and at outdoor venues; however, the *Happiness* series was performed in a formal auditorium. Golden Bough’s more mainstream tendency also reflected the process by which Taiwanese identity entered mainstream discourse. However, Golden Bough’s expansion was also problematic. In 2007, the troupe announced financial difficulties and asked for donations from the public.

Unlike the *Opeila* in the 1960s, the new *Opeila* plays, which were made by Golden Bough Theatre in the 1990s, were performed after martial law had been lifted and people had an entirely human right to express themselves. Why does Golden Bough still parody *Opeila* and recall the past? In a democratically free era, why does Golden Bough still try to seek and re-build a past? The nostalgic sentiment in their works actually reflects a desire to seek a pre-colonial homeland in the post-colonial era. In the programme for *Happiness Part 2* (2007: 20-23), the dramatist You Hui-fen notes that what Golden Bough continues to seek and build is a ‘homeland of spirit’. What is constructed on stage is a utopian old Taiwan, where relationships between people were simple, naïve, uncomplicated and lived in a society with justice, where ‘we reap what we sow’. Thus, to these represent the simplicity of nostalgic

characters, performers are sometimes asked to give up their complicity (Silvio, 2009a: 54).

The leading actor and assistant director, Shih Don-lin, explains:

We usually adore the older generation because of their simplicity and sincerity, and these characteristics are what I am eager to grasp. The reaction to everything of these characters is not as radical as that of the people nowadays. (Silvio, 2009a: 54-55, Personal Translation )

Liu Su-chuan, an actress in *Taiwan Opera: The Female Robin Hood – Pai Hsiao-lan*, also explains the process of interpreting her role, Black Rose. She considers the ‘hot girls’ of the past more *naïve*, as well as cuter and sexier than modern women, who, in her opinion, are sexy for the purpose of gaining benefits or reputations. Generally, people were more simple-minded in the old times (Silvio, 2009a: 55-56). Wong further explains in the introduction to *Happiness Part 2*:

There is an interesting thing to be found here – a group of simple people making a simple play. It is also precious that there is still a group of people living in such a simple way in this complicated and chaotic era. (2007: 16, Personal Translation )

The comparison between past=simple and nowadays=complicated is consistently expressed in interviews and related reports about Golden Bough. Confronting the post-colonial status, what Golden Bough reflects is a desire that they are seeking the glorious memory in the past. Taiwan has experienced successive colonisations, and it, therefore, seems a rather difficult task to revive its most primary indigenous culture; thus, in Golden Bough’s works and in contemporary local Taiwanese discourse, even the former colonial culture could be regarded as part of their ‘native cultural roots’. What remains is the harmless part of colonial experiences, and what is extracted is the purest and wonderful part of Taiwanese culture, with infinite reach. Ironically, Silvio points out, ‘On the one hand, they sincerely wish to reconstruct a simpler society, which they see as uniquely Taiwanese. But this pure, local society does not exist even in the memories of the young actors’ (Silvio, 2009b: 350).

Within the context of the rise of Taiwan’s native consciousness, I argue that Wong

enthusiastically attempts to re-build the Taiwanese memory and identity by restaging the native and popular cultures that were previously marginalized. In an interview, he talks about his new perspective on *Opeila* and native culture:

A lot of Taiwanese culture was belittled by the Taiwanese, such as *Tai-ke* (Taiwanese guest), and people were even belittled for speaking ‘nonstandard’ Mandarin. I feel upset about this, as I respect your language and use your language to communicate with you; however, you pay me back with ridicule. I think this makes people sad.... If Western people, stammer when speaking *Hoklo* language, we may think they’re cute, and, similarly, if a teenager speaks nonstandard *Hoklo*, he/she will be encouraged to keep learning. Actually, the fact that you are eager to speak makes me happy. The Taiwanese share a characteristic that, if you respect me, I will also respect you in return. We will never laugh at your effort. This is also the major difference between the Taiwanese and Chinese. (Interview with author, September 2008, Personal Translation)

The nostalgic trend is one of the most significant cultural phenomena in the 1990s Taiwan. The hybrid culture, which comprises elements of both foreign and local Taiwanese cultures, has taken on new appearances and been presented, in new ways, for Taiwanese people to re-understand and re-accept. For instance, what Wong mentioned in the interview that *Tai-ke* (Taiwanese guest, also meaning Taiwanese people) is originally a dismissive term generally used to refer to a group of teenagers, who wear fake brand clothes, ride 50 c.c. scooters, and go to dance raves at night clubs. However, in the process of reconstructing Taiwanese culture, *Tai-ke* has been promoted as an alternative aesthetic that can exemplify the orthodox Taiwanese taste, which is described as ‘tacky, with force’ (*Song ko u-lot*, in *Hoklo*) (Silvio, 2009: 349). The success of *Tai-ke* Rocks gig in 2005 also signifies another rising popularity of ‘Taiwaneseness’. Indeed, the phenomenon of *Tai-ke* successfully challenged Chinese cultural hegemony. Wong explains that he chose *Hoklo* as his performing language not only because it is his mother tongue, but also because he wants to transform social esteem for Taiwanese culture: ‘living here, “Taiwanese flavour” seems to signify lower and marginal symbol; however, that is also what I am mostly interested in. In my works, the “Taiwanese flavour”; thus, serves as the core characteristic of Golden Bough’ (*Yu-may & Ten-lai* programme, 2004).

Golden Bough's *Opeila* has truly played an important role in the re-building of Taiwanese aesthetics. Su Pei-kai points out that Golden Bough's works introduce:

A new theatre aesthetics, which is derived from the subaltern and popular culture, is applied to challenge the 'modern' and 'civilized' society. In addition, the fresh meaning of *Tai-ke* identity has been proudly created from the previously labelled and stereotyped term (or identity). (*Happiness* programme, 2006: 18, Personal Translation)

However, *Tai-ke* aesthetics, which have been re-evaluated by Golden Bough, are inevitably still generally based on *Hoklo* culture, not taking other ethnic groups' cultures into consideration. Thus, the nostalgic sentiment of re-building Taiwanese identity may easily fall into the pitfall of what Said called 'nativism', which essentially assumes the existence of a pure pre-colonial culture. This assumption is ahistorical and 'this kind of "return", in cultural terms, is often associated with some mood or other of nostalgia' and is the exaltation of 'the resuscitated splendid of the past' (cited in Crow and Banfield, 1996: 10).

It is important to note that there are multiple layers in Taiwan's post-colonial nostalgic nativism. Because of Taiwan's multiple and successive colonial experiences, the presumption of the 'pre-colonial culture' is made all the more complicated by a history of changes in regimes and rulers. Under Japanese colonisation, what Taiwanese intellectuals sought was a homeland based on the Chinese culture in the Japanese era, while the Taiwanese in the post-war era imagined a pan-Taiwanese culture that was actually comprised of hybrid cultures. Post-colonial theatre researcher Helen Gilbert points out the pitfall of the post-colonial nostalgia that the writers sought the nutrition from pre-colonial history; however, Spivak and Bhabha argue that 'such nativist reconstructions are inevitably subject to the processes of cultural intermixing that colonialism promoted and from which no simple retreat is possible (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2000: 159). Although the nostalgic hybrid cultures in Golden Bough's works could challenge the China-centric cultural hegemony, the question must still be raised of whether the pre-colonial Taiwanese culture once evident in Golden Bough's

*Opeila* plays has ‘flattened’ – and whether the power relationships within the hybrid culture are ignored? In the process of re-building Taiwanese cultural identity and aesthetics, have the cultural characteristics of other ethnic groups who also live in Taiwan, such as aboriginals, *Hakka* and Mainlanders, been marginalized and blurred?

## **Conclusion**

*Xing-ju*, under the KMT internal-colonial regime, was a light and popular form of entertainment, in which political and numerous taboo issues rarely appeared. However, Silvio points out that the popularity of *Opeila* is ‘seen as proof of the tolerance and adaptability of *Hoklo* culture and its ability to survive in the face of the neglect and scorn of ruling elites’ (2009b: 344). After the lifting of martial law and with the prospering of the Native Soil Movement, local Taiwanese cultures were re-evaluated, but *Opeila*, because of its hybrid characteristics, proved difficult to define and recognize as a Taiwanese performing form, whereas *Ge-zai Xi* was regarded as the representative local Taiwanese theatre genre. After the 1990s, and due to subtle changes in Taiwanese awareness, a new definition of Taiwanese culture that rested on cultural hybridity was constructed. Within this context, the emergence of new *Opeila* by Golden Bough Theatre and other *Ge-zai Xi* troupes signalled that ‘new *Opeila* does not just copy *Opeila*, but quotes and comments on it; it makes *Opeila* and its various elements significant within a new discursive field’ (Silvio, 2009b: 344). It could be said that the new *Opeila*, *Opeila* of the 1960s, and various forms of *Xing-ju* from the Japanese era all appeared within different historical contexts. I believe that the new *Opeila* produced by Golden Bough can be seen as a phenomenon that reflects the transition from internal colonisation to post-colonialism.

From its earliest years, Golden Bough has traced its own cultural roots, because its founders,

Wong Rong-yu and You Hui-fen, are deeply influenced by the U Theatre and its Grotowskian approach. In the 1980s, when the boundary between Taiwanese and Chinese identity was still vague, Wong and You initiated their journey with an exploration of Taiwanese folk crafts. After discovering the significance of Wong's mother's previous experience in *Ge-zai Xi* troupes, they established their main direction by producing new *Ge-zai Opeila* plays, which were incorporated into the *Tai-ke*'s popularity in 2005. Silvio points out that recent re-evaluations of *Tai-ke* can be seen 'as a reaction against the purism and Puritanism of the Native Soil cultural movement of the 1970s-1990s' (2009b: 341). I argue that in addition to reflecting the limited imagination of Taiwanese culture, the popularity of *Tai-ke* aesthetics signifies the suspension of issues related to the KMT's internal colonisation. Since the lifting of martial law in 1987, Taiwan has not been through a transitional justice process, and as a result, its authoritarian political structure has never been overturned. Therefore, although thirty years have passed, a deep-rooted China-centric ideology still exists in the shadows of every aspect of Taiwanese society. For example, opposition political party, DDP, are still regarded as being comprised of coarse people and supported by the working class, while the KMT party is seen as exemplifying better taste. What is more, people who speak 'standard' Mandarin may give the impression of being more educated and civilised, and in TV variety shows, hosts still tease people from southern or rural Taiwan about their bad taste in clothes. In addition, spoken *Hoklo* TV series are still called '*Xiang-tu-ju*' (Countryside Drama), and the memorial hall of a dictator, Chiang Kai-shek, is still preserved in the capital city.

It is evident that Taiwan has not undergone a post-colonial phase, and I conceive of Golden Bough's new *Opeila*, which contain a great number of *Hoklo* and Japanese cultural signifiers, as subtle resistance to the remaining internal colonial hegemony. When Fischer-Lichte discusses the colonised theatre in India and Africa, she provides a positive perspective,

On the one hand therefore, while in India it was the colonisers who instigated the use of foreign (European) theatre traditions and the adoption of foreign (Western)



theatre forms as exemplary models, and in Africa it was through the indoctrination of school and university education, on the other hand, both the Africans and the Indians developed their own forms of intercultural theatre in the first half of the century, which could be set in motion as an instrument in the battle for national independence and towards affirmation of, or even recovery of, the own cultural identity. (1990: 17, Personal Translation)

With limited oppression from political forces, the new *Opeila* produced by Golden Bough can be seen as a new kind of synthetic theatre, because their hybrid cultural elements are chosen consciously. Wong and You deliberately raise questions in the post-colonial Taiwan, and mimic and mock former and current rulers. Although their strategy challenges the Chinese cultural hegemony and significantly influences audiences to a certain degree, it still works within the same framework where the coloniser creates or even strengthens the cultural hierarchy. For instance, the application of many popular cultures, which were previously belittled, somehow still emphasises the same esteem for these elements. Maybe it is time for *Opeila* to move on to the next stage.

## Chapter Four

### An Alternative Way to Embody Taiwaneseeness through Taiwanese *Xing-ju* – A Personal Analysis of *Sleep Available*<sup>53</sup>

#### Introduction

*Xing-ju*, as I have discussed in the previous chapters, is situated between new and old, West and East, modern and traditional, and elite and folk culture, is loaded with post-colonial cultural symbols because of its cultural hybridity. Can *Xing-ju* be regarded as a theatre genre that can fully embody Taiwanese cultural characteristics? Post-colonial theories have provided with me an appropriate perspective to evaluate *Xing-ju* and its related cultural phenomena. Based on the examination of different phases of *Xing-ju*, I facilitated a practical project to explore my interpretation of *Xing-ju* and ‘Taiwaneseeness’. The project is called *Sleep Available*, a title adapted from a Japanese text written by the Japanese absurdist dramatist Betsuyaku Minoru in the 1960s. My reason for choosing a Japanese, rather than a Taiwanese text, is further explained in a later section.

In light of the popularity of Golden Bough’s *Xing-ju* works after the 1990s, I wonder whether *Xing-ju* can itself be seen as a form of de-colonisation, going beyond mimicry of a colonial theatre form. It is important, in this study, to facilitate a *Xing-ju* project, in order to experiment with an alternative way of exploring the nature of Taiwanese culture and theatre genres, rather than merely looking at these in the context of historical data. *Xing-ju* has never voluntarily developed, and its commercial nature has enabled it to absorb multiple cultures without awareness of subjectivity. Despite having hybrid cultural characteristics, *Xing-ju* has never made Taiwan the subject of its treatments. It was my intention to create a new form of *Xing-ju* performance, within which all of the cultural elements I apply, including the

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<sup>53</sup> Please see the complete performance in the attached DVD2 - *Sleep Available* (2011.5.26).

psychophysical actor training method, are chosen with strict attention to the Taiwanese cultural positions. In doing so, I hope to place *Xing-ju* within a decolonisation context, conferring upon it a post-colonial attitude with which to face colonial history. In addition, *Xing-ju*, which is neither Japanese *Shinpa-geki* nor Chinese *Hua-ju* (Spoken Drama) exemplifies a distinct form of Taiwanese history, culture and philosophy that can also be used to fight against the phenomenon of global singularization.

The psychophysical actor training, developed and conducted by Professor Phillip B. Zarrilli, was incorporated into the rehearsals to enhance *Xing-ju* performance. Zarrilli points out that his psychophysical actors training is ‘intended to help today’s actors find appropriate conceptual and practical tools that will allow them to solve the specific acting problems of both conventional “dramatic” as well as “post-dramatic” dramaturgies’ (2009: 8). I chose as my performers two drama students who have been attending psychophysical actor training for at least one year. The terminology from psychophysical training can serve as our communal working language. As the application of psychophysical acting approach is not limited to any performing style, the question is whether or not it is appropriate to apply this approach to rehearsing for a *Xing-ju* performance? In order to maintain the hybridity of Taiwanese characteristics, can the application of a psychophysical acting approach enhance *Xing-ju* performance so that it is not merely regarded as a soap opera with exaggerated movements? In addition, because one of the main characteristics of *Xing-ju* is its flexible tolerance for absorbing multiple cultures, would the combination of a British academic environment, intercultural actor’s training, international performers (a male Thai performer, Num; a Welsh female performer, Gemma; and a Taiwanese performer, author) and a Japanese text still be classified as Taiwanese *Xing-ju*? Would the characteristic of Taiwanese culture be clearly visible or, in contrast, blurred in this work?

## 1. Why *Sleep Available*?

*Sleep Available* was written by one of the most representative Japanese absurd playwrights, Betsuyaku Minoru, in 1991. He was born in Changchun city in China in 1937. He studied at Waseda University in 1958 and devoted himself to joining student movements such as the protests against the extension of the 'Treaty of Mutual Co-operation and Security' with America in 1960. In addition, he also joined the radical student theatre group, Liberty Stage, and met Suzuki Tadashi and Ono Seki there. Because his time was occupied by student movements and theatre activities, he eventually dropped out of university. In 1966 these three students, who either graduated or dropped out from the Waseda University, created the Waseda Theatre, and Betsuyaku Minoru was their first in-group writer. These theatre practitioners belong to the so-called 'first generation' of avant-garde theatre movement in post-war Japan. All of the student movements they attended gave them the communal experience they needed when they later produced plays. This generation, who had a more dramatic life outside the theatre than in, had their own way to express their thoughts through theatre. The left-wing student movements became a part of Betsuyaku Minoru's material for his scripts, which encompassed the aspects of absurdity and cruelty in the world (Lin, 2001: IX-XV). After joining the Liberty Theatre, Betsuyaku Minoru met his wife Kusunoki Yuko, who was also an actress, and started to write plays in 1970 and produced approximately one hundred scripts for the Snail Theatre Company (*Katasumuri No Kai*). This company was co-founded by Kusunoki and the female director Murai Shimako. *Sleep Available* is one of the works that Betsuyaku wrote during this period of time. Because there was only one female director and one actress in the Snail Theatre, most of Betsuyaku Minoru's plays in this period were two-handers, with 'a woman' and 'a man'; when they started a new play, a second actor would be invited to play the role of that male character (Masako, 1997: 5).

*Sleep Available* is the sequel to *Series of Witch – Part1, Part2, and Part3* and was written in

1991. After the 1990s, the cooperation between Betsuyaku and the Snail Theatre entered a new stage. Their close working relationship allowed him to freely talk about his personal feelings toward joining social movements and his guilt in leaving them (Masako, 1997:8). What *Sleep Available* reveals is a civic centre explosion planned by a radical social activist. This is a two-hander script, with the characters of a Man and a Woman, and it does not give any background information. The play begins with a seemingly usual day in the life of the characters. The Woman is the owner of a shabby room, and one night, the Man, who bears an artificial left leg and leans on a walking stick, knocks on the Woman's door because he is looking for a place to stay overnight and has seen a sign hanging outside the Woman's home with the words 'Sleep Available' on it. The Man then stays with the Woman in the same room for a night, during which they talk a lot and receive a few strange telephone calls from someone who is looking for the owner of a left leg. The Man gradually notices that the Woman's speech and behaviour are unusual. It turns out that the Woman is a Witch, and her house is called 'the house of the witch'. The Woman begins to reveal that the Man was a radical activist thirty years ago and firmly believed that by setting off a bomb in a civic centre, people would 'Wake up from the unconscious daily life!' However, the Man accidentally lost his leg in the explosion, ran away from the hospital, and lost his memory. Until the end, the Woman seems to know everything about this event. When the Man finally recalls his past, he decides to wait for death's arrival at sunrise.

This one-act play can be seen as a typical work of Betsuyaku, in which both roles mostly stay in the same place and speak their lines without any significant physical movements. However, a lot of dialectical conversations and detailed movement instructions in the script create apparently motionless scenes, but, underlying these scenes are complex emotional layers. The content of their conversations is nevertheless rather illogical, which is also a typical characteristic of an absurdist play. The Japanese researcher, Masako Yuasa, suggests that in Betsuyaku's plays, female characters are usually shown as disobeying the social conventional

values, whereas the way of thinking of the male characters is more similar to that of ordinary people. However, along with the development of plot, the male characters, which also symbolize the social convention, will gradually reveal a twisted element under the surface. In *Sleep Available*, the audiences will gradually notice the abnormality and unreasonableness of the Woman character soon after the beginning of play. When she starts to talk to the rag dolls or later insists on believing the missing left leg in the phone calls belongs to the Man, the Woman reveals a response and logic different from 'normal' people. Only at the end of the play is the truth revealed: that the Woman is a witch; however, her real status gives the audience a rational explanation for her abnormal behaviour. On the other hand, compared with the Woman, the Man behaves normally; however, at the end, the truth is revealed that he used to be a radical social activist and has struggled with the guilt of setting a bomb thirty years ago.

In *Sleep Available*, Betsuyaku reflects the social movements in the post-war era from a Japanese perspective; through this piece I have attempted to view the consciousness and loss of the Taiwanese people during the continuous colonised experience. The theme raised in the play through the leaflet call to 'Wake up from the unconscious daily life' also responds to the current circumstance of Taiwan, which is struggling on the edge of China's powerful politics, economics and culture. How Taiwanese people identify themselves as Taiwanese is an ongoing issue. In this script, the forgotten dark past is slowly revealed by the Woman's intention, and leads to the Man's conscious choice of death at the end. The theme of 'missing memory and the re-confrontation with the past' could be interpreted as my reflection on the current KMT government, which is used to be the internal-colonial regime, but re-gains the political power again since 2008 to present. The KMT government appeals to the Taiwanese people to forget the sad past and look forward to a prosperous future to avoid investigating their responsibilities of 228 Incident and White Terror. However, something that is 'missing' cannot resolve the accumulating issues as it cannot be faced directly. This is also the main

reason why I chose this script to interpret *Xing-ju*.

The second reason for choosing the script is that I am interested in interpreting *Xing-ju* performing form by using a text from today, rather than a recreation of Golden Bough, and to challenge the presumption of the contemporary theatre form. *Xing-ju* has been regarded as a performing form that only serves as a light entertainment. With the application of a psychophysical training approach, the performing form is not the main issue of delivering a complex context, but depends on the actor's energy. This text requires the performers to delicately build up their relationship and rhythm as the scenes are mostly based on the conversation. Therefore, it is also rather appropriate for the application of psychophysical acting. The physical movements are not the most crucial thing to focus on but rather a constant engagement of the whole psychophysical form. Regarding the previous *Xing-ju* performances, both in the descriptions from the historical data and in the representative version made by the Golden Bough Theatre, the external performing style was more emphasized than building up the inner energy of the performers. Consequently, until the late stage of *Xing-ju*, most of troupes' repertoires were all limited to the style of soap opera or musical. What I wanted to experiment with was whether I could regard *Xing-ju* as a stylized performing form and interpret the text with the complex layers instead of producing a soap opera.

As has been discussed in the previous chapters, the Taiwanese Westernisation/modernisation was (in)directly influenced by Japan; therefore, regarding the transitional process from the traditional theatre to modern theatre, Taiwanese theatre shared certain similarities with that of Japan. *Shinpa-geki* and *Shingeki* in Japan were in-between theatre genres, while in Taiwan *Gai-liang Xi* (Reformed Theatre), *Wen-ming Xi* (Civilized Theatre), *Wen-hua Ju* (Cultural Theatre) and *Huang-ming Xi* (Emperor Theatre) and *Opeila* (Opera) were all under the umbrella term of *Xing-ju* and could be classified as transitional theatre genres between

traditional and contemporary theatre, which also means that the performing style gradually changed in nature from the 'actor performance' to 'director performance'. The combination of both traditional and Westernised ideas could also be observed in the transitional theatre. Betsuyaku is one of the representative dramatists during the period of *Shingeki*, but compared with Suzuki Tadashi, who put his emphasis on actors training and theatre aesthetics, Betsuyaku's interest is more in developing a 'literary theatre'. Thus, most of his plays are composed of well-structured dialogues.

In contrast, in Taiwan, during the Westernisation process of theatrical evolution, because of the change in official language, the intellectuals, who were educated under Japanese rule, were not allowed to write in their familiar language, Japanese, after the KMT government took over Taiwan and changed the official language from Japanese to Mandarin. After the 1960s, there were few *Opeila* performances rehearsed according to the literal scripts. Most of them were performed on scenarios without using scripts. Consequently, there were fewer and fewer written works left after the 1960s, although hundreds of *Opeila* performances were put on every year. Because of the limited number of *Xing-ju* texts, I decided that I would experiment with the possibility of interpreting *Xing-ju* by using a contemporary text. In addition, the reason for choosing a text written by a Japanese writer is to signify the deep influences from Japanese *Shinpa-geki* and *Shingeki* on the development of Taiwanese contemporary theatre. By parodying both the performing form and narratives of the coloniser, I attempt to consciously review a new aesthetic colonialisation of the hybridization in Taiwanese theatre, and to indicate my thoughts towards colonialism.



## 2. Psychophysical Actor Training

The three performers in *Sleep Available* all participated in psychophysical training for at least one year; therefore, the working terminology and concepts could be shared during the rehearsals. This training method was developed and conducted by Phillip B. Zarrilli<sup>54</sup>(see Figure 4.1). The content of the training includes three major parts: (1) Indian *Hatha Yoga*, (2) Chinese Wu-style *Tai-chi Quan*, and (3) Indian *Kalaripayattu* – a form of martial arts.



Figure 4.1 Phillip Zarrilli demonstrating a tai-chi movement at training in department of Drama, University of Exeter (2009)

Because the aim of psychophysical training is to build a bridge between body and mind for actors, the genres or performing styles may not necessarily limit the application of this training. Chang Wei-hsien, the director of the Starlight Troupe in the Japanese era, introduced the Stanislavskian method to his members, although there is little actual data about the content of the training he applied. Generally, however, most of the *Xing-ju* performers did not have any systematic actor training, although some of the performers might have learnt some traditional *Ge-zai Xi*, dancing and singing, and *Kung-fu*. Consequently, after the most prosperous age of the *Xing-ju* area in the 1970s, *Xing-ju* performance was gradually criticized for its monotonous and stereotyped acting. Although the performances given by the Golden Bough in the 1990s were well accepted by contemporary audiences for their nostalgic and historical flavour, their performances still emphasized the representation of a theatrical form and this led to the result that their performances style still seeming rather soap opera in style. Thus, the question then emerged whether *Xing-ju* performing style can serve as a theatre genre to present the deeper side of an ‘organic process’ of acting rather than merely presenting

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<sup>54</sup> Phillip B. Zarrilli taught at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, University of California, Los Angeles, University of Northwest, University of New York and University of Surrey. He was appointed Professor of Drama at the University of Exeter in 2000 and has been teaching there ever since.(see Figure 4.1)

a monotone and stereotyped soap opera. ‘Organic’ acting for me is when the actors honestly respond to every moment freshly and unpredictably. Even soap operas have different levels of acting and quality. The key to this might lie, in fact, in the performers’ acting and training. The psychophysical training approach aims to sharpen and cultivate the actor’s sensibility towards the environment. I will address the psychophysical training in detail and how the training is applied in the rehearsal of *Sleep Available* in the following section.

Regarding actor training methodologies, the Stanislavsky method, together with related methods, is regarded as dominating this field. However, his perspective is easily misunderstood as there are several phases of his research. Zarrilli points out that ‘Stanislavski was the first to use the term “psychophysical” (*Psikhofizicheskii*) to describe an approach to Western acting focused equally on the actor’s psychology and physicality applied to textually based character acting’ (2009: 13). His psychophysical training is mainly derived from two sources: the theory of psychologist Theodule Armand Ribot and Indian *Yoga* (Zarrilli, 2009: 13). In Stanislavsky’s view, a performer’s best condition is revealed when, in every action ‘there is concealed some inner action, some feelings’ (1961: 228). The ‘feeling’ here not only refers to the psychological feelings but also to a concept that contains the appropriation of Indian *Yoga* and philosophy. However, his concept was misunderstood and changed when it spread to the United States.

Zarrilli regards Lee Strasberg was the most influential person. Strasberg was trained in the American Laboratory Theatre by Boleslavsky but never directly taught by Stanislavsky. Strasberg developed American method acting, a technique which emphasized ‘sense memory’ as well as ‘emotional truth’. The actors were asked to recall memories of important events in their lives and to focus only on the response of sensory aspects. Through the continuous practices of this emotional memory, the actors’ emotions are expected to be released on stage (Zarrilli, 2009: 16).

Method acting is regarded as a dominant training method in Taiwan and many other Asian countries. After the Second World War, American aid not only affected military and economic aspects but also the education system and values in Taiwan. The majority of Taiwanese drama students chose to study abroad in the United States; consequently, the techniques of over-engagement of the actors' psychological status and the analysis of characters also dominated the Taiwanese theatre circles after the 1960s. It was not until the late 1980s that other actor's training approaches apart from method acting were introduced in Taiwan. The training methods of Grotowski, Suzuki Tadashi and Japanese *Butoh* then became fashionable for practitioners to pursue. However, the connection between daily training and performances seemed not yet to be fully understood by the practitioners. It was common for many practitioners to participate in different kinds of theatre workshops; however, only few of them would continue to cultivate an approach by spending sufficient time on it. Although the Golden Bough in its early stages focused on the Grotowskian approach and developed its own training method, the current members do not have systemic daily training as they did before, except for joining the *Ma Tsu* pilgrimage every year. The experienced actors and assistant director of Golden Bough, Shi Dong-lin, who graduated from the Taipei National University of the Arts, Department of Drama, are of the view that 'the training we're doing in Golden Bough now actually do not have a direct connection with our performances. We used to do Grotowskian exercises and *Tai-chi*; however, I do not think there are direct influences and applications (of these trainings)' (Interview with author, September 2009). It seems that they did not fully understand the connection between Grotowski's exercises and acting.

The other reason for not continuing with their training may be their understanding of *Opeila*. Shi points out that 'because of doing *Tai-chi*, there were some elements related to the usage of joints and spine in our earlier works; however, these things disappeared later, and we began to work on *Opeila* and popular things, which has nothing to do with the training' (Interview with author, September 2009). It seemed that they focused more on the form of *Opeila* rather than

an acting perspective, and this sometimes resulted in a rather monotonous and weak acting style, which was supported by exaggerated movement and voice.

Zarrilli criticizes method acting for over-emphasizing emotion and claims that psychology will cause the actors to focus on merely the ‘self’ and create a character with a dualism of body-mind (2009: 17). In addition, by over-emphasizing the actor’s personal and subjective life, ‘acting is reduced to what the actor-as-person feels emotionally in the moment...The result can be self-indulgence to the neglect of the physical side of the acting equation’ (Zarrilli, 2009: 17). Therefore, Zarrilli continues the ‘psychophysical’ concept which is introduced by Stanislavsky and establishes his psychophysical actor training system. This training method does not aim at overturning Stanislavsky’s training but rather at going beyond the restricted understanding of Stanislavsky, who had considerable influences on the actors before. Similar to Eugenio Barba and Grotowski, Zarrilli seeks a training method for actors that can connect body and mind; a method that begins from the regular daily exercises rather than from the emotions and psychology. Barba defines an actor’s preparation before the performance as ‘pre-expressive level of performance’ (Barba and Savarese, 2005: 186-204), which means the preparation work of an actor’s body, mind, awareness and strength is necessary to enable an actor to act on stage.

Zarrilli’s psychophysical training is based on three Asian traditional martial arts, which “attune” the body and mind and awaken one’s inner energy, progresses through a workshop phase in which the actor’s awareness and energy are put into free play in structured improvisations, and continues as the actor fine-tunes awareness and energy in



Figure 4.2 Students were doing the opening breathing exercise at training in department of Drama, University of Exeter (2009)

response to specific dramaturgies’ (Zarrilli, 2009: 8). Regular daily training ‘quickens one’s awareness, heightens one’s sensory acuity and perception, and thereby animates and activates the entire bodymind. This inner activity is resonant and therefore “felt”’ (Zarrilli, 2009: 19). However, in order to reach an ideal status, long-term and regular exercise is required such as practicing Asian traditional martial arts.



Figure 4.3 Students were doing the lion pose from Indian *Kalaripayattu* at training in department of Drama, University of Exeter (2009)

Observed from my experience of participating in Zarrilli’s training for a complete year, daily psychophysical training usually begins with breathing, and is then followed by a thirty-minute *yoga* sequence and another thirty-minute Wu-style *Tai-chi Quan*. The last session consists of around one-and-half hours of Indian *Kalaripayattu* exercises (see Figure 4.3, 4.4).

Taking the one-year M.A. course as an example, the training is introduced to the students in a three-day, six hours per day, intensive workshop. After this workshop, the regular training will be taken five days a week and each session lasts around two and half to three hours. In addition to the three different Asian martial arts forms, other relevant short periods of workshops, which are also highly important regarding the improvement of an actor’s awareness and energy, are also introduced to the students, such as instructed improvisation, Japanese *Butoh* and certain intercultural actors’ training methods as developed by Grotowski, Michael Chekhov and Meyerhold. During the training, Zarrilli



Figure 4.4 Students were doing a sequence from Indian *kalaripayattu* at training in department of Drama, University of Exeter (2009)

not only teaches and demonstrates the physical movements but also gives guidance and illustration of the psychophysical training principle. He always reminds the students that, because of the individual physical conditions, the target of completing the training is not the improvement or the physical flexibility or strength but the understanding of the concept behind each exercise.

The following are some examples of points he usually mentions during training:

(1) ‘Looking from the *Dan-tian*’. *Dan-tian* is an organ which does not exist in Western physiology; however, in most Eastern traditional martial arts, the cultivation of *Dan-tian* strength is a basic topic. *Dan-tian* is seen as the core of the body, and can make one more grounded if having enough support from *Dan-tian*. The exercise is usually conducted in pairs; the other one’s hand’s touch is used to ensure that the partner’s movements are motivated from the *Dan-tian*. Every exercise is basically related to the support of *Dan-tian*



Figure 4.5 Students were working in pairs to help each other sense the impulse from *Dan-tian* at training in department of Drama, University of Exeter (2009)

(see Figure 4.5)

(2) ‘Open your awareness’. Awareness is not a concrete thing that can be measured by any machine. When the students do every exercise, they are still reminded to engage their consciousness and awareness into the whole space and other individuals in the same space. Students should focus on every presence without using unnecessary force.

(3) ‘Residual awareness’. As Zarrilli explains, ‘residual awareness’ is ‘the trace, resonance, and/or feel of one’s kinaesthetic/energetic relationship to each specific form in action. This relationship is kinaesthetic (in/from the body) and energetic (filled out by *Qi*-energy as

appropriate to the form)' (Zarrilli, 2009: 91). When the students carry the residual awareness from the previous movement to the current movement, the whole process can also be seen as an accumulation of completeness.

From my personal perspective of joining the training, it is a path to embody and to cultivate a fluent bodymind connection with a clear consciousness of being aware of the spatial-temporal presence and the relationship between the self and others. In an ideal status, an actor and her constantly floating *Qi* or energy 'enlivens and qualitatively vibrates or resonates each action as it extends to and is shared with the other actors as well as the audiences' (Zarrilli, 2009: 19-20). Thus, the 'entire performance space is (ideally) suffused with/by the actors' individual and collective energy-in-action' (Zarrilli, 2009: 20). Zarrilli's interpretation of the ideal acting mode seems closer to a condition of practicing *Qi-gong* or Asian martial arts; however, when the points outlined above are applied during the rehearsal, they indeed can serve as a pragmatic communal working language for a director. Regarding my experience of participating in a M.A. project, *A Glimpse of 1949* directed by Fung Wai-hang for example, I had a major problem of losing my focus and being unable to breath smoothly in tune with the actions at the early stage of rehearsal; Fung then asked us to continually open our awareness to the whole space and to each other. At no time did she indicate to us a fixed physical movement or reaction to a specific line of the script; instead, she set an appropriate context for actors to stimulate the impulse in order to respond to each moment. She tried to transfer the actors' focus from being self-aware because of breathing or nervousness into reacting to the impulse and to the changes of the environment and every presence. This building up of a context of scenes through the combined energy of actors and environment without pre-setting responses and physical movements constitutes my initial understanding of psychophysical acting. This is also my most important reason for applying psychophysical training as my working method while directing *Sleep Available*. Can psychophysical training principles be used to develop a new style of *Xing-ju*?

### 3. Rehearsal Process

#### 3.1 Psychophysical Actor Training in *Xing-ju* Performance

*Sleep Available* was performed on the 26 May 2011. The rehearsals started in May, lasted for four weeks and included three three-hour rehearsals per week. American theatre researcher Richard Schechner identifies ‘rehearsal’ as ‘a way of setting an exact sequence of events. Preparations are a constant state of training so that when a situation arises one will be ready to “do something appropriate”’ (1976: 222). The rehearsal outline of the first two weeks was as follows: first half hour – breathing and *Yoga* sequences in psychophysical training, as a group. Due to time limitations, we were unable to complete the *Tai-chi* and *Kalarippayattu* sequences. I thus chose to have the performers do only the basic and quiet sessions of *Hatha Yoga* as their bodymind warm-up. After the *Yoga*, we did improvisation exercises related to Taiwanese *Xing-ju* and psychophysical training for around an hour. The rest of the rehearsal time was used to work on the script. The improvisation exercise sessions were reduced in the last two weeks’ rehearsals to less than half an hour each.

The script of *Sleep Available* contains a great amount of dialogue between two characters and much less in the way of huge physical movement. Zarrilli suggests that after actors endure long-term psychophysical training to build close bodymind relationships, when they need to interpret scripts such as those of Samuel Beckett or of Ōta Shōgo’s *Water Station*, in which the actors’ movements are rather still or imperceptible, ‘the requirement that an inner necessity of action/task be embodied quickly becomes apparent to the actor’ (Zarrilli, 2009: 40). Therefore, on the stage, during the many conversations, the actors must focus closely on every moment. In addition, to create an organic performance, responses to the bodymind condition, which are triggered by conversation and the environment, must be closely connected. This is also why I emphasized the first two-hour session of *Yoga* and



improvisation exercises. These practices will be further explained in the following paragraphs.

In addition to the structured improvisation that Zarrilli has introduced, some of the improvisation exercises I used were derived from Fran Barbe's *Butoh* workshops, which I participated in. Barbe's training method emphasizes the application and entire bodymind transformation of images. Japanese philosopher Yuasa Yasuo points out that 'imagining is a psychophysiological act of the entire bodymind' (cited in Zarrilli, 2009: 39). However, under the influence of bodymind dualism, it is easy to regard using images as akin to projecting pictures onto the mind. An actor with appropriate bodymind training is supposed to allow images to connect to the entire bodymind – from the sole of her feet to the top of her head – and this is what Barbe describes as 'a distillation of patterns of energy which [are] applied to the way of conceiving or composing a dramatic action' (cited in Zarrilli, 2009: 39). I also attempted to work through images to compose the entire scenery of an actor's bodymind.

From Barbe's *Butoh* exercises, I incorporated 'slow walking', 'facial *Butoh*' and 'image transformation' into our daily practice. Like most Asian martial arts, *Butoh* also emphasizes the *Dan-tian* and grounded feet. 'Slow walking' attempts to cultivate the stability of actors' lower bodies. With an image of a full-of-water *Dan-tian*, a doer should try to walk slowly and avoid spilling any water from the 'Dan-tian bowl'. The key point is to keep the entire body balanced while walking.

'Facial *Butoh*' is an exercise that uses music to stimulate actors' facial muscles. In other words, actors try to respond to different rhythms and melodies by moving their facial muscles. I deliberately chose Japanese *Enka*, which has a strong rhythm, to stimulate more exaggerated facial expressions, which are a feature of the *Xing-ju* performing style. The *Butoh* exercises emphasise the entire engagement and transformation of whole body-mind and sharpen the actor's sensory feelings. Although does not signify the specific cultural meaning, music serves as a tool in this exercise, to stimulate the actor's face by melody and frequency changes.

Music is not only received by the ears, but can be ‘felt’ by facial skin, muscles or even capillary openings. The role this exercise plays in rehearsing a performative or exaggerated performing form, like *Xing-ju*, may reduce the stereotyped acting habits of actors, and allow actors to honestly react to the stimulations.

‘Image transformation’ also played an important role in the whole rehearsal process. Because the physical style of *Xing-ju* is rather exaggerated and stylized, in order to create the ambiguous atmosphere of weird and normal that is descriptive of the Woman character, performed by a male actor, Num, I gave Num two specific images to help him create this performing style. First, I asked him to imagine applying water to his lower body. I instructed him, as he lay on the floor, to gradually let his feet transform into water. Then, I asked him to stand, walk and do some activities with his water legs, and we developed a stylized walk for his character. I also told Num to envision his eyeballs being dragged by a rope from behind, to create the subtly weird gaze of the woman character when she speaks with the Man.

I gave the other performer, Gemma, who performs the male character with an artificial left limb, two images to work with. I told her to imagine her left leg being surrounded by vines, to create a twisted and struggling feeling in this appendage. To create the sense of carrying a heavy past and secrets and being inattentive on stage, I asked Gemma to count during the conversation with the Woman and never make direct eye contact with the Woman. My attempt to apply these images is to create a stylized performing style. However, these physical characteristics were not fixed but could be adapted to respond to the entire bodymind transformation. In this context, exaggerated performing effects could then be created without the use of deliberate force.

The members of Golden Bough are not like that of the 1960s; therefore, its rehearsal methods are similar to those of contemporary troupes, which apply texts and are mainly directed by the director; in addition, most of the actions that actors do in the performances are rehearsed

beforehand. As a result, Golden Bough's performances sometimes seem quite monotonous because of the actors' deliberate stereotyped acting, although the nostalgic style of Golden Bough's performances distinguishes itself from other contemporary troupes. Hence, I attempt to use image training to create a stylised acting form but maintain a flexible space for the actors to explore.

Another important exercise I used was 'the reduction', which was derived from one of Zarrilli's structured improvisation exercises. Zarrilli notes that the most advanced Indian martial arts practitioner can run through a complete sequence in his mind's eye, maintaining a basic *Yoga* position, full or half lotus, keeping his eyes open, remaining aware of and open to the space around him and letting his *Qi* circulate through his body (Zarrilli, 2009: 40). Similarly, Zarrilli develops a 'reduction' exercise from both Zeami and Eugenio Barba's concepts, to apply to actors' training as follows:

[T]he actor's subtle inner work (the mind) constantly modulates *Qi* in action. This inner work continues at 100 percent while what the actor shows (the body) to the audiences is held back slightly or reduced. This process creates a psychophysically dynamic inner relationship to action. (2009: 102)

The reduction exercise begins with the repetition of three cycles of the opening breathing-control exercise (see Figure 4.6). Always keeping their internal energy at one-hundred percent, the actors then separately try to reduce external movement from seventy, fifty, and ten to one percent. The key point of reducing external movement is to 'produce a heightened inner-sensory awareness of one's *Qi*-energy and its relationship to physical action';



Figure 4.6 Students were doing the 'reduction exercises' in training in department of Drama, University of Exeter. (2009)

therefore, ‘the further the action is reduced toward one percent, the greater the intensity of one’s relationship to whatever remains of the original movement’ (Zarrilli, 2009: 102). In terms of *Xing-ju*, because its performing style is far from the style of contemporary theatre and because its emphasis is on exaggerated facial expressions and physical movements, application of the ‘reduction’ principle may help avoid the performers from ‘falling into the error of confusing intensity in performance with an uninhibited display of emotion that dissipates the actor’s energy and makes him appear crude and excessive’ (Zarrilli, 2009: 101-102). The use of this principle then allows actors to keep their internal energy at one-hundred percent and still regulate their external movement to the proper extent. Thus, if the same principle can be applied to *Xing-ju*, soap opera and musical theatre, which are all supposed to have more dramatic performing styles, it may be feasible to use the opposite principle of ‘increase’ to create exaggerated performance with sufficient internal support and to avoid dry and empty acting. In the first rehearsal of *Sleep Available*, we did the ‘reduction’ exercise together, gradually reducing external movement to one percent and then returning to one-hundred percent of both internal and external movement. We then tried to increase external movement to one-hundred-and-thirty, one-hundred-and-fifty and up to two-hundred percent. However, we still encountered difficulty when we used the concept of ‘increase’, as, when external movement was twice as big as internal energy, the actors’ external movements still seemed rather weak and without sufficient internal energy. It seems that the increase of the external form reduces or dilutes the intensity of the actors’ performing quality. In the end, we realized that if an actor’s both internal and external energy can reach one-hundred percent, performance at this status can already be seen as exceeding the level of realist acting.

### 3.2 *Clichéd and Stereotyped Acting*<sup>55</sup>

As discussed in the previous several chapters in relation to developments in Taiwanese theatre, Taiwanese *Xing-ju* is always fluid. During the Japanese colonial era, *Xing-ju* was, on the one hand, representative of Westernisation and civilisation, but it was also commercial theatre. During the *Kominka* Movement, it was regarded as a tool for policy propaganda, and, similarly, in the early stage of the post-war era, it was used to disseminate anti-communist ideology. Then, after the 1960s, *Xing-ju* became one of the most popular entertaining forms. No matter how its esteem changes, *Xing-ju* always appears, to audiences, to be a light theatre form, with a *clichéd* and stereotyped acting style. Except for the *Wen-hua xi* (Cultural Theatre) period, *Xing-ju* was always criticized and belittled by intellectuals. However, in entering a new age, Taiwan has faced both post-colonial and globalizational issues, which has resulted in the search for a Taiwanese cultural identity. In this context, *Xing-ju* has been re-evaluated as representative of localized Taiwanese culture, which can be used to fight against Chinese culture-centric hegemony.

With *Sleep Available*, I deliberately explored the ‘*clichéd* and stereotyped acting’ in *Xing-ju*. The three performers involved in this project came from three different cultural backgrounds; thus, what I am interested in is the differences and similarities of three popular cultures in relation to *clichéd* or stereotyped performance style. I asked Num and Gemma to prepare the most popular performance or *clichéd* acting clips from their cultures. Gemma, who is Welsh, showed us a traditional British pantomime<sup>56</sup>, performed on the BBC. Interestingly, this kind of performance also involves a great amount of interaction with audiences, interlacing dancing and singing and cross-dressing performance. Thai actor Num, on the other hand, before rehearsal, uploaded several self-made clips on YouTube, in which he parodied a

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<sup>55</sup> Please check the Clip 5 - *Clichéd* acting improvisation exercises in the attached DVD1.

<sup>56</sup> Pantomime is a musical-comedy theatrical production traditionally found in the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Jamaica, South Africa, India, Ireland, Gibraltar and Malta and is mostly performed during the Christmas and New Year seasons (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pantomime>).

popular Thai TV series in an extremely exaggerated acting style. After filming the clips, he started to draw attention from the Thai media. With teaching experience in a drama department at a Thai university, he also attempted to criticize the problems with stereotyped acting styles and the influence of American method acting. I showed Num and Gemma some *Opeila* performance clips from Taiwanese opera troupes.

I also created a ‘*clichéd* acting exercise’. After practicing the *Yoga* sequence, I asked the actors to walk at random in the studio. Everyone was allowed to do any movement, and the others followed and imitated the movements’ patterns, rhythm and quality. Then, we gradually narrowed down the movements’ styles to *clichéd* acting within different cultures – from emotional expressions of delight, to those of anger, sorrow, and happiness – and extended these to other stereotyped reactions. While imitating one another’s actions, we still maintained awareness of one another and the whole space. I asked the actors not only to engage in physical movements, but to engage in the aura accompanied by the movements at the same time. We also tried to add our mother tongues as accompaniment to the movements, in order to differentiate between cultural contexts.

Interestingly, there was no significant difference between the three *clichéd* acting styles. The most obvious difference was that the *clichéd* acting movements made by Num and me, who both have Asian backgrounds, were more delicate and smaller in scale than Gemma’s movements. For instance, when Num and I tried to imitate a woman’s crying on a common TV series, we both chose to present her sobbing and with shivering lips and a shocked gaze. On the other hand, Gemma chose to fall down on the floor and burst into loud sobs. Except for the scale of our movements, the three of us generally felt rather familiar with one another’s reactions, which all seemed to have appeared on TV. This may also reflect the fact that under globalization, and especially in Taiwan post-1960s, the influence of mass media has become widely disseminated. Compared with traditional *Ge-zai Xi* troupes, most of which

adapted their performances from classic novels or historical stories, *Xing-ju* troupes sought their inspiration from Japanese or European or American movies. Under the profound influence of mass media, different cultures are tending toward becoming more singularized by adopting dominant Western values. According to Antonio Gramsci, cultural hegemony exists when 'a certain way of life and thought is dominant, and is diffused throughout society to inform norms, values and tastes, political tastes, and social relations' (Sassoon, 1982, cited in Katz, 2006: 335). In addition, hegemony 'results from a combination of coercion and consent, the latter achieved through the hegemonic cooptation of groups in civil society, resulting in "coercive orthodoxy"' (Persaud, 2001, cited in Katz, 2006: 335). *Xing-ju* was hugely influenced by foreign movies in the 1960s. When TV became popular after the 1970s, most *Xing-ju* performers changed their careers, to work in the TV industry, and this change led to audiences having a collective impression of stereotyped acting style from the past to present. It was evident that *clichéd* acting has also been globalized, with the development of industrialization and the emergence of civic bourgeoisie, and different cultures are being integrated by the dissemination of mass media. It can be said that it is more and more difficult to discern cultural differences in contemporary TV soap opera.

### **3.3 *Liang-xiang* (Showing Face) and Cross-dressing Performance in Traditional Theatre<sup>57</sup>**

In traditional Chinese and Taiwanese theatre, a performer usually enters the stage accompanied by the rhythm of gongs and drums, and then presents a physical sequence, which functions as an introduction to the character's background and also exhibits the performer's physical ability. Within this opening sequence, there is always a sharp pause, with direct eye contact with the audience, after a series of dynamic movements. A traditional

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<sup>57</sup> Please check the Clip 6 -*Liang-xiang* (Showing Face) improvisation exercises in the attached DVD 1.

theatre performer's training and ability can always be judged by the audience at this moment of stillness. Even when a well-trained performer is entirely still, her energy/*Qi* circulates on stage and draws audiences' attention. In traditional theatre, the shift between the dynamic and still movements is known as *Liang-xiang* (translation 'Showing Face' but also means 'making a stage pose'). Although *Xing-ju* looks more like Western theatre, it is notable that there are certain performing characteristics that are influenced by other theatre genres; the application of scenario is an obvious example. Thus, it is not difficult to observe that *Liang-xiang* is still an important part of *Xing-ju* performance. The actors always dress themselves as luxuriously and prettily as they can, and when they make their appearance on-stage, they are accompanied by distinct music and lighting effects that make their entrance attractive. Although *Xing-ju* actors do not display a codified physical style during their opening performances, they still exhibit their charm through singing or dancing. Actually, their opening songs can also be functioned as introductions to their characters as in traditional theatre. For instance, the theme music for a female Robin Hood is always *A Female Dragon from the Sea of Bitterness*, or a similar popular song.

I applied the principle of *Liang-xiang* during rehearsal. We started with the basic *Liang-xiang* hand gesture in traditional theatre and emphasized the sharp halt in dynamic action. After the actors became familiar with this gesture, their movements were extended to other improvisational gestures. The actors walked at random and were allowed to pause while making *Liang-xiang* movements. When they paused, they needed to sense impulse and keep their energy moving. In addition to practicing *Liang-xiang*, the actors also designed stylized entrance poses that would immediately attract the audience's attention. During their performances, the principle of *Liang-xiang* was also applied randomly. The necessity for moments of still movement between always-dynamic actions is interesting.



With regard to the performing style, *Xing-ju* performance has had the cross-dressing convention since the 1960s, as female actors cross-dressing for male roles seems more attractive to and well-accepted by female audiences (see Figure 4.7). The male performers usually play the female clown characters and this is another convention I



Figure 4.7 The left actress cross-dressed as a male role (1970)  
(Photo was provided by You Mei-yun (the right one))

deliberately chose to keep. The male performer, Num, plays the role of the Woman and the female performer, Gemma, performs the role of the Man. I am interested in the cross-dressing performance, in which the gender of the performers can still be distinguished throughout the play.

Cross-dressing actresses are generally well-accepted by audiences, as male characters cross-dressed by actresses in *Opeila* and *Ge-zai xi* performances are usually prettier than their actual male counterparts would be (see Figure 4.8). This cross-dressing convention can be traced back to the early stage of the *Ge-zai Xi* era at the start of the twentieth century. One of the reasons why intellectuals criticized *Ge-zai Xi* as *Yin-xi* (Porn Theatre) is because performers were regarded as deliberately flirting with audiences with a look of the eyes called *Sái-bák-tsiàn* (translation ‘shooting eye arrows’ in *Hoklo*, see Figure 4.9).



Figure 4.8 A current famous leading male role actress, Chang Hsiu-chin, of a *Ge-zai Xi* troupe (2000)  
(Resource: Lin, 2007)

The leading actors and actresses usually sent tender and seductive glances to audiences to fascinate them (Lin, 2006: 72).



Figure 4.9 A *Xing-ju* male-role actress (1960)  
(Resource: Chiu, 2008)

As an example, the leading male role in the New Southern Light *Ge-zai Xi* Troupe, A-yun, has talked about the specific eye gaze training she received when she was a pupil. Her teacher, in an attempt to train performers to give lively looks, held a stick of burning incense and drew circles or other patterns in front of the students' eyes while asking them to stare at and follow the moving incense without moving their heads. Interestingly, actress' cross-dressing performance was much more popular than actor's. Silvio points out that, 'The visible interplay between the male character and the female actor does not create distance, but enhances the intimacy and sexiness, of the actress' (rather than the character's) persona' (2009b: 355). In the rather conservative early Taiwan society, most of the audiences were women. After working the whole day, they would go to a theatre to see an actress performing a leading male role with a great charisma, and the protagonist's independent and ability to cope with life's difficulties would encourage the female audiences during hard times. The fourth wall seems to not necessarily exist in *Ge-zai Xi* and *Xing-ju* performance. On the contrary, performers are always aware of their audiences. Through eye contact, both performers and audiences clearly understand that they are performing/watching a performance. The audiences, then, are also entering a fantasy world, where a pretty protagonist is talking to and staring at them directly.

During our rehearsals, I told Gemma that she needed to make eye contact with the audience while delivering her lines and to make sure she was always aware that she was performing for her audience, whereas Num, who performed the female role, rarely had direct eye contact with the audiences. Hence, every turn or act of sitting, walking or lying down was supposed to present her prettiness and charm. Audience feedback from a post-performance discussion of *Sleep Available* reveals that audiences found the play more intimate and felt closer to the

performance when the actors had a lot of eye contact with them.

### **3.4 *Lian-suo-ju* (Chain Theatre)**

In addition to incorporating performance styles from other theatre genres, *Xing-ju* has also drawn on lighting, sound effects and stage-setting technologies from movies and touring troupes from China and Japan. During the Japanese colonial era, newspapers often ran advertisements of new performances as follows: ‘We have interesting mechanical stage plus vivid electrical lighting and fireworks on the stage’ (*Taiwan Daily News*, no. 8495, 1924.1.24). It seems that mobile mechanical stages and high-tech stage settings were crucial gimmicks for seizing audiences’ attention. After the Japanese introduced movies to the Taiwanese, it also became popular to insert pre-filmed clips into the performances. This kind of mixed performance was called *Lian-suo-ju* (Chain Theatre). According to Taiwanese theatre research and practitioner Lu Su-Shang, Chain Theatre first appeared in 1928 when the River Cloud Society (*Jiang-yun She*) started to apply this technology to their *Ge-zai Xi* performances (1961: 284). The main advantage of chain theatre is that it allows certain outdoor scenes to be presented easily on stage, such as flood, air and underwater scenes. The troupes usually set screens behind the stage setting beforehand, and when the story requires an outdoor scene, the stage setting is removed immediately, and a screen is shown. After outdoor scenes are finished, the stage settings and actors all go back to their previous status (Lu, 1961: 284).

The appearance of Chain Theatre reveals that *Xing-ju* has always pursued modernisation and constantly absorbed the latest technology and performing elements from other performing genres. In *Sleep Available*, when the woman reveals that the man blew up his leg thirty years ago, I insert a pre-filmed clip, which is projected on the hanging screen behind the Woman, to visualize this part of the man’s past. The film is intentionally made in a rather coarse way and

looks obsolete to the audiences, who are familiar with contemporary theatre aesthetics. The black and white colour images in the film produce a cruel and cold feeling. In doing so, I also questioned the over-emphasis of high-tech equipments on theatre performances from the Japanese colonial era to present.

#### **4. Performance Analysis of *Sleep Available***

##### **4.1 A Reflection on *Sleep Available* from the Perspective of Critical Syncretism**

From a ‘contemporary theatre’ point of view, the *Xing-ju* performing style came to seem rather obsolete and was replaced by popular TV and movies after the 1970s. In this sense, the *Opeila* plays performed by Golden Bough Theatre could be regarded as a nostalgic nativism in post-colonial Taiwan. One question emerged here that what is my reason of making a *Xing-ju* play in the U.K. in 2011. The hybrid culture that *Xing-ju* presents is no doubt the result of successive and multiple colonisations, since, in the beginning, it was not ‘the outcome of a conscious choice and free adoption of foreigner theatre forms by theatre artists’ (Fischer-Lichte, 1990: 15). *Xing-ju* was first introduced to the Taiwanese by the Japanese colonial regime. All the *Han*-Chinese cultures were strictly forbidden with the imposition of assimilation policy during the *Kominka* Movement in the 1940s. To survive, *Ge-zai Xi* changed its appearance by adopting contemporary features. During the post-war era, a new theatre genre, with pre-colonial and colonial cultural characteristics, then emerged under the Chinese cultural hegemony. During this period, although *Xing-ju* activities, in which local dialects were used and local cultures were represented, were not forbidden by the KMT government: their existence was still tolerated by the dominant Chinese culture. Post-colonial researcher Homi Bhabha suggests that the concept of ‘hybridity’ refers to ‘the hybrid result of

two different cultures and also mentions a resistant strategy, particular the influence of hybridity: ambivalence' (cited in Chen, 2007: 148). Chen points out that under colonialism, the colonised became more hybrid than the coloniser. They were forced to learn the coloniser's language, accent and cultural context. Although coloniser took a defiant and belittling attitude toward the colonised people's culture, the latter brought their own knowledge and traditions to powerful discussions and further challenged the orthodoxy of colonisation using the coloniser's language and culture (2007: 149). From this perspective, and in regard to the development of Taiwanese *Xing-ju*, it could also be observed that there was an ambiguous space, where the colonised people absorbed the colonial culture and integrated it with their own cultures, between positive and negative resistance. However, the nature of 'hybridity' also has two sides. On the one hand, it still operated within the colonial system and further deepened the original power structure; on the other hand, it also implicitly fought against colonisation, although this may not have been acknowledged by the colonisers (Chen, 2007: 149).

It was not until the lifting of martial law in the 1980s that political decolonisation began. The Taiwanese colonial experience was different from that of India and Africa. Because of the similarity of ethnic groups, Japanese colonisation is particular in colonial history. The *Kominka* Movement was a 'significant colonial work within world colonial history'<sup>58</sup>. In 1949, the KMT government retreated from civil war with the Communist Party to Taiwan and established an authoritarian nation, Republic of China, supported by the U. S. It then started to promote a Chinese-centric ideology by manipulating the state apparatus. In terms of how the KMT government is identified in Taiwan, there is still much controversial debate in academia. Chen identified it as 'a defeated, exiled regime existing under the global cold-war structure'

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<sup>58</sup> 'All of the colonies experienced an imperialised cultural process, which was usually signified by 'assimilation' logic. However, when the colonised people were entitled 'emperors' by the coloniser and were incorporated into the complete strategy, the Japanese colonial particularity was emphasized, and this also implied that the different ethnic groups would be assimilated through the imperialization of the colonised people, the nature of which could also be seen as racially-discriminative assimilation' (Chen, 2007: 189).

(2010: 154). According to Wu Rwei-ren, the identity of the coloniser depends on the ‘different positions of ethnic groups in the multiple colonial history structure and thus is also deeply influenced by the ethnic group’s understanding toward “colonisation”, “anti-colonisation” and “de-colonisation”’ (2006: 96). Although an unbalanced relationship between the Taiwanese aboriginal people and the different *Han*-Chinese ethnic groups still exists, all aboriginal people and *Han*-Chinese immigrants who migrated from East-Southern Asian or China to Taiwan before 1945 confronted the ‘settlers’ regime from China after 1945. In this context, ‘decolonisation means obtaining freedom from the KMT regime and aiming for the ultimate target of ‘Taiwan belonging to the Taiwanese’. Therefore, political decolonisation began with the execution of democratization and localization under the rule of the first non-mainlander background president – Li Deng-hui in 1990 – and finished with the rotation of the political parties in 2000’ (Wu, 2006: 96).

Although political de-colonisation has already finished, the toughest task remains – ‘decolonizing the mind’ (Wu, 2006: 97). After Japanese colonisation ended in 1945, the KMT regime began to establish an authoritarian nation, which was based on Chinese culture and had no regard for other ethnic cultures. On the one hand, because the KMT conceived of the Taiwanese as being deeply influenced by the Japanese education to which they were enslaved, their first mission was to improve consciousness of the Chinese nation, to ‘sinicize’ Taiwanese society, and to eradicate ‘the enslaved old mind and to build up the revolutionary mind’ (Chen, 1989: 58). As a result, the Mandarin Improvement Policy and Sinicization of the education system were imposed as an urgent mission. On the other hand, according to Chen, after the Second World War, and because of competition between the United States and Russia, right-wing regimes in South Korea, Japan and Taiwan began to form an alliance with the U.S. and entered the Cold War era fighting against communist regimes. The Cold War structure not only took over global colonisation systems, but also restricted and closed opportunities for ex-colonised nations to critically evaluate their histories (2007: 189). Consequently, the

Taiwanese basically understood their own society via American social science methodology. Politicians and officials, who were either educated in the U.S. or had a more pro-U.S. stance, dominated powerful positions and constructed Taiwanese political, social and academic systems by applying American models (Chen, 2007: 177-247). In this context, the KMT regime had a contradictory policy. On the one hand, they asked the Taiwanese to engage in 'de-Japanization' and replace Japanese with Chinese ideology; on the other hand, American values were used to construct the nation. In addition, the issue of neo-colonisation, which was accompanied by rapid capitalization, was ignored.

After the lifting of martial law in the 1980s, a Taiwanese nativism and nationalism, which regarded the local Taiwan as the subjectivity, began to develop. In the 1990s, the *Opeila* plays performed by the Golden Bough theatre exemplified the will to re-build and represent a pre-colonial theatre form and a *Hoklo* culture-based Taiwanese culture as resistance to the privileged *Han*-Chinese ideology. This could be seen as an important process of 'de-colonizing the mind' for artistic director Wong Rong-yu, who identified himself as a local *Hoklo* Taiwanese. However, this kind of nostalgic nativism and nationalism, which emerged along with de-colonisation, still cannot entirely erase the colonial shadow or legacy, because a colonial framework is still used as a reference point. Regarding this issue, Chen also suggests:

[N]ativism works by identification with the self. But the other, the opponent of the self-recovery movement, is still the coloniser, who has now left the colony. In the process of reconstituting the subject, nativism must constantly keep moving away from the narcissistic self, or risk being dragged once again into the colonial framework. (2010: 85)

It is not easy to avoid the fact that during the process of de-colonisation, the colonised people attempted to recover the language, culture and values that were negated by the colonisers, in order to affirm themselves. Even so, the formerly-colonised power structure still could not be easily transcended. Post-colonial researcher Meimme further notes:

In order to free himself from colonisation, the colonised must start with his

oppression, the deficiencies of his group...[...]...He can, of course, assert himself as a nationalist. But it is indispensable that he has a free choice and not that he exist only through his nation. He must conquer himself and be free in relation to the religion of his group, which he can retain or reject, but he must stop existing only through it. The same applies to the past, tradition, ethnic characteristics, etc. Finally, he must cease defining himself through categories of colonisers. (Meimmi, 1991: 151-152)

The question then emerges of how to keep going beyond the old colonial structure. Chen suggests a ‘critical syncretism perspective’. His argument is derived from the discussions of Chinese researcher Chien Hsin-tsu (Edward T. Chien). Chien discusses the interactions and influences of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism and then draws the conclusion in *Chiao Hung and the Restructuring of Neo-Confucianism in the Late Ming* (1986) that ‘syncretism implies the active participation of the involved subjects; the practices of the subject are not imposed and unconsciously accepted, but are reflexive processes that engage the interlocutors’ (Chen, 2010: 98). The critical syncretism perspective is operant when the subjectivity attempts to transcend its limitation with a high degree of awareness (Chen, 2007: 151). Furthermore, Chen explains, the concept of ‘syncretism’ here is different from that of ‘hybridity’, in that ‘syncretism denotes a subject who is highly self-conscious when translating the limits of the self, whereas hybridity is simply a product of the colonial machine’s efforts toward assimilation’ (Chen, 2010: 98), which is formed via the manipulation of the colonisation, and ‘multiculturalism’, which means the collection of other cultures and their exhibition in a national display window (Ghassan Hage, 1993: 133, cited in Chen 2010: 97). The key factor is ‘the identity subjectivity’ (Chen, 2007: 152), which means challenging the one-way anti-colonial perspective, to build a self point-of-view and search for multiple cultural identity subjectivities. This includes not only the colonial relationship, but also concern about all the power relationships that are imposed by class, gender, and geographical position. It concerns classes such as labourers, women, aboriginal ethnic groups, homosexuals, bisexuals and Third World. The crucial principle in ‘becoming others’ is the ‘interiorizing the colonised self as the (marginalized) others (Chen, 2007: 152). ‘Critical syncretism is a cultural



strategy of identification for subaltern subject groups' (Chen, 2010: 99). Chen concludes that 'the aim is not simply to rediscover the suppressed voices of the multiple subjects within the social formation, but to generate a system of multiple reference points that can break away from the self-reproducing neo-colonial framework that structures the trajectories and the flow of desire' (2010: 101).

Here, I would also like to draw a bit on an extended theory of critical syncretism, theatrical syncretism, which has been elaborated by Christopher B. Balme. Syncretic theatre emerged in 'Africa, the Caribbean, and India, and is increasing in strength in "Fourth World" or aboriginal cultures' after the Second World War (Balme, 1999: 3). Balme points out that 'decolonisation' can be examined through a number of formal strategies that involve the combination and amalgamation of indigenous performance forms within the framework of the Western notion of theatre. The process whereby culturally heterogeneous signs and codes are merged together can be termed 'theatrical syncretism' (1999: 2). The term 'theatrical syncretism' is used to refer the theatrical works that serve to advance decolonisation and also offer a theatrical and performative perspective of syncretism. The difference between theatrical exoticism and syncretic theatre is that:

[T]he dramatists and directors involved come from indigenous cultures, their processes of adaptation respect the semantics of the cultural texts they use. Although the cultural texts in syncretic theatre also, by definition, undergo a process of recoding, there exists a consciously sought-after creative tension between the meanings engaged by these texts in the traditional performative context and the new function within a Western dramaturgical framework. (1999: 5)

Examined from Balme's perspective of syncretic theatre, it becomes evident that conscious awareness of one's position and one's own cultural subjectivity is still significant. From Balme's point of view, my experiment with a new form of *Xing-ju* could be seen as syncretic theatre, as it involves the conscious choosing of multiple cultural elements that denote, mimic and even mock Taiwanese colonial history. Most important, in syncretic theatre, 'cultural texts

retain their integrity as bearers of precisely defined cultural meaning' (Balme, 1999: 5).

Observed from both the critical syncretism and theatrical syncretism perspective, the main purpose of *Sleep Available* is not a merely utopian or nostalgic seeking of a pure pre-colonial culture, but to present both sides of Taiwanese history. It can also be regarded as my interpretation or reflection of Taiwanese culture, identity and theatre: I am the descendent of a local Taiwanese *Hoklo* family. My grandparents grew up in the Japanese colonial era. My parents are typical middle-class people, educated under the KMT regime. Before I was twenty years old, I identified myself as a 'loyal' Chinese of the Republic of China and a descendent of the *Han*-Chinese ethnic group; however, after the age of twenty I developed a strong Taiwanese consciousness and thus regard myself today as Taiwanese rather than Chinese. From this personal viewpoint, the critical syncretism perspective provides me with the following aspects when I direct *Sleep Available*: (1) to challenge class cultural boundaries; (2) to re-evaluate the gender and performance in popular theatre; (3) to be consciously aware of the application of multiple cultural elements, and the power relationship between different resources from a critical syncretism perspective.

## **4.2 Challenging the Boundaries between Elite and Popular Cultures**

*Sleep Available* contains two parts: (1) A variety show at the opening and ending; (2) performance of the *Sleep Available* script. In 1960s Taiwan, *Xing-ju* usually began with greetings from a variety show host and was interrupted by the same host when the performance reached its climax toward the end, when the host gave a brief pre-introduction of the next day's performance, to induce audiences to buy tickets again. Sometimes, during the scene changes, the curtain would also be pulled, and the host would come out again to either sing a song or tell a joke to amuse the audience. A *Xing-ju* performance was wrapped as a

variety show that included singing, dancing, juggling and, of course, theatre. The variety show culture lasted until the decline of *Xing-ju* and gradually transformed into Restaurant Musical Revue or ‘Beef Show’ (Adult Porn Show). No matter how its content has changed, it still maintains a popular entertainment nature.

When audiences entered the performance studio of *Sleep Available*, I, dressed as a variety show host, greeted them by singing *Karaoke* on stage (see Figure 4.10). A screen was hung behind the stage, and a *Karaoke* music video played, with some women dressed in swimming suits and swinging their bodies.

The song I chose was *Happy Sailing* (*Khuài-lòk ê Tshut-hâng*, in *Hoklo*), which originates from a Japanese melody and has *Hoklo* lyrics. This song was chosen as representative of the non-party political movements in the 1980s, to recall local Taiwanese awareness. As I sang, the audiences settled into their seats, and a waiter



Figure 4.10 I played the host to greet the arrival of audiences (2011)

(Photo was taken by Chen Hsin-feng)

sent out peanuts and popcorns. Theatre was the most popular form of entertainment in early Taiwan, while ‘going to the theatre’ is regarded as an ‘upper class’ and ‘literary’ activity nowadays. Variety shows are still regarded as an inferior and vulgar mode of entertaining form, which was usually associated with working class in Taiwan. Since Western theatre forms were introduced to Taiwanese audiences with the arrival of ‘modernised’ Japanese colonisation, class problems were endemic in Taiwanese theatre. The exotic, Western and modern theatre form was promoted by intellectuals as a critical platform on which to fight against feudal and old traditional theatre. After Western post-modernism was introduced by intellectuals who had studied in the U.S. in the 1960s, the Westernised theatre form was

regarded as mainstream, although this bias was challenged when renewed awareness of local culture started to form in the 1980s. Performance styles such as *Xing-ju*, variety shows or even Golden Bough's new *Opeila* were still marginalized by modern theatre practitioners or critics. Audiences could enjoy a play while eating peanuts or snacks, and vendors sold snacks across audience seats. I used interwoven *Hoklo*, Mandarin and English to greet the audiences, and the audiences applauded at the opening of the play. When *Sleep Available* began, they were clearly conscious of watching a 'play within a show'. My attempt was to challenge their conception of what it meant to watch contemporary theatre by using a popular theatre form to blur boundaries.

### 4.3 Gender and Performance

Gendered performance has been another theme of this project. According to Chao-jung Wu, cross-dressing performances (both male and female cross-dressing) have a long history in traditional Chinese and Taiwanese theatre (2007: 39). Because women's activities were tightly restricted in China's and Taiwan's traditional patriarchal societies, women were not allowed to perform on stage for many years. Therefore, before the ending of the Qing dynasty, at the beginning of the twentieth century, male actors always cross-dressed female roles. In China, the tradition of men's cross-dressing can be traced back to the *Han* dynasty (206 B.C.-240 A.D.). In the late *Qing* dynasty, four great female



Figure 4.11 Num, who played the role of Woman (2011) (Photo was taken by Ho Yi-lien)

impersonators drew great attention: Mei Lan-fang (1894-1961), Xun Hui-sheng (1899-1968), Shang Xiao-yun (1899-1976), and Cheng Yan-qiu (1904-1958). Of these, Mei Lan-fang was regarded as most representative of cross-dressing actors in China and the West. In Taiwan,

‘male cross-dressing performances were found in almost all traditional Taiwanese theatrical genres from the mid-seventeenth until the end of the nineteenth century’ (Wu, 2007: 81). It was not until the Japanese colonial era that, because of the influence of modernisation and industrialisation, women were encouraged to work outside domestic spaces. As a result, many women began to go to the theatre and even to perform on stage. However, this phenomenon did not necessarily signify the rise of women’s rights, because women were usually sold or ‘rented’ to troupes, to earn income for their families. For management reasons, troupes gradually changed from mixed-gender to pure female. Especially in *Ge-zai Xi* troupes, leading male roles, old male roles, and clowns were almost all cross-dressed by female performers. Male actors usually played supporting roles. Women’s participation in theatre also led to the decline of men’s cross-dressing. Wu points out that ‘women, long absent from the theatrical world, ironically learn their first stage poses from male teachers under a patriarchal structure. It was the male assumption of female roles that guided women’s behaviours onstage’ (2007: 86). Male cross-dressing actors portrayed idealised females on stage, and later, female performers also portrayed dream-like males for women audiences. In the 1950s and 1960s, when *Ge-zai Xi* reached its peak, female playgoers loyally chased their favourite leading male role actresses, although they understood that the roles they admired were impersonated by women. This particularity of Taiwanese *Ge-zai Xi* could be viewed from the perspective of queer studies. In addition, women’s cross-dressing was also later adopted in *Xing-ju* performances. It became common to observe the leading male role in a *Xing-ju* performance cross-dressed by a woman; even when an actress got pregnant, she impersonated her male role by tying her belly.

Num played the role of Woman. He entered the stage after making a high and sonorous sound behind the curtain and faced the audience while striking a *Liang-xiang* (Showing Face) pose. The short pause allowed audiences to clearly see his costume – a nostalgic-style short dress in turquoise blue, a pair of pink pointed-toe shoes, a bob-style wig and dainty black eyeliner (see

Figure 4.11). Then, he showed his specific physical score by picking up the phone and walking and sitting down, which deliberately distinguished his female character.

Gemma entered through the door with a *Liang-xiang* and was accompanied by a Taiwanese popular song, *A Sad Song of a Man* (*Lâm-jî Ai-kua*), which is also an adapted Japanese song with *Hoklo* lyrics. The song was accompanied by a saxophone and was full of the Japanese vagabond atmosphere. It thus helped to briefly sketch the characteristics of the Man role. Gemma tied up her hair and wore a man's hat. She had deliberately-drawn thick, black eyebrows; sideburns; stubble on her chin and a hairy chest, which are the very typical image of a masculine man (see Figure 4.12). In addition, Gemma also used many *Liang-xiang* poses in her performance, and in so doing, she had sufficient time to present her charm to the audience through both eye contact and gesture.



Figure 4.12 Gemma, who played the role of Woman, was doing in her *Liang-xiang* pose (2011) (Photo was taken by Chen Hsin-feng)

Gemma and Num both represented very stereotyped gender images. The aim was not to let the audience fulfil fantasies of cross-dressing, as in drag queen shows; on the contrary, through the deliberate gender performances, both in dress and behaviour, the audiences were made clearly aware of the performers' gender. This kind of very explicit gender performance used to be an important tradition in *Xing-ju* in the 1960s, which was initially influenced by touring *Quan-nu-ban* (Whole Female Traditional Theatre Troupe) from China and was then surprisingly well-accepted by audiences. As a result, leading male roles were cross-performed by pretty females and became an important gimmick both in *Xing-ju* and *Ge-zai Xi* performances. The male character in *Sleep Available* is typical of men in *Xing-ju*: he carries an old suitcase, roving over the island with an unknown history of idealist social activism.

Through Gemma and Num's deliberate mimicry of male and female stereotypes, it was expected that the audience would more clearly observe that gender is constructed by performance, no matter in theatre or in real life.

In postcolonial discourse, the gender, age and class of oppressors and oppressed are usually transformed into metonymy: the colonisers are usually regarded as male, adult and upper class, while the colonised are regarded as female, children and lower class (Chen, 2007: 147). However, in *Sleep Available*, I attempt to overturn the old metonymy that a woman is playing the leading role in this script while the man seems relatively incapable of confronting the harsh truth. The colonised people consciously figure out and put together the pieces of puzzles and present a complete picture to the former coloniser and this action results in the death of the colonial legacy.

It is, moreover, worth noting that when Num appeared on stage with an extremely female attitude, audiences burst out in laughter. Contrarily, when Gemma entered the stage, displaying masculine characteristics, audiences were quiet. The question then emerges here: what did different audiences' responses to different genders' cross-dressing performances signify? This might be easier to understand within the Asian context. If an actor overturned the patriarchal power image by himself and revealed a feminine quality, audiences might have viewed this as a form of self-devaluation, which could have aroused their laughter. On the contrary, when an actress hid her feminine qualities and exhibited masculine characteristics, her disguise could have been viewed as a 'challenge'. For the majority of female audiences in the post-war era, the 'challenge' posed by an actress' cross-dressing might have filled a gap in their minds, as the ideal man on stage was a disguised man with some feminine qualities (e.g., a pretty face, a tender voice) but without the execution and power of real-life men. Thus, such 'pretend' men may have seemed more wonderful than their flesh-and-blood counterparts.



Figure 4.13 A scene from *Sleep Available* (2011) (Photo was taken by Chen Hsin-feng)

#### 4.4 Wake up From Our Unconscious Daily Life!! – The Intervention of a Post-colonial Consciousness

To respond to the post-colonial theme within the perspective of critical syncretism, three extra scenes were added to *Sleep Available*. I arranged for a student wearing a khaki uniform and black, thick-framed glasses and carrying a school bag on his shoulder to step out – in parade step – and interrupt the conversation between Man and Woman. The student was accompanied by the sounds of children singing, drawn from the background music in Miyazaki Hayao’s animated film, *The Valley of the Wind* (1984). The intervention happened three times: first, the student pointed to the screen and said, ‘Father, the flights are coming!’ (*O-dou-sa! He-ko-ki De-su*, in **Japanese**), while the screen showed a film of an attack by Japanese bombers (see Figure 4.14). The second time, the student stepped out again and pointed to the screen, saying, ‘Father,



Figure 4.14 A scene from *Sleep Available*, in which I also played a student to interrupt the performance (2011) (Photo was taken by Chen Hsin-feng)



they finally arrive in Taiwan!’ (*Ba-ba! Ta-men Zhong-yu Lai-le*, in **Mandarin**). The film that played on the screen was of Taiwan after the Japanese defeat in the Second World War, when the Taiwanese passionately greeted the arrival of the KMT army and official ships at port. The last time, the student pointed to the screen and said, ‘Father, why do they also come here?’ (*Ba-ba! Si-an-choan In- ma Lai-ah*, in **Hoklo**). The film showed an event that occurred in Taiwan in 2009 when, for the first time after 1949, China sent an official representative to Taiwan to meet with the Taiwanese government; however, during his visit, in order to please the China government, the Taiwanese government forbade people from displaying the Taiwanese national flag, and this caused a serious conflict.

The core theme of this play is ‘Wake up from the unconscious daily life’. The Man, who used to be a radical social activist, tries to spread utopian ideals and attempts to awaken unconscious people by setting off a bomb. In the process, he loses his left leg and starts to roam, with his artificial limb and the guilt of killing children, for thirty years. However, his body seems to still be unaware of the loss of a part and still feels numb or itchy where the leg should be. When the Man unconsciously returns to the same city where he set off the bomb, he gradually recalls the memory of his past with the help of the Woman’s deliberate instruction. In the end, although he realizes that no one was hurt by his bomb, he still consciously chooses death. What the dramatist reveals is the importance of living consciously and understanding the society, history and era in which one lives. ‘Wake up from the unconscious daily life’ is the target of idealists of different eras, who have always aimed to enact a utopia ideology oriented toward reforming and enlightening the societies and people who are still suffering from injustice. For the Japanese intellectual class, who reflected what Japan did during Second World War; for the Betsuyaku, who joined the social movements; for Taiwanese intellectuals in the Japanese era, who sought political autonomy by proposing the Petition for the Establishment of a Taiwan Council and held talks *en masse*; for the local Taiwanese activists who led radical social movements to fight for democracy and against the

KMT regime; even for the Taiwanese peasants who took to the streets to protest against the injustice of land expropriation policy in 2011. We are living in an era in which we try so hard to remind ourselves and others to stay awake from the numbness.

The three different clips I inserted in the performance are fragments of colonial history, which I conceive of as having deeply influenced Taiwanese history and my understanding of Taiwan as a nation. The student's way of walking and his uniform signify the evolution during the later stages of the KMT authoritarian regime in the 1980s. Before the lifting of martial law in 1987, the educational atmosphere was militaristic. Students wore monotone uniforms everyday and strictly followed haircut and clothing regulations. Every morning, when the military music started, they gathered together to attend the flag-raising ceremony, which was highly ritualistic. On the parade grounds, they sang the national anthem and saluted the raising flag. Under the same blazing sun, and in the same assembly line, every single pupil with an orange hat sang loudly the same song, 'President Chiang Kai-shek, you are the saviour of mankind; you are the world's greatest person ...' President Chiang was the one who gave the order to the KMT army to suppress the local Taiwanese in 228 Incident.

When I was in primary school, my daily duties were to learn the notional phonetic alphabet in Mandarin (our mother languages were forbidden for use in public or formal circumstances) and to copy them into exercise books on which were printed '*Opposing the communists, resisting the Russians*' and '*Be a legitimate Chinese*'. We learnt every aspect of China's five-thousand-year history and geography; however, we knew nothing about the areas through which the Taiwanese Zhuo-shui stream passes.

In 1988, when I was ten years old, President Chiang Ching-kuo died, and I was terrified. I asked my little brother, who was only six, to kneel down with me in front of the TV, on which pictures of the president's funeral were being shown. 'Taiwan is going to perish!' I told him. I firmly believed that our president was the only person who could determine the fate of a

nation. We were well-educated and disciplined by the national education system. The five ethical relationships – king-subject, father-son, husband-wife, between-brothers and between-friends – were regarded as standard behaviour principles for being a proper and obedient national, student, child and, most important, a *Yan-huang Zi-sun* (a descendent of Emperors Yan and Huang, who are regarded as the first ancestor of the *Han-Chinese* people).

I started to read unofficial Taiwanese history books at the age of twenty and began my journey of ‘waking up from the unconscious daily life’. I began to realize that Taiwan has gone through a ceaseless cycle of being ‘colonised, resisting, being disciplined, and changing regimes’. During the first intervention in *Sleep Available*, the Taiwanese only see the Japanese bomber flying across the sky. Under Japanese rule, the Taiwanese were forced to learn Japanese and gradually become educated and assimilated into the Japanese empire, although there was much resistance during the process. The second intervention signals the end of Japanese colonisation, when the Taiwanese passionately greeted the arrival of their imaginary motherland regime. At the same time, the KMT government, which was also engaged in civil war with the communist party, took over dominion from Japan with a legitimate attitude. While the Taiwanese expected the beginning of a new era, serious conflict emerged between the local Taiwanese and Mainlanders. The KMT army was sent to suppress the conflict, and this led to the thirty-year era of curfew phase imposed by martial law. The Taiwanese mother languages and Japanese were all forbidden, and Taiwan’s people were again forced to learn another language, Mandarin, as their new official language. That is why, in *Sleep Available*, Mandarin was used in the second intervention. The third intervention refers to Taiwan’s more recent circumstances. After the lifting of martial law and a long-term struggle for a democratic regime, two political alternations happened after the 1990s. the DDP (the Democracy Progress Party), most of whose members are local Taiwanese, began as a non-party movement and finally gained power in 2000; however, it lost it in 2008 because of a corruption scandal. The KMT regained power and seemed to change their anti-communist principles while attempting

to maintain a close relationship with the Chinese government. In regards to the economy, the KMT government has encouraged local Taiwanese industry to move their factories to China to save on labour costs; however, this has led to dependency on China's economy, and what makes me confused is that the same country that was previously called an 'evil communist bandit' in our textbooks by teachers, receives a great ovation from our government now. In addition, our national flag is forbidden from appearing on any official occasions, to avoid provoking Chinese officials. I use *Hoklo*, my mother tongue, to raise questions and express my confusion about the current situation.

The three interventions presented in *Sleep Available* ask whether the shadow of colonialism has already gone. Taiwan now seems to have an absolute democracy and freedom in every respect; however, the question that needs to be asked here is whether the inequity and imbalance that appeared along with the residual of internal-colonisation, the rise of neo-colonialism, economic colonialism and globalization still exist in different forms. Has Taiwanese national and cultural identity already been constructed, during a continuous colonial experience? Have we awakened from the unconsciousness of our history? By juxtaposing different films, different historical contexts, but similar lines spoken in different languages, it is relatively easy to see the similarity and contradiction of different colonial regimes. Confronting the changing roles of the oppressors and oppressed people, a question then emerges: Who always suffers most when changes occur: aboriginal people, the *Hoklo* or *Hakka* ethnic groups, the working class, men or women? Bearing in mind the theatrical syncretism perspective, I thus conceive of *Sleep Available* as a new form of Taiwanese *Xing-ju*, in which Taiwanese subjectivity can be considered the main focus of the director, myself, and can, through the examination of other cultural phenomena, be seen as reflecting on Taiwanese colonial history and the current post-colonial situation.

## Conclusion: Every Nation has a Missing Left Leg

In *Sleep Available*, the Man carries an artificial limb because he lost his left leg; however, his body is still concerned about its missing part and the Man is wrought with suspense for thirty years, until he finally realizes the truth about the location of his buried leg. Every colonised nation has a missing left leg. Although the amputation happened long ago, the body still keeps looking for that absent leg, until its location has been revealed. After losing a part of the body, should we not need to clearly understand what exactly we lost, so that our disabled form will stop itching? Taking Taiwan as an example, because of the continuous changes of colonial regimes, the issues left from the former coloniser have not had the chance to be resolved and soon overlap with those of the later regime, which imposes another ruling system on Taiwan. As a result, the main issue that Taiwan is facing now within the post-colonial context is not the ‘missing left leg’, but the ‘body’, which tries to get used to the lack of leg and thus distorts itself. The body either tries to hide its disability and never looks at itself, or even forgets who took away the left leg and thus forgets to ask for an apology and forgets to keep walking proudly. Chen suggests that ‘the decolonisation work performed by the colonised will not be complete without the coloniser’s de-imperialisation, and vice versa’ (2010: 23). Only when the oppressor honestly reflects and overturns itself from within will the disabled status of the oppressed be healed. Taiwanese *Xing-ju* is the product of the colonial context. Researcher Lin Ho-yi describes the *Opeila* of the post-war era as ‘Taiwanese culture’s deformed child, not its mother’ (1997). Only when we consciously look back to see a complete picture of *Xing-ju* and Taiwanese colonial history, could the meaning of de-colonisation emerge.



Figure 4.15 A scene from *Sleep Available*, in which the host of the show came up to suspend the show at the end (2011) (Photo was taken by Chen Hsin-feng, 2011)

At the end of the performance, the host comes out to interrupt the performance again and gives a brief pre-play message, to attract the audiences to the theatre the next day (see Figure 4.15). Then, the performers and host danced to the opening song, *Happy Sailing* again. However, what played on the screen was not the swimming-suit-beauty *Karaoke* video as in the beginning, but, instead, a combination of clips of the people's awakening: from the Taiwanese Japanese colonial era, the KMT regime, the absence of Chinese Nobel Peace Prize-winner Liu Xiao-po from the award ceremony, the Jasmine Revolution in Egypt and Tunisia and the biggest-ever student protest in the U.K in 2011 (see Figure 4.16). The last part of the film shows street graffiti made by Hong Kong artists to express their support for Chinese concept artist Ai Wei-wei, who was arrested by the Chinese government. All the demonstrations or rebellions shown in the clips may have different causes: not all of them refer to resistance to the coloniser. However, it is a collective process of awakening. What I would like to suggest is that every nation has its dark side during the process of establishment. Although former imperial regimes, like the United Kingdom, have already abandoned colonialism, issues like the multiple ethnic groups, left over from colonial history, still need to be confronted. On the other hand, although some of the colonised nations have been politically decolonised, they still need to face a much more time-consuming and tougher mental decolonisation process; only then can they move forward to become a 'normal' nation. In addition, what both the colonial and colonised nations need to face is the oppression of global neo-capitalism. Observing the world from a critical syncretism perspective and transforming oneself into the 'Other' may be one way to face it.

As the last sentences of the song go, 'Having a nice trip and reciting songs and poems. I am playing guitar happily. We are going to have a happy sail.' As the search for Taiwanese-ness in the context of a complex colonial history proceeds, it is expected that it will be not a process of convicting the sin of colonialism, but a journey to understand who we are, what we have now and what can we do to keep moving forward.

It is worth mentioning that *Sleep Available*, which explored the Taiwanese theatre genres and ‘Taiwaneseness’ taken on in this thesis, took place in a British university in the UK. Audiences were comprised of different nationalities and included citizens of the UK, Thailand, America, Greece, India, and Syria, to name a few. Within an intercultural context, I wonder whether audiences could ascertain the cultural characteristics of this work. In the post-discussion session, I found certain feedback interesting. Regarding performing style, although the foundations of *Xing-ju* are found in Western modes of realistic acting, and although none of the performers were Taiwanese, for audiences, *Sleep Available*, had a unique performing style that was an amalgamation of Japanese, Chinese and Western theatre, ‘with a flavour of Taiwan’. For example, the performers’ clear awareness of the audiences and the full degree of inner and external energy actually alienated audiences from familiar Western realistic acting forms. Music and video clips helped constructed the aura of Taiwan. A PhD student from Thailand pointed out that the performing style of *Sleep Available* was one that she had never seen and that it was a theatre genre belonging to Taiwan. Interestingly, this ‘taste of Taiwan’ or ‘Taiwaneseness’ is actually a fluid and non-fixed concept. The feedback received on *Sleep Available* also reinforced that Taiwanese culture is comprised of multiple cultures, and ‘a taste of Taiwan’ was added after a process of reception and integration of multiple cultures. The new compo, thus, was staged with a new appearance.

In addition, *Sleep Available* resonated with audiences from different cultural backgrounds. A Syrian audience member and a Greek audience member discussed the meaning of terrorist - and who can define it. A Taiwanese audience member also mentioned Taiwanese social activist Yang Ju-men, who was called the ‘Rice Bomber’ by the mass media as he tried to raise public awareness of economic exploitation, when Taiwan became a member of the WTO by threatening the Taiwanese government. With the theme ‘wake up from the unconscious daily life’, I attempted to prompt audiences to pay more attention to their daily lives, which people usually take for granted. In *Sleep Available*, the character Betsuyaku reflected social

movements from a Japanese perspective, while I attempted to face the loss of Taiwan to multiple colonisers.

It is hoped that *Sleep Available* may be performed in Taiwan, where it might draw attention to Taiwan's marginalisation when the country was on the edge of Asia, confronting the rise of China, Korea, and Japan. It is also hoped that this work will provoke greater discussion of such issues as 'how Taiwanese identify as Taiwanese' and 'how Taiwanese culture should be identified'.



Figure 4.16 The ending song and dance of *Sleep Available* (2011)  
(Photo was taken by Chen Hsin-feng, 2011)



## Conclusion: A Fluid Theatre, a Fluid Nation

Having gone through the transformation process from tradition to modernity, Taiwanese theatre has experienced changes under the influences of successive and multiple colonisations. Each political conversion led to considerable influences on culture, society, and aspects of art. The thesis began with the first emergence of *Xing-ju* in the Japanese colonial era, and went on to examine the divergent forms of *Xing-ju* under a successive colonial history. Japan, as the first Westernised country in Asia, disseminated its ‘Japanese Westernisation’ experience through students from China, Taiwan, and other Asian countries. From the beginning of the twentieth century, *Xing-ju* appeared with its ‘modern’ and ‘new’ appearance, accompanied at the same time by the intellectuals’ criticism of traditional values. *Gai-liang Xi* (Reformed Theatre) and *Wen-ming Xi* (Civilised Theatre) began to be well-accepted by Taiwanese audiences along with the popularity of other Western imported ideas and goods.

After twenty years of colonial rule in Taiwan, Taiwanese students, who grew up and obtained education under the Japanese occupation, began to criticize the traditional values, and to pursue modernisation and national self-determination. Taiwanese intellectuals saw *Wen-hua Ju* (Cultural Theatre) as a medium to promote their thoughts. However, a knowledge hierarchy was then constructed, with modernisation and tradition at opposite ends of the continuum. Opposition to the coloniser and an inclination toward modernity characterized the *Xing-ju* of the Japanese era.

During the Second World War, *Xing-ju* was again deeply distorted by the colonisers. The imposition of the *Kominka* movement, however, opened up for *Ge-zai Xi* troupes another gateway to seek a variety of performing characteristics. *Xing-ju* and *Ge-zai Xi* began to interact and appropriate each other’s performing characteristics. As a result, the *Xing-ju* plays performed by *Ge-zai Xi* troupes were called Synthetic Fibre (*Su-hu*), and plays performed by

*Xing-ju* troupes were called Pure Cotton (*Chun-mian*). The distinction between these two styles also indicates whether its performing characteristic was ‘authentic’ or ‘pure’ enough according to the degree of modernisation.

In Chapter Two, I have discussed *Xing-ju* of the post-war period, when Japan was defeated and the KMT regime took over. Under KMT’s internal-colonial regime, Taiwan became a temporary military base and could exemplify the ‘authentic’ Chinese culture. As a result, the culture of other ethnic groups, such as the *Hoklo*, *Hakka* and indigenous peoples, were marginalised under the category of ‘provincial (local) culture’ by the Chinese cultural hegemony. Because of the influence of Incident 228 and the White Terror in the 1950s, *Xing-ju* could no longer serve as the platform for intellectuals to deliver their thoughts, and the anti-communist theatre form became the mainstream instead.

*Xing-ju* inclined towards commercial theatre and became the most popular mode of Taiwanese entertainment before the appearance of television and movies. There were no taboo or political issues discussed on stage; instead, the ordinary life and popular issues were portrayed. *Xing-ju* was generally called *Opeila* in the post-war era; however, if observed from the background of its members, the content of its plays and performing characteristics, it still could be classified in two groups: *Xing-ju Opeila* and *Ge-zai Opeila*. Traditional theatre interacted with Western and Japanize Western theatre forms, and developed a hybrid theatre form with a Taiwanese aesthetic. However, *Opeila* was not recognised as one of the Taiwanese native theatre forms in the Native Soil Movement in the 1980s because of its ‘neither fish nor fowl’ characteristic. In 2000 the opposition party, DDP, gained power for the first time after the KMT’s occupation of almost fifty years, and the China-centric cultural hegemony began to collapse. The Taiwanese people anxiously sought a Taiwanese cultural subjectivity, which originated from China, but had localised characteristics. Within this context, the first cultures to be promoted were the most marginalised, such as *Opeila* theatre

and *Tai-ke* aesthetic. Golden Bough and certain *Ge-zai Xi* troupes began to make the imitations of *Opeila* performances. In the second section of Chapter Two, I draw a picture of the *Opeila* troupes in the post-war era including the recruitment of members, rehearsals, training, content, lighting and stage sets from interviews of *Xing-ju* participants, photos and recordings of the performances. In addition, the decline of *Opeila* in relation to politics is also addressed in this section.

In Chapter Three, the creation of Golden Bough Theatre and its *Opeila* works, which appeared between the internal-colonisation and post-colonisation period of time when the national and cultural identity were still ambiguous, are further discussed. In the early 1970s, because of a series of setbacks in diplomatic events, such as the withdrawal from the United Nations and the severing of diplomatic relations with the United States and other nations, the legitimisation of the KMT regime was challenged. The young Taiwanese generation enthusiastically embraced political and social issues. Researcher Hsiao points out that most of the young intellectuals in the 1970s internalised the Chinese Nationalism, which was imposed by the KMT regime, and their passion for and concerns about the future of Taiwan were actually based on a Chinese Nationalist consciousness and sentiment (2000: 88-93). Under the rule of the KMT, this younger generation were not only familiar with Chinese Nationalist symbols, but also understood the Taiwanese political status from the Chinese Nationalist perspective. On the one hand, they imputed the diplomatic failures to the oppression of Imperialism; on the other hand, they were eager to be more independent with regard to political, economic, and cultural aspects. As a result, their awareness of the society increased, and their consciousness, which was based on a Chinese consciousness, thus gradually combined with the 'Native Soil' consciousness. The trend of 'returning to native soil' emerged in the 1970s. Meanwhile, *Xing-ju* was replaced by TV and films, and the first generation of the Little Theatre Movement began to emerge in its place. The theatre practitioners were stimulated by the Chinese Nationalist 'returning native soil' consciousness, and began to re-interpret the Chinese classic

novels, theatre and philosophy in Western performing form. Liu Ching-ming, the founder of U Theatre, started her theatre career within this context. After Liu participated in the Object Project, facilitated by Grotowski, she created the U Theatre and began the Tracing Source Project (*Su Ji Hua*), in which the members explored Taiwanese traditional crafts. After the lifting of martial law in 1987, political issues were no longer taboo in plays and discussions on the re-evaluation of Taiwanese history, and the identity of Taiwanese culture gradually increased. In addition, the Chinese cultural hegemony was challenged in the plays.

The founders of Golden Bough Theatre, Wong Rong-yu and his wife You Hui-fan, attended the Tracing Sources Project held by U Theatre, which was influenced by Grotowskian concepts; as a consequence they returned to their mother culture and attempted to represent the performing style of *Ge-zai Opeila*. Their plays had a significant influence on the Taiwanese theatrical and academic circles of the 1990s in terms of their distinct performing style and aesthetics. Golden Bough Theatre differentiated itself from mainstream Taiwanese troupes, which employed Mandarin as their performing language, by presenting the *Ge-zai Opeila* plays of the 1960s. Their productions deliberately employed the *Hoklo* language, mixed Taiwanese folk performing styles and flavours, which had previously been regarded as the elements belonging to the working class. In relation to the post-colonial status after the 1990s, the nostalgic atmosphere of the plays performed by Golden Bough actually implied a nativism desire to seek the pre-colonial essential Taiwanese culture and Taiwanese subjectivity.

I suggest a concept of 'nostalgic hybrid cultures' to denote a similarity that Golden Bough's *Opeila* plays in the 1990s and the 1960s' *Opeila* plays share. The plays from different periods of times both contain a great number of hybrid cultural elements, which are mainly from the previous colonisers. I regard this as an alternative resistance to the colonisers that the colonised people attempted to differentiate themselves from the coloniser at the time by

recalling the cultural elements from the previous colonisers. Although the kind of resistance is operated in what Bhabha describes ‘the Third Space’, and mocks the coloniser by mimicry, it still works within the same structure where the coloniser creates or even strengthens the cultural hierarchy. For instance, although Golden Bough attempts to overturn the Chinese hegemony by applying many popular cultures which were previously belittled, the usage of these elements still emphasises the same esteem for these elements. However, Golden Bough’s works also honestly reflect the changes of Taiwanese national and cultural identity, from the pursuit of essential Taiwanese culture, such as *Ge-zai Xi*, in the Native Soil Movement in the 1980s, to a wider meaning of Taiwanese culture, such as the popularity of *Tai-ke*.

In Golden Bough’s *Opeila* plays, because most of their performers lacked the long-term training required by *Ge-zai Xi*’s codified physical movements and singing skills, its performances seemed to mimic the external form of *Opeila* without the cultivation of inner energy. As a result, their performances were similar to the contemporary theatre but with the external form of *Opeila* style. Because Golden Bough’s plays focus on the representation of *Ge-zai Opeila* in the 1960s, the main characteristic of their works is a melodramatic style, which contains complex plots, relationships, romance, and gang fights. They also draw on various elements from *Kung-fu*. Their latest work, *Sayonara My Love*, suggests an attempt to re-interpret Taiwanese history through *Xing-ju*.

After reviewing the historical context of Taiwanese *Xing-ju* from the Japanese era to post-war, in Chapter Four I created a new *Xing-ju* performance, *Sleep Available*, from my own perspective. Based on the critical syncretism perspective, which is suggested by Chen Kuan-hsing, I reflect on my thoughts concerning the Taiwanese theatre development and post-colonial issues. *Sleep Available* was written by a Japanese absurd playwright, Betsuyaku Minoru, in 1991, and the theme of missing memory and awakening also signify the Taiwanese

post-colonial status which the Taiwanese confronted in their colonial history. I am also interested in using a text from today to interpret *Xing-ju*. In addition, by mimicking the text and performing in the style of the former colonisers, the colonial hierarchy is also re-examined and challenged.

*Xing-ju* is not only a performing form with exaggerated and stereotyped acting style, but it is hoped that it can be developed as a stylised performing aesthetic which can exemplify the Taiwanese cultural characteristics. The rehearsal method of *Sleep Available* is based on the psychophysical actor training, which is developed by Phillip Zarrilli, and I invited two practitioners, who have followed the training for more than a year, to rehearse under the same concept and working language. The psychophysical training aims for an actor's closely connected body-mind status and in this way it can create an organic performance, in which the actor always maintains a keen awareness of the environment and each moment on stage. *Xing-ju* or *Opeila* is regarded as an unskilled performing form; however, with the assistance of the psychophysical actor training, I experimented with the creation of the alternative *Xing-ju* aesthetics.

The critical syncretism perspective provides me with a reference point to be aware of all the inequalities, such as class and gender. As a result, I examined the following points from *Sleep Available*: (1) to challenge elite and popular class cultural boundaries; (2) to re-evaluate the gender performance in *Xing-ju*; (3) to consciously be aware of the application of syncretic cultural elements, and the power relationship between different resources. From the post-colonial to globalizational issues, I thus suggest that every nation has its dark side during the process of creation. The Taiwanese history is not a voluntarily chosen colonial history, and although Taiwan is currently free from political colonial forces, it still needs to deal with the psychological burden of decolonisation and the economic neo-colonisation of China and the Western world. As an artistic form that can reflect the reality, in which direction will

Taiwanese theatre develop?

Erika Fischer-Lichte, a German theatre researcher, regards the intercultural theatre as a process of *productive reception*. She explains that the starting point of intercultural performance is ‘not primarily interest in the foreign, the foreign theatre form or foreign culture from which it derives, but rather a wholly specific situation within the own culture, or wholly specific problem originating in the own theatre’ (1990: 283). Thus, interculturalism functions as ‘the revitalization of traditional theatre forms and in general as the re-creation of theatre’ (Fischer-Lichte, 1990: 280). The intercultural theatre of the twentieth century is usually criticized for exploiting and de-historicising other cultures, and is usually performed by Western theatre practitioners. There is, however, a danger that intercultural theatre ‘diminishes any theatre because it transgresses its inherited reliance on the society from which the drama takes its life and for which it was intended to be performed (Brown, 1998: 14, cited in Min Tian, 2008: 6). Having gone through the single- and two-way interactions or appropriations between Eastern and Western theatres, in the twenty first century Fischer-Lichte argues that the ultimate purpose of seeking foreign elements is still based on the needs of one’s own theatre (1990: 284). *Productive reception*, thus, ‘allows any elements of any number of foreign cultures to undergo cultural transformation through the process production, thereby making the own theatre and own culture productive again’ (1990: 287). The perspective of theatrical *productive reception* provides an alternative approach based on the demands of theatre aesthetics, and most importantly, the subjectivity is emphasized within this perspective. Although the hybrid characteristic that *Xing-ju* has presented in the colonial eras is the imposed result of colonisation, this characteristic can provide *Xing-ju* with more possibilities to develop when the colonisers have gone. With an awareness of subjectivity’, I believe, *Xing-ju* can be seen as a syncretic theatre, in which ‘writers and artists involved in creating and working in syncretic processes are having to refashion meanings from diverse cultural sources to create products which declare their hybridity as a conscious stylistic device’

(Balme, 1999: 8). Erika Fischer-Lichte also points out that ‘The adoption of elements from foreign theatre traditions in the intercultural performance is consequently not to be seen and understood as the process of a translation but is perhaps better measured as the process of productive reception’ (1990: 284). From Balme and Fischer-Lichte’s point of view, adopting hybrid cultures in the theatre works is not necessarily always a passive process. After confronting, interacting and integrating with the cultures of multiple ethnic groups’ cultures, *Xing-ju*, therefore, can digest these elements and develop its performing form, with a taste of Taiwan. In addition, during the process of confronting foreign cultures, the definition of Taiwanese culture is constantly re-considered, compared, and shaped, and is still fluid, to the present.

The theatre practitioner, Lin Tuan-chiu, of the Japanese era reflects:

We, Taiwanese, are like maids of the wealthy families: we wear silk and luxury clothes and eat expensive foods everyday but, we can’t have our own thoughts. I wonder when we will become daughters of a peasant. We can own a little land; if we want to grow taro, then we grow taro; if we want to grow sweet potato, then we grow sweet potato. (Shih, 2003: 166)

Making Taiwan a powerful nation, with many resources was never the aim of the Taiwanese people; rather, living on a small, sweet potato-shaped island, what we want to have is the confidence to say, without hesitation or shyness, ‘This is my country; this is my culture’.



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An outdoor *Ge-zai Opeila* performance of New Southern-light Troupe (2009)  
(Photo was taken by author)



# Appendix 1: Text of *Sleep Available*

## Sleep Available      Betsuyaku Minoru (Japan)

This is an adaptation version for University of Exeter, Ph.D. thesis project 2011 by Chen Hui-Yun (Pun). The play was presented in Taiwanese *Xing-ju* style including an opening introduction and an interlude of film.

Translator: Chen Hui-Yun

Proofreader: Elizabeth Pennington

### Rehearsal Text

Time: 1960s

Place: An unknown house

Characters: Woman      Gemma Prangle  
                  Man          Num Grisana Pungeng

(A table and chair are set in the stage centre. A bed is put aside. Everything is in old style and looks dirty, old and starting to collapse. There is a pile of rag-dolls on the table and a lot of hands, legs, necks and bodies of dolls. In addition there is a sewing box, tea set and other things. In the middle, there is an old ragged lamp hanging from the ceiling. There is a telephone in the corner of the room.)

(The phone rings and a woman says “I’m coming, coming, coming...” impatiently and enters the stage holding an incomplete doll)

W:    (answering a phone call) hello...yes...um...? A leg...? A man’s leg...? And what...? It’s Lost...? You just said it is at your place, so, where exactly is it now...yes...Ah...? No. It’s not mine! ...There is no man here.    There is no man here with a lost leg.....It is still warm...? Ah...? So, isn’t he still nearby...I mean that...man with a lost leg.    I don’t know. How can I know this? The person...the person who has lost a leg clearly knows they’ve lost it...(Puts down the phone) What is he thinking? Why is he calling me, I’m so busy, I don’t who is missing a leg? (she wants to tidy up the table, but suddenly finds the doll in her hand) You, what? Oh, right, you lost your left leg too...I’ll try this one...(tries to find the correct leg from a pile of dolls on the table) alas...? Leg...? Left leg...? So it’s you...? (looking at the phone) But wait, he says the lost leg belongs to a man and it’s still warm. (searching through the dolls limbs) Your leg is here...definitely...No problem...Even if I can’t find yours, there must be one be suitable for you. Having one is better than none.

(‘Good Evening’ man’s voice enters the stage, then he suddenly appears outside the door. He is dressed very sloppy and leans on a stick with an artificial left limb)

W: Here I come.

M: I just made a phone call...

W: Was that you? Are you joking? I told you I don’t need a lost leg.

M: No, I called but the line was busy...

W: So...that call is not from you?

M: No. I just saw the sign hanging outside with the words ‘Sleep Available’ on it. May I sleep here...?

W: You can sleep.

M: So...Only one night. Sorry for any inconveniences I may bring to you...

W: No problem...Please take a seat...

M: Thanks...(put his luggage down) I am fortunate to find your place, the time is getting later and later and seems that there are no other proper hotels I can stay....(sits down)

W: Your leg seems injured?

M: Yes...

W: Your left leg?

M: Yes.....this is an artificial limb.

W: Right! That!

M: What’s that?

W: Your left leg...just called...It said that it’s still warm.

M: What? That’s not mine. I lost mine 30 years ago...

W: But if by any chance is yours, shouldn’t you check? They just informed me...(picks up the phone) wait....I, still don’t know who called yet....How can I call back...?

M: That’s all right. I appreciate your concerns, but it’s not mine.....because it is still warm isn’t it?

W: Yes. But if it could be stuck on straight away, is it possible to recover...?

M: Maybe, but, that leg is not mine.

W: It’s all right. Anyway, they also don’t know who is the owner so it could be yours if it sticks on your body...(picks up the phone again)

M: But, you...(stands up and looks at the woman) you don’t know who is rang...

W: (puts down the phone) Ah yes...(back to table side) I feel sorry for you, the leg is there....

M: It’s true, but...(sits down) since that’s not mine, even though it is still warm, it cannot become mine, right?

W: Black tea...? Or coffee or cocoa milk...of course if you’d like something more exciting?

M: No. Coffee is fine....Right! When I lost this leg, the doctor also said ....it will need to be

stuck on while it's still warm...

W: Was your leg cold.....?

M: No. I heard the doctor ask another person to look for it, but, it was already gone...The doctor said it might have been picked up by a dog...

W: Black tea right...?

M: Coffee please...

W: Black tea..?

M: No...

W: Black right...?

M: Yes, please.

W: I think so as well. When I asked you black tea or coffee, I thought you must choose black tea...Don't stare at me in this way. I think I have a kind of physic ability.

M: (looking at the dolls) what are these things for...?

W: They are my Children...

M: Ah! Ah! Your Children.

W: Some lack hands, some lack legs and some are without necks..., so I piece them together bit by bit. Pieces from here and there, there and here ...(suddenly she thinks of something and stops making the tea) However, we should hurry...

M: What're you talking about? Why do we need to hurry?

W: I mean that the left leg is still warm. Didn't you just say it could not be stuck on if you don't hurry...? (wants to make a phone call)

M: But...You still don't know right...? Who has found that leg....

W: Oh yeah...How could we do know...?

M: Nothing to do...And you also you don't know who has lost it.

W: You...don't worry about it at all...? There must be someone facing a critical moment missing their leg...

M: No, I am worried...But it will fine if this guy is lucky, because someone has picked his leg. If they return it to him before it's becoming totally cold...He must be desperate looking for it...

W: That's good...(pours water into a cup but suddenly pauses) wait...? Did you say you want some coffee...?

M: No, I think is was black tea...?

W: I think so too....(keeps pouring tea) I knew you wanted black tea....Anyway, I don't have any coffee here....here is the sugar....here is the milk....And also, if you would like something exciting, I'd suggest you add a little bit of this...

M: What's this?

W: We call it 'northern wind'. Just put a little bit of this into your tea, you will feel a sense of a chill blowing through your life.

M: I don't think I want it...I am not very keen on this kind of exciting thing.

W: Then...please...

M: Thanks...

W: But wait a moment. Has that man already known that thing?

M: Who? Who is that man...?.

W: That, that man who found the left leg and is looking for the owner now. If he doesn't know the leg must be stuck on when it's still warm, he may consider waiting to look for the owner until tomorrow.

M: Maybe...

W: I think you....still need to tell this thing to that man....(stands up) Although the tea is ready, I think, it will be better to remind that man and then we can enjoy our tea...(walks toward the phone)

M: But, madam, you don't know ....who and where he is...

W: (freeze) you're right....There is no way to know...Why does this kind of thing always fail at the end?

M: May I...have my tea now...?

W: Please....(goes back to the table)

M: Thanks...You have to check who he is and where he is next time this thing happens.

W: You're right...Then please tell him the leg cannot be stuck on if he does not hurry...

M: Yes...of course...if I was there and in that situation...(confused face)

W: What...?

M: Nothing...(change ideas and drink tea)

W: The tea may be a little bit bitter....I made it a little bit stronger.

M: I am fine...I prefer stronger black tea....(forces himself to have another slug) What're you looking for, Madam?

W: (pointing at a doll) Her left leg...

M: Left leg...?

W: Yes...It's a missing-left-leg....Always like this...one day they all lose their right legs and another day it's the right eyes turn...(finds one leg) This is how is it...?

M: Could it be possible to stick it on that child's body...?

W: No...

M: I think so as well...(drinks his last slug unwillingly) Thanks...for your black tea...(stands up) I should go to sleep...

W: So early...?'

M: Yes...because I need to get up early tomorrow...No, don't be bothered...Go ahead with what you're doing. I can find my way...Where is the room anyways...?

W: What room...?

M: For me to take a rest...

W: Here....

M: Here...?

W: Yes...There are no other rooms in my house...Please sleep on this bed...

M: But, isn't this yours...?

W: Yes, but never mind...I only own this...It's always like this when I have a guest...

M: But what'll you do...?

W: Just look...

M: You said look, but what do you look at...?

W: I'll just look at you while you're sleeping...

M: But...(look at around) Is there somewhere else...? It's not necessary for me to sleep on the bed...

W: What does it matter...or is there any reason you don't like someone looking at you when you sleep?...

M: No...(starts to check the mattress stealthily) I sleep here and you sit there, right...?

W: Yes, because there isn't any other place for me to stay....?

M: (reconfirms the environment) It's true...But, is it ok if you stay up for a whole night...?

W: Never mind...We only have one bed and you come to sleep....

M: I feel bad for this...

W: Please go ahead...I am running a business...I earn money through this...Please go ahead...Don't you need to get up early tomorrow...?

M: Yeah....So....(take off his top and shoes) I shall...(gets on the bed and touches something weird next to the pillow) this part seems a little bit wet...?

W: Oh~that....never mind...I found a stains on it so slightly wiped it with rag...It will be dry soon and it will become your temperature if you can lie on it...

M: Can it be covered by a cloth...?

W: Of course, it's your cloth...You're the kind of person who concerns themselves with these kinds of things...The man who slept on this bed last time was also...This was vomited by that man. (point out the stains)

M: He vomited...?

W: Yes...Of course I washed it up, but like blood this kind of thing will happen more...at night...

M: That man vomited blood...?

W: Yes...No matter how many times I wipe it up, it still oozed constantly...

M: Why did he vomit blood?

W: I don't know...Maybe he wasn't feel well...? (picks up another doll) This leg is for this child...? Is it suitable...?

M: Yeah...(seems distracted and still think about other stains on the bed)

W: That one is not his. That stain...

M: Who made that...?

W: I Don't know...I don't write diary...Excuse me...(holds the doll's one leg) Can you hold this for me...?

M: Sure...What're you gonna do...?

W: I will...(using scissors) cut this leg and stuck it on this child...

M: But, if so, this doll will lose a leg...

W: Don't worry...I will give him another one...(cuts the leg) Don't you want to sleep...?

M: No, I will...Do you have something for me to cover...?

W: What do you mean by that...?

M: This...(shows her the action of drawing a quilt from feet) ...

W: Are you feeling cold...?

M: No, no, not really...

W: Then I think it's not necessary...People usually sleep here without covering themselves with anything...which will make things more clear...

M: Clear for what...?

W: A...a sense of truly sleeping...

M: Oh...(lies down) I always feel unsafe If I don'y have something to cover me...

W: Why are you facing this direction...?

M: Sorry...It's just my habit...but it's alright...(changes direction) I can sleep facing different direction tonight..

W: I am fine with this...just think if we're face to face, you may find it difficult to fall asleep.

M: No. That's fine...

W: But, if it's necessary for you to face this way...(stands up) I can change the table to the other side of the bed...

M: No, don't bothered...Not to worry, I'll be fine...

W: Will you...?

M: Then, I do need to sleep. I will get up early...Good night...

W: Good night...What will you do tomorrow...?

M: Nothing very special. I want to investigate something...

W: I think you should sleep...No need to worry about me...I am not gonna do anything...

M: (half gets up from the bed) What...what're you going to do...?

W: Nothing...I said I am not gonna do anything....

M: Really...? (lies down again anxiously)

W: Let me sing you a lullaby, but there is an additional charge for this service...?

M: No, thanks...

W: But it won't cost you much...

M: (gets up) I don't need it. I can fall asleep without anything....

W: Then...forget it...I've met this kind of customers, who said nothing is better...So...I won't feel insulted if customers refuse me. It was not because they couldn't bear my singing...Are you asleep...?

M: No, not yet...I am almost asleep now...

W: I see...you mean I better not to talk to you, right...?

M: Excuse me. Yes, just for a little while...

W: I see. I'll do so...I will even stop breathing if I can...

M: I...don't ask you to do so...

W: I understand...I'm just giving you an example...Anyways, you just go to sleep and I won't talk to you though...You're really troublesome. Don't you just need to sleep...? But how can I make sure you're asleep or not...?

M: What's it matter to you whether I'm asleep or not...?

M: You're right...Okay...It doesn't matter with me...

(the phone rings)

W: (takes it for granted) It's your phone call...

M: What...? Isn't it yours...?

W: Ah, yes...(stands up) Will it be mine...? (walks toward the phone)

M: For God's sake...(covers himself with the pillow and takes the opportunity to sleep)

W: (picks up the phone) Hi...Yes...? Ah...? Not you...? It's...the man who picked up the left leg...? (speaks to the man) Oh my God. Get up...(speaks to phone) No, you can't do that...Ah...? What do you mean that it's useless to me...? It's not like that...Is it still warm now...? It's...cool...? Ahah...it's not...then, we should do something...try to stick it on...You said what...the owner? Hold on...(speaks to man) You should say something...it'ss that guy...

M: Which guy...?

W: The guy who picked up the left leg. Hurry....? It's almost cool...

M: (gets down from the bed) But, what am I supposed to say...?

W: You should know...(speaks to phone) I understand. Hold on please. I shall pass to an expert...(pass the phone to man)

M: (hesitates) I, am not an expert...

W: Never mind. It's urgent...Anyways, tell him not to waste his time. He is in panic...

M: I know but...(picks the phone) Hello...hello...

W: What...?

M: He hung up the phone...

W: Hung up...? (he passes the phone to woman) Hello...hello...it was hung up...(returns the phone to man)

M: (takes the phone) What should we do...?

W: I don't know...You, also didn't ask those questions, did you? Who and where is he...?

M: No because he had hung up...(puts down the phone)

W: It seems to almost be cool...the leg...(goes back to the table) If you had picked the phone up earlier...

M: But...(goes back to the bed) It's just too sudden and I am confused...

W: Are you going to sleep...?

M: Yeah...Anyway, I can't help...

W: Yeah...(finishes sewing a leg on a doll) whoops, they are different lengths...?

M: May I get some sleep...?

W: Alright...I will have to take this one off and change this with this one...

M: But, if you do so, does this doll lose his leg...?

W: Never mind. Didn't I just say I'll get another leg for this child...? You can go to sleep...Don't you need to get up early...?

M: Yes, good night...

W: You said you'll investigate...what...?

M: What...?

W: Didn't you just say you will get up early to do some investigations tomorrow...?

M: Ahah...nothing very important...just the reason why I come to this place...that's it...

W: So you mean you came here without knowing why...?

M: Yes, I'm always like this...I always travel...When I arrive in a city, I start to think about the reason why I'm here...

W: So you can find out the answer by investigating...?

M: Mostly...Because people don't do something for no reason...

W: What will you do after you find the reason...?

M: I don't know yet...But, I have to investigate first ...Because if I don't know why I'm here, it means that I even don't understand who I am.

W: Do you want to drink something...?

M: No, I will sleep...I'm falling asleep...

W: Tomorrow. What will you do after finding out the reason of coming this city...?

M: Go to another city...

W: Which one...?

M: I don't know until I arrive there...

W: Such blind travel...?

M: Yes, but I gradually realise that...I am returning...

W: Returning..?

M: Yeah...to the places were where I've lived before...it seems as though I am revisiting those places one by one...

W: So...soon after...(finds the man seems to have fallen asleep, so she stops talking and tries to twist the doll's leg from it) Ah-Ah-Ah....(she screams)

M: (suddenly wake up) What happened...?

W: Nothing...Sorry to wake you up...? It's just a little bit painful...

M: Where...?

W: Not me...is this child...I just twisted her leg off...She felt some pain...So, please go to sleep...You needn't worry...

M: I needn't worry?!...Will you do that again...?



W: I'm almost done. Just once again and this will be broken...

M: Couldn't you make it not painful...?

W: The leg will be twisted off. Do you think is it possible to break a leg without any feelings...?

M: Did it seem not painful when you just cut this doll's leg...?

W: I just forgot the pain...I'm confused...aren't you trying to sleep...?

M: Sleep...If you need to make that noise again, could you please make it before I fall sleep? I'll wake up again if you do that when I'm sleeping...

W: Such a nervous person...Ah-Ah (screams in a quieter voice) done. That's it, isn't it...

M: But I think you need to cut this doll's right leg and sew it onto that one, don't you...? If possible, could you please also...?

W: Why don't you sleep? Don't you need to get up early tomorrow...?

M: I said so simply because I can't fall asleep. I want you do it first unless I am sure you won't make it painful...

W: (holds the doll) Hold that leg...(uses scissors) try to sense the pain...

M: Sense... You want me to feel pain...?

W: Sure... This child can't feel pain because she is a doll...

M: I see...Ah~

W: I haven't start yet...

M: Oh, not yet...

W: You try to imagine your leg is cut by scissors. By doing so, you may feel the reality of how painful it is....Come on...

M: Wait...

W: What...?

M: No, nothing...?

W: Close your eyes...(crack, the doll's leg is cut)

M: Ah-Ah-Ah-Ah-...(scream loudly)

W: Done...

M: Ah, really...?

W: Give me that...(take back the doll's leg, which is held tightly by Man) What...?

M: No...

W: Do you remember that thing...when you lost your leg...?

M: A little bit... a little bit of that feeling...Do you have water...?

W: (pours water into cup) Wanna add something...?

M: What's something...?

W: Just...something exciting...

M: No, that's fine...

W: (pass the cup to man) what's going on with your leg...?

M: It was blown up by a bomb...(drink) Thanks for troubling you again...(return the cup)

W: Is that normal water right...?  
M: Yes...Good night...  
W: Good night...Do you need me to turn down the light...?  
M: No, it's fine. Just keep it...  
W: Are you sure...? But some find it difficult to fall asleep when it's dark because of fear...  
M: Ah...? (gets up) Did you...put something in that water...?  
W: No, I didn't...  
M: Then, why you asked me is that normal water or not...?  
W: Because it's normal water, so I say it's normal water...  
M: Is that true...?  
W: Hurry to sleep now. Wait until you...  
M: Wait until I what...?  
W: Until you wake up.  
M: Then what're you going to do after I wake up...?  
W: Then I'll go to sleep...  
M: You...?  
W: Don't you understand yet? It's a shift. There is only one bed and you should understand this simple thing...  
M: Understand is understand...(lies down) But it's even more difficult to fall asleep after you mentioning it...Damn...(use pillow covering his head)  
W: If you don't fall asleep, my bed time will be delayed as well...Could you please just make your effort to sleep because if you don't sleep, I can't sleep either...  
M: Fine, please be quieter...(hides under the pillow)  
W: Your suggesting to me not to talk...?  
M: Because I can't sleep while you're talking...  
W: It's not a big deal...The key is determination... If you're determined to sleep, no matter who is speaking, you still can sleep...  
M: So, aren't I determined to sleep? Sleep and sleep...  
W: And what...?  
M: What's what...?  
W: Do you know...the way of sleep...?  
M: Yes. Isn't it just sleep...?  
W: Can you tell me after making a determined decision to sleep, what's the next step...?  
M: Then just lie down and close your eyes...  
W: And then...?  
M: That's all...Wait quietly until the coming of sleepiness....  
W: Why don't you go to there...?  
M: Where...?  
W: To sleep...

M: Well...

W: Listen, you don't go to sleep but you wait for sleep's arrival to assist you to fall asleep...

M: Do you really think so...

W: It's YOU go to sleep, but not you to wait until sleep...

M: But how should I do...?

W: It's not difficult. Aren't you just determined to sleep...? Please keep (points the direction of lying down) sleeping...

M: But...

W: Can you determine to raise your right hand and be able to lift your right hand...?

M: Sure...

W: Can you try...?

M: Did you mean this...? (Lifts his right hand)

W: Is it rather simple? Like doing this...Please lie down...

M: Okay...(lies down)

W: Close your eyes...Have you made a decision to sleep...?

M: Yes...

W: Then, please keep it carefully...now...sleep...Have you slept yet...?

M: Nope...

W: Are you slightly abnormal...?

M: But I did follow what you just said...

W: If you did, you're supposed to be asleep...

M: Yes...What am I able to do is make the decision to sleep, but I can't continue after that...

W: What's the thing after that...?

M: Sleep...

W: Just sleep...

M: True...

W: You can stand up when you want to, you can walk when you want to -Why can't you just sleep when you want to...?

M: You're quite right...

W: And maybe you're not so keen to sleep, are you...? Didn't you have proper sleep for these three days...?

M: Yes...

W: That's it. If I am full, I will lose my appetite even if I really want to eat something. But you're not like this...Fine, let me make you something...(stands up)

M: What's that...?

W: Just something to help you fall asleep after drinking it...You seem to be that kind of person, who can't sleep without another's help...(takes a small medicine bottle)

M: If that is sleeping drugs, I don't want it...

W: Why...?

M: No, not that kind of thing...

W: Why do you behave like this from the beginning? Do you have any prejudices towards my place...?

M: No...

W: Did you hear some gossips about what happened to those people who had lived here...?

M: No...I went to your place straight away after leaving the station...

W: You should arrive in civic centre firstly after leaving the station...

M: Yes, so I made a left turn before arriving there...

W: Why...?

M: I don't know...Maybe I sensed here...

W: Here was called 'House of Witch'...and there is a rumour that once people sleep on this bed they will never be awake...

M: Will never be awake...?

W: Yes, won't...

M: Why...?

W: Because they're dead...Do you get my words...?

M: Ahah...I think so...But, is this true...?

W: What...?

M: You're a witch...?

W: It's true...Actually, I used to be a witch...but I didn't feel I was a witch until long time ago...

M: Your not a witch anymore...?

W: Yes...What, I, just do want to do...?

M: Sewing this leg on that doll...Did you give her that leg...?

W: Aiya, did I make a mistake...?

M: Yes...And isn't that the place for hand? The leg should be put on this part of this doll...

W: Yes...I think this is the most unlikely 'witch thing' for me to do in this situation...How could I make this happen...?

M: You should know these kind of things even you're not a witch....No, what are you doing...?

W: I am...taking this off...

M: No way. You should take this first and then sew this on here...

W: Fine, I know how to do it...

M: But you...

W: This is my job...Although I am not a witch anymore, I still know how to do it...

M: Really...? (withdraws his hands)

W: Although I think I might not a witch anymore, but sometimes, I am still sent things regularly...

M: What was sent here? What kind of thing...?  
W: Living tributes...  
M: Living tributes...?  
W: Yes, just like you tonight...  
M: Am I a living tribute...?  
W: Probably...Because it's always like this before...When it comes to evening, there is always someone asking 'May I sleep' and coming in...Is this connected to this part...?  
M: No, that side...  
W: Oh, this is...  
M: Then, what'll you do...? I mean to that guest who asked 'May I sleep' and came inside here...  
W: Let him sleep...just like you...Just on this bed...  
M: And then...?  
W: Like this...In the morning, I call the city council and ask them to come to collect the body...  
M: Will I be like this...?  
W: If you are supposed to be a live tribute, for my duty, I shall do this...So, although you always refuse me, please still drink something...(look at the medicine bottle) Don't look at me like this. I'm just do my own job...  
M: You're right...  
W: Like what I just said, I kill people not because I love to...  
M: I understand your position...But according to what you just said, maybe I am not a live tribute...  
W: Unlikely...What concerns me is just that call...  
M: Call...?  
W: The call about found a leg...It has never happened at this time and they called twice...Have you thought of something...? Any similar call that has happened to you before...?  
M: What did he say...?  
W: A man lost his left leg...with temperature...and also said it will be sent here right away. But I... refused...of course...  
M: It was the night when my leg was blew up 30 years ago. The man, who promised me that he will go back to the scene of bomb to look for my leg, also made a similar call to my ward...  
W: Didn't he come back...?  
M: I don't know...Maybe, but I'd already left my ward...  
W: Why...?  
M: A friend took me running away...  
W: Ran away...?

M: Because the bomb was set by us...

W: So...the leg mentioned by the call is truly yours...

M: But it happened 30 years ago...

W: Didn't you just say that you gradually return to your past...And yes, you finally returned 30 years ago...(puts medicines into the cup) How about drink it off...?

M: Please wait a moment...There is no connection between my thing and whether I'm a live tribute or not....

W: 30 years ago, a bomb was put in the civic centre in this city...the meeting room was destroyed...Tonight, instead of going there, you turned left and came here. The meeting room is still maintained the same situation after that...

M: However, there were no people in the room at that night...No one died and no one got hurt...

W: Yes...(mixes different medicines and put them into the cup) But, the children original planned to gather together to discuss the decorations for the Christmas in that room...When you got the news, you returned to the room and tried to defuse the bomb, but it's too late so you lost one leg...Look at them (point the rag-dolls on the table) These are the bodies of those children that night...

M: But, no one was there...The children's meeting was cancelled, thus there is no one there at that night...

W: It's true, but for you, they're still there...At IEast for you, who returned to defuse the bomb, the house was filled with children...But you failed. Thus when the moment that bomb exploded, what you saw was...look, this child's hand was shattered...that child's neck was the only thing he left...You realised the fact that the children weren't in that room very late...Even you knew the truth, still couldn't forget the children's bodies you saw that night...That's the reason you want to return this city....

M: And then...? If this is the truth, what do you expect me to do...? Or do you want me to take the responsibilities for those almost dead children...?

W: What're you talking about...That's not what I meant but you imagined it by yourself...

M: By myself...?

W: Yes...Although you didn't really kill them, but you still want to be responsible for almost killing children in your heart of hearts...That's the possible way to think...Do you really think you came here only because you saw a signboard written 'Be able to sleep'...?

M: It turns out the true meaning of 'Be able to sleep' is this...?

W: What it can't be anything else...?

M: I think is just very normal sleep....

W: You're also able to sleep...

M: But wait...

W: Any other problems...?

M: Listen, the question is why my partner and me wanted to put a bomb in that place...?

W: What would you do if knew this...? Anyway, drink up...When you finish it, you'll find everything is all the same to you...

M: But it's the beginning of the question...First of all, please put that down...(points at the cup)...or it will seem that I'm forced to drink it...

W: (puts the cup down) Forget it. I still have other work to do...(searches for something in a pile of books) It's strange...

M: What're you looking for...?

W: Don't you want to know the reason of putting the bomb there...?

M: Yes...

W: Just before dying...?

M: Yeah...

W: You mean you're able to die after knowing the truth...?

M: No, I can't promise...

W: Why can't you make that promise...?

M: Because I really don't have those kind of thoughts...Please...what's that exactly...?

W: You were giving leaflets out around the whole city at that time...I remember it was...really strange...

M: By reading that thing I'll understand why I put the bomb...?

W: Yes you will you understand...Didn't you want us to know why you did this , that's why you gave out the leaflets...?

M: Yes...It makes sense...

W: And...I forgot to mention that if you don't want to drink, you could choke...

M: What do you mean choke...?

W: I can choke you by the neck...

M: No, it's not time yet...Now please hurry, find that leaflet...

W: I see...I can find it for you, but you should understand it's a special service...It's not necessary for me to do this...I just think you can't die with any regrets...

M: Do you need my help...?

W: No...You wouldn't know where it is...(keeps searching) By the way, I've also got a needle...

M: Needle...what needle...?

W: Just a needle...Applying something on the point of needle and stabbing your skin...Maybe it will be the fastest way...

M: Forget it...Have you found it...?

W: Finally...(pulls out a dirty piece of paper) This is the leaflet...(blows the dust and tries to flatten the wrinkles on the paper) Can you recognize it...?

M: Well...? (reads it out) Wake up from the unconsChius daily life...What does that mean...?

W: In this case...Do you think will it be better to die without reading this...?

M: But...

W: Needle...?

M: Wait a minute...What does that mean...?

W: Wasn't it written by you...? (puts her finger into the cup and licks her finger) Is it too thin...? (puts more medicines) You did believe that by exploding a bomb could make the citizens...what's was it...?

M: (reads out) wake up from the unconsChius daily life and to understand your standing point within the history...

W: Yes...You did have this expectation...In other words, you think you can....

M: It makes sense...

W: I repeated several times that it was written by you...

M: Yeah...It seems like...

W: (passes the cup to man) I'll make it slightly thick...

M: (looks at the leaflet) Thanks...(takes the cup)

W: Of course, there is no response from the citizens...Simply because when people imagine the results, if they imagine all the children were there, it's terrifyingly...And as one of the partners, you've already run away...

M: (moves his eyesight from the leaflet) Run away...?

M: Didn't you run away from the ward...?

M: Yes, I ran away...

W: Why...? I also don't understand this part...Because people all realized you returned to save those children...In addition, if you just waited at the ward, maybe you could have got your leg back...

M: Do you know a story about a leg and freedom...? (puts the cup close to his mouth)

W: No...How does it taste..?

M: (suddenly aware of it, looks at the cup again) What's this...?

W: A drink for you...

M: Haven't I just said, wait a moment...? I haven't made up my mind...

W: It's not necessary to make up your mind...(unwilling to take the cup from the Man) This kind of thing should be ended naturally and unconsChiusly...

M: Should I need to rinse my mouth...? It tasted a little bit...

W: It's fine. Just a little bit...At the most you may feel a little numb on your leg...So (starts to touch a doll again) What was it you were just talking about...a story about a leg and freedom...?

M: (keeps rubbing his left leg) When I ran away from the ward, a friend told me that...there was a wolf...

W: Not that leg...

M: Excuse me...?



W: I mean that one is an artificial limb...

M: Oh, yes...(changes to rub his right leg) There was a wolf was caught in a hunter's trap in a mountain during the winter...Of course, no matter how hard it tried, it couldn't get rid of the trap, so the wolf bit off its own leg and fled on just three legs...Do you get it...? What this story means is freedom is more precious than a leg...

W: So you decided to give up your leg and run away from this city after hearing this story...?

M: When I was thinking about going back to the city for my leg, one of my friends told me this story and it stopped me...

W: Then why did you return now...? Did you start to feel numb...?

M: This one...? Not at all...Because I don't feel free...Haven't you heard about that? Your missing leg may still itch...Actually this has also happened to me...Can you understand how cruel it is...? In reality, that leg is absent, so even when you want to scratch it, you can't...In general, after one or two years, your body will understand the absence of leg and it will stop itching. But I still feel it after all these years...I still feel the same feelings, sometimes it itches, sometimes it tingles and sometimes it is numb...Can you understand...? I came back for this reason...

W: It's still the same now...?

M: The same...You may not believe it but did you just said my leg will feel numb, didn't you...? This leg is fine now, but this one is numb...(knocks his leg) This missing leg...(knocks more dramatically) This artificial limb...

W: Stop...

M: (stops) Sorry...It didn't work...It doesn't exist anyway...

W: So these children...in fact, were not there, so they neither lost their hands nor their legs, nor their necks. But they seem to experience the accident and always moan and groan...Crying all the time...for 30 years...every night...I stick this child's hand on that child's and use that child's leg on that child because of this...

M: May I lie down...?

W: Please...Do you feel uncomfortable...?

M: No, but it seems that this leg is also starting to feel numb...

W: I guess the medicine works...I just put a little bit... But be patient, it's still early...

M: Be patient for what..?

W: To die...Didn't I just say that the staff from City Council won't collect the body until tomorrow morning...? If you die earlier, I don't know how to...

M: Eventually, I still need to die...?

W: Yes, before morning's coming...Everyone is waiting...

M: Everyone...Who is everyone...?

W: The citizens...Everyone already knows you're here...But of course they wouldn't know that you are the man from 30 years ago...Are you alright...?

M: What do you mean by 'alright'...?

W: I mean it's still not the right time to die...Sometimes, some of them even called for fun and just asked 'is he still alive...?'

M: Then...? What's your answer...?

W: Of course...I say...still alive...Because it's true at this moment...Sometimes, in order to prove you're really alive, I'll make that person hear your voice...

M: But will you call City Council to inform them of my death in the morning, won't you...?

W: Yes, because you'll already be dead then...

M: What entertainment is it to you by doing this...?

W: I find it's fun because of the citizens...but I don't feel pleasure...I only do this because it is my job...

M: Hey you...

W: What...?

M: I am not eager to die...

W: What do you mean...?

M: Because...

(the phone rings)

W: See, they're coming...(put down the doll and get up) What answer shall I give them,...

M: Anything. It doesn't matter to me...

W: (answers the phone) Hello...Ah...? It's you! Where are you now...?(covers the phone and talk to man) You...

M: What happened...?

W: It's the leg...

M: Leg...?

W: Yes, he just called earlier...What can I do...?

M: What do you mean by 'what can you do'...? There's nothing to do...?

W: (speaks on to the phone) Hello hello, is it still warm...? Ah...? Yes...is it...? Please wait for a moment...(speaks to man) He said it's already cold...and suddenly became hard...

M: (freezes and turns his back against the phone) I also understand those things...Tell him to find a place nearby and bury it...

W: (speaks on the phone) Hello, where're you now...? Yes...? Then, dig a hole and bury it...Yes...The man who lost it is not here...He already left this city 30 years ago...Ah...? No need to leave any marks...Fill up the hole and don't let anyone know...Yes...Yes...Thank you and bye bye...(puts down the phone)

M: What type of person was he...?

W: It sounded like a young man's voice...Just like you 30 years ago...

M: My eyes start to be fuzzy...

W: The medicines is starting to work...But it's not the right time to die yet...

M: Not yet...? Why do you think you're able to do whatever you want...? I said I don't

want to die, but you force me to eat strange medicines. When I'm eager to die and you say not to...

W: I didn't say not to die...I meant wait a while...

M: The leg is gone...

W: Leg...? Definitely, the man in the phone buried it...in the backyard of the Civic Centre...There is a very huge white Poplar...maybe it was buried under the tree's roots...

M: I've been waiting for this for 30 years...

W: You came back this city for this, didn't you..?

M: I don't think so...Because I just realised that I'm doing a return journey ...I didn't know why I did it before...Now, it's just at this moment that I get it...I returned for this...

W: Look...(lifts a doll) Now this child has complete legs...

M: Congratulations...Yes, although I can't see it now...I also clearly understand this now...there was no one there when the bomb exploded...

W: Do you feel painful...?

M: No, not at all...Am I...still breathing...?

W: Yes, still...so you're fine now...

M: Why...? I don't understand at all...

W: The medicine is working...but not to make you die, you're already meant to be a dead man and the medicines are stopping the pain and slight strength in your life...

M: Why...?

W: Because you should understand that you came back this city for dearth...Yes, this house and this bed are prepared for you...All of the citizens in this city know that you'll come back here someday and die on this bed...Of course, this is neither to blame what you have done, nor to appreciate you saving the children...It's just...we all understand everything is happening naturally and correctly on its track...

M: Then, am I able to die...?

W: Yes...the church's bell are ringing...Do you hear that...? It's almost morning...you are able to die...You came back here for this...and endure this night for this thing...Good bye...

M: Good bye..

(Sounds from church's bell...the woman slowly cover man's body with a white calico)

W: You, did not harm the children that night because they're not there...But, my rag-dolls were ...So, I am sorry if I put something that would make you die early in your medicine...Because I treat these dolls as my own children...

(Church's bell keeps ringing...)

(light slowly black out)

## Appendix 2: Glossary of Mandarin and *Hoklo* Terms

- Bian-shih* (Plot Explainer) 辯士
- Ba-da-wei-ya De Bao-feng-yun* (The Storm of Batavia) 巴達維亞的暴風雨
- Ben-sheng-ren* (Local Taiwanese) 本省人
- Bai-se Kong-bu* (White Terror) 白色恐怖
- Bao Lai Tuan* (Treasure Coming Group) 寶來團
- Bu-dai Xi* (Hand-puppet Theatre) 布袋戲
- Bō-Ts'ing Xi* (front-curtain theatre, *Hoklo*) 幕前戲
- Cai-gao-qiao* (Stilts Walking) 踩高蹺
- Cai Jie* (Stepping Street) 踩街
- Chou* (Clown) 丑
- Che-gu Xi* (an initial form of *Ge-zai Xi*) 車鼓戲
- Chun Liu She* (Spring Willow Society) 春柳社
- Chang, Nian, Zuo, Da* (Sing, Recite, Do, Fight) 唱唸作打
- Caotun Yan-fong Qing-nian Ju-tuan* (Caotun Town Hot Beacon Youth Troupe) 草屯炎烽青年劇團
- Chun Yang She* (Spring Sun Society) 春陽社
- Dan* (female leading role) 旦
- Dao-shi-diao* (Taoist tone, which was used at Taoist religious rituals) 道士調
- Ding Xing She* (New Vessel Society) 鼎新社
- Fei-zheng-tong* (Unauthentic) 非正統
- Gu-ji Bu* (clown style) 滑稽部
- Gu-hun Lian-Meng* (Solitary Soul Alliance) 孤魂聯盟
- Ge-zai Xi* (Taiwanese opera) 歌仔戲
- Gai-liang Xi* (Reformed Theatre) 改良戲
- Hang-dang* (role types) 行當
- Hua-ju* (Spoken Drama) 話劇
- Hei-mao Ge-wu-tuan* (Black Cat Dancing and Singing Ensemble) 黑貓歌舞團
- Hou Sheng Yan-ju Yan-jiu Hui* (Hou Sheng Theatre Research Society) 厚生演劇研究會
- Huang-min ju* (Emperor Theatre) 皇民劇
- Hu-Bian Xi* (Casual Theatre) 胡編戲
- Hui-gui Xiang-tu Yun-dong* (Returning to Native Soil Movement) 回歸鄉土運動
- Jing* (supporting male roles) 淨
- Jian-dao* (Kendo) 劍道
- Jin Gu Yue* (Forbidding Drums and Music) 禁鼓樂
- Jin Hua Tuan* (Advanced Group) 進化團
- Jiou-jia Xi* (popular theatre genres originated in Fukien area, China) 九甲戲

*Jin Qi Yan She* (Golden Bough Theatre) 金枝演社  
*Kuei-lei Xi* (Puppet Theatre) 傀儡戲  
*Kuo-min-tang* (The Chinese Nationalist Party, KMT) 國民黨  
*Jhao-rih Theatre* (Sunrise Theatre) 朝日戲院  
*Lian-suo-ju* (Chain Theatre) 連鎖劇  
*Lo-te-San* (an initial form of Ge-zai Xi) 落地掃  
*Lao-sheng* (older male role style) 老生  
*Luan-tuan Xi* (also named *Bei-guan Xi*) 亂彈戲、北管戲  
*Li-yuan xi* (also named *Nan-guan Xi*) 梨園戲、南管戲  
*Liang-xiang* (Showing Face) 亮相  
*Liao-guo Zhuo-shui-qi* (Paddling through Zhuo-shui Steam) 潦過濁水溪  
*Mai-yao-tuan* (Medicine Sales Troupes) 賣藥團  
*Ma Tsu* (A Chinese female sea god) 媽祖  
*Mu-biao Xi* (Scenario) 幕表戲  
*Min Jin Dang* (Democratic Progressive Party, DPP) 民進黨  
*Ming-fong Yan-ju Tuan* (People's Beacon Troupe) 民烽演劇團  
*Neng Bu* (all-round style) 能部  
*Opeila* (Opera) 胡撇仔  
*Chun-mian* (Pure Cotton) 純棉  
*Pi-ying Xi* (Shadow-puppet Theatre) 皮影戲  
*Sheng* (male leading role) 生  
*Su-fu* (Synthetic Fibre) 酥胡  
*Su Ji-hua* (Tracing Sources Project) 溯計劃  
*Shia Jiou Liou* (low nine classes) 下九流  
*She Hui Jie Ji* (Social Hierarchy) 社會階級  
*Shanghai Min Xing She* (Shanghai People's Prosperity Society) 上海民興社  
*Si Mu* (curtain operator) 司幕  
*Sio-kau Xi* (Linked Theatre, Hoklo) 相交戲  
*Shi-shi Xin-xi* (News-based New Theatre) 時事新戲  
*Shanghai Xing Min She* (Shanghai New People's Society) 上海新民社  
*Sih-ping Xi* (Popular theatre genres originated in Fukien area, China) 四平戲  
*Sheng-feng Yan-ju Yan-jiu Hui* (Holy Beacon Theatre Research Society) 聖烽演劇研究會  
*Sing-guang Yan-ju Yan-jiou Huei* (Starlight Theatre Research Association) 星光演劇研究會  
*Shi-yan Xiao-ju-tuan* (Experimental Small Troupe) 實驗小劇團  
*Zhong-ming Ju-le-bu* (Tinkle Bell Club) 鐘鳴俱樂部  
*Tai-chi Dao-yin* (a more flexible Tai-chi form) 太極導引  
*Tainan Xing-bao* (Tainan Daily News) 臺南新報  
*Taiwan Dian-Ying Xi-ju Shih* (Taiwanese Movie and Theatre History) 臺灣電影戲劇史  
*Taiwan Nu-xia Bai Hsiao-lan* (Taiwan Opera: The Female Robin Hood - Bai Hsiao-lan) 臺灣

女俠白小蘭

*Taiwan Rih-rih Xing-bao* (Taiwan Daily News) 臺灣日日新報

*Tsiân Suat* (pre-introduction, *Hoklo*), 前說

*Tai-ke* (Taiwanese guest or Taiwanese people) 台客

*Taiwan-sheng Hsing-cheng Chang-kuan Gong-shu* (Taiwan Provincial Administration) 臺灣省行政長官公署

*Taipei Sin Wu Tai* (Taipei New Stage) 臺北新舞臺

*Taiwan Wen-hua Xie-hui* (Taiwanese Cultural Society) 臺灣文化協會

*Taiwan Xin-min Bao* (Taiwan New People's Newspaper) 臺灣新民報

*Taiwan Xin-ju Di-yi-ren* (the first person of Taiwanese Xing-ju) 臺灣新劇第一人

*Taiwan Yi-shu Ju-she* (The Taiwanese Art Theatre Society) 臺灣藝術劇社

*Taiwan Yan-ju Yan-jiu Hui* (Taiwanese Theatre Research Society) 臺灣演劇研究會

*Taiwan Zheng-ju Yan-jiu-hui* (Taiwan Drama Research Company) 臺灣正劇研究會

*Xing-nan-guang Ju-tuan* (New Southern Light Troupe) 新南光劇團

*Xing-ju* (New Theatre) 新劇

*Xiao-ju-chang Yun-dong* (Little Theatre Movement) 小劇場運動

*Xiao-sheng* (younger male role style) 小生

*Xin-sheng-huo Hua-ju-tuan* (New Life Troupe) 新生活話劇團

*Xue-sheng Lian-meng* (Students Alignment) 學生聯盟

*Xiang-tu Wen-xue Yun-dong* (Native Soil Literature Movement) 鄉土文學運動

*Xi-qu Yan-jiu Hui* (Theatre Research Society) 戲曲研究會

*Xin Zhong-guo Ju-she* (New China Theatre Society) 新中國劇社

*Wen-hua Xi* (Cultural Theatre) 文化劇

*Wen-ming Xi* (Civilised Theatre) 文明戲

*Wen-shi Ju* (Elites Theatre) 文士劇

*Wai-sheng-ren* (Mainlanders) 外省人

*Yan-ji* (Capon) 閹雞

*Yong Le Zuo* (Forever Happy Theatre) 永樂座

*Yan-ju Ting-Shen Dui* (Emperor Theatre Troupes) 演劇挺身隊

*Yi-shu Pai* (Art Style) 藝術派

*Zheng-tong* (Authentic) 正統

*Zhai-xing Wang-qiu-hui* (Star-picking Tennis Society) 摘星網球會

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