A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND 
DECLINE OF NEW TAIWAN CINEMA, 1982-1986

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the 
University of North Texas in Partial 
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Ying-chia Lin, B.A.

Denton, Texas

December, 1993
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The emphasis of this research is on the social, economic, and cultural factors generating the New Taiwan Cinema between 1982 to 1986. The study consists of four chapters. Chapter I introduces the background and parameters of the topic. Chapter II discusses the factors which nurtured the rise of New Taiwan Cinema. It also provides historical background information on Taiwanese films. Chapter III discusses the definition and characteristics of New Taiwan Cinema and its major filmmakers and films. Chapter IV focuses on the issue of the end of New Taiwan Cinema. This chapter also covers the general situation of the Taiwanese film industry after 1986.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Taiwan was settled by Chinese immigrants about three hundred years ago. It was in the control of Japan after the Chinese government lost the Sino-Japanese war in 1895. Movies came to Taiwan in 1901 during the Japanese colonial period, five years after motion pictures were seen in Shanghai and Japan. The Japanese government policy during its colonization of Taiwan was "industrious Japan, agricultural Taiwan." Thus, Japan did not encourage new technology such as the motion picture to be introduced and developed in Taiwan. This official discouragement of technical knowledge, combined with censorship and other factors, resulted in scant motion picture production activity during Japan's colonization of Taiwan, though moviegoing was popular in cities.

China regained Taiwan after World War II, just as the Chinese civil war was reerupting. The Communists eventually defeated Chiang Kai-shek and his nationalist party, the Kuomintang (KMT). With the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, Chiang and KMT migrated to Taiwan. Since then, the KMT government in Taiwan has continued to use the name Republic of China (ROC) and has
declared itself the only "official" government of China. The nationalist government in Taiwan and the Communist government in China have maintained an antagonistic relationship. Under KMT rule, Taiwan developed with the party's right-wing, Chinese nationalist ideology. Until his death in 1975, Chiang used high-pressure tactics to maintain his power.

Chiang also used strongman political tactics to control the Taiwanese economy. One of the primary reasons that the KMT lost the civil war in China was that it couldn't control corruption and the economy after World War II. Chiang didn't want the economic collapse and hyperinflation of China repeated in Taiwan so he had the government control the major economic activities. The strategies included controlling the inflow and outflow of capital and foreign currencies; controlling interest, inflation and exchange rates; controlling basic consumer products through government-owned enterprises; high taxes on imports; land reform; and economic plans.3

The basic goal of the economic plan was to build an export-oriented industrial base that would bring economic growth. There were two reasons for doing so: first, the government had to control inflation and currency devaluation caused by a shortage of foreign deposits; second, for a tiny island like Taiwan, the domestic market was too small to sustain economic growth. Under martial law, Taiwan was very stable
politically. That provided an advantageous environment for economic growth.

Before the Seventies, Taiwan's economy was based on agriculture. But since 1963, the value of industrial production has been greater than that of agricultural production. The export and international trade policy brought rapid economic growth. However, at the same time, it made Taiwan more dependent on the United States and Japan; Japan had been the major sources for new technology and machinery and the United States was Taiwan's greatest overseas market for exports from 1967 until the late 1980s.

Chiang also controlled the mass media. Martial law, other regulations and strict censorship limited the mass media's freedom, before martial law was lifted in 1987. As a result of the strict censorship, the press acted merely as an official mouthpiece for the government. The government controlled radio and television as well. The first Taiwanese commercial television station was established in 1962. Taiwan now has three TV stations, owned by the Taiwan provincial government, the Kuomintang and the Department of National Defense. The KMT government used mass media as a tool for political propaganda. And, because cinema was also an influential medium, the government strictly limited it with laws and censorship.

The postwar Taiwanese films demonstrate Chiang's right-wing
Chinese nationalism. Movies from this period were either political propaganda films or were made for public entertainment. The films are filled with nostalgia for China and escapism. Costume musicals, melodramas set in pre-revolution China and war films are examples of the nostalgia and Chinese nationalist propaganda. Violent kung-fu and swordplay films and romances provided the public an escape from the oppressive society.  

Beginning in the late Seventies, economic growth and greater demands for democracy brought radical changes. Since 1975, KMT opponents have established several small organizations and magazines. In 1979, most major political activists were arrested after a large demonstration in Kaohsiung. After that, KMT opponents began to unify and reorganize. The first new organization, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), was established in 1986. After martial law was lifted in 1987, labor, student, environmental and some other social movements became active. But before martial law was lifted, Taiwanese society began going through dramatic changes that are still going on.

The film industry changed in the Eighties, too. A group of films, different from earlier movies and collectively called New Taiwan Cinema, echoed the social and political changes. New Taiwan Cinema employs film language and styles different from the old films. New Taiwan Cinema examines different subject matter, too, dealing with social issues and
Taiwanese history, especially the postwar experience. In short, the spirit of New Taiwan Cinema is totally different from the country's conventional cinema.

On January 34, 1987, the "Manifesto of Taiwanese Cinema in 1987" was published in China Times. Signed by several major New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers, dramatists, writers, film critics and artists, this article is considered to be the manifesto of the death of New Cinema. New Taiwan Cinema was considered dead because; first, New Cinema filmmakers stopped making movies; second, the original spirit and motivation of New Cinema had changed; third, Taiwanese cinema was going in different directions during the late Eighties.

Although the New Taiwan Cinema movement has ended, it brought a lot influences to later movies in Taiwan. It is one of the most important periods in Taiwanese film history. It also established the reputation of Taiwanese films at international film festivals, which previously almost never showed Taiwanese movies. However, the most important contribution of New Taiwan Cinema was that it changed the public perception of Taiwanese cinema and provided Taiwanese film industry an "alternative" choice. This study starts with a short history of Taiwanese cinema and examine how the New Taiwan Cinema started and how it developed. The Chinese names and are transalated into alphabets based on Pinyin system except those have been well known to
the west by Wade system or certain ways. Film titles mentioned in this study are English titles. The author has literally translated the titles of films for which original English titles are not available. In the appendices of this study, a transliteral phonetic title for every film is provided.

Statement of the Problem

The major problems of this study are:

1) What is New Taiwan Cinema? How can New Taiwan Cinema be defined or identified? What are the characteristics of New Taiwan Cinema?

2) How did New Taiwan Cinema start? From what kind of social and historical context did New Taiwan Cinema arise? Why did the New Taiwan Cinema movement occur?

3) How did New Taiwan Cinema develop? Did it become a general movement? Did New Taiwan Cinema face any problems? If so, what problems? Did it end as a movement, and if so, why and how did it end?

4) How did New Taiwan Cinema affect the Taiwanese film industry? What was its relationship to the conventional film industry?

Purpose

The purposes of this study are: 1.) to study how a social and political context can influence and affect filmmaking by examining New Taiwan Cinema and its relationship with Taiwanese society, 2.) to explore the
attributes and influences of New Taiwan Cinema by analyzing it, and 3.) to examine New Cinema as a movement, its success and problems and how those problems affect its development.

**Significance of the Study**

Taiwan lies on the west rim of the Pacific Basin, a marginal area of the Asian continent. Because of its location and history, the study of Taiwanese history is considered a "marginal" pursuit within Asian and Chinese studies. Since the Kuomintang took over the island, studies about Taiwan in Taiwan have either been limited in certain fields or ignored by the public. The main reason for this is because under KMT rule, Chinese nationalism has been the only dominant ideology. Any study of Taiwan itself would only raise suspicions about separatism, which is considered the greatest threat to the KMT's regime.

Studying Taiwanese films is more difficult than other studies of Taiwanese history. The main reason is because the government and public have never considered movies to be a form of art, but rather a tool for political propaganda or entertainment. Because of this, there were few studies of Taiwanese cinema before the Eighties. During the Sixties, some film magazines were published in Taiwan, but most of the articles in them were translations of or introductions to Western film theories, and only a few articles were about contemporary Taiwanese movies.

Studying Taiwanese films is hard in Taiwan and especially difficult
outside the country. Although Taiwanese films were popular and well-known in Southeast Asia during the Seventies, before the emergence of New Taiwan Cinema, Taiwanese movies were seldom seen and little known to people outside East Asia.

During the late Seventies and early Eighties, coincidentally, new waves swept over all three centers of Chinese-language films, Hong Kong, Taiwan and the People's Republic of China (PRC). Hong Kong's new wave came first, starting in 1978,\(^\text{11}\) then came the New Taiwan Cinema in 1982. The Chinese "Fifth Generation" movement started in 1984. However, English-language writings about the new wave of Chinese films are focused on movies from the PRC. In Jack C. Ellis' *A History of Film*, third edition, 1990, there is only one line about Taiwanese cinema.\(^\text{12}\) Of the sixteen articles in the book *Perspectives on Chinese Cinema*, published in 1991, there is only one piece about Taiwanese films and two about Hong Kong cinema.\(^\text{13}\) Thus, writings about Taiwanese cinema are much scarcer than those dealing with PRC films.

The point is that, for a long time, the study of Taiwanese cinema, as well as the study of Hong Kong cinema, was considered a subfield or marginal study in the spectrum of Chinese film study, which focused on movies from the PRC. Always geographically distinct and now separated politically from Mainland China for almost a hundred years (1895 to the
present), Taiwan has been developing its local culture, which differs from mainstream Chinese culture in some ways. Thus, to consider Taiwanese cinema as a subfield of Chinese cinema is to ignore the individuality of Taiwanese cinema.

Therefore, the significance of this study is to redefine the meaning of Taiwanese films and relocate the position of Taiwanese cinema on the map of world film history. Although the center of this study is the movies made within a certain era, any historical study cannot exclude the diachronic and synchronic aspects of that era. Thus, the development of Taiwanese cinema before New Taiwan Cinema and the context in which those movies were made are covered briefly in the study. By doing this, a more complete image of Taiwanese cinema is shaped. This analysis is revisionist relative to some aspects of existing histories of Taiwanese cinema.

Moreover, this study may offer a base to further studies of Taiwanese movies, films in newly industrialized countries and Asian cinema. By discussing the film language used in New Taiwan Cinema, this study also can offer a foundation for further studies about non-Western or Oriental film aesthetics.

**Review of Literature**

Research about cinema and its relevant fields began very late in Taiwan. Film study was not considered serious research. Before the
Eighties, there were a few books and articles about Chinese-language films in general and a book about Taiwanese-dialect films. Most movie books either contained translations of Western articles or were about Western movies. The locally published film magazines were about movie stars. Research about Taiwanese cinema begins with the broader trend of Taiwanese history studies that began during the Eighties, along with the rise of New Taiwan Cinema. In 1978, the first film library was established in Taipei. In 1989, the film library was renamed the National Film Archive. The press department of the National Film Archive has published quite a few books about Taiwanese and international films.

Research about Taiwanese films really begins with the study of New Taiwan Cinema, although there are some studies about early Taiwanese cinema and Taiwanese dialect films. Compared to other facets of Taiwanese cinema, the number of books and articles about New Taiwan Cinema is the largest. However, there still aren't that many.

Among few books specializing in New Taiwan Cinema, *New Taiwan Cinema*, edited by Chiao Hsiung-ping and firstly published in 1988 may be the earliest. Chiao is one of Taiwan's major film critics and she may be the most productive film reviewer. *New Taiwan Cinema* is an anthology written by Chiao and other critics. These reviews and articles are divided by content into four chapters: 1.) "The Changes in the Film Industry," 2.) "The Authors," 3.) "Content, Form and Subjects," and 4.)
Aspects of New Asian Cinema is another anthology edited by Chiao. In this book, there are two articles about Taiwanese films. In "The Crisis of Transformation Faced by Taiwan, Hong Kong and Mainland China," she talks about the recent corporate tendencies in the three places and changes in Taiwanese films during the Nineties. In the other article, "The Contemporary Taiwanese Cinema and Tradition," author Chang Chung-yeng talks about the influence and relationship between the traditional films and New Taiwan Cinema.

The Authors and Genres of Taiwan and Hong Kong Movies, also written by Chiao, emphasizes genres and authors (in other words, directors). Five New Taiwan Cinema directors are discussed in the book. However, the book just combines the reviews of those filmmakers' movies. There is no detailed analysis of their personal styles and creative ideas.

Xiao Yie is one of the people who helped create the New Taiwan Cinema at the Central Motion Picture Company. His book, The Beginning of a Movement, is based on his experiences working with New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers. Most of the articles in the book are personal recollections and commentary about films and filmmakers in Taiwan. He provides some valuable firsthand information about the beginning of New Taiwan Cinema. Three articles in the book, "The Literary Nature in

Death of New Cinema, edited and written by Mi Zho and Liang Xinhua, is an anthology of essays by several film critics. This book is one of the few that specialize in New Taiwan Cinema. However, the movies covered in this book were made after 1987, an era those critics call the "post-new cinema." The writers of this book are considered "new generation" film critics. They are influenced by contemporary Western theories such as semiotics, structuralism, neo-Marxism and Frankfurt school. Therefore, the methodologies applied in this book are mostly based on those ideas. The book has five chapters: 1.) "The End of New Cinema," 2.) "The Politics and Ideology of Images," 3. "City Of Sadness: Historic Discourse/Film System/Critical System," 4.) "City Of Sadness: History/Context/Text" and 5.) "Film/History/Public Memory." This book offers some critical aspects of the New Taiwan Cinema. 

Cai Guo-ron's The Research of Modern Chinese Wen-yi Films may be the only book focused on a movie genre in Taiwan. The genre is the wen-yi movies, roughly speaking, a particular kind of melodrama. In this book, Cai defines the wen-yi films. He starts with the very early wen-yi movies made during the Thirties in Mainland China. However, the emphasis is on the wen-yi movies of the Sixties and Seventies. He
approaches the films through different categories, including the production companies, the novels on which the films are based and the directors. Because many New Cinema films fall into the genre of traditional movies, this book provides some idea about the wen-yi movies that preceded the New Cinema and the New Cinema's relationship with those films.

Lin Nian-tong's Chinese Film Aesthetic is one of the few books focused on film aesthetics. Lin goes back to the traditional Chinese paintings and poetry to make connections between Chinese movies and traditional arts. Although the movies he discusses in the book are mostly films from the Thirties and Forties made in Mainland China, the ideas are very useful for analyzing New Taiwan Cinema. In the article, "The Third Stage of Chinese Cinema," he compares the Chinese-language films of the Eighties from Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. The book offers some valuable ideas about defining Chinese film aesthetics.

Huang Jing-yie's book, The Search for Humanist Films, is an anthology of his movie reviews. Most reviews in this book, which is very personal, are about New Cinema movies. Film, Filmmakers, Film Literature, edited by Lee Yo-xin, is another anthology. Unlike some other books, it is not composed of reviews from newspapers or magazines but of articles analyzing the New Taiwan Cinema movement. Those articles include introductions before New Taiwan Cinema, the critiques of New
Cinema as a movement and Taiwanese film literature.

A handful of journal and magazine articles are relevant to this study. "The Sociological Research of Taiwanese New Cinema in the Eighties," co-written by Chen Pei-zhi and Lee Tien-dow, is a social film study. In the article, the writers address three questions, why New Taiwan Cinema arises during the Eighties instead of another period, what the connection between the style and content of New Cinema and the contemporary social context is, and what the functions of New Cinema are within the Taiwanese film industry. It's a detailed analysis of historical and social factors that influence New Cinema.

In "Boys From Fengkuei and So On," Liou Sen-yiao compares the film style used in the film Boys From Fengkuei with Italian neorealism. Lee Shun-ren's "New Taiwan Cinema and the Third World Cinema" shows a different aspect. He compares New Taiwan Cinema with Third World cinema and argues that New Taiwan Cinema can't be considered part of Third World cinema.

Yian Huei-zen's "Poetic Realism: The First Draft of Film Language in New Taiwan Cinema" tries to seek film style used in the New Taiwan Cinema. He uses the term "poetic realism" to define the style. For him, the New Taiwan Cinema uses realism to express the poetic. The article "The Taiwanese Movie Culture in the Eighties," co-written by Mi Zho and Wu Chi-yen, is a study issued at the 1993 Democratic Progressive Party
Culture Conference. The focus of this article is discussing the movies and the relevant activities of the Eighties. It's a general report about Taiwanese cinema during the Eighties and the context in which it was born. In the article, the author discusses: 1.) the emergence and development of New Taiwan Cinema, 2.) film critique and New Cinema, 3.) domestic film awards and 4.) film archive and its role. In this analysis, the authors make good points about the relationship between old movie system and new system established by the ascendance of New Taiwan Cinema.

From the review above, we can see that Taiwanese film study is still at the beginning stage and that there aren't many film researchers. Most researchers don't write books but edit compilations of articles.

Although compared to other Taiwanese films, the New Taiwan Cinema is well-known to the Western scholars, there still isn't much material about New Taiwan Cinema written in English.

There is a section about the Taiwanese film industry in the book The Asian Film Industry by John Lent. This article is one of the most detailed articles about Taiwanese cinema in English. However, there are some mistakes in the article, especially the part about Taiwanese-dialect movies. Lent says, incorrectly, that Taiwanese-dialect pictures ended in the Sixties. In fact, the Taiwanese-dialect films were still popular through out the decade.15
Tadao Sato’s article, "A Passage to Taiwan," written in Japanese and translated into English, is published by Cinemaya, an Asian film journal. In this article, the author starts with the films City of Sadness (1989) and A Brighter Summer Day (1991), which are considered post-New Cinema works. Then he talks briefly about the New Cinema and how it represents Taiwanese history. This article offers some basic information about New Taiwan Cinema. However, there are some mistakes and confusion in the article. First of all, the translation of "Mainlander" as "Honshujin" or "Taiwanese" as "Gaishojin" is totally wrong and nonsensical to any Mandarin or Taiwanese speaker. The reason for this mistake may be because in the original Japanese version, both "Mainlander" and "Taiwanese" are written in Chinese characters. However, the pronunciation of those characters in Mandarin is different from the Japanese pronunciation. However, the translator didn’t know the difference in Mandarin, and translated the terms based on the Japanese pronunciation. Therefore, these two terms are confusing to the Mandarin reader and perhaps to the Japanese reader as well, because these two terms are not Japanese. Another mistake in the article is the statement that 200,000 Mainlanders migrated to Taiwan before 1949. In fact, the number is ten times that, as two million people migrated during that time.

In the book Perspectives on Chinese Cinema, edited by Chris Berry,
the only article about Taiwanese cinema is Chiao Hsiung-ping's "The Distinct Taiwanese and Hong Kong Cinemas." This article is an English translation by Berry of an essay in Chiao's book, *New Taiwan Cinema*. The English translation has some extra material about Taiwanese film history before 1980. However, one portion of that history differs from other sources. The article says that the "wholesome realism" (jiankun xieshi, another literal translation is "healthy realism") proposed by the Central Motion Picture Corporation during the Sixties became successful in Southeast Asia. In fact, "wholesome realism" didn't become the only dominant genre. The romantic melodrama (wen-yi) became the major export. Chiao didn't distinguish "wholesome realism" and "romantic melodrama" in the original article, and there are differences between these two.  

**Method**

The research method used in this study is historical analysis, integrating social and aesthetic film history study.
Notes


2. Kuomintang (KMT) is the nationalist political party Dr. Sun Yat-sen originally organized in 1911. It was reorganized in 1924 and controlled and led by Chiang Kai-shek until his death in 1975. The Kuomintang lost power in Mainland China during the civil war with the Chinese Communist Party, and in 1949, Chiang and Kuomintang migrated to Taiwan. The Kuomintang has ruled Taiwan ever since.


5. Ibid., 63.

6. "Kung-fu" is a general Chinese term for martial arts, which include boxing, swordplay, kicking and other fighting skills. "Kung-fu" movies are films in which the plot calls for frequent displays of martial arts skills.

7. Tian, 122, 124.


14. The Chinese character "wen" means "literature," and "yi" is the character for "art." Therefore, "wen-yi" conveys the meaning of the "combination of literature and art." Chinese "wen-yi" movies are considered a genre in which the stories are set in modern time and the emphasis is on the description and exposure of the characters' emotions. "Wen-yi" films are similar to melodramas.


16. Mainlanders are the Chinese who migrated to Taiwan after World War II. They are from different parts of China and usually speak different dialects. However, Mandarin is their common language. "Mainlanders" has a special social connotation in Taiwan.


18. Healthy realism is a type of film "created" by Gong Hung, the former general manager of the Central Motion Picture Company in Taiwan (1963-1972). "Healthy" refers to the films' content, and "realism" refers to their style. In other words, filmmakers were supposed to use a realistic style to show the bright side of life, the "healthy" part. The concept of "healthy realism" caused, during the Sixties, arguments over the concepts of "realism" and "realistic films." "Healthy realism" was a popular genre during the Sixties.

CHAPTER 2.

THE RISE OF NEW TAIWANESE CINEMA

Movies, as cultural products, relate closely to the historical context in which they were made and reflect the values and ideology of their time. Therefore, when analyzing a cluster of films, it is not sufficient just to consider the films as a reflection of certain personal points of view; other social factors must be taken into consideration. Thus, when examining the reasons for the rise of New Taiwan Cinema, the context of the time that it began must be examined. Therefore, this chapter discusses the factors behind the emergence of New Taiwan Cinema. Why did the New Taiwan Cinema emerge during the early Eighties? What "nonfilmic" factors, such as politics, economic and social changes, influenced filmmaking? What "filmic" factors, such as the mass audience and film industry influenced New Taiwan Cinema? To answer those questions, a brief history of the politics, social situation, and film industry of Taiwan before the emergence of New Taiwan Cinema will be presented.

Faces of Taiwan: Social Classes and Languages

All of the residents of Taiwan are immigrants. The earliest immigrants are the so-called "Native Taiwanese." According to
anthropologists, they have been living in Taiwan for more than 10,000 years. Ethnically, they are not Han people, the major Chinese ethnic group. Their languages are closely related to those of the Malay-Pacific Island language group.¹

Before Taiwan was known as "Taiwan" or "Formosa," it had several other names. The earliest record of Taiwan in Chinese dates to the Ch'in dynasty (221-207 B.C.), when Taiwan was called "Dong-Kueng," or "east big fish." The first recorded visit of Han people to Taiwan was in 230 A.D. during the Three Kingdoms period, when an officer from kingdom of Wu led 10,000 soldiers on a visit Taiwan. However, China didn't pay a lot attention to Taiwan until Mongolia established the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368 A.D.). As the dynasty expanded the territory it controlled, the Mongolian emperor set up the first government administration office on Penghu, a small island near Taiwan. After that, trade, and thus contact, between Taiwan and China became more and more frequent.

During the latter part of fifteenth century and into the sixteenth, Japanese, Korean and Chinese pirates who used Taiwan as a base disturbed southeast China. From 1600 to 1661, Spanish pirates occupied northern Taiwan, Dutch occupied southern Taiwan, and there were Chinese pirates as well. The most powerful pirate leader, Zheng Zhi-long, recruited many Han people to come to Taiwan to open up the land by starting farms and settling down. In 1661, after Zheng died, his
son, Zheng Cheng-gung, united Taiwan by expelling the Dutch, who had earlier defeated the Spanish. Under the rule of Zheng Cheng-gung and his son, Zheng Jin (1661-1681), the number of Han immigrants who came to Taiwan increased from 10,000 to 30,000.

In 1681, after Zheng Jin died, the second emperor of the Ch'ing dynasty conquered Taiwan, and from 1683 to 1895, the number of Han people increased from 30,000 to 2.5 million. In 1895, Taiwan was ceded to Japan, and it was returned to Chinese government in 1945. The victory of the Communists in Mainland China in 1949 forced the nationalist government, the Kuomintang (KMT), to escape to Taiwan. The nationalist government has ruled Taiwan ever since.\(^2\)

Because of Taiwan's history, Taiwanese society is not only divided along traditional lines such as wealth and gender, but also by language and how long a family has lived in Taiwan.

Basically, Taiwan has four groups of people: the Ming-nanians, the Hakkas, the natives and the Mainlanders. Ming-nanians are from south Fukien ("Ming" is the abbreviation for Fukien and "nan" means south) and speak Ming-nan, which is also called Holow or Taiwanese. The Hakkas are from Canton and, to a lesser extent, Fukien and speak Hakka, another dialect. The native Taiwanese speak several different tribal languages, and Mainlanders speak different Chinese dialects, using Mandarin as the official language. According to a sociologist's
estimate, at the end of 1985, Taiwan had a population in Taiwan of about 19 million people. Ming-nanians comprise 74.51 percent of the population, Hakkas 13.19 percent, Mainlanders 9.85 percent, natives 2.37 percent and others 0.08 percent. However, it seems that this estimate undercounts the number of Hakkas and Mainlanders, but it is still a reasonable point of reference. Besides, nowadays it is more difficult to classify people ethnically because of intermarriage among initial immigrants and Mainlanders.

Within the society, the contrast between the Ming-nanians and the Mainlanders, in terms of political and economic power and ideology, is the most obvious. The Hakkas and the natives are considered minorities in the society and the natives are worse off in terms of education, economics and social class.

When Mainlanders migrated to Taiwan in 1949, there were many different groups and classes among them. In the elite class were those who have political and military power, including high-ranking military officers, government officeholders, police officials and their families. Next were those with economic power, the owners of private enterprise and the bankers. In the middle class were professionals, such as engineers and university professors who migrated to Taiwan not because of personal political beliefs but because of the economic benefits. At the bottom of the Mainlanders community were the 600,000 soldiers and
their family, most of whom were not well-educated, even illiterate.

The soldiers were economically and politically powerless and live in numerous gueng-ts'wen all over the island. (gueng-ts'wen, in Chinese means "the village of soldiers and their families.") The military assigned the soldiers' houses according to the soldiers' branch and rank, thus, gueng ts'wen residents have become a recognizable group. Describing the lives of Mainlander soldiers and gueng ts'wen residents is one of the major themes in New Taiwan Cinema, because several directors are second-generation Mainlanders and former gueng ts'wen residents.

Because of its history, Taiwan's culture is a hybrid: Chinese culture forms its base, but it reflects influences from Japan, acquired during the colonial period, and the West, picked up during the process of modernization. This special cultural characteristic formed a significant background of New Taiwan Cinema.

**Brief History of Taiwan Film Before 1982**

Motion pictures were not introduced to Taiwan until 1901, five years after they were seen in Shanghai and Japan. In 1925, Liou Xi-yang and some other young Taiwanese formed the "Taiwan Film Research Society" and made the first Taiwanese fiction film, *Whose Fault?* Although the Taiwan Film Research Society did not draw a lot of attention and the film was not successful, some people started to think about using this new medium. Until 1928, a local Taiwanese opera group screened short
films as part of their performances to offer narration that couldn't be seen on stage. This gave filmmaking a start. During the Japanese colonial era, eight feature fiction films were made in Taiwan. Although Taiwanese were financed these films, because of their lack of technical knowledge, most of the movies were directed or shot by Japanese.  

Although local film production was limited by factors such as inexperience and censorship and thus couldn't develop very well, moviegoing was a common activity in cities. Until 1941, there were 41 movie theaters in Taiwan, plus numerous theaters which showed both movies and traditional operas. These theaters screened Japanese, American and some Chinese films. Some Shanghai films were very popular, but after World War II broke out, the Japanese banned Chinese films.  

Taiwan was returned to China after World War II. Other than a few government documentaries, Taiwanese made almost no films between 1945 and 1949, although a few Shanghai films were shot in Taiwan to use the scenery. Because the new government opened the market, American and Chinese films were shown widely in movie theaters. The end of the civil war changed the situation after 1949. Eighty percent of the Chinese film industry stayed in Mainland China, fifteen percent moved to Hong Kong and only five percent of the filmmakers and equipment moved to Taiwan. Before the emergence of Taiwanese dialect
movies in 1955, government-owned studios dominated filmmaking and produced political propaganda films. Because of a lack of locally made commercial films, old Cantonese and Amoy dialect films from Hong Kong became popular. The success of Amoy dialect films spurred the production of Taiwanese dialect films later.\textsuperscript{9}

The first Taiwanese dialect film was \textit{Six Talents in West Chamber}, made in 1955 by a Taiwanese opera group.\textsuperscript{10} Because the filmmakers lacked good equipment, the quality of the film was not high and it was a box office disaster. However, the movie demonstrated the possibility of making Taiwanese dialect films. Filmmakers made Taiwanese dialect films, from 1955 to 1981, during which time 930 Taiwanese dialect films were released.\textsuperscript{11}

The popularity of Taiwanese dialect films encouraged private filmmaking. Not only were the native Taiwanese involved in making Taiwanese dialect films, but many Mainlanders were significant filmmakers, too. After 1970, the number of Taiwanese dialect films dropped dramatically. In 1968, 115 Taiwanese dialect films were released but in 1969, there were only 27 films released.\textsuperscript{12} Taiwanese dialect films essentially died out for four reasons. First, as Mandarin became more widely spoken, the linguistic advantage of Taiwanese dialect films vanished. At the same time, Mandarin films became popular because of their higher quality. Second, because of a lack of original,
high quality scripts, Taiwanese adopted and imitated the films of Japan, the United States and elsewhere. After the government eased restrictions on importing Japanese films, high quality Japanese films attracted a large audience. Meanwhile, because of their lack of sophistication, Taiwanese dialect films could not attract moviegoers. Third, the government and mass media didn't pay a lot attention to Taiwanese dialect films. Newspapers published few reviews of Taiwanese dialect films or news stories about the films' directors and stars. As a result, many people, viewed Taiwanese dialect films as low culture. Fourth, a lot of technicians and actors who had worked in Taiwanese dialect films started working in television and Mandarin films. Although the first television station was established in 1961, television sets were not widely owned until the late Sixties, and as the television audience increased, many filmmakers and stars went into the TV business.

Although Taiwanese dialect films are not made in their original form today, the production of these films had a major influence on the Taiwanese film industry. The films encouraged commercial and private filmmaking. Before the rise of Taiwanese dialect films, people could only see propaganda films, and movie going was limited to the cities. Taiwanese dialect films opened the market outside the cities, attracted a large audience and made moviegoing a popular entertainment for ordinary people. Also, the films are a bridge between wartime filmmaking
and the Mandarin films of the Sixties and Seventies. When the KMT fled to Taiwan in 1949, they didn't bring much film equipment, which meant that filmmakers who migrated to Taiwan didn't have the chance to make movies. The rise of Taiwanese dialect films provided a great place for Mainlander filmmakers to work. Those filmmakers made significant contributions to the Taiwanese dialect film genre during its early stage. As time went on, more and more people, including Taiwanese and Mainlanders, got involved in the business of making Taiwanese dialect films. Many people who learned their craft working in Taiwanese dialect films became major filmmakers and actors in Mandarin films. People trained in Taiwanese dialect films also played crucial roles in developing television in Taiwan. Because of the number of films made during those years, the filmmakers got to develop new types of stories, which led to new movie genres. To improve the quality of the films, some filmmakers invited foreigners, mainly Japanese, to help, which improved filmmaking techniques.¹⁵

In 1963, a Hong Kong-made Mandarin costume musical film, Liang Shan-po and Chu Ying-tai, broke box office records. The fans' enthusiasm for this movie caused the Hong Kong press to dub Taipei "a city of maniacs."¹⁶ The popularity of this movie attracted a lot of filmmakers and capital from Hong Kong, and this genre was dominant for the next ten years. Lee Han-xiang, the director of Liang Shan-po and
Chu Ying-tai, left Hong Kong to set up the Grand Movie Company in Taiwan, which was supported by the Union Film Company, the International Film Company (its name was later changed to Dian-mao, then, after its president, Loke Wan-tho died, to Cathay Film Production) and the Taiwan film studio. Unfortunately, Loke Wan-tho and Long Fung, the president of the Taiwan Film Studio, as well as several other figures in the Hong Kong and Taiwan film industry were killed in an air crash. Having lost major support, the Grand Movie Company went out of business in 1967. However, it contributed a lot to the Taiwanese film industry. It trained a lot people, some of whom went on to become major filmmakers and actors. The Grand Movie Company’s better quality films and its practice of adapting literary works inspired other filmmakers. After the Grand Movie Company went bankrupt, Lee Han-xiang made films with the government-owned Central Motion Picture Corporation (CMPC) and some private production houses and continued to be influential for a while.

The government did more to encourage film production during the Sixties. In May 1962, after assisting film production for three years, the Government Information Office (GIO) established the Golden Horse Award. In 1964, the CMPC reorganized and got a new leader, Gong Hone, who proposed a new genre, "healthy realism." Italian neorealism gave rise to the idea of healthy realism, the difference being
that healthy realism movies only showed the positive side of life and reality. The notion of making realistic films, in turn, influenced New Taiwan Cinema. Until the early Seventies, the CMPC continued to make healthy realism movies and historical costume films which promoted traditional values. Then in 1972 the Republic of China withdrew from the United Nations. A series of diplomatic failures and political changes caused the CMPC and the government to alter policy. In subsequent years, the CMPC mainly produced political propaganda films.\textsuperscript{19}

In 1966, Hu Chin-chuan (King Hu) came to Taiwan with support from the Union Film Company and made \textit{Dragon Inn}, which became a box office hit. He also helped build the International Motion Picture Studio near Taipei. The success of \textit{Dragon Inn} brought the \textit{wu-xia} or "swordplay" picture into its golden age. From 1967 until 1974, each year's box office champion is a \textit{wu-xia} film.\textsuperscript{20}

About the same time as the rise of swordplay films, another genre, \textit{wen-yi} or "romantic melodrama" films, became popular. Most of these movies were adapted from novels by Chung Yao, a popular romance writer. Romantic melodramas and swordplay movies dominated the film market for almost twenty years,\textsuperscript{21} until the rise of New Taiwan Cinema.

\textbf{Production}

Taiwan has government-owned studios and private production
houses. Although both work within the commercial system and sometimes cooperate, their policies and production approaches differ. The political situation and government policies influence the government-owned studios, and the market and audience reaction affect the private studios.

Today there are three government-owned studios: the Central Motion Picture Corporation, the Taiwan Provincial Motion Picture Company and the Han-wei Motion Picture Company. Each belongs to a different government institution and has different production goals. The CMPC is the largest of the three and the largest studio in Taiwan as well.

The CMPC has different departments for production and distribution and owns its laboratory, equipment and theater chain. The CMPC grew out of the Agricultural Educational Film Corporation (AEFC), which was established after the war in 1945 in Mainland China. The AEFC's original goal was to educate people in rural areas, so the agency was inclined to make films more because of political and educational concerns than for artistic or commercial reasons. After 1949, the AEFC moved to Taiwan, and in 1954 merged with the Taiwan Motion Picture Association which the Japanese had established to form the CMPC. The KMT controls the CMPC, and CMPC chairmen have important positions in KMT. During the Forties and Fifties, the CMPC didn't take a very active role in production, only making several anti-communist
propaganda films.

During the early Sixties, when Gong Hone took over the studio, the CMPC started to make more films. Under Gong's leadership during that decade, the CMPC hired several new directors and made healthy realism films. During the Seventies, a former soldier named Mei Chang-ling became the manager of the CMPC. Under his leadership, the CMPC went back to making propaganda films. In the early Eighties, Ming Ji became the new leader. He started using new directors and young filmmakers, and the CMPC became the center of New Taiwan Cinema. Lin Deng-fei took over Ming's position in 1984, and now the CMPC's policy is to make money first. However, CMPC policies are still determined by a combination of government edicts and the proclivities of the KMT official who runs it.

The Taiwan Provincial Motion Picture Company was called the Taiwan Film Studio before 1988 and it is part of the Taiwan Provincial Department of Information. The Taiwan Film Studio was the first Taiwanese studio. It was composed of two film associations set up by the Japanese, the Taiwan Motion Picture Association and the Taipei News Picture Association. The Taiwan Film Studio mainly produced government newsreels and documentaries. During the Sixties, under the guidance of Long Fung, the Taiwan Film Studio began to make more narrative films. However, Long was killed in the same air crash as Lok
Wan-tho. After Long's death, the Taiwan Film Studio faced serious problems and has made very few narrative films since the Sixties. A new regulation in 1988 made the Taiwan Film Studio responsible for its own finances and stopped government subsidies. At that point, the Taiwan Film Studio changed its policy to make a few low-budget narrative films, hoping to get into the marketplace.

The Han-wei Motion Picture Company is the former China Film Studio, and the 1988 regulation also changed its name. The China Film Studio was established in Mainland China during wartime. Its original purpose was making war newsreels and anti-Japanese propaganda films and it remains under the Ministry of National Defense. Until the Sixties, the studio made almost no narrative films. From the Sixties to the early Eighties, it made a few narrative films, most of them propaganda war films.

Although no single private production company has ever been as large as the government-owned studios, private production has played a very important role in developing Taiwan film industry, especially in establishing the commercial system. Private production became active with the Taiwanese dialect films. During the Sixties, as Hong Kong-made Mandarin films attained popularity, many Hong Kong filmmakers came to Taiwan to establish businesses. Some of them also cooperated with the government-owned studios, such as the Taiwan Film Studio and the
CMPC. However, most private production companies have been short-lived. In the latter part of the Eighties, the number of local productions progressively shrunk as the audiences for locally made films fell dramatically. In 1990, 410 film companies (including distribution companies) are listed in by the union in the Taipei area, but only 20 percent of them are still in business.\textsuperscript{22}

Private production companies, unlike the government-owned studios, are much more profit-oriented. Nowadays, the important production companies are not pure production companies, as they distribute as well as make films. In fact, most production companies do more distribution than production. The reason is simple: distribution makes more money than production.

Presently, only a few production companies still make theatrically released films. Long-hsian, one of the big Taiwanese distribution companies in Taiwan, sometimes backs local filmmakers' efforts. In the past, it backed some New Taiwan Cinema directors' films, but after some of those movies didn't do well at the box office, the studio's leadership said the company would henceforth carefully consider investing in local filmmakers' projects. Scholars Motion Picture Company may be the most productive private company during the last decade. For example, in 1989, more than 30 percent of the locally made films were from Scholars Motion Picture Company. Scholars mostly makes low-budget commercial
films.

Hong Kong movies went into the Taiwanese market during the postwar era, and Hong Kong producers have been involved in Taiwanese production since the Sixties. At that time, the two biggest Hong Kong production companies were the Shaw Brothers' and Dian-mao, and both had branches or partners in Taiwan. The Shaw Brothers' made a lot of kung fu movies in Taiwan during the Seventies. Hong Kong style-movies made in Taiwan not only dominated the domestic market but also the Southeast Asian market. After Dian-mao declined, Raymond Chow's Golden Harvest rose during the Seventies, but was only involved in distribution. Another new production power during the Eighties was Cinema City. As kung fu movies declined during the Eighties, the Shaw brothers withdrew from Taiwanese production. Cinema City had a production department in Taiwan until the mid-Eighties. However, because of the close relationship between the Hong Kong and Taiwanese film industries, capital move freely between the two places.

The CMPC is considered the original center of New Taiwan Cinema, but after the mid-Eighties, the CMPC stopped supporting New Cinema directors, because the audience for their films had dropped and the CMPC's new leadership was more interested in box office returns than artistic reputation. After losing the CMPC's support, the New Taiwan Cinema directors went to different companies or got out of the business.
Among New Taiwan Cinema directors, Hou Hsiao-hsian is more well-known internationally. *City of Sadness* is the movie he made with the backing of ERA International, a distribution company that began getting involved in production during the mid-Eighties. ERA International's policy was to make films for the international market. Those films were not aimed at the commercial mainstream market but rather at the artistic market, such as international film festivals or the art houses.

After the New Taiwan Cinema directors left the CMPC, some of those who had a more steady audience or a reputation as an auteur established their own production companies or workshops. Hou Hsiao-hsian and Edward Yang are two significant examples. As early as 1983, Hou and some other New Cinema filmmakers set up a production company, which has been reorganized twice. In 1989, Hou separated from the original partners and set up his own company, the Hou Hsiao-hsian Film Company. Edward Yang set up his production company in 1989, called Yang and His Gang Filmmakers' Production. Companies set up by these filmmakers usually are involved only in production, not distribution.

**Distribution and Exhibition**

In the past, there were two kinds of distributors, those who distributed imported films and those who distributed domestic films. The distributors of imported films were usually branches of big U.S.
companies, such as Universal and Paramount. After the Seventies, the local distributors began to distribute imported films and currently distribute more foreign films than do the branches of U.S. companies.

The relationship among distributors, exhibitors and producers changes as time goes by. During the early days, the theater owners had the power to decide whether a movie would be shown. The producers and distributors usually had to expend a lot of energy promoting films to theater owners. Gradually, as the moviegoing audience increased, so did the number of theaters, and some movies were so popular that several theaters showed them simultaneously. Those theaters become a kind of alliance and form today's theater chains. Although they may show the same movies at the same time, there is a pecking order among theater owners and venues. Every chain has a "showcase" theater, which is connected with a particular large distribution company. The lead theater has the right to decide which movie to show and the screening schedule for it. This sort of system allows small theaters the chance to show hit movies and save money on promotion. The theater chain system also resulted from competition among distribution companies, as distribution companies keep trying to attract more theaters for their lead theater's chain in order to have more sales points.

Seven theater chains show first-run Mandarin films in the Taipei area today. Those chains are dominated by several distribution
companies: Long-shong controls two of them, Scholars controls one chain, one has an arrangement with both Long-shong and Scholars, the CMPC and Golden Harvest control one each, and Tai-xin controls the other. However, sometimes theater chains also show films distributed by other companies, depending on the situation. Most big distributors have not only theaters but are also involved in production and videotape distribution.

However, this kind of system has a lot of limitations and disadvantages, especially after the early Eighties, when New Taiwan Cinema rose. The biggest problem with the theater chain system is that the screening schedules have been limited. For example, a movie has to be shown at the same time in all theaters. The problem is, usually, because of different tastes of people in different places, the same film may get a different response in different areas. Not providing for individual situations hurts some movies. For example, some New Taiwan Cinema films attracted urban audiences, but because they didn’t do well outside the cities, they were forced out of theaters in a short time. Thus, if a film cannot attract a large audience quickly, it cannot make money. Because the audiences for most art films builds slowly but steadily, this exhibition system caused many New Taiwan Cinema films to lose money.

Presently, Taiwanese films have lost their overseas market and the Mainland China market is not totally open yet, so the only payback is
from the domestic market. However, the domestic market is dominated by Hong Kong films. This lack of market results in a lack of money, and a lack of money results in poor quality films and a loss of audience. The Taiwan film industry continues to struggle within this cycle.

Box Office and Mass Audience

Today, Taiwan has more than 20 million residents. The gross national product of Taiwan ranks fifth in Asia, behind Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Brunei. Among those countries, only Japan has a population greater than Taiwan. In 1981, about 250,000,000 movie tickets were sold nationwide. In 1987, 28,677,702 tickets were sold in Taipei alone. The regular price for watching a movie is NT $140-180. (NT $26 = U.S. $1) As of the mid-Eighties, Taiwan was the twelfth biggest overseas markets for American films, according to research done in 1987. Generally speaking, Taiwan is one of the major film market in Asia.24

During the Fifties and Sixties, moviegoing may have been the most popular leisure-time activity. However, after television became a part of every household, movies lost a significant part of their audience. In 1985, for every 100 households, there were 106 TV sets. People began spending more time watching TV than movies. In 1980, 74.1 percent of people in Taiwan said watching TV was their most frequent leisure-time activity, while 34.6 of them said movie-watching was. By 1986, the
number who preferred going to the movies had dropped to 9.6 percent.\textsuperscript{25}

Moviegoing seems to be a young people's activity. During the Eighties, 67 percent of the moviegoers were under 18 years old, 24 percent were 18 to 35 years old and only 9 percent of regular moviegoers were older than 35.\textsuperscript{26}

According to research done in 1989, 55.5 percent of moviegoers said that they watch more foreign-language films than Mandarin films, and 78.6 percent of moviegoers said the primary factor influencing their choice of films was the genre, followed by a film's performers. The same research indicates that the most popular genre is science fiction films rather than melodramas, war films, comedies, detective films, kung-fu films, horror films, etc.\textsuperscript{27}

Audiences in northern Taiwan have different tastes than those in middle and southern Taiwan. Relatively speaking, audiences in the cities in the north are more likely to watch foreign films and have more sophisticated tastes than the audiences in the southern rural areas, which prefer Hong Kong-made comedies and action films. However, there is no tradition of an art film audience in Taiwan. Because of government policies, the public hasn't viewed movies as a kind of art or culture, but rather strictly as entertainment. Furthermore, before the economic growth of the Seventies, the average Taiwanese's standard of living
standard was very low, and movies were seen as a world of escape. So, before the rise of New Taiwan Cinema, there was no art film market in Taiwan. The situation improved during the Eighties with Taiwan’s social and economic development. However, the size of the art film audience today is still not big enough to form a distinct group.

As for the box office, foreign films, most of them from Hollywood, usually make more money than Mandarin films. One reason is the ticket prices for foreign movies are higher than those for Mandarin films. During the Eighties, seven of 10 years’ box office champions were Hong Kong-made films (1982 and 1984-89). One of those films was a musical drama directed by a Taiwanese director, which was shot in both Taiwan and Hong Kong by Cinema City (1983). Of the others, six were Jackie Chan martial arts comedies (1982, 1984 and 1986-89), one was a military film (1980), one was a gangster action film (1981), and the other was a action-comedy (1985).28

**Politics, Economics and the Film Industry**

Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang (KMT) took over Taiwan after the Japanese relinquished control in 1945. The rule of Chiang and the KMT has been considered an authoritarian regime, based on right-wing Chinese nationalist ideology.25 The KMT government controls both the politics and the economy in Taiwan.

In order to oppose the Communist regime in Mainland China and
establish its claim to be the only legal Chinese government, the KMT government started to transform the thoughts of the Taiwanese people under two guidelines. The first was Chinese nationalist propaganda intended to reduce the influence of the Japanese colonial era. The second was promoting anti-communist and anti-Taiwanese independence ideology. Under these guidelines, the KMT government controls or interferes with the mass media, which include the film industry and its related activities.30

The government uses strict censorship to control the ideology of movies. Before the Cinema Law of 1983 that remains in effect today, the Regulation of Film Censorship Law of 1957 oversaw the film industry.31 Under that regulation, the Ministry of Education and Government Information Office (GIO) directed the film industry. The law also defined the film industry as a "pleasure industry," a designation equal to nightclubs, brothels and the like.32

Because of this definition, the film industry had to pay higher taxes. It was also subjected to a lot of unreasonable rules, such as requiring women working in theaters to have annual health tests, just like prostitutes.33 Although the Cinema Law of 1983 redefined the film industry as a "cultural business" and canceled many unreasonable rules, the control of ideology and content remains tight. For example, all the rules concerning censorship are vaguely written, such as "movies
cannot cause damage to the national benefits and dignity of our people."

Government censors have the right to ban or to trim anything in films according their objections. These conditions strictly limited production of local movies to certain types before the mid-Eighties, when all the radical changes began to happen. Scenes that include violence, sex and politics usually have censorship problems. Photos and pictures of Chinese Communist leaders were not allowed on screen. Political propaganda, family melodramas and historical costume epics which promoted Chinese nationalism became the most acceptable types of films. Producers found several ways to get around these limitations. For example, even if a movie was shot in Taiwan, it would made under the auspices of a production company from Hong Kong or some other place to avoid censorship problems. In many movies, the screenwriter would make the bad guys regretful and transform them into good guys or sacrifice them for good of the country to cover for violent scenes that may have otherwise caused censorship problems. Thus, for the KMT government, movies are seen as a kind of public entertainment as well as a political propaganda tool.

However, this government-controlled system contradicts capitalism. Under capitalism, a film is a kind of commodity to be traded according to market demands. The KMT government tried to have things both ways. It viewed film as a commodity, an idea that had been rooted within
government institutions since the Twenties, when the first movie
regulations were promulgated. Under those regulations, the films were
considered entertainment. And for the government, the income from the
screening of movies is an important tax source. The contradiction was
that, on the one hand, the government used strict censorship to control
movie content and ideology, but on the other, it hoped to get money from
showing films. Therefore, censorship limited the development of
production, while exhibitors enjoyed more freedom.

This double standard of censorship for production and exhibition
greatly influenced the film industry. The imported films, including those
from Hong Kong, had more freedom in topics and style because the
government thought that those movies didn’t reflect Taiwan’s situation
but those of other places. Therefore, as distributors enjoyed more
freedom, there were few risks in importing a film, but local producers
faced more limitations. Because distributing foreign films carried less
financial risk, imported films came to dominate the market and
distributors dominated the Taiwanese film industry.

Another important factor was the dominance of imported films during
the Japanese colonial era. As mentioned before, during that era, local
production was limited and dominated by the Japanese government.
However, many local people got involved with distribution and exhibition.
Therefore, even without local production, the distribution and exhibition
system became well developed during that era. The postwar film industry was in the same situation because the distribution and exhibition system was well established and retained its old power. Even after the emergence of Taiwanese dialect pictures in the middle-Fifties, distributors still controlled private production, choosing stars, subjects, arranging release times and investing money. Movie producers had to spend a lot of time and money to get their films shown in theaters.

This distribution-dominated structure greatly influenced Taiwanese film production. First, when the distributors invested in production, they tended to be more conservative and more profit-oriented and tended not to try new film types or new stories. However, if the distributors felt that they could make money from importing movies, they would not invest in local film production or try anything new. Because of this structure, the production was either dominated by outside producers or government-owned studios, with the latter playing an especially important role.

The government-owned studios are combinations of capitalism and political control. On the one hand, they function as conduits of government ideology and policy. On the other hand, they must turn a profit to keep operating. Therefore, the policy of the government-owned studios is to make films that can attract an audience while staying within the government’s criteria, which includes not being too commercial without carrying proper themes and values. Not facing the
commercial pressures that private production companies do, government-owned studios usually are in a better position to attempt new types of films than private production houses. This made the CMPC one of the most important factors in the emergence of New Taiwan Cinema.

Because the economy is the base of the social structure, economic activities affect movie activities both directly and indirectly. Movies are a type of commodity, and the production, distribution and exhibition of films are economic activities. Economic activities also influence other aspects of society, such as social values, consumer habits and other cultural activities, and these aspects also influence movies and the film industry.

The Taiwanese economy is basically a capitalist economy with strong government control. The government controls economic activities through the policies and planning of the state. In other words, Taiwanese economic activities are not only adjusted by the market but also controlled by the state.

The other characteristic of the Taiwanese economy is development and expansion dependent upon exports. Taiwan, as an island, does not have a sufficient domestic market. Therefore, the state uses various economic plans and projects to maintain exports and steady economic growth. These two general characteristics of the Taiwanese economy
have influenced the development of the Taiwanese film industry.

Within this economic system, the state strongly intercedes in the film industry in the following ways: 1.) the control of the import and export of films; 2.) the control of the inflow and outflow of capital; 3.) government-owned studios and theater chains; 4.) financial aid for certain films; and 5.) ticket prices. Through those strategies, the government has played an important role in the development of the Taiwanese film industry. For example, between 1962 and 1965, Japanese films were forbidden. Producers of Taiwanese dialect films took advantage of the void and in terms of the number made, their films reached their apex. One of the reasons that Hong Kong films have been in the Taiwanese market since the Fifties is because according to government policy, Hong Kong films were considered Taiwanese films because the KMT wanted to gain support from the Hong Kong film industry in the conflict with the Chinese Communists. Therefore, Hong Kong movies enjoyed all the benefits and protection of local films, such as government aid and no import taxes.

The government also influenced the formation of capital for the film industry. Before the late Eighties, investors needed permission to invest overseas, making investment in overseas markets more difficult. The government-owned studios, especially the Central Motion Picture Company, functioned as the leader in production.
The film industry, like other industries in Taiwan, depends greatly on overseas markets. The major private investors in film production are distributors or owners of overseas theaters. Once it loses the overseas market, the film industry will have problems.

The Social Context of the Emergence of New Taiwan Cinema

Before the emergence of New Taiwan Cinema, Taiwanese society went through a lot of changes during the Seventies and early Eighties. These changes, based on the rapid economic growth from the late Sixties through Seventies, provided the context in which the New Taiwan Cinema could be nurtured.

The government-led economic reformation started right after the KMT government migrated to Taiwan and began with the reconstruction of an economy destroyed by war. The Taiwanese economy improved greatly. When the postwar era began, Taiwan's economy was based on agricultural products. But although Taiwan had exported agricultural products since the Japanese colonial era, in 1962, for the first time industrial production represented a greater share of the gross domestic product than did agricultural production. In 1973, the share of the gross national product represented by agricultural production had fallen to 12.1 percent, and the share represented by industrial production had risen to 43.8 percent. Thus, Taiwan can now be considered an industrial region. The development was rapid as well. In 1951, the per
capita gross national product of Taiwanese people was $81, but by 1979, it had increased to $1,920. From 1963 to 1972, the economy had an average annual growth rate of 10.2 percent. Taiwan was one of the world's fastest-growing economies during that period.

Economic development and industrialization changed society dramatically. First of all, education was improved. More people got a more extensive and better quality education than ever before. By 1985, Taiwan had three times as many schools as it did in 1950. Of the people older than age six, 53 percent have a high-school education. Students pursued higher degrees as well. In 1985, there were 105 colleges and universities in Taiwan. People also went to study overseas, most of them to the United States. From 1952 to 1981, more than 60,000 students went to study abroad, but only 12.3 percent of them returned to Taiwan. Those who have returned have played crucial roles in the nation's development. In recent years, more people have returned. From 1973 to 1982, 15.7 percent of students who studied overseas returned to Taiwan, and the number is increasing.

Taiwanese residents know more about Western culture and are more Westernized than ever before, because of active international trade and contact with Western countries through travel, overseas study, mass media and books. The urbanization brought about by industrialization and economic growth has widened the gap between cities and country.
The number of middle-class people has been increasing since the Sixties. During the Eighties, scholars estimated that 25 percent to 40 percent of Taiwanese adults were middle-class. The middle class in Taiwan includes business owners; administrators in government-owned enterprises; administrators in private business; upper- and middle-rank government officials; professionals such as college teachers, lawyers, doctors, accountants and artists; local and central government leaders; high school and elementary school teachers; trade businessmen; and upper- and middle-rank administrators in the KMT. The middle class tend to push for political democracy and other social reforms.

Anti-KMT political activities started as early as the Fifties. However, because of government oppression, the large-scale, radical changes didn't begin until the middle Seventies. In 1979, several political activists of the new generation established a magazine, Formosa, which become the center of anti-KMT activities. The activists criticized the government with harsh words in that magazine and organized large-scale pro-democracy demonstrations. In December 1979, people from Formosa organized a demonstration that ended in chaos. During the protest, the demonstrators and the police got into a fight and afterward, the leaders of Formosa were arrested. The rest of the people formed a new organization in 1983. Through several reformations and reorganizations, the first postwar opposition political party, the Democratic Progressive
Party (DPP), was established in 1986.

During the Eighties, the Taiwanese people didn't only seek greater political rights, they also sought an improved standard of living. After the rapid economic growth, many problems arose. In the past, the government sacrificed the environment and social welfare for the sake of economic development. People formed "profit groups" to lobby for legislation to protect their financial well-being.

Environmental protection, consumer, feminist and other social movements became active. In 1980, the first consumer organization was established. That same year, the legislature passed new regulations concerning social, disabled and senior-citizen welfare. Taiwanese society of the late Seventies and early Eighties showed a will to change.

The dynamics of change came not only from inside Taiwan but also from the new position Taiwan had attained internationally. In 1971, the People's Republic of China (PRC) replaced Taiwan at the United Nations. Since then, more and more countries have ended diplomatic relations with the KMT government and recognized the PRC as the only official government of China. The United States ended its diplomatic relations with Taiwan in 1978. As of 1988, only 22 countries had formal diplomatic relation with Taiwan, and most of them were small, Third World countries.44 A series of diplomatic failures and changes made people reconsider Taiwan's identity and position in the world.
Those incidents greatly influenced the main body of Eighties Taiwanese society, the generation born or raised after war. Members of the new generation had not directly experienced Japanese colonization or the Communist revolution in Mainland China. They grew up during the era of rapid economic growth era and experienced the radical changes. They had quite different views of the world and Taiwan than the older generation. First, because of a lack of direct contact with Mainland China, most of them showed no interest in "fighting back to China." They didn't accept the political ideology or believe the propaganda anymore. After the series of diplomatic failure and in light of the new world situation, they were suspicious of the KMT government and its "one-China" policy and care more about present-day Taiwan and its problems. With Taiwan's economic wealth, Western countries were no longer considered heaven or viewed as the only model any longer.

Although they learned about Western culture enthusiastically, they are not like the older generation, which unconditionally accepted Western ideas during the Sixties. They started to contemplate the relationship between the West and Taiwan, the past and the present, trying to find roots and the new meaning of Taiwan and its identity.

Members of this new generation not only dedicated themselves to social and political reformation, they also expressed their desire for change and their search for a new identity through literature, dance,
music and other cultural activities.

Postwar Taiwanese literature was dominated by the early stage of anti-Communist ideology. Furthermore, many veteran local writers could not write in Chinese because they had a Japanese education. This meant that Mainland writers dominated literature in the Fifties. Thus, Taiwanese literature of the Fifties was either anti-Communist or nostalgia-filled stories about the Mainland and the pain of being in "exile." During the Sixties, influenced by Western culture, some young novelists introduced modernism and existentialism to literature. These modernist novelists imitated Western writing techniques and described the psychology of individuals. Although the writing is quite different from the anti-Communist literature of the Fifties, later on it was criticized for its escapism and nihilism. However, with the new attitude of the Seventies, people wanted literature to reflect real-life experiences. "This traditional literature spirit, which cares about social reality, reflecting the life of suffering people, has been revived with the steps of the Seventies." This realist literature has been called "country literature," which, in theme and content, deals with the lives of ordinary people, especially the lives of working class. Country literature also partly employs the Taiwanese dialect or Japanese to heighten a sense of realism. Most importantly, country literature revived the realist tradition pressed by the anti-Communist ideology.
In music, Taiwan was conquered by American pop music during the Fifties, when American power was introduced to Taiwan with the Cold War. In 1975, several young college students proposed the idea of ming-ge -- modern folk songs. They emphasized singing "songs of ourselves," composed and written by local people. One young man, Yang Hwai-ming, formed a modern dance group, Cloud Gate, after he returned to Taiwan from the United States in 1973. He wanted to perform dances "danced by ourselves, composed by ourselves, written by ourselves and for ourselves." The first experimental theater group, Lan Lin, was formed in 1977. It introduced new theatrical ideas. Reformation also came to traditional theater. A young Peking opera actress, Guo Xiao-zhwan, formed Yaying Xiaoji in 1979. She and her group tried to reform the traditional Peking opera to attract a younger audience.

During the Seventies, Taiwanese people also had more contact with the rest of the world than before. In 1976, the government eased restrictions on overseas travels. People now can travel to almost anywhere outside Taiwan. With travel, international trade and a well-developed communication network, international information flows into the big cities. Hollywood movies are not the only foreign films people can see. Moviegoers got to know the French New Wave, Italian neorealism and other outstanding films and filmmakers from around the world. The first film library was established in 1978 and later was transformed into
today's National Film Archive. The film library and other sources such as home video and MTV (Movies on TV) centers offer more opportunities for audiences to see various films from other areas.

Before the emergence of New Taiwan Cinema, Taiwanese society was in the process of changing during the late Seventies and early Eighties. People tried to seek new meanings about Taiwan, its past, its future and its identity. The long-term political oppression was gradually released and the voice of people became louder. It was a dynamic and changing society. The New Taiwan Cinema emerged in this context.

Factors Influencing the Emergence of New Taiwan Cinema

Before New Taiwan Cinema, the Taiwanese film market was dominated by kung fu action films and romance movies. Several filmmakers made higher-quality films during that period, but they didn’t have much influence on the film industry as a whole. Lin Ching-chieh’s films about high school life, Wang Chu-chin’s filmic folk tales and Lee Li-an’s realistic movies during the late Seventies provided small challenges to the mainstream but didn’t cause a lot of changes.

New Taiwan Cinema seems to have been started by a group of new directors under the support of the Central Motion Picture Company (CMPC). This was not the first time the CMPC supported new directors. So why were there not film movements like New Taiwan Cinema before? In order to answer the question, the kinds of situations in which the
CMPC decided to support new directors and what kind of directors those people were must be examined.

The golden age of Taiwanese cinema runs from the late Sixties through most of the Seventies. But after the late Seventies, the market for Taiwanese films became smaller and smaller. Taiwanese films first lost the overseas market then gradually lost the domestic market.

During the Seventies, movies made in Taiwan were shipped to many Southeast Asian countries, such as Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, Laos and the Chinatown of Thailand. However, Laos and Vietnam became Communist that decade, and many of the other countries passed laws either to protect local film production or express anti-Chinese sentiments. For example, Singapore had an import tax of 40 percent. In Malaysia, importers had to buy two Malaysian films when they purchased one foreign one. South Korea permitted three Mandarin films to be imported a year, and the Philippines allowed only two a year. But it wasn’t only protectionist policies that reduced the export potential of Taiwanese films. The increasingly worse quality of Taiwanese films reduced the audience’s interest. Audiences had grown tired of the cliches of kung fu and romance movies. Taiwanese films were accused of not being able to communicate to international audiences and of addressing limited topics. At the same time, Hong Kong movies took over the market with their internationalized stories and higher degree of
technical proficiency.

But Taiwanese films also lost the domestic market. From 1969 to 1975, there were, on average, 643 theaters operating nationwide. From 1976 to 1982, only 555 theaters were left. In 1979, people went to movies on average 12.3 times a year. In 1980, the number was still as high as 13.9 times a year, but by 1982, it had dropped to 10.5, and in 1983, it was down to 9.0 times a year. The number of tickets sold decreased as well. In 1979, 216,000,000 tickets were sold, and 250,000,000 tickets were sold in 1981, but in 1982, only 192,000,000 tickets were sold.

A number of factors made this happen. Like the overseas audience, the domestic audience grew tired of the cliches of Taiwanese films. After romance and kung fu movies lost popularity, social realism films emerged. This kind of film depicted gangsters' lives and showed a lot of violence and sex in the name of social reality. This short-lived genre attracted an audience at first. But after it was frequently imitated with ever-increasing levels of violence and sex, the GIO stopped its production. At the same time that it captured the audience's interest, social realism films created a bad reputation for locally made movies. Another important factor Taiwanese movies losing the domestic audience was that with economic development, a greater variety of entertainment became available, and people began spending more time and money on
other forms of entertainment.

Competition from Hong Kong movies also challenged Taiwanese films. In fact, the Taiwanese film market has been dominated by Hong Kong movies for a long time. During the Sixties and the Seventies, many Hong Kong film companies set up branches and made films in Taiwan. However, at that time, the local Taiwanese production companies could survive with overseas distribution. But after they lost the overseas market, and Hong Kong films began dominating the domestic market, the situation reached a point of crisis. Not only Hong Kong films, but other imported films, most of them from Hollywood, gained a large share of the domestic market.

Because of this situation, in addition to inflation and higher production and distribution costs, producers and distributors made less and less money from Taiwanese films. During the early Eighties, several of the CMPC's big budget films didn't do well at the box office, and the CMPC lost a lot of money. On the one hand, because of the pressure for government-owned enterprises to be responsible for their own income, the CMPC had to change policies and make more profits. But on the other hand, because of requirement for the CMPC to make films with positive meaning, the CMPC couldn't just try something purely commercial, such as slapstick comedies and the like.

These factors, combined with the aura of social change, allowed the
head of the CMPC to make more decisions independently. As discussed above, in the late Seventies, Taiwanese society was quite dynamic. After a series of political and social movements, the tension between the citizens and the KMT state especially increased. The government tried to relax tensions by promoting more Taiwan-born officials, giving ordinary people more opportunity to participate in political activities and loosening control of the mass media.\textsuperscript{50} Therefore, the CMPC had more freedom to make decisions than ever before.

The influence and inspiration of the Hong Kong New Wave was also important to New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers. The Hong Kong New Wave emerged during the late Seventies. Before the Hong Kong New Wave the Hong Kong film market like Taiwan, was dominated by martial arts films. However, because of stiff competition among television stations, many young TV workers got opportunities to demonstrate their abilities on TV. Then those people turned to work in film industry. They became the main force of the Hong Kong New Wave and changed the Hong Kong film industry in many ways. Tsui Hark, Ann Hui, Yim Ho, Allen Fong, Patrick Tam and Alex Cheung Kwok Ming are the names mentioned most often. Most of these filmmakers studied in the West, usually in Great Britain or the United States. The Hong Kong New Wave filmmakers influenced Hong Kong films in several ways. First, these movies portrayed Hong Kong social conditions in a relatively realistic fashion.
Because of this, Cantonese-language films moved into the mainstream again. Second, the quality of movies improved as professionalism was established.

The success of the Hong Kong New Wave encouraged those filmmakers who later became part of New Taiwan Cinema. In fact, Hong Kong New Wave directors and New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers share some similarities. Most of them are fairly young and educated in the West. They all desire to change the old style and try new things. They also care about social reality and represent it in their films. The biggest difference is that the Hong Kong New Wave was later totally incorporated within the commercial system, and New Taiwan Cinema was never part of the mainstream.

Thus, the emergence of New Taiwan Cinema has a lot to do with the film industry crisis of the time. The CMPC was under a lot of financial pressure, so they accepted the project for the first New Taiwan Cinema film, In Our Time, because of its low budget. In Our Time was released in 1982, and it turned out to be a box office hit. The CMPC benefitted from the film, so the studio decided to support other projects. So although the Hong Kong New Wave and the CMPC helped start New Taiwan Cinema, many other factors made it last in subsequent years.

The support of film critics contributed greatly Taiwan New Cinema's development. Before the rise of New Taiwan Cinema, there were very few
serious film critics, and they were not noticed by the public. The standard by which old generation film reviewers judged films was whether the film expressed Chinese nationalism or anti-Communist ideology. With the rise of New Taiwan Cinema came a new generation of film critics. Influenced by Western ideas such as auteurism and the French New Wave, these critics gave more emphasis to the artistic achievements films and filmmakers and gave more dimension to their film reviews.

These critics wrote articles that encouraged New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers. Many of them have personal friendships with New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers. They also introduced the audience to New Taiwan Cinema. They wrote newspaper and magazine articles and published books about new directors and their movies, and championed a different point of view for watching movies. Among these critics, Chiao Hsiung-ping, who has a Master of Arts degree from the University of Texas at Austin, is the most important. She has written numerous articles about New Taiwan Cinema films and directors in the United Daily News, one of Taiwan’s two biggest newspapers. The late Yang She-chi, a reporter for the United Daily News, also helped introduce New Taiwan Cinema to audiences. The other big newspaper, China Times, began a column on New Taiwan Cinema. Because of these efforts, New Taiwan Cinema attracted the audience’s attention.
Other factors concerning the development of the Taiwanese film industry aided the growth of New Taiwan Cinema. Most influential to New Taiwan Cinema were the ideas and training developed during the healthy realism era. Healthy realism was a prologue for New Taiwan Cinema for two reasons. First, both genres dealt with the lives of ordinary, lower middle-class people. For example, *The Story of a Small Town*, a healthy realistic film, concerns a sculptor and life in a small town. The biggest difference is that healthy realism tended to portray things positively, and New Taiwan Cinema was not afraid to expose the dark side of life in Taiwan. Second, several healthy realism filmmakers later became major New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers. The most important of these directors is Lee Xin. His *Good Morning, Taipei* (1979) won the Golden Horse Award for best picture, the highest film award in Taiwan. He also won best director award for directing *The Story of a Small Town* in 1979. Two major New Taiwan Cinema directors, Hou Hsiao-hsian and Chen Kuen-hou, worked on his films. Hou was the assistant director and screenwriter of *Good Morning, Taipei* and *The Story of a Small Town*, as well as some of Lee’s other films. Chen was the cinematographer for *The Story of a Small Town*.

In addition to the human resources within the film industry, the 40 years of Taiwanese development in other fields also contributed greatly to New Taiwan Cinema. Literature made the most significant
contribution. Taiwanese films have had a dependent relationship to literature for long time, mainly because of the dearth of professional screenwriters. As early as the Sixties and Seventies, the kung fu novels and romances were adopted into kung fu swordplay and love stories on screen. The country literature movement of the Seventies influenced New Taiwan Cinema with its spirit of social criticism. The country literature carries a strong message and criticism of the processes of development. The exploitation of workers by big international corporations, the myth of economic development, environmental pollution and political oppression were major themes of country literature. The New Taiwan Cinema, to an extent, echoes those themes. In fact, several important New Taiwan Cinema films were adaptations of country literature novels. *Sandwich Man* (1983), *The Days of Seeing Sea* (1983), *Sayonara, Goodbye* (1984) and *I Love Mary* (1984) are adopted from works of Hwang Chuan-ming, a famous country literature writer.

The emergence of New Taiwan Cinema is not a historic coincidence, as there were many factors behind it. Without the social context of the time, New Taiwan Cinema couldn’t have arisen. Had there not been a crisis in the film industry and had the CMPC not been under financial pressure, the CMPC would not have taken the risk to invest in a group of new directors. Without the encouragement and inspiration of the Hong Kong New Wave, the new directors may not have gotten the chance to
show their stuff. Although the film industry crisis had a lot to do with the Taiwanese political and economic system, so did the system of film production and distribution. All these factors contributed to the rise of New Taiwan Cinema and influenced its development and its decline as well.
Notes


2. Ibid., 36-88.

3. Ibid., 26.


5. Ibid., 77.


10. Ibid., 13.


12. Ibid., 22-34.


17. Yu-shang Huang, 152.

18. Ibid., 152.


21. Yu-shang Huang, 152.


23. The last film Cinema City made in Taiwan is Good Bye, Beach in 1987.


29. Yun Wei "Informal Development: the Analysis of Taiwanese Film Industry" Contemporary 81 (Jan 1993): 76.


31. Wei, 78.

32. Ibid., 78.


35. Wu, Lee, 3.

36. Wei, 78.

37. Ren Hwang, "The Twenty-five Years of Changes," 16.


39. Ibid., 31.


42. Ibid., 48.

43. Ibid., 122.

44. Ibid., 271.


46. Ibid., 153.

47. *Country literature* - A literary movement during the Seventies in Taiwan. The goal and spirit of the movement was to express the life of ordinary people. They opposed the modernism adopted by some Mainland writers during the Sixties. They thought that modernism during the Sixties in Taiwan was escapist and imitated Western literature. The works of countryland literature emphasize the life experiences of Taiwanese people, especially proletarians. It is a grassroots literary movement.


50. Chen, Lee, 73.


CHAPTER 3

THE DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTERISTICS
OF NEW TAIWAN CINEMA

The New Taiwan Cinema began, roughly speaking, in 1982, with the release of In Our Time. In January 1987, 53 artists, including New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers, scenarists, critics and dramatists, signed a document called "Manifesto of Taiwanese Cinema in 1987," which is considered the declaration of New Taiwan Cinema’s end. Since the first New Taiwan Cinema film appeared, the movement has been controversial because of its novelty and its differences from old Taiwanese movies. New Taiwan Cinema films differed in their techniques of expression, their use of film language and their subject matter. The goal of this chapter is try to delineate the characteristics of New Taiwan Cinema and the process of its development.

Some Definitional Problems

Before discussing the issue, several problems need to be pointed out. First of all, New Taiwan Cinema is not a movement like French nouvelle vague or Brazilian cinema novo, which are based on certain theories or ideologies. New Taiwan Cinema didn’t set its goal at the outset. The term
is a name for a group of films by several new directors that share certain aesthetic ideas and subject matter. In other words, after the films were made, certain film critics and historians came up with the term "New Taiwan Cinema" to identify the films. Because of this, even several years after New Taiwan Cinema began, many New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers had different opinions about the name. In fact, several of them didn't like it.¹

Secondly, because of the lack of a theoretical background for the New Taiwan Cinema, defining it is problematic. Therefore, the way to identify New Taiwan Cinema is to summarize the movies' common characteristics, and by doing so, hopefully defining what New Taiwan Cinema is.

Movies Be gore New Cinema

The discussion will concentrate on two aspects of New Taiwan Cinema: the content (the subject matter) and the form (the film language). Both the content and form of New Taiwan Cinema differ from conventional Taiwanese movies, which generally were based on a Hollywood standard. The basic logic of New Taiwan Cinema is built on a reaction to that Hollywood standard,² a reaction expressed through both narrative style and story type.

The classical Hollywood narrative film style includes the following general characteristics. First, the narrative structure is closed. The story
has a clearly defined beginning, middle, and ending development and climax. The narration usually starts with an enigma, a lack of knowledge or information, or information in the form of puzzle. When the movie ends, the enigma will be resolved fully or partly, and the motives for characters' actions usually have been explained. Second, the classical narrative is constructed with a sense of temporal and spatial continuity and internal logic. In other words, through editing and mise-en-scene, the look and sense of reality, the illusion of daily experiences is offered. The usual strategies here include shot-reverse-shot editing, eyeline matches, point of view editing and establishing shots followed by cut-ins or cut-aways. Third, the classical narrative encourages identification with the key protagonists. Therefore, as Bill Nichols argues, the main characters are usually highly individuated. Most narrative acts involve the main characters, and their methods of accomplishing these acts mark them off and establish the specific parameters of identification. In other words, in classical narrative, the characters are usually at the center of the narration.

Before the New Taiwan Cinema, three genres dominated the local film industry. First, there were propaganda movies, most of them government-sponsored. This kind of movie was usually about how evil the Communists were and how good the KMT government was. During the Seventies, a lot of movies were set in China during World War II. In
those films, the KMT soldiers are portrayed as heroes sacrificed for the nation. The typical examples of this type of film include *The Immortal Martyrs*, *Victory*, *The Valiant Eight Hundred* and *Heroes in the Eastern Sky*. The goal of these films was not only to oppose Communism but also to try to establish a "Chinese" national identity and confidence in the KMT government. The second popular genre was *wen-yi*, a kind of loving family melodrama usually adopted from romance novels, mostly from works of Chung Yao. *The Rainy Days*, *The Silent Wife*, *Beyond the Window*, and *I Am a Cloud* are some of her famous ones. Between 1965 and 1983, 50 of these films were made from her works. The third popular genre was action movies, which included kung-fu and swordplay movies. Between King Hu's historic stories and Jackie Chan's kung-fu comedies, there are numerous films of this kind. Famous examples include King Hu's *Dragon Inn* and *A Touch of Zen*, Bruce Lee's *Fists of Fury*, director Zhang Che's *One-Armed Swordsman*, *The Invincible Swordsman*, *Golden Swallow* and *The Iron Lady* and Jackie Chan's *Snake in the Eagle's Shadow* and *The Drunken Master* from both Taiwan and Hong Kong.

None of those movies were based on the lives real people lead. Loving family stories satisfied audiences seeking romance in a fairy-tale narrative style. Kung-fu movies expressed an order with which the audience was familiar, providing a sense of security through their
familiarity, and the films' macho heroes compensated for the frustration resulting from Taiwan's diplomatic failures. Both genres offered a kind of escapism and simplified the problems, making audiences feel that all dilemmas can be solved in familiar ways.

**The Development of New Taiwan Cinema**

The New Taiwan Cinema started in 1982 with a film project called *In Our Time*. The major planner was Xiao Yie, a young novelist turn scenarist. He and Tao De-chen, the film's director, proposed the project to Ming Ji, the manager of the Central Motion Picture Corporation. The original plan was to make a film composed of four sections, each section with a separate story and a different director, unified by the common theme of growing experiences. CMPC’s administrators accepted the project mainly because of its low budget. Before that, several big budget CMPC films had lost a lot money, and CMPC’s leaders figured that even if they lost money with the new project, because of its low cost, it wouldn’t be as much as they had been losing with other films. The movie was released in August 1982, and it was a box-office success. This success encouraged other young filmmakers and gave the CMPC the confidence to support new directors.⁷

*In Our Time*’s success made the CMPC and some private production houses want to cooperate with these new directors. Cinema City’s Taiwanese production department may have been the first private
production company to invest in New Taiwan Cinema directors. They bankrolled Ke Yi-zhen to make *Kids With Swords* after his work on *In Our Time*. Besides Cinema City, other important private production companies investing in new directors included Evergreen Production Company, Fee-tang Film Corporation, Tomson Film Corporation and several others. Private producers commonly cooperated with the CMPC, with both the CMPC and private producers putting up money. A rough estimate is that private producers provided half the money and the CMPC the other half. However, the other government-owned studios, because of their nature, didn't invest in New Taiwan Cinema.

While Tao De-chen and Edward Yang continued to work with the CMPC, the other two directors of *In Our Time* went to work for private production companies. In 1983, the CMPC released Edward Yang's next film, *That Day on the Beach*. That same year the CMPC made another "partitioned movie," *Sandwichman*. With that film, another group of New Taiwan Cinema directors became known. At that point, which coincided with a recession in the Taiwanese film industry, these movies' success gave film producers some hope. Besides, the films had very low budgets and seemed to offer fewer risks to investors. Thus, in 1983, eight New Taiwan Cinema movies were released and others were in production.

According to the book *New Taiwan Cinema* and research done by the journal *Film Appreciation* in 1987, 10 directors are generally
recognized as New Taiwan Cinema directors: Chen Kuen-hou, Ke Yi-zhen, Lee Yo-ning, Hou Hsiao-hsian, Tao De-chen, Wang Tong, Wan Ren, Yang De-chan (Edward Yang), Zhang Yi and Zen Zhwan-xiang.\footnote{12} Besides those directors, some films of Yang Li-guo, Yu Kan-ping and Peter Mak are also considered to be New Taiwan Cinema films. Based on this list and Lee Tian-dow and Chen Pei-zi's study,\footnote{13} forty-one New Taiwan Cinema films were released from 1982 to 1986.\footnote{14}

New Taiwan Cinema began in 1982 and established its foundation in 1983. However, its growth process was not smooth. First of all, the government was upset by the social reality reflected in the films, so censorship problems occasionally arose. Second, although the new generation film critics (most were born after 1945) and some international film festivals give New Taiwan Cinema a lot of acclaim, the older, more conservative film critics accused New Taiwan Cinema films of not being sufficiently commercial. Third, New Taiwan Cinema films were initially successful at the box office, but their popularity fell of later, and some serious box office failures greatly damaged the career of several New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers.

As discussed earlier, the support of film critics was an important factor in the development of New Taiwan Cinema. At the early stage of New Taiwan Cinema, several new generation film critics and reviewers wrote articles in newspapers recommending these movies. However, after
New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers established their reputations, a series of negative opinions expressed by older generation film reviewers appeared. At first, they accused the New Taiwan Cinema films of exposing the negative side of Taiwan and creating a bad image of the country. The most famous instance was the "cutting apple event." After Sandwichman was completed, an anonymous letter from the Chinese Film Critics Association accusing the film of creating a bad image for the nation and the like was sent to several government institutions. That sparked a harsh debate in newspapers and caused the CMPC to edit the original footage. Because the portion the CMPC edited was in the third part of the film, The Taste of Apples, the press labeled the matter the "cutting apple event." Similar things happened with some other films, too. For example, several people accused a sex scene in Jade Love of being incompatible with the image of Chinese women. After several box office failures, New Taiwan Cinema's opponents accused the films of being self-indulgent, not commercial enough, boring and so forth. But New Taiwan Cinema had its supporters as well, and the two sides engaged in a harsh debate in the mass media.

This phenomenon also shows that political power and ideology had filtered into different fields of culture, including film criticism. Political ideology had been the only criterion for determining the value of arts, a strategy the government used to control the ideology of movies. Another
reason for this phenomenon was the experience of the civil war. Most
government-favored critics were Mainlanders, and their painful
memories of and fears about Communists made them reject anything
that seemed connected to leftists. However, leftist Chinese filmmakers of
the Thirties were known for making movies about the proletarian class,
so when New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers started making movies with
similar topics, the more conservative critics opposed them. New
generation film critics grew up with different experiences and saw things
from a different perspective. This division between political and aesthetic
points of view had existed for a long time during the postwar era, but
because of the rise of New Taiwan Cinema and the birth of a new
generation of film critics, the issue became more distinct.

During the early stage of New Taiwan Cinema, several movies
performed adequately at the box office, and some, such as Growing Up,
did very well. However, most New Taiwan Cinema films only managed
to break even, and a few, including Taipei Story, A Summer at
Grandpa's, Boys From Fengkuei, did poorly. Those films that bombed at
the box office caused investors to shy away from the projects of New
Taiwan Cinema directors, and those films became the target of blame.
One of the important factors in New Taiwan Cinema's emergence, then,
was the films' early box office success, and once that factor disappeared,
New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers faced a crisis.
The best year for New Taiwan Cinema, in terms of critical and box office response, was 1983. In 1984, several movies by major New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers performed poorly at the box office.21 Furthermore, the New Taiwan Cinema movies didn’t do well at the annual Golden Horse Awards, Taiwan’s most prestigious film honors. At the same time, the average quality of New Taiwan Cinema went down. Therefore, Hwang Jing-yie called 1984, "a year of frustration."22

After 1984, the New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers moved in diverse directions. Some people stopped making movies, and some developed quite personal styles. In 1985, the CMPC decided to train a "second generation" of New Taiwan Cinema directors, and these directors completed a three-part movie, Ah-fu. However, this film didn’t attract as much attention as In Our Time, and the CMPC stopped its project of supporting new directors. On the bright side, after three years of development, although the films still were not performing well at the box office, the New Taiwan Cinema was more recognized by people. New Taiwan Cinema films and filmmakers received 14 awards at 1985’s Golden Horse Awards. However, New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers had many problems and pressures to face. Even in 1986, when several New Taiwan Cinema masterpieces were made, as a movement the New Taiwan Cinema was coming to an end. The "Manifesto of Taiwanese Cinema in 1987," which came out in January 1987, was just a clear
The Filmmakers and Films of New Taiwan Cinema

Within these five years, there are 13 directors, six scenarists, three cinematographers, one producer and one editor recognized by the public as New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers. Among them, 12 directors made their first commercially released films during these five years. The group includes one cinematographer-turned-director (Chen Kuen-hou), one foreign cinematographer (Christopher Doyle of Australia) and several novelists-turned-scenarists (Xiao Yie, Wu Nian-chen, Chu Tien-wen, Din Ya-ming.) However, only a few of them developed significant personal styles.

Hou Hsiao-hsian and Edward Yang (Yang De-chan) may be the most well-known New Taiwan Cinema directors. Hou graduated from the film school in Taiwan. Before he directed his first New Taiwan Cinema movie, he was a screenwriter and a commercial film director. His first New Taiwan Cinema film is the first story in *Sandwichman*. In his next film, *Boys From Fengkuei* (1983), he used a very realistic style to describe the life of a group of young men. In this film, he exposed the gap between an industrialized metropolis, Kaohsiong, and a small village on a remote island. The isolation of these young men, the sense of having no direction is expressed through the episodic narration and description of the details of daily life. In *A Summer at Grandpa's* (1984), Hou repeated
the contrast of city and country life. The story is about a city boy and his sister who are sent to grandpa's home in the country because of their father's illness. Again, Hou uses his slow-paced style and long takes to construct a world full of Taiwanese country people's emotion and feelings. Hou has a special interest in people in the lower, an working classes and shows the lives of those people in his films.

Besides the theme of the city-country gap, the other major theme in Hou's films is the experience of growing up. In A Time to Live, a Time to Die (1985), Hou tells the story of a young man's maturation process. In this autobiographical film, Hou not only depicts the man's life but also mirrors the changes in Taiwan in recent years, especially the transition from the older generation to the younger generation. In Dust in the Wind (1986), he continues these two themes: Young men from a rural area go to the big city of Taipei. The depiction of life's delusions, growing pains and lost love gave the film a somber tone, frustrating the audience much as life frustrates the main character.

Whereas Hou's principal concerns are proletarians in rural settings, Edward Yang seems more interested in the urban middle class. He had lived in the United States for 11 years as a student and as an engineer. He went to the University of Southern California to study film production for a year before returning to Taiwan. His training as an engineer seemed to teach him to look at things in a cool and distanced fashion. In That
Day on the Beach (1983), Yang tells the story of a middle-class family in crisis, but under the surface of the crisis, touches on themes of individuality and freedom, showing that within the social and moral model of an oppressive patriarchy, people are powerless to do as they want. The film differs from the traditional family melodrama in that Yang tries to keep the audience from becoming too emotionally involved, using a lot long takes and an elliptical narrative to achieve this goal.

In Taipei Story (1985), he uses his alien, distant camera position to construct a cool but complex world on screen. The story is about a middle-class couple in Taipei. Through the story of this couple and the people around them, Yang expresses how Taiwan's radical social changes affected ordinary people: Today's alienation contrasts with the old, mythically glorious days. In Terrorists, Yang shows his tremendous control and understanding of film language. The use of off-screen space and voice and editing give the film a sense of ambiguity as well as complexity and multilayered meanings. Yang is also good at using the relationship between characters and space on screen to make his points. Terrorists is considered one of the masterpieces of New Taiwan Cinema. Although Edward Yang and Hou Hsiao-hsian chose different aspects of Taiwanese society to depict, both of them expose the effects brought by the rapid changes of the post-war era.

Chen Kuen-hou, also a famous cinematographer, is one of the few
New Taiwan Cinema directors who made movies before 1982. His *Growing Up* was a box office hit in 1983. However, compared to Hou and Yang's films, Chen's films have a more conventional film style. Ke Yi-zhen is another productive New Taiwan Cinema director and actor, and, in fact, has acted in more movies than he has directed. Like Edward Yang, he also studied film in the United States. His *Last Train to Tamsui* (1986) is about a teenager who lives in a small town, Tamsui, and his relationship to an old man and his family. Ke has a good sense of humor that makes his film more immediately pleasurable to watch.

Compared to other New Taiwan Cinema directors, Zhang Yi seems to go in a different direction after 1983. His *Jade Love* (1984), adopted from a novel and set in pre-revolution Mainland China, is about the sexual desire of a widow. Unlike Hou and Yang whose film disrupted conventional narrative form, Zhang retains the traditional linear narrative structure and places his characters at the center. However, unlike a conventionally excessive melodrama, Zhang's film presents a restrained, delicate world, constructed with a combination of lyric and realistic styles.

Wan Ren is one of the few directors interested in women's place in Taiwanese society. His *Ah Fei* (1984) deals with women's position in the changing society. *Super Citizen* (1985) is a satire of modern Taipei. It is about a group of marginal Taipei citizens, including a prostitute, a crazy
professor, a punk girl and a con man. The film exposes a dark corner of
the big city, but loses depth because of too many unrelated episodes.

Despite the difference among New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers and
films, there are some similarities that will be discussed below.

The Themes and the Spirit of New Taiwan Cinema

As mentioned, since New Taiwan Cinema isn't based on a specific
theoretical framework, it is not easy to reduce New Taiwan Cinema into
several common aspects. However, the films still share some general
similarities. First, introspection concerning the past is the most popular
theme in New Taiwan Cinema and second, the films are infused with a
spirit of humanitarianism.

During the past forty years, Taiwan has been through the most
radical changes in its history. The industrialization and urbanization
brought about by economic development resulted in a number of
changes in other aspects of Taiwanese society. First, the family structure
changed. The traditional extended family could no longer be supported,
and the nuclear family became the dominant form. Second, foreign
influences became more obvious, especially those of American and
Japanese culture. Third, the conventional social structure was adjusted,
with the urban middle class becoming more prominent and social
classes rearranged. Fourth, Taiwan developed a new relationship with
other countries in the world, based on international trade instead of
political connections. Fifth, the lifestyle in Taiwan become more urban and modernized.

Those changes affected Taiwanese residents in many ways and also caused a lot of problems. Because the New Taiwan Cinema directors grew up while the changes were occurring, they directly experienced the transformation, felt its effects, and tried in their films to record and represent the process of change. Most important of all, the filmmakers tried to represent how ordinary people were affected by this process. Their films deal with the problems caused by modernization, urbanization and industrial development, such as alienated human relationships, indifference, crime, materialism and the gap between city and country. For example, Terrorists depicts alienated human relationships and the emptiness of modern existence, and Dust in the Wind shows a young man from the country lost in Taipei.

However, New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers did not care only about how people were affected by the process of development; they also tried to seek or create the meanings that were lost during this process. Through their films, they tried to re-establish lost values, especially those emphasizing human relationships and feelings for the places they live. Because these filmmakers were quite young (about thirty to forty years old), they tended to derive stories from their childhood and adolescent experiences. Also, because Taiwan was undergoing its radical
changes when these filmmakers were teenagers, those experiences in some way mirrored the situation of the nation at that time. The period during which the filmmakers were teenagers was a time of much pressure, which came from the historical moment itself as well as from family and social institutions. The pressure made the conflicts within the context more significant.

Besides self-examination, New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers had the larger ambition of reinterpreting history through their work. For a very long time, Taiwanese history has either been distorted by government propaganda or mystified by political taboos. Country literature during the Seventies was the first movement to offer the public another version of history. New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers inherited that tradition and created an image of Taiwan's past according to their experiences and interpretations.

New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers also showed an interest in and concern for minority groups. With social development and economic welfare, people had more ability to pay attention to minority groups. Filmmakers in the past usually ignored the lives of these people. At the same time, New Taiwan Cinema used minority characters to make social criticism. Many films deal with minority groups’ lives, such as Old Mao's Second Spring, which is about Mainlander soldiers. Flunked-Out Heroes concerns a "minority" in the education system, those who fail high
school entrance exams. Ah Fei and Kuei-Mei, a Woman, are about women's place in patriarchal society and how they have been affected by historical and social changes. Sandwichman shows life before and during economic development, and Super Citizen provides a view of the undersurface of a big city.

Most New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers try to avoid any kind of ideology, left or right. Under the rule of the KMT government, political propaganda seeped into every institution, and as a result, people didn't believe any kind of overt ideology. However, because a lack of ideology suggests a lack of thoughtfulness, New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers adopted humanitarianism as their guiding philosophy. Furthermore, the filmmakers' middle-class background tended to make them believe in "universal humanitarianism." This "universal humanitarianism" is expressed in their films through sympathy to minority groups or concern about the lower class of society.

The New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers consider movies a form of art. For them, film is a medium through which they can express their feelings and ideas. At the same time, they also appreciate the movies' social function but they don't consider social commitment to be the only goal of filmmaking.

Film Language in New Cinema: the Tradition and the Western

The film language of New Taiwan Cinema, which favors long shots
and long takes, is usually considered a product of a realistic style. In this regard, New Taiwan Cinema displays many characteristics of Andre Bazin's vision of realism. Bazin, who is the most famous realistic theorist built his theories on the principle of the relationship between films and reality. Bazin thought that film art crucially involves what filmmakers do with the "traces" of reality. In other words, Bazin thought the foundation of film art was built on the camera's ability to faithfully record the image of reality. The basic unity film records is an "event" which implies that something happens and lasts a definite period of time and within a definite space. Therefore, for Bazin the maintenance of a continuous sense of time and space became the key factor in the experience of reality in films. In order to record an "event" faithfully, Bazin favored techniques such as camera movement, long takes, and deep focus because those techniques can best express this sense of real time and space.

However, the realistic style of New Taiwan Cinema may not be considered to be completely influenced by Bazin, in part because New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers never declared that they were influenced by any theories. Their primary goal was to develop a style which is different from the Hollywood standard. But their use of realistic techniques was also a reaction to past mainstream Taiwanese films such as kung-fu and wen-yi movies. In those films, the filmmakers used a lot of close-ups and
fast zoom-ins and zoom-outs to manipulate the audience's emotions. The
New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers were tired of this style, so they adopted
a cooler, seemingly more bland one to demonstrate other stylistic
possibilities. In other words, for most New Taiwan Cinema directors, the
use of a realistic style is not necessarily a product of Bazin's theories,
but a reaction to the then-prevailing style of Taiwanese films.

Another factor has to do with the economic environment of New
Taiwan Cinema. Because of several technical problems, the New Taiwan
Cinema filmmakers faced limitations, which necessitated a new film
style. According to Hou Hsiao-hsian, who is notorious for using long
shots and long takes, his use of deep-focus techniques comes from long-
term working experiences. He has said that because of budget
constraints, he had to use nonprofessional actors, and the long shots
kept the camera away from them so they could act more naturally. He
also gravitated toward these sorts of techniques because of a lack of
money and good technicians. Later, he found that he preferred this style,
so he kept using it.

However, Hou hasn't explained why he kept using the style. One
possible reason New Taiwan Cinema directors preferred to use realistic
techniques is because of the similarities between Bazin's theories and
some traditional Chinese ideas, especially ideas about nature and the
world.
Bazin's film theory is based on the idea that the world has a sense and it speaks to us. The function of films is to record the actions and events that happen in this world, and the movie camera is a gateway for the audience to approach and be exposed to this world.

There are similar ideas in traditional Chinese principles. First, the world is considered as a totality, all things in the world are interrelated and the interrelationships constitute a context in which everything is defined and positioned. Therefore, human action is not a separate part of this world. Second, there's the concept of tao (the way). Tao explains both the origin of things and the being and becoming of things as a whole. Third, tao can't be explained by words. Lao-tze in his Tao-te-Ching said, "The tao, when it is sayable, is not the constant tao." Fourth, human beings experience change and the transformation of things, and through this process, they can understand the world better. Knowledge is centered on the harmonization of self and the world.

According to these principles, the world is also a body full of meanings. The world "speaks" to us, but not in human languages. Because the movie camera has the function of recording "reality," the world speaks to us through the camera. The idea of tao is very vague and ambiguous and this nature to a degree parallels the ambiguity of reality that Bazin appreciates. Because the harmonization between humanity and the world is the center of knowledge, the movie camera is
not supposed to interfere with or get involved in the action. The movie camera is also not supposed to be used to manipulate the audience's emotions. Because of Chinese tradition, the environment in which characters act and events that happen become important elements. Because of the concern for the interrelationship between human beings and their surroundings, long shots and long takes are frequently used in New Taiwan Cinema. This tradition influenced New Taiwan Cinema directors to use a recognizably realistic style. In an interview, Hou said, "I hope I can film the tien-yi (the will of heaven), the human activities under the natural rules." He seems to tell us that the human activities are there already, and his job is to film them, to record them.

If the use of long shots and long takes gives New Taiwan Cinema films a "realistic" look, the spirit behind the films emanates from the lyric tradition of Chinese poetry and paintings. This lyric tradition gives New Taiwan Cinema a poetic sense. Here, Chinese tradition, Bazin's theories and New Taiwan Cinema have another connection. The combination of poetry and visual arts is a special tradition within Chinese culture. Painters are usually also poets and they usually write poems to accompany their paintings. A good painting is required to express meanings as complex as those of poetry. Therefore, when Su Tung-po (1036-1101 A.D.) appreciated a painting by Wang Wei (698-759 A.D.) and said, "Appreciating Mo-chich's [another name for Wang Wei]
paintings, there is a poem inside; appreciating his poetry, there is a painting inside," Su also showed how this tradition is cherished.

Bazin also wanted people to pay attention to the poetic aspect of cinema. He pointed out that the figures of metaphor, metonymy and ellipsis are important in poetry and in film. However, in New Taiwan Cinema, metaphor doesn't only exist within the dialectical relation between shots, as employed by Eisenstein, but also in the situation in which the camera is set. In other words, metaphor exists in the relationship between the characters or between the characters and the outer world: sometimes, it is setting and location, sometimes it is the entire context, both directly represented and implied. In the movie Boys From Fengkuei, there is a scene in which, after a fight, the three boys sit and talk. It's a very long shot, and though the gloomy sky and open space is visible within the shot, the boys are not. The outer world reflects the inner world of these boys: They feel very uncertain and powerless about their future. This is similar to a Chinese poem which describes the loneliness from seeing off a friend. The last two sentences of the poem are,

Lone sail
Distant shade
Lost in the green horizon
Only Yangzi
Flowing into the sky
This poem seems to portray what the poet sees, but it also expresses the poet's feelings.

Metonymy and ellipsis are two other important figures in poetry. The film *A Time to Live, a Time to Die* seems to be about a family, but Hou connects the history of the family to the history of Taiwan. He used exact historic codes to indicate the times when events happened. The death of the old generation and the maturing of the new generation parallels the changes in Taiwanese society. This is an example of metonymy.

The use of ellipsis in New Cinema is expressed through the narrative. The narratives in these movies are episodic and fragmentary rather than linearly constructed. There seems to be a big gap between each episode and event, a period of time that is omitted without explanation. In describing events, a lot of details have been omitted, too, especially those scenes and shots that could generate significant emotion. In *That Day on the Beach*, there is a scene depicting a argument between a son and his father. When the younger sister comes back and finds a broken cup on the floor, it shows that the fight has ended, but none of the fight itself is ever shown.

The directors' use of off-screen space and the soundtrack to further the narrative achieves the effect of ellipsis, creating more meanings with a single shot. In *A Summer at Grandpa's*, there is a scene in which the boy goes to a pool room with his uncle, and his uncle leaves him alone
and goes into a room with his girlfriend. The boy is seen standing alone in the frame and the sound of flirting is heard from the room. The viewer hears what is happening in the room, and at the same time sees how the boy feels. Hou doesn't cut between what is happening in the room and what is happening to the boy standing outside but instead expressively uses the soundtrack. Hou maintains the continuity of time and the ambiguity of the situation, and the viewer can imagine what is happening. This kind of technique achieves the effect of ellipsis and creates a certain cinematic rhythm. By doing this, the director doesn't have to follow the action or characters all the time.

Off-screen space and long shots also create a sense of alienation between the audience and the action on screen. As mentioned before, in the old-style films, close-ups and some other techniques were used to elicit particular responses from the audience. With long shots, the use of off-screen space and other techniques, New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers tried to reduce their manipulation of the audience. This doesn't mean that New Taiwan Cinema directors didn't care about the audience's emotional response, but they tried to avoid the sort overblown emotion that could make the audience overlook more subtle messages. In other words, New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers adopted a visual and narrative film style and hoped that this style would change the emotional bond between the audience and movies.
The "empty shot" is another technique used by New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers to create rhythm and a sense of alienation. This technique is famous in the films of Yasujiro Ozu. However, the use of the empty shot is another legacy of Chinese tradition. In traditional paintings and calligraphy, the artists care very much about the blank space in their works. The blank space in paintings creates a three-dimensional effect, and this technique is different from the creation of perspective in Western art. Blank space in Chinese paintings separates objects and makes them look as though they are positioned in three-dimensional space. Blank space in calligraphy makes the two-dimensional space on paper more dynamic. However, empty shots in New Taiwan Cinema are not only spatial but also rhythmic. Directors would insert fixed-cameras shots of motionless object and scenery between shots containing action and dialogue to create an ongoing dynamic of meanings and relationships between shots as the film progresses.

During its formative years, New Taiwan Cinema consciously developed an alternative film style. Although the films are different in some ways, they also share some similarities. Thematically, they deal with a lot with past history, especially Taiwan's postwar experiences. Stylistically, the films display a style close to the realism defined by Bazin, but they also integrate some ideas based on traditional Chinese aesthetics. These films also mirror the characteristics of Taiwanese
culture-a basically Chinese culture strongly influenced by the West because of the modernization process. Theories about style and subject matter in New Taiwan Cinema also influenced and contributed to later Taiwanese films.
Notes


4. Ibid., 85-87.

5. Ibid., 85-90.

6. Anonymous writer "Chronology of Taiwanese Film Industry" in Yearbook of Taipei Golden Horse International Film Festival 1991 no page no.


8. Ke Yi-zhen was one of the directors of In Our Time.

9. See Appendices, filmography. Among total 41 New Cinema films, 20 of them are supported by CMPC, 21 of them by private producers.

10. See Chapter two.


14. See Appendices.

15. Chinese Film Critics Association was set up in 1964. It is the earliest association of professional film critics.

17. At least the following films were forced to edit after they were finished: *Sandwichman: The the taste of apples*, *The Time To Live, The Time To Die*, *Jade Love*, *Kwen-Mei, A Woman*.


19. "Country Literature" movement in Seventies is another good example of this division. Like New Taiwan Cinema, Country Literature also had attack from a group of conservative writers and literary critics.

20. *Growing Up* was the number nine in the box office record in that year.


22. Ibid., 61.


26. J. Douley Andrew, 169.


28. Ibid., 175.

29. Ibid., 195.

31. Ibid., 169.

CHAPTER 4

THE END OF NEW TAIWAN CINEMA AND IMAGE OF NINETIES

The "Manifesto of Taiwanese Cinema in 1987" is considered the declaration of the end of New Taiwan Cinema. Chi Long-ren in the book Death of New Cinema said:

The wave of "New Cinema" in Taiwan (1982-1986), frankly speaking, has ended; not only the term "New Cinema" has ended, the initial motive of New Cinema filmmakers and the critical strategies of New Cinema critics have also ended. The phenomena mentioned above is revealed through the appearance of the "Manifesto of Taiwanese Cinema in 1987."[1]

Why is New Taiwan Cinema considered a "dead movement"? If New Taiwan Cinema really has ended, what are the factors that brought about its demise? What happened to New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers and their films after the initial years? What are the problems and crises that New Taiwan Cinema faces? What are New Taiwan Cinema's contributions to the Taiwanese film industry? These are the questions that will be discussed in this chapter.

The End of New Taiwan Cinema

The best year for New Taiwanese Cinema, in terms of critical and box office response, was 1983. That year, because of the favorable box office
response, New Taiwan Cinema also established its position within the commercial system. Because of New Taiwan Cinema's good commercial results in 1983, the next year four veteran commercial film directors made movies displaying certain New Taiwan Cinema characteristics (e.g., narrative style and subject matter). However, those and other New Taiwan Cinema films didn't do well at the box office, and since then, no more veteran commercial directors have dabbled in New Taiwan Cinema stylistic techniques. New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers, meanwhile, have faced considerable box office pressure. After 1985, New Taiwan Cinema directors moved in diverse directions in terms of their relationships with the commercial system. Some adopted a more conventional style, such as Chen Kuen-hou in My Favorite Season. Others developed more definitive personal styles.

The turning point for New Taiwan Cinema was 1985, because after that, the signs of New Taiwan Cinema's decline appeared. In 1986, the gap between Hou and Yang and the other New Taiwan Cinema directors became clearer and wider. Yang made his masterpiece, Terrorists and Hou made his award-winning Dust in the Wind. On the other hand, because of a personal event, Zhang Yi declared he would not make any more movies after This Love of Mine. Ke Yi-zhen and Chen Kuen-hou made films close to conventional melodramas. Wan Ren didn't have any new films released in 1985. As for Zen Zhwan-xiang, he stopped making
movies after 1984 because of unhappy experiences with his production company.

The original New Taiwan Cinema directors went in diverse directions not only because of personal interests but also and more importantly, because box office pressures made most of them have to adjust their film style more or less in order to fit in the mainstream film market. Other people still kept making their personal films, such as Hou and Yang. This doesn't mean that Hou and Yang's films performed well at the box office, but their international reputations made it difficult for them to give up their personal styles and incorporate within the mainstream.

As for the other directors, they either adopted conventional film styles or went to television to do series work and commercials: Chen Kuen-hou worked for TV; Ke Yi-zhen and Wan Ren made commercials; Tao De-chen moved overseas; Zen Zhwan-xiang took up teaching; even Edward Yang taught temporarily after Taipei Story because he couldn't get financial support for his next project.

The number of New Taiwan Cinema films also dropped after 1985. In 1986, 12 New Taiwan Cinema films were made, but in 1987, the number dropped to eight. In fact, after 1985, it's increasingly difficult to define "New Taiwan Cinema" because some New Taiwan Cinema directors had resumed making conventional melodramas.

According to Chi, the initial impulse motivating New Taiwan Cinema
directors and filmmakers has dissipated. But what was the initial motivation and spirit of New Taiwan Cinema? As discussed in the second chapter, New Taiwan Cinema is differentiated from conventional cinema in two aspects: First, New Taiwan Cinema is a reaction to earlier commercial films, including ways of conceiving the production system and the films' style and content. Second, New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers display humanitarianism, a quite different ideology from conventional cinema. The first aspect concerns the relationship between New Taiwan Cinema and Taiwanese commercial films, especially the commercial system. The second aspect concerns New Taiwan Cinema directors' attitude toward political propaganda and ideology. At the start of New Taiwan Cinema, the filmmakers rejected mainstream commercial cinema and the studio system. The realistic film style and humanitarianism displayed in New Taiwan Cinema films expressed those filmmakers' indifference to political propaganda and their abandonment of consensus political ideology. From the reaction to the "cutting apple event" in 1983, it can be seen that New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers were quite at odds with those who held political power.

The change in the relationship between New Taiwan Cinema directors and the commercial system happened after the mid-Eighties. Several original New Taiwan Cinema directors began to make more conventional types of films. More significant was the participation of large private
production companies such as Tomson and Cinema City. The participation of those more profit-oriented mainstream companies accelerated the dilution of New Taiwan Cinema. In other words, once New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers had to cooperate with the mainstream film industry for financial reasons, they had to follow the rules of the marketplace and were more or less limited by those companies. This forced them to adjust and change their style to an extent. This raised a lot of conflicts. Wan Ren with Cinema City, Zen Zhwan-xiang with Tom Son, Zhang Yi with the CMPC, had conflicts over budgets, style, working methods and so on. Zen Zhwan-xiang even declared he would not make any more movies because of this experience. However, many New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers faced the dilemma of either being swallowed by the commercial system or being excluded from the business.

The New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers had a complex about political power. On the one hand, the "realistic" film style of New Taiwan Cinema and the films exposure of the negative side of Taiwanese society got on the nerves of government officials. On the other hand, the CMPC was the biggest supporter of New Taiwan Cinema and is a government-owned studio. If New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers had truly serious problems with government censorship, that they would have faced big problems getting financial support. Therefore, although there was tension between
New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers and the government, the filmmakers were less oppositional than agnostic the government; they just wouldn't side with those who wielded political power. However, that relationship seemed to change with the production of a short military propaganda film, All For Tomorrow, in 1988.

In October 1988, the Department of National Defense invited several major New Taiwan Cinema workers, including Chen Guo-fu, (a film critic and project supervisor for Terrorists), Hou Hsiao-hsian, Xia Yie and Wu Nian-zhen to produce a short, film intended to "strengthen the central leadership, express the power of our military."8 This short film was shown on television and before feature films in movie theaters. It created a harsh debate in certain newspapers.9 Mi Cho criticized the filmmakers who cooperated with the government to "beautify the past, affirm the past, to defend for today's beneficiary ... make a false history, create an illusion for the future."10 Lei Bu-pa said that All for Tomorrow is a film that "has political ambitions, a tendency to beautify official stories and the danger of twisting historic truth."11 After these accusations, Wu Nian-zhen defended the filmmakers' work, saying that they "just gave hand." Hou said he never talked about ideology in his films. Xiao Yie didn't agree with the accusations, and Chen Guo-fu said he felt guilty.12 The reception of All for Tomorrow shows the dilemma New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers faced. Having to deal with commercial and political
pressures, New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers showed that they were having difficulty sustaining their original ideals and were being swamped by the marketplace and political power.

In 1987, the film journal *Film Appreciation* researched New Taiwan Cinema. They interviewed 17 New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers including nine directors, four screen writers, two cinematographers, one editor and one producer. They were asked three basic questions:

1. What are your opinions of your work surroundings and your opinions of other people?
2. What are your opinions about your past works and your plans for the future?
3. Has New Taiwan Cinema had any effect on the Taiwanese film industry?

In this study, many New Taiwan Cinema workers (Wu Nian-zhen, Ke Yi-zhen, Hou Hsiao-hsian, Zhang Yi, Wan Ren and Chen Kwan-hou) said they didn't think that there was a New Taiwan Cinema or that they were New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers. Some people (Chu Tian-wen, Lee Yon-nian and Zen Zhwan-xiang) said they thought that New Taiwan Cinema was a vague term created by the mass media and that it was difficult to define. Only a few people (Xiao Yie and Edward Yang) thought that New Taiwan Cinema still existed and was different from old cinema.

What is the message and implication of this research? Why did most
New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers not want to be identified with the term "New Taiwan Cinema?" Why did those filmmakers seem to not want to be differentiated from old cinema? Most filmmakers said that it didn't mean anything to classify or label them; what mattered was making the movies they wanted to make. Some people thought that it was simplistic to put all those people in one category regardless of their stylistic and philosophical differences. Tao De-chen indicated that this label created financing difficulties for New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers because of the box office failings of some New Taiwan Cinema films. No matter how those filmmakers explained their reasons for approving of disapproving of the term "New Taiwan Cinema", it was clear, that, as Chi Long-ren said, the term "New Taiwan Cinema" had become a "historic term" instead of a current reality.

The release of the "Manifesto of Taiwanese Cinema in 1987" shows the desire of filmmakers and critics to move beyond the term "New Taiwanese Cinema." In that manifesto, there is no mention about "new cinema," instead, it proposed the idea of "alternative cinema," which is vaguely defined as "the films which have creative attention, artistic tendencies and cultural self-consciousness."14 This shows that the critics who created and supported the term "New Taiwan Cinema" were eager to change the image associated filmmakers and their movies in the public's mind. It also shows that those critics and filmmakers had
relinquished the images connected with the term "New Taiwan Cinema." The reason for them to do so is obvious: Under financial pressure, the filmmakers and critics had to try to break the stereotype that was limiting the filmmakers' development. In other words, the image connected to the term "New Taiwan Cinema" bothered the filmmakers, and they were ready to give up the term. Therefore, Chi said that the original "critical strategy" was terminated.

When New Taiwan Cinema arose in 1982, it was considered an alternative to a dying film industry. Therefore, the CMPC received "alternative" film projects with a more generous attitude. However, after the mid-Eighties, New Taiwan Cinema faced heavier financial pressure, so the filmmakers' freedom was increasingly diminished. Under these conditions, even as the manifesto was issued as a protest, the life of New Taiwan Cinema could not be saved.

Factors Causing the End of New Taiwan Cinema

Because of the reasons mentioned above, New Taiwan Cinema seemed to end. But why did this movement end so soon? Why did it happen at all? As discussed in the second chapter, the rise of New Taiwan Cinema was based on many factors, but does the decline of the movement mean that the factors that nurtured its development disappeared? How did the social and historical context change between 1982 and 1986? How did the New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers adjust
themselves and their films to changing cultural realities? What has been the attitude of the film industry to New Taiwan Cinema after this period? These are the major questions that will be discussed in conjunction with the end of New Taiwan Cinema.

As mentioned in the second chapter, the rise of New Taiwan Cinema had a lot to do with the more general cultural movement that, since the Seventies, had been seeking self-identity and roots. The major issue during the Seventies was finding a new identity for Taiwan and its culture. Therefore, people looked back to Taiwan's history, trying to learn new meanings from it. New Taiwan Cinema followed all those Seventies activities and movements and become a part of them. The difference is that New Taiwan Cinema appeared later than the other movements. It seems that New Taiwan Cinema was the last expression of this "seeking roots" movement.¹⁵

Since the early Eighties, Taiwanese society has gone through a period of radical historical change. Based on the revisionist thinking of the Seventies, Taiwanese people turned their ideas into action. A series of political struggles, social movements and other activities forced the KMT government to relinquish a considerable amount of its control of domestic politics and economics. The KMT ended martial law in 1987 and lifted the ban on establishing new political parties and newspapers. The first opposition political party, the Democratic Progressive Party
(DPP), was established in 1986, when organizing new parties was still officially illegal. Four more political parties were formed in 1987.

At the same time, the Taiwanese economy also entered a new stage. Economic growth slowed down after 1988. The large amount of foreign-exchange holdings and the trade surplus caused the Taiwanese government to revalue the exchange rate between new Taiwanese dollars (NT dollars) and U.S. dollars. The rate between the U.S. and Taiwanese currencies changed from 1:40 to 1:30 between September 1985 and October 1987. Because of increasing labor costs and the currency revaluation, Taiwan's traditional exports, which were mainly products of "light industry," couldn't compete with the same products from other developing countries. Taiwan's manufacturing industries faced pressure to upgrade its products to more sophisticated heavy and technology-intensive varies.

The ups and downs of the stock market also greatly affected the Taiwanese economy and society. Because of foreign exchange control and low interest rates, people had few attractive alternatives for investing idle money. Besides, the revaluation of the Taiwanese currency caused a lot of capital to flow into Taiwan. These factors made the stock market increase threefold during first nine months of 1987. Then the government interfered, and it dropped 39 percent in October. In 1988, the stock market went up again and then dropped dramatically from
12,500 points to 2,500 points. The effect of these changes in the stock market was tremendous. The biggest effect was that it attracted a lot of investors and capital. Between 1987 and 1990, the whole economic system was influenced by the dramatic change and it caused considerable turmoil in the currency market.

All these pressures caused the government to relax foreign exchange controls after 1987. The new foreign exchange regulations, high labor costs and other factors encouraged overseas investment. In 1990, the outflow of capital was about U.S. $15 billion. The major portion of this money was invested in Southeast Asian countries and China. Taiwan became Asia's second-largest capital-exporting nation in 1990.

Another very important effect on both the politics and the economy was the changing relationship with the PRC. A closer relationship is developing across the Formosa Strait. Although antagonism still exists between the two governments, more and more contacts between residents of the two places began taking place. In 1987, after the end of martial law, for the first time since 1950, the KMT government allowed some Taiwanese residents to go to Mainland China. From November 1987 through the end of 1991, 2.4 million Taiwanese residents had visited the PRC and more than 22,000 Mainland residents had legally visited Taiwan. From 1987 through 1991, people from the two countries
exchanged 40 million letters, and between July 1989 and December
1991, they made more than 12 million telephone calls across the strait.
The following years, the KMT government relaxed other restrictions on
traveling, visiting and shooting films and television programs in China.
The people on the two sides of the strait is doing business, too. Although
the Taiwanese government doesn't allow the direct trade between two
sides, indirect trade is increasing. In 1987, this amounted to 15 billion
U.S. dollars. Taiwanese investment in the PRC had reached $2.44
million by mid-1991 and has continued to increase.21 Suddenly, one-
time antagonists have become business and trade partners.

Under the weight of rapid changes, people developed complex
feelings. Many people felt that they couldn't understand their
surroundings and worried about the possible effects of these
transformations. Meanwhile, the movies' conventional function as
escapist entertainment became more apparent. People went to movies
seeking an illusory world in order to escape from reality.22 However, at
this point, New Taiwan Cinema didn't seem able to catch up with current
changes, but became trapped in past experiences, unable to grapple with
contemporary social issues. The oblique social criticism of New Taiwan
Cinema became too conservative and not sufficiently emphatic for some
people. A good example is what happened to the movie Goodbye, Beach.
In this film, director Wan Ren brings up the issue of retired Mainlander
veterans, especially those who of a low social class. Most of these people didn’t have family or relatives in Taiwan, and they couldn’t return to Mainland China. Part of the film deals with these old, lonely soldiers, some of whom have to sell tickets for the "Liberal Lottery" (a kind of Taiwanese government lottery) on the street to make a living. However, before the film was released, the government began to allow people to go to Mainland China, and soon after the film’s release, the government stopped the Liberal Lottery. Suddenly, the film seemed out of date. New Taiwan Cinema was losing its audience. For those who expected New Taiwan Cinema to be critical, the films seemed stodgy and time-bound relative to the rapid rate of social change. And those filmgoers who expected movies to be conventionally entertaining were disappointed by the anti-dramatic style of New Taiwan Cinema films.

The fact that New Taiwan Cinema was losing its audience also uncovered a "problem" with the nature of the Taiwanese audience. Most moviegoers in Taiwan are teenagers, students and laborers. For them, the function of movies is to offer entertainment, excitement and escape from the pressures of reality. There were a few sophisticated audiences in the big cities, but not enough to support the continued growth of New Taiwan Cinema. Besides, when New Taiwan Cinema began, in terms of film style, the gap between New Taiwan Cinema and conventional movies was not so great. Later on, as some New Taiwan
Cinema auteurs made more personal, stylistically idiosyncratic movies the mass audience, even the urban middle class, had increasing difficulty accepting their films.

Another problem with the Taiwanese movie audience is the clear gap between audiences in the northern, urban areas and in middle-south areas. In many cases, New Taiwan Cinema films made decent money in Taipei, but outside of there, or in south Taiwan, they couldn't attract an audience. At the beginning of the New Taiwan Cinema era, because of low production costs, the films could break even or show a profit with only a small audience. But as the production cost increased, it became more and more difficult for producers to recoup their investments.

The film industry no longer offered a good environment for further development of New Taiwan Cinema. In fact, the relationship between commercial film industry system and New Taiwan Cinema was quite complex. On the one hand, one of the major reasons that New Taiwan Cinema emerged was because it brought hope to the film industry, which was suffering huge losses in the market during the early Eighties. As mentioned in the second chapter, because several early New Taiwan Cinema films did quite well at the box office, the CMPC and some private producers dared to invest in New Taiwan Cinema projects. Therefore, at the very beginning, New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers bore the responsibility of saving the domestic market. But, paradoxically the
image of New Taiwan Cinema as "art films" seemed temporarily to protect New Taiwan Cinema films from being judged by their box office receipts.

At the very beginning, in order to attract an audience and carve out an identity different from other movies, the advertisement for the first New Taiwan Cinema film, *In Our Time*, promoted it as the "first Taiwanese art film for 40 years." Later on, New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers dealt with some taboos and sensitive issues, thus drawing the persistent attention of government censors, so tension developed between the filmmakers and the government. Some conservative film reviewers attacked the New Taiwan Cinema for this reason. To gain the upper hand in this debate, supporters of New Taiwan Cinema, including film critics and others in the mass media, started emphasizing the image of New Taiwan Cinema as "art films" to protect them from political judgment. Meanwhile, several New Taiwan Cinema films received favorable reception at international film festivals, thus solidifying the movement's association with "art films." This image of New Taiwan Cinema prompted the debate in critical circles whether or not New Taiwan Cinema should be judged by box office receipts. However, film investors didn't care whether these were "art films" or not. What mattered to them was making money.

The CMPC's approach was to make movies that were profitable as
well as acceptable to the government. When the movies were not profitable and had problems with government censorship, the CMPC had no reason to support them. Unfortunately, New Taiwan Cinema had that problem since 1984. By 1985, several original New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers, such as Hou, Yang and Zhang, had left the CMPC. As mentioned in the third chapter, the CMPC decided to train a "second generation" of New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers with a film project in 1985. However, the results from that film were not good, and the CMPC stopped further financial support for the training project.

But a more important reason that the CMPC withdrew its backing was that New Taiwan Cinema's most powerful supporter, Ming Ji, the manager of the CMPC, left the company in 1985. The new manager showed little interest in making high-quality films and was more purely interested in making money.

The government didn't help New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers solve their financial problems. In fact, the government's attitude toward movies never was really helpful. For the KMT government, movies had only two functions: movies could be used for political propaganda, and, as a public entertainment, they offered a good source for government revenue. Among government departments, the Government Information Office (GIO) has direct supervision of the film industry. When Dr. James Soong was directing the GIO, he helped rebuild the film
industry with government support. Although he did so mainly to further his personal political career, he managed to lift the position of film in the public’s mind. Soong encouraged college students to watch domestic movies. Under his direction, GIO supported a “college film festival,” a traveling program of free film screenings at principal colleges across Taiwan. After the screenings, some directors and actors would talk to students face-to-face. This program played an important role in introducing New Taiwan Cinema and other Taiwanese films to college students, who became New Taiwan Cinema’s major audience. Soong also left his position in 1985, and the new GIO director made less effort to help the film industry.

In 1988, the GIO began a new financial support project called "The Fund for Domestic Film Production." The goal of this fund was to save the declining film industry in general, not specifically New Taiwan Cinema. They decided that the "Foundation for Film Development" would give NT $30 million in financial support for ten films a year. Those wanting to apply for the grant have to submit the proposed film project and screenplay to a 15-member committee composed of government officials, scholars and the like. However, this program didn’t do a lot to help either New Taiwan Cinema or the general film industry. Since the program began, it has generated a lot of complaints. First, the members of committee don’t have the trust of other people, the process of judging
works is murky and there are rumors of bribery. Second, the amount of support that is offered isn’t enough to make a film. The average budget for a film in Taiwan these days is about NT $10 million. Although the GIO adjusted the program and increased another NT $10 million the amount of support that would be provided every year to one film needing a higher budget, the other 10 projects selected are still underbudgeted. Third, the criteria for support are in dispute. Some people think that the money should support commercial films, while others believe that the government shouldn’t be supporting commercial films and that the money should go to noncommercial projects instead. Regardless, the government doesn’t seem to have a good solution for the problems facing the Taiwanese film industry and New Taiwan Cinema.

As discussed earlier, by the late Eighties, not only New Taiwan Cinema but the whole Taiwanese film industry was headed toward a difficult situation. The number of films made in Taiwan is decreasing. In fact, the old problems that existed before New Taiwan Cinema’s rise still exist. New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers tried to change the system but failed. The distribution system is still full of flaws. Industry professionalism has never been established. Imported films still dominate the market. In 1986, of the 158 Mandarin films released in Taipei, only 71 of them were made in Taiwan, and 87 of them came from
Hong Kong. Of the top 10 box office films, eight were Hong Kong films. In 1987, the situation got worse; among 156 Mandarin films released in Taipei, 98 were from Hong Kong and only 58 from Taiwan.

During the Eighties, the fast spread of home videocassette recorders worsened the situation. A study indicates that at the end of 1984, there were more than one million VCRs in Taiwan and one of every four households had one, a higher percentage than in the United States at that time. In 1987, the number of VCRs reached 1.2 million. In Taipei, people with VCRs spent an average of seven hours a week watching videocassette. The average rent for a videotape was NT $20-25 (NT $26 = US $1) before the new copyright law in 1992. The problem of piracy is serious, too. Sometimes, people can rent or buy movies that are still showing in theaters. People also go to MTV, or "movies on TV," video centers to watch films. In MTV centers, the people rent movies on tape and watch them in a small, private room in which there is a television, VCR and laserdisc player. The cost of watching a film in an MTV center is about the same as watching it in theaters. However, because of the wider variety of films and privacy, many people go to MTV centers, of which there were more than 1,000 in Taiwan by 1989.

New Taiwan Cinema was the last struggle the Taiwanese film industry undertook. After the mid-Eighties, because of the popularity of Hong Kong films, some producers and investors invited Hong Kong
filmmakers, including film crews and stars, to work in Taiwan. However, the topics and styles of those films are more "Hong Kong" than Taiwanese. More investors just put their money in the Hong Kong film industry or bought the distribution rights to Hong Kong films. In 1986, the Tom Son motion picture company and Long Hsian set up headquarters in Hong Kong to invest money in the Hong Kong film industry. After the government loosened controls on the outflow of capital in 1987, more and more Taiwanese money flowed that direction. According to one estimate, in 1991 about NT $1.4 billion in Taiwanese money was invested in the Hong Kong film industry. Thirty percent of the capital in the Hong Kong film industry comes from Taiwan. The Taiwanese film industry has been losing artists and technicians, too. Many Taiwanese actors and actresses have moved to Hong Kong, and some filmmakers as well. The famous New Taiwan Cinema filmmaker Lee Ping-bing, the cinematographer of Dust in the Wind, was invited to work in Hong Kong and was paid three times as much as he received in Taiwan. The death of New Taiwan Cinema, then, was part of the general decline of the Taiwanese film industry.

**Criticisms of New Taiwan Cinema**

Although New Taiwan Cinema had numerous positive effects on Taiwanese film culture, it was also accused of several shortcomings. First of all, New Taiwan Cinema movies shared too many stylistic and
thematic similarities and eventually lost their originality and creativity. Most New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers are friends and have good personal relationships with each other. They did not only offer ideas and opinions to one another, they also acted or did actual production work in each other's films. The reason is, as Hou said, "because we cannot fail in the marketplace, so we make a team." However, there is good side to kind of situation. The filmmakers helped one another and formed a kind of power base. But the downside was that their movies became too similar. For example, they preferred to use long shots, long takes and deep focus, and some critics accused them of using this style too much and without regard to the film's content or the mass audience's tastes. They also tended to choose similar topics, especially themes involving teenagers, coming-of-age experiences and women's lives. The mass audience soon grew weary of this homogeneity.

New Taiwan Cinema was also criticized for the emptiness of its social criticism. Although New Taiwan Cinema dealt more with social reality than did "old cinema," most of the social criticism in New Taiwan Cinema was relatively superficial. This was because the KMT government controlled the mass media more tightly than any other institution. The timidity of New Taiwan Cinema also resulted from the complex relationship among its filmmakers, political power, and the movement's financial problems. Especially after the "cutting apple event." New
Taiwan Cinema filmmakers tacitly imposed on themselves a kind of self-censorship. For example, Hou always said that his films don't deal with ideology. Does that just indicate his personal preference or does it show that he was trying to avoid something? It's doubtful that it is possible to not touch "ideology" in movies.

At the same time, Eighties Taiwanese society was undergoing radical changes. New Taiwan Cinema seems to be too conservative for the new standard of the late Eighties. Lee Tian-dow and Chen Pei-chi wrote in their article:

Compared to the movies before the Eighties, New Cinema displayed realistic images that had never been seen, so it was able to earn the support of public opinion and gain box office success in 1982. But compared to the whole social wave in the Eighties, New Cinema was limited within the frame of political institutions. Its introspection and looking back seemed to be soft and conservative. At the same time, it failed to inspire new ideas in the political struggle and social movements of that time. Therefore, although New Cinema could get support from part of the art and literary circles, it couldn't get recognition from the middle class and laborers after 1984.  

The Contribution of New Taiwan Cinema  

The contributions to and influence of New Taiwan Cinema on the Taiwanese film industry are significant and important. First, New Taiwan Cinema changed the position of movies in the public mind. Before New Taiwan Cinema, movies were considered public entertainment, a kind of pleasure industry, as well as a tool for political propaganda. For most people, movies were not something serious, not art or culture. The
emergence of New Taiwan Cinema changed some of these notions, and especially after some films received positive responses in international film festivals, the idea of the movies as a creative form was established.

The second contribution of New Taiwan Cinema was its challenge to the traditional studio system. Before the rise of New Taiwan Cinema, the studio system was very bureaucratic. For example, a director had to work up from the bottom, learning everything about the filmmaking craft and waiting a long time for the chance to direct. There was no chance for new and young filmmakers. When the CMPC first went against this system and gave young, relatively untested directors an opportunity, there were a lot of complaints. Although the film industry bureaucracy still exists, because of the young filmmakers’ success, the succeeding generation of filmmakers get more chances. The New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers not only challenged the old studio system, they improved the technical sophistication and quality of moviemaking in Taiwan because of their education and professionalism.

During the New Taiwan Cinema period, local film criticism as an institution also established its foundation. Before New Taiwan Cinema, there were only personal impressionistic reviews of movies. People also weren’t paying attention to film study and its related fields. The rise of New Taiwan Cinema offered a good opportunity for some young and Western-educated film critics to express their ideas. They introduced
Western critical methodologies, especially the theory of auteurism. The debate between New Taiwan Cinema supporters and its detractors also brought film critics and New Taiwan Cinema to the public's attention.

One of the most important contributions of New Taiwan Cinema filmmakers is that they challenged conventional commercial styles and introduced alternative film styles to Taiwanese cinema. Although New Taiwan Cinema films never really joined the commercial mainstream, because of the mass media attention they attracted the films got the public to pay attention to the ideas the films were dealing with. New Taiwan Cinema also introduced the mass audience to new film styles and ideas.

The New Taiwan Cinema also earned an international critical reputation for Taiwanese cinema. Before New Taiwan Cinema, few people outside Asia knew about Taiwanese movies. Certain filmmakers' success in international film festivals attracted attention in other countries.

During the five years of New Taiwan Cinema, because of the efforts of some filmmakers and critics, the government eased censorship and changed certain regulations. Many important movies in Taiwanese film history were part of New Taiwan Cinema. It also nurtured two outstanding directors, Hou Hsiao-hsian and Edward Yang. The influence of New Taiwan Cinema on Taiwanese movies is deep and can't be overlooked.
The Struggle of the Taiwanese Film Industry

The Taiwanese film industry reached its nadir after the end of New Taiwan Cinema. The number of movies made in Taiwan has declined alarmingly in recent years. In 1989, 201 Mandarin films were released in Taipei, and only 55 of them were made in Taiwan.\(^4\) In 1992, there were no more than 20 Taiwanese films released in theaters.\(^42\) Although Hou's *City of Sadness* won the Grand Prize at the Venice Film Festival in 1989, it couldn't disguise the fact that the Taiwanese film industry was in the worst shape in its history.

The government also felt the film industry’s crisis. Under new director Hu Chi-chang’s leadership, the GIO has started a program called the "1993 National Film Year." The government assumed a more active role in rebuilding the film industry. Several former New Taiwan Cinema supporters are major planners in this program.\(^43\) This shows that New Taiwan Cinema has gained the recognition of the mainstream audience and those with political power. On the hand, it also shows that the relationship between the New Taiwan Cinema group and those with political power has become less adversarial.

Some production companies, such as Long-shong and the CMPC have started to train a new generation of filmmakers. They also have new plans to train and promote local performers to compete with Hong Kong stars. In several new CMPC films, new and young actors and actresses
have played major roles. Long-shong has been the biggest distributor of Hong Kong movies in Taiwan in recent years and, it uses its good connections with the Hong Kong film industry to help Taiwanese actors and actresses get started in Hong Kong-made films.

**New Taiwan Cinema Directors During the Nineties**

Between 1988 and 1992, with a few exceptions, most New Taiwan Cinema directors seemed to stop making movies. Hou and Yang are the most active New Taiwan Cinema directors in the Nineties and get financial backing mainly because of their international reputations. However, they have also had to try other jobs in addition to making movies.

After winning the Golden Lion in Venice, Hou got the full support of ERA International Film Co. Hou also formed a workshop called the Hou Hsiao-hsian Film Workshop and has done much work as a producer. He is the executive producer of Zhang Yimou’s *Raise the Red Lantern* and even sings on the soundtrack of the movie *Dust of Angels*. After *City of Sadness*, he directed *The Puppetmaster*, a film set in the years of the Japanese occupation. It’s about a puppet player, his childhood and youth. The story ends at the time the war ended. As usual, in *The Puppetmaster* he created vivid characters and integrated a historic atmosphere with personal fate. In this film, Hou takes his unique aesthetic to an extreme. The fixed angle and camera positions give the
film a quiet and heavy feeling. Most of this film was shot in Xiamon, China, because its scenery is similar to that of postwar Taiwan. The Puppetmaster won the Jury Prize at the 1993 Cannes Film Festival. His next film project will be set during the Fifties Cold War era when there was large-scale political oppression in Taiwan.

After Terrorists in 1986, Yang couldn't get financing to make any films and taught school for a while. Yang's latest film is 1991's A Brighter Summer Day. Yang also formed his own production house for this film. Since then, Yang has directed a stage play in Taipei and now is planning his next film, a comedy titled The Confucian Confusion.

Birth of a New Generation

A group of new generation filmmakers started to make movies after the late Eighties and early Nineties. They also became a new attraction. Yie Hong-wei started making movies in the late Eighties. His Curse of the Knife deals with the history of the KMT regime's cooperation with local powers, especially local gangsters. It touches another category of past Taiwanese experiences. His Five Girls and a Rope went in another direction. Based on a novel by a writer from Mainland China, the movie was set in a remote region of China. Although its theme was not new to Taiwanese audiences, it differs from New Taiwan Cinema's concentration on Taiwanese experiences. That film gave Yie the honor of Best Young Director at the 1991 Tokyo Film Festival. However, the film went to the
Tokyo festival under the name of Hong Kong company because it was shot in China and used a Mainland actress, and the KMT hadn’t lifted the restrictions on using Mainland Chinese actresses and actors at that time. The film was banned in Taiwan until 1992.

Lee Ang may be the most well-known new director in Taiwan now. He is New York University graduate and has been living in the United States for many years since coming over as a student. After he graduated from NYU, he couldn’t get the opportunity to make movies, so he stayed at home writing scripts and film projects. In 1990, he sent a script to Taiwan for a government-funded screenplay contest and was selected. Because of that, he established connections with the CMPC, and with its support, made Pushing Hands, his first feature film, in 1991. This film was shot in New York and concerns the Chinese-American experience. Pushing Hands is close to a conventional melodrama but did quite well at the box office in Taiwan and was nominated for seven Golden Horse Awards. Because of the success of Pushing Hands, he worked with the CMPC again to make his next film, The Wedding Banquet. The film won the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival in 1993. It’s a comedy about a gay male yuppie from Taiwan living in New York and the pressure exerted by traditional ideas and his parents. This film also was a box office hit in Taiwan and has been released very successfully in the United States.
Xu Xiao-ming, Tsai Ming-liang and Stan Lai are new directors who made their first feature films in 1992. Xu Xiao-ming's Dust of Angels and Tsai Ming-lian's Rebels of the Neon God both deal with teenagers' lives. These films differ from New Taiwan Cinema in that they deal with today's adolescents and reflect contemporary Taiwanese society through them. The films display the cool film style of New Taiwan Cinema, but have a darker tone. Stan Lai got his Ph.D degree in drama at the University of California in Berkeley. Peach Blossom Land is his first film and was based on his popular play. Before that, he taught at schools and worked as a stage director and writer. Because of his background, Peach Blossom Land has a conventional dramatic structure. It's a little different from New Taiwan Cinema's style in terms of narrative. The theme is different, too. It's a comedy about some mistakes and coincidences that take place during the rehearsals of two plays.

Huang Ming-chuan is perhaps the first and only independent feature filmmaker in Taiwan. His first film, Man From Island West, deals with a theme that is rarely tackled -- the natives of Taiwan. In that film, he shows how those minority people lost their roots and tribe culture because of the oppression of Chinese people and modern civilization. He is currently working on Bodo.

Yu Wei-yen got involved in moviemaking as early as 1981 and participated in several New Taiwan Cinema productions as art designer,
executive producer and other positions. The movies he has worked on include *Jade Love*, *Red Rouge of the North* and *A Brighter Summer Day*. *Moonlight Boy* is the second feature movie he directed. This film looks like a family melodrama mixed with a ghost story. However, the style and narrative are unique. Before becoming a movie director, Chen Guo-fu was a film critic. He was involved in the production of *Terrorists*. His first feature film was *High School Girl* in 1989, a satire of high school education and teenagers. His second film, *Treasure Island*, which was released in 1993, concerns the danger and anxiety under the surface of modern urban life. It makes an ironic statement about the second generation of a powerful Mainland family and a new generation of Taipei youth.

The new generation filmmakers demonstrate different faces and more variety than their New Taiwan Cinema antecedents. First of all, because of the democratization of recent years, the filmmakers have more freedom to deal with political topics. For example, both *The Curse of the Knife* and *Treasure Island* make fairly pointed statements about political power. Second, new generation filmmakers have demonstrated more variety in subject matter and film styles. They are not limited to past history and coming-of-age experiences. Lee Ang's Chinese-American experiences, Stan Lai's filmed stage play or Chen Guo-fu's montage of the modern urban middle class show the wider range of subject matter.
Many filmmakers have adopted a realistic film style, but there are more experimental images, too. Huang Ming-chuan's *Man From Island West* is full of symbolism. Chen Guo-fu's *Treasure Island* puts reality in a surreal atmosphere. Yu Wei-yen blended live action and animation in *Moonlight Boy*.

There is obvious technical progress in those films, too. With the competition and stimulation from Hong Kong and other imported films, the cinematography, editing and sound recording of Taiwanese films have improved. These new directors show their intention to cooperate with the commercial system. They've used nonprofessional actors, stage actors and TV actors as well as big stars.

*The New Direction of Taiwanese Cinema*

In the past several years, the Taiwanese film industry plunged to new depths commercially and now is going in new directions and entering a new era. The obvious changes includes the internationalization of Taiwanese movies, the cooperation and interaction among Taiwan, Hong Kong and China and commercialization and new promotional strategies.

The internationalization of Taiwanese films goes along with the increasingly active role Taiwan plays in the world and the Asian economy. It also reflects the recession of local film production. Because local investors don't want to invest in local production, the filmmakers look for outside financial help. However, this has been limited to those
who have international reputations, such as Edward Yang. During the
post-production stage of *A Brighter Summer Day*, Yang had financial
problems, so he sold the Japanese distribution rights to a Japanese
company, Hero, and world distribution rights to Mico, another Japanese
company. Huang Ming-chuan is making his new film with money
from Singapore. When Lee Ang shot his first film, *Pushing Hands*, he
established another model; he used the CMPC’s money and shot in New
York with an American independent production company and American
film crew. Sometimes, local productions also cooperate with overseas
companies to achieve better quality. For example, the post-production
work for several movies has been completed in Japan.

The cooperation among the film industries in Taiwan, Hong Kong and
Mainland China may point to the most significant direction for Chinese
language films. Separated geographically and politically, the three places
have developed quite different film industry models. However, along with
the radical changes and problems in all three places, people in the three
film industries understand the benefit of cooperation. The most common
model has involved using the scenery in China, with stars and crew from
Hong Kong and investment capital from Taiwan. Sometimes, the
combination is different, but the role the Taiwanese film industry usually
plays is that of an investor. For example, ERA International Co. invested
in Zhang Yimou’s *Raise the Red Lantern*. After China announced the
opening of its film market as of 1993, several big production companies, such as ERA and the CMPC, prepared to enter that huge market. In fact, even before the official "opening," some Taiwanese films from the Seventies were released in China. It’s predicted that the relationship among these three film industries of three Chinas will become closer. Because of internationalization and cooperation with China and Hong Kong, it has become more and more difficult to define "Taiwanese cinema".

Due to the box office failures of recent years, the Taiwanese film industry also has had to adjust. Since the domestic market is not big enough to support the film industry, the overseas market is crucial. With new promotion strategies, filmmakers hope to be able to enter the overseas market, especially the European and North American "art film" market, with high-quality Taiwanese films. As for commercial films, Taiwanese producers hope that they can gain popularity in China or Southeast Asia.

New Taiwan Cinema as a movement has ended. However, its contributions to and influence on the Taiwanese film industry are important. The Nineties Taiwanese film industry is starting from a new point. Facing the film business recession, filmmakers and the government have tried to find a solution for the future. At the same time, Taiwan is also at a turning point in its history. The voice of
independence domestically, the relationship with China and the impending return of Hong Kong to China in 1997 also affect the society and film industry in Taiwan. On the other hand, the rise of a new generation of filmmakers seeking new styles of moviemaking and the internationalization of the film industry have given Taiwanese films of the Nineties a different face. Thus, the future of Taiwanese cinema is full of unpredictable dynamics.
Notes


3. Ibid., 45.


5. See chapter two.

6. Cinema City is a big Hong Kong production company and has a headquarters in Taiwan. Tomson and Cinema City, Long Shong, Fee-Tung and Evergreen are the other major private production companies involved in New Taiwan Cinema production. Usually, they cooperate with the CMPC and invested part of the money for a project. Among all New Taiwan Cinema productions, the CPMC provided about half the investment and other production companies invested the other half.

7. After CPMC has a new manager in 1984, it became more and more profit-oriented because of reducing government support. In 1988, a new regulation ask CMPC to be responsible for their own finance.


10. Mi Zho, 42.


Yang, Zhang Yi and Zen Zhwan-xiang; the screen writers are Chu Tian-wen, Ding Ya-ming, Wu Nian-zhen and Xiao Yie; the cinematographers are Lee Bing-ping and Yang Wei-han; the editor is Liou Ching-sung; the producer is Zhang Hua-kuen.


18. Ibid., 72.


20. Ibid., 58.


26. See chapter two.

27. See chapter two.


30. Ibid., 151.

31. Ibid., 151.

32. See chapter two.


34. Chen, Lee, 76.


43. Chiao Hsiung-ping, the most famous New Taiwan Cinema supporter and film critic, is the vice executive planner of this project.


APPENDIX

Filmography: New Taiwan Cinema Films Released

NB:d=director

* Title translated into English by the author.

1982
1. In Our Time (Guanying De Gushi) d. Tao De-chan, Ke Yi-zhen, Edward Yang, Zhang Yi. Central Motion Picture Company.

2. Sandwichman (Er'ze De Da Wan'uo) d. Hou Hsiao-hsian, Wan Ren, Zen Zhuan-xiang. Central Motion Picture Company.


4. The Boys From Fengkei (Fengkuei Lai De Ren) d. Hou Hsiao-hsian. Evergreen Film Company.

5. The Kendo Kids (Zhijian Shaonian) d. Zhang Yi. Central Motion Picture Company.

6. The Kid With a Sword* (Daijian De Xiaohai) d. Ke Yi-zhen. Cinema City Film Company.


8. The Wrong Bus* (Da Cou Che) d. Yu Kun-ping. Cinema City Film Company.

1983

2. Sandwichman (Er'ze De Da Wan'uo) d. Hou Hsiao-hsian, Wan Ren, Zen Zhuan-xiang. Central Motion Picture Company.


4. The Boys From Fengkei (Fengkuei Lai De Ren) d. Hou Hsiao-hsian. Evergreen Film Company.

5. The Kendo Kids (Zhijian Shaonian) d. Zhang Yi. Central Motion Picture Company.

6. The Kid With a Sword* (Daijian De Xiaohai) d. Ke Yi-zhen. Cinema City Film Company.


8. The Wrong Bus* (Da Cou Che) d. Yu Kun-ping. Cinema City Film Company.

1984

2. The Woman of Wrath (Sha Fu) d. Zen Zhuan-xiang. Tomson
3. A Summer at Grandpa’s (Dongdong De Jiachi) d. Hou Hsiao-hsian. Marlboro Film Company.


5. Old Mao’s Second Spring (Laomuo De Di’re Ge Chuentien) d. Lee Yo-ning. Kao-she Film Company.

6. The Bicycle and Me* (Dan Che Yu Wo) d. Tao De-chen. Central Motion Picture Company.


9. Wheat Is Harvested in the Sorghum Field* (Gaoliangdi Li Damai Sho) d. Yang Li-guo. Lio-fong Film Company.


11. Ah Fei (Yio Ma Cai Ze) d. Wan Ren. Marlboro Film Company.

12. The Elegy of a Killer* (Shashou Wange) d. Lee Yo-ning. Montage Film Company.


2. A Time to Live, a Time to Die (Tongnian Wanshi) d. Hou Hsiao-hsian. Central Motion Picture Company.


4. The Matrimony (Jiehuen) d. Chen Kuen-hou. Fee Tung Film Company.

5. Super Citizen (Chaoji Shiming) d. Wan Ren. Long-shong Film Company.


8. The Flunked-Out Heroes (Guo'si Yingshiong Zhuani) d. Peter Mak. Long-shong Film Company.

9. Spring Outside the Fence (Zhulibawei De Chuentien) d. Lee Yoning. Tomson Film Company.


12. Run Away (Ce’ma Rulin) d. Wang Tong. Central Motion Picture Company.

1986


2. Dust in the Wind (Lienglieng Fengchen) d. Hou Hsiao-hsian. Central Motion Picture Company.

3. Last Train to Tamsui (Woman De Tiankuan) d. Ke Yi-zhen. Central Motion Picture Company.

4. Hanson, My Son (Wo'er Hanshen) d. Zhang Yi. Central Motion Picture Company.

5. This Love of Mine (Wo De Ai) d. Zhang Yi. Central Motion Picture Company.


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