1950年代末至1960年代初的臺語片明星現象：
「明星夢」與「香港熱」之探討

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摘要

本文討論臺灣1950年代末至1960年代初期，隨著臺語片興起所出現蓬勃的「明星熱」與「香港熱」的現象。筆者認為當代報章雜誌關於臺語片明星的報導，一方面呈現當代社會對於臺語片興起的反應，另一方面，報導撰文的修辭也體現主流意識形態運作的軌跡。透過閱讀「明星夢」與「香港熱」的相關報導，本文辨識出「國家化國語片」與「省化臺語片」的態度與修辭，其將剛興起的臺語片和明星與中國中心國族主義接合起來。然而，關於臺語片明星的香港經驗，報導中所流露出對現代大都會的渴望——無論出自於明星本身或是媒體對於明星香港經驗的詮釋，顯示了中國中心主義意識形態無法完整地框架與收編此新興文化。

關鍵字：臺語片、明星夢、香港熱、國族主義、現代性

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Introduction: Taiyupian as Heuristic Device and Culture

The release of Taiwanese-language films (taiyupian/臺語片), such as Six Talents’ Romance of the West Chamber in 1955 and the commercial success of Xue Pinggui and Wang Baochuan in 1956, not only motivated the spectacular inception of taiyupian industry but also brought about the taiyupian star phenomenon. More than one hundred and fifty taiyupian films were produced between 1955 and 1959, nonetheless, only thirteen from the 1950s survive today, according to the record preserved in the Taiwan Film Institute. The industry in its nascent years produced many taiyupian stars, such as Xiao Yan Qiu (小艷秋), Bai Lan (白蘭), and Bai Hong (白虹), who were not only active in taiyupian film industry in Taiwan but even in Amoy-dialect film industry in Hong Kong. The needs of actresses and actors of the industry and the growing popularity of taiyupian stars generated both journalistic and social sensation. Yet, while events were selected in response to the public interests to the emerging taiyupian phenomenon, the journalistic representations of the industry and stars simultaneously involved ideological operations that sought to contained the industrial spectacle within the Nationalist government’s cultural and political creeds. By examining “dream of stardom” and “Hong Kong fever” of taiyupian formed in news reports, the article explores contests between industrial development of taiyupian and ideological containment of the dominant power, that is, the Nationalist regime, mediated by journalism.

1 Six Talents’ Romance of the West Chamber (Liu caizi xixiang ji/六才子西廂記) is directed by Shao Luo-Hui (邵羅輝). Xue Pinggui and Wang Baochuan (Xue Pinggui yu Wang Baochuan/薛平貴與王寶釧) is directed by He Ji-Ming (何基明). Chinese name order follows usage in the original languages. Chinese and Japanese family names come before given names.

Taiyupian in this article is approached as a heuristic device as well as a culture. The methodological reconsideration in my approach to taiyupian responds to the ways in which taiyupian is defined by the two the two pioneering taiyupian historians, Huang Ren (黃仁), and Ye Long-Yan (葉龍彥). In the preface of Sorrowful Taiwanese-Language Films (1994), Huang laments that the Nationalist government’s suppression of taiyu to cut off the Taiwanese’s local bondage is the major cause of the estrangement of taiyupian in Taiwan film historiography.\(^3\) The sentiment of sorrow attached to taiyupian is derived from the hierarchy between Taiwanese-language and Mandarin imposed by the Nationalist government. Ye in his Spring Flowers, Dream Dews: The Ups and Downs of the Authentic Taiwanese-Language films (1999) positions “authentic taiyupian” (zhengzong taiyu pian/正宗台語片) against Amoy-dialect films imported from Hong Kong, Mandarin films, and a taiyupian produced by the state-owned studio.\(^4\) Taiyupian in Huang and Ye’s language-centric and local vs. official binary understandings—taiyu with connotations of localness, authenticity, non-officiality, suppression, and the sentiment of sadness become a concept with stable and fix meanings and imaginings.

Nonetheless, although taiyu is an important attribute that characterizes taiyupian, the language-centric approach may lead to the overemphasis of the political and cultural suppression in the 1950s and 1960s and downplay the cross-cultural and cross-media exchanges in taiyupian that make taiyupian less local and authentic as imagined. In response to the limitation drawing from the language-centric understanding of taiyupian in

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\(^3\) Ren Huang, Sorrowful Taiwanese-Language Films (Beiqing taiyupian/悲情台語片) (Taipei: Wanxiang, 1994), p. v.

\(^4\) See Long-Yan Ye, Spring Flowers, Dream Dews: The Ups and Downs of the Authentic Taiwanese-Language films (Chunghua menglu: zhengzong taiyu dianying xing shuai lulu/春花夢露：正宗台語電影興衰錄) (Taipei: Boyang wenhua, 1999), Table of Contents.
the field of research, I propose to approach *taiyupian* as a heuristic device and a culture rather than an established concept. The Modern Girl Around the World Research Group provides a good example of how *taiyupian* could be approached as a heuristic device that “emerges in and through the research process and possesses a future orientation.”[^5] The Modern Girl Around the World Research Group maps the global phenomenon of Modern Girl in the 1920s and 1930s by tracing its “various colonial and national incarnations and [revealing] linkages among the many geographic locations in which she appeared.”[^6] The Modern Girl, as images and concepts, is enriched and complicated simultaneously by social and cultural specificities of each places and linkages between the Modern Girl phenomenon across geographical and political boundaries.[^7] In addition, it is more likely to encounter unexpected researching findings without prescriptive presumptions during the research process.[^8] The understanding that the Modern Girl is a heuristic device is productive in re-approaching *taiyupian*. On the one hand, it cautions researchers the limitation of the epistemology framework of reading the so-called local culture in today’s scholarships on *taiyupian*. On the other hand, it reminds scholars to re-map the discourse formation by returning to film texts and archival materials and allow the heteroglossia and heterogeneity to emerge. To the later point, Zhang Zhen’s reconsideration of the term “early


Pi-Ju Liang, “The Taiyupian Star Phenomenon from the Late 1950s to Early 1960s: the “Dream of Stardom” and “Hong Kong Fever””

Chinese cinema” is enlightening. The study of early cinema transformed from film-text oriented to that includes various cultural practices, demonstrated in the annual conference of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF) in 1978. The attention to film culture and experience is constituted by and not exclusive to star phenomenon, fan culture, and theatre experience that re-connect on- and off-screen spaces. As the invention of cinema marks a historical point in modern life, taiyupian, the first locally mass-produced and mass consumed cultural product in Taiwan, also plays a role in Taiwan’s cultural and social experience in the modernizing process. By taking taiyupian as a keyword and entry point through which to re-assess archival materials to re-map the formation of taiyupian culture.

Newspaper stories related to taiyupian is constituent in the cultural formation of taiyupian. They not only react to the public interests but also direct them. My investigation of the phenomena of “dream of stardom” and “Hong Kong fever” reported in newspapers is an attempt to trace the rhetorics employed, and therefore the dominant ideology articulated, to contain the possibility of social mobility opened up by the taiyupian industry boom, especially in relation to women's movement from ordinary to extraordinary and from local to international film stars. This essay will begin with a theoretical and methodological investigation on taiyupian’s historiography, categorization, and definition. I will then examine the social stories and criticism about the “dream of stardom” facilitated by the taiyupian industry. News reports published by private news agencies are major references in my investigation for they simultaneously display and mediate public interests. Revolving around movement not only between private and public spaces, country and city, but also between gender roles as well as social standings, the

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stories illustrate the ambivalent relationship between women and cinema, that is, between liberation and commodification. The essay will then shift to the geographical and physical movements of taiyupian stars, particularly female starts depicted in newspaper stories. “Hong Kong fever” will be contextualized in the dominant ideology’s rhetoric of provincializing taiyupian and nationalizing Mandarin films in the media, which were mainly controlled by the government at the time. As will be argued, taiyupian stars’ “Hong Kong fever”, which involved cosmopolitan vernaculars on fashion, lifestyle, and body language, could not be easily contained by the Sinocentric narrative. By examining “dream of stardom” and “Hong Kong fever”, the article intends to demonstrate that taiyupian as a subordinate cinema of taiyu is also a culture, in which the dominant ideology on women's social mobility was challenged and resisted.

**Taiyupian: From Prescriptive to Descriptive**

The search for cultural specificity in taiyupian scholarships has the tendency to construct taiyupian as national cinema. Post-colonialism became an organizing concept in Taiwanese literature after the lifting of martial law, which lasted from 1949 to 1987. Chiu Kuei-Fen points out that during the post-martial law literary scholars of Taiwanization movement had recourse to post-colonial discourse of colonizer and colonized for framing local literature, which was repressed by non-local dominant powers.\(^{10}\) Taiyupian studies also emerged and were caught in the post-martial-law Taiwanization movement in which taiyupian was positioned as, on the one hand, a victim of the KMT political and cultural policy, and on the other, a local cultural expression against the dominance of official language. As Wang Chun-Chi has pointed out, one key problem of taiyupian’s positionality in the taiyupian studies is

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that the understanding of taiyupian representing a nonofficial ideology is based not on the film texts themselves but on their marginal, political, commercial, and historical status in relation to Healthy Realism, which is promoted by the KMT government. One example of these works is pioneering taiyupian historian Huang Ren’s *Sorrowful Taiwanese-Language Films*, one of the earliest accounts of taiyupian history. The book title manifests the victimized status of taiyupian conceived by Huang. Another taiyupian historian, Ye Long-Yan, likewise introduces the KMT’s oppressive cultural policy to begin his book, *Spring Flowers, Dream Dews: The Ups and Downs of the Authentic Taiwanese-Language films*. Andrew Higson cautions that national cinema, while established to resist industrial, cultural, and ideological invasion and hegemony of Hollywood films, “very often the concept of national cinema is used prescriptively rather than descriptively, citing what ought to be the national cinema, rather than describing the actual cinematic experience of popular audiences.” The impulse of resisting and subverting the hegemonic discourse and delimiting self-identity also appears in current taiyupian scholarships.

Nevertheless, both Huang and Ye touch on cross-cultural exchanges in the nascent taiyupian industry, such as the involvement of mainlanders and the “Hong Kong fever” of taiyupian stars. “Mainlanders” (waisheng ren/外省人) can literally be translated as “people from outside of the province of

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Taiwan,” referring to the people who came to Taiwan from mainland China after 1945 or 1949. To Huang mainlanders contributed to the taiyupian boom in the first five years of its development (1955-1960). Since the Mandarin film industry in post-1949 Taiwan was nearly dormant, many Chinese filmmakers who came to Taiwan with the KMT government devoted themselves to taiyupian filmmaking even though many of them did not understand taiyu. Taiyupian was thus enriched by their diverse cultural input and cinematic knowledge and became aesthetically accented. Even the so-called islanders (benshengren/本省人), which literally means “people of this province,” may have distinctive inflections determined by their different ancestral homelands, such as Zhangzou and Quanzhou in the Fujian province of China. Besides, according to Ye, the first period of taiyupian (1955-1961) was characterized by the formation of the star system and the establishment of private production companies. Regarding the star system, Ye touches on the phenomenon of taiyupian stars’ “Hong Kong fever”—going to Hong Kong to make Amoy-dialect films—and the stars’ transformations. Just like Amoy-dialect film industry, which incorporated talents and performers from all over the place, taiyupian is a heterogeneous and hybrid cultural body. The cross-cultural exchanges noted by Huang and Ye show that taiyupian is a multi-accented form of expression and testifies to the fluctuating and ambivalent border of authentic taiyupian.

15 Huang, Sorrowful Taiwanese-Language Films, pp. 8-14.
16 Ye, Spring Flowers, Dream Dews, pp. 92-111.
17 Ibid., pp. 94-95. Interestingly, although Ye demarcates the field of taiyupian with parameters such as language, location, and crew, he does not consider Six Talents’ Romance of the West Chamber the first authentic taiyupian because it is produced and played by the theatre troupe from Xiamen, China (p. 67).
Instead of searching for “authentic” *taiyupian* with a specific cultural meaning, one should regard it as an operational term, a heuristic device. Wang Chun-Chi has cautioned that claim “authentic *taiyupian*” is derived from the *taiyupian* industry’s attempt to distinguish itself from Amoy-dialect films. Drawing from Hall’s conceptualization of cultural identity, Wang argues that the meaning and identity of *taiyupian* should stem from continuous positioning rather than essence. Regarding *taiyupian* as a heuristic device does away the prescribed understandings of *taiyupian* and enables researchers to track relevant representations (literal, audio, or visual) that revolve around it. For example, as the biography of Bai Hong illustrates, some *taiyupian* stars started their careers in *taiyupian* filmmaking but traveled to Hong Kong to make Amoy-dialect films and Mandarin films. They later returned to Taiwan to continue their *taiyupian* careers and even made local Mandarin films or transferred to television. Recognized as *taiyupian* stars, their border-crossings, including national, linguistic, and industrial activities, are integral part of *taiyupian* culture.

Arjun Appadurai argues that “[s]tressing the dimensionality of culture rather than its substantiality permits our thinking of culture less a property of individuals and groups and more as a heuristic device that we can use to talk

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about difference.” 21 When taiyupian studies is extracted from the epistemologies of postcolonialism, nativism, and essentialism, other ways to articulate gender, nation, race, and classes become visible. Wang Chun-chi, for instance, re-contextualizes and historicizes taiyupian in the discourses of modernization and modernity in Taiwan, identifying patriarchal capitalism and nationalism in the characterizations of female characters. To her taiyupian is no longer defined by the reified language to signify cultural and ethnic authenticity. 22 In my previous discussion on the sub-imperial ideology in Xin Qi’s works, taiyupian is also situated in the broader context of transnationalism. 23 Here in this article, I consider that taiyupian involves various cultural practices in which diverse narratives of taiyupian are formed, including news coverage, film criticism, TV and radio programs, and advertisements. These cultural practices were dynamic process organizing perceptions of taiyupian, as they simultaneously catered to and affected the public’s interests. Shifting the focus from cultural specificity of the language,


Pi-Ju Liang, “The Taiyupian Star Phenomenon from the Late 1950s to Early 1960s: the “Dream of Stardom” and “Hong Kong Fever””

taiyu, and the film texts per se to these cultural practices, the article proposes to define taiyupian descriptively instead of prescriptively.

**Women’s Ambivalent “Dream of Stardom”: Mobility and Commodity**

In *Spring Flowers, Dream Dews*, Ye includes interviews of more than forty-six people on their “memories of taiyupian” (*taiyupian de huiyi/台語片的回憶*). Among the interviewees, seven were mainlanders, thirty-one were islanders, and eight were people living America. Although Ye did not reveal the exact questions posed to the interviewees, drawing from the diverse answers in their recollections, taiyupian seems to serve as a triggering device that is capable of activating memories of experiences that are not necessarily concerned with the films of taiyupian but rather with the general social environment. The interviewees’ recollections of taiyupian included the following: taiyupian film texts and qualities, Amoy-dialect films (mentioned by one interviewee), taiyupian performers, film-going experience; experiences related to attending acting class or playing extras in taiyupian; and, for females, the “dream of stardom.”

As the taiyupian industry flourished, many social stories related to the “dream of stardom” began to appear in newspapers. More importantly, the protagonists of these social stories were oftentimes women, as the booming taiyupian industry needed actresses for melodramas revolving around women’s misfortunes. The industry provided chances for local women to

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26 Ye, *Spring Flowers, Dream Dews*, pp. 219-220.
participate in a mass-mediated public sphere from which they were previously excluded. However, the relationship between women and cinema was ambivalent. The cinema industry conveys, borrowing Zhang Zhen’s words, “the promise of liberation and social mobility as well as the lure and risks of a new kind of commodification of the body by film technology.”\textsuperscript{28} The social stories of women’s “dreams of stardom” act as a channel for researchers to simultaneously probe social reactions to the emergence of the industry and inquire the modernity experienced and embodied by women’s encounter with the modern technology and mass culture that is cinema. Tracing the changing representations of women in \textit{taiyupian} from the inception of the industry, Liao Jinfeng observes that, from the 1950s to the mid-1960s, women on screen have shifted from women with bitter fates, with broken families, as parted couple, or as wandering orphans to women as spies, samurai, thieves, or bar owners.\textsuperscript{29} I will add that, during the time in which \textit{taiyupian} appeared and underwent rapid expansion, newspapers also represented film star as an available, spectacular, and viable role women could take up.

The Mandarin film industry (\textit{guoyupian/國語片})—literally means “films in the national language”— was nearly dormant in the 1950s. Other than castings and acting classes held by the state-run studios not much was going on. Only sixty \textit{guoyupian} were produced from 1949 to 1960, compared to the one hundred and ninety-nine \textit{taiyupian} between 1955 and 1960.\textsuperscript{30} They were propaganda-oriented films and therefore had difficulty achieving commercial success. In addition, casting applicants for state-run studios had to meet a language requirement; all applicants needed to be able to speak “pure


\textsuperscript{29} Liao, \textit{Faded Images}, pp. 162-163.

\textsuperscript{30} Zhang, “Table 4.4,” \textit{Chinese National Cinema}, p. 129.
Pi-Ju Liang, “The Taiyupian Star Phenomenon from the Late 1950s to Early 1960s: the “Dream of Stardom” and “Hong Kong Fever””

and correct Mandarin” (guoyu chunzheng/國語純正). As a result, the local guoyupian industry became an exclusive field for certain groups of people.

Taiyupian on the other hand was an unprecedented mass-mediated, mass-produced, and mass-consumed cultural and industrial phenomenon. The prosperous film productions also rendered the “dream of stardom” imaginable and accessible for mainly taiyu-speaking youths and provided alternative channels for them to enter the public sphere. As the films-in-productions list shows production companies blossomed after 1955, according to Lü Shu-Shang’s pioneering work History of Taiwan Cinema and Drama (1961). In 1956 fifteen film companies were set up and twenty-one films were already in production. In 1957, thirty-eight taiyupian were released by twenty-six production companies. Growth in production meant an increasing need for more film performers. Lü calculates that among the thirty-eight taiyupian in 1957, thirty female and male protagonist roles were played by former theatre performers, whereas forty-six were played by newcomers. Lü praises the growing presence of new faces on the silver screen. To him they represented the improvement of the industry and demonstrated the healthy metabolism of the business. Chen Hsing-Chi added that the taiyupian performers who emerged in 1957 were different from those in 1956 in terms of age, educational background, and professional training; the neophytes were mainly young people between seventeen and nineteen years old with at least a high

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32 Shu-Shang Lü, History of Taiwan Cinema and Drama (Taiwan dianying xiju shi/臺灣電影戲劇史) (Taipei: Yinhua chubanshe, 1961), pp. 70-71.
33 Lü, History of Taiwan Cinema and Drama, pp. 75-77.
34 Lü, History of Taiwan Cinema and Drama, p. 79.
35 Ibid., p. 79.
school education and without theatrical experience. A 1957 news report titled “Pursuing the Dream of Stardom, Aspiring to the Silver Screen: 207 People Audition” described the spectacular castings held jointly by seven taiyupian and Amoy-dialect film companies from Taiwan and Hong Kong. The report noted in detail the demographic and physical characteristics of the applicants. They included thirteen-year-old little girls to fifty-two-year-old grandmas, skinny and obese individuals, students, country girls, urban modern girls, department salesladies, “young punks” (afei/阿飛), and cement workers. Girls wore fancy clothes and makeup, and some even looked like Hollywood stars. Unlike the report on castings held by Central Motion Picture Corporation (CMPC) focused on the audition procedures rather than the diversity and attributes of applicants, it emphasized the heterogeneity and individuality of ordinary people rather than the homogeneity and authority of the institution. One can see the obvious dichotomy between the “pure and correct” Mandarin film and hybrid taiyupian both in film production practice and on media.

As the “dream of stardom” was facilitated by the booming taiyupian industry, social news and public criticisms related to the phenomenon also


38 For example, Feng-Pan Yao, “Boys and Girls Wandering on the Milky River Aspiring to Transform into Stars” (Yinhe panghuang xiaoernü, dou yu yaoshen bian mingxing/銀河徬徨小兒女，都欲搖身變明星), United Daily News (12 Jan. 1959): 5.
increased. As a newspaper column article entitled “Girls Fascinated by Dream of Stardom” indicates:

The **booming of taiyupian** has produced a number of new *taiyupian* film stars. It also **weaves alluring dreams for many islander girls**, who wish to transform from a nameless person to a glamorous star whom people will admire when the dream comes true.\(^\text{39}\)

The article recounted a “real story” in which an ordinary 18 year-old sales girl in Taichung who mistook a prank of a film marketing man from Taipei for a once-in-a-lifetime chance to become a film star. She even invited herself to the hotel room of the person whom she believed to be a famous film director late at night to ask to be taken to Taipei. The author of the article Taiper-er (*taipei ren*/台北人) points out that the girl was lucky that it was only a prank otherwise she would pay dearly for her dream of stardom. In fact, the "real story" this article recounts is the young girl's desire for geographical and social mobility to go to the big city and get out of her working-class family, as she tried to persuade the “director” to take her to Taipei by telling him that she did not have much education, that her father was a car technician, and her mother was a laundry woman. Therefore, her family would be glad if she became a star. Unsurprisingly, the author categorized the star phenomenon as a woman’s dream. These types of narratives can be found in other relevant social news. For example, a twelve-year-old girl brought her eight-year-old brother from Kaohsiung to Taipei to submit their photos to a production company and ask to be in a film.\(^\text{40}\) Two country girls went from Taoyuan to

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Taipei to fulfill their dream of stardom only to find out that the best they could be was a factory worker. Yet, these tales are recounted with evaluations concerned with, on the one hand, the false fantasy facilitated by the booming industry, and on the other, the dreamers’ naivety in their pursuits of “dream of stardom.” Nonetheless, from home to production company, from the country to the city, and from the ordinary to the extraordinary, taiyupian not only stimulated the “dream of stardom” but also intervened in people’s social life by bringing them to places they otherwise would perhaps never go. These dreamers are granted with chances and empowered by a certain degree of agency to move from the margin to the center, from the private to the public space, and, if fortunate, climb up the social ladder.

Film and Drama Weekly (Yingju zhoubao/影劇周報) published a statistic in 1959 regarding taiyupian stars’ backgrounds and categorized them into four groups: professional actors; students “leaping onto the screen”; singers “leaping onto the screen”; and hostesses (jiujianjü/酒家女) turned stars. The last category was apparently the most sensational due the huge contrast of the two social status. The article even detailed from which restaurants these hostess-turned-stars came. One prominent example involves a restaurant in Taipei that planned to make a taiyupian to celebrate its second anniversary. The film, Sea Breeze (1957), depicted the lives of hostesses. The whole cast was played by the restaurant’s “bevy of hostesses” (yingying yanyan/鶯鶯燕燕), and the most popular hostess, Chen Yin (陳茵), took on

42 “Do You Know the Backgrounds of Stars?” (Ni zhidao mingxing de chushen ma?/你知道明星的出身嗎?). Film and Drama Weekly 46 (14 Mar. 1959): 9. Hostess in a restaurant at that time are similar to bargirls nowadays.
43 Sea Breeze (Haibianfeng/海邊風), directed by Chen Tian (田琛), 1957.
the role of one of the leading female characters.\textsuperscript{44} Photo News (Sheying xinwen/攝影新聞) published a photo in which a famous taiyupian star, Xiao Yan Qiu, stood with Chen and two other performers in front of the restaurant.\textsuperscript{45} The photo illustrated the uncanny transformations of the restaurant and Chen through the power of cinema and photographic image; as a working space, it was simultaneously real (as a restaurant) and fictional (as a setting). The liberating power of cinema enabled Chen to move from one public sphere to another and, therefore, from hostess to film star and more. According to a news source, Chen assumed three identities during the film’s production: “hostess, star, and producer.”\textsuperscript{46}

“Dream of stardom” also put its aspirers, mostly female, in “a new kind of commodification of the body” as Zhang Zhen points out. This ambivalent relationship between women and cinema in the taiyupian industry is demonstrated in social stories about hostesses-turned-stars. Now that they had become film stars, their bodies, tastes, and body language were reported excessively as well as the social problems related to them. The women’s bodies were doubly objectified and commodified, first by the gazes of male customers in the restaurant and then by the film companies. The press also exploited the hostess-turned-star phenomenon by publishing stories of famous hostesses as though they are of the same status as stars. In October 1957, Photo News ran at least fourteen hostess introductions and juxtaposed them with local or foreign entertainment news. In addition, the hostesses’ pictures and stories were sometimes placed, not only next to taiyupian stars, but also stars

\textsuperscript{44} “Shadow City and Silver Lane” (Yingcheng yinxiang/影城銀巷), Credit News (3 Apr. 1957): 3.
\textsuperscript{46} “Yin Chen Wearing Many Hats” (Chen Yin shenjian sanzhi/陳茵身兼三職). Credit News (20 Jul. 1957): 3.
from Hong Kong, Europe, and Hollywood, such as Chung Ching (鍾情), Sophia Loren, and Jayne Mansfield. The hostess-turned-star phenomenon gave the press an excuse to openly present the hostesses’ stories and bodies as commodity in the name of film culture.

By juxtaposing the hostesses and female film stars, the press’s objectification and commodification of women also included the latter. An exemplary report on Bai Lan blatantly exposed the slippery boundary between female stars and hostesses and the highly commodified female bodies (of film stars) that were constructed and reinforced in media discourse. In a magazine article, Bai Lan is described as follows:

It costs Bai Lan and her agent seventy thousand dollars to terminate the contract with Zhong Hua [film company]. In other words, Bai Lan is worth seventy thousand dollars, the highest price in the ‘underground human trafficking’ in this province…. Her ‘capital’ is sufficient, with a height of 5 feet 4 inches, 34-22-25 of body measurements, and weighing 105 pounds…. When she walks, her hips and bust wave seductively.

The term “underground human trafficking” (dixia renkou fanmai/地下人口販賣) used here implies that Bai Lan is as a commodity on the market for sale. The unabashed descriptions of her body shape and even her body movement

49 “Yue Feng from Rotunda Restaurant” (Xuan Gong Yue Feng/璇宮月鳳). Photo News (14 Oct. 1957): 2.
explicitly direct the reader’s attention to her body, rather than her professional skill as an actress. To the author of this report, a female star such as Bai Lan is no different from hostesses, who make a living by selling their body or sexuality and are often sold via “underground human trafficking.” The report blurs the boundary between hostess and actress, which accentuates the ambivalent relationship between women and cinema.

The sense of moral judgement embedded in the report also reveals the attempt to contain the “dream of stardom” of the booming taiyupian industry by the dominant ideology, which associated taiyupian with impureness, naivety, and illegitimacy in quite a number of reports and stories. By downplaying “dream of stardom,” they inadvertently tried to suppress the desire for geographical and social mobility of the local people, especially local women. However, transformative experiences of female dreamers of stardom and the fact that the commodity culture opened the space for social mobility and gender liberation cannot be denied. Moreover, commodification and movement (between on/off-screen spaces, places, and social standings) were not limited by national boundaries. The rise of taiyupian industry also started the international movement of its stars, especially from Taiwan to Hong Kong. Taiyupian star Xiao Yan Qiu, who went to Hong Kong to shoot Amoy-dialect films, was proclaimed by the press as “the first taiyupian star exported.”

Although the term “export” explicitly connoted women’s bodies as goods in an international economic exchange, it was taiyupian that enabled her to make her border-crossing trip to cosmopolitan Hong Kong. By going over the news reports and stories about “Going Abroad Fever” or “Hong Kong Fever,” as the newspapers called it, we will find that they show both the desire of

51 “Shadow City and Silver Lights” (Yingcheng yinguang/影城銀光), Credit News (17 Mar. 1957): 2.
taiyupian stars to become a cosmopolitan subject as well as that of the nationalist government to nationalize the phenomena.

“Hong Kong Fever”: Sinocentric Nationalism vs. Cosmopolitanism

The rise of taiyupian industry increased the frequency of the geographical movement of movie stars after 1957 and brought out criticism on the phenomenon in the press. The criticism in general was made on two basses. One saw Chinese (including Taiwan and Hong Kong) movie stars’ desire and high frequency of going abroad to work or for personal reasons, described as “going abroad fever” (chuguo re/出國熱), as unpatriotic and vain. In the viewpoint of the press, stars who chose to go to Hollywood were used as objects of Orientalism and could not elevate their popularity among the local audience.52 The other focused in particular on taiyupian stars’ going to Hong Kong to make films, called “Hong Kong fever.” It argued that while the exchange of guoyupian stars between Taiwan and Hong was normal, it was improper for stars of the “provincial cinema,” taiyupian, to go abroad to Hong Kong to make films. While the press found the stars’ cosmopolitan experiences fascinating and appealing to the public, it was equally concerned about the phenomenon of “going abroad fever” and “Hong Kong fever.” Its criticism of the phenomenon reveals the dominant ideology of Sinocentric nationalism, especially in the differentiation of guoyupian as national cinema and taiyupian as a provincial one in the reports on “Hong Kong fever.” But as I will show the cosmopolitanism promoted by the reports on taiyupian stars’ Hong Kong experiences cannot be easily contained by the dominant ideology. The criticism was also gender biased since it was mainly female stars who were targeted in these reports. However, the cosmopolitanism was an

empowering experience to the *taiyupian* female stars as well as a significant aspect of *taiyupian*. It should be taken into consideration in the definition and study of *taiyupian* to avoid perpetuating the problematic tendency of provincializing it.

In the news report titled “Stars’ Going Abroad Fever” (*Mingxing chu guo re, hua luo zhi duo shao*), published by *Credit News* on October 19, 1958, local *guoyupian* actresses Diana Chang (*Zhang Zhong-Wen* 張仲文) and Mu Hong (*穆虹*), both contracted actresses of state-run studio CMPC, were criticized respectively for the prolonged stay in Hong Kong and their eagerness to leave the set of CMPC-produced film *When They Wake Up* (*Tamen meng xing shi* 她們夢醒時, dir. Tian Chen, 1958) to go to Hong Kong. Similar to those newspaper stories of the “dream of stardom,” females were the primary targets in criticism about “going abroad fever,” and these criticisms revolved around the issue of identification. According to an article in *Film and Drama Weekly*, female stars (*nüxing*/女星) from both *guoyupian* and *taiyupian* were lured to Hong Kong with the understanding that one could become a “shining star” (*mingxing*/明星) when become part of the “Hollywood of the Orient” (*dongfang howlaiwu*/東方好萊塢). In addition to becoming stars, the actresses also became modern material girls. For example, in another criticism on Diana Chang’s luxurious life in Hong Kong, the reporter lamented that Chang, who “represents the honor of the nation,” became influenced by the “Hong Kong air” (*Xianggang feng*/香港風) and began to “use the most modern equipment, drive the most fashionable car,”

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and “live in a high-end building with an ocean view of Hong Kong.” Another guoyupian actress Julie Yeh Feng (葉楓) from Taiwan was chided for her foolishness to fall in love with a “red-headed Indian” (hongtou a san/紅頭阿三), instead of falling for better choices such as directors, scriptwriters, and producers in the Hong Kong industry.

Embedded in the narrative is the complex of the KMT regime’s Sinocentric nationalism. At the time, Hong Kong was the hub of Chinese film production in Asia, where filmmakers migrated from China to escape the civil war. Prominent production companies such as Asia Pictures (supported by the U.S. government), Motion Picture & General Investment, and Shaw Brothers were located there. In addition to the advanced film industry, Hong Kong was considered the showpiece of the achievement of colonial and capitalist modernity in Asia. Several monikers of Hong Kong appeared in newspapers, including “Hollywood of the Orient,” “Pearl of the Orient” (dongfang zhi zhu/東方之珠), “John Bull’s ‘Pearl of the Orient’” (Yuehanniu de ‘dongfang zhi zhu’/約翰牛的「東方之珠」), and “under the Victoria Peak” (Taipingshan xia/太平山下). These appellations indicate, on the one hand, that Hong

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56 This is a derogative term originally referring to the Indians, especially Sikhs, who served as police and often wore red hat in duty in Shanghai British Settlement. See, “紅头阿三,” in Shanghainese Dictionary (Shanghaihua da cidian/上海話大詞典), eds. Nai-Rong Qian, Bao-Hua Xu, and Zhen-Zhu Tang (Shanghai: Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House, 2007), p. 151.
57 “Stars’ Going Abroad Fever.”
58 For example, “Xiao Yan Qiu in Love with Pearl of the Orient” (Xiao Yan Qiu relian dongfang zhi zhu/小艷秋熱戀東方之珠), Credit News (1 May 1957): 3.
60 Cang Tian, “Ko Yu-Hsia Gave Up Going to Hong Kong Two Times.”
Kong as a successful Oriental copy of the West or model of industrial capitalism and, on the other hand, with explicit colonialism, they also imply the economic and cultural superiority of British governance. The frequent usages of these tags of Hong Kong in local newspapers in Taiwan reveals the aspiration to become like the spectacular Hong Kong.

To the press controlled by KMT ideology, Hong Kong as a symbol of colonial-capitalist modernity is far beyond the reach of taiyupian stars, whom were deemed as provincial and secondary in terms of culture. The news piece entitled “Stars’ Going Abroad Fever” commented on taiyupian star Bai Hong (白虹) and Bai Yi’s (白漪) alleged trip to Hong Kong first by questioning the credibility of the information. The reporter wrote:

Bai Hong and Bai Yi announced to the journalist that they were invited to Hong Kong by Union Film Enterprises Ltd. to make ten films, but the head of the company Hu Jin-Kang would not admit to it.

So what do they go there for? They should check the records of those stars who have been there before. It's not that easy to be a star.

The reporter condescendingly points out that the two taiyupian actresses underestimated the difficulty of becoming movie stars. Both taiyupian and guoyupian stars traveled to Hong Kong in the late 1950s. One can observe the differentiation between the taiyupian stars and the guoyupian stars in the press coverage of “going abroad fever,” especially local stars’ “Hong Kong fever.” Stories of inexperienced and naïve taiyupian stars, both male and female, and their unfortunate encounters with cosmopolitan Hong Kong were sometimes

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61 “Stars’ Going Abroad Fever.”
the focus in newspaper stories. One reporter even directly claimed that *taiyupian* stars were mostly “simple-minded” (*tournao jiandan*//頭腦簡單). The regrettable encounters of *taiyupian* stars in Hong Kong and the crude term employed to describe them frame the *taiyupian* stars with “Hong Kong fever” as unsophisticated and unrealistic dreamers who are unfit to participate in the international film stage, in contrast to the readiness of *guoyupian* stars. Therefore, the ideology operated in the journalistic representations on stars’ going abroad fever was that *guoyupian* stars were deemed more capable of becoming part of the cosmopolitan circle of Hong Kong than *taiyupian* actresses.

A reporter later turned filmmaker, Yao Feng-Pan (姚鳳磐), identified the trend of going to Hong Kong found in *taiyupian* stars as “Hong Kong fever.” Yao published “Taiyu Stars’ Hong Kong fever” (*Taiyu mingxing fu gang re*) in *United Daily News* on November 30, 1958. Yao juxtaposed *guoyupian* and *taiyupian* female stars’ Hong Kong trips, and employing the logic of nationalizing *guoyupian* stars, Yao justified *guoyupian* female stars’ Hong Kong trips, such as those of Diana Chang and Mu Hong, as based on “friendly interactions” (*qinggan jiaoliu* 情感交流) and collaborations between Taiwan and Hong Kong. This last was initiated by Hong Kong *guoyupian* stars coming to Taiwan to pay their tributes to the KMT army and

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Chiang Kai-Shek. Regarding *taiyupian* stars, Yao chided *taiyupian* stars with “Hong Kong fever” as traitors who selfishly sought their own interest at the cost of the nation’s (*chili pawai*/*吃裡扒外*), as the industry was “naturally” a local business and they should work in Taiwan. According to Yao, the “Hong Kong fever” was driven by opportunistic overseas Chinese investors who found it easier and more profitable to invite *taiyupian* stars to Hong Kong to make Amoy-dialect films for Southeast Asia market than exporting *taiyupian* directly from Taiwan. These investors could then sell the films to Southeast Asia and Taiwan. *Taiyupian* stars, along with overseas Chinese investors, were categorized as opportunists without cultural or national loyalty. Unlike *guoyupian* stars, who represent the nation, the *taiyupian* stars, as Yao’s comment implies, are prescriptively defined as provincial due to *taiyu*’s low cultural status and *taiyupian*’s geographically marginal origin. Yao’s contempt for the *taiyupian* stars’ Hong Kong connection is obvious when he writes:

> When a *taiyu* star is being chosen to discuss the issue of going to Hong Kong by any Taiwan-Hong Kong co-production project, this star would be definitely ‘surprised for being favored and put on Hong Kong dress.’ Their families will come to congratulate them and they would go to temples to thank the Sea Goddess (*Mazu*/*媽祖*).

Yao deliberately uses the feudalist and patriarchal expression “surprised to be favored” (*jing shouchong*/*驚受寵*) to suggest that the *taiyupian* stars were patronized by those overseas Chinese opportunists. Furthermore, his religious sketch reinforces the cultural image that *taiyupian* stars were less enlightened, which corresponded to the official discourse on women guided by Soong Mei-Ling, also known as Madame Chiang Kai-Shek. In this discourse, mainland women were categorized as modern women as well as the enlightener and
savior of islander women. Therefore Yao’s comment reflects the overall nationalist ideology of, as observed by Chang Yu-Fen, “mainlander as center/islander as local” (waisheng zhongyang/ bensheng defang/「外省中央/本省地方」) and “progressive mainlander/ backward islander (“waisheng you (jinbu)/ bensheng lie (luohou)”/「外省優（進步）/本省劣（落後）」). The hierarchical relation between guoyupian and taiyupian stars was discursively formulated and reinforced through journalistic representations. The general practice of Sinocentric nationalism was nationalizing guoyupian stars and provincializing taiyupian stars, who were depicted as less experienced, less prepared, and less qualified to enter and adapt to Hong Kong’s capitalist modernity and a lesser representative of the nation. Yet, representations of guoyupian and taiyupian stars were never homogenous. Along with reports and comments based on Sinocentric nationalism, there was another ideological strand that could be detected in the coverage. While the taiyupian stars were criticized for their Hong Kong fever, they were already becoming cosmopolitan subjects in the entertainment-oriented coverage of it. In other words, Hong Kong fever not only provided an opportunity for the taiyupian stars to geographically move from Taiwan to Hong Kong but also


66 Chang, Women and Nation, p. 215.

67 Chang, Women and Nation, p. 215.
be culturally as levelled up from provincial to international beyond the ideological containment of Sinocentric nationalism.

**Hong Kong Experience and Becoming Cosmopolitan Subject**

The extensive coverage on the lives of *taiyupian* female stars in cosmopolitan Hong Kong participated in forging the phenomenon of Hong Kong fever as a spectacle while it reflected the growing public interest. Stars such as Xiao Yan Qiu and Bai Lan were often depicted in newspaper stories as being marketed as “sex symbols” in Hong Kong. But it would be misleading to conveniently criticize these stories about their on-screen images and exciting lives off-screen as objectification and commodification of *taiyupian* female stars. What these stories also revealed is the transformative influence of Hong Kong on them. By going to Honk Kong the *taiyupian* stars went through a learning process of acquiring a cosmopolitan vernacular and being transformed from a provincial country girl to cosmopolitan subject. That is to say the writing of the history of *taiyupian* industry and culture should not be confined to the discourse of national vs. provincial but has to deal with issue of modernity. *Taiyupian* stars' Hong Kong experience was no less than an encounter with modernity as the industry began to boom.

The “dream of stardom” phenomenon discussed previously has demonstrated the ambivalent attraction of cinema to women. *Taiyupian* stars’ experiences with Hong Kong are further emphasized in the media as amorous attraction. For example, a news report on Xiao Yan Qiu’s trip to Hong Kong was titled “Xiao Yan Qiu in Love with Pearl of the Orient.” Also, in a story

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68 Jeremy E. Taylor observes “Siu Yim Chao and Bai Lan were the first Hokkien performers since Dongfang Mingzhu to be marketed as ‘sex symbols’” in his *Rethinking Transnational Chinese Cinemas: The Amoy-Dialect Film Industry in Cold War Asia* (London: Routledge, 2011), p.72.

69 “Xiao Yan Qiu in Love with Pearl of the Orient.”
on Bai Lan’s third visit to Hong Kong, Bai Lan confessed to the Hong Kong press:

Surely Taiwan is better than Hong Kong, Taiwan is my hometown...But Hong Kong seems to have such a seduction that I cannot resist, therefore I am here again...maybe it is because Hong Kong’s attractive scenery, or perhaps due to Hong Kong’s department windows...maybe mannerism of Hong Kong gentlemen...

Although the cosmopolitan experience and transformation of taiyupian stars depicted in the news still employed “provincializing taiyupian” as the rhetoric, as more and more competing narratives about their attractions to Hong Kong came out, their Hong Kong fever stories could no longer be contained at the national level. The modes of transportation that took them overseas rather than around the island were not only integral parts of their journeys but also symbolized their transformations. With steamboats and airplanes, taiyupian female stars were able to “sail” (aoxiang/翱翔) and “see the world” (jianjian shimian/见见世面). These geographical movements embody the itinerary from provincial to cosmopolitan. Upon returning from Hong Kong to Taiwan, taiyupian actresses were identified by journalists as

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71 Feng Pan, “Bai Lan Going to Hong Kong by the End of the Month” (Bai Lan yuedi fu Gang/白蘭月底赴港), United Daily News (18 May 1960): 6.

72 “Bai Lan Also Going to Make Films in Hong Kong” (Bai Lan yequ Xianggang paipian/白蘭也去香港拍片), Film and Drama Weekly 41 (31 Jan. 1959): 11.
“Hong Kong star-like” or more “star-like”. The stars’ familiarization with cosmopolitan vernaculars, such as fashion, manners, and dancing steps, during their stays in Hong Kong manifested and achieved this “star-like” impression. Baptized in colonial and capitalist modernity in Hong Kong, taiyupian actresses were inscribed with cosmopolitan aesthetics, which enabled them to become cosmopolitan subjects. Although taiyupian actresses’ images were often the focus of newspaper reports, the transformations of taiyupian female stars who caught Hong Kong fever were emphasized in particular. News stories covered their arrivals at the airport or at the port with detailed descriptions of their appearances, which underlined their transformation. For example, a news piece that recounted Xiao Yan Qiu’s arrival time and the grand reception held by her families, friends, and fans at the airport also described her attire and accessories: a long moon-white cheongsam with a side opening and brocade edging; a black, long duffel coat with black and white checkered lining; gray high heels; an aluminum beauty case; a gray handbag; a green Western-style umbrella; and a pair of glasses. The journalist was amazed by Xiao Yan Qiu’s “Hong Kong-star style” (Gangshi mingxing pai tou/港式明星派頭) and suggested that four months of Hong Kong life made her more beautiful. Another report on Xiao Yan Qiu’s arrival at an airport in Taiwan from her second trip to Hong Kong, again, described her outfit in detail. The report praised Xiao Yan Qiu for becoming more sophisticated, plump, and charming; it stated that the change was derived from being nurtured by the “Hong Kong style” (Gang feng/港風) twice.

73 “Xiao Yan Qiu Returning to Taiwan” (Xiao Yan Qiu pianran guilai 小艷秋翩然歸來), United Daily News (15 Apr. 1957): 5.
74 Feng Pan, “Bai Lan Leaving for Hong Kong Again” (Bai Lan you fu Gang/白蘭又赴港), United Daily News (21 Nov. 1959): 8.
75 “Xiao Yan Qiu Returning to Taiwan,” United Daily News (15 Apr. 1957): 5.
another example, a source described Hong Ming-Li, as she disembarked from the steamboat, to be in a red Western-style dress with black edging and reported that she had become leaner and prettier after her Hong Kong trip.77

Besides the reports on their Hong Kong style appearances, journalistic stories about the taiyupian actresses’ dancing on- and off-screen in Hong Kong also contributed to the formation of their cosmopolitan subjectivity. Other than shopping, night life and dancing were two attractions and practices mentioned by taiyupian actresses in Hong Kong. The fashionable dancing steps were presented as modern social vernaculars in cosmopolitan Hong Kong. Stars such as Xiao Yan Qiu, Bai Hong, and Hong Ming-Li all told the press that they enjoyed visiting nightclubs in Hong Kong. Taiyupian actor Lin Chong (林沖) even joked that he could change his job to “escort dancer” (wunan/舞男) for he was busy accompanying taiyupian actresses, seven or eight of them, dancing at nightclubs every available night.78 In addition to providing entertainment, nightclubs sometimes served as dance studios for taiyupian actresses to take dancing classes.79 More importantly, they also served as places for taiyupian actresses to socialize with people in the entertainment business and make new connections. For instance, Bai Hong told one of her friends in a letter that she went nightclubbing with a Filipino

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77 Tao Ren, “Ming-Li Hong, Feng Ding, Li-Hua Su, and Hu Dou Returning Taiwan with Fames, Fortunes, and Honors” (Hong Ming-Li, Ding Feng, Su Li-Hua, Hu Dou, mingli shuangshou zaiyu fan Tai/洪明麗、丁鳳、蘇麗華、戽斗 名利雙收載譽返臺), Film and Drama Weekly 60 (4 Jul. 1959): 10.
79 “Xiao Yan Qiu and Others Good at Swinging and Dancing” (Xiao Yan Qiu deng yaobai shan wu/小艷秋等搖擺善舞), United Daily News (7 Jan. 1958): 3.
investor and danced “cha-cha” (queue wu/卻卻舞) while discussing the possibility of making films in the Philippines.  

Familiarization with chic dancing steps for taiyupian actresses was also required for acting in Amoy-dialect films. Jeremy E. Taylor pointed out that the inclusion of taiyupian actresses in the Amoy-dialect film industry coincided with the coming of what Ye Long-Yan called “new Amoy-dialect films” (xinxing Xiayupian/新興廈語片). Taylor observes that, starting in 1957, the Amoy-dialect film industry revamped itself by shifting its focus from representing “cultural China” to “Hokkien versions of modernity” to compete with Hong Kong-produced Cantonese and Mandarin films that had been making Hong Kong modernity a major motif before Amoy-dialect films. Nightclubs and dancing were constructed as the symbolic, metropolitan space and body movements of modern Hong Kong, exemplified by the film Mambo Girl (Manpo niulang/曼波女郎, dir. Yi Wen/易文, 1957) starring Grace Chang (Ge Lan/葛蘭). To play modern characters in the modernized Amoy-dialect films, taiyupian actresses were required to learn modern steps. The prolonged dance sequence in Bai Lan’s A Good Couple (Hao fuqi/好夫妻, dir. But Fu/畢虎, 1959) and Bai Hong and Bai Yi’s Siren of the Dance Hall (Gechang yaoji/歌場妖姬, dir. Xu Xin-Fu/徐欣夫, 1959) are two examples. On- and off-screen, taiyupian actresses’ dancing body displaced their familiarization with cosmopolitan vernaculars, illustrating the gradual permeation of Hong Kong modernity on them. The recurring appearance of stories about the taiyupian stars’ dancing and night life in the newspaper reflected the audience’s desire to see them in modern dramatic

80 “Hong Bai May Return to Taiwan Before Going to the Philippines by the End of the Month” (Bai Hong yuedi fu Fei keneng fan Tai yixing/白虹月底赴菲，可能返臺一行). Film and Drama Weekly 55 (16 May, 1959): 9.

81 Taylor, Rethinking Transnational Chinese Cinemas, p. 80.

82 Taylor, Rethinking Transnational Chinese Cinemas, p. 80.
spectacles. In a way these stories were also substitutions for those new Amoy-dialect films they starred in but were not shown in Taiwan to provide the audience with vicarious satisfaction. The newspaper coverage of taiyupian stars’ Hong Kong experience chronicled the transformation of taiyupian actresses from a provincial or national subject to becoming a cosmopolitan one.

**Conclusion**

This article evaluates the star phenomenon driven by the emergence and success of the taiyupian industry in the 1950s through the lenses of the “dream of stardom” and “Hong Kong fever.” The media discourse on the star phenomenon, on the one hand, provides ample documents to probe contemporary society’s reactions to the newly developed industry and trace the ideological operations that organize public perceptions of taiyupian culture. The booming taiyupian industry brought about taiyupian star phenomenon, which opened up the space for geographical and social mobility as well as new subjectivity. One could observe in the news reports the attempts of the dominant ideology of Sinocentric nationalism to contain the emergent taiyupian culture, such as provincializing taiyupian and nationalizing Mandarin films. But as this study has shown, its excess could not be easily contained, as in the case of taiyupian actresses’ transformation to become a cosmopolitan subject with their Hong Kong experience. While existing historiographical writings on taiyupian mainly hinge on the issue of nationalism, the approach to see taiyupian as heuristic device and culture allows this study to break away from the dichotomy of national Mandarin cinema vs. provincial taiyupian. The rich historical material of journalist accounts of taiyupian phenomenon reveals the overlooked aspects of taiyupian, such as “dream of stardom” and “Hong Kong fever.” This article argues that taiyupian also stimulated aspiration for local dreamers, especially women, to level up from ordinary to extraordinary and from provincial to
international and cosmopolitan. *Taiyupian* is by no means a local film industry or provincial Taiwanese culture. It involves geopolitical movements and social border-crossing. It is the hope of this article that through such reassessment and reflection, the history of *taiyupian* could be more carefully approached.

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The Taiyupian Star Phenomenon from the Late 1950s to Early 1960s: the “Dream of Stardom” and “Hong Kong Fever”*  

Pi-Ju Liang **

Abstract

This article studies the star phenomenon driven by the emergence and rapid development of the taiyupian —Taiwanese-language films — industry in the 1950s through the lenses of the “dream of stardom” and “Hong Kong fever.” The media discourse on the star phenomenon allows researchers to probe into the contemporary society’s reaction to this newly developed industry as well as trace ideological operations that organize public perceptions of culture. The article explores the formation of taiyupian culture and related media discourse through the lens of star phenomenon during its nascent years—from 1955 to 1960—and the convoluted and sometime paradoxical relations between gender, nation, and modernity. By reading newspaper stories related to “dream of stardom” and “Hong Kong fever,” I attempt to point out the dominant ideology’s operation in journalistic representations seeking to contain the phenomena within Sinocentric nationalism. Newspaper stories about “dream of stardom” and “Hong Kong fever” applied the dichotomous framing of Mandarin film and taiyupian film industry—the pure vs. impure—and the rhetoric of nationalizing guoyupian to provincialize taiyupian. The article will analyze taiyupian stars’ cosmopolitan desire in their Hong Kong experiences and argue that, as

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uncontainable excess of the emergent culture, it circumvents the Sinocentric nationalism.

**Keywords:** taiyupian, dream of stardom, Hong Kong fever, nationalism, modernity