

Autumn 2006  
CENTER FOR EAST ASIAN STUDIES  
FRIDAY NOON FILM SERIES

PRESENTS  
Taiwan in Transition

In less than 50 years, the political, economical, and cultural landscape of Taiwan has never ceased to evolve at an incredible pace, making it arguably one of the most fascinating living social laboratories in the world. This series of documentary films, most of them made in the last five years, will focus on the cultural and social transition between the last generations of people living on this island, and within each generation, between different ethnical groups and strata. Through these films, we will learn the difficulty in defining a clear boundary between the various groups. This series will start with the elder generation, last guardian of different ethnic pasts: the high mountain aboriginal legends, the Minnan agricultural traditions, and the identity dilemma of Mainlander veterans, some still longing for their far away homeland. Then, a glimpse of the middle generation, torn between tradition and modernity. Through intermarriages, participation to social movements, or the establishment of cooperative organizations, new social bonds and identities emerge, sometimes at the price of inter-generational tensions. During the post-screening presentation, we will debate whether with the last generation new values and life styles have come into full bloom. Purchased directly from Taiwanese documentary filmmakers, most of these screening will be premier showings in the United States. We hope that the diverse backgrounds of the presenters, with their inter-disciplinary approach, will enrich the post-screening discussions.

This series is co-sponsored by the Taiwanese Student Association and will be presented by Benjamin Vialettes, Ph.D student in the Department of Sociology; Lee, Pei-lin, M.A.P.S.S. student in Sociology; Chen, Hsi-yuan, Master student in Public Policy; Shie, Tzu-ping, Independent Documentary Filmmaker; and Lu, Chih-lan, Media Activist.

(ALL FILMS ARE SUBTITLED IN ENGLISH)

Part I. The Elder Generation. The Loss of Traditions?

The elder Taiwanese generation is composed of diverse groups, each having their own traditions. This part is aimed to present social, cultural and linguistic diversity richness of the contemporary Taiwan, as well as the issues that it stirs. This part will be presented by Benjamin Vialettes.

September 29: The Last Rice Farmers (無米樂)

Yan, Lan-chuan; Zhuang, Yi-zen, 2004, 107mn.

This film traces one year of the life of Uncle Kun-Bin and his neighbors - possibly the last rice farmers in Taiwan. Economic pillar of the Nationalist government after the 50's, they now rely on government for subsidy. You will be captivated by the touching humanity of these farmers who take their work as self-cultivation. Do not miss this gem of Taiwan's documentary scene!

October 6: Sounds of Love and Sorrow (愛戀排灣笛)

Hu, Tai-li, 2000, 86mn.

Hu Tai-li, both researcher at the Academia Sinica and visual ethnographer, has spent several months in the southern mountains of Taiwan to record the dying traditions of flute making and playing in the Paiwan aboriginal tribe. She depicts the multiple dimensions of flutes as male political power, emblems of the whole tribal bond, and also as a powerful means of courtship.

October 13: Chen Tsi-gen and His Neighbors (陳才根和他的鄰居們)

Wu, Yi-feng, 1997, 90mn.

This film presents the identical ambiguities of seven mainlander veterans who crossed over to Taiwan from the mainland with the Nationalist Army in 1949, now hardly surviving in a shantytown right in the center of the modern Taipei. All that these men share is their difficult fate, made of broken dreams, broken families, and sometimes... broken minds.

Part II. The Middle Generation: Crossing boundaries.

Here, we look at the interactions among the different groups. The social and geographical boundaries separating ethnic groups, social classes, and different generations had been stepped across by both individuals and organized social groups. Thus, the tension created by the rapid social transformation and the interaction of different social forces has contributed to the unique profile of the socio-cultural dynamics in Taiwan. This part will be presented by Lee, Pei-lin; and Chen, Hsi-yuan.

October 20: Stone Dream (石頭夢)

Hu, Tai-li, 2004, 79mn.

From a farmer to a soldier, Liu, who was born in China, came to Taiwan in the 1940s and married an aboriginal woman. While the mixture of different cultures stimulated a great extent of ethnic integration, Liu's emotional attachments to China and Taiwan, on the other hand, revealed the contradictory characteristic of the new inter-ethnic relationship in Taiwan.

October 27: How Are You, Gongliao? (貢寮你好嗎?)

Cui, Su-xing, 2004, 87mn.

Since Gongliao, a small village on the northeastern coast of Taiwan, was designated as the proposed construction site of the 4th Nuclear Power Plant in the 1980s, the locals had been resisting this policy result for more than one decade. On the surface an environmental issue, this policy decision actually intertwined the interests of both political parties and foreign and domestic corporations...

November 3: Radio Mihi (部落之音)

Li, Zhong-wang, 2004, 135mn.

What was split by the big earthquake of September 21, 1999 -- the land or the tribe? Post 921 rebuilding of Mihi village offered the residents a hope for creating an "Eden" for both the younger and the older generation of the Taiya tribe. The idea was simple enough until they began their task of rebuilding the village. Many problems concerning the traditional values of the tribe, the passage of power from the elders to the middle generation, and the political, economical, and geographical inferiority of the aboriginal people soon emerged

Part III. The Young Generation: New Individual Consciousnesses.

Taiwan's documentary film scene has become a podium for moral, educational, political, and social media - not only perceiving socially constructed realities but also delivering directors' personal statements on cultural identity. The three films we present will provide a richer understanding of the Taiwan's current social issues regarding gay relationships, cross-cultural marriage and documentary filmmakers' role in participation of Taiwan's social movement. This part will be presented by Shie, Tzu-ping & Lu, Chih-lan.

November 10: Three Fork Village (三叉坑)

Chen, Liang-feng, 2006, 88mn.

The inhabitants of Three-Fork Village, which lies quietly below Big-Snow Mountain and is surrounded by three streams, are members of the Taiya Tribe. From the moment that the great 921 Earthquake first shook Taiwan, the filmmaker and Chien-Chi, a recently returned former resident of Three-Fork Village, embarked on a six-year journey of reconstruction. The film traces the ambivalence and sorrow of a seemingly tranquil village deep in the mists of a mountain village when outside forces plan for their relocation.

November 17: My imported wife (移民新娘首部曲：我的強娜威)

Tsai, Tsung-lung, 2003, 56mn.

In 2003, one out of every four marriages in Taiwan involved a foreign bride. My Imported Wife, used a fly-on-the-wall approach to reflect the rapid structural changes within this island, successfully presents how the couples have come together across national and other boundaries to confront the challenges of the age, sex, cultural, and ethnic tensions within the traditions of marriage and family while chronicling the formation of the problems of “marriage for sale”.

November 24: - Thanksgiving, no screening

December 1: Taste of Happiness (幸福的滋味)

Shie, Tzu-ping, 2002, 65mn.

“Happiness” means different things to different people. Some people are willing to pay any price for love, while others express it in extreme ways like insanity or even suicide when they’ve reached their limit. The protagonist Jey, who has a gay lover, chose to enter into a conventional marriage with a girl he never loved despite his struggles with his gay identity.

ALL SCREENINGS ARE FREE AND TAKE PLACE IN JUDD 302, BEGINNING AT 12:40 PM