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ACTA ASIATICA VARSOVIENSIA

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[askon@askon.waw.pl](mailto:askon@askon.waw.pl)

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Professor Roman Sławiński  
(1932–2014)



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## Introduction

Dear Readers!

We are presenting you yet another, already the 28th, issue of *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia* devoted to the countries and culture of Asia. Over the years of its activity the journal started to be issued in English and it has hosted on its pages many eminent experts on Asia, yet still it remained faithful to its formula which was proposed thirty years ago by Professor Roman Sławiński, the founder of the journal and its permanent editor in chief. This formula stipulated that the Asian cultures should present themselves in the journal and talk directly with their own voice. The idea was both: to include in the group of authors and editors of the magazine scientists who grew up in Asian cultures, as well as to publish materials based on or referring to the texts – philosophical, linguistic, historical, sociological, religious studies or political studies – which were created by the Asian culture. These could be proper names as an object of linguistic research, religious texts, political documents, ideological declarations, but also biographical materials, historiographical elaborations, experience of meeting other cultures and mutual acculturation phenomenon resulting from the relations.

Professor Roman Sławiński left us in November 2014. The more time passes from his death, the more I feel his absence and the more I realize how unique a character he was in the world of research on China. Professor Marianne Bastid-Bruguière, a prominent French scholar from Institut de France in Paris, who met Roman Sławiński in the times of his studies in Beijing, writes about that fact. Most striking is the variety of interests and multidimensionality of research on China which he ran. He was trained as a linguist, and he knew perfectly well not only the classical language, but also many dialects. There was even a time it was appreciated by Mao Zedong himself. Roman Sławiński was interpreting a conversation of the Chinese leader with the Polish state authorities. During the conversation Mao Zedong changed as usual from the classical language to the dialect of Hunan province, which was his place of origin. When he realized he was using the dialect, he noticed that it was not a slightest problem for the interpreter to understand his statements. Then he asked: „Who is that young man who understands the Hunan dialect?” It was known that many Chinese from the surroundings of the Chairman did not understand him when he spoke in the native dialect. It so happened, that Roman Sławiński knew the dialect.

He was interested not only in the language. History, politics, culture as well as China's economy were the subject of his interest and research. His views, opinions and insights on these matters were the inspiration for many researchers of China, some of which are the authors of the materials contained in this issue. Of the many research interests of Professor Sławiński in recent years at least two may be mentioned. First one became Confucianism, especially its latest colours and shades. Professor persistently sought and discovered them in the texts of Chinese scientists, government documents, archives and everyday citizens of China. In this regard he was a dedicated explorer and a keen observer. Even the slightest detail was important to him. Minor personnel changes on the bureaucratic ladder were important for the formation

of general conclusions. From my conversations with him, I got the impression that he was rather skeptical about the possibility of a revival of Confucianism under the supervision of the communist authorities. So he concluded after examining many texts of the so-called new wave of Confucianism in China. His works on the latest Chinese historiography constitute an invaluable contribution to global research on contemporary China. His second passion was the research on the minorities of China Southern. The field research among the peoples of Miao and Tujia that he ran and in which I had the opportunity to participate assumed getting to know the nature of change in the cultural identity of these minorities in the era of globalization and accelerated socio-economic transformation in China. These studies had not been completed, and we can only hope that one of the students of Professor will continue them in the near future.

The arrangement of contents offered to you in the 28th issue of *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia* refers to the research passions of Professor Sławiński. The first article, written by Stanisław Tokarski – Indologist and long-time associate of Professor Sławiński, concerns dialogue between the East and the West and the possibility of mutual understanding and agreement. Understanding another culture is also the ability to read the symbols contained in the letters and that aspect of the intercultural dialogue interested Professor Sławiński in particular. The question of so-called Asian values – presented in the articles written by Adam Jelonek, Adam Raszewski, Artur Kościański and Larisa Zabrowskaia – was very close to Professor Sławiński and he dealt with it for many years as part of his research on the so-called new Confucianism. The issue of Chinese migration in the world was also in the interests of Professor – mainly in the context of global economic and social phenomena. This part of the research on China is presented in the article on the Chinese migration to France by Nicolas Levi. The issue of Chinese language was obviously important for Professor Sławiński as a linguist and he always welcomed in the columns of *Acta* the authors writing about language and linguistic issues. This area of research is presented in the current issue in the article on Chinese names written by Irena Kałużyńska. On the other hand, the artistic part of the culture is referred to in the articles by Izabella Łabędzka, Lidia Kasarełło, Ewa Chmielowska, Fu-sheng Shih and Diana Wolańska. The first three of these articles relate to Taiwan, where Professor conducted research for many years which resulted among others in a monograph *History of Taiwan*. The further three articles penned by Waldemar Dziak, Iwona Grabowska-Lipińska and Anna Mrozek-Dumanowska refer to the political sphere. Political sphere is inextricably linked with the ideology which was also the case of China. Confucianism and the new Confucianism emerged and developed in the shadow of the emperors, presidents and chairmen of the Chinese Communist Party. Researching them without the analysis of the political scene was not possible. The part of articles is closed by two texts unrelated with China, but with the Middle East. Their authors – Dorota Rudnicka-Kassem and Marcin Styszyński present materials based on the Middle Eastern sources and thus relate to the traditions of *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia*. The issue is closed by the report from field research in southern China by Professor Sławiński and me. For me it was a unique opportunity to get to know at least a little piece of China – a unique one, because my guide was Professor Sławiński – such a great scholar and such a seasoned expert on Asia.

I would like to thank the authors – students, colleagues and friends – for participation in the preparation of the issue, and the Directorate of the Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures of the Polish Academy of Sciences for the possibility to dedicate the anniversary issue of *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia* to Professor Sławiński.

Jerzy Zdanowski

LIDIA KASARELLO

## The Pop-Cultural Phenomenon of Taiwanese TV Drama: Remodelled Fairy Tales and Playing with Virtues<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

This paper attempt to define and classify Taiwanese drama in terms of its genre, origin, audience, structure and meaning, placing the phenomenon in broader cultural and historical context. The main textual study subject here is reduced to idol drama and some prime-time drama (except history drama) representing main types of *lianxuju*. Taiwanese drama as a form of imaginary reality embodies several characteristics of a fairy tale, which are recreated and rewritten. Narrative paradigm of *lianxuju* related to (fairy) tale is universal, whereas its syntagmatic code is regional (Taiwanese). Articulating tension between Confucian virtues and the modern values of individual emancipation Taiwanese drama reflect at the syntagmatic level mixture of old and new ideologies.

**Key words:** Taiwan, TV drama, idol drama, *xiangtu* drama, audience, soap opera, fairy tales, melodramatic structure, Confucian vs. modern values, *yuanfen*.

One of the most popular types of TV program in Taiwan are *lianxuju* (連續劇), in English called drama. This term is used only for television series produced in Taiwan (*taiju* 台劇), Japan (*ruju* 日劇), Korea (*hanju* 韓劇), China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, and differs from American or other western series', called *guoyu* (國語) *dianshi yingji* (電視影劇) mini-series). Taiwanese drama has not only became one of the main elements of teenage pop culture, but also an important cultural commodity distributed to ordinary TV viewers. As a mass produced and mass consumed text of popular culture, it remains a very interesting research object, although some investigators maybe convinced that such a form of 'low' culture is not worth studying.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the value judgments of popular culture, the most important impulse and motivation to explore the topic is the growing popularity of Taiwanese drama among Taiwanese, East

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<sup>1</sup> This is a longer, more detailed and changed version of the position paper presented at the International Symposium 'Discovering Taiwan in Europe', 22–23 October 2015, Charles University: Prague.

<sup>2</sup> Filoteo, *Placing Reality TV in the Cultural Spectrum: Making a Case for Studying the World of Reality Television* (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 13–16.07.2013 [http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p23432\\_index.html](http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p23432_index.html) (accessed 10 September 2015).

Asian and European audiences. Ten years ago bilingual fans from abroad started to create internet services to watch Asian dramas in English, Spanish, or Russian. Websites such as *dramacrazy.eu*, *gooddrama.net*, and *dramago.com*, not only offer watching series' in their original or foreign languages, but also their reviewing, recommending and rating according to a scale of 1–10.

Through the translations of volunteers some Taiwanese dramas crossed the hermetic language barriers and opened their cultural transmission to totally new audiences, albeit still marginal compared to the Chinese speaking community in Taiwan, Asian expatriates, and transnational TV audiences in East and South Asia, where these series are mostly admired. With that in mind, we can investigate the subject from the perspective of different recipients by stressing cultural otherness (Western versus Eastern) or cultural hybridism in the age of transnational media flows. Taiwanese drama has become fashionable among the young generations abroad (in Asia and Europe) due to the increasing popularity of Japanese manga, anime, 'j-pop', 'k-pop' and Korean and Japanese 'Fever'.

The question of *lianxuju* analysed as a narrative form, social discourse, or tradable commodity should be put in the context of trans-cultural diffusion, the exotic "Other" and the consumption of symbolic cultural meanings and commodities, but it requires more analysis and that is for the longer term.

This paper attempts to define and classify Taiwanese drama in terms of its genre, origin, audience, structure and meaning, placing the phenomenon in a broader cultural and historical context. It is to be precise, that the main textual study subject herein is reduced to 'idol drama' and some 'prime-time' drama (except history drama) representing the main types of *lianxuju*. In contrast to *danyuanju* (單元劇)<sup>3</sup>, the stories of which refer to a more independent stand-alone format, *lianxuju* is based on continuously evolving stories, spread over multiple episodes with a set of characters.

It is known, that the Taiwanese drama originated in local operas about life in the countryside. The first Taiwanese prime-time drama appeared on Chinese Television on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1990, first in Taiwanese (*Taiyu* 台語) and then changed to Chinese due to policy regulations, and was called *Love (Ai 愛)* and represented Xiangtu drama (*taiyu xiangtuju* 台語鄉土劇).<sup>4</sup>

If we put the history of the Taiwanese TV series into a broader socio-political context, it is not hard to see that the political situation in Taiwan plays a significant role in determining the position of *Taiyu xiangtuju* in the media market and society.<sup>5</sup>

The popularity of Xiangtu drama in the nineties mainly resulted from the democratisation process and essentially from the Bentuhua movement (*bentuhua yundong* 本土化運動), which was engaged in the construction of a new Taiwanese identity. Minnan TV dramas (台語劇) were criticised for being in poor taste and of low quality, factors automatically associated with the elderly, uneducated, *Taiyu* speaking audience. As a result, this situation strengthened cultural, ethnic and political diversity. Even though *Taiyu* drama retained a local position and its own audience, it was unable to compete with international productions.

<sup>3</sup> One of the best known *danyuanju* is a criminal TV series, made with the cooperation of the FTV and the Ministry of Justice, and is known as *Independent heroes (Lianzheng yingxiong 廉正英雄)*.

<sup>4</sup> *The Family Fengshui (Fengshui Shijia 風水師世家)* is one of the most popular Taiwanese Xiangtu dramas.

<sup>5</sup> Fang Chih, Irene Yang, 'Engaging with Korean Dramas: Discourses of Gender, Media, and Class Formation in Taiwan', *Asian Journal of Communication*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2008, p. 178.

Because of neo-liberalisation and media privatisation, and also the dominance of Chinese language market, Xiangtu drama stepped aside and gave way to a TV industry controlled by leaders from GMD.<sup>6</sup>

As the result, culture became an economic resource. By making use of an open door policy Taiwanese filmmakers went to China to produce a series in cooperation with PRC (*Liang'an hepai ju* 兩岸合拍劇). Apart from reducing costs, producers were mostly interested in promoting and bringing Taiwanese dramas to the Chinese market. The story of this co-production often takes place simultaneously in Shanghai and Taipei, linking romantic drama with economic and cultural co-operation between mainland China and Taiwan. The most popular series produced in co-operation with China was the 24 episode drama *Destined to Love You* (*Pian pian xihuan ni* 偏偏喜歡你) broadcasted in 2008 by SETTV and TTV, and in 2010 by Hunan TV. Fang-Chih Irena argues that since the times of neo-liberal globalisation in Taiwan, “Chinese culture through the economic rhetoric of the Chinese language market became a leverage for a mainlander elite, who has dominated the TV industry since its inception”.<sup>7</sup>

However, the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century belonged to ‘idol drama’ (*Ouxiangju* 偶像劇). Before the phenomenon started in 2001 in Taiwan with *Meteor Garden* (*Liuxing huayuan* 流星花園), which is based on a Japanese ‘shojo-manga’ book entitled *Hana yori dango* (*Boys Before Flowers*), Japanese cable channels were established and fashionable, Japanese dramas were imported. In a very short time their scripts and formats were copied and remodelled into Taiwanese ‘idol’ dramas. From 2001, the more that was produced, the more success was realized.

Taiwanese ‘idol’ dramas are chiefly an eclectic form composed of various cultural components. They employ the most popular singers and actors or actresses from the Taiwanese entertainment industry, sometimes joining celebrities from Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong and China. Many storylines are based on Japanese *manga* series’ and adapted to Taiwanese settings and realities, representing typical cartoon aesthetics, which are converted directly into cinematic language.

From the very beginning Taiwanese idol dramas were produced to attract young teenage audiences, fascinated with Japanese TV dramas, ‘j-pop’, ‘k-pop’, comic books, and good-looking actors and singers.

As Chua suggests, the term “idols” has begun to characterise the particular segment of popular cultural products<sup>8</sup> in East Asian media markets.

Describing the fame of *Meteor Garden* in Taiwan, Hsiu-Chuang Deppman (2009) argues that Taiwanese idol dramas combine two similar genres in Japanese TV programmes: “trendy dramas” and “post-trendy dramas”. Promoting a modish urban lifestyle, with all its fashionable gadgets, home design, clothes and pop music scenes, trendy dramas reflect and protect materialistic consumerism.<sup>9</sup>

Taiwanese drama undoubtedly shares more similarities with “post-trendy dramas”, which focus on depicting young people’s interest in love, friendship and careers.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 178.

<sup>8</sup> B.H. Chua, ‘Conceptualising an East Asian Popular Culture’, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* Vol. 5, No. 2, 2004, p. 203.

<sup>9</sup> K. Iwabuchi (ed.), *Feeling Asian Modernities: Transnational Consumption of Japanese TV Dramas*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004, p. 9.

Most of the Taiwanese idol dramas incorporate and combine romantic and comedic elements in a distinctive way for the romantic comedy genre. Many of these series' concentrate on family, work, everyday experiences, or life concentrated around celebrities, representing different subgenres such as 'urban romance', 'pink drama' or comedy.

Analysing idol drama, we should take into consideration how the media consumption of Japanese and Korean TV dramas shapes the cultural tastes of Taiwanese youth.

According to Hsiu-Chin Hung, "Japanese and Korean TV dramas and their pop culture as 'cultural others' have become a form of "everydayness" embedded in [Taiwanese] young daily life".<sup>10</sup>

It is worth pointing out that the process seems to be mutually beneficial to the partners involved. Since 2000 many Taiwanese idol productions have become an inspiration for Japanese and Korean dramas (e.g. the Taiwanese drama *Fated to Love You* (*Ming zhong zhu ding wo ai ni* 命中注定我愛你) from 2008 was remade in Korean in 2014 with *Unmyeongcheoreom Neol Saranghae*).

The popularity of idol dramas among young Taiwanese audiences in recent years has attracted the attention of many researchers.<sup>11</sup>

They try to identify the causes of this intra-Asian cultural flow and its interaction in the construction of regional cultural consciousness. As part of the viewing process, the young university audiences in Taiwan acquire knowledge about Japanese and Korean popular youth cultures and their lifestyles. A fundamental factor behind the reason why Japanese and Korean idol dramas have charmed young viewers in Taiwan, is directly linked to Japanophiles (*Harizu* 哈日族) and Koreanophiles (*Hanliu/Hallyu* 韓流).

Japanese and Korean dramas as media commodities evidently reflect ideas of Asian modernisation and an urban aesthetic way of life.<sup>12</sup>

According to Appadurai, they combine three important elements of the postmodern media scene: "the image, the imagined and the imaginary".<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Hsiu-Chin Hung, *Transnational Media Consumption and Cultural Negotiations: Taiwanese Youth Look at Japanese and South Korean Television Dramas*. A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Department of Media and Communications, Goldsmiths, University of London, [http://research.gold.ac.uk/8853/1/MED\\_PHDHung\\_2013.pdf](http://research.gold.ac.uk/8853/1/MED_PHDHung_2013.pdf). (accessed 19 September 2015).

<sup>11</sup> Fang-Chih Irene Yang, 'Exploring the Politics of Gender, Class, and Ethnicity in Loser-Dog Queen 2 in Taiwan', *The Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 46, No. 5, 2013; Sang-Yeon Sung, 'Constructing a New Image Hallyu in Taiwan', *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, Vol. 9 (1), 2013, pp. 25–45; Hsiu-Chin Hung, *Transnational Media Consumption and Cultural Negotiations: Taiwanese Youth Look at Japanese and South Korean Television Dramas*. A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Department of Media and Communications, Goldsmiths, University of London, 2013, [http://research.gold.ac.uk/8853/1/MED\\_PHDHung\\_2013.pdf](http://research.gold.ac.uk/8853/1/MED_PHDHung_2013.pdf). (accessed 19 September 2015); S. Chiou, 'Cultural Imagination: Japanese Trendy Drama in Taiwan', *Envisage: A Journal Book of Chinese Media Studies*, Vol. 1, 2002, pp. 50–67; H-C. Deppman, *Made in Taiwan: an Analysis of Meteor Garden as an East Asian Idol Drama*, C. Berry and Y. Zhu (eds), TV China, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009, pp. 90–110.

<sup>12</sup> According to local news reports in Taiwan, Korean TV dramas are now more widely circulated and distributed than Japanese ones. Younger people prefer Japanese dramas whereas middle-aged women are more likely to stick with Korean ones. I. Ang, 'The Cultural Intimacy of TV Drama', in: K. Iwabuchi (ed.) *Feeling Asian Modernities: Transnational Consumption of Japanese TV Dramas*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004, pp. 306–307.

<sup>13</sup> A. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation*, London & Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. 3.

Focusing on urban romance they depict luxurious lifestyles, beautiful settings, pop idols and the search for individuality and love in a modern consumer society.

Taiwanese idol dramas with their emphasis on love, individual happiness and familial relationships as key themes, appeal to those aged between 18 and 35. Nevertheless if the drama (usually a soap opera) is based on history or a well known family saga, set over 50 or even 100 episodes, more adults will be attracted to them.<sup>14</sup>

From a generic point of view, Taiwanese drama generally seems to be a 'near cousin' of American soap operas and 'younger sister' of Korean and Japanese drama.

Despite a significant global (western) influence and advanced processes of acculturation, Taiwanese dramas vary from American soap operas. However, by overlooking the generic and historical differences between the two, some researchers tend to treat Taiwanese drama as a type of soap opera. Taking into account the specificities of audiences and structures, only prime time dramas (*badian dang* 八點檔) and early *xiangtu ju* (鄉土劇) can be categorized as pure soap operas. The Taiwanese TV series' being broadcast during prime time, generally found success among women (although not working women) and elderly audiences. The age of audiences watching Taiwanese soap operas vary from 40 to 65. However, the 'exaggerated stories' also attract many young people in the 20 to 30 age bracket. Among the most popular are *Two Fathers* (*Liang ge baba* 兩個爸爸) from 2012, and *The Choice of Happiness* (*Xingfu xuanze ti* 幸福選擇題) from 2013. Performed as a series on daytime television, because of the long-running and open structure, a Taiwanese prime-time soap opera often goes on for years. Taiwanese soap operas commonly portray romantic storylines about the lives of a multitude of characters. Plots are generally sensational and designed to appeal strongly to emotions. In comparison to idol dramas, which are characterised by evident comedic factors and slapstick humour, soap operas encapsulate pure melodramatic attributes. Many of the stories unfold as the episodes are shown. Family life, personal relationships, emotional and moral conflicts make up their central subject matter. Although the overwhelming majority of soap operas stories are composed within a domestic sphere, a broader social context is easy to reconstruct.

In general Taiwanese soap operas are dialogue based, while serialized romantic comedies are more visually portrayed. Though soap operas share with idol dramas similar melodramatic and sentimental aspects, along with strongly stereotypical characters and situations, it is clear that their producers appeal to different audiences.

Likewise, there are distinguishing elements between Taiwanese and Japanese/ Korean idol dramas. Despite the cultural proximity (meta Confucian) and cultural connection with Japan and Korea, they do differ slightly from their transnational prototype. Even if both share the same or similar narratives, the epic and theatrical tradition (of China), as well as similar aesthetic principles (of Japan and Korea), there are still some slightly different interpretations of tradition concerning moral values and ethical order.<sup>15</sup> Leung signalled that Confucian values and conservatism are the two main points that make distinctions between Japanese and Taiwanese TV dramas. Conservative tendencies can be seen not only in the quite prudish expression of erotic and sexuality issues, but also in the more evident

<sup>14</sup> Li Jingyi, Chen Yujing, Huang Xinyi 李靜衣, 陳盈靜, 黃馨逸, *The Comparison of Taiwanese Soap Operas and Korean Soap Operas*, 2011, p. 6, <http://www.shs.edu.tw/works/essay/2011/11/2011110911515410.pdf> (accessed 15 June 2015).

<sup>15</sup> Ch. Leung, L.Y.M., *An Asian Formula? Comparative Reading of Japanese and Korean TV Dramas*, 13th JAMCO Online International Symposium, 2004.

articulation of Confucian ethics. Additionally, elements such as lifestyle, the behavioural pattern of villagers, a promotion of local investment, and language differentiation (ordinary people speaks *Taiyu*, townsfolk – *guoyu*) all denote a Taiwanese specificity.

Faced with the commoditization and globalization of culture, audiences in Taiwan have a potentially free choice of product. According to Gordon Mathews, despite the notion of a “cultural supermarket”, Taiwanese audiences feel that they belong to their own national culture. At the same time they consume from the global cultural supermarket, were they can buy Japanese and Korean drama, American soap operas or European romantic comedies and believe (albeit falsely) that they can buy, do, or ‘be’ anything in the world that they want to.<sup>16</sup> Gordon’s conviction that, “we can’t have it both ways. We can’t have all the world’s cultures to choose from and our own”<sup>17</sup> takes into context the particular importance Taiwanese TV audiences’ cultural identity.

By articulating views of different audience groups and by representing diverse aesthetic tastes, the Taiwanese *lianxuju* have differentiated into a variety of subcategories like comedy, romantic comedy, romance, crime, and historical drama.

Taiwanese teenagers, housewives, middle-aged and elderly audiences alike, are generally over-exposed to a thematically feminine agenda of love, romance and the family sphere. Viewing these dramas female audiences can identify with, one can learn a lot about an alluring cosmopolitan urban lifestyle infected with consumerist desire.

This is a reason enough to recognise why so many studies on Taiwanese popular culture and world mass media, demonstrate a gender oriented “pattern of cultural construction”.<sup>18</sup>

A brief analysis of several lists of Taiwanese drama linked on websites providing information about Asian TV dramas, such as [www.dramafever.com](http://www.dramafever.com), [www.sugoideas.com](http://www.sugoideas.com), [www.spcnet.tv](http://www.spcnet.tv), and [www.gooddrama.net](http://www.gooddrama.net) indicates the absolute favouritism given to titles related to love, happiness, family, zodiac, stars, marriage, kings, princes, queens and flowers. This tendency concerns Chinese titles as well as their English version, which often differ from each other. Here are some examples:

Love: Love Contract (*Aiqing heyue*愛情合約); Bump Off Lover (*Aisha*愛殺17; *Love Queen* (*Bianai niwang*戀愛女王); The Magicians of Love (*Aiqing mofa shi*愛情魔髮師); The Spirit of Love (Ai愛); Love together (*Airang women zai yiqi* 愛讓我們在一起); Love You (*Zuihou jue ding aishang ni* 醉後決定愛上你); Fall In Love With Me (*Aishang liang ge wo* 愛上兩個我); Love Family (*You ai 1 jia ren* 有愛1家人); Love Around (*Zhen ai heibai pei* 真愛黑白配); Love SOS (*Aiqing ji zheng shi* 愛情急整室); Endless Love (*Ai wuxian* 愛無限); Love Buffet (*Aisi bai hui* 愛似百匯); That love comes (*Huanying ai guanglin* 歡迎愛光臨); Way Back Into Love (Ai.Huilai愛。回來).

<sup>16</sup> G. Mathews, *Global Culture/Individual Identity. Searching for Home in the Cultural Supermarket*, London: Routledge, 2006.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>18</sup> Ch. Geraghty, ‘Women’s Fiction Still? The Study of Soap Opera in Television Studies The Study of Soap Opera’, in J. Wasko (ed.), *A Companion to Television*, Blackwell Publishing, 2005; Y. Tsai, ‘Cultural Identity in an Era of Globalisation. The Structure and Content of Taiwanese Soap Operas’, in J. Tay, G. Turner (eds), *Television Histories in Asia: Issues and Contexts (Media, Culture and Social Change in Asia Series)* London: Routledge, 2015; Fang-Chih Irene Yang, ‘From Korean Wave to Korean Living: Meteor Garden and the Politics of Love Fantasies in Taiwan’, *Korea Observer*, Vol. 43, No. 3, 2012, pp.19–44, [http://www.tobiashubINETTE.se/hallyu\\_4.pdf](http://www.tobiashubINETTE.se/hallyu_4.pdf) (accessed 20 September 2015).

**Happiness:** The Year of Happiness and Love (*Nayi nian de xingfushiguang* 那一年的幸福時光); Happy and Love Forever (*Xingfu yidingqiang* 幸福一定強), *Easy Fortune Happy Life* (*Fuqi you ankang* 福氣又安康), Sunny Happiness (*Xingfu zui qingtian* 幸福最晴天), Happy 300 Days (*Yujian xingfu300 tian* 遇見幸福300天), Happy Michelin Kitchen (*Xingfu san ke xing* 幸福三顆星).

**Kingdom:** *Poor Prince* (*Pinqiong gui gong* 貧窮貴公); The Prince Who Turns into a Frog, *Wangzi bian qingwa* 王子變青蛙; Prince and Princess 2 (*Zikanjian er gongzhu* 子看見二公主); My Queen (*Baiquan nüwang* 敗犬女王); The Queen of S.O.P. (S.O.P nüwang 女王); The Queen! (*Nüwangde dansheng* 女王的誕生).

**Relatives:** I, My Brother (*Wo he wo de xiongdi* 我和我的兄弟); Two Fathers (*Liangge baba* 兩個爸爸); Golden Dad (*Jin pai laoba* 金牌老爸); Kiss Me Mom! (*Ma, qin yixia* 媽, 親一下!); Our Mother (*Ama* 阿母); Baby Daddy (*Chang bu da de baba* 長不大的爸爸).

The website 'dramafever.com' provides a very useful instrument to grasp the main motifs and strains of the storylines. According to the typology filtered by theme, this website has organised the whole content of Taiwanese drama into such categories as: destiny, twists of fate, first love, love/hate relationships, love triangles, office romances, true love, tough love, jealousy, marriage, arranged marriage, family relationships, parenting, work relationships, food, wealth and money. Supplemented with such topos' and motifs as terminal illness, memory loss, bankruptcy, careers, business profits, separated lovers, revenge, secrets about the birth or identities of characters, extramarital affairs and marriage break-ups, we get a catalogue of motifs specific to romance, romantic comedy, love stories and melodrama.

Critical studies of the content and structures reveal that Taiwanese dramas represent qualities of morality, repetition, intimacy and schematised storyline, cardinal attributes of melodramatic form.<sup>19</sup>

The same generic connotation acknowledge Singer characterisation of contemporary melodrama: "pathos, overwrought or heightened emotion, moral polarization (good vs. evil), non-classical narrative structure (e.g., use of extreme coincidence and "deus ex machine"), and sensationalism (emphasis on action, violence, and thrills)."<sup>20</sup>

Facing repeated criticism due to rigid character, over stylisation, over reliance on romantic scenery, sentiments and nostalgic emotions, *lianxuju* step by step conquer Taiwanese TV audience. Its secret lies in narrative and visual apparatus, which are used to construct and support the melodramatic and romantic-comedic format. In narrative terms, the whole structure have dichotomic nature organised around conflict pattern. This binary system facilitate and support process of meaning decrypting, that even uneducated audience can easily grasp the story, categorise the character and understand moral notion. At the same time some participants of high culture, according to the concept of omnivorousness so-called *professionals* (Peterson) because of this kind of simplification exactly choose TV drama for "brain resting".<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> E. Lozano, A. Singhal, 'Melodramatic Television Serials: Mythical Narratives for Education', *Communications: The European Journal of Communication*, Vol. 18 (1), 1993, p. 116.

<sup>20</sup> B. Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2001, p. 48.

<sup>21</sup> According to the concept of, we observe today a shift from an elite-to-mass status hierarchy to an omnivore-to-univore status hierarchy. It means that the real audience of pop cultural soap operas, Asian dramas etc. may include omnivorousness category (for example high educated class, etc.). See R.A. Peterson, 'Understanding Audience Segmentation: From Elite and Mass to Omnivore and Univore', *Poetics*, Vol. 21, No. 4, 1992, pp. 243–258.

Applying Chen Yanru and Hao Xiaoming proposition<sup>22</sup> to Taiwanese (love) drama, it is already apparent that difference between them and Chinese love-story series is not so great or so relevant. By examining content of many *lianxuju* there are classes of conflict to specify like: conflict between career aspirations and familial duties, conflict between love and betrayal, conflict between arranged marriages, conflict caused by different social and economic status, conflict between different life objectives, conflict reflecting search for independence and filial piety, conflict between past and present caused by memory lost.

In my opinion Taiwanese drama as a form of imaginary reality embodies several characteristics of a fairy tale (or within larger category – folktale except fable). Although Lozano & Singhal<sup>23</sup> argue that this kind of drama has mythical character, and Yean Tsai<sup>24</sup> try to apply Propp's theoretical proposition<sup>25</sup>, fairy tale convention seems to be more useful and precise to categorise Taiwanese idol drama and prime time drama.

Despite of evident lack of magical (fairy) elements as the feature by which fairy tales can be distinguished from other sorts of folktales<sup>26</sup> another constitutive elements like: schematic construction of fictional events, motifs and characters (mostly stylised), victory of love and justice, triumph of good over evil, happy ending – are still present. It is also worth remembering, that due to diachronic and cross-cultural transmission many fairy tales are recreated, rewritten and became the palimpsest for another texts.

Like a myth, fairy tales “transcends any of its particular versions; in other words it is a story matrix from which different narrations can be generated.”<sup>27</sup>

Taiwanese drama is just one of the narrative form which employs old tales – pattern of Cinderella (*Fated to Love You, Autumn Concerto, Xia yidian, xingfu* 下一站, 幸福); Big Red Ridding Hood (*Because of you or Fairy Tale Under the Starlight, Xingguang xia de tonghua* 星光下的童話); Sleeping Beauty (*Queen of S.O.P*); The Frog King (The Prince Who Turns into a Frog); The Swineheard (*Boysitter, Qiao mo nü qiang tou hun* 俏摩女搶頭婚). According to Lozano this kind of (melodramatic) series is very flexible syntagmatically, and highly structured paradigmally.<sup>28</sup>

It means that the narrative paradigm of *lianxuju* related to (fairy) tale is universal, whereas its syntagmatic code is regional (Taiwanese). At the paradigmatic level *lianxuju* is embodied with all the quality mentioned above. At the syntagmatic level traditional values and elements representing Taiwanese reality, distinguish it from rest of romances, soap operas, melodramas and romantic comedies produced in America or Europe. Articulating tension between Confucian virtues and the modern values of individual emancipation,

<sup>22</sup> See Chen Yanru, Hao Xiaoming (1997/8-8), Conflict Resolution in Love Triangles: Perspectives Offered by Chinese TV Dramas', *Intercultural Communication Studies*, VII: 1., <http://web.uri.edu/iaics/files/08-Chen-Yanru-Hao-Xiaoming.pdf> (accessed 15.09.2015).

<sup>23</sup> Lozano, Singhal, 'Melodramatic Television...', p. 116.

<sup>24</sup> Yean Tsai, 'Cultural Identity in the Era of Globalization: the Structure and Content of Taiwanese Soap Operas', in G. Wang, J. Servaes, A. Goonasekera (eds), *The New Communications Landscape: Demystifying Media Globalization*, London: Routledge, 2000, p. 182.

<sup>25</sup> Yean Tsai have selected and reviewed 14 *xiangju* and *lishiju* (歷史劇) on theoretical basis of Propp's *Morfology of the Folktale*. Propp used his method to analyse Russian folktales, included fairy tales and fables.

<sup>26</sup> S.S. Jones, *The Fairy Tale: The Magic Mirror of the Imagination*, London: Routledge, 2002, p. 8.

<sup>27</sup> Lozano, Singhal, 'Melodramatic Television...', p. 116.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 115–128.

Taiwanese drama de facto reflect mixture of old and new ideas. Among large number of images, which are ideologically supported by Confucian cultural values, representation of traditional concept of community and family, gender and elders status is dominating. Many Taiwanese drama retell the story preserving model of obedient wife or women, which sacrifice their own interests for the sake of their husband, partner or family (*Fated to Love*, *Autumn Concerto*, *Sunny Happiness*). There are also many which express traditional views on marriage, social hierarchy in workplace, parenting, especially manifesting idea of filial piety or *yuanfen* 緣分. It is interesting that the concept of destiny *yuanfen* originating from Buddhist philosophy plays leading role not only in all melodramas, but also in many comedic oriented idol dramas. Though routinely it is associated with romantic love and “written in the stars” (*tiansheng yi dui* 天生一對) happy marriage, traditional connotation to *yuanfen* – invisible force intertwining individual fate still retains (*You’re My Destiny*, *Autumn Concerto*, *Just you* (*Jiu shi yao ni ai shang wo* 就是要你愛上我). I would argue, that *yuanfen* perform hidden function of magical helper (donor), which possesses an extraordinary kind of power and share with *yuanfen* the possibility of transforming the human fate.

At the same time Taiwanese drama (syntagmatically) exploit the narrative device to incorporate into the stories modern values, fashionable gadgets, westernised customs and habits, European songs and arts, new slang derived from English or Japanese language.

Despite the binary model constructed to expose the conflict pattern, which allow to juxtapose Taiwanese tradition to all these virtues and attributes reflecting contemporary global, modern and mostly urban life, in my opinion in series praxis operate an trichotomy order. The third category indicate liminality or confusion (in) between value system of tradition and global/postmodern/postcolonial word.



## Notes on Contributors

MARIANNE BASTID-BRUGUIÈRE, an outstanding sinologist graduated from the Ecole Nationale des Langues et Civilisations Orientales and Peking University who worked for the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris and was named Grand Officer of the Légion d'honneur in 2010

STANISŁAW TOKARSKI, Professor Emeritus at the Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Studies at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, e-mail: s-tokarski@o2.pl

ADAM W. JELONEK, Professor at the Institute of Middle and Far Eastern Studies of the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, e-mail: ajelonek@hotmail.com

ADAM RASZEWSKI, PhD student at the Institute of Political Science of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, e-mail: voland7@onet.eu

ARTUR KOŚCIAŃSKI, Assistant Professor at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, e-mail: akoscian@ifispan.waw.pl

LARISA ZABROVSKAIA, Professor at the Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnography of Far Eastern People of the Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Vladivostok, e-mail: larisa51@hotmail.com

NICOLAS LEVI, Assistant Professor at the Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Studies at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, e-mail: nicolas\_levi@yahoo.fr

IRENA KALUŻYŃSKA, Professor at the Department of Sinology of the Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw, e-mail: i.s.kaluzynska@uw.edu.pl

IZABELLA ŁABĘDZKA, Professor at the Chair of Asian Studies of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, e-mail: izarab@amu.edu.pl

LIDIA KASAREŁŁO, Professor at the Department of Sinology of the Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw, and at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Jagiellonian University, e-mail: lidia.kasarello@uw.edu.pl

EWA CHMIELOWSKA, PhD candidate of Department of Anthropology, Institute of Zoology, Jagiellonian University, e-mail: ewa.chmielowska@uj.edu.pl

FU-SHENG SHIH, PhD, Assistant Professor of Department of Sociology, Soochow University, Taipei, Taiwan, e-mail: fusheng@scu.edu.tw

ANNA MROZEK-DUMANOWSKA, Professor at the Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Studies at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, e-mail: abdumanowscy@wp.pl

DIANA WOLAŃSKA, Doctoral Candidate at the Faculty of Humanities, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, e-mail: alanis7@wp.pl

WALDEMAR J. DZIAK, Professor at the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw

IWONA GRABOWSKA-LIPIŃSKA, PhD, politologist-sinologist graduated from the Warsaw University, former co-worker of Professor Roman Sławiński in Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, e-mail: iwona.grabowska.lipinska@gmail.com

MARCIN STYSZYŃSKI, Associate Professor in the Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, e-mail: martin@amu.edu.pl

DOROTA RUDNICKA-KASSEM, Associate Professor at the Institute of Middle and Far Eastern Studies of the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, e-mail: d.rudkass@interia.pl

ROMAN SŁAWIŃSKI (1932–2014) was a Professor of Sinology at the Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Studies at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw and the Editor-in-Chief of *Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia*

JERZY ZDANOWSKI, Professor at the Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Studies at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, e-mail: [jerzyzda@gmail.com](mailto:jerzyzda@gmail.com)