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

Submitted by CHEN HUI-YUN to the University of Exeter
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Abstract

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

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