



Memories of an Actress

女伶回憶錄

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BFT2.0 Translator: Michael Kearney

In collaboration with the Taiwan Film and Audiovisual Institute, Golden Comic Awards winner Jason Chien brings the vibrant world of 1960s Taiwanese cinema to life through the eyes of actress Bai Hua. With rich detail, the story captures the filming environment, popular culture, and artistry of the era. It highlights both the dazzling heights and the inevitable decline of Taiwanese cinema, intertwined with the triumphs and struggles of Bai Hua's personal journey.



Author Chien Chia-Cheng

Chien Chia-Cheng's *Wind Chaser Under the Blue Sky* won the Grand Prize at the 17th Japan International Manga Award in 2023. Chien has worked as a lead artist on comics about railways, finance, and World War II, as well as storyboards for advertisements and animation, and novel illustrations. His comic works include *Time Train*, *Alishan Railway Mysteries*, *Ms. Jiang*, *Have You Ever Been in Love?*, *Battlefield Communications*, and *Seven Dreams of the Louvre*. His illustrations for novels include *Howl of the Wolf*, *Other Dreams*, *Fight Chess King: Winning Moves*, and *Fight Chess King: Ghost Moves*. *Time Train* and *Back Street Dusk* sold rights in Arabic, while *The Movie Painter* sold rights in Russian. In 2016, works from *Seven Dreams of the Louvre* were exhibited at the Beijing Normal University Art Museum. In 2013, *Time Train* won the Best General Comic Award at the 4th Golden Comic Awards from the Ministry of Culture.

The Everlasting Beauty: Female Actors and Taiwanese Hokkien Cinema

by Wei Ching Su

In January 1956, Taiwan's first 35mm Hokkien film, *Xue Pinggui and Wang Baochun*, was released. Directed by young returnee director He Jiming, with performances by members of the Mai Liao Gong Le troupe, the film marked the beginning of Taiwan's Hokkien cinema. In line with the tradition of female roles in Taiwanese opera, Liu Meiyang played Xue Pinggui and Wu Biyu played Wang Baochun. These two actresses made the leap from stage to screen, sparking the golden age of Taiwanese Hokkien cinema. Their success highlights the strong connection between Hokkien cinema and Taiwanese opera, with female actors playing a central role.

Later in November 1956, the first Taiwanese Hokkien fashion drama *Rainy Night Flower* was released. This film,

featuring the emerging Zhongsheng troupe, reflected daily life with a focus on realism, as opposed to the stylized movements of traditional opera. Its success led to an influx of talented actors and actresses, who transitioned from stage plays to become film stars, ushering in the first boom of Taiwanese Hokkien cinema.

As the film industry grew, directors and producers sought to develop talent, with notable figures like He Jiming at Huaxing Film Studio recruiting actors like He Yuhua, who became known for her warm and virtuous image. From young girls to elderly women, she appeared in many films. As the Hokkien film industry died, she then transitioned to television.

Lin Boqiu's Yufeng Film Company adopted a distinctive strategy by

integrating film production with actor training, drawing inspiration from Japan's Takarazuka Revue. Their focus was on producing high-quality, culturally rich films, prioritizing fewer releases with greater artistic depth. This approach emphasized women's inner worlds and deepened the portrayal of female characters.

By 1962, Taiwanese Hokkien cinema had overcome early challenges of poor production quality and competition from Japanese imports. The industry transitioned from the traditional studio system to Beitou, embracing a variety of themes and genres. This shift allowed for more diverse and nuanced representations of female characters.

Early Taiwanese Hokkien films often revolved around tragic narratives, with actresses like Bai Lan and Jin Mei portraying rural girls forced to migrate to cities due to family hardships. These stories reflected Taiwan's modernization, juxtaposing rural and urban settings while exploring the transformation of young girls into women.

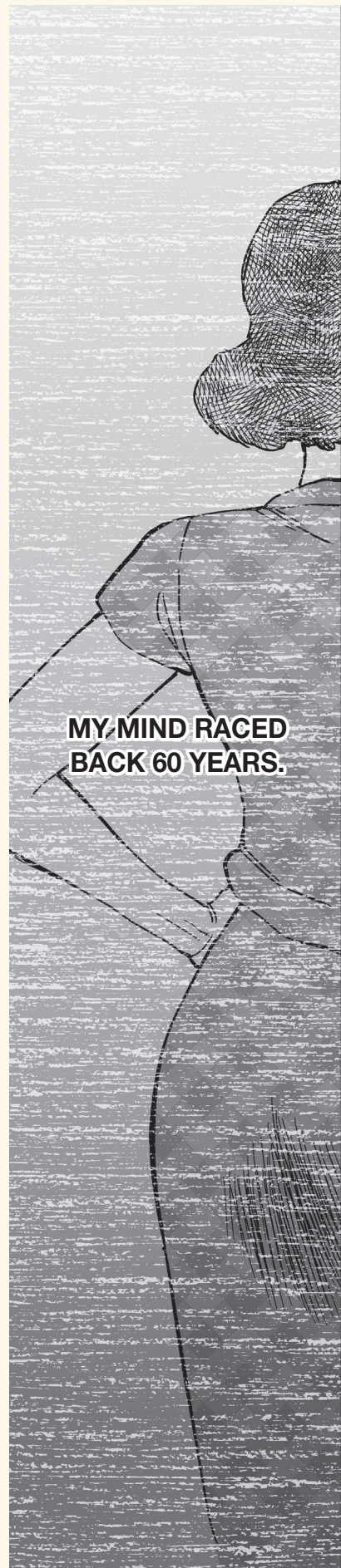
As the industry evolved, female roles expanded significantly. Strong female protagonists emerged in gangster films, and women spies challenged the traditional male dominance of the spy genre. Even supporting roles gained prominence, with actresses delivering

performances that left lasting impressions on audiences. This evolution showcased the growing depth and complexity of female characters in Taiwanese Hokkien cinema.

If Taiwanese Hokkien cinema were to be revived, it could offer a glimpse into the diversity of female representation in Taiwanese society. Through their identities, relationships, and evolving roles, actresses reflect Taiwan's societal changes, offering new perspectives on the star system and the film industry. The challenge, however, lies in the loss of veteran filmmakers. Preservation and restoration efforts serve as a fight against time, aiming to safeguard the invaluable youth and contributions of these actresses to Taiwanese Hokkien cinema.

This afterword has been edited for the purposes of this booklet.

Wei Ching Su is a freelance film critic with a Master's degree in Animation Art and Image Aesthetics from Tainan National University of the Arts. She has participated in film festival work, including the Kaohsiung Film Festival and the Cross-Strait Film Festival. Additionally, she has served as a specialized writer and lecturer for the National Center for Film and Audio-Visual Culture.



MY MIND RACED
BACK 60 YEARS.



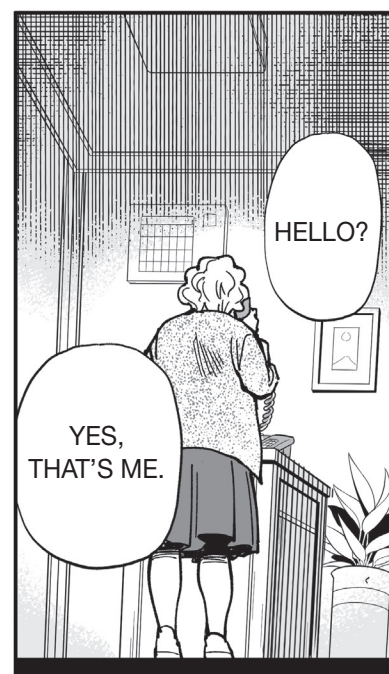
IN AN INSTANT,

YOU
FOUND
THEM!?



THAT'S
GRANDMA'S
OLD NAME.

BAI-HUA?
WHO'S
THAT?



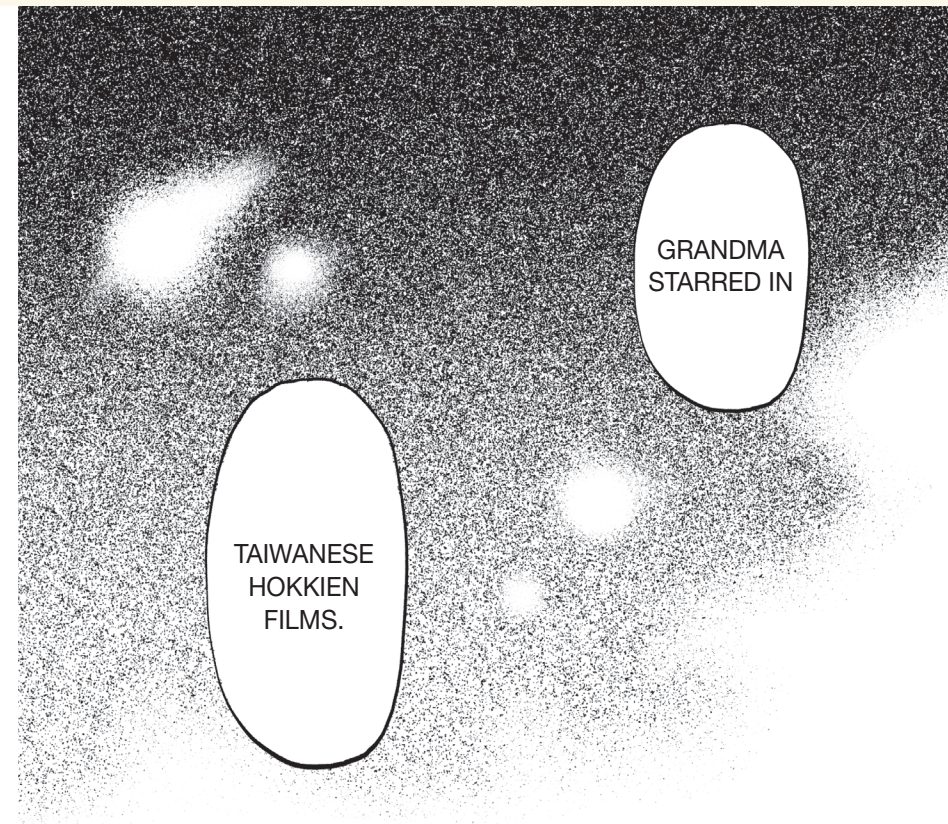
HELLO?

YES,
THAT'S ME.



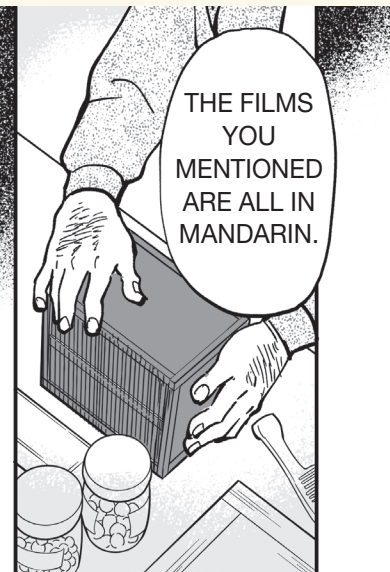
THAT'S
CORRECT.

HUH?

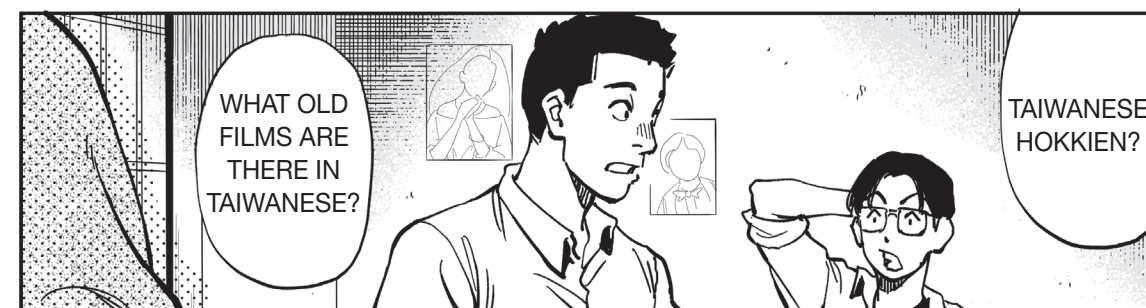


TAIWANESE
HOKKIEN
FILMS.

GRANDMA
STARRED IN



THE FILMS
YOU
MENTIONED
ARE ALL IN
MANDARIN.



WHAT OLD
FILMS ARE
THERE IN
TAIWANESE?

TAIWANESE
HOKKIEN?



BUT HE
REFERRED
TO YOU AS
"BAI-HUA."
IT MUST BE
SOMEONE
YOU KNOW.



WHO
IS IT?

I'M NOT
SURE. THE
CALLER
GAVE
A VERY
LONG
TITLE.



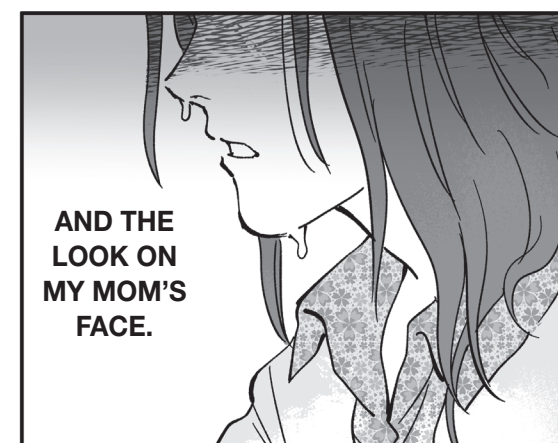
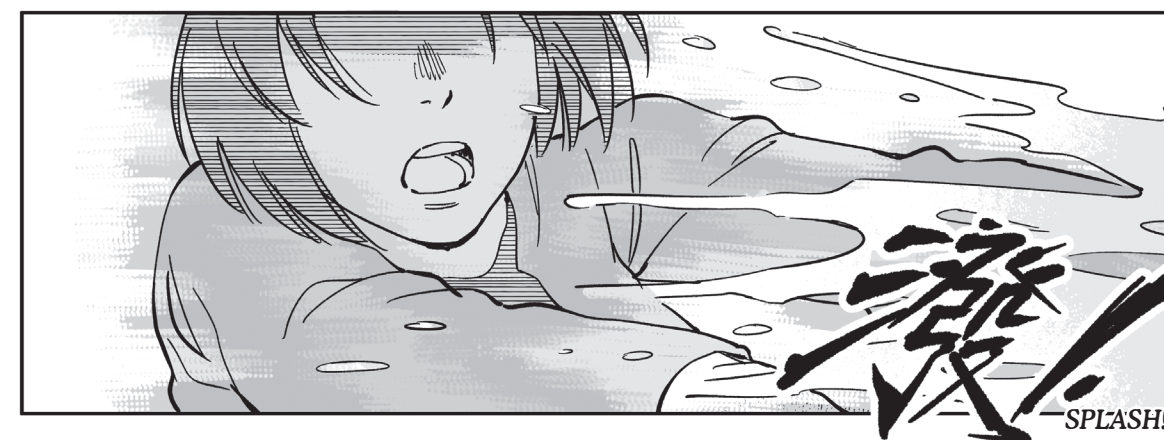
MOM,
YOU HAVE
A PHONE
CALL.

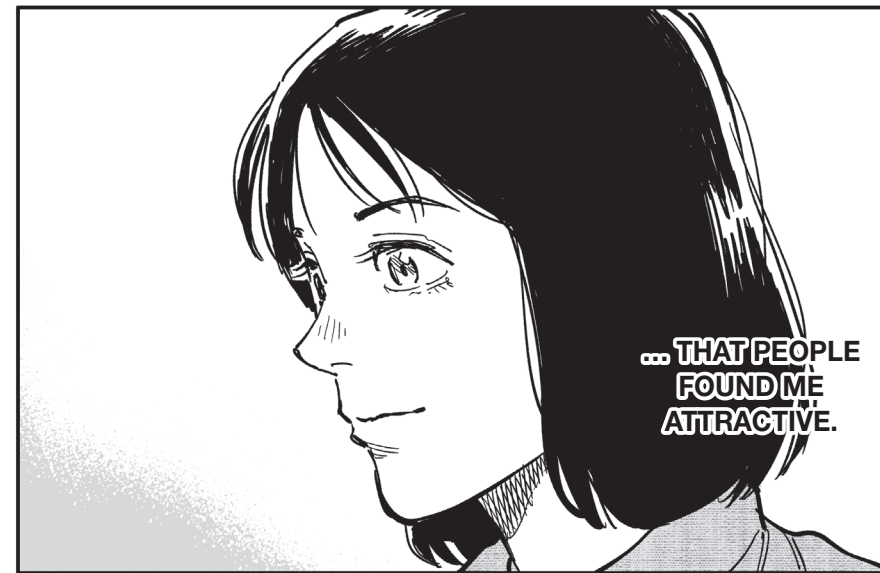
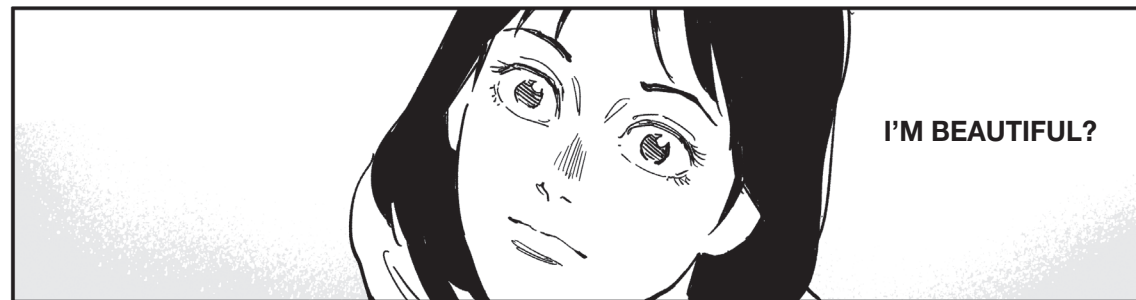
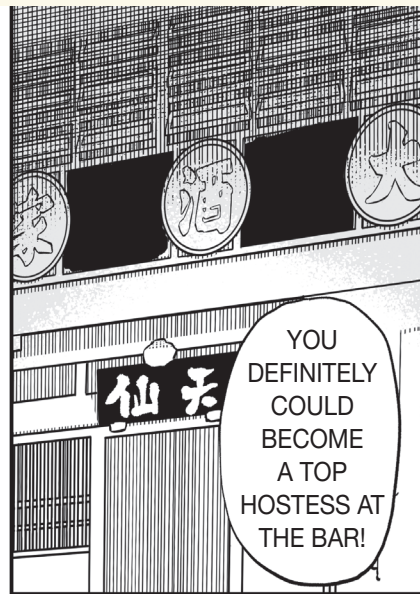


... THAT I WAS
THE UNWANTED
ONE.



ONLY THEN DID
I REALIZE...

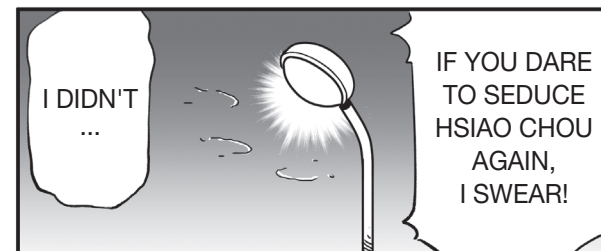
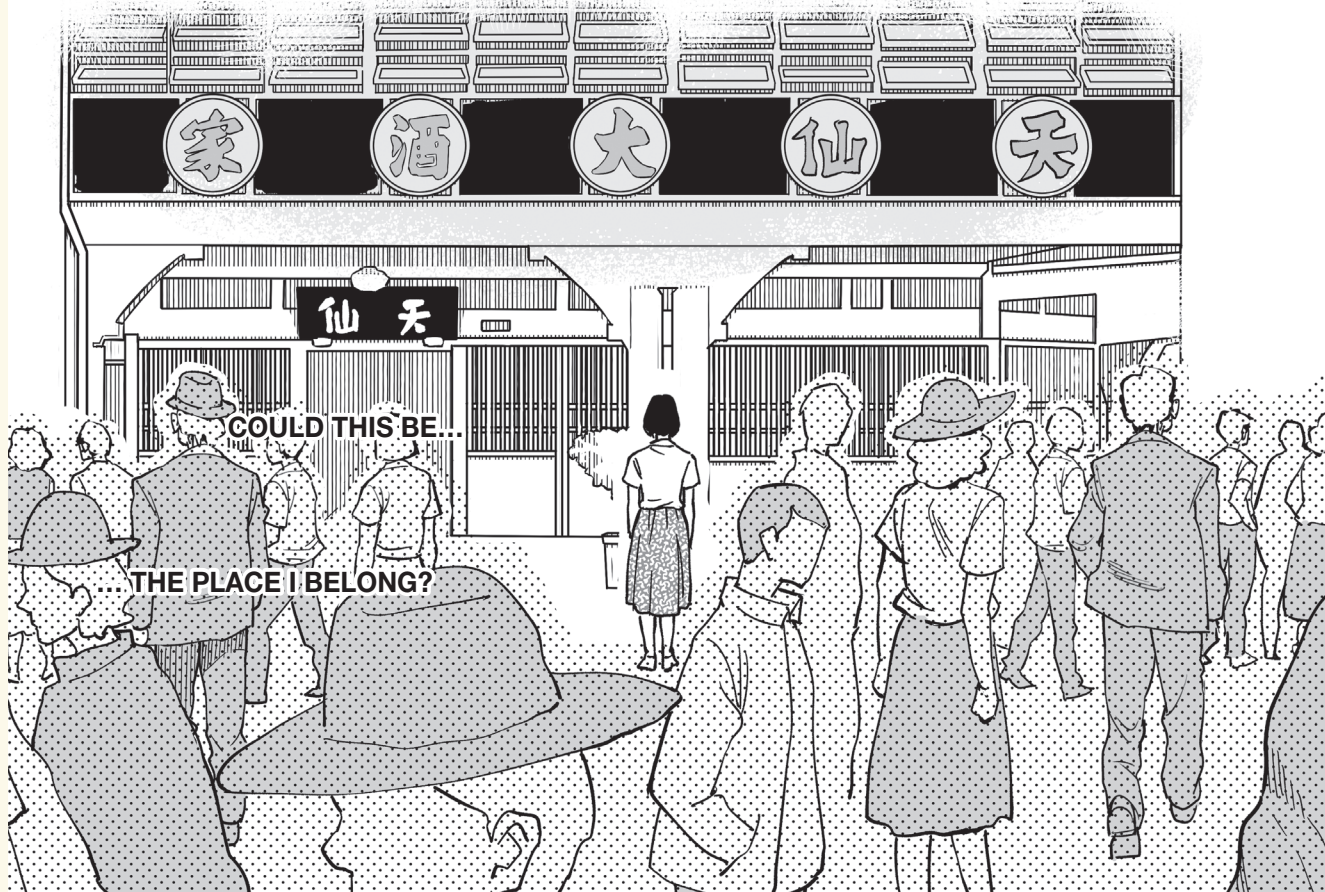




ON BOTH MY
FATHER'S SIDE

AND MY
MOTHER'S
SIDE,

I WAS ALWAYS
A BURDEN.



BUT I STILL
HADN'T FOUND
A PLACE WHERE
I BELONGED.

