《蘭嶼觀點》Voices of Orchid Island[1]

導演：胡台麗，出品年：1993，片長：73分鐘，格式：16mm，彩色，語言：華語、達悟語，拍攝地：臺灣，出品者：中央研究院民族學研究所，發行者：同喜文化出版工作室。

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Towards the end of Hu Tai-li's 胡台麗 1993 documentary, *Voices of Orchid Island* 蘭嶼觀點, there is a scene from the 1991 "Expel the Evil Spirits" protest (220反核廢驅逐惡靈運動). The "evil spirits" referenced come from the Tao (aka Yami) belief in *anito*, but here they also stand for the nuclear waste the Taiwanese government began storing on the island in 1982. The initial decision to store waste on Lanyu (蘭嶼, the Chinese for Orchid Island, known as Pongso no Tao in the Tao language) had been made much earlier, as far back as the early 1970s. Lanyu was chosen because of its remoteness: Located 49 kilometers off the cost of the Taiwan mainland and lacking any large urban development, with a small mostly Indigenous population,[2] it seemed like an ideal location to government bureaucrats. But the local population was never consulted. Even worse, the true nature of the waste disposal site continued to be hidden as it was being built. When the truth came out in 1982, Taiwan was still under martial law, which meant open protest was out of the question. Only after martial law was lifted in 1987 could public protests begin to be staged.

This context may explain the uniquely reflexive and collaborative approach Hu Tai-li adopted in the making of this film. Not only were two of the anti-nuclear movement's leaders, Syaman Rapongan 夏曼・藍波安, and Si Pozngit[3] 郭建平,

1 Thanks to 楊政賢 Cheng-hsien Yang and 林建享 Lin Chien-Hsiang for their help. Any mistakes are my own.

2 Around three thousand people resided on Lanyu in 1991, now there are about five thousand, of whom some eight hundred are Han.

3 Today he is known as Syaman Fengayan. Tao people use a system of teknonymy in which men are named after their first-born son; as a result their names change over the course of their lifetime.

closely involved, but the film's opening gives them a chance to weigh in with their concerns before the story has even begun. The two of them are sitting on the beach with Hu Tai-li, along with the Bunun doctor Topas Tamabima 田雅各 and a small child. Hu Tai-li asks the three Indigenous men if they would be willing to collaborate with her on the film. In response, they each express deep concern about the harm outsiders have brought to the island, but Topas Tamapima—something of an outsider himself—and Syaman Rapongan both grudgingly say they are willing to give Hu Tai-li the benefit of the doubt. Si Pozngit, however, is less sanguine. He expresses concern about the tendency of anthropologists to use Indigenous peoples for their own career advancement, leaving an uncomfortable silence that is only filled in by the sound of the ocean as the film's title graphics appear over the rocks.

Not only did the lifting of martial law create an environment in which people could for the first time openly express displeasure with the government, it also allowed Taiwanese to begin to explore their own history and culture, rejecting the state-imposed Chinese nationalism of the martial law era. This led to an outpouring of documentary films by and about Taiwan's Indigenous peoples, including this film (Friedman 2021). If Hu Tai-li was influenced in part by the opening up and democratization of Taiwanese society, she was also likely influenced by similar developments within the discipline of anthropology. The reflexive turn in anthropology, which took place around the same time, led anthropologists to shed the pretense of objective authority and encouraged them to adopt a variety of experimental forms that called into question the authority of the author or filmmaker. Visual anthropologists picked up on developments in books like *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986) and looked back to the work of Jean Rouch in the 1960s (Ruby 1991) for models of how to bring a similar sensibility into their films. One can see direct parallels between the film's opening and that of *Chronicle of a Summer*, a 1961 film by Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin, which also starts with a bit of self-reflexive dialog that includes one of the film's subjects.[4]

Voices of Orchid Island is divided into three chapters, each dealing with a separate theme. The first chapter focuses on tourism, which brought important business opportunities to the island, but also conflict and resentment as well, since very little of the tourist revenue went to locals. The question about the presence

4 Hu Tai-li would later have the opportunity to interview Jean Rouch on camera in 2003, a year before he died (*Encountering Jean Rouch* 2007).

of cameras raised in the opening scene gets picked up again in the discussion of tourist photography. In scenes reminiscent of Dennis O'Rourke's 1988 documentary *Cannibal Tours* (O'Rourke 2011), the camera stays behind after the tourists are gone to ask local residents how they feel about them. Most say that they wouldn't mind being photographed if it was done with more respect and concern for their privacy. Traditional dress for Tao men consists, in part, of a thong-shaped loincloth, which has long been a cause for ridicule by mainstream society. When Tao interviewees express concern about tourists taking pictures surreptitiously, it raises questions about the inclusion of similar images in the documentary film itself. The question as to whether the camera wielded by the film crew is any better than that of the tourists is raised by the film in a joking manner when, during a festival, a young child looks straight at the camera and yells that they shouldn't be filming.

The second chapter focuses on the activities of the doctor, Topas Tamapima, as he makes his rounds. Today, along with Syaman Rapongan, he is known primarily for his important contributions to Taiwanese Indigenous literature as a writer and novelist. At the time, however, he had been serving as a doctor on Lanyu for three years, providing affordable medical care so people wouldn't have to make an expensive trip to the Taiwanese mainland for pregnancies and other easily treated conditions. The chapter starts with a discussion of his interest in photography, thus linking it back to the previous chapter. We are reminded of this theme through the recurring device of ending each of the chapter's short vignettes with a freeze-frame and the sound of a shutter click. While this device feels a bit heavy-handed, this very heavy-handedness seems to serve a purpose. By drawing attention to the presence of the film camera, much as the little boy did in the first chapter, it breaks through the fourth wall. Was this a Brechtian strategy used to keep audiences critically engaged, rather than accepting the artifice of the documentary as "natural"? Given the reflexive tone of the film, it seems quite likely. After some discussion of the medical situation on the island, the chapter shifts to Tao beliefs about illness. These revolve around the presence of spirits, or *anito*. We learn how children can fall prey to evil *anito* if they venture too far from home, how parents might call spirits back to a sick child, and about benevolent *anito* as well, since not all spirits are evil.

Each chapter is also organized around a local festival and other seasonal activities. The first chapter centers on the *mapabosbos* ceremony performed for the launching of a new boat; it is included to show how the rise of tourism has also led to a revival of such rituals. In the second chapter we see the annual *meypazos* (also written *miparos*) ritual during which offerings are made and placed on the roofs of people's

homes and at the seashore for the benevolent *anito*. And in the third and final chapter we see scenes of the rituals associated with the launching of a small boat (*mangap do kareyan*). The seasonal catching of flying fish (*alibangbang*) and mahi mahi (*arayo*) is also central to this chapter. While there is little ethnographic discussion of these scenes, they are not just there just to provide a bit of local color. Rather, they are an important part of the narrative. The fishing scenes in particular highlight the important role that nature plays in local culture. The protesters feel that the presence of nuclear waste threatens the connection with nature, and thus their entire way of life. Si Pozngit goes so far as to describe the nuclear waste as an agent of genocide, rejecting the government's claim that it is harmless. Although it isn't presented in the film, a poem by Syaman Rapongan reflects this sentiment powerfully: "Wild savages, your breakfast is served. Cobalt-60 for the men, cesium-137 for the women. As for the children, their breakfast is extinction" (Han 2017).

Today, nearly thirty years after it came out, the questions this film raises are as pressing as ever. Despite government promises to the contrary, the nuclear waste remains on the island, with no clear plan as to how or when it will be removed (Hioe 2022). People still must be flown to the Taiwanese mainland for emergency medical care (Chuang 2022). Tourism is still a contested issue (Jensen 2020). And as recently as the 2020 Golden Bell music award ceremony, the media made lewd remarks about the exposed buttocks of Tao actor Si Pangoyod 鍾家駿 who appeared in traditional formal dress for the occasion (Taiwan News 2020). Nor has the question of how anthropological filmmakers should collaborate with Indigenous peoples become any less urgent. Hu Tai-li's encounter with Orchid Island marked an important milestone in the history of ethnographic film, but unfortunately much remains the same for the Tao.

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