

Tsui Yung-Hui 崔永徽 (Heather Tsui)

Director Tsui Yung-hui graduated from the Department of Chinese Literature of Fu Jen Catholic University, New Taipei City, Taiwan. She works as a documentary film maker. Her films have been shown all over Taiwan and have participated in international festivals. “Long Time No Sea” (*Zhi you dahai zhidao* 只有大海知道, 2018) is her debut feature film. At the 2018 Taipei Golden Horse Film Festival, the movie’s main actor Si Pangoyod (Zhong Jiajun 鍾家駿) earned the Best New Performer Award for the role of Manawei.

On 17-18 October 2019, the Research Unit for Taiwanese Culture and Literature of the Faculty of East Asian Studies of Ruhr University Bochum, Germany, invited Director Tsui for a presentation of “Long Time No Sea” with a Question and Answer session after the show on October 17.



Director Tsui Yung-Hui during preparations for the film show on October 17, 2019.

On the next day, the students of the seminar “Introduction to the Ethnolinguistic Status of Taiwan”, given by guest professor Dr. Li Taiyuan, had prepared more

detailed questions on the film and on Lanyu, which Director Tsui had kindly consented to answer. The interview was held in Chinese and English.



Director Tsui during the interview session in Dr. Li Taiyuan's MA seminar "The ethnolinguistic status of Taiwan", October 18, 2019.

The first question concerned one of the most obvious symbols of cultural difference: the traditional male outfit of the thong, initially very much disliked by the schoolboys who feature in this film.

Question: There is a scene in the film where the protagonist is very reluctant to wear 'T-pants'.¹ Is it really so embarrassing to wear them? And how about girls? What do they think about traditional clothing?

¹ *Dingzi ku* 丁字褲, *kekjit no mehakay* in the Tao language, a woven thong, traditional clothing for men of the ethnic group Tao 達悟族 living on Lanyu Island.



Film still from “Long Time No Sea” (provided by Swallow Wings Films 海鵬影業).

Director Tsui: It was indeed so one or two decades ago. A friend once told me that when she was an elementary school pupil, the school took them to Taiwan island for a cultural performance. On that occasion, everyone was wearing traditional clothes, so the boys had to wear ‘T-pants’, too. When they met with pupils from other schools, who made fun of them, the boys from Lanyu were terrified. They hid behind the girls. Students from other cultures made fun of them for the revealing nature of their T-pants, and didn’t realize that this belonged to a way of life and culture. So, as for the traditional clothing of Lanyu Island, young men are quite ambivalent about it. But traditional women’s clothing consists of beautiful dresses and skirts, so as a rule they are quite willing to wear them and feel little reluctance. In the past, when there was less appreciation of cultural diversity, people from outside would often make fun of and even disapprove of the ‘T-pants’. For the young boys of Lanyu Island, this was really stressful.

Question: There is another scene in the film where a song is being sung at a bar. I found the melody very familiar and wondered whether it was a local song from Lanyu Island or a traditional song of the indigenous people in Taiwan?

Director Tsui: It's a traditional folksong from Lanyu Island. The locals call it "Love Song of Lanyu" ("Lanyu qingge" 蘭嶼情歌). Noone knows who wrote the song, but almost everyone on the island knows it. I heard it from my friends when I first travelled to Lanyu Island. Even though I don't understand the lyrics, I can still appreciate the beautiful melody. The famous Taiwanese singer Chen Jien-nien 陳建年² and the singer Si Manpang 希.滿棒 from Lanyu Island have sung it in Tiehua Music Village 鐵花村, an artists' village at Taidong on Taiwan. As far as I know, there is a common version of the lyrics, but there are various text versions to the same melody. There is a story of how I chose this song as an episode for the movie: I got to know a singer from Yayo Village (Yeyou cun 椰油村) on Lanyu Island, Carey Chou (Zhou Liwen 周莉文). She took part in a singing contest hosted by Taiwan Indigenous Television and won first prize with her performance of "Love Song of Lanyu". On that occasion the lyrics were written by her mother. I first heard her version in 2012 or 2013 on YouTube and found it really appealing, because it was about the students of Yayo Elementary School (Yeyou guoxiao 椰油國小) taking part in a dance contest in Taiwan. That was years before I made my film, but at the time I had already finished writing the script. So when I heard Carey Chou's title, I felt that this was just telling the story of my movie! The lyrics, 'Children from Yayo leave their island for the contest, to bring our culture to the outer world, bless our children with success' and so forth, fit so well into my movie, except for some phrases on religion, so it only needed slight rephrasing. Carey Chou is also one of the popular singers from Lanyu. Not only has she made several albums, she is also active in the mainstream media. I like her voice so much that I asked her if she could sing the songs in our movie. Of course, our version is not the same as the one she sang at the singing contest. I asked Carey's mother to do the rephrasing, so it would fit better into the movie. There was another small episode: At the time of the recording, Carey was married and lived in Pingtung. She came to the studio in Taipei and invited her mother to come from Lanyu as well. The reason she invited her mother was that even though Carey could speak in her mother tongue [Tao], she was not sure if her pronunciation was perfect, since she belonged to a younger generation and lived on Taiwan Island most of her time. Carey's

² Ethnic name Pur-dur or Pau-Dull.

mother was to help her pronounce correctly during the recording, so that every word she sang would be perfect. Otherwise, it would not be acceptable to her people on Lanyu. But on the day everything went smoothly, so that Carey's mother had little reason to correct her pronunciation. She felt that her daughter's performance in their native language was quite accomplished.

Question: How did you choose and invite Chen Jien-nien to perform the final and theme song?

Director Tsui: The final song is also the theme song. And Chen Jien-nien is a famous singer in Taiwan from the ethnic group of the Beinan 卑南 (Puyuma). He works as a policeman. At first, since he liked to write songs, he brought out an album on CD. His first album won him not only the Golden Melody Award but also success and popularity in the market. But even though he is now very famous, he still works as a policeman. By sheer coincidence, for almost ten years Chen was assigned to the Lanyu police station in Yayo Village where our story takes place. Because he has been on Lanyu for a long time, Chen Jien-nien has become more like a Lanyu native. He has created music on the topic of Lanyu and released an album. In other words, Chen Jien-nien is very familiar with Lanyu. And since his music fits so well into this movie, I invited him to write and perform the title song. But it took a while for him to agree because he was too busy to accept my invitation. Fortunately, after I tried every way to ask him, he finally consented. And now in the theme song you hear at the end of the film, the lyrics are written by myself, and Chen Jien-nien composed the music. In addition, I always wanted a traditional song of the Tao people as one section of this theme song. So I chose a traditional children's song. Unfortunately, Jien-nien said that the song I had chosen didn't fit the theme; but the teacher in our movie teaches music at the elementary school and knows how to compose. He was also familiar with Lanyu's Tao traditional songs, so he helped to search out the traditional children's song "Song of Flying Fish" (飛魚之歌). So, at the end of the movie, there is the theme song in Chinese and then a song sung by Lanyu local children in the Tao language. Although composing the theme song of this movie was not easy, the result is perfect. I was very grateful for this solution.

That said, the issue of music is what I really want to emphasize in the movie. For example, the remix of our opening song includes the chanting of an elderly villager. That chanting sound is actually part of the movie plot: in order to collect traditional cultural materials, the male and female protagonists invited an elderly villager to sing and then record the chanting. The composer of the opening music took this chanting as his theme, together with other orchestral arrangements. It becomes a composition of the traditional and the innovative. In short, I intended to present the traditional ballads and music of Lanyu in many scenes of the film.

Question: We learn that a policeman from Taiwan is assigned to Lanyu. And then a teacher is assigned to Taiwan. So, are there many Han Chinese people in Lanyu? What else can these outsiders do in Lanyu?



Location of Lanyu (Orchid Island) about 64 km off the southeast coast of Taiwan Island. Map Source: Wikipedia. Re-edited by the translator.

Director Tsui: The number of Han Chinese on Lanyu Island is gradually increasing. Some people who work for the civil service are assigned to Lanyu, like the policeman and singer Chen Jien-nien. But many people also go there to work in temporary jobs, or tourists settle down there after having visited the island several times. This is also

in line with the trend in recent years that people want to escape from the cities. I once heard that there were young girls who liked Lanyu so much that they set their mind on marrying Lanyu men. They actively tried to fall in love in Lanyu, and later their dreams came true: they really found love on the small island and settled there forever.

Question: Is it because they like this environment, and then they just meet Mr. Right?

Director Tsui: I have heard many romantic love stories, but what's more special is that if you don't love Lanyu and don't like the lifestyle on this tiny island, then even if you fall in love, it will not work out. Many of my friends there are outsiders who married Lanyu locals and finally chose to live on Lanyu, and they all enjoy their life on the island. What can outsiders do there? The opportunities for work on Lanyu are quite limited. Some people work as schoolteachers, many others are in the tourism business, such as bed and breakfasts and catering, or traditional heritage crafts. But many Lanyu people will say: this shop is run by Taiwanese, and only that one is run by a Lanyu local.

Now there is a phenomenon on Lanyu that outsiders come over and set up their business here. In the past, if tourists wanted to hire motorcycles, they usually got them from their bed and breakfast place, which had only a small number of motorcycles to rent out. But in recent years, there has been a change. Now outsiders run the business and usually invest more funds. For example, as soon as a motorcycle hire shop with two hundred new motorcycles opens, it monopolizes the local rental market, so that the bed and breakfast's motorcycles can't be rented out. This is happening not only in motorcycle hire but also, for example, with cafés, bed and breakfasts, and even snorkeling companies, as larger Taiwanese stores come in and take over local business. As a result, the locals cannot compete with them, as their owner-operated stores etc. are very small. This is a big threat to Lanyu's local tourism industry.

Question: How far is Lanyu from Taiwan?

Director Tsui: It takes about 20 minutes by plane and 3 hours by ship. It depends on the waves and the wind at that time. When the sea is rough, one quickly becomes seasick. Outsiders often think that the locals on Lanyu are not afraid of taking a ship. In fact, when schools like the elementary school in the movie take children off the island to participate in activities, there are usually 30 to 40 people in the group, but

only 19 people can take a plane. Moreover, a flight might be cancelled due to strong winds. So as a rule larger groups will choose to go by sea when leaving or returning to the island. I heard that when children knew they were to take the ship, they cried in fright because it is really easy to get sick and to throw up on a ship if the sea is rough. When I first made the crossing, I didn't know how terrible sea sickness was. It really felt as if I was going to die... I kept thinking whether I could call a helicopter to save me. When I was making the movie, I travelled by ship with the crew. Everyone took sea sickness medicine, but it had no effect on me.

Question: Is there a hospital nearby? Can one go there if an accident should occur?

Director Tsui: There is a health center on Lanyu Island, but if it is a more serious or urgent medical condition, the patient will be sent to Taiwan. And the nearest hospital there is in Taitung. An accident occurred in the winter of 2018, when a patient needed to be sent to Taiwan for urgent medical treatment. But the weather was bad and the rescue helicopter crashed into the sea. Because there is a strong northeast monsoon in winter, flying in the winter months is very risky, and flights are often cancelled because of the strong winds. I myself once encountered strong winds on a flight, and the plane shook all the way to Lanyu. I was so scared and my legs became so weak When the plane finally landed, my first thought was how good it was to be still alive! I often joke that taking a ship is physical torture, but taking a plane is sheer mental stress.

Question: The language environment of the family has a great influence on language shift. Many grandparents in Taipei speak Chinese with their grandchildren, but they usually have a Taiwanese accent. In the past, many children couldn't understand Taiwanese or Hakka, but now opinions are slowly changing. Isn't this a problem of social concepts?

Director Tsui: I asked a friend of mine, who is about the same age as me; I observed that he and his mother spoke in the mother tongue of his ethnic group, but he spoke Chinese with his children. So I asked him: Why don't you speak in the mother tongue with your children so that the language will be passed on? He replied that the mother tongue is a language only for the old society, there are many modern things and new concepts for which there are no words in the mother tongue. Therefore, it is not easy

for him to talk with a two- or three-year-old child in the mother tongue. I myself also have a child. When I meet older people in Taiwan, I naturally speak Taiwanese, but I also find it difficult and inconvenient to communicate with my child in Taiwanese; when I talk with my child at home in Taiwanese, I really feel weird. Usually, I still talk with children in Chinese (Mandarin). After all, that is the language that everyone around me uses. But it is true that some traditional languages are gradually disappearing.

Question: What is your impression of how the Lanyu people think about this issue?

Director Tsui: Of course, they still hope to pass on the mother tongue and they organize various activities to promote its use. For example, traditional ballad competitions are held for different age groups: seniors, middle-agers, twenties and thirties, and children. In this way, children, too, can sing songs in the mother tongue and participate in competitions. Outsiders who settle on Lanyu can also make up a team. For example, outsiders who married Lanyu locals will form a team of their own. In this way the language and culture can live on. Of course, the dance team of Yayo Elementary School is becoming increasingly famous now, and this will also have some positive effects. But these are just supporting measures, the family is still the most important factor in language transmission.

Question: But if the first generation brings up the third generation, doesn't this create a good opportunity to pass on the language?

Director Tsui: Once I helped the Lanyu people to stage a singing contest. Afterwards the host announced whose family language teaching was the most successful. Because mom and dad go out to work, many grandchildren are brought up by their grandparents, and because grandparents can only speak in the mother tongue, these children will definitely learn their mother tongue better.

Question: In the movie we heard the grandson speaking Chinese, and the grandmother responding in the mother tongue. Is this a common situation? And when the grandson was upset, to comfort him, grandma used a little Chinese.

Director Tsui: Actually, our child actor can speak only very little in his mother tongue. So we asked him to memorize the lines in the movie, including those of his grandmother.

Question: So, don't children understand what their grandmothers are saying in daily life?

Director Tsui: Today's children don't usually speak in the mother tongue, simple words may be okay, but long conversations are indeed difficult. To prepare for reading aloud in school competitions, teachers are asked to teach and recite texts sentence by sentence for all the children who will take part, so that they are able to perform on stage. Otherwise, they actually have difficulties with the mother tongue.

On the day of the Golden Horse Awards Ceremony, we did not expect our young actor to win a prize. Later, because I learned that he had a good chance, I urgently asked him to prepare an award speech. But because I didn't want him to have too high hopes of winning the award, so as not to be too disappointed afterwards, I told him that we were only there to participate, and not to think about whether or not we will win the award. But that afternoon a colleague told me that for the best new artist we might have a good chance. At the time, the actors were all preparing and doing their makeup at the hotel. I had not yet arrived at the hotel, so I quickly phoned my colleague there and asked him to tell our little actor to hurry up and prepare an award speech. I said that it must be in the mother tongue to show his identity as a member of the Tao people. Fortunately, the older actress who played the grandmother was there, so she quickly prepared Zhong Jiajun's speech. Later, he really did win the prize, and his acceptance speech on stage in the mother tongue moved many people.

You perhaps know Sangpuy 桑布伊, a singer in the ethnic group Beinan. Sangpuy is very intelligent, but he had to go back to learn [his mother tongue] as an adult. He couldn't speak it when he was a child and now he realized: Hey, I am a member of the Beinan people, but I have no way to communicate with my elders and even to speak in my own tongue. He then spent a lot of time learning by himself. This is rare, and not everyone is willing to do it.

Question: I have another question aside from what we have discussed so far: Why don't we find mention in the movie of a painful memory for Lanyu: the movement against nuclear waste? Is it because the people there no longer mention this matter?

Director Tsui: No, they are still always talking about it, everyone discusses this problem. But the theme of the movie is to tell the story of children, it's about family

and culture. In addition, I think that the nuclear waste plant is a very complicated issue. It is a political and historical problem that has been left unsolved (for more than thirty years). At the time, the government deceived the people of Lanyu, saying that it was going to build a canning factory and produce canned fish for export to Taiwan, so that local people would have more employment opportunities. The Lanyu people welcomed the plan, believing that such job opportunities would help to improve their lives. It was later discovered that it was not a cannery at all, but that nuclear waste would be stored here. In fact, the first time Taipower shipped barrels of nuclear waste to the island, the Tao people had already launched a resistance campaign, which was the first movement against the government in the history of Lanyu. But it was useless. Lanyu at the time was much weaker than it is now, and the voices of the indigenous people were not heard. The government could really bully them, which gave rise to great sadness and anger.

Some Lanyu people still have to work in the nuclear waste storage yard in order to live and support their families. Nevertheless, in recent years, the aboriginal people have become more and more aware, and feel increasingly that they have been treated very unjustly. They have again begun to put up anti-nuclear resistance, hoping that the government will solve the issue. But nothing has been done so far, and they are still unable to solve the nuclear waste problem. There is no alternative site, so they don't know where they can move the waste to. After the Fukushima nuclear disaster, the locals of Lanyu were also very nervous. They found a number of academic institutes to help with detecting the radiation levels of the nuclear waste, but the results obtained by the people themselves were completely different from the official results. According to the official testing the nuclear waste is safe, but private testing shows that it is very harmful to human health. Some local people are sick or are suffering from cancer, and they often wonder whether it is related to the pollution caused by nuclear waste.

While I was writing my movie script, quite a few people suggested that I should include Lanyu's nuclear waste question. I thought about it, but found that it was quite another topic, unrelated to the theme of my story. My idea is not to make a movie all-inclusive, it is all right to tell just one story.

Question: Will you continue to make films about Lanyu Tao people or other indigenous people in the future?

Director Tsui: I'm considering several ideas, but am not yet sure which one to develop first. There is already a completed documentary, which has nothing to do with aborigines. It was actually made before "Long Time No Sea". "Long Time No Sea" had to be completed in a short space of time, because the children of Lanyu were about to become teenagers. Also, we had received a grant from the Ministry of Culture and had to fulfill the contract quickly. Moreover, I have been working on Lanyu for so many years. I also had to consider the people of Lanyu's expectations for the movie. They could not be kept waiting year after year. Once enthusiasm has cooled down, it is hard to revive it. So, I finished "Long Time No Sea" first, and the documentary film that I had made beforehand was released after "Long Time No Sea". As for the topic of indigenous people, several plans have been considered recently, but I hope that similar themes won't have to be repeated. For example, in "Long Time No Sea", we discussed the issues of cultural loss and self-identity of the next generation. Perhaps I don't need to tell a similar story again.

I also want to create something that is not too serious. Our main actor is now a high school student. He's 15 years old and goes to school in Taipei. He still loves acting, singing and dancing. Actually, he came to Taipei on his own to attend school, his family is still on Lanyu. Several of our friends are taking care of him. He is very independent but very modest. I would also like to say that I plan to make something suitable for him again, to foster and promote him. Because he has a goal: he loves acting very much, but many child actors have difficulty finding opportunities when they reach adulthood. I want to encourage him so that he has a clear career development path.

Question: Concerning a director from the Tao people, did you see "Ten Years of Taiwan" (十年台灣) in 2018? "Ten Years" is a project in Hong Kong. There is also a movie called "The Can of Evil Spirits" ("Eling guantou" 惡靈罐頭), which was filmed

by a Tao director.³ I agree with his position, but I think he doesn't seem to have made it for the people in the same echo chamber.⁴

Director Tsui: This matter of echo chamber [or cultural tribalism] is quite a problem in Taiwanese indigenous discourse. For instance, Taiwan has an indigenous TV channel. However, one may get the impression that this channel is only for the indigenous themselves. In no way does it communicate with non-indigenous friends. One special aspect of "Long Time No Sea" is probably that I am not an indigenous person. I was looking in from the outside. But I stand with them. I think this makes the film more effective for communication with other people, it takes them into the indigenous world.

But because of my identity I also encounter another kind of embarrassment when I make this type of movie. Indigenous friends are worried about how I will present them and will be extremely anxious. After all, I am an outsider. So when I make a film, I will ask advisors to help check all aspects, including props, lines, and so forth. Everyone is very meticulous about checking. Because if I do not get things right, I might be criticized by the Lanyu people or make everyone feel bad. In addition, I must also think about stereotypes and labeling problems concerning the indigenous. For example, we had a scene where an indigenous man encountered some setbacks and was down in the dumps. At first I wanted to set two beer cans next to him, but after consulting with the advisors, we were worried that this might increase the prejudice about the alcohol problems of the indigenous. So we finally decided to replace them with cans of non-alcoholic drink. On this kind of question, I respect the judgement of my advisors, and not just [on issues] concerning the performance in the movie. This is why? I think the mindset of this film is different from that of other films, because I have given consideration to how the indigenous people feel.

³ Lecal Sumi 勒嘎舒米, one of five directors in the joint film project "Ten Year Taiwan" released in 2018. The project was modelled on the Hong Kong film "Ten Years". The film reflects on the impact of nuclear waste dumped on Lanyu. See the film Review in "The New Lens", <https://international.thenewslens.com/article/110911>, 2018/12/26 and interview with the Director Lecal Sumi, <https://international.thenewslens.com/article/112767> [Accessed 03 Aug. 2020].

⁴ Echo chamber, or filter bubble (*tongwenceng* 同溫層, isothermal layer), metaphorical reference to mutual reinforcement of opinions in closed systems.

Throughout the making of the film, my advisor really monitored every shot. In the beginning grandmother and grandson are picking longans, but because of the weather and wind conditions in the few months before, the longan tree we wanted to film had not produced any fruit. Therefore, we had no choice but to pick a longan from another tree and graft it onto the longan tree to be filmed, but our advisor was very worried about the deception. He said: 'No, it's not obvious to you outsiders, but if it is not done well, we Lanyu people will find something strange. So in order to make the Longan graft completely flawless, he himself was up in the tree for two hours and worked hard to make it look perfect. And in fact, the local Lanyu people couldn't tell that it wasn't natural, it looked completely authentic. For the test screening of the movie in Taipei, we invited a lot of indigenous friends from all ethnic groups: artists, indigenous directors, journalists, people of all ethnicities were there. In fact, everyone was wondering how a flatland person could film an indigenous theme. What would it look like? Later, when the movie had ended, it could be felt that they generally agreed with the contents; some people even said they were surprised that a non-indigenous director could shoot an indigenous theme in such an authentic way. In contemporary Taiwan, the self-image of indigenous peoples is quite strong. If I hadn't got this film right, it would have offended many indigenous friends.

Question: What do you do if you encounter something concerning the life of the indigenous people that you don't know much about?

Director Tsui: I will keep asking them for advice, to be absolutely sure that they feel everything is done in the right way. As I said earlier, an advisor helped me do the check. Every time I shot a scene, I asked him to confirm if there was a problem. Apart from our advisor, the actors and actresses on the scene who are all Lanyu locals also gave me lots of feedback and suggestions. In fact, we were all under a certain amount of pressure. If our indigenous friends can't identify with the movie, then even if outsiders can, it will be meaningless.

Of course, there were still be a lot of major and minor problems and difficulties to overcome during the shooting, or unexpected things occur; for example, the problem with the canoe. There is a scene where the uncle wants to row a boat and take the boy out to sea. The scene was set, and the boat was borrowed, but when shooting was about to start, the actor who was going to play the uncle had a traffic accident and

broke three ribs. Unexpectedly, after finding another actor, the man who originally agreed to lend us his boat refused, because the substitute actor was from another village... This surprised me a lot at the time. It's still very difficult for us outsiders to really understand local life and culture. For example, different tribes and different villages traditionally draw a strict line between each other's fields and fishing grounds and stick firmly to that line. This affected our shooting when we found the substitute and the boat owner was not willing to lend it out because they were not from the same village. We had to think of a way out. These are very special cultural boundaries, which are not easy for outsiders to appreciate, but the characteristics of this type of movie are such that we must respect these local norms. Moreover, the Tao 'Tatala' (拼板舟) boat with its gorgeous carvings is invaluable; after all, these traditional skills are gradually disappearing. If we had made a small scratch on the hull while shooting, it would have been difficult to explain to the owner. Like driving a ten million-dollar sports car, I was very worried about any small marks on the boat. So, on the day when the canoeing scene was being shot, the actor was also under a lot of pressure. If the hull touched an underwater reef and was damaged, he would have been very upset for the boat owner, and our film team would not have known how to compensate him... In short, many unexpected problems were encountered, just as the wind direction, temperature and humidity affected our shooting of the Longan tree.

Another example is the women's hair dance. The original idea of my plot was for the main actor's landlady to be a member of the hair dance group, but I later learned that it would not work! Because it was the women from the Yayo Village who came to support the performance of the hair dance, and the landlady was from another village. It turned out that women from different villages would not and could not dance together! Even though it was only for the purpose of acting in a movie, it was impossible to break the rules. To local people, dancing together symbolizes the solidarity and emotional connection of a tribe. It is because they live in the same village that they can dance together; this is the local life and culture. When I first learned that there were such restrictions, it was a bit difficult to accept. I wanted to say that it was just for making a movie. Couldn't they compromise? But later I discovered that they really drew a very clear line in their minds, even though it was for a performance in front of a movie camera. Because it was a traditional hair dance,

it was practically impossible for people from different villages to dance together, it would have been unthinkable to them!



Yami [Tao] hair dance performance by girls of a Lanyu elementary school. Film still from “Long Time No Sea” (provided by Swallow Wings Film 海鵬影業).

Later, I had to adjust and try to understand that this was the culture of Lanyu. Even though it was only a movie, some cultural traditions were very real and serious, and there was not to be the slightest fake or unreal element. So, in the end I had to compromise and find ways of changing the script so that it conformed to the local culture. During the shooting, I was often surprised that there were so many things I was completely ignorant of. I had to learn all the time while filming and adapt accordingly. And when the movie was finally finished, I could still maintain friendly relations with the local people, because I had done nothing to offend them, and I had even got their approval. For me such an invisible license is very important. After all, I shot this movie with love and sympathy for the island of Lanyu. As a friend of Lanyu, I only hope that this movie has created a positive image for this place. Otherwise, the value of making it would be lost.



Director Tsui Yung-Hui (front center) and Cultural Attaché Mr. Lee Pei-jung (2nd from right) with participants of Dr. Li Taiyuan's (1st from right) seminar, October 18, 2019.

Translated by Wu Kuan-Wei, with the help of Karen Finney-Kellerhoff