

國立政治大學亞太研究英語碩士學位學程

International Master's Program in Asia-Pacific Studies

College of Social Sciences

National Chengchi University

碩士論文

Master's Thesis

掌聲：作為文化外交工具的台灣布袋戲

Voice in Hand:

Taiwanese Glove Puppetry as a Tool of Cultural Diplomacy

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Adviser: Dr. Wei Mei-chuan

06-10-2019

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碩士論文

A Thesis

Submitted to International Master's Program in Asia-Pacific Studies

National Chengchi University

In partial fulfillment of the Requirement

For the degree of Master in Asia-Pacific Studies

Authorized page – available at IMAS Office.



Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my thesis committee members for overseeing this research. Dr. Lai Chia-Ling graciously agreed to be the chair of my committee team. Her advice on exploring museums as contact zones expanded my research and gave me a deeper perspective on the implications of my findings. Dr. Su Cho-hsin also agreed to be on my committee and assisted in securing my interview with former ambassador Lu Michel Ching-long, who provided me with data that vastly aided my research. Dr. Wei Mei-Chuan graciously served as my adviser. Her support encouraged me to reach my highest potential and greatly assisted me when I had difficulty in my research.

I am grateful to my interviewees for giving me their time and answering my questions thoughtfully. Kristin Haverty took the additional time to write out her interview answers since our time difference made it difficult to conduct our interview over the telephone. Ambassador Michel Ching-long Lu took time out of his busy schedule and gave enthusiastic and informative answers during our talk. Tiffanee Niitsu-Santo provided unique insight as an overseas Pili fan and supplied images of her puppet advocacy. Dr. Robin Ruizendaal provided me with his academic expertise of Taiwanese puppet culture. Kim Siebert contributed her knowledge and expertise of museums and conservation. Dr. Terry Silvio gave her expertise on Taiwanese glove puppetry, specifically Pili Multimedia International's puppet television and film programs and their devoted fan base.

On a personal note, I would like to thank my partner Joshua Samuel Brown for his enthusiastic support of my academic pursuits. His love and home cooked meals provided me with immense support. I am grateful to the members of Thesis Club who provided moral support and friendship. I am also grateful for the numerous Pili *Thunderbolt Fantasy* fans who contributed their love of the series to online fan groups. Finally I would like to thank Taiwan for this educational opportunity. As a recipient of the Taiwan Scholarship, it has been a privilege to attend NCCU and it is my hope that my research greatly benefits Taiwan. This work would not have been accomplished without the aide of those mentioned above. I sincerely thank all of them.

Stephanie Huffman

Abstract

Puppetry as a political voice has a long history in Asia. From Chinese puppeteers using their craft to satirize local officials and criticize taxation policies to troupes in Taiwan performing clandestine puppet shows in Taiwanese despite Japanese colonialist bans, puppetry has long been a means to express political opinion and to explore cultural identity. As its diplomatic participation in the international community is limited, Taiwan must seek alternative ways to engage with the world stage. The use of cultural diplomacy is a valuable and viable means to communicate, educate and create allies. Through its intrinsic ability to entertain and forge connections, puppetry is a useful form of soft power that can promote Taiwan and its interests. This research demonstrates how Budaixi¹, or Taiwanese glove puppetry, can be utilized as a tool of cultural diplomacy because of its unique evolution, historical ties and its ability to attract audiences from multiple cultures, classes and age groups. Through literature reviews and in-depth interviews with scholars, puppeteers and Budaixi fans, this research highlights how modern puppet shows are revisioning history and providing an important space for Taiwan to tell its story on its own terms. Puppet shows in Taiwan educate the next generation on the island's history and evolving culture while contributing to the deepening notions of Taiwanese identity. Contemporary puppet troupes are embracing new technology to broadcast their shows to global audiences, gaining new fans abroad who in turn further widen the audience by sharing their enthusiasm with friends and family. As Taiwan continues to define itself as the heart of Asia, Budaixi symbolizes Taiwan's rich history and its vibrant future. This research asserts the value of Taiwanese glove puppetry and its incredible potential to further broadcast Taiwan's importance and significance to the greater global audience.

Keywords: Budaixi, China, cultural diplomacy, puppets, soft power, Taiwan

¹ There are several spellings and pronunciations for Taiwanese glove puppetry. Potehi, Zhang-zhong xi, Budai Xi are some alternative spellings I have encountered in this research. For this thesis, *Budaixi* is used as it was the most common spelling encountered.

摘要

[偶戲]自古以來於亞洲儼然成為政治發聲的其中一個方式。儘管當時日本殖民主義宣布禁令，臺灣人仍運用偶戲表達個人政治觀點並探索文化認同，然而，仍有華人偶戲藝術工作者在臺灣私下進行偶戲，並藉由偶戲工藝諷刺地方官員並批評政府的稅收政策。由於臺灣當前在國際社會的外交參與受限，因此，臺灣必須尋求其他方式與世界舞臺接觸。而文化外交確實是一溝通、教育和建立盟友的寶貴而可行的手段。偶戲除是一種有用的軟實力形式，更可藉此發揮娛樂大眾以及增進人與人間的強力鏈結，將促進臺灣文化的推展及其他益處。本研究將闡述 Budaixi 或臺灣獨有的手偶戲如何被應用以作為文化外交的利器，因為它具有獨特的演進，能連結歷史，更能吸引來自不同文化、階級和年齡層的觀眾欣賞此藝術。藉由文獻回顧與對學者、偶戲藝術工作者與和偶戲迷的深入訪談，本研究將呈現現代偶劇是如何使臺灣重新檢視歷史，並提供一個空間，讓臺灣以自己的方式講述自己的故事。臺灣的偶戲表演教育下個世代於臺灣島上的歷史，並同時持續發展此特有文化，促進臺灣身份的認同。當代偶戲劇團正運用新技術對全球觀眾推展他們的表演藝術，藉由與朋友和家人分享熱忱，逐漸藉此拓展藍圖，獲得更多的海外粉絲青睞。依著臺灣持續將自己定位為亞洲的核心下，布袋戲正象徵著臺灣豐富的歷史和充滿活力的未來。本研究主張並強調臺灣偶戲的價值，不單進一步推展臺灣文化至全球，更藉由推展呈現潛藏的重要性與重要意涵。

關鍵詞：布袋戲，華人，文化外交，偶戲，軟實力，臺灣

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

The question of Taiwan's sovereignty has not been definitively answered. Because of this quandary, the ongoing conflict between Taiwan and China has been long standing and contains both "significance and danger." (Zheng, p. 203) The conflict has been described as an internal affairs issue, a fight over sovereignty by two separate states, a competition between two clashing political systems, and a "continuation of the Chinese Civil War of the 1940s." (Zheng, p. 203) Realizing he was losing the war, Chiang Kai-shek led the Nationalists in a retreat to Taiwan, hoping to regroup and one day retake the Mainland. During the 1950s, Chiang and Chairman Mao engaged in a "new battle to form a new political identity for China." (Zheng, p. 209) By the 1970s, the People's Republic of China (PRC) had won the China seat in the United Nations, leaving Chiang's Republic of China (ROC) without a UN position and a diminishing number of countries who recognized them as the legitimate ruler of China.

On Taiwan, the Nationalists continued their rule as the only power of government. Civil unrest and anti-government protest culminated in the 228 Incident. The suppression of this uprising led to thousands of Taiwanese being imprisoned and killed during the ensuing White Terror; later martial law was installed, lasting until 1987. The lifting of martial law allowed opposing political parties to be legally formed. As democracy matured in Taiwan, China cracked down on its budding democratic movement, culminating in the Tiananmen Square Massacre. Economic modernization and success in Taiwan only furthered the distance between the two countries as China lagged behind Taiwan despite the economic reforms of Deng Xiaoping. As Taiwanese democracy further developed, Taiwan underwent an identity transformation that began to differentiate itself from the Mainland. Portions of Taiwan's government continued to espouse of rapprochement with China while a growing faction called for Taiwanese independence. China, on the other hand, continued its vow of reunification.

Through the years China has tried numerous attempts at reunification with Taiwan, from bombing outer islands to economic integration. World War II brought the United States into the equation which further complicated Cross-Strait Relations, changing the nature of the

relationship “from one of bipolarity to one of tripolarity.” (Zheng, p. 211) Numerous social and political changes in the 1980s and 1990s prompted the growing notion of an independent Taiwan to blossom into a movement. As the Nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) party adapted to sharing political ground with the newly formed opposition party the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), China continued pushing for reunification, insisting on “one country, two systems.” (Zheng p. 213) While the struggle over sovereignty continues, Taiwan's democratically elected presidents have run the island as a de facto independent country for decades. However, with the rise of China as an economic and military power, Taiwan is experiencing an increasingly asymmetric relationship with the Mainland.

As pressure for reunification increases through economic interdependence and political isolation, Taiwan has sought to balance this asymmetry in a multitude of ways. Since the island nation does not have de jure independence, its capacity to participate in the international community is limited. Currently it is not allowed membership into the United Nations and its inclusion in international organizations has been slowly declining. Additionally, Taiwan is denied entry into organizations that require statehood as part of membership. These setbacks have resulted in Taiwan becoming increasingly isolated. In 2018, multiple allies severed official diplomatic ties with Taiwan to ally with China, compounding the problem. As Taiwan's political maneuverability has become increasingly constrained, China's integration policy has intensified. Despite this pressure, Taiwan maintains its democracy and its de facto independent status. However with pressure only increasing, Taiwan must find alternative ways to engage with the world stage to ensure that it is included in the global community.

To do so, Taiwan uses its power to interact with other countries. All countries have some amount of power. Political scholar Joseph Nye defines power as the “capacity to do things and in social situations to affect others to get the outcomes we want.” (Nye, p. 6) Power can be defined in terms of resources. These resources have an effect on behaviors which can be viewed as the “production of intended effects.” (Russell, p. 23) An effective way to differentiate power is by separating it into hard and soft categories. Hard power takes the form of economic and military resources. Soft power is encapsulated by a state's culture, beliefs and values, and domestic and foreign policies. Soft power enhances a state's ability to create positive attention, legitimacy and

credibility. Using persuasion and attraction are a means of “framing the agenda, persuading, and eliciting positive attraction.” (Nye, p. 13) The use of soft power is a viable means to communicate, educate and create allies. Agents of soft power include both government bodies and private actors. To use soft power effectively, targets need to include “broad public opinion and cultural attitudes.” (Nye, p. 97)

Opinion is a form of power and “other forms of power are derived from it.” (Russell, p. 109) By framing public opinion and persuading cultural attitudes, countries can utilize the power of opinion. This helps them compensate for a lack of hard power resources by using soft power to gain strategic advantages. Large countries like the United States, with a large economy and military, have ample hard and soft power. Though it had enjoyed the benefit of positive opinion at the start of the Iraq War, the ensuing conflict caused opinions of the US to be affected, tarnishing its soft power. Japan, constrained by international treaties on expanding its military power, has focused on increasing its economic weight and strengthening its soft power. Rising powers like China are focusing on building up both hard and soft power to increase their global standing. Smaller countries who believe their hard power to be lacking can gain more international influence by effectively using soft power. Countries in East Asia are investing in soft power in hopes of expanding “their existing economic influence” as they acquire “more sophisticated politico-cultural leverage.” (Lee, p. 4) Doing so could result in increased regional influence and potentially increased international influence. A rise in soft power of several small countries can improve a region’s status in the international community.

Taiwan is constrained in its use of hard power; use of its military in a bid for independence would arouse an attack from China. With growing economic interdependence with the Mainland, Taiwan’s use of its economic power is also restrained. Improving its soft power could help balance this predicament and be used to further engage Taiwan with the international community. To its benefit, Taiwan has ample sources of soft power, especially from its democracy that gives a positive “demonstration effect” to other Asian and small countries to its civil society that is “vibrant and diversified.” (Lee, p. 117) Taiwan’s society is layered with culture that can be incorporated to create positive influences as “over time, cultures influence each other.” (Nye, p.

85) By using its culture as a form of soft power, Taiwan is using it for public diplomacy as a form of communication and for cultural diplomacy as a form of cultural exchange.

Diplomacy concerns the practical ways the global community interacts and serves two core functions, those of “representation and communication.” (Pigman, p. 88) Countries use public diplomacy to represent themselves and their interests to other countries and to those countries’ representatives and populace. Representation gives countries a voice in international relations and helps to secure an active role in global society. Communication to promote cultural and economic exchanges but also can resolve conflicts and heal relationships. The power of communication lies in its ability to “modify the interests and even the identity of the actors communicating with one another.” (Pigman, p. 7) Effective communication can change opinions and beliefs. Changing beliefs relies on several factors, namely “desire, evidence, and iteration.” (Russell, p. 113) Each factor has its own value. But to change “socially important” beliefs all three of these elements must be involved. (Russell, p. 113)

Representation and communication help build long term relationships between nations. States conduct diplomacy through a multitude of actors-governments, ambassadors, diplomats, civil society organizations and private actors. The importance of public diplomacy is illustrated by the varying degrees that diplomatic actors play in the “social construction of international society.” (Pigman, p. 13) Cross-cultural dialogues and cultural exchanges act as a method of socialization that facilitate communication and promote the ideas and beliefs a country wants others to hold about it. These dialogues and exchanges are a type of “integrative power” helping to build respect and friendship through interactions. (Lee, p.13) Public diplomacy, and soft power, are “less threatening forms of power.” (Lee, p. 247) In an increasingly transnational world, being able to communicate without provocation is becoming more valuable.

Though a small country, Taiwan enhances its global standing through public diplomacy. Smaller nations can use public diplomacy to “enhance their respect, credibility, and persuasive power in the international public forum.” (Lee, p. 120) Maintaining good relations between governments is vital but developing and strengthening relations with the foreign public is also a valuable resource. To verbalize and progress towards their objectives, countries must “invest as much in

communicating with foreign publics as with the governments that represent them.” (Leonard, p. 3) By engaging in cultural and educational exchanges, overseas public information campaigns, and collaborations with both “national and transnational non-governmental organizations (NGOs)” small countries like Taiwan can improve their representation and communication with other states and in the larger international community as well. (Lee, p. 120)

As a “dimension of public diplomacy,” cultural diplomacy utilizes representation and communication as well as soft power to engage in cultural exchanges. (Ang, p. 368) These exchanges foster deeper understanding between nations by exchanging different aspects of each state’s respective culture. Aspects exchanged can include art, ideas, societal beliefs and other information about a country. By sharing its culture, countries “foster mutual understanding” between each other and project positive images about themselves. (Ang, p. 366) Ideas about a country come in numerous forms such as movies and television, books and newspaper articles; some of these brands and consumer products have a national association. “Because most of the messages that people pick up about a country are beyond the control of national governments,” the non-governmental sector has a role to play in effective diplomacy. (Leonard, p. 4) Cultural diplomacy can be employed by numerous actors including governments, multilateral institutions and civil society organizations in order to build understanding and familiarity between different peoples and states. As understanding grows, beliefs are changed and relationships deepen to the benefit of the parties involved.

Contemporary cultural diplomacy “stresses culture as an ongoing process” that is relational and engages in a “co-production of meaning” through communication. (Ang, p. 377) Countries can engage in it alone or form alliances to practice cultural diplomacy as a region. Regional cultural diplomacy is a diplomatic collaboration that goes beyond the national interest by representing clusters of countries to communicate their shared interests. Smaller countries that have less of a voice in the international arena can potentially benefit through these collaborative diplomatic efforts. While cultural diplomacy is expected to advance a country’s interest, there is an additional anticipation that these exchanges contributes to a “more harmonious international order to the benefit of all.” (Ang, 370) Cultural diplomacy is a form of advocacy and is a method of “advancing the interests and viewpoints” of a state. (Freeman, p. 115) As nations build a

history of dealings and negotiations with each other, relationships are developed. Diplomacy strengthens these relationships and works to “enlarge trust and confidence between nations.” (Freeman, p. 117)

As its diplomatic participation in the international community is limited, Taiwan must seek alternative ways to engage with the international community. The use of cultural diplomacy is a valuable and viable means to communicate and educate while fostering alliances. Taiwan combines its unique history with traditional and modern culture to create a “dynamic, vibrant, and evolving whole.” (Lee, p. 122) Taiwan’s culture is diverse and this is reflected in its wide array of art forms. One dynamic example is theater, an evolutionary artistic process which fosters welcoming environments to express the cultural zeitgeist. “Theatricals and storytellers, as entertaining as they might be, were (and in many cases still are) important purveyors of cultural values, morals, history, literature, and many aspects of non-formal education.” (Cohen p. 35) With theater’s ability to adapt to changing times, it is a valuable reflection of changes in a country’s society and culture. Taiwanese glove puppet theater can be effectively utilized as a tool of cultural diplomacy because of its unique evolution, connections to Taiwanese history and identity, and its ability to attract audiences from multiple cultures, classes and age groups. Glove puppets can entertain but they can also inform the audience about Taiwan’s transformation from colony to democracy, its cultural diversity, its societal and religious beliefs and significantly its political situation. As Taiwan continues to promote itself as the heart of Asia, glove puppetry can assist in communicating Taiwan’s rich history and its vibrant future.

1.2 Research Motivation and Purpose

Due to its unique history, Taiwan is not able to fully participate diplomatically in the realm of international relations. This isolation means Taiwan must take other means in order to gain recognition from and forge relationships with other states. By using its culture as a form of soft power, Taiwan can develop influence and status that has been denied through formal diplomatic means. Taiwan is a diverse country with multiple cultures that have rich, evocative traditions. Though there are numerous art forms that represent Taiwan, this research specifically focuses on Taiwanese glove puppetry. Soon after arriving in Taiwan I discovered televised puppet shows and was immediately captivated. A Taiwanese History class allowed me to explore the historical

roots of this particular art form which later motivated me to designate it as my research topic. Budaixi, Taiwanese glove puppetry, is one of the art forms that can be used as a tool of cultural diplomacy. Because it has evolved alongside Taiwan in its transformation from colony to flourishing democracy, it is a powerful reflection of the country's journey. The purpose of my research is to explore how Taiwan has used its culture as a form of diplomacy. It is my hope that this research will provide guidance on how theatrical culture, specifically Budaixi, can be utilized on a deeper level to further promote Taiwan's interests to the international community.

My research analyzes how Taiwan has used its culture as a form of diplomacy and soft power. Specifically I focus on how Budaixi is a useful tool of cultural diplomacy because of its deep roots in Taiwan. Like Taiwan, Budaixi has undergone a unique evolution and the art form is entwined with the island's transformation. I hope to illustrate glove puppetry's ability to further broadcast Taiwan's importance and significance in the international community to a greater global audience. By presenting Budaixi to a world stage, Taiwan can use individual puppeteer hands to amplify the country's collective voice.

1.3 Research Question

My research addresses two questions. First I ask how Taiwanese glove puppetry can be used as a tool of cultural diplomacy. Since a key aspect to this question is effectiveness, I am additionally asking what are the contribution and challenges of using Budaixi as a tool of cultural diplomacy. To answer these questions I have conducted literature research on soft power, public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy. Case studies provide examples of how various forms of Taiwanese culture has been used as cultural diplomacy and why a particular cultural aspect was embraced. In-depth interviews examine how the specific art of glove puppet theater can be incorporated as a function of cultural diplomacy. An online fan group of the Pili puppet series *Thunderbolt Fantasy* has been analyzed for evidence of cross-cultural communication.

1.4 Research Method

To determine how Taiwanese glove puppetry can be used as a tool of cultural diplomacy I have adopted a qualitative methodology. Qualitative research is used in social sciences and is a method of observation to gain data of a non-numerical nature. This form of research focuses on

the hows and whys of phenomenon occurring. To explore how often phenomenon occurs, quantitative research is used; this research method involves empirical investigation of phenomena via statistical or other numerical methods. Qualitative research techniques involve in-depth literature review, focus groups, participant observation, interviews and case studies. Because the aim of this research is to explore how Taiwanese glove puppetry can be used as cultural diplomacy a qualitative research method was chosen to enable an in-depth understanding and exploration of the topic.

Qualitative research was conducted through secondary research of literature review and analysis, and in-depth interviews. Literature review focuses on soft power, public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy and Taiwanese glove puppetry. I have conducted exploratory case studies with qualitative methods to examine how different forms of Taiwanese culture have been used as a form of cultural diplomacy. Because numerous art forms exemplify Taiwan's culture, I have chosen three different genres for my case studies. Cloud Gate is an example from the dance genre. Peking and Taiwanese Opera are both part of theatrical and singing genres. Nezha, the Electric Techno Neon God, is an example from both religious art and dancing genres.

Objects of research involved the Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum, the Center For Puppetry Arts, Taiwan puppet television shows such as *Shi Yan-wen* and the Pili puppet series including *Thunderbolt Fantasy*, and online activities of Pili fans. In-depth interviews were held with puppet scholars, puppet museum staff, puppeteers and puppet fans. Additional research was conducted with an analysis of an online Facebook fan group of Taiwanese glove puppetry. Interviews were conducted in person, over the telephone and through email. I have interviewed six individuals for this research.

Lu Michel Ching-long served as the Taiwanese ambassador to France for sixteen years. He also served as ambassador to Haiti and as director of Taiwan's Association of Foreign Relations. Lu helped strengthen Taiwan's bilateral ties with France and Haiti, fostering cross-cultural communication and educational experiences. Now retired, Lu lectures both domestically and abroad on diplomatic issues, cross-cultural communication and how to promote Taiwan through

its multifaceted culture. As an ambassador, Lu gained a reputation for incorporating Taiwanese glove puppets into his diplomatic trips and lectures.

Robin Ruizendaal is the director of the Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum (台原亞洲偶戲博物館). The TAPTM encompasses both a museum and theater space and has four floors dedicated to puppetry, featuring glove, marionette, rod and shadow puppets. In addition to puppets from Taiwan, their collection includes puppets, props, costumes and stages from across the Asia region. Paul Lin co-founded the TAPTM with Ruizendaal in 2000 and the organization currently has over ten thousand Asian puppetry artifacts in its collection. They hold regular puppet exhibitions, educational workshops and puppet performances both locally and abroad.

Kim Siebert is the Collection and Conservation Director at the Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum. She facilitates the preservation, care and exhibition of the museum's collection. Having trained, worked and lived in multiple countries, Siebert shared her experience in conserving artifacts from diverse cultures. Siebert has a background in museum and conservation practice with a focus on cultural heritage artifacts. She has worked with the TAPTM since 2008.

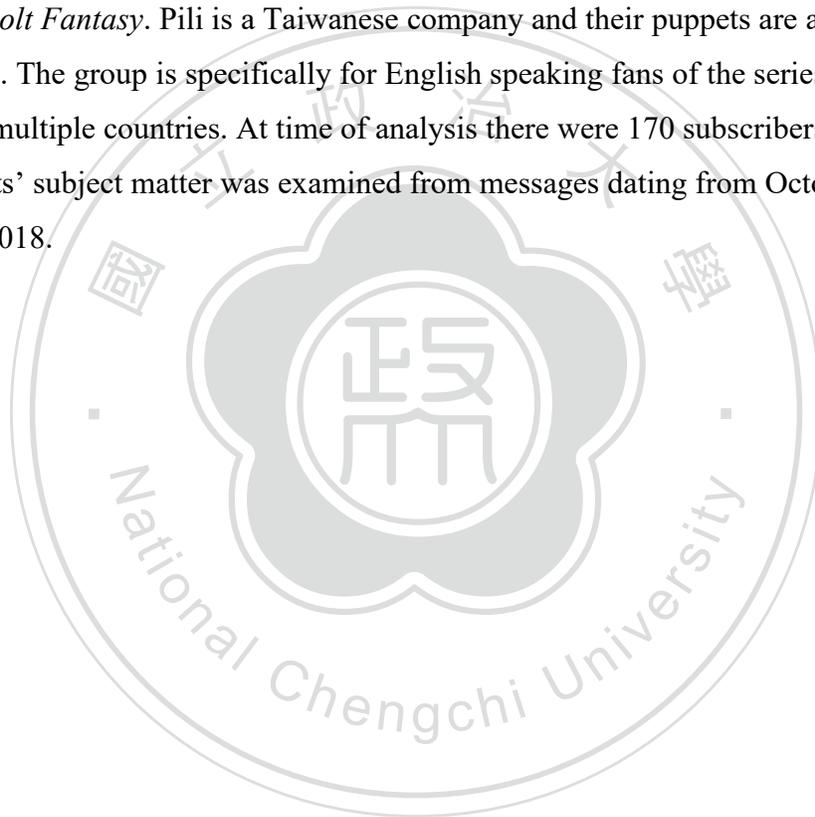
Dr. Terry Silvio has researched both Taiwanese Opera and Taiwanese glove puppetry. She has a particular interest in the intersection of performance traditions and media technologies. Working with Academia Sinica since 2002, she is an Assistant Research Fellow in the Institute of Ethnology. Silvio has written several academic articles about puppetry and her book *Puppets, Gods, and Brands: Theorizing the Age of Animation from Taiwan* will be published September 2019.

Kristin Haverty is a producer at the Center for Puppetry Arts (CPA) in Atlanta, Georgia, USA and a UNIMA² councilor. Currently she is working with the Taipei Economic & Cultural Office (TECO) in Atlanta to host the Taiwanese Chen Hsi-Huang Traditional Puppetry Troupe at the CPA in June of this year. Established in 1978, the CPA is the largest non-profit organization in the US that is solely dedicated to puppetry.

² Union Internationale de la Marionnette International Puppetry Association

Tiffanee Niitsu-Santo is an American fan of Taiwanese glove puppetry and has appointed herself an ambassador for Taiwanese culture and glove puppets. She brings her collection of glove puppets to comic, anime³ and doll conventions in the United States and introduces curious onlookers to the Pili puppet series and to Taiwan. Niitsu-Santo cares deeply about Budaixi and has made connections within the puppet fan community both in Taiwan and around the world

Additional research involves qualitative analysis of an online puppet fan group. Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* (東離劍遊紀) is a Facebook group for fans of the Pili puppet television series *Thunderbolt Fantasy*. Pili is a Taiwanese company and their puppets are a contemporary form of Budaixi. The group is specifically for English speaking fans of the series and has 169 members from multiple countries. At time of analysis there were 170 subscribers to the fan page. Analysis of posts' subject matter was examined from messages dating from October 24, 2017 to December 29, 2018.



³ Anime is a form of Japanese animation known for its colorful graphics and fantasy themes.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Soft Power and Public Diplomacy

Joseph Nye has written extensively about soft power and defines it as the “ability to get what you want.” (Nye, p. 13) Power can be separated into different aspects such as hard and soft power. If hard power is more about command and *push* then soft power is more about framing or *pull*.

Hard power has the ability to obtain desired outcomes through “coercion and payment.” (Nye, p. 16) Soft power, on the other hand, achieves preferred outcomes by co-optive methods such as reframing, persuasion and “eliciting positive attraction.” (Nye, p. 20-21) Hard power often captures more attention because it is focused on compelling others to act against their own preferences to align with the holder of hard power. The subtlety of soft power sometimes renders it less visible. Instead of compelling, soft power works on “preference formation.” (Nye, p. 16)

Scholars and politicians debate over whether hard power or soft power is more valuable. Power comes in many forms and each are important in their own way, though Russell argues that “no one of these can be regarded as subordinate to any other.” (Russell, p. 4) However, psychological research suggests that traits such as “empathy and social intelligence” are superior for gaining and employing power rather than “force, deception, or terror.” (Nye, p. 17) Soft power has had just as real of an effect on history as has hard power. Countries can struggle with each other in an attempt to enhance their own, and deprive competitors of, soft power. Reframing others’ beliefs and ideas can reshape others’ preferences, goals and future actions. Creating “networks of trust” allows countries to work together towards common goals. (Nye, p. 17) As the global communities’ populations, economies and communications become ever more interconnected, developing trusted networks become increasingly important.

A state’s power can be measured by its “ability to alter and channel the behavior of other states.” (Freeman, p. 15) A country’s soft power can be categorized into three broad resources-culture, political values and foreign policies. To function as soft power, each resource must be interpreted positively by other nations, their agents and populace; its culture must be seen as attractive. Likewise the nation must be seen as living up to its own political values. For foreign policies to function as soft power they need to be viewed as “legitimate and having moral authority.” (Nye,

p. 84) These resources can include factors such as perceived legitimacy, cultural beliefs and institutions. Soft power can address value goals such as attaining freedom, promoting democracy or spreading the acceptance of human rights. When a government is focused on these types of value objects, soft power then becomes “superior to hard power.” (Nye, p. 84)

Soft power can affect targets both directly and indirectly. Direct influence applies to the leaders, elites and power networks of other countries. Indirect influence references the public and third parties becoming influenced. They in turn affect the decisions and actions of their leaders. This form of influence is a two-step model which creates environments that enable change. A state’s effective use of its soft power can be categorized into three conditions to affect “broad public opinion and cultural attitudes.” (Nye, p. 97) First, communication must occur in a “functioning marketplace of ideas,” second, persuasion takes the form of changing attitudes on political issues and third, this persuasion ensures the creation of new attitudes that influence future political outcomes. Influencing opinions is an “opportunity for creating desired habits in others.” (Russell, p. 24) For soft power resources to be valuable, they need to create in others a perception that the original country has desired qualities such as “benignity, competence, and charisma.” (Nye, p. 100) Changed attitudes and newly created habits of belief lay the foundation for new interactions and relationships between peoples, cultures and nations.

Soft power in East Asian countries is “increasingly perceived as having strategic value in gaining national influence and status.” (Lee, p. 5) East Asian countries are utilizing their soft power to supplement hard power and to “achieve different national objectives.” (Lee, p. 12) By doing so, countries can potentially increase their international status and influence. Constraints to Japan’s hard power prompted the country to seek alternative means of power. “Japan was the first country in East Asia to embrace the concept of soft power as an instrument of its foreign affairs and security policy, particularly because of its constitutional constraints on the use of military hard power.” (Lee, p.12) In the sphere of soft power and diplomacy, “strategies that focus upon projecting a selected national image by exporting appealing cultural products such as animation, TV programs, popular music, films and fashion, still occupy a central place in the efforts of Japan as well as other East Asian countries.” (Iwabuchi, p. 419)

Like Japan, South Korea also uses soft power as a way to supplement its hard power strengths. The Korean Wave is a form of cultural diplomacy incorporating Korean cultural products such as K-pop⁴, movies, television and food. “Though not fully embraced at the beginning, today the Korean Wave has become an integral aspect of Korea’s global image and marketability.” (Trolan, p. 204) With its successful modernization causing global powers to become concerned over its rapid growth, China is using its “charm offensive” in an attempt to soothe fears over its rise. (Lee, p. 12) Soft power is a valuable tool for a country whose international standing is restrained. In an “increasingly unfavorable asymmetric relationship with mainland China,” Taiwan can use soft power to help carve out more breathing room in the international arena. (Lee, p. 117) States project strength through both hard power and soft power. A nation’s power depends “not only upon its numbers and its economic resources and its technical capacity, but also upon its beliefs.” (Russell, p. 117) Taiwan has multiple sources of soft power such as demonstrating its democracy to the world, a diverse society and an economy that was one of the original four tigers of Asia.

Since Taiwan’s use of hard power is constrained, it must place greater reliance on utilizing its soft power. Soft power can help increase the legitimacy Taiwan needs in its struggle to gain increased participation in the international community. In our current information age, embracing new media helps generate an increased public awareness and reframes the issue of Taiwan in a manner that is beneficial to the country’s interests. Culture is a valuable tool for the country because it is a “powerful and inexhaustible source of soft power.” (Lee, p. 122) Taiwanese culture is an important source of power and by promoting its own unique culture, Taiwan uses it as a tool of soft power, telling the world its story on its own terms. The power of story is a valuable asset in society and is only increasing in importance in the information age. If politics “may ultimately be about whose story wins” then “narratives become the currency of soft power.” (Nye, p. 104)

Diplomacy evolved from state to state communication to more diverse engagements as governments realized the need to communicate with both their own public and to foreign citizens. These global interactions evolved over time into diplomacy, broadening into the “management of international relations by negotiation.” (Pigman, p. 4) As a form of socialization, public

⁴ K-pop is a genre of South Korean popular music began as a subculture and has grown into a global phenomenon.

diplomacy helps a nation persuade other countries to accept new ideas and beliefs about itself and its relationships with others. Public diplomacy has several dimensions-daily communications between states, strategic communications involving symbolic events that can be tied to individual states or shared history and long-term cultural exchanges. All three dimensions enable “broad socialization processes” that involve both representation and communication. (Lee, p. 45) Representation shapes perceptions of a country and is a “core diplomatic function.” (Pigman, p. 7) Likewise, communication is also a core function of diplomacy and can potentially alter the “interests and even the identity of the actors communicating with one another.” (Pigman, p. 7) Both have the ability to maintain and forge relationships, resolve conflicts, promote social engagements and enhance economic exchange.

In a sense, public diplomacy has been practiced as long as countries have been talking to one other. Communication evolved into diplomacy that created frameworks for “harmonizing the competing national interests of the parties without unnecessary resort to force.” (Freeman, p. 14) As technology advanced, communication became more complex. In the current information age, technological advances enable a deeper level of connectivity. Television, films, the internet and social media have transformed the manner in which countries and their diplomatic actors represent themselves by “changing how they are able to be seen and perceived by global publics.” (Pigman, p. 11) Advances in technology have enabled a more instantaneous and deeper level of connectivity between countries and their populations. New technologies combined with a more interconnected world have resulted in increased diversification among diplomatic actors. In addition to governments, private actors are utilizing new technology to “send and gather information through interaction with the global public.” (Pigman, p. 211)

Communication between states takes various forms in today’s postmodern age as goods, services and labor flow across borders more rapidly than at any other point in history. Culture, with its accompanying knowledge, ideas and beliefs, is too crossing borders, resulting in an increasing number of cross-cultural exchanges. These activities create a “broader range of processes” providing non-governmental actors more opportunities to engage in diplomacy. (Pigman, p. 5) A wider array of processes enable more diverse public diplomacy strategies that can be “targeted specifically to the desired audience, whilst running a greater likelihood of viewers perceiving the

promotional objective directly.” (Pigman, p. 124) New processes include websites, social networks and multiplayer online games, which allow for communication to occur across geographical boundaries. Technology has become more varied but representation and communication continues in this “burgeoning field of digital diplomacy.” (Ang, 379)

Public diplomacy facilitates relationships between nations, regions and “evolving transnational relationships.” (Lee, p. 252) Building and maintaining such relationships are vital to modern statecraft. Such relations build “mutual respect, deference, and understanding between states.” (Freeman, p. 135) Maintaining these relations can create positive long-term relationships between countries. Such committed relationships helps “win recognition” of a country’s “values and assets.” (Leonard, p. 11) Smaller countries with underdeveloped hard power can develop public diplomacy to improve their global reputation and to assist in communication with other states. For East Asia, public diplomacy is a valuable resource. Countries such as Indonesia, China, South Korea, Taiwan and Japan have embraced public diplomacy in the form of “society-to-society relationships” which in turn help strengthen each countries’ soft power. (Lee, p. 261) Public diplomacy led by private actors is “particularly critical” where governments struggle with legitimacy issues. (Lee, p. 261) In the case of Taiwan, who lacks widespread official diplomatic recognition, public diplomacy has provided a means for the country to remain a valuable player in international relations. Taiwan has seen successful efforts with its “international public relations” and lobbying efforts, resulting in an “imaginative approach” in advancing its soft power. (Lee, p. 255)

2.2 Cultural Diplomacy and Case Studies

Culture is an important resource of power and cultural diplomacy is a “key component of the contemporary cultural policy landscape.” (Ang, 365) By utilizing cultural diplomacy, countries use their culture as a tool of soft power to communicate, educate and create new allies. As a subset of public diplomacy, cultural diplomacy employs representation and communication in cultural exchanges that can further a country’s attractiveness and legitimacy. Culture is one of the prime differences between “peoples, governments, firms and other organizations” and it is the aim of cultural diplomacy to bridge these differences. (Pigman, p. 180) By sharing one’s culture with other states, a country can diffuse negative stereotypes and create positive

associations. For a cultural diplomatic tool to be effective it must “have a sophisticated grounding in the history and culture” of the country. (Freeman, p. 112) A nation’s culture can increase its soft power.

“In some contexts, culture can be an important power resource. Culture is the pattern of social behaviors by which groups transmit knowledge and values, and it exists at multiple levels. Some aspects of human culture are universal, some are national, and others are particular to social classes or small groups. Culture is never static, and different cultures interact in different ways.” (Nye, p. 84)

A state’s cultural attractiveness can be used by governmental agencies and private actors to “achieve strategic imperatives” in international relations. (Lee, p.11) Private actors act as third parties that can perform representative and communicative acts outside government bounds. Sharing these aspects of attractiveness builds familiarity between disparate states and creates a level of comfort between them. Affinities of values or interests between nations can create a compatibility as “important as the exercise of hard power to achieve a nation’s desired objectives.” (Lee, p.11) Cultural exchanges may advance a state’s power but they also go “far beyond narrow national interest” by creating a trust foundation between peoples that transcends borders. (Ang, p. 368) If maintained, these new beliefs and levels of trust then become embedded into a country’s society.

Cultural exchanges serve different functions in diplomatic relationships. When countries have had strained or even absent relations, cultural diplomacy acts as a “universally acceptable vehicle for rapprochement.” (Ang, p. 368) By establishing an atmosphere of cooperation, cultural exchanges establish a platform for communication. When relations are initially being established, or if two states are entering a thaw period after an “extended period of tension or alienation,” cultural diplomacy represents an “essential precursor to communication and negotiation,” especially when contention exists over complicated issues. (Pigman, p. 185) Once relationships are established, the role of cultural exchanges changes as they become a means of “sustaining mutual understanding between two peoples and governments.” (Pigman, p. 185) The resulting increased familiarity between cultures, peoples and governments contributes to present and

future relations. Established relations still benefit from cultural diplomacy. Cultural exchanges maintain and sustain established mutual understandings.

One manifestation for bringing cultural diplomacy to a wider audience is the exchanges that involve artistic and creative productions. Art represents culture and could be considered the “greatest single source of the impressions that people abroad form of a nation-state.” (Pigman, p. 185) It is one of the earliest indicators of difference that children learn in school and carries an association of authenticity. Cultural features including “music, paintings, national costume or dress” are compared and contrasted with those of one’s own country. Information dissemination through educational programs, media and modern entertainment influence belief “through the potency of iteration.” (Russell, p. 113) Artistic works and performances communicate authenticity and information. Successive generations learn about other countries through socialization. Cultural diplomacy establishes these learning opportunities to create “familiarity between peoples and cultures.” (Pigman, p. 185)

Individual states using cultural diplomacy are one strand in a larger web of “intersecting cultural relations.” (Ang, p. 372) Small and larger players, both governmental and private actors, make up this larger global web. Within the web, nations collaborate with each other to promote regional cultural diplomacy. A country can move outside solely promoting its own national interest by joining efforts with other countries who have similar interests and goals. When several states collaborate by “strategically investing in popular culture” they can target other nations and regions as a unified region. This can help raise opinions about individual states but also regional areas by generating “new intercultural understandings.” (Ang, p. 379) Cooperation of this nature can benefit smaller nations or those with diminished power. Regional cooperation can improve the “targeting, timing, and substance” of an individual state’s advocacy. (Freeman, p. 120) Multiple sources can potentially project a smaller state’s culture, enhancing both individual and regional soft power.

With Taiwan’s diplomatic isolation, it is necessary for the country to create new connections to the global community. By telling its own story on its own terms, Taiwan has the potential to shape current and future generations’ beliefs about the island. Combining cultural art with online

networks broadcasts Taiwan to a wider audience, potentially creating a larger community that is emotionally invested in its future. Communicating the plight of Taiwan to a larger global audience can increase the number of people invested in Taiwan's political struggles and goals. Maximizing its soft power is a valuable strategy to advance and protect Taiwan's long-term interests and goals, both as a nation and as a member of the international community. The combination of a unique history with both traditional and modern societal factors enables Taiwan to sustain a dynamic and vibrant culture. Taiwan is a "significant, responsible, and constructive player in East Asia and the world at large" and its rich culture can help increase its importance to not only the East Asian region but to the international community. (Lee, p. 135)

The ideas of soft power may have initially been formed by Western scholars but it "fits East Asia like a glove." (Lee, p. 249) Specifically, Taiwanese glove puppetry can be utilized as an effective form of cultural diplomacy because not only has puppetry had a long history in Asia, it is deeply part of Taiwanese culture. From Asian puppeteers using their craft to satirize local officials and criticize taxation policies to troupes in Taiwan performing clandestine puppet shows despite Japanese colonialist bans, puppetry has long been a means to express political opinion and to explore cultural identity. As a form of cultural diplomacy, Budaixi represents an inherent connection to Taiwan's historical cultural heritage but also to its present multiethnic culture. Using an art form that is so bound to identity as a form of cultural diplomacy assists Taiwan in projecting not only its history and culture to the world but also its very identity. As a sense of Taiwan identity grows, puppet theater is increasingly seen as an "expression of Taiwanese grassroots culture." (Fushiki and Ruizendaal, p. 13) Through its intrinsic ability to entertain and forge connections, puppetry is a useful tool that can effectively promote Taiwan and its interests.

Three case studies were examined to see how aspects of Taiwanese culture has been used as cultural diplomacy. The cultural arts have expressed political movements, sentiments and tensions throughout history, reflecting the zeitgeist of their times. Cloud Gate Dance Theatre is associated with the art of theater and dance. Both Peking and Taiwanese Opera represent the genres of theater and singing. The third case study focuses on a deity and analyzes his journey from traditional Chinese roots to his current status as part of Taiwan's popular culture. The Chinese god Nezha has been transformed into a Taiwanese pop cultural icon who travels the

world encouraging others to join him in dance and is an example of religious art and dancing genres. These art forms are examples of Taiwan's multifaceted culture. They have acted as symbols and as ambassadors of Taiwan.

Cloud Gate Dance Theatre is considered the first professional contemporary dance company in Taiwan. Established in 1973, Lin Hwai-min made a name for the company by developing a unique dance style that fuses elements of multiple cultures including Chinese, Taiwanese, Japanese and Western cultures. *Cloud Gate* refers to a ritual performed for the Yellow Emperor in ancient China. The fusion of dance styles reflects the hybrid nature of Taiwanese culture, making it an apt symbol to promote Taiwan abroad. With its integration of diverse elements, including traditional and modern dance styles, Cloud Gate has created a "unique dance style that is significant in the Chinese diasporic society." (Chao, p. 9) In addition to domestic success, Cloud Gate has toured internationally to countries such as the United States, Canada, Germany, Mexico, Russia and China. Its overseas tours have brought awards and acclaim with some regarding Cloud Gate as the "most important cultural export the Republic of China has made in the past twenty years." (Chao, p. 10) By taking Cloud Gate on tour abroad, Lin acts as a private actor bringing Taiwanese identity and culture to a larger international audience. The evolution of Cloud Gate reflects Taiwanese society's own cultural and political transformations. The integration of Eastern and Western cultural aspects laid a foundation of cultural characteristics that later saw the "emergence of Taiwanese identity and nationalism." (Chao, p. 11) Both themes of culture and identity are regularly explored in Cloud Gate productions. By synthesizing multiple cultures present in Taiwan, Cloud Gate creates a "complex picture of a diasporic culture" through its dance performances. (Chao, p. 60) This complex picture is an integration of multiple cultures that represents Taiwan's multiethnic population.

Premiering in 1978, Cloud Gate's *Legacy* production told the story of Chinese immigrants arriving in Taiwan. The socio-cultural significance of the dance performance was highlighted in its features of lineage succession, the Taiwanese characteristics incorporated into the dance, and the "spirit of struggle and the community of solidarity embedded" throughout the performance. (Chao, p. 82) Though *Legacy* initially focused on Chinese nationalism, Cloud Gate Dance Theatre's focus has evolved into one of Taiwanese nationalism. This shift in tone affects how

successive dance performances have been interpreted. Earlier productions of *Legacy* used the ROC national flag and sang the national anthem to indicate Mainland China was the homeland. Later productions featured ancient maps of Taiwan and headings of “Taiwan, Our Native Land” to indicate that the idea of homeland had shifted to the island state. (Chao, p. 101)

Cloud Gate also has participated in academic events to further cross-collaboration within the dance world. *New Trends in Dance* was an international conference held in Taiwan in 1992 and was co-hosted by Cloud Gates’ Dance Foundation and sponsored by the Ministry of Education and the Council for Cultural Planning and Development of Taiwan. Nine countries participated in the event which included dance performances, lectures, presentations and academic papers. Themes covered included methods for the “preservation and transformation of traditional dance forms as well as the development of new, cross-cultural forms within a global context.” (Wang, p. 54) At the conference Francis Tao, Dimensions Dance Theatre’s founder, credited Cloud Gate as the “first turning point for dance in Taiwan.” (Wang, p. 54) Cloud Gate both promotes diversity and reflects contemporary trends. Lin’s original piece *Cross the Black Water* was discussed during a conference panel and was praised for its “cross-cultural performance.” (Wang, p. 56) International dance conferences hosted in Taiwan have led to greater dance scholarship. In 1998 the International Dance Theory and Technique Workshop was held in Taiwan and sponsored by the Bureau of Cultural Development and Planning and was considered a “promising development” in the world of dance scholarship. (Wu, W., p. 135) Workshops were instructed by Western and Taiwanese dance scholars, reflecting the cross-cultural nature of the event.

Theater has expressed political movements, sentiments and tensions throughout history, reflecting the zeitgeist of their times. Two operatic forms in Taiwan reflect the island’s political transformation from colony to democracy and both have been used as forms of cultural diplomacy. During the reign of the Nationalists, the Republic of China sponsored international tours of Peking Opera hoping to strengthen its sovereignty claims to the whole of China. Labeled a “national essence” that was believed to “embody the essence of the Chinese national spirit,” Peking Opera illustrated that the ROC were the rightful guardians of traditional Chinese culture and helped to legitimize their regime. (Guy, p. 47) Peking Opera became a tool of international diplomacy for the ROC government and accompanying goodwill tours encapsulated the regime’s

attempt to woo the international community. It was fitting that a cultural performance was used to make an argument for legitimacy since both the ROC and PRC “based at least part of their claims to legitimacy on cultural grounds.” (Guy, p. 54)

These international tours had the goal of “advancing people-to-people diplomacy and entertaining overseas Chinese.” (Guy, p. 55) Cultural diplomacy of this form increased in importance as the ROC began losing international allies. As official diplomatic channels diminished, less formal ties increased in value allowing Taiwan to avoid isolation by finding outlets in the global community where it could still participate. Taiwan Legislator Li Gongquan captured this sentiment when he remarked, “the international situation has made it very difficult for us to advance diplomatically.” (Guy, p. 59) Stressing that Peking Opera should be promoted abroad, Li surmised that, “all promotion of national opera will help enable it to share the responsibility in the cultural exchange effort.” (Guy, p. 59) As Taiwan became more diplomatically isolated the importance of these tours to create cultural exchanges remained highly significant and overseas tours continued through the 1980s and 1990s.

As Taiwan became more liberalized and a “Taiwanese consciousness” began taking shape, the political climate shifted, resulting in the devaluation of cultural art forms derived from the Mainland. (Guy, p. 4) Taiwanese Opera, also known as Gezaixi, originally did not enjoy government support and, as Taiwan’s “only indigenous opera form”, it was suppressed by the Nationalist government. (Guy, p. 6) Though the Nationalists regarded Taiwanese Opera with suspicion, its popularity on the island steadily increased, eventually becoming the “most popular theater genre in Taiwan.” (Chang, p. 111) The KMT’s policies of suppressing Gezaixi as an outsider art helped create a sense of otherness and of a separate Taiwanese identity.

As Taiwanese identity and nationalism grows, Gezaixi has become an “identity symbol tightly bound to politics.” (Chang, p. 112) As Taiwanese identity matures, it is Gezaixi that steps into the symbolic spot once held by Peking Opera. President Lee Teng-hui helped legitimize Gezaixi by attending a Ming Hwa Yuan performance and afterwards declaring it was the “best that he had attended in 50 years.” (Chang, p. 125) The new political economy of Taiwan has taken emphasis away from Chinese culture and transferred attention to indigenous cultures and art

forms. Much like the Nationalists financial support of Peking Opera troupes, the Democratic Progressive Party founded the first public Gezaixi troupe in 1992. With government support came funding that allowed troupes to organize existing scripts, interview aging Gezaixi performers and compose new Gezaixi plays based on Taiwanese history.

As Taiwan continues to refine its identity through cultural and political reforms, Gezaixi helps give legitimacy to the Taiwanese identity by presenting Taiwan's unique history and cultural traditions to audiences both at home and abroad. Peking and Taiwanese Opera both survived Japanese colonization. Peking Opera thrived under KMT rule; Gezaixi endured in the shadows. While Peking Opera has wilted under Taiwan's democracy, Gezaixi has flowered. "Governments have long used and promoted music and other performing arts to advance political and social agendas, which shows the real-world belief in the power of cultural forms to shape their environments." (Guy, p. 7) The politics and ideologies that have shaped Taiwan since World War II is reflected in both art forms and both have been used as cultural diplomacy.

The god Nezha has transformed from a traditional Chinese deity into a Taiwanese pop culture phenomenon who has spread far beyond Taiwan's borders. Although still considered "one of the most important gods in Taiwanese folklore," Nezha's societal role has transitioned from more traditional religious duties at temples to performing at secular celebrations and promotional events in Taiwan and abroad. (Yuan, p. 28) Oversized Nezha costumes are worn around the world as performers are project this god as a symbol of Taiwanese culture. This form of cultural diplomacy is helping to raise awareness of Taiwan's history and political plight while making valuable cross-cultural connections. Originally, the god featured prominently in annual Welcoming God festivals; positioned at the front of the parade, a performer wearing a Nezha costume led revelers along a route, visiting temples and religious shrines along the way. As technology evolved, neon lights were incorporated into the costume and techno music accompanied his dance routines. These technological upgrades led to him being renamed the Electric Techno Neon God. The hybridism of techno music and dance steps created an "innovative cultural product that is favoured by modern audiences." (Yuan, p.31) Nezha has transformed into a pop culture symbol so popular with the younger generation that they "even regard Nezha as a national icon." (Sheng, p. 391)

Nezha was broadcast to a wider audience at the 2009 World Games held in Kaohsiung when forty Nezha dancers performed during the opening ceremony. In addition to dancing, the gods also rode motorcycles, reflecting the connection between Nezha, his magical ring and the motorcycle riders who pray to him for protection. By participating in events abroad, the Dancing Nezha has become a positive symbol that promotes Taiwan. The Nezha dance movements were a “new kind of performance” that quickly became popular in Taiwan; this popularity gradually spread to the international level. (Sheng, p. 405) One notable performance was a Techno Nezha dance to US singer Lady Gaga’s *Bad Romance* at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles in 2010. The hybridization of Nezha’s traditional roots and his modern adaptations have “enabled his character to be disseminated and further refined as a new icon of Taiwanese identity in international events.” (Sheng, p. 405)

Private actors are utilizing cultural diplomacy to “send and gather information through interaction with the global public.” (Pigman, p. 211) Wu Jianheng’s world tour with a Nezha costume illustrates this point. Beginning in 2011, Wu traveled to seventy two countries in three years promoting Taiwan. Wu's 17 kg Nezha dances with sunglasses, neon lights and ROC flags. *Taiwan* has been embroidered on the front of the costume, reflecting the aesthetic changes the god has undertaken as it has been transformed into a symbol of Taiwan. Of his inspiration, Wu comments in his Nezha compilation video that many people in the world do not know about his “beautiful country” so he “made it my mission to change that.” (Wu, J.) In Wu’s video Nezha appears as a cultural ambassador, celebrating multiple cultural practices and creating numerous cross-cultural collaborations. Dancers from Brunei, Thailand, Romania, Macedonia and Nicaragua dressed in their respective traditional cultural costumes to perform with Nezha. Dancers wearing oversized costumes from the Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Slovenia joined Nezha for dancing. Nezha performed local dances in Kenya, Thailand, Latvia and Swaziland. Collaborations of this nature are an example of how “traditional cultural diplomacy” can be combined with modern technology to develop deeper understanding and bonds between cultures. (Ang, 379) As of this writing Wu’s video has been viewed 694,353 times.



Image 1 Wu's NeZha participating in a traditional dance in Romania

The hybridity of the Techno NeZha represents the merging of the old and the new and helps explain why this deity is “best able to represent Taiwanese identity” more than other deities or folk symbols. (Sheng, p. 407) By using its culture as a tool of soft power, Taiwan can broadcast its beliefs and ideals to audiences. The god NeZha has been transformed into a “new symbol of Taiwanese culture.” (Sheng, p. 407) His iconic appearance is memorable and helps shine a spotlight on Taiwan’s culture. NeZha statues still guard Taiwanese temples but the god’s role has expanded tremendously. He has achieved fame and headlines, bringing joy with his performances and much needed attention to his country.

2.3 Museums and International Traveling Exhibitions

As discussed there are many paths that cultural diplomacy can take. One significant route is traveling via the global network of museums, places where “different cultural visions and community interests are negotiated.” (Clifford, p. 8) Communicating one’s cultural visions and interests to other states is an integral part of cultural diplomacy. Museums offer an opportunity for countries to have communication and representation outside their borders. Clifford cautions that these institutions are not a final destination for culture. Rather, museums acts as contact zones for culture. These zones are a form of “contact approaches” involving systems “entering new relations through historical processes of displacement.” (Clifford, p. 7) In a museum different cultures coexist and their power dynamics can be negotiated by curators and

conservators. These spaces perform as contact zones by creating opportunities where “geographically and historically separated groups establish ongoing relations.” (Clifford, p. 195)

One specific way that museums engage in cultural diplomacy is by participating in cross-cultural collaborations. This can take the form of international traveling exhibitions (ITEs) which are “exhibits temporarily loaned from museums and galleries in a number of countries.” (Lai, p. 90) ITEs typically are organized by museum curators from a minimum of two countries, though multiple countries can participate in individual ITEs. Such a “cross-national exhibition” may be temporary but it has the ability to attract a high number of visitors to the hosting museum. (Lai, p. 90) The impermanence of the event may prompt an increase of visitors to the hosting museum and heightened media coverage. ITEs are symbolic of a deepened era of global connection; they can also signify a “new relationship with society.” (Lai, p. 90)

Museum collections are more than mere objects for public display. They embody history from specific times and locations that may be linked with “pointed meanings in current political struggles.” (Clifford, p. 190) Over time the meanings associated with these objects can change. Tracing the changes of these objects is akin to tracing a life journey. Appadurai asserts that objects and commodities, “like persons, have social lives.” (Appadurai, p. 3) The value a particular object is given is established by “human transactions, attributions, and motivations” placed upon them. (Appadurai, p. 5) These attributes can deepen over time but also adapt to changing circumstances. Relationships can develop around said objects, such as the religious connection between Taiwan temple culture and Budaixi performances in Taiwan. Museums may be the final resting place for an object but it is important to note the relationship it has to its culture and country of origin. ITEs have an opportunity to revive these connections and to develop new relationships with peoples of differing cultures. These relationships, or “cultural flows” can be tracked across various *scapes* such as “ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes.” (Clifford, p. 7) The flow of culture through museums and ITEs can be described as a *museumscape*.

By embracing “reciprocal communication,” museums have an opportunity to “decenter the physical objects in favor of narrative, history, and politics.” (Clifford, p. 191) Including these

aspects can foster cultural diplomacy. In the case of Taiwan, its narrative of colonial history, transition from colony to democracy and ongoing struggle for sovereignty can be included in exhibitions. As contact zones, museums explore their relationships to each other and to the larger community. This relationship is embodied in the international traveling exhibition. ITEs have connected museums from different regions in the world, “powerfully manifesting the global mobility of museums and heritages, and the mobilities of people and of the objects they instigate.” (Lai, p. 95) By creating space for interaction between cultures, mutual understanding can blossom. This is an important aspect of cultural diplomacy. Contact zones emphasize “copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices.” (Clifford, p. 192) By creating space for such understandings, museums can enable the two core functions of cultural diplomacy—representation and communication.

They also create space for the performance of culture. This can be an opportunity to educate and display a culture that may be largely unknown or misunderstood. However, there is a political aspect to such an opportunity. It is important to recognize who politically “deploys nationality or transnationality, authenticity or hybridity, against whom, with what relative power and ability to sustain a hegemony.” (Clifford, p. 10) Within contact zones, it is important to note the effect of power inherent in the relationship. In many museums, the history of colonialism in the creation of the museum’s collection involved “conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict.” (Clifford, p. 192) This past history can contribute to an asymmetrical power relationship when two museums choose to work together. “While reciprocity is a crucial stake, it will not be understood in the same way by people from different cultures in asymmetrical power relationships.” (Clifford, p. 194) Examination of hierarchical relationships is vital to making cooperation between museums as egalitarian as possible.

International traveling exhibitions hold particular significance for Taiwan. With the loss of its United Nations seat in 1971, Taiwan became not only disconnected politically but also culturally, such as within the museumscape. As Taiwan's economy underwent a resurgence in the 1980s and the country became one of the four tigers of economic rise in Asia, Taiwan reconnected with the world. This included reconnecting culturally and Taiwanese museums, both traditional and contemporary, began participating in ITEs. The more traditional museums were institutions

conserving traditional Chinese culture. Taiwan's National Palace Museum is one such institution and is the "finest representative, dominating the field in presenting work to foreigners and educating citizens." (Lai, p. 95) Contemporary Taiwanese museums, such as Taipei's Fine Art Museum, may have a more limited collection but they too focus on education and presentation. Both inbound and outbound ITEs have assisted Taiwan's connection to the larger global museumscape which have "enabled the construction of bridges not only to Europe and the United States, but also to China and other parts of the world." (Lai, p. 96)

Countries can also strategize to host or participate in Mega-Events as a form of soft power. Mega-Events are large scale social events that receive ample amount of media coverage. Events on this scale "represent a visible and ostensibly collectively-owned platform that can be used to help achieve a series of political, economic, social and cultural objectives for their promoters." (McPherson, p. 3) Similar to ITEs, Mega-Events has social and cultural value befitting the local communities where they occur and the countries of origin. Mega-Events can be global in scale such as the Olympics or more national focused like the Superbowl⁵. Events of this nature capture heightened media coverage and enhance civic engagement. Participants and observers benefit from deeper social inclusion and "demonstrable civic boosterism." (McPherson, p. 2) Mega-Events can give attention to participating countries and increase their presence in the global contentiousness. Like ITEs, Mega-Events create bridges between communities, cultures and countries. The more Taiwan can create these networking bridges the more it is connected to the global community.

Creating bridges forges connections between cultures but it also can stir up controversy. Such was the case with the *Splendors of Imperial China* exhibition in 1996. Work for this event involved the National Palace Museum (NPM) in Taipei and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET) in New York City. Exhibitions are not immune to political tension and many museum shows "require delicate international diplomacy, but this one was unusually loaded with political meaning." (Solomon, p. 183) Protesters in Taiwan took issue with the NPM's decision to send valuable works of Chinese art, including items the museum regulated to a restricted list that reduced display in Taiwan, to the United States. There was also fear of China taking possession

⁵ An annual football competition in the United States.

of the items once they'd left Taiwan. Meanwhile, pressure from Beijing prompted corporations to withdraw their sponsorship. The controversy was a “telling display of Taiwan's deep identity crisis.” (Solomon, p. 183) The exhibition items are part of a museum whose history is tied to both China and Taiwan. As the ITE was set to open four days before Taiwan's first democratic presidential election, the *Splendors of Imperial China* “would remind an American audience of Taiwan's presence and its increasing hunger for self-determination.” (Solomon, p. 183)

As the controversy increased, an investigative committee was launched in Taiwan and the exhibition items were reevaluated, throwing the ITE plans into crisis mode. A compromise was made allowing the ITE to take place. However, twenty-three items were withdrawn from the exhibition and nineteen other items were only allowed to be displayed overseas for forty days. The Metropolitan Museum of Art was “immensely gratified to see how enthusiastically the public responded” to the *Splendors of Imperial China* exhibition. (Report, p. 4) Attendance for said exhibition was over 426,000 people during the eight week run and was the museum's highest attendance for an Asian art exhibition. Though it has been touted as the “greatest exhibition of Chinese art ever staged in the West” because of the controversy “much of this work is unlikely to leave Taiwan ever again.” (Solomon, p. 196)

International traveling exhibitions brought art and culture from around the world into Taiwan and has allowed Taiwanese culture to travel the world in return. ITEs can be presented at a single overseas museum but often they conduct tours, traveling from one museum to the next before the visiting collection returns to its home country. Museum objects imbue the identity of the culture they are from and therefore they are not merely a physical object on display abroad. These objects are displaying a country, its society and cultural belief systems. International museums are an important resource for Budaxi because they offer an avenue for the art form to be displayed outside Taiwan and for the receiving audience to learn more about the country.

Chapter 3. Mouth and Mind: A symbolic performance evoking conversation

Puppet theater has a rich history in Asia. Its origins can be traced back to wooden and clay figurines that were part of burial rituals two thousand years ago in China. (Stalberg, p. 4) Over time these rites expanded from funerals into performances at weddings and festivals. The ancestral puppet forms became more refined and musical elements were added to the performance, morphing the religious rituals into entertainment. Performances in larger cities served more secular purposes while puppet theater in the countryside “served a primarily religious function”. (Chen, p. 15) Troupes performing for religious events did so for both the enjoyment of residents and deities. Puppet plays dealt with themes of filial piety, honesty, loyalty, and explored ideas of good versus evil. “Puppetry and other folk entertainments no doubt provided considerable information, with their earthy humor and satires of corrupt officials or excessive taxation.” (Stalberg, p. 8) Puppet shows challenged belief systems; satirical puppet commentaries varied in topic, including arguments that “Buddha, Lao-zi and Confucius were really women.” (Stalberg, p. 6)



Image 2 Examples of rod, marionette, shadow and glove puppets

In China, several distinct styles of puppetry developed. Marionette puppetry used strings to manipulate puppet movements from above. Rod puppetry placed puppets on a long stick while smaller rods were used to move its arms and legs. Shadow puppetry placed intricately cut, two dimensional leather puppets behind a cloth; the leather pieces were then moved with thin rods from below. Lit from behind these leather pieces created shadowed figures and scenes for an audience. Glove puppetry developed using smaller puppets worn on and manipulated by the hands. Known as Budaixi, this form of puppetry has spread across Southeast Asia including Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. In Taiwan, it has undergone quite the evolution and has become a unique art form, representing Taiwanese history and spirit.

The majority of scholars place the origins of glove puppetry to the 18th century; however, authors Fushiki and Ruizendaal claim an earlier date, citing a poem written in 1259 that references the cloth bag and rod baskets that still accompany puppet shows to the present day. (Fushiki and Ruizendaal, p. 8) Increased immigration from China in the 1800s during the Opium Wars brought an increased number of puppeteers and troupes to Taiwan. Of the four styles of Chinese puppetry, Budaixi was the “smallest, most portable form of local theatre in Fujian,” making it the most convenient of the puppet theaters to make the move. (Fushiki and Ruizendaal, p. 10) During the 19th century, Budaixi in Taiwan began incorporating foreign characters into storylines, reflecting the changing population and foreign influences on the island.

Japanese colonization brought more changes to glove puppetry. Puppet plays reflecting Chinese styles and themes were replaced with Japanese aesthetics. Puppets were costumed in Japanese styled clothing but their heads and hands remained the same. New plays centering on Japanese themes were created and new rules requiring the licensing of troupes were implemented. During the occupation, traditional music prohibited, instead puppet troupes used recorded Japanese music during performances. The same plays were spoken and sung in Japanese instead of Mandarin or Taiwanese. Like their opera counterparts, puppeteers performed in Japanese when officials were on site but switched to Taiwanese when not being monitored. Though dressed in Japanese clothing, the puppets secretly wore traditional clothing underneath. When only a Taiwanese audience remained, performers would undress the puppets to reveal more traditional Budaixi costumes. The ability of theatrical performers to switch between regulated forms and

their preferred artistic expression reflect how they were “secretly challenging the colonial authority.” (Hsieh, p. 281)

The changing nature of glove puppetry became more dramatic during and after the Chinese Civil War. The People's Republic of China reformed puppet theater by secularizing it. Traditional theater troupes were reorganized into state companies with performers becoming state employees and given a standard wage. Puppet plays removed religious and erotic elements and inserted storylines that glorified Chairman Mao and the Communist Party. During the height of the Cultural Revolution, puppets, scripts and stages were burned and many puppet troupes stopped performing completely. After the Cultural Revolution ended, puppet theatre was revived but the advent of television caused a decline in the art's popularity throughout China.

The Chinese Civil War also affected Budaixi in Taiwan. As in the Mainland, puppet shows were transformed into political tools for the government. Puppet troupes transformed the aesthetics of puppets to present political dramas. Similar to the transformation that occurred during the Japanese Occupation, puppet heads, hands and feet remained the same while the clothing was changed. New costumes were fashioned to look like Communist and Kuomintang generals and soldiers. Threats of a PRC military invasion and hopes of retaking the Mainland were portrayed in puppet plays and Chiang Kai-shek and Chairman Mao puppets were created. These motifs encouraged “all people to bear the responsibility for safeguarding the country and opposing communism.” (Taiwan Theater Museum)

Further changes occurred during Taiwan's martial law era. After the 228 Incident, performing arts were heavily monitored. Puppet theaters were forced to perform inside enclosed theaters; the move indoors caused them to shift away from their elaborately carved stages and adapt to a painted cloth stage. These cloth stages were more portable and cheaper to create and continued to be used after troupes were allowed to perform outdoors again in the 1950s. Martial art storylines became popular during the martial law era. (Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum)

Professional writers were hired to create original plots for puppet troupes which resulted in new personalities joining puppet stock characters. Recorded music was gaining in popularity, steadily replacing live musicians. (Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum)

Taiwanese glove puppetry underwent a tremendous evolution between the years 1950 and 1980. Puppet imports from Fujian Province ceased after 1949, forcing troupes to make their own puppets and props. While Taiwan was under martial law, puppet makers were creating larger puppets with a unique style which became known as Golden Ray. (Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum) Golden Ray Theater ushered in a new era for Budaixi with its unique style which was a “form of early postmodern theater mixing Western and Eastern influences, music, puppets and stage design into a new art form.” (Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum) Golden Ray puppets were heavily influenced by foreign movies, music and cartoons. The puppets underwent an extensive transformation with colors, paint, clothing, hairstyles and body size changing dramatically and new technology, such as audio recordings and black lights, were incorporated into performances. Television would take the art form to unparalleled levels of popularity. Puppet master Huang Junxiong refined the Golden Ray style and debuted his puppet television series *Shi Yan-wen* in 1970; the show became a sensation with ratings consistently over 90%. Notably, the puppets spoke in Taiwanese with Mandarin subtitles provided on screen.

Shi Yan-wen was wildly popular and legends of its power to halt the economy have woven themselves into the show’s history. Supposedly, when it was on air Taiwan families and workers stopped all activities to watch the show. The Kuomintang needed to maintain a Chinese identity in Taiwan to keep hopes of retaking the Mainland alive; promoting Mandarin reinforced this identity and the KMT’s authority on the island. The Taiwanese language was a threat to the KMT’s hegemony and thus *Shi Yan-wen* was pulled off air in 1974 because the show “disrupted the normal routine of agricultural and industrial work and thus shook the foundations of the nation.” (Fushiki and Ruizendaal, p. 18) It was eventually allowed back on air in 1982. Part of the show’s popularity was attributed to its association with Taiwan. *Shi Yan-wen* became a “national hero” which created “love for puppet theatre for a generation of Taiwanese schoolchildren, as well as adults.” (Fushiki and Ruizendaal, p. 18) Today both traditional and contemporary glove puppet performances can be seen in Taiwan.

Huang passed the puppet show mantle onto his sons, Huang Qianghua and Huang Wenzhe who continued their father’s legacy by forming Pili International Multimedia in 1983. The Huang brothers utilized mass media to create their puppet empire, bringing Budaixi to the next

generation. The Pili company has produced multiple series of Pili shows; past and current episodes can be watched on television and online. Like *Shi Yan-wen*, the series is spoken in Taiwanese with Mandarin subtitles. DVDs are widely available throughout the island and through the company's website. Their innovative use of technology and marketing have won them accolades for Taiwan's emerging "cultural creative industries" and the company is seen as a capable competitor with the "United States, Japan and Korea." (Silvio, 2011, p. 151) The style of the show is distinct and is a "popular culture genre unique to Taiwan." (Silvio, 2007, p. 285) Characters are beloved by the fanbase who gather online to discuss the show and share Pili inspired artwork. The puppet Su Huanzhen is both a protagonist of the Pili show and an "icon of Taiwanese popular culture." (Silvio, 2007, p. 307) As the company has achieved success domestically it has shifted to expanding its influence regionally and globally. The videos are one of the most popular entertainment produced in Taiwan and the series has "attracted cult followings in Japan and China." (Silvio, 2011, p. 150) There is hope for Pili to follow the success of Japan and South Korea at entering the Western market; however entry into the US market has been "extremely limited, and of varying success." (Silvio, 2007, p. 286)

3.1 Budaixi as representation

Running itself as a de facto country while simultaneously dealing with increasing pressure from China puts Taiwan in a "unique situation in the international community." (Lu) Cultural diplomacy not only plays an important part in Taiwan's diplomatic efforts, it embodies a vital role. "If Taiwan is to survive, cultural diplomacy is crucial diplomacy." (Lu) Living under such unique circumstances, Taiwan benefits from practicing more traditional diplomacy while adapting to newer forms. As the world changes, so too does diplomacy; "diplomacy is no longer limited to the banquet of the season." (Lu) While these traditional channels of diplomacy are still vital to the international community, the types of actors have become more diversified. The more channels of diplomacy Taiwan employs the more opportunities exist for the country to represent itself abroad.

"Taiwan is a unique situation in the international community. On one hand we are a normal country with all the portions of daily life. On the other hand Taiwan is not like a normal country because we are under political pressure from Mainland

China. This is a crucial fact. Certainly this is why for the diplomat there is a clear mission trying to promote good relations with the international community. For example with diplomatic official exchanges, there is no limit to promote ourselves and all means could be useful.” (Lu)

Taiwan’s cultural diversity is reflected in the wide array of art forms. Taipei’s National Palace Museum has the one of the largest collection of traditional Chinese art in the world. Expressions of Hakka culture can be found in oil-paper umbrellas on display at Taoyuan’s Hakka Culture Hall. The country still uses Traditional Chinese characters, ensuring that calligraphy remains a practiced art form on the island. As a democracy, religion is freely practised on the island and Taiwan's religious temples have numerous festivals throughout the year; the Matsu pilgrimage is an annual event attracting thousands of participants. The government of Taiwan officially recognizes sixteen aboriginal tribes. These tribes have their own distinctive culture and art forms which include weaving, dancing and religious festivals. Taiwan’s diverse cultures and their art forms represent the countries complex history, heritage and identity. As symbols of Taiwan, art then becomes tied to the politics of the country.

As a part of these diverse cultural arts, Budaixi both represents Taiwan and communicates issues of importance to the country to the international community. This research’s findings reflect how Taiwanese glove puppetry serves as a tool of cultural diplomacy by adapting a traditional art form to be used by modern actors. Budaixi has evolved into a distinctive art form that represents Taiwan; as such it can be used to teach about the history of the country and the diverse facets of its culture. “A particular relic may have a specific biography, but whole types of relic and indeed the class of things called ‘relic’ itself, may have a larger historical ebb and flow, in the course of which its meaning may shift significantly.” (Appadurai, p. 34) As Taiwan evolved from colony to autocracy to democracy, Budaixi has evolved alongside it, reflecting these historical and cultural changes back to the audience. By incorporating emerging technologies into their shows, puppeteers have created innovative artwork preserving its historical roots. Taiwanese glove puppets entertain while educating audiences about Taiwan’s history, cultural, diverse religious beliefs and its complex political status. As Taiwan works to increase its participation in the

global community, Budaixi presents a “Taiwan-centered globalization” that is “grounded in just such a history, constructed through specific forms of remediation.” (Silvio, 2007, p. 287) Culture is a valuable resource of power. As a form of soft power, cultural diplomacy “relies on and legitimizes the marketization of culture and sponsors the production and international projection of attractive media culture for the purpose of enhancing national reputation and economic profits.” (Iwabuchi, p. 423) Taiwan has a rich culture and can benefit from promoting it abroad. By using this culture as a tool of soft power, Taiwan can broadcast its beliefs and ideals to wider audiences. Since Taiwan has restraints placed on its use of hard power, utilizing its soft power could help balance Taiwan's diplomatic predicament and further engage the country with the global community. Taiwanese glove puppetry represents Taiwanese culture and connects it to the larger world of puppetry. “Local cultures are a microcosm of something bigger.” (Siebert) By bringing that culture to a larger audience, Budaixi acts as a conduit connecting Taiwan to the larger international community as well.

Soft power has value in “its utility in redefining national identity.” (Lee, p.5) In Taiwan, puppets represent Taiwan because they have a connection to Taiwanese identity. During election season in Taiwan, local politicians pose with glove puppets for publicity. A puppet designed in the likeness of former president Chen Shui-bian was made for publicity during his election campaign. During her campaigning, current president Tsai Ing-wen had a puppet theater company perform at night markets in an attempt to grab voters' attention. Because of its connection to Taiwan and to identity, Budaixi can be used as a symbol to represent the country.

“They [puppets] are part of a certain political message about identity, about Taiwanese identity as opposed to any other identity. As such it's mainly used by politicians and basically only during election time to show their Taiwaneseess. Puppet theater because of its history is the easiest thing to show that. Also because it's fun and the puppets don't talk back. So they have very positive aspects and it's part of the Taiwanese psyche because of the television puppets in the 1970s and the Pili hype now.” (Ruizendaal)

As an ambassador to France and Haiti, Lu Michel Ching-long served as a representative of his country and during this time he used puppets to represent Taiwan. While ambassador, Lu brought Taiwanese glove puppets on his diplomatic trips abroad; while on these trips he would show off the puppets to onlookers and demonstrate how they worked. A history of puppetry and its ties to Taiwan were incorporated into his speeches. Notably, he would enact short plays where he would play with the puppets while voicing characters in the French language. “For diplomacy you need creativity and imagination;” the ambassador’s puppet shows contained both. (Lu) French audiences were receptive to his shows and the ambassador became associated with the art form. “They always expected Lu will come with his puppets.” (Lu) This expectation reflected the associations between the Taiwanese ambassador with puppetry and by extension between puppetry and Taiwan. Not only were his shows popular, his performances inspired some in the audience to travel to Taiwan to study. “French students came to Taiwan to learn the puppets.” (Lu) In 2013, Lu gave a speech at the Festival d'Avignon⁶ in France. After his speech he impressed the audience by performing with Taiwanese glove puppets. At the end of his puppet show, Lu told the audience, “You don't need to remember Ambassador Lu. But after you see and hear my speech and performance, I guarantee that you will remember that this is Taiwan.” (Yang) This association between Budaixi and Taiwan illustrates how the art form represents the country.

Taiwan museums represent Taiwan when working with other museums abroad. International traveling exhibitions can be particularly helpful for Taiwan if the receiving museum does not have any Taiwanese cultural artifacts in its collection. The Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum has represented Taiwan abroad with its museum exhibitions and with its theater troupe. Their overseas representation has been government funded and has led to long lasting relationships between other museums and other puppet organizations. “We could build a very deep and complex program for a foreign institution and represent Taiwan very well.” (Siebert) By representing Taiwan, the TAPTM was able to show not only the history of Taiwanese puppetry but also the role the country played in the larger world of Asian puppetry. In May 2017, the museum traveled to Cape South, South Africa with their exhibition *The Magic of Asian Theatre Puppets-Beauties, Heroes, Villains, Gods and Clowns*. This international traveling exhibition allowed the museum to represent Taiwan abroad. Their presentation was the

⁶ The Festival d'Avignon is an arts festival held annually in Avignon, France.

first representation of Asian puppetry to be exhibited in Africa. The two month exhibition took place at the Iziko South African National Gallery; highlights included over 150 items not only from Taiwan but from the Asian region. Collection items on display included shadow, rod, marionettes and glove puppets as part of the exhibition. Accompanying workshops included puppet demonstrations and lectures focusing on Asian puppetry history and puppet conservation. Lectures addressed the connection between Taiwanese identity and glove puppet traditions. By representing Taiwan, the TAPTM was able to show not only the history of Taiwanese puppetry but also the role the country played in the larger world of Asian puppetry.

When Budaixi travels abroad it represents Taiwan. In 2019, the TECO⁷ office in Atlanta, Georgia organized events to celebrate both the 40th anniversary of the Taiwan Relation Act and the 40th anniversary of the Taipei Atlanta Sister City relationship. Associated events included Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je meeting with Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms and Georgia Governor Brian Kemp. The Atlanta based Center for Puppetry Arts (CPA) hosted a reception for Mayor Ko and the accompanying Taiwan delegation. Center for Puppetry Arts producer Kristin Haverty described the reception as positive, commenting that “it was a packed event!” (Haverty) The CPA advertised the event outside their puppet headquarters and media coverage featured photos of the Center, including photos of Mayor Ko standing in front of a CPA podium.

⁷ The Taipei Economic and Cultural Office serves as an unofficial embassy and consulate overseas in lieu of formal diplomatic relations.



Image 3 Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je at the Center for Puppetry Art

During the Mayor Ko's visit a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Importers and Exporters Association of Taipei and the Metro Atlanta Chamber. The memorandum proclaimed the participating parties would enhance their liaison and cooperation in regards to importing and exporting. Other areas where such ties would also be enhanced included investment and information sharing. The issue of Taiwan's political and economic status was discussed at the event including how Taiwanese companies "have been caught in the middle of the U.S.-China trade war and are rethinking their China-heavy supply chains." (Williams) Staging this event at the CPA allowed Budaixi to represent Taiwan at a political event and influenced the language of the participants. IEAT chairman Peter W.J. Huang told the Global Atlanta that the memorandum's signing was "more than just theater." (Williams)

Budaixi will continue to represent Taiwan in Atlanta as the celebrations of this sister-city relationship extends into the summer. Again working with TECO, the CPA has arranged for the Taiwanese puppet troupe Chen Hsi-Huang to visit in June. Chen Hsi-Huang will be performing the traditional Budaixi play *A Chance Encounter Leads to Marriage*. The Center anticipates that people "will come and get excited about the *budai xi* [sic] glove puppetry and want to know more about the company and the tradition." (Haverty) This particular troupe was chosen because they have learned the craft through a lineage of puppet masters. Connection to past Taiwanese

puppeteers conveys the message that the “work is both of the present and the past.” (Haverty) By representing Taiwan, Taiwanese glove puppetry has brought Taiwan culture to Atlanta.

Other Taiwanese theater troupes are representing Taiwan to an international audience.

Tainan based GooDoo Puppet Troupe illustrates how the art form has evolved and how it is being used to tell Taiwan’s story. Formed in 2000, GooDoo regularly performs across the island and has conducted tours abroad to Japan and Thailand. Their shows incorporate the smaller sized traditional Budaixi puppets and the larger sized modern puppets similar to those used by Pili. Puppets that resemble the Golden Ray style are also included in their shows, allowing audiences to visually witness the many changes the art form has undergone in Taiwan over the last few decades. GooDoo incorporates modern aesthetics and subject matter into its plays, reflecting the changes taking place in Taiwanese culture and the changing identity of its society. Troupe leader Huang Guan-Wei believes Taiwanese glove puppetry will continue to thrive and adapt to modern times. “Performances will become more complex and increasingly sophisticated.” (Huffman) As a representation of Taiwan, GooDoo feels an obligation to reflect Taiwan authentically. Huang feels a responsibility to both represent the people of Taiwan and the art form. “We have a responsibility to the legacy of Budaixi but we also acknowledge the needs of this era by incorporating experiences people have had on this land into our performances.” (Huffman)

A strength of diplomacy “is its audience reach and ability to generate public awareness and set the agenda.” (Nye, p. 107) GooDoo creates public awareness of Taiwanese history by incorporating it into their performances. Their 2017 production, *Mystery of The Great Mind Ocean*, presented a historical drama set during Taiwan’s Dutch colonial period. Historical figure Koxinga became a character in the storyline and significantly moved the plot forward. The play addressed a complex series of issues including colonization, taxation, Aboriginal tribal life, prostitution, and racially motivated mass murder.



Image 4 GooDoo Puppet Troupe's *Mystery of the Great Mind Ocean*

Working Taiwanese events and historical figures into storylines is important to GooDoo. Troupe member Roger Chang explains, “by putting stories into our plays that incorporate real events we can teach history that people might otherwise not know.” (Huffman) GooDoo’s approach reflects Taiwan’s evolving identity- Taiwanese history from the perspective of Taiwan as its own entity and distinctively not under the umbrella of China. Traditional smaller puppets are used that evoke its Chinese origins alongside modern day puppets that symbolized how the art, and the country, have changed.

Budaixi has evolved to attract a more international audience. The type of actors employing glove puppetry has also evolved. In addition to governments, private actors utilize cultural diplomacy to “send and gather information through interaction with the global public.” (Pigman, p. 211) Taipei based NPY Studio was founded in 2016 and is the creator of the online puppet show *Underworld Rangers*. The series follows a small group of puppet heroes as they travel the land fighting for justice. The puppet show performs entirely online via NPY Studio’s YouTube channel⁸. A unique aspect of the show is that production is partially financed through

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvYEYEv87JBnTGozvZCI65Q>

crowdfunding⁹. Over 7,000 fans from Japan, China, Canada and the United States have donated financially. Additionally funding was provided by Taipei government's Department of Cultural Affairs. By incorporating emerging technologies into their shows, puppeteers have created innovative artwork that preserves its historical roots and helps bring the art form to a larger audience that extends beyond Taiwan. New technologies such as online puppet shows can be classified as a new modality that is part of the "burgeoning field of digital diplomacy." (Ang, p. 379) New technologies allow companies like NPY Studio to create an online public space for "cultural growth and experimentation" that reaches a larger global audience. (Street, p. 309)

NPY Studio represents Taiwan in their promotional materials, showing Taiwanese voice actors recording in Taiwan and behind the scenes filming that takes place on the island. Crowdfunding efforts include special rewards for those who donate specific monetary amounts. NPY includes items in their reward packages such as tokens resembling Ming Dynasty coinage, bags and chopsticks embossed with traditional Chinese characters, and both posters and key chains of the main puppet characters. One reward package includes a T-shirt with cartoon images of the main four characters depicted in an anime style. The t-shirt is advertised as "made of 100% Taiwan quality cotton" and made with the "unremitting spirit of Taiwanese people." (Lin) As a representative of Taiwan, NPY Studio is bringing Taiwanese to a larger global audience. They maintain a Facebook page¹⁰ which posts updates on the series. As of this writing, their fan community boasts 7,910 people.

Pili's long running puppet series maintains a steady level of popularity in Taiwan and a growing fanbase abroad. As a representative of Taiwan, it mirrors the nation's complex history. Like its country, the puppet show has roots in Chinese culture but has evolved into its own distinct identity. Taiwan's multiethnic background is reflected in the way Pili "globalizes itself." (Silvio, 2007, p. 285) Narratives and characters uphold the "principles of Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism" while also adapting to modern times and incorporating contemporary digital effects and aesthetics. (Silvio, 2011, p. 152) Plotlines have become more complex and modern shows feature a "world of multiple organizations and shifting alliances." (Silvio, 2011, p. 152) In

⁹ A type of financial funding that raises small amounts of donations from a large amount of people through an online website.

¹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/UnderworldRangers>

today's world of complicated international relations, Pili exports Taiwan's culture, entertaining while introducing foreign viewers to Taiwan.

In 2016, the company released *Thunderbolt Fantasy*, a cross-cultural collaboration puppet series between Pili puppeteers with Japanese anime artists and designers. Famous Japanese writer Gen Urobuchi worked on the production. The show aired in Taiwan, Japan, Mainland China and the United States. The series combined Pili's signature puppetry style with Japanese characters and script design, airing in Taiwan, Japan, China and the United States. *Thunderbolt Fantasy* was a successful collaboration with the series boosting Pili profits¹¹ and launching an extensive related merchandise line. The second season of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* debuted in 2018 and the series has been renewed for a third season. Japanese and English subtitles enabled *Thunderbolt Fantasy* to represent Taiwan to a larger audience. The release of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* marked a dramatic increase in the global reach of the Pili company. The cross-cultural collaboration "had a much more international reach than anything they'd done before." (Silvio)

Because of Taiwan's rich puppet tradition, the art form has an intrinsic connection to the country. "Pili doesn't have to emphasize it's Taiwanese because it's developed in Taiwan. It's clearly different than anything developed in the Mainland." (Silvio) This research validates Dr. Silvio's claim that Pili puppet shows represent Taiwan. Members of the Facebook group Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀 were aware of the Taiwanese roots of their beloved series. The fan page credits Taiwan in its description: "English-language fan page for *Thunderbolt Fantasy* (a scrumptious blend of anime action and Taiwanese puppetry from Gen Urobuchi and Pili)." (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀) Individual posts on the Facebook page illustrate that *Thunderbolt Fantasy* is representing Taiwan. A October 25, 2017 post reporting on the Japanese premiere of the Pili spin off film *Sword of Life and Death* credited Pili as a Taiwanese company. "Along with a sequel, Taiwanese puppet co-production *Thunderbolt Fantasy* is coming back in *Thunderbolt Fantasy: Sword of Life and Death*, a Sha Wu Sheng, the Screaming Phoenix Killer

¹¹ Pili stock enjoyed a growth rate of 64% and the company's market value increased by NT \$2.3 billion. <https://taiwantoday.tw/news.php?unit=3,7,11,16,19&post=104473>

(CV Nobuyuki Hiyama) [sic] focused story partially based on the *Thunderbolt Fantasy Gaiden*¹² novel and partially a new story by Gen Urobochi.” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀)

Another fan post reflects how the series represents the larger Pili catalogue and Taiwan. The November 10, 2017 post asked, “Did you know that Shang and Lin¹³ gave Taiwanese audiences a tease before *Thunderbolt Fantasy* was released?” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀) The question was answered in the same post: “The pair have sneaky cameos (three of them) in another of Pili's shows, *Lang Yan: Battle for Supremacy Over the Ancient Plain*. They're all on YouTube.” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀) The post included three links to YouTube featuring short scenes of the Shang and Lin characters. Online media such as fan sites help expose foreigners to Taiwanese culture and encourages them to learn more. The Korean Wave also used websites and social media to attract more fans to the brand *Korea*. “Social media has led to major impacts for the Korean entertainment industry and tourism, and in turn, an opportunity for Governmental branding of “Korea.” (Trolan, p. 205)

Pili fans are also becoming Taiwan representatives themselves. International Pili fan Tiffanee Niitsu-Santo illustrates how Taiwan can use Budaixi to create sympathy, respect and inspiration with overseas fans. Niitsu-Santo is a forty year old American living in Oregon who is passionate about promoting Taiwan and its puppet traditions. *Thunderbolt Fantasy* was the spark that ignited this passion. “What got me into Taiwanese culture was the puppets.” (Niitsu-Santo) She has an extensive Pili memorabilia collection and now owns thirteen puppets with another three puppets currently being built for her in Taiwan. The puppets represented Taiwan, communicating their Taiwaneseness, prompting her to explore the country’s culture deeper. As her interest increased, she was motivated to declare herself an ambassador of Taiwan. Niitsu-Santo is not paid for this role; her work is strictly voluntary. Her ambassador duties involve promoting Budaixi and Taiwan as much as she can in person and on social media. Niitsu-Santo believes bringing her puppet collection to public events is the easiest way to do this. Events include comic, anime and doll conventions in the United States. (Niitsu-Santo) As a long time convention

¹² Gaiden is a Japanese word and refers to a side story or supplementary tale to a main project.

¹³ Shang and Lin are puppet characters in *Thunderbolt Fantasy*.

attendee and cosplayer¹⁴, she knows how to attract attention. If it is a multiple day event, she will bring a different puppet each day. Because their weight can be cumbersome, Niitsu-Santo transports them via a baby stroller which regularly attracts curious onlookers. “I go to Kumoricon¹⁵ each year and I take a puppet...It's part of my goal to help spread the awareness of Taiwanese culture.” (Niitsu-Santo)



Image 5 One of Niitsu-Santo's Taiwanese puppets in a baby stroller

This diverse set of actors represent Taiwan through puppetry. The art form conveys universal values that connect Taiwan to the larger international community and aspects of Taiwanese culture that make it distinct. Puppetry “can so beautifully bring to life a culture.” (Haverty) By representing Taiwan, Budaixi reflects the uniqueness of Taiwan identity while simultaneously embodying “many universal themes.” (Haverty) Because puppetry is a

¹⁴ A cosplayer is a fan who dresses in costume to resemble their favorite anime, comic book or film character.

¹⁵ Anime convention held annually in Portland, Oregon

performative art, it can expression traditional elements while incorporating fresh ideas and trends. These improvised opportunities allow the puppeteers to include “little local flavors that have always made performances more interesting and edgy.” (Siebert) As a representative of Taiwan, Budaixi communicates the story of Taiwan to the world.

3.2 Budaixi as communication

Communication is a core function of cultural diplomacy, creating dialogues between states and between their corresponding populace. Information conveyed to audiences can focus on Taiwanese culture, history and traditions as well as its political circumstances. Communicating the plight of Taiwan to a larger global audience can help increase the number of people invested in the country’s political struggles and future. “With dialogue you can attract attention.” (Lu) Developing mutual understanding between nations can lead to improved bilateral relations which in turn fosters mutually beneficial alliances and long lasting relationships. The number of official diplomatic ties to Taiwan has decreased in response to China’s charm offensive. As an isolated country “mutual understanding is a top priority” for Taiwan that can provide “concrete improvement in bilateral relations.” (Lu)

Even as the world becomes more technologically advanced, cultures and countries still need to communicate with each other. As they come into contact with each other there is potential for relationships to develop. Cultural diplomacy creates space for communication that encourages these relations to grow. “I believe with mutual understanding, in the age of international cooperation and globalization, that there is no other way.” (Lu) Encouraging peoples from different countries to communicate educates those involved. “In my own opinion, I think people are one of the best means of promotion, no matter what it is they are promoting.” (Niitsu-Santo) By promoting culture, specifically puppet culture, Taiwan can use its popular culture as soft power to educate audiences through entertainment. Scholar John Street contends that the “very definition of popular culture is political.” (Street, p. 302) Popular culture is political because it expresses beliefs and values, both of which have political elements. Popular culture emphasizes particular aspects of culture and the state legitimizes this culture by endorsing different aspects of it. Consumption of popular culture can spread a political message to a wider audience. It is an effective tool of cultural diplomacy because it stimulates the recipients’ emotions and thoughts

while simultaneously providing pleasure. The popular culture of music, plays, and comedies all communicate politics through their expression. Popular culture has the ability to give validation and to legitimize “forms of cultural activity” by incorporating elements of the activity into its own form. (Street, p. 307)

Ambassador Lu’s short puppet plays served as a literal representation of the bilateral relationship between France and Taiwan. By giving Taiwanese puppets French voices he combined two cultures into a hybrid performance. Lu felt that his combination of playing with Taiwanese puppets while speaking in French was the essential factor in his puppet shows. “The puppets are made in Taiwan and by starting such a dialogue in French you attract all the attention. This is the synergy of all our communication.” (Lu) His shows communicated information about Taiwan’s culture through the French dialogue and represented Taiwan through the puppets themselves as they were fashioned in the traditional Budaixi style. They also created an association between the diplomat and Taiwanese glove puppetry. Not only were audiences forming associations between Lu and puppets, they were becoming familiarized with Taiwanese culture. The Ambassador’s puppet shows created mutual understanding and dialogues about Taiwan overseas.

The Center for Puppetry Arts (CPA) in Atlanta is a “unique cultural treasure...where children and adults are educated, enlightened and entertained.” (Center for Puppetry Arts) They hold workshops, performances and have a museum featuring an extensive Muppet collection from American puppet pioneer Jim Henson. The CPA expanded their museum in 2015 to include a global puppetry gallery. This expansion was added because the CPA has a particular interest in “sharing the traditional art forms of other cultures.” (Haverty) By sharing these art forms, visitors gain a greater understanding of the cultures featured. Puppetry communicates its cultural history and societal beliefs to audiences.

“One reason I particularly like about puppetry, is that it can so beautifully bring to life a culture. Walking through our museum, there are so many universal themes, and yet the particular way that these themes are expressed is culturally unique to the time and place in which the work was created. The Chen Hsi Huang Troupe’s

work is also interesting in that Mr. Hsi-Huang Chen has learned the craft from a long lineage of masters so his work is both of the present and the past.” (Haverty)

Puppets educate by communicating culture through performance; when activated they embody multiple meanings of the heritage that created them. “They are embodying deities, sacred energies, ritual, community continuity, life or death and the future.” (Siebert) When puppet cultures from different countries work together, the similarities of culture can come into stark relief. The TAPTM’s theater piece *Monkey Kings* highlighted similarities between Taiwanese and Thailand culture by showcasing how the monkey legends played an important role in the heritage of both countries. (Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum) The production was government financed and was part of the Exhibition of Cultural Creative Industries of Taiwan and Thailand. The production premiered at the Nantou based exhibition in 2008. *Monkey Kings* highlighted the Thailand legends of the Hindu monkey god Hanuman and the Chinese monkey king Sun Wukong. The TAPTM incorporated puppets from both Taiwan and Thailand for the performance. By illustrating how both countries have legends concerning monkeys, the production created an opportunity to educate audiences about the mutual characteristics of both cultures’ beliefs and traditions.

Joseph Nye emphasized the power of story and asserted that importance was increasing in the information age. “Politics has become a contest of competitive credibility.” (Nye, p. 104) A country’s narratives are their soft power to win such a contest with credible stories. GooDoo creates original storylines based on historical events in Taiwan, performing in Taiwanese with Chinese and English subtitles. The troupe teaches its audience about Taiwanese history and culture through entertainment. As GooDoo Puppet Troupe brings Taiwanese puppetry to the world stage, it has the potential to affect a much larger pool of opinions and attitudes concerning Taiwan. They traveled to Thailand in 2015 and performed in Japan in 2017. September 2018 saw the troupe’s return to Japan to perform *Taiwan's Legend: Ripple Of War* in Tokyo. The troupe hopes to travel to the United States in the near future. Chang explains why their shows are popular with foreign audiences, “Puppets are relatable and entertaining. They show people the similarities between cultures and make cross-cultural connections.” (Huffman) Their play *Mystery of The Great Mind Ocean* communicated Taiwan’s history as a Dutch colony. It also

expressed the struggles of Aborigines under colonization. *Taiwan's Legend: Ripple Of War* communicates the history of Tainan to audiences while delivering an entertaining puppet show.

Taiwan's culture interacts with the global community and encourages communication. "Each year the richness of Taiwan's culture helped a lot to communicate with the international community." (Lu) Tailoring puppet shows to include a more global sensibility is one method Taiwan has increased communication with foreign audiences. Traditional Pili shows have complicated storylines told in an episodic manner, and this can make it difficult to attract new viewers. Taipei based NPY Studio streamlined their puppet show *Underworld Rangers* by reducing the number of featured characters and writing more direct plotlines. Founder Lin Zi-yang explains, "Our stories are more simple to reach a wider audience." (Huffman) In addition, seasons have fewer number of episodes and are released in batches to encourage longer viewing, similar to the strategy of streaming service Netflix. A significant change is Lin's decision to have the puppet characters speak Chinese instead of the traditional Taiwanese. Subtitles are provided in traditional Chinese and English. These decisions were made in hopes of attracting a larger global audience. Stylistically the show is designed to reflect Ming Dynasty aesthetics. However, the dialogue is peppered with modern references such as ordering a book off Amazon.com, further broadening the appeal of the show.

It is imperative that Taiwan find strategic and efficient ways to communicate with not only the leaders of other countries but to their people as well. Diplomacy is not only about building relationships. With mutual understanding and communication, countries engage in "communicating our points of view; correcting misconceptions; looking for areas where we can find common cause." (Leonard, p. 9) Through communication, Taiwan can express its point of view on its own identity, its struggles for self-determination and its desire to be viewed as a peer with other nations. "If we want to survive we should be strong enough to communicate that Taiwan is a qualified partner of the international community." (Lu) Positive and productive communication between nations reflects the positive effects of cultural diplomacy. "Diplomacy means there is no fear between two cultures." (Lu) Communication can dispel fears and replace them with knowledge and trust. Increased communication can lead to cross-cultural

collaborations that can foster long lasting relationships. Through communication, Budaixi helps forge connections between Taiwan and other countries.

Museums foster communication by presenting culture but also by conserving it. Conservation work can lead to import conversations and collaborations both in the present and the future. “By conserving heritage I would be able to support a new generation of debate, discussion and contextualizing.” (Siebert) Museums and international traveling exhibitions can expose audiences to new cultures and new ideas. This form of cultural diplomacy is especially beneficial for Taiwan whose hard power is constricted. Investing in ITEs is an investment for future diplomacy. “What a conservator is doing is they are preserving an object so that there will be many multigenerational discussions about that object.” (Siebert) Collaborations of these sorts can benefit countries and “for Taiwan they are very important.” (Siebert)

ITEs allow heritage to become mobile and increases communication and connection to a larger global stage. The value of these connections have benefited Taiwan and served as a form of cultural diplomacy. Museums function as a form of cultural diplomacy because they are representing and communicating numerous cultures to their populace. “If you are doing a good job of representation you would be including the community in the formulation of your exhibitions and content if at all possible.” (Siebert) By identifying the museum's context in the culture on exhibition, the relations between participating museums and their associated countries are also explored. “Like a bridge, ITEs connect museums and facilitate links between them across national borders.” (Lai, p. 91) History, culture and art can be explored through ITEs, creating new bridges that strengthen relationships and connections.

3.3 Cross-Cultural Collaborations

Artistic collaborations are valuable forms of cultural diplomacy. They have the benefit of representing the countries involved and enhancing communication between parties.

Collaboration of this nature “enriches cooperation not just between institutions but between communities and universities.” (Lu) Such activities create space for different cultures to interact with each other. Collaborations can enhance the cultural landscape and “serve to validate or legitimate forms of cultural activity.” (Street, p. 307) Cross-cultural collaborations highlight

particular aspects of participating cultures and can create a fusion of cultures that appeals to the global community through a collaboration that emphasizes transculturalism. Because of this countries strategize on what form their collaborations will take. Collaborations come in numerous forms including museums hosting a visiting international traveling exhibition to artists working together to create original works of art. Collaborations can also align with the involved parties' values such as the Center for Puppetry Arts's mission "to inspire imagination, education and community through the global art of puppetry." (Haverty) Utilizing an art form that is so tied with Taiwan history and identity can be a powerful way to expand the nation's soft power, especially since it is a small state. Smaller powers that engage in cultural exchanges can develop relationships to "enhance their respect, credibility, and persuasive power in the international public forum, especially in the eyes of foreign publics." (Lee, p. 120)

Cross-cultural collaborations involve an investment of finances and time. However, these investments have the potential to create returns for involved parties in both the short and long term. Because networks are created through these collaborations, the seeds for future events are planted as the relationship grows. In the more immediate sense, cross-cultural events can see an increase in the number of visitors to museums because a new event is taking place. When organized successfully, ITEs attract increased visitors to the exhibition whose attention is aroused to partake of a noteworthy event. Collaborations, especially ITEs can capitalize on their newsworthiness by coinciding with important anniversaries or significant festivities. "With large numbers of visitors, the exhibition takes on something of the character of a festival." (Lai, p. 101)

ITEs and the larger museumscape involves museums of differing sizes and specificities. In Taiwan, there is the much grander in scale National Palace Museum which makes the TAPTM's size look rather small in comparison. Because of the difference in history and focus "it's difficult to compare the National Palace with a puppet museum." (Siebert) Though both museums engage in ITEs, the legacies of the two entities are different. The National Palace Museum has a specific history with Mainland China and the KMT government which puts it in a different context than a puppet museum like the TAPTM. As a museum with a specific focus, the TAPTM collects puppets from the Asian region. Their mission and their research have highlighted Taiwan's connection to the global community through the extended Chinese diaspora.

When Taiwanese puppet museums collaborate with their peers abroad, they create a valuable opportunity for Taiwan to tell its story through Budaixi. As a contact zone, a museum “becomes a cultural center and a site of storytelling, of indigenous history, and of ongoing tribal politics.” (Clifford, p. 212) Museums have the opportunity to give voice to those who may have been excluded in the past. Their ability to frame a contact zone as a relationship can be inclusive, allowing for representation and communication. Done well, international traveling exhibitions can create reciprocal communication between participating parties to ensure all voices are represented. “The ‘world of museums’ is diverse and dynamic” and ITEs help to enhance this diversity and amplify the dynamic. (Clifford, p. 218) Sending a portion of a collection abroad not only represents the museum but also the culture and country which it represents. These ITEs cross borders and connect not only the participating museums but the populace who engage with the visiting exhibition.

Though it has evolved dramatically since its first arrival in Taiwan, Budaixi is an “imported art form” which places it “in a context of a diaspora.” (Siebert) Because the TAPTM has such a specific focus, this context was able to be furthered explored. The museum found that there was a “continuity in the diaspora that is no longer in China.” (Siebert) This continuity linked Taiwan to other Asian countries such as Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia where Budaixi has immigrated. Traditional Chinese glove puppetry may have migrated to these countries but once there the art form transformed along with the country over time. “We have the nuances within that diaspora as each community has addressed local needs and evolution and continuity in different ways.” (Siebert) By highlighting these nuances in exhibitions both locally and overseas, museums like the TAPTM can present how each country is similar to and unique from each other.

The Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum is well known for their cross-cultural collaborations. Because founder Paul Lin created an organization that included the museum collection, puppeteers and a puppet performance troupe they were able to strengthen its international reputation and recognition. TAPTM has sent international traveling exhibitions to numerous countries including France, Germany, Turkey, Malaysia, Germany, Canada and the United States. In 2017 the museum sent an ITE to South Africa. Their exhibition *The Magic of Asian Theatre Puppets-Beauties, Heroes, Villains, Gods and Clowns* visited the South Africa National Gallery

from May to July 2017. Over 150 pieces from the TAPTM's collection were on display. The Gallery also hosted related lectures and workshops that revolved around Asian puppetry. It was the first Asian puppetry exhibition held in the country.

The museum's ITE's have helped Taiwan become more connected to the global museumscape. "There's not any major museum that has puppets in its collection that doesn't know about us intimately-from the Smithsonian to the Branly.¹⁶ All the major puppet museums know our collection, scholars know our collection." (Siebert) The museum's history of a multifaceted outreach has befitted it both locally and abroad. "I think that this institution has this range of responses which is puppetry, education and the authority of the collection with a world recognized scholar." (Siebert) The TAPTM has cultivated a reputation connected to travel and transculturalism. "The internationalism has put it [Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum] in a very strong position." (Siebert)

Outside the Asian region there is less knowledge about Budaixi. Therefore, it is vital for Taiwan to connect to other puppet groups and museums. "It's a subgroup of a subgroup of a subgroup. It's coming in through the back door." (Siebert) Though it may not be as well known as other theater genres, such as Kabuki, Taiwanese glove puppetry does captivate audiences when it has gained a platform to do so. Because puppetry represents Taiwan, new audiences are exposed to more than just a puppet; they are exposed to its culture and history. Siebert felt that an audience's initial exposure to Budaixi should not be underestimated. "I have every conviction that a visitor would be potentially as moved as I am by the collection." (Siebert)

Investment in long term cross-cultural collaborations can benefit all parties involved. The Center for Puppetry Arts participated in all four years of the Cultural Olympiad, the Olympics arts festival program that occurred in Atlanta in connection with the 1996 Olympics. Numerous international puppeteers were hosted by the Center for this multiple year event that connected it to the Mega-Event of the Olympics. Since she was not a staff member at the time, Haverty consulted the Center's Administrative Director Lisa Rhodes who related how both the local Atlanta audience and the temporary audience of international visitors connected to the Olympics appreciated their puppet exhibitions:

¹⁶ Quai Branly Museum in Paris, France

“During the weeks of the Olympics, we had a huge exhibit of Jim Henson’s work and had visitors from all over the world attend because people around the globe are familiar with his work through Sesame Street, the Muppets, etc. The beauty of that exhibit was that it highlighted an American puppeteer whose work was appreciated worldwide and was enjoyed by a global audience who didn’t need to speak English to have a wonderful visit here. Because puppetry is such a strong tradition in so many countries, we had a lot of international visitors who were curious to explore our Center.” (Haverty)

In preparation to host the Chen Hsi-Huang Traditional Puppet Troupe, Haverty had the opportunity to experience Taiwanese culture. “Working with the staff at TECO and the planning for Chen Hsi-Huang’s visit has absolutely given me a greater awareness and appreciation of the rich cultural traditions of Taiwan.” (Haverty) By giving space for this puppet troupe to represent Taiwan, the CPA hopes their performance will create a similar feeling among those in attendance. “I hope that our audiences will also feel this way after seeing the performance.” (Haverty)

By promoting the popular culture of Budaixi abroad, Taiwan has the opportunity to shape how others view not only the country’s culture but its history and political struggles as well. As the popularity of Taiwanese glove puppetry expands overseas, Taiwan has a valuable opportunity to communicate to a growing number of people outside its border. *Thunderbolt Fantasy* is a cross-cultural collaboration that increased Pili’s fan base outside of Taiwan. The puppet series was able to communicate to both puppet and anime fans. “The Pili fans who liked *Thunderbolt Fantasy* felt like it was the quality of writing they remembered as being the best of Pili.” (Silvio) Anime fans were drawn to it because it was written by a famous Japanese writer. “Some of them couldn’t deal with the puppets but those who liked it were like ‘this is really cool.’” (Silvio) *Thunderbolt Fantasy*’s continuation into a second and currently in production third series indicates a positive response to this cross-cultural collaboration.

The hybridity of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* succeeded in part because of the collaboration with Japanese writer Gen Urobuchi. “He’s really famous and he has a lot of fans in Japan and across

the world.” (Silvio) Another factor is the intended audience; Pili produced a collaboration that appealed to a specific fan culture instead of trying to reach a generalized audience. *Thunderbolt Fantasy* worked so well overseas because of how it is communicated to fan culture. Though the series appealed to a more subculture audience, that audience is known for their active engagement. Working with a famous Japanese writer and incorporating anime elements appealed to this type of audience. “It’s right there in the overlap between Pili fans and anime fans and how it is related to fan culture.” (Silvio) Additionally, the series appeals to active fans because the plot of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* is “really open to fan fiction.” (Silvio) The Pili company created tie in products that also helped popularize the show. Puppets portrayed in *Thunderbolt Fantasy* could be purchased as well as numerous products portrayed the characters’ likeness. “Basically I think it worked because they went the anime route, as opposed to the Disney route.” (Silvio)

Cross-collaborations create unique theatrical shows that in turn create excitement among fans. On December 25, 2018 a post asked for opinions of *Thunderbolt Fantasy*’s second season. “What did you think of season 2? And the last episode? Most importantly...HOW LOUDLY DID YOU SCREAM at the very end of the credits????!!!![sic] (Beware spoilers in the comments!)” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀) Nangely Celestyal Darky Demon of Mexico City, Mexico replied, “Awesome, i love the last episode!! Lin and Sho battle together...Wow! My gift for Christmas x3 and the secret of the end...Ufff! I scream loudly...i knew it! I want the third season now! x3[sic]” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀) Tien Li Huang from Taipei, Taiwan said, “Me too! I want new seasons and the new movies forever and ever.” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀) Mana Kinzie, from Kapaa, Hawaii, left a lengthy positive review of the season, beginning thought on the larger story arc of the second season.

“Season 2 of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* Sword Seekers stands as a continuation of a story that's much larger than the series itself... Imagine stumbling upon something that few people even know exists that when you attempt to share what you've found the world really doesn't know how to react to it. For this reason I think TBF remains to be a hidden gem whose glimmer may only be appealing to certain eyes... Frankly, once you get past (or in my case openly embrace) the things that make TBF unique, what you're left with is a story that is complex and well

written...” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀)

His post then segues into an assessment of the season two finale. Kinzie echoes other fans by praising the choreographed fight scenes but felt that the series particularly shined in regards to world building. He ended his review by praising the uniqueness of the series, “The finale brought about a fight that in it's [sic] own unique way tops that of the first season.” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀) Like other members, Kinzie too was hopeful for a third season. His hope centered on a “very suggestive possibility of yet again another likely awesome season of puppet mayhem in the world of thunder and fantasy.” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀)

Original puppet plays between the TAPTM museum and foreign puppeteers reflect successful cross-cultural collaboration. In 2001, they created and performed *Marco Polo*, an original production featuring Chinese, Taiwanese and Italian design elements. Both Taiwanese and Italian poetry was used in dialogue voiced by puppets. Nanguan and Italian opera created a cross-cultural blend of music. Another Taiwanese and Italian collaboration resulted in the 2013 puppet play *King Porky* (小豬當國王) about a daydreaming pig who wanted to be a king. The stage designed featured Italian and European styles and spoken dialogue included Mandarin, Italian and English. Advertisements highlighted the cross-cultural collaborations-“In conjunction with this year's oriental happy Zodiac Year of the Pig¹⁷ and the Italian fairy tale, you must worship the New Year in Taiwan!” (Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum)

In 2008, the TAPTM worked with Turkish puppet troupe Osek Shadow Theater to present *Tree Fair*, a “traditional Middle Eastern, legendary Turkish shadow play.” (Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum) In 2015, the museum traveled to Turkey to perform at the Istanbul International Puppet Festival, their fourth time performing. The festival hosts puppeteers from around the world and is an example of puppets acting as cultural diplomacy. Taiwan was represented by TAPTC who communicated the uniqueness of Budaixi and how the tradition was tied to Taiwanese identity. The Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Company presented *A Sea of Puppet*, *A Woman Going Home* and *I Have a Name*. They also hosted a conference entitled

¹⁷ This is most likely a metaphorical reference to the zodiac pig as 2013 was the year of the snake.

“Politics, Puppets and Identity in Taiwan,” held a screening of the Taiwanese film *The Puppetmaster* and a workshop. (Ergil) Their workshop featured a hands on aspect, allowing participants to hold and manipulate the puppets and examine musical instruments traditionally used in Budaixi performances. The workshop was described as “perhaps the most exciting event in this year's festival.” (Ergil) *A Sea of Puppets* also traveled to Vancouver, Canada in 2011 with sponsorship from the Asian Canadian Special Events Association. The two puppet puppet companies collaborated again in 2018 with the shadow puppet show *Garbage Monster*.

TAPTM collaborates with troupes around the world for a variety of reasons. “Sometimes people come to visit us, sometimes the government wants us to do something.” (Ruizendaal) Their play *Little Girl Selling Fazi Fire* (賣番仔火的小女孩) used multicultural items to enhance the play’s fusion theme. The TAPTM based the 2008 play on the Danish fairy tale Little Match Girl. The Nadou Theater¹⁸ was designed as a match factory and featured matchbooks from around the world “as if it is a pocket-sized version of the World Matchbox Exhibition Hall.” (Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum) A puppet collaboration in Macao was based on the desire to focus on the city’s history. Their 2010 play *The Box (La Boite)* created a cultural fusion by musically combining the pipa¹⁹ with Western harps. Part of the Macao Arts Festival, the play took place on a boat in the Esplanada Don Carlos harbor. The TAPTC paired with French troupe La Compagnie des Zonzonshe and had an audience of 800 people. “The audience was taken on a journey through different cultures and traditions, from the past to the present, in a performance that transcended the boundaries of language and nationality.” (O’Neil, p. 120)

Sponsorship from both Taiwanese and French government supported the 2008 TAPTC production *The Box (La Boite)*. The success of this production led to a later Taiwanese and French collaboration; The TAPTC again collaborated with La Compagnie des Zonzonshe to debut *A Sailor’s Tale* in 2017. The production focuses on a French sailor during the Franco-Chinese War era who washes up on Taiwan’s shores and is found by a local woman. This particular play is a crossover of French, Chinese and Taiwanese influences; it was spoken and sung in French with Chinese subtitles. Traditionally sized Budaixi puppets wore Western and

¹⁸ The Nadou Theater and Taiyuan Puppet Theatre Company are both affiliated with the Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theater Museum.

¹⁹ A traditional Chinese musical instrument

Eastern styled costumes and the sailor character had Western facial features. Traditional Taiwanese glove puppet play music was used as was a traditional stage. (Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum) Promotional material for *A Sailor's Tale* featured photos of the Taiwanese, French and Italian performers. The two lead puppet characters are also pictured on the poster reflecting the cross-cultural design elements of the production.



Image 6 Promotional material for *A Sailor's Tale*

Puppet show collaborations can help connect peoples from different cultures and nations. Using puppets to forge connections facilitates the communication needed for cultures to understand each other. By utilizing Taiwanese culture as a tool of cultural diplomacy, Taiwan increases its representation and communicates its interests to the international community. Sharing one's culture is one of the “most common, and most successful, approaches” to project a positive image of one's country abroad. (Pigman, p. 124) Cross-cultural artistic collaborations helps

further connect Taiwan to other nations and with such artistic challenges comes rewards. “Every time it's a challenge to integrate different styles and music together. It's fun and it's a learning process overall.” (Ruizendaal) Cross-cultural collaborations represent the countries involved and fosters communication between them. “I think you influence each other, definitely you're inspired. I think that's the most important thing.” (Ruizendaal)



Chapter 4. Rose and thorn: Contributions and challenges of Budaixi

4.1 Contributions of Budaixi

As a form of cultural diplomacy, Budaixi contributes to Taiwan's international presence. Puppets are popular around the globe and audiences are quite diverse. Numerous countries have rich puppet histories which offer ample opportunity for cross-cultural collaborations, as illustrated by TATPM and Pili productions. Puppet shows have historically contained comedy, bawdy humor and political satirical elements in their performances. Additionally, puppets are often allowed more agency than human actors which grants wider freedom of expression and liberties to the puppet, and by extension the puppeteers. Topics considered sensitive may have greater freedom of expression if voiced through puppets. Taiwanese glove puppetry serves as a gateway into Taiwan's culture, helping initiate a growing awareness of Taiwan and a larger conversation about its culture and political future. The entertainment of puppet shows makes the art approachable and appeals to a diverse set of audiences. Because “puppetry is about the hoi polloi²⁰, often it's been a vehicle for political critique of the status quo. Because it has these improvised opportunities for the puppeteer to express something in more traditional storytelling.” (Siebert)

Puppets are able to embody multiple aspects of a culture. This ability to become an animated representative communicating culture gives puppetry a “tremendous and ancient gravitas.” (Siebert) Being exposed to a new culture for the first time can leave a powerful impression and inspire future investigation. Niitsu-Santo's self-appointed ambassador duties include introducing Americans to Taiwanese culture through her puppets. When she brings her puppets out in public “most people stare in complete awe and amazement.” (Niitsu-Santo) This initial contact allows her to talk about the puppets, their history and their connection to Taiwan. To interest them more, Niitsu-Santo directs onlookers to YouTube clips of *Thunderbolt Fantasy*. “I have managed to get many Americans interested in puppets and I link them to YouTube to watch videos.” (Niitsu-Santo) Clips with English subtitles make puppet shows more approachable. By hosting the Chen Hsi-Huang Traditional Puppetry Troupe, the Center for Puppetry Arts includes the troupe within the context of the larger world of puppetry. Visitors to the CPA will see Taiwan and its culture presented as an inherent member of this global community. “I do believe that anyone not

²⁰ A Greek expression that refers to the masses, the public or the common people

currently familiar with Taiwan will emerge from a performance with a greater understanding and appreciation of Taiwan's art and people.” (Haverty)

Budaixi creates connections between Taiwan and the international community. International traveling exhibitions and cross-cultural collaborations create connections between Taiwan and other countries. Participation in puppet events deepens these connections while communicating Taiwan's skills in the art form. When nations host Taiwanese puppeteers, such as Taiwanese puppet troupe Puppet and Its Double at the Festival de Casteliers,²¹ it raises the “perception of Taiwan as a leader in the field.” (Haverty) As Taiwan connects itself to the global community through cultural diplomacy, these connections feed back into the art form's own continuing evolution. “The Pili serials are seen by their producers and fans, local scholars, the Taiwanese government, and the mass media as a form through which ‘traditional Taiwanese culture’ both absorbs the global and globalizes itself.” (Silvio, 2007, p. 285) By collaborating with Japanese anime artists, Pili was able to put a unique spin on the art form while retaining its Taiwanese-ness.

“It [*Thunderbolt Fantasy*] worked because it's basically in terms of what its appeal is and how it is related to fan culture. It's right there in the overlap between Pili fans and anime fans. Like the thing they have in common is all in *Thunderbolt Fantasy*. You have a plot that's really open to fan fiction because there's mostly male characters and they have ambiguous relationships and that can be fantasized and developed in fanfiction and that's a really big thing. It's on multimedia platforms and they put out a manga in Japanese. There were tie in products and puppets. Basically I think it worked because they went the anime route. As opposed to the Disney route.” (Silvio)

Social media connects puppet fans from around the world and fans of Budaixi are particularly active online. Facebook fan page Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* repeatedly displayed cross-cultural communication as posts involved conversations between fans living in different countries discussing their feelings about the puppet series. Upcoming episodes of the show was a topic of many posts. A November 6, 2017 post with an embedded video of a teaser trailer

²¹ An international puppet festival that takes place annually in Montreal.

advertising upcoming Season Two of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* was viewed 141 times. The spin off film *Sword of Life and Death* aired on streaming service Crunchyroll in 2018 and a post was made February 20th of that year to alert fellow fans. “THIS IS NOT A DRILL. Watch *Sword of Life and Death* NOW at Crunchyroll!” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀) A later post shared the trailer for upcoming Season 2 of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* on July 29, 2018 and was viewed 252 times. The accompanying text read, “FINALLY, we have a release date and a new trailer for Season Two :D [sic] *Thunderbolt Fantasy 2* starts broadcasting on October 1st!!” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀) Lisa Faisan from Châteaurenard, France replied to this post asking, “Is there anywhere where we can watch the Taiwanese version of *Thunderbolt Fantasy*? I like their voices in the trailer.” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀) Another member, Deeannaa Marie of Horseheads, New York, answered “I haven’t found one yet but I’ll post it if I do!” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀)

Budaixi fans from different countries regularly communicate via social media. A November 29, 2018 post solicited feedback regarding the second season of *Thunderbolt Fantasy*; responses from fans in three separate countries, including Taiwan, responded to the thread. “Hello everyone!! How are you enjoying the second season so far? Who is your favorite NEW character? And what do you think of what went down in the latest episode...(episode 8)?” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀) Mana Kinzie from Kapaa, Hawaii, United States responded that “Season two is great. I like em [sic] all.” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀) Fan Poerava Lgo, from Puna'auia, French Polynesia, also responded with positive reviews. “I love this 2nd season as well! And Lang and Ling Ya are just awesome! For the last episode, I was so angsty QmQ [sic]” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀) Lydia Huang from Taipei, Taiwan commented, “My favorite character is Lang (浪巫謠) and his weapon!” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀)

Thunderbolt Fantasy fans collect Pili merchandise such as DVDs, posters, stickers, cards, calendars and magazines. Fan page member Caris Nautilus, from Tagum, Philippines, expressed

his desire for tie-in merchandise of the puppet characters, “i [sic] want justice to be a nendoroid²² series of this guy...grrr [sic]” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀) Amanda Fousse, of Rochester, NY, agreed with this sentiment replying, “Yesss [sic] they should do him next” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀) Regarding the announcement specifically, member Meroni Chan Well, location unknown, observed, “considering where it left off, if there wasn't one I would be sorely disappointed.” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀)



Image 7 Example of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* fan's memorabilia collection

As fans of the Pili show *Thunderbolt Fantasy* engaged in cross-cultural communication, their mutual love of the series led to friendships. Niitsu-Santo's search for affordable puppets led to communication with Pili fans in Taiwan. “This prompted me to make friends in Taiwan and also go through channels to purchase Pili merchandise as well as my own puppets.” (Niitsu-Santo) Evidence of friendship is indicated by the sharing of culture and humor. Two posts incorporating Western holidays celebrated in the United States included media from *Thunderbolt Fantasy*. A Thanksgiving post created November 24, 2017 featured a photo of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* characters sitting around a table eating food. Accompanying text read, “Happy American

²² Nendo is short for nendoroids which are a type of plastic figurine created by the Good Smile Company. Figures are made in the likeness of manga and anime characters and a series of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* characters are sold through the company's website.

Thanksgiving to those celebrating! Hopefully your turkey dinner doesn't come with some vaping²³ guy trying to trick you xD [sic].” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀) A farcical post to celebrate April Fool’s Day was created April 1, 2018 and included a short video clip from the show. “This year's ‘Dream Collaboration’²⁴ for April Fool's Day is a nod to Junichi Suwabe! The voice actor provides the Japanese voices for both Shang and Sengo Muramasa of Touken Ranbu...I think the ‘Let's get naked together!’ bit has pretty much made my week.” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀) This particular video was viewed 105 times.

Imitation serves as indirect evidence of cultural diplomacy. “When you get copied that's usually a reason for success.” (Ruizendaal) With the success of Budaixi abroad in traveling tours, there is some evidence of imitation. Two years later after the release of *Thunderbolt Fantasy*, the effects of this collaboration is reflected in new artistic performances in Japan. Takarazuka Revue, an all female Japanese theater group, designed a performance inspired by Pili puppet shows. Their Budaixi inspired piece is called *Thunderbolt Fantasy*, reflecting the cultural effect of the collaboration. In 2018, the troupe traveled to Taiwan to perform this production. The theater troupe is popular with Taiwanese audiences and Takarazuka Revue hopes to “delight them once again with a performance inspired by Taiwanese culture.” (DeAeth) Both versions of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* show the “potential for cultural diplomacy to generate new intercultural understandings.” (Ang, 379) The art form is both universal and tailored to its local culture which gives it a fluidity to attract new audiences. A puppet show, and shows inspired by puppets, “offers possibilities that are profound.” (Siebert)

The Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* fan page reported on Takarazuka Revue’s trip to Taiwan. A December 30, 2017 post discussed the theater group and provided links to news coverage of the event. “So apparently there is going to be a stage production of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* next fall, with Takarazuka actors playing the various characters.” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀) At the end of the post an explanation of the troupe was given for those unfamiliar with their work. “Takarazuka is made up of groups of all-women theatre troupes known for their famously-

²³ Vaping guy refers to a puppet in the photo who is smoking a pipe. There is a running joke among fans that this character is using a vaporizer or an electronic cigarette.

²⁴ Said scene is from *Thunderbolt Fantasy* with overdubbed audio. The naked line hints at sexual innuendo and flirtation between two male characters that is not part of the original series.

extravagant stage productions of both original stories and adaptations from other popular media.” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy 東離劍遊紀*) Taiwan’s puppet popular culture “creates a common ground between cultures and nations at the same moment that the transnational sharing of this pop attests to the remarkable fluidity of these cultural boundaries.” (Moskowitz, p. 9)

Indication of Budaixi’s international potential is reflected in Pili’s growing fanbase. Fans of the series are quite active online, especially on social media. Traditional puppet show fans were elderly Taiwanese men in the rural parts of the country. But current fans are “urban and young, and the majority of fans who are active in club activities are female.” (Silvio, 2007, p. 292) Pili fans communicate via online chat groups, enabling cross-cultural connections as fans from various countries communicate online. Online communities are not restricted to physical boundaries, allowing artwork to be shared across borders. These communities also act as educational opportunities where new fans can learn more about Taiwanese culture. While the Pili company works on increasing its viewers overseas, its fans are taking the initiative by creating an expanding online subcultural community and, creating a “powerful model of an alternative, local mode of globalization.” (Silvio, 2007, p. 307) New media enables cross-cultural communication that takes place “not merely across social fields within nations, but across national and cultural boundaries.” (Silvio, 2007, p. 287)

The Pili fanbase advocacy is similar to the advocacy of overseas Japanese anime and manga fans. With their passion, fans spread the popularity of these genres outside of Japan “despite the fact that the Japanese producers were totally uninterested in an international audience.” (Silvio) After being included in a 2006 BBC World Service Poll as a country with international influence, Japan began promoting its national image “by exporting attractive Japanese media forms (especially manga and anime).” (Iwabuchi, p. 423) Pili fans advocate for the company and the puppet series. Merchandise connected to Pili shows are purchased by fans who in turn encourage others in their online communities to purchase them as well. This is helping to create wider recognition of the Pili brand, especially of *Thunderbolt Fantasy*. “Pili fans engage in a wide variety of activities that include collecting puppets and tie-in products, puppet performance and puppet photography, cosplay (dressing up as the characters), as well as creating original fiction and art based on the characters.” (Silvio, 2011, p. 153). Art created by Pili fans are widely shared

online, serving to heighten awareness of both puppetry and Taiwan. Some fans, such as Niitsu-Santo, show their love of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* by getting puppet tattoos.



Image 8 Pili inspired tattoo

Opinions of Taiwan can be formed or even changed as a result of puppet shows. Significantly a more nuanced understanding of Taiwan's political situation can be conveyed through exposure to Taiwanese glove puppetry. The Metropolitan Museum of Art's 1996 exhibition *Splendors of Imperial China* was considered a "landmark exhibition of Chinese art" with high visitor attendance. (Report, p. 4) Related exhibition publications *Possessing the Past* and *Splendors of Imperial China* were both reprinted before the end of the New York exhibition. However, the exhibition was mired in controversy, placing more emphasis on the political tensions of Cross-Strait Relations and causing doubt that such a grandiose international traveling exhibition from the National Palace Museum could be held again. Because of the museum's history its collection and by extension its ITEs are "always a sensitive and political collection." (Siebert) In contrast, puppets are much less likely to cause controversy. "We don't notice anything; we're just too

small. We're flying under the radar.” (Ruizendaal) Though puppet shows explore political matters, the entertainment of watching puppets makes the subject matter easier to convey. While politics feel part of the show or storyline, “it's not in your face.” (Siebert)

Taiwanese glove puppetry can initiate increased interest in Taiwan and puppet shows are opportunities to create further exploration. “If you watch *Thunderbolt Fantasy* and you've never seen anything like it before there's all these directions it could take you.” (Silvio) Prior to becoming a Budaixi fan, Niitsu-Santo did not know much about Taiwan's culture. “I honestly did not know anything, only that they speak Chinese.” (Niitsu-Santo) Since her interest in Pili began, her interest in Taiwan has deepened. “Taiwan’s culture as a whole is fascinating to me and I want to just dive into its pool of wonder. It’s an ongoing quest for me and a journey.” (Niitsu-Santo) Likewise before *Thunderbolt Fantasy*, Niitsu-Santo knew little of Taiwan’s political situation with China. “I knew a bit of the tension between Taiwan and China, since many of the Taiwanese actually settled there with Chiang Kai-shek and brought over the puppetry culture with them.” (Niitsu-Santo) Today, her understanding is more nuanced, a product of her own study and friendships with Pili fans in Taiwan. “I learned from Taiwanese friends that it’s a very sensitive subject...I know that Taiwan is made up of many immigrants who fled China many decades ago and China holds a grip on Taiwan and the citizens want their independence and freedom.” (Niitsu-Santo)

4.2 Challenges of Budaixi

Taiwanese glove puppetry contributes to Taiwanese cultural diplomacy but it also comes with its own challenges. The effectiveness of cultural diplomacy is difficult to measure. Specifically, it is difficult to definitively measure emotions or how people’s beliefs are altered. Though the 2006 National Opinion poll was cited by Robin Ruizendaal, Kim Siebert and Terry Silvio as important evidence of Budaixi’s significance in Taiwan, I was unable to find additional direct quantitative evidence. All three of these interviewees expressed the need for more research in this area. Siebert also cited the 2006 poll as evidence of the importance of both Budaixi and international traveling exhibitions for Taiwan. There was surprise expressed that Taiwanese glove puppetry had been chosen as the best symbol to represent the country. Ruizendaal and Siebert agreed that the TAPTM staff did not expect such a result. “That was a very nice surprise to see that

Taiwanese people generally would identify a puppet as being an emblem in a way that represented Taiwanese-ness.” (Siebert) Ruizendaal revealed that the government office that conducted the opinion survey did not expect Budaixi to take first place, sharing that he “talked to the Minister in charge and they were quite amazed as well by the outcome, they didn't expect it.” (Ruizendaal)

Despite expressing the belief that Taiwanese glove puppetry is an effective tool of cultural diplomacy and that more direct evidence was needed, none of my interviewees could provide any new data. Neither the Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum nor the Center for Puppetry Arts collect data on visitors and the TAPTM does not collect demographic data on its international travel exhibitions or cross-cultural collaborations. When asked, none of my interviewees knew of any additional research done by the Taiwanese government concerning puppetry. Similarly, my interviewees could not provide data measuring the impact of either international travelling puppet exhibitions or cross-cultural artistic puppet collaborations. Kim Siebert reflected that such research “would be difficult to do.” (Siebert) My personal search for quantitative research on Budaixi did not reveal any additional studies. Kristin Haverty summed up this lack of direct evidence on the effectiveness of Budaixi saying, “it feels very elusive and hard to quantify.” (Haverty)

Ruizendaal felt measuring Budaixi’s successful effectiveness was difficult because there are numerous ways to measure success. If traditional measures of success such as soaring profits and large audience numbers are used to gauge the success of a museum then “in that respect we're a complete failure.” (Ruizendaal) He explained to Macao Magazine that “the performances and exhibitions bring in money. The museum loses money.” (O'Neill, p. 119) Ruizendaal emphasized the importance of factoring in the position of theater, arguing that “live performance of puppet theater is completely at the fringes of the entertainment industry and the arts industry, both in the perception of the audience and the government.” (Ruizendaal) The Pili company does not have this problem as its adopted to television and DVDs. “Television is very difficult to compete with. That's the problem of live theater.” (Ruizendaal) While there is general agreement that cultural diplomacy is important there is debate on how to evaluate its effectiveness. Ambassador Lu

acknowledged this difficulty and argued that the “most important part of cultural diplomacy is the communication that happens with the presentation of a country like Taiwan.” (Lu)

Lack of further quantitative evidence has not prevented the Taiwan government from funding puppet enterprises. Ruizendaal attributed consistent funding to both a governmental policy of “equal distribution of funds” and specific invitations from government officials to participate in cross-cultural activities. (Ruizendaal) Siebert noted that the TAPTM had been consistently successful in securing funding from both the Taiwanese government and foreign institutions that allowed them to conduct ITEs and cross-cultural collaborations. “So obviously this museum is seen to be doing that quite effectively.” (Siebert) The TAPTM's overseas travels have helped the museum to attain an international reputation. This reputation then helps to secure more funding for more international travel. At the time of my interview with Siebert, the TAPTM had received funding for an ITE traveling to Toledo, Spain to be held in 2020. With funding coming from both within and outside of the country to help the TAPTM financially, this indirect evidence suggests that Taiwanese glove puppetry is a valuable form of cultural diplomacy.

Another challenge involves the power dynamics that are inherent in collaborations. Budaixi encourages transculturalism by building bridges of commonality between puppeteers, museums and audience members. Therefore, it is important to examine the power dynamic when these collaborations are being assembled. “Every single nuance of difference and sameness should be on some level acknowledged and negotiated if you're doing a good job.” (Siebert) The TAPTM's work with other museums involved different cultures working together. Ruizendaal felt that both cultures were well represented in these cross-cultural collaborations. “It was always egalitarian I think.” (Ruizendaal) Taiwanese glove puppetry has both assets and hindrances when combined with puppet traditions from another country. If Taiwan is not already represented in a museum, a Taiwanese museum may have a more difficult time establishing the relationship needed for an ITE. This challenge is compounded because some art forms are more valued than others.

“Because of this Eurocentric way that we've framed heritage we have this hierarchical framework where paintings are more important than embroideries...Puppetry because it's practiced by marginalized communities like

theater performers, the heritage of theater performers in most societies have not necessarily been revered....Because the way that it's structured and because certain art is valued more than others or communities, it's almost like how can you measure the value of this. We have to change the entire paradigm of measurement.” (Siebert)

Moving out of a Eurocentric lens would allow visitors to view a culture on its own terms. “Until recently in the West, transculturation has been understood hierarchically, in ways that naturalize a power imbalance and the claim of one group to define history and authenticity.” (Clifford, p. 201) This new paradigm involves museum “contact approaches” to evolve relationships built on established systems into new relations. (Clifford, p. 7) Such an approach would give wider space for Taiwan to tell its story on its own terms.

When a culture engages with another, there is a power exchange aspect to the relationship that could result in cultural displacement. Siebert felt that questioning the nature of the relationship could prevent displacement from occurring. “Why do you need this relationship with an outsider? It's because you're not represented within.” (Siebert) Dr. Silvio observed that when Taiwan puppeteers have participated in cross-cultural collaborations that have deviated too far from their cultural cores they have failed. Pointing out the failure of the Pili film *The Arti*, she noted that Pili “added a lot of Disney elements” including heavy use of CGI and wisecracking animal sidekicks. (Silvio) Because *Thunderbolt Fantasy* worked with its puppet aesthetics and did not altar its style dramatically it was well received by its devoted fanbase and by new fans discovering the art form for the first time. Likewise, although *Underground Rangers* adds in references to Western culture it does not stray too far from its Budaixi foundation.

The language barrier is a particular challenge for Taiwanese glove puppetry. The art form is typically voiced in Taiwanese, commonly understood in Taiwan but far less so by viewers outside of the country. *Thunderbolt Fantasy* was originally given two versions of audio, one in Taiwanese and the other in Japanese. The DVD box set comes with Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese and English subtitles. Outside of *Thunderbolt Fantasy*, Pili shows do not have English or Japanese subtitles. Puppets speak in Taiwanese and Traditional Chinese subtitles

are provided. While fan posts indicate that voiceovers would be most celebrated, subtitles are an acceptable substitute. Dr. Silvio interviewed Mainland China Pili fans and found that they were “willing to read the subtitles.” (Silvio) Analysis of Pili Fanpage Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* indicates fans are also willing to read subtitles if available. Posts on the Facebook page ranged from frustration from a lack of English subtitles for Pili projects to hope that future translations would be provided.

While a challenge, this language barrier has also served as an opportunity among overseas Pili fans. As a hindrance, a limited number of English subtitles and voiceovers has resulted in a slow growing fanbase abroad. Subtitles in Japanese and simplified Mandarin, and Japanese voiceovers for the entire *Thunderbolt Fantasy* series has helped reach a wider audience but lack of English subtitles translate to isolated fan base growth. Members of Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* expressed disappointment in the lack of English subtitles. A post from October 25, 2017 reporting on the Japanese premiere of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* spin off film *Sword of Life and Death* commented about the lack of release in Western countries and the lack of English subtitles. “No news as of yet with regard to North American (or other English language) release, but I’ll post an update as soon as I hear!” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀) A February 9, 2018 post announced that “*Thunderbolt Fantasy: Sword of Life and Death* comes out on Blu-ray and DVD on April 4th.” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀) The post noted that this was for release in Japan and then added, “hopefully this means Western audiences will get to see it via streaming service or other English language release.” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀) This suggests that fan are hoping for an English voiceovers or subtitles.

As an opportunity, a lack of subtitles is compelling fans to take action on their own and in the process creating cross-cultural connections. Non-Taiwanese speaking and non-Mandarin reading Pili fans cannot understand the dialogue in most of Pili’s catalogue. Bilingual fans translate Pili clips for fans who do not understand the language prompting cross-cultural conversations. The Facebook fan page regularly translated Pili related media into English for group members. A December 9, 2017 post featured a tweet²⁵ of fan art with accompanying Japanese text which the

²⁵ Individual posts made on Twitter are referred to as tweets.

poster translated into English. “The tweet says Congrats on (the release of) *Sword of Life and Death* and ‘I want to drink with Shou Fu Kan.’” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀)

Translating news and commentary about *Thunderbolt Fantasy* creates conversation between fans from different cultures and countries. Another example written November 6, 2017 highlights a post written in Japanese on Twitter. The original tweet focused on Japanese actor Nishikawa Takashi who was reportedly voicing a character in an upcoming episode of *Thunderbolt Fantasy*. The accompanying text read, “Went poking on Twitter and discovered that Nishikawa-san's character is named 浪巫謠 (Rou Fu You). The kanji *could* be translated to ‘Wandering Sorcerer Ballad’ but I'm not sure how exactly they intend it to be read, so it's just a guess!” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀) Pili fans actively search for new Pili related online material and willingly translate text into English for other fans.

As an opportunity, the lack of official English subtitles has prompted overseas fans to create their own. Fansubs²⁶ in the United States are created “mostly by Taiwanese Americans” but more translations exist elsewhere. (Silvio) Multiple unofficial fansubs have been created by the global Pili fan community and “there have been fansubs in dozens of languages-Romanian, French Spanish, Eastern European ones.” (Silvio) Facebook posts include an embedded translation tool that translates posts into the preferred language of the user further reducing language obstacles. Likewise, fan clips of Pili episodes on YouTube sometimes come with fansubs. However, since these translations are not official the quality of the translations is varied. Niitsu-Santo's exposure to Taiwanese glove puppetry has inspired her to begin Mandarin studies. “I found myself wanting to learn Mandarin Chinese, buy Taiwanese cookbooks, travel guides and study material for the language.” (Niitsu-Santo)

Online websites created by fans are further indirect evidence of private actors advocating for Taiwan’s behalf while overcoming language challenges. This is mirrored in Korea, where fans have created “websites dedicated Kdrama²⁷ and K-pop.” (Trolan, p. 205) Clips featuring scenes from drama shows or K-pop music videos come with subtitles to assist foreign fans. These subtitles are “effectively nullifying the language barrier and potentially encouraging people to

²⁶ Foreign film or television episode that has been given subtitles by a fan of the program

²⁷ Korean dramatic television shows

learn Korean.” (Trolan, p. 205) Despite the initial language barrier, social media encourages communication between fans leading to friendships and greater interest in the culture producing the entertainment of interest. “Social media has led to major impacts for the Korean entertainment industry and tourism, and in turn, an opportunity for Governmental branding of ‘Korea.’” (Trolan, p. 205) Through social media and an active fan base, Taiwanese glove puppetry functions as a gateway into the wider area of Taiwanese culture, slowly overcoming the challenge of the language barrier.

The perseverance of overseas Pili fans in promoting and translating their favorite shows illustrates the advocacy of puppet fans. By collaborating with Japanese artists, Pili was able to appeal to a wider audience by introducing unfamiliar elements of Taiwanese glove puppetry to an audience that was already familiar with anime. “*Thunderbolt Fantasy* is part of the gateway as it's reached many fans of anime/manga in general.” (Niitsu-Santo) The visual spectacle of the puppet show entertains them, spurring them to investigate more. Fans have taken up the role of translation services in the absent of official Pili options. Though the language barrier is a challenge it has not stopped fans from enjoying the show. “Often the puppet can express so much without words. This power to express ideas without words allows us to break down language barriers and connect as human beings.” (Haverty) The spectacle of puppets are drawing viewers into Taiwan’s culture and “by continuous efforts, Taiwan can be better understood by the international community.” (Lu)

Chapter 5. Conclusion-Looking backward, moving forward

This thesis has explored how Taiwanese glove puppetry has been used as a tool of cultural diplomacy. Research into Taiwan's history reveals its political limitations in deepening its inclusion in the international community. Though Taiwan has de facto sovereignty, its lack of de jure sovereignty has resulted in a denial of membership to the United Nations and international organizations that require de jure for admission. Taiwan's current political pressures reveal how its use of hard power is restricted, leaving soft power a valuable option to make its story heard. Literature review of soft power, public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy highlighted the core functions of diplomacy, that of representation and communication. "Maximizing Taiwan's soft power is hence the best, and perhaps the only, strategy available to the island for protecting its long-term interests and making itself a significant, responsible, and constructive player in East Asia and the world at large." (Lee, p. 135)

Cultural diplomacy helps create and strengthen relationships between countries, governments and its peoples. Culture is an important resource of soft power and "shapes the way the world is viewed." (Street, p. 310) As culture travels, associations between this culture and its outside its country of origin are created. The Asian region has seen countries increasingly willing to "invest in soft power to expand their existing economic influence and acquire more sophisticated politico-cultural leverage." (Lee, p. 4) As K-pop Korean dramas increased in popularity, the Korean government and private businesses began to invest in its production. The popularity of the Korean wave has created industry growth in cultural products, tourism and has increased positive perceptions of Korea. Using its culture as a tool of soft power, Taiwan broadcasts its beliefs and ideals about itself to a global audience. Communicating the plight of Taiwan to other nations can help increase the number invested in Taiwan's political struggles, goals and future. Taiwan has a rich culture and benefits from promoting it to the international community. Cultural diplomacy both represents Taiwan and communicates ideas and beliefs about Taiwan.

The three case studies analyzed for this research illustrate Taiwan's multifaceted culture and how that culture has been used as representatives of cultural diplomacy. Cloud Gate Dance Theatre is an example Taiwanese culture acting as a symbol of Taiwan. As it performs domestically and

abroad, Cloud Gate illustrates the politics of representation. As the dance performances have redefined its ideas of nationalism it reflects the evolving nature of Taiwanese identity. Both Peking Opera and Taiwanese Opera were promoted abroad to promote the country. As Taiwan's liberal democracy matured, the indigenous roots of Taiwanese Opera caused it to gain the spotlight over Peking Opera. Nezha evolved from a traditional Chinese religious deity to a Taiwanese Electric Techno Neon God. As private actors bring Nezha costumes abroad to join in public dancing and media events this broadcasts a symbol that is tied to Taiwanese culture.

Budaixi is one of the many examples of Taiwanese culture and are a valuable tool of cultural diplomacy. As an art form it engages audiences because it is entertaining and colorful. Storytelling is an inherent part of the performance which gives Taiwan the ability to author its own story. Puppets are popular around the globe and its audiences are quite diverse. Through utilizing international traveling exhibitions, Taiwanese museums send puppets abroad to represent Taiwan. "ITEs have emerged as an important strategy in the museum field, facilitating interconnectivity between museums cross-nationally." (Lai, p. 90) Museums and ITEs can gain additional media coverage for Taiwan by collaborating with Mega-Events internationally. Numerous countries have rich puppet histories which offer ample opportunity for cross-cultural collaborations, as illustrated by TAPM and Pili productions. Cross-collaborations build bridges between peoples of different nations that provide relationship foundations to grow over time. Countries may export many aspects of their culture but "for Taiwan to export puppetry is so much easier-it's family friendly and it's dynamic. It literally moves." (Siebert)

When audiences engage with Budaixi they are engaging with Taiwanese history, its culture and significantly its political situation. "It is not possible to cut or separate our culture because it's part of our life." (Lu) Learning the origins of the art form informs audiences about the Chinese immigrants who traveled to Taiwan with their cultural art forms. The Golden Ray period can communicate the aftermath of the Chinese Civil War and the political ramifications of the competition between the KMT and PRC over the claim to the UN seat. The television series *Shi Yan-wen* communicates more of the art form's evolution but also of Taiwan's evolving identity. Educating the public about the show's censorship due to its incorporation of the Taiwanese language communicates the politics of representation. Modern puppet shows such as Pili's

Thunderbolt Fantasy or NPY's *Underworld Rangers* are capturing an increasing portion of international viewers. They are symbols of the evolution of the art form but also act as symbols of Taiwan which can entertain and educate audiences worldwide.



Image 9 Evolution of Taiwanese glove puppetry

Taiwan's diverse cultural provides many excellent art forms to use as cultural diplomacy, including Budaixi. This particularly art enables Taiwan to join the international puppet community. Though they may be difficult to establish, collaborations can build foundations for future collaborations and networking. The sharing nature of collaboration creates an inclusive environment wherein multiple participants can contribute. This gives Taiwan more representation, a primary function of cultural diplomacy. Cross-cultural collaborations are beneficial to Taiwan and promote cultural diplomacy. Taiwan can strategically choose how to participate in this community through collaborations between museums, conferences, Mega-Events and ITES.

“Each year the richness of Taiwan's culture helped a lot to communicate with the international community. In France there are puppets but they are different than ours. In Taiwan it is our privilege to have such rich puppet culture... We are very proud to preserve this traditional Chinese culture but we have new versions of

puppetry. Golden Ray puppets, we have television programs appreciated by so many people in Taiwan.” (Lu)

Taiwan both preserves the traditional Budaixi styles and continues to evolve the art form. By embracing the diversity of its puppet heritage, Taiwan can participate in a variety of cultural events. The Chen Hsi-Huang Traditional Puppetry Troupe will perform a traditional Budaixi play at the Center for Puppetry Arts. Meanwhile, *Thunderbolt Fantasy* has been confirmed for a third season. With its modern style and utilization of computer technology, the series motivates cross-cultural conversations among international fans. Museums such as the Taiyuan Asian Puppet Theatre Museum bring an array of puppet artifacts with their ITEs. This serves as education about the evolution of the art form and also of Taiwan. Private actors, like NPY Studio founder Lin Zi-yang, utilize new technologies such as social media and crowdfunding campaigns helping to bring Taiwan into the global community via puppetry.

In particular, collaborations between museums create a contact zone that “becomes active collaboration and a sharing of authority.” (Clifford, p. 210) Collaborations and international traveling exhibitions can benefit Taiwan in the form of increased news coverage since ITEs are a noteworthy event that attract media coverage both locally and globally. By keeping Taiwan in the news, the country helps maintain itself in the consciousness of the international community. Collaborations foster an intimate relationship between the parties involved, laying a foundation for addition collaborations in the future. Specifically utilizing the expertise of smaller puppet museums allows ITEs to explore a deeper relationship to the collection items and produces reciprocal visits between museums and peoples of differing nations. Through puppetry, audiences learn about Taiwan’s history and culture. “You have the whole of Taiwan in your hand as I always say.” (Ruizendaal)

Governments, NGOs and private actors can be agents of cultural diplomacy. While traditional channels of diplomacy are still vital to the international community, the types of actors have become more diversified. In addition to governments, private actors are utilizing cultural diplomacy to “send and gather information through interaction with the global public.” (Pigman, p. 211) By diversifying its cultural diplomacy actors, Taiwan can reach a diverse audience.

The advocacy of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* fans is particularly illustrative of the power of private actors. Pili fans volunteer their time promoting the puppet show and, by extension, Taiwan. The passion that international Budaixi fans such as Tiffanee Niitsu-Santo put into promoting *Thunderbolt Fantasy* and Taiwan shows the value of this art form.

“Taiwan just sits in a deserted corner, unknown by many while countries Japan like stand out like a bright white star in the sky. So it's up to people like YOU and ME to help Taiwan become a fellow bright star in the sky and shine. Knowledge is power and the more of it we can spread, the more other cultures will know about Taiwan’s culture with its rich history and traditions. In my own opinion, I think people are one of the best means of promotion, no matter what it is they are promoting. The more people outside of Taiwan who help promote its culture, the better for the world to know of it and who can explore the infinite wonders Taiwan has to offer.” (Niitsu-Santo)

A limitation of this research concerns the small amount of empirical data concerning Taiwanese glove puppetry’s effectiveness as cultural diplomacy. As argued above, this dearth is not exclusive to Budaixi; proving the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy is difficult. Another limitation is the language capacity of this author. Since I do not read Chinese fluently at a professional level, I was only able to study material about Budaixi written in English. Additionally, the museums I spoke with did not keep demographic information about their visitors which prevented me from investigating the nationality of said visitors. With these limitations in mind, I present the implications and recommendations I have compiled after studying my research and findings.

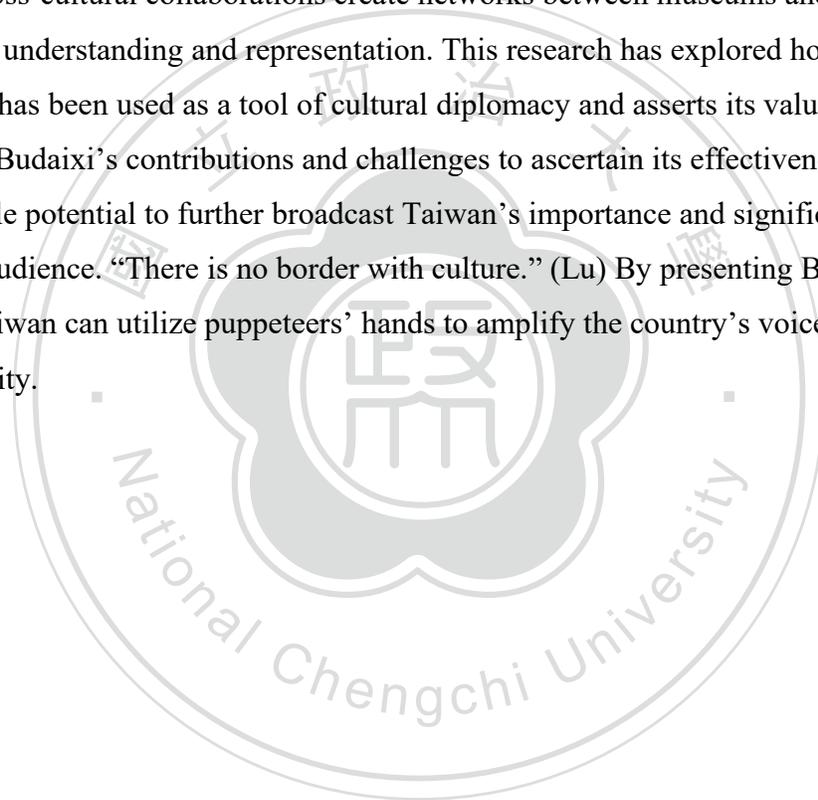
This research illustrates there is more indirect evidence for the effectiveness of Taiwanese glove puppetry as a tool of cultural diplomacy, leading me to believe that more study and data are warranted. Additional opinion surveys could investigate the associations of Budaixi with Taiwanese society. The lack of demographic research on museum visitors reflects a gap in knowledge. I recommend that puppet museums begin collecting information from their guests, such as country of origin and how the visitor originally learned of the museum. Valuable

information could be gained via the webpages of these museums. An application that recorded the IP address of visits to the website could analyze data such as online visitor's country of origin. Surveys, in person or online, could prove invaluable in collecting demographic data. Further qualitative study could prove useful if the deeper ramifications of exposure to a new culture is examined. "We have to change the entire paradigm of measurement." (Siebert) Initial exposure to a new culture can have an effect on multiple levels. This research suggests that assessing the long term effects of promoting Budaixi overseas could prove beneficial to Taiwan's overall diplomatic aims and ambitions.

This leads to a larger recommendation of solving the language barrier. The enthusiasm of fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* provides indirect evidence that Taiwanese glove puppetry has appeal to a global audience. The passion of these fans indicate that reducing the language barrier could increase their advocacy. Quality translations in the form of voiceovers or subtitles could exponentially increase the fan base. However, quality translations require an investment of time and money. When done poorly, bad translations can befuddle potential advocates and turn away potential allies. The original English translation of Pili "was a butchering," upsetting fans and not delivering on hopes of an expanded audience. (Silvio) High quality translation provides fans with a quality connection to the media and is an investment that rewards time and again as future audiences are exposed to the material. "Be willing to spend the money and the time on translation. Do more of that in Japanese and English." (Silvio)

There are numerous avenues where Taiwan's voice is restricted or omitted entirely. Cultural diplomacy is an opportunity for Taiwan to teach the world about itself and to forge connections with other nations and their people. Diplomacy may be difficult to quantify but the quality of good diplomacy is easier to detect. "The most important part of cultural diplomacy is the communication that happens with the presentation of a country like Taiwan." (Lu) Exercising its soft power through cultural diplomacy allows Taiwan to represent itself to the world and to communicate its history, its political struggles and its identity. The art of puppetry is a unique and creative way to do this. "The arts have a great power in bringing people together to celebrate what makes us unique and what unifies us." (Haverty)

Budaixi has undergone a unique evolution in Taiwan and is intertwined with the island's transformation from colony to democracy. With its ability to attract audiences from multiple cultures, classes and age groups, puppet performances continue to remain relevant in the information age. Taiwanese puppet shows provide an important space for Taiwan to tell its story on its own terms. International traveling Budaixi exhibitions educate the global community on the island's history and evolving culture while creating mutual understanding and bilateral ties. Puppeteers are embracing new technology to broadcast their shows to global audiences and in the process are gaining new fans abroad who further widen the audience through their enthusiasm. Cross-cultural collaborations create networks between museums and artists that develop mutual understanding and representation. This research has explored how Taiwanese glove puppetry has been used as a tool of cultural diplomacy and asserts its value. It has examined both Budaixi's contributions and challenges to ascertain its effectiveness. This cultural art has incredible potential to further broadcast Taiwan's importance and significance in the greater global audience. "There is no border with culture." (Lu) By presenting Budaixi to the world stage, Taiwan can utilize puppeteers' hands to amplify the country's voice to the larger global community.



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Appendix

7.1 Kristin Haverty Interview

Interview with Kristin Haverty

2019-03-27, Email interview

1. Please introduce yourself and the work you're doing.

Kristin Haverty, Producer at the Center for Puppetry Arts in Atlanta, GA

I am also a UNIMA-USA councilor. I have been working with TECO in Atlanta to host the Chen Hsi-Huang Traditional Puppetry Troupe here at the Center June 15 and 16, 2019.

2. How did you get connected with the Chen Hsi-Huang Traditional Puppetry Troupe? Was there something about their work that made them a good troupe to host?

In advance of the 40th anniversary of the Taipei Atlanta Sister City relationship, our staff met with the staff of Atlanta's Taiwanese Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) and they expressed interest in partnering with us to host a Taiwanese company during the anniversary year. We explored many options and found the Ministry of Culture's website very helpful.

https://entoolkit.culture.tw/teaminfo_89_53.html

We made the decision to host the Chen Hsi-Huang Traditional Puppet Troupe as they perform the traditional *budai xi* [sic] puppetry with great precision and energy.

3. When the Center for Puppetry Arts hosts guests like Chen Hsi-Huang Traditional Puppetry Troupe does the guest troupe do their own work or is a new hybrid work created?

They will be performing a traditional work "*A Chance Encounter Leads to Marriage*." Sharing the traditional art forms of other cultures is of particular interest to our artistic group, particularly since we opened our museum expansion in 2015 which includes a global puppetry gallery.

4. Has the Center for Puppetry Arts hosted Taiwanese puppet troupes in the past?

In the 1984-85 season we presented the Hsiao His Puppet Troupe of Taiwan.

5. What does the Center for Puppetry Arts hope to accomplish with hosting a Taiwanese troupe?

Presenting the Chen Hsi-Huang Traditional Puppetry Troupe aligns with the Center for Puppetry Arts' mission is to inspire imagination, education and community through the global art of puppetry.

6. Can puppet collaborations function as cultural diplomacy? What has been your experience?

I believe so. The Center is the headquarters, and I currently serve as a councilor, for UNIMA-USA, the American branch of the international organization UNIMA. As stated on UNIMA's website:

This organization and art form allows us to promote the noblest human values such as peace and mutual understanding between people regardless of origin, political or religious convictions and differences in culture, in accordance with the respect for fundamental human rights as defined in

the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of December 10th 1948. In this way, UNIMA works for the cultural diplomacy. <https://www.unima.org/en/unima/presentation/>
Working with the staff at TECO and the planning for Chen Hsi-Huang's visit has absolutely given me a greater awareness and appreciation of the rich cultural traditions of Taiwan. I hope that our audiences will also feel this way after seeing the performance.

7. Were you involved with the Center when they participated in the 1996 Olympics arts festival program? Was this a cross-cultural exchange? Do you feel cultural diplomacy took place during this program?

I was not yet a staff member but I asked our Administrative Director Lisa Rhodes who was here during the Olympics- "We participated in all 4 years of the Cultural Olympiad-the 3 years preceding and then in 1996. We hosted numerous international performers who were very well-received by our Atlanta audience. During the weeks of the Olympics, we had a huge exhibit of Jim Henson's work and had visitors from all over the world attend because people around the globe are familiar with his work through Sesame Street, the Muppets, etc. The beauty of that exhibit was that it highlighted an American puppeteer whose work was appreciated worldwide and was enjoyed by a global audience who didn't need to speak English to have a wonderful visit here. Because puppetry is such a strong tradition in so many countries, we had a lot of international visitors who were curious to explore our Center."

8. Do you think Taiwan can gain more representation on the world stage through artistic collaborations?

Politics-and the hard and soft powers you mention in your essay-are very complicated as you know and I suppose the answer depends on what sort of representation one seeks. I attended a conference recently where I met an artist from Mexico. At one point he noted-"We are not our governments, we are just people." I think the arts have a great power in bringing people together to celebrate what makes us unique and what unifies us.

9. One of the difficulties with cultural diplomacy is proving its effectiveness. Does the Center for Puppetry Arts have any data for its collaborations?

You are correct-it feels very elusive and hard to quantify. We do not have any data that would make it any more quantifiable.

10. What has feedback been for the upcoming Chen Hsi-Huang Traditional Puppetry Troupe performance? For past Taiwanese troupes?

We have not yet started promoting our 2019-2020 season so we don't know yet. But, we recently hosted Taipei's mayor here at the Center and it was a packed event! I will include an article about the event.

<https://www.globalatlanta.com/with-new-agreement-taipei-and-atlanta-seek-to-revive-decades-old-trade-ties/#>

11. How much does the audience know about Taiwan before seeing a Taiwanese puppet performance?

It depends very much on the audience member. There is a very vibrant Taiwanese community here in Atlanta so I hope they will attend. But there are also those who we hope will come and

get excited about the *budai xi [sic]* glove puppetry and want to know more about the company and the tradition.

12. How does the work with Chen Hsi-Huang Traditional Puppetry Troupe teach audience members about Taiwan?

One reason I particularly like about puppetry, is that it can so beautifully bring to life a culture. Walking through our museum, there are so many universal themes, and yet the particular way that these themes are expressed is culturally unique to the time and place in which the work was created. The Chen Hsi Huang Troupe's work is also interesting in that Mr. Hsi-Huang Chen has learned the craft from a long lineage of masters so his work is both of the present and the past.

13. Are perceptions of Taiwan changed through collaborations of this sort?

There is no digital substitute for seeing artists live on stage creating a beautiful work of art. The energy of that space allows for transformation and growth. I do believe that anyone not currently familiar with Taiwan will emerge from a performance with a greater understanding and appreciation of Taiwan's art and people.

14. Do you believe audience interest in Taiwan will increase as a result of seeing Chen Hsi-Huang Traditional Puppetry Troupe?

I hope it will! We had a demonstration by a Japanese Master several years ago. In the audiences was a puppeteer who was so inspired by his work that she applied for a scholarship to go study with him in Japan. It was transformational for her and she is planning another trip to Japan this year. You never know who is in the audience and who might be inspired by the work onstage.

15. Do you imagine future collaborations with Taiwanese puppet troupes?

We would love to work with TECO again and invite another Taiwanese puppet troupe in the future. I recently met the Puppet and Its Double's Artistic Director Chen Chia-yin in Montreal at the Festival de Casteliers and I think the artist residency she has created in Taiwan is very exciting for international artists and their perception of Taiwan as a leader in the field.

16. What makes puppetry a good tool for cross-cultural collaborations?

Often the puppet can express so much without words. This power to express ideas without words allows us to break down language barriers and connect as human beings.

7.2 Ambassador Michel Ching-long Lu Interview

Interview with Ambassador Michel Ching-long Lu
2019-03-28, 4:00-4:51pm

1. Based on your experience of serving as a diplomat, what do you think about soft power, public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy?

It is always interesting to talk about cultural diplomacy. When speaking you try to have mutual understanding between your country and others, both in public and private. Mutual understanding is a top priority. With better mutual understanding there is concrete improvement in bilateral relations. The world is changing. For diplomacy this is normal. Diplomacy is no

longer limited to the banquet of the season. Diplomacy is now a wide and varied rich field in which people try to communicate.

For our country Taiwan and for China, 1912 [founding of the Republic of China] is a distant thing now. We say we are still there [China] and we are here [Taiwan] so there is no need to interpret. This is why Taiwan is a unique situation in the international community. On one hand we are a normal country with all the portions of daily life. On the other hand Taiwan is not like a normal country because we are under political pressure from Mainland China. This is a crucial fact.

Certainly this is why for the diplomat there is a clear mission trying to promote good relations with the international community. For example with diplomatic official exchanges, there is no limit to promote ourselves and all means could be useful. I believe with mutual understanding, in the age of international cooperation and globalization, that there is no other way.

When I became a diplomat I served abroad. I was sent by the government to Paris. I studied French in Taiwan. I was sent to Paris in 1980 for 4 years. Then I transferred to the Netherlands for 2.5 years which was another country with another culture. I was sent back to Paris in 1991. I went to France to serve and found so many curiosities in front of me. In Haiti I saw colorful paintings, dance, Western and African culture. When I was there I had good contact with local troupes. Haiti's financial situation is not so well. Taiwanese groups went to Haiti to have contact and promote cultural understanding. I was chief of mission in Paris 2007. In July 2015 I came back to Taiwan.

2. As a country that enjoys de facto sovereignty but only has formal diplomatic relations with 17 countries worldwide, does cultural diplomacy play a more important role for Taiwan's diplomacy?

The answer is very positive. If Taiwan is to survive, cultural diplomacy is crucial diplomacy. Taiwan does not accept the PRC conditions. There is no reason people will accept the unilateral imposed [by China]. Our argument is very simple. If you were Taiwanese would you accept such an imposition? Taiwan today has become a purist society, there is no more taboo, everything can be debated and discussed. Why should Taiwan accept this imposition from the PRC?

This was my argument when I was invited to roundtables by think tanks and different institutions. There are two possibilities between the PRC and Taiwan. First-we should entrust time to find an acceptable resolution that both sides accept. The solution is not limited to one solution. Second-entrust competition by different systems. The systems are different in the PRC and Taiwan. Next year we have another election for president. China doesn't have that and it causes a headache. Taiwan performs as a democracy, it is our life. We have diplomatic pressure and intimidation from the PRC on our head and shoulders.

If there is no economy then Taiwan will be marginalized. If we want to survive we should be strong enough to communicate that Taiwan is a qualified partner of the international community. Taiwan is the 18th exporting country at 1.8percent., 19 importing country at 1.40 percent. Taiwan is not a big country but it is bigger than more than 40 countries. It is more populated than many other countries in the world so don't say Taiwan is a small country. After WW2 many

countries tried to develop. Taiwan is a good example if we work hard we will have a successful and developed economic life. Taiwan is one of the best in life expectancy and social security, not worse than others.

We have enough rights to seek our national security. We need to find an efficient, strategic way to communicate with the international community. [In regards to] PRC pressures-if you can't support Taiwan explicitly please understand our situation because it will continue. You can enjoy the stability of different points of view. Politically speaking it's very hard. Our attempts at national defense and attempts to improve people's quality of life will continue.

Taiwan is a unique situation. We enjoy the confidence of the people, no matter the elections, our daily life continues. Culture is very very important. The budget for cultural diplomacy, culture budget is more than 1 percent for the first time in a long time. It is important for the government to invest money in cultural diplomacy

3. You have been praised as one of the best ambassadors of Taiwan for the way you conduct diplomatic work to promote the country, both as a whole and focusing on traditional and local cultural identity. As the newspapers widely reported, you were invited to give a speech at the Oscar d'ille et vilaine in Paris, 2015, where you took the chance to impress the French audience by performing with Taiwanese traditional glove puppets. Could you share why you decided to use Taiwanese glove puppetry for delivering your speech on this specific occasion and at other events?

It's my creation. For diplomacy you need creativity and imagination. People ask where I learned to play the puppets. I didn't learn it officially. I was born in the sugar refinery in Chiayi in 1947. My father worked in the sugar plant. We did not have a privileged life at that time. At that time the sugar refinery plant regularly organized cultural performances. Mainly opera troupes performed in public institutions for the army and navy. There were performances of Peking Opera and Taiwanese acrobats. The sugar refinery cultural center could accommodate 200 people at once. At local festivals and anniversaries at temples in Chiayi we had activities with puppets. Religious activities always accompanied with puppets. In Taiwan we tried to follow performances. There were no smart phones back then. We boys tried to learn to imitate the puppet shows. We had Taiwanese Opera that we also enjoyed. Black and white TV and before that radio helped us to learn the dialogues [of the puppet and opera shows]. When I was in primary school I went to these shows which taught me to appreciate cultural performances. For Taiwanese people we have our own culture. As a boy we had contact with Chinese cultures in a larger sense. This contact was limited with Taiwanese culture.

Diplomacy means there is no fear between two cultures. This [his puppet show] helped to facilitate the communication. I enjoyed the challenges of connecting Taiwan and French people.

4. Do you believe Taiwan can gain more representation on the world stage through international artistic collaborations between Taiwanese and foreign organizations? For my research on Taiwanese glove puppetry, do you believe cross-collaboration puppet shows can be used for cultural diplomacy?

How are you going to promote international exchanges, send young artists to overseas to international communities, send invitations to others to come to Taiwan? Cultural diplomacy is

costly. You need a financial committee from the government sector. Each year we have students going abroad, 75,000 foreign students are studying in Taiwan. They play a very important role in international communication. Working hard with cultural diplomacy is necessary.

I met with French students and Taiwanese studying abroad. I worked with the Ministry of Education to promote Taiwan and organize events for visiting students. And we noticed our French friends became interested in Taiwan culture. I enjoyed my mission over there and worked very closely with TECO Paris. We had 20 exhibitions in Paris and 150 performances, dancing and acrobatics for young students. Each year the richness of Taiwan's culture helped a lot to communicate with the international community.

In France there are puppets but they are different than ours. In Taiwan it is our privilege to have such rich puppet culture. It was introduced from Fujian Province. We are very proud to preserve this traditional Chinese culture but we have new versions of puppetry. Golden Ray puppets, we have television programs appreciated by so many people in Taiwan. The poorest of society can still have appreciation of Taiwan puppetry.

Different associations preserve this tradition, this art is encountering challenges and disappearing. There is risk of disappearing but with contributions from society and younger generations school children and foreign students learn how to play the puppets. In France there is interest in our puppets. French students came to Taiwan to learn the puppets. There is no border with culture. This is interesting. We use Taiwan puppets to play the traditional classical opera and of Western opera with Taiwanese puppets.

5. In your view, can Taiwanese glove puppets be used for cultural diplomacy? Are there other forms of culture that would be helpful for Taiwan's cultural diplomacy?

This is interesting because Taiwanese puppet clothes are very colorful and the sides are very easy to play. [to manipulate with the hands] The most important thing is I played with the puppets in France and then the dialogue is very interesting in French.

The story [for the puppets] would always be a couple. One puppet would be a young American man who studied in French. He and his new bride travel to Paris. The new bride is from my country. The two love Paris and talk about studying and working in Paris. They talk about how Paris is one of the most beautiful cities in the world. They are speaking in French and singing in French. They kiss and say our children will come to study in France to promote mutual understanding with friends. The puppets are made in Taiwan and by starting such a dialogue in French you attract all the attention. This is the synergy of all our communication.

The puppet clothes are very well prepared. The clothing is so colorful and the composition is harmonious. Visually they are very cute. The matter of the head and face is very real, very authentic. If you have seen the movie *Father (Hong He Zi)*, you can ask anyone this is a real story talking about the puppet master and his story. A great puppetmaster respected by the community, a national treasure. Because there are techniques to smoke, puppets can smoke. I'm not encouraging people to smoke but the finesse of performance techniques-preparing tea, writing calligraphy-fine techniques that you can appreciate this art. For me who is not a puppet professional, I attract interest in dialogue. With dialogue you can attract attention.

There are ongoing cross-cultural arts collaborations with Taiwan and other countries. We have a world famous comic festival. This started by my efforts in Paris. At the Angouleme International Comics Festival²⁸ we have Taiwan artists participating. We have resident artist villages and mutual countries making art installations. This enriches cooperation not just between institutions but between communities and universities.

The National Taiwan of the Arts University has had more than 60 collaborations with different institutions. Academically speaking we are doing very well. We have professors and students coming back to Taiwan to train our younger generations. Each year we send troupes of artists to different countries. Taiwan culture is so important. By continuous efforts, Taiwan can be better understood by the international community.

6. What was audience feedback like when you performed with the glove puppets in France?

Taiwanese teachers and French teachers knew we would introduce Taiwan and start speeches with a puppet show. In Paris they were pleased with the puppets. I went to southern France and they expected puppets. They always expected Lu will come with his puppets. This was confirmation that audiences appreciate the puppets and created dialogues with the public. The people began to greet Overseas Chinese citizens with my puppets. And people had never seen such a situation. The Overseas Chinese highly appreciated this and put me on Youtube.

7. One of the hotly debated and much discussed questions about cultural diplomacy is its effectiveness. In your view, how do you evaluate the effectiveness of cultural diplomacy?

The most important part of cultural diplomacy is the communication that happens with the presentation of a country like Taiwan. Economically speaking we not be the best country, but we didn't neglect or ignore the importance of culture. Culture is continuing. It is not possible to cut or separate our culture because it's part of our life. A country without a culture could not be a great country. It's not about size, it's about national capacity. On one hand it's the freedom of the society, where are the creators, what creation is allowed, are new things allowed to come out?

Positive effects of cultural exchanges with the international community will indirectly strengthen the confidence of the people. Countries and culture are different but our country is not bad. So why not encourage people to move to international community? This is necessary today to enable and strengthen understanding and international cooperation in regards to Taiwan. Cooperation of so called general interest emphasizes cultural exchanges. Different puppet groups in Taiwan-there are wider divisions, different flavors, could be different, cultural differences and preferences. This together helps exchanges. Public spectators have more choices. It's like a democracy. There are different choices, different communication. It's all very positive.

7.3 Tiffanee Niitsu-Santo Interview

Interview with Tiffanee Niitsu-Santo
2019-04-11, 2018-10-22, Email interview

1. Please introduce yourself.

²⁸ <https://taiwantoday.tw/news.php?unit=2,6,10,15,18&post=148914>

I'm a 40 year old woman originally from Portland. [Oregon, United States] In 1993 we moved out here to Forest Grove where my dad grew up.

2. How did you become interested in Pili?

When I was a Junior in HS, Sailor Moon aired on TV and I fell in love. I wasn't into anime and Japanese comics/culture at that time but that changed. I even began studying Japanese on my own, learning to read and write as well. I'm not fluent in speaking but I can read a lot. My first husband was an Osaka native.

3. First you were interested in anime and Japanese culture. How did you learn about Taiwanese culture?

What got me into Taiwanese culture was the puppets. I learned of Taiwanese glove puppets when I saw *Thunderbolt Fantasy* two years ago. While I can appreciate the small traditional puppets, my favorite types are the TV size puppets, used in Pili, Golden Light and Underworld Rangers, of course. Since I read Japanese, am into manga, cosplay (I've been a cosplayer since 2005) and anime, I purchase various magazines at Kinokuniya Bookstore・紀伊国屋書店 in Beaverton, Oregon. I've been a loyal shopper since 1998. In August 2016, I purchased the current issue of *Animage・アニメージュ*, an Anime magazine, which had a 4 page article on *Thunderbolt Fantasy*.

4. What was the experience of discovering Taiwanese glove puppetry like?

I was AMAZED. What were these..."DOLLS"??? Are they for sale? Where can I find them? At first I thought they were Japanese made character dolls. Me, being a researcher orientated person, began my hunt on the world wide web, finding many things on PILI, even their official website where people can see the entire list of TV puppets for sale. People can buy their favorite roles. Okay...they cost.....WHAT?! I converted one of the prices of 47,000 NTD to roughly over \$1,300 and plus. I sank in the chair thinking, 'I can't afford that...and how the heck could I even BUY one?!' (I then learned many studios that make original puppets will do monthly payments.)

This prompted me to make friends in Taiwan and also go through channels to purchase Pili merchandise as well as my own puppets. I looked on YouTube, found a gentleman in Taiwan with a video of himself demonstrating his Taiwanese puppet. I made a comment along the lines of 'I'm American and want to know how to buy a puppet.' He, (Shouichi) replied and hence, aided me in my quest, as of which I now own 13 puppets, 8 of them being PILI characters. The others are original and one of a kind. I then decided to self-appoint myself as an Ambassador in the USA for Taiwanese Culture/Glove puppets and when I attend events, I take puppets with me.

5. What prompted you to become an Ambassador for Taiwanese culture and glove puppets?

I want other people of different cultures to know about Taiwanese culture and their tradition of glove puppetry. It's a most beloved treasure in Taiwan and I believe that people from all over the world can and would truly appreciate and adore it as much as I do. Thusly, I take the opportunity to introduce it as much as I can. Public events are the easiest way to do this.

6. What are your self-appointed Ambassador duties?

I go to Kumoricon each year and I take a puppet. Also, as I will attend my 14th year at Kumoricon later this month, I will bring 1 puppet with me to show around. I use a stroller for the

puppet as they can be heavy after a while and having a bad back doesn't really help. This will be my second year bringing a puppet with me. It's part of my goal to help spread the awareness of Taiwanese culture. I also attended a ball jointed doll convention in August and I took a different puppet each day

7. What are people's reactions to Taiwanese glove puppets?

Most people stare in complete awe and amazement. Others who know of Ball Jointed Dolls (BJD's) ask me what sculpt the puppet is and that is when I start to explain that the puppet is not a BJD and I delve into introducing the individual/individuals to Taiwanese glove puppetry and I also make sure to include the proper name for it which is Budaixi. To sum it up, I receive positive reactions and as I previously said, the reactions are of pure amazement with most comments along the lines of "That's a gorgeous doll! And so big!" which is an exact quote of one woman. I love it all.

8. What is the US Pili Fandom like?

To be honest, it's a small but growing fan base, as Season 2 of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* is airing, more people have the opportunity to learn about the puppets. It's very easy, especially if the fans are into Japanese animation and comics. I have had a lengthy conversation with Liang-Hsun Huang, who is the 5th generation head of Pili. I had managed to add him as a friend on Facebook and introduce myself. I brought up the idea of him maybe coming to the US again and helping me with a panel at Kumoricon about Pili and Taiwanese glove puppets in general. His response was along the lines of if the fan base grows larger he will consider it and see how his schedule is. In 2017, he and Pili were invited by a Taiwanese staff member of Washington state's annual Japanese culture convention Sakuracon. If I had known in advance I would have made a really big effort to make it there. I would have loved to meet Liang-Hsun Huang in person and I would have taken one of my Pili puppets. I can only imagine the surprise he and the other members/puppeteers of Pili would have reacted. I sincerely doubt there are many other Americans with puppets in general. You can't just go online to a shop site and buy one. You have to go through a friend Taiwan or know those who have puppet studios and who can buy the Pili puppets. Pili does not accept monthly payments, nor do they ship overseas. So you really have to have those channels to go through.

9. How much did you know about Taiwan's culture before becoming a fan of Taiwan glove puppetry?

I honestly did not know anything, only that they speak Chinese, which I learned is Traditional Chinese or Mandarin Chinese. Besides puppetry, I'm interested in the food, people, learning Mandarin Chinese and culture as a whole. The same way I am with Japan. I do not limit myself in just being interested in the puppets. Taiwan's culture as a whole is fascinating to me and I want to just dive into its pool of wonder. It's an ongoing quest for me and a journey.

10. Did Taiwanese glove puppetry inspire you to learn more about Taiwan?

Oh YES, most definitely!!! I found myself wanting to learn Mandarin Chinese, buy Taiwanese cookbooks, travel guides and study material for the language. I plan to make a trip there in the future.

11. Has your opinion of Taiwan's culture changed? If so, how?

I really didn't have an opinion of the culture, to be honest. I have just seen a lot of things sold here that say "Made in China/Taiwan". I just figured it was a lot like China back then. But I've learned a lot about the history of China and Taiwan.

12. How much did you know about Taiwan's political situation before becoming a fan of Taiwan puppetry?

I knew a bit of the tension between Taiwan and China, since many of the Taiwanese actually settled there with Chiang Kai-shek and brought over the puppetry culture with them, thusly, also expanding it into what it is today.

13. Has your opinion of Taiwan's political situation changed? If so, how?

I learned from Taiwanese friends that it's a very sensitive subject and it's best not to discuss it in public, unless you're in a group of people who are open to talking about it. I know that Taiwan is made up of many immigrants who fled China many decades ago and China holds a grip on Taiwan and the citizens want their independence and freedom.

14. Has your interest in Taiwanese glove puppetry helped make cross-cultural connections?

Yes, very much so. I've got over 2,000 friends there [Taiwan] on Facebook. I'm hoping to get there in the near future. Many of the friends appreciate what I do. I have managed to get many Americans interested in puppets and I link them to YouTube to watch videos. I even got a Canadian friend interested and she went so far as to purchase the first *Thunderbolt Fantasy* series on DVD. This made me feel really accomplished.

I'm the first US citizen (who is not of Asian descent) to buy puppets from two people (who are friends) in Taiwan who manage their own studios. Earlier I mentioned my first friend in Taiwan, Shoichi, who helped me buy my first puppet. Shoichi has a blog and he made a very large entry about the journey of the first puppet to go to America. It received a lot of attention and positive feedback. Now, we don't know 100% if I am the only American to own puppets. (Please note that this does not count for any people of Asian descent that live in the USA who have puppets.) I am also very much into tattoos and I plan to have the Taiwanese flag as well as a Pili puppet character tattooed on my right arm in the future.

Also, I had the pleasure of buying Pili merchandise on Ebay in the past from a Taiwanese college student studying in Nevada. He was very surprised that an American is so into Taiwanese puppets and culture but at the same time, he was delighted. When sending me the Pili items I had purchased, he included many other items as gifts and as thanks for promoting his culture. I receive the same reactions from many Taiwanese friends. They express sheer gratitude and thanks for what I do. This in itself gives me great joy and a feeling of appreciation.

15. How do you think Taiwan can best promote its culture, history and political status to the international community?

I was told by a friend in Taiwan that it's difficult for them to promote their culture. I find this to be accurate. This is a big reason why I decided to appoint myself as an Ambassador for Taiwan. They need help with promotion and I believe if I and other people can introduce their culture to other countries, they will become more known and appreciated.

Thunderbolt Fantasy is part of the gateway as it's reached many fans of anime/manga in general. I'm very certain people who love Japan and other Asian cultures would also like Taiwanese culture. As you know, Taiwan just sits in a deserted corner, unknown by many while countries like Japan stand out like a bright white star in the sky. So it's up to people like YOU and ME to help Taiwan become a fellow bright star in the sky and shine. Knowledge is power and the more of it we can spread, the more other cultures will know about Taiwan's culture with its rich history and traditions. In my own opinion, I think people are one of the best means of promotion, no matter what it is they are promoting. The more people outside of Taiwan who help promote its culture, the better for the world to know of it and who can explore the infinite wonders Taiwan has to offer.

7.4 Dr. Robin Ruizendaal Interview

Interview with Dr. Robin Ruizendaal
2019-03-13, 2:00-2:37pm, personal interview

1. In 2018 I attended one of your lectures about Taiwanese puppetry. During your talk you said “Why puppets are political is because you literally have Taiwan on your hand.” How is Taiwan puppetry political?

They don't really represent politics but they are part of a certain political message about identity, about Taiwanese identity as opposed to any other identity. As such it's mainly used by politicians and basically only during election time to show their Taiwanese-ness. Puppet theater because of its history is the easiest thing to show that. Also because it's fun and the puppets don't talk back. So they have very positive aspects and it's part of the Taiwanese psyche because of the television puppets in the 1970s and the Pili hype now. From that perspective it's got more cultural value in Taiwan than in any other place in Asia.

You have the whole of Taiwan in your hand as I always say. If you have a puppet in your hand, every politician will either be photographed with a puppet or invite puppet theater companies to perform. Tsai Ing-wen had a puppet theater company go into night markets and Chen Shui-bian had a puppet made of himself so basically that's it.

2. Taiwan has such a history of immigrants and the immigration waves have changed its society. Is this idea of a hybrid identity reflective in puppetry?

Well, I think the lines are still pretty much clearly drawn between people who identify as Taiwanese or identify as Mainland ancestry. There's some blurred lines because the second/third generation can be either way. It's pretty much related to Taiwan. It's related to Taiwan identity and for the sort of leaning Mainland people it's Chinese heritage so it's that double edged sword.

It's a reflection of social change that's coming in that transcends identity questions. It's more about what is considered as beautiful and attractive. Especially in the field of what is attractive, that is the main change. Ugly is always ugly but attractiveness changes a lot. So the bigger nose, bigger eyes, thinner faces, all these elements you see that are considered good in society are reflected in the faces of the puppets.

3. One thing that kept coming up in my research is how to measure the effectiveness of puppetry as cultural diplomacy. How do you show that an opinion has been changed or an opinion has been influenced?

Yeah, well there are many different ways to measure success. What is success? So that's a very tricky question.

4. How do you measure success with the museum's cross-collaborations?

Of course, what is considered success is a large audience and you make money. In that respect we're a complete failure. The live performance of puppet theater is completely at the fringes of the entertainment industry and the arts industry, both in the perception of the audience and the government. When you get copied that's usually a reason for success. Audiences, everybody has hardly any audience so that's very difficult to say. But you see that in the field of exhibitions and performance and presentations as well. So with how you present your company on paper or on the internet you can see the influence because we are very successful in that respect. You see people copying that and being more professional in the presentation of the groups.

5. How do you secure government funding?

Government support is based on a simple system of equal distribution of funds. There's very little money, it's a small cake and everybody gets a slice. Then you have the relations factor but that maybe adds a little more but not too much. Sometimes you just happen to have jury members who are slightly more positive to you so you have more than someone else.

6. How are foreign tourists reactions like when compared to the reactions of locals?

They're looking for a chunk of Taiwanese culture that is easily accessible. We have very positive reactions from both foreign visitors and Taiwanese visitors.

7. In your book²⁹ you quote the survey about glove puppetry being voted the number one symbol of Taiwan, beating Jade Mountain and Taipei 101. Do you know of any other similar surveys about puppetry? Or surveys measuring the effectiveness of puppetry as cultural diplomacy?

No.

[Stephanie Huffman] I wanted you to say yes but I have been searching and I have not been able to find any.

Ok, no. I also talked to the Minister in charge and they were quite amazed as well by the outcome, they didn't expect it. I think there was a choice of twenty or thirty.

[Stephanie Huffman] My hope was that since puppetry was number one, they'd do a few more surveys but no?

No.

[Stephanie Huffman] Do you know of any surveys measuring the effectiveness of puppetry as cultural diplomacy?

²⁹ Fushiki, K., & Ruizendall, R. (2016). *Potehi: Glove puppet theatre in Southeast Asia and Taiwan*. Taipei: Taiyuan Publishing.

Yeah, that's really difficult.

8. What was the inspiration for the museum's cross-collaboration projects?

Sometimes people come to visit us, sometimes the government wants us to do something. Like with Thailand, the government asked us to do something with Thailand. With Istanbul I wanted to do something with Istanbul and with Holland I forgot what that was. With Macau it was because they asked us to do something about the history of Macau. So, many different reasons, the government proposes something, we propose something or someone proposes something.

[Stephanie Huffman] The government wanted you to work with Thailand. What was the hoped for outcome?

Well there was a big Thai sort of culture exhibition at the Central Taiwan at the hand craft/handicraft research center in Nantou. They said we want to do something with Thailand and we have this budget so would you care to set it up? So I set it up and then it happened.

9. When these cross-collaborations happen, how do you balance the influence of each culture?

It was always egalitarian I think.

10. What is the benefit of cross-collaboration projects over solely Taiwanese puppetry exhibitions or performances?

Because you're out of your comfort zone, same as when you live in a foreign country. You're more aware of your own positive sides and negative sides. When you work together with another country you're more aware of the pros and cons of Taiwanese puppet theater and how to use it. Every time it's a challenge to integrate different styles and music together. It's fun and it's a learning process overall. Definitely a new play is created. I think you influence each other, definitely you're inspired. I think that's the most important thing.

11. When you perform or display Taiwanese glove puppetry to a foreigner audience is there a danger of cultural displacement?

There's not. Well the concept is very broad, the concept of 'foreigner'. There are different levels in Taiwanese society. For me, small children are like little foreigners because they're so out of touch with traditional culture. So you need to analyze your audience all the time. Of course there's basic knowledge of Taiwanese puppeteers and the scene and everything. It's not exactly that they will know much more about the storylines because they know all the stories. They probably know the characters better so there is a basic understanding. It's more advanced.

We try to analyze every audience. Basically we make every exhibition a three level audience approach. We make it accessible to children, families and experts or people who have read a little bit more about it. So that's the basic idea. Everything in the exhibition we make is thinking about the person who doesn't know very much about the subject.

12. What do you think of Pili? Why are they more popular than puppet museums or performances?

I'm happy they exist. It's a totally fascinating story. They're marketing, branding is impressive. People are so into them. Television is very difficult to compete with. That's the problem of live theater.

13. What was the museum's Touch Taiwan project with shadow puppetry? You worked with Aboriginal stories?

Yeah we asked the tribes to give us their stories. We wrote a play in Chinese, gave it back to the tribe, they translated it into their native language. Then we went back and the children performed it for their own tribe in their tribal language.

[Stephanie Huffman] Aboriginal culture didn't have puppets originally?

No. It was my idea because I remember everything I did in elementary school in French or other languages. So you remember the songs you learned, you remember the theater pieces very well. It's a great way to learn a language. It was sort of a theater native language project that lasted three years. We published a documentary, two books.

14. You're working with the French culture association in March and performing the French Sailor play?

Yeah, we'll just perform yeah. It's the French month around the world.

[Stephanie Huffman] Did you get approached for that?

Yeah they saw the show.

15. Do you think that puppets can be used as cultural diplomacy?

Absolutely. Especially for Taiwan. We've done it around the world, 50 countries. It works very well as soft power.

16. What was the audience feedback for the shows you took abroad?

It's always been quite positive. Slowly, you're getting more and more recognition because we're not the only group going out. Now there's lots of groups. People have studied this type of theater.

17. What do you think is the future of Taiwan glove puppetry?

I don't see many big changes. As long as there's not going to be a school or education program things will just continue. Not much, I don't see anything creative or new coming out, the new shows of course but so so.

18. Do you have any museum statistics?

I don't think so.

19. Is it hard to travel because China's pressuring so much?

No. We don't notice anything; we're just too small. We're flying under the radar.

7.5 Kim Siebert Interview

Interview with Kim Siebert
2019-04-11, 12:30-1:34pm, Personal interview

1. How can museums foster cultural diplomacy?

I would say cultural diplomacy in a way is a summary of the museum's functions. Because that's happening on many different levels. If you are doing a good job of representation you would be including the community in the formulation of your exhibitions and content if at all possible. Presumably your identity as a cultural institution would also include identifying yourself in an international context. Local cultures are a microcosm of something bigger.

For example if you're talking about Taiwan it's always in relation to say Southeast Asia or Mainland [China]. Or indigenous as opposed to immigrant, indigenous as opposed to colonial. You need to identify yourself in that context for whatever project for whatever you say. You might be able to purchase an object, you might get an objection through donation, but that does not make that artifact yours, which obviously resonates with cultural identity. You don't claim that cultural identity if you're smart unless it really is your own. Every single nuance of difference and sameness should be on some level acknowledged and negotiated if you're doing a good job. It might not be overt, but it should be in the process.

I don't see how else you can negotiate heritage. I feel very strongly about it. And as I said before, I moved from being a curator of African art at the South African National Gallery at that point and at that very first interview I said I want to find a replacement because I come from a white settler community and I don't want to be in that position of representing an African continent. Not in my country which was facing democratic elections for the first time. So that's why I elected to move into conservation. By conserving heritage I would be able to support a new generation of debate, discussion and contextualizing. To hold onto a position when at that time there was such a dominance of white academics-I just felt I could not do it. I could not uncritically join those ranks in an opportunistic way, no matter how much I'd actually been part of a voice that had expanded the acquisition policy of the national gallery to move out of a Eurocentric framework.

2. How do museum's act as contact zones?

That's what that was. This was in the 1990s when certain white curators were taking up positions as curators of African art were people beginning to express this in the community and in America for example. So it's been interesting that like twenty or thirty years later [people are] saying is she really the best candidate?

One thing that is very clear to me is that you cannot separate the integrity and the values of the people involved. It is your willingness to negotiate. The distinctions of who is witnessing, who is observing, that changes the dynamics of what is happening in front of them. So much is about curation and collection development. As a conservator that's why we worked so hard in the costume exhibition to include a puppeteer in our presentation. It was absolutely central to our positioning as conservators because we don't want to have a hierarchical relationship. We want to have a relationship of fluidity and conversation.

We discuss methodology and approaches because when you're working in conservation as a very new profession, developing ethics and methodology, such as preventive conservation, is so important. Where you look at the whole environment rather than this emphasis on restoration, to really preserve the object as much as possible including things like deposits of dust and dirt and wear and tear to show that integrity of the process of a living object.

3. How do museums create effective space for cultural exchange?

What a conservator is doing is they are preserving an object so that there will be many multigenerational discussions about that object. To see yourself as having the last word on anything is very arrogant and short sighted.

[Stephanie Huffman] So you are keeping the door open for conversation?

Completely. This is why there's sometimes a loggerhead between a curator with a very strong will and vision and a conservator because the conservator is hoping to keep the backdoor open for many different discussions. This idea of this is the most important object in the collection-the conservator knows, and certainly some museum professionals know as well, and appreciates that there are things that can emerge in museum collections that become important that we would never anticipate. So in terms of collection management and how you understand your collection you really have to be terribly aware of the bias of an ideology of a particular age. You want to be very open to any possible nuance, to keep that possibility in mind.

4. Why are puppets valuable items for international travelling exhibitions (ITEs) and for cross-cultural collaborations? When the museum had an exhibition in South Africa was that an ITE?

It was and was government funded with local institutions. This museum has used a lot of that and has been quite successful in securing that kind of funding. So obviously this museum is seen to be doing that quite effectively. And I think it was particularly important because we had puppeteers, we had a performance company and we had a museum collection. We could build a very deep and complex program for a foreign institution and represent Taiwan very well. We also had the strength of a director [Ruizendaal] who has an academic profile as a recognized scholar in the field of puppetry. And his fluidity in French, German, English and of course Chinese. That's very important-that fluidity in the director is certainly a strength.

For Taiwan they [ITEs] are very important because they seem to be...so there was a survey...where people chose. That surprised us. That was after the museum was started. That was a very nice surprise to see that Taiwanese people generally would identify a puppet as being an emblem in a way that represented Taiwanese-ness.

5. What is the difference between a larger museum such as the National Palace Museum and a smaller museum like the TAPTM engaging in ITEs?

The collection of the National Palace Museum has a very specific history with the KMT government. And they are the National Palace Museum so it's always a sensitive and political collection. You cannot avoid it. You might detract from that by focusing on thematic exhibition in your curation but essentially it's a very specific collection of a very specific history. And that is Mainland Chinese so that's a different meaning.

I think that this institution has this range of responses which is puppetry, education and the authority of the collection with a world recognized scholar. The internationalness has put it in a very strong position. Paul Lin was saying we are a museum of international reputation. We have clearly delivered so much of that in regards to travel and transculturalism. We have been successful because we have managed to secure government funding time and time again for exactly this. And we've done it again, we'll be going to a museum in Toledo, Spain next year.

It's difficult to compare the National Palace with a puppet museum. You don't understand a puppet until it's activated in a performance. Where's the National Palace Museum there are artifacts that might be functional, they might be beautiful, but they're also and always have been about taste and contemplation. This highly discerning artifacts of a very important legacy through control and leadership. It's weighted completely differently.

I think for Taiwan to export puppetry is so much easier-it's family friendly and it's dynamic. It literally moves. If you're giving it, if you're presenting it through performance. And storytelling is inherent in it.

[Stephanie Huffman] Even though it could lead to political discussions it's not overtly political.

It's not in your face.

6. When museums create an exhibition of Taiwanese puppetry, or host a Taiwanese ITE, how have they balanced the display of the physical object with the corresponding narrative and history of the object?

It depends on the kind of museum. With the National Gallery in Capetown it was minimal and I felt it was a less successful exhibition because of that. I think we had too many objects. I think when you want to move towards a more sculptural focus on puppetry then you really have to present objects in isolation and really develop this idea of contemplating a single object without context. It's a different way of looking rather than this clustering. We were doing that in South Africa and I think it was less successful. I think the room was too crowded. It needed serious editing in my opinion. But I come from a fine art background. That was my old institution. I'm very used to a fine art context.

Clustering of many objects of particularly traditions and even a set-one of the strengths of this collection is that we have collected sets. The narrative I have always felt was extremely successful here.

In fact I like small museums because for me there is a kind of humanity to a small museum, if they are well presented and well conceived, especially in the public galleries. A big museum can be very much like a mall in the sense that it's exhausting. If you are a visitor from out of town where you can't return regularly to see updated galleries, people feel they have to get their bucks worth. They trudge through the whole huge monolith of an institution which is a huge meal that leaves you exhausted in the end. Hence the success of the dining halls and the coffee shops in museums. So with a small museum it's more like a really good perfectly sized meal.

[Stephanie Huffman] It always feels to me like it's more intimate even if it's more crowded.

I think that this sort of storytelling in the curation, Robin's storytelling with the designer Raintree, I think there's a lovely quality. And that certainly attracted me to this museum at the beginning. So I'm very interested in small museums and those who do it well. There are more smaller museums than big museums actually. I don't think that being a small museum is something to apologize for. I think it's a lot about connoisseurship. It's interesting when you say it feels intimate. It's like holding a little *Netsuke* in your hand. [Japanese toggle] It is an intimate relationship. If it's working really well you're able to examine a small subject. There's small museums that allow you to have more in depth relationships with particular subjects or angles. Not that big museums can't do that, of course they can do that. But I'm just saying they usually have multiple shows. And a whole bank of curators and traveling shows. It's a different thing.

7. Is there an exchange of power inherent in cross-cultural collaboration?

It depends on who's at the table. You can mess it up! Well look at the genuflecting that's Germany's doing now to Africa. [The Linden Museum returned artifacts belonging to Chief Hendrik Witbooi to Namibia in February 2019.] And the British Museum is a perfect example of egg on your face and really arguments that are so insulting to the nations of origin. [There have been numerous controversies involving the British Museum collection in regards to the country's colonial past.]

[Stephanie Huffman] What's necessary to do it well?

You have to have some empathy to start with, it would help if you weren't arrogant. And there's also this issue of who's funded the most. Because there's a legacy loosely of colonialism or war or some huge macro context which is why you are not already embedded in the institution. Why do you need this relationship with an outsider? It's because you're not represented within. Do you know what I mean?

You have the capacity to represent if you have black curators and women curators and Chinese curators and whatever in these great institutional collections. So you build up your authority through partnerships. Because I'm trying to highlight the tension. To not always place it with the communities that are obviously being consulted with but to look at who is initiating that relationship and why. So there's a shortfall in internal representation. It's not only going in and getting the data that you want. I would say it's an acknowledgement that there's a shortfall. So you have got to complement yourself with the respectful relationship not just a relationship of acquisition. Acquisition of data-if you're doing consultation without this kind of power relationship you'll be very happy.

8. Is new culture created when two different cultures collaborate?

To add your team of advisers and if they're non advisers they would be partners. How much better to have partners? So that's where Rosie and I were at, that we wanted a paper [and exhibition] that was a partnership with the puppeteers. We could say we consulted with certain puppeteers. But you know this is a person who has an academic background, why shouldn't he be represented in the paper with us? I mean we all are involved in preservation there's no question about that. So it's very much about who frames the relationship. And how inclusive you're going

to allow that relationship to be. So it's a decision you make. And if you're very conventional you're not going to be inclusive.

9. How do we measure the impact of an international travelling exhibitions (ITEs) and cross-cultural artistic collaborations?

Well, I think there's...first of all it would be difficult to do that. How do you quantify that? I don't know. And sometimes when you're exposed to a culture for the first time...I find I'm particularly interested in puppetry because I think puppetry has tremendous and ancient gravitas. And sacred functions. Really any three dimensional figurative and symbolic piece of sculpture can be compared to a puppet in a way. A puppet is an animated form and that is profound because if you look at the functions of puppets often they are embodying deities, sacred energies, ritual, community continuity, life or death and the future. And the safety of a community. There are many, many things that puppets are able to embody because these experiences of life, sometimes mysterious and dangerous. Who else better to embody those ideas than a moving puppet? It's so much more universal and fluid than a person would be for example. It offers possibilities that are profound.

10. In regards to cross-cultural collaborations is there a danger of glove puppetry going through cultural displacement?

Because of this Eurocentric way that we've framed heritage we have this hierarchical framework where paintings are more important than embroideries. Where a pot does not have the same gravitas necessarily as a figure of a deity for example. We inherit these things and puppetry because it's practiced by marginalized communities like theater performers, the heritage of theater performers in most societies have not necessarily been revered. In some cases they have been-there have been important performances that have been linked with the elites, palace performances to royalty and so on. But often puppetry is about the hoi polloi, often it's been a vehicle for political critique of the status quo. Because it has these improvised opportunities for the puppeteer to express something in more traditional storytelling and so on. The little local flavors that have always made performances more interesting and edgy.

It's almost like because the way that it's structured and because certain art is valued more than others or communities it's almost like how can you measure the value of this. We have to change the entire paradigm of measurement. It's also interesting to look at the Mingei movement in Japan during the 1930s. There were a small group of intellectuals in Japan, including Bernard Leach who's an English potter, and Shoji Hamada. And they started like William Morris in the 19th century in England identifying local unknown craftsmen as being a profound expression of local culture. And they saw it at risk. The impact of industrialization and internationalism that was moving through as markets were opening up and moving through societies. They started writing critically about this and collecting so that whole Mingei movement evolved. Some people have said that it served Japanese fascist imperial ideas in the end so they're very critical of it but it has a mixed flavor about it. That is not overt but they weren't particularly uncritical either. So it's complicated but this idea of living treasures, people that embody [that], is very much from that movement.

[Stephanie Huffman] How do you put a price tag on a living treasure?

Well that's the thing, you can't. But we know in Taiwan that's a very sensitive issue. Because like Master Chen his state pension is not a living wage. So we give him the title but we don't give him, and he's in his 80's now, we don't give him respect in terms of enumeration. So somehow he's supposed to miraculously survive even though he's eeked out a magnificently rich craft on the fringes of society. So he's obviously not a wealthy person. So respect is also about taking care of people in real terms I think. There's sort of these gaps. It's not thought through, it's not thorough. Only when it's finally lost and that's also why the idea of the Mingei. So puppetry would fit so well with it.

11. With the museum ITE's that you have participated in, how do you think the audience was affected?

This is part of the reason why I use the Japanese model. If I say Japanese puppetry everybody is like Bunraku. It's very well known. Not everybody might know about Bunraku, but they'll know about Kabuki and then you could say, did you know and they'll say oh I get it. If you say Chinese puppetry to many people outside of Taiwan or Asia they're absolute blank. And we know that because when we've made publications like our Thames & Hudson book that was the first. So there have been Chinese publications and Chinese scholars who have focused on puppetry but not international scholars, not translations that are going into English for example or French. It's a subgroup of a subgroup of a subgroup. It's coming in through the back door. From that point of view I think this collection is profound. Because for many people it will be the first exposure and I'm very sure that they will be pleasantly surprised. I have every conviction that a visitor would be potentially as moved as I am by the collection.

[Stephanie Huffman] For me it felt like it was this whole world that has existed for a very long time it was almost like discovering a secret treasure that I had no idea was there.

We can talk about some sixteenth century Chinese documents that refer to puppetry but we know that they must go back further. They don't arrive in the sixteenth century [fully formed]. And some of us might even brazenly believe like I do that somehow European puppetry had some exposure to Chinese puppetry. For example that white face of the clown is associated with the white patch of the clown of the Chinese puppets. Maybe the characters and their combative style of Punch of Judy. Caragus has a mocking clown, the clown characters in Chinese puppetry are a central sub-theme. Maybe even Shakespeare was influenced by puppetry? I don't know. These links we can't energize them again with evidence. But I wonder about these things. I would not underestimate the influence of these puppets.

Just like there's the swazil. Now the fact that that is in street performers [mouths] in China and in street performers [mouths] on the beaches of England. How does that connection get made? It's too weird. And it's street theater. These are people that have not gotten formal education necessarily. They are really surviving entertainers, they have all this spunk and creativity and passion of somebody who survives by entertainment. They don't get documented. They're very fluid. And difficult to track. For me there is so much to say [regarding puppets]. There's so much still to explore.

12. How can these museums, these contact zones, be used to increase global awareness or legitimacy of Taiwan?

For example, what we worked on for the *Potehi* book³⁰ was the fact that puppetry is an import. The indigenous people of Taiwan did not use puppets, they used other means for communicating and celebrating their heritage. So it's an imported art form. Taiwan puppetry is in a context of a diaspora. So the *Potehi* book was so important because Mainland China has its own story and in the 20th century there's the impact of the Cultural Revolution which challenged Daoism, and what they saw as superstition in a very critical way. So that really devastated the continuity of expressions. So what we find is there's continuity in the diaspora that is no longer in China. And which is very much where Taiwan is placed. And then we have the nuances within that diaspora as each community has addressed local needs and evolution and continuity in different ways. Based on the strengths on the performers who were there.

Before the Cultural Revolution there was tremendous exchange both of puppeteers and of skills. People could order puppets from Mainland China and all of these wonderful exchanges. When the Cultural Revolution happened there was a freeze over so severe that some puppeteers were basically misplaced and never got to see their families in China for the rest of their lives if they happened to be in Taiwan for example. And also the performing diaspora had to evolve those skills for themselves. And that was based on the strengths and weaknesses of that overseas community. And that's where the differences have emerged. Some performance companies just kept their old puppets and repainted them so the core puppet is hardly recognizable. But actually the core carving is inside, maybe it's a hundred years old but it looks like a contemporary painted refashioning of the characters. Other cultures managed because they had puppets in performing companies. They had skilled carpenters and carvers who did a very good job of creating new puppets.

And so the stylization evolved-the new puppets, the new generation. And Taiwan just went ballistic. It upscaled, it went disco, it went psychedelic, it went fireworks, it just went bling bling. It just had this incredible inclusive approach which made it exceptional through the Golden Era. And then of course there's also the taste for the more traditional puppets that have also continued here which Master Chen expresses so well. He has been taking on apprentices so he's shared a lot of those skills whenever he could.

13. How does success abroad help Taiwanese museums and puppeteers back home?

I would say so because it's exposing the puppeteers in an interesting way to a new audience. What is happening in Taiwan, and we see it with the spectrum of visitors to the museum, is that it's related to in a very warm way by Taiwanese. Because in fact puppets are so complex that they could well be something that adults would respond to as they have in the past. Certainly in China and also in Taiwan when you were commissioning performances from either an opera company or a puppet company it's not only that the puppet company employed less number of people and was cheaper. Actually there's a certain kind of client that loves puppetry more than they like opera. It's also about personal taste. So there's some sort of connoisseurship there that we have from the past. It's about taste, personal taste. Not only about bottom line business. So I think it's quite nuanced actually. There's not any major museum that has puppets in its collection that doesn't know about us intimately-from the Smithsonian to the Branly. All the major puppet museums know our collection, scholars know our collection.

³⁰ Fushiki, K., & Ruizendall, R. (2016). *Potehi: Glove puppet theatre in Southeast Asia and Taiwan*. Taipei: Taiyuan Publishing.

14. How does glove puppetry reflect Taiwan's evolving identity?

Of course now performances are very much tied up with the continuity of temple culture and Daoism as experienced in Taiwan. And I would say the continuity of performance cannot be separated from temple culture. This preference of puppetry being used to perform to ancestors is very important. That the taste could change and when you're entertaining your ancestors you choose not to show them puppetry anymore because they didn't like puppetry. Then it might evolve in a different way. So it's a bit edgy. I would like to speak to a Taiwanese Daoist about that more. That we could get to a point where and we are already seeing that, we're not seeing as many puppet performances in the countryside as we did in the past.

15. What I'm finding with Pili is overseas non-Chinese speaking fans don't understand the language but they love the show so much. They make efforts to reach out to people, like in Taiwan, befriending them so that they can discuss the show.

That's good to hear because Pili puppets are not linked with Daoism so much. They might be inspired by the Daoist traditional characters in some way but they also have this kind of manga, Southeast Asian, cosplay...that sort of Golden Ray ability to just absorb anything that's working for your audiences. This willingness to unshackle yourself from cultural characters-they are very innovative. And in fact puppetry always has been. This willingness to reinvent something. So there will be a traditional repertoire but you're always open to doing something new.

16. How have international travelling exhibitions (ITEs) helped Taiwan become more connected to the world museumscape?

For us, it's a process. So first of all there would be an Asian focus, it's very much a Vancouver thing. The museum of anthropology has approached us many times and been inclusive of our support programs. Not necessarily our exhibits. So we sort of come through the back door in a way with the dynamics of our performing company. And our ability to understand what museums might want because we're a museum ourselves.

7.6 Dr. Terry Silvio Interview

Interview with Dr. Terry Silvio

2019-03-20, 2:00-3:11pm, Personal interview

1. How did you become interested in Taiwanese puppetry?

When I was an undergrad I was studying at a college with a theater department. I was in the English department-I wrote about the theater. I got really interested in cross gendered performance so my PhD topic was Gezaixi, Taiwanese Opera.

2. So you focused on Taiwanese Opera with gender changes first?

So that's really a female dominated form. Women are the actors, the musicians are men but the performers are women. The audiences, the fans are women. If you've got a big temple festival, they have a lot of stages. They have a Gezaixi stage, an opera stage, on one side, a puppet stage on the other side. There will be all women on one side and then the other side will be watching

puppets with the older men. I had thought for my next project I'll do puppetry because then I will look at masculine forms.

But then I saw Pili on TV and I was like this is way more. Because one of the reasons I was interested in the opera was because it was televised. It's gone now but it used to be each station had their own troupe. The way it was filmed blew me away because it was different than anything I had seen. Basically it looked like an ancient costumed soap opera but people would just burst into song. It's like the filming techniques were strict soap opera and there were voiceovers of characters speaking. Then all of a sudden they would start singing plus all the men are played by women. When I saw the puppets on TV it was amazing, unlike anything I've seen. I decided to study Pili and found out that my assumptions about gender were completely wrong. Because most of the fans were women. Not most of the fans. The passive fans who just watch are 50/50. But fans who form fan clubs or fan fiction, it's mostly women. So that's how I got into it.

3. In your Remedial and Globalization article you focused on the inner activity of the Pili community and how they created horizontal networks as opposed to vertical networks. How do these horizontal networks help enable cross-cultural collaborations or contacts?

The thing that's different with the chapter since I wrote that three years ago, the Pili company did a collaboration with a really famous animator.

[Stephanie Huffman] The one in Japan?

Yes, the one in Japan. *Thunderbolt Fantasy* suddenly gave them an international audience that was really not there before. There was a little bit. Some of my friends who read my stuff started watching Pili and who don't read Chinese could occasionally find fans subs of videos online. But not much and it's not always well done. Because it's not from the Pili company. These are just fansubs, mostly by Taiwanese Americans. There have been fansubs in dozens of languages- Romanian, French Spanish, Eastern European ones. I haven't looked at all of them. So that had a much more international reach than anything they'd done before. Some people hated it because a lot of the new people watch because they're fans of the Japanese anime creator and don't like the puppets. Some of them did like it. So there are a lot of these fans in Japan.

4. Do you know of any statistical or empirical data about puppetry?

Actually, the *Thunderbolt Fantasy* was on the Crunchyroll streaming service in the US. I haven't seen the second one. They did the first series, it was 13 episodes of *Thunderbolt Fantasy*. They made two versions. They were the same visually but there were two voices. One was in Taiwanese and the other had voiceovers in Japanese by professional Japanese actors. The Taiwan one it was the Huang sons. And the second series came out which I haven't seen. They didn't do a Taiwanese version but just a Japanese one with Chinese subtitles. I don't know if they did English subtitles. I think they might have because it showed in the US. If you can get to US services it should be on Crunchyroll, a mostly animation service. It's animation online.

Huang Chin wang was the CEO of Pili. It was his son that directed *Thunderbolt Fantasy* for the Taiwan part. The script was in Japanese. Gen Urobuchi wrote the script in Japanese and they had it translated into Chinese and then it went to Pili and Pili shot it. Then it went back to Japan for

subtitling and Japanese dubbing. But I know that I found an article that Huang Liang-Hsun did go to a few overseas anime cons [conventions].

[Stephanie Huffman] That's the video I saw of him on a Seattle morning talk show.

Yes he went to Sakura-Con.

5. Could Taiwan Pili team up with a Western company and produce a hybridization in a similar vein to *Thunderbolt Fantasy*?

I don't know if they're thinking of that. Once they sold the rights to be edited and they mixed the themes up.

[Stephanie Huffman] And the fans were very upset.

Yes it was a butchering. I think they feel they got burned by that and they don't want that to happen again. Part of it is traditional ideology. Westerners don't get the genre. They don't understand the Chinese genre. Japanese people do. They're used to it. They feel like working with China and Japan is the easiest. Except in China you can't make money. They have tons of Mainland fans. Taiwanese Pili fans started complaining because they felt the Mainland fans were taking over the fan clubs. Which wouldn't really matter except there are a lot of votes to choose your favorite character and the favorite character gets more tie in products.

But they can't find a way to distribute in the Mainland to make money. It may be different now with the Great Firewall and all these crackdowns. But it used to be people in the Mainland would just get them the same day, the new episodes the same day as Taiwan. So in the Mainland they made money mostly from puppets and selling tie in products. Like not from the stuff that could be copied and screened. They tried getting their stuff on screenings in China and it was a long and laborious process that didn't work because they have to go through censors there and it's considered too violent and doesn't pass the censors.

[Stephanie Huffman] So it's not worth it?

That was about six years ago so maybe the situation in the Mainland has changed a lot. They need a cultural diplomacy initiative because they're hoping they would have more international series. Their 4,000 episodes series have the most complicated plots.

6. What makes puppetry effective as a tool of cultural diplomacy?

In some ways *Thunderbolt Fantasy* works in part because they did a movie earlier that they kind of wanted to try to get a more international audience. *The Arti* with a robot.

[Stephanie Huffman] The one before *Thunderbolt Fantasy*?

Yes, they added a lot of Disney elements. They had CGI. It was kind of a flop. I think *Thunderbolt Fantasy* worked better because they gave up, there were sort of internal arguments in the company, about what constitutes the appeal, what mood do we want, what kind of audience do we want to go for. Because some people really wanted Disney as the model, a big

hit that would go for the most general audience possible. Something that would appeal to a much younger audience than the Pili series, the original Pili series. And that resulted in this wooden robot film. It's hard to tell why it failed. There were a lot of reasons.

With *Thunderbolt Fantasy* some people say it succeed because of Gen Urobuchi . He's really famous and he has a lot of fans in Japan and across the world. If you're into anime he's a big guy. That was part of it. But part of it also was that they went with that audience. I think they gave up on trying to attract a family audience. They were like it's ok if it's a subculture audience. In Japan we'll go with the same audience that watches it in Taiwan even if there's fewer of them. But it worked because it's basically in terms of what its appeal is and how it is related to fan culture. It's right there in the overlap between Pili fans and anime fans. Like the thing they have in common is all in *Thunderbolt Fantasy*. You have a plot that's really open to fan fiction because there's mostly male characters and they have ambiguous relationships and that can be fantasized and developed in fanfiction and that's a really big thing. It's on multimedia platforms and they put out a manga in Japanese. There were tie in products and puppets. Basically I think it worked because they went the anime route. As opposed to the Disney route.

[Stephanie Huffman] Anime trumps Disney.

As a business model, promoting it as anime with puppets.

[Stephanie Huffman] That makes sense. Even in America, there's such an anime subculture of fans.

Because most of the staff, and certainly the writers that I met, the younger writers over the years have all been big fans of anime. They are all familiar with it.

7. How can puppet companies attract new fans while staying true to the original aesthetics of puppetry? Can you balance both?

I think it's hard. I feel like both Pili and anime fans would both like *Thunderbolt Fantasy*. The Pili fans who liked *Thunderbolt Fantasy* felt like it was the quality of writing they remembered as being the best of Pili. Some of the plot and quality of the dialogue is more like what Pili used to be so they really liked it, a revitalization with a famous Japanese writer. So they saw it as a Pili style puppet series with a quality of writing that they remembered as being the best of Pili. Anime fans who came to it because it was written by Gen Urobuchi some of them couldn't deal with the puppets. But those who liked it were like this is really cool. It's like a new kind of 2.5D or 2D.

8. You wrote about changes in the Pili fan base in the 1990s. In 2019 how is the fan base different?

It's not that very different than it was years ago One sort of new development is that there is more puppetry series now. There's two more. Pili has a rival now. There's another series. They took the characters from the 1970s *Shi Yan-wen*, their father's show, and they rebooted those characters, some of them, into a new series.

There's another one that's a segway. The rival series is by another son of the father and it started as a reboot of *Shi Yan-wen*. Those characters still sometimes appear but they developed another new set of characters. So they have rivals now. That's kind of hard. Some of the fans switched over and some of their writers went. So that's one thing that's changed-there is more. There are more fans. Puppetry has become a fandom category. They're called onlys. Instead of having annual cons, like CWT, Comics World Taiwan, the big conventions at the Jingmei or Taida or those ones. But fans of one series or a certain type of series will often have their own smaller events to exchange fan fiction and art with just one set of characters. So with Budaixi they have a big Budaixi fan con.

9. There are Pili fans from different countries communicating with each other. How much Taiwan knowledge is seeping into these conversations through their shared love of puppetry?

I have not done any research on that. But yes, I've been curious about that. I know it's happening in Taiwan. I did look at that a little bit to find out how *Thunderbolt Fantasy* was being received. Fred Patten is an American writer who started in science fiction. He wrote on how Japanese anime and manga got big in Taiwan despite the fact that the Japanese producers were totally uninterested in an international audience. It was basically fans who made that happen. He documents how it started with a few fans who had either lived overseas in Japan or Japanese Americans. They had these VHS tapes that they brought back and they took them and showed them in the middle of some Star Trek con and it slowly built up. I think that *Thunderbolt Fantasy* started the ball rolling.

[Stephanie Huffman] On FB you have people talking to each other about *Thunderbolt Fantasy*. It's like their inspired to do it because of their shared love of this puppet show and I find that really interesting.

Yeah that is really very interesting. I would also be interested in what they later become fans of, like Gen Urobuchi's work in anime. Like they get into the genre. Because those are all potentials. If you watch *Thunderbolt Fantasy* and you've never seen anything like it before there's all these directions it could take you. One of them is puppetry, and that style of puppetry.

10. In regards to Taiwan's political situation, how does Taiwanese puppetry honor Chinese tradition while also developing its own Taiwanese voice?

I don't think they see it that way. As I recall when I interviewed Huang about it he was more in the cultural proximity discourse. He was basically like we have the same history, we have the same culture, so it's easy to sell it to China and Chinese people like it. But he also said they have Budaixi in Fujian too but they don't innovate. You look at puppet shows in China and that's what we were doing forty years ago. It doesn't matter where you come from it matters where you go. Pili doesn't have to emphasize it's Taiwanese because it's developed in Taiwan. It's clearly different than anything developed in the Mainland. And it would be hard to pinpoint what's Taiwanese about it. Because their father Huang father is a national treasure, of course it's so obvious to them what's Taiwanese about it.

I interviewed fans in the Mainland about what they liked about it. I don't think of it as particularly Taiwanese but Taiwanese do. People in the Mainland think Taiwan is China so they

just think it's Chinese. I think they might dub over it in Mandarin but I can't remember if it's official. But I remember some of the fans wanted official subtitles. They're willing to read the subtitles.

11. Would English subtitles work?

It's hard. It costs money. I'm pretty sure the English translation subtitles for *Thunderbolt Fantasy* were done in Japan. They were based on the Japanese script.

12. Do you know of any other examples of puppetry creating dialogue with other countries?

Well if you know Robin you know most of them. They do international productions. The traditional puppetry stuff like Li Tien-lu had French students.

[Stephanie Huffman] With the traditional puppets, the TECO offices in the US uses them for exhibitions. When Tsai Ing-wen went to LA they had the traditional puppets and she talked to Taiwanese Americans and they played with puppets together.

I think other puppeteers travel. They have international puppet conferences in Taiwan where they've had puppeteers come from other countries. The movies too. *Puppetmaster* was a big international one. And the *Red Box*. It did show internationally.

My impression is that compared with the North American Taiwan studies cultural diplomacy is a much bigger focus for the European scholars interested in Taiwan. The European Association of Taiwan Studies has a Taiwan studies program and journal.

13. What do you think about the future of Taiwanese puppetry and of Pili?

I think that it's going to be tied up with the future of Japanese manga and anime fandom. Not necessarily directly but at least indirectly. The Pili fandom is very much modeled after the Japanese fandom, like structurally they're similar. Because of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* there's a lot of overlap. The Huang brothers are grooming their children to take over. Their sons and daughters are directing and producing. So there will be a generational shift that will segway gradually, the same way it did when they took over from their father. Be willing to spend the money and the time on translation. Do more of that in Japanese and English.

14. With the changing of the guard, are the next generation of fans becoming more vocal?

Pili has always had a close relationship with fans. Like most of the people who work at Pili started off as fans. It's very similar to Japan.

7.7 Data from Facebook Page Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀

I collected data from the Facebook page Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀³¹ (FoTF) to analyze for evidence of cross-cultural communication about Taiwanese glove puppetry. A Facebook fan page is an online social media page that acts as a public group. Similar to an online forum, pages can be created for multiple purposes such as pages dedicated to movies, television shows or bands. Fans of a particular show join the associated page by liking it. Unlike online

³¹ <https://www.facebook.com/TourikenYuuki/>

groups, fan pages are visible to the public and are not officially connected to the show or band they are promoting. After liking the page, fans will then receive notifications in their Facebook feed to alert them of new activity on the page. FoTF is not an official promotion of the Pili company. There are numerous Budaixi websites online and within Facebook. I have chosen Fans of Thunderbolt Fantasy specifically because it was created by a Pili fan in the United States by a native English speaker. It was created on October, 24, 2017, after *Thunderbolt Fantasy* Season One had premiered but well before Season Two had been released³². Additionally, this fan page was chosen because it has intentionally been made for English speaking fans of the Pili show *Thunderbolt Fantasy*. The group describes itself as an “English-language fan page for Thunderbolt Fantasy (a scrumptious blend of anime action and Taiwanese puppetry from Gen Urobuchi and Pili).” (Fans of *Thunderbolt Fantasy* 東離劍遊紀)

Posts on the fan page followed a general pattern. The administrator of the group created original posts on the page and the fan page community responded by clicking on positive icons such as like or love buttons, sharing the posts to their personal Facebook page or by making a written comment to the original post. Of the fifteen months examined, posts were made in eleven of them. Sixty eight original posts were made during this period, plus additional corresponding comments made to the initial posts. Reception of these original posts were received in various ways, ranging from numerous comments left by individual fans of the page to no comments and merely posts views. All posts centered around the show *Thunderbolt Fantasy*. Post subject matter varied over several topics centered around the series from trailers for the upcoming (at the time of posting) Season Two to discussion of individual episodes to fan handmade art. Posts were assessed for evidence of cross-cultural communication and for popularity among the fanbase. The country of origin of the posts were ascertained by examining the poster’s individual Facebook page.

³² *Thunderbolt Fantasy* Season One premiered July 8, 2016; Season Two premiered October 1, 2018.