

**Capturing the Place:
Location Shooting, Medium and Politics
in Shaw Brothers' *Moonlight Serenade* (1967)**

Kathy Yim-king MAK
Art History, UCLA

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In memory of Sir Run Run Shaw (1907-2014)
and Yen Chun (1917-1980)

For the film production company Shaw Brothers (Hong Kong) Limited 邵氏兄弟 (香港)有限公司,¹ the Cold War, especially during the 1960s, marks a period of experimentation with location shooting overseas. Location shooting refers to the practice of filming on an existing locale. Unlike filming in studios where soundstages or back lots are used, location shooting takes place in a less controlled environment in exchange for a more physically genuine setting. Prior scholarship has described the company's investment, in the 1960s, in the construction of Movietown, where film sets such as historic towns and villages were built to provide settings for films in genres such as *huangmeidiao* 黃梅調 (opera drama) and *wuxia pian* 武俠片 (martial arts).² Less has been written, however, about the studio's active exploration of filming locations in East Asia during the late 1950s and the 1960s.³

¹ For the industrial history and relevant discussions of the studio, see Wong Ain-ling ed., *Shao shi dianying chutan* 邵氏電影初探 (The Shaw screen: a preliminary study; Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2003), available in both English and Chinese; Liao Jinfeng et al. eds., *Shao shi yingshi diguo – wenhua Zhongguo de xianxiang* 邵氏影視帝國——文化中國的想像 (The film empire of Shaw Brothers – imagining the cultural China; Taipei: Maitian chubanshen, 2003); and Liu Hui and Fu Poshek eds., *Xianggang de “Zhongguo” Shao shi dianying* 香港的“中國”邵氏電影 (The “Chinese” films in Shaw, Hong Kong; Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2011).

² Located in Clear Water Bay, Hong Kong, Shaw Brothers Limited's Movietown was constructed in two different phases: from 1957 to 1961, and from 1964 to 1967. It had provided altogether twelve film studios, enabling simultaneous shooting of several films. See Chung Po-yin, “Xiongdì qiye de gongye zhuanbian – Shao shi xiongdì he Shao shi jigou” 兄弟企業的工業轉變——邵氏兄弟和邵氏機構 (The industrial transformation of the brotherly enterprise – the Shaw Brothers and Shaw organization), in Wong Ain-ling ed., 7; Chen Meiling, “Shao shi xiongdì zài Xīngjiāpō - èr líng niándài zhī qīshí niándài” 邵氏兄弟在新加坡——二零年代至七十年代 (Shaw Brothers in Singapore – the 1920s to the 1970s), in Liao Jinfeng et al. ed., 59; and Chung Po-yin, “Da pianchang xiao gushi: Daoyang He Menghua shuo Shao shi dianying de xingshuai” 大片廠小故事: 導演何夢華說邵氏電影的興衰 (Large studio, small story: director He Menghua telling the rise and fall of Shaw films), in Liu Hui and Fu Poshek eds., 108-9.

³ Liu Xiancheng is a one of the few scholars who has discussed Shaw Brothers Limited films shot on-location in Taiwan. See his article, “Shao shi dianying zài Taiwan” 邵氏電影在台灣 (Shaw films in Taiwan), in Liao Jinfeng ed., 134-5. Another scholar is Law Kar, who has briefly discussed Shaw Brothers Limited's practice of shooting overseas in Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, the Philippines, South Korea, and Thailand, in the 1950s and the 1960s, in his article, “Shao shi xiongdì de kua jiè fazhan” 邵氏兄弟的跨界發展 (Transnational development of the Shaw Brothers), in Liao Jinfeng ed., 151-160.

Featuring a majority of outdoor scenes shot in Taiwan in 1966, the Mandarin musical melodrama *Moonlight Serenade* 菁菁, released in Hong Kong in 1967, provides a fertile terrain upon which to investigate the politics of location shooting of Shaw Brothers Limited during the Cold War. The hilly lawn in Kenting Park 墾丁公園 (renamed Kenting National Park 墾丁國家公園 in 1982) in Hengchun 恆春, southern Taiwan, served as the key locale for shooting many of the outdoor scenes of this film. Yen Chun 嚴俊 (1917-1980), the film director, was experienced in utilizing the regional business networks of the film company in East Asia to produce climactic scenes of his films outside of Hong Kong. For instance, in his earlier film *Squadron 77* 七七敢死隊 (1965), a number of the fierce battle scenes were filmed in Taiwan.⁴ His another film, *That Man In Chang-an* 幪面大俠 (1967), had a few scenes shot on location in South Korea.⁵

Unlike these two films, which utilize on-site location as merely a physical platform on which actions take place, *Moonlight Serenade* adopts a variety of cinematic techniques to fully capture the topographic and environmental qualities of the location. These qualities, in Edward Casey's word, fully capture the sense of "place," experienced by the body according to its physical qualities such as color, texture, and depth.⁶ Through an analysis of *Moonlight Serenade*'s cinematic articulation of the qualities of place, this article examines the ways in which the practice of location shooting overseas served as a film production technique, allowing the filmmaker to renew the visual language of an old

⁴ *Xianggang yingpian daquan* 香港影片大全 (Hong Kong Filmography), v. 6 1965-1969 (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Film Archive, 2007), 59.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁶ Edward Casey, *The Fate of Place: a Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 204.

popular film into a new film. By further interpreting how the industrial practice of location shooting intersected with the geopolitics of East Asia during the Cold War, I argue that location shooting overseas could mediate people's conception of nation, despite the triangulated geopolitical dynamics of Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China in the 1960s.

Remaking a Film, Relocating its Setting

Moonlight Serenade is a remake of an older musical melodrama titled, *Golden Phoenix* 金鳳 (1956), directed by Yen Chun a decade earlier, in conjunction with a different production company, the Yung Hwa Motion Picture Studio 永華電影製片廠有限公司, in Hong Kong. These two films basically narrate the same romantic story: the tale of a young shepherdess whose love with a young man meets with difficulty. In *Moonlight Serenade*, the young shepherdess is named Jingjing 菁菁, whereas her lover is called Weisheng 惠生. In *Golden Phoenix*, the shepherdess is named Jin Feng 金鳳, whereas her sweetheart is called Er Niuzi 二牛子. These two film shares a comparative narrative structure: since the young man is unable to completely forget his former lover, the shepherdess, with a broken heart, is forced to marry a local, wealthy middle-aged man. Knowing that the elder brother of her “imposed fiancé” has raped a widow, the shepherdess uses this information to blackmail the elder brother into cancelling the unwanted arranged marriage. To safeguard his secrecy, the elder brother sends an accomplice to threaten the shepherdess to surrender the evidence of his crime. After a fierce scene depicting the running and fighting of the villain, the shepherdess's lover and her friend atop a hill, the shepherdess's friend dies in an attempt to save her.

Despite their shared narrative, these two films demonstrate different approaches in utilizing space and place. Many of the scenes that *Golden Phoenix* set within manmade architectural spaces, such as on a street or in a liquor house (figs. 1-2), were relocated into natural environments in *Moonlight Serenade*. Accordingly, the spatial regularity that once characterized the earlier film was replaced by the vast wilderness of a hilly lawn, green foliage, a blue sky, and white clouds in Kenting Park (figs. 3-4). The senses of place of the location were all captured in vibrant color on the wide screen known as Shawscope, a state-of-the-art film projection technique invented by the Shaw Brothers Limited in the 1960s.⁷

Moving the film's setting into an outdoor environment likely introduced new technical, logistical, and financial demands into the filmmaking process. Among these is the necessity to secure the availability of an ideal—or at least acceptable—location. This process has been eased by the establishment of technical support teams abroad, one of which Shaw Brothers Limited maintained in Taiwan from 1963 to 1966.⁸ The technical skills required to manage outdoor lighting and sound varied from those used in a controlled studio environment. Further complications were introduced when shooting locations were situated far beyond the city border, necessitating an additional budget to transport the production team and to provide actors and crew with accommodations and travel insurance. Due to these factors, the transition to location shooting in *Moonlight Serenade*, the production itinerary of which crossed national borders, can become a

⁷ See the technological advances adopted by Shaw Brothers Limited in the late 1950s and the 1960s in Poshek Fu, "Cold War Politics and Hong Kong Mandarin Cinema," in *The Oxford Handbook of Chinese Cinemas*, ed. Carlos Rojas and Eileen Cheng-yin Chow (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 121.

⁸ Liang Hai-chiang, "Hong Kong Cinema's 'Taiwan Factor'," in *Hong Kong Cinema Retrospective: Fifty Years of Electric Shadows*, ed. Law Kar (Hong Kong: Urban Council, 1997), 153 and 159.

financial and political liability. Additional effort and expense raise the question of what overseas filming might offer, as a counterweight, to the political meaning and quality of the produced film.

The Cinematic Production of Place

The hilly lawn in the Kenting Park that hosted both the idyllic and climactic fight scenes of *Moonlight Serenade* functions as more than a neutral platform for action. Through the effects of cinematography, choreography, editing and sound design, this location is represented as a natural site that bears the fullest sense of place on the wide screen.

Cinematography

In terms of camera distance and angle, Yen Chun opted to capture Jingjing's actions on the green field through extreme long shot (figs. 3-4). This causes her to appear especially small in relation to the surrounding space within the frame. This approach of shooting highlights not the facial expression of the actress, but the visual effect composed by her posture, the blue sky, and the vast wilderness of the natural space. This shooting approach marks a difference from the camerawork of *Golden Phoenix*, wherein relatively closer shots captured in greater detail the facial expressions of the shepherdess, Jin Feng (fig. 5). In the remake, Jingjing's size diminishes in relationship to the green fields surrounding her. This approach of composing the scene engulfs her in the open landscapes of the wilderness, emphasizing a sense of freedom that is sometimes echoed in the loose and liberated bodily gestures of the actress.

Obviously, the long shots of *Moonlight Serenade* give greater visibility to the natural pastures upon which it was captured. The cinematic interest of prioritizing the surrounding space in this remake distinguishes the relationship of the film to its setting from that of its 1950s precedent. Additionally, the dominating trait of the landscape is further enhanced by shots that adopt a lower level and sharper angle, redefining the spatial relations between the shepherdess and the site. The resulting frames raise a greater portion of the actress's body, thereby juxtaposing her figure immediately with the blue sky (figs. 3-4). The tendency to highlight the sky in the remake contrasts sharply with *Golden Phoenix*, in which a constant use of straight-on shooting angles almost eliminates the appearance of the sky entirely (fig. 5). Through its more dynamic camerawork, the remake turns the green lawn and the blue sky into significant visual components of the setting.

Choreography

Apart from the sense of dynamism in the cinematographic work, the technique of choreography on site also calls attention to the role of place within the film. Among the scenes that take place on the hill top, actions are often staged around patches of land within view of a huge igneous rock which stands in the background (figs. 3). The unusual, undulating crest of this monolith lends a recognizable form. The camera further frames its spatial relationship with the actress and the actors, turning it into a recurrent topographic motif in four different scenes: in an early scene of Jingjing anxiously waiting for her lover, Weisheng, while grazing her sheep on the hill; in a scene of her fearlessly confronting two local villains who scared her sheep with their rifles; in a scene depicting Jingjing wandering in a melancholy mood with her flock of sheep upon the lawn; and in

the final fight scene between Weisheng, the Big Head 大頭 (Jingjing's friend), and Zhang Third 張三 (the villain sent by the elder brother of Jingjing's forced fiancé).

The careful choreography of the figures and camera on the site enables this rock to be captured multiple times on screen. For instance, in the scene wherein Jingjing waits for Weisheng upon the hill top, the rock appears directly behind the hill where a flock of sheep and Jingjing stand. This suggests that the rock, the sheep, Jingjing, and the camera were almost aligned on the same axis. Yet, upon hearing the echo of a whistle, which Jingjing suspects to indicate the arrival of her man, she runs to the other side of the hill. On that spot, she is confronted by a panoramic view of the landscape surrounding the same piece of monolithic rock (fig. 6a). In the following series of shots, the rock is presented again, providing a backdrop to Jingjing when she returns to the original spot, and to Weisheng when he appears at the site. The spatial orientation between the rock and these patches of lawn being shot is not clearly presented within the scene. The golden principle of spatial continuity, carefully achieved in many classical Hollywood films through deliberate positioning of the actors and camera, was not dogmatically pursued in the shooting of these scenes.⁹

Paradoxically, the monolith is highly visible no matter where the actress stands or moves. It is frequently captured at the expense of maintaining a clear sense of spatial continuity of the scene. This approach to shooting reveals a cinematic interest in turning a topographic feature of the location into a recurrent motif in the film. This rock, in terms of its narrative function, provides a monument that accompanies Jingjing through her

⁹ See the analysis of the construction of spatial continuity through the use of the "180-degree system" in Hollywood films in David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction* (New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, 1997), 285-298.

emotional fluctuations when pursuing love and confronting local villains. In this regard, the rock is not a random topographic feature on site, and its high visibility on screen must not be taken for granted. Indeed, it functions as a temporal marker of the different stages of Jingjing's life while disguised as mere *mise-en-scène*, a technique that is absent from *Golden Phoenix*.

Creating a double vision

In addition to high rate at which it appears on screen, the rock also plays a stronger narrative function through its role as the object of the actress and the audience's common interest. In the shot of Jingjing arriving at the other side of the hill, the camera captures her searching for her man from afar through an extreme long shot (fig. 6a). Suddenly, the camera pans right, framing the breathtaking view of the surrounding space of the rock in full for almost ten seconds (figs. 6b-c). This long take bears a dual function: first, it visualizes what Jingjing is looking at from a long distance away; second, it frames the landscape for the spectator's observation. With the rightward panning of the camera at the same level, the spectator is compelled to examine the topography of the land and the spectacular landscape around the rock as if he or she were physically standing on Jingjing's spot. This method of filming the landscape merges the vision of Jingjing with that of the spectator, identifying the rock as a significant object of visual interest, both for the actress within the narrative and the spectator who looks upon her. This contributes to their perception of the location as a place that exudes a great sense of natural spontaneity as opposed to the air of artificiality rendered by ordinary film sets.

Auditory accentuation

The sound design of this film further charges the rock with additional meanings. In a scene wherein Jingjing asks Weisheng why he always comes to a particular spot in the field to gaze speechlessly at the rock, the camera quickly pans along her arm to the left to capture the monolith in full (fig. 7a). The question “What were you doing?” posed by Jingjing sounds off-screen as the moving shot comes to a stop to dwell upon the rock. Next, a reverse-shot shows Weisheng staring at the rock, and then a return to the view of the rock as Jingjing adds the second part of her question, with “Tell me” sounding from off-screen (fig. 7b). The integrated use of shot/reverse-shot and an off-screen voice heightens the cinematic function of the rock in construction both the filmic narrative and the viewing experience of the spectator. It loads the rock with the personal history and memory of both the female and male protagonists, while provoking the spectator’s curiosity regarding its narrative function in the film – again, introducing techniques unexplored in *Golden Phoenix*.

Alluded site of violence

Lastly, the rock gains further cinematic weight by functioning as the implied site of violence. In the final fighting scene between him, Weisheng, and the Big Head, the rock functions as more than just a backdrop of the fighting scene due to careful editing of the film. This fighting scene on the lawn cuts abruptly to another shot that captures the three men fleeing from and fighting with each other on a slope, of which the rocky surface evokes the texture of the monolith. The following long shots, which capture the three men reaching the top of a hill that bears the monolith’s characteristic undulating profile, further enhances the impression that the fight takes place atop that rock (fig. 8). Although viewers lack the necessary textual and visual evidence to discern whether the

fight was really shot on the rock or on other hilly sites, the strategic staging of actions, filming and editing produce the illusion that the rock is the theatrical site of violence. Consequently, the rock not only functions as the object of visual and auditory interest, but also actively invites the spectator to imagine it as the locale for the final drama, engaging with the viewing experiences of the spectator.

The formative role of the landscape in *Moonlight Serenade* raises a question that cultural geographers have posed in the context of painting and cartography: what does it mean to feature a place in film?"¹⁰ In the context of *Moonlight Serenade*, why did the filmmakers bother to employ a variety of cinematic techniques to fully capture the topographic and environmental conditions of Kenting Park? While the intentions behind such a filming approach remain unknown, for Yen Chun, this filming practice served to reshape the visual language of *Golden Phoenix* that he had produced a decade earlier. The natural wilderness of Kenting Park, now captured in its immediacy, provided new contexts through which visual images could produce meanings. In this way, landscape imagery itself constituted a kind of visual language, operating simultaneous to the literary and literal languages of the film.

Location might thus be understood in W.J.T. Mitchell's terms, as a medium, in *Moonlight Serenade*.¹¹ First, the setting invites the actress and actors to engage with the topographic conditions of the lands, thereby reconfiguring their approach to acting and moving. Second, it incentivizes cinematographers to position their camera at certain angles, levels and distances. Third, the location compels its viewers to interpret and

¹⁰ See Edward Casey, "Prologue: What Does It Mean to Represent Landscape?" in *Representing Place: Landscape Painting and Maps* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), xiii-xviii.

¹¹ W.J.T. Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape," in *Landscape and Power*, ed. W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 14.

imagine the symbolic function of the lands in the filmic narrative. Captured through the variety of cinematic techniques explained above, the location used in *Moonlight Serenade* manifests what Casey associates with a sense of place. This sense constitutes a significant yet often overlooked component of the mise-en-scène of the film, reshaping the viewing experience of the spectator.

Location and Geographical Reimagining

Yen Chun's active exploration of overseas shooting in his films during the 1960s provides a rich context for the interpretation of role of framing location into place. *Mist Over Dream Lake* 寒煙翠 (1968), a romantic melodrama of Yen Chun released a year later, offers a pertinent example for comparative analysis as many of its scenes were also shot on location in Kenting Park. Adapted from a novel written by the renowned Taiwanese writer Chiung Yao 瓊瑤 (b. 1938) in the early 1960s, this film tells the story of the young female protagonist Yongwei 詠薇, who is sent by her parents in Taipei to stay at the house of their friends in rural area in central Taiwan.¹² In this story, Yongwei begins to discover, and get involved in, the intricate interpersonal relationships between people living there. Similar to *Moonlight Serenade*, this film utilizes a range of cinematic techniques to capture the environmental quality of the park. The cinematography serves as a good example, as this film frequently employs a long shot positioned from a low angle and level to capture the female protagonist running atop the hill. Similar to *Moonlight Serenade*, this shooting distance and angle charge the location with a sense of physical emancipation and momentum.

¹² *Ibid.*, 425.

Concerning the symbolic use of topographic feature there, the igneous rock that was significantly featured in *Moonlight Serenade* is again captured as a monument to love in this film. Particularly in the middle portion of the film, a long shot is used to capture Yongwei standing speechlessly in front of the rock for a long period of almost seventeen seconds (fig. 9). With the non-diegetic use of the song *The Bitter Love Flower* 苦情花 as the background music, the rock is charged with the tacit sentiment of lovesickness. In the following scene of a conversation with her friends from the host family, the rock appears again as the background to some of their personal monologues about the frustration of unobtainable love. Interestingly, the hilly setting of this scene remains a filmic invention: in the original novel, this particular scene occurs in a setting around the house of the host family instead.¹³ The final decision, in the story's film adaptation, to situate these moments on the hilly land in view of the rock reveals the cinematic interest in projecting these topographic elements of Kenting Park on screen, and charging them with symbolic meanings. With the breadth and hilly topographical conditions of the park captured along with the filmic narrative, the location is represented as a place that is intertwined with romance, memory, sentiment, to an extent comparable to that of *Moonlight Serenade*.

In addition to a strategic use of camerawork and music design, *Mist Over Dream Lake* utilizes locations from different parts of Taiwan for shooting. In the original novel written, this film features a story that supposedly takes place in a host family living in

¹³ This plot was a filmic invention as it was not depicted in the original novel. In the novel, Yongwei comes to talk to Lingxiao right after leaving the house of the host family before reaching a stream, marking a sharp difference from the hilly setting depicted in the film. See Chiung Yao, *Han-yan-cui* 寒煙翠 (Taipei: Huang guan zazhi she, 1966), 193.

central Taiwan.¹⁴ Logically, the places that the female protagonist manages to visit should be located within the same region where her host family lives. Yet, as pointed out in a number of articles published in *Southern Screen*, the monthly official magazine of Shaw Brothers Limited, the film was actually shot at several locations in different parts of Taiwan. These include the Kenting Ranch 墾丁牧場 (southern), the Chia-nan Irrigation System 嘉南大圳 (southwestern), Cheng Ching Lake 澄清湖 (southern), and Shihmen Reservoir 石門水庫 (northern).¹⁵ Yen Chun, like other Shaw filmmakers in the 1960s, exhausted time and resources to search for an ideal location overseas for filming specific scenes.¹⁶ Even more ironically, as the igneous rock at the Kenting Park is viewable from where the host family lives, the audiences come to realize that a majority of the story was indeed shot at the Kenting Ranch located in the south, instead of faithfully following the original central-Taiwan locations identified in the novel. The use of locations from different parts of Taiwan to film a story that supposedly happens around a single specific region creates a sense of geographical inconsistency to spectators who are familiar with the geography in the original novel. Such inconsistency shows that a faithfulness to the original locales is deprioritized in favor of capturing a visually agreeable and accessible setting on screen.

Taiwan as an “Alternative China” in Spectator’s Imagination

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 425.

¹⁵ “*Han-yan-cui waijing dagong gaocheng*” 寒煙翠外景大功告成 (Completion of location shooting for *Mist Over Dream Lake*), *Southern Screen*, no. 114 (August, 1967), 50-53.

¹⁶ See “*Cong choubei dao shezhi: Han-yan-cui de huiwei*” 從籌備到攝製: 寒煙翠的回味 (From preparation to filming: an aftertaste of *Mist Over Dream Lake*), *Xianggang yinghua* 香港影畫 (Hong Kong Movie News), no. 20 (August, 1967): 31.

Overseas shoots pose complex problems for investigation on many levels. In addition to the logistical challenges already discussed, production abroad can equally intersect with the politics of the representation and reconceptualization of nation-state. Unlike a number of Shaw's martial art films, which downplayed the geographic specificity of their settings,¹⁷ many of their modern films narrate stories that are set in particular locations in mainland China. For instance, in Pan Lei 潘壘's film *Downhill They Ride* 山賊 (1966), the story takes place in northeastern China, an important location in the narrative of the film wherein villagers combat nomadic bandits who are invading from the north.¹⁸ Depicting a love story that happens at the time of the Second Sino-Japanese War in China, Doe Chin 陶秦's *The Blue and the Black* 藍與黑 (1966) features the scenes of numerous historically renowned wars taking place in specific locations in mainland China, including the Taihang Mountains 太行山, Mount Du 獨山, and the Yellow River 黃河.¹⁹

Nevertheless, since the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, it had become even almost impossible for non-leftist film companies in Hong Kong

¹⁷ For instance, *The Twin Swords* 鴛鴦劍俠 (1965), *Temple Of The Red Lotus* 江湖奇俠 (1965), *Come Drink With Me* 大醉俠 (1966), *The Sword And The Lute* 琴劍恩仇 (1967), *The Trail Of The Broken Blade* 斷腸劍 (1967), and *One-Armed Swordsman* 獨臂刀 (1967). Also see Fu Poshek, "Xiangxiang Zhongguo: Shao shi dianying" 想像中國: 邵氏電影 (Imagined China: Shaw films), in his edited volume (2011), 18; and He Siying, "Shao shi guodu shiqi de liang wei daoyan – Li Hanxiang he Zhang Che" 邵氏過渡時期的兩位導演——李翰祥和張徹 (Two directors in the transitional period of Shaw – Li Hangxiang and Zhang Che), in Wong Ain-ling ed., 97-99.

¹⁸ "Pan Lei takan *Shan-zei waijing*" 潘壘踏勘山賊外景 (Pan Lei searches for and examines the locations for *Downhill They Ride*), *Southern Screen*, no. 83, January, 1965, 134; *Xianggang yingpian daquan*, v.6, 69.

¹⁹ "*Lan-yu-hei waijing dui di Tai*" 藍與黑外景隊抵台 (The location shooting team of *The Blue and the Black* arriving at Taiwan), *Southern Screen*, no. 91, September, 1965, 36-7.

to send film production teams to the mainland for location shooting.²⁰ Benefiting by a variety of favorable economic and cultural policies, Taiwan, instead, had become a tempting location for shooting among film studios in Hong Kong.²¹ For instance, in *Downhill They Ride*, the village that was supposedly situated in northeastern China was, in reality, shot on a set constructed atop a snowy mountain in Taiwan.²² In *The Blue and the Black*, historical battle scenes that supposedly took place in China were actually shot at Cheng Gong Hill 成功嶺, Shalu 沙鹿, and Daduxi 大肚溪 in Taiwan.²³ As a result, for many filmmakers in Hong Kong, Taiwan offered the much needed territories for the construction of “China” on screen due to the availability of a broader range of terrains compared to what the small colonial city could offer. For the spectator who was informed of the locations used for the shooting of these films, Taiwan had come to function as the surrogate of the inaccessible China.

Indeed, the concept of Taiwan as an alternative China was frequently articulated in *Southern Screen* in the 1960s. For instance, *The Blue and the Black*'s main actor Kwan Shan 關山 uses the word “*zuguo*” 祖國 (the motherland) as the synonym of Taiwan in his article published in the magazine.²⁴ This term has also become a synonym of Taiwan in the discursive field of the magazine that time. In this context, for Shaw Brothers Limited, the concept of the “imagined China” was supported not only through, as Fu Poshek

²⁰ However, this is not entirely impossible. Some of the leftist film companies in Hong Kong, such as Xinlian 新聯, was able to film on location in Hangzhou, China, in the early 1960s. See Lee Sun Fung 李晨風's film, *So Siusiu* 蘇小小 (1962).

²¹ Liu Xiancheng, 133-6.

²² “Laolong gou beiguo fengguang – sui *Shan-zei* waijing dui shidi canguan ji” 老龍溝北國風光——隨山賊外景隊實地參觀記 (The scenery of the northern land of Old Dragon Creek – visiting the location of *Downhill They Ride* with the location shooting team), *Southern Screen*, no. 88, June, 1965, 48.

²³ “*Lan-yu-hei* waijing dui di Tai” 藍與黑外景隊抵台 (The location shooting team of *The Blue and the Black* arriving at Taiwan), *Southern Screen*, no. 91, September, 1965, 36-7.

²⁴ Kwan Shan, “Nanwang de yitian” 難忘的一天 (An unforgettable day), *Southern Screen*, no. 91, September, 1965, 38.

argued, the construction of a “timeless China” on screen during the 1950s and the 1960s.²⁵ Rather, this myth was engendered through the cinematic appropriation of Taiwanese territory as a surrogate for the mainland.

The perception of Taiwan as an alternative China could have conveyed other political meanings by redefining the relationships between humans and their living environments. In the case of *Moonlight Serenade*, while *Southern Screen* advertised that the film narrates a story taking place in a town located in Jiangnan area in southeastern China,²⁶ the magazine informed the film fans that the majority of its outdoor scenes were indeed shot on location in the countryside of Taiwan.²⁷ On screen, this surrogate China is portrayed as the site of liberation, where actresses and actors can move through the land freely without any physical confinement. Such depiction of Taiwan, as a liberated territory, created a sharp contrast to the politically turbulence portrayed in the media of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) that had just erupted in mainland China, when *Moonlight Serenade* was released in Hong Kong in 1967. As a result, location shooting in Taiwan was not only a result of the entanglement of the film industry, the economy and politics, but it was also an instrument, disguised as a cultural production, in reinforcing the concept of Taiwan as “the free China” in the mid-1960s.

²⁵ Fu Poshek (2011), 17-18.

²⁶ This story takes place in town called Lanqiaozen 藍橋鎮 (the town of blue bridge) in Jiangnan, southeastern China. See “Yazhou yinghou Li Ching xinzuo *Jing-jing*” 亞洲影后李菁新作菁菁 (New work of Asian Best Actress Li Ching, *Moonlight Serenade*), *Southern Screen*, no. 92, October, 1965, 13.

²⁷ Ibid; Riqing 日青, “*Jingjing waijing dui shilu*” 菁菁外景隊實錄 (A record of location shooting of *Moonlight Serenade*), *Southern Screen*, no. 101, July, 1966; and “*Jingjing waijing meili ru hua. Li Jing, Jin Feng de caoyuan qingge*” 菁菁外景美麗如畫 李菁金峯的草原情歌 (The picturesque quality of locations in *Moonlight Serenade*. The love song of Li Jing and Jin Feng), *Southern Screen*, no. 102, August, 1966, 74-75.

Medium of Landscape Promotion

As the location captured in *Moonlight Serenade* provides a medium through which to renew the visual language of an old film and to produce the idea of “the free China” on screen, in reality, it participated in a broader promotion of the Taiwanese landscape through various cultural media in the 1950s and the 1960s. For one, the igneous rock that was captured in the two films of Yen Chun is widely known as “the Big Pointed Hill” 大尖山 in Kenting Park. Stretching 308 meters above sea level with a varying profile viewed from different angles (figs. 10a-d), it is considered a distinctive landmark among other igneous rocks within the park (fig. 11).²⁸ Its recurring appearance in one Shaw’s film after another over several months further enhanced a cultural discourse, linking the park to the ideals of personal liberation and romantic pursuits.²⁹

The cinematic promotion of Kenting Park echoes a contemporaneous political initiative to promote places in Taiwan from the late 1950s through the 1960s. While the publication of guidebooks and travel literature on Taiwan began as early as the first half of the twentieth century, those applications were mostly produced by publisher in Europe and mainland China.³⁰ It was not until the mid-1950s and the 1960s, that Chinese-language versions of these two types of publications would be produced in the territory of Taiwan. Among these, some publications promoted the geographical knowledge of

²⁸ Lu Jiahuang, *Kending guojia gongyuan fengjing judian jianjie* 墾丁國家公園風景據點簡介 (An introduction to scenic spots in the Kenting National Park; Pingdong county: Kenting guojia gongyuan guanlichu, 1991) 46.

²⁹ *Moonlight Serenade* was released on April 12, 1967, whereas *Mist Over Dream Lake* was released on January 5, 1968. See *Xianggang yingpian daquan*, 131 and 171.

³⁰ Taiwan was formerly known as Formosa. Some publications include Harry A. Franck, *Glimpses of Japan and Formosa* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1924); José María Alvarez, *Formosa geográfica e históricamente considerada* (Taiwan geographically and historically considered; Barcelona: L. Gili, 1930); and Zhou Wende, *Taiwan jianwen lu* 台灣見聞錄 (Shanghai: Zhongguo kexue tushu yiqi gongsi, 1947).

Taiwan,³¹ while some focused specifically upon the subject of mountains on the island as “general knowledge of modern nation.”³²

The political discourse of landscape promotion was not only limited to film and textual media, but it also affected visual media. The 1950s and the 1960s witnessed the rise of the depiction of specific places among ink painters in Taiwan. Some of the locations frequently depicted in these works include Alishan Range 阿里山, Yushan 玉山, Suhua Highway 蘇花公路, Cross-Island Highway 橫貫公路, and Sun Moon Lake 日月潭.³³ The depictions of these places as landscape in paintings echo the phenomenon of capturing these locations in many films of Shaw Brothers Limited around that time. For instance, Alishan Range was featured in both *Mist Over Dream Lake*³⁴ and Ho Meng-hua 何夢華’s *The Monkey Goes West* 西遊記 (1966).³⁵ Cross-Island Highway was also captured in Ho’s film.³⁶ Suhua Highway was also captured as a site in Pan Lei 潘壘’s

³¹ For instance, Guoli bianyi guan ed., *Taiwan dili* 台灣地理 (Geography of Taiwan; Taipei: Zhengzhong shuju, 1958);

³² For instance, see Cheng Zhaoxiong, *Taiwan shandi ji xing* 臺灣山地紀行 (Travel notes on mountains and lands in Taiwan; Taipei: Zhonghua wenhua chuban shiye weiyuanhui, 1956), which was officially published under the series of the “General Knowledge of Modern Nation.”

³³ Flora Li-tsui Fu, “Shijing shanshui yu jiangtu lunshu – qishi niandai yiqian Zhongguo dalu yu Taiwan de shanshuihua yu zhengzhi” 實景山水與疆 論述 七〇年代以前中國大陸與台灣的山水畫與政治意識” (Landscape Discourse and National Identity: Political Meanings in Representations of Specific Places in China and Taiwan 1911-1970s),” In *Chinese Culture Centenary* 中華文化百年論文集 1901-2000, ed. National Museum of History (Taipei: National Museum of History, 1999), 124.

³⁴ “Han-yan-cui waijing dui di tai, ji qi yipian ying xing rechao” 寒煙翠外景隊抵台, 激起一片迎星熱潮 (The location team of *Mist Over Dream Lake* arrived in Taiwan, sparking a wave of star fever), *Southern Screen*, no. 113, July, 1967, 46-49.

³⁵ “Xi-you-ji baodao qujing” 西遊記寶島取景 (*The Monkey Goes West* seeking locations in Taiwan), *Southern Screen*, no. 88, June, 1965, 45.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Lovers' Rock 情人石 (1964).³⁷ Sun Moon Lake was featured in Yuan Qiufeng 袁秋楓's *Songfest* 山歌姻緣 (1965).³⁸

Shooting overseas had in fact become so fashionable that the marketing department of Shaw Brothers Limited had highlighted filming locations as a selling point in the promotional materials of many movies. Often, *Southern Screen* published articles written by the directors or the actors/actresses on the geographic conditions of the location, the itinerary of the shooting, as well as the anecdotes or memoirs of those places, months before the release of the films.³⁹ In the case of articles related to *Moonlight Serenade* and *Mist Over Dream Lake*, Kenting Park was often described as a beautiful and romantic place as if a mythical, fairy-tale site.⁴⁰ In this context, Shaw Brothers Limited's industrial practice of shooting participated in a broader promotion of Taiwanese landscapes that spanned various media. Interestingly, in terms of the after-effect of this politically-engaged cultural phenomenon, the publishing industry in Hong Kong in the 1970s witnessed their own publications of travel guidebooks or travel literatures on Taiwan.⁴¹ As for Kenting Park, it continued to receive media attention, and was named the first national park of Taiwan in 1982.⁴²

³⁷ "Cheng Pei-pei, Chiao Chuang, *Qing-ren-shi*" 鄭佩佩, 喬莊, 情人石 (*Lovers' Rock*), *Southern Screen*, no. 70, December, 1963, 54.

³⁸ "Shan-ge-yin-yuan li Tu Chuan sheming jiu qinglang" 山歌姻緣裡杜娟捨命救情郎 (In *Songfest*, Tu Chuan desperately saves her love), *Southern Screen*, no. 68 (October, 1963): 54.

³⁹ "Han-yan-cui waijing dui fangwen ji" 寒煙翠外景隊訪問記 (*Mist Over Dream Lake* on location), *Southern Screen*, no. 115, September, 1967, 56-59; "Shiqinghuayi de Han-yan-cui" 詩情畫意的寒煙翠 (The poetically beautiful *Mist Over Dream Lake*), *Southern Screen*, no. 116, October, 1967, 54-57.

⁴⁰ "Jing-jing waijing dui shilu" 菁菁外景隊實錄 (*Moonlight Serenade* goes on location), *Southern Screen*, no. 101, July, 1966, 76-77; "Jing-jing waijing meili ru hua. Li Jing Jin Feng de caoyuan qingge" 菁菁外景美麗如畫, 李菁金峯的草原情歌 (The picturesque location in *Moonlight Serenade*. The prairie love songs of Li Jing and Jin Feng), *Southern Screen*, no. 101, July, 1966, 76-7.

⁴¹ For instance, Jia Yifu, *Baodao jiyou* 寶島紀遊 (Hong Kong: Xianggang Zhongguo bi hui, 1970); Rongmaoshusheng, *Taiwan xing* 台灣行 (Hong Kong: Huaqiao xinwen she, 1972).

⁴² Lu Jiahuang, 2.

Conclusion

As a film practice, location shooting offers to capture a more genuine environment for the depiction of a narrative. As filmmakers strategically apply a variety of cinematic techniques to capture the location, they can indeed repackage the narrative and the visual languages of an old film into a new film. As such, the agency exercised by a location in film might be considered through the terms that literary scholar Franco Moretti uses to describe in his study of the atlas of the European novel: the choice of site or location can indeed be a literary device as it shapes or influences the development of a kind of story.⁴³ In this vein, as shown in this article, a location may inform ways of acting, shooting, and editing, processes through which the final product becomes inextricably linked through the terrain upon which it was filmed. The multiple mediating powers of location demonstrate that shooting outdoors is no simply an industrial practice subordinate to the duty to support a narrative. Nor should filming locations be understood as empty stages where acting and filming take place. Location, rather, can function as a medium through its capacity to influence approaches to acting, filming, interpreting, and imagining a story.

Politically, during the Cold War period, location shooting had likewise functioned as a medium by negotiating popular conceptions of nation-state. In the mid-1960s when mainland China was generally geographically inaccessible to most of the Hong Kong film studios, filming in Taiwan had offered an alternative, which in turn shaped the perception of a surrogate motherland on screen. Furthermore, through print retellings of their interactions with these locations, Shaw's filmmakers took part in the politicized

⁴³ Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* (London; New York: Verso, 1998), 70.

tendency to promote locales both within and outside Taiwan. Shooting locations can affect a public's feelings and perceptions of a nation-state, operating as an imaginary point of access to lands where physical access was impossible. Although seldom addressed by prior scholarship, the study of location shooting, particularly when it is performed abroad, offers to shed light upon the role of cinema in regional politics during the Cold War in the 1960s.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ The use of location shooting in films, including in Hong Kong, appears to be gaining scholarly attention. An important preliminary study on the topic, however, focuses primarily upon films that were shot on location within the territory of Hong Kong, leaving the politics and logistics underlying international shoots open to exploration. See Linda Chiu-han Lai and Kinburley Wing-yee Choi eds., *World Film Locations: Hong Kong* (Bristol: Intellect, 2013).

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* The years listed below refer to the release year of the feature film.

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That Man In Chang-an 幪面大俠. Dir. Yen Chun 嚴俊. 1967.
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The Sword And The Lute 琴劍恩仇. Dir. Hsu Cheng-hung 徐增宏. 1967.
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Illustrations



Fig. 1 Yen Chun, *Golden Phoenix*, 1956. Yung Hwa Motion Picture Studio. Film still.



Fig. 2 Yen Chun, *Golden Phoenix*, 1956. Yung Hwa Motion Picture Studio. Film still.



Fig. 3 Yen Chun, *Moonlight Serenade*, 1967. Shaw Brothers (Hong Kong) Limited. Film still.



Fig. 4 Yen Chun, *Moonlight Serenade*, 1967. Shaw Brothers (Hong Kong) Limited. Film still.



Fig. 5 Yen Chun, *Golden Phoenix*, 1956. Yung Hwa Motion Picture Studio. Film still.



a.



b.



c.

Fig. 6 Yen Chun, *Moonlight Serenade*, 1967. Shaw Brothers (Hong Kong) Limited. Film stills.



a.



b.

Fig. 7 Yen Chun, *Moonlight Serenade*, 1967. Shaw Brothers (Hong Kong) Limited. Film stills.



Fig. 8 Yen Chun, *Moonlight Serenade*, 1967. Shaw Brothers (Hong Kong) Limited. Film still.



Fig. 9 Yen Chun, *Mist Over Dream Lake*, 1968. Shaw Brothers (Hong Kong) Limited. Film stills.



Fig. 10a The Big Point Hill (frontal view). Lu Jiahuang, 48.

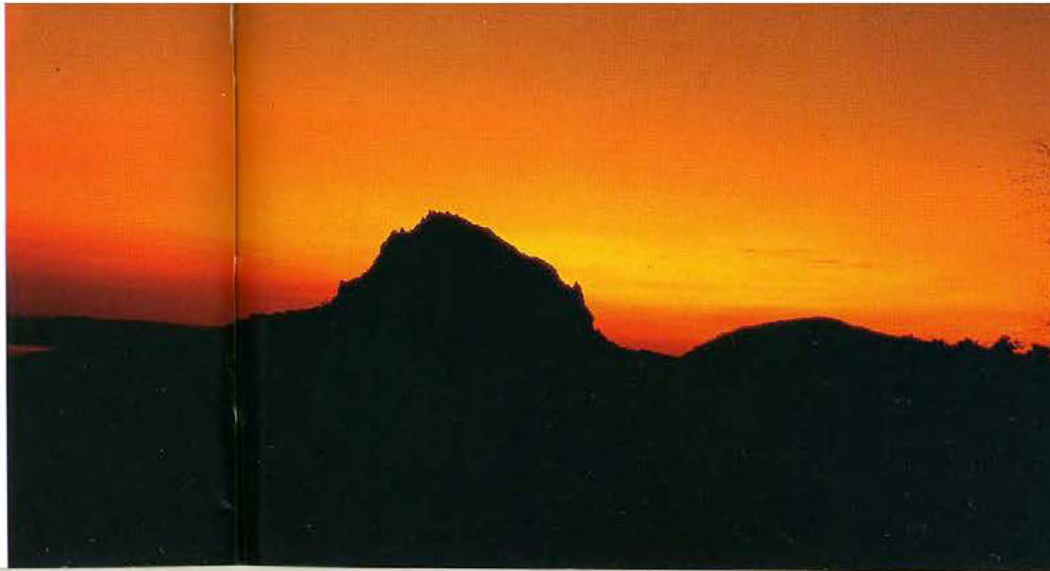


Fig. 10b The Big Point Hill (back view). Lu Jiahuang, 46-7.

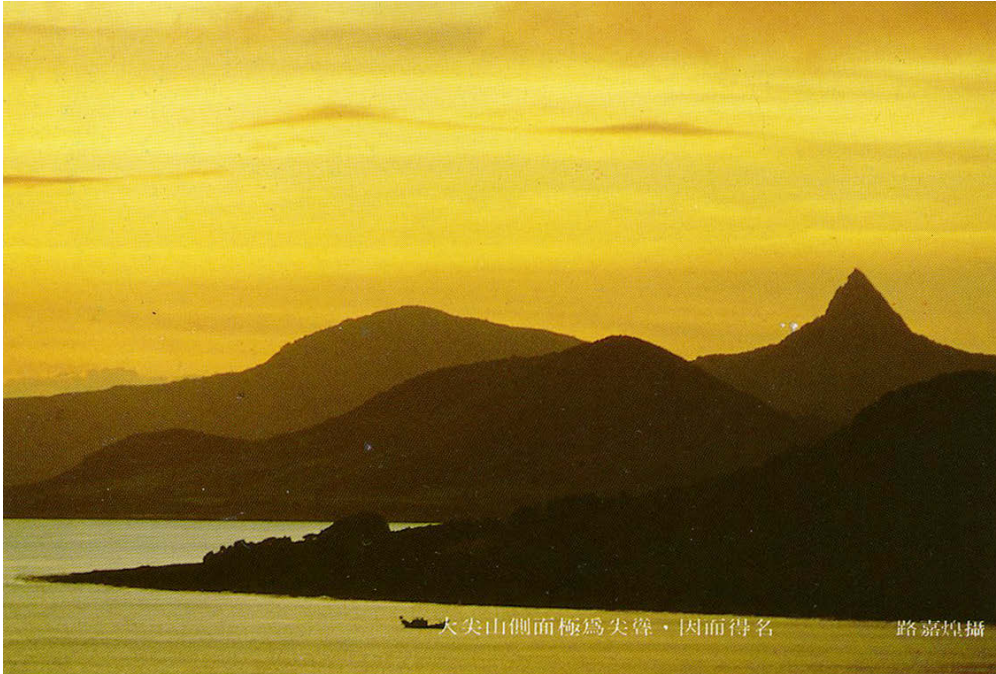


Fig. 10c The Big Point Hill (side view). Lu Jiahuang, 48



Fig. 10d The Big Point Hill (side view). Lu Jiahuang, 40.



Fig. 11 Map showing the location of the Big Pointed Hill and other igneous rocks at the Kenting National Park. Lu Jiahuang, 49.

Legend

1. Menmaluo shan 門馬羅山
2. Dashan mu shan 大山母山 (Big hill principal hill)
- 3. Dajian shan 大尖山 (Big pointed hill)**
4. Xiaojian shan 小尖山 (Small pointed hill)
5. Qingwa shi 青蛙石 (Frog rock)
6. Dayuan shan 大圓山 (Big round hill)