

## **A Brief History of Documentary Film in Taiwan**

**Daw-Ming Lee**

Documentary film in the forms familiar to today's audience did not appear in Taiwan until the mid-1960s. *Liu Pi-chia* (1967), considered the first “modernistic” documentary film in Taiwan, is about a veteran working in a farmland development project in eastern Taiwan, shot and directed by Richard Chen Yao-chi, a filmmaker trained at film school in the United States. Most nonfiction films before it were either in the style of 1930s and 1940s British documentaries, i.e., real events reenacted according to a pre-written script, and told by voice-over narration accompanied by music, or propaganda films and educational films made by the government and its agencies to “teach” viewers.

The first such film in the traditional documentary style before Chen was *An Introduction to the Actual Conditions in Taiwan* (1907) produced and directed by Takamatsu Toyojirō, who was commissioned by the Taiwan Government- General Office to show the real situation in Taiwan after a decade of colonial rule. The film was long (over 220 minutes), exhaustively recording cityscapes, education, hygiene, basic infrastructure, sea ports, industry, mining, agriculture, fisheries, transportation, railway travel, ancient sites, beautiful scenery, cultural activities, lives of native Taiwanese and Aborigines, and also re-enacting scenes of the

subjugation of the Aborigines.

Similar films about conditions in Taiwan were repeatedly made by the Taiwan Education Society (TES), a government-affiliated organization, including two films that were specifically made to show in major Japanese cities in exhibitions held by the TES in 1920 and 1921, in the context of the “*Current Situations of Taiwan*” project. In 1929, when the Government-General of Taiwan held exhibitions in Tokyo and Osaka promoting Taiwan, *Traveling Taiwan*, another film produced by the TES, was screened on those occasions. The TES’s 28-minute short, *Taiwan* (1931), used in Japan’s elementary schools, comprehensively presented the geography, agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, forest products, minerals, as well as city and rural scenery, historic places, and modern ports. *All Taiwan* (1934) was the first “all talkie” sound film made by *Nippon Eiga*’s Talkie News Productions, commissioned by the Taiwan Military Headquarters and the Taiwan Government-General Office. It included seven chapters, i.e., governance, industries, education, national defense, nature & inhabitants, transportation & communications, cities & historical sites, introducing the situation in Taiwan, as well as promoting the concept of air defense, to audiences in Taiwan and Japan.

In 1906, Governor-General Sakuma Samata began his decade-long large-scale military actions against the *Atayal* Aborigines living in the northern deep

mountains. Some of the military activities were recorded in films produced by Takamatsu, shot by famous cameraman Tsuchiya Tsunekichi and others recruited from homeland Japan. Between 1909 and 1912, Takamatsu produced 20 such film titles on behalf of the Taiwan chapter of the Patriotic Women's Association (PWA), a Japanese women's group helping the colonial government with war relief. The films were shown not only to the governor-general and other government officials, soldiers, police, students, and the general public in Taiwan, but also to the PWA members and the press at the PWA main office in Tokyo, as well as to officials of the imperial government and congressmen, to win support for the suppression of the Aborigines.

Takamatsu made a documentary following the activities of a group of 53 Taiwan Aborigines who visited Japan during his 1912 Tokyo trip to show films he made on behalf of the Taiwan PWA. This new documentary film about them was later shown to their fellow Aborigines in Taiwan, who were astonished. The film helped the colonial government promote its "mainland sightseeing" (*naichi kankō*) policy, inviting leaders of Taiwan's indigenous peoples to visit modernized Japan. The purpose of "mainland sightseeing" or "Aborigine sightseeing" (*banjin kankō*), which could also be related to Aborigine leaders visiting modernized cities in Taiwan, was to persuade Aborigines to fear (and not fight against) the mighty

military power of great Imperial Japan. Many of the sightseeing activities of their leaders in modern Japan, in the city and visiting military facilities, were filmed and shown to indigenous audiences, who never would have had such an opportunity. The filmed record and testimony of their leaders in Japan to mountain tribes was considered an effective way of convincing the Aborigines to accept Japanese rule.

The Aboriginal Affairs section in the Bureau of Police Affairs started making its own documentaries about the lives of Aborigines in 1922. Many of these films are educational/propaganda films aimed at persuading the Aborigines to change from their “semi-primitive” ways of living to “progressive” or “modern” ways. For example, a demonstration film was made for the Aborigines about how to grow rice, showing the entire process from sowing, planting, weeding, and cutting rice, to threshing, shelling, and the final harvest. Such filmmaking was not only executed by the Government-General Office, but also on a local level.

The Taiwan Education Society started making films in 1917. By early 1924, a total of 84 films had been made by the TES, an average of 12 per year. Not all of these films were educational, however. About 17 percent were records of political events, 13 percent were about farm produce and fisheries, and 26 percent focused on transportation, visiting cities, off-shore islands, and other scenery.

In the 1920s, many agencies in the Government-General Office began making their own films to disseminate messages regarding the businesses they were in charge of. For example, the Special Product Section in the Bureau of Colonial Production (*Shokusan-kyoku*) produced films to sell farm produce, such as the titles: *Taiwan Tea*, *Taiwan Granulated Sugar*, *Pineapple and Canned Pineapple*, *Banana*, and *Taiwan Citrus*. The Communication Section in the Bureau of Transportation made *Actual Condition in the Post Office*. The Transport Division of the Railway Department in the Bureau of Transportation shot *Sakura of Alishan Mountain*, *Along the Tamsui Line*, *Xiahai Chenghuang Temple Festival*, *Across the Southland by the North-South Way*, *Touring Along the Ridges of Taiwan Mountains*, etc. Starting from mid-1936, the Transportation Division issued newsreels called *Taiwan Pictorial*, probably the first regularly produced newsreels in Taiwan.

Later the same year, *Taiwan Nichi Nichi Shimpō* (*Taiwan Daily News*, or *Tainichi*) also began regularly producing a newsreel series, *Tainichi Talkie News Film*. *Tainichi* founded its motion pictures department in 1923. The department made two fiction films, before switching to nonfiction filmmaking. It produced many documentaries about high mountains and mountaineering during its 20-year history, such as *Shintakayama Mountain* (1924) and *Jikōzan* (1925). To commemorate the opening of its new building, *Tainichi* made *A Film About a*

*Newspaper/Shimbun eiga*, a feature-length documentary which shows the 24-hour activities of a newspaper - reporters at news scenes, writing and editing of articles, organizing international news, internal communication, typesetting and proofreading, designing layouts, rotary press printing, and delivery to homes and newsstands. After the China Incident broke out in 1937, *Tainichi's* motion pictures department started issuing "North China Incidents Special Edition," later renamed "Sino-Japanese Incidents Special Edition," to report on battlefield situations in Mainland China. However, following the Imperial government's new policy, the Special Edition was merged in mid-1940 with Japan News Film Company (*Nippon News Eiga Sha*).

After the Government-General Office announced on 15 August, 1937 that Taiwan was in a state of war, the TES began concentrating its filmmaking on topics relating to the war. *Taiwan in the Current Situation/Jikyoku ka no Taiwan*, produced by the TES in 1937-38, depicted the situation in Taiwan after the Sino-Japanese War started. The TES sent a cameraman to battlefields in Southern China to make documentaries in 1940. Its motion pictures unit, personnel, and facilities were taken over by the Taiwan Film Association (*Tai'ei*) in late 1942.

*Tai'ei's* original responsibility was to produce *bunka eiga* (documentaries) and enlightening informational films. Its first productions were a dozen reels of

documentary films showing civilian conditions on the island. As the Pacific War escalated and Taiwan became the southward base for the Japanese Empire, *Tai'ei* began to produce films related to the war. For example, *Captive Life of Generals Who Lost in the War/Yabureta shōgun tachi furyo no seikatsu* (1942) shows the lives of imprisoned British officers and soldiers from the Southeast Asia theater of the Pacific War, held at a prison camp near Taipei City. In May 1943, *Tai'ei* started to produce a regular newsreel series, *Taiwan Film Monthly/Taiwan eiga geppō*, and documentary news films. The newsreels were mainly reports of events on the island. The news documentary films, promoted achievements of the Japanization (*kōminka*) policy, showed life inside a training center for special army volunteer soldiers, revealed different training in preparation for the war in Taiwan, or boasted how Taiwanese “warmly welcomed” conscription. Japanese critics at the time considered these news documentaries of poor quality.

Although nonfiction filmmaking during the colonial rule seemed to be solely produced by government agencies or government-affiliated organizations, such as the Taiwan PWA, TES, *Tai'ei*, and even *Tainichi*, there was an amateur cine-club filmmaking fad in the decade between the mid-1920s and mid-1930s. Amateur filmmakers used their small-gauge (17.5mm, 16mm, 9.5mm, and 8mm) movie cameras not only to make home movies, but also documentaries, science films,

essay film, etc. The camera technique of some amateurs was so impressive that they were commissioned by Taiwan Military Headquarters to make a 9.5mm documentary film, *Taiwan Special Exercises*, in the early 1930s. One amateur documentary of note was made by a Japanese photography shop owner about the funeral of Jiang Weishui, leader of the Taiwan Popular Party, the first Taiwanese political party.

Among all Taiwanese amateur filmmakers in the 1930s, Deng Nanguang was the most prolific, winning many awards in Japan. Deng, a professional photographer trained in Tokyo, made a dozen films in the 1930s, among them, *Fishing Trip/Ryō yū/Yu you* and *The Zoo/Dōbutsu en/Dongwu yuan*, which won an “Honorable” award in a festival held by the Japan 8mm Film Association. His *Sudden Shower* is a short poem about the city during a sudden shower, reminiscent of Joris Ivens’s masterpiece, *Rain/Regen* (1929). For *Insect/Chong*, Deng even used time-lapse photography to record the process of a cicada casting off its skin.

Ho Chi-Ming, an official at the Department of Education in the Taichū Shū government, was one of the few native Taiwanese who had made newsreels and documentaries during the colonial period. He was in charge of making and screening educational films for schools in the Taichū Shū area. Occasionally, Ho



also was required to make newsreels about events, such as sports games. Such activities were stopped after the Taiwan Film Association was established in 1941.

After Japan surrendered in August 1945, the Nationalist government took over Taiwan. Taiwan Film Studio (TFS) was established in October, based on the foundation of *Tai'ei*. The early newsreels and documentaries made by the TFS were very much like those of *Tai'ei*, probably attributable to the fact that many of these films were made or assisted by Japanese cameramen, a soundman, editors, and their Taiwanese assistants retained by Bai Ke, the first director of the TFS.

From that time until the lifting of Martial Law in 1987, Taiwanese documentaries were limited to journalistic reportage, political propaganda, and educational films. Most of the films were produced by film studios owned and managed by the government (i.e., the TFS and China Film Studio) or the ruling Nationalist Party (i.e., Central Motion Picture Corporation).

Other than Taiwan Film Studio and China Film Studio (CFS), the Government Information Office (GIO) was the only government agency that maintained a regular staff for making documentaries. In 1960, *Visit to a City of Cathay* (1960), a film about the panoramic scroll painting by Song Dynasty artist Zhang Zeduan, called "Along the River During the Qingming Festival/Qingming shanghe tu," is the first documentary produced and directed by the GIO's own staff. (Kung Hong

was the producer.) The favorable reaction it received prompted the GIO to include making documentary films as one of its responsibilities. Since 1976, the GIO produced four documentaries annually. These films were targeted at foreign audiences, and, therefore, were mostly about culture, arts, folklore, scenery, and developments in science, agriculture, etc.

Since the 1970s, the GIO began to hire well-known fiction and documentary film directors, such as Richard Chen Yao-chi, Chang Chao-Tang/Zhang Zhaotang, Wang Chu-chin/Wang Jujin, and Hsu Chin-liang to make documentaries. The strategy of the GIO's documentary filmmaking changed in the 1990s. The annual four productions were commissioned to private production companies, which would hire their own directors to do the work. The quality of most these GIO-commissioned films was good, attested to by the awards they won at international film festivals.

Although most documentaries were produced by government-affiliated organizations before 1970, a few private individuals did manage to make documentary films in the 1960s. They were a group of young filmmakers from the avant-garde film/theater magazine *Theatre*. The magazine emerged at a time when Taiwan began to liberate itself from the total control of arts and literature by the anti-communism ideology of the Kuomintang (KMT), the root of which could be

traced back to the Korean War. The ROC government on Taiwan became an important ally of the United States government after the eruption of civil war on the Korean Peninsula, receiving ample economic and military aid from America annually. American culture and arts soon prevailed in Taiwan. Modernism in literature, fine arts, and music soon became popular among the cultural elite. The concept of modernist filmmaking and the works of modernist filmmakers were quickly introduced to Taiwan, first in publications, later in movie theaters.

Richard Chen Yao-chi, one of *Theatre* magazine's editors, published articles introducing *cinéma vérité* in 1965. This was followed by the showing of his film school MFA thesis documentary, *Liu Pi-chia*, that focused on the life of a veteran from China, and other of his works in Taipei the following year. Chen's modern approach directly affected only a few privileged individuals who had the opportunity to produce independent documentaries in the 1960s, because the control of the film medium was still tight under Martial Law. However, by the 1970s, the fruition of Chen's innovation was finally seen in television documentaries made by Chang Chao-Tang and others.

The early television documentaries made by Chang were characterized by his stylized collages of footage from real events, accompanied by folk music (both Western and Taiwanese), very much akin to music videos popular much later in

the 1980s. In contrast, the television documentary series, *Fragrant Treasure Island/Fenfang baodao* (1974), produced by nativist writer-turned-documentarist Huang Chun-ming, and directed by Huang and some young filmmakers, including Chang, Wang Chu-chin, Wang Ying, among others, were traditional observational films with voice-over and pre-recorded music. These films were much more lively and interesting than documentaries produced by the government-affiliated studios – the TFS and CFS - most of which were pre-scripted, didactic, and sometimes reenacted. The films in *Fragrant Treasure Island* series explored and revealed subjects, such as folk beliefs and festivals, fishermen's lives, the life and philosophy of a snake catcher, one day in a fresh food market, etc.

In 1976, China Television (CTV), owned and operated by the KMT, started *60 Minutes/Liushi fenzhong*, an imitation of the famed American news magazine program on the CBS network. Cameraman Chang Chao-Tang teamed up with writer Lei Shiang/Li Xiang, journalist Guo Guanying, and young novice cinematographer Christopher Doyle, to work on Taiwan's *60 Minutes*, mixing news reports of social events with interesting human characters. The emergence of the CTV's program coincided with the nativism movement in Taiwan literature, which advocated that writers should be concerned with local issues and realities. However, none of the television documentaries made during this period dared to

explore social issues, not to mention the darker side of reality. Restrained by censorship, Taiwanese documentary makers learned to steer clear of politically or socially sensitive issues. Their works remained within safer bounds, inhibited from explicitly expressing an independent consciousness or any censure of society. For documentarists to tackle political or social issues would take another decade and the emergence of a younger generation of filmmakers who involved themselves in the democratization movement.

By the 1980s, after the mass arrest and open trials of opposition leaders involved in the 1979 “Formosa Incident,” the anti-government opposition movement finally coalesced in the formation of the first opposition party in 1986, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). A riot erupted near Taoyuan International Airport on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November. Government-controlled mass media, including television news and the printed press, accused the opposition of inciting the riot and being responsible for the 49 injuries of police and civilians. To dispel the misleading news report orchestrated by the Nationalist government, a video camera team siding with the opposition movement, named the “Green Team” (*luse xiaozu*), quickly put together a documentary on the incident, called “*The Taoyuan Airport Incident*,” and showed it on video monitors in the headquarters of the DPP candidates running for seats in the Legislative Yuan during the first election held

after the establishment of the DPP. The influence of the documentary was obviously great, as the opposition party won a landslide victory in the election, unaffected by the KMT's disinformation campaign.

After that, independent documentary makers such as the "Green Team" managed to break down the state media monopoly. They acted as a forceful check on the government-version of truth. Documentaries became, in many ways, weapons of the weak and marginalized, against the dominant social forces. Portable video camcorders became the tool used by the "Green Team" and other minority groups to make documentaries, so that alternative voices could be heard. Such video documentaries developed hand in hand with the political and social movements surging in the late 1980s and continuing well into the 1990s, coming perhaps coincidentally with similar development of anti-government political movements in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Korea, and the Philippines.

Independent documentary films appeared before the emergence of the alternative video movement of the late 1980s. Kuangchi Program Service, a production company owned and operated by the Society of Jesus, made a 16mm feature documentary, *The Love and Death in the Himalayas/Ximalaya de ai yu si* (1985), directed and shot by its staff director Chen Songyong, about the tragic death of members in a Himalayan climbing team from Taiwan. *Beyond the Killing*

*Fields: Refugees on the Thai-Cambodian Border/Shalu zhanchang de bianyuan* (Daw-Ming Lee, 1987), also a Kuangchi feature documentary, was the first totally sync-sound 16mm documentary film, and was made on location in Thailand and Cambodia. The film shows life inside refugee camps and explores the predicament of Cambodian refugees and Vietnamese refugees of Chinese descent who risked their lives crossing Cambodia to reach Thailand. The film won “Best Documentary” and “Best Documentary Director” at the 1987 Golden Horse Awards.

Ethnographic films also started to appear in the mid-1980s. Hu Tai-Li, an anthropologist with some filmmaking training, made her first ethnographic film, *The Return of Gods and Ancestors: The Five Year Ceremony/Shen zu zhi ling gui lai – paiwan zu wu nian ji* (1985). Undertaken with very little financial or human resources, it is the first reflexive documentary in Taiwan that reveals the concepts of the filmmaker as well as the process of filmmaking, a new documentary aesthetic. Hu continued to direct similar ethnographic films well into the 2000s. She won “Best Documentary” at the Golden Horse for *Voices of Orchid Island/Lanyu guandian* (1993, coproduced by Daw-Ming Lee). Her film *Passing Through My Mother-in-Law’s Village/Chuanguo pojia cun* (1997) became the first feature documentary to be screened in a commercial movie theater, with moderate

box-office. *Stone Dream/Shitou meng* (2004) follows the story of Liu Pi-chia, left untold since Richard Chen Yao-chi finished his own film *Liu Pi-chia*. For the last quarter of a century, Hu Tai-Li remained the only ethnographic filmmaker in Taiwan. All other anthropologists use film or video simply as a means to assist them in field research, never as an artistic end.

Much has changed since 1987. Propelled by freedoms unleashed by the lifting of Martial Law, Taiwanese documentary makers vigorously reinvented their medium. With inspired breakthroughs, both stylistic and intellectual, numerous Taiwanese documentarists, equipped with the speed and efficiency of professional Betacam and amateur video camcorders, focused on the unprecedented social and political changes brought on by Taiwan's accelerated democratization. Their unrelenting efforts captured the vitality and chaos of contemporary Taiwan, exposing its contradictions and conflicts in a stream of historical and current topical footage.

The most notable examples are works of the Full Shot Foundation. Led by Wu Yi-feng, the documentary group committed itself to making documentaries about the underprivileged and marginalized, as well as training novice documentary makers, and promoting the viewing and appreciation of documentary works. Two of the most notable documentaries to come from Full Shot are Wu's *Moon*



*Children/Yueliang de xiaohai* (1990), about the social ostracism of albinos, and *Gift of Life/Shengming* (2004), which chronicles the lives of the surviving members in four families after the 1999 earthquake that caused severe damage and killed nearly 2,500. *Gift of Life* was part of a larger project at Full Shot, documenting the aftermath of the earthquake and the reconstruction process. Four documentaries in the project, including *Gift of Life*, were shown at a Taipei movie theater in 2004. *Gift of Life* did extremely well, and was eventually shown in theaters across Taiwan. Its NT\$10 million (US\$300,000) box-office take made the documentary the top-grossing Taiwan film in 2004.

“Prosumer” video camcorders, and later, the semi-professional digital video cameras, as well as computer editing software, became increasingly popular in the 1990s. Documentary subjects began extending into more private domains, to voice inner feelings of the self, the family, and the community. Since the 1990s, more than a score of personal documentaries by independent, as well as government-funded filmmakers, have employed observational and participatory methods to further probe into the relationship between the documentarist and subject. A good example is *Swimming on the Highway/Zai gaosugonglu shang youyong* (Wu Yao-tung, 1999), which chronicles the conflicts and struggle between the documentarist and his subject, who was a suicidal graduate school classmate. It

won the prestigious “Shinsuke Ogawa Award” at the 1999 Yamagata Documentary Film Festival in Japan. New questions have been raised about formerly-prescribed social conventions and cultural mindsets. For some works, bold experimentation with aesthetics and theories became the central concern. *Floating Islands/Liuli daoying* (2000), a documentary film project initiated by Zero Chou to document life on 12 offshore islands of Taiwan, is considered a milestone for both its scale and the experimental approach taken by most of the 12 individual directors.

Since the late 1990s, documentaries have captured the attention of Taiwanese audiences. Documentary filmmaking became a new trend. This may be partially attributed to Full-Shot Foundation’s efforts since 1991, running documentary road shows presenting their own documentaries to community groups all over Taiwan. Their loyal audience numbers in the tens of thousands, constituting the support base for many other documentaries in Taiwan.

Documentaries have also become a tool for people on the fringe to present their concerns and feelings to the society at large. The Community Documentary Makers' Training Program, organized by the Full-Shot Foundation, has trained hundreds of documentary makers from all walks of life and every corner of Taiwanese society, not only school teachers, social and cultural activists, but also

indigenous peoples, the hearing-impaired, and other minority groups. This was in line with the “Integrated Community Development Project,” initiated in 1993 by the Council for Cultural Affairs (CCA), a central government agency, meant to stimulate a new wave of social projects, and to call for the preservation of the country's disappearing cultural heritage. Under the banner of the Project, the promotion, making, and viewing of documentaries became the business of the CCA.

The Council for Cultural Affairs has been the biggest catalyst behind the recent documentary movement. Besides supporting the Community Documentary Makers' Training Program, encouraging trainees to make documentaries about community affairs, the CCA also established the Documentary Video Awards, as well as an island-wide touring program, presenting Taiwan's best works. To help promote domestic and international documentaries, the CCA established the biannual Taiwan International Documentary Festival (TIDF). The first TIDF, held in 1998, gave evidence of the growing Taiwanese interest in documentary films. In contrast to the continuously dwindling domestic audience for Taiwanese-made feature films in the 1990s, the enthusiastic passion expressed by audiences for documentaries is phenomenal.

Other governmental agencies also play a pivotal role in the near past

documentary movement. Through central and local government programs, such as the Short Film and Feature Documentary Film Fund, National Culture and Arts Fund, Media Arts Fund of Taipei City Government, and sometimes by contract with the state-funded Public Television Service, documentary makers can receive funding of up to US\$80,000 for making feature and short documentary videos and films. Print and electronic media also sponsor the making of documentary videos. There are now over four documentary awards given each year. The best works are given cash awards of up to US\$30,000.

In the mid-2000s, some documentary films and videos were shown in cinemas to rather large crowds, garnering box-office results better than that of most Taiwanese feature films. Documentary film and video made their commercial cinema debuts in 1997 and 1999. Both *Passing Through My Mother-in-Law's Village* and *Boys for Beauty/Meili shaonian* (Mickey Chen, 1999) were well-received. In 2004, *Gift of Life* ranked number one among domestic productions in box-office (and ranked 51<sup>st</sup> at the box office among all domestic and foreign feature films shown in Taipei). *Viva Tonal – The Dance Age/Tiaowu shidai* (Chien Wei-Ssu and Kuo Chen-Ti, 2003) and *Burning Dreams/Gewu zhongguo* (Wayne Peng, 2003) ranked fifth and sixth the same year. *The Last Rice Farmer/Wu mi le* (aka *Let It Be*) (Juang Yi-tzeng and Yen Lan-chuan, 2005) and

*Jump! Boys/Fangun ba nanhai* (Lin Yu-hsien, 2005), ranked fourth and fifth in 2005. *My Football Summer/Qiji de xiatian* (Yang Li-chou, 2006) and *Doctor/Yisheng* (Chung Mong-Hong/Zhong Menghong, 2006), also ranked fourth and fifth in 2006.

This positive trend did not continue after 2007, however. Commercial exhibition of documentaries has aroused debate among documentarists about the spirit and ethics of documentary making. Only emotionally-touching stories seemed able to attract a wide audience, which affected the direction of documentary making, thus marginalizing “serious” documentaries, which received much less attention from mainstream media. However, in the bigger picture, very few documentaries actually received any attention at all. It was estimated that among the nearly 200 documentary films and videos made annually, only one percent had the opportunity to be shown in commercial cinemas, and only 10 percent even got to be shown at film festivals or on television. Documentaries exploring environmental issues, migrant workers, the indigenous, and other social concerns are among those that could only be seen on *Documentary POV*, a program on the Public Television Service (PTS) channel, in addition to some film festivals.

Among the documentary makers of such films during the 1990s and 2000s,

Daw-Ming Lee/Li Daoming is known for his films on the indigenous culture, such as *Songs of Pasta'ay/Airen ji zhi ge* (codirected with Hu Tai-Li, 1989), *Sakuliu/Paiwan ren saguliu* (1994), *The Last Chieftain/Modai toumu* (1999), and *Tsuenu, the Way/Lu* (2001). His *Voice of the People/Renmin de shengyin huanbao pian* (1991), about environmental issues, won “Best Documentary” at the 1991 Golden Horse.

Director Tsai Tsung-lung has made documentaries on social issues such as human rights and Taiwan's foreign brides, among other subjects. His *Formosa Homicide Chronicle 3: The Sweet Taste of Freedom* (2009) explores the Su Chien-ho case, known internationally as the “Hsichih Trio.” Su and his two friends were accused and convicted of double murder, and it became one of the most controversial and political cases in Taiwan history, taking a series of legal twists and turns between 1991 and 2011. Successive justice ministers from 1996-on have refused to allow their execution.

Mayaw Biho, an indigenous independent filmmaker, has made a series of independent films since graduation from college, all from an indigenous perspective. Two of his films, *As Life, As Pangcah/Ru shi banzha* (1998) and *Dear Rice Wine, You Are Defeated/Qinai de mijiu ni bei wo dabai le* (1998) were selected for screening by the prestigious Margaret Mead Film and Video Festival.

Documentaries were made not only by independent filmmakers, but also by the print and broadcast media. Three documentary series on Taiwan history were produced in the past quarter-century. *Taiwan in Transition: Go Through the Past Together/Yitong zouguo congqian: xishou taiwan sishinian* (Chang Chao-Tang, 1988), produced by *CommonWealth Magazine*, tells postwar history from the historical points-of-view of the Nationalists and capitalist entrepreneurs. *In Search of Taiwan's Animating Spirit/Xunzhao taiwan shengmingli* (Fu Chang-feng, 1993), produced by another financial magazine, *Global Views Monthly*, tries to find out what it meant to be Taiwanese in a time of social turbulence. *Taiwan: A People's History/Dapin: taiwan renmin de lishi* (Fu Chang-feng, Chen Li-kuei, and Cheng Wen-Tang, 2007), produced by the Public Television Service, uses reenactment and reconstruction methods to recreate the past on film. The PTS also produced documentary series on the lives of Chiang Ching-kuo, Mme. Chiang Kai-shek, General Sun Li-Jen, and Lee Teng-hui, among others. It also made documentary series on various micro-histories of Taiwan, including epidemic diseases, baseball, animation, and the student movement.

The development of the modern documentary in Taiwan took only about a quarter of a century, correlating with its political development, especially the lifting of Martial Law and the democratization of Taiwan society. The

documentary's progress, in a way, can be compared with the development of Taiwan cinema from the emergence of Taiwan New Cinema to the appearance of *Cape No. 7* (Wei Te-Sheng, 2008). Documentary films in the 1980s and early 1990s were "serious" in content and "formal" in style, thus establishing a paradigm. However, after the emergence of a new generation, the paradigm was soon overturned, and scores of documentaries with freer, more approachable style, and less "serious" content appeared. After the phenomenal success of *Gift of Life*, many films vied for audiences in commercial cinemas and succeeded. However, these films, though energetic, were never able to replace fictional films as the mainstream mode of expression in Taiwan. After the commercial success of *Cape No. 7*, documentaries were no longer favored, and quickly disappeared in movie theatres. Though many documentaries are still being made these days, few stimulate strong reactions or passionate discussions.