

# **A RE-PRESENTATION OF A TAIWANESE FOLKLORE BELIEF ACROSS CULTURAL BOUNDARIES: THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HBO ORIGINAL SERIES *THE TEENAGE PSYCHIC***

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## **Introduction - *The Teenage Psychic*: A Multinational Tv Series, Archetype, Plot Structure And Folklore Context.**

The *Teenage Psychic* is HBO Asia's first original Chinese-spoken (including Mandarin and Taiwanese Hokkien) TV series to garner attention in Taiwan and Singapore. Co-produced by Taiwan PTS (Public Television Service, the broadcasting institute which originally initiated this production), InFocus Asia (a Singaporean production company) and HBO Asia, this series has received mostly positive feedback. The filming of this co-production was entirely undertaken in Taiwan by a young Taiwanese filmmaking team, its existence marking a watershed moment in Taiwan's drama production industry's development in international collaboration and content marketing. It was released on PTS and HBO Asia in 23 territories on April 2nd, 2017, with English subtitles and is currently available through the following streaming services: HBO GO, HBO MAX, and DIRECTV.

*The Teenage Psychic* is based on *The Busy Young Psychic*, Chen Ho Yu's award-winning 30-minute drama short film, whose story was inspired by the autobiography of Sophia, a real psychic. *The Busy Young Psychic* debuted on PTS in 2013, portraying a high school girl with "yin yang" eyes (eyes that can see ghosts) who enjoys softball and struggles to balance psychic work and campus life. *The Busy Young Psychic* was chosen as a strand of PTS's Innovative Stories and received widespread acclaim both at home and abroad. HBO Asia was also drawn to the unconventional depiction of temples and psychics.

The Busy Young Psychic was then expanded into a six-episode series: *The Teenage Psychic*. The protagonist is Xie Ya-Zhen, a sixteen-year-old girl born with yin yang eyes (eyes that can see ghosts) and psychic talent. The storyline alternates between two perspectives generated from two extremely different sets of environments in her life. At school, she is just an ordinary 16-year-old girl; after school, she has to answer the spiritual calling and takes up the duty of Holy Maiden in a temple, serving as a medium consultant who communicates with the spirits. The daily life of a sixteen-year-old female high school student, along with various events and disputes that occur in the temple have been pieced together to form the main axes of this series.

Some critics commented that *The Teenage Psychic* has a large fan base for what is essentially a generic campus romance between the protagonist and a spirit (e.g. Lan 2017, Chou 2017). Some comments also criticized that the whole drama is a direct transplant from Japanese drama, Japanese comics, or light novels. These comments may be due to the fact that Taiwan's popular idol dramas are almost entirely imitations or even copies of Japanese or Korean dramas and popular cultures. On the other hand, plays based on folklore elements often seem to have an older audience group and more fixed traditional forms. When it comes to the stories about supernatural beings, traditional religious legends are used as materials, and if it is a ghost legend, it is usually full of dark and terrifying atmosphere. But *The Teenage Psychic* is an atypical folkloresque drama that has successfully combined folklore elements and contemporary issues to create a new popular genre (Foster 2015: 3). Therefore, it is not only a campus romance but also a supernatural story.

As well as surpassing campus love stories and supernatural legends, this six-episode TV series contains some universal, eternal, and unsolvable debates as higher themes, such as life, death, and love. The plot of the entire drama is structured along a couple of main narrative axes: on one hand, it discusses concerns of universality; on the other, it is clear that there is a great ambition to present the uniqueness of Taiwanese society. What's more, it also has managed to present issues about homosexuality, single

parenting, life and death, social-political conflicts, and superstition versus rationality. Literary and cultural circles in Taiwan have praised its innovation. Even Tsai Ying-Wen, the president of Taiwan, posted a strong endorsement and recommendation to watch it on her Facebook page (Tsai 2017). But what *The Teenage Psychic* has done is more than that. To understand its further achievement, deeper and subtler discussion is needed.

Han Chinese have made up more than 90% of Taiwan's population since the 17th century. After Japanese colonization ended in 1945, Kuomintang, which brought a second wave of Han Chinese immigrants from China, ruled Taiwan, and its imposition of martial law and White Terror (the political repression of Taiwanese civilians resulting in more than a million deaths) left Taiwan in a state of political and cultural colonization by Chinese authoritarianism for a long time, ideological restraint on language and education policies making self-identity as Taiwanese a hazy and dim symbol. Taiwan did not become a liberal and democratic independent country until martial law was lifted in 1987. Folklore and folk beliefs are frequently important ways for post-colonial countries to rebuild culture and revitalize language. However, the use of folklore is a double-edged sword: on one side, it is used as a cultural umbilical cord with China by pro-China political and ideological groups, and on the other side, it is used as an important basis for ethnic identity by localist groups.

The folk beliefs of the Han Chinese people in Taiwan, which are descended from the Chinese mainland, include faith in deities, ancestor worship, belief in human souls and ghosts, belief in animism and shamanism. The Han Chinese are a polytheistic people; new gods are constantly being created, and new foreign religious gods continue to be included after ethnic contact or migration (Lin 1991). Furthermore, Taiwan's democratization process began in 1987, and the lifting of various political and media restrictions was reflected in the collective needs of religious beliefs and the shift in thinking. Taiwanese authorities have begun to value folk beliefs in order to preserve local culture, and local temples have also begun to gain higher status and more attention for their importance. As a result, Taiwan's folk religions have a tendency to become festive, sightseeing, media-oriented, politicized,

commercialized, and culturally symbolized at the same time. Thus, a modern face of Taiwanese religion and beliefs has been created (Hung 2009).

In order to get close to the real folklore and avoid the old tradition of it being separated from reality and used as an excuse for cultural kinship, it is necessary to establish contemporary folklore belonging to Taiwan, rather than clinging to the reconstruction of traditional folklore of immigrant society. In *The Teenage Psychic*, the combination of popular culture and materials from contemporary folklore and traditional legends encourages young people to become interested in and understand folklore, which then becomes a symbol of their own identity. Thus, the drama has a special significance for Taiwan's ethnic identity, local language, and cultural subjectivity.

### **The Way Of Storytelling: The Image Construction And Marketing Strategy Of The Teenage Psychic**

As previously stated, *The Teenage Psychic* is more than just a teen romance or a supernatural series. On one hand, it addresses universal issues, while on the other, the drama goes to great lengths to demonstrate the uniqueness of Taiwanese society and culture. How did HBO Asia create an image for *The Teenage Psychic* as a multi-national series to attract audiences of various nationalities and cultures? How did Taiwan's local characteristics resonate with foreign audiences while meeting commercial ratings expectations?

First of all, *The Teenage Psychic* has the traits of popular culture such as universality, transcendence, integration, daily life, and sociality. If a TV series aims to resonate with audiences in different countries and cultures, it needs to have universal elements. As Walter Benjamin has indicated:

The more natural the process by which the storyteller forgoes psychological shading, the greater becomes the story's claim to a place in the memory of the listener, the more completely is it integrated into his own experience, the greater will be his

inclination to repeat it to someone else someday, sooner or later. (Benjamin [1968] 2007:91)

Likewise, Gerald Thomas noted 'enough similarity between the real life and the soap opera plots to suggest a high degree of personal identification (1980: 343). The encounters of the characters can be relatable to audience members regardless of what culture they come from. The joys and sorrows of the characters in the play can be found in the daily life that may occur at any time and space. As John Storey said,

The melodramatic imagination is the articulation of a way of seeing that finds in ordinary day-to-day existence, with its pain and triumphs, its victories and defeats, a world that is as profoundly meaningful and significant as the world of classical tragedy (2015: 149).

The universal activities in the community and daily life indeed occupy a great length of this story. This explains the change of setting from the softball club in *The Busy Young Psychic* to the drama club in *The Teenage Psychic*. The production team decided that because baseball is not a popular sport in Southeast Asian countries, in the series the baseball theme should be replaced by the drama club as a much more acceptable setting. The drama club, compared to other high school clubs, is more independent and neutral, and it is also more natural to connect scenes in the story to locations of campus legends, such as a haunted building or classroom. Likewise, if a series wants to be more popular, the script needs to include a wider range of relatable senses to arouse the masses; this is usually achieved when critical conflicts, anxieties, and fears between culture are touched upon (Jenkins 2007: 14). Therefore, the script of this drama includes a variety of concerns, which assures that when the drama is broadcast across the countries, the audience and their own experience are assimilated, resulting in a sense of familiarity and even resonance. Also, using young

women as protagonists is a strategy to create another common denominator, not a parody or grafting.

Furthermore, similar texts of folk literature, such as motifs and plot units, can often be found in different cultural contexts, so using them as material to write transnational dramas can create a sense of familiarity and resonance, even in different cultural contexts. Similar legends may have different interpretations. However, a sense of familiarity and resonance can still be created from different legendary scenery and locations.

The uniqueness of Taiwanese local culture constructs the main image of the series. When talking about the script, director Chen said, 'In fact, I am constantly asking myself who I am. Taiwan lacks collective memory, common heroes, and common names, so scripts often lack local characteristics' (Punchline 2017). Chen said the drama he wanted to produce should have not only have structure but also local characteristics. Local characteristics must not be just a disposable or a gimmick but depiction from the bottom of the heart (Punchline 2017). It can be seen that director Chen on this cross-border cooperation series had a high self-consciousness during the selection of the series' theme. As he said:

Although I don't have especially strong links with religions, temples, or folk customs, I still feel deep affection to them. Now all of us realize that Taiwan must develop a variety of characteristics. Although at this initial stage, we still need to imitate foreign frameworks, this may be the moment to think about what our characteristics are (Punchline 2017).

With this notion in mind, Chen consciously and deliberately put the characteristics of Taiwanese culture in the drama, trying to show the elements that represent Taiwanese local culture.

*The Teenage Psychic* was filmed in a real temple: Shizhi Jide Temple. The filmed scenes there show Taiwan's traditional temple architecture and culture. Moreover, Sophia, a

former real-life psychic whose life story inspired the whole production, worked as a consultant to guide the actress to perform like a psychic who is adept at the movements and chants of Taoism rituals, for example: sacrifice ritual, raising a sword, drawing Taoism magic figures, and so on. In one scene, the actress who plays the psychic needs to skilfully hold a large bouquet of burning incense sticks in each hand and conduct a combination of special footsteps when dispelling the ghosts on the campus. In another, she holds a burning joss paper and simulates a real ritual to avoid calamities and evil spirits for the worshippers. These performances of mediums' actions and rituals are extremely realistic.

Although religion is a big feature in Taiwanese culture and getting help from a psychic in the temple is not uncommon, HBO Asia reminded the team of some restrictions on TV dramas to be displayed in other countries, like restricting the language use to Mandarin. The director insists on using the Taiwanese Hokkien to make the drama more realistic, in order to present the most authentic local folk religion and psychic power. However, some restrictions still apply as the broadcast regulation of each country's television must be followed. For example, because of the ban of dialect display on Singapore TV, the series in Singapore removed the Taiwanese original sound. The touch of the 'holy water' was also removed as in some religions it is a sensitive taboo.

The series is still criticized for failing to capture the spirit and essence of Taiwanese temple culture. According to one critic, the series is a de-Taiwan, de-culturalization, and an unreal world far from Taiwan (Shen, 2017). *The Teenage Psychic* is criticised for not depicting the temple's laborious religious process, all types of worshipers, or real temple administration and management (Shen, 2017). However, the series shows the temple operation within a contemporary social dilemma. Through teacher Jin's role, who attempted to study EMBA and manage the temple as a business, the series shows how to use an innovative business strategy to make the temple profitable. Teacher Jin even designed a catalogue of products, such as magic perfume, soap, prayer beads, etc., and even accepted postal orders. In the logic of capitalism, the tradition is on the wave of commercialisation.

*The Teenage Psychic* indeed shows a realistic contemporary Taiwan temple culture feature, but for some it is short of showing a complete picture.

Such criticism may stem from Taiwan's colonial history when folklore and languages were restricted. As a result, many people in cultural circles believe that the current priority is to restore Taiwanese culture and languages, which were once forgotten, neglected, and degraded. Such criticism contends that the proportion of Taiwanese Hokkien in the series is insufficient. The official and non-governmental efforts to revitalize the local languages didn't appear until the Development of National Languages Act was passed at the end of 2018 and it has been obvious that Taiwan's young and midlife generations are not very fluent in Taiwanese Hokkien. The situation of mixing with Mandarin is typical of daily life.

Those who dislike this series believe that the folklore in it is not traditional enough; similarly, oral tradition audiences, who already have a definite version of folklore in their hearts, will object to the storyteller who deviates from tradition. This also demonstrates that in the restoration, collection, and research of Taiwanese folklore, tradition remains the primary research material, with little attention paid to contemporary folklore and legends. It is incorrect to believe that the adoption of old forms also completely restores the old system of meaning and content. As Hermann Bausinger writes:

The common comparison, which likens Volkskunde and the conservation of folklore to the natural sciences and the conservation of nature.....actually it is always determined by historical and social factors.....in the sense of the revival of old forms which are believed to be endowed with natural permanence or to have developed naturally, while in reality outdated historic forms are being mummified (Bausinger [1961] 1990 : 73).

And as Tolbert indicates: 'These creative individuals reassemble and redeploy disparate motifs and imageries, forming new, contemporary creations that nevertheless hearken back

to “olden times,” to fairy tales, legends, and myths long familiar to audiences’ (Tolbert, 2016: 44). After all *The Teenage Psychic* isn't a documentary and under the premise of being a multinational production, the series makes a concerted effort to maintain a balance between local religion, cultural characteristics, and cross-border market demands.

### **The Cultural Significance Of *The Teenage Psychic*: How Tv Series Represent Folklore**

*The Teenage Psychic* creates an extraordinary virtual space that leads the audience to think about the meaning of death within the framework of reasoning in the context of an ordinary daily life confronted with impermanence; in such a space, the existence of folklore beliefs affects people unconsciously. People's lives are alternately made up of ‘the Ordinary’ and ‘the Extraordinary’, and when people enter the Extraordinary from the Ordinary, it's like returning to the source of life or power and being purified and rejuvenated for a new life (Li Fong-Mao 1995: 41-64). The temple affairs provide an extraordinary time and space in which to present extraordinary behaviours performed by the body, such as exaggerated make-up, intense action, high emotions, and extraordinary breakthroughs. These extraordinary behaviours, which are typically not permitted in public, preserve instinctive vitality (Li Fong-Mao 1993: 116-154). Those are the spiritual characteristics that have been preserved in folklore and popular culture. Despite the current gradual decline of folk tradition, spiritual characteristics will still manifest themselves when body and mind cannot be reconciled. The time and space of impermanence designed in *The Teenage Psychic* provides an extraordinary dramatic performance stage.

This drama does not present the story in the traditional manner (horror / supernatural) but instead combines it with the bildungsroman development of youth, blending fantasy and reality.

In the face of inevitable mortality and human powerlessness, it is easy to create a spark and produce an emotional impact in the audience that achieves the effect of drama tension. Like the scene in which the city councillor, faced with his wife's final stage of cancer,

lapses into a 'mad' state, reverting to a primitive human status, in the face of the death of a beloved one, the drama explores the nature of the id (the unconscious instinctual component of personality that is present at birth). This dramatic performance, in conjunction with the superstitious conviction toward deities, creates a dialogue between reason and superstition. This binary opposition, such as good and evil, youth and adulthood, life and death, persistence, and defeat, demonstrates a significant and unique aesthetic.

The script of *The Teenage Psychic* has a unique aesthetic form. It's a reversal of the old and fixed psychic impression. A teenager, whose life is just getting started, becomes a medium to the other world, interacting with ghosts. In reality, and as detailed in an anthropologist's research paper on female mediums, almost all Taiwanese female psychics have suffered from a serious illness or bad luck, which is a way for the deities to 'imply.' After medical treatment failed, one went to a temple to seek folk therapy, where she discovered she had been given 'the destiny,' and accepted the deities' choice to become a psychic (Tsai, Pei-Ru 2001). They are middle-aged women who have complete marriage and children, which indicates that those women have fulfilled their traditional obligations and demonstrates the integrity of their social identity. But, with the grotesque bodies and exaggerated ritual performances, their psychic image frequently violates established norms and boundaries, and it is frequently stigmatized (Tsai, Pei-Ru 2001). However, the psychic in this series is set as a young girl in order to break the limitations of those television and cinema works with folklore elements, remove the rustic flavour of such works, and attract the interest of young audiences. Furthermore, most movies and television works with similar themes usually aim for a high level of horror in order to achieve high ratings and create a gloomy, near-death atmosphere, and they do not allow the audience to feel the image of 'life.' There is little horror in *The Teenage Psychic*, and it is also warm, full of the worries and troubles that frequently touch us in daily life; and the view is intimate and not gloomy.

*The Teenage Psychic* displays a creative thinking of Taiwan's new generation of directors and production teams. The weak and thin high school girl, armed with a sword and possessed by a deity, fights an evil spirit-possessed man, displaying an incongruity that

does not make the audience feel ridiculous. This teenage girl seems an image of weakness, but in a special circumstance, she is transformed into a powerhouse against a stronger figure like a city councillor. Contradictory elements presented in a large number surprisingly show unexpected results.

*The Teenage Psychic* depicts distinctive Taiwanese folklore and cultural elements, such as the significance of temple beliefs in modern people's lives. It expresses the religious philosophy confronted with life and death through the unavoidable binary opposition of tradition and modernity, superstition, and rationality. Death is a universal fear, and each culture has different response to it. As Malinowski states:

Death and its denial Immortality have always formed, as they form today, the most poignant theme of man's forebodings. The extreme complexity of man's emotional reactions to life finds necessarily its counterpart in his attitude to death. (Malinowski 1948: 29)

When the living and the deceased are both struck with the bereavement and sorrow caused by death, their affection toward, and dependence upon each other continues and becomes some sort of obscure complex, kept in the living's vague subconsciousness, about the belief that the living is still connected with the deceased's soul. The idea that people become spirits after death has persisted in Taiwanese folk culture, even in the modern era of advanced science and technology and high rationality.

Although modern people may not accept such ideas intellectually, the concept of 'there is a spirit after death' still prevails in folklore and rituals. Examples include rituals preserved in folk funerals, sacrifice ceremonies, and salvation ceremonies, and one of the most well-known features is the khan-bong ritual. In a khan-bong ritual, a brief occasion of re-encounter with a deceased relative is generated. Through psychics, deceased loved ones symbolically reunite with living relatives and friends (Yee 2006). It is also a healing performance of the khan-bong ritual. Through the ritual, the deceased has a chance to

answer, allowing the living's feelings to be relieved. In folk beliefs, psychics serve as cultural healers, convincing the living of the arrival of the dead by talking about things only known between them and calling each other's names. The dialogue's content is mostly unfinished business, thought communication, and greetings that wish each other well. In the first episode of *The Teenage Psychic*, for example, singer Alice and his deceased girlfriend reunite and communicate through psychics, their thoughts finally allowed to be exchanged.

*The Teenage Psychic* adapted contemporary legends as part of the plot, too.

Contemporary legends are found in contemporary culture, both in 'folk' (oral-traditional) and in 'popular' (commercial media-disseminated) versions. Many of these stories eventually found their way into literature, film, and television (Brunvand 2001). Contemporary legends exist 'here and now'. Compared with traditional narrative, contemporary legends vary a great deal in their circulation, the degree of flexibility in the media, contexts of performance, presentational forms, functions, and degree of creativity (Smith 1996: 103-112). Campus legends are a large category of contemporary legends. Some of the most prominent ghosts on campus are suicide victims, reflecting intense academic and social pressure. Certain interior spaces seem to encourage a ghostly activity. Passageways of all kinds and libraries offer good dwellings for ghosts (Tucker 2005). In Taiwan, the legend of a haunted classroom or toilet is a collective memory that almost everyone has: 'Contemporary legends are set in our own world, and in places we can recognize or even visit, and they have emerged from events and ideas found in our social world and in our interaction with others' (Bennett & Smith 2007: XVI). The protagonist's dual identities in *The Teenage Psychic* deftly connect the worlds of reality and legend. In the third episode, a female teacher who ~~committed~~ died by suicide years ago due to verbal bullying is imprisoned in a taboo abandoned classroom. The drama club that the protagonist joins secretly uses this forbidden space, and strange things happen, making people fearful. The teenage psychic detects the ghost's presence and assists the ghost in fulfilling her unfulfilled wish to meet her beloved lover, as well as performing transcendence ritual to help the ghost enter the afterlife smoothly.

How does the TV show depict folklore? Popular culture entails both consumption and production; how can non-commercial folklore and legends be transformed into a form that looks compatible with commercial profits? As Elizabeth Bird indicates:

We need to forget about whether or not popular culture "transmits" folklore. Rather, we begin to consider that certain popular culture forms succeed because they act like folklore. . . . . Thus, popular culture is popular because of its resonance, its appeal to an audience's existing set of story conventions. (Bird 2006: 346)

The concept of 'folkloresque' might provide a meaningful heuristic view for broadening our understandings of both folklore and popular culture and the symbiotic relationship between the two (Foster 2015: 3). No specific folklore is used in *The Teenage Psychic* (e.g., no mention of any specific deity or legend). This can be illustrated by Foster's "fuzzy allusion" – 'It smells of folklore, but we can't locate the particular sources of the odour. This is not to say there are no associated references, but there are no direct correlations; indexical relations are lacking, or at least extremely vague' (Foster 2015: 53). This narrative pattern resonates in all cultural contexts. Although there are no direct citations here, ghosts and mysterious events depicted in this story do originate from Taiwanese folklore. Thus, traditional folklore and contemporary legends from Taiwan resonate with global audiences, allowing cinema and television works to carry the infectious power of Taiwan folklore.

### **How To Tell Contemporary Folklore In The Context Of Globalization: Filmic Folklore And Folkloresque That Construct Cultural Identity.**

Cinema or television works such as *The Teenage Psychic* integrate folklore elements. It is one of the new narrative types of contemporary folklore and can also be regarded as a specific genre of popular culture. Researchers are concerned with how producers/consumers of popular culture interpret folklore and how they consciously use it to obtain the sense of authenticity and authority it provides (Foster 2015:15). The mass media

cannot be viewed simply as a means of disseminating folklore, nor can it be satisfied with motif spotting', 'tale-type labelling' and other such traditional methodologies.

Chinese scholar Juwen Zhang proposed the term 'filmic folklore.' According to Zhang,

Filmic Folklore is an imagined folklore that exists only in films and is a folklore-like performance that is represented, created, or hybridized in fictional film.....Films with filmic folklore does not have the purpose of documenting folklore, but rather of deconstructing and reconstructing folklore through the medium of film, thus creating a time out of time (Zhang 2005: 267-8).

But Zhang emphasized that filmic folklore does not mirror the culture and the people of a certain time and place. With booming of the film and television industries in the digital age and the emergence of a variety of creative 'filmic folklore'" works, this new term defines a preliminary but hazy outline that requires more nuanced classification and analysis.

Furthermore, Zhang's emphasis that 'filmic folklore' does not reflect the culture and people of a specific time and place is limiting its scope and function. Realistic works or works based on real history may be excluded. He also emphasizes that studying 'filmic folklore' can provide an analysis of what role these films play in constructing cultural identity and what kind of influence they have on a nation.

Michael Dylan Foster and Jeffrey Talbert, coined the term 'folkloresque,' which provides a more refined classification with in-depth discussion. The use of numerous folklore elements can be found in folkloresque, and it also offers interpretation of folklore. Exploring "folkloresque" as a form of integration that provides insight to popular culture:

The folkloresque is popular culture's own perception and performance of folklore. That is, it refers to creative, often commercial products or texts that give the impression to the consumer that they derive directly from existing folkloric

traditions..... a folkloresque product is rarely based on any single vernacular item or tradition; usually it has been consciously cobbled together from a range of folkloric elements, often mixed with newly created elements, to appear as if it emerged organically from a specific source. (Foster 2015: 3)

The folkloresque integration mode involves subtle incorporation and integration of elements from various folkloric traditions. As a result, we must explore the various, complex, and creative ways in which creators incorporate elements of folklore into their works, as well as the causes and effects of this appropriation. *The Teenage Psychic* is a conglomeration of various sources and ideas, a synthesis of reality, fantasy, and contemporary legends and folk belief. Researchers should keep a close eye on the impact it will have on local and cross-cultural audiences.

Because of the popularity of streaming platforms, the multinational film industry now has a communication channel that crosses international borders. Globalization is practiced through producing and viewing of multinational films. In terms of globalization, clarifying the source and authenticity of folklore in folkloresque works is actually counterproductive; what matters is how to make this type of film demonstrate creativity in the global market. From the standpoint of popular culture, commercial purpose is the primary goal, and ratings are an important indicator. From the perspective of folklore, such films can extend folklore's life span in contemporary society, continue to affect the minds and lives of modern people, magnify both its influence and scope of influence, and let the local culture be reiterated. In fact, when it comes to globalization and localization, the two are not diametrically opposed to each other; emphasizing the characteristics of localization is not to oppose globalization, but to give localization contemporary value in the globalization trend. *The Teenage Psychic* demonstrates the director's conscious application of Taiwanese folklore and contemporary legends in Taiwanese popular culture, along with the reconstruction of Taiwan's cultural identity, confrontation with Chinese cultural hegemony, and openness in the face of globalization.

Through the folkloresque, the contemporary public has re-recognized the folk tradition, reconstructed folklore, and constructed a new collective belief. In the contemporary era of the disintegration of traditional beliefs, the folkloresque has spread across generation gaps and cultural boundaries, offering audio and subtitle options in multiple languages. *The Teenage Psychic* introduces Taiwan culture onto the international TV channel, combining youth campus context and supernatural, fantasy elements. The colour of the whole drama is youthful, the centre of the whole setting is the life of a 16-year-old teenager, and the narrative design beautifully interweaves intriguing contrasts of joy to sadness, life to death, etc. Each episode depicts a psychological issue or a social problem of Taiwan to create special contradictions, but all of them are eventually embraced in harmonious beauty. There is also the possibility of a critical folkloresque that can inspire meaningful social critique (Foster, 2015:65). Although the series' Taiwanese cultural representation and impact on domestic and international audiences remains to be fully seen, Taiwan is gradually developing local characteristics and folklore into establishment of a unique and independent culture. *The Teenage Psychic*, marking the dawning of Taiwan film industry success in the global market, is a proof of an independent attempt to show the true colours of Taiwan soft power.

## **Films**

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