

questions about his refusal to frame his television work as part of his oeuvre. Although Pollacchi stresses the primacy of Wang's sensibility in the editing suite, the impression of a collaborative practice that emerges from the book, which indicates the director works closely with other professionals both while editing and while shooting footage, is slightly at odds with this emphasis. Pollacchi clearly sees Wang's recognition at Cannes, Venice and Locarno as an acknowledgment of his inherently auteurist qualities. But it is clear that the increasingly rarefied spaces of exhibition through which Wang's work circulate have also helped shape his critical reception abroad, smoothing out the contradictions threaded through his spaces of production. It is these tensions that I personally would have liked to hear more about.

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## Renegade Rhymes: Rap Music, Narrative, and Knowledge in Taiwan

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Meredith Schweig's monograph, *Renegade Rhymes*, is the first detailed English-language account of rap music in Taiwan. Using interviews with Taiwan hip-hop key actors, observations, song lyrics and a plurality of archival materials, Schweig brilliantly fills a gap in the literature about popular music in Taiwan and in the Sinophone world in general.

In her book, drawn from her PhD dissertation defended in 2013, Schweig interrogates the emergence of Taiwan hip-hop music and culture in the late 1980s, after decades of martial law imposed by the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT). Schweig's observations and interviews mainly focus on the early 2010s, an era politically dominated by Ma Ying-Jeou's KMT (2008–2016) which proved critical for Taiwan's rap community. Schweig's main argument moves away from traditional debates about hip-hop as a form of counter-hegemonic discourse to "position rap songs in Taiwan as synergetic efforts to imagine new forms of post-authoritarian sociality" (p. 1).

Schweig starts at the beginning – the introduction of rap in Taiwan – but as the rapper Dwagie warns her, "the beginning ... well, it depends how you define rap" (p. 19). Instead of imposing her own understanding of Taiwan's rap history, Schweig lets the actors recount their own subjective stories, a "dizzying array of timelines and wildly divergent ideas about which events have proven formative to the community" (p. 19). This story also depends on the emic term used to translate the English "rap," may it be the Hoklo *liām-kua* 唸歌 for "song with narration" (p. 20), the Mandarin *shuochang* 說唱 ("speaking-singing"), *xiha* 嘻哈, or even *raoshe* 饒舌 ("rhapsodizing tongue") (p. 20). Each of these terms has its own story and connotation, emphasizing for instance the American influence with *xiha* or Taiwan's own musical tradition with *liām-kua*.

Schweig carefully retraces the advent of rap in Taiwan, from the popularization of break-dancing with the release of *Flashdance* to "the island's first *xiha* teen idols" (p. 25), LA Boyz, a band of three Taiwanese American singers formed in the early 1990s. The author also pays attention to the first artists rapping in Hoklo, such as Blacklist Workshop or Jutoupi, who rose to fame after the lifting of martial law and the end of the restrictions on local languages (Hoklo, Hakka and other indigenous

languages). The author's history of Taiwan rap is fascinating but sometimes partial – one can regret the minimization of Jay Chou's role in the popularization of hip-hop or the relegation of the late Taiwanese American rapper Shawn Sung to a footnote.

One of the author's most interesting contributions revolves around her observation of hip-hop male sociability in Taiwan: in opposition to Mandopop (pop music in Mandarin), "the *xihua* scene has historically been a venue in which cisgender heterosexual men are concerned primarily with speaking to other cisgender heterosexual men about issues other than their relationships with and feelings about women" (p. 83). Through song analyses (such as "I Love Taiwan Girls" by MC Hotdog and A-Yue), and the observation of ciphers (freestyle rap sessions), Schweig shows how the Taiwan rap community values the masculine traits of its members, even though they are supposed to promote "progressive worldviews, such as environmental, anti-nuclear, transitional justice, and Indigenous rights movements" (p. 67). The male sociability of Taiwanese rappers recalls the description by Avron Boretz of the *jianghu* underworld in Taiwan (*Gods, Ghosts, and Gangsters*, University of Hawai'i Press, 2011).

Rap is not only a space of predominantly male solidarity, but also a space of learning and teaching. Schweig relates the establishment of the first hip-hop clubs at National Taiwan University, one of the island's most notorious public universities, by Teacher Lin of the Tripoets in 2000 – which is reminiscent of the high schools' and universities' rock clubs which provided Taiwan with famous rock stars such as MayDay (Chi-chung Wang, "How Taiwanese students learn: high school extracurricular clubs and the making of young rock musicians" in Eva Tsai, Tung-Hung Ho and Miaoju Jian [eds.], *Made in Taiwan: Studies in Popular Music*, Routledge, 2019). Schweig also notes the relatively privileged social background of Taiwan's most notorious rappers, which explains why "Taiwan has so many 'PhD rappers'" (p. 113). The author's use of many traditional Confucian dichotomies (*nei/wai* to understand feminine–masculine relations or *wen/wu* to explain the balance between pedagogy and masculinity in the rap community) is somewhat less convincing than her brilliant depiction of actual relationships.

The last part of the book is dedicated to rappers' political engagement, both in their songs and in their use of repressed languages. For the rapper Chang Jui-chuan, who sings exclusively in Hoklo, Mandarin is seen as "an oppressor's language" (p. 148). Chang's Hoklo songs are also his way to construct an alternative history of Taiwan, pointing out the crimes perpetrated by the KMT. Not forgetting Taiwan's original inhabitants who suffered multiple waves of Han or Japanese colonizers, Schweig examines a song by the T-ho Brothers "centering the experiences of Indigenous peoples in the postwar period" (p. 168).

The book opens in 2009 with the 921.87 Rap Benefit Concert criticizing the government's response to the devastating Typhoon Morakot, and it ends in 2014 with the mobilization of Taiwanese rappers during the Sunflower Movement, which began with a critique of a controversial liberal trade agreement with China drafted by the KMT. Seeing the support of many rappers – such as Dwagie – for the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) during the 2016 and 2020 presidential elections, and their relative silence regarding the DPP's neoliberal economic policies and trade agreements with the US, one can ask if, as the author argues, this historical period really "testified to the emergence of an anti-free trade, left-wing political subjectivity" (p. 174) or consisted merely of a Taiwanese ethno-nationalist moment. The chronological boundary of this book calls for more studies on the new generation of Taiwan rappers, and its more mainstream appeal – with the broadcast in 2021 of the first Taiwan talent show dedicated to hip-hop, *The Rappers*. Schweig's book is nonetheless a critical contribution to Taiwan popular music studies and ethnomusicology in general, and the many fascinating details will make it an important read for Taiwan studies undergraduates or any students interested in the localization process of foreign music genres.