

戲院、歌仔戲與殖民地觀眾——論近代台語通俗劇場的興起  
**Theaters, Koa-a-hi, and the Colonial Audience**  
—— **On the Rise of the Modern Taiwanese Popular Theater**

石婉舜 Wan-shun Shih

國立清華大學台灣文學研究所

Institute of Taiwan Literature, National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan

Koa-a-hi, or Taiwanese opera, is a symbol of Taiwanese culture. Before enjoying its postwar golden age in the 1950s, Koa-a-hi has undergone crucial evolution during the middle and late periods of Japanese rule, at the time when its main performance styles came to crystalize. By examining the Koa-a-hi performances in theaters around Taiwan under Japanese rule, this essay focuses its discussions on the following questions:

1. In the middle period of Japanese rule, how was Koa-a-hi, then an emerging urban theatrical genre, born in its colonial context? Besides inheriting elements of acting from the native “Old Koa-a-hi,” what contemporary forms of cultural representation did Koa-a-hi incorporate? And who were its spectators? What drove them to see Koa-a-hi performances in theaters?
2. How did the colonizers and the colonized intellectuals on the island react to the rise of Koa-a-hi? What were their discourse and practice strategies? Did they work or not? How different are the images of Koa-a-hi in reality and those revealed in the discourses of the colonizers and the colonized intellectuals? And what facts does such difference show to us?
3. In the late period of Japanese rule, theaters were not only entertainment venues where different theater companies and theater owners fought for spectators, but arenas presenting the negotiations of cultural identity among the colony rulers, the colonized intellectuals and the general public. Meanwhile, the performance styles and patterns of exchange of Koa-a-hi theatrical arts were both transformed. How were these phenomena related to each other? What came as a result? And what facts does it show?

By means of the discussions above, this essay aims to capture the emotional experience of the public under colonial modernization, and to pursue an alternative way of appreciating Taiwanese culture.