

2024 Chuan Lyu Lectures in Taiwan Studies

Border Imagination *Taiwan on the Frontline*

Professor Lin Wei-ping

(National Taiwan University)



Lin Wei-ping is Professor of Anthropology at the National Taiwan University and Director of Humanities and Social Sciences, National Science Council, Taiwan. She received her PhD in social anthropology from the University of Cambridge in 1998. Her research interests are in kinship, religion and issues of place and space among the Han Chinese in Taiwan. Religious aspects in particular are the main foci and include religious change, healing cults, and sacred objects (god statues). In recent years she has been carrying out research in a military base on an off-shore island in Taiwan, exploring issues relating to de/militarization, violence, and the state. Her publications include *Materializing Magic Power: Chinese Popular Religion in Villages and Cities* (Harvard University Asia Center 2015) [Chinese version 《靈力具現：鄉村與都市中的民間宗教》 NTU Press 2020]; *Island Fantasia: Imagining Subjects on the Military Frontline between China and Taiwan* (Cambridge University Press 2021) [Chinese version 《島嶼幻想曲：戰地馬祖的想像主體與未來》 春山出版 2023]. Both monographs won Scholarly Monograph Awards in the Humanities and Social Sciences given by Academia Sinica. She also edited 《媒介宗教——音樂、影像、物與新媒體》 (NTU Press 2018); 《氛圍的感染——感官經驗與宗教的邊界》 (co-editor; NTU Press 2022). Her full profile can be found here: <https://anthro.ntu.edu.tw/en/faculty/professors/wei-ping-lin/>

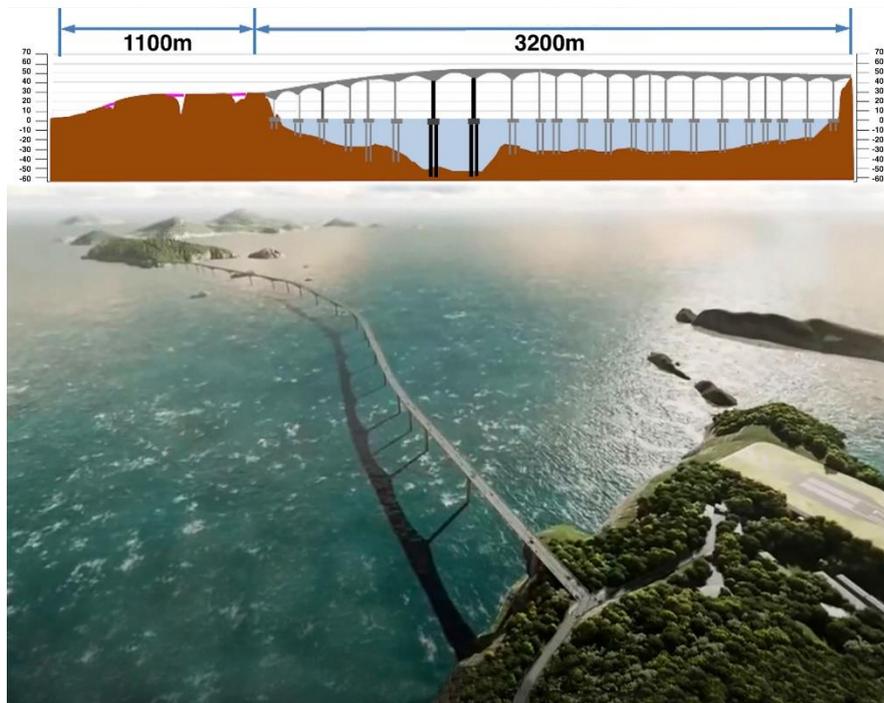
Lecture One

Spectral Infrastructure

Bridge in Suspension and Marine Technopolitics on the New Cold War Frontline

5pm, 30 April, 2024 (Tuesday)

LG18 Faculty of Law



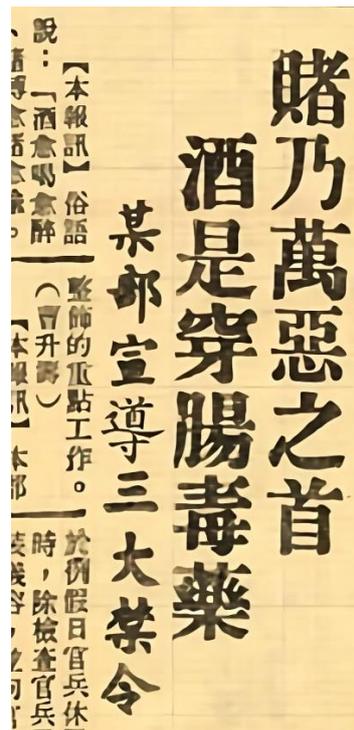
Schematic animation of the new designs for the Matsu Bridge

This paper examines the large-scale cross-sea bridge projects of the Matsu (馬祖) archipelago, a post-Cold War island chain between China and Taiwan, which suddenly finds itself yet again on the military frontline of a new 21st-century cold war. After thirty years of effort, however, the bridge has still not been built, and yet neither has it been abandoned. It exists in a state of suspension. In comparison to the growing body of work on suspension and unbuilt or unfinished infrastructure, this paper takes two different perspectives. First, I probe the marine geology and exploratory technology in infrastructural constructions which have been mostly overlooked in studies of “social-technical assemblages.” Second, I incorporate the literature on spectral studies and develop “spectralization” to depict the mode of precarious infrastructural existence in border areas. With the connotation of confronting unsettled history, subjectivity, and affect, spectralization can better capture the encounters of people, politics, technology, and affective experience and explain the volatile character of border infrastructure, teetering on edge between disappearance and rebirth.

Lecture Two

Gambling and Affect in the Cold War Matsu Islands

2pm, 2 May, 2024 (Thursday)
LG18, Faculty of Law



A clipping from *Matsu Daily* warning against gambling and drinking

This paper examines gambling and affect by drawing on ethnography from Matsu (馬祖), a small archipelago in the Taiwan Strait. To begin with, I situate gambling within the contexts of island ecology and fishing economy, showing how gambling can on the one hand be a source of leisure and relaxation, and on the other hand be embedded within a maritime world as a way to train fishermen to dare to take risks, an essential attribute of their profession which requires ceaseless struggle in the ocean. When the army came to Matsu in 1949 and placed the island under military administration, although the fishing industry underwent a steep decline, gambling spread to all walks of life, continuing unabated despite every attempt of the military government to stamp it out. The second part of this paper considers the significance of gambling in periods of historical and social change. I argue that gambling during the warzone period became a new space of affect and resistance. I re-interpret the ethnography in *Island Fantasia* (Lin 2021) through the lens of affect to show that gambling released the smothering inhibitions and oppressions of military rule and offered new possibilities for, and imaginaries of, resistance. While writing about affect and emotion, I do not always strictly differentiate these terms, but interweave them to highlight the juxtaposition of conscious/unconscious intensity that energizes the island life and its transitions and transformations.