



KANO, THE SPORT  
GENRE AND  
TAIWANESE FILM  
HISTORY

The background features a dark teal to black gradient on the left, transitioning into a vibrant, multi-layered teal and blue geometric pattern on the right. This pattern consists of overlapping, semi-transparent shapes and a grid of small squares, creating a sense of depth and movement.

# Film in Taiwan under Japanese colonialism: Production

- Only a handful of fiction films were produced in Taiwan during the colonial era—most were either instructional or education films were what we may call either documentaries or proto-documentaries.
- Filmmakers from Korea, China, Burma, and Taiwan traveled to Japan during the 1920s and 1930s to train in Japanese film studios.
- Taiwanese film productions created to show in Taiwan and in Japan.
- Documentaries filmed in Taiwan and shown in Japan include
  - *Current State of Conquering Taiwan's Native Rebels* (*Taiwan dohi seibatsu no jikyo*, 1910) and
  - *Heroes of the Taiwan Extermination Squad* (*Taiwan tobatsutai no yushi*, 1910).



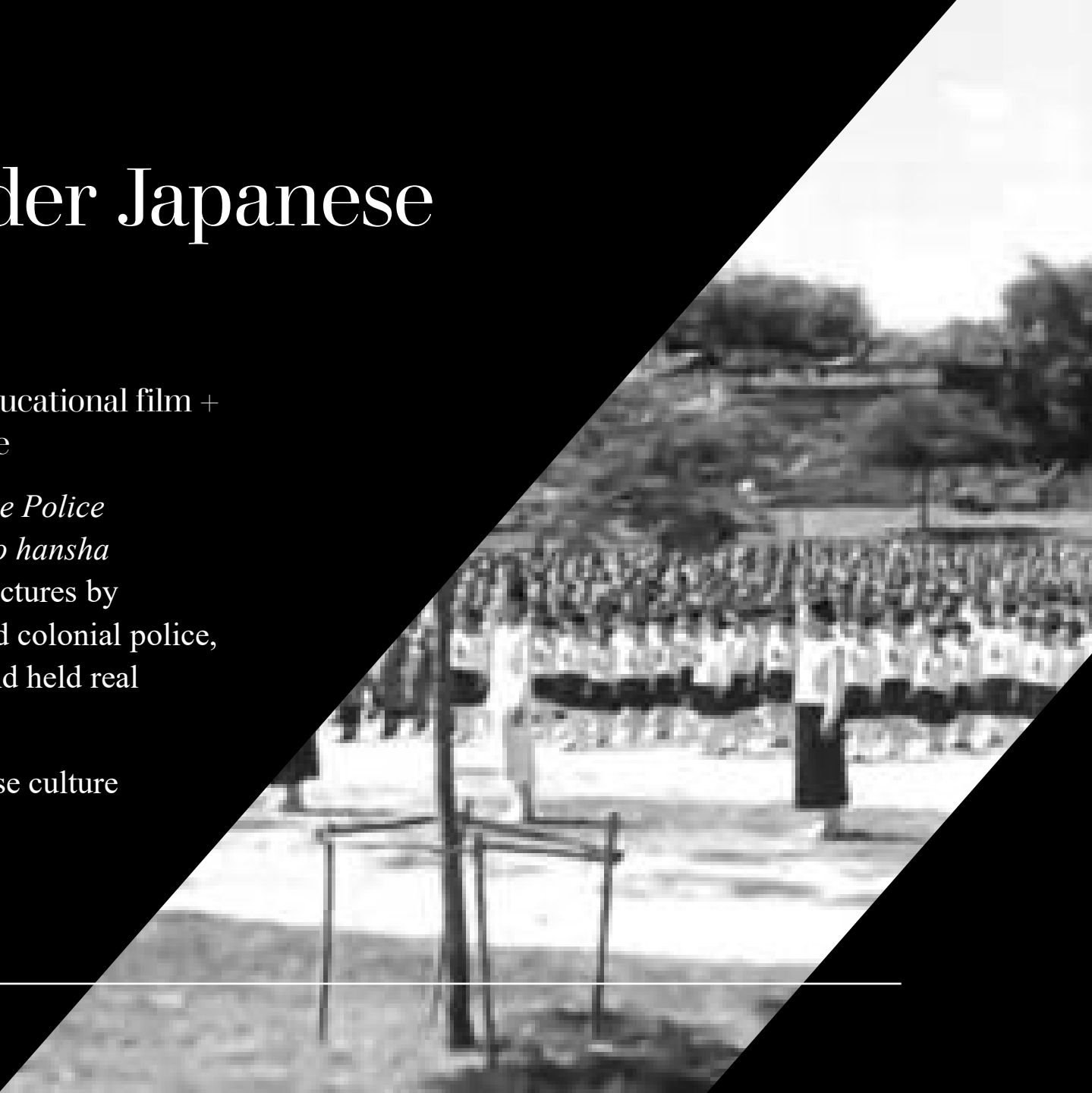
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# Film in Taiwan under Japanese colonialism: Exhibition

- Film exhibition began in 1905, for Japanese colonists, Han Chinese, and indigenous groups.
  - Instructional film was imagined as a way to “civilize” indigenous populations.
  - Colonial authorities actively encouraged educational committees throughout the island to integrate film into their educational systems and offered government subsidies to those organizations that held officially sponsored film lectures.
  - Japanese ideologues often claimed the colonial film markets of Taiwan and Korea as evidence of the modernizing and civilizing effects of Japanese imperialism.
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# Film in Taiwan under Japanese colonialism

- Film exhibition: the “balanced program”: educational film + how to film + Japanese feature film + lecture
- Films about daily colonial life, such as *Japanese Police Supervise a Taiwanese Village* (*Nihon keikan no hansha shisatsu*, 1935), normalized colonial power structures by presenting figures of authority, like teachers and colonial police, as civilizing forces who educated the masses and held real power.
- Film exhibition attempted to circumvent Chinese culture through film



Year	Japan %	America %	China %
1925–1928	70	25	4
1929	80	14	4
1930	78	10	10
1931	83	10	5
1932	78	10	10
1933	75	15	8
1934	70	19	9
1935	63	18	6
Total %	over 60	under 30	under 10

Source: Ya-wen Hung, “Taiwan sotokufu ni yoru eiga seisaku,” *Eiga gaku*, no. 12 (1998): 135.

# Film in Taiwan under Japanese colonialism: Benshi and film narrators

- Style of silent film narration native to Japan in which the operation of the projector itself would be described before the showing, and then explanations of Western culture would accompany the film with the *benshi* standing to the side of the screen. This commentary was as much part of the theater-going experience as the film itself.
  - Spread into Japanese colonies: *byeonsa* in Korea, *piansu* in Taiwan
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# The Piansu in *Kano*



# What sorts of conclusions can we draw about film in colonized Taiwan?

- Film is an important part of Japan's power engine
  - Sought to normalize Japanese imperialism as “the best, most Asian” imperialism
  - Brought particular filmmaking modes to Taiwan which would affect how the island would relate to film
  - Benshi/piansu could—and did—do certain kinds of cultural and political work
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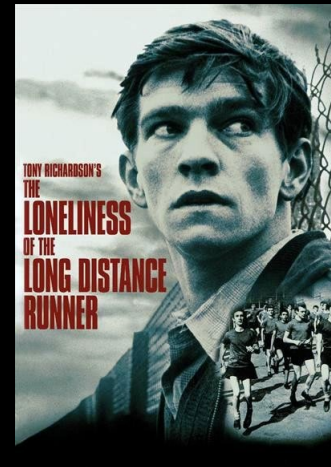




AND NOW FOR  
SOMETHING  
COMPLETELY  
DIFFERENT

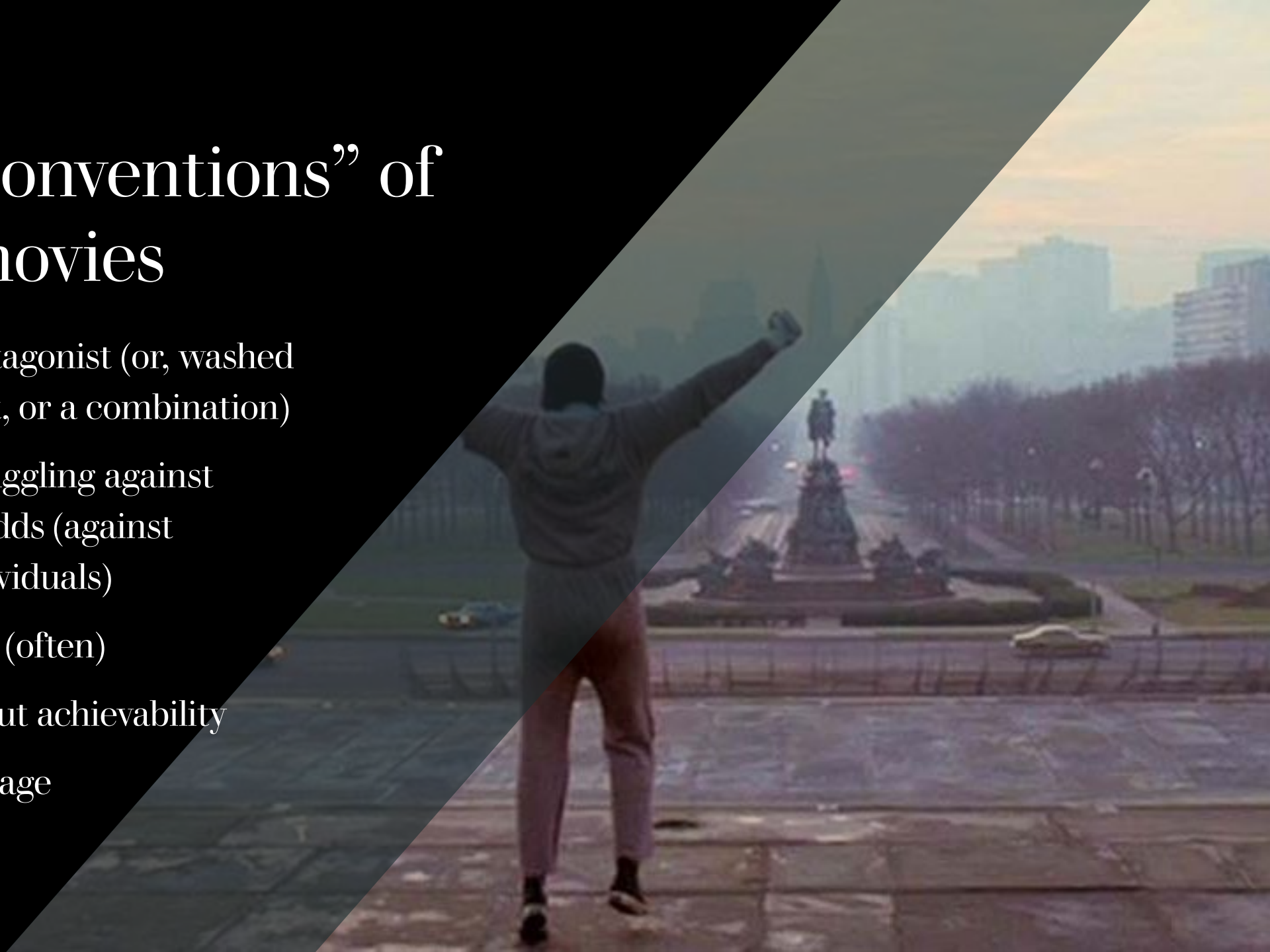
# Sports! In movies!

- Sports film is a slippery genre
- Can include team sports, personal narratives, from any culture or country
- Can involve a variety of different themes or meanings.



# Some “conventions” of sports movies

- Unknown protagonist (or, washed up protagonist, or a combination)
- Underdog struggling against tremendous odds (against dominant individuals)
- A love interest (often)
- Questions about achievability
- Training montage





# National identity and the sports film

- How these films illustrate ideas of a specific nation?
- Do these ideas differ from nation to nation?



# *Lagaan* (2001)




# TAIWAN AND SOFT POWER

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What is soft power, and how does it work with the sports  
film?

# Who wins the soft power war?

Those whose dominant culture and ideas are closer to prevailing global norms (which now emphasize liberalism, pluralism, and autonomy);

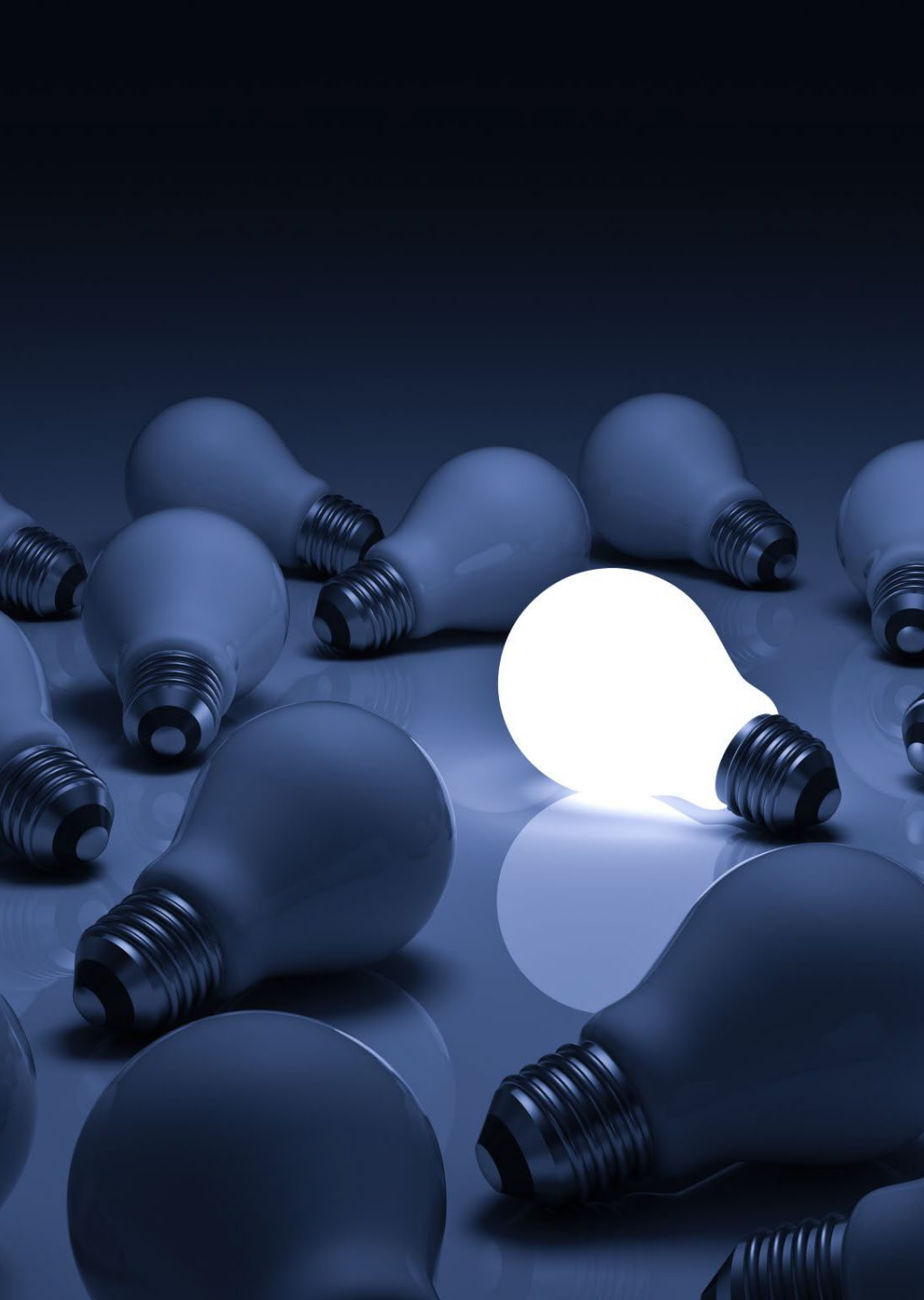


Those with the most access to multiple channels of communication and thus more influence over how issues are framed; and



Those whose credibility is enhanced by their domestic and international performance.





# What might Taiwanese soft power look like?

Democratic values are a central component of Taiwanese soft power. For instance, former Vice President Annette Lu (呂秀蓮) defined Taiwanese soft power as consisting of “human rights, democracy, peace, love, and high technology.” Multiple scholars, including Gary Rawnsley and Ryan Hass, have also highlighted the importance of Taiwan’s democratic values in its soft power attraction. Taiwan can demonstrate Taiwan’s commitment to democracy, not only by covering stories that depict Taiwan’s vibrant civil society, but also by showing their own commitment to maintaining a free press.



# Umin Boya and Wei Te-sheng

- Director Umin Boya is half indigenous (Seediq)
- Actor by trade, appearing in several of Wei Te-sheng's films



- Writer producer Wei Te-sheng made a trilogy of pre-1949 films about Japanese colonialism and pre-KMT life