

Basic Thoughts on the History of Taiwan's Literatures

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Introduction

The title of this article already hints at the crucial methodological approach of my project. The plural “literatures” is necessary because Taiwan (by which I primarily mean the main island also known as Formosa as well as the offshore islands close to it) has always had several literary traditions, some of which ran parallel for long periods of time, meaning that they had very little or no contact with each other.² This, in turn, was due to the fact that the respective traditions (which I also refer to as “strands”) manifested themselves in different, often mutually incomprehensible languages.³ Many people assume automatically that literature from Taiwan is the same as literature in Mandarin, but this is a mistake. Taiwan has always been a multilingual country, even though several political regimes have tried to ignore or even change this fact.

My project – which I hope to complete in the not-too-distant future – is to write a literary history that does justice to this complexity by giving the individual languages the space they deserve.

¹ This is a revised and enlarged version of my article “Grundgedanken zur Geschichte der taiwanischen Literaturen”, published in *ASIEN* no. 156/57, Juli/October 2020, pp. 168-189.

² The idea is not entirely new; Lin Chen-shan 林鎮山, for example, already suggested that the “Canadian literatures” should be used as a comparative model (Lin 2008).

³ On Taiwan’s language situation and my conception of the designation of these languages, see Diefenbach (2019). At this point, it should only be noted that the most common native languages of Taiwan, namely Taiwanese 台語 (also: Holo 河洛話) and Hakka 客語, should not be regarded as dialects of Mandarin 北京話, i.e. the standard northern Chinese language, but as separate languages, each with its own dialects. Mandarin as a spoken language did not come to Taiwan until 1945 and was completely uncommon there before this date; in its written form, however, Mandarin had some influence on modern Taiwanese literature from the 1920s onward. – I use the word “Sinitic” when speaking of ‘cultural China’ (including characters) to clearly distinguish it from the state ruled by the Communist Party. Moreover, I use this term as a generic term for the immigrants who came to Taiwan from the mainland (as distinct from the Austronesian aboriginals to which I also refer to as “indigenous”). As a matter of principle, I use the word “Chinese” only when referring to China, especially the People’s Republic of China, and never in the linguistic sense, because it is too imprecise and misleading.

Of course, I do not intend to write anything even approaching an exhaustive account, but rather to provide an initial overview, to show the full range of the literary field in Taiwan, and to point out questions that are still unanswered and unexplored.

It is not surprising that no work of this kind has yet been published, since ideally it should be written by someone who is equally proficient in almost twenty (very different) languages and who is also an expert in at least three very different cultural regions. Since such a competent person hardly exists, it obviously would be a better option if experts from the respective sub-areas compiled an anthology of essays – but firstly, such groups are not easy to assemble (and even more difficult to keep together), and secondly, such anthologies usually lack an inner order, an organic composition. Thus, the third option remains – namely, that an individual, in this case a sinologist, who meets at least some of the prerequisites, takes on this task in order to create a (hopefully) solid foundation, which can then be used as a basis for further, even more detailed works. Fortunately, the fact that a great deal of material on Taiwanese literary history (both primary and secondary) has now been translated into English and Mandarin greatly facilitates this work. In the past decades, the collection and study of Taiwanese literatures has made impressive progress. Only 30 years ago, the situation was such that Helmut Martin (1940-1999) recommended to collect and describe all available material at first, and then to proceed to a critical appraisal, from a literary-aesthetic perspective as well (Martin 1996: 40). It seems to me that the time is now ripe for this second step.

The works on Taiwanese literary history that have appeared so far, whether in Taiwan or abroad, do not do justice to the complicated reality in terms of their timeframe and linguistic framework. Current literary historiography in Taiwan often seems to me to be stuck in dead ends or to run into thinking traps. In some cases, it can even be observed that certain guidelines and taboos from the times of the Kuomintang dictatorship still linger today, so that complete areas of Taiwanese literature are left out (for example the aboriginal languages 原住民族語言 or works written in Taiwanese). Others focus on ideological criteria, for example, by treating only those works of the Japanese period 日治時期 (1895-1945) in which the “foreign rulers” are criticized or attacked; but the fact that at the same time there were also many authors in Taiwan who were friendly towards Japan and even loyal to the emperor is thereby suppressed. Some Taiwanese scholars adopt the official Chinese line, and others, in protest against the traditional taboos and the Chinese style approach, present a very idealized picture of the indomitable Taiwanese who have bravely rebelled against the various colonial rulers throughout the ages and always preserved their cultural independence.⁴ An explicitly displayed “Taiwanese self-confidence 台灣意識” automatically ensures a positive assessment of a work in certain circles, while in other circles, on the other hand, a “Great China attitude” goes down very well.

Since the notions of Taiwanese identity and culture are so strongly contested, it is no wonder that the view of Taiwan’s own literary history is also highly politicized. As a result, the question of literary quality often recedes into the background, and instead the ideological orientation of the author is decisive for the judgment of the critic and/or literary historian. Thus, until today many very different, often contradictory drafts of Taiwanese literature have emerged, all of

⁴ The official Chinese line is to regard Taiwan as a part of China and to bend the entire history of Taiwan towards this misconception. Free research is impossible in China anyway; Chinese Taiwan research serves only political and propaganda purposes, which is why most of it is worthless.

which must be taken into account – but always with the necessary critical distance. This also includes revealing and reflecting on one’s own point of view.

As a non-Taiwanese, one is basically in an excellent position to write a book like the one outlined here. One is not part of the often heated debates fought over issues such as Taiwanese identity; one is not personally affected by many of the problems involved in dealing with Taiwanese history. The outside perspective may therefore sometimes provide deeper insights, although of course – for linguistic reasons alone – there often remains a certain gap with the locals, their knowledge and insights. Also, it will occasionally happen that my views on Taiwanese literature differ from common assessments and judgments, but this is not surprising, since I am not only a foreigner (from Taiwan’s point of view), but also a translator, and therefore read literary works in a different way than most Taiwanese.

My book is intended not only for specialists, but for all readers interested in Taiwan or in literary history in principle. This means that while I want to be as accurate as possible, I also want to present my findings and reflections in an understandable and readable way.

What is Taiwanese literature? What is a Taiwanese author?

In the introduction to my book, I will try to define the term “Taiwanese literature” because so far there has been no consensus on what should be included and what should not. My approach is to place Taiwan at the center of my considerations and not to consider it as a “marginality” of some other literature, such as Chinese literature.

To this day, there are Taiwanese who would prefer to exclude all works written in Japanese from their definition of Taiwanese literature. At the same time, the same people argue that all works about Taiwan should be included in Taiwanese literature, as long as they are written only in Sinitic characters – even if these works first came to Taiwan centuries after they were written and their authors have no connection to Taiwan at all. I do not embrace this very narrow and in a sense “ethnically” oriented definition; nor can I embrace Cheng Ch’ing-wen’s 鄭清文 (1932-2017)⁵ statement that everyone who writes about Taiwan is a Taiwanese author, no matter what country he comes from or what language he writes in (Cheng 2019b: 6). Instead of this definition, which is both far too narrow (content restriction) and far too broad (all languages of the world), I choose a more concrete and flexible approach:

1. For me, the content of a work is not a decisive criterion at all. A Taiwanese author can write about whatever (and however) he wants. Conversely, not every work about Taiwan belongs to Taiwanese literature.

⁵ If I wanted to be extremely exact, I would have to transcribe all Taiwanese place and personal names according to their Taiwanese or Hakka pronunciation. Unfortunately, I do not know these two languages, since I only learned Mandarin. Therefore – and for reasons of uniformity, which also makes for better readability – I transcribe all Taiwanese names and designations according to their Mandarin pronunciation, namely according to the Wade-Giles system, because in my opinion the use of the Chinese Hanyu Pinyin is not inappropriate due to political reasons. For place names, however, I often deviate from Wade-Giles.

2. More important is the language in which a work is written: It must be one of the languages that are among the languages in common use in Taiwan at the time that the work was written and published.
3. Also very important is the publication and reception history of a work within Taiwan, and
4. the author's background and relationship to Taiwan as well as to the Taiwanese literary establishment.

Thus, rather than applying a rigid definition to the entire history of Taiwanese literature, I consider each work and author within the context of their particular time circumstances and then decide whether or not they should be counted as Taiwanese literature. Eileen Chang 張愛玲 (1921-1995), for example, can hardly be called a Taiwanese author because she visited the island only once for a few days and hardly had any contacts there, but on the other hand, her works were so popular and influential in Taiwan from the 1960s onward that she cannot simply be ignored in a literary history of Taiwan either. Or take the well-known Japanese writer Satō Haruo 佐藤春夫 (1892-1964), who spent only three months in Taiwan in 1920, but was so impressed by it that in the following years he wrote several books whose plots were set in Taiwan. All of these books were also published in Taiwan during the Japanese period, so they can also be counted as Taiwanese literature. On the other hand, I do not think that the works of Ch'en Ti 陳第 (1541-1617) or Yü Yung-ho 郁永河, who traveled the island in 1697 in search of sulfur deposits, are part of Taiwan literature. This is because, firstly, these works did not reach Taiwan until much later, and secondly, these are books of a more ethnographic and geographical nature, not literature in a strict sense. Some literary historians consider Ch'en's "Report on the Eastern Barbarians 東番記" (c. 1604) to be the beginning of Taiwanese literature, but this is like declaring Tacitus' *Germania* to be the first work of German literary history.

My book will focus primarily on poetry and narrative literature and to a lesser degree on essayistic works. I have to make such a restriction so that my project does not get out of hand. For the same reason, I will not discuss children's and young adult literature, manga 漫畫, or theater or opera in Taiwan (these areas are, in my opinion, best dealt with in separate studies). On the other hand, I will in some cases come to talk about libretti or similar texts when it comes to the question of the writing of Taiwanese.

This brings me to another important topic: the term "literature 文學/文/文藝" also deserves some attention and explanation, because here, too, very different views have existed at different times (if not until today). This fact can be demonstrated, for example, by the emergence of the "New Literature 新文學" at the beginning of the 20th century, which was accompanied by a drastic change in the concept of "literature" in the thinking of Taiwanese people. Two important steps in this process were the overcoming of the very rigid traditional rules for poetry and the revaluation of narrative prose.

In my introduction, I will also discuss some of the problems I encountered in writing my history of literature. For example, for the phase of Ch'ing rule 清朝 (1684-1895), it is often very difficult to determine when a particular literary work was written or when and where it was first printed; and for the Japanese period, one must always pay close attention to the language in which a particular work was written. There are researchers in Taiwan, for example, who consi-

der translations from the Japanese as Mandarin originals, which I think is a serious problem and leads to wrong conclusions. This problem is compounded by the lack of care observed in some of the literary histories I have read; for example, the date and place of the first publication of a literary work are sometimes not given at all or are given incorrectly.

Literary histories should also contain comparative elements, which is why I will repeatedly relate Taiwanese literary history to its Chinese and Japanese counterparts. However, since I am writing for German readers, I will also occasionally compare certain Taiwanese phenomena and works with German literary history – perhaps I will sometimes come to insights that may also be of interest to Taiwanese.

First Part: Overview of Taiwanese History

The first part of my book consists of an overview of Taiwan’s political history to give the German reader a better understanding of the historical background of the literature there. At the end of this chapter, I include several tables that break down various topics in a clear manner:

- the evolution of Taiwan’s administrative divisions from the times of Koxinga 鄭成功 (1624-1662) to the present,
- the size of the population from Koxinga’s times to the present (comparing various estimates and calculations),
- the names of all rulers, governors and presidents in Taiwan,
- a list of all riots and uprisings in Taiwan since the 17th century,
- an overview of the aboriginal peoples officially recognized today.

With this orientation it will be easier for the German reader to follow the literary-historical explanations. This overview of political history is also necessary, however, because my literary history is not structured on the basis of political dates, as it was often done in the past. Of course, politics always affect a country’s literature in some way, but that does not mean that 1895 (the year of the Japanese takeover of Taiwan) or 1945 (the year of the Republic of China takeover) were significant dates in literary history. Instead, 1923 (when the first modern poem in quasi-Mandarin was published)⁶ or 1946 (when the use of Japanese in newspapers was banned), for example, were much more relevant, and that is why I structure the individual chapters based on such dates.

⁶ There is a certain naming problem here, because the native Taiwanese authors of the Japanese period tried to write modern, i.e. colloquial (i.e. Taiwanese) poems and stories with Sinitic characters. However, the results are usually understandable to anyone who has only learned Mandarin. One could therefore speak more precisely of a “Taiwanized Mandarin 台化北京話 or a quasi-Mandarin 準北京話”, in which only occasionally certain unusual characters (which are supposed to reflect Taiwanese expressions) or even Japanese terms cause difficulties in understanding.

Part Two: Oral Literature

In the second part, I will present the oral literatures of various languages. In doing so, I will not only discuss the oral traditions of the aboriginals and the Sinitic peoples (i.e., the inhabitants of Taiwan originating from Fukien and Canton), but also give some details on the Japanese tradition, since the Japanese also incorporated their cultural heritage into the local textbooks during their rule over Taiwan, making certain tales of the Japanese oral tradition part of the knowledge of two generations of Taiwanese. Much of the oral literature of all these languages has already been translated into English, Mandarin, or even German.⁷

I will also outline here from when and how the oral literature of each ethnic group was collected and recorded: The Ch'ing literati were not interested in this at all, with a single exception – Huang Shu-ching 黃叔璥 (1680-1758), who at least transcribed a few songs of the aboriginals 平埔族 who settled in the western plains. In the 1880s, foreigners such as George Taylor excelled in this field; and beginning in the 1900s, some Japanese published relevant anthologies. In the postwar period, many native Taiwanese were engaged in the field, and around 1970 Wolfram Eberhard (1909-1989), who was a visiting professor in Taipei for a time, was also very active in the field. Together with Lou Tzu-k'uang 婁子匡 (1905-2005), who was originally from China, he edited several volumes. The lifting of martial law in 1987 gave a tremendous boost to the study of oral literature.

Following this second part, I will include a short section on the first writing system in Taiwanese history, namely the Latin alphabet 羅馬字, which the Dutch introduced to Taiwan in the early 17th century to transcribe the language of the aboriginal Siraya 西拉雅族 tribe. However, the Siraya script was never used to compose literary works or to record oral tradition, but it was used for Christian missionary work; some parts of the Bible in the Siraya script still survive. Unfortunately, the writing system fell out of use altogether in the middle of the 19th century; the last of the so-called Sinkan manuscripts 新港文書 dates from 1813. The Siraya script could have been the beginning of a written aboriginal literature, but this opportunity was not taken – the first of several “failed beginnings” (Heinz Schlaffer) in the history of Taiwanese literatures.

⁷ The first German article presenting the Atayal language, including insights into its oral tradition, appeared as early as 1932 (Scheerer 1932). The first German study on the indigenous languages of Taiwan appeared even earlier (von der Gabelentz 1859).

Het H. Euangelium
na [de beschrijvinge]

MATTHEI.

Het eerste Capittel.

I HET Boeck des
Geslaches JE-
SU CHRISTI,
des soons Da-
vids / des soons Abrahams.
2 Abraham gewan I-
aac, ende Iaac gewan Ja-
cob, ende Jacob ghewan
Judas / ende sijne broe-
ders.
3 Ende Judas ghewan
Phares ende Zara by Tha-
mar, ende Phares ghewan
Esrom, ende Esrom gewan
Aram.
4 Ende Aram gewan A-
minadab, ende Aminadab
gewan Naasson, ende Na-
asson gewan Salmon.
5 Ende Salmon ghe-
wan Boos; by Rachab,
ende Boos; gewan Obed by
Ruth, ende Obed ghewan
Jesse.
6 Ende Jesse ghewan
David den Koningh, ende
David de Koningh gewan
Salomon by de ghene die
Urias

Hagnau ka D'lligh

Matiktik ka na fasoulat ti

MATTHEUS.

Naunamou ki lbægb ki soulat.

I Soulat ki kavouytan
ti JEZUS CHRI-
STUS, ka na alak ti
David, ka na alak ti
Abraham.
2 Ti Abraham ta ni-pou-alak
ti Isaac-an. ti Isaac ta ni-pou-alak
ti Jakob-an. ti Jacob ta ni-pou-
alak ti Juda-an, ki tæ'i-a-papar'ap-
pa tyn-da.
3 Ti Judas ta ni-pou-alak na
Fares-an na Zara-an-appa p'ouh-
koua ti Thamar-an. Ti Fares ta ni-
pou-alak ti Esrom-an. Ti Esrom ta
ni-pou-alak ti Aram-an.
4 Ti Aram ta ni-pou-alak ti
Aminadab-an. Ti Aminadab ta ni-
pou-alak ti Naasson-an. Ti Naas-
son ta ni-pou-alak ti Salmon-an.
5 Ti Salmon ta ni-pou-alak na
Boos-an p'ouh-koua ti Rachab-
an. Ti Boos ta ni-pou-alak na O-
bed-an p'ouh-koua ti Ruth-an. Ti
Obed ta ni-pou-alak ti Jesse-an.
6 Ti Jesse ta ni-pou-alak ti
David-an ka na Mei-fasou ka Si
bavau. Ti David ka na Mei-fasou
ta ni-pou-alak ti Salomon-an p'ouh-
A koua

CHAP. I. (1) THE book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. (2) Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren; (3) and Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; (4) and Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon; (5) and Salmon begat Boos of Rachab; and Boos begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; (6) and Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat

A

Figure 1: The first parts of the Gospel of Matthew in Dutch and Siraya. Reprint of 1888 of the first version of 1661. Source: Wikipedia (CC BY-SA).

Part Three: Classical Literatures

The part on classical literatures includes only two languages or writing systems, namely Sinitic and Japanese.⁸ The first chapter, which will be devoted to literature written in Sinitic, is divided

⁸ In using the term “classical Sinitic”, I borrow from the usage in Japanese studies (see, e.g., Rabinovitch and Bradstock 2019). – “Kanshi” 漢詩 literally means “Han poem”, and in Japan it refers to poetry modeled on classical forms adopted from China. In Japan, this poetry was of course pronounced the

into three parts, namely the early phase, the consolidation phase, and the blooming phase. I will present particularly noteworthy works and authors for each of these phases. It is also important to note that the Sinitic characters in which classical literature was written were usually pronounced in Taiwanese or Hakka on Taiwan until at least the 1940s, but not according to the modern Mandarin standard. In spite of this, I do not count these works as Taiwanese 台語文學 or Hakka literature 客語文學, because they can easily be understood by someone who is fluent only in classical Sinitic, but neither Taiwanese nor Hakka.

The first half of the early period begins around 1650 with the arrival of Shen Kuang-wen 沈光文 (1612-1688), who landed on the island involuntarily, after a storm. He was followed by other literati 文人⁹ who preferred to venture the perilous journey to Taiwan rather than remain on the mainland under Manchurian rule. Their works are usually grouped under the term “exile literature 流寓文學”.

Then, when the Ch'ing Dynasty destroyed the Cheng regime in 1683, the second half of the early period began. Important aspects of this period were the establishment of traditional schools 書院 (1683/1704), the beginning of the Confucian examination system 科舉 (1687), and the production of the first “local histories 地方志,” whose significance for literary history lies in the fact that they usually include a separate “chapter on literature 藝文志”. The first local history of this kind appeared in 1696. Moreover, Taiwan's first poetry society 詩社 was founded in 1685. In 1693, the first native Taiwanese 本土台灣人 acquired the title of “provincial graduate 舉人”.¹⁰ During this period, a “Rhapsody on Taiwan 台灣賦” as well as the series “Eight Views of Taiwan 台灣八景詩” were also written for the first time – both works that were considered exemplary not only until the end of Ch'ing rule, but are even imitated until today. In their poems, the literati of this phase – both the early exiles and those later sent to Taiwan as administrators 宦遊 – often dealt with the dangerous passage to Taiwan, the unfamiliar climate, the difficult living conditions, the aboriginal peoples and their customs, etc.

When Sun Yüan-heng 孫元衡 (life dates unknown) took up his post as magistrate for coastal defense 台灣府海防捕盜同知 in 1705, the cornerstones of imperial rule and literary life were already in place in Taiwan. Therefore, I choose this date as the beginning of the consolidation

Japanese way, but nevertheless it is also understandable to classically trained sinologists without knowledge of Japanese.

⁹ To speak of “authors” or “writers” would be inappropriate for this phase, because the term “wen-jen” implies that an official was a poet at the same time. – The works in classical Sinitic that have come down to us from that period are all written by men; women poets do not appear in Taiwan until the middle of the 19th century, and even then only very sporadically.

¹⁰ I choose the term “native” as a translation for the term pen-sheng 本省 or pen-t'u 本土, which refers to all Taiwanese born on Taiwan and whose families were already resident there before 1945; “mainlander” or wai-sheng 外省, on the other hand, is the term for those who arrived on the island only after 1945. It should be noted that the descendants of expatriates born on Taiwan are usually not referred to as “natives” (and often do not call themselves such), but as “2nd generation mainlanders 外省二代”.

period. From this time on, the number of schools increased steadily, allowing more and more native Taiwanese to be educated as scholars. These native literati 本土文人 now earned their degrees under the state examination system, though almost none of them went on to civil service careers on the mainland; most worked as teachers in Taiwan instead. In 1725, the Ch'ing government banned all poetry societies and even prohibited any gatherings of scholars – a sign of the imperial court's deep distrust of officialdom, which was, after all, largely non-Manchurian. It is difficult to determine, however, to what extent these harsh regulations were effectively enforced in Taiwan; in any case, they did not stop the Taiwanese literati from diligently writing poetry. Important authors of these phases – besides Sun himself – were Lan Ting-yüan 藍鼎元 (1678-1732), who wrote not only poetry but also some literary notable edicts directed to higher administrative bodies; Huang Shu-ching 黃叔璥 (1666-1742), who translated some song lyrics he had heard from aboriginals; and Chang Fu 章甫 (1755-1816), whose works were highly praised by many contemporaries. Ch'en Hui 陳慧 (life dates unknown), who came to Taiwan in 1739, is most famous for his poem “Buying Rice 買米”, which is remarkably frank in its criticism of corrupt officials and rapacious merchants.

I place the beginning of the blooming period in 1823, when the first native Taiwanese passed the palace examination and was thus allowed to call himself “Palace Graduate 進士”: Cheng Yung-hsi 鄭用錫 (1788-1858). One of his most famous works is a treatise written in 1853, which calls for a peace settlement between mutually warring factions (which defined themselves by their place of origin on the mainland). During this period, many more schools were opened. This rapid expansion of education continued until the end of Ch'ing rule, and even after 1895, many traditional Confucian schools persisted for some more years. Poetry societies formed again from 1863 onward, although I am not yet sure whether the respective ban had been officially lifted or whether it was simply ignored. Important writers of this phase included Ch'en Chao-hsing 陳肇興 (1831-1866?), Lin Chan-mei 林占梅 (1821-1868), and Shih Shih-hao 施士浩 (1856-1922).

In 1895, the Japanese took over Taiwan, and it is interesting to look at the different ways in which literati reacted to the arrival of the new rulers. Most of them stayed on the island or returned shortly after the fighting ended. Widely known in this context is the name of Ch'iu Feng-chia 丘逢甲 (1864-1912), who is always referred to in Taiwanese (and Chinese, of course) literary histories as a “patriotic poet of the struggle against the Japanese invaders 愛國抗日詩人”, even though he fled the island before the enemy arrived and wrote his patriotic poems at a very safe distance. It seems that the label “patriotic poet” seems to fit better to other literati, such as Wu T'ang-hsing 吳湯興 (?-1895) from Miaoli 苗栗, who was killed in action fighting the Japanese.

After 1895, a considerable number of Japanese in Taiwan also wrote poems in classical Sinitic; Hu Chü-ch'uan 胡巨川 (b. 1938) has collected the works of over 140 authors originating from Japan and compiled them in eight volumes so far (Hu 2012-2019). And in 1897, Lin Tz'u-hsiang 林次湘 (life dates unknown) published some poems in classical Sinitic in a newspaper – the first publication by a woman in Taiwanese literary history that we know of.

Then, in 1924, Chang Wo-chün 張我軍 (1902-1955) published a very aggressive article that sweepingly attacked everyone who “still” used classical Sinitic, a language that was outdated

and obsolete in his eyes. However, very few writers joined his furious attack, because most of them were not only writing classical poetry but also experimenting with “New / Modern Literature 新文學”, a more colloquial, modern form of Mandarin inspired by a cultural renewal movement which had originated in northern China. Even if Chang’s articles did not achieve their goals, they were of some symbolic significance because they signaled the final end of the heyday of classical literature. As such, they constitute a significant caesura in Taiwanese literary history – at least in the strand of classical Sinitic. After this date, there are hardly any significant turning points, for even if this strand of language is still active today and there are still poetry societies and journals devoted exclusively to poetry in classical Sinitic, this kind of poetry is hardly noticed by the public. Only occasionally does it cause a stir, such as in 2015, when a thoroughly clumsy rhapsody was hung in the Taipei airport terminal (Diefenbach 2016).

The next strand within this part is Classical Japanese, which arrived in Taiwan in 1895 but was initially used only by Japanese. So far, I have not been able to determine in what year Sinitic Taiwanese began composing works in Classical Japanese (and likewise, I am not sure if there were any aboriginals who were active in this strand). The problem is that this area is relatively unexplored, at least there are hardly any studies on classical Japanese literature in Taiwan. Thus, one of the most important sources on this topic still is Shimada Kinji’s 島田謹二 (1901-1993) article “The Past, Present and Future of Taiwan Literature 台灣的文學的過現未 in 文藝台灣”, although it dates from 1941.

This chapter will first cover the period up to 1946, the year in which the Kuomintang 國民黨 took the first steps toward an outright ban on the Japanese language in publishing and in the public sphere in general.

Since I do not speak Japanese myself, I have to rely on conversations with experts and use materials written in English or Mandarin for this section. The same applies to Taiwanese and Hakka.

Part Four: New Literatures from 1885 to 1946

This part covers the first phase of the “New Literatures 新文學”, which led to the first multilingual phase of Taiwanese literary history. Multilingual means that during this period there were many authors who wrote and published in two or more languages (classical Sinitic, quasi-Mandarin, modern Japanese, classical Japanese, Latinized Taiwanese).

Several decades before “New” literature (i.e., literature oriented to colloquial language and (in poetry) working with free forms and rhythms) emerged in Taiwan in the early 1920s, a new medium for literary writing had already arrived on the island: in 1885, the Latin alphabet was again introduced to Taiwan, and again by Christian missionaries – this time, however, it served to transcribe Taiwanese. Very soon, this new script was also used for literary writing: The first poems of this strand (which are consistently reminiscent of Christian hymns) appeared as early as 1885, and the first stories followed already in the following year.

Before the introduction of “Latinized Taiwanese 台語羅馬字/白話字/Peh-ōe-jī”, Taiwanese had been rendered exclusively with Sinitic characters. However, this never resulted in a uniform system, which means that some of these older texts are difficult to understand. This is also due

to the fact that the pronunciation of Sinitic characters varies and varied greatly from region to region, especially before the 20th century, i.e., before the introduction of a nationwide school system.

It is no coincidence that those three countries which adopted Sinitic characters (Vietnam, Korea and Japan) tried very early on to develop new systems that could be used to better reflect the phonetic (and in some cases grammatical) peculiarities of their own language. In Korea, this led to the development of a completely new alphabet which largely supplanted the Sinitic characters; the Japanese, on the other hand, designed two syllabic alphabets of their own, which supplemented the imported characters. The Vietnamese developed Chu Nom in the 13th century, which was an attempt to record spoken Vietnamese using Sinitic characters, but resulted in a very complicated and difficult-to-learn system that was later replaced by Quoc ngu, created in the 17th century by Portuguese missionaries and based on Latin letters. – The Latin transcription for Taiwanese, originally developed for the closely related Hokkien (used in Malaysia), now offered Taiwanese a way to create a literature that was colloquial in the literal sense.

Thus, the beginning of a colloquial literature 白話文學 for Taiwan cannot be dated to the early 1920s, as is usually done with regard to quasi-Mandarin, but over 30 years earlier. However, it is difficult to decide whether one can already speak of “new literature” in the sense of “modern literature” here. It was “new” in the sense that it was much closer to spoken Taiwanese than anything that had ever been written in Sinitic characters before, especially in terms of pronunciation, but formally this literature was still quite traditional. The poetry, for example, was predominantly oriented toward seven-syllable verse and was rhymed throughout – both typical characteristics of the oral Taiwanese tradition. In terms of content, however, the literature written in “Latinized Taiwanese” often referred to the Bible, i.e., one of the central books of “Western” thought, which at that time was considered “modern” in Taiwan – incidentally, an interesting contradiction to the European idea of modernity, which aimed precisely at overcoming religion(s).

Many Taiwanese, such as Liu Mao-Ch’ing 劉茂清 (1857-1922) and especially Ts’ai P’ei-huo 蔡培火 (1889-1983), very much welcomed this new writing system, not only because it closely followed the pronunciation of Taiwanese, but also because it was so easy to learn compared to Sinitic characters. The question of how to render Taiwanese in writing was one of the triggers for the first debate on native literature 鄉土文學論戰 around 1930. Ironically, many participants in this debate did not even know that a Latin transcription of their own language was already being used to write poems, stories, and even novels.

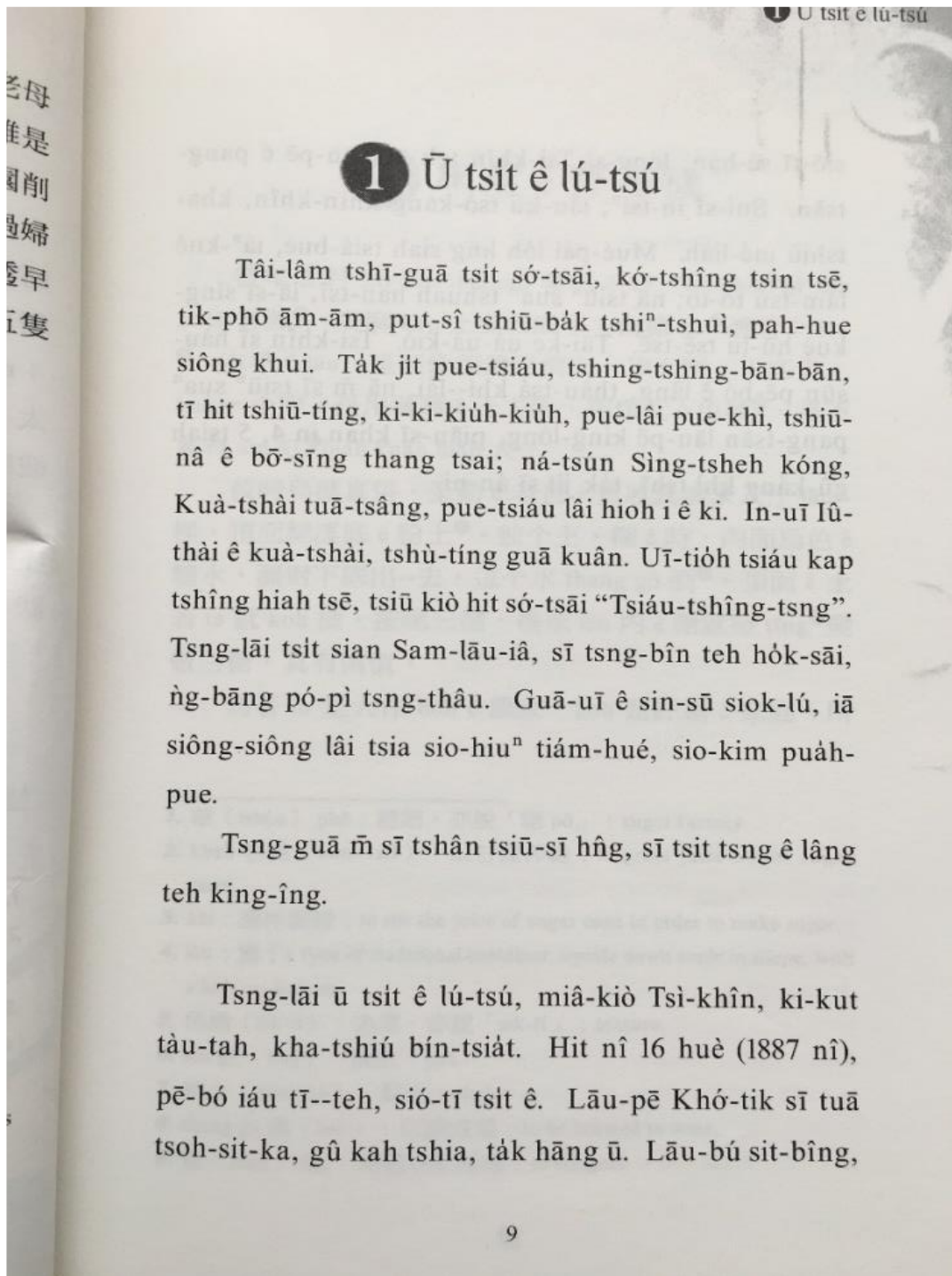


Figure 2: The first page of the 1926 novel *Chhut sí sòan* [出死線], written by Tēn Khe-phoàn [鄭溪洋] (1896-1951); here in a modern edition. Source: Own photo

The Japanese did not restrict the use of “Latinized Taiwanese” until the course of the Pacific War, and it was used more intensively again shortly after the end of the war. In this section, I will outline the further development of this strand until 1969 – the year in which the Kuomintang banned its use. Until that year it was also used steadily, but almost exclusively in church circles and only rarely for literary works.

It should also be mentioned that the Japanese who arrived in Taiwan after 1895 naturally already brought with them a modern literature in their own language, for the history of modern literature had already begun in Japan in the 1880s. As early as 1898, modern poems in Japanese can be found in Taiwanese newspapers. An interesting question in this context is why the Sinitic Taiwanese were not inspired by these novel literary forms well before 1920 – so far, I have not found an answer to this question that goes beyond purely political reasons.

The next chapter describes the developments of New Literature in quasi-Mandarin and Japanese between 1920 and 1937, and since many authors were able to write and speak both languages, I will treat these two strands together in this section. Before going into the details of New Literature in Taiwan itself, I will discuss the preceding developments in Japan and China that ultimately spurred the emergence of New Literature 新文學運動 in Taiwan. In this chapter, I will not only introduce the most important and well-known works and authors of this period, but also attempt, in some cases, to reassess their literary qualities (which includes the question of the extent to which Lai Ho 賴和 (1894-1942) deserves his title as the “father of modern Taiwanese literature”). This seems important to me because, in my opinion, most writers and literary societies of the time had primarily political and social goals in mind and were at most secondarily concerned with literary aesthetics and principles. A notable exception to this was the Windmill Society 風車詩社, founded in 1933, albeit it did not exist for long and had only little influence on the literary scene in Taiwan.

Since many works in this period appeared anonymously or under pseudonyms (which, incidentally, was also the case with Latinized Taiwanese), it is difficult to determine since when women began to participate in the literary life of these two strands; we do know, however, that in the 1930s and 1940s women such as Yang Ch’ien-ho 楊千鶴 (1921-2011), Huang Feng-tzu 黃鳳姿 (b. 1928) and Sakaguchi Reiko 坂口禊子 (1914-2007) published several works.

The Esperanto movement 台灣世界語運動 is a special case because this language is not a native Taiwanese language. Although the movement never had more than 70 members in Taiwan in the 1920s and 1930s, it was active enough to launch two magazines, *La Verda Ombro* and *La Verda Insulo*. These occasionally published literary works, often translations of European originals, but sometimes also indigenous and aboriginal folklore. During the 1940s, the movement gradually faded away.

Although this chapter will cover only a relatively short period of time, it will be quite extensive because it will have to present a very productive and lively period full of controversy and new cultural influences.

The year 1937 was a turning point in that the Japanese rulers henceforth sought to make their own language the dominant in Taiwan – if not the only one. Ultimately, this was intended to end the multilingualism of Taiwanese literature, but of course this goal could not be achieved immediately. While it is true that most of the journals written in quasi-Mandarin soon disappeared, not all of them did: the journals of the *Feng-yüeh*-series 風月報, for example, managed to appear until March 1944. The language of this entertainment magazine tended slightly toward classical Sinitic; in the later issues, it approached more and more the written modern Mandarin used in China at the same time. Since this magazine was very popular and circulated almost island-wide, it is wrong to claim that the Taiwanese population had no access to modern Mandarin at all after 1937. Especially for this period, it is again important to pay attention to the

literary skills of individual authors, rather than judging their political stance, as is often done to this day. I will also discuss the censorship system under Japanese rule in this part.

Part Five: Modern Literatures from 1946 to the 1980s

In October 1946, only a year after its takeover of Taiwan, the Kuomintang took the first steps toward establishing another form of monolingualism – now, Japanese was to be pushed out of the public sphere and replaced by Mandarin, the northern Chinese vernacular. Shortly thereafter, the Kuomintang went on to push back Taiwanese, Hakka and aboriginal languages as well; in schools, only Mandarin, which (as a spoken language) had previously been completely uncommon in Taiwan, was now allowed to be spoken. The new government, which had effectively imposed martial law on Taiwan since 1947, was more successful in its language policy project than the Japanese because it was even stricter and had more time at its disposal, but it still failed to suppress the private use of other languages. Many native Taiwanese 本省人, such as Wu Cho-liu 吳濁流 (1900-1976), simply continued writing in Japanese and then had their works translated into Mandarin for publication. However, the literary use of Japanese in Taiwan steadily declined.

In the 1960s, authors such as Lin Tsung-yüan 林宗源 (b. 1935) and Huang Ch'un-ming 黃春明 (b. 1935) also began to use elements of Taiwanese or Hakka vernacular in their works (preferably in dialogues). They used exclusively Sinitic characters – not because of the ban on Latinized transcription imposed in 1969, but because that writing system was completely unknown to them.

The postwar period was also the first phase in Taiwanese literary history in which women authors, publishers, and editors played a major role. Notable among these would be Lin Hai-yin 林海音 (1918-2001), Nancy Chang Ing 殷張蘭熙 (1920-2017) and Nieh Hua-ling 聶華苓 (b. 1925).

Since the Kuomintang also subjected Taiwanese literature to strict censorship, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, I will also discuss the censorship system in a bit more detail in this part. Censorship was significantly relaxed even before the lifting of martial law in 1987.

Part Six: Literatures after 1990

Around 1990, multilingualism, which had been suppressed for decades, returned to Taiwanese literature in a more diverse and free way than ever before. Mandarin, however, retained and retains to this day an absolutely dominant position, which means that the overwhelming majority of Taiwanese authors think, write, and publish in this language.

The first chapter (which is probably going to be the longest chapter of my book) will therefore deal with literature in Mandarin. It will be divided as follows:

- An overview of publishing, the book market, and sales figures. Here I also discuss literary awards and their influence on the literary field.
- A critical overview of the development of the study of Taiwanese literature since the end of the war. The focus here is on the literary historical approaches of Huang Te-shih

- 黃得時 (1909-1999) and Yeh Shih-t'ao 葉石濤 (1925-2008), as well as the rediscovery of Taiwanese literature produced during the Japanese period beginning in the 1970s. This section will demonstrate once again how much politics influenced, if not distorted, Taiwanese people's view of themselves and their own culture. Finally, beginning in the 1990s, research on Taiwanese literature became increasingly careful and professional.
- An assessment of the state of literary translation in Taiwan (in both directions).
 - Sexuality and eroticism. Neither of the two played a major role until the postwar period because, especially during martial law, the government was very careful to maintain public morals. It was then (often female) authors such as Kuo Liang-hui 郭良蕙 (1926-2013), Pai Hsien-yung 白先勇 (b. 1937) and Li Ang 李昂 (b. 1952) whose works provocatively broke taboos and triggered heated discussions. In the 1990s, sexual themes of all kinds became very popular and have remained so to this day.
 - Kinmen 金門縣 and Matsu 馬祖列島, two groups of islands just off the Chinese coast that remained under the control of the Republic of China only for purely military reasons. Therefore, they also occupy a very special role in Taiwanese literature, if they fall into that category at all. For before 1949, no one would have associated them with the island, but after that year, their inhabitants – if they were able to remain there at all – had to look to Taiwan if they wanted to participate in cultural life. The literary scene of both island groups is relatively small, and Kinmen seems to be the more active one here.
 - Nature, ecology, and marine literature 海洋文學. The first two themes emerged in the 1980s and became more popular in the 1990s. Well-known authors in this field include Liu K'o-hsiang 劉克襄 (b. 1957) and Wu Ming-yi 吳明益 (b. 1971). The third theme, that is, literary exploration of the ocean, its inhabitants, and the people who are closely connected to it emotionally or professionally, emerged as early as the 1950s, interestingly under the aegis of naval officers. It was not until the 1990s that this area gained noticeable popularity. Today there are authors who work exclusively in this field, such as Liao Hung-chi 廖鴻基 (b. 1957).
 - Literature in Mandarin by indigenous authors. This is a particularly important area: for most of Taiwanese history, there was only writing *about* the aboriginals since the aboriginal peoples themselves (apart from the Siraya) never had a writing system of their own. During the Japanese period, some aboriginals recorded songs, but none of them seem to have participated in literary life. It was not until 1962 that Kowan Talall of the Paiwan 排灣族 people – still being forced to use his Sinitic name Ch'en Ying-hsiung 陳英雄 – became the first aboriginal ever to publish a literary work (a collection of stories). In the 1980s, indigenous people established their own literary magazines, and since that time they have also been permanent members of the literary scene.
 - Works by Sinitic Malaysians 馬華 living and working in Taiwan, such as Li Yung-p'ing 李永平 (1947-2017), Huang Chin-shu 黃錦樹 (b. 1967) or Chung Yi-wen 鍾怡雯 (b. 1969). The first of them came to study on the island in the 1960s. Some deal with everyday life or the history of Malaysia, others describe their new life in Taiwan. Especially in the 1970s and 1980s, they played quite an important role; however, from the year 2000 onwards, only few new authors joined them.
 - The next chapters are then devoted to the other languages used for literary writing in Taiwan today.

- Taiwanese 台語. This scene is not very large, but all the more active. However, it is deeply divided on one point, namely the question of the writing system. Many prefer the Sinitic characters, others want to use only the Latin alphabet, and still others use a mixed system 漢羅 developed in the USA in the 1980s. The use of Sinitic characters is quite problematic, because in school children learn them as a transcription of Mandarin and not of Taiwanese. Exaggeratedly, one could say that Taiwanese is certainly not a dialect of Mandarin, but that if it is rendered with Sinitic characters, it is degraded to a dialect.



Figure 3: Language education for young children in Taipei subway in spring 2020. The symbols next to the characters indicate the Mandarin pronunciation. Source: Own photo

- Hakka. This scene is even smaller than the Taiwanese one, yet there are some literary magazines and regular book publications. A writing system for Hakka based on the Latin alphabet was developed as early as the Japanese period, but unlike “Latinized Taiwanese”, it was apparently not used for writing literature at that time. This did not occur until after 1987, but most Hakka authors stick to Sinitic characters.
- Native languages. Not all of these more than 20 languages (some with only a few hundred speakers) are used for literary purposes today, and most aboriginal authors write in Mandarin anyway, but some also use their native languages, which they usually tran-

scribe with Latin letters (the majority of these writing systems were also developed by missionaries). However, these latter works have very few readers, so they often appear in bilingual editions (such as Puyuma / Mandarin).

- Languages of new immigrants 新住民 (Vietnamese, Thai, Indonesian, etc.). In recent years, more and more immigrants have come to Taiwan to work, especially from South-east Asia. Some of them have started to write, partly in Mandarin, partly in their mother tongue. In the second case, the readership within Taiwan is of course again very limited, but at least there is already a special literary prize for it. There are also some Europeans and Americans living in Taiwan who publish in English and/or Mandarin.
- In the early 1990s, the Esperanto movement returned to Taiwan, although unfortunately, for political reasons, the community there is still not an official member of the Esperanto World Congress. Literary activities, however, seem to take place on a very small scale.
- There are also still some authors who were born in Taiwan but live abroad and publish in the language of their host country, e.g. in Japanese or English. Particularly prominent examples are Lin Wei-yün 林蔚昀 (b. 1982) and Li Ch'in-feng 李琴峰 (b. 1989), who have even been awarded literary prizes in Poland and Japan respectively.
- At this point, I will also return to classical Sinitic, which is still actively cultivated in Taiwan today, albeit only by not too many people.

The final chapter will once again summarize the most recent trends in the literary field in Taiwan and attempt an outlook on its possible future, for example, with regard to the language issue (will the planned language education reform for schools change the writing and reading habits of Taiwanese?), or also with regard to the question of whether the literary scene in Taiwan will be able to gradually overcome or even bridge the still deep political rifts. The most important prerequisite for a positive development of Taiwanese literature (and Taiwan as a whole) is, of course, that the island continues to resist all attempts of a takeover by its big, aggressive neighbor.

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