

## **Prof. Wu Rwei-ren Shares Taiwan's Experience of Democracy in His Taiwan Lecture on Chinese Studies at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences**

On May 8, 2018, the National Central Library's (NCL) Center for Chinese Studies and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences co-sponsored the first Taiwan Lecture on Chinese Studies of the year, which was held at the academy. Prof. Wu Rwei-ren (吳叡人), a research fellow of the Academia Sinica Institute of Taiwan History, was invited to deliver the lecture, entitled "Caught between Empires: Democracy and Nation-State Formation in Taiwan." The lecture was moderated by Dr. István Monok, director-general of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Library. NCL director-general Ms. Tseng Shu-hsien (曾淑賢) made a speech before the lecture, which was also attended by Representative Chang Yun-ping of the TECO in Hungary.

Prof. Wu Rwei-ren obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. His research focuses on modern and contemporary Taiwanese and Japanese political history, emphasizing themes such as nationalism, state formation, colonialism, post-colonial criticism, and left wing movements. Prof. Wu has published prolifically in Chinese and Japanese, and his translation of Benedict Anderson's famous work *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* was by a large margin voted the most highly recommended academic translation published in Taiwan during the 1990s.

Drawing on his many years of experience of research on the course of democracy in Taiwan, Prof. Wu introduced Taiwan's complex history to the Hungarian audience. He recounted Taiwan's journey from colonial rule, through autocratic government, to today's freely developing pluralistic society. Prof. Wu also pointed out, however, that while being a fine example of an up and coming democratic system of government, at a time when Taiwanese democracy is still establishing itself, it has seemingly had to endure its fair share of threats due to the realities of international politics. At a time

when Taiwan's democracy and constitutional government is facing a crisis, it is worth observing and reflecting on the Taiwanese people's response. Prof. Wu connected many similarities in both the powerful threats faced by the two countries, and in their changing democracies, which resonated with the audience.

The NCL has been working closely with Hungary for many years. A year after the library put on a very well-received bibliographic exhibition, "The Imprint of Civilization: The Amazing Journey of Books," at Hungary's National Széchenyi Library in 2017, it returned to Hungary to hold this lecture, which once again attracted quite a large audience. As both Hungary and Taiwan are examples of countries that successfully transformed into democracies in the 1990s, Taiwan's experience of democracy and its current state of affairs is something that is of interest to Hungarian society. After the lecture, the audience asked Prof. Wu a stream of questions and participated in lively discussions with him. The Center for Chinese Studies distributed information publicizing its Research Grant for Foreign Scholars in Chinese Studies and MoFA's Taiwan Fellowship, with the hope that this will encourage even more foreign scholars to carry out research in Taiwan, and so increase Taiwan's research capabilities.



Prof. Wu Rwei-ren delivers his lecture



NCL director-general Tseng Shu-hsien (left) with the director-general of the



Prof Wu Rwei-ren delivers his lecture, with Judit Bagi, a research fellow of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, assisting him (left).



Director-General Tseng Shu-hsien (far left) with Representative Chang Yun-ping of the TECO in Hungary (2<sup>nd</sup> left); Prof. Wu Rwei-ren (2<sup>nd</sup> right); and Director-General Dr. István Monok of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Library (3<sup>rd</sup> left)