

Diffraction National Narratives: Folkloric and Literary Writing in Colonial Taiwan under Japanese Imperialisation

Taiwan's literary and cultural production under Japanese rule has been a well-examined research topic since the 1990s. Despite the cogency of the oft-adopted resistance-centred post-colonial standpoint, it reduces the coloniser-colonised relationship to a rigid binary. A pronounced case illustrating this nationalist valorisation is the reappraisal of *Minzoku Taiwan* (Taiwanese Folklore). Despite the debate between Yang Yunping (1906-2000) and Kanaseki Takeo (1897-1983) over its purport in 1941,¹ the journal has long been seen positively for “epitomising the Japanese people's conscience” (Yang 1961, 60; 1981, 1), and “not lending support to Japan's imperialisation” (Lin 1995, 33–61).² However, in 1996, Kawamura Minato (b.1951) argued that the journal was full of exoticism and its ethnological efforts were an integral part of Japan's imperialist concept of “The Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere” (Kawamura, 1996).³ The relationship between the thought of Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962), founder of Japanese folklore studies, and Japan's cultural nationalism, further lends weight to this view, but in 2012, Tarumi Chie offered a more neutral opinion, considering Kawamura's appraisal of *Minzoku Taiwan* “too harsh” (57).

This scholarship tends to assume that Japanese and Taiwanese subject positions are stable, while in fact their representation remains contested and is frequently subject to the authors' or politicians' ideological interests. Kobayashi Yoshinori's *Neo Gomanism Manifesto Special – On Taiwan* attests that Japan's national pride needs re-defending, whereas the 2015 debate between Lee Teng-hui (b.1923) and then president of Taiwan, Ma Ying-jeou (b.1950), indicates that Taiwan's subjectivity continues to be entangled with Japan and China.⁴ Clearly, the

¹ See Yang, “Kenyū to ai” (Research and Love), *Taiwan nichu nichu shimpō* (May 29, 1941): 3; Kanaseki, “Minzoku e no ai: Yō Unhei kun ni kotafu” (Love towards Folklore: In Reply to Yang Yunping), *Taiwan nichu nichu shimpō* (June 1, 1941): 3.

² Similarly, Wang Shilang (1981) considered *Minzoku Taiwan*'s leading figure Ikeda Toshio (1923–1974) to be a man who truly loved Taiwan, and a great contributor to Taiwan's folklore studies.

³ The journal's veteran contributor Kokubu Naoichi (1908–2005) rejected Kawamura's view, but Kokubu's remarks are quite personal. See Kokubu (1997) for his defensive response to Kawamura, and Wu Micha (2006) for the debate.

⁴ Lee criticised Ma's commemoration of the second Sino-Japanese War for “harassing Japan and pleasing Communist China”, see Li et al. (2015).

coloniser/colonised dichotomy fails to address the precarious subject positions of Japanese and Taiwanese. It either reinforces Japan's colonial hegemony or overstates Taiwan's resistance. Nor can it expound the polyphonic views held among Taiwanese and Japanese writers. To redress this, scholars have provided new analytical frameworks. Tierney (2010), Xiong (2014), and Chang (2017) tackle the Japanese people's ambivalent identity formation,⁵ while Kleeman (2003) and Thornber (2009) focus on cultural and literary exchange between the coloniser and the colonised and between the colonised Taiwanese and the colonised Koreans.⁶

Minzoku Taiwan makes a great example for further exploration of the complex and interrelated coloniser/colonised tie. Its contributors' ethnological endeavours are frequently understood as Japan's enlightenment/modernisation agenda and co-prosperity ambition (Tsu 2003; Wang 2012; Zhang 2006). The identical Japanese pronunciations of "folklore" and "nation" (*minzoku*) already imply the tangled association between the two concepts that resonates with the theories of Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), who stresses the importance of folklore materials in constructing a coherent collective ethno-national identity. To gain a more nuanced understanding of the Japanese and Taiwanese writers' views on folklore and local culture, it is necessary to problematise the term "folklore" and related expressions such as "locality".

This paper considers folklore a discursive and contested concept through which Japanese colonisers' knowledge construction and Taiwanese writers' folklore writing converged. In other words, Japan's promotion of local (*chihō*) culture allowed room for Taiwanese intellectuals to articulate their own views of Taiwan's folklore in the 1940s. Folklore in this context became a contact zone to examine the compatible yet different nationalist imaginings put forward by Japanese and Taiwanese critics, a process I call "diffracted national narrative". To highlight the various appropriations of folklore, I will present three case studies – the journal *Minzoku Taiwan*, the

⁵ Tierney detects a "temporary distancing" strategy of the Japanese colonisers who asserted Japan's superiority over colonial subjects and recovered their presumably pure primordial past at the same time. Xiong examines how Nishikawa Mitsuru and Ōuchi Takao renegotiated their relationship with Japan proper and its greater empire when they ventured out of Japan. Wen-hsun Chang argued that the Japanese scholars involved in *Minzoku Taiwan* (such as Kanaseki Takeo) questioned Yanagita Kunio's folklore studies and identified themselves as the "outsiders" of imperial knowledge production.

⁶ Kleeman compares the works between expatriate Japanese writers in Taiwan and Taiwan's ideologically diverse native authors. Thornber uses the concept of artistic contact nebulae to explore the intra-East Asian literary exchange, mainly of Chinese, Korean, and Taiwanese authors' emulation of Japanese texts.

different mappings of literature from Taiwan as a region of and away from the Japanese empire, and the folklore writings of Taiwanese authors in the early 1940s. Each case corresponds to a question I explore in this paper: How can we better comprehend the ethnological practices in colonial Taiwan in the 1940s? What were the possibilities of defining the literature produced *locally* in colonial Taiwan? How were Taiwanese authors' views of local culture represented through their creative works?

Minzoku Taiwan and Contested Views on Folklore

After the imperialisation campaign was implemented in Taiwan in late 1936, Taiwan's literary field remained quiet until around 1941, when the Japanese colonisers began to call for the establishment of local cultures. The revitalisation of locality was already an important program in the 1938 "new order" (*shintaisei*) movement because the strengthened cultural and economic power of a local region was thought to serve as a necessary foundation for a strong Japanese nation. However, it was not until the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, a para-fascist political organisation established in October 1940, published *Fundamental Ideas and Strategies for a New Development of Local Culture* (*Chihō bunka shinkensetsu no konpon rinen to sono hōsaku*) in January 1941 that Taiwan's position elevated as a local site of the Japanese Empire and research on Taiwan's folklore was encouraged.

In July 1941, a mixed group of folklorists launched the journal *Minzoku Taiwan*. The cover of each issue stated that the journal was for "studying and introducing folkways". Although the Japanese colonisers' call for rejuvenating local culture can be seen as an ongoing anthropological effort to collect data about the colonies initiated by the governor-general of Taiwan, this view cannot do justice to the varieties of articles published in *Minzoku Taiwan*. As the journal's main figures, Kanaseki Takeo and Ikeda Toshio from the Taiwan government-general's information office,⁷ specified, *Minzoku Taiwan* aimed to record Taiwan's quickly disappearing customs under Japan's radical imperialisation. In the early issues, there were essays drawing connections between folklore study and nation building. The Japanese anthropologist Okada Yuzuru (1906–1969), for instance, defined folklore as the cultural inheritance of a certain nation (*minzoku*) as a regional/local group (1941a).

⁷ Kanaseki Takeo was an anatomy professor, anthropologist, and, under the penname Rin Yūsei (C: Lin Xiongsheng), author of detective fiction.

He further stated that the foundation of ethnology is the combining of the merits of all nations' inherited cultures (1941b). To pass the censors, the editors confessed that they occasionally inserted pro-Japan messages. From October 1942 onwards, the cover line was changed to "studying and introducing the folkways of the South" to correspond to Japan's advancement southwards. In 1944, Kanaseki declared that the journal was "in cooperation with the political situation at that time" (1944, 9).⁸

Despite the political climate *Minzoku Taiwan* faced, some Japanese scholars were self-reflexive when conducting research in and about Taiwan. Shiomi Kaoru reminded researchers of Taiwan's ethnology not to judge others' cultures with reference to their own culture and not to exert their superiority over Taiwan's folkways (1941, 4). Besides Shiomi, the view of Yanagi Sōetsu (aka Yanagi Muneyoshi, 1889–1961), founder of Japan's folk-craft (*mingei*) movement in the late 1920s and 1930s, is worth noting.⁹ In March 1941, Yanagi was commissioned to investigate the handcrafted art in Taiwan. Upon arrival, Kanaseki Takeo and the *wansei* (Taiwan-born) artist Tateishi Tetsuomi (1905–1980) accompanied him for an island-wide tour. In Guanmiao of Tainan, an important manufacturing site for bamboo handicraft, Yanagi was impressed both by the products and the overall working environment. Kanaseki recorded Yanagi's comments about Taiwanese handicrafts and later published them in *Minzoku Taiwan* (Yanagi & Kanaseki, 1943).

During his sojourn in Taiwan, Yanagi praised Taiwan's handicrafts for their power, concluding that the island's craftsmanship was more advanced than that of Japan. He also showed his admiration of the indigenous peoples' handicrafts. However, despite Yanagi's call for mutual respect for people of different races and his comment that "their [Japan's cultural others such as the Ainu and Taiwanese] handicrafts are remarkable and we [Japanese] must respect them," he simultaneously claimed that "only Japanese can discover the true aesthetic sense," and therefore Japan must "elevate their [Japan's cultural others such as the Ainu and Taiwanese] ability of appreciating beauty" (1981, 574; 602). For Yanagi, Japan remained the educator about aesthetics whereas racial and cultural others (such as the people of Taiwan) were the students of aesthetics.¹⁰ Although the Taiwanese had managed to

⁸ For the relationship between folklore research and Japan's co-prosperity ideal, see Wang Shao-chun (2012).

⁹ For Yanagi's notions of folk-craft, see Kikuchi (2004); Brandt (2007).

¹⁰ This inferior presentation of colonised subjectivity was perhaps due to a lack of an aesthetic apparatus, see Brink (2011).

utilise beautiful crafts in their daily lives more than had their Japanese counterparts, a colonial hierarchy remained in which the colonised subjectivity was still considered inferior.

Besides these Japanese critics' diverse views on folk-crafts, Taiwanese writers who contributed to *Minzoku Taiwan* provide yet other possibilities for conceptualising "folkways". Several articles by Taiwanese authors tackle women's social problems such as *tongyangxi* (the practice of child marriage or "adopting" a future daughter-in-law). Its 29th issue was dedicated to Taiwan's outmoded adopted daughter and daughter-in-law practices. Lian Wenqing (1894–1957) detailed how, after being transplanted from China to Taiwan, the practices had taken on a more utilitarian turn. He also observed that *zhuixu* (a son-in-law living with his wife's parents) further promoted the practice of adopted daughters-in-law. Zhang Wenhuan (1909–1978) recommended fighting against the procuresses selling their adopted girls to improve the destiny of those girls and elevate Taiwan's public morals. He also criticised men pawning or selling their wives in response to poverty. Wu Xinrong (1907–1967) discussed the maltreatment suffered by both the adopted girls and daughters-in-law, yet simultaneously mentioned their bad habits such as lacking self-awareness because of their lack of education. In addition to describing the suffering of adopted daughters-in-law as Chen Shaoxin (1906–1966) did, Yang Qianhe (1921–2011) wrote about the marginalised status of daughters in traditional families. Given that many of these authors were overseas Taiwanese students in Japan and considering the Japanese colonisers' earlier call for abandoning outdated practices, one may consider those opinions a byproduct of the colonisers' modernization discourses.¹¹

However, the journal's contents are quite diverse and far from a seamless endorsement of colonial rhetoric. Along with those "seemingly-conformist" pieces introducing scientific knowledge or detailing Taiwanese customs and traditions, there are articles on children's games, Taiwan's street drinks, and the Taiwanese people's dietary habits. Some are about legends and folk tales, making a contrast with the meticulous investigation demonstrated in some more scholarly and socially engaged articles. A few are written with a sense of humour. Ikeda Toshio, for instance, published a witty piece on the three qualities – small mouth, willow-leaf eyebrows, and doll-like oval-shaped face – a woman must have if she wishes to be considered a

¹¹ Chang Hsiu-sheng (2014) considers Taiwanese intellectuals' criticism of Taiwan's bad social practices in *Minzoku Taiwan* and Japan's imperialisation campaign fairly identical.

beauty (1941, 27–29). Yang Kui’s (1906–1985) piece about his disapproval of arranged marriage is personal and autobiographical. It includes details such as his second brother’s suicide and how Yang saved 45 yuan and left for Tokyo to escape a forced marriage (1944, 30–32). “Listening to Stories in Mengjia” (*Manka chōsho*), which contains several folk practices such as not washing hair or cutting nails at night, and the belief that one will be bad at math if one eats fish eggs before the age of 16, by Lishi Xinhua, offers yet another example.

Huang Fengzi (b.1928), Ikeda Toshio’s student, and later his wife, was probably the best-known female contributor to *Minzoku Taiwan*. From March to December 1942, Huang published her childhood memories of growing up in Mengjia in six instalments titled “Memories of a Young Girl from Mengjia” (*Manka no shōjo omoide*). Those entries cover topics ranging from wearing the Taiwanese-styled blouse and scarf made by her great grandmother, the death of her great grandmother, festivals such as the Lantern Festival and Lunar New Year, going to the temple fair, and the killing of livestock and poultry. The first entry is about Huang’s receiving vaccinations and a subsequent peanut picking ceremony when she was about two or three years old. The last entry describes Huang’s great grandmother’s traditional funeral ceremony when Huang was four. In this piece, Huang details her great grandmother’s specific funerary objects, the *kurakan* (staying vigilant beside the coffin) ritual, and choosing the burial location based on the *fengshui* specialist’s advice. This entry is mixed with Huang’s objective description of the Taiwanese funeral ceremony and burial process and her subjective reminiscences about her paternal great-grandmother. One detail is particularly touching. Huang recollects she was taken to her maternal grandmother’s place when her great grandmother was about to pass away. Huang insisted on being with her great grandmother, so her maternal grandmother carried her back to see the dying woman, who breathed her last after her beloved great granddaughter returned.

Despite the lyricism, this piece does engage in some criticism. For instance, Huang commented that the way her family tried to please the *fengshui* specialist was rather ridiculous. However, Huang remained respectful of the way people acted, stating that perhaps there were indeed unexpected rationales behind the geomancy practice. At the end of the piece, Huang remarked that she was not too impressed by the practice of pretending to cry aloud. Still, she accepted it with an open mind. Instead of criticising this funeral tradition, she empathised with her mother by

concluding that, “it must be tough for Mother and Aunt as they have been repeatedly doing it for two months. Even recollecting it now, I still deeply feel so” (1942, 41). Huang’s childhood recollection may be interpreted as a lenient criticism of Taiwanese people’s “superstitions”, but what merits further attention is the ultra-personal and lyrical tone of her folklore. For example, Huang connected her ear-piercing experience with her great grandmother. She ignored her father’s objection and had her ears pierced because it was a command from her great grandmother. When depicting the worship during the Nine Filial Piety Festival, celebrated on the 29th day of the first lunar month, and her favourite Nine Filial Piety porridge, Huang emphasised that it was her grandmother who explained the origin of the practice to her, and she could still remember vividly her grandmother’s expression, tone, and gesture as though she were still right next to her.

Those poetic details of Huang’s intimate interactions with both her great-grandmother and her grandmother, plus Huang’s documentation of the Taiwanese funeral tradition with a focus on her mother and aunt, make the folk description in “Memories of a Young Girl from Mengjia” quite special. As Naomi Schor observed, the detail is gendered and doubly gendered as feminine (1987, 4). Rather than viewing this female-centric mapping of time and Taiwan’s social change offered by Huang as negativity, or a “bad object” as termed by Schor, I consider it a point of departure inviting us to rethink the top-down imperialist call, that is often gendered as masculine, for revitalising (colonies’) local cultures. This aesthetic of “detail”, however, is not just found exclusively in women writers’ works. The short pieces by male writers, such as Ikeda Toshio and Yang Kui, can mostly also be read as “detail”, though not always gendered detail. The co-existence of those pieces and the Japan-centric nationalist folklore writing is indicative of the multiple voices that *Minzoku Taiwan* contains. Those alternative voices, though not vociferous enough to overthrow the Japanese colonisers’ appropriation of folklore research as an integral part of their co-prosperous empire-making, exhibit that the colonisers’ agendas were not always straightforwardly disseminated or successfully fulfilled.

The Location of Taiwan Literature: Different Articulations of *Chihō*

In addition to the palimpsest of voices covering folkways within *Minzoku Taiwan*, Taiwanese writers also took advantage of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association Cultural Division’s call for “rebuilding local cultures”, and they produced

Taiwan-centric literature in their own ways. This proposal aimed to establish a new national (Japanese) culture based on the non-metropolitan, and therefore “less foreign-influenced”, local (such as rural co-operative) cultures. Although the ultimate objective was to consolidate the Japanese empire and its hierarchy, the plans created opportunities for the colonised Taiwanese to invigorate their peripheral “local” cultures. Hence, Taiwan enjoyed a brief period of literary revival before Kishida Kunio (1890–1954) stepped down in July 1942 as the (first) Minister of Cultural Affairs, precisely because the status of Taiwanese literature was “elevated” from an inferior and marginalised *gaichi* (the colony) to a recognised constituent of Japan’s Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

Efforts to establish a unique Taiwanese literature were made by critics in the 1930s.¹² A prominent example can be found in Huang Shihui’s (1900–1945) “How Not to Promote Nativist Literature?” (*Zenyang bu tichang xiangtu wenxue*),¹³ which elicited a debate surrounding nativist literature in Taiwan. In the essay, Huang advocated writing about Taiwan’s social reality in the Taiwanese language. He further defined Taiwan’s nativist literature as the literature describing Taiwanese experience written by those “Taiwanese” writers living in Taiwan and writing in the Taiwanese language. He maintained that writers should write with the labouring masses as their target audience.¹⁴ Other related discussions included Ye Rongzhong’s (1900–1978) notion of “the third literature”,¹⁵ that is a literature based on Taiwan’s unique culture and its people’s common life but without the distinct proletarian colour detectable in Huang Shihui’s writing. Ye’s less class-centric proposal found support among intellectuals such as Zhang Shenqie (1904–1965), Wang Shilang (1908–1984), and Li Xianzhang’s (1914–1999) publication of *Taiwan minjian wenxue ji* (Collections of Folk Literature from Taiwan) in 1936. Efforts to compile Taiwan’s folklore were made previously; some by Japanese officers in Taiwan.¹⁶ Nevertheless, Huang Deshi argued that the Japanese people’s compiling tasks were primarily for “fondling the

¹² Earlier relevant efforts included the call for collecting folk songs in *Taiwan xinminbao* in 1927, and Lian Heng’s proposal for preserving the Taiwanese language in 1929.

¹³ Published originally in *Wuren bao* nos. 9–11 (August 16–September 1, 1930) and compiled in *Yijiusanling niandai Taiwan xiangtu wenxue lunzhan ziliao huibian* edited by Nakajima Toshio (2003).

¹⁴ Guo Qiusheng further elaborated Huang’s idea in 1931. See Guo’s essay “A Proposal for Establishing a Taiwanese Language” in Nakajima’s edited volume mentioned in fn. 13, 7–52.

¹⁵ Ye Rongzhong, “Tichang disan wenxue” (Promoting the Third Literature). *Nanyin* (Southern Tone) 1.8: 2.

¹⁶ For example, Hirazawa Teitō, an employee at Taiwan’s Government-General, edited *Taiwan no kayō to meicho monogatari*, 2 vols. (Taiwan Folk Literature) (Taipei: Taipei kōbunkan, 1917, repr. 1976).

exoticism of the South”, and thus were part of colonial control. In contrast, Taiwanese people’s efforts revealed their profound concerns over Taiwan’s fading local cultural practices.¹⁷

In a similar vein, how to define Taiwan’s literature vis-à-vis the literature from Japan proper became a debatable issue for both Taiwanese and Japanese critics. Since the late 1930s, the Taiwan-residing Japanese writer Nishikawa Mitsuru (1908–1999) had striven to establish a regional literature in Taiwan that differed from that of Japan. Drawing inspiration from the linguistic and cultural revitalizations of Provence in southern France in the second half of the 19th century, Nishikawa founded the Taiwan Poets Association. It was renamed the Association of Taiwanese Writers and Artists (*Taiwan bungeika kyōkai*) in late 1939. Its official magazine, *Bungei Taiwan* (Literary Taiwan), was launched in January 1940.

Bungei Taiwan was renowned for its exoticism and romanticism, the literary modes with which Nishikawa was typically associated. Dissatisfied with *Bungei Taiwan*’s romanticist style, Zhang Wenhuan established *Taiwan Bungaku* (Taiwan Literature) in May 1941. Although the founding of *Taiwan Bungaku*, the members of which were largely Taiwanese, was often simplified as the confrontation between Japanese writers in Taiwan and Taiwanese writers, or between romanticism and realism, the concomitance of the two journals did increase the publication channels for Taiwanese authors. In *Kareitō* (Gorgeous Island), Nishikawa and Shimada Kinji (1901–1993) both offered their definitions of the French concept “régionalisme”. Nishikawa rendered it as 地方主義文學 (*chihō shugi bungaku*, provincial literature) in Kanji, whereas Shimada used the French word directly and occasionally translated it as 郷土主義 (*kyōdo shugi*, nativism) or provincial literature. Both conceptualised “régionalisme” as the aesthetics of a certain region/locale (*chihō*), which resonated well with the official promotion of regional culture since the late 1930s.

Even earlier than the Provençal model of “régionalisme” that Nishikawa employed, the German model of *Heimatkunst* (homeland art; home art), a term adopted by some German writers in late 19th century to express their anti-urban and anti-cosmopolitan standpoint, was also introduced into Japan. Writers supporting “*Heimatkunst*” opposed external literary modes such as naturalism and neo-romanticism, calling for a return to the traditions of their homeland. The concept was

¹⁷ Huang Deshi, “Guanyu Taiwan geyao de souji” (On the Collection of Taiwanese Folksongs), *Taiwan wenhua* (Taiwan Culture) 6.3 & 6.4 (December 1950): 38.

popular in the late Meiji and Taishō periods. Nishikawa's employment of the Provençal model of revitalizing the regional literature was likely because of his background in French literature as well as the influence of his teacher Yoshie Takamatsu (1880–1940), who introduced the literary movement of Provence in Japan.

The diverse views on which narrative mode writers should adopt and how Taiwanese literature, as an embodiment of literary regionalism, should be related to Japanese literature are clearly shown between Shimada Kinji and Huang Deshi's dissimilar mappings of Taiwan literature. Shimada became interested in the literature written by Taiwan-residing Japanese writers after he learned about some of those writers through Nishikawa Mitsuru. Inspired by the French concepts of *littérature d'outre-mer* (literature overseas) and *littérature coloniale* (colonial literature), Shimada started to conceptualise the literature produced in Taiwan along those lines around 1935. In 1939, he began to publish essays that were later compiled into the book, *A Record of Literature from Taiwan*, published posthumously in 1995.¹⁸ In those essays, Shimada expressed his high expectation of literature from Taiwan, which he called *gaichi bungaku* (literature of the outer land). For him, the ideal *gaichi bungaku* should go beyond the usual (Japanese) travellers' observations by providing a vivid depiction of the national features of Taiwanese people's behaviours and characters. Writing under the penname Shōfūshi, he urged the Japanese writers in Taiwan to produce works “deeply rooted in Taiwan and [that] can gouge out the local life completely, which can be on par with the *gaichi* fiction by Madame Richardson or Jean Marquet” (Shōfūshi 1939, 81). Later on, he reiterated similar points, advocating a *gaichi* literature that ingeniously exposes and represents fresh things unseen by the “insensitive” aborigines and immigrants (Shimada 1940, 40–43). He contended that only when the Japanese writers in Taiwan could produce masterpieces that “reveal the true picture of life” and “merge *exotisme* and psychological realism into one” (Shimada 1941, 2–24) could a literary perspective based on their lives in Taiwan be truly established.

Shimada's ambivalence towards the possibility of an autonomous and self-contained Taiwan literature such as *gaichi* literature is intricate. So is his literary ideal, a synthesis of two seemingly opposite literary modes of “exoticism” and “realism”. It

¹⁸ Shimada planned to write a book, tentatively entitled *Kareitō bungakushi* (The History of Literature from Taiwan), on the literary activities of Japanese authors who came to Taiwan during the Meiji and Taishō periods, but it was never finished. See Hashimoto (2012).

can be interpreted as the two phases of producing *gaichi* literature – to capture the local people’s ways of life first and then to go beyond the surface by delineating the inner reality of the local people. This requires the Japanese writers in the colony to be concurrently both outsiders (to examine fresh topics with their non-native perspectives) and insiders (to provide a non-superficial realist account). It can be argued that once a Japanese author had lived in a colony for a long time, he or she would become localised enough to capture the essence of life there. The writer hailed by Shimada as a paradigm for *gaichi* literature was W. B. Yeats,¹⁹ the leading Irish poet and playwright involved in Ireland’s fight for independence from Britain, and this suggests that Shimada’s notion of *gaichi* literature was a self-contained system on par with the literature of Japan than an extension outside the Japanese Empire.

Before Shimada’s conceptualisation on *gaichi* literature became systematically established, Nakamura Tetsu had already made two suggestions to guide the writing of “colonial literature” – to write about the colony’s particularities and to learn from mainland Japan’s literature even though the quality of literature from the colonies might not equal that of Japan (1940, 262–65). Nakamura’s pre-assumption of the “inferiority” of literature from the colonies is questionable, but he appreciated the vantage point of Taiwan-residing Japanese writers in capturing the essence of Taiwan. Similar to Shimada, Nakamura urged Japanese writers in the colonies to adopt realism. Yet, unlike Shimada, Nakamura considered realism and exoticism to be incompatible. He promoted realism because he believed the realist mode was the antidote of exoticism.

A few Taiwanese critics have frowned upon Shimada’s predominant concern about Japanese authors in Taiwan in his mapping of *gaichi* literature. Although some researchers have offered a more in-depth reappraisal of Shimada’s notion of *gaichi* literature, the perception of Shimada as a critic with the coloniser’s exotic gaze remains common.²⁰ According to Hashimoto Kyōko, Shimada used the term *gaichi* to refer to Japanese literature produced outside Japan so as to differentiate it from literature written by the colonised Taiwanese (*shokuminchi bungaku*) (2003, 90). Bearing Shimada’s categorisation in mind, criticism for his neglecting Taiwanese writers and exerting the coloniser’s cultural arrogance is warranted. After all, as a

¹⁹ In his 1941 article “Taiwan no bungakuteki kagenmi” (The Past, Present, and Future of Literature in Taiwan), Shimada compares Nishikawa Mitsuru with Yeats.

²⁰ See Chen Chien-chung (2003) for instance.

Japanese “overseas” literary comparatist, Shimada was renegotiating his own relationship with Japan proper through the discourse of *gaichi* literature.

In the introduction of his planned *A Record of Literature from Taiwan*, Shimada appeared to be more inclusive. He started with an overview of Taiwan’s literature under the Dutch and Qing rules, taking into account the writing of a small number of Taiwanese poets (1995, 14–38). Chapter 2 of the book is dedicated to how Taiwan had been represented in the Japanese literature (from mainland Japan) of the Meiji period. Even though he mentioned those few Taiwanese poets, Shimada’s continued emphasis on the local particularity of literature from Taiwan and encouragement of Taiwan-based Japanese writers to produce great literature “with its own meaning” opens up a possibility for a Taiwan-centric perspective. This is because the value of *gaichi* literature lie precisely in its creole Japanese writing, which was different from that produced in Japan. Once it developed its own tradition, such a rich “locally accented” literature from Taiwan could potentially establish Taiwan’s subjectivity as a colony. It also seemed possible for those Taiwanese writers to be included in the scope of Shimada’s *gaichi* literature if their works met his aesthetic requirements for “good *gaichi* literature”.

Nevertheless, Shimada did not comment much on this, stating instead that works by Taiwanese writers “require more considerations due to various reasons” when evaluating whether they were great works (2006, 95–96). Hence, his notion of *gaichi* literature was, in Chen Fangming’s view, “appropriating Taiwan literature into the context of [mainland] Japan’s literary history” (2011, 165). This is also how Shimada’s discussion of Taiwan literature differs greatly from Huang Deshi’s in Shimada’s 1943 essay “An Introduction to Taiwan’s Literary History” (*Taiwan bungakushi josetsu*). Inspired by Hippolyte Taine’s three conditioning factors behind all works of art,²¹ Huang’s “Introduction” ponders what it is to be Taiwanese and what constitutes the particularity of “Taiwan literature”. In his Taiwan-centric and relatively inclusive historiography, Taiwan’s literature can be dated back to the Ming dynasty’s Koxinga era, and all works could be considered part of Taiwan’s literature as long as they are about Taiwan, even if they are written by those not born in and

²¹ Various Japanese and Taiwanese critics appropriated Taine’s ideas during that time. Shimada, in his 1933 essay, acknowledged the importance of Taine’s ideas but quoted Auguste Angelier’s criticism of Taine to identify the weakness of Taine’s concept of literature. For the application of Taine’s theory in colonial Taiwan, see Lin Jinli (2015).

who had never been to Taiwan, and even if those works are produced outside Taiwan (1943, 2–11).

In this introduction, Huang specified that literary history dealing exclusively with Japanese people's (*naichijin*) literary activities was too narrow. He also explained that because of the unique characteristics of Taiwan's race, environment, and history, one must contemplate Taiwan's literary history alone rather than view it as part of Qing or Meiji literature. Those statements mark a clear difference between Huang's alternative Taiwan-centric mapping and Shimada's notion of *gaichi* literature. Huang, in his more encompassing conceptualisation of Taiwan literature, acknowledged the multiracial nature of Taiwan, which was home not only to Han and indigenous peoples but also westerners such as the Spanish and Dutch. He identified two trends for literature in Taiwan – the literature expressing nostalgia towards one's original country (such as the poetry written by the Ming loyalists or the tanka and haiku by Japanese people after Japan had ruled Taiwan) and the literature about the acculturation, assimilation, conquering, and resistance between different races. He considered those born in Taiwan who produced works there to be the most qualified for the object of study as far as literature in Taiwan was concerned, but he maintained that those born elsewhere who settled in Taiwan should be included. If necessary, those who sojourned in Taiwan briefly could be counted, too. In other words, whoever resided in Taiwan, regardless of whether they were indigenous or immigrants, could *all* be taken into consideration.²² Despite the unfinished state of Huang's historiography of Taiwan literature, his emphasis on Taiwan's historical particularities and multi-racial nature differed noticeably from Shimada's Japan(ese)-centrism.

Divergent perspectives on Taiwan literature between the Japanese and most Taiwanese critics were also found in the debate surrounding “faeces realism”²³ around May 1943, in which *Bungei Taiwan* writers such as Nishikawa Mitsuru and Hamada Hayao (1909–1973) criticised Taiwanese authors for depicting Taiwan's (dark) reality

²² In Huang's view, the “indigenous” population seems to refer to Taiwan's Han people, who arrived before the Qing immigrants and Japanese colonisers, instead of Taiwan's aborigines.

²³ Tarumi Chie (2002) points out that Hayashi Fusao used the term “faeces realism” in 1935, after his literary reorientation from Marxism to romanticism, when he criticised Japan's left wing writers who contributed to the magazine *Jinmin Bunko* (People's Library). Through tracing Hamada Haya's and Nishikawa Mitsuru's relationship with Japan's romanticists, as well as Zhang Wenhuan's and Lü Heruo's interactions with the *Jinmin Bunko* writers or critics, she argues that the 1943 “faeces realism” debate in Taiwan should be seen within this larger context.

as counterproductive to the war effort and their employment of realism as too close to Anglo-American culture and as a straying from the “imperial-subject” spirit (Hamada 1943, 74–9). Nishikawa attacked Taiwanese writers for practicing “unbearably vulgar faeces realism (*kuso riarizumu*)” that “depicts life uncritically” and therefore “lacks Japanese tradition”. In his view, it was ironic that several Taiwanese authors continued to write about problems concerning stepsons and family relationships, which were “absolutely not true realism”, and neglected the reality in which the younger generation of Taiwanese were becoming volunteers for the Japanese army (Nishikawa 1943, 38).

Facing this harsh criticism, Shi Waimin claimed that romanticism risked becoming shallow sentimentalism if it had no clear goal, and that Nishikawa’s understanding of Japanese spirit was questionable. For Shi Waimin, only things [literary works] that could play a part in promoting historical or contemporary society’s progress could be considered traditions (1943). He praised the writing of Nagai Kafū (1879–1959) as a model in response to Nishikawa’s admiration for Izumi Kyōka (1873–1939). Although both writers were known for their lavish writing style, Nagai’s works were, for Shi Waimin, drawn from real life, including its dark side, and thus could function as a cultural commentary on Japanese society.²⁴ However, Izumi’s works were generally more mystical, conceptual, and imaginative. One week after the publication of Shi Waimin’s article, Nishikawa’s Taiwanese student Ye Shitao (1925–2008) reiterated Nishikawa’s view by stressing the need for positive and vigorous imperial-subject literature (1943).²⁵ Ye further commented that while Zhang Wenhuan’s work “lacks a world view”, Lü’s “Gōka Heian” (The Whole Family is Safe and Sound) and “Byōtei” (The Shrine Garden) resembled “the new drama performed in the countryside” (ibid). Soon afterwards, Itō Ryō (Yang Kui’s penname) and others joined the debate by defending realism (1943, 17–21). For a socially active writer like Yang, literature must come from the indigenous soil; it should not merely cater to the war effort or personal aestheticism. The stylistic and ideological discrepancies between authors from these two camps ended in January 1944 when they merged into *Taiwan Bungei* (Literary Art of Taiwan) under the management of the Japan-sponsored Taiwan Literature Patriotic Association.

²⁴ Some of Nagai’s works were banned during wartime. After 1945, he was known for his anti-war attitude.

²⁵ However, Ye later denied authorship of this 1943 article, see Peng Ruijin’s 2002 interview with Ye.

The Production of Indigeneity: The Case of Lü Heruo

Considering the different framings of Taiwan literature, it is useful to turn to the works by some Taiwanese writers to examine how they exerted their agency to carve out a space for publication and a reliable cultural identity in the heyday of Japan's totalitarian wartime mobilisation. Lü Heruo's several stories, which capture Taiwan's disappearing customs, make an effective case study on Taiwanese writers' view on folklore.

Ostensibly, Lü's relationship with Taiwan's folklore writing is not palpable, since he did not directly participate in the discussion of folklore. However, similar to Zhang Wenhuan, Lü mused over the question of establishing a distinct local Taiwanese culture. In the inaugural issue of *Taiwan Bungaku*, Lü explained that Taiwanese culture was seen as a "culture of amusement" before the founding of the journal, and that the goal of *Taiwan Bungaku* was to build a "passionate and honest Taiwanese culture" (1941, 106–09). This is demonstrative of Lü's Taiwan-specific concerns. Several of Lü's stories, especially those written after 1942, touch upon Taiwan's folkways,²⁶ and he contributed to *Minzoku Taiwan* too.²⁷ His involvement in the socially engaging Life-Enriching Drama Research Society (*Kōsei engeki kenkyūkai*), which aimed to redress the problem of overly-imperialised Taiwanese new drama, provides yet another piece of evidence of Lü's emphasis on Taiwan's local conditions.²⁸

In "Oxcart" (*Gyūsha*, 1935), Lü's concerns for Taiwan's vanishing folkways are expressed through his nostalgic and even sentimental portrayal of how the Taiwanese farmer Yang Tianding's initially self-sufficient life as an oxcart driver is destroyed due to his inability to compete with the mechanised farming techniques and modern transportation methods brought by Japanese colonialism. Through contrasts between the times before and after Japanese rule (such as sedans vs. automobiles;

²⁶ Lü wrote very little from June 1937 to February 1942. Tarumi Chie argues that 1942 marked Lü's turn to folkway writing. She further points out that this thematic change should be taken into account together with Lü's commentaries on the poor acting of "Madame Chin", his involvement in *Taiwan Bungaku*, and his relationship with *Minzoku Taiwan*. See Tarumi (2012).

²⁷ Lü's contributions appeared in *Minzoku Taiwan* 2.1 (January 1942) and 3.11 (November 1943). The former depicts wedding customs, whereas the latter deals with the issue of child brides.

²⁸ For an analysis of Life-Enriching Drama Research Society's inheritance of 1930s realism and its expression of (Taiwanese) cultural nationalism, see Shih Wan-shun (2016).

oxcarts vs. lorries), the misery of Taiwanese farmers and the following collapse of traditional social values and family ethics are shown.

Entering the 1940s, such humanitarian and socially engaged traits were still detectable in Lü's writing. His works about traditional Taiwanese social customs prior to Japanese rule can be regarded as a diffraction of the colonisers' demand for the "new order". As anticipated, some Japanese critics were not convinced by Lü's representation of Taiwan's dismal reality. Kawano Yoshihiko was one of them. For him, Lü's writing about the decay of the traditional Taiwanese family was "dark" (1944, 90–93). However, to regard Lü's writing of Taiwanese folk culture as explicit "resistance" would risk downplaying the fact that this folkway writing benefitted from the coloniser's promotion of local cultures. As Tarumi Chie observed, Huang Deshi's notion of establishing the Taiwanese literary arena was put forward under the logic that Taiwan equals "local", therefore promoting Taiwanese culture revitalised local culture and assisted with the progress of the Japanese Empire (2012, 56).

Although Lü's writing was subject to colonial policy, his agency should not be overlooked. His "Neighbours" (*Rinkyō*), a story about family relationships, illustrates how he responded to wartime demands without sacrificing his personal artistic considerations. The plotline, in which the infertile Japanese woman Mrs. Tanaka tries to adopt a Taiwanese boy, fits well with the coloniser's "Japan-Taiwan oneness" (*naitai ichinyō*) idea. Yet, readers soon realise that Mrs. Tanaka, quite rudely, wants to take the boy away regardless of whether he wishes to go with her. This ambiguous portrayal of Mrs. Tanaka makes it possible to interpret "Neighbours" as a work that simultaneously celebrates and ridicules Japan's "oneness" ideal. If Lü intended to comment about the attitude that Japanese and Taiwanese people should hold in this story (Lü 2004, 209), then he conveyed a rather ambiguous message.

Lü's "The Whole Family is Safe and Sound" (*Gōka heian*), a 1943 work about the decline of a traditional Taiwanese gentry family, offers another example of his striving to carve out space for more Taiwan-centric literary expressions. According to Lü's son Lü Fangxiong, the male protagonist Fan Qingxing refers to Lü's uncle, and the 3rd uncle who helps the character Youfu refers to Lü's father Lü Kunlin (Lü 2004, 479–80). In the story, the opium-addicted patriarch Fan Qingxing exhausts his family fortune and leads an indolent life, demanding money from his sons and his ex-wife's brothers. After

his two biological sons leave home, Fan can only rely on his adopted son Youfu. The story ends with Fan demanding money from Youfu and asking him to move back home, but Youfu hesitates between returning home and heading to Southeast Asia. Reading this story in the context of Japan's wartime mobilisation, Lü's depiction of a dysfunctional Taiwanese family was indeed "dark", an accusation Nishikawa Mitsuru had launched against Lü already. Although going to Southeast Asia, matches Japan's military expansion at that time, the story remains nearly an antithesis to the more uplifting literature expected by the colonisers.

Lü's firm self-defence during the 1943 faeces realism debate did not mean he was not at all bothered by what, and in which style, he should write (Lü 2004, 351) around that time. He in fact encouraged himself to produce "good works". His diary entries between late May and early June of 1943 document that he was weighing the two options – writing something "beautiful" and "constructive" as advised by Kudō Yoshimi (1898–1992) (ibid., 352), or following his own wish to "describe typical character" even though this led him to "write about the dark side" (ibid., 354). While he felt awkward about tackling "the situation of the times" (*jikyō*) in his works (ibid., 358), he started to draft "Kyōdai" (Brothers) and study the literature and history of China in order to understand himself. He, too, commented that he hoped to write works containing East Asian awareness (ibid.). Clearly, Lü strove to search for reliable Chinese cultural bases to better make sense of Taiwan's position in East Asia. This "East Asian awareness" of Lü may be seen as a derivative of Japan's imperialist "co-prosperity" concept, but his turning to Chinese heritage offered a fresh possibility for positioning Taiwan.

When it came to writing fiction, Lü's struggle with the storyline and the title continued. He "jammed in so many characteristics of the times that the plotline [of "Brothers"] is unnatural" (Lü 2004, 361). However, he managed to publish "Sekiryū" (The Pomegranate) about brotherly love and returning to one's ancestors in a relatively short period of time, and was pleased with it. If fraternal love is what Lü meant by "beautiful things", then what he referred to by "contributing to the nation" (Lü 2004, 354) can be understood as sustaining Taiwanese tradition and continuing the patriarchal system. Written soon after Nishikawa attacked Lü for his "untimely" theme and style, "The Pomegranate" well demonstrates how Lü deliberately chose to

“describe the change of people’s fate” (Lü 2004, 360) instead of writing about “beautiful things” to conform to the Japanese coloniser’s wartime thematic preference.

“The Pomegranate”, however, is not devoid of “beautiful” elements. The image of the eldest brother, Jinsheng, as a surrogate father looking after his brothers as well as the farm owner’s compassion are both positive. Moreover, the title symbolises fertility and abundance. But at the same time, it is a lyrical tale about Taiwan’s social change – a theme Lü yearned to capture. It tells how the poverty-stricken brothers are forced to separate, and how Muhuo (the youngest who is sent away as someone else’s foster son) can be “unified” with his deceased biological parents after his premature death only through the “tablet-combining” (*helu*) ritual. Through another Taiwanese ritual, “paternal uncle-nephew adoption” (*guofang*), Jinsheng makes his second son the late Muhuo’s adopted son.

Given this story’s “dual elements” – the positive characters and melancholic life trajectory of the brothers, Lü seemed to be able to balance between what he wished to write and what he was expected to write. The family tale adorned with traditional Taiwanese folk beliefs and cultural practices appeared to have facilitated this. Nevertheless, certain parts of the story – such as Jinsheng’s oscillation between self-condemnation and contentment – read as contrived. These minor flaws mark the process of Lü’s negotiations between his own literary ideas and external demands. If the nativist discourses in the 1930s can be seen as a prelude to the debates on a Taiwan-centric realism in the 1940s diffracted from the Japanese coloniser’s promotion of local (colony) cultures, then Lü’s works exhibit a sustained concern for Taiwanese folkways. At least two writing strategies were detected in Lü’s case. One is his earlier critique of colonial modernity and its impact on underprivileged Taiwanese farmers. The other is his later recurrent depiction of Taiwanese folk customs, although they are mixed occasionally with Japan’s imperialist ideology.

Conclusion

By considering the various takes on the term “folklore” and literary writing, this paper argues that the Japanese colonisers’ promotion of local culture and research on folkways in early 1941 generated quite different yet interrelated multi-furcated approaches to it. In the case of *Minzoku Taiwan*, I maintain that the journal’s ethnological endeavour was not merely for paving a cultural foundation for Japan’s

imperialist political ambition of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity per se. It simultaneously and perhaps inadvertently offered a channel for Taiwanese writers of both sexes and varied agendas to articulate their views on Taiwan's folkways. Through a close reading of the folklore writing by Huang Fengzi and others, I consider the personal and poetic tones found abundantly in their articles in order to illustrate an aesthetic of "detail". It may not necessarily have subverted the colonisers' empire building, but it did demonstrate that their colonial enlightenment discourses were far from being absolutely effective. Rather, the colonial discourses were subject to different interpretations. Indeed, among the Japanese folklorists, there existed divergent voices. Some efforts were made to eschew the colonisers' lens of superiority, calling instead for learning from the colonised native population. While those efforts appeared humanistic, they were ambivalent at times, as revealed by Yanagi's dichotomous division of the Japanese as the appreciators of, and the colonised as the producers of, craftwork.

Different articulations of locality is also seen in the disparate theorisations of the literature from Taiwan presented by Shimada Kinji and Huang Deshi. In Shimada's notion of "*gaichi* literature", the (local) literature from Taiwan referred to Japanese literature written by the Japanese authors in Taiwan. He placed a great emphasis on the aesthetic quality of such *gaichi* literature. Nevertheless, his expectation of those writers to be simultaneously etic (outsider) and emic (insider) in their literary modes elicits the possibility of Japanese's indigenisation. As such, his promotion of *gaichi* literature "with its own meaning" opens up new prospects for Taiwan's literary subjectivity. Where Shimada left off was where Huang Deshi's historiography of Taiwan literature began, even though his effort remained preliminary. In brief, Shimada's notion was an aesthetic contemplation in relation to literature from Japan proper whereas Huang's was a quasi-nationalist political attempt to initiate a Taiwan-centric literary historiography. Despite the differences, both Shimada's and Huang's theorisations of Taiwan's literature exemplified the complex translingual practices in the making of a national or quasi-national literature. French literary ideas, Taine's in particular, coincidentally served as the main influence in both instances.

In the case of Lü Heruo, folklore writing was a continued negotiation with the colonisers' wartime literary mobilisation. Several of Lü's works written in the 1940s read as equivocal, which can be interpreted as traces of such an effort. Nevertheless,

his turning to write about Taiwan's folkways since 1942 was noticeable. His concerns for Taiwan vis-à-vis the dominant Japanese culture can be tracked in his early works published in the 1930s, although his shift from musing on the impact of colonial modernity to recording Taiwan's folk practices may not be visible enough for him to be deemed a key contributor to the nativist discourses or folklore studies of Taiwan in the 1930s and 1940s. Despite the imperfections of his work, Lü overall attained an equilibrium between the wartime demand and his own aesthetic sensitivity through his lyrical and poignant accounts of traditional Taiwanese families and folkways. With evidence from his diary entries, Lü's agency as a writer in his search for beauty and attempt to position Taiwan was apparent.

The three cases altogether inform us that the colonisers' identity was not monolithic or always neatly definable. Instead, it was unstable and underwent constant re-forging. They also remind us that the colonial policies and what the colonised writers hoped to achieve were not at all times incompatible. Actually, the gap between the colonial administration in Taipei and the policies of the Colonial Ministry in Tokyo was widened after Japan seized Manchuria in 1931. As Japan became distracted by Manchuria and Korea, its attention towards Taiwan dropped. The discursiveness of the terms such as folklore and locality enabled both the Japanese and the Taiwanese to enunciate their own takes on those concepts and construct their individual nationalist discourses.

Rather than taking the efficacy of colonial policies or the resistance of Taiwanese writers as the premise of my inquiry, I have examined the cultural discourse and literary production of the late years of Japanese rule in Taiwan from a moderate revisionist perspective by accentuating the coexistence of the multiple voices that were set forth, as well as their confluence and divergence. Apropos of Yang Yunping's and Wang Shilang's positive view on *Minzoku Taiwan*, one should remain vigilant about whether this quasi-"over-correction" risks compromising Taiwan's subject position vis-à-vis Japan. This is a thorny concern, since the de-Sinification of post-martial-law Taiwan can be easily exerted in a reductionist fashion of affirming Japan's cultural legacy.²⁹ Returning to the controversial instances mentioned at the beginning of this essay, Japan remains an expedient currency for

²⁹ Wu Rwei-ren expresses a similar concern. He argues that the construction of Taiwan's subjectivity discourse must be built simultaneously upon Taiwan's autonomy in relation to both China and Japan, see Wu 2016, 20.

defending Taiwan's subjectivity against China. But, would this make the construction of Taiwan's subject position become lenient towards the exploitative nature of Japanese colonial practice or, in the worst case, the unintended accomplice of right-wing ideology like the one demonstrated in Kobayashi's *On Taiwan*?

While I do not concur that the practice of preserving Taiwanese folklore in *Minzoku Taiwan* is an extension of Japan proper's nationalism-charged folklore studies, I do not mean to naïvely suggest that *Minzoku Taiwan* was totally exempt from the colonial unconscious, either. Quite the opposite, because it was impossible to neglect the omnipresent inequality of coloniser and colonised, and because the boundary between Japanese interests and the presentation of Taiwanese folk culture was often fuzzy, artistically navigating through, or even making use of, the limits of colonial reality and policy with one's own indigenised variations and definitions, as illustrated by Huang Fengzi, Huang Deshi, and Lü Heruo, proved to be an expedient practice of memory recall, subjectivity construction, and aesthetic experiment.

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