



A Letter from Grandpa Zuojhen

左鎮人爺爺，您幾歲？

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A Letter from Grandpa Zuojhen explores the archaeological discovery of Zuojhen, once celebrated as Taiwan's earliest human, through a poetic lens. This work weaves vivid, hyper-realistic imagery with meditative reflections on the trajectory of human civilization and local culture. By blending intimate and expansive historical narratives, it dissolves the boundaries between personal and collective histories, offering a more holistic perspective. The piece also grapples with profound existential questions: Where do we come from? Where are we going?



Author **Shu-Fen Wang**

A native of Zuojhen, Tainan, Shu-Fen Wang graduated from National Taiwan Normal University. An award-winning and bestselling children's author, she has also served as a primary school director, art teacher, and consultant and host for literary programs on Public Television and Global Destiny Cable. Since publishing her first book, *Fresh Stories for First Graders*, in 1993, Wang has produced over sixty works, including children's books and teaching materials. Notably, her children's novel *I Am an Idiot*, often featured on Life Education reading lists, has been published in Korean and simplified Chinese and adapted into a Korean film.



Illustrator **Nan-Jun**

Born in Changzhi, Pingtung, Nan-Jun was inspired by the exquisite illustrations in picture books during his elementary school years, which shaped her future aspirations. He enjoys starting his creative process with a cup of black coffee to awaken his soul, then retreats to her own small studio, where he picks up his paintbrush and begins to dream on paper. Committed to hand-drawing, he cherishes the way watercolor dances on paper—sometimes unpredictably—embracing the beauty and uniqueness of “original” artwork.

The Homeland of Fossils and a Paradise for Ancient Life

by Chun-Hsiang Chang

The winding Cailiao River carves through exposed cliffs, revealing fossils that gleam darkly amidst the flowing water and sediment. These remnants tell the story of an ecological paradise created by animals hundreds of thousands of years ago.

On this ever-changing Earth, shaped by the cycle of life and the ceaseless movement of land, Taiwan emerged in the western Pacific due to the collision and compression of the Philippine Sea Plate and the Eurasian Plate. During the Ice Age, dramatic sea-level drops caused the Taiwan Strait to vanish, connecting Taiwan to the mainland. This land bridge provided a migratory pathway for large groups of animals to move southward and eastward.

As a result, animal populations from northern and southern China migrated to the Cailiao River area in

ZuoJhen District, Tainan. However, with the end of the Ice Age, the Taiwan Strait reappeared, isolating the two sides. Over time, the animals gradually vanished, leaving behind fragmented traces in the form of fossils.

Can you imagine it? Some 400,000 years ago in Taiwan, particularly in the ZuoJhen area, magnificent creatures like the Early Saka Rhino, Saber-Toothed Elephant, and Grassland Mammoth roamed the land, reigning as giants of their time. Water buffalo, sika deer, Formosan sambar deer, and wild boars grazed across grasslands and forests, while black bears and tigers stalked nearby, poised to strike. Monkeys and golden snub-nosed monkeys leaped through the treetops, and porcupines, wild hares, and mice scurried through shrubs and grasses, always wary of predators like badgers, civets, and masked palm civets

lying in ambush.

This abundance and diversity of life were sustained by the lush vegetation and rich waters of the Cailiao River basin, which provided ample food and shelter for these animals to thrive. Over immense stretches of time, the land gradually rose from the seafloor, and the discovery of fossils such as coral, sea urchins, and oysters documents the evolving marine environment of this region.

Although the ZuoJhen people from thousands of years ago never encountered the animal groups from tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands of years ago, the discovery of ZuoJhen human fossils remains a significant milestone in the study of prehistoric humans in Taiwan. The emergence of humans marked the dawn of modern civilization, and archaeological findings in the ZuoJhen area, such as prehistoric pottery shards and tools, reveal the vibrant development of early human culture. We eagerly anticipate that new research methods and advanced dating techniques will provide fresh insights and a deeper

understanding. Future discoveries of additional fossil evidence will help trace the origins and history of the ZuoJhen people's fossils and artifacts.

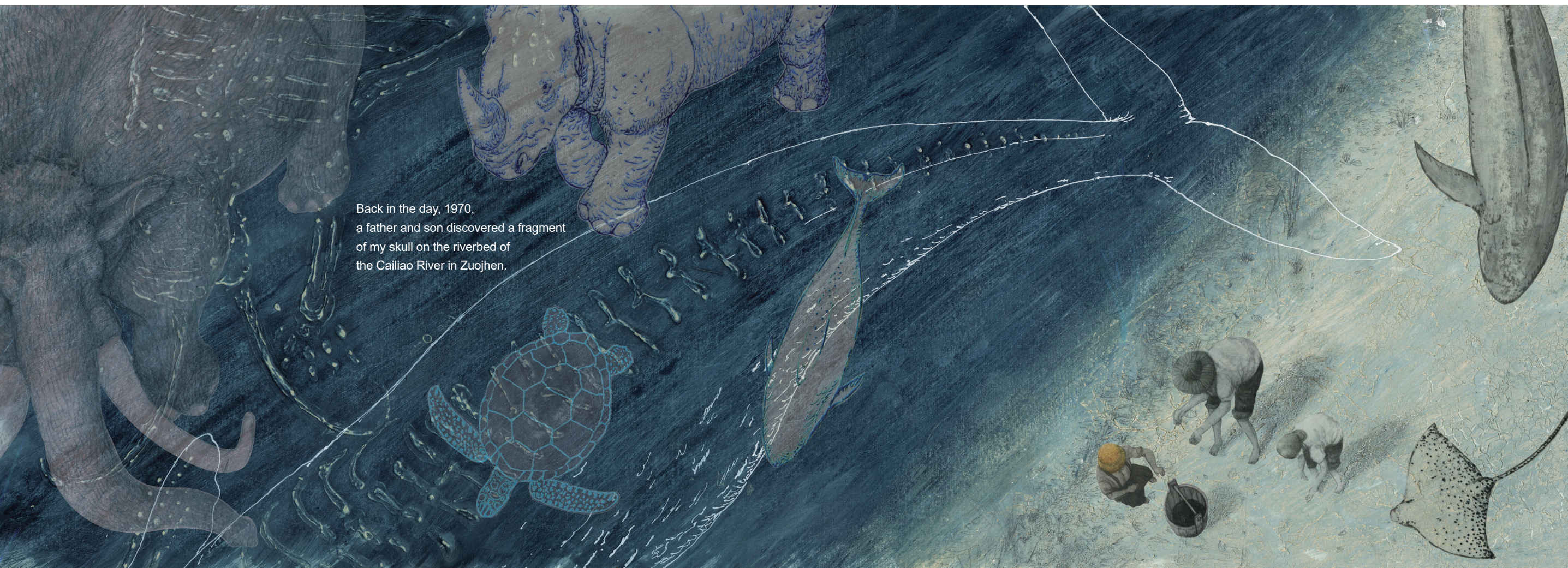
The fossil evidence from Cailiao allows us to witness the dramatic shifts in sea levels of the Taiwan Strait during the Ice Age, as animal groups crossed the strait and expanded their territories to Taiwan. This makes the ZuoJhen area a cradle of fossils and a haven for prehistoric creatures. The ongoing pursuit and collection of fossils, combined with scientific analysis and research, aim to reconstruct the appearance of these ancient organisms, bringing them vividly back to life and immersing us in the wonders and mysteries of prehistoric animals.

This afterword has been edited for the purposes of this booklet.

Chun-Hsiang Chang holds a Ph.D. in Paleontology from the University of London, United Kingdom.



If I were 300 years old...



Back in the day, 1970,
a father and son discovered a fragment
of my skull on the riverbed of
the Cailiao River in Zuojhen.

A collage illustration of various marine life fossils, including a large whale, a shark, a squid, and various fish and shells, set against a textured background. The central focus is a large, dark whale, possibly a blue whale, swimming towards the left. Above it, a shark is visible. To the left, a squid is depicted. Below the whale, a hammerhead shark is shown. Various other fish species, including a large spotted fish and a smaller striped fish, are scattered around. Several seashells of different shapes and sizes are also included. The background is a mix of light and dark greenish-blue washes, suggesting an underwater environment. The fossils are presented as cutouts with white borders, giving the impression of a scientific display or a collection of specimens.

The fossils found on the riverbed of Cailiao River are astonishing—they include seashells and fish, proving that Taiwan was once underwater.