BOOKS FROM TAIWAN

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TAICCA 文化內容策進院
TAIWAN CREATIVE CONTENT AGENCY

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ABOUT TAIWAN CREATIVE CONTENT AGENCY

Gifted with cultural and natural diversity, Taiwan has created admirable economic and political miracles over time that empowers many fascinating stories. Even though cultural industries in Taiwan have been prosperous and prolific, in response to the knowledge economy and evolving technologies, we stand at a critical point to adapt and innovate.

Founded in 2019, TAICCA is a professional intermediary organization supervised by the Ministry of Culture to facilitate cultural industry development, including but not limited to publishing, audiovisual, music, animation, comics, games, and cultural technology applications. TAICCA drives industrial investments, innovations, and formulates Taiwan's cultural brand that enriches the international cultural landscape through our diverse and rich cultural content.


TAICCA
Aggregate Resources
Invest with the National Development Fund
to propel content production
Development Support
Incubate original Taiwanese content
and increase content productions
Expand Markets
Maximize international matchmaking
and networking opportunities
to connect with global markets
Highlight Trends
Publish business studies
and conduct surveys for the paths forward
Cultivate Talents
Customize programs to build up
industrial ecosystems
and professional capabilities

EDITOR'S PREFACE

Perhaps you did not know it, but Taiwan contains multitudes, and has for a long time. As one of our featured authors, the architect Lee Chian-Lang points out, Taiwan has occupied an important position along Southeast Asian trade routes ever since mankind learned to sail. Since ancient times, the island has witnessed the arrival of many different peoples, from the now-indigenous tribes like the Bunun and Atayal, to the advance guard of colonial powers like Portugal, China, and Japan. These arrivals and incursions have brought gifts and left scars, but in every case they have made Taiwan more culturally complex than it was before. The titles in this issue reflect that complexity, showing us many different faces of the nation.

Indigenous Taiwanese voices hold a central place in this issue. In *Moving Mountains*, the author and scholar Salizan Takisvilainan recovers the history of the mountaineering Bunun tribes' interaction with the civil and military forces of Qing-dynasty China and imperial Japan. Lee Chian-Lang's *Heart of the Craftsman*, meanwhile, takes us on an illustrated tour of traditional Atayal houses, which make highly effective use of hillside topography to defend against extreme weather. Both books highlight the independence and ingenuity of

indigenous Taiwanese peoples who have habitually been otherized and forgotten.

Other titles feature characters and themes that exemplify the richness and complexity of that which is left in darkness. The stories in *New Gods*, for instance, invoke the powerful mix of folk religions that has brewed continuously in Taiwan for decades. Ku De-Sha's memoir *Speak, Memory* leads inside the industrialized homes of the rural milliners who fueled Taiwan's textile boom, and suffered the consequences of its bust, while the novel *Ghost Town* takes us inside a village that has suffered the same kind of fate. Tang Chia-Bang's *The Baseball Club Murder* leads us into the anomalous yet deeply influential period of Japanese colonization, when local Taiwanese had to live as second-class citizens in their own country. Finally, the short story collection *Chopsticks* presents a cultural integration of an even deeper, if also more whimsical sort: the stories within are contributed by Japanese, Taiwanese, and Hong Kong authors to invoke a commonplace object – chopsticks – as a theme. The stories that emerge from it are exciting and polyphonic, yet also resonant with each other, representing a diversity within regional community in which Taiwan is a core contributor.

Canaan Morse
Editor-in-Chief

GRANT FOR THE PUBLICATION OF TAIWANESE WORKS IN TRANSLATION (GPT)

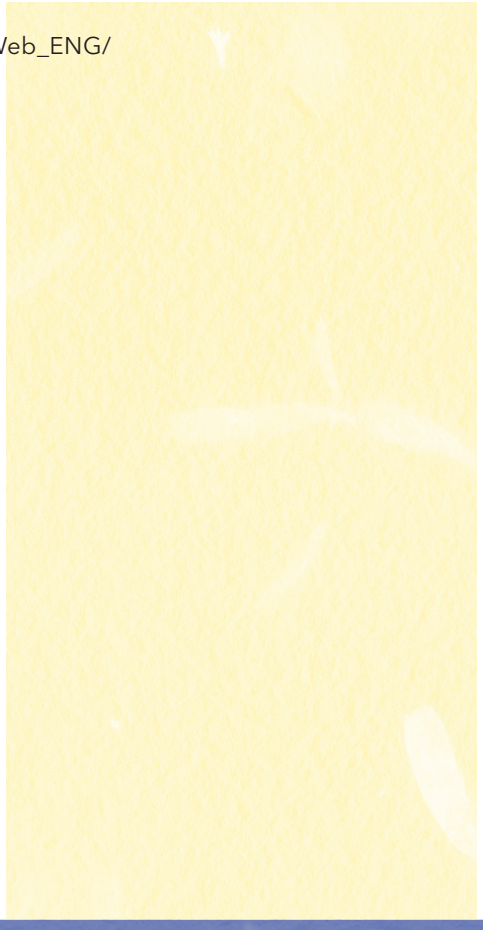
MINISTRY OF CULTURE, REPUBLIC OF CHINA (TAIWAN)

GPT is set up by The Ministry of Culture to encourage the publication of Taiwanese works in translation overseas, to raise the international visibility of Taiwanese cultural content, and to help Taiwan's publishing industry expand into non-Chinese international markets.

- Applicant Eligibility: Foreign publishing houses (legal persons) legally registered in accordance with the laws and regulations of their respective countries.
- Conditions:
  1. The so-called Taiwanese works must meet the following requirements:
     A. Use traditional characters;
     B. Written by a natural person holding an R.O.C. identity card;
     C. Has been assigned an ISBN in Taiwan.
     i.e., the author is a native of Taiwan, and the first 6 digits of the book's ISBN are 978-957-XXX-XXX-X or 978-986-XXX-XXX-X.
  2. Applications must include documents certifying that the copyright holder of the Taiwanese works consents to its translation and foreign publication (no restriction on its format).
  3. A translation sample of the Taiwanese work is required (no restriction on its format and length).

- Grant Items:
  1. The maximum grant available for each project is NT$600,000, which covers:
     A. Licensing fees (going to the copyright holder of the Taiwanese works);
     B. Translation fees;
     C. Marketing and promotion fees (limited to economy class air tickets for the R.O.C. writer to participate in overseas promotional activities related to the project);
     D. Book production-oriented fees;
     E. Tax (20% of the total award amount);
     F. Remittance-related handling fees.
  2. Priority consideration is given to books that have received the Golden Tripod Award, the Golden Comic Award, or the Taiwan Literature Award.
- Application Period: Twice every year. The MOC reserves the right to change the application periods, and will announce said changes separately.
- Announcement of successful applications: Winners will be announced within three months of the end of the application period.
- Application Method: Please visit the Ministry's official website (https://grants.moc.gov.tw/Web_ENG/), and use the online application system.

For full details, please visit: https://grants.moc.gov.tw/Web_ENG/
Or contact: books@moc.gov.tw



About TAICCA Select

As book adaptations and interdisciplinary development gain momentum in recent years, TAICCA recommends outstanding titles in each issue to publishers, TV and film producers, and other media developers worldwide, with sample translations and related articles available online. For more details, email: booksfromtaiwan.rights@gmail.com.

TAICCA

SELECT

用頭帶背起一座座山：嚮導背工與

MOVING MOUNTAINS: A TALE OF RANGERS AND PORTERS

Salizan Takisvilainan
沙力浪

- **Category:** Reportage
- **Publisher:** Chien Hsing
- **Date:** 9/2019
- **Rights contact:** booksfromtaiwan.rights@gmail.com
- **Pages:** 240
- **Length:** 72,809 characters (approx. 47,000 words in English)

Bunun poet, scholar, and essayist, who records his tribe and their lands through literature. He has won multiple awards, including the Taiwan Literature Award. In 2005, he founded Millet String Publishing House, which specializes in books written in indigenous languages. He also worked as a mountain ranger.

巡山員的故事

The Bunun people, Taiwan's indigenous mountaineers, have wended their way through the mountains of central Taiwan for untold centuries. Bunun poet and scholar Salizan, who has trekked with the rangers for decades, dives deeply into their culture, expertise, and troubled history through the colonial era.

The Bunun people, Taiwan's indigenous mountaineers, have wended their way through the mountains of central Taiwan for untold centuries. For growing numbers of enthusiastic amateur mountaineers, the Bunun are skilled guides and porters who sustain long expeditions in this now-popular pastime. Yet in this book, Bunun poet Salizan takes us deeper into the culture, the accreted wisdom, and the troubled history of his own people over the past century.

A veteran backpacker himself, Salizan presents many of his expeditions as narrative backgrounds for scholarly (and sometimes deeply personal) investigations of Bunun culture, mountaineering expertise, and colonial history. Through his writer's eyes we see the ancient trails dug through the mountains by the Qing armies, the Japanese colonists, and eventually the modern Taiwanese government, while following the actions and reactions of the Bunun rangers and guides who made those projects happen.

As Salizan's backpacking team follows old, sometimes overrun mountain trade routes, they run across emblems of the past – stone houses, changing natural environments, destroyed landmarks, and more – that find themselves alive once more in the accounts of the rangers. The reader, following these material and oral histories like stepping across river stones, (re)discovers the Bunun as an adapting population, responding to collaborative and oppressive forces as all civilizations do, while attempting to preserve the expertise that their mountaineering ancestors bequeathed to them.

BEARING THE BURDENS OF HISTORY

Written by Chen Yen-Chen
Translated by Joshua Dyer

We are told that during the Age of Discovery, as the Portuguese explorers sailed past Taiwan for the first time, they cried out in astonishment, "Ilha formosa!" ("Beautiful island!"). Indeed, Taiwan is a rich and fertile land, blessed with an abundance of flora and fauna. Its geography is diverse, its landscape both pleasing and well-suited for human inhabitation. Although research now suggests that first people to call this island Formosa were likely Spanish colonists, the story of the Portuguese explorers has long since become a touchstone of pride for all Taiwanese, and a powerful echo of the reverence that binds its aboriginal people to the island, their spiritual mother.

Taiwan and much of Latin America occupy parallel histories: colonization by the Spanish; periods of dictatorial rule followed by struggles for independence. Over the course of history, control of Taiwan has successively passed from the aboriginal inhabitants to the Dutch, to the Spaniards, to the Tungning Kingdom (the Ming successor state established by Koxinga), to the Qing Dynasty, to Imperial Japan, to the Kuomintang, before finally flowering under modern democracy. Alongside this intermingling of cultures and bloodlines, Taiwan's literature has developed into the variegated display of forms we see today. Yet, because they originally had no written language to record their stories, the literature of Taiwan's aboriginal peoples has only gradually, through the tireless labor of dedicated individuals, gained belated recognition.

For Salizan Takisvilainan, a young poet of the Bunun people who left his tribal lands to pursue an education but eventually returned, drawn by the deep love of his native culture, the barriers to cultural preservation presented by the lack of a written language are all too real. To better grapple with these challenges, he established Millet String Publishing House, an independent publisher based in Nakahila Village, Zhuoxi Township, Hualien County. A laborer of language, a bearer of words, Salizan uses the Latin alphabet to phonetically record the stories of village elders, and prepares them for native-language publication. So far, he has produced *A Simple Dictionary of the Takbanuaz Dialect of the Bunun Language*, *An Oral Account of the Kasibanan Incident*, and *Mipakaliva: Age of Legend – Myths of the Bunun People of Zhuoxi Township*. Concurrent with his publishing work, Salizan has worked as a mountain guide and porter, and undertook the writing of *Moving Mountains: A Tale of Rangers and Porters*.

After completing his obligatory military service, Salizan began following tribal elders into the mountains, where, over the next ten-plus years, he gathered materials for the *Moving Mountains: A Tale of Rangers and Porters*, three pieces of reportage comprising his personal experiences supplemented by a plethora of practical field studies. The eponymous first essay deals with heads straps, the indispensable tools of transport of his ancestors – woven headbands from which a large basket was suspended, allowing one to bear weight with the head and neck, while the basket rests against the back. In earlier times, head straps allowed Bunun tribesman to carry quarry home after a hunt, or to transport the large stone flags needed to build stone houses.

Under the vicissitudes of colonization and cultural assimilation, Salizan's Bunun ancestors, proud hunters and stewards of the forest, so well-versed in the wisdom of the head strap, became laborers serving at

the whims of others, and the head strap became the tool that sped the demise of their culture. For, after subduing the Bunun people, the Japanese colonial regime relocated them out of the mountain highlands and forced them to work as coolies, a move that cut off the tribe from their ancestral lands. Mr. Lin Yuan-Yuan, a Bunun elder, told Salizan a grisly tale on one of their expeditions into the mountains: "There was an Isbukun Bunun named Vilan who was also (forced into) carrying Chinese juniper wood. His family was from Mashisan. He borrowed a rifle from the Japanese to go hunting. He took it to the old family home and shot himself because he wanted to die in the same house as his parents."

In "Monuments of Sorrow" Salizan tells how the way of life of the tribes people was transformed by the roads, residences, and schools built by the Japanese as they pushed their way into the mountain highlands, with all the force of empire behind them. As their territory shrank, the Bunun people were forced into labor, exploited. In battle after battle, conflict after conflict, the blood of the Bunun people was spilled, soaking the earth, but the memorials that were built invariably celebrated the Japanese invaders. The only legacies left to the natives who died defending their land were criminal records. In "Trail of Tears" readers are guided through the reconstruction of a stone house. Through the careful stacking of the stone flags, a process requiring almost reverential patience, the ruins of an old home are gradually restored, along with the vanishing construction techniques of the Bunun people.

According to Salizan, his direct ancestors were relocated from the mountain highlands at 2000 meters down to a new settlement at 300 meters. He has already gathered a mountain of documentary evidence and oral accounts of this event. In time he will collate and organize these materials, and write the story of his own family's upheaval from their ancestral lands.

I stand atop the summit;
From my tribal culture, I face these ranges.
Let me and the land of my ancestors once more produce new meaning.

- Salizan Takisvilainan "Homeland, Village, Person"

MOVING MOUNTAINS: A TALE OF RANGERS AND PORTERS

By Salizan Takisvilainan
Translated by Mike Fu

The Story Begins with Head Straps

Our ancestors in the Bunun tribe relied on human strength to convey goods, so they crafted many instruments to bear loads. The *patakan* is a type of L-shaped back bracket made of wood, similar in structure to the aluminum frame backpacks later introduced by mountain climbing companies. We also use the *palagan*, a basket for the back; the *palangan qaibi*, a sealed back basket; the *davaz*, a mesh bag; and the *sivazu*, a mesh bag for women. For the Bunun people, these are all important tools, mostly crafted in twill or hexagonal weaves.

Two accessories are critical to these load-bearing devices: the *vakil* and the *tinaqis*, the shoulder strap and head strap. These two Taiwanese rattan accessories enable two distinctive modes of transport – by the shoulders or by the forehead. To carry by shoulder, goods are placed inside the instrument of transport, which is strapped to both shoulders and rests against the back in transit. The latter mode entails wrapping a strap around the forehead and using the strength of the head for transporting baskets and other load-bearing devices.

We can carry goods by shoulder when they don't weigh too much. We call the act of bearing loads by both shoulders *vakilun*. When the load is a bit heavier, we use a head strap and call this *patinbunguan*, the act of bearing loads by the forehead.

Shoulder straps are often used for trips of short duration, such as carrying crops back from the fields near one's home. Head straps are for heavier items and longer trips, like transporting quarry from the hunt. The head strap allows our clansmen to travel long distances while carrying heavy objects. Since we're talking about porters, who bear heavy loads and make long journeys into the mountains, let's begin our story with the head strap.

In 2000, I traveled from Dongpu to Lamuan on a survey of the Japanese colonial-era Batongguan Traversing Trail. As we left Dafen, the rhythms of *matin lumaq* – "The Song of Carrying Heavy Loads" – slowly rose from the belly of my guide Lin Yuan-Yuan, coalescing in his mouth as a crisp song that trembled, resonated, and reverberated in the valley of Dafen.

He wore a towel wrapped on his head, a strap around his forehead, and plastic rain boots. On his shoulders he carried a mountaineering backpack constructed from a rice sack inside a metal frame. The head strap was the most eye-catching part of this outfit. The tribesmen of yore once carried heavy items with this strap alone. Nowadays, porters use L-shaped aluminum frames along with head straps to lighten the load on their shoulders. The first head straps were woven from Taiwanese rattan bark. In step with the progress of the times and the accessibility of materials, straps woven from packing belts have gradually become the norm. Every tribe has its own method for weaving, but most work in twill. Worn on the head, the strap looks very much like an ornamental headpiece, and is really quite attractive.

I also wore a strap on my head, which I had gotten

from Dina's back basket. Attached to an aluminum frame, this contraption made my journey into the mountains possible. Most of the head straps in the tribe had been made by elder Huang Tai-Shan, whose tribal name was Bisazu. He was the only person left in the tribe who made head straps from Taiwanese rattan, so most of the tribespeople used straps made by Bisazu. Nowadays woven goods are made from packing belts or Taiwanese rattan (*quaz*). He could make them from either of these materials, producing a steady supply of traditional yet practical woven goods.

Head straps are the thing I use most these days. I had to borrow one from Dina whenever I went into the mountains. Eventually I found time to learn how to make them from Bisazu because I was afraid of losing the ones I borrowed. One month of training and I had an exclusive head strap in my possession. Ninety-year-old Tina Umav, who was born in Tarunas on the Lakulaku River, once told me that the people of the Isbabanal clan used to be the only ones who could weave. Other households had to barter with them for woven goods. In her words:

> *naitun maqansia matas-I balangan, tuban, sivazu, davaz, at talangqas, kaupakaupa tindun qai Isbabanaz a tindun, maqa ata qai mabaliv ata.*
> They were the only ones who knew how to make back baskets, Taiwanese rattan sieves, mesh bags, and *talangqas*. Only the Isbabanaz clan could make these, so other clans bought from them.

This weaving technique was exclusive to the Isbabanaz; for other clans, weaving was forbidden (*samu*). As time went on and clans communicated with one another, many other people, like Bisazu of the Istasipaz clan, came to learn the technique. Fewer and fewer young people study this traditional craft nowadays. Who knows whether this beautiful woven good will still be seen in the mountains in the future?

The head strap is one item that aboriginal guides and porters always bring with them when traveling into the mountains. This woven item lets you identify, among many mountain-dwelling peoples, who the aboriginals are in the crowd. But now more and more flatlanders are learning to use head straps. Using the head strap requires practice, or else one risks injuring the cervical vertebra. The head strap is not placed directly on the forehead, but rather one-third of the way down between the crown of the head and the forehead, and the neck must be a straight line. One cannot look up; the line of sight needs to be on the ground. Head straps can usually be affixed to shoulder straps and, when the load is heavy or the trip is long, help reduce the burden on the shoulders.

If someone suffers injury or debilitating illness – barring neck or spinal injuries – they can also be transported out of the mountains using head straps and trekking poles. Two trekking poles, one head strap, and a rope can sustain a person of up to 100 kilos. No matter how far the road or how serious the injury, head straps can be used to bring them to safety.

With a strap on his head, Lin Yuan-Yuan brought me to the traditional homeland of the Bunun people. This is where I also heard about rangers for the first time. I learned that a group of people within the Bunun tribe work in their ancestral homeland as porters for outside travelers and for the academic community. In the past decade or more, my relationship with brother Lin Yuan-Yuan has afforded me consistent opportunities to travel into the mountains and get to know the tribespeople who wear straps on their heads. They each have their own roles – as guides, porters, rangers, and so on. Even though their jobs are called different things, they universally involve the deployment of physical strength while working in the ancestral homeland.

But how are the tribespeople's real-life working conditions? And what do outsiders imagine when they think of this vocation? These questions arose from the conversations I had during my visit to the Bunun ancestral home of Mashisan in 2013. It was a beautiful dawn on the second day of my trip, golden light gently spilling onto the bodies of Lin Yuan-Yuan, Kao Chung-Yi (aboriginal name Tiang Tanaouna), and other rangers. As we were preparing our backpacks in front of the Walami Cabin, a tourist asked us where we were going.

"We're heading to Dafen," replied Lin Yuan-Yuan.

"How many days are you going for?" asked the tourist.

"We'll be walking for another ten or so days," Lin laughed. "We're rangers with the national park and

need to make our rounds of the mountains."

"How wonderful," said the tourist cheerfully. "You can take in the sights while working, with the mountains and rivers at your side." Most tourists are only able to reach the Walami Cabin. Beyond that lies the ecological reserve of the national park, which requires a permit from the park administration to enter. That we could leisurely go in and work in nature inspired some jealousy, naturally.

Is it really so romantic to work with mountains and forests? This idealized vision of working in nature is not just a contemporary sensibility. Kano Tadao's *Mountains, Clouds, and Barbarians* from the Japanese colonial period describes a scene in which he hears the Bunun tribe's song: "The song rang through the forest and gave rise to an unbelievable echo. Primitive rhythms spilled forth from the mouths of the savages… and penetrated my spirit." Kano was proudest of the time he spent working in the mountains with the Bunun, a period that was also his most productive. He believed that the Bunun's mountain guides, like the samurai, possessed an elegant bearing, valued the bonds of kinship, and carried out their responsibilities to the very end. A whiff of romantic imagination emerges in his literary depictions of the tribe.

His romanticism motivated me to write about the Bunun tribe and the reality of their working environment amid the mountain forests of their traditional territory. This book is based on two journeys into Yushan National Park: the first, a survey of the Qing-era Batongguan Historic Trail, which I'll call the Qing Historic Trail Trip for short, conducted from October 29 to November 9, 2012; the second taken along the Japanese colonial era Batongguan Traversing Trail to the ancestral homeland of Mashisan, from April 19 to April 30, 2013. The articles that follow are primarily about the Qing Historic Trail, with the Japanese colonial Batongguan Traversing Trail as complement. With rangers and porters as my focus, the stories of these two trips are paired with historical events that detail the working conditions of the tribespeople in the mountains.

Discussion of the head strap has introduced us to this group of people working in nature, and how they move mountains of their own. The head strap is an accessory to back baskets, mesh bags, and back braces, but when one situates this load-bearing device on one's forehead, it allows one to transport a fixed quantity without slipping on the road. It makes heavier loads easier to bear in transit. Let the tribespeople who carry heavy loads by forehead – with the help of back baskets, mesh bags, and back braces – tell the story of the mountains and forests one step at a time. May "The Song of Carrying Heavy Loads" be sung for more people to hear.

Guides with Head Straps

The participants in our itinerary on the eastern route of the Qing dynasty Batongguan Historic Trail included: Lin Yuan-Yuan, Lin Chih-Chung, Chiang Chih-Lung, Kao Chih-Cheng, Wu Chun-Chieh (all of them rangers from the Yushan National Park Headquarters), Lin Hsiu-Shan, Lin Hsiao-Te (the latter two from Jhuosi village, assuming the role of porters), Chao Tsung-Yi (Salizan's Chinese name, the author of this book), Chang Chia-Jung, Huang Chiu-Hao, Lin Yu-Chu, and Fang Hsiang.

2012 Itinerary

Day 0 October 28
Fengyuan → Dongpu
Day 1 October 29
Dongpu → approximately 12.3 km to Batongguan C1
Day 2 October 30
C1 → Guangao → bypassing collapsed cliff through the mountains → Batongguan prairie → Central Gold Mine C2
Day 3 October 31
C2 → Dujyuan Campground → Nan Campground → Dashueiku Cabin C3
Day 4 November 1
C3 → Miasang River C4
Day 5 November 2
C4 → Southern saddle, Gongshan → ruins of Nunusun C5
Day 6 November 3
C5 → Mahoras River C6
Day 7 November 4
C6 → Abolan Valley C7
Day 8 November 5
C7 → Makansutu River C8

Day 9 November 6
C8 → Lambas, beneath Peak 2330 C9
Day 10 November 7
C9 → Mount Aburang → Talumu River C10
Day 11 November 8
C10 → Asanglaijia Shan → Mount Yuli Crossroads → Mount Jhuosi Industrial Road → Jhuosi

Even though Lin Yuan-Yuan had traveled this route with elder master Yang Nan-Chun before, the road had been lost to overgrown vegetation and effaced by landslides in the twenty years since. To keep the historical trail from falling into complete disuse, Yushan National Park commissioned academic groups to survey and record present conditions. This journey was led by Lin Yuan-Yuan, who had previously guided many academic teams into the mountains. Everyone was used to having him as their guide.

On October 28, 2012, we took a train from Yuli, Hualien County to Fengyuan, Taichung, then transferred to Dongpu. The name Dongpu is transliterated from *tunpu*, which means "axe" in the language of the Tsou people. This land was once Tsou territory and thus received its name because the Tsou people of yore made stone axes here. Around the end of the 18th century, the Isbukun community that originally resided in the Jyunda River region relocated and settled in Dongpu in search of new hunting grounds and lands to cultivate. The Bunun people of the Isbukun community who made their homes in Dongpu called this land *hanupan*, which means "hunting ground".

That night we stayed in the Aboriginal Dongpu Hall of the hot springs resort area, part of the second and fifth neighborhoods of Dongpu. This area is a tourist neighborhood nowadays because of the hot springs; most of the residents only moved here after World War II. The third and sixth neighborhoods downstream, on the other hand, were once part of the Taki Havilan settlement of the Bunun tribe. The fourth neighborhood is also known as Lower Dongpu, a Han outpost where residents were brought in as lumberers during the Japanese colonial period. After the war, they settled here as well. In the 1980s, Dongpu had the most mountain guides out of all the neighborhoods. Various regulations were implemented during that time, such as license requirements for the guides, but these were nominal gestures. The indigenous people who actually performed these duties were called "mountain attendants".

We visited Lin Yuan-Yuan's master, Wu Wan-Sheng (tribal name Akila), during our stay in Dongpu. He had been a mountain attendant in the '60s and '70s and remained in good health. However, many years of carrying heavy loads had deteriorated his mobility and left him bedridden. Once upon a time, he had borne heavy loads and selected the hundred peaks of Taiwan alongside the four kings of the mountain world. He'd surveyed the Qing Historic Trail with groups of people including Yang Nan-Chun. Brother Lin called him "master" because he'd followed in Wu's footsteps many a time, absorbing plenty of traditional knowledge from him about the mountain forests.

In conversation, I asked what one should call a person who leads the way in the Bunun language. Tama Akila said that the tribespeople used to call them *lavian*, but this might be more akin to a military leader. Brother Lin brought up the term *sanadan*:

> *at tupaun mita aipa tu sanadan, ita makis isabinaz qai paun ta sanadan tuna sia ta maqo sanadan tu makuaq ata tastu lumaq*.
> If a person is just guiding their family, showing the way and serving as their leader, we call him *sanadan*.

The next day, October 29, we set off on our journey from the hot springs of Dongpu. A few steps into the trailhead at the foot of the mountain, we could see the entirety of Dongpu's first neighborhood upstream from the Zhuoshui River, situated serenely above where the Chenyoulan River and Shalisian River met.

筷：怪談競演奇物語

CHOPSTICKS

- **Category:** Fantasy
- **Publisher:** Apex
- **Date:** 2/2020
- **Rights contact:** booksfromtaiwan.rights@gmail.com
- **Pages:** 416
- **Length:** 226,602 characters (approx. 147,000 words in English)
- **Rights sold:** Korean (Gimm-Young), Japanese (Kobunsha), Vietnamese (Phuong Nam)

Five authors from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Japan come together to write a tale of fantasy and intrigue based on the theme of "chopsticks". In the miraculous stories that unfold, chopsticks become much more than eating utensils; they are also family treasures, as well as conduits to divine power.

Chopsticks: simple, ingenious, essential. A central and utterly unremarkable feature of life in East Asia. A symbol so powerful it is almost invisible – that is, until five authors from Taiwan, Japan, and Hong Kong invoke it as a central theme for five wild stories of fantasy and intrigue.

Japanese author Mitsuda Shinzo opens the tale with the story of a young schoolboy who is seen at lunchtime performing a wish ritual before a pair of chopsticks stuck into his rice (an action considered strictly taboo in East Asia, as vertical chopsticks resemble graveside joss sticks). The 84-day ritual promises to bring a response from the spirits, but the boy and his classmates must be careful what they wish for.

Taiwanese author Xerses echoes the schoolyard setting in her chapter, in which a boy who wears a pair of coral chopsticks around his neck finds himself the center of female attention. Under the female protagonist's searching eye, his relationship to his chopsticks – and the divine power they store – does not stay secret for long.

Hong Kong writer JeTauZi turns things even darker in her tale of a famous YouTuber who is poisoned while livestreaming, and his girlfriend's quest to uncover his killer. But all three stories come to a surprising climax in Xiao Xiang Shen's fourth chapter, which weaves all three stories together in a single tale of dark intrigue that ends with a bitter twist. Finally, award-winning author Chan Ho-Kei brings everything back to his native Hong Kong, rewriting history and transforming the backstory into a masterpiece of science fiction, cosmic entities, and Lovecraftian horror.

Mitsuda Shinzo 三津田信三

A long-time aficionado of horror films and novels, Japanese author Mitsuda Shinzo is known for stories that imbue horror and local folklore into the crime fiction genre. His *Tojio Genya* series of stories have earned him a wide readership across many age groups, as well as multiple prize nominations. His novel *Like a Sinking Water Demon* won the tenth Honkaku Mystery Award.

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Xerses 薛西斯

Xerses is one of the most exciting young novelists in Taiwan's science fiction/mystery community. Deeply inspired by Shimada's Soji *The Tokyo Zodiac Murders*, Xerses is dedicated to incorporating the finest logical intrigue into her stories. Her novel *Lotus Reborn* won a Bronze Medal in the 2013 Kadokawa Fiction Awards, and *Avalon's Quest* was shortlisted for the 2015 Soji Shimada Mystery Award.

JeTauZi 夜透紫

Author, intercultural studies specialist, and confirmed cat lady, JeTauZi has written novels, stories, and scripts for children's TV shows and mobile games. In 2011, her fantasy story "The Spirit of the Word" won a bronze medal in the Kadokawa Fiction Awards. She's written multiple long novels in several genres, including detective fiction and horror.

Xiao Xiang Shen 瀟湘神

Novelist and VR game designer Xiao Xiang Shen is a member of the Taipei Legend Studio and an avid researcher of local folklore whose work brings the mystical side of urban spaces to life. His short story "Taipei Scrolls" won a bronze medal in the short story category at the Kadokawa Fiction Awards in 2012, as well as the King Car Fantasy Fiction Prize in 2014. He has written multiple novels set in Taiwan during the Japanese Occupation, as well as a compendium of Taiwanese demons, which became the basis for a well-known virtual reality game.

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Chan Ho-Kei 陳浩基

Chan Ho-Kei was born and raised in Hong Kong. He has worked as software engineer, scriptwriter, game designer, and editor of comic magazines. His writing career started in 2008 at the age of thirty-three, with the short story "The Case of Jack and the Beanstalk", which was shortlisted for the Mystery Writers of Taiwan Award. He went on to win the award again the following year with "The Locked Room of Bluebeard". In 2011, Chan's first novel, *The Man Who Sold the World*, won the Soji Shimada Mystery Award. His subsequent works, including *The Borrowed*, have been translated into multiple languages, include English, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Italian, Dutch, Italian, Vietnamese, Thai, Indonesian, and Hebrew.

CHOPSTICKS, BATONS, AND AUTHORIAL ACROBATICS: A COLLABORATION BETWEEN EDITOR AND WRITERS

Written by Kaiting Chan (Editor of *Chopsticks*)
Translated by Joshua Dyer

Chopsticks has been a long journey, one which has yet to reach its end. As the first original book from Apex Press, it has sold surprisingly well in the Taiwan market, receiving rave reviews from readers and critics alike. The tailwinds have held strong, and with the help of numerous people, the book will soon be available to readers in South Korea, Vietnam, and Japan. At this point *Chopsticks* has taken on a life of its own, one never envisioned by the editor and publisher. It's the fans who are now opening new horizons for the book.

Combining the talents of writers Mitsuda Shinzo, Xerses, JeTauZi, Xiao Xiang Shen, and Chan Ho-Kei, the structure of *Chopsticks* is part collaborative creation, part relay race. The first three authors wrote stories based on two prompts: "an urban legend concerning chopsticks" and "a person with a fish-shaped birthmark on their arm". The latter two picked up the baton where the ones before them left off, writing additional stories to help tie all of the pieces together into a coherent whole.

In "Lord Chopsticks", the first of the three vanguard stories, a Japanese middle school student performs a forbidden ritual by sticking a pair of bamboo chopsticks upright in a bowl of rice, thus mimicking a funerary rite. This act summons Lord Chopsticks to grant the student's wish, but he must pay by becoming prey to a monster that will hunt him through his dreams. The second tale, "The Coral Bones", is about a young woman who beseeches a Taoist priest with a fish-shaped birthmark on his hand to locate a missing chopstick. Possessed by a spirit known as Immortal Wang, the chopsticks once brought good luck, but decades ago, after one of the pair disappeared, the remaining chopstick has only brought misfortune. "The Cursed Net" is based on a popular urban legend about Bride's Pool in Hong Kong. According to the legend, if a ritual meal for the dead is placed at the edge of the pool, a ghost bride will appear to take vengeance on behalf of the supplicant. In the story, a young internet star is assisted by the ghost bride in solving the case of her boyfriend's death during a livestream broadcast. "The Dream of the Crocodile", links together the first three tales with the story of a father who will stop at nothing to save his son from the curse of Lord Chopsticks. His unflagging determination leads him to the ruins of a flooded school at the bottom of a reservoir, where yet another mystery is revealed. The final story, a sci-fi romance/adventure, completely defies expectations, carrying forward the suspense of the previous four while developing novel linkages between them.

Looking back it is clear that arriving at the theme of "chopsticks" was the first critical step in the book's development. The process of selecting the theme was fairly straightforward. We just felt out different ideas, one at a time. To facilitate discussions we created a group on Facebook with Xerses and JeTauZi. Each day we tossed around ideas, looking for areas of commonality between Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Japan. We considered some heavier topics like cram schools or death by overwork, and more general themes, like "the sea". After turning things over for a while, in a flash of inspiration, JeTauZi came up with "chopsticks". It struck us as strange at first,

but the more we thought about it the more intriguing it sounded. Chopsticks are simple utensils, but each region has its own taboos, myths, and legends around them. It seemed worthwhile to challenge ourselves to create a sense of horror surrounding an ordinary, commonplace object. From chopsticks we free-associated our way to "fish". Adding the essential element of a person led us to "a person with a fish-shaped birthmark on their arm".

We hoped readers would sense subtle connections linking the three stories based on the prompts alone, and then the last two stories could surprise readers by creating a more coherent whole. The idea of "passing the baton" to the next writer became another critical step in the book's development. Although the collaborative framework of the book would be laid out there on the book jacket, we hoped the experience of reading the linked stories would far surpass the mere explication. For Xiao Xiang Shen, the author of "The Dream of the Crocodile", this wasn't his first time receiving the baton from another writer. He had already proved himself writing in the relay race format, which is why we assigned him the fourth story. The first three stories were a superstitious tale of horror, a suspense story laced with romance, and a mystery fusing a tale of detection with elements of social realism. With the fourth story, Xiao Xiang Shen expanded the blueprint of the book by writing from an almost sociological perspective, addressing the culture of chopsticks, and the difficulties faced by young women in contemporary Asian society. While surprising, "The Dream of the Crocodile" provided a satisfying conclusion, which only increased the difficulty of the challenge faced by the fifth writer. Now that the string of chopsticks-related incidents had reached a perfect conclusion, what was Chan Ho-Kei to write about?

I consider this the final miracle of the book, a miracle woven by five writers. This isn't just a collaboration between writers. It is an acrobatic competition with five performers on the same stage, all attempting to outdo each other. In addition to addressing the themes assigned by the editorial team, each is throwing down the gauntlet to the writers that follow. "What materials are you going to harvest from my story? Are you going to tie up the loose ends?" Or perhaps, "Will you notice the little mysteries I left unsolved?" The last two writers are the wide receivers, catching the compositional elements and foreshadowing thrown to them by the first three, possibly even picking up a fumble or two. They are expanding the scope of the book, while, at the same time, stitching its pieces together and cleaning up loose threads. Even more astounding is the fact that none of the writers were acquainted with each other before beginning the book. All they had in common was that they were all mystery writers. The synchronicities that emerge between the writers' stories is a product of their passion, spirit, and professionalism.

I'm not confident we could actually pull off another miracle like this one. Just getting authors interested in this kind of collaboration is rare and wonderful enough, like spotting a shooting star at night. After coming up with the basic themes, Xerses, JeTauZi, and I invited Chan Ho-Kei to join us. He immediately began advocating that "good stories know no borders", which set us on the path of inviting a Japanese writer to join the project, giving form to our transnational concept. Mitsuda Shinzo, a talented writer of supernatural stories, is held in high regard by Taiwanese readers. When it came time to write the final story, Chan Ho-Kei was assisted by a timeline of the events of the previous four stories drawn up by Xiao Xiang Shen, which helped him to locate points where he could weave the threads of the stories together. Nearly every stage of this book would have proved impossible but for the experience and quality of the other writers on the team. Everything about this rare and unique process of creation exceeded our imagining, except, perhaps, for the cliché that once good writers get started, they can't put down their pens – every story ended up running over our assigned word counts!

Chopsticks is an unexpected success of a book, with its imagination-defying plot and rarely-seen literary pyrotechnics. Combining horror, mystery, fantasy, romance, and science fiction, all built on a foundation of chopstick lore, the book illustrates the cultural commonalities and differences between Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Japan. Simultaneously, the interactions between these five masters of fiction reveals the unique literary characteristics of each region. One book, five stories, rife with ingenious plotting, stunning authorial acrobatics, and a thick atmosphere of mystery and horror distilled from one of the most familiar objects in East Asian culture. We simply cannot wait for these literary pleasures to be enjoyed by book lovers from around the world.

CHOPSTICKS

By Mitsuda Shinzo, Xerses, JeTauZi, Xiao Xiang Shen, Chan Ho-Kei
Translated by Mike Day

2. The Coral Bones

Now *this* is a surprise.

That was the first thought that flashed through my mind when Mr. Fish opened up the door.

He wore a baggy black T-shirt and worn blue jeans. He looked young, almost like a student. If I hadn't known, I would never have taken him for a warlock.

Just one thing about him seemed slightly strange: the big, angry red mark that ran up one forearm, disappearing beneath his cuff. I don't think I had ever seen such a bright red birthmark. It writhed like a dying fish that had sunk its teeth into his wrist and refused to let go.

"Come in."

The rickety ceiling lamp in the hallway flickered, and I remembered what my friend had said: if you're determined to meet this man, do it in broad daylight, when the yang energy is at its most intense, and the ghosts can't get at you.

The room was so small a single long table and two wooden armchairs almost filled it. There was no air conditioner, yet I sensed a chill in the air. The light was dim, so I couldn't see what was in the two black cases by the window.

I had pictured a dark den of mysticism filled with swirling incense smoke, but the room was tidy and cheerless, with no hint of the occult.

The warlock strolled back to the big wooden armchair, sat, and slowly looked me over. There was a cold, sober look in his eyes suggesting that he was sizing me up, but I didn't feel threatened. Beneath his cold, weighty gaze, I even felt he might be threatened by me.

"Please, sit. Can I get you some tea?"

"No, thanks."

He unhurriedly made a pot of tea nevertheless, and just as I was about to say "no thank you" again, tipped the little teapot and filled his cup.

"I'm sorry. I haven't had a good night's sleep in almost two months, so I need to drink tea to stay awake. I don't sleep much at the best of times, and right now it's high season. Bull demons and serpent devils come at me the instant my eyes close." I noticed the black bags beneath his eyes. He yawned wide, then asked, "What's your name?"

From the instant I arrived, he'd given off a cocky aura, as if to say, *I don't need you as much as you need me.*

"My last name is Cheng."

"Miss Cheng." He gave a small nod. "You can call me Master Hailin – that's 'hai' for ocean, and 'lin' for fish scale. My spiritual name." His eyes darted all around as if in search of something. "Better not use your real name here. *They* might hear. And trust me, that kind of trouble we don't need."

I nodded hurriedly. I had heard he had a long list of rules.

Last winter, a friend had told me about Mr. Fish.

At first, the name had struck me as funny: "Mr. Fish?" I didn't know then that his spiritual name was 'fish scale' – I guess that's where the name came from, if it wasn't the birthmark on his arm.

Most in his line of work kept a low profile, relying on word of mouth to bring in customers. I had been lucky enough to hear of him from a friend who had suffered a spell of terrible luck after getting on a spirit's bad side: three in the family had taken ill, and two

died. They had gone to more than ten masters, but none had been able to help.

Then they went to see Mr. Fish, who set things straight in three days. When I heard this, I knew Mr. Fish was the man for the job.

"What can I do for you today, Miss Cheng?"

"Well, you see, I'm getting married at the end of the year…."

Suddenly, he looked uneasy.

"Don't tell me you're here to have me calculate your eight birth characters and pick an auspicious wedding date."

"Huh?"

"Tell me that isn't it. I'm no good at that stuff."

I said nothing.

"Let me be straight with you: I'm only good at one thing." It was then that I noticed the full-color price list pressed beneath the placemat. At first glance, it looked like the menu at a hole-in-the-wall snack bar. He lifted a finger and stabbed it directly down at the last item on the list: "This."

Exorcism.

"If ghosts are giving you trouble, I'll get them off your back, guaranteed. Other than that, I'm useless."

Useless – quite a way to describe yourself.

But come to think of it, maybe he laid his cards on the table because he was just that confident as an exorcist.

"If you want to get your fortune told, if you need to pick a wedding date, I can send you to people who do that." As he spoke, he pulled a cell phone from his pocket. The screen flashed to life, showing a riotously colorful background picture, a flock of a parrots fluttering over a tropical forest. I knew those parrots: they were characters in Cosmic Forest, a virtual pet game, my two-year-old niece's favorite.

"No need," I promptly interrupted. "To tell the truth… I came to you because I've got problems ordinary human effort can't fix. I'm getting married soon, and there are things I need to sort out before starting a family."

"Oh?" This seemed to catch him off guard. "Sure thing, I get it, plenty of people come to me for that. But your case seems… special. Has it occurred to you you might be imagining things?"

"Meaning?"

"Your energy is pure. An evil spirit wouldn't touch you with a ten-foot pole."

"How do you know my energy is pure?"

"Warm, sunny yang energy radiates out within a meter of you. Any sane demon would be frightened out of its wits. People who get possessed are deficient in yang energy. You can tell just by looking that they're about to kick the bucket."

Judging by the big black bags beneath his eyes, I wondered if he was talking about himself.

"I've been to many masters, and about half have said the same thing."

"Oh, so only half are wrong. Things in the occult industry are looking up!" he exclaimed, seeming pleased, but his eyes quickly narrowed again. "Then what are you here for? There's no need to be so…. I mean, do you believe in spirits, or don't you?"

I forced a smile. "I don't know – you tell me. But this has been going on for fifteen years now. I've seen plenty of inexplicable things. I can't rest until this is settled once and for all."

"You should know I'm not a medium, and I'm not a travel agent to the spirit world." Seeing he hadn't succeeded in shaking my determination, he sighed, spread his hands in despair, and said, "Okay! I'll try to help. As long as you know going in that exorcism is the only thing I'm good at."

"No problem. I believe in you." I promptly added, "It has to do with a pair of chopsticks."

"Chopsticks?" I could see he was taken aback. After a moment, he asked, "Are you sure this is in my area?"

"That's just what I was about to ask you."

I'd spent plenty of time pondering how to start the story.

Should I be direct, get straight to the point? That might make things easier. But I decided to start with the part that meant the most to me – the way we met. So I explained to Mr. Fish:

In junior high, the kids called me Six-One. Strange, right?

That's because my astrological bone weight (a system of DIY fortunetelling in which a heavier weight meant a better fate) was six taels, one mace.

I have no idea what junior high students are into these days, but in my time, superstitions were all the rage. My bone weight of six taels and a mace made me a schoolyard legend. No one else was even in my league.

But fortunetelling was child's play – spirit writing and spirit summoning games were the real thrill. I went to a Christian school, and the teachers were not amused by our games. They doled out harsh punishments to anyone caught playing them, but we didn't let that stop us. We defied authority to prove our courage.

I was no exception, but it wasn't that I was an especially bold or rebellious kid. My friends just dragged me into it. When it came to these games, clear battle lines were drawn between boys and girls – I was the only girl the boys let into their group. They said they needed some feminine yin energy to balance things out, but the real reason was that it got boring playing with just boys, and I was a tomboy anyway.... These were their excuses, but we all knew the real reason: Six taels and a mace. With me in the group, it was safe to play the games.

So I don't know if that's in the scope of your services, but as far as the ancients were concerned, my birth characters put me right up there with kings and emperors.

Fortunetellers would take down my birth date, run some calculations and say, "Look what we have here, a dog fatter than a pig." In ancient times, pigs were symbols of a family's wealth and were supposed to be fat, but people didn't waste resources fattening up their dogs, just as they didn't waste resources on their daughters, pinning their hopes on their sons instead. What the fortunetellers meant was that if a boy had the same eight birth characters as me, he'd be sure to become the sort of person people looked up to – it was too bad I was a girl.

I burst out laughing every time I told the tale, not because the fortunetellers' ideas about gender were a hundred years out of date, but because, setting aside all the talk about dogs, pigs, and emperors, the real use of having "six taels and a mace" was playing spirit-summoning games.

The games had many rules, but the most important of all was to be respectful. The games began with what we called an invocation, and ended with a banishment ritual. From the beginning to the end, every detail had to be just so.

Whether there was really anything paranormal going on, I'm still not sure. We gave the games whimsical names like "Immortal of the Coin" and "Immortal of the Pen" – whatever it was we summoned, we never thought they were *real* spirits.

Once, just to be brats, we played Immortal of the Coin in the school chapel.

But once the game began, no matter what we asked, the coin kept circling the same three characters. The characters seemed to be a name, but it wasn't the name of anyone in class. We were all bewildered. Then one of my friends had a flash of inspiration, and asked it, "Coin spirit, coin spirit, is this your name?"

The coin did an abrupt turn and slid to the character "yes".

We were practically jumping for joy. We couldn't believe how smart we were. We were getting ready to ask it another question when the coin started moving again, dragging our hands with it, doing wild circles around two characters, "help" and "me". This struck fear into us: what on earth was going on? We cried out repeatedly, "Spirit, be gone!" But nothing we did helped. I tried to pull my hand away, but it was stuck. The coin circled faster and faster, tearing a hole in the paper.

Just then, the solemn sound of singing resounded in the chapel.

It was the same recorded hymn that played at six o'clock each day. At almost exactly that moment, the coin started to slow, and finally stopped.

We stood stock still. No one dared pull their hand away. Tears rolled down the cheeks of a few of my fainthearted friends.

I lifted my eyes to the altar and saw the setting sun shining through the stained-glass window, bathing the golden cross in a shaft of glistening light. There we were, summoning spirits in full view of the Lord. When I think of it, I still get shivers.

Looking back on it now, I think it was probably just one of my friends messing around, but either way, the fad

for spirit-summoning games came to an end that day.

Next, a fad for online urban legends swept through the school.

The winter of my third year in junior high, the girls in class got into chopstick magic.

It worked like this: you secretly switched one stick of your pair of chopsticks with that of the boy you liked. If you kept it up for three months and he didn't find out, you'd end up together, guaranteed.

The idea seemed to be that since chopsticks came in pairs, they had the power to pair people up. Junior high school girls like to dream about their future loves, and chopstick magic had plenty of true believers. The unique thing about love spells is that they have many meticulous steps, but they aren't as dangerous as spirit-summoning spells. You could say the toil and trouble take the place of the danger, and the spirits are satisfied.

But love magic wasn't all that big of a bother, if you asked me. Back then, most of us had chopsticks engraved with whirling spiral patterns. Every pair was pretty much the same, except that some were engraved with the words "Present from the PTA", so it wasn't hard to switch your chopsticks with someone else's. It just seemed too easy. Even eraser spells, where you wrote the name of your crush on an eraser and ground it down until it disappeared, seemed more legitimate to me.

So I was surprised to see my friends taking the chopstick magic so seriously.

"In case you hadn't noticed, all chopsticks are pretty much the same. Switching one pair for another is too easy. If that were all it took, no one in the world would end up with a broken heart."

This flippant comment drew opposition from all sides. Pointing their fingers in my face, they fumed, "Six, you've got a heart of stone and the imagination of a stick! That's why boys never bring you flowers. They only use you for their games."

By the way, the girls all called me Six, as if it was too much trouble to say my full nickname.

I didn't mind giving up a mace if it meant gaining the girls' friendship.

"Nah, I'm just the levelheaded type."

"Then why not try it?"

"What?"

"If it's so easy, give it a try."

"Is it the type of thing you can just try?"

"If you don't believe in it, it can't hurt, can it?"

The took out an attendance sheet and struck out the names of boys who had already been targeted. It went without saying that I didn't believe in love spells, but when they explained, "we pick targets by drawing names," and I looked over the list of names that hadn't been sloppily stricken through, I felt my enthusiasm draining away – sorry to say it, but the juiciest fruits had already been picked, and the leftovers didn't whet my appetite.

But I was too proud to back down now.

Even if the chances were a million to one, I was determined to pick a boy I could live with.

I broke in hurriedly, "Wait, wait, no drawing names. Let me pick."

"Ooh, scared?"

"No. To make it a fair test, we should pick a tough target."

"Okay. Then who?"

Right away, I knew.

In three years, we'd barely exchanged a word. The one time we did talk, it was under very eerie circumstances.

Back when the fad for spirit-summoning games was in full swing, I stayed after class one day with a boy called the King and his court, to play a game we called "Occult Coin Toss".

It was a little like a gambling game. We played with a bowl and three ten-yuan coins painted red on one side. It was easy to find a way to spend them because the value was so low.

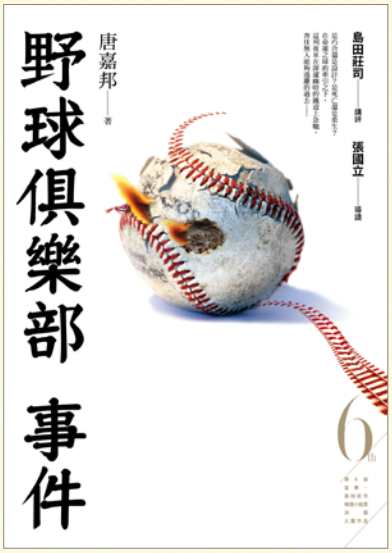
野球俱樂部事件

THE BASEBALL CLUB MURDER

Tang Chia-Bang
唐嘉邦

- **Category:** Crime Fiction
- **Publisher:** Crown
- **Date:** 9/2019
- **Rights contact:** booksfromtaiwan.rights@gmail.com
- **Pages:** 256
- **Length:** 103,784 characters (approx. 67,500 words in English)

Tang Chia-Bang spent seven years as a metropolitan reporter for the *China Times*, writing about everything from politics to medicine, to fishing, to religion. He loves history, reading, and detective fiction, and has always been an avid baseball fan.



*** First Prize of the 2019 King Car Soji Shimada Award**

The setting is Japanese-occupied Taiwan. Two businessmen – one Japanese, one Taiwanese – are murdered on the same night while riding trains at opposite ends of the island. Both were members of an exclusive club for baseball aficionado, and each disliked the other intensely. Who could have masterminded the murders – and what does it have to do with the game that defined the 20th century?

At 7:22 p.m. on the 31st of October, 1938, millionaire businessman and baseball enthusiast Fujishima Keizaburo boards a train bound for southern Taiwan. His unexplained absence at the Kyumikai Baseball Club, which had convened that night to listen to the game between rivals Keio and Waseda University, was noted but understood: he was headed south to convince the best young star in Taiwan to join the Keio team.

Yet, when the train pulls into Kaohsiung station the following morning, Fujishima's stabbed body is found sprawled across the floor of his compartment. At around the same time, his fellow club member Chen Chin-Shui is found dead by poisoning while riding the Taipei Rail. The two men hated each other enough to be suspect, but who would kill them both at once?

In this historical dive into one of the tensest periods in Taiwanese history, award-winning mystery writer Tang Chia-Bang writes the sinister side of a world defined by high stakes, home runs, and dangerous fouls.

THE BASEBALL CLUB MURDER: A MASTERWORK OF CONTEMPORARY TAIWANESE CRIME FICTION

Written by Sean Hsu
Translated by Joshua Dyer

The Baseball Club Murder is one of three TAICCA Select titles in *Books from Taiwan* Issue 13 and the recipient of the 2019 King Car Soji Shimada Mystery Award.

On the evening of October 31st, 1938, a body is found on a train traveling the Shinten railway line. The deceased, Chen Chin-Shui, a businessman from Banka, died clutching a bottle of Hakutsuru sake. Early the following morning a train out of Taipei pulls into Kaohsiung, the final stop of the West Coast Line. On board is the lifeless body of Fujishima Keizaburo, president of a Japanese trading company, a knife protruding from his chest. A baseball fan club, the Kyumikai Baseball Club, where both men were members, is the only link between two cases from opposite corners of Taiwan. The victims met there through their mutual interest in baseball, but repeatedly clashed over their differing views and social backgrounds. While investigating the death of Cheng Chin-Shui, detective Li Shan-Hai of the Taipei South Police Departments's Criminal Investigation Department begins to suspect that the murder of Fujishima some 400 kilometers away may be the key to cracking his own case. As the investigation deepens, this case that hinges on the complex relations between Japanese and Taiwanese people in colonial Taiwan leads Detective Li all the way back to the Tapani Incident of 1915, an armed uprising of Taiwanese locals against Japanese imperial rule.

Author Tang Chia-Bang, a baseball fanatic and former news reporter, says the story was brewing in his mind for many years before he finally took time away from freelance journalism to write this, his first work of fiction. The major awards the book eventually garnered were the furthest thing from his mind when he started. At the banquet for the Soji Shimada Award, Tang said, "My first thought was just to write something to share with a few friends." Perhaps it is the purity of this original intention that allowed Tang to complete a 100,000 word manuscript that seamlessly integrates baseball, railroads, and Taiwan's colonial history into the structure of a classic crime novel.

Of these three elements, history is paramount. Taiwan of 1938 was a colony of Japan – spoils of the First Sino-Japanese War – and would remain so until the end of the Second World War. The evolving relations between colonizer and colonized, initially characterized by armed resistance but later giving way to the détente of mutual prosperity, are distilled within the novel into the murders of two men, the detective investigating the case, and the villain whose identity is obscured within this murky and contentious mix.

In Taiwan, baseball is a miraculous sport. Now the country's "national sport", it was first introduced to Taiwan by the Japanese and gradually took root in the lives of the local people. The sport became a cross-cultural meeting point, a space for interactions on a relatively equal footing, and, for some, an opportunity to completely transform one's social status. The Kyumikai Club of the novel provides these same functions, but are the conflicts in the club just the usual tussle of competing interests? Or are they a deep running personal vendetta

that provides the motive for the crime? The railway setting provides a distant echo of these processes of cultural assimilation (no nation has embraced the subgenre of travel mysteries like Japan), while also being implicated in the novel's numerous intrigues and puzzles. Like baseball, the development of Taiwan's railways is intimately linked to Japan, and equally Japanese crime fiction has had a deep impact on Taiwanese readers and writers. That the novel received the Soji Shimada Award may be the greatest acknowledgement of this complex heritage.

Mystery writer Shimada Soji burst onto the scene in 1981 with the release of *The Tokyo Zodiac Murders*, a novel brimming with chilling perversions and the pure pleasures of deduction. The novel set Japanese mystery writers on the path of the Third Wave of Orthodox Writing (also known as New Mystery), venerating early mystery writers like Edogawa Ranpo and Yokomizo Seishi. By the '90s, the works of New Mystery writers were slowly being translated and published in Taiwan in *Mystery* magazine. Followed in the 2000's by the systematic translation and publication of American and British Golden Age mystery writers by publishers like Yuan-Liou and Faces, a new generation of Taiwanese writers in their twenties and thirties were itching to try their hand at constructing detective stories that revolved around a central ruse. Crown Publishing jumped on the bandwagon with a smorgasbord of projects: the JOY Series, which focused on contemporary American and European crime fiction; a selection of Shimada Soji's works; the collected works of Ayatsuji Yukito; and the Mystery Fan series, which published other Japanese authors. In 2008, seven years after discontinuing the Crown Award for Popular Fiction, the publisher established the annual Soji Shimada Mystery Award with the inaugural prize going to Mr Pets' *Virtua Street* in 2009.

One of the great contributions of the Soji Shimada Award is that it brings together authors and readers: in recent years the award has helped smooth the way for the sale of overseas publishing rights for recipients. In addition, the award has facilitated interactions between Taiwanese and Japanese crime fiction. The short story submission prize established by the Mystery Writers of Taiwan has also played a significant role in raising the profile of Taiwanese crime fiction authors, acting as a much-needed proving ground for aspiring novelists after the closure of *Mystery* magazine left a dearth of publication opportunities. Without these developments, the market for original crime stories might have sunk to a far lower nadir than seen today.

Meanwhile, genre literature in general has provided an injection of energy into the field of Taiwanese story-telling. In recent years, Taiwan's cultural and entertainment sector, with its emphasis on exporting soft power, has begun to attract international attention. Book rights have led the way with the sales of overseas translation rights for *The Borrowed* by Chan Ho-Kei and *The Stir-Fry Sniper* by Chang Kuo-Li. The television series *The Victim's Game*, adapted from a novel by Tien Ti Wu Hsien, was recently acquired by Netflix. The success of manga/video game crossover *The Agnostic Detective*, co-created by Xerses and Yingwu Chou, is yet another example. All of this has raised the visibility of Taiwanese creators, and expanded their vision as well, challenging them to create works of increasing breadth, depth, and maturity, characteristics prominently on display in *The Baseball Club Murder*. Whether it is the clever fusion of Taiwan's social history into the narrative framework of the Golden Era detective novel, the evocative imagery, or the deft handling of subtle emotional currents, Tang Chia-Bang's *The Baseball Club Murder* is never short on charms to court the admiration of readers from around the world.

THE BASEBALL CLUB MURDER

By Tang Chia-Bang
Translated by Brendan O'Kane

Prologue: The Baseball Club

October 31, Shōwa year 13, Taipei.

The paper lanterns have just been lit for the night and the bustling streets of Taipei glitter colorfully. Traffic is bumper to bumper on Sanhsien Road; eager customers spill out of the Kikumoto Department Store on Sakae-cho; Dadaocheng, where the natives of the island are concentrated, is if anything even more busily jumbled. Whatever you want – movies, plays, music, food, horse-races, baseball – you'll find it here. It is everything you would expect of a modern city.

The war between China and Japan has been raging for more than a year, spreading from Peiping, Shanghai, and Nanking all the way to Shanxi, Henan, Jiangxi, and Guangdong – but the battlegrounds are far away, on the Chinese mainland. For most people on the other side of the Taiwan Strait – to say nothing of the Japanese home islands – life carries on as it always has, untroubled by thoughts of war.

Soviet Volunteer Group bombers painted with the national emblem of the Republic of China attacked Matsuyama Airfield in February. A public panic ensued, but there have been no more raids since then, and over the intervening months the scent of gunpowder has faded even from memory.

The show, more or less, goes on. The "Island Metropolis", with Taipei Station at its heart, continues to sparkle and shine.

Behind the Railway Hotel that faces the station is the Grand Slam Café, an unremarkable-looking establishment that serves as a gathering place for the city's baseball enthusiasts. The baseball-mad owner, Notsuka Nao, founded the *Kyūmikai Club* three years ago, and invites his fellow enthusiasts to his establishment every Monday evening from 6 to 10 to share their opinions on ongoing developments in baseball matches around the world, some of which even go on to see print in newspapers and magazines.

October 31, a Monday, is the last day of the Fall season for the Tokyo Big 6 intercollegiate baseball league, and the second of the season's eagerly awaited Sōkeisen games between Waseda and Keio Universities. The Big 6 and the Intercity Baseball Tournament undoubtedly represented the highest levels of baseball in Japan until the Japanese Baseball League came along two years ago. Even now, in the third year of the JBL, the Big 6 games are still more popular. It's still early days for professional baseball, after all, and most people are waiting to see what the future will bring.

The Waseda-Keio game was rescheduled for noon after getting rained out the day before. Taipei Radio, which broadcasts the games in Taiwan, has a fixed daytime broadcasting schedule on Mondays, so the game won't be broadcast until six o'clock, just as the *Kyūmikai Club* assembles for its Monday meeting.

It's after ten. The *Kyūmikai Club* has concluded its activities and its members have wended their ways home. Two men remain in the cafe, chatting idly. One of them, an impeccably mannered man in a sharp Western-style suit, looks over his notes from the broadcast as if reliving the game. This is Kanuma Yūsuke. Not yet 40 years old, he has already risen to take charge of the massive Ōkido Corporation's Taiwan concerns, making him perhaps the most valuable member of the Kyūmikai Club.

"Waseda and Keio played one hell of a game this time!" Kanuma says, sounding too excited to be a corporate executive." Even just listening to it, I was so

on the edge of my seat that it felt like I was right there in Jingū Stadium."

"Did you get to Jingū a lot when you were studying at Rikkyo?" Notsuka, a fiftyish man with a greying moustache, sits off to one side with his legs crossed, sipping his coffee.

"They opened Jingū just before I got to Rikkyo, and I was there any time I got a free moment! I was even there the time the Emperor graced the Waseda-Keio game with His presence."

Kanuma had plenty of chances to watch games in person when he was working and studying in Tokyo – but he hasn't made it to as many games as Notsuka, whose enthusiasm for baseball borders on mania. Four years ago, when the American Major League All-Star team toured Japan, he followed them all around the country, watching Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Jimmie Foxx and the others in person. They played eighteen games – Jingū Stadium in Tokyo, Kōshien Stadium in Kansai, Hakodate in Hokkaido, Kokura in Kyushu – and he didn't miss a single one.

The conversation turns back to that day's game, in which Waseda followed up on its 7-5 win the day before to shut Keio out of the whole series with a narrow 3-2 victory.

Notsuka glances over at the Big 6 table he drew and put up on the wall. "Two losses in a row to Waseda – Keio might as well have given Meiji the championship on a silver platter."

The Fall season has come down to Meiji against Keio. As of the last week of the season, Meiji has seven wins, one loss, and two ties against Keio's six wins, one loss, and one tie. Meiji has played all of its games, so Keio could have snatched up the championship at the last minute with two wins against Waseda. Waseda, in third place behind them, didn't have a shot at the championship, but its two close victories over Keio have effectively ended its rival's hopes of winning the season.

"Waseda's getting its revenge on Keio for costing them their shot at the title last year," Kanuma says. Last year's Waseda-Keio games went the opposite way, with Keio emerging victorious and ending Waseda's struggle to win the championship.

The *Kyūmikai Club* has adjourned for the week, but Kanuma and Notsuka remain in the Grand Slam Café, reliving the game.

Only four of the club's seven regular members came to listen to the broadcast. Watanabe Riku, the semi-pro pitcher for the Ministry of Taiwan Railway team, had told them in advance that he would be away for training with his team in Kaohsiung; the other two members had simply not shown up.

"Just as well Fujishima didn't come," Notsuka says. "Seeing Keio lose to Waseda twice in a row and blow its chance at the title would've put him in a foul mood." The founder of the Kyūmikai Club has been growing irritable on the subject of Fujishima, who has a tendency to lose his temper when games don't go as he hopes.

By "Fujishima", Notsuka means Fujishima Keizaburō, Keio University alumnus and head of Fujishima Enterprises in Shinki-chō.

"Nothing surprising about Fujishima not showing up. I didn't think Chen would miss it, though – he always comes," Kanuma says, sounding rather more concerned about the other absent member of the club.

Chen Chin-Shui is the only local among the seven core members of the Kyūmikai Club. He runs a small company by the name of Lung-Chang Trade in Banka.

The mention of Chen reminds Notsuka of something. "The two of them can't stand each other anyway," he mutters.

A week ago, the club's discussion of Kano University's team and the Waseda-graduate player Wu Ming-Chieh started a serious dispute between Fujishima and Chen. Fujishima, always concerned with personal backgrounds, is not shy about his own – a Keio graduate and a native of the home islands – and has always looked down on the natives of this island. His judgment of Wu was scathing: "People wouldn't talk about Waseda the way they do if it didn't take players from the lower classes!" and "That coward wouldn't dare show his face in the pro leagues." He capped off his remarks on Wu Ming-Chieh by saying "A Chinaman is only ever going to be a Chinaman." He was looking Chen dead in the eye as he said it.

Fujishima has never been able to abide the presence of locals in the *Kyūmikai Club*. More than once he has tried to get Notsuka to kick Chen out, and more frequently still he has subjected Chen to all manner of scorn and mockery. Chen, for his part, has

always borne this bravely, but at the word "Chinaman" he threw himself at Fujishima and knocked him to the floor, where the two men grappled and beat at each other in a tangled, violent mess.

The others pulled them apart quickly, but Fujishima's injured pride drove him straight to the police station, where he tried to get the police to arrest Chen Chin-Shui. The other members of the Kyūmikai Club managed to send the policeman away, but things with Fujishima and Chen have passed all hope of resolution.

"Fujishima came by this afternoon to tell me he'd be leaving for Kaohsiung early," Notsuka says. "Something came up, so he said he had to take the 53 at 7:22 p.m."

"That must be why he turned me down when I asked if he wanted to take the G3 back with me at 10:30 tonight," says Kanuma. "But what could he be doing in Kaohsiung so late?"

The 53 and the G3 are sleeper trains on the West Coast Line between Keelung and Kaohsiung. The 53 leaves from Keelung at 6:25 p.m. and passes through Taipei at 7:22 p.m.; the G3 departs at 9:45 p.m. and passes through Taipei at 10:30 p.m.

On November 1 – tomorrow – the Ministry of Taiwan Railway team, including *Kyūmikai Club* member and Meiji University graduate Watanabe Riku, will play a practice game against Kaohsiung Commerce High School. Kanuma, graduate of Rikkyo, and Fujishima, graduate of Keio, have been planning to take the overnight train south to see the match. Their purpose is not to cheer on their friend Watanabe; each of the three men will in fact be competing against the others to buttonhole Ōshita Hiroshi, Commerce's star pitcher and cleanup hitter, and convince the promising young player to attend his own alma mater.

"So is Ōshita really worth the three of you fighting over him for your schools?" Notsuka, who has never laid eyes on Ōshita himself, has been reserving judgment.

"I saw Commerce playing in the All-Taiwan Middle School games at Maruyama Stadium last summer. Ōshita stood out for the power in his swing. Unfortunately, the rest of the team isn't at his level. They're ranked behind Kanō and Chiayi Middle School. I don't think he's got much chance of making it to Kōshien before he graduates."

Kanuma smiles, hearing himself sounding like a baseball scout. "Make no mistake about it, Ōshita is going to be one of the stars of the next generation in baseball, and I'll get him for Rikkyo University. Players at his level are what the Big 6 needs to stay on top."

"Ah," Notsuka sighs. "But will the Big 6 stay on top, now that the game is going professional? Or will it just fade away? Everything changes so fast nowadays."

"Not on your life," replies Kanuma, proud graduate of a Big 6 school. "A hundred years from now, Big 6 will still be lighting up the field at Jingū Stadium."

The hands on the wall clock point to 10:20 p.m. Kanuma stands up and gets ready to cross the road to Taipei Station and catch the G3 overnight to Kaohsiung.

Notsuka stands up with him. "I'll walk with you – It's just across the street."

"Much obliged."

Side by side, the two men walk out of the cafe and toward the station.

1. Last Train

Taipei Rail's Taipei-Shinten Line, the city's only commercial rail line, runs between Banka and Shinten, a distance of around 10 kilometers, and is (along with the Tamsui Line) Greater Taipei's most important public transit line. Its main interchange is Taipei Banka, where it shares a station with the Ministry of Taiwan Railway's West Coast Line.

October 31, 11:40 p.m.: a train with only two cars pulls slowly into Taipei Banka, the last stop on the Shinten Line. It is the last train of the night, and is concluding a journey that began at 11:15 p.m. at Gunyakusho-mae Station, the other end of the line.

The few remaining passengers disembark. The engineer on duty waits for them to leave before walking out of the driver's cab and through the cars for his final inspection.

In the second car he sees a passenger still sitting in the last row: a man, head lowered, apparently fast asleep. As he draws closer, he notices an open one-liter bottle of Hakutsuru Sake in the man's right hand.

Another drunk, the engineer thinks. *I can't go more than a few days without a drunk passenger. At least this one hasn't puked on his seat – it'll save me the trouble of cleaning up after him.*

He walks up next to the man. "We've arrived at the last stop, sir," he whispers in Japanese. "Please exit the train." When the man doesn't respond, the engineer switches to Taiwanese, raising his voice and shaking the man's shoulder, but still nothing.

The engineer starts to get a bad feeling about his unresponsive passenger. He studies the man's face. After a moment's hesitation, he puts a hand under the man's nose to see if he's breathing.

There is no breath, nothing but a faint whiff of almonds.

The engineer has never seen a dead person before. He runs out onto the platform in a panic and shouts for his coworkers: "Emergency! Call the police!"

Taipei Banka Station falls within the jurisdiction of the Taipei South Police Department, and patrolmen from Shintomi-chō Station quickly arrive on the scene. After pronouncing the man dead, they call for officers from the Criminal Investigation Department and begin the search for eyewitnesses. As it happens, two of the man's fellow passengers are still waiting to be picked up at the station, and agree to assist the police in their inquiries.

One of the other passengers says he had been sitting near the door. He hadn't noticed the dead man, but is sure that the man hadn't boarded after he got on at Keibi Station. Another passenger says he saw the man sitting in the back row after he got on at Kotei-chō Station and walked to the back of the car to find a seat, but assumed he was asleep.

According to both passengers, the man didn't move or do anything to draw their attention. Both are pretty sure no one approached him.

Detectives Kitagawa Hidetaka and Li Shan-Hai of the Taipei South Police Department's Criminal Investigation Department are the officers on duty, so they catch the case. They hurry to the scene upon being notified, just after midnight.

The two men joined the police force at the same time, though Li Shan-Hai has two years on Kitagawa and considerably more in the way of investigative skills. Kitagawa, however, has already made Inspector, while Li is still a sergeant.

No native Taiwanese has ever been promoted to the rank of Inspector, as Li's superiors have told him, and Li is not particularly bothered by this. He knows how the world works: natives are natives, Japanese are Japanese, and that is that.

In any case, Li has nothing against his partner Kitagawa; he's even fond of him. The Shikoku-born Kitagawa has a straightforward personality, a strong sense of justice, and an unwillingness to bow to the hypocritical demands of the world. The two of them treat one another as equals, and Kitagawa has never looked down on Li for being Taiwanese. Quite the opposite, in fact: Li takes the lead in their investigations, with Kitagawa, deferring to Li's professionalism as an investigator, serving as more of an assistant.

Once Li and Kitagawa arrive in the train car, a patrolman from the local station comes over to make a report: Male, deceased, found by engineer on duty at 11:42 p.m.; absence of livor mortis indicates time of death within the past two hours; cause of death presumed to be the potassium cyanide mixed in with his sake.

Also, a search of the dead man has turned up a monthly Taipei Rail pass, according to which he was probably Chen Chin-Shui, of 27 Shinten Road, Wenshan District, and a paper bag in his coat containing five 100-yen notes.

"Who would carry five hundred yen around with them?" blurts Kitagawa, who makes 35 yen a month and has hardly ever seen so much cash in one place.

Going by the other passengers' statements, the dead man probably got on the train before Keibi Station. The station nearest to the home address on his rail pass was Kōgakkō-mae Station. There are no station attendants there, so passengers boarding at Kōgakkō-mae have to show the engineer their tickets or buy one directly – but the engineer on duty didn't see the dead man get on there.


BOOKS FROM TAIWAN

鬼地方
GHOST TOWN

Kevin Chen
陳思宏

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Kevin Chen began his artistic career as a cinema actor, starring in the Taiwanese and German films *Ghosted*, *Kung Bao Huhn*, and *Global Player*. Now based in Germany, he is a staff writer for *Performing Arts Reviews* magazine. He's published several novels and short story collections, including *Attitude, Flowers from Fingernails, Ghosts by Torchlight*, the essay collection *Rebellious Berlin, Three Ways to Get Rid of Allergies* and other titles.

*** 2020 Golden Tripod Award**

*** 2020 Taiwan Literature Award (Grand Prize)**

Sharp Objects *meets Flannery O'Connor in Garcia Marquez's Macondo – or rather its Taiwanese equivalent – in this bestselling literary tour-de-force.*

Yongjing, a small town in central Taiwan and whose name means "Eternal Peace", is anything but. It is the birthplace of Chen Tien-Hong – youngest of seven siblings and result of parents who desperately wanted a son but instead got only daughters. Yet he turns out to be gay, so of course he had to run away.

The story begins many years later, when Chen has just been released from prison for killing his boyfriend in Berlin. He is about to return to Yongjing, now a poor and desolate place. With his parents gone, sisters married (to wrong guys), mad, or dead, there is really nothing left for him here. So why is he coming back? What happened more than a decade ago that tore this happy family apart? More importantly, why did Chen kill his German boyfriend?

Told in a myriad of voices – both living and dead – and moving through time with deceptive ease, *Ghost Town* weaves a mesmerizing web of family secrets and countryside superstitions, the search for identity and clash of cultures.

Kevin Chen's first novel in twelve years is a sumptuous read, an irresistible fusion of Gothic family saga, bildungsroman, and magical realist mystery.

GHOST TOWN

By Kevin Chen
Translated by Darryl Sterk

Written for my hometown, a non-existent Yongjing

1. The First Row of Townhouses

"Where are you from?"

That was the first question T asked him. T gave him a lot: a German passport, a new home, a chance to flee, and a lot of questions. Right from the start, T liked to ask questions. What's your home like? How many brothers and sisters do you have? How hot does it get in the summertime? Are there cicadas? What about snakes? What do the trees look like? What are they called? Are there any rivers? What about canals? When is the rainy season? Are there ever any floods? Is the soil fertile? What all gets planted? Why can't I go to Taiwan with you to attend your father's funeral? Why go home? Why not go home?

The question marks caught on his hair and nicked his skin. T's questions were hard to answer, so he didn't. He dodged, or lied, until his made-up biography was full of holes and contradictions, like a badly written novel. And so he tried to write one. The first chapter opened with a table on which a few objects had been placed: one gun, two knives, and three diaries. The gun would have to be fired in a subsequent chapter, the knives could be used to dismember and flay, and the diaries should solve the riddle at the heart of the story. But the novel of his life was a total mess. He wrote and wrote and forgot about the gun, the knives, and the diaries. Instead, he obsessed over an assortment of trash that was strewn on the table and littered his narrative with irrelevant clues, like posters pasted up on a factory wall, a pair of bright red shorts, and a face with a plastic bag over it. When a person is rotten, his novel will be rotten, too, and full of holes.

He was a guy who was all holes from head to toe, holes he stuffed with everything he didn't want to talk about – all the incidents that had made a mess of his memory and which he claimed to have forgotten. When the holes ripped, as they did from time to time, sundry stories would come tumbling out.

How could he tell those stories? Or write them?

Unable to tell them, he could only keep writing: I come from a small town.

His home, Yongjing, was a small town in central Taiwan. It was first settled by people from Guangdong Province in China early in the nineteenth century. They built their settlement, a main street with homesteads around it, on level wasteland. The land around town was soon traversed by artificial waterways that probably resembled the "Kanäle" that T talked about. The oldest of these "canals", many of which were mere "ditches", had drawn the muddy waters of the Zhuoshui River, the longest in the country, since the eighteenth century, for farmers to irrigate their fields with. Early on, there were brawls between immigrants from different parts of Guangdong, as well as never-ending disasters, both conflagrations and floods. No wonder the first settlers of the town he grew up in called the place Yongjing. It was an expression of their aspiration for eternal (*yong*) peace (*jing*).

The terrain around Yongjing was flat, but gazing East you could see green hills and mountains in the distance. Gawping West, you couldn't see or even hear the Zhuoshui River, but the old-timers used to say that if you walked West you'd eventually hit the

Taiwan Strait. Few did. The inhabitants were farmers who seldom left this patch of prairie. They never went mountain climbing, and never saw the sea. The soil retained moisture well and could be called fertile. The local produce included flowers, betel leaf, and rice. After several centuries of settlement, it still looked like a farming village. The barns and homes were low-slung, single-story buildings. Several of the old-fashioned three-wing compounds were declared national heritage sites, but not many tourists made the trip. Prosperity hadn't arrived yet.

In the 1970s, a contractor came to Yongjing and obtained a piece of land to build a row of townhouses, the first in the township. Ten townhouses, three stories each. The project was supposed to be a prelude to prosperity for the town. When tall buildings start going up it means that a place is going to escape from poverty. At the time, many people had never seen buildings that high before, buildings with reinforced concrete, terrazzo floors, and flush toilets. He grew up in one of those townhouses. It was fifth from the left, his home. The sixth from the left used to be his eldest sister's house, but now it was sitting empty. The seventh was once a VHS video rental stop, but now the whole building was charred black. There was a "For Sale" 出售 sign on the balcony. The place had been "For Sale" for years. A few of the strokes in the second character 售 had fallen off, leaving a yawning "mouth" 口 that transformed "For Sale" into "Way Out." The telephone number on the bottom of the sign was too mottled to make out.

He stood looking at the sign, lost in thought. After being incarcerated for many years, he could really use a way out. Today he'd actually come back here. He knew better than anyone else that this place could never be a way out, not for him. Could that mottled "Way Out" sign lead him all the way back, for instance, to those bright red shorts?

His eldest sister was the only one who stayed. She now lived in the fifth house from the left, his old home.

The small town was also a ghost town to him.

A "ghost town" is deserted. His hometown was indeed out of the way, remote from civilization. Nobody had heard of it before. When Taiwan's economy ran wild in the 1970s, Yongjing didn't keep up with the pace of development. There was a brain drain. When young people like him left the countryside they didn't come back. They forgot the place, even forgot what it was called. They left behind an aging generation that could never leave. Originally an aspiration, the name has become a curse. Intended to signify Eternal Peace, Yongjing had come to mean Always Quiet. It was really, really quiet.

The summer he got out, there was a drought in central Taiwan. The roads were furnaces in the afternoon. He wouldn't need to fire up the gas stove – he could fry eggs, stir-fry rice, or simmer congee right on the road. It'd been so many years, but everything matched his memory of the place. Certainly the weather did. Boy was it hot! The afternoon heat could slow the second hand of the clock. The trees took an afternoon snooze, the wind died down. If you held your breath and listened you could hear the earth snore, the thick, heavy sound of hibernation. Until the next rain the land would refuse to wake up. When he experienced this kind of weather as a boy, he would find a tree and fall into a deep sleep under it. The crowing cock, the throbbing cicada, the squealing pig, the hissing snake, the baaing sheep – nothing could wake him. After he grew up, he often suffered from insomnia. In prison the scarcest commodity is noise. You can't hear the rain fall or the wind blow. The falling leaves are inaudible. He told the prison doctor it was too quiet, how was he supposed to get to sleep? Would medication help? He even considered asking if there were a pill that let you hear the rain. Back home, whenever the rain struck the iron roof sheeting, playing a bright, brassy, percussive symphony. If he heard it, he could fall asleep for sure.

He came back because he really wanted to hear the sound of the rain.

What he heard now wasn't the sound of the rain but the clatter of a sewing machine.

That was his eldest sister.

As her feet worked the treadle, the television beside her showed a midday soap opera: the nasty mother-in-law had just slapped her poor daughter-in-law on the cheek. Chickens clucked, electric fans whirred. He heard the faint sound of firecrackers from the next neighborhood. He hadn't slept in quite a few days. He'd taken quite a few connecting

flights. His head was so fuzzy he didn't know quite where he was, but the sound of the sewing machine was unmistakable. He'd really come home to this godforsaken place, this ghost town.

Ghost towns are deserted, but where are the ghosts? Are there any?

There were a lot of ghosts in the countryside, living in people's oral accounts. Folks used to tell him never to go near the clump of bamboo out in front of the townhouse. There was a female ghost lurking in there, a poor daughter-in-law who was driven out of her husband's home after her chastity was compromised. She walked into the bamboo and hanged herself from a branch. She had haunted the grove ever since, lying in wait for young men to seduce. When the dogs howled at the moon, they were "blowing the dog conch" according to the Taiwanese idiom, meaning that the beasts had seen a ghost. So go to sleep, Mother would say, and don't open your eyes; if you do, you'll see something you shouldn't. Even if you see it you can't say it. If you see it run away – try to outrun it if you can. The kids said the most ghosts were to be found in the willow trees that line the irrigation channels. Don't touch the leaves, kids used to say, or you'll get mixed up with a ghostly maiden. You're certain to get zero on every test, and the only way out of the mess would be to tie the knot. His friends said that the maidens in the willows were lonely old spinsters waiting for some unlucky sod to come marry them. There was another ghost in an irrigation channel, a beautiful lady who was abused by a Japanese soldier. She jumped in a well and was rescued, but then got raped by the doctor she was taken to. In the end she drowned herself in the Zhuoshui River, but instead of being washed out to sea, she got stuck in the irrigation network, then floated all the way to Yongjing, where she settled down. The kids said that the moss along the waterline was fresh green blood from her ghostly body. The channel reeked so bad because she lived in it. As for the mushrooms budding all over the banks, don't touch them, let alone eat them, those are her nipples. Touching one will bring you bad luck. If you eat one, your guts will turn into a haunted house. You'll die, blood spraying from your pupils, within a week. If you see a red envelope on the road, don't go anywhere near it. It contains the eight characters of that lady ghost's birth, the secret to her destiny. If you pick it up hoping to find money inside, you'll have to take her to wife.

Later on, there was even a lady ghost from his own family. She ran around disheveled, yelling her head off, until she drowned in an irrigation ditch.

When he was a kid, if a pet cat or dog died of old age, then you "hung the cat in a tree" or "threw the dog in the stream". One time Mom rode her scooter with him on the back and a pet dog in his arms. When they got to the irrigation ditch, he was supposed to toss it in. Afraid of the water ghost, he cried and cried. His mom told him to hurry up. Here, the ditch was actually a slough, clogged with dead dogs and hogs, rotten watermelons, old scooters, even a betel nut stand. Everything stank in the hot sun. A million flies celebrated, enjoying an all-you-can-eat feast. He made out the putrid carcass of the neighbor's dog, Yeller. Crying, he refused to toss their dog in. He said he wanted to bury it and erect a grave marker. Mother grabbed it out of his arms and threw it into the dead water with a splash. The flies scattered, then returned to buzz in his ear as if to say thanks. They hadn't finished with the rotten meat and here they'd been served fresh.

How was he to tell T? That this was the kind of ghastly place that he was from?

How was he to tell T about his absurd upbringing? Five elder sisters, one elder brother, a father who never talked, and a mother who never shut up. A snake-killing next door neighbor, a guy named Nut who wore tight red shorts, irrigation ditches, his sister's wedding, a sacred bishopwood tree, a mansion called the White House, a hippopotamus, the Eternal Prosperity Pool, a secret basement, a starfruit orchard, the Lady at the Foot of the Wall, the Tomorrow Bookstore, and a silver water cistern.

In jail he often dreamed about Nut and about the dog cemetery behind T's family home. When T was young, he raised three dogs, which he buried one by one in the back yard. On each wooden grave marker

he pasted a picture. That was the kind of dog burial he had fantasized about growing up in Taiwan. He'd finally seen it in Germany. He also dreamed about the slough Mother threw the dog into, but he didn't see a shadow of a ghost in his dreams. Now that he was a grownup, he didn't believe in ghosts anymore. He was no longer afraid of them. Ghosts weren't scary, people were. The living were the cruelest, not the dead. In his dreams the irrigation ditches didn't stink. The lotus flowers bloomed, the mushrooms grew in dense mats, and from the warmth and the color of the willows and the silvergrass he could tell it was high summer. Drawing water from the ditch to irrigate the fields, his father was a white-toothed, dark-skinned youth, the most respectable eldest son in town. He smiled in the sun, teeth twinkling. The lotus flowers were all bashful in his presence.

Pity that he killed T.

If T were still around to ask, he would point to that row of townhouses and say: "This is where I'm from, this god-forsaken place, this ghost town. It's Ghost Festival today. The ghosts are coming. I've come back, too."

2. Stuffed in the Crack in the Floor

"What do I do?" His fourth sister, Barbie, hollered over the phone. "What do I do? What do I do? Mom's gone missing!"

Big Sister Beverly hung up the phone and collapsed on the floor. She knew it didn't matter whether she hung up or not; Barbie wouldn't even notice. She'd just keep hollering "Mom's gone missing!" into the receiver. The summer heat raged, without rain or cloud. The sun was scorching. But she couldn't bear to turn on the aircon; she forced herself to save on electricity because she hadn't gotten enough work done this month. The terrazzo floor was nice and cool. She pressed herself against those terrazzo tiles to give her sweaty, aggravated body some relief. A big crack had appeared in the floor during the big earthquake a few years back. She decided not to repair it. Everything breaks down in an old house, no matter what. The wall cancer – mold and peeling paint – had metastasized. Rats ran rampant. The pipes were often blocked. Sheet metal shingles had gotten blown off several times. She still remembered what the house looked like when it was brand new: off-white tiles on the exterior, snow-white paint on the inside walls, the freshly waxed terrazzo floor tiles bright and shiny. The tiles looked pebbly, like they would poke your feet, but actually they were smooth to walk on. The floor was like a slide.

She rolled over and eyeballed the crack. Today was Ghost Festival; that meant that the Ghost Gate lay wide open. Maybe if she looked into the crack she would be able to see Hell. It was right by her sewing machine, a sign of vitality. Every time she looked at the floor, the crack seemed to grow a bit bigger. She made a point of looking a few more times, hoping to see it widen. Maybe one day it'd get so wide she'd be able to stuff herself in. Then nobody would be able to find her. She remembered the day of the earthquake. Her husband Little Gao tore into the backyard without a glance at her. He grabbed a few potted orchids and ran out. She hadn't gotten up at all. She kept working at the sewing machine. She had a batch of garments to deliver the next day. The earthquake didn't matter. The walls could fall, the house could collapse, she didn't care. But please don't let the power go out. Because then the sewing machine will stop working and I won't be able to fulfill the order or get paid. She hadn't paid the bills that month. The only other thing she was hoping for was that her husband would keep running with those orchids all the way out of town, to disappear and never to return.

新神
NEW GODS

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Chiou Charng-Ting 邱常婷

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Chiou Charng-Ting earned her literary MFA from Dong Hwa University, and she is currently pursuing a PhD in children's literature in National Taitung University. Her work, which spans genre fiction, fantasy, children's literature, and upmarket literature, has won her the King Car Fantasy Prize and the Unitas New Author Award.

*** 2019 Openbook Award**

Five interconnected novellas tell the stories of new gods, born out of the confluence and conflict of cultures, subcultures, ethnicities, and faiths that mingle in Taiwan's unseen spaces.

Taiwan has long been a site of contact between wildly different peoples, missions, and beliefs. In *New Gods*, five interconnected novellas tell the stories of new deities and demons born out of the confluence and conflict of cultures, subcultures, ethnicities, and faiths that mingle in Taiwan's unseen spaces.

If, as Ezra Pound once said, "a god is a permanent state of mind", then these five tales are rituals for invoking a new spiritual consciousness. Elemental features of the natural landscape – fire, water, mountains, flora – seem to inhabit and inspire the characters amid their struggles. A young girl who lives amid fish tanks has an explosive encounter with a rebellious boy whose flesh has been mortified in Taoist rituals; a young hotel prostitute meets the "flower spirit" of her grandmother's stories in the gaps between reality and memory; a tribal police officer and a priest team up to find indigenous children lost in the mountains after a windstorm.

These five novellas, which can be read independently or all together, bring us into the presence of danger and change personified, and the spirits they conjure are prepared to lead us in a new direction.

NEW GODS

By Chiou Charng-Ting
Translated by Anna Brachtendorf

1. A Million Scars

A muffled explosion came from the far end of the asphalt road. She remembered it being both alarmingly quiet and alarmingly loud. In the ocean of darkness, the bright glow of streetlamps illuminated only the crowds standing beneath them. In this moment, when everyone was waiting in the darkness that was quiet yet loud, Alisha suddenly remembered that when she was young, she had to plug her ears with her index fingers. If she didn't, the sound of the approaching explosions and the pain in her body would make her wail.

What were they waiting for? Alisha's father, his countenance undisturbed, held onto her with a big, warm hand that restored her equanimity, and let her keep her gaze obediently fixed on the end of the road. A group of the strangest people Alisha had ever seen swarmed up the road towards her. She had forgotten most of the sounds, other than the explosions, as well as most of the body, other than the scars.

At the front of the group was a middle-aged man who was sweating profusely and bleeding from his shiny forehead. His gaze was steady but detached, like he were hypnotized or intoxicated. He intermittently hit his head with the cudgel he was holding, causing more fresh blood to flow.

He was closely followed by a man with an iron rod between his teeth. As he approached, Alisha realized that he wasn't biting the three-centimeter-wide rod; it had been driven straight through his cheeks. Strange enough, the holes in his cheeks were not bleeding. He winked at Alisha.

In Alisha's childhood memory, the man with the rod in his mouth had told her the trick to this: He rubbed his cheeks with vinegar every morning and evening, and over time the skin became numb.

How had he spoken to Alisha with an iron rod in his mouth? She had forgotten. She only remembered that this was the creepiest group she had ever seen. They were like deep sea fish, strange shapes moving through the darkness. From time to time, firecrackers exploded around them and more bleeding men with self-inflicted wounds roamed about at their own distinctive pace. Last in the group, surrounded by glittering sparks of fire and smoke that stung the nose, was a naked boy on a platform carried by four men. Even though the lower half of his face was wrapped in white cloth, it still glowed. The crowd was throwing firecrackers at him from all sides. His body was covered in scars, and his mouth glistened with fresh blood. Occasionally, he used branches from a banyan tree to bat away firecrackers. He looked different from the gods Alisha had seen before. Even though he was standing on the platform above, he seemed bored. Suddenly his glance met Alisha's, and the mouth under the white cloth grinned, or appeared to. But before she could see it clearly, he was already moving away, swaying back and forth on the platform.

The morning she left home, Alisha stayed awake for the entire ride on the nearly empty train. The passenger in the seat in front of her was reading a newspaper article about the latest developments in the case of the Dong Yu ship incident. Curiously, she peeked through the gap between the seats. A few years ago, when she was still a little girl, she vaguely remembered having boarded a boat and setting sail in

the night just after a typhoon had passed.

The landscape outside the window flew by, and the Fuxing high-speed train they boarded in Taitung going north vibrated violently. Mai had fallen asleep with his head leaned against Alisha's shoulder, but Alisha could feel his muscles stiffening, and she saw that the screen of the phone in his pocket kept lighting up. Mai's dad was definitely looking for him. The man had hidden all the family's money in his son's bank account, so when he lost at gambling, he could just throw up his hands and claim to have fallen into poverty. Mai simply withdrew the huge sum of money and stuffed it into his empty backpack. When they departed, their hometown was engulfed in morning light like a golden fire.

Where would they go next? How far would they be able to go? She hadn't thought that far ahead by the time they left, and now Alisha felt helpless. As morning light poured in through the train window, Mai woke up and blinked. As if he had suddenly made a decision, he said: "How about we go to Yilan?"

"Yilan?"

"Yeah, have you ever been to Yilan?"

"No." Alisha felt embarrassed. Her fingers held the hem of her dress tightly, wrinkling it in her hands.

"There are hot springs in Yilan, in Jiaoxi, let's go to Jiaoxi. You like fish, and there are fish in the hot springs there that kiss your feet." While talking Mai took a packet of Mineshine milk tea out of his backpack, pierced the top with the straw and sucked for a long time.

Mai was three years older than Alisha, but when they hung out together, Alisha felt like a mother, or at least she saw Mai's existence and spirit in a way that felt old. Only if he entered "that" world, Mai would change.

It was a long journey. They covered their legs with their thin coats, under which their hands were clasped tightly together. Watching the morning sunlight filter through the clouds onto the ocean – the shining ocean, untouched and azure blue – they didn't say a word, and they could almost hear each other's heartbeats.

From the start of their friendship until now, Mai didn't seem to have changed. His dyed blond hair, the "swish swish" sound when he sucked on the straw of an empty Mineshine milk tea packet, and the dark skin were all utterly familiar to Alisha. Alisha often left home to see Mai. The adults in the neighborhood all said that he was ruining her – a small tragedy that often happened in small towns. "Well…look at what happened with her dad….", "After all, the kid has seen that kind of thing before…." They often added a sentence or two, wanting to seem like they knew more. Alisha hadn't seen Dad in a long time. She lived quietly in the old house with only her grandparents. They left the house at 6:00 a.m. to work in the fields up on the mountains and came back in the evening. Back at home, they listened to the radio instead of watching TV. The old people seemed like a giant tableau of dolls, and Alisha understood that this feeling was mutual. To her grandparents, Alisha was also like a doll, only useful for reminding them that they had once had a good-for-nothing son.

One day, Alisha wandered around the city carrying a fishing net. Following memories of being with Dad, she walked through the street where they had seen that strange parade, and then she saw Mai by a temple.

Mai was playing with bang snaps coated in white powder, which were popular with kids from elementary school to middle school. There was nothing unusual about it, it was just the kind of annoying thing kids did. However, there was something unspeakably mysterious about Mai that drew Alisha in, just like the moon pulls the ocean tides. The motion with which Mai threw the bang snaps was unexpectedly graceful, and Alisha saw potential in it.

A snap exploded on the ground and sparks glittered like small white flowers. Mai saw Alisha and rudely gestured for her to go away. Alisha's thin, ugly knees trembled. The sound of the explosion and the light were incredible. The sparks weren't only around Mai's hands and on the ground, but moved as if they had a consciousness of their own. It was like during the parade of that strange group that night when the sparks of fire had bloomed on the skin of the naked boy, making him look absolutely extraordinary.

Mai began throwing bang snaps at Alisha's feet, making her cry and dance in the fire. Mai laughed. He stopped, waiting for Alisha to run away, but she didn't. Mai stopped smiling and whipped a bang snap onto Alisha's pale thigh, leaving a rosella-flower-shaped mark, but still she didn't run away. Mai's eyes were so

focused, just like when he had been on the platform. His hands moved like passing clouds and flowing water, and dazzling light exploded all around them. Alisha's skin was scratched by the bang snaps and blood flowed. Alisha remembered that at the time, she had had a strange feeling in her heart.

In the summer when she was thirteen, during the summer vacation, when the chirr of the cicadas came and went in waves, the principal of Alisha's middle school gave a long speech warning students not to hang out with school dropouts. According to the principal, Mai, with his dyed blond hair, smoking habit, and penchant for drifting with his motorcycle on the melting asphalt, was a bad guy. Everyone who knew about it thought it was Mai's fault, but nobody would have ever dreamed that it was Alisha who had started it all.

During the few seconds when she was surrounded by the exploding bang snaps, an image from the end of the semester appeared in Alisha's mind. In her class was a very beautiful girl with big eyes which didn't even close fully when she was taking a nap. Because half a trembling eyeball was always showing, the boys teased her and called her "bugeyed goldfish". The girl was tall and had fair skin, and her calves were especially slender and beautiful. One day, nobody saw her during several lessons in a row. Later, before school was over, she was helped back into the classroom by another female friend. Alisha saw that her naked calves below her sport shorts were covered in red, bloody welts.

Allegedly, a female gang leader outside of school hadn't liked the bugeyed goldfish and had called her out for a lesson. She lay her chest on the table and cried silently, but Alisha couldn't look away from the legs covered in the artful cuts of the knife. Seeing the destruction of something beautiful gave her a nauseating, yet faintly exciting feeling.

The smoke gradually subsided. Alisha's eyes were full of tears, but she did not avoid Mai's inquisitive gaze.

The next second, the boy opened his mouth and laughed out loud. He put the last snap into his mouth and bit down on it like on a betel nut. His dark mouth suddenly lit up. Bleeding a little bit, he spat on the ground. After this, he walked into the temple. Inside the temple it was very hot, and a giant electric fan was circulating the air. An old man sat on a plastic chair, waiting for the gods to finish eating the fruit and snacks he had given as offerings. Alisha followed Mai to the break room of the temple staff. Mai took two packets of Mineshine milk tea from the refrigerator. He asked Alisha: what was her name, and where did she live? Which school did she go to?

"Thirteen, huh? Quite young." Soon after Mai and she had finished their drinks, he was called by an adult to do something. Alisha looked at Mai's naked back when he took off his shirt. His sweat had pooled into a river, reminding her of the heavy rain from a typhoon pouring from the mountains down to the ocean, which made her to feel cold.

Alisha also thought of fish and the wet. Next to the faucet on the wall she found her fishing net with the long handle, and she ran to the port to catch minnows.

When Dad was still around, he often took young Alisha to catch fusilier fish. They raised the fusilier fish in a three-foot tank and when they were grown, they killed and ate them. At that time, Dad was raising all kinds of different fish, except for regular fish that could be found in streams and rivers. He invested all his money in his hobby of raising ornamental fish. He especially loved ancient fish. In large and small fish tanks he raised ancient giant gourami, small dinosaur eel and gar fish. There was another kind of fish that looked like an insect. Seen from the bottom of the fish tank, it floated close to the water surface, gliding along with its fins open like it was ready to fly. Alisha thought it looked very beautiful and very strange. Dad had said that they are called ancient butterflies, or toothed butterfly fish, and that their physical form had not evolved for a long time. In the ocean, there were countless fish that looked stranger than them.

As time passed, Alisha gradually understood what Dad had meant. She wore her grandma's sun hat and sleeves, went to the river and the coast, and waved her small net through the water. Whenever some of Dad's

former fishing friends saw her, they were always happy to give Alisha a few small fish that she could use as bait. Among the fish she caught, there were indeed fish that were even more exotic than the ancient butterflies – just like the people here, who had all been raised to take strange shapes by the mountains and the sea.

Besides the three-foot tanks, the largest fish tank Dad had left was six feet long. They used to fill the drip box together with filter materials, white cotton, wool fleece, ceramic rings, quartz rings, coral bones.… Layer upon layer, stacked on top of the six-foot tank. She asked what the tank was made of, and Dad explained to her carefully: glass, very sturdy. There are more acrylic tanks in Japan because Japan often has earthquakes, but when regularly cleaning those huge acrylic fish tanks, their surface can easily be scratched, making it harder to see the fish in the tank.

The six-foot tank held only one Red Arowana. They had tried to raise stingrays in the tank at the same time, but those were difficult to care for and quickly died. Young Alisha spent a lot of time wandering around under the fish tank, which gave the Red Arowana a "drooping eye" and drove Dad to forbid her from getting under the tank. One day, taking advantage of the fact that Dad wasn't there, she lifted the aquarium cover and tried to look at the Red Arowana from above. For Alisha, this was a special experience. The giant, beautiful Red Arowana, always isolated behind the glass of the aquarium, suddenly became an object to be caught. Alisha was fascinated by this perspective, she even stretched out her hand to touch the fish's back fin.

Young Alisha fell and caused a small splash. Alisha had almost no memory of that time she fell into the water. She only remembered that time and light moved more and more slowly, and that the Red Arowana swam around surprisingly calm next to her, calm and aloof. The fish's body glowed under the light of the aquarium lamp, like a ghost, and its downward gaze gave Alisha the feeling that he was looking at her with disdain.

Out of the water, Dad laid Alisha flat on the ground. She breathed slowly, with water running from her eyes, nose and mouth. Alisha's sense of time came back, and with it the pain, burning like fire in her chest.

That was the first time Dad beat Alisha. He used a rattan cane – maybe it was split bamboo – to strike her body. The sound it made was very loud, and Alisha forgot whether she had cried or not. She only remembered that the whole time Dad was beating her, he was smiling a little bit, which made Alisha feel like this kind of thing was not a punishment.

How wonderful it would be if people could live under water. Alisha later thought: If people could be the same as what it is like under water, everything would be slow, and the sight of Dad leaving would also slow down.

The day Dad had left, Alisha was dreaming. She dreamed that Dad had a fish tank that was all black inside. He was raising butterflies in the tank, but it was actually an imitation of butterflies composed of many pieces of different creatures, some of which were highly poisonous. The butterflies' wings scattered light and shadow as they drifted silently through the black water. The poison killed an ancient giant gourami in the fish tank, but Dad said it didn't matter, that's how this kind of fish was raised and the fish carcass didn't need to be taken out. Every once in a while, Dad added new fish, and the new fish would soon die and become beautiful butterflies. He never took out the fish carcasses. Alisha did not dare look at the fish tank, thinking it was filled with disgusting fish corpses. She did not know what it looked like or what to do with it, so she only dared to glance at it from a distance.

Every time she looked at the black fish tank turning transparent in the sunlight, she saw the blurry but brilliant wings of a butterfly. When Alisha woke up, she happened to see Dad leaving home and walking into the sun, as if he were being eaten by the sunlight.

我所告訴你關於那座山的一切
THE MOUNTAIN I'D SHARE, WITH YOU

Liu Chen-Chun
劉宸君

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- **Publisher:** Spring Hill
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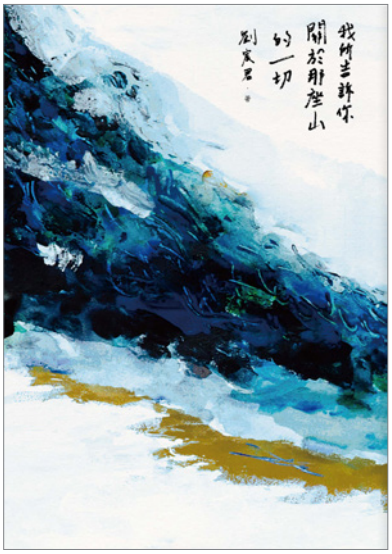
Born in Miaoli, Taiwan in 1998, Liu Chen-Chun set off for the Indian-Nepalese border on a mountaineering trip in the spring of 2017. While hiking near the Narchet Khola Valley, Liu and his partner were trapped in a cave by a blizzard. Liu died of exposure on their forty-fourth day of captivity, three days before the rescue team arrived.



*** 2019 Openbook Award**
*** 2019 Mirror Weekly Book of the Year**
*** 2020 Taiwan Literature Award**

Stories, poems, and the final travelogue of author Liu Chen-Chun, completed while the author was trapped on a mountainside in Nepal for forty-seven days, a catastrophe that would finally claim his life.

In 2017, author Liu Chen-Chun and his partner set out on what was supposed to be a grand adventure: a mountaineering trip to Nepal. Yet a sudden blizzard overtook them near the Narchet Khola Valley, trapping them in a mountain cave. During the 47 days it took for a rescue team to reach the pair, Liu battled the elements by putting pen to paper, writing poems and extending his travelogue as far as he could before exposure took his life.

The stories and poems within this collection bring us close to the emotional core of their many speakers, as they explore powerful themes of love, solitude, and pain. They invent and invoke memories that bring us back to images of home and family that cannot be recovered. Through the travelogue, Liu explores the meaning of writing and of literature as he understands it, as well as the nature and purpose of journeying into the wild.

The Mountain I'd Share, With You is a truly unique offering of a writing life abruptly cut short. It is more than the first-hand record of a disaster; it is a work of multiple, fragmented enlightenments through pain, recollection, and introspection.

THE MOUNTAIN I'D SHARE, WITH YOU

By Liu Chen-Chun
Translated by Jim Weldon

Chapter 1 On the Road

The Living are All on Their Way to the Same Place

January 22, 2017.

By Train: Sealdah → Budge Budge → Tollygunge → Kalighat (Kolkata People's Film Festival) → Tollygunge → B.B.D Bag → Kolkata → Lenin Sarani/Nirmal Chandra Dey Street

Notes:

1) Public transport on India's roads can almost all be hailed anywhere, and if it's going slowly enough you can just hop on.
2) The trains are in fact quite punctual.

Death; codes; bribery (exchange); poetry and gods (invisibility); returning.

Death: Arriving at the youth hostel, we found that the ground floor operated as a space for holding funerals, and one was just finishing. An old lady was being carried out, wrapped in a white shroud, her feet marked all over with white dots. I had not yet come to understand death in this city; what I had been feeling was its life. Automobiles, tuk-tuks, rickshaws, and bicycles dodge and weave with an exceptional unspoken dexterity, squeezing into each other's space all at the same time. People make a solemn attempt to cross the road with some enormous thing balanced on their head. Children play with a kite made out of a thin plastic bag amongst the traffic of vehicles and pedestrians, or are given a bath outside the shacks that line the roadside. Do they know that there are people dying in the city right at this very moment? The answer is in the negative; death is a secret intrigue the whole city colludes in. This allows us to offer the following interpretation: these living people are all on their way to the one and the same place.

Bribery: *Police*, onlookers.

Poetry and gods: The invisibility of the burden-bearer, frozen time, Sisyphus…

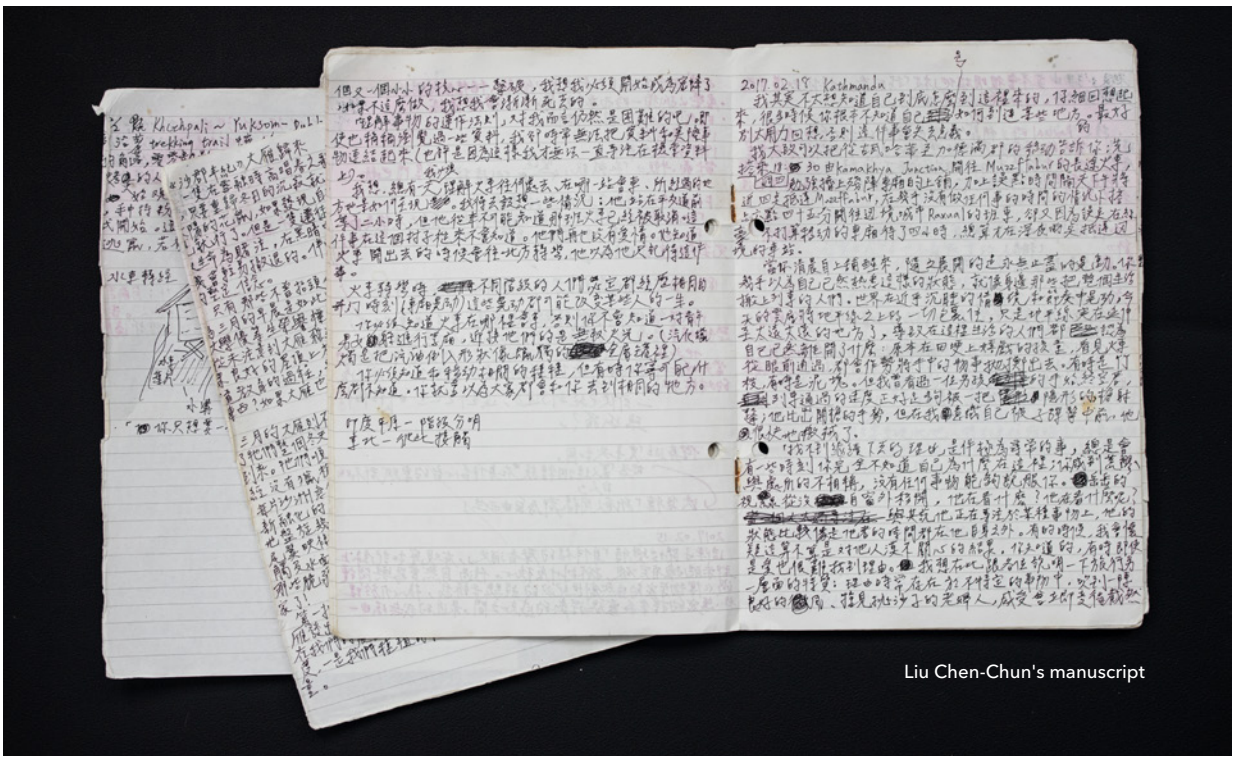
Codes: Yueh can understand the city's codes and how they operate / the gauge of the tracks, the vintage of the trolleybuses, the gap in height between platform and train, where the tracks might lead.

January 23, 2017.

Local train: Sealdah → Bongoan

Onboard the train it's another marketplace – an extension of the street but also a little world of its own formed by the narrow confines of the carriage.

They loudly praise their wares to us on the train, as if they were sharing some happy news they'd heard that morning, of victory in battle or a win at the cricket. They sometimes test out the hardness of their tires, sometimes hit the horn, sometimes the brakes; and the further they can spread the story of such brand-new discoveries the better. Sometimes we spot someone coming from a way off and it makes us imagine we



Liu Chen-Chun's manuscript

have the ability to control distance. There is another type of person I tend to appreciate even more: they never speak, stood nearby but at a distance, the calm solemnity of their demeanor making it impossible to guess how they appraise this thing called "distance"; distance is far too precious, and not a thing to be taken lightly.

The Mayor's Eyes

January 24, 2017.

Baikola stay

On first arriving in Baikola, we became intensely aware of the stares directed at us, especially because the people there all had big eyes with long lashes. It's exhausting to be stared at continually, so much so that it made us forget that we were also staring at them.

The eyes of the village mayor served as our camera lens. He showed us the things that made him proud, and at the same time showed us off to the other villagers. The most important thing as he saw it was the village shrine, then it was the national flag, then a portrait of "Netaji" Subhas Chandra Bose; often he would ask us to photograph what we were being shown. Our tour took us right round the whole village and we were asked to take full-length family portraits of every household. Some people casually showed us the things that made them proud, such as the man who insisted on being photographed together with his goats. There were moments when, as I pressed the shutter, I had the sudden sense of being engaged in serious business. The village mayor projected his pride onto the villagers; our appearance made the villagers respond to his aspirations.

Sometimes it felt to me like I was somehow doing harm. We visited schools and went to weddings. Could the alarm we caused everyone be considered a kind of harm?

On National Highway 12

January 25, 2017

Baikola → Duttapulia → Krishnanagar → Bahadurpur
Dhubulia → near Singhati

All you can do is keep moving. When you sling your kit over your shoulder, it's as if you're carrying yourself on your back too. Take a deep breath; hold it; go from this village on to that village.

January 26, 2017

Singhati → Palsanda

Although NH12 (India's National Highway Number Twelve) is not in the best of conditions, as you ride along you can still get a sense of the straightness and flatness of the open wilderness. After you put on your sunglasses, the plains of India take on a translucent amber hue; it was only now I was able to take a good long look at everything as it kept on slowing down.

It seems to me that I've not yet truly achieved a mode of living where the only way is forward, with no turning back. My vision is not yet honed to sufficient sharpness; I need to live on my bicycle for a few more days yet. When I reach the point where I can barely keep on pedaling, I imagine myself as a plaster idol that's not been painted yet, fixed in a single posture and cracking all over as I dry.

…

1. Guesswork and estimating: there are no locational signals along NH12, and when signs telling you distances or destinations do appear somewhere tucked away, you find you've lost the will to go read them. I own a cycling computer that can tell me my current speed, how far I've traveled on the day, and a total of all the distances I've ridden to date, but I've not got round to installing it on my bike, and even if I did, I don't imagine I'd ever look at it. All I can do is guess; I've given up making estimates of how far in kilometers or how long it will take until the next village. I've started wondering when I'll next see another tree like this one I'm just looking at now. Is there some connection between that old man who just went by on an old iron bike and this laden truck bearing down so heavy on the road? Humboldt experienced something similar on his travels through South America: the southern stars and the cactuses made him realize he was a long way from home, but all it took was the sound of a cowbell or cattle lowing for him to imagine himself back on the greensward at Schloss Tegel. I am forced to reappraise my conception of time and space; when you're traveling by bicycle you can draw connections between the various things you encounter and make from them a whole, but each of those things will pull you to a particular place, perhaps somewhere quite profound.

2. The wheel on Yueh's trailer finally died, the hub shattering completely, a loss of the center around which it turned. He was riding up ahead of me as usual that day; from behind I had a clear view of how his trailer was doing: the left wheel began leaning heavily, so it threw up even more dust, then shortly after it came to a dead halt, like some person who's simply given up on life. Yueh was squatting down trying to stick the hub back on when two local Indian men appeared as if from nowhere and, without ado or polite inquiry as to whether their assistance was required, set to work with tools helping Yueh fix the hub. After you've been in India a while, you often feel the locals can be extremely peremptory when it comes to "deciding" on your behalf. They will often "decide" whether or not you need help. This can sometimes be a very warm experience; after all, there are times when you won't even admit to yourself that you do in fact need help (like when Dahu opens the car door for Hafay in *The Man with the Compound Eyes*).

The great cloud of dust made by a herd of elephants on the move.

January 27, 2017

Umagur → Malda luggage

13141 Malda → NJP

The cities and countryside of the Indian plains are full of charm, the small towns along the highway make you nauseous.

The doors on either side of the baggage car can be slid open and left that way even when the train is going forwards. In motion, it is like being in a gigantic

box with picture windows.

As I recall it, Yueh went right over and tugged open the big heavy door and the wind came pouring in; the black line of the horizon had become very low now and seemed to shimmer. As darkness fell, many households would light small charcoal fires by their door and the little shops would turn on a small lightbulb hung in their front window (*details*: snacks hung up in strings, sweet treats in a variety of shapes and colors in the shop windows). These miniscule light sources seemed able to link together some larger thing they all shared a part in. What made this linking up important was not the way it turned the plain into one enormous network, but the pulling effect it had on all the faces.

If you've ever walked along a mountain path at night with a companion, there's bound to have been moments when you believed that wherever you could see light there must be smoke, and usually those are moments when all you can do is believe.

After Yueh opened the carriage door, he stayed stood there not changing posture.…

January 28, 2017

On National Highway Twelve through the wilderness: A Bengali man on a heavy old pushbike; an old man singing as he propels himself along in his wheelchair like rowing a boat; slow-plodding cattle kicking up the dust; young folk crammed together on the roof of a bus; all encounter my bicycle at different times. They appear not because that is where they are; things are scattered piecemeal and just signaling their existence to each other.

Every morning in the early hours, my bicycle and I head out into the haze together. The dust settles on the places I can see and those I can't. Horton tells me that Whoville is in great danger: We need to get the whole town to float down onto this flower, then climb to the highest mountaintop and put the town there. It will be a journey that requires more than courage and determination; there is a world in miniature in your hands and it needs handling with great care.

During this time I ride my bicycle across the Indian plains, the animated movie version of *Horton Hears a Who* I watched back in elementary school keeps coming to mind. One day, an elephant called Horton happens to hear a tiny voice coming from a speck of dust that's floating by. He picks a dandelion with his trunk, catches the dust speck on it and tries talking to the world that apparently exists within. There is indeed a town on the speck of dust, called Whoville. The mayor, who has ninety-six daughters, hears Horton and starts attempting to announce his existence to this voice from beyond.

A few days back, the mayor of Baikola invited us to stay an extra day in the village. When we met with the village mayor, I remembered that I'd learned the English word *mayor* from *Horton Hears a Who*. The mayor made a point of signaling to us to bring our phones (my phone has a "*Legalize Gay Marriage*" sticker on the back which I had not thought to remove, even though we were coming to India where same-sex sexual activity is not yet legal) before taking us for a walk around the whole village. My lens was the line of sight along which the mayor looked upon his village. Our movements followed his gaze as we stopped at the places he indicated and photographed each of the various things he was showing to us. At the same time, he was showing us off to the villagers.

The subjects we were most often asked to photograph were the shrines, the portraits of Subhas Chandra Bose, and the national flag. The first time we took a picture of a Bose portrait we were asked to offer flowers. The second time, in a scene pointed out for us by the mayor, a primary school employee can be seen at the bottom left working away with his head down, and the portrait hanging behind him, looking as if it might stretch on out forever. The mayor even took us to a kiln where they were baking bricks. He asked the workers to hold still for a moment while I lifted up my phone and took the picture quick as I could. Hard, hard work, carrying bricks.

說吧。記憶
SPEAK, MEMORY: A MEMOIR

© Liu Chia-Sheng

Ku De-Sha
顧德莎

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As a student, Ku De-Sha was a promising essayist and creative writer, editing her high school's literary magazine and winning national prizes for her writings. After entering the workplace, she stopped writing for a full four decades. In 2012 she picked up her pen once more, and restarted a creative process now imbued with the power of memory.

Celebrated author Ku De-Sha looks back on her life as a factory worker in 1960s Taiwan, when the first explosion of industrial prosperity – and the cycles of boom and bust that came with it – shaped an entire generation of people's lives. The prize-winning novelist takes us through that age and into her own private battles with cancer and with the endless obstacles of a writer's life.

Celebrated author Ku De-Sha grew up in the 1960s, an age of new industrial prosperity and precarity in Taiwan unlike anything the island had ever seen before. Taiwan's textile industry, which seemed to bloom overnight into a global force, did so on the backs of entire villages of factory workers and private subcontractors. Even after winning multiple literary prizes in her youth, Ku De-Sha eventually joined that workforce, until a fight with cancer and a return to writing liberated her from it.

Part I of *Speak, Memory* describes Ku's childhood in Chiayi and her transition after her father's death from a traditional Fujianese household to a village community. In Part II, she takes us inside the vast network of factories, household contractors, and working villages that provided the raw labor on which Taiwan's textile explosion was built, and her many years trying to be the best worker and wife she could be. Part III depicts an even more arduous struggle: Ku's decade-long battle with cancer that inspired her to return to the writing life.

Speak, Memory is a momentously important piece of literary nonfiction because it weaves Ku De-Sha's individual experiences into the broad cloth of a significant, collective memory. That integration of the singular and plural concern lends further resonance to her story of her return to life and an artistic self.

SPEAK, MEMORY: A MEMOIR

By Ku De-Sha
Translated by Eleanor Goodman

1. The Beginning of Memory

The Beginning of Memory

Does my memory begin with death? Or with a cozy dinner under dizzying lights?

I am standing beneath the ironwood trees in the Dongmen traffic roundabout, looking toward the door of my house several meters away. A coffin has been placed at the entrance, and a mountain of burning paper glints like gold. Not far from that glowing spot is a pedicab, the back of which is usually laden with sugarcane for my grandfather to sell. But now it sits empty.

I've probably been taken to the roundabout by an adult. People in Taiwan subscribe to many taboos when it comes to the rituals of celebration or mourning, so is it that my Chinese zodiac sign indicated that it was unlucky for me to get close? I catch glimpses of people moving inside the house, all clothed in the white robes of mourning: my father, mother, uncle, aunt. I don't see my sisters – why am I the only one standing there?

I'm probably feeling terribly lonely, so I decide to ignore the constraints the adults have put on me, and try to head back home. Between the roundabout and my house is a road. It's close to the East Market, and there's heavy bicycle traffic. I have to carefully calculate the speed of each bicycle, and take advantage of a break in the traffic to run across. I wait for a long time, until finally I see that I can make it across before a bicycle coming from the Nineteen Kung Temple can hit me. I start to dash across to my house.

Almost exactly at the moment I begin to run, I feel a sharp pain behind my eyes.

I crash into the handlebars of a pedicab and am knocked unconscious.

A Small Town Past the Tropic of Cancer

The Dongmen roundabout is a popular place to be on a summer night in Chiayi. After dinner, men in t-shirts sit in the doorways on benches, and women gather in small groups to chat and keep an eye on the kids running back and forth across the street. The streetlamps are bright on the roundabout, and when the occasional bicycle comes past, it always slows down so as not to hit a running child.

The man who pushes the taro ice cream cart has long since taken up his position, and is tossing dice rhythmically into a bowl. They clink as though sounding out some sort of code. Men wander over one by one and encircle his cart. They throw the dice, competing to calculate the highs and lows, and their delight at the wins and losses carries on their shouting. They appear around dusk: the glutinous rice cake maker from next door, the woodworker from my family, the neighbor from across the street who makes tables. They rush over to throw the dice into the big bowl and compare the results. Sometimes I see my mother in her clogs click back to the kitchen for a bowl when the men manage to win a big bowl of taro ice cream squares. My sisters and I sit on the benches that are abandoned now that the woodshop has closed for the night, filled with happiness as we eat the sweet ice cream. We don't get a big bowl every time; often there's a shallow container with one single square of ice cream that we

lick slowly, tasting the happiness that is in the process of melting away. Finally, we'll eat the hard outside layer of the square.

One evening, the woodworker wins half a bucket of taro ice cream squares, and my sisters and I run back to the house for two large soup bowls. The whole woodshop fills with a celebratory spirit as though it's New Years, and a rare smile crosses my grandmother's face.

In the autumn, when the sugarcane is harvested, the small towns past the Tropic of Cancer get oppressively hot, and sugarcane becomes the snack of choice in every house. My grandfather piles it on the back of his pedicab, and sells it from our doorstep. His target customers are those passing by the traffic circle on the way to the East Market, and when the market closes, our neighbors come to buy it too. During the day, Grandfather pares the sugarcane for housewives, and at night the local men use it to make wagers, while the circles of onlookers exclaim sympathetically.

"Sugarcane splitting" is Grandfather's specialty. He pulls out a stalk, names the price, and lets everyone examine it. If a man hands over some money, Grandfather gives the knife to him. The man stands on top of a wooden stool – about a third higher than an ancient-style stool, so as to be taller than the sugarcane – and demonstrates his strength by splitting the cane with the knife.

The buyer holds the sugarcane in one hand and the knife in the other, and, holding his breath in concentration, lets go of the cane and chops with the knife from top to bottom. As the onlookers gasp, a chunk of the cane is sheared off, and that is the prize.

I once saw an expert sugarcane-splitter who sent the knife straight down the middle and split it open. The whole cane was his. I've also seen someone give it his first go and fail to even chop off a chunk from the top.

I am often among the spectators. These performances in the noisy street at dusk make me happy, all these adults absorbed in the drama of stalk after stalk, distracted enough that no one bothers to smack the children.

In my memory, aside from the noisy evening and the sweet fragrance of the sugarcane, my grandfather is a dark shadow, and I cannot pick his voice out of the clamor.

Many years later, from my mother's stories and watching a certain TV show, I realized that the ancestors of the short, slender man may have come from Zhaoan in Fujian Province. After many tribulations, he appeared alone in what was once Taiwan's most economically dynamic region. He ended up marrying into his wife's family and taking their name. He and his tall, thin wife produced my father. Since I was always told as a child that I couldn't marry anyone surnamed Chang, I'm sure that we were "Liaos on the outside and Changs on the inside". In life, we were named Liao, but after death we would be named Chang: "Never forget as long as you live that Chang and Liao are one and the same."

My mother told me that Grandfather had come from Xiluo Township in Yunlin County. He'd somehow made his way to Chiayi and married into Grandmother's family. At my age, I wouldn't have known about the origins of the Chang-Liao double surname, and I also wouldn't have paid attention to whether Grandfather's ancestral tablet was inscribed with Chang or with Liao. But from a young age, we were told that we couldn't marry a Chang or a Chien. Perhaps because I was a girl, there was no need to explain "Liaos on the outside and Changs on the inside" to me; or perhaps my grandmother had long since forgotten the ancestral lesson.

Grandfather died, and my impressions of living with him for several years yield nothing more than the pedicab. He may have hugged me once, even though I was already the second in a long line of Liao family "unprofitable goods" – namely, "damned girls". But given the kindness that comes with age, at some point he likely held me when I cried, although I cannot remember how he smelled or sounded as he comforted me.

Four Kids Peeing on a Roundabout

By the time I was born, the tree was already growing there.

On warm, humid afternoons after a rain, a group would surround the tree, and men would use bamboo poles to knock translucent black blobs, wet and soft

as clouds, from the bark. I heard the adults call them "wood ears", which made me very curious about what kind of tree would grow ears. Like the man who made candy figures under the tree – he would swing the kettle of hot caramel and produce General Guan Yu, female goddesses, roosters, rabbits.… I would watch it all, fascinated his world of temptations.

Three hundred years ago, the city had four gates. The East Gate near our house had long since been destroyed in an earthquake, and the city gates remained only in the memories of those from my great-grandfather's generation. The traffic circle, by contrast, was like an invisible boundary drawn by adults, and to leave its edges was risky. None of us would cross the barrier unless led by someone.

Aside from the tree that grew ears, there were ironwood trees, royal poincianas, a red telephone box, and two air-raid shelters. In the middle of it all was a round pond, and in the center of the pond was a tall tower with four peeing children. Twenty-four hours a day, those kids peed (water) into the pond. The pond held fish, tadpoles, and water striders.

While the adults worked, the children who lived near the roundabout would gather under the poinciana trees to play "milk caps", or buy a piece of candy from the peddler under the fig tree. The peddler would hand over a needle, and you could etch the shape of a key onto the piece of candy. If you finished the etching, you could exchange it for a bigger candy figurine.

I often sat underneath the irontrees, sweeping the withered pine needles aside to clear a spot to draw butterflies, birds, fish, and children.

We kids were usually left to our own devices when the adults were busy. I would run wild by myself on the roundabout, sometimes chasing after the older kids from next door. The older girls would teach the younger girls how to collect red petals that had fallen to the earth, and make butterflies from four petals and two calyxes. The boys would use the hardened poinciana tree pods as swords, and divide into two groups that would attack each other. Sometimes we were soldiers on the Long March, led eastward off the roundabout by the older kids.

The fig tree sprouted wood ears, as well as a suspended horn, which occasionally let out a few yelps. When that happened, the whole island nation was reminded: war still awaits, and if the bugle sounds, we must all be ready to counterattack.

The loudspeakers transmitted a simple melody which the boys gave lyrics to: "a little black cat, without pants". All the girls would laugh uncomfortably when we heard it. "Little black cat" meant a pretty girl.

I wasn't allowed to go too far. Most of the time I crouched under irontree by the entrance to the air-raid shelter, poking the mimosa plants so they would close up their leaves, or playing with the purple amaranth flowers. More often, I'd look for a flat rock with which to brush pictures in the hardened mud. Or I'd collect discarded popsicle sticks, and draw random lines underneath the irontree. From there I could see my house and the people moving around inside the woodshop. And when my mother called for me, I'd be able to hear her.

Often I'd make a square grid, and draw a flower or a butterfly or some other object in each box. Sometimes I'd watch how the candy peddler created his goddesses. He could draw expertly. He'd boil his kettle of caramel into golden bubbles, lift it up, and pour the syrup onto a metal plate. Then in a few moments he would have a beauty with a long flowing gown and her hair coiled into tall buns, or maybe a thickly feathered rooster.

Sometimes under the ironwood tree, I'd snap off a needle and break off the nodes one by one. One end of the needle was concave, and the other convex; the glutinous rice cake maker said that the concave ends were female and the convex ends were male. So we would use the needles to determine who would play first in our games. We'd break off all the nodes on a needle, and if the last one remaining was convex, the boys would go first, and if it was concave, the girls would go first.

Not only was I a girl, but I was the second daughter. My older sister was born more than five hundred days before me. Her gender disappointed my grandmother, but at least she was the first granddaughter. A lot of people comforted my grandmother, saying: an older

sister can take care of her younger siblings. But when I was born, the whole family was disappointed. My grandmother had to look after me while my mother was busy running the household, and I was called a "useless child". When I cried because my diaper was wet, or I was hungry, or I was tired, I was always impatiently set on the bed or put into my cradle and ignored.

My heart began its intense demand for love, and my body would start to pant in response. On cold mornings, when the mimosa plants were draped in white frost, my mother would carry my little sister, two years younger than I, to the water pump by the main door to get water to wash the clothing. I would be put into a bouncing chair and set out in the roundabout by myself to cry. My overwhelmed mother would constantly yell at me to be quiet. I trust that at times, she cried a few silent tears. When she scolded me, she was actually blaming someone else in the family.

When my asthma acted up in the autumn and I was stuck in bed watching people walk outside the window, in the summer silently crouching in the roundabout, or watching my distant house that rang with the sound of sawing, time felt slow and rhythmical. A lot of things appeared before I had the power to understand them.

2. A Better Wife Than My Mother

Migratory Birds

In 2008, Y invited me to tea. It was cold on Elephant Mountain, and I wore a wool sweater. He recognized it, pointed to a small decoration on it and smiled. It was left over from an order he'd made from us many years ago. The color was slightly off, but only someone with expertise would be able to tell.

He said that his kids had already taken over his food import company. He still traveled a lot, but this year he'd refurbished his house and was planning to settle down: "I can't keep it up."

He said several times: "Thank goodness I moved fast back then." From the first wave of textile quotas sent out under a different name with unusual prices, to a circuitous route to opening up a factory on mainland China, to pulling out of China ten years later and moving everything to Vietnam and then to Canada, he'd run fast enough to keep a bit ahead of the danger. Now he had a little extra in his pocket, enough not to have to worry about the basics.

He was Hakka, and at that time there were many Hakka working in knitted textiles. When my boss, colleagues, and business partners met, they would immediately start speaking Hakka, and with their amused *chuo* (right) and *wu chuo* (not right), I slowly came to understand their good will and guidance. I gradually grew accustomed to them speaking their own language around me, and all my concern faded.

When Y's factory had just been built, we helped him set up an accounting system. I created forms for everything, from warehouse management to salary calculation, for him to have printed out. It wasn't that I was particularly skilled, I just had a bit of experience under my belt, and I knew that designing those management forms would later come in handy in dealing effectively with the tax bureau. Back then things hadn't yet become digital, and it was easy to commit fraud. It was also easy to slip up and get caught.

When orders flooded Y's factory, I did help him save a little money in taxes – all legally. And when our subcontracting factory was in financial trouble, Y helped us out.

He moved operations to the mainland early on, and the factory I had with C limped on for a few years before closing.

I was a migratory bird who headed north, landing with disheartened wings in a strange place, not knowing when I'd be able to fly south again.

Most likely, when I got on the express train heading to Taipei, God had already prepared my homework for me. They arranged checkpoints to test my intelligence, and at every checkpoint, there was a secret code that would have released me from danger. But I couldn't read the faint code, and waded deeper and deeper into the water.

直探匠心：
李乾朗剖繪台灣經典古建築
HEART OF THE CRAFTSMAN: SECTION DRAWINGS OF CLASSICAL

Lee Chian-Lang
李乾朗

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Born in 1949, Lee Chian-Lang found himself fascinated by classical Chinese architecture as an undergraduate at Chinese Cultural University in Taipei. He teaches archeological preservation at National Taiwan University of Arts and popular art at National Taipei University. He has written multiple books on Taiwanese architecture covering multiple periods in the nation's history.

TAIWANESE ARCHITECTURE

Examine the finest works of Taiwanese architecture from literally every angle with master architect Lee Chian-Lang, whose book shows off the unique splendor of indigenous, dynastic, and colonial Taiwanese architecture.

The homes we build say more about us than simply how much stuff we have to store; building styles reflect cultural values, religious tenets, and our relationship to our environment. Taiwan's architectural landscape is among the most diverse in southeast Asia, because the country has occupied a crucial position at the crossroads of maritime trade routes since humans began to sail. Master architect and urban planner Lee Chian-Liang is here to show off the unique splendor of indigenous, dynastic, and colonial Taiwanese architecture from literally every angle.

Heart of the Craftsman takes an in-depth look at thirty-five different buildings of vastly different styles located all across Taiwan. A marvelous hand draughtsman, Lee offers full-color representations of a Portuguese castle, indigenous cave house complexes, aristocratic mansions, imperial-era temples and more. Each piece is presented from multiple angles, such as a "bird's eye view", a "bug's eye view", a "fish-eye view", and many others in order to highlight its special characteristics.

Lee supplements his beautifully-crafted images with detailed documentation and analysis of each building, in which he explains its history, its composition, its architectural pedigree, and its unique value. *Heart of the Craftsman* provides a wealth of information in a clear, easily understandable format that leaves readers with a broad understanding of what can sometimes feel like an intimidating subject. It gives us both the matter and the meaning of Taiwanese architecture.

HEART OF THE CRAFTSMAN: SECTION DRAWINGS OF CLASSICAL TAIWANESE ARCHITECTURE

By Lee Chian-Lang
Translated by Jack Hargreaves

Introduction to Classical Taiwanese Architecture

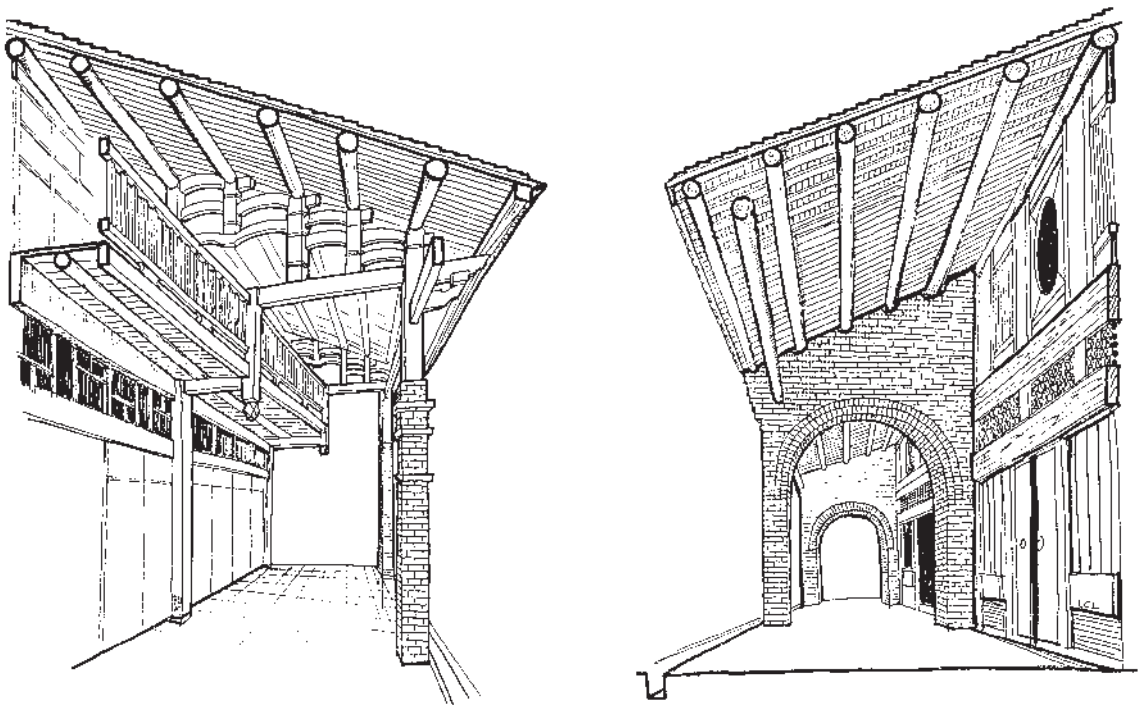
Few examples of classical architecture remain standing in Taiwan. Indigenous peoples have lived on these islands for over a thousand years, yet since their preferred building materials are perishable, no structures of theirs more than a hundred years old still remain. The oldest buildings left are the forts that the Dutch and Spanish constructed in their brief rules during the seventeenth century European Age of Discovery, like Fort Zeelandia and Chihkan Tower in Tainan, and Fort San Domingo in Tamsui District, New Taipei. Apart from these, temples and manor estates from the last two Chinese dynasties make up the most well-preserved buildings of historical note. Taiwan's central position at the crossroads of shipping routes between South and East Asia made it a meeting place for the cultures of East and West, which motivated its unique architectural diversity.

Adapted to the Elements: Resisting Earthquakes, Wind and Heat

A subtropical country, Taiwan suffers frequent earthquakes and typhoons. Securing their homes against seismic forces, gale-force winds, and high temperatures was the primary concern of its first settlers. Many indigenous peoples chose to construct semi-underground buildings in high mountain regions or along the coast. The Tao (Yami) people of Orchid Island, for example, build their homes partially underground and cover them with thatched roofs framed with bamboo poles and a long front slope, which protects against the weather and helps keep the interior cool. The mountain-dwelling Atayal also build their houses half-below grade, and with curved roofs to provide shelter from the wind and preserve heat. Han Taiwanese prefer deep eaves and roof overhangs on their homes, and build high pavilions to provide shady escapes from the summer heat. Arcades commonly line their streets, so pedestrians can navigate a town in comfort, and commercial activity can continue undisturbed by the elements. In Lukang, these "skyless" streets once kept harsh sunlight and heavy rains off traders and their customers while they talked business.

Airflow and ventilation are also central points of concern in Han building design. Generally, every room has two windows; some also have a window in the door to allow air to circulate. Notably, main rooms often have two windows and a door in their façade, as well as two additional vents beneath the eaves with the fine-sounding name of "phoenix-eye windows". Windows also flank both sides of an altar table, letting in a cool draft during torrid summer days.

Besides how best to suit the local climate, classical Taiwanese architectural design also takes into account the availability of local materials. Coastal cities made use of the ballast stones dumped by ships that passed through the Taiwan Strait, while mountain communities gathered local sandstone and shale. The Drekay and Paiwan peoples in southern Taiwan mostly use stone slabs for their buildings, though bamboo features widely. The "*ang moh* clay" imported to the country by the "red-headed" Dutch was actually a kind of cement made by mixing the lime from burnt oyster shells with sand and syrup.



/ Arcades line the streets to keep pedestrians out of the sun and rain.

A Tradition from the Mainland – Schools of Craftsmanship Galore

Han architectural styles derive from a tradition extending back thousands of years in mainland China. The timberwork techniques evident in certain extant buildings are much the same as those used in the Tang-Song period (618-1279), with many exacting methods practiced by local craftsmen resembling almost exactly those recorded in Li Mingzhong's *Methods of Construction*. Even in recent history, timber beams and pillars with mortise and tenon joints remain the framework of choice for larger residences and temples.

The use of *guatong* (lit. "melon barrel", ornamented, tiered short posts), *diaotong* (lit. "suspended barrel", festooned supporting columns beneath the cornice), and *dougong* (lit. "cap [and] block", interlocking wooden brackets that form decorative corbels) to reinforce the timber structures of these kinds of buildings showcases the range of distinct carpentry styles brought to Taiwan by schools of craftsmen from the Minnan and eastern Guangdong regions of China. Each school had its own approaches to roofing; the Quanzhou School opted for sparse rafters, while the Zhangzhou School preferred thick ridgepoles, and the Chaozhou School were masters of fine carvings. The Lungshan temples in Lukang and Bangka, the Baoan Temple in Taipei, and the Sanshan Guowang Temple in Tainan, respectively, exemplify their styles.

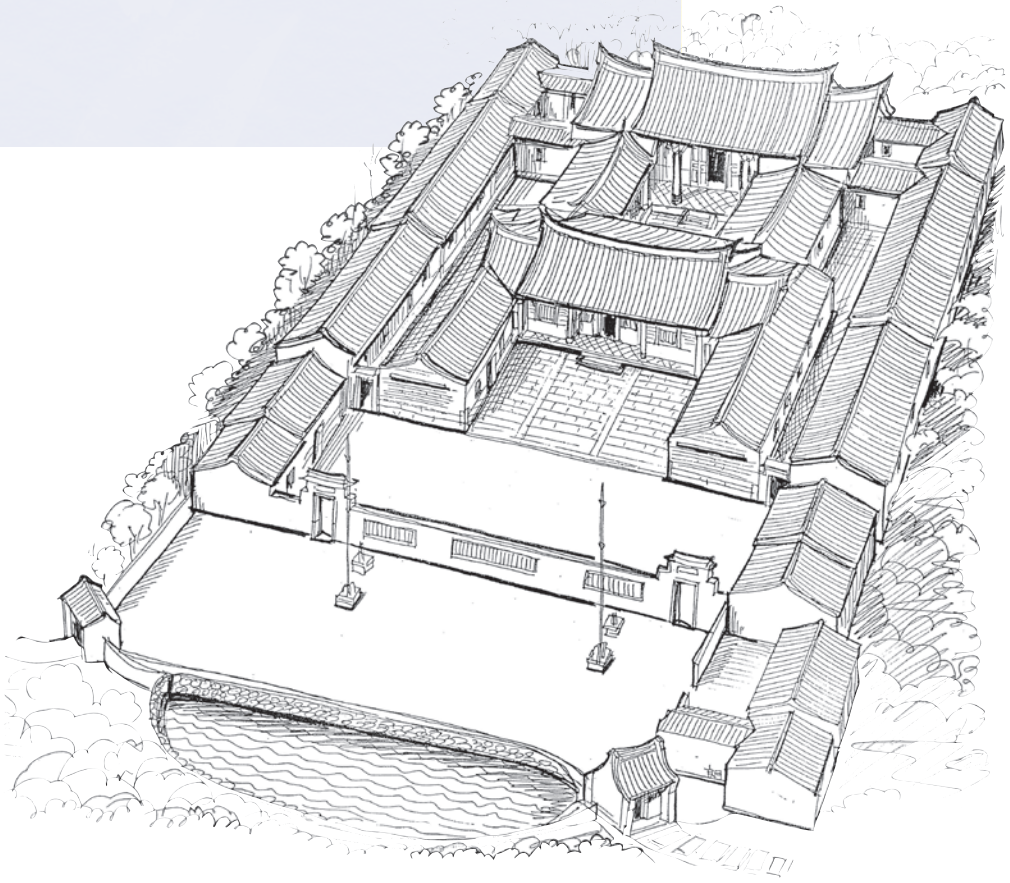
In the early twentieth century, native Taiwanese craftsmen rose to prominence. Chaotian Temple in Beigang and Chen Dexing Ancestral Hall in Taipei both boast *jiasichui* (lit. "false-four-overhang") roofs, or double-layered eaves on each of their corners, expertly combining complex structural timberwork with accomplished molding. The advent of *jiasichui* roofs in Taiwan marked a milestone in the development of local architecture. It redefined the temple for future generations of designers and ushered in a trend that has lasted since 1910.

There were also numerous other special techniques in use throughout that era. Adding a shorter roof beneath the main roof, for example, forms an "*ancuo*" (lit. dark space), which divides the interior space into main and secondary areas. Although such two-layered roofs are inferior to simple unitary roofs in terms of sturdiness and rain disposal, they can be

seen throughout Southeastern China. Ming dynasty designer Ji Cheng refers to them in his monograph *The Craft of Gardens* as "Drainage Rafters"; surely, they must be an age-old tradition. We can find them at Tainan Confucius Temple, Lukang Mazu Temple, and Tamsui Yinshan Temple.

Another key source of structural solidity besides large timber framework are brick walls. Lai-ching Hall, a two-story building on the site of the Lin Family Mansion and Garden in Banqiao, has both a sturdy timber structure and a thick brick wall at each corner for reinforcement. Tainan Confucius Temple's Ta-Cheng Memorial Gate also incorporates brickwork into its frame, with broad cross-shaped walls that buttress its two pillars and, thanks to the swallowtail ridges atop them which reach in each direction, make for both a stronger structure and a more stately aesthetic.

Examples of ingenious joinery can be found on other structures besides estate residences and temples. Yingxi Gate, the east gate in Hsinchu, and Chengen Gate, the north gate of Taipei's city walls, both feature exceptional timberwork. The former's value lies in how closely it matches its description in documents written when it was first built in 1827, which record the amount of timber and stone and the number of bricks and tiles used. Meanwhile, Chengen Gate is famous for its incredibly well-preserved interior, thanks in part to tight entry restrictions which have remained in place since its construction during the 1890s. It goes without saying, then, that the structures are invaluable artifacts for research on classical architecture.



/ Lee Teng-Fan's Residence in Daxi District, Taoyuan City is symmetrically arranged along a central axis, with the most important buildings and rooms being given the innermost position. Its design also ticks the box for "Water in front like a mirror," an important geomantic and aesthetic principle.

Confucianism and Taoism Mixed with Folk Belief

Confucian and Taoist thought lay at the core of architectural design in pre-modern Taiwan. Confucians attributed moral values to certain geographical features, like bodies of water and mountains, which they believed to facilitate self-reflection, self-cultivation, reverence for Heaven, emulation of ancestors, and respect for hierarchical order. The latter they represented architecturally with a symmetrical layout along a central axis, an idea based on the traditional "*zhao-mu*, left-right" system for parties attending an offering ceremony in an ancestral hall, which ensured attendees were positioned opposite each other according to order of descent (father opposite sons, the close opposite the distant, the older opposite the younger). This arrangement maintained the Central Mean, bringing balance and harmony to the space. Taiwanese Han homes have axial symmetry too, with the central, innermost position being the most important, and the outermost the least. A close look at Confucian temples and classic estates, like Lin An Tai Historical House, the Lin Family Mansion, and the Lee Family Estate in Luzhou, reveals a scrupulous symmetry in their layouts. The women within the inner spaces even had their homelives circumscribed by screens, behind which they went about their days.

Taoism's influence is also ubiquitous. Lao-tzu held that "great form is formless", and "to yield is to be preserved whole". These maxims communicate the Taoist principle of alignment with natural cycles, which we find reflected in Taiwanese architecture in a number of ways. "Mountains to screen the rear [and] water in front like a mirror" was one common standard for choosing a building's location; meanwhile, pathways through classic estates often wind and curve as they near the main building. The latter is especially true of estates arranged according to the *Yi Ching*'s eight trigrams, or *bagua*, which dictate that the prime orientation of the entrance relative to the main building is the *xun* position, or southeast (135°). Take as examples Xiaoyun Lyu's Mansion or Zhaixing Villa: the gateway arch of each estate sits not on the central axis, but in the southeast corner, thereby embodying the ancient ideal of blending the direct with the indirect. Channeling the flow of water around the front of a building derives from another Taoist precept, namely that "drawing water close keeps in *qi*".

As for Buddhist architecture, most temples in Taiwan are modeled after one or other "ancestral temple" in Fujian, many of which belong to the Linji sect of Chan Buddhism. The founding masters of Taiwanese Buddhism largely came from Fujian or Guangdong, where it was common for their schools of thought to blend Buddhist and Taoist ideas. During the Qing dynasty, the most popular kind of Buddhism was the domestic practice known as *Zhaijiao*. The architecture of these temples closely resembles local residents' homes, generally with a smaller, secondary building beside the main structure, and understated decoration as befits Chan philosophy. There are two chief branches of Chan Buddhism in China: the gradualist schools and the subitist schools. The former, which asserts enlightenment is attained through gradual cultivation, was popular in the north; the latter, which by contrast regarded enlightenment as attainable through instantaneous insight, predominated in the south. For example, Yongquan Monastery on Mount Gu in Fuzhou, Fujian belongs to the latter category. When monks of the southern Linji School traveled to Taiwan to proselytize, they often enshrined and worshipped local folk deities, like the "Holy Heavenly Mother" (Mazu) and "Holy Emperor Lord Guan" (Guan Yu, the God of War), which over time led to a convergence of Buddhist, Taoist, and folk iconography. The famous Chaotian Temple in Beigang was constructed in the early eighteenth century by the Linji School's Monk Shubi as an invitation for the god Mazu to extend her reach from Meizhou to Taiwan.

BOOKS FROM TAIWAN