Taiwan was under Japanese colonial rule for fifty years from 1895 to 1945, and was therefore greatly influenced by Japan in political, economic, and cultural matters. This influence continued to play a role in Taiwan’s development even after World War II and the end of formal Japanese rule. The “Imperial Subject Movement” (Kominka undō) promoted during Japanese colonial rule was a phenomenon that must be faced in order to understand this particular period of history in Taiwan. The Imperial Subject Literature it produced is a page in the history of Taiwan literature that cannot be denied. For this special issue entitled “Imperial Subject Literature in Taiwan,” we have selected and translated a number of representative works in the hope that they will help English readers to better understand this special phenomenon, the literary works it produced, and its place in the history of Taiwan literature.

The Imperial Subject Movement was a part of the assimilationist program of Japanization promoted by the Japanese government toward ethnic communities in the Japanese colonies, including the Ryukyu Islands, Taiwan, Korea, and Manchuria.

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The Japanization Movement did not begin immediately with the establishment of Japanese colonial rule, so we cannot draw a simple equal sign between colonial rule and the Imperial Subject Movement.

The Japanese Governor-General was the highest authority in colonial Taiwan. During the fifty years of occupation, there were nineteen governors-general who were appointed according to their previous experiences and career backgrounds. Generally speaking, the appointments of governors-general can be divided into three different periods: the initial period (1895–1919) of military control and consolidation, with seven governors-general who were military officers; the middle period (1919–1936) of social peace, with nine civilian officers as governors-general; and the later war-collaboration period (1936–1945), with three military officers as governors-general charged with implementing national policy during the war period.

The beginning of the Imperial Subject Movement in Taiwan is found in September 1936, when, in order to push forward the national war policy, Admiral Seizō Kobayashi (1877–1962) was appointed to replace the civilian Governor-General Kenzō Nagakawa (1875–1944). On July 7, 1937, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident occurred in China, and on September 10, the Governor-General of Taiwan under the Fumimaro Konoe Administration immediately launched the National Spiritual Mobilization campaign as a means of manipulating public opinion. Thus the Imperial Subject Movement was born.

During his tenure as Governor-General of Taiwan, Kobayashi maintained three ruling principles: Japanization, Industrialization, and the Southward Advance Policy. In practice, these principles included encouraging the adoption of Japanese names, promoting the “National Language Movement,” and regulating traditional temples. The aim was to reform religion, education, spiritual culture, and daily life, while boosting industry and developing military production. The objective was to establish

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Taiwan as a base for implementing the Southward Advance Policy, meaning the military conquest of Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands.

In April of 1941, the Imperial Subject Public Service Society (Kōmin hōkōkai) was established in order to carry the Imperial Subject Movement to another phase. This program was aimed at inducting all available manpower and material resources into the Japanese military system. In December of 1941, Japan unleashed the Greater East Asia War while simultaneously pushing the Imperial Subject Movement to its peak. Politically, the slogan “the eight corners of the world under one roof” (bakkō-ichiu) was used to promote the principle that “all the world is one family (under Japanese leadership).” Spiritually, the objective was to dismantle Taiwanese national consciousness. In daily life, Taiwanese people were encouraged to break away from their traditional ways of life, customs, and folk beliefs.

On June 2, 1942, the Army Special Volunteer System was implemented to encourage Taiwanese people to join the army volunteer corps with “sincerity” and “like-mindedness,” and thus contribute to a united war front. In November of 1943, the Conference on Taiwan Literature for the Decisive Battle was convened. With this, Taiwan entered the final decisive period of the war, which ended less than two years later in August of 1945 with Japan’s surrender. In short, the promotion of the Imperial Subject Movement in Taiwan lasted approximately nine years, from September 1936 to August 1945.

Imperial Subject Literature can be summarized by three ideas and themes: a) works that describe the spiritual journey to become an Imperial Subject or Japanese national; b) works that depict or eulogize the act of joining the army as a volunteer, and often predict victory in the war; c) works that fervently support the war with a call to support the Southward Advance Policy with increased production and unified effort. (“Comments on the so-called ‘Imperial Subject Literature,’” online course outline by Chen
Under Japanese rule in the beginning of the 1940s, Taiwan had two major literary periodicals. *Bungei Taiwan* [The Literary Art of Taiwan] was edited by Nishikawa Mitsuru (1908–1998) and had Japanese writers as its core contributors. It started to publish in January 1940. The other was *Taiwan bungaku* [Taiwan Literature], edited by Chang Wen-huan (1909–1978). This was founded in May 1941 with a core of contributors who were mainly Taiwanese writers. These two magazines were rivals and enjoyed a great reputation among their respective readerships. However, in November 1943, during the Conference on Taiwan Literature for the Decisive Battle, which took place at the Public Hall of Taihoku City, the two periodicals were merged. The intention was to suggest their cooperation in the war effort. In practice, this meant that the group of Taiwanese writers gathered together under *Taiwan bungaku* was dissolved and the two journals were united in a new publication under the auspices of the Taiwan Public Service Society. At the conference, Japanese writers Nishikawa Mitsuru and Hamada Hayao (1909–1973) proposed to give *Bungei Taiwan* to the Taiwan Literature Public Service Society, and they issued a statement to the effect that the society was officially in possession of the journal. This proposal was openly opposed by Huang Te-shih (1909–1999) and Yang K’uei (1905–1985), who were associated with *Taiwan bungaku*.

The atmosphere of the meeting was tense and confrontational. Chang Wen-huan, the well-respected editor of *Taiwan bungaku*, immediately issued what he described as “a defense with a deep feeling of remorse.” He resolutely stood up and asserted, “In Taiwan there isn’t any Non-Imperial Subject Literature. Anyone who writes Non-Imperial Subject Literature should be shot.” The dispute was thus settled. The result of the meeting was that the authorities finally achieved their desired goal. The so-called, “Wartime Position of Home Island Literature” was thereby established. (See Nakajima Toshio, “Taiwan kessen bungaku
In June of 1944, the Public Service Society appealed to the 1943 conference participants to respond to a campaign entitled “Taiwan Literature Circles Standing up United.” Thirteen members were selected and dispatched to various industrial production sites. The plan was for each member to spend one week at the production site. They were instructed that their mission was “not only to observe and listen, but to become involved at the sites so as to come into contact with the real feelings of the people and experience their labor.” The intention was that after staying at these sites for a week, living together with the workers day and night, the writers could use their observations and experiences as the subject matter for the stories they wrote. In that way, the writers could put into practice the main theme of the conference: Writers’ Collaboration in the War Effort—Ideas and Practical Methods. The thoughts and works of the dispatched writers were published in newspapers and periodicals over a period of six months. Eventually, the two volumes of An Anthology of Taiwan Literature for the Decisive Battle were published in December 1944 and January 1945, respectively. This highly concrete result was achieved only a year after the conference was convened.

An Anthology of Taiwan Literature for the Decisive Battle is thus an invaluable source of evidence concerning Imperial Subject Literature. Among the thirteen authors of the anthology, seven were Taiwanese writers and six were Japanese writers. They are listed here:

Hamada Hayao, “Roban” [Hearth Workers]
Takayama Bonseki, “Go anzen ni” [Watch for Safety]
Lung Ying-tsung, “Wakai umi” [Youthful Sea]
Nishikawa Mitsuru, “Sekitan, senkyo, dōjō” [Coal, Dock, and Arena]
Toshimura Min, “Chikujō no shō” [Essays on Fortification]
Chang Wen-huan, “Kumo no naka” [In the Clouds]
Kōno Yoshihiko, “Sakusei-kō” [Well Drillers]


Nishikawa Mitsuru, “Iku sanga” [How Many Mountains and Rivers]
Chou Chin-po, “Jokyō” [Assistant Instructor]
Yang K’uei, “Zōsan no kage ni” [Behind the Production Increase]
Niigaki Kōichi, “Senkyo” [Dock]
Yang Yun-p’ing, “Tetsudō shishū” [The Railway Poems]
Lü Ho-jo, “Fūtō suibi” [Where the Water Ends and the Wind Begins]

From the end of World War II in 1945 to the repeal of martial law in 1987, under the Chinese-oriented rule of the Nationalist government, the study of Taiwan literature under Japanese rule was considered a forbidden subject. However, the task of excavating Taiwanese writers and their works from the Japanese period actually started in the middle of the 1970s, when the debate over regional (xiangtu) literature arose. It was only after Guangfu-qian Taiwan wenxue quanji [Complete Works of Taiwan Literature before Retrocession] was published in July 1979 that people in Taiwan started to look directly at the writers of Imperial
Subject Literature and translate their works into Chinese. This process naturally raised questions about how to select and evaluate their works.

Chung Chao-cheng, the editor of the Complete Works of Taiwan Literature before Retrocession, characterized Imperial Subject Literature by saying, “To put it simply, it is the literature of being an obedient Japanese, and needless to say, it is a literature that has lost the fundamental ethno-national subject position of Taiwan.” (See “Ri-ju shiqi Taiwan wenxue de mangdian—dui ‘Huangmin wenxue de yige kaocha’” [A Blind Spot in Taiwan Literature under Japanese Occupation—An Examination of “Imperial Subject Literature.”] Published in United Daily, June 1, 1979, and quoted by Nakajima in “Huangmin zuojia de xingcheng—Zhou Jinbo” [Becoming of an Imperial Subject Writer—Chou Chin-po.]) The “Imperial Subject Literature” included in the Complete Works Collection was divided into four types as follows:

“Blind Type”: These writers believed the Japanese propaganda glorifying the empire, the imperial soldiers, and the holy war, and flattering the ruler. These writers’ Taiwanese national consciousness was very weak or nonexistent.

“Submissive Type”: These were writers of high repute in literary circles and were invited to participate in the Greater East Asia Conference. They were then dispatched to various places to give public talks about their personal experiences. Most writers belonged to this type.

“Self-conscious Type”: These writers were aware of the dangerous situation they were in, and yet didn’t forget their own national position as Taiwanese people. Yang K’uei is typical of this type.

“Order-defying Type”: These writers resolutely refused to follow the Japanese. An example is Wu Cho-liu, who secretly wrote Yaxiya de gu’er [Asia’s Orphan] during wartime under the close watch of the Japanese police.

In Taiwan wenxue shigang [An Outline History of
Taiwan Literature, Yeh Shih-t’ao proposes that Chou Chin-po, Wang Ch’ang-hsiung, and Ch’ên Huo-ch’üan are the three most representative writers of Imperial Subject Literature. Chou’s “Shiganhei” [The Volunteer] was published in Bungei T'aiwan, Vol. 2, No. 6, September 20, 1941. Ch’ên Huo-ch’üan’s “Michi” [The Path] was published in the same magazine, Vol. 6, No. 3, July 1, 1943, and Wang Ch’ang-hsiung’s “Honryū” [Strong Currents] was published in Taiwan bungaku, Vol. 3, No. 3, July 31, 1943. These three representative works were all written in response to the prevailing spirit of the times. It was at this point that the Imperial Subject Movement entered its second stage with the establishment of the Imperial Subject Public Service Society (April 1943).

Interestingly, in the Complete Works, Vol. 8, we find this statement regarding “The Purpose of Publication and Editorial Styles”: “Our praise and disapproval are implied through our selection of works. All works that have significant hallmarks of Imperial Subject have been excluded from our selection by way of silent and tolerant criticism.” The anthology included a Chinese translation of Wang Ch’ang-hsiung’s “Strong Currents” but excluded Ch’ên Huo-ch’üan’s “The Path” and Chou Chin-po’s “The Volunteer,” which were apparently considered “works that have significant hallmarks of Imperial Subject.”

Let’s first take a look at Chou Chin-po and his story, “The Volunteer.”

Chou Chin-po, born in 1920 in Keelung, was taken to Japan by his mother a year after his birth in order to join his father who was a student there. He returned to Taiwan at the age of four to receive an elementary education, then returned to Japan at age thirteen. After high school, he entered Nihon University to study dentistry. Upon graduation, he returned to Taiwan in April 1943 to succeed his father in running the Chôjû Dental Clinic. In September of that year, his story, “The Volunteer,” appeared in Bungei Taiwan, Vol. 2, No. 6. In August of 1943, he participated in the Second Greater East Asia Writers Conference and delivered
his article “Kōmin bungaku no juritsu” [The Establishment of Imperial Subject Literature]. He asserted, “As everyone knows, we Taiwanese can be taken as an epitome of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, with the Yamato people, Chinese people, and the Takasago (Formosan) people co-existing equally in co-prosperity under Imperial authority. As circumstances stand, the three areas are now unified, and march forward in cooperation to wage holy war.”

In an article about Taiwanese writers and the Greater East Asia Conference, Yeh Shih-t’ao states with reference to “The Volunteer,” “This is a piece of Imperial Subject Literature, and of Taiwan literature during the ‘decisive battle’ period, it is the only example of pure and unadulterated Imperial Subject Literature.” In his article on Taiwan literature written in Japanese during the 1940s, he asserts that “The Volunteer” by Chou Chin-po “is realistic testament to the success that the Japanese policy of enslavement had among a segment of ignorant young people. Chou attended the second Greater East Asia Writers Conference. His story demonstrates how fifty years of Japanese colonial rule destroyed the national consciousness of a certain portion of the population of Taiwan, and how successful the enslavement was. Perhaps this can be counted as a historical record spattered in blood.” (See Yeh Shih-t’ao, Zouxiang Taiwan wenxue [Moving toward Taiwan Literature], March 1990.)

In Ri-ju shiqi T'aiwan xiaoshuo yanjiu [The Study of Taiwan Fiction under Japanese Occupation], Hsu Chun-ya compares Chou Chin-po’s earlier works, “The Volunteer” and “Noma,” with his later works, “‘Monosashi’ no tanjō” [The Birth of a “Ruler”] and “Kyōshū” [Nostalgia]. Hsu maintains that, “From the perspective of Chou’s later works, we observe his perplexity resulting from his attempts to find a way to become an Imperial Subject. His uneasiness was far from what Nishikawa Mitsuru had wishfully and optimistically expected of him. Doesn’t the story ‘Nostalgia’ actually explain that the road to Imperial Subjecthood

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had come to an impasse and offered no way out? If we deny the author and his works merely on the basis of his first two stories, ranking him as the most representative author of the Imperial Subject Literature, doesn’t that mean that we deny the value of all of his later writing? Isn’t neglecting the changes that he went through unfair to Mr. Chou?”

In fact, when Chou Chin-po was born, Taiwan had been under Japanese rule for twenty-five years already, and thus he didn’t have anti-Japanese sentiment, nor did he have resistance to being Japanese. The order issued on June 29, 1942, to implement “The Army Special Volunteer System” was the theme dwelled upon in “The Volunteer.” The author grew up in Japan, was educated in Japan, studied at a Japanese university, and considered himself to be Japanese. This is indicated when the main character in the story, Meiki, says, “True, we’ve got to become Japanese…. Why do we have to become Japanese? That’s the question I ask first. I was in Japan. I grew up under the Japanese system and was educated in Japan. I cannot speak anything but Japanese. I can’t write letters unless I use Japanese kana. That means my life is meaningless unless I become Japanese.”

On the other hand, the mentality of the character Meiki shows the sense of superiority of the Taiwanese elite, as well as the belief that Taiwan lags behind culturally. There is genuine admiration of Japan, and the Taiwanese elite look forward to a time when the level of Taiwanese culture is raised to that of Japan. “Becoming Imperial Subjects” is part of the process of raising Taiwanese culture and the level of civilization generally. The author and the character in the story have been criticized for being weak in their consciousness of Taiwanese national identity, but as a colonial writer who subscribed to the colonial government’s policy and cooperated with the Imperial Subject Movement, the author had Taiwan’s interests at heart, and some critics have thus considered him to be someone who “loved Taiwan.”

As Nakajima has noted, Chou Chin-po’s “Noma” was an

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idealistic work that demonstrated the author’s assimilated ideas. It was written before he returned to Taiwan, and his values had been internalized to the extent that they were identical to those current in Japanese society. Based on his personal life experience, he looked at reality from the perspective of a Japanese person, and in the story he constructed cultural difference as a dichotomy between “modern Japan” and “traditional Taiwan,” and “progressive” and “backward” (“‘Huangmin zuojia’ de xingcheng” [How “Imperial Writers” Were Formed.])

Now let us take a look at Ch’en Huo-ch’üan and his representative work “The Path.”

Ch’en Huo-ch’üan (1908–1999) was born in Lukang, Changhua, and adopted the Japanese name of Takayama Bonseki during wartime. At the age of six, he learned classical Chinese at an old-style tutorial school. At ten, he entered the Second Public School in Lukang. In 1930, after graduating from Taihoku Municipal Industry School, he took a job at Taiwan Camphor Manufacturer, Inc. and later at the Monopoly Bureau of the Office of the Governor-General of Taiwan. In 1943, he published his first story “The Path” in Bungei Taiwan Vol. 6, No. 3. It was nominated for the Akutagawa Award, and earned praise from the Japanese writer Hayao Hamada as follows:

Have we ever seen a work that has so strongly and clearly described the heart-felt aspiration to become an Imperial Subject? Have we ever seen a work that so keenly pours out the agony of becoming an Imperial Subject? Moreover, have we ever had a work that has so forcefully expressed the process of an individual struggling with the agony of becoming an Imperial Subject? The path is the way leading to Japan…. Indeed this is unprecedented in Taiwan literature, and it can be said that this is an example of the unique Imperial Subject Literature of Taiwan at the moment. I believe from this we can foresee a new literature
of Taiwan. (Hayao Hamada, “Shōsetsu ‘Michi’” [The Path]. Bungei Taiwan, Vol. 6, No. 3, July 1943.)

This was the first time the term “Imperial Subject Literature” was used in a positive sense to characterize a work as ground-breaking and opening a new world for Taiwanese writers. However, in the postwar academic world of Taiwan, comments and reviews on Imperial Subject Literature in general have had a critical tone.

“The Path” by Ch’en Huo-ch’üan describes the way for Taiwanese people to transform themselves into Imperial Subjects. The story depicts the anguish and struggle that Seinan goes through as a Taiwanese person becoming an Imperial Subject and in his pursuit of the “Japanese spirit” and “Japanese national character.” The goal of the colonial government was to “educate” the Taiwanese to be “assimilated” and become Japanese. In the name of helping the Taiwanese experience “Japanese spirit,” the program of “assimilation education” required the Taiwanese to use the “National Language,” and to practice Japanese habits, expressions, and manners. It also encouraged them to write waka and haiku (traditional Japanese verse forms), and appreciate Japanese classic literature in order to raise their “cultural standard” and achieve true “civilization.” Education and training were both means that led to “the Imperial Way.” The objective was to transform the Taiwanese on the island into subjects of the Japanese nation in possession of the Soul of Japan (Yamato-damashi).

However, Lin Jui-ming, one of the editors of the Complete Works, raised concerns about “The Path,” saying, “Although Mr. Ch’en may have experienced anguish and struggle, and may even have exposed the hypocrisy of the slogan, ‘fair play for all concerned’ (isshi-dōjin), nevertheless, these things occupy only an insignificant portion of the entire story. The direction of the main theme is completely askew. There is only ‘Japanese spirit’ and ‘dying for the Emperor,’ and the anguish of the Taiwanese

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has been completely lost. Any contradictions have completely dissipated.” Lin’s criticism that an “insignificant portion” of the story is concerned with negative aspects of the assimilation process is perhaps overstated. In consideration of the environment of the times, the main objective of this story was not to resist or critique the wartime policies of the colonial government. Rather, the story indirectly exposes the suffering of the colonial Taiwanese in the face of unequal treatment, as well as depicting their struggles and helplessness as second-class citizens. It was not by any means intended to be completely laudatory.

Next, let’s look at Wang Ch’ang-hsiung and his masterpiece, “Strong Currents.”

Wang Ch’ang-hsiung (1916–2000) was born in Tanshui, Taipei County. After he graduated from public elementary school in 1929, he went to Tokyo to attend Ikubunkan Junior High School. He later returned to Taiwan to study at Taihoku Business and Industry Senior School. In 1935, he passed the entrance examination and registered in the Department of Literature, Nihon University. The following year, his father passed away and he transferred to the Department of Dentistry, eventually spending his life as a dentist.

“Strong Currents,” published in 1943 in *Taiwan bungaku*, Vol. 3, No. 3, was his masterpiece, and it established his reputation as a writer. The question of whether the story was a piece of Imperial Subject Literature written in response to the political situation of the time has been hotly debated. The story’s content deals with the difficult position of the Taiwanese and their inner struggles in trying to adjust to the Imperial Subject Movement. The image of the title “Strong Currents” suggests to the reader the turmoil of the times and the surging waves of the tide.

The main character of the story is Shū Shunsei, a Taiwanese high school teacher who lives a Japanized life. He has changed his name to Itō Shunsei and married a Japanese wife. He worships the Japanese spirit, and considers Taiwanese culture vulgar and
backward. He even feels ashamed that his parents are Taiwanese. This disgusts his student, Rin Hakunen. Rin believes that one can worship Japan, but it is unnecessary to feel contempt for one’s parents. He feels that one has to be a dignified Taiwanese in order to be a dignified Japanese. Rin is very averse to Itō Shunsei’s thinking and behavior, and often rebels against him. His character forms a strong contrast with Itō. The narrator is caught between the two. Like Itō, he has also studied in Japan and identifies with Japanese culture, longing for everything about the Japanese inland (naichi). However, the narrator cannot forsake his love for Taiwan, which is his birthplace. He firmly rejects Itō’s Imperialist mindset and lifestyle. Finding himself in this predicament, the narrator is unable to decide which alternative is right. Because he does not know what to do, the story ends with him fleeing: “I could not bear it anymore, and shouting out, ‘Damn it, damn it,’ I raced from the top of the hill to the bottom. Then like a child, I ran. When I stumbled, I got up and ran; when I slipped, I got up and ran; when I was confronted with the harshness of the wind, I ran even harder.”

Of the three representative stories discussed above, Wang Ch’ang-hsiung’s “Strong Currents” has already been translated and published in a special issue of this journal, “Taiwan Literature during the Period of Japanese Rule II,” No. 20, January 2007. Now, in this issue of the journal, we provide translations of the other two stories, “The Volunteer” and “The Path.” In addition, we have selected three stories related to this theme: “Noma” by Chou Chin-po, and two pieces by Lü Ho-jo: “Where the Water Ends and the Wind Begins” and “Clear Autumn.”

A common trope in Imperial Subject Literature is that of a Taiwanese intellectual who returns to his hometown after studying in Japan, only to discover that vast differences exist between Taiwan and Tokyo, hometown and Imperial capital, the Taiwanese (hontōjin, or “the inhabitants of this island”) and the inland Japanese, in cultural standards and the level of modern civilization.
These men wish to raise cultural standards, especially the level of education and hygienic conditions in Taiwan. The stories often depict the modern face of the colony as a way to justify the positive values of assimilation. Efforts are made to justify the cooperation of these characters with Japanese national policy, their devotion to public service, and even the sacrifices they make as volunteers during the war period.

We can see this basic trope in stories such as “Noma,” “Nostalgia,” “Clear Autumn,” and “Strong Currents.” Although the characters in Lü Ho-jo’s “Clear Autumn” support the Southward Advance Policy and affirm the virtue of joining the army to fight in South East Asia, in comparison to “The Volunteer” by Chou Chin-po, their support is much more reserved and implicit. “Where the Water Ends and the Wind Begins” by Lü Ho-jo was written in response to the proposal of the Information Division of the Taiwan Governor-General Office for writers to travel to production sites to record their experiences. This proposal was made at the 1943 Conference on Taiwan Literature for the Decisive Battle, as noted above. The author was dispatched to Shakei Farm in Taichū for one week and produced a short story based on his actual experience there. As declared in the preface to the Anthology of Taiwan Literature for the Decisive Battle, this type of work “aims to realistically portray Taiwan’s wartime preparations so as to enlighten the people on the island, while cultivating clear, fervid sentiments. The aim is to incite a vigorous attitude toward the future so that all may be transformed into sustenance that supports and boosts the morale of the production warriors.” Facing political pressure from the colonial government at that time, Lü Ho-jo was able to avoid disaster, and skillfully create a work of lasting literary quality that triumphs over political interference and transcends time and space. His creative art and integrity as a writer deserve our admiration.

All the translations in this issue are based on the original texts in Japanese. “Clear Autumn” and “The Path” are both
particularly long and challenging to translate. Our translation team included Lili Selden, Christopher Ahn, Faye Yuan Kleeman, Jon Reed, and Hiroaki Sato, as well as English editor Terence Russell, and copy-editor Fred Edwards. Their conscientious hard work and Dr. Selden’s timely assistance in the final stage of the editing process deserve our greatest appreciation. Editorial assistance from the Center for Taiwan Studies at UCSB, as well as cooperation and assistance from National Taiwan University Press have been essential for this issue to be published as planned. I would like to express my special gratitude to both of them for the assistance they provided.

It has been more than seven decades since the Imperial Subject Movement was launched in 1937. In the meantime, Taiwan has progressed through the democratization of the 1990s and become a pluralistic, democratic society. Today, in this very different time and social environment, divergent academic views can co-exist with mutual respect. As we evaluate Imperial Subject Literature and seek to judge the virtues of the authors of the time, we should cast aside political correctness, national position, and moral indictment in order to arrive at a more tolerant and understanding attitude toward this particular episode in the history of Taiwan literature. We hope that more works that can stand the test of time will be unearthed from the historical materials. That they have endured so long is itself testament to their quality and literary value. When we selected works for translation here, literary quality and representativeness were our main concerns. The objective is to provide students and the general reader with reliable texts for their research and enjoyment. On the other hand, Imperial Subject Literature of the Japanese colonial period, with all its complexity, provides rich research material for scholars of cultural studies and post-colonial studies. These works merit diverse interpretations and deserve further investigation, especially from the comparative perspective of colonial culture and modern society in East Asia. With the publication of this special issue, in
addition to our appreciation for the dedication and outstanding contributions of our translators, we hope that the works we have selected and translated by way of introducing “Imperial Subject Literature in Taiwan” will be read for their own literary value, and as representative works of the authors. We thus especially recommend these works to scholars and researchers in the field.