The historical ethnic division in Taiwan’s society has been between the Han people (Chinese, now the overwhelming majority) and the aborigines. The Han people themselves comprise two major groups: The Hoklo and the Hakka. There are four million Hakka in Taiwan, making up about one third of the total population. As the Hakka are the second largest ethnic group, their culture, of course, constitutes an important part of the cultural landscape of Taiwan. Particularly in literature, most writers of masterpiece novels are Hakka, a great source of pride for them. Since the 1980s, in the progression of Taiwan studies and the movement of “Return to the Mother Language” aiming at a multicultural society, scholarly attention has been directed to the study of Hakka language and culture, producing considerable research results. Hakka culture as reflected in literature, as well as the distinct characteristics of their customs, languages, religion, emigration history, life experiences, and creative styles, is all worthy of examination and translation to make it accessible to scholars abroad. Through these literary works interested readers will gain a better understanding of Taiwan’s society with its multicultural complex resulting from multiethnic and multilingual voices.

Except for the native aboriginal population, Taiwan is an immigrant society. The Han people are immigrants from Fujian and
Guangdong. According to the census conducted in 2001, the population of Taiwan is 22,350,000, with ninety-eight percent being Han Chinese. Beginning in the Song (960–1279) and Yuan (1234–1368) Dynasties, people from the mainland gradually immigrated to Taiwan, and increased at the end of the Ming Dynasty (mid-seventeenth century). Thus, most of Taiwan’s residents are Han Chinese immigrants from Mainland China in the last four hundred years. The early Han immigrants (generally called “Taiwanese”) comprise eighty-five percent of the immigrant population, of which the ratio between Hoklo (primarily from southern Fujian) and Hakka (mostly from Guangdong) is three to one. There are about two million (fifteen percent) so-called mainlanders or new immigrants who moved to Taiwan in 1949 with the Nationalist government—such as administrative personnel, military troops, and refugees. The aborigines are generally recognized as consisting of ten tribes and, according to the census of 2001, there are 413,519 of them, making up 1.85 percent of the total population of Taiwan. In short, Taiwan’s society is composed of four ethnic groups, which are, in order of their proportion in the total population, Hoklo, Hakka, new immigrants, and aborigines. Since the 1980s, Taiwan’s society has become more and more multiplex in politics, culture, and speech, and these four ethnic groups stand out as enduring links in the formation of Taiwan’s diversity.

Who are the Hakka people? They are generally recognized as originally the inhabitants of northern China, who are now widely distributed throughout southeastern China, in Taiwan and Hong Kong, and in Southeast Asia (see *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*). The English word “Hakka” comes from the Cantonese pronunciation of the Chinese characters “kejia,” which means “settlers in a strange land” or “sojourners.” According to historical documents, at the end of the West Jin Dynasty (early fourth century), a group of Han people from the Yellow River valley moved south of the Yangtze River to escape from the ravages of war. Again at the end of the Tang Dynasty (end of the ninth century) and the end of Southern Song (end of the thirteenth century), large numbers of people crossed the Yangtze River and moved to Jiangxi, Fujian, and Guangdong, where they were called “Hakka” in distinction from the original local residents. At
the conclusion of the seventeenth century, the Hakka continued the trend of immigration and sailed across the sea to Taiwan. In the *Zhuluo xianzhi* [Gazetteer of Zhuluo County (Chiayi County today)] published in 1717, the immigrants from Guangdong were called “ke” [guests] by the Hoklo. It has generally been maintained that the Hakka immigrated to Taiwan much later than the Hoklo, who went to Taiwan with Zheng Chenggong and expelled the Dutch in 1661. However, it is interesting to note that, as discovered by the German historian, Ludwig Riess, in his study of Dutch historical documents, most of the interpreters were the Hakka who had helped the Dutch communicate with the aborigines when they first arrived in Taiwan, and that the Dutch had also hired many Hakka laborers to cultivate the land. Therefore some Hakka immigration to Taiwan must actually have preceded the Hoklo immigration (see Ch’iu Yen-kuei and Wu Chung-chi, *Taiwan Kejia ditu* [The Map of Taiwan Hakka], p. 29).

As the Hakka people are a minority in Taiwan’s society, they are often referred to as “the invisible people” because they do not speak the Hakka dialect in public and they often try to conceal their ethnicity. On the other hand, the Hakka have a very strong sense of ethnic consciousness, considering themselves the successors of the central plains culture of China proper, and attaching importance to tradition, culture, ancestral home, maxims from ancient times, history, and the family heritage of part-time study and part-time farming as indications of their collective consciousness. These two traits—their ethnic reticence and ethnic pride—seem contradictory but, in fact, have proved to be effective ways to coalesce for economic survival as a minority historically in competition with the Hoklo. Professor Hsü Cheng-kuang aptly explains the reasons the Hakka strive to conceal or remain ambiguous about their ethnic identity:

(1) Geographically: In the immigration history of Taiwan, those from Guangdong came later, the population ratio was lower, and most of the available farming tracts were along the mountains or on the hill slopes, comparatively unfavorable for cultivation. They were in a disadvantageous economic position and inferior in competition with the Hoklo.

(2) Historically: In the major anti-government incidents during
the rule of the Qing Dynasty, particularly the Zhu Yigui Incident under the reign of Kangxi (1662–1722) and the Lin Shuangwen Incident under the reign of Qianlong (1736–1795), the Hakka assisted the Manchu government to put down the riots and made themselves the patriotic subjects of the regime. Later on repeated xiedou [group fighting with weapons] with the Hoklo, resulted in serious rupture between the groups and tension of inter-ethnic relations.

(3) Politically: To consolidate the regime, political leaders often resorted to ethnic confrontations and conflicts. “Yimin” [patriotic subjects] is a historical brand engraved upon the minds of the Hakka, or considered their “original sin,” therefore they chose to depend on the regime, identify themselves with other ethnic groups, or to conceal their Hakka identity to avoid any ethnic conflict.

(4) Socio-economically: Due to environmental differences in settlement areas, most of the Hakka depended on farming and agricultural work while most of the Hoklo dealt with business, trade, and industrial production, resulting in vast differences in financial resources and economic status. In the society of modern times, the Hakka have moved from the country to the city and, in order to adapt to urban life and industrialized society, have inevitably lost their ethnic consciousness and become assimilated.

(5) Languages and cultural policies: Both the Imperial Subject Movement near the end of Japanese rule and the essentially colonial “national language” education of the Nationalist government in Taiwan placed emphasis on the official language, rejected other native languages, and suppressed nativist culture. As a result, the Hakka language and traditional culture were diluted and were more difficult to transmit, and the ethnic consciousness was relatively diminished (see Preface to Paihuai yu zuqun he xianshi zhijian [Loitering between Ethnic Groups and Realities], 1991).

This analysis summarizes the unfavorable conditions for the development of Hakka language and culture, which alerted the Hakka to the crisis that their ethnic consciousness was falling apart. Thus the awakening movement for Hakka consciousness occurred
at the end of the 1980s. They responded to a cry from the populace to dissolve all the notorious residual institutions from the period of martial law, including the Return to the Mother Language Movement, and to establish democratic and fair political and economic systems, strive for legitimate rights for the Hakka, and pursue a sound ethnic relation and social order, so as to move toward an open and pluralistic society with understanding, harmony, and respect among the different ethnic groups.

We can see that the cultural characteristics of the Hakka are different from the Hoklo in every respect, including architecture, music, food, religious belief, customs, and gender-related roles in the family. It is particularly remarkable that in the traditional family concept of the Hakka, the male gender pursues success in scholarly honor and official position while the female takes charge and runs a household and, moreover, carries on the ideal family tradition of studying and farming. Hakka women have been expected to manage “three front ends and three rear ends” with respect to their work: “Stove in front and wok in rear” for cooking, “needle in front and thread in rear” for sewing, and “field in front and land in rear” for farming on the hills or fields. Since Hakka women usually worked in the fields, there was no common practice of foot-binding like that of the Hoklo, and thus people are impressed that Hakka women are hard-working but never complaining, and can stand the strain of labor and hardship. In its historical development, such a stereotyped image of Hakka women is perhaps no more than an exploitation of female labor, and in no way suggests that women have the same social and cultural status as men; in fact, the concept that men are superior to women also generally exists in traditional Hakka society.

On the other hand, the Hakka have a tradition of holding a high esteem for learning and literature. The adage “Farm when the sun shines and study when it rains” suggests the balance of physical and mental lifestyles the Hakka strive to achieve, and their appreciation of anything written can be discerned from the fact that Shengji-ting [Holy Writings Pavilions] exist only in Hakka communities. Paper with Chinese characters written on it should not be discarded or smeared casually but, instead, must be collected to be burned at a Shengji-ting or Jingzi-ting [Reverence of Writing...
Taiwan Literature Pavilion], which has been built for the sole purpose of burning written paper (see Ch’iu Yen-kuei and Wu Chung-chieh, *The Map of Taiwan Hakka*, p. 90). As the Hakka people assume that they carry on central China’s culture, they particularly respect the wise words and noble deeds of ancient sages and worthies, together with the intellectuals who love the classics and seek knowledge. As demonstrated in creative writings, Hakka writers’ achievements deserve special attention. Lai Ho, a Hakka who is revered as the father of the Taiwanese new literature, used the Hoklo dialect in his stories because no one in his family spoke Hakka any longer. He refers ruefully to this gap in his identity, as seen in the following lines of a poem:

> I belong to a Hakka family  
> But have forgotten my native tongue.  
> I grieve for my cherished ideals,  
> Ashamed to have lost sight of my origin.

Following Lai Ho, Hakka writers have come forth in every generation. The renowned Hakka authors of fiction include Wu Cho-liu, Lung Ying-tsung, Lü Ho-jo, Chung Li-ho, Lin Hai-yin, Chung Chao-cheng, Lee Chiao, Cheng Huan, Huang Chüan, Chung Tieh-min, Lin Po-yen, Wu Chin-fa, among others; and Chan Ping, Tu-Pan Fang-ko, Lin Wai, Mo Yu, Tseng Kuei-hai, Chiao T’ung, Li Yu-fang, Huang Heng-ch’iu, Chang Fang-tzu, among others in poetry; as well as many other talented writers of prose, folklore, translations, and historical reportage. As for the “great river fiction” based on the history of Taiwan, it is monopolized by Hakka writers, with such works as Wu Cho-liu’s *Yaxiya de guer* [Asia’s Orphan], *Wuhuaguo* [The Fig Tree], *Taiwan lien-giou* [Taiwanese Forsythia], Chung Chao-cheng’s *Taiwanren sanbuqu* [A Trilogy of Taiwanese], *Zhuoliu sanbuqu* [Turbid Currents Trilogy], and Lee Chiao’s *Hanye sanbuqu* [Wintry Night Trilogy] and *Maiyuan, 1947, maiyuan* [Bury Grievances, 1947, Buried Grievances]. Hakka writers’ achievements in this particular field fully reveal not only their unyielding spirit but also their deeply rooted passion for the land.

Nevertheless, from Hakka writings to writing Hakka, we are bound to ask: What is Hakka literature? Or, what are the main
characteristics of Hakka literature? This is a question many critics and scholars have explored. If Hakka literature means no more than literary works written by a Hakka writer, it does not mean much, because among the four elements of literature—author, reader, language used for expression, and literary world presented—the first three are not essential conditions; the most important element is the world and the spiritual features presented in a work, such that distinctive features of Hakka culture are represented. With this in mind, we have selected the critic P’eng Jui-chin’s article, which summarizes the distinctive features of Hakka writers’ works in three points: (1) an unyielding ethnic spirit reflected in Hakka writers’ literary activities, (2) an interpretation of life in terms of the relationship between man and the land, (3) a prominence of Hakka women, characterized as strong figures (see the article “Taiwan Kejia wenxue de tezhi” [Characteristics of Taiwan Hakka Writers and Their Works], p. 185).

However, in contemporary Taiwan society, it is getting more and more common for the Hakka ethnic group to cohabit and interact with other groups and, under no circumstance, can it cut itself off from the outside world; consequently it is hard to maintain any cultural characteristics purely distinctive of the Hakka, and even more difficult to expect Hakka literature to have unique characteristics. Nevertheless, as long as these writings reflect the life of the Hakka people and naturally preserve the customs, habits, religion, and linguistic characteristics, they are recognized as Hakka literature. With the reality that the Hakka language is gradually vanishing, the question remains: Is it possible to have a work of Hakka literature written completely in its mother language? This is why most Hakka writers make painstaking efforts to insert some Hakka expressions into their works in an attempt to preserve as much vitality in the old language as they can. In the pluralistic society of Taiwan today, local dialects—either Hakka or Hoklo—should be resources for creating Taiwan literature, which, in other words, should evolve from various ethnic languages and be developed by all ethnic writers in their creative explorations. As Professor P’eng’s conclusion suggests, “In the past sixty years there have never been Hakka writers who write under the banner of Hakka literature, and yet they have opened up a huge special province of
Hakka literature. The essence of this fact provides advocates of Hakka literature with plenty of food for thought, and deserves to be pondered upon by those concerned with Taiwan literature.” The Hakka writer Lee Chiao also maintains that “It is almost impossible to demand one to use the pure dialects of Hakka daily life to write fiction.” Therefore, he considers that promoting “Hakka literature” is only a process or measure to elevate the Hakka ethnic group by means of literature, and the purpose is “for Hakka people to attain a lofty realm of literature.” In other words, we proceed from “Hakka literature” or “literary Hakka,” and move toward “literary Taiwan”—there lies a beautiful world (see the critique “Literary Hakka, Hakka Literature,” p. 3). This view echoes what P’eng has pointed out: the vision of creating a new Taiwan literature with the common efforts of various ethnic groups.

Thus, the articles selected for this issue are directly or indirectly related to the Hakka, presenting an exploration of Hakka literature and culture. Since there is no precise definition of Hakka literature, for the selection of works we could only resort to the authors who have been generally recognized as Hakka writers. For poetry, in addition to the four poets Tseng Kuei-hai, Lin Wai, Huang Heng-ch’iu, and Mo Yu translated in this issue, we have published selections from other Hakka poets in our previous issues, such as Chan Ping, Tu-Pan Fang-ko, Li Yü-fang, and Chang Fang-tz’u. For fiction, most of the stories are selected from *Kejia wenxue jingxuan ji: xiaoshuo juan* [An Anthology of Hakka Literature, Fiction Volume], compiled by Lee Chiao, Hsü Su-lan, and Liu Hui-chen, published by Tianxia Wenhua, 2004, which provides a representative selection. Chung Chao-cheng’s “Kulou yu meiyou shuziban de zhong” [The Skull and the Faceless Clock], Lee Chiao’s “Amnesia Elixir,” Cheng Huan’s “Sheguo” [Snake Fruit], and Wu Chin-fa’s “Xiaoshide nanxing” [The Man Vanished] are all famous works and deserve our special recommendation to the reader. Lung Ying-tsung’s “Baku” [The Tapir] and Lü Ho-jo’s “Mokuren-ka” [The Magnolia] are originally written in Japanese and the translations, carefully rendered by our English co-editor from the original texts, is a precious contribution to the field. In the present situation without an exact definition of Hakka literature, except for a few poems, there is no fiction written in the pure
Hakka dialect to express the daily life of the Hakka people. The popular American writer James A. Michener (1907–1997) has a special niche in the history of “Hakka literature” because of his novel, *Hawaii* (1959). Michener’s *Tales of the South Pacific* won a Pulitzer Prize in 1947 and was made into the Broadway musical, *South Pacific* (1949), making him one of the most popular American writers of the post-World War II era. Most of his works are semi-documentary novels, each of which illustrates the history of a particular region, including the “great river fiction” about Africa, Israel, Poland, Mexico, the Caribbean, Alaska, Hawaii, Texas, and Maryland. *Hawaii* celebrates America’s fiftieth state and, with considerable space, portrays a legendary Hakka woman and her family history in Hawaii. With his technique of writing and his literary style, he describes the origin, history, culture, and ethnic features of the Hakka people, and became an unintended forerunner of Hakka literature. We hope our readers will enjoy reading the introductory article, “Hakka Women in Michener’s *Hawaii*” by Professor P’eng.

For the first time we are publishing a script written by Chung Chiao, who is a Hakka writer, poet, reportage writer, and theatre director. He is head of the Assignment Theatre Troupe, and has been devoted to the performance of experimental theatre and popular theatre in Taiwan for years. After the earthquake of September 21, 1999, he went deep into the disaster areas, including Shihkang in Taichung County, and founded the “Shihkang Mama Theatre Troupe” (see the brief introduction, p. 203). The script, “River in the Heart,” exemplifies the use of magical realism in the grassroots theatre of the oppressed in Taiwan. The translator, Ron Smith, is a Ph.D. candidate in the Drama Department at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and has had the invaluable experience of participating in the performance of the Assignment Theatre in Taiwan for years. He was assisted in this task by Kerry Chang, also a newcomer to us as a translator.

With the publication of this issue, the series will enter its ninth year, thanks to the labor and contribution of all our translators. Howard Gobblatt, Sylvia Li-chun Lin, John Balcom, Yingshih Hwang, and Sue Wiles are all master hands in the field and most dependable supporters of this journal. Professor John Crespi and Suefen Tsai are also familiar to our readers, and we are thankful to
their assistance in tackling the two difficult pieces for this issue again. Lee Chiao’s “Meng-po tang” [Amnesia Elixir], with many Buddhist terms and traditional lore, could only be handled by a master like Professor Howard Goldblatt, who skillfully brings it to life with an outstanding style. Some of the studies and critiques are very difficult to render because of the complex sentences and ambiguity of expressions in the original texts, and we appreciate the efforts and dedication of the translators. As editors, we have tried our best to make the translations more expressive and readable. During the early stages of preparation of this issue, we had the great fortune that Lee Chiao was visiting our campus under the “UCSB Taiwan Writers in Residence Program” and so, in addition to having the opportunity to listen to his lectures, we benefited from consultation with him about Hakka literature and culture and from his advice and suggestions as to the journal’s content. In short, without assistance from the authors and translators, we could not have completed this mission and, herewith, we express our deepest gratitude.