The Heart of “Native Soil”:
Cheng Ch’ing-wen’s *Three Legged Horse*

by

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I drove three hours outside of Taipei, to a rural village where I would find my junior college classmate, Lai Guolin. We had recently seen each other at a class reunion, which was a difficult experience because it had been twenty years since graduation, and it was the first time I had seen him. At the party, while everyone was re-introducing themselves and their current lives, I found out that he had gone back to his hometown and opened a woodcutting factory, specializing in manufacturing certain types of wood products.

The scale of his factory seemed quite large, spanning more than two hundred yards. It was established in front of a small store that sold the goods it produced. I went to that little store, my main goal being to find some wood-crafted horses. I had been collecting horses for more than a year, and already I had two thousand of varying sizes. Some were made of wood, others, of stone. That year was the year of the horse, and I was prepared to take advantage of the occasion as an opportunity to collect even more.

Guolin had already given me a look at a lot of woodcarvings. They were all incredibly well made, but perhaps this was because of my relationship with the manufacturer. While we were walking, we also surveyed the pieces, until suddenly, in the corner, there was one very special horse that brought tears to my eyes. That horse, unlike all the rest, had its head hanging down. It seemed like it was eating grass, but it also seemed like it wasn’t. Its face had a cloudy, dark expression that seemed very pained, yet, at the same time it seemed to be ashamed of something. I
have collected quite a lot of horses, but never had I seen that kind of expression. It was a type of art that I feared I would not find anywhere.

I took another careful look at what Guolin held in his hand, until I unexpectedly discovered that this particular horse had a crippled leg. This surprised me, and also gave rise to pity. Looking down at the top of the horse’s body, it seemed livelier than all the others. Its facial features definitely emphasized that characteristic. It absolutely could not be compared to any other works. It was plain, as in not brushed with lacquer. Plain to the extent that it had not even been passed over with sandpaper. Also, you could see the traces left by the engraving knife. From the perspective of its innocent eyes, you could speculate it was not a valued object. Lai Guolin saw me grab at the curio inside his hand, but would not release his grip. Instead, he told me this,

“This is a carving done by a strange person. He likes to carve these bizarre horses. Once, I went to his home to make a purchase from him. At that time he had not finished the number of horses I had requested, so he tried to add the bizarre horse to the order, but then, he said it could not be sold. He asked that we wait for him to send us the rest of the order, and then return the strange little horse back to him. He seemed to regard it as precious pocket change he had scoured the ground to find.”

“Do you have other things he carved in your store? I mean, more common horses?”

“I do, and this is it.” I followed his hand until it led me to the object. “What do you think?”
“This is quite strange. It’s as good as other carvings of his. Maybe he is making use of the same mold for all of them. However, when compared to others, its eyes are not the same. When you look at a common horse’s eyes, they face sideways, yet this horse looks forward. Also, its mane, tail and back legs are somehow different. Yet, you could not entirely compare this crippled horse with the others. Look, it is in motion, demonstrating the life of the horse. Moreover, it shows deep expression. It will show off the animal’s appearance, which is actually very difficult.”

“We maintain all his carved horses thoroughly. Though, we all say he is a very rotten person, even sandpaper does not wear him down. In order to control him properly, we restrict his wages.”

“Does he produce a lot of works?”

“I couldn’t really say. I see him piling dirty things together, but we do not really know what are the actual works and what are not. We are demanding, though our expectations are getting smaller and smaller. Before, we would go collect once a week from him, but now we just go every two or three weeks. There was even one month we could only go once. He is letting go of doing the work properly, and becoming a person who hides inside there, carving some incredibly strange things.”

“Is he really not selling them? I mean, the representations of the crippled horses?”

“I don’t know that either. Who can understand what the innermost desires of this strange man are?”
“Can you bring me to see him?”

“Go see him? To do what?”

“I want to take a look at the special things he has.”

“Special things?”

“You know, like the crippled horse you described. That type of bizarre thing.”

Lai Guolin brought me there on his scooter. Proceeding on a winding mountain road, it took us half an hour. Just as we proceeded to the top of the slope, we stopped for a bit. The high elevation made it possible to view some very beautiful scenery. We saw a low mountain with a small plateau, with approximately only ten, or twenty households dispersed among it. Some of the neighbors were separated by a considerable distance.

“That is Shenpu village.” Lai Guolin said, as he started up the scooter again and we proceeded down the mountain slope. In a very simple and crude place, a small mound of earth had been built up, but there were parts of it that had already eroded away. Inside the structure, the straw insulation had already begun to loosen, until it looked like an inchworm raising up and coming out of the ground. This small bit of earth was the side of a house. The main hall was also made of a small mound of earth, but it was only actually mud at the surface layer. There was ash spread upon the stone set in the mud, making the place seem almost completely new.
The door was halfway closed. Lai Guolin gently pushed on it a little and started to enter. I then smelled the fragrance of lumber. Because the sunlight was shining intensely outside, suddenly entering the dim room made it so that my eyes could not see anything before me. We stood there a short while, until gradually we saw a man of at least sixty years sitting underneath a small bamboo latticed window. His hair was more white than black, cut very short, with beard and moustache also trimmed to five or six fen¹.

“Guolin?”

“It’s me, Uncle Jixiang, I brought someone to see you.”

“A person? From where?” He was gazing at me curiously.

“Taipei.”

“Taipei city?”

“Yes.” Lai Guolin said. Once my eyes had grown accustomed to the dim light, I scanned the area around me. Under the window was a high work counter, and placed on it was a wooden mallet and a type of woodcarving knife. The old man sat on top of a small, flat wooden board. A pair of tiny, crooked feet stretched outward in front of him. In between his legs there was some sort of wooden object, though I could not tell what. There were woodchips scattered all over the ground, and in the corners they had been aimlessly piled into their own little works of art.

¹ One fen (fen) is equal to .33 centimeters.
“Is your friend from Taipei?” I had not yet clearly seen those corner piles before the old man opened his mouth again. “He is. He is my classmate, from when I was studying in Taipei.”

“Did you know there is a place in Taipei’s suburbs called Jiuzhen?”

“I am from Jiuzhen, I lived there for 30 years, until ten years ago when I moved to Taipei.”

“Where did you live in Jiuzhen?”

“Across from the police sub-bureau station.”

“The police sub-bureau, didn’t that used to be the region’s military service building?”

“Yes.”

“In light of your age and place of residence, you should recognize me.” He said, slowly turning towards me.

“I should?”

“Do you not recognize me yet?” He pointed at the bridge of his nose. From his eyebrows to the end of his nose was a patch of white, which seemed to be some type of dermatitis.

“Is it...?”

“Do you remember? I am the white-nosed coati! Whose son are you?”
I told him my father’s name; I also told him my father used to have a store that sold wooden objects, maybe that was how he knew me.

“I remember him. I was always running into him.”

“I know. My father told me something about that.”

“Is your father still there?”

“No, he passed away.”

“Did he ever talk about me?”

“…”

“You can say it, I won’t be offended.”

“My father said, a three-legged horse is much more repulsive than a four-legged one.”

The old man was silent for a short moment, and then from above his work counter he pulled out a picture frame about four or fives inches long.

“Do you recognize her?”

“No, I don’t.”

“She was my woman.”

“For some reason I remember her older and younger sister both served as teachers.”
“Right, right.”

“Now, this person?” I pointed two inches above the bottom left corner, where the picture was starting to turn yellow.

“This is my first picture. This was my first time in Taipei, so I had to mail it back to my mother at home.”

Higher up in the picture was a person who had been shaved bald. I attentively looked at the bridge of his nose; however, I did not find that white patch. He seemed to have already realized my thoughts.

“That is a picture my teacher took. In order to do this, I had to pay him more than five dollars.”

“You mean, you had this when you were very small?”

“Hmm, very small, very small…”

Chapter 1

“Black-footed deer, white nose coati…”

Ah Gou headed the party of five people, each of which grasped a spinning top. Half of them walked, the other half ran forward towards the burial grounds of the village. Ah Xiang was the smallest person in this group of five, shorter than Ah Gou by half a head, and followed after the group very closely.
“Black-footed deer, white nosed coati, turn around and go, don’t hang back there like dung.” Ah Jin said loudly from the back of the line. He let the spinning top in his hand fall violently to the ground.

“But I have one too…” Ah Xiang said. The weather was very cold, whenever anyone spoke, steam would issue from his mouth.

“What do you have? Do you have penis?” Ah Cheng said.

“I have a spinning top.”

“What spinning top? Did you carve it yourself? It’s even smaller than your balls!” Ah Jin said.

“My uncle said he would buy me one this big! Ah Xiang said, using his hands to compare it to the brim of a small bowl.

“When you actually get it, then come talk to me again.” Ah Jin said.

“My uncle lives in Taipei.”

“What’s so great about Taipei?”

“Go back, if you don’t go back I’ll pull off your pants.” Ah Xiang picked at the spinning top in one hand, and dragged up his pants in the other. His pants were fastened together by one piece of cloth rope. He was very small and seemed to have no way of making himself seem larger. He folded and stuffed his pants around his waist so that the rope tied them up tightly.
“Go back.” Ah Jin turned his head and pushed Ah Xiang, causing the boy to retreat backwards a step. Ah Jin was Uncle Fu’s youngest son. It was him who called Ah Xiang white-nosed coati for the first time.

There was one time when Uncle Fu was at the top of a mountain and he caught a white nosed coati. He put it in an iron wire cage, and prepared to bring it down the mountain to sell it. Its fur was yellow with black hairs showing through, and its nose had a long stripe of white, which went down until it became pink at the round tip of its muzzle. Its feet were pinched in the trap so that if it started to walk, it would gradually become crippled.

“You are also a white nosed coati,” Ah Jin suddenly said as he pointed at his nose. After this incident, everyone called him the white-nosed coati, to the point where it seemed they had forgotten his real name.

He stared hazily at the other boys, and saw them bend forward from behind the bamboo screen. He started to raise his hand and sent the spinning top down to the ground, but he didn’t throw it well, and the top started to fall over very quickly.

“Fuck! Dead top!” Ah Xiang shouted. He picked up the spinning top and wound the rope around it tightly then let it go again.

It followed the original path and then broke away and came back. Looking along the road, on one curbside there was a woman selling tea. She crouched down and quickly poured two bowls.
Ah Xiang returned to Uncle Fu’s vegetable field on the other side of the road. Originally, at the four sides of a circular mountain there was a bit of tilled land. It was a barren piece of land, but even so, the inhabitants planted sweet potatoes, cassava, and peanuts. There was only Uncle Fu who often went outside his own compound; he would go listen to other family’s complaints about the land. When he could not disperse evenly among them a small earthenware bowl of his own crop, he would switch to planting different vegetables.

Ah Xiang felt as though his abdomen was bloated and very full, but he could wait a little longer. He stood at one side of the vegetable field waiting. There were some rolled up cores of vegetables that had been harvested a month ago. They were starting to roll up crooked, still green on one side, yet there were already a few leaves turning yellow. If it weren’t for Ah Jin, there wouldn’t be people calling him white-nosed coati, he thought.

A cold wind blew from one side and made the bamboo screen howl. His body shivered a tiny bit. His bladder became even more bloated. He looked all around him, knowing there was no one. He suddenly lost control and pulled off his pants, using his strength to squeeze his bladder. As he urinated, the mist floated towards a cabbage and it poured all over it. The urine irrigated the vegetables, even the vegetable’s core. He used his strength to squeeze, and started to concentrate all of it on this particular cabbage. The urine also created bubbles to form in the dirt, but they faded very quickly back inside the earth. He felt entirely free from worry, and if by chance some people saw him, then he would say he was irrigating the ground to make it more fertile.
“Yi ai!” Someone suddenly shouted, charging forward from behind the bamboo screen. Ah Xiang trembled slightly, he hadn’t yet clearly seen who it was, and the urine had already sunk into the earth.

Rushing out, however, was Ah Gou and Ah Jin. He truly could not believe it. How could they wind around such a big circle and hide on the other side of the bamboo screen?

“How?”

“You pee like one.”

“I was fertilizing the ground! Fertilizing your field on your behalf is not good enough?”

“Don’t tell me you don’t know urine can’t be used as irrigation? It’s too salty; it’ll kill the vegetables. Look at those three cabbages.”

“I didn’t do it.”

“If it wasn’t you, who else could it be?”

“It really wasn’t me.”

“If the white-nosed coati stole fruit to eat, would he also say it was his once he had it? If we caught the white-nosed coati we would skin it, so let’s make him take off his pants.” Ah Jin said, holding his hands together.
“Please don’t, please don’t,” Ah Xiang said while struggling. He waved his hands and kicked his feet frantically. Ah Jin caught him as though he himself were a mere spinning top, while Ah He and Ah Cheng pulled at his legs. Ah Gou stood off to one side laughing. As Ah Jin pulled his pants off, the rope belt slipped off as well. It seemed like a bamboo shoot in its shell. Once his pants were loosened, they fell down to the ground.

“Ha, ha, ha!” Ah Jin pulled off his pants completely and tossed them into the air where they were caught by a tail wind, eventually floating down onto the ground elsewhere.

“Ha, ha, ha!” Everyone else joined in laughing riotously. Ah Xiang struggled ferociously to free his body. The wind was very cold, and he felt it blow on his buttocks and limbs. But the boys had not taken everything into consideration. Ah Xiang grabbed the spinning top, aimed it at Ah Jin’s back and violently smashed it into him.

“Ai yo!” Ah Jin yelled, stretching his hand to his back to assess the damage, his hands already running red with blood.

“Shit!” Ah Jin turned his head around, throwing a punch at Ah Xiang.

His teeth were hit, and bit his own tongue. The inside of his mouth was salty, so he knew blood had been drawn.
Chapter 2

The sky was bathed in a deep blue green hue, shining with intensely bright sunlight. Looking out over the forest, there was a low mountain that was completely covered by the dense growth of lovesick trees. In the calm atmosphere the sun began to go down, lingering peacefully for a long time.

Ah Xiang had already been walking for two hours. The naked, red earth of the mountain road was only one or two feet wide, and followed a small creek that snaked onward. This was the only road that led toward the outside world. After every rainfall, water buffalo would walk on that road and leave behind many footprints. The sun would then pass over and dry them out, turning them into sharp imprints.

Ah Xiang stepped on those naked red feet, alternating between walking and running. He carried a book wrapped conveniently in a long towel that was slung at an angle from his left shoulder to the right side of his waist.

He walked down another small section of the mountain road, and then farther down the slope by the side of the creek, where he set foot on partially submerged stones. When the water level was at a low point, the water’s surface exposed equal steps of distance between the stones. People could step on them and pass through, that is, until the rain returned and raised the water level. There are some places where the water was deep enough to reach a person’s waist. It is said that during typhoon season, the creek’s water level rises so violently that the river washes away all the people who try and manage the difficulty of wading through it.
Still, there are some people that charge through head-on. One of them was Uncle Fu. In the countryside, he lived on a road within two or three hours of other people, though everyone considered him their neighbor.

“Uncle Fu.” Ah Xiang called out, slightly embarrassed. He was always afraid of seeing familiar people on the road. He was in the middle of the creek though, so there was not enough time for him to hide.

“Ah Xiang, you’re on the road!” Uncle Fu did not have time to attend school growing up. In the countryside, there was no conception of measured time, so it did not matter whether children attended school or not. Ah Xiang stepped one foot into the water, letting Uncle Fu go though. The water was cool; he thought it was very comfortable. He could clearly see his two feet standing in the water. The bottoms of his feet were a little slippery because there was moss growing on the stones. He made sure his feet were stable, then immersed his hand in the water. It felt cool and refreshing even down to his core.

If Uncle Fu ran into his father, and told him that he had bumped into his son on the road, his father would begin to ask many questions. What would Ah Xiang do? He stood up and turned his head to look at Uncle Fu. Still, he was even more afraid of that newly arrived Japanese teacher Mr. Inoue. Mr. Inoue was white-haired and fat, completely different from the black-haired, clean village people that used to serve as teachers. On Mr. Inoue’s second day, he made the students to move all the tables and chairs to the back of the room, then took them outside, made everyone kneel down,
and, using a bamboo stick, knocked each person on the head. When Mr. Inoue saw Ah Xiang’s nose, he added an extra hit.

“Bakayaro!^2 Uneducated, useless beasts!

Mr. Inoue screeched as he lashed out with his stick. Out of the whole class, there wasn’t one person who knew why they were being hit. The next day after this incident occurred, there were ten students who did not come to class.

“What use is studying?” some people said.

“I will not kneel before him. I only kneel before my ancestors.”

Ah Xiang endured the beatings better than his fellow classmates. Every one or two weeks, they were beaten at least once. Every time they were beaten, the tops of their heads would swell up as though there were a tumor developing under the skin. Why did this happen? He absolutely did not think it was reasonable, but perhaps it had something to do with the white spot on his nose.

He honestly did not want to continue studying. But every time, he always thought about his uncle. So Ah Xiang would walk for an hour down the road to Neipu to study. It was his uncle who did his utmost to convince his father that this was good.

“You must study very hard, and then when you’re done studying, go to Taipei.”

^2 Japanese for “idiot.”
Ah Xiang knew today he certainly would be given a beating. Usually, he never showed up late. He walked down the flat road; on the side of the road he saw a strange bird perched atop a tree. It seemed like it might be some kind of duck, but its beak had a little red crest. It seemed a little like a duck but smaller. Ah Xiang didn’t know what this bird was called. He followed it for a little while, even at a run. This activity led him to school, even though he still hadn’t caught up with the bird.

Mr. Inoue brandished his bamboo stick so that it was swaying in front of his eyes. Then came the sharp, clear sound of the stick knocking against a skull. Ah Xiang knelt on the ground and waited, willing the blow to come faster, still fearing the actual blow itself. As the stick came down, he squeezed his eyelids shut very tight.

He was at school---actually, speaking properly it could only be called a small branch of the national schools, when he hesitated a bit nearby. Suddenly Uncle wanted to live in Taipei again, but they would have to take a train to get there. Until then, he had not even see a train before. It was said trains travel on an iron track, but it wasn’t until he left the village that he actually saw it.

As he walked to Zhongbu, the shining sun was already very high, raising the temperature rapidly. He walked until he found the shade of a tree, took his bag out of its protective cloth and took out his bian dang. There was plenty of rice, and the accompanying items were only some dried radish and a little bit of salted fermented

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3 A bian dang is the Taiwanese version of the Japanese bento box. While they come in many varieties, the most common type has a rice base, with pickled vegetables, hard-boiled egg and pork or sausage.
beans. While he sat, his parents went out to the street to buy a little salted fish. Once they returned, he stuffed all of the food into his mouth within minutes. It was sunny enough already to be midday. To walk from his house to the Neipu branch of school took a little more than an hour, and from Neipu to Zhongbu it would also take a little more than an hour. From Zhongbu to an outer village would take a little more than an hour, adding up to a grand total of four hours or more.

His heart began to thump wildly again. That pounding and the pounding he felt while thinking of Mr. Inoue’s stick were almost the same, however, he had long ago forgotten that matter with Mr. Inoue.

He did not know what the train would be like. He also did not know what the iron track was like. Although Uncle once drew him a picture on a rice jar, he had not yet correctly outlined the image and gotten a true feeling for what it was.

He also once requested that his parents bring him out. But they both said he was too small. Once, when he was climbing a small slope, he found a depression in the mountain and climbed inside. He stood at the apex of the small slope, in between a wall of two mountains, and there he saw an iron road. Was it really an iron road? He assumed he would not see one until he got to an outer village, and he knew from here to the outer village was not far, however, he was not at the outer village yet.

Two iron tracks went in two directions and spread out. He did not know which side went toward Taipei. Both sides looked exactly the same, so he fixed his gaze. His line of sight followed the iron track in a down and back movement. On one side, he saw a mountain cave very far away.
He climbed up the mountain slope. The iron track was spread on top of a lot of wooden logs, and there was cinder on top of the logs, also rust. He crouched down and saw that the top of the iron track was shining as brightly as silver; moreover, it was flat and smooth. Under the bright sun would not stop sparkling. He used his hand to stroke it, and it seemed the same as secretly touching Tudi Gong’s face.

“Choo-Choo-Choo.” The sound of a whistle came from the direction of the mountain cave. He suddenly realized what was coming, stood up and retreated away to the side of the mountain. The train whipped by right in front of him. It went so fast he could not make out any part of it clearly. After the train had gone by, he then thought the people in the cars could have see him; that maybe they were laughing at him. He uprooted his feet and chased after it. The train was then right in front of him. He chased, and chased and chased.

Chapter 3

Once he graduated from elementary school, Ah Xiang then went to Taipei to help his uncle at his restaurant. First, he studied how to sweep the floors, wash the dishes and chopsticks, wipe down tables, and finally serve food and greet customers. Later, he also studied how to ride a bicycle in order to deliver food. He learned very quickly, especially in becoming familiar with his surroundings. Although it was his

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4 Tudi Gong is a Chinese earth deity.
first time being in a big city, and he had not been there very long, even so, he proved to be more useful that the other children who had been there longer.

Uncle was very happy. Sometimes he would be called to go out and purchase items or had to run to the bank. Ah Xiang very quickly became his uncle’s most competent worker. There was one day, even though it was already after 11 o’clock at night, when he delivered noodles to a family cloth store in Ceding where there were four or five employees playing a game with four dice.

“The noodles are here, are they hot?” one of the employees asked.

“White nose,” another employee called him. “Why is there so little soup? Did you steal some?”

It was difficult to manage delivering food on a bicycle without some of the soup spilling out. Moreover, the noodles had become soggy because they begin to absorb the soup very quickly.

“Yeah, he really looks like a white-nosed coati. Hey, little guy, I heard you are from Neishan, they must have a lot of white-nosed coati there,” another voice chimed in.

“Hurry up and clean the dice, don’t pay any attention to him.”

“Hey, is your father a white-nosed coati too? How about your mom?”

“Don’t joke around, joking is only funny to a certain extent,” another person said.
Ah Xiang used both of his hands to put the noodles, bowl by bowl, on the table. He exerted himself so much that his hands started shaking. He was afraid the soup would spill again. He carried the boxes of noodles gently so that the lids stayed on securely. When he was back on his bicycle pedaling, he started crying. He pedaled as fast as he could, using the back of his hands to wipe away the tears. Why? Why did every person always call him white-nosed coati? He wanted to leave his hometown because everyone there called him white-nosed coati. Arriving in the city, he did not know many people, but once he became familiar with the city, then again they called him white-nosed.

Even though he was certainly not familiar with those people, but still, they made fun of him. Moreover, they also dishonored his parents. He did not return to the shop directly. He went to the edge of the public park, where there was a local police station, to report a case to the authorities about people gambling.

The police asked him to lead the way. Because he went by the local police station while delivering food, he and the police knew each other. The police caught the people gambling and kept them in custody. Although Ah Xiang went to the entrance of the station, he did not enter with the police. Still, the gamblers supposed that he had reported the case. While they were in prison, they ordered food, and made sure to always chew him out when he made the deliveries.

Ah Xiang went again to make a report. The police warned them, if they ever again do this sort of thing, then they would not be let go.
During this, he felt more clearly that people are divided into two categories: one type are those who bully others, and the other type are those that bear the attacks of the bullies. Mr. Inoue was the first type, and he himself was the second type. But now, he personally saw those store employees be of one type and then turn into the other type. Moreover, he himself seemed to be turned from second type into the first type.

After, those store employees were let go, they quickly went to the restaurant to look for Uncle and have their voices heard. But Uncle was not afraid of them. The police had already said he was a good citizen, a good Japanese citizen. If there were any more incidents after all that, he should be more inclined to contact the police.

One time, Ah Xiang was delivering noodles during the evening, when some kids ran out from inside an alley. They pushed his bicycle over onto the street, beat him up a bit, then waited for him to climb back up again. The bowls and boxes were all broken, and the wheels of his bike were twisted and bent. He again ran to report the case, and the police came, but those people had already run away without leaving a trace.

He went back to the inside of the shop, where Uncle was very unhappy.

“I told you before, we are business people. We should be doing business according to the rules; you should not worry about managing other things. You, however, do not listen. You had better go back to the countryside; it’s safer there. Wait for a little bit, and I will write a letter and ask you to come back here again.”
Ah Xiang did not return to the countryside. He ran to the local police station and complained. They saw he was intelligent, so they kept him on to work with them. Because he was a native Taiwanese, he had very convenient language skills. Also, because he had previously been a delivery boy, he was very familiar the nearby area’s geography and citizens. Sometimes they would bring him along when they handled a case, sometimes they would call him to inquire about some news by himself. Under their name, he was a co-worker. However, he also had the identity of an informant.

During this time period, the thing that stirred his emotions the most deeply was the separation and detention of criminals behind bars. It didn’t matter who the criminal was, once he entered inside, his acute spirit completely disappeared and he became very gentle and agreeable. It didn’t matter if they were intellectual types, or if they were rich people, they would all lie on their stomachs behind the bars requesting he give them a glass of water.

Sometimes, he also saw the police move out a criminal, bringing them to the backside of the station where the bathroom was. They would use a water faucet to rinse the each person, and it looked like an old rat caught in a mousetrap. Their entire body was soaked, even the feet went soft and gave out. Sometimes, the police also stuck an eraser in the criminal’s mouth and pinched their nose closed, making it so that the water would not stop pouring down their faces. The criminal would lamentably cry out, while also trying to swallow the unstopping water, waiting for it to rise in their stomach. The police would then make him lie on his stomach while they tread on him, teaching him to throw up the water.
At the present time, he was only a workmate, a mere child under the age of 18, but it was only because he stood on the outside of the wooden bars that the people inside all looked at him with pleading eyes. The people inside never called him “white-nosed coati”.

Of course, he occasionally had to stand by the side of the wooden bars and guard them. But he was not going to spend his entire life as a workmate; he was also not going to spend his entire life as an informant. He would expand the wooden bars of the police station to repair society. He would become a policeman because he though that all other kinds of people respect him only if he had that title. They may even fear him.

He told some of the policemen of his determination. They gave him certain types of books to read, taught him how to study them, and they also taught him how to take the entrance exam. The first time, he did not pass. The second time, however, he passed without a hitch; moreover he was put in the famous forward patrol.

Chapter 4

Zeng Jixiang and Wu Yulan sat on the stone steps. There were more than twenty steps in all; each step was about two feet wide, eight inches high, and longer than twenty inches. Above the steps was the Ciyou Palace’s large passageway, and below them was the bank of a large river. The steps themselves were thus part of a dike, which also served as a pier.
On the surface of the jet-black sky, stars were thinly stitched together. Their light shone out from all directions, stretching forward even though the next morning would extinguish them. Sometimes the light searched alone; sometimes it would find a way to rendezvous in the sky.

Japan had already declared war on America, and taking extra precautions was a core demand.

“No, Father said we cannot have a Japanese style wedding ceremony,” Wu Yulan drooped her head low, her eyes let forth a large stream of flowing tears. A large shadow trailed behind the glimmering light, but the light seemed to spark indefinitely.

“Your father is really stubborn.”

“Don’t say that. He said ‘we have our own ceremonies.’”

“You are an educated person, don’t act like that kind of backwards country folk.”

“Father has also studied books, only, they were different kinds of books. He said sending my sisters and myself to be educated was entirely useless. He says we studied very strange things, and now when we talk, there is not one sentence that he understands.”

“Section chief Kuwa advised that I do this sort of thing. He advised me, actually, that this sort of thing is more of an order.”
“My older sister’s husband also said we should use our own ceremonies. He had also gone inland to study.”

“You should not mention him again, he is a suspicious character. He has my protection though, so if he gets into trouble, I should be able to get him out of it. Still, when families have a person like him, it puts me in a very unfavorable position. The police will not take confidence in me. At least, it will not be like the type of trust they had before. This time, I have decided to use a Japanese style ceremony; one half of this is also in order for you to have this kind of protection.”

“But Father said, ‘if it is not in accordance with our style of life, then he will not allow us.’”

“If he won’t let us, then…” Zeng Jixiang suddenly stood up.

“Zeng-san,” Wu Yulan also started to stand up.

“What do you want?”

“…”

“Your decision is very important. There has not been this type of condition in Taiwan before now. For the first time, I realize what is truly precious. Maybe you do not know, but the government is now planning to push forward and popularize the colonization movement. Afterwards, not only will have to use Japanese wedding ceremonies, and pray to their gods, we will also have to change our last names. For example, my last name is Zeng, but I can change it to Sowaga, like my brothers who are now named Sowaga. Your last name is Wu, which Japanese people also have,
even if there aren’t very many. Moreover, their pronunciation of Chinese characters is different. The colonization movement will be thorough, and even the best people will have to change their last names. Japan has already taken control of a large amount of the South Asian seas. After all this, we will go to the there. That place is very big, we will go and lose ourselves.”

“My older sister’s husband said, ‘Japan will…”’

“Don’t say it. Whatever you have to say, I already know. Once you start talking, it is a crime, and you will become a criminal. I am then compelled to capture those people who talk so. I cannot capture you, because I have to protect you, but with your relatives, I am incapable of such restraint. I have a responsibility to protect my country. Any person starting a rumor is harming their country. Japan will certainly win this war. Section Chief Kuwa was right; we should make ourselves fine examples. If we surround ourselves with positive atmosphere, we will see many people following behind us.”

“…”

“What did you say?”

“I promise to do what you say. We will certainly do all those things.”

Two months earlier, these two were playing tennis on a court behind a college dorm. Although it was a public court, the character and physical awareness of exercise kept people scarce. There were only a few Japanese people around: policemen, a teacher, and the male and female middle school students mentioned
above. These few people belonged to the so-called outstanding class that could be made use of in society.

After the two students finished playing, they went to the Jixiang’s dorm to rest and get a better look at his tennis racquet. Yulan had been to the dorm before, however, she always went together with other friends, and had never gone alone.

Playing tennis was a way for Jixiang to receive physical training while studying. He had studied judo, swordplay and tennis. Judo and swordplay were techniques for protecting his body, and they were also were Jin\(^5\) era strategies. He already was a black belt. Tennis, however, was an important activity for social interaction. While he was in Taipei, he already had the notion that he needed to make friends in mind.

Although her tennis playing skills were not remarkable, he liked her physicality. Ever since he started playing tennis with her, her reflection would appear in his memory after each time they played. She wore a white short-sleeved shirt, white shorts, white socks, white shoes made of cloth, and wrapped in her hair was a white hair band. She always gripped the racquet tightly. She had a petite body structure, and she also a lovable, sweet voice. These were all the results of her family and her education.

\(^5\) The Jin Dynasty ruled from 265-420 CE.
With regard to education, she had studied more than him. Although she did not have the name of a noblewoman, she was a graduate of a private girls’ school. And he, in comparison, only had graduated from elementary school.

Today, she still wore all white, only her hair was a little disordered. She took off the white hair band, and using her hands to gather her hair together at the back of her head, tied it back up. She sat very close to him. But between these two people, however, was a very large distance. To get rid of this kind of distance, there is but one solution, which is to subdue her. And right then was the most difficult of opportunities.

He sort of threw himself at her.

“If you want me, you should think it over thoroughly. If you bump into me again, I will certainly die,” she said in a low voice.

“Please forgive me.” He crouched on the tatami mat, resting his hands before him. His head was bent straight down so low that it could make contact with the floor. “I really love you. Please give me a response.”

“…”

“Wulan-san…”

“Do your parents also approve of using a Japanese style ceremony?”

“They are country folk, they do not have any kind of opinion, so it does not really matter. Besides, I can also persuade them, and just in case persuading them
does not work, I will just use that type of ceremony.” His voice was very resolute, and also had a hint of high spirits.

When he finished speaking, he saw Wu Yulan’s body slowly starting to turn around, looking toward the bank of the large river, and then she turned to look toward the open sky. Some paths cannot be explored without a searchlight, alternately; some need to explore the open sky. Taipei city sits directly on the lower level of the large river. He vaguely could see the governor general’s high tower. Splat. From amidst the river waters came the splash of heavy mud. There were people flinging stones. Splash. Splash. The stones landed closer and closer, so that they hurled straight until they reached the water’s edge at the stone steps.

“Who’s there!” Zeng Jixiang yelled out.

“Don’t pay attention to them.”

“That was obviously deliberate.”

“So today, it is deliberate. Still, don’t pay attention to them.”

“There’s a man and a woman together,” It was the voice of a small child.

“Shh!” Splash.

“Yeeee-oh, a man and a woman together.”

“White nose.”

“Dumb beasts!” Zeng Jixiang began to jump up.
“Zeng-san, please do as I say.”

“Ok, however…”

“I will give you a response.”

“Your parents?”

“I will strive my hardest to convince them.”

Chapter 5

“Japan lost.”

“Japan lost.”

At the start, everyone whispered secretly amongst themselves, as there still lingered a slight sense of disbelief. Everyone knew that although Japan would not send out a single soldier, and although Japan’s newspapers once again said Okinawa had gone down in glory, and although the United States had already dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and although everyone knew Japan would surrender sooner or later, still, everyone did not anticipate that it would be that today.

Today, everyone seemed to feel a little peculiar. In the morning, the open sky was clear and bright, yet extraordinarily tranquil. There had not been any alert, and the sound of a single airplane could be not heard.

Within the regional military service, everyone appeared to be very nervous. Their spirits were distracted.
Some of them put down their radios at the region military’s vestibule until the middle of afternoon when every single person was kneeling on the ground before the senior provincial officer, listening respectfully to the Emperor of Japan’s royal address from the steps of his throne. The effect of the broadcast was not that good because there was a lot of muddled noise. Moreover, the voice of the Emperor was very shaky, it seemed that the sobbing he could do had turned into sound.

At the beginning, everyone was merely kneeling silently, but later, some people began to weep silent tears. Each person was so nervous; they all grasped their shaking hands together. Their heads became more and more heavy, and drooped lower and lower. Some people used their hands to beat their fists together.

Zeng Jixiang was also kneeling in the middle of this place, but he did not know whether what he felt was sorrow or hardship. He was kneeling distractedly. This thing seemed to have nothing to do with him, yet it also seemed to have some sort of personal connection.

When the royal broadcast finished, everyone was still in salute towards the radio. They stayed that way a long time without standing up.

“Japan has lost.”

This tiny sentence turned into a heavy weight. Zeng Jixiang saw the senior provincial officer coming. The street chief, the section chief, the chairman, and the patrol department continued to walk by. Some people hung their disheartened heads, but still there were some people who seemed to already have determination. Their faces revealed an expression of resoluteness.
“Japan lost.” Zeng Jixiang walked down the street, where there were already people talking in loud voices.

“Japan lost?” Returning into his house, his wife came out quickly and helped him take off his clothes.

“They lost.”

“So what do we do?”

“I do not know.” Within his lifetime, he had never experienced something so irresolute.

“Will the United States army kill everyone?”

“Do you believe that?”

“Of course I don’t.”

“Then why do you still ask?”

“The Japanese will certainly disperse. For now, I still think about those young girls who committed suicide on the face of Okinawa’s cliffs. I mean those Princess Lilies.”

“Why on earth are you thinking about that?”

“I mean, if you…?

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6 The Princess Lilies were Japanese school girls conscripted in the army to work as nurses. To avoid being raped during the occupation of Japan, many of them committed suicide by jumping off the cliffs of Okinawa.
“If I what?”

“If you give me the order, I will not be afraid of anything.”

“Idiot, we do not agree, we are not Japanese.”

“I know I am not Japanese, but you are a Japanese policeman.”

“Then I will discard this uniform.”

“Can you discard it?”

“Japan is now the shell of a country, don’t tell me they can still control me?”

“But…”

“The senior provincial officer has ordered us Taiwanese to maintain law and order.”

“Yulan, Yulan.” Some people called from outside.

“Sister, please come in.”

“Your sister’s husband said Zeng-san wants to run away.”

“Why?”

“You see now that the masses are still tranquil, but things come suddenly and no one knows what to do. Maybe tomorrow, maybe one week from now, some people will raise difficult questions, and no one can say for sure if people will end up dead.”
“Then, what will everyone do?”

“Children can temporarily stay in my home.”

But Zeng Jixiang did not believe the masses would be like that. He said he has a duty to maintain the law and order of Jiuzhen.

When the second day arrived, Jiuzhen started to develop into a bad situation.

It started with the head of the patrol department committing suicide. On the same day as the royal broadcast, a few Japanese officials commit suicide in nearby towns. The suicides seemed contagious; nearly everyday the newspaper had a report of it. Although the heads of departments only comprised a small organ of government, in Jiuzhen however, it was a big deal.

Jiuzhen was originally a small, peaceful town and the residents were all law-abiding citizens. But revenge, as though carried on the wind, spread very quickly to Jiuzhen.

It was said that the very first person to rise up was Xiang Yashi’s son. Xiang Yashi did not have a medical license, so he was pretty much a secret doctor. Because there was a secret report about this Xiang Yashi opening a dentistry business, during the war, he was arrested and detained. Once the fighting was over, his middle school aged son who studied judo then went to settle accounts, and in front of the public, he threw the other person on the ground. Afterwards, the son again went looking for his captured father by means of the Ryukyu Island policemen.
At this time, the masses all of a sudden began to realize the truth and everyone was yelling ‘Injustice will be traced back to its origin.’ Each person searched within to find an enemy to retaliate against.

Some policemen were forced to kneel down in front of a temple, representing their guilt put forth to the gods. During the war, some butchers took control and privately governed the area, making the policemen catch and detain irrigation water. At that moment, however, they were taking the daggers they used to slaughter pigs and pressing them against the backs of those two policemen. From the mountaintop above the sea they walked to Caodianwei, and kept them in custody while walking the streets publically exposed. The butchers were very proud, prouder than anyone could possibly be.

Taiwan’s own policemen, the majority of which were managers of affairs, and did not have any sort of interconnection with the masses, could all live together in harmony. There was only one person named Lai, who was dragged to Ciyou Palace Blessings Temple’s public square in front of everyone.

“Beat him to death!” Some people were yelling.

“Beat the Japanese lackey to death!” Others agreed.

“Forgive me, forgive me,” He kneeled down on the ground, continuing to kowtow and plead with his wife kneeling at his side.

“Beat him to death!” Some people yelled again.

“You dog, three-legged dog, die well,” some people kicked him.
“You dead dog, we will beat you to death!” Some people grabbed sticks to beat him with.

“Ai yo! Ai yo!”

The policeman named Lai, was merely the second greatest sinner, so only his leg was broken.

“Hold the man named Zeng, capture the white-nosed coati.” But there was not a single person who knew where the white-nosed coati had run.

As the masses came knocking on the door, Zeng Jixiang rapidly ran up onto the roof. As night fell, he quietly ran away from Jiuzhen, however, he did not have the opportunity to bring his wife with him.

But not everyone had given up on him. After everyone destroyed the furniture inside his house, they detained Yulan there.

“People, I also do not know where to run. Besides, you all have things you need to do and I can manage them all. If you all beat me to death, I will not have any complaints.”

Everyone decided that she must put on a play at the Ciyou Palace for at least three days. Within the span of these three days, she would prepare incense to burn sweet smelling smoke, and it would make the people of Jiuzhen draw in breath without restriction.
At that time, the long prohibited children’s show of Japan came back out of retirement, a firecracker’s noise had already replaced the sound of the bomb, and everyone could again hear the sound of the gong and drum roll. The masses paid tribute with incense at the Buddhist temple, expressing thanks to the many gods for bestowing peace upon them.

In front of Ciyou Palace, leaning against the river dike, a stage was erected, and on the stage canopy’s front eaves was a sign written on red paper that said, ‘Dedicated to the National Criminal Zeng Jixiang,’ in large characters. Along the front of the stage canopy, basket, after basket, after basket, was completely full of smoking incense. It created glorious stage lighting, and lit up the thoroughfare as if it were a bright day. On the bottom of every basket of incense, hung a red banner. Written in the same style was “Dedicated to National Criminal Zeng Jixiang,” in large characters. His wife Yulan kneeled in the square facing all the citizens of Jiuzhen offering an apology.

“Come on, come out and smoke a cigarette from the white-nose.” The citizens of Jiuzhen called out to each other, very restlessly proceeding towards Ciyou Palace. “Come on, come out and see the play put on by the white-nose.”

Although no one had captured him, their hearts where without regret. Time passed, making the event insipid and eventually forgotten.

**Chapter 6**
“How old were you at that time?” The old man Zeng Jixiang asked me.

“About 12 years old,” I had to think about it for a second.

“Do you still remember it clearly?”

“It was a very big thing.”

“But after 33 years?”

“Mm, 33 years.”

“Oh, Jiuzhen, Jiuzhen…”

“Have you not been back there?”

“Go back? How could I go back?” He lifted his head slightly to look at me, and then put it back down again. I could see his nose distinctly, and although the passing of time had caused his entire face to age, however, it was impossible for that section of his nose to lose its distinctive color.

“Oh, Jiuzhen, Jiuzhen is my nightmare.” He sighed again, his eyes gazed off towards the wall, but his line of sight seemed to go past the wall and see what was outside it, and way beyond.

“I do not know what to call this nightmare. Perhaps my experience at Jiuzhen is causing this nightmare. I continually want to forget Jiuzhen, but I can never seem to get it out of my mind. Although I left Jiuzhen long ago, once I start to close my eyes, I see those kind-hearted people; sometimes I see their smiling faces. I also remember your father, that undersized boy. Or the kind-hearted carpenter with his
pair of outwardly bent feet. The people of Jiuzhen all addressed him as uncle. Is he not there anymore?"

“Mm, no, he isn’t.”

“Because he hesitated a bit when I wanted him to make me a bookshelf, I hit him in the mouth, even though he was older than me. I was carrying the weight of a country on my back. At that time it was what I wanted. I still remember that he saw the emotions behind my eyes. Those eyes were full of hatred for those who committed crimes. But, I thought the authorities were still stronger than that hostility.

“I also remember that woman called Chai Pafeng. She would have been your neighbor. When they gave out pork at Lingpei, she cut in line. I made her kneel in front of everyone, and dumped a wooden bucket of full of water all over her head. Since it was rationed, every person could buy a portion. However, there were always some people who cut in line. Originally, this was a small matter, and I could pretend to be unaware and overlook it, but I heard Japanese people talking about this sort of behavior. They coveted these small advantages, not hesitating to destroy social order by criticizing Taiwanese people as being stupid and without class. Earlier, this was how my Japanese teachers viewed me; however, I learned very quickly to see my own compatriots in this way.

“I also remember a butcher called Ah Zao. Some people secretly informed on him and said that he was artificially increasing the weight of his pork. He would not concede this, so I made him drink copious amounts of water. Even now, I still hear his whining as he begs for forgiveness."
“That was a terrifying nightmare, a never ending nightmare. I have a very good memory and keen deductive powers. I capitalized on these skills, completely by myself, while the attitude of the people in charge reigned supreme in Jiuzhen. I thought I was a tiger, or maybe a lion. But inside my frame, however, I was a cat, or a dog. I had learned to rely on the strength of the Japanese people.

“I believed that I was a nobleman, but the people of Jiuzhen made me see I was in fact a deity personifying pestilence. I knew they were evading me. But there were also some people who would flatter me, just the same way as I was flattering the Japanese. Yulan had already advised me not to be too excessive. Because Jiuzhen was a small town, her family was, of course, a small town family. As I reckon, there were only three people in the mixture of Jiuzhen’s population that were not her family’s relatives or friends. But how could I lend them a hand? People at the summit of authority become drunk with power, and thus will forget themselves.

“Moreover, there was one day when Japan suffered a defeat. Honestly, it was the Japanese people’s own premonition, but there were only a few people who anticipated that what happened would come so quickly. Because the situation came on so suddenly, I did not have a sufficient amount of time to make a decision, so Yulan’s sister’s husband, the lawyer, told me to run away and hide.

“I did not listen to what he said. I assumed I could still continue to lead the people of Jiuzhen, until one day, all of a sudden I discovered that the reindeer I had watched over had already turned into fierce tigers. In the midst of panic, I ran away from Jiuzhen and returned to the countryside. This was only place to which I could
escape. At that point, I had not realized that my father would not accept me. He said I was no longer his son. I knew he felt this way because the style of the wedding ceremony had offended him. I honestly had not realized that a person from the countryside would have that kind of moral courage. Fortunately, my mother persistently implored that he remove the old farming tools from the small storehouse and let me move into that space, thus giving me a temporary place to live. My father had a little spit of cropland, but he would not let me cultivate it. Actually, I was incapable of cultivating it, so my mother secretly sent me things to eat.

“In silence I waited to be reunited with Yulan, or waited until the situation became more calm so I could go out and look for her. I did not realize that in the two months that had already passed, she had contracted typhoid and left this world alone. When this news reached me, I could not believe it.

“I still remember, at that time her family’s dwelling was encircled and demarcated by a grass rope so that everyone knew the sickness was contagious. They went far out of their way to avoid that place.

“During this, I suddenly felt that I was the most lonely person in the entire world. In this world, there was no one who could possibly replace her. Now, I still can remember the posture she had while playing tennis. Just after the war ended, she told me that if I committed suicide, she would not at all hesitate to be with me. It seemed I could see her alone, kneeling the palace square, facing the masses and asking for forgiveness.
“I heard that the people opposing her were frantic, but she was very calm and incredibly brave. She was a mere woman, but she bore the weight of crimes against the nation. The masses scolded her, and she asked them for forgiveness, but it was not for herself. Some people spit on her, but she did not go clean herself. I am a man, however, I made my own woman be humiliated and bear my dishonor.

“Could it be that she did not complain? To see her again even one last time would not be enough. She had complaints, but how could she appeal to me? I did not know she was the kind of person who would close their eyes and die contentedly.

“How did I manage to have this kind of woman? My sins are deep, so was I meant to obtain her, only to lose her? While all other people, including my relatives, spurned me, there was only her silent acceptance, and I have no opportunities to express my feelings of thanks and guilt, because she has silently left the world.

“Once she died, my entire heart died with her. Actually, if I died, I should have died a little earlier. While Japan was surrendering, I should have died. A lot of Japanese people committed suicide for the cause of their country, however, I did not have this kind of courage. I said I was not Japanese. I was a sinner against my nationality, so I should have died to apologize for offenses against my country. But I did not, on the contrary, I ran away deep into the mountains. You see, I am a very disgraceful person. I ran away, and made her take the place of apologizing for my offenses to the people. Still, in my heart, I hope one day for a peaceful situation to come, in this place I can still be a policeman like I used to be.
“But Yulan is dead, and it completely changes my way of thinking. Starting from that day onward, there would never again be a person called Zeng Jixiang. Actually, the day Japan surrendered he ceased to exist. His people, his relatives and friends, his mother, they all had already spat on him, but he stayed and said nothing more as though he had no sense of shame.

“Alas, Yulan.” He picked up the photograph again to gaze at it carefully. “You really do not recognize her?” His hands were shaking, and the expression in his eyes was stupefied. It looked like they had dried up.

“I feel like I know her. Maybe at that time she was young and smaller, but I truly do not recognize her.”

“There are far more people that you who do not recognize her! At your age you cannot recognize her, and maybe in all of Jiuzhen there are only a handful of people who would recognize her. Just now you said that Jiuzhen developed very quickly, you went back, and on the street it was not easy to bump into people that you recognize. I know the households would have quickly forgotten her.”

“You still have not carved something on her behalf?”

“I tried, but I cannot not carve her. Although she was my wife, although she was very close to me, I still cannot carve her. She left me long ago. Her body, the body I felt with my hands long ago, is not a part of me. Although her heart had once belonged to me, however, my predictions were wrong. Her face, that face she had before I left, what expression does it hold? Up until now no one has told me.”
“I know she only had one cherished desire. It was to die at my side, to be buried by my side. I heard that her parents left this world one after the other; I heard that all of Jiuzhen has already changed. I however, continually avoid that place. I dare not go. To start, I am afraid of those people who would remember that they hate me. Additionally, I am afraid my impure being will stain her land. I do not have the courage to see her relatives again. I want to bring her ashes to this place, but I am afraid that because she never came here while she was alive it might be unfamiliar to her.

“Her son has already grown up and become an adult. I say her son, because I am not capable of having children. Currently, he left Jiuzhen to go to Taipei. Originally, I wanted things to pass peacefully, to let them pass by the side of my body. I did not realize that all of a sudden she let go of my hand and went away, but made him stay, leaving her older sister with the responsibility of nurturing him into manhood. He already came to see me and asked me to go and live with him. But I did not dare face him, because seeing him was more painful than anything else. He looked like Yulan. I hoped he would resemble his people and eventually learn to spurn me.

“I should have made myself tell him what happened between Yulan and me. But I could never open my mouth wide enough. When there is no one around, I can talk with Yulan, but if she actually were to appear, I am afraid I could not utter a single word. This is the reason I am incapable of carving Yulan.”

“Is carving those horses some kind of way to blame yourself?”
“At that time, Taiwanese people called the Japanese dogs. Dogs have four feet, but the Taiwanese people working as lackeys of the Japanese, they only have three feet.”

“Why do you only carve horses? And not any other kinds of animal?”

“Because they have to be horses. I am carving, carving, and suddenly, it seems like I can see the bodies of horses, so I then test myself and carve them out.”

On the ground, in the corners, a horse, another one, and another one. Although each one has a different posture, they all have a special characteristic in common. Their expressions and stances are all satisfyingly painful and ashamed.

“What do you plan to do with them all?”

“I do not know.” He hesitated a bit. “Perhaps, one day, I will burn them.”

“Burn them?”

“Because they don’t have any meaning for other people.” He said powerlessly.

“Can you sell me one of them?” I said, mustering up courage. Actually, my heart’s innermost desire was to buy them all, if only I could afford it.

“Sell you one?” He again hesitated a bit, and turned his face around slowly towards me. “Ok, choose one. During these 33 years, I have not met a person from Jiuzhen. I have always wanted to meet a person from Jiuzhen, but also feared meeting one at the same time.”
“But, I also left Jiuzhen.”

“At least you know Jiuzhen once had a policeman called white-nosed coati.” I chose one. Its three legs were in a kneeling position, using its front feet, despite obvious pain, to support the weight of its entire body. Its head was slightly contorted, and its mouth was starting to open. Its nose was especially large, so it seemed to be panting. It also seemed to be neighing, and its fur was messy. I carefully looked again, one of its back legs had already been broken, and it dragged behind powerlessly.

“This one, I’m giving it to you as a present.” His speak was very hesitant.

“Why?”

“My heart always is afraid of choosing this one. The thing that brings me fright often comes early in the morning. There was one evening when I dreamt that Yulan had come back. It had already been a long time since I had dreamt about her. I was afraid she had forgotten me. I saw her, kneeling in front of me crying. I was also crying. I always assumed I had no more tears left within me. But on that evening, I cried until my pillow was soaking wet. In the morning, I got up, determined to push away all other work and wholeheartedly started carving a horse. The horse you have in your hand is the one I carved that day. To see a horse you have to see its eyes. Look at its eyes.”

First, I looked at the horse, then I looked at him again. His dry, expressionless eyes suddenly became moist.
I quickly turned my head, then softly returned the horse that I held in my hand, pulling Lai Guolin to retreat silently.

-1979

**Small Sections**

~Two Homelands~

Cheng Ch’ing-wen was born in *Tao Yuan* to a peasant family named Li. Just after his first birthday, his maternal uncle changed the family name to Cheng. Though he was born in a rural area and grew up in *Jiuzhen*, every winter vacation, he would go back to *Tao Yuan* for a period of time during winter vacations. As a result, Cheng Ch’ing-wen has more than most people—two homelands—in his boyhood experiences.

The scenery of Taiwan’s rural countryside and life in *Jiuzhen* seeped into him little by little, becoming one of the important sources of his creative work.

~*Jiuzhen* and other Rural Villages~

The final terminus of the Danshui River in Northern Taiwan is an open river harbor. Early in the Qing Dynasty, from Qianlong to Jiaqing’s rule, the *Jiuzhen* that

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7 These two emperors combined ruled the Qing Dynasty from 1735-1820.
Cheng Ch’ing-wen writes about was situated in an area in which commerce became very important. Until the middle of Emperor Jiaqing’s ruling period, the river’s course accumulated massive amounts of silt, which became so massive that it finally obstructed the river’s flow. This flowing motion’s “big water river” (Cheng Ch’ing-wen’s words) served Jiuzhen as a pathway leading toward the outside world, and opened up the small town, thereby becoming a symbol of life.

At the time when Cheng Ch’ing-wen wrote this story, the rural village of Taoyuan was a tranquil, good-hearted place. Inhabitants lived undisturbed, serene lives. In the mind of Cheng Ch’ing-wen, the images of the rural villages of Jiuzhen and Taoyuan are in direct opposition to each other.

~The Kiriyama Pacific Rim Literary Prize~

In September of 1979, Cheng Ch’ing-wen’s collected anthology of short stories, “Three-Legged Horse” captured fourth place in the University of San Francisco’s “Kiriyama Pacific Rim Literary Prize.” It was the first time a Taiwanese author had ever won this sort of international prize for literature.

The Pacific Rim joins together parts of America, Canada, Central and South America, turning to Australia, reaching to Asia and finally arriving at the Pacific Ocean. In 1996, the Kiriyama Literary Prize was established in order to expand the awareness of other communities through books, and also to provide for more mutual understanding and communication between the peoples of these various places. In a
few short years’ time, every country that received recognition through this award came to value it very highly.

~The Difference Between Wood Carving and Engraving

Carving is the digging out of unnecessary material while creating a satisfactory design in its place. In this way, the technique employs the style of “subtraction.” What engraving refers to is the production of a creative work from a solid, three-dimensional material. Carving, on the other hand, is conducted on a flat surface. For example, everyone can go get a “carved seal,” but they would not get an “engraved seal.”

The first carver in Taiwan was Huang Tushui. He was also the first Taiwanese person to go to Japan’s Tokyo Fine Arts School.

~Borders of Earth

During the high period of agriculture in Taiwan, building a house required an assessment of economic condition in order to decide which materials would be used. A rich family used tiles and bricks, but a peasant family would have to collect materials from the ground, using bits of earth (called tujiao in the southern Fujian dialect) to make the canopy of their houses.
Some ways of creating a house canopy use loess and glutinous rice paste. Fresh water is stirred into the paste, and then small bits of straw are added. The mixture is then poured into a mold. After they have dried completely, they become earthen bricks, which are then a usable material for building. Another way is to use bamboo piping as support pillars with a sheet of bamboo woven into the wall of the house itself. Mud lime is then applied layer after layer.

Using the earthen blocks is a better insulator, making the winters warm and the summers cool, while also keeping the house refreshing and cozy. In Taiwan’s rural areas this is a very common type of building.

~Young people in Taiwan pursuing knowledge under Japanese rule

During Japanese rule, the children of Taiwanese people could only attend public schools (though Japanese people attended private schools). After graduation, wanting to continue to the next grade would be very difficult as middle schools mainly promoted the education of Japanese students. Because of this, if Taiwanese children wanted to move up a grade, families could only select national language schools, medical schools, or administrative schools for their children to attend. A small number of students with good economic backgrounds would be allowed to go to Japan to study. In 1928, Taiwan’s highest educational establishment, “Taipei Imperial University” was established, but most of the attending students were Japanese.
Before being ceded to Japan in 1895, Taiwan did not have any proper schools. Places of education were regularly called “study rooms” (they came to be called private schools). Students would attend class at the teacher’s house or temple. The texts everyone studied were typically the Four Great Books and the Five Classics of Confucianism. Only those people from richer families would have the potential to go on and study. After Japan’s government took control of Taiwan, they introduced the foreign concept of the “Modern Era School.”

Japan established the first public schools in Taiwan situated at Taipei’s Zhishanyan and began Taiwan’s modern educational system. Through public schools, Taiwanese people were able to accept the colonial government’s philosophy, and were imbued with the desire to study Japanese language. Until 1945, the rate of entering students reached a level where 80 percent were Taiwanese children. Public schooling was an elementary education unit, equal to today’s elementary schools.

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8 The Four Great Books were the Great Learning, the Doctrine of the Mean, the Analects of Confucius and the writings of Mencius.

9 Zhishanyan (芝山岩) is located in the Shilin District of Taipei city. It is a scenic park that contains a nature trail.
Specialized Vocational Universities

After graduating from public school, Taiwanese students could then go on to study at the medical university, the national language university (teacher-training university), the agriculture university, the industry university, or the skilled vocational university. The goal was to create doctors, teachers, and talented specialized workers. Making Taiwan’s young people dedicated to studying as much as they could would thereby create middle rank employees or lower level officials.

National Language University

In 1896, Taiwan’s new colonial governor established the national language university in Taipei, including the installation of a teaching department. This generated a great amount of qualified teachers that then went on the hold positions as part of the public school teaching staff. That era was considered Taiwan’s highest educational generation. The sculptor Huang Tushui, painters Chen Dengpo, Li Zepan, Cai Peihuo to Jing Ying were all able to study at the national language university. Author Wu Zhuoliu also went to the national language university. Studying at the national language university could be enjoyed at public expense, and after graduating, one could have a teaching position. It was the optimal choice for Taiwan’s children with poorer financial circumstances.

Taipei Medical University
In 1899, Taiwan’s new governor officially established Taipei Medical University, which changed its name to “Taipei Specialized Medical University” (Taipei Medical University) in 1922. During the time of Japan’s rule, it was a place that fostered the special talents of medical students.

Though young Taiwanese students entered into the medical school to study, and many of them became Taiwan’s political, societal, and cultural leaders after the fall of Japanese rule. For example: Lai He, Jiang Weishui, Weng Junming, Taiwan’s first students to receive doctoral degrees were all originally students of the medical university.

~Three and Four Legged Horses

The police during the time of Japan’s rule were called “big people” by the masses. The Taiwanese people feared them because, for the most part, the police were governmental offices held only by Japanese people. They had a much higher authority than the common people. In ancient times they were greeted with the title “Salutations, Grand Bodhisattva.” The number of Taiwanese people serving as police officers was low, even more so because the colonial government managed and supervised the Taiwanese people’s ideologies and social statuses. It made the Taiwanese believe they were the pawns of Japan, and in private it also made them satirize these Japanese underlings as “3 legged animals.” This referred to the idea that Taiwanese people are in fact people because they have a pair of legs. The Japanese people however, were dogs, so they have four legs, but the Taiwanese
people who work as Japanese pawns or lackeys, occupied a space between the two
and the four-legged forms, so they were “three-legged animals.”

~White-nosed Coati

The white-nosed coati spoken of within Chinese language is the masked palm
civet, which is also referred to by its white nose. This type of animal is more than
halfway covered by yellow or gray fur, while the head area is usually black. The
forehead down to the bridge of the nose has a distinct strip of white fur, so it is called
white-nosed coati. When it is anxious, it will emit an aroma similar to that of peanut
oil, which is why it is also called, “black-footed stinker.” It is a nocturnal,
omnivorous animal. Wild white-nosed coatis are of the rodent family, as they eat
insects, snails and fruit. Still, more than half of its diet consists of fruit.

~Playing Dry Music

Playing with a spinning top, an activity called, “dry music,” was a very
common toy for Taiwanese children during the 1920s-1930s. “Dry music” usually is
played as a competition between a few people.

“Dry music” as a game has many different levels, and two types of making
moves. In 1969, Taoyuan’s Daxi district developed “Big Dry Music,” in which five
to 50 kilogram tops are spun in succession. It was a sensation for quite a while, and it
also elevated “dry music” from a mere children’s toy into an important Taiwanese folklore activity.

The spinning top is a type of bell shaped toy. One end of the top winds around and at the lowest part of the small end is a sharp needle. Before playing with the spinning top, one must wind rope around the larger part and pull away quickly on the rope. Then you can put it on the ground and let it spin.

This is the method for coiling up the rope of the spinning top: put the line tightly on the bottom part of the top, and from the lower part follow inside to outside, quickly making a spiral around the top.

This is the method for spinning the top: the fundamental theory is to place the spinning top in the middle of your hand with the axis of rotation (the needle part) facing upwards. Place your thumb on top of the small side (the needle part) with your pointer finger wrapped around the rope. When you release the top, quickly pull back, because you cannot use power to drag the top and make it spin faster. It will follow its own course along the floor until it falls over.
~Fertilizing the Vegetables---liquid fertilizer

Before the war, there were not many families in Taiwan that had flushable toilets and sewage tank equipment, especially in the rural countryside. The majority of families were still using handmade pits or “urine buckets” to solve the big problems of excretion.

At that time there were some people who specialized in “collecting liquid fertilizer” as their profession. Carrying wooden water buckets on a shoulder pole, they went all over to collect the liquid fertilizer (excrement) and afterwards, would sell it to farmers who used it for their crops. Before the 1960s, one of the tasks of America’s USAID organization’s development committee was to assist Taiwanese farmers to improve and develop their agriculture. The majority of Taiwan’s rural villages using liquid fertilizer viewed it as important resource.

~Bundled Cloth

During Japan’s rule, many children of impoverished families used about one meter of bundled cloth to carry around books, stationery, and bian dang lunches. These pieces of cloth were fastened around the waist so the child could carry it to school. This type of phenomenon mainly occurred until just after the end of the war. The bundled cloth was very convenient to use, as it could also be made to hold a child on ones back and shoulders as well. While in the fields, peasant women carried their children on their backs and tied a bamboo hat on top of their heads to keep the sunshine off of themselves and their children.
~Gymnastics

The Japanese people introduced Taiwan to a new type of school. The biggest difference the traditional old-style private school offered lay in its increased discipline, “the sturdy body” project. For a fixed time during the day, schools held exercise meetings were students participated in gymnastics activities, jogging, training, etc. The purpose of these activities was to promote disciplined bodies among the nationals. Gymnastics took the leading role in physical education classes in order to make the students more quick and agile, and also to promote bodily health in general.

Instituting competitions demonstrated the efficiency of the exercise meetings, as it became an important activity that collaborated with the school and its community.

~Physical Labor Service

In order to clean up campuses during Japan’s reign, schools used physical labor to train students to harbor the spirit of obedience and get along well with others. The physical labor project included sweeping the campus, community service, even extending to helping clean shrines or military base, etc during the war.

This type of “physical labor” was a way of learning spiritual education. Even now, it is still a part of campus life.
~Full-time Attendance Award

In order to encourage young students to be enthusiastic about participating in school during the time of Japan’s rule, a full-time attendance award was established. From the perspective of the Xinzhu or Beibu public schools full-time students, this was a very good thing. The top portion of the award was a snowflake and the bottom section displayed a firefly. These represent the “firefly light reflected in the snow,” a symbol of diligent study.

~Meeting to Learn a Skill

A new, emerging style of education included music, drawing, and singing classes, even though campus life appeared to be the primary thing. The purpose of

10 This refers to an ancient Chinese story that encourages young people to study hard. In the story, a young man catches fireflies during the day so he can study by their light throughout the night. In the wintertime, this light would reflect off of the fallen snow.
singing classes was to correct students’ Japanese pronunciation, and every semester a 
“meeting to learn a skill” was held. It became a way to engage young students in 
studying how to manage everyday situations. Also, it made the child’s parent or 
guardian interact with the teacher.

~Trains

When Liu Mingzhuan was first appointed to be Taiwan’s inspector general, he 
started an initiative to built railroads. In 1891, the Taipei---Jilong line was completed; 
two years later they completed the Taipei---Xinzhu line, which had been delayed due 
to insufficient funds at the end of the project. In the beginning period of Japan’s rule, 
one of the first initiatives was to get the Taiwanese people accustomed to using 
“platform cars” as a transportation tool.

Today, Taiwan’s most important railroad is the western line (though there is a 
north south line that runs all the way to Gaohsiung). Part of the railroad’s structure 
remains from the initial construction done in Liu Mingzhuan’s era. The other part of 
it is new construction, which was completed in 1908.

~Eating in a Restaurant

Before Japan’s rule, “eating out” was a big part of the people’s livelihood, as 
more than half of Taiwanese people “settle disputes” inside their homes. Food sold 
outside was mainly from vendors that hawked their wares at a small stand along the
street. This promoted physical laborers to eat many different small meals in order to fill their bellies. After Japan took control of Taiwan, Taiwan’s catering industry started to develop vigorously, including dining halls, cafes, Western cantinas, etc; almost all styles of restaurant were established.

~The Police System during Japan’s Reign

Under Japan’s control, Taiwan was a model of police society. The police system was led by a governor-general who thought that maintaining peace and law was one of the most effective strategies for keeping the people under control. In the beginning of Japan’s rule, policeman carried muskets, wore straw sandals, and had long braids in their hair.

After the third governor-general of Taiwan, Nogi Maresuke was appointed, he raised the issue of “three part police system,” which divided Taiwan into smaller sections. First class places were dangerous communities, second-class places were unstable communities, and third class places were safe communities. Included in these three classes were outlying places that were even more peaceful settled villages and cities. The police were in charge of keeping the law and peace. At that time one could only say: “The big people have come.” There was no one among the masses who did not feel panic and fear when that happened.

~Getting Married at the Shrine
During the colonizing movement, shrines played a very important role. Joyous marriages and group worship both have a connection to shrines; encouraging young people to get married at a shrine was called having a “wedding before God.” During this activity, the colonial government’s connection is comparatively close to that of the family, as the family will act in concert with government policy at the shrine while holding a wedding. After the ceremony finishes, there is always a large group photo.

~Remodeling the Taiwanese People

“The Colonizing Movement” corresponded with the needs of the war, as it attempted to make Taiwanese people “Japanicized.” It genuinely transformed them into Japanese people, becoming “red letters of the Emperor.” The colonizing movement lasted eight years, until Japan surrendered. The government put an end to written Chinese newspapers, prohibited the use of dialects (promptly changing the national language, to Japanese). They removed the Taiwanese people’s consecration of the image of God and traditional ceremonies, while forcing them to go to shrines to worship at regular intervals as converts of the Shinto faith. The Japanese government prohibited traditional Taiwanese social customs, and pushed forward a movement of changing last names. All these efforts were made to destroy Taiwan’s traditional culture and make Taiwanese people follow Japanese Imperial policy.

~Playing Tennis
After 1907, Japanese people introduced a new, different version of tennis called “soft” tennis. After more than 10 years of vigorous advocacy, it became a considerably enjoyable and welcome form of exercise. Public figures loved playing tennis as a hobby, and in 1939 some participated in a competition in Buli. After each tennis match was played, they were commemorated with a photograph.

~Leisure during Japanese Rule

To cope with the rapid development of cities and the increase in population after Japan took control of Taiwan, amusing oneself during leisure time grew into a certain kind of phenomenon. Plans were set in motion for the development of many completely new relaxation facilities. Taiwanese people started to understand the novelty of going for a walk in a public garden, going to the zoo to see orangutans, or going to the movies to watch a film.

Green trees came to shade the new public park that was opened for the people of Taipei city as the optimal place for relaxation. In 1916, the Yuanshan Zoo opened, with orangutans and clouded leopards being among the most famous animals. In 1934, when the Happy Childhood Garden was established, it became one of the Taipei area’s best destinations. During the summertime, everyone would go to the beach to go swimming. It even became fashionable to spend one’s entire summer holiday in relaxation.
~Connecting the Train to Travel Taiwan

In 1908, Taiwan’s north and south railroad lines were opened to the public. Transportation from south to north came to be very advantageous, and the concept of leisure travel emerged. After the 1920s era, cars and buses became important tools of transportation; every scenic area in Taiwan could be reached and would greet you with a flourishing atmosphere. Traveling became one of the Taiwanese people’s most important relaxation activities. From the perspective of 1939’s “Taiwan Concept Map,” the sites to visit in Taiwan were eight large scenic features, twelve landmarks, including Sun and Moon Lake and Ah Li Shan.

~Professions of the Taiwanese under Japanese Rule

During the time of Japanese rule, the Japanese government’s position on Taiwan’s industry policy was, “Agriculture Taiwan.” Due to this stance during the
era of Japanese control, Taiwan maintained its farming society architecture, and the majority of Taiwanese people were farmers. A small number of Taiwanese people could force their way into medium level education, and some people participated in the Japan-ruled, up and coming industry of commercial business, or had an official position. During Japan’s rule, the hands of the Japanese grasped all the power of the big companies. Under Japan’s oppression, only when autonomous businesses opened could a greater number of Taiwanese people hold a governmental office at a basal level position.

~Industry Pioneers

Under Japanese control, Taiwan had vigorous development in agricultural industry through commercially manufacturing candy and canned pineapple. Besides introducing Japan’s large companies into Taiwan to engage in business, enterprises in tobacco and alcohol became project monopolies on the island. A sugar refinery, an alcohol refinery, a tobacco refinery, all these kinds of industries appeared in Taiwan after this point. Some of the farmers were introduced to the refineries as basic workers or technical staff, where they absorbed the new industry knowledge and technology. Thus, they became Taiwan’s coming era of technology industry’s first line of pioneers. After the Japanese left, the undertaking to recover after the war became the new industry’s heavy responsibility.

~From Commerce and Official Positions
Commercial enterprise school included classes in agriculture, business industry and aquatic production. However, regardless of what one studied, the vast majority entered into Japanese controlled business industries and official positions post-graduation, creating the Taiwanese people’s emerging middle class hierarchy. Their professions ranged from businessmen operating their own stores, to joining large-scale Japanese capital banks, to company work. Having an official position in any place, city or village, or being a member of the central authority department’s administration or technological staff was practically a position of servitude because the Japanese dominated all the middle or high-level positions. Yet, there was a small number of Taiwanese people who became government leaders, thereby starting a new job as a pact member or village chief.

~Teacher, Author, Musician

During Japan’s rule of Taiwan, the governmental authority encouraged Taiwanese people to study elementary education at public school. The requirement for qualified teachers among the Taiwanese was imperative and because of this, the government promoted a tuition-free school to attract Taiwanese people to study and go to teaching college. At that time, teaching was subdivided into teaching order and discipline on two different levels. The governor fostered Japanese people as those who “teach order,” and assumed an office of formal teaching. Taiwanese people, for the most part, could only serve as “discipliners,” the formal teacher’s assistant. Teaching college offered a small number of opportunities to rising Taiwanese
students, not only to foster those who qualified, to also allow Taiwanese people to actively study fine arts and music. Many of the graduates were people like fine artist Ni Jianghuai, or musician Deng Yuxian, etc.

~Doctors

In 1899, the governor of Taiwan established the medical college. Along with the creation a national language university of qualified teachers at the beginning of Japanese rule, the medical college became one of the highest educational establishments. This type of system in the era of Japanese rule of Taiwan led a large amount of the intellectual elite to be central their professions in the medical field. In many places, doctors integrated into society and political movements because they often had complaints about the government. Nan Zhixin was a clansman of Taidong’s Beinan. He practiced medicine in the countryside, but at the same time, threw himself into different political circles. Jiang Weishui opened “Taiwan Island,” which standardized diagnosis books and medical prescriptions as “clinical teaching materials,” allowing the profession to become more prominent, a bright characteristic that attracted teaching doctors and political activists.

~The Pearl Harbor Incident
In 1941, Japan launched a sneak attack on the United States army in Hawaii’s Pearl Harbor naval base, leading to the United States’ declaration of war on Japan. Japan’s combined naval force played the lead role in the sudden and violent assault on Pearl Harbor. In 1943, that force annihilated the United States army in a battle, and its proclaimed military power was even documented in pictures on postcards.

~Japan’s Surrender

On the eighth and ninth day of August 1945, the United States dropped two atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, bringing about disastrous injuries and a catastrophic amount of death. Japan’s emperor Hirohito decided to surrender to the allied forces unconditionally, and on the 15th of August, he announced via radio broadcast the news of losing the war. Emperor Hirohito’s first “royal broadcast,” proclaimed the end result of World War II, and also began the dispersal of Japanese people in Taiwan.
~Celebrating Taiwanese Liberation

After Japan lost the war, Japanese people desolately waited repatriation to Japan, while Taiwanese people however, were joyously starting to study everything they could about their ancestral country, including language. Picture cards show the visible masses on the streets waving the national flag and celebrating the break away from the control of the colonial government.

~Welcome Ancestral Country

On the day of Taiwanese Liberation, the 17\textsuperscript{th} of September 1945, the first Chinese Army came to support Taiwan. The Taiwanese people were wild with joy to welcome the administrators of their ancestral country. On the 25\textsuperscript{th} of September, China’s former war zone, the Taiwan province, had a surrender celebration at the Taipei Guild Hall, wherein a meeting was held that concluded Japan’s 50 years and 156 days of control over Taiwan.
He was born in 1905 in Taipei, and as a child, followed his family as they returned to Tokyo. During his adolescent years, he returned to Taiwanese life several times, and in 1941, he invested in the making of a “Folklore Taiwan” magazine. Tateishi Tetsuomi thoroughly observed the world of Taiwan’s common people, and out of his drawings came Taiwan’s natural conditions and social customs; the circumstances of the people. In 1948, he was forced to leave Taiwan. After returning to Japan he completed the “Taiwan Picture Album,” which recorded all of his cherished memories about Taiwan, including the life, the folklore, and the scenery.

~You Can’t Bring it Along, So Go to The Vendors

This is an image that Tateishi Tetsuomi drew depicting a scene of Taiwan’s repatriated Japanese after the war. Except for finishing service work for the time being, or “continued employment” outside of Taiwan, the Japanese were sent back to their homeland from Keelung harbor starting in 1945. According to the law, overseas Japanese people could only bring simple belongings back with them to Japan. Tateishi Tetsuomi’s drawings show the lively appearance of Japanese people at the vendors on the sides of the streets. The things they cannot take along with them will be sold or straightforwardly given to other people present at the scene.
Many of the Japanese people forced to return to Japan were actually born in Taiwan. They grew up there and had never actually been to their ancestral country. This made them feel very reluctant about leaving Taiwan.

Tateishi Tetsuomi described the Keelung harbor when the friends of the native Taiwanese were seen off. On the boat, registered Japanese people vigorously waved their hands as they reluctantly departed from their old lives. Two years after the war, the Japanese army had repatriated approximately 170,000 soldiers and the governing body had repatriated approximately 330,000 citizens back to Japan.
Critical Analysis

Part I

The short novel, *Three-Legged Horse,* (三腳馬) was written by the Taiwanese author Cheng Ch’ing-wen in 1979. Cheng was born in *Taoyuan,* Taiwan, which lies on the outskirts of Taipei city, in 1932. He spent most of his childhood between his native home of *Taoyuan* and his childless uncle’s wooden furniture shop in *Hsinchu.* One can easily see the parallels forming between Cheng’s own life, and the story of the main character, Jixiang. At the time of Cheng’s birth, Japan had already ruled Taiwan for 37 years, winning the territory after defeating China in the Sino-Japanese War. Cheng’s native language is the Min Nan dialect of Chinese, also known as Taiwanese. He learned Japanese in elementary school, and only began to learn Mandarin Chinese after Taiwan was ceded back to China at the end of World War II, when he tested into a private middle school. He attended a vocational high school, and after graduation, went to work at the downtown Taipei branch of Hua Nan bank. He eventually took the college exams, and was admitted to the National Taiwan University, where he studied business.

Finding the course load to be not so strenuous, Cheng had ample time to invest in exploring literature. He was greatly influenced by the Russian writers Tolstoy and Chekhov, even though Chinese versions of these texts were banned during his youth. He instead had to plow through English versions with a trusty dictionary on hand. His infatuation with literature has continued throughout his life,
and led to a prolific side-career as an author. Cheng has written more than 200 short stories, three novels and three volumes of children’s’ stories.\textsuperscript{11}

He has been credited as a lead figure in the “nativist” movement of Taiwan. This movement is based upon the concept of the Taiwanese people identifying themselves with their island homeland, and not with the races of either country that has had taken control of Taiwan. Though the vast majority of the population of Taiwan consists of people who emigrated from Mainland China, and were therefore at one point considered “Chinese,” many people in Taiwan call themselves “Taiwanese.” Having spent four months studying abroad in Taiwan, I have witnessed first hand that this distinction in identity allows the people of Taiwan to feel a deeper connection with the unique culture of their homeland.

Taiwan is a special place due to its history. First colonized by the Dutch in the 17\textsuperscript{th} century, the island was then known as “Ilha Formosa,” or the “Beautiful Island.” The Chinese navy drove out the Dutch colonists in 1662, led by Zheng Chenggong. He fled to Taiwan at the fall of the Ming Dynasty and established the Kingdom of Tungning. This feeble empire lasted only about 20 years, when an armada led by Shi Lang defeated Zheng’s grandson, leading the Qing Dynasty to annex Taiwan and place it under the ruling jurisdiction of Fujian province. It

\textsuperscript{11}Interview with Cheng Ch’ing-wen

remained part of a different province until 1885, when it finally became a province in its own right.\textsuperscript{12}

A mere ten years later in 1895, however, Taiwan’s fate would be altered forever. After being defeated in the First Sino-Japanese War, China was forced to cede Taiwan to Japan. For 50 years, Taiwan was under complete Japanese control. Mandarin was no longer taught in school and all non-Japanese people in Taiwan essentially became second-class citizens. The aboriginal people of Taiwan were looked down upon even more, and became third-class citizens. All children during this era, including Cheng Ch’ing-wen, were taught Japanese. Older citizens also had to learn this new language, and Chinese language newspapers and books were banned. Many citizens of Taiwan were forced to convert to Shinto, and many people had to change their last names to the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese characters.

Japanese rule also had a profound effect other parts of Taiwanese society. They introduced factories and refineries into a nation that had mostly been agricultural, providing countless jobs for rural farmers. They restructured the public education system and opened the first national university in Taipei. They also expanded the railroad lines, which created a new, extensive transportation system.\textsuperscript{13} After the devastating events of World War II, Japan was forced to cede Taiwan back to China. The Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) came to the island, and another cycle of

\textsuperscript{12} Hung Chien-chao, \textit{A History of Taiwan}, Il Cerchio Iniziative Editoriali; 2000 (pg. 44-52)

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid (pg. 200-202)
cultural uprooting began. Chinese became the official language again, and the speaking of Japanese or publication of Japanese texts was prohibited.

In the midst of this cultural turmoil, an attachment to their native homeland kept the Taiwanese from being completely assimilated into China. Taiwan remained open to the West during the 1950s and 60s as Mao’s communism took hold of China, shutting its doors on the Western world. The infrastructure laid down by the Japanese helped the Taiwanese government reduce the barriers impeding education and entrepreneurship, which created a space of upward mobility for many Taiwanese families.\textsuperscript{14} Also, the immense amount of foreign aid received from the U.S. during the Korean War boosted Taiwan’s economy, leading it to become one of the Four Asian Dragons.\textsuperscript{15} Taiwan was recognized by the United Nations as the legitimate government of China until the 1970s. Today, Taiwan is still known as the Republic of China (ROC), while Mainland China is known as the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Though Taiwan is a democratic nation with an elected president, the PRC does not recognize the ROC as a legitimate government, and claims that the only China is the People’s Republic, treating Taiwan like a province. While Taiwan is not recognized as a sovereign nation by the United Nations, its people and culture reflect the special identity of this island. The muddled political issues with Mainland China have led the people of Taiwan to associate with their homeland even more strongly.

\textsuperscript{14} Roy, Denny, \textit{Taiwan: A Political History}, Cornell University Press; 2003 (pg.97)

\textsuperscript{15} The Four Asian Dragons were Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea and Singapore. These four nations were noted with maintaining exceptionally high growth rates and rapid industrialization from the 1960s-1990s.
This unique situation has led the Taiwanese people to adopt the ideas proposed by the “nativist” movement of Cheng Ch’ing-wen’s time as their established identity.

The events described in Three-Legged Horse mostly deal with the construction of identity during the Japanese colonization. Cheng aids the reader in understanding the new culture of this specific era through the unique style of his story. This translation has two parts: the narrative, and the perspectives of culture and history of colonial Taiwan. In the original Chinese text, interspersed with the narrative are small paragraphs that talk about difference aspects of culture or history in Taiwan during that time. All of these short blurbs are accompanied by old photographs, commercial images of the time period, or illustrations that help depict the concept being presented. I have incorporated only five of over 60 different images featured in the Chinese texts due to bindery restrictions on color printing.

The juxtaposition of the fictional narrative and the historical or cultural blurbs has an incredible effect. The events of the narrative are given a distinct sense of credibility, causing the reader to blur the line between the narrative and historical fact. The story becomes united with the facts, and a larger picture of Taiwan is formed, where the reader is privy to all the background information and immersed into a world to which, they never would normally have access. Cheng Ch’ing-wen draws the reader in to create a more intimate relationship between the story and the reader. Through the blending of the fact and fiction, the story seems more like a past reality. The characters no longer seem to be mere descriptions, but actual people that existed in this world. Cheng’s masterful crafting of this parallel adds a new dimension to his work, making it more gripping and fascinating.
Part II

Reading works in translation is a fallacy. When someone says they have read the *Odyssey*, or *War and Peace*, they have most likely not read what the actual author wrote. They have read the words of the *translator*, not the original author. Yet, we believe when we have read a translation, we have read the same text as the original; that is the fallacy. There are many different methods of translation, and they are all equally correct. The debate between an awkward, literal translation versus a flowing, liberal one will never be settled. Neither will the argument over how much liberty a translator can take with the original text. These are all issues I thought about as I approached this project. In the end, I decided to use one philosophy of translation to guide me through the process. I am a proponent of liberal translations because literal translations often sound awkward, and give themselves away as translations to the reader. I want to lull the reader into continuing the fallacy of the translated work, and the only way to do that is through creating a smooth, more liberally translated text. Though the words on the page are different, the different words should ultimately produce the same feeling for the reader in either language.

This translation was done through a three-draft process. In the first draft, I translated as literally as possible from the Chinese, which produced a generally incomprehensible text. The second draft was the most challenging, and the most time consuming. I went back and read what I had rendered from the source text, and then edited the English version to make it more comprehensible. Then I read the new version of what I had written and compared it to the original, making sure it had the same connotations in both languages, and prompted similar feelings. The third draft
was done without the use of the original text, the purpose being to make the English version as seamless as possible. In this final step, some of the exact Chinese vocabulary was dropped, but seamlessness is a quality I value highly in a translated text. My ultimate goal was to preserve the essence of the original text in a new form.

Translating Chinese to English, however, can make that a very difficult goal. There were many obstacles I faced, not only because I was working in a non-Romanized language, but also because the Chinese of this text uses a specific dialect that most dictionaries do not encompass. One of the first challenges I met in this translation was the issue of punctuation and its role in Chinese versus its role in English. Sentence and grammar structure also played into this problem. In Chinese, multiple clauses can be strung together in a single sentence separated by commas without conjunctions. Essentially, that means a sentence is perfectly logical in Chinese, but becomes a compounded run-on sentence in English. In the first draft, I kept the Chinese punctuation intact, thus, during the second draft; it was exceedingly tricky to figure out when to leave the commas as they were and insert conjunctions and when to make them into separate sentences.

Due to this multiple clause structure, Chinese does not require that each sentence have a subject indicated by a pronoun, as it is implied by context and previous clauses and if included, would be redundant. Therefore, it was necessary to read through the text and insert pronouns in order to make the English version less confusing. Aside from set grammar structures, Chinese sentences can be constructed in very different ways from English. I had to change the structure of many sentences to make them read in a more logical sequence. Another difficult facet of translating
Chinese is the language’s onomatopoeias. Almost all languages have methods of expressing sounds via written language. Translating them from one language to another, with a completely different set, is a tricky task. The three onomatopoeias I encountered in this translation were 嘟, 嘤 and 噗. Respectively, they stand for the sound of a train, the sound of a whisper and the sound of escaping or rushing water. The first two have relatively common analogues in English with the train sound of whoo-whoo, and the whisper sound of shhhh. The most difficult one to bring across into English is the last one, the sound of rushing water. Even though most people know what rushing water sounds like, there is no set word in the English language for this type of sound that would immediately bring the reader to think of rushing water.

In my initial draft, I translated the onomatopoeia as “whoosh”, but eventually settled on “splash” as it is only used to describe the sound of water or other liquids whereas “whoosh” can be used to describe rushing air. This way, the English reader immediately thinks of water, just as the Chinese reader would.

With the exception of the onomatopoeias, these are issues confronting any person doing a Chinese to English translation. They are frustrating, but can ultimately be overcome with a certain amount of dedication and patience. The most challenging aspect of translating this work, however, was the time specific vocabulary and language. Taiwan, like many places in China, has a population that speaks a specific dialect of Mandarin. In Taiwan, this dialect is called Min Nan. While not all people living in Taiwan speak this language, it has still had an influence on the standard Mandarin of Taiwan. For the most part, the speakers of Min Nan are the people who live in rural areas and do not have a great deal of contact with people
who cannot speak the dialect, while urbanites need to speak standard Mandarin as large cities attract emigrants from Mainland China.

The folk culture of Taiwan is also heavily tied to the Min Nan dialect because this culture traces its origin back to rural peasants. One example of this subculture from this work is an instance during the main character’s flashback where a group of boys is playing with spinning tops. This sort of game was very popular in Taiwan during the early decades of the 20th century, and it evolved its own complex rule system and vocabulary. Upon first encountering these words, I was very confused, as they were not included in any standard Mandarin dictionary. The actual word for a spinning top in Chinese is 陀螺, but the act of playing with them is 打干樂. As is clearly visible, the word for the toy is not part of the phrase that means to play with it. The phrase actually means, “playing dry music.”

In order to spin the top, a player must wind a rope around the toy, and then pull back on the rope violently in order to release it. This motion is comparable to the back and forth movement of a musician playing an erhu, a stringed Chinese instrument. The toy makes a rattling sound on the ground instead of the smooth, flowing tones of the erhu, so the top creates a type of “dry music.” There are also specific names for different kinds of tops. These names correspond to the way the top moves when it spins, which is determined by its size. There is also a set of slang used by the Taiwanese youth to describe different players and their tops that was very difficult to decipher.
Another interesting aspect of the written language used in the book has to do with the time period it describes. The main bulk of the story takes place during the period of the Japanese colonization of Taiwan. During his flashback, Jixiang talks about his experiences in elementary school and the tough, disciplinarian teacher he had. This teacher was Japanese, and at one point yells at his students in Japanese. Japanese and Chinese share the writing system the Japanese call kanji, which is composed of Chinese characters. In his rant, he calls his students “馬鹿野郎”. In Chinese, this phrase is pronounced ma lu ye lang, which is nonsense and has no meaning. In Japanese, however, the same characters are pronounced baka yaro, which means idiot.

The next question I was faced with was how to translate this phrase. I decided that to bypass the Japanese being spoken and translate it directly into English was robbing the reader of the cultural differences that are the major underlying theme of the entire text. Instead, I left the romanized Japanese in my version and used a footnote to explain its significance. That way, the reader would be able to understand the clashing of Taiwanese and Japanese culture that is being highlighted by this work even more clearly than just reading about it. The schism between the two actually becomes part of the text, as the Japanese interrupts the flow of the Chinese narrative, much in the same way that the Japanese bombarded the Taiwanese way of life. This, however, was the only concrete instance of the blurring of language that was conveyable to the English reader. In the original text, the reader experiences in an intermingling of languages that is in itself a manifestation of the issue of identity being addressed by the story. Language is not just a method of communication, but a
window through which we make sense of the world around us. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis strongly suggests our language does not only define us culturally, but also weaves the very fabric of our everyday understanding. This fundamental nature of language was not as straight-forward for the people of Taiwan during Japanese rule, as evinced by the language used by Cheng Chi’ng-wen. The interspersion of languages creates the effect of blurred identity, which was the exact case for the protagonist, Jixiang.

Part III

The conflict between the Taiwanese and their colonizers, the Japanese, is the central theme of this text. The narrative chronicles the story of a boy born in a small, rural village who eventually becomes a member of the Japanese-run police force. Jixiang’s role as a transitional piece between his traditional Taiwanese roots and his future desires as a pseudo-Japanese policeman help the reader grasp both sides of this conflict. The story is written in such a way as to make the reader sympathize with the main character, and because his identity transitions between Taiwanese and Japanese, it is difficult for the reader to pull apart this dynamic and try to side with one or the other.

The key image that corresponds to this conflict is the eponymous “three-legged” horse. In the short blurbs, Cheng includes a small section on the origin of the three-legged animal theme. The Taiwanese considered themselves to be the only true humans on the island, so they have two legs. The Japanese were considered dogs.
Dogs are generally useful animals that can be trained to operate with loyalty to a higher power. In the case of the Japanese in Taiwan, they were loyal to the Japanese Empire, doing its bidding in a colonized land. Yet, there was ground in between these two views. Those Taiwanese that worked in conjunction with the Japanese government were the ones in the middle, neither fully Japanese nor Taiwanese. Thus, these people earned the title of “three-legged,” as they existed in the space between the two-legged humans (Taiwanese) and the four-legged dogs (Japanese).

The main character of *Three-Legged Horse*, Jixiang, is a person who carries the unfortunate title of “three-legged.” When first introduced to Jixiang, he is a hermit that carves three-legged horses out of wood. These images are a reflection of his own self; he is the three-legged horse. I find this image to be much more powerful than that of the three-legged dog. As demonstrated through the narrative, Jiyang was a vital person during his youth. He bounced back after being bullied, he learned to navigate the winding alleyways of Taipei, he took on the difficult task of being a police informant to the Japanese, eventually joining their ranks. During this time, he was considered to be a horse, a young, powerful man in the prime of his life. Horses were even more valuable than dogs. In the era of Japanese colonialism in Taiwan, only the wealthiest people could afford to keep horses, making them an elitist status symbol that other people could only look up to and admire. Jixiang thought that his own status was analogous to those elites with horses, admirable compared to his Taiwanese counterparts who were mere farmers or factory workers.

This vitality, however, was taken from him when Japan was defeated in World War II. The people in his village revolted against the Japanese authority, and he
became a target of their anti-Japanese sentiment. In his fear, he fled the village to return to his parents’ home, leaving behind his wife. This act haunts him for the rest of his life, and turns him into a three-legged horse. He is no longer the useful, powerful creature he once was, but rather the shell of a man filled with regret. His known affiliation with the Japanese cannot help him as the Nationalist Party takes control of Taiwan, and he is thrust into the shadows as an afterthought. Parts of his being have been stripped away: his once-glorious profession and the love of his life. He feels utterly useless and pitiful, like a horse that has lost a leg. The proud identity he once valued more highly than anything disappeared, leaving him with nothing and casting him into a state of self-pity and sadness.

The three-legged horse Jixiang, however, is not entirely alone. Another issue brought to light by this story is the untold effects of World War II. When World War II is mentioned in the Western world, the first images that come to mind for the vast majority of people are the gruesome squalor of concentration camps or the hideous mushroom clouds blurring the Japanese skyline. While these effects are certainly important, they end up obscuring the struggles and plights of the people affected by the war in other ways. By this, I mean the effect World War II had on the identities of the Taiwanese people.

At the time of the Shimonoseki treaty in 1945, Japan had already ruled Taiwan for 50 years. Within that time frame, Japan had implemented massive assimilations efforts to get the people of Taiwan to understand that they were officially Japanese. All of the children born in this time, including Cheng Ch’ing-wen were taught Japanese in school; they never learned a single word of standard
Mandarin. Upon Japan’s surrender, Taiwan was ceded back to China and the Nationalists took control. Almost all registered Japanese citizens were forced to return to Japan, even if they had children that were born in Taiwan. This was an incredibly painful process for the people of Taiwan. Even more painful, however, was the identity crisis that followed.

Those who had been born under Japanese rule were now forced to learn Mandarin. Speaking Japanese or reading Japanese texts was made illegal. The only worldview these people ever had was turned completely upside down, leaving them feeling lost, confused and homeless, even though they had never left their home country. They felt like strangers in their own homes, the most fundamental part of their lives was irreparably changed. Identity is a force powerful enough to motivate someone during the darkest times. The victims of the Holocaust and other World War II related atrocities had strong senses of their identities, even if they knew this identity would be condemning. Identity creates allegiances between people and strengthens them against oppression. The Taiwanese people, on the other hand, did not have this power to aid them during their darkest hour. Their previous identity was ripped away and a new one was forcefully pushed in, leaving no time to comprehend the transition.

Cheng Chi’ng-wen’s short novel, *Three-Legged Horse*, is the story of such a plight. A man stripped of his identity is cursed to mourn his losses for the rest of his life. Yet, he finds a source of redemption in the young man who listens to his story and ultimately asks for a three-legged horse. This young man’s interest in his life proves to Jixiang that he is not as useless as he thought after all, and that redemption
can always be found. Cheng has created a small masterpiece that brings to light a story that has largely gone unheard, the story of a small island and its incredible people.