

舊建築新生命

Old Architecture, New Life

The stately old building that currently hosts the National Museum of Taiwan Literature once housed the seat of government during the Japanese Colonial Period, offices of the ROC Air Force Support Command and the Tainan Municipal Government. Recognized as an important historical building, this Tainan landmark was saved from falling into further decay, restored and made one of Taiwan's first and most important examples of infusing old buildings with new purpose. Out of respect and love for our shared heritage, we hope you can spend some of your time at the NMTL learning about the almost 100 years of history embodied in this important architectural legacy and then helping its stories further enrich your appreciation of Taiwan's abundant literary garden.



臺灣文學的發展

The Development of Taiwan Literature

From Grassroots into Modernity

Generation after generation have worked, struggled and fought to build a better life on Taiwan. This vibrant spirit flowing through the centuries also feeds the wellspring of grassroots literature. Taiwan literature is inextricably tied to the spatial and spiritual nature of the land - to the lives and everyday experiences of Taiwanese. Literary works from a given period tells the story of the people and the land at that point in time.



The water buffalo, hardworking spirit of traditional agriculture, is an appropriate symbol of the "grassroots" qualities that permeate Taiwan literature. The railway line, on the other hand, captures Taiwanese ambitions toward modernity and progress. Together, the water buffalo and railway line symbolize the vibrant spirit of the Taiwanese people and channel the two great streams of grassroots traditions and modern ambitions into the dynamic river of Taiwan literature.



A Polyphonic Symphony : Taiwan's Multiethnic Melting Pot

Language breathes life into literature. The richer and more expressive a language is, the greater the room for literary depth and substance.



The many languages that coexist here give Taiwan a particularly high level of linguistic diversity. Dozens of indigenous Malayo-Polynesian languages, Dutch, Spanish, Hō-ló (Taiwanese), Hakkanese, English, Japanese and Mandarin form the pillars upon which Taiwan's literary diversity is grounded and built. Lullabies in so many languages have been sung and remembered here. Each cultural and ethnic group is a living part of Taiwan's collective modern soul; a part of the song of Taiwan.

Sharing Memories, Developing Themes

Rising like an immobile whale between the East and South China Seas, the island of Taiwan has seen immigration, homesteading, colonialism, oppression and opposition. Those living on Taiwan have often risked everything for a better life for themselves and future generations. The history of Taiwan is rife with blood and tears.



There seem always to be certain authors at every turn, every stage of history ready and willing to walk as one with the people, expounding upon their stories and experiences to produce moving narratives. The ten themes in this section of the exhibit create a vivid image of history through the "eyes" of the literary narrative.

Taiwan Literary History: Acknowledged and Celebrated

Taiwan literature has long been overlooked as a subtheme within Japanese and Chinese literary traditions. In the past, some have gone so far as to claim the island has no independent literary tradition.



Only when the public began in the 1980s to look inward and appreciate their identity as Taiwanese, as well as the unique influence of Taiwan on their life experience, did they begin appreciating the richness and depth inherent to domestic literature. From indigenous Malayo-Polynesian and early Chinese oral stories to classical Chinese poems to the New Literature movement, Taiwan has a solid literary foundation replete with distinct forms and styles, moving stories and themes, and a complex overlay of languages. Taiwan literature captures both the expansive vision and complex reality of the Taiwan experience. Look, experience and read to begin your personal journey.

The Development of Taiwan Literature



Combining Trends, Embracing the World

Ocean waters connect the four corners of the world. Surrounded by the sea, Taiwan has been a crossroads of culture since prehistoric times. Visitors and settlers from Southeast Asia, China, Japan and the West have all made their mark here, with influences lingering in the island's literary legacy. Taiwan's creative output has long been part of world literature.

Taiwanese are familiar with the world's great literary works, and the cream of Taiwan literary output in translation has been shared and enjoyed around the world. Literature is an important window to the world for those on Taiwan, who both follow global literary trends and share their own literary creativity with others.



A Passageway across Time: The True Face of Literature

Taiwan literature serves as a "passageway across time", with each twist and turn reflecting the experiences and life stories of those who found and made their life on this island.

The images of authors displayed here tell the story of Taiwan at each stage of its history and development. Each of the literary journals they founded, edited and contributed to is a treasure trove of literary gems that epitomize the passions and love felt for their Taiwan home.

As you walk through this passageway, listen closely to the voices of our literary past. We hope you will find them as bright, fulfilling and moving as we do.

