Constructing a Colonial Literary History:
Re-Examining the Writing of Taiwanese Literary History under Japanese Colonial Rule

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ABSTARCT

This study applies the basic questions on literary history to analyzing the construction of Taiwanese Literary History under Japanese Colonial Rule as a field of study. "Literary history" as a subject deals primarily with understanding the literature of a country. Thus, when placing "Taiwanese literature" into a framework of "literary history," Taiwan thus presumably had the status of a nation. Nevertheless, to write a comprehensive literary history of a colony made up of many different ethnic groups is by no means an easy task. Such a project would involve parsing out not only the history of that colony, but also the definition of literature itself and literary criticism. Current research on Taiwanese Literary History under Japanese Colonial Rule has generally focused on "the subjectivity of Taiwan"; that is, whether or not to take Taiwanese writers into consideration when constructing a Taiwanese literary history. However, this article argues that it is necessary to reexamine the history of "the subjectivity of Taiwanese literary history," investigating the idea of Taiwanese literary history as an organic entity in which different peoples have come together at different times, and looking into the aesthetic or standard of evaluation adopted to critique the literary works of various cultures. Although considerable research on Taiwanese Literary History under Japanese Colonial Rule has already been carried out, this study approaches the topic from new angles. This article is guided by the above question of how to write a literary history of a multi-ethnic colony, and seeks to form a new methodology and intellectual framework for exploring this issue in the Taiwanese context.

Keywords: Literary history, Taiwanese Literary History, Taiwanese Literature, Subjectivity