

# 直接的自然和扭曲的自然： 殖民時期台灣視覺藝術與超現實詩 的風景觀比較

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## 中文摘要

探討台灣殖民時期的文化發展，從自然到文化面向的轉變是重要的議題。對殖民者日本而言，重構物質環境及展現其意涵是統治台灣非常關鍵的一步，就此，自然物理條件包含了一種精神與情緒的特定語言以反應此一特殊關係。

本論文探討在殖民脈絡下視覺藝術家如何發展風景畫與形塑風景觀；相較於此，超現實主義詩人楊熾昌又如何創作出不同境況的現代詩。經由不同的表現取徑，兩者皆關注台灣風景與熱帶景象，但表現的手法與創作思路大相逕庭。這個現象反映不同媒介表達（文字與繪畫）與觀點的差異下「自然的台灣」如何被賦予文化涵義並詮釋成為「文化的台灣」。因此，他們構想台灣的方式透露出他們如何發現與再現殖民脈絡下的台灣。這樣的看法也反映了他們在殖民關係上的特定價值判斷與詮釋。在客觀與主觀之間，在真實與反轉之間，以及在現實與詩意之間，台灣風景在他們的眼前表現了不同的劇碼與涵義。從視覺藝術與文學的比較反映出，藝術與媒材的表現和社會文化的個人詮釋有密切關係。

關鍵詞：殖民主義、風景、台灣美術、台灣文學、地方色彩

# Naturalistic and Distorted Natures: The Conception of Landscape in Visual Art and Surrealist Poetry in Colonial Taiwanese

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## Abstract

The transition from natural Taiwan to cultural Taiwan plays an important role in positioning Taiwan's visual art during the colonial period. The reconstruction of the physical environment was a crucial step for the Japanese empire to implement in her colony of Taiwan. Physical nature therefore becomes a certain language containing psychological and emotional reactions towards such relationships.

The paper intends to identify how some Taiwanese visual artists developed their landscape paintings, in comparison, how Yang Chih-Chang (楊熾昌, 1908-1994), a surrealist poet, conceived a different view of Taiwanese landscape poetry during roughly the same colonial period of the 1920s-1940s. Both sides paid attention to Taiwanese landscape and tropical scenery, but their terms of descriptive and reflective approaches differed. This interesting discrepancy shows that natural Taiwan has been endowed with cultural connotations and interpretations through the different media of visual and verbal representations and languages.

Such perceptions also reflect certain value judgments and colonial relationships towards the Taiwan they inhabit. Between the objective and subjective, the literal and subverted, and the realistic and poetic, the Taiwanese landscape performed a different drama and meaning to their eyes. The way in which they conceived Taiwan therefore reveals how they discovered and represented colonial Taiwan.

**Key words:** colonialism, landscape, Taiwanese art, Taiwanese literature, local color

# Naturalistic and Distorted Natures:

## The Conception of Landscape in Visual Art and Surrealist Poetry in Colonial Taiwanese

Art opens the established reality to another dimension...

And precisely in this transfiguration,  
art preserves and transcends its class character.

Herbert Marcuse (1972)

### I. Introduction

The reconstruction of the physical environment was a very important step for the Japanese empire to implement in her colonization of Taiwan (1895-1945). Not only did Japan physically pursue modernization,<sup>1</sup> but it also created a new colonial spectacle visually, socio-culturally, and psychologically. As Robert J. C. Young interprets the influence of power relation on environment as well as culture,

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<sup>1</sup> Some scholars distinguish Asian modernization of colonized territories as “colonial modernity” or “refracted modernity” which is different from Euro-American one since modernization in Asian countries contains various projects including colonization and modernization, self-affirmation and localization etc. See Barlow, Tani E. ed., *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia*, (Durham: Duke University, 1997); Kikuchi Yuko, *Refracted Modernity: Visual Culture and Identity in Colonial Taiwan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007); Shia Chu-Joe (夏鑄九), “Zhiming de xiandaixing yingzao - chongxie riben zhiming shiqi Taiwan jianzhu yu chengshi de lishi” (殖民的現代性營造 Building Colonial Modernity: Rewriting the Histories of Architecture and Urbanism in the Colonial Taiwan), *Taiwan shehui yanjiu jikan* (台灣社會研究季刊 Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies) No. 40 (2000), pp.47-82.

[C]olonialism...involves the physical appropriation of land, its capture for the cultivation of another culture. It thus foregrounds the fact that cultural colonization was not simply a discursive operation but a seizure of cultural (in all sense of the word) space.<sup>2</sup>

For the colonizer, it is both crucial to govern the colonized in both visible and invisible aspects. Discernment of the natural environment and socio-cultural attitudes is certainly true to any formation of culture, but is more urgent for the colonial ruler. “He” (a ruling subject with gender and hierarchical connotation in power relationship) needs to claim complete legitimate right over the space he possesses, in order to show his perfect efficiency of governing. The appropriation of nature is therefore not a superficial change in appearance, but a significant and profound transformation. As such, deciphering natural appearances are meaningful when analyzing a colonial situation like Taiwan. This perception is a basic necessity for the analysis of post-colonial study in terms of the dialectic between nature and culture. Shia Chu-Joe describes the colonial situation in Taiwan from the perspective of transforming landscape as “palimpsest”, which is recognized as a kind of parchment on which successive generations have inscribed and re-inscribed the process of history. Landscape, like a piece of paper, is coded and recoded through successive political desires and cultural intentions which combine the real and the imagined. Shia puts it,

The Taiwanese landscape, which was turned around and re-written like palimpsest, is the colonizer’s imagined nature. Its “other nature” conforms to the imagined geography of “The Great Japanese Empire.”<sup>3</sup>(The following quotations of Chinese text are all translated by the writer.)

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<sup>2</sup> Young, Robert J. C., *Colonial Desire – Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. (London: Routledge, 1995), p.172.

<sup>3</sup> Shia Chu-Joe, “Zhiming de xiandaixing yingzao - chongxie riben zhiming shiqi Taiwan jianzhu yu chengshi de lishi”, p.56.

For the construction of environment, “place” as well as “space” cannot be separated in a project of colonization. This can be seen theoretically in David Arnold’s discussion that there is a close relationship between cultural operation (a power form especially) and natural environment in the colonial context:

It ought, in theory, to be possible to separate the imperial rhetoric from the analysis of the material reality. In practice, however, the distinction is often hard to maintain, for the very sources themselves are imbued with a particular mind-set, a colonial way of understanding nature and representing its human consequences.<sup>4</sup>

Under a specific context, epistemological and practical realization does not diverge, but instead develops mutually. Physical nature therefore becomes a certain language containing psychological and emotional reactions towards such relationships. As such, Ronald G. Knapp deems that examining the environmental transformation is necessary for understanding Taiwanese culture and identity.<sup>5</sup>

The transition from “natural Taiwan” to “cultural Taiwan” plays an important role in positioning Taiwan’s visual art during the colonial period.<sup>6</sup> It is worthwhile to examine this issue further in both the comparative perspectives of the visual arts and literature, since both perceived colonial Taiwan differently through distinct social perception and value judgment. Both artistic forms were dominant and popular in the colonial Taiwan. The gap between them, though potentially important, is seldom discussed in detail. The following hopes to identify how Taiwanese visual artists developed their landscape paintings with the support of the colonial

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<sup>4</sup> Arnold, David, *The Problem of Nature – Environment, Culture and European Expansion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p.173.

<sup>5</sup> Knapp, Ronald G., “The Shaping of Taiwan’s Landscapes”. Murray A. Rubinstein ed. *Taiwan – A New History* (New York: An East Gate Book, 1999), pp.3-26.

<sup>6</sup> Liao Hsin-Tien, “Cong ziran de Taiwan dao wenhua de Taiwan – riju shidai Taiwan fengjing tuxiang de wenhua biao zheng tanshi” (從自然的臺灣到文化的臺灣 – 日據時代臺灣風景圖像表徵探試 From Natural Taiwan to Cultural Taiwan – Representation and Symbolism in Taiwan Landscape Images of the Japanese Colonial Period). *Lishi wenwu* (歷史文物 Bulletin of the National Museum of History) Vol.14 No.1 (2004), pp.16-37.

government and the public and, in comparison, how Yang Chih-Chang, a surrealist poet and founder of a poetry group (The Windmill Poetry Society 風車詩社), conceived a different view of the world of Taiwanese landscape poetry during roughly the same period of the 1920s-1940s. Both paid attention to Taiwanese landscape and tropical scenery, but their terms of descriptive and reflective approaches differed. This interesting discrepancy shows that natural Taiwan has been endowed with cultural connotations and interpretations through the different media of visual and verbal languages. Such perceptions also reflect certain value judgments and colonial relationships towards the Taiwan they inhabit. Between the objective and subjective, the literal and subverted, the realistic and poetic, as well as the conscious and subconscious, the Taiwanese landscape performed a different drama to their eyes. The way in which they conceived Taiwan therefore reveals how they discovered and represented colonial Taiwan.

## II. The Emergence of Taiwan's Modern Landscape Painting and Its Context

### A. The Cultivation of Artistic Background and the Japanese Art Teacher Ishikawa Kinichiro (石川欽一郎)

During its fifty-year occupation of Taiwan, though Japan governed by trial and error colonial government in Taiwan still went through different stages and reached a high achievement in terms of economic, political and cultural transformations.<sup>7</sup> Generally, the Japanese colonial period can be divided into three stages: military government (1895-1919), civil official government (1919-1936), and a return to military one (1936-1945). The second stage is the beginning of modern fine art in

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<sup>7</sup> Wakabayashi Masahiro (若林正丈), Xsu Pei-Hsien (許佩賢) trans, "Ribei de Taiwan zhimingdi zhipeishi yanjiu de chengguo" (日本的臺灣殖民地支配史研究的成果 The Achievement of Dominating History Research in Japanese Colonization of Taiwan). *Dandai* (當代 Contemporary) No.87 (1993), pp.50-61.

Taiwan. The argument has been made that the modernization that occurred during the first twenty-five years of Japanese rule paved the way for the rise of modern Taiwanese art. During this period, the Taiwanese were exposed for the first time to modern banking, transportation, communication, postal office, and public sanitation systems. According to the writer, eight factors conclusively influenced the development of modern western-style art in Taiwan: the Japanese-style educational system, the trend of studying abroad (that is, Japan), the influence of Japanese art teachers, the establishment of a Taipei Teacher's School for training local teachers, the support of the Taiwan *Sotokufu* (the Taiwanese Governor-General's Office), the patronage system, the creation of art groups, and art criticism.<sup>8</sup> Most of all, landscape painting could not be a major artistic form in Taiwan without the help of Ishikawa Kinichiro (1871-1945). With his stay in Taiwan (1907-1916, 1924-1932), he helped the Taiwanese to establish a new way of reading and describing the Taiwanese environment. In November 1907, Ishikawa was sent to Taiwan as a military translation officer, and was also invited to teach painting courses part-time at the Taipei Teacher's School (台北師範學校), where he promoted the practice of outdoor sketching. It was during this time that he incorporated Taiwanese subjects into his paintings, thus introducing the exotic tropical island of Taiwan to Japanese society. In 1924, Ishikawa became a full-time art teacher of the Taipei Teacher's School. Many of his Taiwanese students then went to Japan for advanced study (especially the Tokyo School of Fine Arts), and later showed their paintings at both Japanese and Taiwanese official exhibitions. Ishikawa's style later became a genre of Taiwanese landscape art all onto itself.

One of Ishikawa's greatest accomplishments was his promotion of art as aesthetic enjoyment for Taiwanese and Japanese in Taiwan. He often took his students to practice outdoor sketching and exhibited their results in schools and

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<sup>8</sup> Liao Hsin-Tien, "Colonialism, Post-colonialism and Local Identity in Colonial Taiwanese Landscape Paintings (1908-1945)" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University Central England in Birmingham, 2002).



public galleries.<sup>9</sup> He also organized some art groups, whose members were for the most part, his current and former students. The Seven Stars Art Group (七星畫會) (1926-1929), the Taiwanese Watercolor Painting Association (臺灣水彩畫會) (1927-1936), and the Red Island Society (赤島社) (1927-1933) served to demonstrate Ishikawa's pooling of the Taiwanese art community. In addition to art exhibitions, he and other Japanese cultural leaders lobbied the colonial government to organize the first Taiwanese Fine Art Exhibition (the 1927-1936 *Taiten* 臺展 and the 1938-1943 *Futen* 府展). During this time he published many articles on art in *the Taiwan Daily News* (台灣日日新報), an activity that possibly increase Taiwanese peoples' interest in art.

Ishikawa wrote many articles that reflected his perceptions of Taiwan. He was devoted to discovering the reality of Taiwan's landscape and the creation of landscape painting. From his first published article on Taiwanese landscape in 1908 to his retirement, Ishikawa explored the unfamiliar and exotic colonial island and made it familiar to himself, to native residents, and to "inland people" (內地人, the Japanese). He gradually established a "Taiwanese taste", that was characterized by strong light, vibrant colors, and a certain level of roughness.<sup>10</sup> It was an interpretation of Taiwan that deeply influenced his students and fellow Japanese painters. He emphasized heat and bright sunshine as the dominant features of the tropical island, believing that his was an objective observation.<sup>11</sup> He truly believed that the monotonous and vulgar qualities of the culture he described were reflections of nature. In total, Ishikawa's style was pastoral, poetic, and conservative.

<sup>9</sup> Lin Ju-Wei (林如薇), "Ishikawa Kinchiro dierci zai Taiwan de huodong" (石川欽一郎第二次在臺灣的活動 Ishikawa Kinchiro's Second Stay in Taiwan), *Yishujia* No. 242 (1995), pp.326-336.

<sup>10</sup> Ishikawa Kinichiro, "Taiwan de shanshui" (臺灣的山水 Taiwan Mountains and Water), Yen Chuan-Ying (顏娟英) and Tsuruta Takeyoshi (鶴田武良) eds., *Fengjing xinjing* (風景心境——台灣近代美術文獻導讀 Landscape Moods: Selected Readings in Modern Taiwanese Art) (Taipei: Xiongshi Meishu Publishing, 2001), pp.49-53.

<sup>11</sup> Ishikawa Kinichiro, "Taiwan diqu de fengjing jianshang" (臺灣地區的風景鑑賞 An Appreciation of Taiwanese Landscape Painting), Yen Chuan-Ying and Tsuruta Takeyoshi eds., *Fengjing xinjing*, pp.32-35.

His taste was that of the Japanese middle class, delicate, realistic, and holding an urban world view that treated rural scenes as harbors for modern nostalgia. He believed that color was a fixed environmental element that was objective and therefore could be agreed upon by all. As such, landscape painting and its theory were established under his enthusiastic initiation and visual discourse in colonial Taiwan.

## B. The Spectacle of the Colonized

Taiwanese landscape paintings developed a style that echoed socio-cultural changes during the emergence of a modern artistic environment that included art education, exhibitions, and criticism as aforementioned. To some extent, the spectacle of the colonized society was reflected and expressed in landscape painting. When discussing project of modernization, vernacularism needs to become the focus. In her studies of Asian crafts, Yuko Kikuchi argues that modernity in Japan, as well as in its colonies, was transformed into a version of what she calls “Oriental Orientalism”. It is a vernacularism that expressed modern characteristics of “Oientalness” to differentiate the Japanese empire from its European competitors. This is similar to Terence Ranger’s concept of “progressive traditionalism” that used to describe improvements in traditional or local resources via modernization programs could be described as helping in the discovery of an authentic life for Japan and its colonies.<sup>12</sup> Here, local appearance was treated as a spectacle, as the visual aspect of a new socio-political and cultural order.

One of the most important features of colonial modernization in terms of Taiwanese landscape painting was the discovery and representation of actual local life. The idea of painting Taiwanese environments had been loosely amalgamated into a common purpose, namely to describe the transformation of Taiwan. According to Chen Chun-De a critic in the colonial period,

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<sup>12</sup> Ranger, Terence, “The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa”. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 211-262.

The new sturdy spirit of fine art and expression was in realism...The so-called reality often combined the appearances of objects. Reality in painting was actually based on reality in life and the shape of objects.<sup>13</sup>

Nature becomes the teacher of artists and their ultimate object in terms of the new concept. Reality is expressed in terms of a tropical landscape and southern rural scenery that included temples, tropical flora, traditional Taiwanese dwellings, and peasant life. But at the same time, there were many representations of the changes resulting from modernization under colonial rule. Wire poles, bridges, and railways became increasingly common elements in landscape paintings. Artists tried to depict and express genuine local stories and local progress simultaneously. On the whole, this was the construction of a new aesthetic order. Their works reflected selections, reflections, expectations, and an overall acceptance of both the present and future. However, the growing dispute in artistic groups showed dissatisfaction toward “local color”, which gradually became a burden rather than an asset in terms of artistic creation.

### C. The Problem of “Local Color” and Its Arguments

The issue of local color served two functions regarding the formation of local identity in colonial Taiwanese visual art from the 1910s to the 1930s. In addition to being a theoretical framework for both *Yōga* (洋畫 western-style painting) and *Toyōga* (東洋畫 Eastern-style painting), local color was an instructive framework linking various artists and their works. However, it is important to keep in mind that the concept of local color was constantly being challenged even as it was being developed.

In the 1930s, the local color concept in Japanese visual art developed from the ideas of “nationalized subject” and “localized subject”.<sup>14</sup> When Kuroda Seiki (黒

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<sup>13</sup> Chen Chun-Te (陳春德), “Yongjiu fe vhongjing” (永久的憧憬 Longing for Permanence)”, Yen Chuan-Ying and Tsuruta Takeyoshi eds., *Fengjing xinjing*, p.343.

田清輝), one of the first Japanese art students in France, was appointed as the director of the Western Painting Section of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts in 1896, he influenced his students with a combination of Western academic style and the bright colors of Impressionism. This compromised style – alternately called “impressionistic academism”<sup>15</sup> and “academic Impressionism”<sup>16</sup> quickly became the mainstream style among Japanese artists.<sup>17</sup> Its major characteristics were local subject matter treated with modern techniques of expression. During that time, the majority of active Taiwanese artists studied modern fine art at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, and so their depictions of Taiwan accordingly resembled the works of their Japanese teachers. However, the concept of local color in Taiwanese art contained some important differences resulting from the colonial context.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Taiwan was a popular subject for paintings because of the Japanese government’s intention to promote its new acquisition. For example, a Taiwanese pavilion was built for the Japan’s Fifth Domestic Industrial Exhibition in 1903. Two years later, the colonial government issued a series of Taiwanese postcards to commemorate its first ten years of colonial administration. By 1908, Taiwanese images were considered an accepted subject to be shown at Japanese art forums. A watercolor painting entitled *The Brook* by Ishikawa was displayed at the second *Bunten* (文展), considered the most important

<sup>14</sup> Wang Hsiu-Hsiung (王秀雄), “Zhanqian Taiwan xiyanghua de fengge tanshi” (戰前臺灣西洋畫的風格探試 An Analysis of Western Painting in Pre-World War II Taiwan), *Xichao dongfeng – yinxiangpai zai Taiwan* (西潮東風 – 印象派在臺灣 Western Waves, Eastern Wind – Impressionism in Taiwan) (Kaoshiung: Kaoshiung Fine Arts Museum, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> Takashina, Shuji, “Eastern and Western Dynamics in the Development of Western-style Oil Painting during the Meiji Era”, Shuji Takashina, J. Thomas Rimer and Gerald D. Bolas eds., *Paris in Japan – the Japanese Encounter with European Painting* (Tokyo and Missouri: The Japan Foundation and Washington University in St. Louis, 1987), pp.21-31.

<sup>16</sup> McCallum, Donald, “Three Taisho Artists: Yorozu Tetsugoro, Koide Narashige, and Kishida Ryusei”, Shuji Takashina, J. Thomas Rimer and Gerald D. Bolas eds. *Paris in Japan*, pp.81-95.

<sup>17</sup> “Impressionistic academism” suggests that this non-academic art creation Impressionism in France in the late twentieth century was incorporated into the Japanese art academic community. Therefore, an “academic Impressionism” occurred in Japan and its colonies. “Impressionistic academism” and “academic Impressionism” reveal the combination of the different fields in the art world of modern Asia.

official Japanese exhibition. From 1910 to 1913, Ishikawa's work was filled with Taiwanese subjects.<sup>18</sup> He later admitted that he took advantage of the then-current interest in Taiwan to gain entry to Japanese exhibitions and to attract viewers.<sup>19</sup> Local color seemed to be ascribed to watercolorist Ishikawa and his followers' style exclusively. His student Ni Chiang-Huai (倪蔣懷) explained that local color in Ishikawa's paintings were used to express Taiwanese domestic society of Taiwan. In a student exhibition hosted by Ishikawa in 1911, "Ishikawaian style" had been described as "with strong colors to express the southern taste".<sup>20</sup>

Other Japanese artists quickly followed suit, producing paintings with such titles as *Nangoku* (南國 The Southern Country) and "Taiwanese Landscape". At official Japanese exhibitions, they were joined by such Taiwanese artists as sculptor Huang Tu-Shui (黃土水, who produced a piece entitled A "Barbarian" Child) and painter Chen Cheng-Po's (陳澄波) *Suburb of Jiayi*. Japanese painter Teteishi Tetsuomi thus made this humorous and ironic comment on the popular trend of that period:

In every Tokyo exhibition, it was easy to recognize those works created by the Taiwanese painters. This is probably because they steadily stuck to the insular local color. Their works even were like their own names which can be smelled like the flavor of Taiwanese food.<sup>21</sup>

The term "local color" came to hold a double meaning – one for visual art and one for social engineering. A judge at the Taiwanese Fine Art Exhibition later recalled suggesting that the host institute should purposefully cultivate a specific Taiwanese

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<sup>18</sup> Fang Lin (方林), "Dizhan dhiqi fe Taiwan yinxiang" (帝展時期的臺灣印象 Taiwanese Images in the Teiten), *Yishujia* (藝術家 Artists) No.251 (1996), pp.371-375.

<sup>19</sup> Ishikawa Kinichiro, "Taiwan fengguang de huixiang (臺灣風光的回想 Reminiscences of Taiwanese Scenery)", Yen Chuan-Ying and Tsuruta Takeyoshi eds., *Fengjing xinjing*, pp.54-56.

<sup>20</sup> Siyousheng (四憂生), "Shuicaihua zhanlanhui suogan (水彩畫會展覽會所感 On an Exhibition of Watercolor Paintings).", Yen Chuan-Ying and Tsuruta Takeyoshi eds., *Fengjing xinjing* (2001), pp.320-322.

<sup>21</sup> Tateishi Tetsuomi (立石鐵臣), "Difang secai" (地方色彩 Local Color), Yen Chuan-Ying and Tsuruta Takeyoshi eds., *Fengjing xinjing*, p.169.

style by encouraging the concept of local color.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the colonial Minister of Education encouraged the development of a distinctive local art movement based on geographic locality.<sup>23</sup> The motivations were not only artistic, however. The Minister argued that an official art exhibition could serve to elevate the status of Taiwan – an idea that was mentioned in a report entitled “The Purpose of Launching Taiwanese Fine Arts Exhibition”.<sup>24</sup> In other words, the idea of developing a sense of Taiwanese local color was supported by local officials as a means of advertising the island they administered and colonized.

The discourse encouraged experimentation with new ways of painting. Scientific observation and outdoors sketching programs were added to the art school curriculum, and newly trained artists could be seen combing the countryside for suitable subjects. The result was an exceptionally large number of landscape paintings shown at Taiwanese and Japanese official exhibitions from the 1930s to the end of colonization in 1945. Popular themes included buildings (especially temples and examples of local architecture) and indigenous plants and animals. The uniqueness of Taiwan was easily expressed through such symbols as palm/coconut trees and water buffalo. Geography, clearly an important consideration in promoting the use of local color, was mentioned repeatedly by the governor-general and other colonial administrators in their speeches preceding the first Taiwanese Fine Art Exhibition.

It seems that promoting the concept of local color was promising in terms of “advertising” Taiwanese art and Taiwan’s status. Nonetheless, the future of this appeal was not as bright as the supporters’ expectations. Questioning the manifestation shadowed the seemingly promising appeal.

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<sup>22</sup> Matsubayashi Keigetsu (松林桂月), “Taiwan - taifuzhan yu luxing jingyan” (台灣－台府展與旅行經驗 Taiwan - Taiwanese Art Exhibition and Experience of Traveling), Yen Chuan-Ying and Tsuruta Takeyoshi eds., *Fengjing xinjing*, p.273.

<sup>23</sup> Ishiguro Hidehiko (石黑英彦), “Taiwan meishu zhanlanhui shencha ganyan” (台灣美術展覽會審查感言 On Being A Panel Judge for the Taiwanese Art Exhibition), Fan Lin (方林) trans. *Yishujia* (1995), p.388.

<sup>24</sup> Taiwan Sotokufu (臺灣總督府 Taiwan Governor-General’s Office), “Juban Taiwan meishuzhan de yiyi” (舉辦臺灣美術展的意義 The Meaning of Launching a Taiwanese Fine Arts Exhibition), Yen Chuan-Ying and Tsuruta Takeyoshi eds., *Fengjing xinjing*, p.562.

Even though the concept of local color had official approval from colonial administrators and support from local art teachers and theorists, the idea never blossomed to the degree expected by its earliest supporters. One possible explanation for its failure was the different ways that the term local color was interpreted. In the newspaper, a writer argued that local color was underrepresented at the Taiwanese Fine Art Exhibition, despite the large percentage of local landscape paintings that were shown:

It was said that there was no local color in works of art in the past Taitens. What about this time?...It was a shame to say that the answer is “No”. The so-called local color meant that we were aware of a contemporary spirit in reality. We then positioned ourselves in a specific space-time framework and vividly expressed the situation. If there was no such awareness, how were we able to express local color?<sup>25</sup>

His comments brought into question the meaning of local color, a point that became the central challenge to this discourse. There were many interpretations and therefore misunderstandings of the meaning of the concept of local color. Some artists and critics claimed that the term’s superficial overuse led to shallow portrayals of local images, while others argued that copying from nature and imitating the styles of art teachers – e.g., Ishikawa’s watercolors – did not constitute a serious effort to express a sense of Taiwan and art. A writer of that time commented that while artists such as Ishikawa could create unique Taiwanese scenery, their paintings lacked originality and inspiration.<sup>26</sup> Criticism were not limited to Taiwanese wishing to promote the quality of art; one of the most vocal critics of the local color concept was Shiotsuki Toho (鹽月桃甫), who was moreover one of the most important judges of Taiwan salon. Shiotsuki agreed with the idea that environment should play a decisive role

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<sup>25</sup> N Seiki (N 生記), “Disihui taizhan guanhouji” (第四回台展觀後記 Review of the Fourth Taiten), Yen Chuan-Ying and Tsuruta Takeyoshi eds., *Fengjing xinjing*, p.198.

<sup>26</sup> Baomengsheng (抱夢生), “Zilanhui, shemuhui guanshangji” (紫瀾會、蛇木會觀賞記 Appreciative Exhibition of Zilan and Shemu Groups), Yen Chuan-Ying and Tsuruta Takeyoshi eds., *Fengjing xinjing* (2001), pp.323-324.

in art, and agreed with the use of local color as a criterion for selecting pieces for display.<sup>27</sup> However, he also objected to what he saw as a direct copying of natural scenes and a superficial delineation of landscapes and cityscapes, arguing that:

[I]f people indulge in the stimulation of reality and stick to the exploration of surface sensation, they are distancing themselves from pure artistic creation... Can we say that painting possesses Taiwanese color by merely adopting Taiwanese subject-matter?... [W]e are not happy with the result of the fact that Taiwanese [art] works reach their goal by enclosing Taiwan from the outside world.<sup>28</sup>

Increasingly, the term local color was used to describe Taiwanese painters who maintained a rigid style marked by restricted techniques to depict local subjects.<sup>29</sup> Whereas officials used local color to select paintings for the *Taiten*, critics such as Oteisei and Okayama used the term to degrade what they felt to be a formalist style and a conservative genre.<sup>30</sup> In the eyes of its detractors, local color became part of a negative cycle: the more local color, the more local subjects; the more local subjects, the more superficial. Hence, the appeal of local color was starting to blur.

The specific discussion of local color led to reflections on the larger issue of the meaning of art in landscape painting. After visiting the final Taiwanese Fine Art Exhibition, Wang Pai-Yuan (王白淵), a Taiwanese art graduate from the Tokyo School of

<sup>27</sup> Shiotsuki Toho, “Guanyu siyanghua” (關於西洋畫 On Western-style Painting). (王淑津) trans, *Nango nihong - Shiotsuki Toho yishu yanjiu* (南國霓虹—鹽月桃甫藝術研究 The Rainbow of the Southern Country)(Taipei: dissertation of Graduate Institute of Art history, National Taiwan University, 1997), pp.24-27.

<sup>28</sup> Shiotsuki Toho, “Dibahui taizhan zhi qiang” (第八回台展之前 Before the Eighth Taiwanese Fine Art Exhibition), Wang Shu-Chin, *Nango nihong - Shiotsuki toho yishu yanjiu* (1997), pp.30-33.

<sup>29</sup> Nomura Koichi (野村幸一), “Taiyang zhan guangan - fahui Taiwan de tese ba” (台陽展觀感—發揮台灣的特色吧! Review of the Taiyang Exhibition - Express more Taiwanese Characteristics), Yen Chuan-Ying and Tsuruta Takeyoshi eds., *Fengjing xinjing*, pp.326-329; Miyatake Taatsuo (宮武辰夫), “Taizhan manbu guan xiyanghua” (台灣漫步觀西洋畫 Wandering around the Taiten - Appreciating Western-style Painting), Yen Chuan-Ying and Tsuruta Takeyoshi eds., *Fengjing xinjing*, pp.257-259; Tateishi Tetsuomi (立石鐵臣), “Difang secai” (地方色彩 Local Color), Yen Chuan-Ying and Tsuruta Takeyoshi eds., *Fengjing xinjing*, p.169.

<sup>30</sup> Oteisei (鷗汀生) and Okayama (岡山蕙三), “Diyihui fuzhan manping” (第一回府展漫評 The Criticism on the First Futen), Yen Chuan-Ying and Tsuruta Takeyoshi eds., *Fengjing xinjing*, pp.261-269.



Fine Arts and a writer of the colonial period, criticized the work of salon artists for lacking strong characteristics in style and for lacking expressive insights into nature. He used the idea of representation to make a distinction between “artistic nature” and “nature itself”:

Art is the representation of nature; however, represented nature is not the original nature. The problem is how painters observe nature. Being a slave of nature, one cannot walk out on realism; only by being the master of nature can the painter really see through to the essence of nature.<sup>31</sup>

Wang’s remark on depiction actually uncovered the dilemma in the genre of landscape painting and echoed the worry expressed by other art critics. For a Japanese Iida Jitsuo, the misunderstanding of the concept of local color increased the potential of “cultural suicide of localism”.<sup>32</sup> Teteishi was more forceful in his denial that the appeal of local color was an important issue, arguing that:

We don’t have to emphasize whether local color is expressed or not. After all, it is not a serious problem in fine art. Although concern with local color is a good thing, not considering it is not a mistake whatsoever.<sup>33</sup>

As Yen Chuan-Ying points out, there were no professional art schools, research institutes, or museums in Taiwan at the time, and despite the popularity of the term local color, a true sense of identifying local cultural consciousness was embryonic. Yan feels that the most important question during the colonial period was “how to concretely develop the characteristics of Taiwanese art, but not randomly look for custom or local subjects as symbolic signs”.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Wang Pai-yuan, “Fuzhang zagan: yishu de mutai”(第六回府展雜感－藝術的創造力 Random Thoughts on Futen: The Creation of Art), Yen Chuan-Ying and Tsuruta Takeyoshi eds., *Fengjing xinjing*, pp.296-307.

<sup>32</sup> Iida Jitsuo (飯田實雄), “Taiwan meishujie qiujie xhanwang”(台灣美術界秋季展望 Autumn Prospects of the Taiwanese Fine Art Society), Yen Chuan-Ying and Tsuruta Takeyoshi eds., *Fengjing cinjing* (2001), pp.538-539.

<sup>33</sup> Teteishi, “Difang secai.”, Yen Chuan-Ying and Tsuruta Takeyoshi eds., *Fengjing xinjing*, p.169.

<sup>34</sup> Yen Chuan-Ying (顏娟英), “Taizhan shiqi dongyanghua de difang secai”(臺展時期東洋畫的

The call for visual artists to develop local color reached its peak in the 1930s, when the Taiwanese cultural/political enlightenment movement also entered its most productive period. The two movements were treated very differently by the Japanese government, the former was welcomed, and the latter was seen as a hostile force. Part of the reason was that Taiwanese landscape painters did not use the natural environment as a tool of emotional expression, as critics of the time noted, but as an objective reflection of nature. This “objective naturalism” contrasted with the “social realism” of the cultural movement, which purposefully attempted to reflect the reality of the colonized. Whereas landscape painters frequently depicted the modernization activities encouraged by the Japanese government, writers were more likely to express the sorrow resulting from Japanese oppression through colonization.

The rupture between visual art and cultural movements showed that the conception of local color was constrained in the domain of visual art activity and had no resonance from other social circles. Not only this, another counter discourse, surrealist poetry emerged to more closely challenge local color. Though not in a direct face-to-face confrontation, surrealist poetry presented a different view of the colonial sky of Taiwan under Japanese rule.

### III. The Real in the Surreal: Surrealist Poet Yang, Chih-Chang's (楊熾昌) Poetry on Taiwanese Landscape

#### A. The Rise of Surrealist Poetry and Yang's Advocacy

In the 1930s, an important group of Taiwanese writers advocated what they described as “xiangtu wenxue” (鄉土文學), which translated literally is “native soil literature (nativism)” or “vernacular literature (vernacularism)”. Its strong social realism edge resembled the socialist left wing of the socio-political movement of the Taiwanese

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地方色彩 The Local Color of Eastern-style Painting in the Taiten Period), Yen Chuan-Ying and Tsuruta Takeyoshi eds., *Fengjing xinjing*, pp.493-494.

Cultural Association (台灣文化協會) that sought both to label Japanese colonization as brutal and to arouse social awareness of colonialism's injustice. Representative writers such as Lai Ho (賴和, 1894-1943) and Yang Kuei (楊逵, 1906-1985), spoke for the powerless and voiceless public. The new Taiwanese literature movement characterized Taiwanese literature of the colonial period both in terms quantity and quality. It was at this point that the issue of anti-realism in literature entered the debate. Surrealism in colonial Taiwan was championed by a small group of poets who argued that realism in literature focused too much on class struggle and issues germane to a colonial society. Yang Chih-Chang bemoaned the fact that realism produced "irrelevant" works that seemed rigid and unable to awaken people's minds. Theory of realism and the reality of colonial Taiwan finally will become disconnected.<sup>35</sup> Surrealists insisted that only surrealism could expand depth and freedom in artistic works.<sup>36</sup> Yang, the leading figure of the surrealist group, claimed that one of his motivations in promoting surrealist poetry was to avoid harassment by Japanese censorship:

I thought that there were many literary skills in terms of expression. Confrontation with Japanese authorities merely brought on cruel oppression and led to sacrifice. Only by using an elusive consciousness, a special literary technique and another angle of description to reveal social reality, to dissect the abnormality and analyze life...could we avoid the Japanese bully.<sup>37</sup>

According to Yang's theory, such metaphorical approaches could succeed in literature without any suppression from the colonizer.

Yang studied Japanese literature in Tokyo in 1930. He published his first Japanese poetry collection *The Tropical Fish* in 1931. In 1933, together with six like-minded friends, he established a group called "The Windmill Poetry Society".

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<sup>35</sup> Yang Chih-Chang, *Shuiyiping zuopinji* (水蔭萍作品集 Anthology of shuiyiping) (Tainan: Tainan City Culture Center, 1995).

<sup>36</sup> Lu Hsing-Chang (呂興昌), "Shishi dingwei de jichu" (詩史定位的基礎 Identifying the Foundation of Poetry History), Yang Chih-Chang, *Shuiyiping zuopinji*, p.10.

<sup>37</sup> Yang Chih-Chang, *Shuiyiping zuopinji*, p.224.

The group intended to “pump fresh air” into Taiwanese literary circles that emphasized realism and naturalism. They sought to break with the traditional mindset that Taiwanese literature had no way of escaping the tensions of colonialism and anti-imperialism. Yang repeatedly highlighted two issues: First, he urged that Taiwanese writers to avoid taking political stands in their works. He ferociously criticized “the political stand in colonial literature “a serious problem”. Second, he repudiated both social realism and naturalism as a means to express so much subjective sorrow and for lacking expressive technique in terms of artistic and aesthetic criteria. The comment clearly criticized the native soil literature, but did not target landscape paintings. He advocated “art for art’s sake” instead of “art for life’s sake”. As he stated:

Under the flag of “art for itself”, I support a radical self-position, excluding all conforming imitators. I want to walk a way where images reflect on my retinas...[M]any artistic performances have ceased to make progress, sticking to strong subjective expression that lacks expressive techniques, or does not give oneself a chance to develop as in naturalism. As a result, it falls into a subjective grief of killing oneself.<sup>38</sup>

He embraced artistic modernism to celebrate a revolutionary expression which was intended to destroy traditional balance, proportion, and unity. He also rejected all established art concepts, methods, and rhetoric, emphasizing a free language of creativity by advocating the death of academicism in art. Therefore, Futurism, Cubism, Expressionism, Constructivism, Dadaism, Surrealism, and *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) etc. All possessed this new spirit. He maintained that surrealists should break grammatical and syntactic orders in their attempt to create a profoundly different world. The pure and “transparent” form is the highest rule of creating poetry. In “The Necessity of the Evil of Pervert”,

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<sup>38</sup> Yang Chih-Chang, *Shuiyiping zuopinji*, p.167.

Liu Chi-Hui gave a detailed account how Yang used the surrealist strategy. By transforming himself into “an alienated molecule”, Yang reached a new artistic expressive perspective, as Liu commented.<sup>39</sup> This “negative writing” reflected the Taiwanese predicament under colonial condition. Liu also noticed that though Yang Chih-Chang used Japanese to depict the Taiwanese landscape, his works were full of local color and native consciousness. Surrealism was believed to reveal Taiwan through perversion, imagination, and creation. It became a radical conception of understanding Taiwanese landscape in the colonial period, especially when we compare it with landscape painting, which sought to discover and record local characteristics objectively under the leading topic of local color as mentioned above.

## B. Interpreting Landscape: Yang’s Conception of the Colonial Scenery

Using poetry to describe Taiwanese landscape together with visual images has already existed in “the Eight Taiwanese Views” (台灣八景) of the Qing dynasty. In each case, the island’s beauty is described with traditional four-word phrases, in poetry, and in illustrations. A similar traditional style was used at the outset of the Japanese colonization: voting for new Eight Taiwanese Views. In the 1920s, the new way of describing Taiwanese landscape replaced the old one. It combined images and verbal explanation. For example, Ishikawa often published his works in the newspapers, with added verbal explanations. This kind of presentation stressed the beauty of landscape, pursuing the realistic and naturalistic agenda.

For the surrealist, turning the world upside-down is a useful strategy. The embedded subconscious in the human mindset reveals our true feelings. It is easier

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<sup>39</sup> Liu Chi-Hui (劉紀蕙), “Bianyi zhi er de biyao – Yang Chih-Chang de ‘yichangwui’ shuxie” (變異之惡的必要—楊熾昌的「異常為」書寫 The Necessity of the Evil of Pervert), Liu Chi-Hui, *Guer nushen fumianshuxie* (孤兒女神負面書寫 Orphan, Goddess, and the Writing of the Negative) (Taipei: Lixu Publishing, 1995), pp.190-223.

to view an inner world from this perspective; however it is not so straightforward to “betray” the outside world that we encounter through our visual senses. For example, how can a person interpret a sunny place as cold, pale, and bleak? It is more difficult to explore the psychological elements in landscape, as it is so real and concrete objects we see and touch. Our projection of feeling onto nature is mostly conditioned by the tangible and sensual. However, W. J. T. Mitchell, looking at landscape through power relationships, gave encountering landscape a different view.<sup>40</sup> Mitchell took landscape as a dynamic concept, a verb, and drew two approaches to look at it: contemplative and interpretative. The first approach “attempted to read the history of landscape primarily on the basis of a history of landscape painting and to narrativize that history as progressive movement toward purification of the visual field”. The second, “tended to de-center the role of painting and pure formal visuality in favor of a semiotic and hermeneutic approach that treated landscape as an allegory of psychological or ideological themes”. Mitchell’s second strategy is to read the phenomenon of politicization of landscape. Such an approach broadly puts landscape into a semiotic and symbolic context for people to decipher, but not to sense or describe. Landscape is here the reflection of human feelings, but not an objective existence as be put the following:

The second strategy is interpretative and is exemplified in attempts to decode landscape as a body of determinate signs. It is clear that landscape can be deciphered as textual systems. Natural features such as trees, stones, water, animals, and dwellings can be read as symbols in religious, psychological, or political allegories; characteristic structures and forms (...) can be linked with generic and narrative typologies such as the pastoral, the georgic, the exotic, the sublime, and the picturesque.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Mitchell, W. J. T., *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

<sup>41</sup> Mitchell, W. J. T., *Landscape and Power*, p.1.

Mitchell's methodological viewpoint echoes Martin Warnke's concept. Warnke pointed out that even the simplest change in landscape is still the result of a human's willed decision; any artificial object in landscape is a "land monument".<sup>42</sup> Such a perspective brings attention to the usage of landscape as a reflected mirror image of people's feelings and desires. Surrealist poet Yang's conception of landscape parallels such an interpretative perspective of reading landscape. He believed poetry can create an uneven space like a low relief, namely, to flatten the orderly three-dimensional world into a surreal, perhaps chaotic, two-dimensional one. He concentrated on and dug into landscape to find inner meaning. The real and the unreal thus were combined into a strange amalgamation. He was constantly fascinated by the abundant significance of landscape, which provided a resource of sorrow and sadness as he believed was the reality of Taiwanese landscape as well as Taiwanese situation under colonial subjugation. Such a conception of negating landscape was seen in his poetry:

Landscape kills expression and pure reminiscence,  
Becoming a high-priced consumption.  
In a flowered mirror,  
This pale-skinned aesthetic?  
Arouses a splendid tragedy. ("Flower Sea")<sup>43</sup>

In "The Pale Song" (蒼白的歌), he wrote, "Amid the terrible white eyes of people who commit suicide, and floating sickening leaves, in the music, I will catch a landscape-like cold";<sup>44</sup> in "Moon Light Sonata" (月光奏鳴曲), he wrote, "a beautiful gaunt figure strolls in the remote and expressive landscape".<sup>45</sup> Landscape

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<sup>42</sup> Warnke, Martin, David McIntock trans, *Political Landscape – The Art History of Nature*. (London: Reaktion Books. Warnke, 1994).

<sup>43</sup> Yang Chih-Chang, *Shuiyinping zuopinji*, p.34. 風景殺掉表現而一純潔的思念／成為高貴的消費 花的三菱鏡裡／蒼白的皮膚的美學／引發炫爛的悲劇

<sup>44</sup> *ibid*, p.45.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid*, p.31.

is indispensable for Yang to observe, to feel, to ponder over, and to express. By distorting an object and its context, Yang turned landscape into a personal language that strongly differed from the objective naturalism that dominated landscape painting. Yang often used landscape as an anthropomorphic medium. For example, he called it “the silly landscape” with a “devil voice” in a 1933 poem entitled “The Sunday-style Walker” (日曜日式的散步者)<sup>46</sup>, and “The Sacrificial Rite-like Landscape”<sup>47</sup> in a 1934 poem entitled “The Poetry Anthology of the Sea Land” (海島詩集). Such negative reading of landscape provides an image of decadence in his poetry as a whole. However, his inner motivation is somehow positive. As he said, under colonial supervision and suppression, pursuing the artistic purpose of poetry and averting “the big brother” was best done in a seemingly twisted and passive language. Only the “abnormal” landscape can present the real Taiwanese landscape, the passive as progressive, negative as positive, the pervertible as straightening, and even death as life. More importantly, this kind of “detouring” touches the truth of art in terms of artistic expression and the value of art as a whole.

Inasmuch as man and nature are constituted by an unfree society, their repressed and distorted potentialities can be represented only in an estranging form. The world of art is that of another reality, of estrangement – and only as estrangement does art fulfill a cognitive function: it communicates truths not communicable in any other language; it contradicts.<sup>48</sup> Reality becomes unreal since the reality is no more seen, felt and touched. With the power of symbol and metaphor, Yang’s surrealist landscape poetry found freedom to breathe again.

<sup>46</sup> ……這傻楞楞的風景……愉快的人呵呵笑著煞像愉快似的／他們在哄笑所造的虹形空間裡抱著罪惡經過。……

不會畫畫的我走著聆聽空間的聲音……我把我的耳朵貼上去／我在我身體內聽著像什麼惡魔似的東西……

<sup>47</sup> 黎明從椰子國的吸氣吸取七天的月光／風景祭禮似地浮著……古老的森林的觸覺令島民發狂頭腦變為白色

<sup>48</sup> Marcuse, Herbert, *The Aesthetic Dimension - Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978).



While European artists pushed the limits of surrealism and abstract painting in the 1920s and 1930s, Taiwanese visual artists were confined to naturalism. Surrealism simply remained a minor poetry movement in colonial Taiwan. Except for a very small number of Japanese painters, exhibitors at

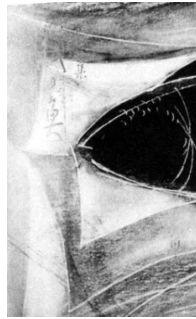


Figure 1



Figure 2

official fine art exhibitions showed little interest in surrealist expression. There was little discussion about the artistic style as well. In 1937, the Taiwan Daily News published an article by Shinmi Kiichiro entitle “Surrealist Painting”.<sup>49</sup> The writer borrowed Herbert Read’s point of view on surrealism: it includes all aesthetics of expressive creative impulses; it breaks with academic art tradition which belongs to the capitalist class; and it is only suitable for dialectical materialism. Little was mentioned about surrealism in the Taiwanese art circles. However, Japanese art scholar Nakamura Giichi inferred that vernacular taste in Taiwanese painting caused surrealism art to develop in Taiwan.<sup>50</sup> He thought that it is worthwhile to re-evaluate the issue of surrealism in Taiwan despite having had limited exploration. According to Nakamura, one Japanese artist connected Yang’s surrealism to visual art. Fukui Keiichi (福井敬一), a Taiwan-born Japanese high school student, studied art with Shiotsuki. As mentioned, Shiotsuki Toho strongly opposed what he deemed shallow naturalism, represented by “Ishikawaian school” of landscape painting. Later, as a student at the Imperial Art School in Japan, Fukui became member of an avant-garde group known as JAN (an acronym for Jeunes Artistes Nouveaux). Some of his paintings with Taiwanese subjects were exhibited in the *Koku gakai* (the

<sup>49</sup> Shinmi Kiichiro (新見棋一郎), “Chaoxianshi zhuyi huihua” (超現實主義繪畫 Surrealist Painting), Yen Chuan-Ying and Tsuruta Takeyoshi eds., *Fengjing xinjing*, p.168.

<sup>50</sup> Nakamura Giichi (中村義一), “Taiwan de chaoxianshi zhuyi” (台灣的超現實主義 Surrealism in Taiwan), Yang Chih-Chang, *Shuiyinping zuopinji*, pp.289-293; “Taiwan de chaoxianshi zhuyi ji qita” (台灣的超現實主義及其他 Taiwanese Surrealism and Others). Ibid, pp.301-305.

Society of National Painting) and the Taiwanese Fine Art Exhibition.<sup>51</sup> Fukui's style earned the Surrealist poet Yang Chih-Chang's compliment when he did illustration for Yang's first poetry anthology *The Tropical Fish* in 1931 and the later book *Zhiyu* (Paper Fish) in 1985 (Fig. 1, 2). Yang highly prized Fukui's illustration as "counter writing", which especially expressed the "inside aspect" of consciousness. Yang said: "The writer should pursue the beauty of enchantment. As a hunter of beauty, the artist's keen sight on beauty is reflected in his life."<sup>52</sup>

Aside from connecting to the visual arts through Fukui, Yang also paid attention to visual communication and musical expression in his poetry. In "Demi Rever", he hybridized music and art into landscape and wrote, "Music and painting and the sound of waves in poetry possess the sound of angel's steps. In music, my ideal is Picasso's guitar music"<sup>53</sup>. The two connections brought Yang close to visual and musical expression.

For his dedication to surrealism, Yang described his difficult past life as "a road of surrealism", which echoed a global art trend. Yang was concerned with pursuing an inner and subconscious world that reflected his encounters in the outer world. The objective environment, such as local characteristics, was meaningless if the local environment could not intrigue a mental and emotional reaction. When Taiwanese political activists started to promote social realism as an anti-colonial weapon, the objective naturalism associated with local color in visual art seemed to be dismissed as marginal. Inside the art circle, the appeal of local color was considered banal, superficial, and devoid of profound theoretical or methodological foundations. Serious attack also came from Yang's surrealist concept. It is interesting to note that the difference between naturalism in landscape painting and surrealism in Young's poetry describing landscape reveals the discrepancy in the

<sup>51</sup> Lin Chien-Hung, "The Rise of Landscape in Provincial Taiwan: A Study of Western-style Painting in the Formation of National Identity" (U.K: Dissertation of University of East Anglia, 1998).

<sup>52</sup> Yang Chih-Chang, *Shuiyiping zuopinji*, p.252.

<sup>53</sup> 音樂和繪畫和詩的潮音有天使的愛音／音樂裡的我的理想是畢卡索的吉他之音樂

conception of Taiwanese landscape in the colonial context. Such a divergence is represented by the two ideal types of “naturalistic nature” versus “distorted nature”. This can be seen in their attitudes toward tropical weather.

The characteristics of tropical weather in Taiwan form the basis of discourse for artistic expression in landscape painting and in surrealist poetry. Yang praised the advantages of utilizing Taiwanese tropical landscape and weather to create a semiotic and symbolic atmosphere in his poetry. He wrote,

Living in Taiwan is an exceptionally blessing poetic thinking. Our literature is banana color, buffalo music, and also the aboriginal girl’s love songs...Outside of my windows are bright green tomato fields. The color and wind of the southern tropics of Formosa constantly give hot air to my pale forehead, eyeballs, and lips. I am pondering over transparent thinking at this moment. It is blown in by the Formosa subtropical wind...Tomorrow in the spring morning, the poet on the island will stand up in the ritual of poetry with burning hair.<sup>54</sup>

Tropical features are also an important element in the visual landscape. Tropicality, a concept describing the European imperial hierarchical judgment, allows landscape paintings and other visual representations such as post cards or posters to represent colonial Taiwan.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, tropicality was a framework that helped to define the tropical world, and its imagined others. Several typical symbols which made the tropical condition possible were tropical items such as plants (bananas, palms), animals (buffalos) or local buildings. A Japanese artist gave a typical Taiwanese image: mountains, cows and camphor trees.<sup>56</sup> A Taiwanese artist Liao Chi-Chun stressed that he wanted his works to “manifest the unique scene of Taiwan

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<sup>54</sup> Yang Chih-Chang, *Shuiyiping zuopinji*, pp.127-132.

<sup>55</sup> Liao Hsin-Tien, “Cong ziran de Taiwan dao wenhua de Taiwan – rijū shidai Taiwan fengjing tuxiang de wenhua biao zheng tanshi”

<sup>56</sup> Maruyama Banka (丸山晚霞), 1935. “Taiwan no keshike” (The Taiwanese Landscape). *Taiwan Jihō* (Taiwan Times) (1935, Feb., Apr. and May), pp.141-150, pp.117-124, pp.128-138.

summers”.<sup>57</sup> The stereotypical representation is clearer where comparing landscape paintings and posters. The typical representations of the local color movement in the visual arts are also relevant to the tourist industry in the colonial period. In 1927, the campaign to vote for “Eight New Taiwanese Views” was held and artists were particularly impacted by the activity. Ideal landscape was highlighted by painters and the participation of the public. The emergence of landscape painting in Taiwan therefore was not simply an artistic activity, it also involve a process of “secularizing and popularizing” Taiwanese landscape images.

With regard to Yang’s surrealist poetry, he perceived tropical Taiwan as a total different version from his unique perspective of subverting nature. Sad, bleak, and perverted reading of Taiwanese nature filled his works. In “The Insular Image of Formosa” (福爾摩莎島影), subtitled “Street Trees” (街樹), he used an image of trees along a street to describe a gloomy, barren winter landscape:

Just let a plant without shadow be put on a crimson cushion.

Watching the lazy sleepy winter landscape, under the unseen sun...<sup>58</sup>

In “Illusion” (幻影), he borrowed violent weather as a metaphor to describe the suppressed feelings:

The breath of a terrible falling night,

When did the snowstorm come down to the colony in the neglected sky?

It was a ferocious illusion which disappeared in the cold smile...<sup>59</sup>

Yang used changes in the environment to represent political change in this poem. He longed for a distorted environment by using perverted expression. Therefore, the high temperature in tropical Taiwan became cold and shattering in his mind. His conception about nature is totally different to visual naturalism in landscape painting.

<sup>57</sup> Lin Hsin-Yueh (林惺獄), Liao Chi-chun (廖繼春), *Taiwanese Art Series 4 (台灣美術全集)* (Taipei: Yishujia, 1992).

<sup>58</sup> 沒有影子的植物的擺設就放在緋紅的墊子吧／在看不見的太陽下看著冬天懶睡的風景……

<sup>59</sup> Yang Chih-Chang, *Shuiyiping zuopinji*, p.77.



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

The above contrast description intends to create ideal types, by providing the framework in which to assess these paradigms. However, these ideal types still apply to concrete details. Taking the palm trees as an example, the way in which both groups appropriated were different. In landscape painting and some other visual images, palms play the role of representing local characteristic and defining a tropical place. These palms are used to designate colonial Taiwan although they came from different fields of art, poster, postcard, and brochure. Objectification and characterization are main functions. In contrast, in Yang's poems, the palm is presented as a more personal language:

Feet on the carpet, dancing in "death", nothing is seen on the opposite side  
of her white cloth

The tip of palm leaves shining in the wind

In the wind, pieces of paper flying in. ("Bell Towers")<sup>60</sup>

The daybreak absorbs moonlight of seven days' breath of the country of palms

The sacrificial-rite-like landscape. ("Sea Island")

<sup>60</sup> Yang Chih-Chang, *Shuiyinping zuopinji*, p.73-75.毛氈上的腳、腳在「死」裡舞蹈著，琳子的白衣服對面什麼也看不見／風中閃耀著椰樹的葉尖／風中飛來紙屑

Yang changed the objective character of the palm and changed the color of the tropical plant.

In conclusion, several distinctions are seen between “naturalistic nature” in landscape painting and “distorted nature” in poetry.

1. The way in which Taiwanese painters and Yang responded to real nature refers to their attitudes towards cultural nature. Vernacularizing and objectifying landscape was the main goal of those landscape painters. Such a perspective presumed a common world where people can communicate. On the contrary, Yang tried to personalize his literary landscape through a surrealist approach; somehow he even sexualized landscape by abusing natural objects in his poems. Individualization and sexualization therefore became Yang’s surrealist landscape poetry.
2. Such different focuses reveal divergent artistic motivations and purposes. For visual artists, discovering and describing the modern beauty of Taiwan through scientific observation and description, was their main target. For Yang Chih-Chang, the tropical world around him offered wonderful resources to pervert and distort, but not as a direct object of expression. It held both a pragmatic and idealistic perspectives beneath. Description and expression respectively played main roles in painters and poets’ artistic creation.
3. The conception of the real/literal nature refers to an external-oriented perception, which heavily relies on the immediate sensual contact. Sometimes, the acquaintance inevitably links to the observer’s cultural background (for example, the colonizer brought Japanese concept to decipher Taiwan), but is somehow stereotypical to use as the purpose of comparison to differentiate (in the case of colonial Taiwan, the comparison is utilized to show the hierarchical relationship between the Japanese

culture and the Taiwanese culture).<sup>61</sup> The conception of the perverted nature takes the sociopolitical background into a primary consideration on encountering the outside world. The subjective attitude of the latter is clearly in contrast to the objective one of the former.

4. On the other hand, the concept of literal nature uses a fixed and transcendental framework to look at the world. That is, the natural world exists regardless of historical or social situations. The naturalistic viewer is “blind” to the possibility of the dark or human side of nature, and is open to accommodate the imprint of nature. The concept of perverted nature deems the physical world as an ephemeral phenomenon, depending on how people experience it emotionally. Consequently, nature becomes the reflection of the human mind and nature thus reveals the perceivers’ perception of their environment. As a result, the surrealists found a world of expression to resist colonial suppression and simultaneously to reach their artistic goal. This was a significant contrast to the naturalists’ indulgence in local picturesqueness. The result in literal nature is often direct, but naïve and often limited and in the space in which to respond and imagine. The development of local color in landscape painting was largely welcomed, but was found a dead alley in the above discussion and as means to express the socio-cultural issues imbedded in beautiful Formosa. The concept of distorted nature seeks to express an inner, dark underworld of difficulties in communication and even of misunderstanding. It is an indirect pursuit: that by experiencing tropical nature arouses the vernacular writer’s hostility towards to it. The literal and the perverted as such, refer to the collective and the individual.

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<sup>61</sup> Liao Hsin-Tien, “Cong ziran de Taiwan dao wenhua de Taiwan – riju shidai Taiwan fengjing tuxiang de wenhua biao zheng tanshi”.

5. Finally, the above opposition highlights their conception of nature as radically different. The core concept towards nature for both is “nature for representing” and “nature for expressing”. These diverse conceptions helped develop different ways of seeing nature and techniques of expression.

We are facing a dilemma of artistic expression in the conception of landscape. In the case of colonial Taiwan, the dilemma falls on the ideal types of literal or perverted natures. Both of them are the transition from “natural Taiwan” to “cultural Taiwan”, but they result in divergent views because of their concerns with theory of art and ways of expression in creation through different media. Considering the social background and public taste of the colonial era, it was much easier and acceptable to appreciate realistic and naturalistic works in an agricultural society of Taiwan which faced two radical changes: colonization and modernization, since they could connect works with a common sense. This is why landscape painting was welcomed and accepted by various sectors. This is also why Yang’s surrealist poetry did not reverberate well with such institutions. The distorted nature is hard to grasp in terms of public acceptance and political domination, especially because the art intentions of surrealists were unclear and indirect. Here, artistic intention brings the issue of imagination to the arena of such debate.

Which type of conception of landscape gives more space in terms of artistic expression for the public? Does imagination in art help the native consciousness unite or does it upgrade the quality of insight? How do we re-evaluate the wide-spread interpretation of colonial Taiwanese landscape through different media and perspectives? It would seem unfair to judge one better than the other through pure artistic achievement or socio-political contribution. The mission of art brought them to stand in opposing directions that were both convincing in truth and in beauty. Politicization of aesthetics and aestheticization of politics always happens no matter what the artists accept or reject. However, what art transcends



always gives us new visions to re-interpret their artistic value. The concept of distorted nature for now seems to attract more attention where the naturalistic nature is kept as simpler and starker in comparison.

- Figure 1** “The Cover of *Fish Paper*”. In *Shuiyinping zuopinji*, xvi.
- Figure 2** Photo of Yang Chih-Chang and Fukui Keiichi. In *Shuiyinping zuopinji*, xiv.
- Figure 3** Lan Yin-Ting (藍蔭鼎), *Sanxiandao* (三線道 A Three-lane Road). In *Lan Yin-Ting de yishu shijie* (藍蔭鼎的藝術世界 The Art World of Lan Yinding) (Taipei: National Museum of History, 1998),p. 50.
- Figures 4-6** Postcards and posters of the colonial period of Taiwan, *Meli zhi dao – Taiwan gu ditu yu shenghuo fengmao zhan* (美麗之島－臺灣古地圖與生活風貌展 The Beautiful Island – An Exhibition of Old Taiwanese Maps and Life) (Taipei: National Museum of History, 2003).

