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A Japanese dentist immigrant described by the writer, Chihei Nakamura, during the Japanese colonial period

KEYWORDS

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After the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki between China and Japan in 1895, Taiwan and Penghu entered a 50-year period of Japanese rule (1895–1945). Among the modern knowledge fields, in addition to the modern science, technology, and medicine, the modern literature and art were also established and developed in Taiwan during the Japanese colonial period.¹ Interestingly, a short story written by a Japanese writer during the Japanese colonial period contained a passage describing the image of a dentist and the setting of his clinic. Even though it was the author's imagination, it was at least a projection of the author's life experience.

Japanese literary giant Haruo Sato was invited by his good friend Kiichi Higashi, a Japanese dentist immigrant in Taiwan, to visit Taiwan from June to October, 1920. Later, he wrote many works with Taiwan as the background, such as "The Journey to the Colony".² A Japanese liberal arts student, Chihei Nakamura, perhaps inspired by Haruo Sato, came to Taiwan to study. He studied at the Taipei High School from 1926 to 1930. After graduation, he left Taiwan and returned to Japan to study art history at the Tokyo Imperial University. In 1939, he ever came to Taiwan again for a short trip. In May 1934, he published the short story "At the Travel Destination" in the magazine "Action", which was then included in his "Taiwan Fiction Collection" (Fig. 1A and B). This work contained a plot involving a dentist. The story itself was fictional, but perhaps it can

also reflect the situation of dentistry in Taiwan at that time through the author's observations and writing.

This study summarized the description of dentistry in this literary work. The woman whom the protagonist likes, "Toshi", was originally an elementary school teacher. She immigrated to Chiayi, Taiwan from Kyushu, Japan with her husband. Her husband was a dentist, and their Kawada Dental Hospital was special. It was located in a Taiwanese community and the environment was small and dirty. The clinic was furnished with a dental chair, tooth models, and a hanging scroll of the model picture in a transformation of the Taiwanese house into the Japanese style (Fig. 1C). Although her husband was a dentist, he left his two incisors missing and did not replace them. He would take out a newspaper, show off to the protagonist, and say "Look, I'm in the newspaper", but it was clearly an advertisement. Then, he boasted that his clinic was doing very good business, but in the protagonist's opinion, there were no patients coming to the clinic at all.

This literary work was created after the author returned to Japan, perhaps based on his experience or memories of studying in Taiwan. The novel was set in the Showa period. At that time, the majority of Japanese immigrating to Taiwan came from Kyushu. Wherever Japan's national power or immigration expanded, Japanese dentists usually appeared. Due to the development of the Alishan Forest Farm, many Japanese immigrants moved into Chiayi, and

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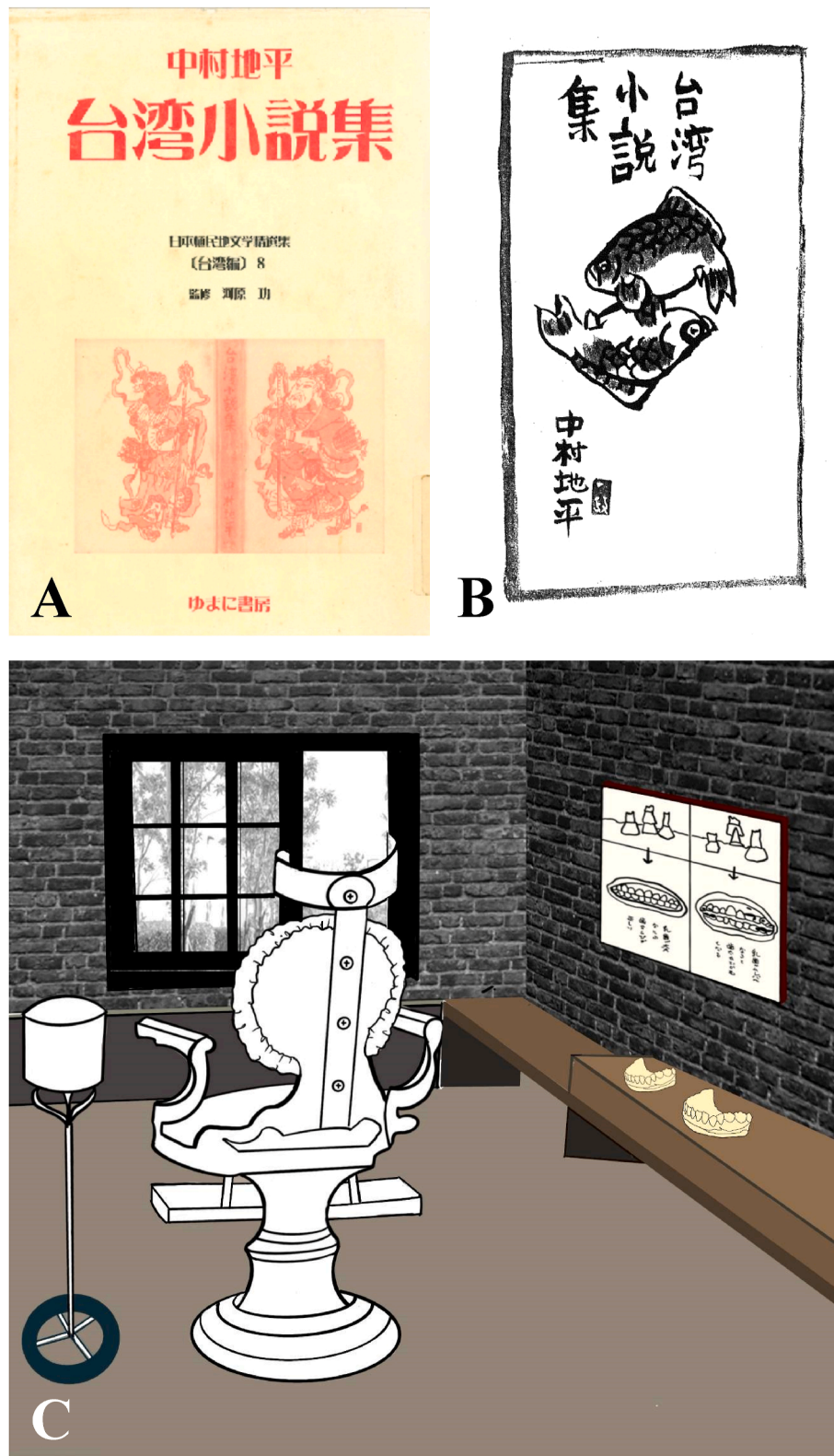


Figure 1 The cover (A) and its inside illustration (B) of the collection of Chihei Nakamura's literary works, "Taiwan Fiction Collection". In this study, we produced the illustration (C) of the furnishings of the dental clinic in the novel. This illustration was drawn by Ling-Hsia Wang, the co-author of this article, according to the description in the novel and the relevant historical materials.

there was a demand for dental services. According to the 1929 dental registration, there were 11 dentists in Chiayi and 5 of them were Japanese dentists. The story also reflected to some extent the difficult dental environment at that time, as a dentist had to be responsible for all the business of clinic management and his or her dental practice (including dental laboratory) alone. Newspaper advertising was the main form of publicity, and perhaps having an advertisement published in a newspaper was something to be proud of. However, the dentists always spent most of their time on taking care of their patients' dental problems, but it was also a big problem that who can offer dental treatments to these busy dentists.

Around 1965, the socio-dental field emerged from community dental research, which was the application of social and behavioral science research to dentistry. In the 1980s, more critical and reflexive research issues emerged in the field of dentistry, such as the reflection and practice on equal access to the dental care.³ This article further proposed the term dental culture. The dental culture refers to the fact that as the concepts of oral care and dental profession are integrated into society and become part of people's daily lives, the dentistry not only plays a role in clinical treatment, but also has an impact on various other aspects of the social life, and to some extent has formed a special cultural phenomenon. Therefore, the concept of dental culture holds that the dentistry is not only a profession that promotes oral health (such as dental treatment technology) and the role of its professionals (such as dentists), but also an element of the cultural expression. In fact, the past research related to dental humanities has also confirmed the relationship between the dentistry and the fields of history, religion, archaeology, and anthropology.⁴

With the continuous development of the modern dentistry, oral health care and the image of the dental profession have long been integrated into the people's daily lives, and in turn affect the people's perception and social culture. The dental imagination is reflected in the images and plots of the dental treatment, dental clinics or dentists in art, literature, and drama. These have become important elements in building the dental culture. In modern times, in addition to Japan, Taiwan can be said to be a major center for the development of the dental culture, at least in Asia, but this view has received less attention. For example, in the 1920s, characters and plots related to the dentistry or dental clinics began to appear in Taiwan's artistic creations and literary works. This implies that under the social context of the time, the concept of oral health care was integrated into the people's daily lives and the importance of dental treatment increased.⁵

Declaration of competing interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest relevant to this article.

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Feng-Chou Cheng¹

Chia-Te Dental Clinic, New Taipei City, Taiwan
School of Life Science, College of Science, National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, Taiwan
Science Education Center, National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, Taiwan

Ling-Hsia Wang

Center for the Literature and Art, Hsin Sheng Junior College of Medical Care and Management, Taoyuan, Taiwan

Wen-Hsun Chang**

Graduate Institute of Taiwan Literature, College of Liberal Arts, National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan

Chun-Pin Chiang*

Department of Dentistry, National Taiwan University Hospital, College of Medicine, National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan

Graduate Institute of Oral Biology, School of Dentistry, National Taiwan University, Taipei, Taiwan

Department of Dentistry, Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Foundation, Hualien, Taiwan
Institute of Oral Medicine and Materials, College of Medicine, Tzu Chi University, Hualien, Taiwan

** Corresponding author. Graduate Institute of Taiwan Literature, College of Liberal Arts, National Taiwan University, No. 1, Section 4, Roosevelt Road, Da'an District, Taipei City 106319, Taiwan.

E-mail address: cwhsun@ntu.edu.tw (W.-H. Chang)

* Corresponding author. Department of Dentistry, Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Foundation, and Institute of Oral Medicine and Materials, College of Medicine, Tzu Chi University, No. 707, Section 3, Chung-Yang Road, Hualien 970, Taiwan.

E-mail address: cpchiang@ntu.edu.tw (C.-P. Chiang)

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¹ These two authors contributed equally to this work.