Why do I search for the snow leopard? 
Is it to feel the value of my existence or to feel real? 
As a matter of fact, I am still asking myself 
Maybe it will only be when I glimpse a snow leopard in 
the primitive, dense forest of Taiwan 
that I will know the answer?

— Chiang Po-jen, March 2010.

After 13 years of searching in vain for the Formosan clouded leopard (Neofelis nebulosa brachyuran), Taiwan’s snow leopards were declared extinct by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) in 2013 (“After 13-Year Quest, Clouded Leopards Confirmed Extinct in Taiwan”). As a result of colonization, urbanization, deforestation, overhunting, and poaching, the disappearance of the snow leopards is just one of the many episodes of the current sixth extinction event. Animals—whether according to scientific taxonomy they belong to the class vertebrate (e.g., fish, birds, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles) or
invertebrate (which refers to any other animal classified outside of the vertebrate class, such as insects, arachnids, and worms/nematodes)—deserve our utmost attention as they are much utilized in our global neocapitalist production as raw materials and capital. Examples abound everywhere: animal poaching and trafficking for zoo medicine and aesthetic consumption (e.g., rhino horn powder, bear bile, and ivory art), gastronomic and laboratory cruelty (e.g., shark fin soup and animal testing), animal farming (e.g., puppy mills and industrial animal factory), excess or negligence (e.g., stray dogs and performing animals in private zoos), etc.

This special issue, No. 41 of *Taiwan Literature: English Translation Series*, entitled “Special Issue on Animal Writing in Taiwan Literature,” is dedicated to Taiwan’s animals. *Dongwu shuxie* (animal writing) is Taiwan’s contribution to world animal literary studies. Susan McHugh defines animal studies as “an interdisciplinary field of inquiry that coalesces around questions of agency and the social field, which insist that readings of animal representations inform and are informed by axiological and other ‘unnatural’ histories” (2006). The very term *dongwu shuxie* lacks a linguistic equivalent in the West: while there is “animal literature,” “animal novel,” etc., there is no such term as “animal writing,” which is inspired by the genre of “nature writing.” Animal literary studies and ecocriticism in the West have developed in parallel to each other based on their own history and disciplinary trajectory. This probably explains why the cross-fertilization that could give rise to a term like “animal writing” has never occurred. Due to the wide dissemination of Western nature writing and ecocriticism through translation, the unique transnational process of negotiation, (mis)interpretation, assimilation, and finally domestication, nature writing has taken root in Taiwan and morphed into different “sub-fields.”

I propose here to use the Chinese term *dongwu shuxie* as a way to preserve its local identity on the stage of global animal
literary studies, as well as to highlight its uniqueness within nature writing on a local scale. Admittedly, the distinction between nature writing (ziran shuxie) and dongwu shuxie can never be squarely drawn, because these two categories often overlap. In the following section I shall first provide a brief account of the development and “definition” of dongwu shuxie. To understand this local term, I begin with its close relative—nature writing—and Taiwan’s animal protection consciousness and animal rights movement.

1. **Dongwu shuxie: A Winding Path of Roots and Routes**

Starting in the late 1970s and 1980s, nature writing such as environmental reportage and other nonfictional essays began to emerge in Taiwan as a major literary genre to address the degradation of Taiwan’s environmental reality. An important genre imported from American Studies programs in U.S. academia, the term “nature writing” first appeared in the title of *The American Nature Writing Newsletter*, edited by Alicia Nitecki and Cheryll Burgess. Though it has gone through different stages of development, John Elder at the 1995 ASLE conference summarized the genre as “a form of the personal, reflective essay grounded in attentiveness to the natural world and an appreciation of science but also open to the spiritual meaning and intrinsic value of nature” (quoted in Armbruster and Wallace 2). This definition was later modified to include other nature writings that examine the human psychological response to experience in nature\(^1\) as well as other literary genres such as fiction

---

\(^1\) “The emergence of the term ‘writing,’ rather than literature, has to do with a nonfictional turn to include genres such as diaries, autobiographies, etc. with the advent of American Studies in the 1960s and a need for 1980s English Departments in the U.S. to teach many texts that were not considered ‘literature,’ meaning fiction, poetry, and drama, with a few exceptions.” Private email correspondence with Patrick D. Murphy, 4/12/2017.
Taiwan Literature

(Slovic, 1989).

The growth of nature writing in Taiwan has run in tandem with the translation of Western nature writing canons as well as the introduction, institutionalization, and development of ecocriticism.² The term “ecocriticism” first appeared in William Rueckert’s 1978 article “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism,” while the most recognized and often-quoted definition is by Cheryll Glotfelty: “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (xviii). Ecocriticism emerged in North America in the 1980s basically as a form including nonfiction nature writing, nonhuman nature and wilderness experience in American and British literature. Ever since its inception, this term has gone through many stages/waves of revision and expansion (Adamson and Slovic 2009; Slovic 2010).

When nature writing was introduced to Taiwan, it inevitably inherited some of the U.S. legacy, as reflected in the translation proposed by several nature writers. For example, due to U.S. nature writing’s association with the wilderness movement, Wang Chiahsiang proposed to translate nature writing as wilderness literature (huangye wenxue). Though this term was later rejected by other writers such as Wu Ming-yi, a writer-scholar-activist, the concept of wilderness or wildness remains a powerful aspect in many writers’ works as a form of resistance to urban civilization. Other translations were subsequently proposed, such as nature-oriented literature (ziran daoxiang de wenxue, ziran xiezuo),³ eco-literature (shengtai wenxue), environmental literature (huanjing wenxue), etc. All these proposals for coming to terms with the foreign genre

² For a short summary of the development of ecocriticism in Taiwan, see Chia-ju Chang and Scott Slovic’s Ecocriticism in Taiwan: Identity, Environment, and the Arts.

³ According to Patrick D. Murphy, nature-oriented literature consists of nature writing, nature literature, environmental writing, and environmental literature. See Murphy’s Farther Afield.

Taiwan Literature
demonstrate a robust interest and the resonance of the genre with writers who sought out a generic voice with which to express their environmental concerns. Discussion of the translation of the term “writing” was also part of this process.

Wu Ming-yi, in his ongoing study of nature writing and ecocriticism, proposes to adopt ziran shuxie in lieu of a more commonly accepted term ziran xiezuo. He argues that the word-phrase shuxie 可以 be used as both a verb and a noun. In addition, it can serve as a homophone for “lyrical writing” (as in “抒寫”). The implicit connotation of shuxie 可以 as shuxie 可以 aptly endorses spontaneous expressions of a writer’s own subjective opinion and feelings, while injecting objective, scientific knowledge that is a requirement of the genre of nature writing (2011: 35). The idea of a lyrical shuxie draws upon a classical Chinese poetic literary sensitivity and also enriches the meaning of the English word “writing.” After three decades of an ongoing process of assimilation, negotiation, and experimentation, nature writing (ziran shuxie) has taken root in Taiwan and evolved into a fairly sophisticated and refined field of writing. It has subsequently branched out into various subgenres such as ocean writing, cetacean writing, and river/watershed writing, to just name a few, in order to aptly reflect the respective subjects of study and the geographic or species particulars.

As mentioned at the beginning, dongwu shuxie has its own distinct identity, yet contains an ambiguous relationship with ziran shuxie. On the one hand, the term is without question inspired by ziran shuxie; therefore, one easily views it as ziran shuxie’s subgenre, like many other subgenres mentioned above. On the other hand, unlike ziran shuxie and its subgenres, dongwu shuxie foregrounds nonhuman animals as a separate category with its own legitimate area of aesthetic and ethical inquiry. It distinguishes itself from other categories that focus on phenology, ecosystem, wilderness, ocean, or urban environment as a holistic subject of inquiry often found in the ziran shuxie genre. The subtext of dongwu shuxie

Introduction
is an urgent sense of the need to promote animal protection consciousness, and this position of animal advocacy finds its root in Taiwan’s animal rights movement.

Taiwan’s animal protection consciousness and animal activism is without a doubt a byproduct of modernity, but the understanding of modernity needs to be understood in terms of Taiwan’s successive colonial encounters, extending long before the Post-Martial Law period in the late 1980s, and the post-war period of rapid industrialization. In addition to modernity, Taiwan’s animal protection consciousness also derives from the interdependent relationship between humans and nature in pre-modern agricultural society, as well as traditional spiritual or religious cosmogenic vision. At least three strands of Taiwan’s animal protection consciousness can be traced back to historical roots: the traditional agrarian reverence for economic animals, especially water buffaloes; missionaries in the nineteenth century who introduced Euro-American concepts of animal protection; and the introduction of Western animal protection to Taiwan by way of Japan during the Japanese colonialization. The first animal protection organization, though short-lived, was established in 1923 in Taichung, and called “Association of Taiwan Animal Protection” (Taiwan dongwu baohu hui). Many writers prior to the Post-Martial Law period wrote essays or creative works about the condition of animals and called for compassion. Though scattered, one can nonetheless piece together a long native genealogy of Taiwan animal advocacy writing dating back to the Qing Dynasty, often expressing Confucian or Buddhist views of life-protection (husheng) and animal ethics.

---

4 This was later followed by another animal protection organization, Association of Chinese Animal Protection (Zhongguo baohu dongwu hui, 1935) established by the female poet and animal activist Lu Bicheng (1883-1942). Lu studied at Columbia University and joined animal protection groups in the West. She brought this style of movement back to Taiwan and integrated it with the Buddhist concept of animal protection.
As a fairly young genre, often subsumed under nature writing, the definition of *dongwu shuxie* is still at a rudimentary stage and lacks formal attributes, unlike *ziran shuxie*. At its outset, animal writing presents a strong component of animal advocacy: to address animal suffering and to promote animal protection consciousness. This dimension is often found in writings on Taiwan’s colonial experience, the country’s reckless capitalist development and urbanization, and indigenous writings. All these constitute Taiwan’s “animal humanities scholarship,” and include topics such as the cultural history of animals (e.g., zoos, performing animals, wartime animals); animals in Taiwan’s colonial history; animals in contemporary visual arts, theater, and film; vegetarianism; companionship with animals; animals as expressions of modernity’s excesses; indigenous relationships with animals, etc. Scholarly works within animal humanities, such as Cheng Li-rong (National Chengchi University), Lu Chien-yi (Academia Sinica), and Wu Chuang-hsien (National University of Tainan) belong to diverse disciplines such as History, Political Science, Public Administration and Management, to name a few. Scholarship on the literature of animal humanities includes works by Huang Tsung-chieh (Dong Hwa University), Lee Yu-lin (National Chung Hsing University), and myself. In the next section, I will single out two scholars, Huang Tsung-chieh and Lee Yu-lin, and discuss their important contributions to Taiwan’s animal literary studies.

---

5 Animal Humanities has been an accepted terminology, referring broadly to writings and scholarship within humanities such as history, cultural and film studies, literary studies, and so on.
II. Discourse of *Dongwu shuxie*

Two important scholars in the field of Taiwan’s animal literary studies are Huang Tsung-chieh and Lee Yu-lin. The term *dongwu shuxie* was first proposed by Huang Tsung-chieh, a professor of Chinese at National Dong Hwa University, renowned animal literary/cultural studies scholar, and a passionate animal advocate who works closely with animal NGOs and animal activists. Huang contends that there is a need to distinguish the terms *dongwu shuxie* and *ziran shuxie*, as the former concerns animal subjectivity, while the later reads literary texts systemically and in a holistic fashion. Her critical attention tends to focus on individual animals and one-on-one human-animal relationships, rather than on a conservation approach centering more on species in the hierarchy of the food chain. She suggests that animals have a national boundary, and therefore Taiwan’s *dongwu shuxie* needs to zero in on animals, animal issues, and animal-human relationships pertinent to Taiwan’s culture, society, and history (2009: 317). Huang is less concerned with the literary nature (wenxuexing) and formal properties of *dongwu shuxie* and dwells more on ethical issues, propelled by a strong sense of animal justice that is derived by the recognition of omnipresent anthropogenic animal suffering. To learn about each animal individually for Huang is a way to avoid the taxonomic way of knowing. Huang places the ethical imperative above all others, even higher than the knowledge of natural science. She argues that overly emphasizing science runs the risk of repressing a writer’s emotive communication and thereby will not benefit the goal of animal advocacy that *dongwu shuxie* aims to promote. Thus, Huang is willing to bypass one of the most defining characteristics of nature writing, which emphasizes naturalist details and ways of knowing (2011: 9).

Huang’s ethical imperative for *dongwu shuxie* helps us to understand the thematic organization of her book, *The Construction of Life Ethics: Contemporary Literature of Taiwan as a Case Study*.
(2011). In this book, she identifies several animal themes in Taiwan’s contemporary literature of the 1980s and onward: cross-species’ co-existent experience, human-animal companionship, and concerns for animal living conditions (13). As exemplified in the choices of literary texts, one can detect her strong stance on animal advocacy. Overall, Huang regards genre convention as an obstruction for dongwu shuxie. In fact, Huang even goes so far as to claim that any writing—not just nonfiction prose and reportage, but also poetry, novels, drama, artworks, etc. that may not even engage directly with animals—should be counted as dongwu shuxie and be of concern for animal studies. Ultimately, Huang wants to do away with the word “animal” in the phrase “animal writing” to call for a more encompassing understanding of animals in the writing and creative process, or even the absence of it. To summarize Huang’s view, she regards dongwu shuxie as being not limited to a specific genre, but also including creative animal ethnography, novel, nonfictional essays, folklore, etc. In other words, dongwu shuxie consists of any literary texts involving animals as characters, symbols, voices, etc.

The other prominent scholar in the field of animal literary studies or dongwu shuxie is Lee Yu-lin, the director of the Graduate Institute of Taiwan Literature and Transnational Cultural Studies, and the Director of the Research Center for Humanities and Social Sciences at National Chung Hsing University. Unlike Huang’s advocacy approach and devotion to constructing dongwu shuxie discourse, most of Lee’s work on Taiwan’s dongwu shuxie focuses on the “animal question.” Lee demonstrates the crisis of human subjectivity and humanism—a philosophical and aesthetic inquiry into the thought processes of deconstructive philosophers such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Giorgio Agamben, and Cary Wolfe (118–120). In The Fabulation of a New Earth: Contemporary Taiwanese Nature Writing, Lee provides a model of comparative animal literary studies, which weaves together the ethics and aesthetics of “becoming-animal” or “becoming-
minoritarian” in dongwu shuxie and Deleuze-Guattari’s philosophy (142) as a mode of political resistance so as to deconstruct human exceptionalism. As a mode of resistance, it is different from the dominant mode of macro-politics, such as democracy, that resorts to the mainstream normative discourse of identity politics and rights. Dongwu shuxie, Lee argues, is not simply a depiction of animals or expression of concern for the ecological environment; rather, writers, when faced with animals, reflect upon the human-subject and animal-object cognitive structure. Commenting on them, Lee states: “writers, in using writing, abandon the anthropocentric environmental and world view, and compose an environment that is not predicated on the subject-object cognitive structure” (9). What concerns Lee in Taiwan’s dongwu shuxie is the way in which authors writing about animals assemble new ways of articulating interspecies alliances, thus constituting a de-anthropocentric vision to remap anthropocentric geo-territory.⁶

III. Selected Works

This special issue first features four established nature writers, including excerpts of Liu Ka-shiang’s four animal novels, Liao Hung-chi’s short fictional essays published in Piaoliu jianyu [Floating Prison] (2012), Dadao xiaodao [Big Islands Small Islands] (2015), and Haitong [Merbabies] (2016). Wu Mingyi’s two pieces of “butterfly writing” (hudie shuxie) are respectively from Midiezhi [Records of Bewildering Butterflies] (2010) and Diedao [The Dao of Butterflies] (2012). In echoing Huang’s inclusive definition of dongwu shuxie, here we also include indigenous tales from the Bunun tribe and a renowned Taiwanese writer, Lee Chiao, who is

⁶ For a detailed introduction of Lee’s book, see Chia-ju Chang’s “Writing Life: Review of The Fabulation of New Earth: Contemporary Nature Writing in Taiwan.”

Taiwan Literature
recognized for his writing about colonial Taiwan.

Often considered as the father of Taiwan’s nature writing, Liu Ka-shiang has pioneered various genres of writing about animals, and his experiment with the novel form resulted in the publication of a series of animal novels. *Fengniao Pinuocha* [The Windbird Pinocha] (1991) narrates the story of a ringed plover, Pinocha, who is determined to search for a migratory hero, “Shady” (Heixing, literally means “Black Shape”), a legendary figure, and abandons its migratory and procreational mandates to explore new possibilities of the meaning of life beyond a biological one. After years of searching in vain, Pinocha follows the path of a hero to defy his own biologically predestined mandate to return to his birthplace and becomes a legend himself. The selected excerpt depicts Pinocha and his companion, a crippled bird named Red-eye (Hongxiu), deciding to embark on an impossible journey for migratory plovers up to Snow Mountain. For Red-eye, he wants to find out why migratory birds cannot survive the severe winter in the north; Pinocha, in addition wants to know whether his companion Red-eye is the legendary hero Shady or not. When they finally reach the mountaintop, all they see is white snow and nothing else.

Liu’s second animal novel, *Zuotoujing Helianmeme* [Humpback Whale Halinmama] (1993), depicts the journey of a humpback whale named Halinmama, who, like the ringed plover Pinocha, questions the biologically programed destiny assigned to his species, and determines to take an unlikely adventure into an unknown territory: upstream in a river. Employing two narrative lines, one human and one animal, the human line portrays three characters, an elderly fisherman, an animal researcher, and a boy, who represent three positions and attitudes toward wild animals respectively: animal conservation, interventionist animal protection activism, and children’s unaffected innocence and biophilia. Eventually these two parallel lines of narrative cross as Halinmama becomes stranded on the riverbank and is discovered by these three humans.
The excerpt selected here narrates Halinmama’s journeys swimming upstream, stranding himself, and the encounter with the fishermen. The text entertains the idea of cetaceans stranding themselves on land as an indication of nonhuman sentient beings’ expression of freewill (e.g., to escape from their collective way of life); therefore, such an act should be respected.

Liu’s next animal novel, *Yegou zhi qiu* [Hill of Stray Dogs] (2007), focuses on a group of stray dogs in Taipei. Though classified as an animal novel, it is more accurately a “creative animal ethnography” in the form of diary, as it mixes observational, animal ethnographic accounts of dogs’ daily activities injected with the author’s interpretation. Like most of his works, Liu renders rich zoological knowledge in a naturalist fashion, while humanizing the naturalist propensity with the writer’s own subjective opinions and feelings. The selected excerpt provides a glimpse into the dogs’ lifeworld—parent-child relationships, friendship, mating, scavenging, disease, death, coping with human abandonment, and the threat of being captured by the animal squad—in the semi-fictional 101 Alley in Taipei. In this excerpt, Liu criticizes Taiwan’s anthropocentric urban vision and policy. *Hill of Stray of Dogs* gives an example of *dongwu shuxie* that exemplifies what Rob Nixon calls “slow violence” in the form of human indifference in Taiwan’s society that is too real to bear.

Liu’s last animal novel, *Yongyuan de xintianweng* [Forever Albatross] (2008), tells of a migration journey of a she-albatross, Big Foot (Dajiao). Again, Liu adapts a human-animal parallel narrative strategy similar to that found in *Humpback Whale Halinnmama*, to provide a comparison and contrast of the animal and human worlds. The human protagonist “I,” a Taiwanese researcher, joins a group of scientists, led by a Japanese, to the habitat of the albatross. Among the newly born albatrosses, Big Foot impresses her human observers with her superb flying skills. After taking off from the island, as part of being an albatross, she disappears and only later reappears in Pengchia Islet, a territory
atypical for an albatross, thereby remaining a mystery. The Taiwanese researcher then begins his lessons in flying. The excerpt chosen here depicts Big Foot’s training and departure.

These four animal novels share a common theme: the mystery of biological deviation, or even betrayal, which is ultimately a question of free will, a form of inquiry, and an imagining across species lines. The question of identity and free will, often manifesting itself in the main characters’ quest to transcend their biology, is also found in all of these works.

Famous for his cetacean writing, Liao Hung-chi began his career as a fisherman at the age of 35 and became a writer and ocean conservationist. His works mostly entail the lives of fishermen, and his descriptions of encounters with the ocean and cetaceans are both bloody and romantic: a meditation on life and death; the naked reality of species confrontation in the ocean food chain; human greed and indifference; as well as a deep appreciation of the beauty and vibrancy of the ocean and cetacean lives. “Yuxue” [Fish Blood] is a sober meditation on interspecies violence. Liao tells his fishing experience and recounts the reactions of different fish species vis-à-vis their impending death at the hands of fishermen. Here, Liao ruminates on blood as a mysterious liquid that brings tranquility and violence: “it is stirring like a flame, and beautiful like a rose petal…but it decays and goes bad quickly, and becomes a mark of life that cannot be washed away.” “Shang’an” [Coming Ashore] is an animal allegory about six dolphins that go ashore and begin to walk toward a winding hill trail, only to be scolded by the human hikers who tell them to return to the place from which they come. As they look down toward the ocean, there is not a single place in the ocean that is not marked by human beings.

“Youyu tan” [Squid Beach] and “Haitong” [Merbabies] offer criticism of eco-capitalism—that ruthless exploitation of species to makes profits without respecting those species as sentient beings. In “Squid Beach” a squid species called South Island
squids are considered resources in the eyes of the villagers when they annually migrate to the village only to encounter their final death; later, after their eventual disappearance from the beach, they turn symbolic in sustaining the squid festival that celebrates their arrival. In “Merbabies,” mysterious cetaceous animals, called “children from the sea” by the locals, are on the opposite end of the spectrum of eco-capitalism; they are undesired capital and face the same fate as the squid. The fabricated squid festival—a “cultural tradition” that celebrates the abundance of nature—lives on and continues to consume squids, exported this time, while species extinction is no longer an issue of concern. In the game of capitalism the fates of animals are ultimately the same. Finally, “Jinkui” [Periwinkle] narrates humans’ deep yearning for a sublime encounter with a fictional majestic being, the jinkui (Periwinkle) whale, even if only for a fleeting moment. The theme of appreciation and the awe-inspiring encounter with a cetacean extend across Liao’s dongwu shuxie.

The third writer introduced here is Wu Ming-yi. Widely known for his butterfly writing, Wu’s study of butterflies is set forth in two publications: Records of Bewildering Butterflies and The Dao of Butterflies. “The Compass of the Soul” from The Dao of Butterflies is a travel narrative in which the narrator (Wu himself) goes on an excursion to Meinung, a Hakka town in Kaohsiung County. For Wu, this trip evokes a string of historical memories associated with the place: migration and settlement of Hakka in the mid-eighteenth century, Japanese occupation, the life of a native Hakka writer Chung Li-ho in the first half of the twentieth century, and finally, contemporary dam construction to satiate the thirst of the Taiwanese people. Both history and nonhuman species play an agential role in shaping the local landscape of Meinung and the discourse of conservation. Wu’s narration recreates a multispecies historiography, in which butterflies and other species are considered as co-inhabitants of the place.

In “Koxinga” from Records of Bewildering Butterflies, Wu
pieces together a history of the Taiwanese purple-spot butterfly (*Euploea tulliolus* [ssb.] koxinga) on a trip to a small town called Kuohsing (Koxinga) in Nantou County. This subspecies named *koxinga* probably has to do with this eponymous township in which they were discovered. The association with Koxinga, better known as Zheng Chenggong, evokes the island's colonial past, beginning with the Dutch occupation (1624–1661), and then with Zheng Chenggong’s “retrieving lost ‘national territory’” by chasing the indigenous peoples deep into the mountains. Here, Wu looks at Taiwan’s colonial history from the perspective of the butterflies, which served as witnesses and became themselves victims of colonialization “executed for their iridescent purplish-blue forewings and stuck on butterfly mosaics” during the time when Taiwan was known as a butterfly kingdom.

Dealing with the same animal issue as Liu’s *Hill of Stray Dogs*, Lee Chiao’s “Xiuluo ji” [A Sacrifice to the Asuras] (1971) raises the question of whether human society is capable of sharing space with nonhuman animals and living with animals’ untamed animality. The narrative begins with the protagonist reminiscing about a stray dog, “Luo Xin,” that he once adopted and named, while partaking of a bowl of Luo Xin’s “fragrant flesh” (local euphemism for dog meat). Employing the first-person narration, the protagonist recounts the difficulty of “domesticating” Luo Xin, a young mutt with the blood of a hunting dog. Luo Xin was possibly abused or poisoned by humans and hence maintains a distance from humans. As suggested in the title, like the Asuras—the lowest ranking deities or demigods in Buddhist cosmology—Luo Xin is ill-tempered, arrogant, and suspicious, all the qualities that Asuras represent. The answer to the question of human coexistence provided in this text is a pessimistic one, if not tragic.

---

7 For a detailed biographical information on Lee Chiao, see Kuo-ch’ing Tu’s “Forward to the Special Issue on Lee Chiao.”
Elevated to a more philosophical level, the protagonist’s gesture of tasting Luo Xin’s meat signifies the protagonist’s conflicting love-and-hate complex and animals’ precarious relationship with humans.

In Taiwan, the aboriginal people constitute about 2.3% of the island’s population. There are sixteen officially recognized tribes, all belonging to the Austronesian linguistic group. Each tribe possesses rich animal narratives in their myths and folklore. In this special issue, we showcase several animal stories from the Bunun tribe, who have folklore rich in animal stories. Hengsyung Jeng, Professor Emeritus at National Taiwan University and a specialist on Taiwan’s indigenous culture and languages, argues that humans and animals are not ontologically separated. This interspecies worldview is manifested in the theme of human-animal metamorphosis that resonates with Greek mythology and Shanhai jing [Classic of Mountains and Seas].

Finally, the special issue concludes with three animal poems by Kuo-ch’ing Tu. Known for his poetics of “objectivity,” the poems sketch everyday multispecies relationship. It provides a glimpse into our contemporary, urban multispecies experience, personally and collectively.

Conclusion

Unlike ziran shuxie, dongwu shuxie is Taiwan’s unique contribution to global ecocriticism and animal literary studies. As a byproduct of globalization, it consists of nature writing, ecocriticism, and local animal activism. From selected texts in this volume, the reader can get a glimpse of the texture, flavor, and narrative density of Taiwan’s dongwu shuxie. They include “philosophical animal questions” and aesthetics, including animality, animal freewill, migration, and interspecies communication, as well as animal “real-world problems” in human society, such as stray dogs, dog meat
consumption, eco-colonialism and animal trade, eco-tourism, and human encroachment of nonhuman space. One can see different writing strategies and styles: the naturalist, the eco-postcolonial, animal advocacy, ecofeminist, and the animist/ineffable. These are not mutually exclusive and often overlap with one another in one single text. Each field of critical inquiry and discourse has its own strengths and blind spots. Regardless of the inevitable imperfection and limitation, they provide a discursive platform for textual praxis. The field and discourse of dongwu shuxie continues to evolve up to the present day.

After thirteen years of searching in vain for the Formosan clouded leopard, the zoologist Chiang Po-jun, a member of the search team, wrote a poem about the Formosan clouded leopard. In this poem, he provides a clue as to why animals matter by posing a rhetorical question: “Is it to feel the value of my existence or to feel real?” Here he hints that the Formosan clouded leopards (or nonhuman animals in general) are potentially the missing piece of our own coexistent being-in-the-world puzzle; without animals, human existence is unreal, as our inner sense of existence, even in our DNA, is co-constituted with our animal kin.

Works Cited


Lee, Chiao. “Xiuluojí” [A Sacrifice to the Asuras] First published


—. Dadao xiaodao [Big Islands Small Islands]. Taipei: Youlu Publisher, 2015.


Murphy, Patrick, D. Farther Afield in the Study of Nature-Oriented


—. *Diedao* [The Tao of Butterflies]. Taipei: Eryu Publisher, 2012.