The Sense of Place in Hwang Chun-ming’s Fiction

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__An upsurge on the consciousness of homeland and regional writing is a main cultural feature in the recent Taiwan. Speaking dialects, learning about local custom, and promoting homeland teaching are emphasized in government policy and public events, even more; identification with the soil is a norm for the identity attribute. “Kissing the land of Taiwan”, “Embracing Taiwan” are highly political declarations to proclaim the loyalty and enthusiasm toward this island. However, as the movement of indigenization is ardently carried on, what exactly is the “land”? Since searching for the origin emphasizes on constructive activity, what is the evolution of the image and significance of the soil in this literary process?

Those questions drove me to read the Taiwanese literature of 1960’s again in hope to outline the façade of this land. I notice that in the representative regional literature by Hwang Chun-ming that its focus centers on the characters rather than the land, more specifically, on the people of small towns instead of on the geographic scenery of those areas. The characters are the core and the countryside is only the background. More strictly speaking, the depiction and connotation of the space are secondary, even attached to the characters. Why would Hwang Chun-ming portray the story or problem of “homeland” with characters and culture as the core and the land as the supplement? If so, when does the image of land finally become clear in regional literature? What is Taiwanese sense of place represented in his fiction? This study aims to explore the sense of place in Hwang Chun-ming’s works, and probe into the constructive process of symbolic homeland in Taiwanese regional literature.