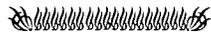




# Taiwan

On New Year's Eve, the last major official link between the United States and the government of Taiwan—a treaty of mutual defense—will be broken. Washington now formally recognizes the regime in Peking as "China." Yet, for almost three decades, the United States was anti-Communist Taiwan's indispensable ally. The Americans supplied the late Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist regime with military backing, money, and, in the UN, support for its claim to represent *all* China. Can Taiwan's prosperous people survive the rupture with Washington? Here, Taiwan scholar Parris Chang looks at the island's neglected early history; political scientist Gerald McBeath sums up the vast changes on Taiwan since 1949; and former diplomat Ralph Clough speculates on the future.



## BEAUTIFUL ISLAND

*by Parris H. Chang*

An old Chinese legend holds that a fiery dragon created Taiwan by piling great rocks up in the sea. The tale is not all that fanciful. Some 60 million years ago, a massive earthquake rocked the East Asian shore, submerging the entire coastline. A second earthquake heaved a narrow chunk of sunken crust up through the waters. As the elements over millennia eroded the jagged landscape, the island spread out into its present shape.

"The earthquake and typhoon have played an important part in the formation of the [Taiwanese] character," W. G. Goddard, the leading British historian of the island, once wrote. "The island was no place for weaklings. It afforded no sanctuary for the indolent. Only the strong could survive."

Taiwan is about twice the size of New Jersey or slightly larger than Holland. It is separated from the fishing and rice-growing province of Fukien, on the mainland of China, by the Taiwan Strait, which varies from 89 to 124 miles in width. Par-

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allel mountain ranges—the Chung-yang Range and three others—form a rugged green spine along the eastern coast of the island, facing the broad Pacific; rich farmland lies on the western slopes and on the coastal plain stretching toward the Strait. The climate is subtropical: Rainfall totals 100 inches annually; the average temperature is 75°F.

Of the 17 million people on Taiwan today, some 14.5 million are “Taiwanese” (descendants of Chinese who settled the island prior to the 20th century), more than 2 million are “mainlanders” (post-1945 Nationalist refugees from the Chinese mainland), and approximately 200,000 are aboriginal tribesmen. The stocky aborigines are variously believed to have arrived, by raft or outrigger canoe, from the Malay Peninsula, the Philippines, the mainland of south China, or the Ryukyu Islands in prehistoric times.

The aborigines generally have straight rather than slanted eyes. Their old tradition of headhunting, for which they were called *shengfan* (“raw savages”) by the Chinese, served for centuries as a strong deterrent to settlement of the island from the mainland.

Yet beginning around A.D. 1000 and intensifying during the 16th and 17th centuries, mainland Chinese began crossing the Strait from Fukien in large numbers, some as part of a government-planned migration, some to escape war or famine. Many of the early mainland migrants were the much-suffering Hakkas (literally, “guest people”), descendants of immigrants from northern China who had settled in eastern Kwangtung; latecomers to south China, they were reviled by local Chinese. The Hakkas and others gradually drove the aborigines into the remote mountain regions along Taiwan’s eastern coast, where their tribal descendants, known as *kaoshan* (“mountain dwellers”) still lead a semi-nomadic existence.

The first Western contact with Taiwan came a century after Bartholomeu Dias sailed around the Cape of Good Hope, when Portuguese sailors en route to Japan discovered the place in 1590, naming it *Ilha Formosa* (“beautiful island”). The Portuguese did not follow up; others did. By the early 1600s,

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From A Chinese scroll.

*Archer, scholar, pirate, the versatile Koxinga established Taiwan's first government. "This island was the dominion of my father," he told Dutch colonists. "Foreigners must leave." Although Koxinga's father betrayed the Ming cause, the old man's death affected Koxinga deeply, and at night he would "mourn and weep facing the north."*

there were small Spanish and Japanese trading colonies on the north of the island (the Japanese withdrew in 1628), and a pirate confederation, led by Li Han (also known as "Captain China"), prowled the seas and ravaged the mainland from Taiwan's sheltered, silted harbors. Most of the island was a political no-man's-land, and the 25,000 immigrant Chinese, as well as the aboriginal population, were pretty much left alone to fish, farm, or hunt as they had always done.

In 1624, the Dutch invaded Taiwan, eventually ousted the Spanish, and set up a fortified colony of several hundred in the southwest called Fort Zeelandia, near present-day Tainan. The Dutch used Taiwan primarily as a base for trade with China and Japan, but they exploited the local population whenever they could: The Java-based Dutch commercial empire in Asia was not founded on kindness.

Dutch rule was short-lived. "Formosa would perhaps have been theirs to this day," wrote James Davidson, U.S. consul in Taiwan, in 1903, "had not the [Dutch East India] Company, with extraordinary short-sightedness, been so engrossed in making the maximum of profits for the moment that they refused to expend the money necessary to secure themselves against

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Chinese invasion." Then as later, Taiwan's fate depended on the politics of the mainland.

The nemesis of the Dutch was Cheng Cheng-kung (Koxinga). He was born in Japan in 1624 of mixed Chinese and Japanese parentage. His father, Cheng Chih-lung, a Fukienese tailor-pirate of Hakka origin, plied both his needle and his sword in and around Taiwan. When the nomadic Manchus wrested Peking from the Ming government in 1644, the elder Cheng's fleet of junks became the last hope of the pro-Ming resistance. In 1646, however, Cheng Chih-lung defected to the winners. His son, throwing his scholar's robe into the fire at the temple of Confucius, vowed to continue the fight against the Tartar hordes.

### **Bribing and Boodling**

Although only 23 years old, Cheng Cheng-kung was hailed by Ming loyalists as their leader. Had not the Ming Emperor Lung-Wu, impressed by the young lad, conferred upon him the imperial surname? (Kuo-hsing-yeh, or "Koxinga," means "Lord of Imperial Surname"). From 1646 to 1660, the flamboyant Koxinga, with 70,000 men and a 3,000-junk fleet—"the sight of them inspired one with awe" wrote Vittorio Ricci, a Jesuit missionary in China and friend of Koxinga—scored a succession of brilliant tactical successes against the Manchu armies in South China. But his adversaries' superior numbers finally forced him to transfer his fleet and his base of operations to Taiwan in 1661. He made short work of Dutch pretensions to hegemony over the island. After a nine-month siege, he captured Fort Zeelandia and expelled the Dutch.

Koxinga's takeover had an enormous impact on Taiwan. By stamping out all traces of Western rule, he ensured that Taiwan, unlike other Asian island territories (e.g., Indonesia, the Philippines), could retain the supremacy of its language, culture, and religion. More important was a new exodus of Chinese to the island from the mainland, far surpassing previous waves of immigration. Not only officials and soldiers serving under Koxinga but also thousands of Ming loyalists followed Koxinga to Taiwan. By the 1680s, some 250,000 Chinese newcomers were farming and prospering on the island.

It is tempting to imagine what Koxinga, had he lived, might have accomplished, either as ruler of Taiwan or leader of a pro-Ming return to the mainland. But he passed away in 1663, at the age of 39, less than two years after his victory over the Dutch. As death neared, he was holding the sacred testament of

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the founding Ming Emperor and muttering: "The Great Ming pacified the empire and restored its ancient splendor. How can I meet him in heaven with my mission unfulfilled?"

Today, Koxinga is honored by all Chinese as a national hero for his expulsion of the "red-haired barbarians" from Taiwan. But the Nationalists, who fled to Taiwan in 1949, also think of him as the man who provided a refuge for opponents of the alien Manchu conquerors, then struggled relentlessly to recapture the mainland, a kind of 17th-century forerunner of Chiang Kai-shek. (A magnificent temple to Koxinga today stands in downtown Tainan, and Nationalist authorities commemorate his birthday every May). For their part, many native Taiwanese regard Koxinga as the founder of an independent state on Formosa. Not surprisingly, the mainland Communists prefer to honor Koxinga's grandson, Cheng K'o-shuang; he surrendered Taiwan to the Manchu government in 1683, thereby bringing about Taiwan's "reunification" with the mainland.

The two centuries of Manchu rule on Taiwan (1683–1895) were marked largely by sporadic repression and neglect. George MacKay, a Canadian Protestant missionary who spent 22 years in Taiwan, described the situation in the nineteenth century:

From the highest to the lowest, every [mainland] Chinese official in Formosa has an "itching palm," and the exercise of official functions is always corrupted by money bribes. . . . In the matter of bribing and boodling, the Chinese officials in Formosa could give points to the most accomplished office-seekers and money-grabbers in Washington or Ottawa.

For 200 years, local Chinese factions fought one another or, together, took on the aborigines. Between 1683 and 1843, there were 15 bloody anti-government rebellions, sometimes fired by yearnings for independence, sometimes simply by blind rage.

Despite such handicaps, the population of Taiwan increased rapidly, due largely to immigration from the mainland, where civil strife was no less frequent and the population pressure was far worse. There were perhaps 250,000 Chinese on the island in 1683; this number grew to 1,300,000 by the end of the 18th century, and to 2,546,000 by 1893. And, during interludes of peace, they prospered. The island's soil and climate were well-suited to the growing of rice, sweet potatoes, sugar cane, tea, vegetables, and fruits; food from Taiwan often averted famine in south China.

As Manchu power eroded, the great 19th-century surge of

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European imperialism in the Far East opened up mainland China to Western commerce. The Treaty of Tientsin in 1858 also opened up Taiwan's ports of Keelung and Tamsui to the ships of France, Britain, Russia, and the United States. Beginning in 1869, two Hong Kong-based British mercantile houses, Jardine Matheson & Company and Dent & Company, set up shop on Taiwan to secure opium, camphorwood, and tea for Western markets. American traders arrived in 1865.

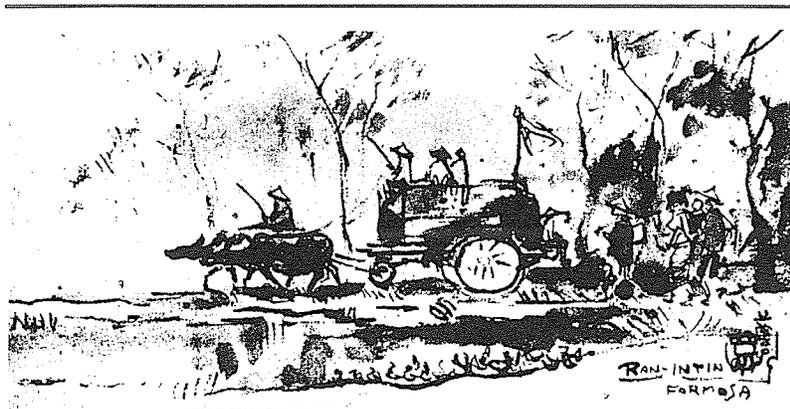
### The Yellow Man's Burden

The hopes of foreign powers with regard to Taiwan were not confined to trade. As early as 1833, British merchants in south China had urged their government to occupy Taiwan as a "convenient and desirable acquisition." After opening up Japan, the U.S. Navy's Commodore Mathew Perry sent an expedition to Taiwan in 1854 and pressed the State Department to acquire the island. Three years later, Gideon Nye, an American merchant in China, presented the U.S. commissioner to China, Peter Parker, with a plan for the "colonization" of Taiwan. President James Buchanan rejected the proposal, in part because he felt that growing U.S. domestic tensions, which would soon erupt in the Civil War, made foreign adventures ill-advised.

Finally, in 1884, following the Franco-Chinese war over Indochina, the French invaded Taiwan in a gambit to hold the island as a guarantee for the payment of an indemnity from the weakened Chinese government. French troops took Keelung and the Pescadores Islands. But the gambit failed; they could make no further progress against Chinese defenders and were forced to withdraw after a year.

Forcibly alerted to Taiwan's new strategic importance, the Manchu government in Peking moved to strengthen the island's defenses, reform its government, and revitalize its economy. In October 1885, Taiwan, hitherto merely a *tao*, a county, of Fukien Province, was proclaimed a province in its own right; Liu Ming-chuan was appointed its first governor. Liu, a farmer's son and mercenary captain turned intellectual, was the most progressive official Peking had ever sent to Taiwan. He was determined to help bring China into the 19th century, and he conceived of Taiwan as the first step in a bold experiment. "The West," he once wrote, "[is] making technological improvements by the day and by the hour. If . . . we linger and procrastinate, our backwardness will make us too frail to stand up as a nation at all."

Liu moved the island's capital from Tainan in the south to



Farmers Going Home by RAN INTIN. Used by permission.

Taipei in the north, near the best harbors. There he built Taiwan's first electric power station in 1887, installed street lights, and provided the city with a limited postal system. Liu also founded a Western-style school in Taipei, with English and Danish instructors. (Taiwan's schools had hitherto stressed Chinese classics, with little or no attention given to technical subjects or foreign languages). In 1891, Taiwan's first railway (the second in all of China) was completed. The Chinese on the mainland came to think of the island as a model province.

But the island's happy status did not last long. The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95 began as a struggle over Korea; it ended with the beaten Chinese handing over Taiwan. The acquisition of the island marked Japan's entry into the world's "colonial club," hitherto restricted to Western powers, and the Japanese were eager to make their venture a success. A contemporary Japanese historian, Yosaburo Takekoshi, put it this way:

The white people have long believed that it has been the white man's burden to cultivate the uncivilized territories and bring to them the benefits of civilization. The Japanese people now have risen in the Far East and want to participate with the white people in this great mission. Will the Japanese Nation, as a yellow people, be capable of performing this mission? The rule of Taiwan may well provide the answer.

At first, heavy-handed Japanese warrior-administrators embittered the Taiwanese, using little imagination and much savagery to suppress first a revolt aimed at independence, then an outbreak of brigandage and banditry. The arrival in 1898 of Governor-General Gentaro Kodama and his civilian aide, Dr.

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Shimpei Goto, ushered in a new era. Kodama, a career military man, streamlined the colonial bureaucracy, recruited a qualified corps of Japanese civil servants, and imposed a series of bold changes designed by Goto to ensure stability, raise revenue, and step up economic production.

Chief among these was establishment of an efficient police force, which was given considerable latitude—including responsibility for supervising agricultural improvements and public works projects—in dealing with the populace. In addition, the old Chinese *paochia* system was revived.\* By 1902, peace and order had been restored throughout the island, though the antipathy of the native population to their alien rulers persisted.

### The Glory of the Emperor

The colonial government boosted agricultural exports; production was geared to the Japanese market, which accounts for the growth in the rice, sugar, banana, and sweet potato crops. (Taiwan's trade with Western governments virtually ceased during the Japanese period). To increase farm output, the colonial government broke up the old feudal land tenure system (turning tenants into owners) and introduced new farming methods, including the use of chemical fertilizer and hybrid seed.

The Japanese were bent on exploiting Taiwan for the glory of the Emperor, but the wealth they generated was shared to some degree by the native population, who came to enjoy a standard of living considerably higher than that of mainland Chinese. Bicycles, radios, textiles, watches, and other goods from Japan flooded into Taiwan in return for rice and sugar. Malaria and cholera virtually disappeared as the Japanese stressed sanitation. Taiwan's population doubled during the 50 years of Japanese rule to more than 6 million in 1945, despite an almost total ban on immigration from the Chinese mainland.

Concern for public health prompted colonial administrators to open up the fields of medicine and hygiene to Taiwanese. They otherwise did little to foster native education until the increasing industrialization of the island in the 1920s and '30s created a demand for skilled local workers. In 1932, only one-half of all school-age boys (and one-fifth of the girls) were enrolled in elementary school. Ten years later, however, over 90

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\*A *paochia* was a group of about 100 households, headed by a senior member elected by the group. The leader answered to the police for the misdeeds of the families under his supervision: In turn, he held each family head responsible for the actions of all members of *his* family. As Dr. Goto refined the system, the Japanese had final approval over the choice of the senior member of each household group.

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percent of native Taiwanese, and even 75 percent of the aboriginal children, were attending the free, six-year grade schools.

Beyond grammar school, education policy was dilatory and discriminatory. In high schools and at the only university—the Imperial University of Taipei, established in 1928—Japanese students greatly outnumbered Taiwanese, who were subject to restrictive quotas. In 1939, for example, only 90 Taiwanese were registered at the university, and they were permitted to study only medicine, agriculture, and other practical sciences. Many Taiwanese did study at the American- and British-supported Presbyterian Seminary in Tainan, a private college that still exists and has had great influence on the island's intellectual growth.\* Many well-to-do Taiwanese also sent their children to universities in Japan.

### Liberation

The Japanese progressively adopted a policy of “Japanization” of the Taiwanese, in the hope that the natives would embrace “the unique and divine culture of Japan.” Instruction from elementary school on was in Japanese, and persons not fluent in the language were denied positions of prestige or importance. After 1937, no newspapers could be published in Chinese, or even carry a Chinese language column. By 1944, about 70 percent of the Taiwanese were literate in the Japanese language. Yet intermarriages were few, and the Taiwanese remained socially apart from the 350,000 Japanese, most of whom were in government service, the armed forces, the police, and industry.

Cut off from Chinese influence, the Taiwanese were culturally adrift, seemingly neither Chinese nor Japanese.

Yet in many respects, the Taiwanese were lucky. They fared far better under Japanese rule than did the people of Korea and Manchuria. Even the briefest comparison with the U.S. record in the Philippines, or with the Asian colonies of France, Britain, and Holland, suggests that, whatever their motives, the Japanese did relatively well by their island colony. Apart from developing “infrastructure”—roads, railroads, power plants—the Japanese gave numerous Taiwanese a thorough technical training, creating a reservoir of skilled manpower that made an important contribution to Taiwan's post-1949 economic growth.

During the Second World War, Japan used Taiwan as one of

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\*There are 170,000 Presbyterians on Taiwan, most of them native Taiwanese. Mainlanders who have converted to Christianity are generally Roman Catholics or Methodists. Buddhism and Taoism are the main religions of the island.



Taiwan is self-sufficient in natural gas, but must import 99 percent of its oil. By the 1990s, nuclear power will provide about 40 percent of the island's electricity. Taiwan is defended by a modern air force and a 330,000-man army, one-fourth of it deployed on the off-shore islands of Quemoy and Matsu (inset). There are no longer U.S. military forces on Taiwan.

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its main staging bases for the southward surge of imperial forces after Pearl Harbor. During the war's final months, Taiwan suffered severely from U.S. bombing but escaped the more serious damage that a full-scale invasion would have inflicted. (U.S. forces bypassed the island in favor of seizing Okinawa.) In September 1945, after the surrender of Japan, China's Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek sent in Nationalist troops to take over the island administration.\*

### Lost Opportunities?

The Taiwanese were initially exuberant. The island province was back in the fold, free of foreign occupation. Disillusionment set in as Chinese Nationalists made it clear that they intended to treat Taiwan as a conquered territory, its population as a subjugated people. "Carpet-baggers" from China swarmed over Taiwan, enriching themselves as they acquired sinecures at all levels of government, supplanting the Japanese. The Nationalists quickly expropriated 90 percent of the island's key industries (including the utilities and the processing of sugar, tea, and tobacco) and replaced senior Taiwanese workers, regardless of experience and ability, with mainland émigrés.

Within 18 months, Taiwan's economy collapsed. Food shortages developed after heavy shipments of grain went to the war-ravaged mainland. Between November 1945 and January 1947, prices rose an estimated 700 percent for food, 1,400 percent for fuel and building materials, and 25,000 percent for fertilizer. A breakdown in health services caused epidemics of cholera and bubonic plague.

The island was ripe for rebellion. On February 27, 1947, a Taiwanese woman selling black-market cigarettes was killed by a Chinese Nationalist policeman. When a large crowd protested the following day, the police opened fire, killing at least four people. Insurgents rallied throughout the island. The Taiwanese organized a "committee for the settlement of the February 28th incident" and presented General Chen Yi, the island's Chinese Nationalist governor, with demands for political and economic reform. Chen temporized, then, with reinforcements hastily dispatched from the mainland, slaughtered more than 10,000 Taiwanese, systematically liquidating native educators, doctors, businessmen, publishers, politicians. A whole generation of

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\*The Cairo Declaration of 1943, jointly issued by U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, had stated that "all territories Japan had stolen from the Chinese, such as Manchuria, Formosa, and the Pescadore, shall be returned to the Republic of China."

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Taiwanese leaders was lost; by the end of March 1947, the island's populace was firmly under Nationalist control.

Most Taiwanese would probably agree with U.S. General Albert Wedemeyer, writing in the aftermath of the 1947 rebellion, that at that early stage in its postwar rivalry with the Communists, the Nationalist government had lost "a fine opportunity to indicate to the Chinese people and to the world at large its capacity to provide honest and efficient administration."

Chiang Kai-shek soon had other worries. Civil conflict, interrupted by World War II, was raging again on the mainland, and the American-supplied Nationalist armies were steadily losing ground to the Communists led by Mao Zedong. By the end of 1948, all of northern China was in the hands of the Communists, and 5,000 mainland Chinese refugees were pouring into Taiwan every day. By April 1949, the Nationalists had evacuated their capital at Nanking. A month later, the Communists took Shanghai. In December, Taiwan was all that was left of the Republic of China, and Chiang Kai-shek, with 2 million refugee loyalists and a priceless hoard of art treasures and dismantled factories from the mainland, set up his "temporary wartime capital" in Taipei.

In Washington a few weeks later, President Harry S Truman announced a "hands off" policy toward the cornered Nationalist government. Secretary of State Dean Acheson declared, in effect, that the U.S. defense perimeter in Asia did not include Taiwan. Chinese Communist troops slowly massed on their side of the Taiwan Strait. Pentagon analysts agreed that the Nationalists could not hold out on their island fortress for more than one year.

Taiwan was on its own.