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Chinese Working-Class Lives

Hill Gates

Published by Cornell University Press

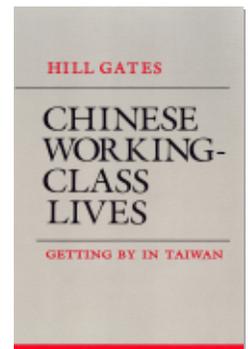
Gates, Hill.

Chinese Working-Class Lives: Getting By in Taiwan.

Cornell University Press, 1987.

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An Island of Immigrants

Taiwan, a subtropical island 240 miles long by 90 miles wide, lies off the south China coast. It has been populated, and its history and culture shaped, by four great human migrations. The earliest immigrants, whose living descendants are known as the Taiwan Aborigines, began to arrive in the island as early as fifteen thousand years ago. Until the nineteenth century, small groups of potential migrants continued to land in Taiwan after sea voyages from the Philippines (de Beauclaire 1971:31). In earlier times, others came from the islands and coasts of south China, some of which are less than 100 miles away. Today, about a quarter million Aborigines inhabit the island's lofty, forested mountains and the poorer sections of its cities and towns. The next important wave of migrations, of southern Chinese from the provinces of Fujian and Guangdong, began about four hundred years ago. Arriving in large numbers from the early seventeenth century to the end of the nineteenth, their descendants, known today as the Taiwanese, are still the majority population, numbering, in 1987, about seventeen million. For fifty years, from 1895 to 1945, several hundred thousand Japanese came to labor, govern, and do business in Taiwan as part of the Japanese empire. Although at the end of World War II these migrants returned to Japan, Japanese influence on older Taiwanese and Aborigines remains strong. The last immigrants, also Chinese, are a mixed group who fled from the mainland of China to the island after losing the long Chinese civil war between supporters of the Nationalist party and those of the Communist party, in 1949. They and their children born in Taiwan, referred to as "Mainlanders," made up over two million people in 1987.

Each successive group has brought changes to those who came before, as old settlers and new struggled for resources and the power to control them.

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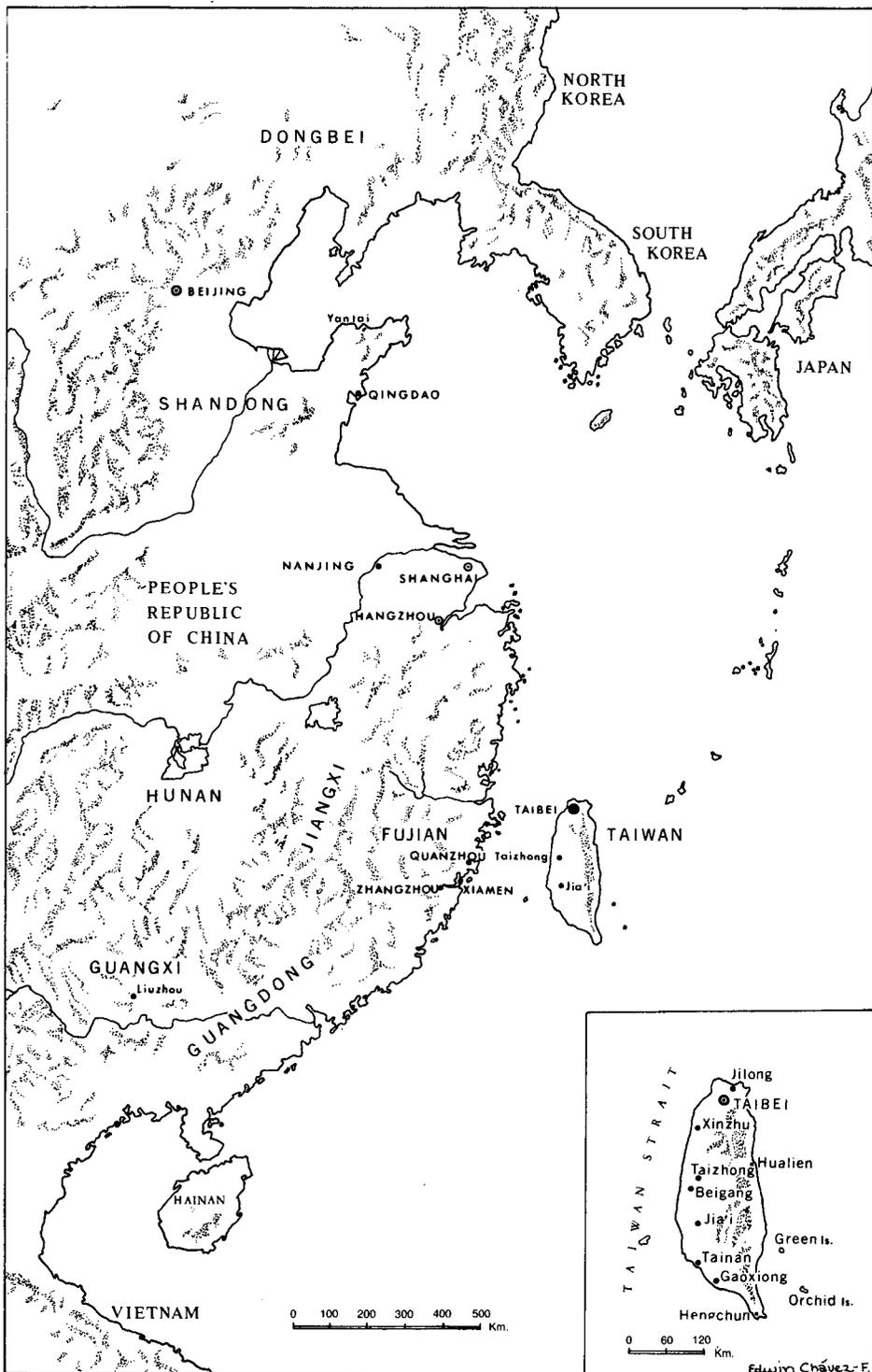
Until the Chinese began to arrive in substantial numbers in the seventeenth century, those struggles were probably less intense, for the island had plenty of room to allow the small Aboriginal communities to follow their culturally diverse paths. Differences between older and newer arrivals—in population density, ecological adjustment, economic system, political organization, social relations, and beliefs—have shaped the culture that the immigrants have created for themselves. The Taiwan version of Chinese culture, and therefore the lives of the people in this study, are the complex products of the relations, peaceful and otherwise, among these differing peoples, and of the accommodations each has had to make to the others.

The turbulent coexistence of all four groups has been a vivid part of the life experience of older living islanders. Stories of war between Taiwanese and Aborigines were passed on to me by people who remember such times, or whose parents did; as late as 1930, an armed Aborigine rebellion against the Japanese revived old Chinese fears of their tribal neighbors. In this century, first the Japanese and then the Mainlanders have influenced Taiwanese lives through government and commerce. The Mainlanders themselves, recently arrived and uninterested in the island's history, are nevertheless affected by it and by the shock their arrival has caused the previous inhabitants. Since the beginning of Japanese rule in 1895, Taiwan's economy has been made increasingly complex and productive because of the interplay among peoples. By the 1930s the Japanese had replaced traditional agriculture with an early green revolution while, in the 1960s, the Mainlanders helped industry overshadow agriculture as the primary source of wealth. Tracing the experiences of the four groups of migrants reveals the historical background of our subjects' lives, as well as Taiwan's emergence as an industrialized country with a highly complex culture.

Prehistoric and Aborigine Settlement

The Chinese call Taiwan's Aborigines "Mountain People" because they now occupy the island's central mountainous regions. Once the only inhabitants, their ancestors first occupied the island fifteen thousand years ago, as proven by the archaeological discovery of stone tools from that time (Chang 1977:486). Such early inhabitants were probably foragers and fisherfolk, doubtless related to the people who left similar tools on the south China coast at about the same period.

Considerably later, by about 5,500 years ago (Chang 1977:85–91), people at Dapenkeng on the island's east coast were making and using a globular brown pottery marked with surface designs pressed into the wet clay that



Taiwan and the China coast

looks a good deal like ceramics found on the coast of southern China and Southeast Asia. The cordage with which the pottery designs were made suggests a familiarity with rope making for other purposes—fishnets (there are stone “sinkers” as well) and lashings for canoes—while stone adzes for woodworking hint at the construction of boats. The folk of Dapenkeng may have been a seagoing people living on fish, wild plants, and, perhaps, on domesticated root crops like taro. If this is so, horticulture may have arisen one thousand years earlier in this region than in northern China. Such a pattern fits into archaeological and linguistic knowledge of the wider Pacific area to which contemporary Aborigines clearly belong. Their languages belong to the Austronesian family, which includes Polynesian and some Melanesian tongues, Indonesian, and even the language of distant Madagascar. It is even possible that this great radiation of Austronesian tongues may have had its source in Taiwan (W. Wang 1985).

After reaching Taiwan, the Aborigines did not cease to visit and exchange genes, crops, techniques, and ideas with their fellow Austronesians. Chinese historians record their voyages to the mainland and the Philippines late in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Davidson [1967]:563); contact with the Philippines seems to have been especially significant, continuing for some until the mid-nineteenth century (de Beauclaire 1971:47). Although there is little left at present of the seagoing tradition for most of the Mountain People, on offshore Orchid Island men still construct deep-sea canoes of lashed-together adze-cut planking in which they brave unpredictable winds and rocky coasts, after the custom of their fathers.

By a thousand years ago, these people were building stone terraces on the steep mountains in central Taiwan to grow millet and tubers (Triestman 1972:74)—a sure sign of population pressure on the more easily cultivated lowlands and of the abandonment by part of the population of a maritime existence. Another change in basic food production, which brought about the present-day reliance on the sweet potato, must have occurred some time after the Spanish transmitted that New World plant to the Pacific in the sixteenth century. The availability of sweet potatoes, which proved very productive in Taiwan, may have triggered a further rise in the Aboriginal population at just the time the Chinese began to compete with them for land.

Although the Chinese commonly lump the Mountain People together as a single ethnic category, they do not constitute a homogeneous group. The Dutch counted 293 local groups in the vicinity of their settlement in the mid-1600s (Davidson [1967]:562), which, like contemporary Aboriginal communities, were probably only loosely affiliated with their neighbors. In recent times, the Mountain People have lived in small kinship or residen-

tial communities that sometimes fought and sometimes allied themselves with similar neighboring villages. Their slash-and-burn cropping methods and wide-ranging hunting activities encouraged frequent group and individual moves and considerable cultural variation. With little social differentiation of rich and poor, or men and women, these were egalitarian communities with close ties to the natural world and an economic system based on reciprocity and mutual support. The generosity this culture teaches and values can still be seen in the open and hospitable ways of today's Aborigines, who cheerfully offer drinks from a common bottle of moonshine, invite strangers for a meal, and expect to share one's pack of cigarettes as they would freely do if the tobacco were their own.

Like other egalitarian horticulturalists living in autonomous villages, the Mountain People found it difficult to resolve some disputes, and in the past they were often at war with their neighbors. Bringing home the heads of dead enemies to display as skull trophies became a goal of war and a sign of bravery among men.

After millennia of slowly occupying the island, learning and using its resources, and creating patterns of social relations and beliefs that they still value today, Aborigines began to encounter competition for their land from entirely alien peoples. These were the Chinese and Japanese, who were impelled to venture forth by expanding populations and economies in Asia, and the Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch, who were stimulated to exploration by the emerging capitalist economy of Europe.

Although the Chinese had first visited Taiwan in the seventh century, when they attempted to force local people to accept their overlordship, the island was apparently too remote to draw further Chinese attention until the sixteenth century. In 1564, in response to Taiwan-based Chinese and Japanese pirate attacks on China's coasts, the emperor of China claimed the island and settled a garrison in the south, near the present city of Tainan. Trade and colonists soon followed, beginning the process that has made Taiwan a part of the Chinese world.

While the Dutch were the first European colonists in Taiwan, other Europeans also explored its possibilities. The Portuguese, who merely visited in the early 1500s, described Taiwan as an *ilha formosa*—a “beautiful island,” giving Taiwan its often-used alias, “Formosa.”¹ The Spanish established a short-lived mission in northern Taiwan, from which they were driven by the Dutch in 1642.

1. The name Formosa, because it is not derived from Chinese, is the preferred English usage for some Taiwanese who advocate independence for the island and freedom from Nationalist Chinese rule.

The founding of a Dutch colony in 1621 was the result both of an increasingly aggressive Dutch policy in East Asia and of the Chinese authorities' desire to keep European traders out of their mainland ports. The Dutch, apparently satisfied with this foothold in a fruitful and strategically located island, set about building a base for their East Asian trade and for piracy against the trade of the Spanish and Portuguese. They were to remain in Taiwan until 1662, when an army of Chinese pirates seeking a safe haven drove them out. During these years the Dutch administered (to their considerable profit) the land and people—Chinese and Aborigines—of a large area of southwest Taiwan, encouraging a mainland trade in Aborigine forest products and in the rice and sugar that immigrant Chinese were beginning to produce.

The most enduring influence of the Dutch was, by fostering trade, to increase the flow of Chinese immigrants to Taiwan and to make the Chinese authorities more eager to control this dangerous outpost off their turbulent southeast coast. After the Chinese ousted the Europeans during the late seventeenth century, the Aborigines stood alone against China's vast pool of prospective emigrants, its complex economy, and its sophisticated methods of administration. While the Dutch had given them a short-lived religious tradition, some literacy, and firearms, the Chinese would give them their future.

That future, to make a sad tale brief, meant being pushed out of the low-lying plains and valleys, where Chinese agriculture was most successful, and into the forested mountains in a guerrilla war that lasted for centuries. As the Chinese population and economy expanded or foreign trade offered a price for upland products, the Aborigines lost ground, though they fought for every foot and decorated their villages with thousands of bleaching Chinese skulls. The hatred this bitter struggle engendered in the Chinese was most clearly expressed in the custom, common in the early 1890s, of cannibalism.

One horrible feature of the campaign against the savages was the sale by the Chinese in open market of savage flesh. . . . After killing a savage, the head was commonly severed from the body and exhibited to those who were not on hand to witness the prior display of slaughter and mutilation. The body was then either divided among its captors and eaten, or sold to wealthy Chinese and even to high officials, who disposed of it in a like manner. The kidney, liver, heart, and soles of the feet were considered the most desirable portions, and were ordinarily cut up into very small pieces, boiled, and eaten somewhat in the form of a soup. The flesh and bones were boiled, and the former made into a sort of jelly. (Davidson [1967]:254)

In this century, modern administrations have controlled the Aborigines so that warfare is no longer practiced among themselves or against the Chinese. Limited education and social services have been provided for them, and their contacts with Chinese and others are carefully monitored. The Japanese forced them militarily into a vast reservation that they were not permitted to leave, though Japanese could enter, mostly as policemen and schoolteachers. Since the beginning of Chinese Nationalist control in 1945, Aborigines have been free to move down into the lowlands and cities, and the government has given many retired Nationalist soldiers land in the mountains. These men often marry Aborigine women, seriously limiting the marriage possibilities of Aborigine men. In the mountains, the Aborigines' old ways recede fast before the tide of economic development that brings more and more fruit growers, lumberers, power-generation workers, and military men to settle among them.

Those who move to the plains join a stream of earlier Mountain People who have assimilated to Chinese society by the adoption of Chinese languages, dress, and customs. They do not mix easily with the ethnocentric Chinese, who frequently stereotype them as "uncivilized" even when they adopt the majority culture. The Chinese surname that many "sinified" Aborigines were given in the past—Pan—is a character meaning "barbarian," with another beside it indicating the category "insect." While a few urbanized Mountain People have achieved fame as athletes or entertainers, most still experience social and occupational discrimination and poverty.

The Taiwanese: Pioneers from South China

The Chinese who migrated to Taiwan in earlier centuries have come recently to develop a sense of common identity as Taiwanese. Those who crossed the Taiwan Straits to settle the island, however, set out as women and men of Quanzhou or Changzhou or Xiamen cities, or as people of another of the many local communities of the south China coast. What they became in Taiwan was the product, in part, of the south Chinese culture they brought with them, of the pressure the Chinese state exerted on the remote island, and of the economy of the busy merchant cities of China's commercial coast. Conditions in China prompted, quickened, and at times controlled their emigration, and China remained a refuge for those who failed to adapt to Taiwan's rough frontier society.

But local conditions also shaped the Taiwanese: the violent contact with alien Aborigines, the distance from centers of state control, the new economic opportunities of a land not wholly monopolized by the rich and

powerful. In this, they shared much with other south Chinese regional subcultures formed in remote mountain areas recently conquered from tribal peoples. Taiwan, however, differed from the outback of Guangxi or Yunnan provinces in being both well endowed for the production of valuable crops and well located to transport them to coastal markets. Its maritime position, exposing it to many influences, also made Taiwan more cosmopolitan than most parts of China. The Chinese government's desire to guard its frontiers against foreign encroachment; the Chinese merchants' search for profit from a rich agriculture, and the Chinese peasants' hope of acquiring land that would support their families might all be realized in this, the richest of the Qing dynasty's immense territorial conquests.

These motives brought a flood of immigrants to Taiwan during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries. This was a period during which tendencies in government and economy converged to encourage the settlement of newly opened land by families working small landholdings with their own labor (Marks 1984:32ff.), a pattern that the Taiwanese saw as the ideal basis for a household. Some people, early in the migration or in a few favored locations, were able simply to strike out and pioneer as rugged individualists. The majority, however, settled as tenants on land that the government, attempting to encourage Chinese occupation, had sold or granted in large blocks to land speculators for further subdivision into family farms. Although the landlord held rights to the subsoil, the tenant had a permanent right to his parcel of land, from which he could not be evicted as long as he paid his rent (Wickberg 1981:212-13). Such tenancy was not quite ownership, but it was close enough to be very attractive to the many land-poor families of Fujian's sandy coast. Large areas were opened up by tenants brought in by land dealers, so that settlement of a new area was often rapid and the settlers were homogeneous in regional background. Some areas were settled through government grants to troops demobilized in Taiwan after having served in the military garrison.

Subcultural or ethnic variations among the immigrants were maintained or even accentuated by the discontinuous pattern of settlement and varying ecological adaptations they made in Taiwan. The Hakka minority, for example, found their niche in the foothill regions, where they specialized in upland agriculture, forestry, and skirmishes with the Aborigines. Such Hakka had little in common with the Hoklo (lowland, Fujianese) immigrants.

Increasingly, as Chinese settlement encountered Aborigine resistance, pioneering families banded together in fortified villages to clear and keep land. Often the ties that bound them into cohesive communities were

based on kinship or, if there were few kin ties among a group of migrants pioneering together, on fictive kinship that assumed a common ancestor for everyone sharing one of the few Chinese surnames. These ties were extended agnatically, creating strong kin groups in which men played all major roles. The strong tradition of patrilineality, long part of Chinese culture, was strengthened further by the constant need for physical defense on the frontier. A common mainland place of origin served as a bond to organize groups that had no basis for forming lineages, familiar local accent and custom supplying the necessary sense of connectedness.

Although lineages and villages of people of similar mainland origins needed a sense of solidarity to take and hold Aborigine land, they needed it as well to create effective work groups to clear the luxuriant forests and build the irrigation systems necessary to grow rice and sugar (Pasternak 1972). Taiwan's western plain is crossed by many short rivers falling rapidly to the sea which become raging torrents in the rainy season. Typhoons, with their destructive winds and flooding downpours, frequently wreak havoc in autumn on what has been built that year. Building and maintaining networks of canals with their necessary dikes and sluice gates required substantial numbers of coordinated, cooperative workers. Even running an irrigation system in good working order meant sharing the available water equitably and finding ways to resolve the disputes over land, water, and labor that inevitably arose.

Because the Chinese government apparatus was weak in most parts of Taiwan, and because in any case the state discouraged the use of its courts for local conflict resolution, Taiwanese pioneers generally depended for their rights on the strength of their village or kin group. While mediation could often resolve difficulties within a community, disputes among communities frequently led to feuds and to outright warfare (Lamley 1981). The men of one or several allied villages were quick to turn their strength to defending their land and water or to attacking those of others. Local alliances of lineages or villages were the strongest political bodies in the countryside, fighting, making peace, controlling important economic activities, and defining the rules by which their members lived. A family that did not belong to such a group was in serious danger.

Occasionally, the Chinese state attempted to exert the authority it claimed over these independent people, who then rebelled, raising arms against the imported mainland troops sent to "pacify" them. Rebellions resulted, too, when official corruption, completely uncontrolled by the distant central government, became intolerable. Especially during the eighteenth century, when rebellion was virtually continuous, Taiwan was

known in Beijing, China's capital, as a hard-to-govern region with "an outbreak every three years and a rebellion every five."

In 1722 one of the greatest of these uprisings was sparked by the immigrant Zhou Yigui, who led the many people who were angered by a new government monopoly on camphor production. Together they drove all the officials out of Taiwan, crowned Zhou emperor of Taiwan, and began to set up a presumably more just system of government. In response, a large mainland army crushed the rebels, sent Zhou back to Beijing in a cage to be crucified, and laid waste the countryside. The devastations of war and the diseases that followed it were worsened by the unlucky chance of a violent typhoon that, in 1723, left "scarcely a building uninjured in the settlements near the coast" (Davidson [1967]:73).

In 1784 an even larger rebellion lasting nine months and killing a hundred thousand people grew out of a feud between Changzhou and Quanzhou branches of an immense secret society. It too was brutally put down—its leader was executed by being cut into a thousand pieces—and the countryside ravaged in "an exhibition of severity the like of which the island had never seen" (Davidson [1967]:78). Lesser episodes, with their recurring demands for independence from the Chinese, continued well into the nineteenth century.

Despite the frequent violence, peasants continued to plough their land, growing rice, sugar, and other valuable crops for export to Fujian's coastal cities. Most of the sugar consumed in northern China, and much of the rice eaten in Fujian, was grown in Taiwan, as was the "oilcake" of pressed-out peanuts used for fertilizer in Fujian (Davidson [1967]:66). Well-armed men harvested valuable timber and other forest products, from textile fibers to herbal medicines, and in the late nineteenth century more and more Chinese woodsmen distilled camphor from huge camphor trees for a growing Japanese market. At the same time, increasing American demand for green and oolong teas made this a profitable crop in north Taiwan. As tea grows best on cool, misty hillsides, more Aborigine forests were cleared for its cultivation, more small peasant families sharecropped on the edge of Chinese civilization, and more big landowners and tea merchants drew profits from Aborigine land and Taiwanese labor.

From the beginning of large-scale Chinese immigration in the seventeenth century, most peasant migrants were firmly embedded in an embryonic capitalist economy run by a class of state-aided entrepreneurs. Before a peasant family could secure its own subsistence, it was obliged to pay out rent or taxes, in money or in kind, for the use of the land. In Taiwan, local community power was sometimes great enough so that weak

state agents were unable to collect taxes; it was this power, perhaps, as much as the island's natural agricultural advantages that allowed immigrants to flourish there. But landlords with their private armies could usually collect rents, siphoning off much of the wealth created in Taiwan's countryside.

Because Taiwan's economy was built on land speculation and exports, the use of money and the habit of calculating the costs of land, labor, and goods permeated the way of life of settlers even in remote valleys. As confrontations between Chinese and Aborigines became less those of war and more those of business, Chinese familiarity with money, officially sanctioned land transactions, interest on loans, and wage labor enabled them regularly to gain over the tribal people. Although capitalist relations often operated to the peasants' disadvantage in their dealings with landlords and merchants, the Taiwanese could profitably apply what they knew of such relations in their dealings with their former enemies.

Taiwanese sophistication in an economy with some capitalist patterns also gave the island's people an advantage when they began to produce for international markets. During the early nineteenth century, European capitalists had chafed at the restrictions the Chinese state imposed on their trade with China. When they could gain no entry diplomatically or economically, the British, in the 1840s, began simply to bombard coastal cities until the Chinese agreed to allow their trade—the British wanted especially to market opium in China—to be undertaken on British terms. Once China was “opened,” European and American interest soon turned to Taiwan's small tea trade. Here, capitalist elements of Chinese tradition, which were especially strong in Taiwan, enabled island Chinese to organize rapidly to meet the new demand and to maintain control over a good deal of the profitable new export trade. Although Europeans and Americans entered Taiwan as tea merchants, they did not gain the kind of dominance that would have enabled non-Chinese to drain all the tea profits back to their homelands. Foreign merchants interested in other Taiwan commodities generally found they could not compete profitably with the already-established Chinese system. In the long run, it was more to the advantage of the peasant majority that the merchants and landlords who gained from their work were Chinese. Unlike foreigners, they might invest their gains in Taiwanese business, establish local schools, improve the roads and bridges, and be accountable in some measure to local pressure.

To meet both island and export needs, many small industries and commercial enterprises grew up. Sugar had to be refined, rice milled, camphor distilled, and indigo made into dye paste. As steam shipping became important, coal mining was added to the extraction of gold and sulphur

from the island's mountains. The Taiwanese drew on a long and rich Chinese tradition of practical science and engineering that enabled them to accomplish these and many other industrial tasks with a minimum of equipment, though with much labor (Hommel 1937). When new problems presented themselves, Chinese craftsmen invented ingenious solutions. One observant visitor described the extremely simple and clever manufacture of lead linings for tea boxes in these words: the visitor

will find the chief workman standing beside a pot containing molten lead, and on the floor may be seen . . . two tiles, one on top of the other. Commencing operations, the Chinese with one hand lifts one side of the top tile up slightly, and with the other hand dips a little of the molten metal out of the pot and with a dexterous movement dashes it in between the two tiles; then, instantly dropping the upper one, and stepping upon it, he applies sufficient pressure to force the melted lead to spread over the tiles. The metal hardens in a few seconds; the upper tile is again lifted . . . these plates, after having been trimmed, are soldered together in the shape of a box. (Davidson [1967]:386).

The tea trade alone required many specialized workers: farm families who planted and cared for the bushes; tea-picking girls and women who selected the correct leaves; carriers who rushed them down the hills for processing; owners and laborers in small tea-drying factories; makers of sacks, baskets, lead liners, and wooden boxes for manufacture and shipping; porters, clerks, and buyers to bring the finished tea to the big urban merchants; and sailors to start it on its journey to American tea tables. Taiwanese labor was supplemented in busy seasons by throngs of migrant laborers from the mainland (Davidson 1903:55), who were housed and fed by local boardinghouse keepers and "entertained" in teahouses and brothels. Other agricultural, industrial, and mining activities produced similar arrays of occupations and opportunities for small business. Not all business was small, however, and Ng observed that "in a frontier and migrant society such as Taiwan, merchants wielded greater influence in the urban communities than their counterparts in the mainland" (1983:182).

Many Taiwanese, then, engaged in wage work or small-scale commerce and industry, often combined with agriculture. There was no sharp break between a purely agricultural life in the countryside and a commercial existence in the towns and cities, though towns housed fewer farmers and more families who provided services and luxuries for the relatively rich who clustered there. Competition, shady practices, the attempt to profit on a deal at another's expense were a part of the daily lives of the people enmeshed in this small-scale capitalism, although generosity to acquaintances, paying one's debts, and a desire for a reputation as an honest

businessperson probably helped keep these antisocial tendencies in check then, as they do today

Many of the occupations the Taiwanese pursued in these early centuries, as in the present, were carried out by families, with the assistance, in larger enterprises, of hired labor. Every family must have hoped at least to achieve a stable balance between having sufficient means of production (land, production equipment, etc.) to support a family, and enough labor in the form of able-bodied family members to use them efficiently. Families then as now hoped that their capital and labor would earn them the money to buy more means of production and raise larger, multigenerational families modeled after the households of merchants and landlords. While this sometimes happened, for many just keeping a balance between resources and people required both hard work and good fortune. Too many daughters and too few sons, a parent's early death, or an infertile marriage might spell poverty as surely as loss of land to a moneylender or the destruction of the family fishing boat in a typhoon. Whether they were at war or competing in the market, life meant struggle, confrontation, and a constant search for security.

As Taiwanese people shaped their culture to meet these challenges, they came to rely very heavily on two institutions: the local community, defined either by lineage ties, common origin, or simple coresidence; and the patrilineal coresident family. From the abundant evidence of present-day religious beliefs and activities, we can reconstruct something of how Taiwanese people themselves must have perceived these institutions and their place in organized society.

Taiwanese popular religion has long centered on rituals performed for three categories of spiritual beings: ancestors, gods, and ghosts (A. Wolf 1974). Family ceremonies, even when they focus on the living, always include references to the dead men and women ancestral to the family. In many households, these honored dead receive prayers and offerings daily at handsome living-room altars. The worship of ancestors, representing a family's deceased patrilineal kin but also representing, abstractly, the orderly structure of family life, focuses people's attention on the importance of belonging to a well-defined and well-organized family. Worshiping their ancestors situates people clearly in history and in society and emphasizes the ongoing rights and responsibilities of living members of families toward one another.

Gods, by contrast, are worshiped in elaborate, community-built temples—colorful, cool, and fragrant with incense—that were at one time the most beautiful places ordinary, hard-laboring folk ever saw. Imagined as a hierarchy of heavenly bureaucrats who rule the ordinary world, gods also

embody the social power of the officials and the wealthy. There are benevolent and vindictive gods, compassionate and grasping ones, mighty ones and those of limited power, just as in society the ordinary person might observe good and corrupt officials, men of great wealth and power, and lesser lights.

A community, whether a whole village or one of its parts, a town or a city neighborhood, typically sets up a temple for the worship of the god or goddess who acts as its patron and protector. Community temples are social centers, used not only for worship and ritual celebration, but also as playgrounds for children and meeting places for the elderly, and, in the past, as classrooms, for military practice, and for the storage of arms. Local gods are expected to guard against war, sickness, and disaster; in prayers one petitions them first for *pieng an* (T) (peace and quiet). Such deities—powerful images of local solidarity—represent the community itself.

In addition to the ancestors and gods, elegantly housed in lineage halls, altars, or their own temples, Taiwanese pay ritual respect to ghosts, symbolically represented as homeless, and worshiped only out of doors. These are the spirits of the dead who linger on, hungry, filthy, and malicious toward the living, because they died outside of society's important institutions. People with no descendants to care for them as ancestors become ghosts after death, as do soldiers killed in battle far from home whose bones lie unburied. The drowned, the suicides, the girls who die before marriage makes them at least potential ancestors, and many others whose lives do not fit the tight patrilineal/communal model are all doomed to a wandering and dangerous existence after death. Ghosts symbolize, too, those living people who have neither family nor community: beggars, the homeless, drifting migrant workers, strangers of all kinds (Weller 1985). The social world of past and present Taiwanese is divided symbolically into one's own and similar properly organized families, enduring and reliable, symbolized by ancestors; the powerful worldly authorities, who might punish but who can be persuaded and sometimes bribed to benevolence, symbolized by gods; and strangers of unknown background, objects of suspicion and dislike, represented by malevolent ghosts.

The Japanese: Taiwan as a Sugar Colony, 1895–1945

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Taiwan began to feel the force of expanding imperialism in East Asia. In the face of this threat, the emperor raised the island to the rank of a province and entrusted it to an unusually progressive governor, Liu Mingquan, to strengthen Chinese

administrative hold on the population. Liu built China's first railroad and a telegraph system, introduced electricity to the new provincial capital of Taipei, and pioneered a modern, state-run coal mine, along with many other reforms. Liu's efforts were insufficient to avert the many pressures that foreigners were bringing to bear on China, however. As foreign shipping increased in the Taiwan Straits, so did shipwrecks. Aborigines, ever more hostile to intruders, began to massacre survivors who landed on their shores, provoking outraged foreign ambassadors to demand that the Chinese control "their" natives. As the Chinese clearly could not do so, and as Taiwan was in any case a promising acquisition for any imperializing nation, it was only a matter of time before one of them attempted to include the island in its empire. Eventually, the Japanese outmaneuvered the French, British, Americans, and others interested in carving off slices of China, securing sovereignty over the island through the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895.

Taking possession was another matter. With Beijing's encouragement, members of the more prosperous class in Taiwan proclaimed an independent Republic of Taiwan, hoping that some republican Western nation would therefore be motivated to save it from Japan. The Republic lasted only a few weeks, for its leaders were not committed to its cause. Their followers, drawn from the many Taiwanese who were always ready to oppose outside authority, fought the Japanese entry into the island and remained as pockets of resistance (and banditry) for several years. Women joined in some of the early battles and served as spies for the resistance (Davidson [1967]:328-30). Aborigines continued sporadic opposition into the 1930s as the Japanese systematically invaded their territory with heavy modern armaments (Bodley 1982:56-59; see also Ch'en 1977).

The Japanese who came to rule Taiwan were riding the crest of an extraordinary accomplishment. In the previous thirty years, an alliance of samurai and merchant classes had turned Japan from an archaic, agricultural backwater into a strongly centralized, rapidly industrializing nation aiming for international equality with advanced capitalist countries of the West. Such nations had official or unofficial empires that supplied them with cheap raw materials, markets for their consumer goods, and an income from colonial taxes. To compete, Japan needed the same advantages, and China was the obvious target. Fresh from the successes of reorganizing Japan, these empire builders set out to make Taiwan not just a profitable but a model colony that would show the world that Japanese culture was as powerful and progressive as any.

Economic development would be the foundation. The Japanese home government invested large sums in Taiwan's future productivity: railroads,

harbors, and other transportation and communications systems were built, agricultural research and extension work was undertaken, the health and skills of the population were improved through medical and educational services. Japanese capitalists began modern food processing, mining, and other industries based on local raw materials. Trade was redirected to or through Japan, with cheap Taiwan rice enabling Japan to shift much of its own population from agriculture to industry. Newly wage-earning Japanese eagerly bought cheap Taiwan sugar grown in new irrigation systems paid for with Taiwanese taxes. Built to meet Japan's needs, it was an economic system operated by capitalists and state functionaries in smooth cooperation. While business profits went mostly to Japan, much of the tax collected in Taiwan was spent there on the infrastructure and administration that had made increased productivity possible. For Taiwanese peasants, life became much safer, healthier, a bit more comfortable.

The new political system, tailored to the needs of the economy but also to Japanese ideas of justice, also hastened the colony's rapid development. Efficiency and fair regulations and laws were fostered by well-trained and dedicated civil servants, police, military forces, and schoolteachers. Soon, except for the Aborigines, some of whom were treated very harshly, the population rapidly accepted Japanese officials, flocking to the incorruptible new courts with old and new grievances, and allowing Japanese officials and civilians to live safely among them (Davidson [1967]:594). Japanese officials are remembered today as strict but fair. "When the Japanese caught a thief, they'd put him in a box, all bent over, for the night. That would fix him! We hardly ever saw thieves in those days. *They* knew what they were doing!" an old gentleman once cackled to me when he saw a policeman.

Enforcement of the laws was much simplified by the system of household registration the Japanese had perfected for their own use. Still in operation today, the law requires every family to register with the police, giving information about all current members, including name, age, sex, relationship to household head, marital status, educational level achieved, occupation, and numerous other details, and to update that information yearly. Such data are invaluable for government planning purposes, and were and are of great utility to the police in controlling both crime and political opposition.

Whether out of respect for what was, after all, a somewhat similar culture, or simply to lessen the possibility of resistance to their policies, the Japanese did not attempt to alter radically Taiwanese culture and social structure. Landlord-tenant relations, patterns of inheritance, customs of marriage and adoption, and religious practices were permitted to continue largely unchanged. Indeed, as many Taiwanese customs were now upheld

by a functioning legal system, Japanese tolerance may be said to have fossilized them at a time when many practices might have been expected to change with the times. Despite the innovations of the Japanese regime, it had a generally conservative influence on basic institutions.

Even so, significant changes took place. Whereas in some parts of northern Taiwan about 70 percent of girl babies had previously been adopted out to other families as future wives for their sons, by the 1930s, after greater job opportunities for young people gave them more voice in their own marriages, girls and their adoptive brothers began to repudiate such arrangements. The adoption of baby daughters-in-law declined sharply thereafter (Wolf and Huang 1980:129, 193). Japanese officials prohibited some customs they found too distasteful. Footbinding, for example, was forbidden in order to protect the health of little girls, who sometimes died of gangrene from the painful and crippling process. An American who surveyed people in the sugar-growing Jianan Plain in the early 1950s noted that they still remembered warmly the Japanese engineer who designed the region's irrigation system, and that in consequence of their respect for the project, they were more reliant on science than on tradition and ancestor worship in their daily lives (Raper 1953:165).

Although the Taiwanese were treated fairly and equally among themselves, they were not accorded equality with the Japanese. Racism, an inevitable by-product of imperialism, set limits to the role the Taiwanese could play in society. In the early decades of Japanese rule, they were excluded from political participation and even from the study of law, ignored by Japanese businesses except as low-level manual workers, and forbidden to marry Japanese. Unlike Japanese, they could receive flogging as a legal punishment. Although some of these forms of discrimination were ameliorated during the 1930s, none was forgotten. As many Japanese lived in housing built by their government or business employers, a residential segregation emerged that could still readily be seen in the 1970s in the discontinuous pattern of Japanese-style and Taiwanese-style housing in cities. The educational system, intended to create a more literate and loyal population, was initially segregated, though nothing prevented well-to-do Chinese from sending their sons to school in Japan. After 1922, Japanese-speaking children of either group could enter the better Japanese schools on the island. Taiwanese who studied beyond elementary education were channeled into teaching and medicine, "safety-valves" for the few Taiwanese allowed upward mobility (Tsurumi 1977:77).

A small stratum of elite, Japanized Taiwanese emerged either from wealthy families who could afford education or from families for whom the new schools were a path out of poverty. They taught the Taiwanese chil-

dren, doctored the Taiwanese sick, ran small businesses, and slowly came to fill in the lower ranks of technicians in larger, Japanese-run concerns. Only the most Japanized of these, however, fully assimilated into the Japanese community.

Japanese discrimination had numerous causes. The Japanese clearly detested some Chinese habits: a government publication aimed at showing the English-speaking reader the best of *Progressive Formosa* described the state of local markets as “more than enough to make any Japanese instantaneously sick” (Government of Formosa 1926:79); they punished the near-unconscious Chinese custom of spitting in the streets so severely that many urban Taiwanese still think it disgusting, too. Discrimination had a class basis as well: the majority of immigrant Japanese were urban and middle class, while most Taiwanese were peasants, and elite Japanese felt far superior even to Japanese peasants (Hane 1982:8). The Japanese were especially ethnocentric and ultranationalist at that time as the only Asian society to be holding its own with Europeans. But, whatever the superficial reasons for Japanese discrimination might be, the logic of colonization required that if Taiwan was to be a colony that sent more wealth to Japan than it got back, its people would have to be seen as, and to believe themselves to be, inferior to the Japanese.

Not all Japanese, however, wanted such a relationship. Especially in the 1920s and 1930s, more liberal and democratic Japanese favored greater equality, including full Taiwanese political participation, home rule for the island, and economic reforms that would assist the peasants. These ideas appeared in Japanese publications in Taiwan and were encountered directly by the many Taiwanese who traveled freely to Japan. Socialist and Communist ideas circulating widely in Asia gave ideological focus to working-class and peasant movements for higher wages and lower rents. In these decades, Taiwanese people also became aware of the ideological struggles in south China between the Chinese Communist and Nationalist parties. Educated Taiwanese experienced an exciting sense of both reformist and radically new possibilities for the future, and their feelings toward the country that had freed them intellectually while oppressing them politically and economically were deeply ambivalent.

Developing pressures for democracy in Taiwan were sharply curtailed in the late 1930s by militarist and extreme nationalist responses to similar pressures in Japan. As the empire geared for war, first with China and then against competing European and American imperialist forces in Asia, Taiwan's people were pushed harder to sacrifice for the emperor, take Japanese names, and be fully loyal. Traditional religious celebrations were abruptly suppressed, and people were ordered to worship Shinto deities in public

ceremonies and on their home altars. Opportunities for expressing dissident views or organizing political opposition vanished, creating resentment and a deepening sense of oppression.

The war between China and Japan, which lasted from 1937 until 1945, brought a resurgence of Chinese nationalism to many Taiwanese, while the sufferings and privations of that war created widespread discontent. Of the two hundred thousand Taiwanese who served the emperor in the war, more than thirty thousand died (*Free China Journal* August 5, 1984:1). American forces bombed Taiwan's cities repeatedly, cutting off vital supplies in the last months before the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended the war. By time of the surrender, many Taiwanese were disillusioned with the Japanese empire, others had become more Japanese than ever, and the rest simply did not know what they felt.

The more than three hundred thousand Japanese civilians, some of them farmers and ordinary workers, but mostly clerks, schoolteachers, businessmen, and bureaucrats and their families, were rounded up and, within weeks, were off the island. Many had been born in Taiwan or had lived most of their lives there. Some, who had never been to Japan, had no real home to return to. These refugees, forced to leave Taiwan for the rubble of postwar Japan, must often have longed for their peaceful and prosperous days on that lovely island; Taiwan remains today a favorite vacation spot for Japanese tourists.

Even before the war was over, an agreement among Franklin Roosevelt, Joseph Stalin, Winston Churchill, and Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek) settled Taiwan's future. It was to be restored to Chinese sovereignty; the Taiwanese were not asked for their opinion on the matter.

Fifty years of Japanese rule had had a profound effect on the island, nearly doubling its population, to six million, and multiplying its productivity manyfold. They had engendered from its mainly agricultural population a modern-educated middle class with a cosmopolitan outlook and an identity as a people who were not just descendants of regional Chinese immigrants, but not exactly Japanese, either. There must have been a moment when, knowing they would soon be under Chinese rule again, Taiwanese could assume themselves simply to be Chinese. That moment lasted until shortly after the Mainlanders arrived.

The Coming of the Mainlanders, 1945

October 25 is now a national holiday in Taiwan, known as Retrocession Day—literally a “Day of Brilliant Return”—commemorating the ceding

back to China of sovereignty after Japan's surrender. In December 1945, when Chinese troops landed in Taiwan to take possession of the island for the Nationalist government, Taiwanese turned out by the thousands to welcome them. The welcome quickly soured as the Taiwanese, used to well-disciplined Japanese soldiers, encountered an ill-equipped and disorderly mob, draped with cooking equipment and often bare-footed, who represented the new regime. Such troops had terrorized the mainland Chinese countryside through which they passed—raping, looting, killing people and animals, and shanghaiing young men as soldiers or porters. They saw no reason to behave better among people who had been part of the hated Japanese empire. Mainland troops ran riot in Taiwan for the next several years; they were armed men against whose insults and injuries there was no reliable redress.

It was not only the foot soldiers who treated the Taiwanese, in the words of a recent Taiwanese historian, as “slaves without a country” (Shi 1979:706). The Nationalist official in charge, Chen Yi, quickly seized all Japanese property, public and private, which the Taiwanese had hoped would revert to them, and considerable Taiwanese private property as well. He and his underlings shipped large stocks of raw materials, factory machinery, Japanese military supplies, and even metals from public buildings and the telegraph system to Hong Kong and Shanghai, where they sold them at large personal profit. They held wealthy Taiwanese for ransom (Kerr 1965:191–93) and stole outright from the poor.

On February 28, 1947 (known as “2:28”), rebellion against these extortionist tactics burst out after Mainlander soldiers shot a woman peddler for selling cigarettes illegally. With Japanese Imperial Army swords, Taiwanese men roamed the streets of Taipei, taking Mainlander heads, while Nationalist soldiers machine-gunned bystanders at busy crossroads (Kerr 1965:250–300; see also Shi 1979: 749–80). For a few days, by a coordinated effort, the Taiwanese seized many of the important urban centers, with high school and university students and their elders in the Japanese-educated professional class providing much of the leadership.

Soon, however, military force and deceptive promises from the Nationalists persuaded the Taiwanese to lay aside their arms and to open negotiations. As a participant told me bitterly, “Under the Japanese, we learned to trust the word of the authorities. The Nationalists betrayed that trust; they will never have it again.” Between ten and twenty thousand activists were rounded up and shot—by the sides of roads, from bridges, at a large open racetrack. The Nationalists hunted down the survivors of this bloodbath during the following months, sending many more to torture and jail. In a few weeks, the liberal-minded, educated, and generally pro-

Japanese new middle class was virtually destroyed. People whose father, brother, or aunt had been implicated in the events of 2:28 were barred from government work, including schoolteaching, and remained under a dangerous cloud of official suspicion for decades. The government's violent response to the 2:28 uprising eliminated much of the potential Taiwanese leadership, terrorized the population, and left the Mainlanders firmly in control.

In the autumn of 1949 the island's reeling social system was shocked again as the Nationalists were driven by the Communists off the mainland of China into Taiwan. Another purge followed, in which the supporters of the Nationalist clique headed by Jiang Jieshi hunted down "Communists"—that is, anyone he suspected of disloyalty to him. Taiwanese distrust of the new government deepened.

To understand why these latest Chinese immigrants entered Taiwan so violently, we must briefly examine the events that led up to the Communist success and Nationalist failure in China. For, while Taiwan under Japanese rule was peacefully becoming a safer, more prosperous, and more technologically advanced place in which to live, the people of the China mainland were experiencing imperialist attacks, civil war, and social chaos on a staggering scale.

China's last imperial dynasty, the Qing, fell easily from power in 1911 after a century in which population pressure, foreign invasions of its economy, and governmental inflexibility had lost it any popular support. The empire segmented into many natural economic and political regions headed by various parties and warlords. As all thinking Chinese could readily see, these smaller units were even more vulnerable to foreign penetration than the tired old empire; foreigners, seeing it too, expanded their activities. This brought wealth to a tiny number of Chinese landlords, industrialists, and financiers and increasing poverty to the peasants, textile workers, and servants whom they employed. Class differences, always wide in traditional China, became even more so in the capitalist-dominated coastal cities, where some Chinese could afford any imaginable luxury. At the same time, women and girls were worked to death in the silk mills, and young union organizers were unceremoniously shot in the street (Burchett 1976:54). As landlords moved to high-rolling cities like Shanghai, peasants were pressed harder for rent and given fewer customary protections against bad harvests or disasters. An intellectual gap grew between reactionary Chinese, who thought the teachings of the past were sufficient for the present, and those who believed that scientific thinking was necessary to compete with the West. Riven by regional, class, and ideological dif-

ferences, China lost the capacity to maintain orderly social life and a minimal standard of living for its people.

Two political parties, the Nationalists (Guomindang, Kuomintang, or KMT) and the Communists emerged as the two competing political centers around which different classes rallied. The similarities between these parties are worth noting. Both were modeled in their organization after the Leninist Communist party of the Soviet Union, which sent advisors to both sides at various times. Both assumed it was the role of the party to guide society and the state, and that popular democracy must subordinate itself to that guidance. Both believed that only with national reunification—*one* China, with *one* party and *one* government—could the Chinese throw off foreign control. Neither would accept a divided China, or a two-party government in a united country.

But the differences between the two ultimately settled their conflict over which of them should rule. The Communists acted on the basis of a sophisticated analysis of China's problems—Marxism, supplemented by the ideas of such Communist leaders as Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-tung), and with the support of intellectuals and much of the huge peasant and worker population. The Nationalists, who controlled a larger area until the late 1940s, had no clear-cut theory or social program and drew their support mainly from a tiny proportion of the Chinese people—the merchants, landlords, and industrialists of the coastal regions. While the Nationalists did little to alleviate poverty and injustice, depending increasingly on military force to remain in power (Ch'ien 1965), the Communists developed economic reforms and the political techniques that persuaded people to practice them.

The struggle between the parties was complicated and prolonged by the aggressive expansion of the Japanese in China beginning in 1931. Responding to popular anti-imperialist, pronational sentiments urging cooperation on the contending parties, the Communists began guerrilla resistance when the Japanese expanded in the North China plain in 1936. The Nationalists, however, reluctant to expend on the Japanese resources they hoped ultimately to turn against the Communists, held back. Finally, in 1937, with American assistance, they too began to resist the Japanese takeover. Their failure to put national defense before internal political goals lost them the support of many, especially students.

During these years, the corruption the Nationalists had allowed among themselves grew worse. Their leader, Jiang Jieshi, his family, and three closely allied families had gained control of China's main banks, the national revenues, and sources of foreign aid by using their power to manipulate

currencies, speculate in import-export deals, and divert government funds to build their private fortunes. Lesser civil and military officials did the same. Generals, for example, held up their troops' pay to play the stock market, so troops were often paid weeks or months in arrears. Soldiers scrounged and stole from the peasants to survive. Civil servants committed grave abuses—collusion between government officials and landlords sometimes multiplied peasants' taxes by a factor of five (Eastman 1984:64). Nothing could be accomplished in government without gifts and bribes, and the lavish and blatantly immoral life style of many Nationalist officials was an international scandal. Thus, popular support dwindled further.

Many people remained in the Nationalist orbit, however, continuing their loyalty to Jiang Jieshi. Capitalists, big and small, especially landlords, feared a Communist government, and the huge army of Nationalist party members, civil servants, and military officers living at public expense—sometimes very well—also preferred the status quo to the reforms the Communists were making in the north. Nationalist propaganda also frightened many; and Jiang, a leader with a certain charisma, managed to persuade many Chinese that he, at least, was above corruption.

From the end of the war with Japan in 1945 to the final Communist victory in 1949, the Chinese endured civil war. The Nationalists, with American help, and the Communists, aided much more sparingly by the Soviet Union, fought major battles over the provinces known as the Dongbei, or Northeast, which the Japanese had developed agriculturally and industrially since 1931. After their failure to hold the north, Nationalist troops began to desert to the winning side by whole armies at a time.

As the Communists accomplished their final, triumphant mopping up in the autumn of 1949, Jiang brought the central and provincial governments of China (with their treasuries), as much of his army as he could ship over, and a panicky group of military dependents and civilians from coastal cities to Taiwan. Among them were Shanghai textile mill owners, some with the basic equipment from their factories, small merchants from Fuzhou, and members of the Shanghai underworld who had acted as Jiang's enforcers in coastal cities. At least a million were military men (the exact figure is still secret), the core of an army with which Jiang hoped later to retake the mainland. Altogether, between one and one-half and two million Chinese made the crossing to what was hoped would be a temporary refuge.

Until that crossing, Taiwan had been very much a sideshow to the main events on the mainland. Chen Yi's atrocities on the island after 1945, which precipitated the 2:28 uprising, were no worse than similar acts of oppression against dissident populations throughout the Nationalist rule. The

stripping of Taiwan's resources and the liquidation of its middle class were, and still are, justified by the Nationalists as necessary for the prosecution of the war. With their attention fixed on the calamitous defeats of the civil war and their own status as refugees, most Mainlanders saw Japanized Taiwan simply as the alien and inconsequential backdrop to their own tragedies.