In July 1937, Japan’s military forces invaded North China, marking the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War and Japanese mobilization for total war. Japan’s colonial and military leaders now had to decide whether to enlist their Taiwanese subjects as military servicemen and deploy them to the front lines in China. Japan had some five million Taiwanese subjects, the majority Han with ethnic ties to China. Japanese officials categorized them as part of the “Chinese race” (Shina-zoku). A smaller number were indigenous Taiwanese, once derogatorily classified as “savages” (ban-jin) but, by the 1930s, positively reclassified as “the tribal peoples of Taiwan” (Takasago-zoku). The Japanese did not worry about indigenous Taiwanese ties to China since they were perceived as having ethnolinguistic connections with the Austronesian peoples in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. For the first few years of the Sino-Japanese War, Japanese colonial and military leaders focused their energies on the Han Taiwanese. (Though both groups were essential to Taiwan’s wartime story, I generally use “Taiwanese” in part 2 to refer to the Han Taiwanese and “indigenous Taiwanese” to refer to the latter group.) Japanese authorities worried about whether decades of colonial rule had sufficiently assimilated the Taiwanese, such that they could be trusted with arms to fight for their Japanese “motherland” (J. bokoku, C. muguo). What if the Taiwanese sided instead with their Chinese “ancestral homeland” (J. sokoku, C. zuguo)?
Taiwanese stances toward Japan were varied. The Government-General had endeavored both to foster and enforce Taiwanese loyalty for Japan for years, but anticolonial activities had continued. The Chinese Nationalist Party (GMD) had also made efforts to strengthen ties with the overseas Taiwanese population that both China and Japan claimed as their own “brethren” (J. dōhō, C. tongbao). Japanese officers in the Taiwan Army were therefore skeptical about how much they could trust the Taiwanese. In an intelligence report to Tokyo army headquarters in September 1937, Taiwan Army commander Hata Shun-roku wrote, “Taiwanese have been donating funds to the war cause to demonstrate their solidarity with Japan as imperial subjects.” But, he went on, this was only a tiny percentage of the Taiwanese population, and he felt that their actions were superficial. “Many Taiwanese still believe in China’s power. Because of shared ethnic ties, they view China as their ancestral homeland and remain critical of our country. The majority hope for China’s victory and Taiwan’s reversion to China.”

Yet the massive scale of war and administrative burdens in China soon necessitated that Japan’s army and navy draw on Taiwanese manpower. Beginning in the fall of 1937, the military allowed Han Taiwanese to serve in noncombatant civilian roles as “military assistants” (J. gunzoku, gunpu; C. junsu, junfu). As part of mixed Japanese-Taiwanese units in Central and South China, the majority of these military assistants worked as porters, farmers, interpreters, patrolmen, and nurses. Not until 1942, when the Japanese implemented the Special Army Volunteer System in Taiwan, were Taiwanese permitted to enlist as armed soldiers. Over the course of the Sino-Japanese and Asia-Pacific wars, an estimated 126,000 Taiwanese served as military assistants, and some 80,000 as armed soldiers, for a total of 207,000 Taiwanese servicemen. Around 30,000 Taiwanese lost their lives in battle.

Japanese wartime mobilization goals in Taiwan were full of ambiguities, and at times worked at cross-purposes. As other scholars have suggested, policies that aimed for what can be translated as “imperial subjectification” (kōminka), sought to radically “Japanize” colonial subjects, most notably with the elimination of Chinese-language education and publications. But to spread propaganda and foster loyalty among the Taiwanese, the Government-General violated its own recommendations and communicated in the Chinese language. Moreover, Japanese officials often sought not to eradicate, but to take advantage of, the Chinese-ness of their Taiwanese subjects. Whether Taiwanese were serving as military assistants or later as armed soldiers, they possessed language and other cultural skills that made them distinctively useful for Japan in the China front. Indeed, Han Taiwanese, who were seen as racially Chinese, were allowed to enlist as military assistants four years earlier
than indigenous Taiwanese, who lacked that perceived link. Taiwanese had the tools to navigate the imperial gateway, making them a source not just of Japanese anxiety, but also, a means of furthering ambitious wartime strategy.

**Cultivating Taiwanese Loyalty**

For nearly two decades before the Second Sino-Japanese War began, anticolonial Taiwanese activists had been developing close ties to China. Japanese colonial officials responded with growing suspicion, and with policies fostering assimilation. By the 1930s, as we saw in chapter 2, some Taiwanese activists took refuge from the Government-General’s increasingly strident crackdowns by moving to China. For instance, Xie Chunmu (1902–69), a prominent journalist and activist, had moved to Shanghai after Japanese officials disbanded the Taiwanese People’s Party in 1931. He adopted a new name, Xie Nanguang, to try to conceal his Taiwanese identity and blend in with the Chinese community. With the support of GMD funds, he established the China Alliance News Agency in Shanghai to publish anti-Japanese Chinese propaganda. However, Xie and his Taiwanese colleagues in the news agency remained under Japanese consular surveillance.

In the spring of 1936, Xie hosted Lin Xiantang (1881–1956), a leading Taiwanese political and economic figure who was on a two-month tour of China. Lin was quoted by the Chinese media referring to China, rather than Japan, as his “ancestral homeland” (J. sokoku, C. zuguo). The Japanese consulate police in Shanghai relayed the news to the Taiwan Government-General, which criticized Lin’s words in the *Taiwan Daily News* as unpatriotic and hostile to the Japanese nation-state. Upon his return to Taiwan, Lin was interrogated by Japanese colonial officials about his national identity. Lin replied that, based on the dictionary definition, China was indeed his ancestral homeland since his ancestors were descendants of that country. On the other hand, Japan was his “motherland” (J. bokoku, C. muguo) where he had been raised. Despite publicly affirming his loyalty to the Japanese motherland, Lin was pressured to resign from leadership posts in the Taiwan Governor-General’s advisory council and local civic associations. The controversy came to be known as the Ancestral Homeland Incident.

As the year went on, anticolonial Taiwanese activities further exacerbated Japanese anxieties. Taiwan Army intelligence reports and British consular records documented several Taiwanese anticolonial activists caught plotting against Japanese rule in both Taiwan and China. In October, Taiwan Government-General police arrested ten Taiwanese middle school students
for organizing a secret society aimed at Taiwan’s secession from Japan.\textsuperscript{9} Two months later, Taiwanese identified as “communist supporters of a revolution in Taiwan” were arrested by Japanese consular police in Xiamen and Shanghai and extradited to Taiwan.\textsuperscript{10}

The Government-General responded to anticolonial threats not just on a case-by-case basis but with public programs designed to cultivate loyalty through Japanese-language assimilation. In 1929, Japanese colonial officials had launched an aggressive Japanese-Language Outreach Program. The tuition-free, part-time curriculum, offered outside the regular school system, was credited with tripling Japanese-language speakers among the Taiwanese from 12 percent in 1930 to 37 percent by 1937. The intensification of education outreach efforts during the Japanese “national language” movement from 1937, which included the suppression of spoken Chinese and indigenous languages, led to the further rise of Japanese-language speakers in Taiwan to 80 percent by 1943.\textsuperscript{11}

During the 1930s, the Government-General launched campaigns centered on the sociocultural assimilation of the indigenous Taiwanese. Previously, the Japanese had prioritized the cultural assimilation and economic incorporation of Han Taiwanese in the western plains over the so-called savages in the central and eastern highlands, who, with a few exceptions, occupied the bottom rungs of Taiwan’s colonial hierarchy.\textsuperscript{12} Throughout the colonial period, the Government-General had heavily policed the indigenous Taiwanese communities to combat periodic armed uprisings. As late as October 1930, the Atayal peoples staged a massive revolt against the Japanese with the Musha Rebellion. As scholars Kondō Masami and Leo Ching have noted, the rebellion marked a turning point in Japanese indigenous governance. The Japanese soon replaced the derogatory moniker of “savages” with the “tribal peoples of Taiwan” (Takasago-zoku) and raised standards for their education and agricultural training.\textsuperscript{13} By the end of the decade, primary school enrollment for indigenous children had risen to 87 percent, with one-third of the indigenous population capable of daily conversation in Japanese.\textsuperscript{14} Starting in 1932, the Government-General published articles submitted by patriotic indigenous Taiwanese in the Aborigine Administrators’ Companion journal.\textsuperscript{15} Japanese officials celebrated the transformation of previously “backward,” “head-hunting savages” into “enlightened,” loyal subjects. Indigenous Taiwanese thus became an integral part of Japanese assimilation policies previously directed mainly at the Han population.

In 1936, the Taiwan Government-General began using the term kōminka (“imperial subjectification”) to refer to sociocultural policies aimed at the rapid assimilation of both Han and indigenous Taiwanese into loyal subjects.\textsuperscript{16} That July, the Government-General assembled a Promotion of Social Customs
Council, consisting of Japanese and Taiwanese representatives, to spread the following practices among the Taiwanese populace: (1) the use of spoken Japanese in place of Chinese not just in public but also in private within the family; and (2) patriotic worship at Japanese Shinto shrines. Japanese officials promoted State Shinto in place of traditional Chinese religions—a blend of Buddhism, Daoism, and folk beliefs. Taiwanese were encouraged to worship at local Shinto shrines, which nearly doubled from thirty-eight to sixty-eight between 1937 and 1943, and to install miniature Shinto altars in their households.

In 1937, Governor-General Kobayashi Seizō stepped up efforts at linguistic de-Sinification for all of Taiwan. In January, the Japanese removed literary Chinese from the Taiwanese primary school curriculum, which had already been in decline since 1922 when it was designated an optional elective. Three months later, the Government-General banned Chinese-language publications. The two proscriptions upset Taiwanese elites like Lin Xiantang and Cai Peihuo, who appealed to colonial officials that written Chinese was critical for most Taiwanese still illiterate in Japanese. Chinese-language publications were still the quickest means for inculcating Taiwanese with Japanese patriotism. Lin and Cai also contended that Chinese-language skills allowed the Taiwanese to conduct business in South China and Southeast Asia to promote Japanese interests in the region.

Even Japanese officials in the Government-General quickly came to question the viability of a Chinese-language ban. During a governors’ conference in Taipei in April 1937, the governor of Taidong voiced concerns that the policy was antithetical to Taiwan’s goals in South China and Southeast Asia. According to a British consular report from Danshui, the governor echoed Lin and Cai’s point that “knowledge of Chinese would be useful to Formosans [Taiwanese] who went abroad to engage in the policy of southward advance.” Other Japanese leaders also viewed the language ban as impractical since colonial officials, especially police and medical personnel, still relied on spoken and written Chinese to communicate with the majority Taiwanese population.

The resulting quandary was whether the Government-General could generate pro-Japanese nationalism among the Taiwanese masses without using the Chinese language. As Japan’s army advanced its way through North and Central China from mid to late 1937, the Japanese-language colonial media celebrated with jingoistic reports. However, the Government-General worried that news aimed to legitimate the war and boost patriotism could only reach Japanese-educated Taiwanese, a mere one-third of the population. The Taiwan Army’s intelligence report on July 27, titled Summary of Taiwanese Public Opinion, noted with alarm that many Taiwanese listened to GMD radio broadcasts from Nanjing, which made them doubt the accuracy of Japanese news.
Fearful of GMD war propaganda infiltrating Taiwanese society, the Japanese tried to restrict foreign broadcasts. In fall 1937, British consular reports noted that in Taipei, “Heavy penalties were attached to listening to radio broadcasts from foreign stations . . . [and] extensive domiciliary and personal searches were made, with the double purpose apparently of tracing a secret transmitting station and of searching for arms.”

Despite its de-Sinification aims, the Taiwan Government-General soon decided to compromise on its Chinese-language ban. Within weeks of the war, it established an Information Bureau that inaugurated Chinese-language programming from the Taipei radio station aimed at Taiwanese “national spiritual mobilization” (kokka seishin dōin). The Information Bureau’s news bulletins and radio broadcasts included twenty-minute broadcasts in the Taiwanese dialect (twice a day) and Mandarin and English (once per day). In 1942, the Government-General installed a second radio channel solely in the Taiwanese dialect for the non-Japanese speaking population. The Taipei radio station’s multilingual programs were directed not only at Taiwanese but also at Chinese-language speakers in South China and Southeast Asia.

The Taiwan Government-General pamphlet, A True Account of the China Incident (1937), “warned all islanders [Taiwanese] of distorted Chinese news propaganda.” It described Japanese officials’ efforts to distribute radio receivers throughout the island to inform Taiwanese with purportedly correct news. Whether fueled by the popularity of Taiwanese-dialect radio broadcasts or the growing affordability of receivers, the percentage of Taiwanese households with licensed radios rose from 28 percent (12,000 households) in 1937 to over 44 percent (44,000 households) by 1944. To reach a larger Taiwanese audience, Japanese officials also installed loudspeaker radio systems in public venues such as parks, schools, markets, and temple courtyards. While restricting the spread of Chinese-language print media, the Government-General used spoken Chinese for radio propaganda aimed at the Taiwanese public. With Taiwan’s ambiguous linguistic status in the wartime empire, Japanese officials attempted to balance competing interests of rapidly assimilating the Taiwanese while still using Chinese to propagate Japanese nationalism among Han residents.

**Sino-Japanese Competition over the Overseas Taiwanese as “Brethren”**

To generate anti-Chinese sentiment among the Taiwanese, the Taiwan Government-General publicized the wartime victimization of overseas Tai-
wanese “brethren” (J. dōhō, C. tongbao) in China at the hands of Chiang Kai-shek’s GMD military. As Japan’s army proceeded from North to Central China in summer 1937, Japanese subjects in South China, where there were no Japanese reinforcements, became vulnerable to Chinese attacks. Faced with the threat of Chiang deploying GMD forces to Fujian and Guangdong, Japanese consuls offered travel subsidies to resident Taiwanese to evacuate to Taiwan. By late August, when GMD troops arrived, 10,000 Taiwanese and 2,000 Japanese had left for Taiwan, with hundreds of Taiwanese also fleeing to Hong Kong and Southeast Asia.

The few thousand Taiwanese who chose to remain in South China faced a precarious situation. The Taiwan Daily News reported that the GMD military imprisoned or executed hundreds of Taiwanese as suspected spies of Japan. In October 1937, the Taiwan Information Bureau news reports described how anti-Japanese Chinese violence had resulted in countless deaths of Taiwanese brethren in Xiamen. The Taiwan Daily News chronicled tragic stories of Taiwanese like Yu Ai, who lost family members while evacuating the city. Yu’s husband had been too sick to leave Xiamen with Yu and their five children. After the GMD arrested him as a “traitor to the Han Chinese” (C. hanjian), Yu had no choice but to abandon him and flee with their children to Taiwan. The Japanese colonial media also described the GMD destruction of Taiwan-funded institutions like the Xiamen Kyokuei Academy, Xiamen Philanthropic Hospital, and Quanmin New Daily, as well as the confiscation of Taiwanese private property.

While Japanese narratives focused on overseas Taiwanese as victims of Chinese violence, mainland Chinese-language newspapers justified the GMD crackdown on Taiwanese for their anti-Chinese behavior. By the 1930s, Taiwanese in South China were notorious for abusing their extraterritorial privileges and profiting from illicit businesses under Japanese consular protection (see chapter 2). The Second Sino-Japanese War exacerbated Chinese fears of Taiwanese spying or fighting on behalf of Japan. During the GMD occupation of Xiamen, for instance, the Taiwanese gangster Wang Changsheng had organized a militia corps with forty other Taiwanese to help protect the Japanese consulate. Most of the corps were killed or arrested by the GMD, although Wang managed to escape to Hong Kong. The GMD also executed several leaders of the Xiamen Taiwanese Association on account of pro-Japanese collaboration. Hundreds of other suspected Taiwanese were captured and relocated to agricultural camps in Chong’an in northern Fujian.

The GMD, however, did not view all resident Taiwanese as enemies. GMD officials in Fujian conducted censuses that allowed pro-Chinese Taiwanese brethren to apply for renaturalization as Chinese nationals and keep their families and property in place. For example, Lin Jinquan, who donated 1,000 yuan to Xiamen’s
Anti-Japanese Support Association in September 1937, obtained Chinese nationality for his family of seven.\textsuperscript{41} By May 1938, an estimated 1,900 Taiwanese had applied for Chinese nationality.\textsuperscript{42} The GMD also recruited anti-Japanese Taiwanese throughout China for propaganda and military activities, including the activist Xie Chunmu. Xie assisted with Chinese intelligence on the Japanese military for the GMD’s Research Center on International Problems—first in Shanghai (1937) and Hong Kong (1938) and then in Chongqing (1939–45).\textsuperscript{43}

The Taiwan Volunteer Corps (est. 1939) in Zhejiang and Fujian provinces and the Taiwan Revolutionary Alliance (est. 1941) in Chongqing were the two most prominent Taiwanese organizations in China supporting the GMD. The Volunteer Corps was a paramilitary group of several hundred Taiwanese that provided military and medical assistance to GMD troops.\textsuperscript{44} The Revolutionary Alliance partnered with the GMD to propagate anti-Japanese publications and radio broadcasts to unify Chinese and Taiwanese brethren against Japan. Its leaders consisted of pro-GMD Taiwanese who had lived in China in the 1920s–30s as students, teachers, and party members—such as Xie Dongmin, Qiu Niantai, and Huang Chaoqin—many of whom went on to high-ranking positions in the post-1945 GMD government in Taiwan.\textsuperscript{45} In Chinese journals like \textit{Taiwan Vanguard} and \textit{Wartime Japan}, Revolutionary Alliance members appealed to Chinese officials and the public that not all Taiwanese were “traitors to the Han Chinese” and that many remained loyal to their Chinese homeland.\textsuperscript{46} Revolutionary Alliance propaganda pamphlets flown over Taiwan by American aircraft carriers called on the Taiwanese not to join Japan’s war effort and “become cannon-fodder for the enemy.”\textsuperscript{47}

Nevertheless, GMD officials remained suspicious of even self-professed pro-Chinese Taiwanese. GMD Secretary-General Zhu Jiahua admitted that the term “Taiwanese” for him connoted “scoundrels involved in illicit activities.”\textsuperscript{48} In postwar memoirs, Xie Dongmin and Qiu Niantai wrote that the GMD closely monitored their activities. Huang Chaoqin recalled hiding his Taiwanese status to avoid accusations of being a Japanese spy.\textsuperscript{49} Taiwanese in China thus were caught in-between competing nationalist narratives by Chinese and Japanese authorities. On the one hand, hundreds of Taiwanese were imprisoned or executed by the GMD as suspected collaborators. On the other hand, others were reembraced as fellow brethren with bilingual skills useful for anti-Japanese intelligence and propaganda work. Meanwhile, Japanese authorities portrayed the overseas Taiwanese as brethren victimized by the Chinese and in need of military rescue. In this way, wartime mobilization helped promote a pro-Japanese Taiwanese identity grounded in Chinese persecution, while also fostering Chinese distrust of the Taiwanese as traitorous collaborators of Japan.
Mobilizing Taiwanese Military Assistants to China

Prior to the Second Sino-Japanese War, the Taiwan Army had primarily been used to suppress domestic rebellions within the island. During the 1930 Musha Uprising by the indigenous Atayal tribe in eastern Taiwan—the last large-scale armed revolt against Japanese colonialists—the Taiwan Army had recruited Han Taiwanese as military assistant laborers, though they were not entrusted with weapons. With the start of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937 and the growing need for additional manpower, the Taiwan Army looked to enlist an increasing number of Han Taiwanese as military personnel. Yet Japanese military leaders remained skeptical about whether Taiwanese could be trusted as armed soldiers due to their ethnic and kinship ties to China.

Months into the war, Taiwan Army intelligence reports contained over one hundred police cases involving anticcolonial behavior. Though small in scale, they included Taiwanese students who talked back to their Japanese teachers by insisting that China would win the war; public criticism of Japanese discriminatory policies toward the Taiwanese; and the spread of pro-Chinese sentiment. But Taiwan Governor-General Kobayashi Seizō was enthusiastic about incorporating military service as an integral part of the kōminka movement, and the Taiwan Army needed more manpower. So, in September 1937, less than two months into the Sino-Japanese War, the Taiwan Army began recruiting Han Taiwanese as noncombatant military assistants. As part of mixed ethnic brigades led by Japanese officers, Han Taiwanese served in noncombatant roles as porters, farmers, interpreters, and nurses. They (like their Korean counterparts) were not segregated into separate units like the British Indians or African-American and Japanese-American minority soldiers during World War II.

In what Japanese authorities celebrated as Taiwanese “volunteer fever” (shigan netsujō), military assistant applications increased from 103 in September to 1,953 in October. Japanese colonial officials and the media valorized the new Taiwanese military assistants as model patriots. In an October 1937 radio broadcast, Taiwan general affairs director Morioka Jirō applauded the enthusiastic participation by Taiwanese in the war effort: “The Taiwanese deployed to Central China as porters and farmers have displayed tremendous patriotism and loyalty. Many Taiwanese, including indigenous peoples, have offered their services and donated war funds to express their nationalistic spirit. Taiwanese women, too, have volunteered as nurses.” Morioka emphatically described the military assistant applications that included Taiwanese “blood pleas” (kessho), which were literally “letters written in blood,” as proof of loyalty to the emperor.
One of the first groups of Taiwanese volunteers dispatched to Central China was military farmers, sent to increase Japanese army food production. The Government-General published news reports, films, songs, and textbooks to commemorate the courage of Taiwanese “plow warriors,” including a May 1938 film titled, *The Glory of Military Assistants (Homare no gunpu)*, based on the life of Chen Yang. In August 1937, the forty-nine-year-old Chen had volunteered with his twenty-year-old son for the Shanghai war front, where he became one of the war’s first Taiwanese casualties. A tomb was built in his hometown to honor his sacrifice. The Government-General distributed the film to Taiwanese theaters and schools and incorporated Chen’s story into ethics textbooks.\(^{35}\)

Taiwanese were enlisted as military interpreters by the Japanese army and navy in Central and South China (see figure 4.1). The Japanese viewed educated bilingual Taiwanese as ideal interpreters, especially in Fujian and Guangdong provinces, where they shared regional Chinese dialects or could quickly learn them. In early 1939, in front of Taipei’s Public Assembly Hall, the Government-General honored fourteen Taiwanese military interpreters—a mix of professional teachers, lawyers, journalists, doctors, and businessmen—for having served in the occupation of South China’s Guangzhou in the fall of 1938. In speeches directed at the Taiwanese public, the interpreters spoke

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**Figure 4.1.** Taiwanese military interpreters in Japan’s South China Expeditionary Army, ca. 1938. Interpreters did not carry rifles but had Japanese swords and wore armbands with the character “tsū” (short for *tsūyaku* or “interpreter”). Source: Takeuchi Kiyoshi, *Jihen to Taiwanjin* (Taipei: Taiwan Shinminpōsha, 1940).
about the “glory of military service,” their “willingness to die for the sake of Japan,” and their gratitude for participating in the “holy war” against China.56

Japanese wartime rhetoric celebrated the patriotism of indigenous Taiwanese too, even though they lacked the Chinese language skills of their Han counterparts. The donation of war funds, worship at Shinto shrines, and submission of blood pleas to volunteer as military assistants were reported as proof of successful assimilation of indigenous Taiwanese.57 The Japanese media eulogized model patriots such as Sayon, a seventeen-year-old Atayal girl who drowned in a 1938 typhoon while carrying her Japanese teacher’s luggage across a river during his sendoff to the war front. Sayon became a martyr whose story was dramatized in songs and paintings and culminated in the film, _The Bell of Sayon_ (Sayon no kane, 1943).58

Still, such inclusionary rhetoric did not translate into the elevation of indigenous Taiwanese from their third-class colonial status. Whereas Han Taiwanese offered Chinese-language expertise and could serve as military intermediaries, Japanese officials viewed indigenous Taiwanese as less acculturated—even primitive or uncivilized—with poor Japanese and without Chinese skills that would translate in wartime China. Few records exist of indigenous Taiwanese servicemen in the China theater (except for several military “comfort women” [jūgun ianfu] in occupied Hainan, as we will discuss in chapter 5). It was only after Japanese army forces invaded Southeast Asia in 1941 that Japanese-educated indigenous youth were deployed overseas as military assistants in the Asia-Pacific War.

The following year, both Han and indigenous Taiwanese became eligible for enrollment as armed military soldiers. Between 1942 and 1945, the Government-General dispatched tens of thousands of Taiwanese as military servicemen to the war fronts of Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. A wide range of motivations drove Taiwanese to volunteer for military service. Taiwanese youth who grew up with Japanese-language education in the 1920s and 1930s were most receptive to wartime service. Some volunteered out of patriotic ideals, while others enlisted for the high wages, viewing military service as an opportunity for socioeconomic advancement and prestige.59 Others felt intense pressure from Japanese teachers and officials, in addition to their Taiwanese peers, to prove their Japanese-ness in the form of military sacrifice.60 Having long been doubly marginalized as third-class subjects by the Japanese and Han communities, many indigenous Taiwanese, in particular, hoped to prove themselves as courageous and capable subjects of the empire.61 As the scholar Chih-Huei Huang has noted, military service was one of the few paths to economic advancement for the indigenous Taiwanese who had fewer chances at socioeconomic mobility than Han Taiwanese.62 In other words,
patriotic and pragmatic incentives were not mutually exclusive for the hundreds of thousands of Taiwanese who volunteered.

To be sure, one must remain skeptical of Japanese official statements of Taiwanese “volunteer fever.” Taiwan Army intelligence reports included cases of Taiwanese who tried to avoid military service through fraud or flight. Many Taiwanese were volunteers in name only as Japanese police coerced them to apply. Because Japanese authorities censored public statements by the Taiwanese, one must turn to postwar oral histories and memoirs to render a more nuanced picture of motivations for military service. As historians like Yoshimi Yoshiaki and Sayaka Chatani have noted, even with the interpretative challenges of retrospective narratives, firsthand testimonies help shed light on the complicated—if not at times contradictory—emotions and self-perceptions of Taiwanese volunteers.

In postwar interviews, for example, Li Taiping (b. 1918), a member of the 1938 Taiwan Agricultural Volunteer Corps in Central China, said he had been drawn to military assignments as much out of pragmatic self-interest as patriotic ideals. Li said he had signed up for the high wages of ¥30 a month, the equivalent pay of a police officer in Taiwan. After completing his farming duties, he stayed on as a military interpreter, for which his salary doubled to ¥60 a month. Fluent in Japanese and having picked up the local Zhejiang dialect, Li translated Chinese intelligence for the Japanese army. He left his unit in the 1940s to join a Sino-Japanese agricultural company where he earned over ¥100 a month. Li’s military service thus opened up profitable opportunities that were not necessarily linked to the nationalism that Japanese officials celebrated.

At the same time, there are extant interviews and memoirs by self-professed patriots who volunteered precisely to prove their loyalty to Japan. When interviewed in the 1990s, Zhang Zijing (b. 1921, Toyomitsu Saburō) explained that Japanese colonial education had successfully turned him into a devoted subject. He believed that Japan, not China, was his motherland, and that it was his duty to fight the Chinese: not once did he view them as brethren, despite his shared Han ethnicity. Following in the footsteps of his two older brothers who were dispatched to occupied Hainan as a policeman and teacher, Zhang served on the same island as a military interpreter and intelligence officer from 1941 to 1945.

As for Taiwanese women, Japanese authorities praised nurse volunteers as exemplars of “the female Yamato [Japanese] spirit” (josei Yamato damashi). With the growing need for medical personnel in China, the Government-General recruited Taiwanese nurse assistants for military hospitals in occupied South China. Since the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05), the Japanese media
had portrayed military nurses as model female patriots, referring to them as “angels in white uniform” (*hakui no tenshi*).69 Taiwanese nurse volunteers consisted primarily of educated female graduates from secondary girls’ schools or members of patriotic youth groups.70 Japanese songs paid homage to Taiwanese nurses dispatched to China with lyrics such as: “Little lilies bloom in the mountains [of Taiwan] and leave their fathers and mothers behind to cross the sea to South China and advance with the imperial military.”71

Like their male counterparts, Taiwanese women volunteered as military nurse assistants out of a mix of patriotism and social pressure (see figure 4.2). Upon graduating from Japanese-language primary school, Fu Xiusong (b. 1928, Toyama Emiko) initially wanted to study medicine in Japan, but her family could not afford it. After working three years at her local Xinzhu police bureau, Fu joined the Imperial Subjects for Public Service Girls’ Training Center in 1942. With Fu’s older brother already serving in New Guinea, her father encouraged her to apply as a military nurse assistant that year. However, she was rejected for being under eighteen, the required minimum age. Despite opposition from her mother and sister, who feared that she would be killed in battle, Fu applied two more times. In her third application in 1944, after which

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**Figure 4.2.** Taiwanese military nurses in Haikou’s Benevolent Hospital Clinic, Hainan Island, May 1939. Courtesy of Asahi Shimbun.
she was accepted and dispatched to Guangzhou, she wrote the lyrics to the Japanese military anthem, “Go Off into the Sea,” in her own blood to prove her willingness to die for the country.72

Both Fu and Chen Huimei (b. 1927, Azuma Emiko), a fellow Taiwanese nurse assistant in Guangzhou, understood that their official status was lower than that of the ethnic Japanese. In wartime China, Taiwanese nurse assistants wore the same uniforms as their Japanese counterparts but donned different hats to mark their distinct ethnic identity.73 Still, as patriotic subjects, they eagerly embraced the opportunity to serve the Japanese empire and bring official honor upon themselves and their families. Chen and her secondary school classmates looked up to Japanese military nurses and followed their Japanese teachers’ advice to volunteer after graduation. Chen was also raised by a patriotic mother who willingly adopted the Japanese surname, Azuma, for their family and installed a miniature Shinto altar in their household. As head of the local Taiwanese women’s association that assisted with wartime savings and air defense drills, Chen’s mother was proud of her deployment as a volunteer nurse to Guangzhou.74

On the other hand, Taiwanese military assistants like Cai Xinke (b. 1919, Sayama Yasuo) felt more ambivalent about their identity vis-à-vis the Japanese and Chinese. Cai had grown up resentful of Japanese who differentiated themselves as first-class subjects from the Taiwanese who were second-class subjects. He felt the injustice of how Taiwanese paths for higher education were limited and that their salaries were two-thirds of their Japanese counterparts.75 Having worked his way up to first-rank patrolman in Taiwan, Cai volunteered as a military policeman in 1940s Hainan for higher wages and the opportunity to prove himself equal to his Japanese peers.76 In postwar interviews, Cai said he felt conflicted about the Chinese he interrogated and even executed based on his Japanese superiors’ orders: “Not a single day passed during the war when I forgot that I was ethnically Han, and thus I did not willfully kill the Chinese.”77

While Japan waited until 1942 to arm Taiwanese for battle, the Tokyo War Ministry, with the backing of both the Korean Army and Korean Government-General, implemented a Special Army Volunteer System for Koreans to begin in April 1938.78 As in Taiwan, Japanese authorities in colonial Korea and Manchuria worried about anti-Japanese activism and were eager to promote kōminka (“imperial subjectification”) policies. But the Japanese had other, distinctive reasons to enlist Korean soldiers. Following Japan’s 1931 occupation of Manchuria, Koreans had worked in the Manchuko police and military forces. By the mid-1930s, Japanese officials recognized increasing patriotism among Koreans for “Japan-Korea harmony” (Naisen yūwa) and the development of Manchuko as a joint Japanese-Korean project.79 What’s more, colo-
nial discourse promoted the idea that Koreans and Japanese shared historical and racial ties (Nissen dōsoron). All this made it easier for the Imperial Army and Navy to mobilize Koreans in the armed forces.80

Despite wartime slogans promoting “Japan-Taiwan unity” (Nittai itchi), Japanese rhetoric of racial affinity with the Taiwanese did not exist to the same extent as it did in Korea. However, Japanese claims that Koreans were better suited for military service because they were more acculturated than Taiwanese were disingenuous, at least from a linguistic and educational perspective. Indeed, the low level of Japanese-language speakers among the colonial population was more of a concern for Japanese officials in Korea than in Taiwan.81

By 1937, thanks to the success of the Taiwan Government-General’s Japanese-Language Outreach Program, the percentage of Taiwanese who spoke Japanese was three times that of Koreans (the government in Korea implemented a similar program that same year, nine years after Taiwan). Though Japanese-language speakers in Korea from 1937 to 1943 nearly doubled (12 percent to 22 percent), the average Japanese-language ability in Taiwan remained much higher.82 Such wartime statistics point to Taiwanese, rather than Koreans, as more assimilated in Japanese-language education and potentially better suited for military service.

For Japan’s army and navy leaders, the problem of military enlistment in Taiwan was not so much about Japanese-language abilities but the risk of pro-Chinese sentiment. Han Taiwanese were in a particularly tricky position because of their ethnocultural ties to China. In the end, Japan’s wartime mobilization of Taiwanese personnel consisted of multiple tensions and contradictions. On the one hand, the Government-General promoted kōminkata policies that sought to convert the mother tongue of Taiwanese subjects to Japanese, increase patriotic loyalty, and eliminate pro-Chinese sentiment. Along with active Japanese-language outreach efforts, colonial officials banned Chinese-language education and publications. At the same time, the Japanese encouraged the use of spoken Chinese for pragmatic war aims. The Government-General inaugurated Chinese-language radio broadcasts to promote war propaganda and pro-Japanese nationalism among the Han Taiwanese population (the majority did not yet understand Japanese in 1937). Moreover, the Japanese military dispatched Han Taiwanese as military assistants to China’s war front precisely because of their Sino-Japanese bilingual abilities.

Taiwanese volunteers for military service were driven by diverse social, economic, and ideological motivations. Intergenerational differences contributed to much of Taiwanese youth’s war fever. Many Taiwanese who grew up with Japanese-language education in the 1920s–30s became patriotic subjects in pursuit of public honor, higher wages, or both by contributing to Japan’s
war efforts. Long relegated to second—or even third-class status—Han and indigenous Taiwanese volunteers saw military service as an opportunity to prove they were equally capable and devoted as the Japanese. Interethnic competition in the Japanese military included Han Taiwanese who strove to gain the same army volunteer privileges as the Koreans (who served as armed soldiers four years earlier) and indigenous Taiwanese who sought to outperform the Han Taiwanese.

The Japanese kōminka movement’s goal was not to transform Taiwanese into ethnic Japanese but to cultivate a Pan-Asianist loyalty and patriotism toward Japan. The Han Taiwanese themselves rarely viewed their status as equal to that of the Japanese. Instead, they often embraced a hybrid Taiwanese identity: ethnic Han who were culturally and legally Japanese nationals and thus different from, and superior to, the Chinese they fought in the war. To be sure, many felt ambivalent and resentful toward the Japanese even as they sought the socioeconomic benefits of military service. Meanwhile, GMD officials largely distrusted Taiwanese in China as pro-Japanese collaborators, as evidenced by the arrest and killing of Taiwanese residents in Xiamen in 1937. At the same time, anticolonial Taiwanese activists were recruited by the GMD for Japanese skills critical to intelligence activities. In this way, Taiwanese in wartime China were in a precarious situation caught in-between nationalist agendas by Chinese and Japanese authorities.