

Taiwan

A New History

Murray A. Rubinstein, Editor

ARMONK, NEW YORK: M. E. SHARPE, 1999
536 PAGES

Taiwan has had the fortune, or misfortune, of standing at the intersection of great historical struggles. It has stood at the point of overlapping interests among great powers such as China, Japan, and the United States. Taiwan has also stood at the edge of the history of others, the history of Chinese expansion and retreat from their oceanic frontiers, the history of European and Japanese colonial expansion and defeat, the history of the Republic of China, and the history of the United States as the dominant power in the western Pacific. Meanwhile, residents of Taiwan, whether the Hakkas, other early and late immigrants from the Chinese mainland, or the aboriginal residents, have had to redefine their own history in relation to Taiwan's very complex past, as well as to the uncertain future of the island republic.

The study of Taiwan's history after the Second World War has been overshadowed by the greater interest in Chinese history. Whether one sought the reasons for the Nationalist failure on the mainland, or the reasons for the rise of the Chinese Communists, Taiwan was the place scholars visited to study the Chinese language and access documents. Taiwan history was also not the mainstream subject for historians in Taiwan, where any hint of Taiwanese consciousness was, until the 1990s, a subject hazardous to one's career and health. Yet some scholars in Taiwan and overseas persevered in their study of Taiwan history, and the democratization and economic development of Taiwan in the late 1980s brought the freedom, the interest, and the funding for the study of Taiwan history.

This book is a sophisticated and eminently readable introduction to the basic issues of Taiwan history from the beginning of recorded time to 1995. There are sixteen articles from thirteen authors. Each essay stands well on its own, therefore each could be quite useful for a class not requiring the entire book. (For instance, the two articles on the history of Taiwanese literature would be useful in a historical survey course on Asian literature.) The book, read from beginning to end, gives the reader a sense of cohesiveness difficult to produce in a collaborative effort. This book is suitable for upper level undergraduate courses, but individual essays can, with some encouragement from the instructor, be used for lower level undergraduate courses. Just as important, this is a very good place for instructors and students interested in studying Taiwan history to begin.

There are sixteen chapters written by scholars from Taiwan, the United States, and Europe. Their specialties range from anthropology to geography to history. The chapters are arranged chronologically, though the methods employed by the authors in covering

their time periods varies nicely with their specialties. Ronald G. Knapp contributed a wonderful essay on the transformation of Taiwan's landscapes. Michael Stainton discusses the competing theories of Taiwan's aboriginal origins, and effectively demonstrates the relationship between the theories and competing contemporary political interests. Stainton also contributes a second article on the aboriginal self-government movement. The next six articles cover Taiwan from the late Ming dynasty up to the Qing: Eduard B. Vermeer on the expansion of the Fukienese in the late Ming period, John E. Wills, Jr.'s particularly well written article on Taiwan under the Dutch and Cheng regimes in the seventeenth century, John R. Shepherd's article on Taiwan as an island frontier of the Qing Government, Chen's insightful piece on the transformation of local elites in mid-Qing Taiwan, 1780–1862, and Robert Gardella on Taiwan's transformation from treaty ports to a province from 1860–94.

Harry J. Lamley describes Taiwan under Japanese rule from 1895 to 1945 in an important and lengthier article. Sung-sheng Yvonne Chang contributed two articles worth reading in relation to one another, the first on Taiwan's New Literature in the colonial context, and the second on Taiwan's literature after 1949. Steven Philips contributed a particularly complex and well researched article on the very difficult history of Taiwanese retrocession to Nationalist Chinese rule from 1945–8. Peter Chen-main Wang follows with an article summarizing the period 1949–70 as the creation of the last bastion for the Republic of China government. Robert P. Weller contributed a fascinating article on identity and

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social change in Taiwanese religion. The volume's editor, Murray A. Rubinstein, wrote two articles, one on Taiwan's socioeconomic modernization from 1971 to 1996, and a second creative and informative article on the relationship between Chiang Ching-kuo's "Taiwanization" policy in the 1970s (the recruitment of promising Taiwanese into the Kuomintang government) and Lee Teng-hui's Pragmatic Diplomacy policy. This collection presents balanced, solid research without turning away from the controversies of contemporary Taiwanese politics. A commendable feat. ■

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The Classic of the Way and Virtue

A New Translation of the Tao-Te Ching of Laozi As Interpreted by Wang Bi

Translated by Richard John Lynn

NEW YORK: COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1999
244 PAGES

Since 1868, almost fifty major English translations of the ancient Chinese classic known as *Laozi* (Lao-tzu) or *Daodejing* (Tao Te Ching) have appeared in print—to say nothing of the countless, less reliable translations which seem to sprout on bookstore shelves like mushrooms after spring rains. The student or teacher of Chinese literature, religions, philosophy, or history might well ask: "Why another translation?" In this case, the appearance of yet another translation is distinguished by two distinctive contributions to the way in which English-speaking readers encounter the text. Richard John Lynn has juxtaposed his translation of the text with its most influential early commentary, that of Wang Bi (226–249 C.E.), and has rendered both in a masterly, clear, and dignified English prose. Those who pick up this new volume will discover—or rediscover—old treasures of early Chinese thought, made more profound and in many ways more accessible by these twin gifts of commentary and clarity. They also will find that this translation, like the many which precede it, stakes out controversial positions regarding the nature of the text, the relationship between the movements which have claimed it for their own, and the meaning of key terms.