

Taiwan *Nation-State or Province?*

Sixth Edition

By JOHN F. COPPER

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Reviewed by Thomas J. Bellows



This is the sixth edition of what has become the standard textbook on Taiwan since 1990. Professor John F. Copper, a leading authority on Taiwan, is Stanley J. Buckman Distinguished Professor of International Studies Emeritus at Rhodes College. One virtue of this book is that the author has spent several decades studying and writing on Taiwan. This focus has allowed his analysis to have breadth, as well as a deep understanding of change and continuity in Taiwan and the Republic of China. The book avoids impressionable interpretations and is

based on careful, longitudinal analysis. The author perceives Taiwan ultimately as a nonnegotiable issue between the United States and China—a rising superpower.

This book is a pleasure to use in the classroom. It includes substantial amounts of hard data and medium-range interpretation rather than attempts to fit developments into one or more macro theories. Interpretations and trends are best-presented through careful inductive analysis. The author's detailed footnotes and bibliography indicate both the breadth and eclectic nature of Professor Copper's research. I found this especially impressive as I read his work.

A special virtue of this book is its topical arrangement, beginning with chapter one, "The Land and the People," which deals with such issues as physical setting, population, ethnic groups, and culture, followed by chapters on "History," "Society," "Political Systems," "The Economy," "Foreign and Military Affairs," and "The Future." Each chapter has a historical/developmental format, allowing the reader to understand the evolution of Taiwan into a democratic, middle-class society after World War II. The latest edition includes relations with the United States and China, a falling fertility index, and analysis of the 2012 *Kuomintang* presidential and legislative victories.

If one is planning to spend months or years in Taiwan or East Asia, this book is a must-read. For the serious student, with a dedicated reading attention span, this book will bring considerable understanding of democratic and economic development in general and an appreciation of Taiwan's development in an often-dangerous geopolitical environment.

The photographs in the middle of the book give Taiwan neophytes a sense of place. My one suggestion is to include appropriate tables dealing with elections, public attitudes, and economics. This suggestion does not detract from my very positive overall impression of this book, its readability, and the need for more books of this length on other countries. ■

THOMAS J. BELLOWS, PhD, Yale University, is Professor of Political Science at The University of Texas at San Antonio, and Editor of the *American Journal of Chinese Studies*.



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