

The History of Taiwan – Part II

Notes taken from *Dr. Andrew D. Morris's [Taiwan's History: An Introduction](#)*.

Taiwan becomes a colony of the Empire of Japan



Flag of the short-lived Republic of Taiwan (1895)

- During the late 19th century the Qing Dynasty sought to integrate Taiwan into the empire after nearly a century of utter neglect (and to teach the foreigners a thing or two) by turning the island into a "foundation of national wealth and power" (Kuo 1973, 237).
- Upgraded in 1885 from a prefecture of Fujian Province to a province of China in its own right, Taiwan became the object of several modernizing reforms in military, industrial, educational, commercial, political, communications, and administrative spheres, particularly in the north.
- This period also saw the abrupt reintegration of Taiwan into the world marketplace, as Taiwan's economy and society were quickly reordered to provide for the efficient export of tea (Taiwan's "green gold"), camphor and sugar, accompanied by the import of foreign cotton, wool, and opium (Gardella 1999, 171-176).
- Yet even this work to establish a Qing dynasty presence over every inch of Taiwan could not prevent the interest of the eager imperialists of the Japanese military, who hoped to protect their nation from European and American expansion in Asia by expanding their influence in the same fashion as these Western power.
- The reckoning finally came in 1895, when Japan defeated the Qing in the Sino-Japanese War, started by the Japanese in 1894 over the weighty Chinese influence in Korea. In the Treaty of Shimonoseki, Japan demanded possession of Taiwan, along with an indemnity of 200 million ounces of silver and various industrial privileges in China.

- The governor of Taiwan, Tang Jingsong, learned of the cession two days later in a simple telegram, in which the imperial court reminded him that "*Taiwan is certainly important to us, but obviously not as important as Beijing ... since Taiwan is all by itself out there in the ocean, we would not be able to help defend Taiwan anyway*" (Lishi Jiaoxue 1954, 51).
- Forsaken by Beijing, the scholarly elite of Taipei formulated another strategy of avoiding colonization by the Japanese: an independent Taiwan, which could not be ceded legally by the Qing. These elites, with the reluctant cooperation of Governor Tang, founded the Taiwan Republic (with Tang as president) and issued the following statement: "*The Qing court has not heard the mandate of the people; in ceding Taiwan they totally ignored our anger. . . . The public is full of grief and fury; a call for autonomy [zizhu] will arouse the people.... We must unite the people and gentry of Taiwan and establish a Taiwan Republic [Taiwan minzhuguo]. Together we will push forward a draft of a constitution, taking the good points of the American and French models.... This will be Asia's first republic*" (Zheng 1981, 81).
 - The republic was quickly suppressed by the superior Japanese military.
- After taking command of Taiwan, the Japanese lost no time in transforming it and its people. This newest symbol of Japan's imperial power could not continue to look the way it had under what the Japanese saw as the obsolescence and decay of Chinese culture.
 - This "laboratory," as Civil Administrator Gota Shimpei saw Taiwan, would be the perfect site to test the most modern theories of colonialism and showcase the brilliance of Japanese modernity. Two official doctrines of Japanese colonialism - "assimilation" and "equal treatment under one [imperial] view" were representative of the enlightened, humanitarian ethos promised under Japanese rule.
 - Over the next several years until 1902, the Japanese killed some twenty thousand "bandits" and "rebels" leading attacks on occupying Japanese forces (Lamley 1999,207).
- Yet this colonialist modernization program was a mixed bag. Improving the lives of Taiwanese farmers was clearly secondary to the obvious colonial goal of ensuring richer and richer exports back to Japan. [A Japanese official] in charge of these agricultural modernizations, put it plainly: "Merely being kind to [colonial subjects] is insufficient. Primitive peoples are motivated by awe" (Peattie 1984, 88).

- Chief among Japan's "primitives" were Taiwan's [Indigenous] population.
- The Japanese used many American policies of "civilizing," policing, and destroying Native Americans as a model for their own policies in Taiwan (Knapp and Hauptman 1980).
- Japan's fifty-year administration of Taiwan came to be defined by this model of the strict colonial overlord working in mysterious ways for the betterment of his native subjects. (Indeed, one important source of income used to pay for these agricultural modernizations was the 12,420,000 yen that the Japanese were able to earn from their official monopoly on opium sales in Taiwan from 1898 to 1907 [Ka 1995, 54-55]).
- The Japanese education system was extended to Taiwan, but Taiwanese youth were rarely able to complete education past the elementary level. Taiwanese were promised fair treatment as good Japanese imperial subjects, but Tokyo's extraordinary (and unconstitutional) "Law No. 63" gave the ordinances of the Japanese governor-general of Taiwan the same status as the law of Japan, making him an independent lawmaker unto himself until 1921 (Chen 1984, 251-252).
- Taiwanese "natives" could be only second-class imperial subjects under Japanese colonial rule-no surprise, given the government's attempts to master the policies first employed by the British in India, the French in Algeria, or the Germans in Alsace-Lorraine (Fraser 1988, 95; Peattie 1984, 88).
- In 1903, it became official policy to expand Japanese language use to Taiwanese subjects, for the purpose of "assimilating" them into Japanese colonial society (Wu 1987, 7).
 - Elementary schools, founded in 1896 for Taiwanese boys and girls (You 1988, 272), became ground zero for this [colonial] experiment, as the new administration sought to attract students away from the Chinese-style private schools by merely hiring their tutors to teach in Japanese schools. But this schooling was typically available for children of the upper classes only.



Seal used in Taiwan during Japanese colonial rule

- [In 1940] the colonial regime announced a name-changing campaign, encouraging Taiwanese (not forcing, as in Korea) who spoke Japanese and had the stuff of a good imperial subject to take Japanese names. One applied through the local government for this privilege, and those whose requests were approved had to follow several guidelines in choosing their new name; for example, the use of Chinese place names was forbidden. Eventually some 7 percent of Taiwanese people made this change.
- By the 1930s, Taiwan had been transformed into a relatively stable, peaceful, and prosperous Japanese colony. Thousands of college-educated Taiwanese, as one scholar described, "entered the ranks of Japanese [intellectuals], becoming almost indistinguishable from them." Taiwan had become a reliable "sugar bowl" and "rice basket," providing foodstuffs and light industrial products for Japan's home islands.
- Pressures to conform and desires to be accepted aside, however, Japan's war against China, the land of their ancestors, was clearly a difficult war for most Taiwanese to support.
 - Taiwanese subjects learned their position in the imperial order the hard way. Even though rice shipments to Japan decreased during wartime because of the lack of available ships, the rice not sent to Japan was stored rather than being distributed back to the Taiwanese population.
- In 1945, at war's end, Taiwan had been heavily bombed in American air strikes but largely spared from the hell of invasion suffered on other Japanese islands, such as Okinawa. General Douglas MacArthur, supreme commander of the Allied Command in the Pacific, authorized Taiwan's surrender to **Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and his Republic of China (ROC) government** as a trustee on behalf of the Allied Powers (Chen and Reisman 1972, 6n).
- Elation was the typical Taiwanese reaction to the news that the Japanese colonial authorities would be leaving their island. During the two months between Japanese defeat and the arrival of ROC forces, Taiwanese elites worked to ensure a smooth transition to Chinese rule (under Chiang Kai-shek's ROC government).



Republic of China Flag