Remembering China from Taiwan

Divided Families and Bittersweet Reunions after the Chinese Civil War

Mahlon Meyer

香港大學出版社
Hong Kong University Press

Hong Kong University Press
14/F Hing Wai Centre
7 Tin Wan Praya Road
Aberdeen
Hong Kong
www.hkupress.org

ISBN 978-988-8083-86-2

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed and bound by Paramount Printing Co., Ltd. in Hong Kong, China

Contents

Introduction

I hope this book will not have the same effect on you as it did on one of my friends. The friend in question is a well-known Taiwanese journalist who helped me on countless occasions, bringing perspective or knowledge to my newspaper and magazine articles. Whenever I wanted to tackle a new topic, I would simply call her up and she would help me outline the main points of my piece, feeding me background information about all the people I was interviewing and generally throwing in her opinion and perspective. She was a mentor and a good friend. But after hearing me simply mention the topic and characters involved in this book, she rose up rudely, in anger, and stormed out of the coffee shop where she had been taking refreshments with me, knocking chairs out of the way and promising never to contact me again. She had not read a single word of the manuscript.

The above story is true, and just goes to show how inflammatory this topic is in current-day Taiwan. The journalist friend in question is the daughter of mainland refugees, whose stories are the focus of this writing. She said she was overwhelmingly perplexed at my tendency to use a soft touch in dealing with her parents' generation. She told me that she was outraged that I presumed to describe them as innocent survivors of invasion, civil war, and finally exile rather than condemn them as predators who had come to Taiwan from China to murder and harass the local Taiwanese. When I protested that the piece was focused upon the *memories* of these men and women which they clung to even harder now given their recent loss of position and status, she left without looking back.

My friend had gone over to the "camp" of the native Taiwanese, whose representative was, at the time, in the presidential palace. She was working, during that highly emotional period, as a television commentator aligned with the Taiwanese

party, the Democratic Progressive Party. As a mainlander, in fact the second generation of a group that terrorized or held sway over the locals for almost half a century, she was appearing on nightly talk shows supporting the locals, the group that she believed her parents and their generation had wronged. After her outburst and sudden departure, I walked the streets of Taipei for hours, trying to sort out how I felt about her, this book, and myself. Besides my sadness over the encounter, I began thinking that I had, perhaps, failed in what I had wanted to do. I had wanted to show that the oral histories given me by aging exiles from China showed the beginning of a new sense of being Chinese that would ultimately result in the closer integration of Taiwan and China. I interviewed these exiles after their political party had lost power for the first time in Taiwan. They were facing a second defeat, the first one being the loss of their homes on China at the end of the Civil War when they were separated from their families, crossed the Strait to Taiwan, and were born into a new life.

No one was disputing that the Kuomintang, of whom all the subjects interviewed in the book were members, was one of the most disappointing regimes in history. Conceived as a revolutionary party to save China from warlords and foreign exploitation at the start of the twentieth century, the party soon allied itself with gangsters and triads and eventually warlords. When Chiang Kai-shek took over the leadership, he copied organization and ideology from the Nazis.[1] Mass conscriptions of peasants, staggering corruption and economic failure alienated southern and coastal China and eventually contributed to the loss of the entire country to the Chinese Communist Party, led by Mao Zedong. Eventually, the Kuomintang fled to Taiwan. Fifty years of rule on the small island—roughly the size of a small US state—started in 1945, when the Japanese colonizers handed the island back to China, and the government of Chiang Kai-shek began transferring over from China. But starting only two years after taking over the island, Kuomintang troops began massacring tens of thousands of people. Many natives simply disappeared into the labyrinths of the security forces. Execution cells and firing squads became a way the government dealt with dissenters, and the souls that once screamed and perished there are said by local historians to still exist, as ghosts, beneath the central institutions of government.

One of the most haunting events for the Kuomintang, as it began to set its sights on Taiwan as a possible base for a retreat, was the 2–28 Massacre, named for the day and month in 1947 when it started. It was through this slaughter,

which started when a local woman was harassed for selling contraband cigarettes, that the party launched its regime in Taiwan by hunting down and killing up to 30,000 locals in the massacre that lasted over a year. Many of the victims were students and leading citizens. The reign of terror is now understood to have mimicked Stalin's in Poland, aimed at wiping out the intelligentsia before taking possession of the new land.[2]

But it was not only Taiwanese that suffered. Poet Ya Hsien writes of "heads nailed to a cross" and saw cities "mutilated by iron."[3] Writer Bo Yang was penned up in Green Island for years for loosely translating the captions of a Popeye comic strip that made Chiang Kai-shek think he was being mocked. When he emerged, emaciated and with his skin sagging, he wrote another book entitled *The Ugly Chinaman*, writing that the Chinese people had brought a curse down upon themselves. But by the time he was released, he was safe; he was an international celebrity and the days of White Terror were already over. Both men were immigrants from mainland China and had held literary appointments with the central government.

Most of the mainland immigrants, however, just went along with the regime's way of handling things, it is true. The Kuomintang's soldiers, civil servants, and other functionaries of the central government were heavily subsidized and remained so for the rest of their lives. Wang Shu-chih, one of those who provided an oral history for this book, lived in a number of government-subsidized compounds. The first one, however, was a cramped warehouse divided into small units with blankets, each one packed with a single refugee family. Although these mainland refugees (or invaders, as the locals at the time called them) often attribute their success, and the success of Taiwan, to their own enlightened efforts, such as Chiang Kai-shek's land reform, some of it came down to the luck of having two American wars in the region that stimulated the island's economy.

This group of "mainland refugees" or "mainland immigrants," that could also be called "mainland settlers,"[4] who lost their homes in China only to build others in Taiwan, represents a remnant of a cultural ideology that died out elsewhere. Whatever atrocities their soldiers and government may have committed, they brought with them a now-unique way of patterning their world. This would change as they lived and developed in Taiwan, but would still emphasize essentially moral elements. These elements show up in their memories transformed

into guilt, anger, and shame. Even so, many of those interviewed here were on the periphery of the Kuomintang regime and were not directly responsible for the violence perpetrated by its government and military. Their struggles have more to do with repetition of loss, both as children on the mainland, when they lost their homes, and later, as adults in Taiwan, when they lost their ruling-class status. My interpretation, as I believe this book shows, is that these aging exiles continually re-imagined their identities, to adapt to the times, and ultimately came to identify themselves with their former enemy, seeing themselves once again as Chinese, but now as part of a rising economically-superior China. For close to forty years, they had been staring across the Taiwan Strait, gazing at the other shore, the mainland, where they had left families behind. Meanwhile, their relatives in China had been looking to their shore with longing, regret, and hostility. It has taken another twenty years, a democratic election in Taiwan, and growing affluence in China, for both sides to see beyond the other shore to something bigger, which is what this book is about.

I still think my friend misunderstood my enterprise. I do not mean, in the first two chapters, to portray these aged "Chinese refugees," or "mainland immigrants," as I call them, as victims. On the contrary, I intend to use their own feelings of impotence and shame, and self-victimization to gain a richer understanding of their experience. Later, I talk about what happened to their children and the relatives they left behind in the mainland.

The Kuomintang held power in Taiwan from 1945 until 2000 when a popular democratic election thrust them from ruling status. Their reaction on election night, when their representatives used violence to try to overturn the election, was one indication of the shock. Never before had the mainland immigrants realized the full extent of their minority status. They and their descendants occupied only about fifteen percent of the island's population. And suddenly they were living through the greatest social and political upheaval since they had come to Taiwan. The society they had dominated for half a century was now going through the kind of turbulence that they had experienced in the mainland a half century earlier. Would it be a prelude to the same violence and disaster they faced then, which sent them fleeing to Taiwan in the first place? The familiar sense of terror, grief, and shame came welling up like a genie out of a box. It was their trauma surfacing again, even as the local Taiwanese were trying to escape from theirs. The result for the mainlanders: emotional and social chaos and the

resurrection of feelings of shame and helplessness at the inevitability of displacement. To explain this kind of dislocation, loss of status and power, a leading psychiatrist at Taipei Veterans' General, Chou Chih-sui, who treats old soldiers and displaced mainland immigrants, said: "The biggest event in the second part of these peoples' lives was their loss of political power in Taiwan. This election and the democratic reforms that brought it about was a huge blow to them. They have reacted with rage and disorientation. It has caused them to start to question their entire lives." An entire website is devoted to the expressions of rage and sadness of mainland immigrants.[5] One letter is excerpted, as follows. Here, "Nei Di Ren" refers to refugees from China.

The Last Generation of Nei Di Ren
Written by Xin Huai-nan; translated by K C Lu

We are a minority among minorities. Fifty years from now, when Chinese historians study this period, they will find that we, the Nei Di Ren, are a unique group of people.

We were born into a chaotic time marked by continuous warfare. If we had not escaped to Taiwan, I believe at least one third of us would have perished under Mao Tze-Tung's communist regime.

We spent our childhood in Taiwan; some in the northern cities, and others in the southern fields . . . Although we were short on material possessions, we never went hungry. Many of us grew up in "Juan Cun" (literally spouse village), a compound of state-provided housing for the dependents of government and military personnel. Many criticized us for never learning to speak Taiwanese and not being "Taiwanese" enough after spending our formative years on the island. However, this was not our fault. The government at that time was trying to establish Mandarin as the official language on the island. We had no opportunity to speak Taiwanese at school and could not learn it from our parents at home since they themselves did not speak it. It is unreasonable to place the blame on us.

Too often we are made to feel like some forlorn traveler listening to the blowing of the political winds in a lone boat picked out by the moonlight. In Taiwan, first we were called Nei Di Ren; later, we were addressed as Wai Sheng Ren (people from other provinces) to differentiate us from the provincial Taiwanese. Yet when we go to China, we are treated as Taiwanese.

In terms of political beliefs, we rejected the "White Terror" perpetrated by Chiang Kai-Shek's government. Nor could we identify with the "red terror" that

is the communist one party dictatorship practiced in China. We love Taiwan more than we love China, but we are not the "New Taiwanese" who deny their Chinese heritage.

To some degree, we try to be true to Confucius's belief that a man must expand his resoluteness because he accepts the challenges and realizes his burden will be heavy and his path long. We are not the greatest generation of Chinese; we are simply the last generation of Nei Di Ren.

Another clear expression of their shame and rage, came through in the 2006–07 demonstrations in front of the presidential palace. Mainland immigrants came roaring out of their apartments and condominiums to demonstrate against the (native Taiwanese) president. They rioted in front of the presidential palace. They frequently appeared on television, making wild threats, and pounding on drums, as if they were going to lead a battalion into battle. Notable figures from this disenfranchised generation, such as Chen Lu-an, a former defense minister and son of a major Kuomintang General, and Hu Chih-chiang (Jason Hu), constantly rallied crowds against the president. Fist fights broke out, instigated by ethnic tensions between the local Taiwanese, who usually supported the president during those days, and the mainland immigrants who wanted him out of the presidential mansion and a return to their days of power.

Anger spread through the society. Television news on channels owned or influenced by the Kuomintang, which still controls vast resources in Taiwan, carried nothing but news items attacking President Chen Shui-bian. Influenced by these programs, citizens of Taipei flocked to the protests, with little more reason than that they had heard news broadcasters announcing that he was corrupt. Through October, November, and December of 2006, the hysteria spread. Crowds attacked the president's car. Meanwhile, in the south, where locals predominate, support for Chen Shui-bian remained high. The island was poised, for the first time in more than fifty years, to split apart along ethnic lines: the local, native Taiwanese on the side of the president, the mainland settlers represented by the Kuomintang, along with those locals who had joined their cause and transformed it, on the other. Then what seemed like a sacrifice was offered. The courts found the nephew of Chen Shui-bian guilty of corruption. He was sentenced to eight years. The hydra of the Kuomintang had proved its strength after all. But Chen Shui-bian remained in the presidential mansion. After the

whole thing was over, and the Kuomintang retook the presidency, he too was sentenced to twenty years.

It was in this atmosphere, when society seemed turned upside down to the older mainlanders—the "years of chaos" as one Kuomintang historian put it—that the oral histories for this book were taken at the moment of greatest despair for the mainlanders. This book is a snapshot of those moments, of those eight years, when their deepest fears were realized. It is a snapshot of a time, of a moment. But the feelings of loss and shame are still driving them. Just for a moment, they believed they had not only lost China but Taiwan as well. Old wounds, filmed over with fifty years of scabs, were ripped open and started to bleed. To stop the flow, they began thinking in new ways, about themselves and about their former enemies, the Communists in China.

Their position was a little bit like other elites from earlier times in Chinese history, toppled from power, but encouraged to write their own histories. Throughout Chinese history, scholars from a previous dynasty, crushed by the current one, were asked to write the history of their defunct dynasty. They were asked, by new rulers, to tell the stories of their past adventures and their defeated masters. This happened during the Qing dynasty, when scholars were wooed back after experiencing profound alienation with the new dynasty that had waded into power through rivers of blood. The promise of an exam which, if passed, would qualify them to write the history of the Ming dynasty they had once been loyal to, eventually pulled many of them back to the official halls. These scholars, then, actually wrote the history of the Ming dynasty under the supervision of the Qing, who were their new masters.[6] How they dealt with their guilt and the realities of working under the enemy, how they transferred their sentiments over to their new masters, how aware they were of the oppression they must have felt themselves subject to, and how all these complexities appeared in their writing, are all questions that would have to be looked at bit by bit in the Ming history they wrote. The position of these Ming scholars is similar to that of the mainland refugees in Taiwan—both tell a history of their own past, not as victors, but as the defeated—no longer even masters of their exile government but, rather, subject to a hostile regime. After being in power for fifty years in Taiwan, these mainland settlers began to lose power two decades ago after their party gradually opened its doors to local Taiwanese. Eventually, democratic reforms catapulted them from their privileged seat. Like their Ming counterparts, the mainlander

refugees in Taiwan told their stories as if their lives were flashing before their eyes, never knowing when their lives as they knew them would end.

By linking the stories of the family members who escaped to Taiwan with their relatives left behind, I am suggesting that what are usually taken as two separate stories are actually one. The devastation of the Maoist movements in the mainland is actually part of the same narrative that describes the crushing weight of Kuomintang repression in Taiwan. I am suggesting that this book offers a new way of unifying the experiences of all Chinese over the past four generations, generations that were ravaged and left desolate by war as one community marked by dislocation and changing identities. The mainlander exiles, for their part, are still coping, still trying to re-imagine their past and present. Many have tried to return to China, to visit lost relatives or marry wives, and found that a half century of nostalgia has clouded their memories—or made them more corrosive. When Ko Jen-tao left home at the age of ten, his mother was thirty, plump, and had dark, sleek hair and a seamless round face. When he finally found her again, over fifty years later, she was in her eighties, with white sparse hair, toothless gums, and a face like a crumpled sack, heavily wrinkled and sagging after a lifetime of waiting.

His memory of her, which had helped keep him alive, was part of a grander memory of a past glory—and of how that glory was stripped away. It was almost as if the entire group of mainlanders ached for memories that they might have forgotten. What they found was shame for being cast out from their privileged position, shame at having to live with the knowledge that not only they themselves knew this but their enemies knew this as well, and shame that they needed to reinvent themselves so late in life. Perhaps even shame for what they believed had happened to their civilization. For if one event delineates the People's Republic from past Chinese history, it was the systematic elimination of the elite, landlord class, which for most of Chinese history played the major role in transmitting culture. It is safe to say that many of those who survived the pogroms were among the roughly two million who fled to Taiwan around 1949. In a sense, capturing oral histories from the first generation of survivors is capturing some ethos of that extinct class, that lost civilization which was once imperial China. They had endured the loss of their homeland. They had endured fifty years of exile in Taiwan. They had endured a second exile—from power and status. And they had reinvented themselves again.

Table 1
Subjects interviewed, occupations, provinces of origin and ages[a]

Mainland Immigrant	Biographical Data[b]
Chang Ching-tan	civil servant; Fujian, 82
Lin Ching-wu	soldier-educator; Fujian, 85
Hu Yao-hen	professor; Hubei, 77
Weiwei Furen (Yin Tsai-chun)	newspaper columnist; Nanjing, 74
Ko Jen-tao	police chief; Nanjing, 83
Ku Chi	banker; Shanghai, 77
Shen Hsueh-yung	opera singer; Sichuan, 78
Wang Shu-chih	civil servant; Henan, 77
Tan Hua-shen	soldier; Shandong, 78

a. The limited number of interviewees was compelled by the emphasis on a qualitative, rather than quantitative, approach to the subject. The attempt to explore the mindset, as deeply as possible, of the subjects, necessitated a close, detailed approach, much as in recent works in American History such as the award-winning *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785–1812* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991) by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich. A more "Chinese" approach of selecting interviewees involved seeking out friends and acquaintances of the principal family of Ko Jen-tao. Anthropologists call this approach "snowballing." But, in this case, my approach assumes that friends and acquaintances, like a family, share certain characteristics of temperament and experience that create a cohesive whole not unlike a village or family.

b. Taiwanese-style romanization is used for names, unless the person came from mainland China within the last few decades in which case I use pinyin.

The mainlander

Ko Jen-tao is talking about his problems.[7] His wife works thirteen hours a day. She works as a nurse's aide in the hospital. In the morning, she prepares her food, her breakfast, and her lunch. Her dinner she buys at the hospital. The problem is that Ko is lonely. At eighty-three, his face sags more than ever, his pot belly comes and goes depending on his state of sadness, and when he complains it sounds like a great foghorn. "My wife is never around to take care of me," he says.

He married her ten years ago when she was a lithe beauty from Qingdao with white skin and a figure that seemed to suck the velvet dresses she slipped into tight against her hips and breasts. His sons insist she married him for his money. (The mainland in most places is still poorer than Taiwan.) When he met her, through a fellow police officer, she was living alone with her two sisters and father in a tiny shack in that port city where fog grips the horizon like a milky white hand half the time. His first wife had died, a horrendous death as cancer ate away her bones until they cracked. Soon after, he married Liu Rong. Their wedding picture, taken several years after the event, shows a happy, if perhaps slightly cynical, couple arrayed in colored costumes. She appears haughty and wise. He, on the other hand, looks like some gamester, some kingpin of Macau or other small-time city in greater China. They seem suited for each other.

Yet now, their unhappiness seems boundless. Liu Rong has a son from a former marriage. The son just never seems satisfied with what he has. He walked away from a school in the heart of an agricultural district because the water was laced with salt and fertilizers. Now he stays at home playing computer games and talking with his grandfather. This is the reason why Liu Rong, his mother, works seven days a week, thirteen hours a day, folding hospital quilts and removing catheters. She wants to get him out, out of China; she dreams of sending her son to New Zealand. Once there, and having earned a visa, he will buy a house, with her money, and eventually be able to bring herself out to New Zealand also. "I won't go," says Ko, wretched. He hates the son. And he is furious at being left alone. "She should take care of me," he says. "This is her real job."

Today is a rest day for Liu Rong. She is having hot flashes from menopause and flits around the house, boiling water, sitting and fanning herself, and listening to the oral history delivered by her husband. Her cotton dress is short and rides up her hard, white thighs when she sits down. At fifty, she is still very beautiful, with wide, intelligent eyes and long limbs. "She really takes care of herself," says Ko, as if she is a commodity, as if she keeps herself in splendor so that, if she fails in this marriage, she can find another. In their moments of despair, they seem united in a single false belief, belied at other times, but hovering now in their terror that her body is all that she has.

Ko deteriorates every moment he sits on the couch watching her, speaking about his life. The black dye he uses on his hair has faded at the periphery so that his hair appears to molt around his collar. Deep sacks with surfaces fading

from black to grey pucker under his eyes. His clothing is that of the old man in Taiwan—an undershirt with no sleeves and loose shorts. Even his toenails are sick. They are stunted, curving like elephant tusks, yellowing with decay. Liu Rong, flitting around in hormonal frustration, her dress flying up as she sits down in a chair, now on the couch, now as she paces by, might be his daughter, trapped in an obscure old apartment with a single couch, a tiny, hot kitchen filled with steam, tied to her aging father in a dance of hate and recrimination.

"I used to be able to run all the way around the Sun Yat-sen Memorial. Do you know how far that is? If we block out the streets like this, and this, you see, it is a perfect square. I used to be in really good shape. My colleagues all envied me."

His wife brushes by again, apparently without having heard the comments: she's heard them before. Ko repeats every anecdote, every sentence many times. In the old days, such repetition used to be a sign of hospitality, such as the hospitality I was offered when I came to his house for dinner. In those days, the dinner table overflowed with food. Chicken, fish, tofu, vegetables, duck, plus the inevitable bottle of brandy. He presided at his dinner table once a week, when his work permitted him to come home.

I would give up; a little more food would be eaten. Or I would have more brandy forced on me. Against my better judgment, I would take a sip or two, and the issue would be settled. Although, for the rest of the evening, Ko would rumble, "Ah, you didn't eat anything."

For many of these refugees, like Ko, trauma—or despair—did not show its face until old age. Something happened. A fall. An accident. The death of a parent. The loss of prestige. Then old age came sifting down like leaves, or ashes, and suddenly the past became all too real. I wanted to capture that past before the mainland settlers gave up wanting to talk about it. Each oral history ranged from about one hour to over four hours, depending on the respondent's willingness to draw forth memories. Each of the refugees was eager to talk, eager to imagine and re-imagine his or her identity in the context of the present. For Ko, it was the advent of bone spurs, that prevented him from taking his daily run, that began to transform him. A police officer for over thirty years, the loss of the use of his physical frame hit him particularly hard. He put on weight, he slowed down, he grew tremendously frustrated.

The decline of his body mirrored the decline of his ability to control his life. When first married to Liu Rong, he bought her a two-story, white and brown

brick house looking out into the harbor of Qingdao. The house, now rented to a Japanese businessman to pay for her son's schooling, is painted to resemble an Alpine chateau. But it's not enough to cover his wife's plans, he says, frustrated. The income goes to her son and Liu Rong continues to work; studying in New Zealand takes enormous sums. Ko has a lot to think about. He'd like to talk to her about it but he has to let her sleep, so she can do well in her job. He wakes up naturally at five or six in the morning—the only hour he can get an erection—and looks at his wife sleeping soundly next to him. "I don't dare to wake her, that's when she's having her soundest sleep." In the morning, after she has gone, he writhes in agony. "I feel if she had to choose between me and her son, she'd choose her son."

Each of the eight individuals featured in the early chapters and their relatives who remained in the mainland were touched by the same explosion of invasion, flight, trauma, rebuilding and ultimate displacement. Each mainland refugee lost a whole other life in China through war, then rebuilt his or her fortunes in Taiwan as a new ruling class, finally to have his or her position in society knocked away like a child's building blocks.

Even later, after their party returned to power, they continued to face other disillusionments, other challenges. Foremost among them was how to understand the rise of a powerful China, the homeland they lost, and how to convince themselves that they are still a part of it.

Ko, who was born in Shanghai, and came to Taiwan as a child with the retreating Kuomintang armies in 1949, is a member of a group of Chinese refugees who share a unique fate in modern Chinese history. Defeated by the Communists, yet masters of Taiwan for almost half a century, they faced a period of profound alienation. Having lost the mainland, they found they had lost political and social control of Taiwan as well. The final disaster has been the attempt over the past two decades to return to mainland China in various ways—through business ventures, marriages, even actual immigration. But some of these have been nearly as unsuccessful as their battle against the Communists and subsequent retreat. Now these mostly seventy-, eighty-, and ninety-year-olds face the disillusioning task of taking stock of their engagement with China, their birthplace and land they have been banished from for most of their lives. Their final reckoning is important in another sense, for it may also impact the way Taiwan and China come together in the future. These refugees, old soldiers and dispossessed

landlords, though deracinated, yet cling fast to traditional moral elements that they see lacking in mainland China, subject as it was to decades of communist purges and emaciating poverty. Leading intellectuals and the media in the mainland are unceasingly fascinated with the experiences and value systems of their former enemies. Television shows in China now focus on the lives of the mainland settlers. Some Chinese scholars even feel nostalgic about Chiang Kai-shek.

It has taken both sides over half a century to get there. When the mainland settlers first arrived in Taiwan, there were no familiar landscapes, buildings, or routines. So they rebuilt a life there that eventually surpassed the original in prosperity and abundance. They didn't want to forget what they had been. Chinese art, transported out of the war zone and ensconced in hills in the center of the island before being resurrected in an artificial palace built in the capital, served both to spur and legitimate memory. Their leaders sought to mimic the China they had lost by turning Taipei into a map of mainland China, taking possession of the land with a series of ornate rituals centered on naming things and reflecting Chinese philosophical cosmology. As they developed their mimetic land, and held onto, for a while at least, their dream of retaking mainland China, they were less successful in dealing with the trauma of their wartime experiences.

Now, sixty years later, the mainlanders have been remembering their pain so long that they are trying to forget. They had lived so long in memories that when they started to come out of them, when they were awakened by their loss of power, they found that they no longer had anything to hold on to, except those memories and the success of their families they had once left behind. They now want to feel that they are part of that success, of the pride of a China they once remembered only with shame.

Conclusion: The Other Shore

It started, as much as anything can be said to start, during the high point of the last dynasty. It involved officials, officials who became technicians instead of scholars. Until the Manchus took over China in 1644, Chinese officials had mostly spent their time writing poetry and other efflorescences of a culture steeped not only in its own tradition but in the stewing, masticating and swallowing of that tradition over thousands of years. Under the Manchus, a hardy, clever and ruthless people, Chinese officials became something new: they became experts at statecraft. That meant they had to manage markets, control river flooding and, most of all, prevent famine. Famine was probably the biggest killer, the biggest cause of rupture with the past in all history. It was under the Qianlong emperor that the officials took these techniques to new heights. They erected granaries around the empire to feed the hungry in times of famine, to succor the farmers when prices were too high and to retain stability in a wildly unpredictable terrain of droughts, pestilence and an overabundance of human population.

The plan backfired. Not only because the officials could not see beyond their shortsightedness. Not only because they could not see that if you feed a hungry population, that population soon doubles and then even if you have planned ahead, as these officials did, you soon do not have enough to feed anyone. Not only were they unable to see that the very success of their policies must irreparably undo the very successes they had been striving to achieve. But that it would jeopardize their own lives and the lives of their families as it was they who had brought the dynasty to ruin in the very act that, under different conditions, say, under conditions of only partial success, would have saved it.

When the population of China exploded at the end of the Qing dynasty, resources became so scarce that desperate, hungry, and bedeviled people sought

their way out of the impoverished land by any means possible. They went to Southeast Asia to work in guano factories and pits. They foraged for sand banks along rivers fronting the ocean, places where seed might take hold, where they might find food for their families. Some of them went as far as Hawaii and eventually San Francisco. Some went to Taiwan. The great and last Chinese diaspora had begun, set off not only by the utter defeat of the policies that had been implemented to prevent it, but also by the final attainment of Chinese empire-building, the greatest area ever achieved, the greatest number of people fed, the most complicated institutions of government. As R. Kent Guy puts it, the Qing dynasty was too successful.[1]

So it fell, in 1911. But the reckless, frightened flight out of the land that had begun a century earlier continued. There were more horrors to flee now, besides just the worst of them all, the granddaddy of horrors, famine. Now there were foreign invaders, new droughts, and pestilence. There were warlords, opium, and the Japanese invasion. The flight continued. Eventually, those two parties which, because of the nature of their founding, continually bickered for the right to save China, began to fight among themselves. Only when the civil war ended in 1949, and China was overrun again with a single entity, did it look as if the flight was over.

It was not. At each stage of the exodus, the Chinese migrants had sought to invent themselves, then reinvent themselves. As their old institutions crumbled—which, according to their way of viewing history, was expected to happen every several hundred years—they had been forced to align themselves with the new dynasty, a somewhat mild form of shifting allegiances if not identity. But when the dynastic system itself crumbled, both students and their teachers tried to invent for themselves a new image and a new identity. Thus, when the two political parties promised to carry on the new identity, many of those same students and teachers were filled with a kind of hope. It was as if the very dreams of hope and enfranchisement that had brought down established governments before had now brought down five thousand years of Chinese history and were now going to fire a new kind of politics. Thus, the Kuomintang set out to lead the country out of its stale, backward past, a past so corrupt that it nearly ended the Chinese race. When the Kuomintang failed, the Communists, claiming an equal right to carry on this new dream and new identity, promised to further the aspirations and stunted hopes of all the Chinese. A Lincoln writing in the first part

of the twentieth century might even go so far as to say that the combatants were fighting not so much over land, which is what they thought, but over the very claim that they represented the new destiny of the Chinese people.

So destiny—which in imperial times was simply called by another name—by right of force and victory, came to rest in the hands of the Communists under Mao Zedong. The losers, the final refugees in the long, terrified flight out of China, settled in Taiwan, bereft of home, of land, and of destiny. They no longer had a role to play in the history of the Chinese race. And without that role, they quite rightly came to believe that they would suffer not only dissolution but actual death, not only at the hands of their enemies across the strait but at the very people who they had displaced in Taiwan.

Thus began the long process of escape. Escape not so much from the past or even from a specific place or land. But rather escape from flight. Escape from the soundless, mindless flight from terror, from the loss of order and meaning and confidence. They simply stopped. Nor was this stopping something new. It was Confucian; it was tradition. "Stop and then you will be settled. When you are settled, you can be still. When you can be still, you can be safe. When you are safe, you can ponder. When you can ponder, you can gain advantage." Thus, the beginning of the Great Learning, one of the central, core texts, memorized for a millennium.

Taiwan was a stopping place. Not so much physically, although that was the case, but also a stopping place for "pondering," for reflecting, and for rebuilding. Many of the attempts failed. The map of China affixed onto Taipei failed to convince the mainlanders that they would ever retake China. Hatred and fear of the locals only forced them to question the democratic developments on the island. Each attempt was followed by another attempt, as if they were reliving in their hearts and minds the many phases they had passed through, sometimes as children, to escape from China, from their homes. These phases now defined them, as they imagined and re-imagined their identities. They traversed the long, personal histories of escape and reinvention just as they had trekked out of China.

And they were helped. They were helped by the economic rise of China. Their former enemies now became their guides. A mythic China, a China devoid of the differences between Communists and Nationalists, was rising. Their reunifications with relatives, their failed business ventures, and their exposure to the

horrors encountered by their relatives during the Cultural Revolution did little to shake this new dream, this new way of imagining themselves. China was strong. China was rising again. The circle was closing, soon to be complete. They would get back what they had lost, if not in material things, if not in land or even in the prospect of any increase in wealth or prosperity, but in the conception they formed of themselves. They were now Chinese again, allied against anyone through the overwhelming belief that their race was rising again. They became part of destiny again, if not its masters, caught up in the tide of a new destiny, a destiny distinctly Chinese. They had come from there, the land, the old land to which they still laid claim in their blood. They did not ever expect to recover it but it marked them, freed them from their current petty and trivial lives. The land itself was now rising up, and it would pull them back if not in person, then in effigy. They had reinvented themselves as Chinese.

Notes

Introduction

1. William Kirby, *Germany and Republican China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984), pp. 169–70, 176–83, 264–5, 308.
2. Lai Tse-han, Ramon H. Myers, and Wei Wou, *A Tragic Beginning: The Taiwan Uprising of February 28, 1947* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).
3. Ya Hsien, "Salt," translated by the author (Hongfan: Taipei, 1981).
4. The group of Chinese who retreated from China to Taiwan around 1949 are referred to as both "mainland immigrants," "mainland refugees," "mainland settlers," and "mainlanders." In other places, books and magazines, they are referred to as *neidiren* (people from the hinterland) or *waishengren* (people from other provinces).
5. http://www.thelastndr.org/home-the-last-generation-of-ndr.html#eversion. Used with permission of the author.
6. Kent Guy, *The Emperor's Four Treasuries: Scholars and the State in the Late Ch'ien-lung Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).
7. The following sketch is based on the oral history of Ko Jen-tao and my personal observations. I lived as an exchange student in his house from 1987 to 1988 and have remained almost as close as another, albeit foreign, son to him ever since then. This sketch is meant to "set the stage" for the following history by showing the state of one mainland refugee after a life of exile and toil in Taiwan for over fifty years.

Chapter 1

1. Steven J. Hood, "Political Change in Taiwan: The Rise of Kuomintang Factions," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 36, No. 5 (May, 1996): 468–82.
2. A documentary, *Japanese Devils*, features interviews with retired, aged Japanese soldiers who recounted the atrocities they committed while Imperial soldiers invading China in the late 1930s.

3. From the French accouchement, "to give birth." Thus meaning, "to give birth to again" or "to be given birth to again."
4. Lai Tse-han et al., *A Tragic Beginning*, p. 45.
5. R. Kent Guy, *Qing Governors* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010).
6. Taipei municipal historians have erected marble stellae around the city offering accounts of the city's history that differ with Western scholarship. One such, in the suburb of Mucha, describes the area as having been named for houses built out of wood to fend off the rampant numbers of wild horses in the area during the Ming dynasty.
7. John Shepherd, *Statecraft and Political Economy on the Taiwan Frontier, 1600–1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).
8. Wu Hung, *Monumentality in Early Chinese Art and Architecture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995). Using Wu Hung's conception of the religious role of architecture, Taipei can be seen as more than a monument, but as rather something with a more spiritual purpose, almost as something living.
9. Documents taken from archives of Taiwan Provincial Government, which stores archival material from earlier periods of Taipei Municipal Government and Interior Ministry. These are copies of telegrams received between August 30 and December 18, 1946. *Taiwan Sheng Hsingcheng Changguan Kungshu Kungpao*, nos. 668–84. Available in *Taiwan Sheng Chengfu Kungpao Wangchi Luchahsun Hsitung.*
10. *Chungyang Ripao*, January 25 and February 27, 1947, microfilm, Taiwan National Chengchi University Shetsisuo.
11. Lothar Ledderose, *Ten-thousand Things: Module and Mass Production in Chinese Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).
12. Taking possession of a new territory often involves naming rituals. When the Spanish "took possession" of the New World, they read Latin texts to the trees. Yet the fact these rituals referred back to a distant power often suggested that they would have trouble fully transforming the new territory. See Patricia Seed, "Taking Possession and Reading Texts: Establishing the Authority of Overseas Empires," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., Vol. 49, No. 2 (Apr. 1992), pp. 183–209.
13. The "New Thought" is covered extensively in Jonathan Spence, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace: The Chinese and Their Revolution, 1895–1980* (New York: Penguin, 1982).
14. The reference to the leather cape comes from Lin Ching-wu (see Chapter 1). The transfer of the imperial collection of art works from Beijing to Taiwan is recorded in the 50th Anniversary of the PRC special edition of *Newsweek*, in an article I wrote entitled, "Stolen Treasures."
15. Julia Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom: The Way of Wang Yang-ming* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976).

Chapter 2

1. Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).
2. In 1978, the US broke off diplomatic relations with Taiwan, and it was kicked out of the United Nations as representing "China." The government in Taiwan still continued to debate the claim up until the early 1990s.
3. *The Chinese Pen*, Summer, 2006, pp. 40–63.
4. Lai Tse-han et al., *A Tragic Beginning*, Chapter 2.
5. You Chien-ming, "Dang Waishengjen Yudao Taiwan Nuhsing: Chanhou Taiwan Paokanchung te Nuhsing Lunshu (1945–1949)" [When mainlanders encountered Taiwanese women: Explorations into women in post-war Taiwan], *Chungyang Yenchiuyuen Chintaishih Yenchiusuo Chikan*, No. 17 [Academia Sinica Modern History Research Journal, No. 17].

Chapter 3

1. Pamela Kyle Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), part 3.
2. I am deeply familiar with the details of this trip because I was present for most of it.
3. About the same time, the government began to destroy one of the major "islands" of mainland refugee life and identity: the military villages in which many grew up. The decision involved demolishing the old communities and erecting, in their place, apartment buildings that would fit in with the characterless façade of the rest of the island, where identical concrete stacks of apartment blocks fill every city street.
4. Last lines of the play, *Agamemnon*, translated by E. D. A. Morshead, as part of the M.I.T. online classics, http://classics.mit.edu/Aeschylus/agamemnon.html. The lines are spoken by Cassandra, who has the ability to foresee the future.
5. Some mainland refugees believed that these social changes made it easier for Taiwanese to propagate violence against mainland refugees. For instance, they expressed fear over the shooting assassination of a mainland-refugee politician on May 23, 2007, Taipei County Councilor Wu Shan-jiu. Second-generation mainland refugees said he was shot because he was exposing the corruption of local Taiwanese.
6. In May, the central government voted to change the name of the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall to "National Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall." While such a change, from the perspective of Taiwanese leaders who wanted to "retake" their history was of course justified, the action prompted a military-style confrontation between agents of the central government and the city government, which was still held by the Kuomintang.
7. A leading Taiwanese activist, Peng Ming-min's descriptions suggest that the Taiwanese who came out to meet the ships arriving from China were dressed in

in Japanese-style clothing. See Peng Ming-min, *A Taste of Freedom: Memoirs of a Formosan Independence Leader* (Upland, CA: Taiwan Pub. Co., 2005).

8. Most coverage of Taiwan by Westerners follows this theme. For example, Jonathan Manthorpe, *Forbidden Nation: A History of Taiwan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). Taiwan is called "A Leaf of the Waves."
9. This is a situation that I wrote about as both a newspaper and magazine reporter.

Chapter 4

1. Recruits were sometimes tied together by the necks with rope to prevent them from running off. They also were sometimes stripped of clothes at night also to keep them from absconding. See Lloyd E. Eastman et al., *The Nationalist Era in China, 1927–1949* (New York: Cambridge, 1991), p. 140.
2. The Chinese Communists proclaimed, after Liberation in 1949, that they had eradicated all forms of "traditional exploitation" in society. See William Hinton, *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village* (New York: Vintage, 1966), p. 9.
3. In rural China, the Eighth Route Army gained almost mythic proportions in people's memories as purveyors of everything desirable. Hinton, p. 168.
4. Kent Guy, "Fang Pao and the *Ch'in-ting Ssu-shu-wen*," in *Education and Society in Late Imperial China, 1600–1900*, edited by Benjamin A. Elman and Alexander Woodside (Taipei: SCM Publishing, 1994), p. 154.
5. See the account of Lin Ching-wu from Fujian in Chapter 1.
6. Liang Heng, *Son of the Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1983), p. 8.
7. After the Tiananmen massacre, Taiwanese investors were among the first to rush back in to China to invest. Up until 2007, Taiwanese have invested at least $57.5 billion in China, according to Taiwan's Government Information Office. See: http://www.gio.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=34875&ctNode=2462&mp=807. Unofficial investment is much higher.
8. Even the generation younger than Tan's felt "fooled and cheated" by the incessant political campaigns orchestrated by Mao over decades. See Jonathan Spence, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace,* p. 359. The feeling of wasted decades was also felt at the highest political levels. Mao's doctor seemed to sum up the feelings of an entire generation of top elites when he wrote of "how good and talented people living under his [Mao's] regime were forced to violate their consciences and sacrifice their ideals to survive." See Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* (New York: Random House, 1994), p. 638.
9. Personal income per capita (in renminbi) rose from 400 yuan in 1982 to 2,400 yuan in 1993, for city dwellers. In the country, the growth was less stupendous. Rural per capita income over the same period rose from about 300 yuan to about 900 yuan. See Cheng Li, *Rediscovering China: Dynamics and Dilemmas of Reform* (Lanham:

Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), p. 118. Since 1993, China's economy has continued to grow at around ten percent a year.

10. Despite the rise of material affluence, the government still imposed strict regulations on families, such as the "one-child policy." See Deborah Davis and Stevan Harrel, (eds.), *Chinese Families in the Post-Mao Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 75–76.
11. The workplace, in the Chinese Communist system, was usually coterminous with the party branch, giving the party secretary wide powers encompassing all aspects of life. For Ko I-jen, the factory encompassed all aspects of his life. He worked there, his housing was assigned from there, he was introduced to his wife there. See Deborah Davis-Friedmann, *Long Lives: Chinese Elderly and the Communist Revolution* (Harvard: Cambridge, 1983), pp. 22–23.
12. The movement to send people who had "problems" down to the countryside started during the Anti-Rightist campaign with intellectuals who had criticized the party. It continued through the Cultural Revolution when "educated youth," usually children of intellectuals, were sent to the countryside to "learn from the peasants."
13. My emphasis.
14. Between 1939 and 1941, the Japanese bombed Chongqing (Chungking) 286 times in an attempt to break Chinese morale. The Nationalists had moved its headquarters there in 1937–38. See Eastman et al., *The Nationalist Era in China*, pp. 122, 135.
15. In cities such as Shanghai, the floating population, even as far back as the late 1980s, made up over one-quarter of the population. As of 2003, there were a total of 140 million people in the floating population, mostly rural migrant laborers without residency rights in cities. Many went to Guangzhou, the center of the "world's factory." See Kam Wing Chan, "Internal Migration and Rural Migrant Labor: Trends, Geography, and Policies," in *The Labor of Reform in China*, edited by Mary Gallagher, Ching Kwan Lee, and Albert Park (New York: Routledge, forthcoming), pp. 8, 26.
16. Ko insisted that his grandchildren will work in the factory. His insistence may belie a certain level of anxiety. Migrant workers from the countryside are now granted a form of household registration in some cities, allowing them to take up factory jobs at rates lower than skilled urban workers. See Xiaobo Lu and Elizabeth J. Perry, *Danwei*, pp. 296–7.
17. This was one year after I made the visit. By that time, Ko Jen-tao had retired from the police force and so was allowed by Taiwanese authorities to visit the mainland.
18. Until recent DPP reforms to Taiwan's educational system, more time was spent on classical Chinese texts than on any other subject in Grades 1 through 12. See Douglas C. Smith, *The Confucian Continuum: Educational Modernization in Taiwan* (New York: Praeger, 1991), p. 117.
19. Privatization in the housing system has given people the chances to own homes. The rate of homeownership in cities has changed drastically, from twenty percent

in the 1980s to seventy-two percent in 2000. See Youqin Huang, "The Road to Homeownership: A Longitudinal Analysis of Tenure Transition in Urban China (1949–93)," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 28, no. 4 (2004): 774–95.

20. Riots have become common in the countryside for a variety of reasons, including the closing of factories, but also on account of such factors as corrupt officials selling off farmers' land.
21. On August 18, 1966, Mao called on over a million young people assembled in Tiananmen Square to "smash up the four olds," meaning "old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits." Groups of Red Guards, mostly teenagers, raided people's homes all over the country and smashed anything remotely connected with traditional culture. Nevertheless, there were some efforts to defend old temples and other artifacts, oftentimes attributed to the intervention of Zhou Enlai. See "To Protect and Preserve: Resisting the Destroy the Four Olds Campaign, 1966–1967," in *The Chinese Cultural Revolution as History*, edited by Joseph W. Esherick et al. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 64–93.
22. Initially, the program of sending urban youths to the countryside was a way of stemming urban unemployment, disposing of middle-school graduates with no future educational prospects, and an attempt to enhance rural development. Between 1956 and 1966, 1.2 million urban youths settled in the countryside. But after the onset of the Cultural Revolution, the program expanded greatly and at least 12 million were sent between 1968 and 1975. See Thomas P. Bernstein, *Up to the Mountains and Down to the Villages: The Transfer of Youth from Urban to Rural China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).
23. Taiwan lifted its ban on travel to mainland China in 1987. In 1988, roughly 440,000 Taiwanese visited China. By 2005, the number had increased to 4.1 million. Source: Taiwan's Government Information Office yearbook, which can be accessed at: http://www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/5-gp/yearbook/.
24. According to Liu Rong's narrative, she and Ko Jen-tao only began communicating after the death of his first wife. The children suspect it was earlier, before the wife died.
25. Or, tens of thousands of US dollars.
26. A major city near the southern end of Taiwan, roughly a six-hour car ride or one-hour plane trip from Taipei.
27. This was Ko Chen-tsang, the younger of the twins, who beat his daughters. See Chapter 3.
28. The wife is the aborigine woman that Ko Chen-tsang married. Perhaps because of her marginal background, Liu Rong felt closer to her than to other members of the family.

29. For a discussion of shamanism in Inner Mongolia, see David Sneath, *Changing Inner Mongolia: Pastoral Mongolian Society and the Chinese State* (New York: Oxford, 2000), pp. 234–44.
30. She asked me to try to find him. I contacted a number of government agencies in Taiwan and did my own research. This is what I found. Her uncle was never registered with the Tuifuhui (Ministry of Retired People), which means he probably did not make it to Taiwan alive. The archivist at the Ministry of National Defense, Mr Kuo Kuan-ling, provided a few details about her uncle's unit. The commander of his unit was named Lu Yinglue. On New Year's Eve of 1948, the unit was assigned to protect the Beiping-Hankou railroad. After being defeated by the Communists, Lu (the commander) committed suicide. Almost the entire unit had been destroyed. Some had surrendered to the Communists, who promised the Nationalist soldiers that they could keep their same rank. In February, the remaining men were ordered to the area between Beiping (as it was called at the time—Beijing) and Tianjin. This area was held by the 101st Division, whose commander was named Ru Zuoyi. He was killed in battle and the remaining soldiers died or surrendered.

Conclusion

1. R. Kent Guy, *Qing Governors and Their Provinces: The Evolution of Territorial Administration in China, 1644–1796* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010).

Index