


RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Together in the Same Boat: Exiled Nationalist State and Chinese Civil War Exiles in 1950s Taiwan

Dominic Meng-Hsuan Yang 

Department of History, University of Missouri-Columbia, USA, email: [yangmeng@missouri.edu](mailto:yangmeng@missouri.edu).

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## Abstract

When the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came to power, one million mainland Chinese were forcibly displaced to Taiwan with Chiang Kai-shek's regime. Today, this event is still largely considered as a relocation of government or a military withdrawal operation instead of a massive population movement. Contrary to popular belief, many of the displaced mainlanders were not Nationalist elites. Most were common soldiers, petty civil servants, and war refugees from different walks of life. Based on newspapers, magazines, surveys, declassified official documents produced in 1950s Taiwan and contemporary oral history, this article uncovers the complicated relationship between the regime in exile and the people in exile. It argues that the interdependency between the two, in particular between the migrant state and the socially atomized lower class migrants, was formed gradually over a decade due to two main factors: wartime displacement and the need to face an unfriendly local population together.

**Keywords:** Chinese civil war; mainland refugees; state–society relations; 1950s Taiwan

## Introduction: In The Same Boat or Not?

In mid-May 1950, the Nationalist Party (*Kuomintang*, hereafter KMT) dictator Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek ordered the evacuation from Zhoushan Islands 舟山群島. The Generalissimo's decision came after a long and heated debate with his top generals, many of whom were reluctant to leave the strategically important archipelago off the coast of northern Zhejiang Province.<sup>1</sup> Yet, strategically speaking, Chiang had very little choice. In spring 1950, after the signing of the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance, the Soviet Union began to provide the newly established People's Republic of China (PRC) with advanced jet fighters and to help the People's Liberation Army (PLA) train pilots. The Nationalists then started

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<sup>1</sup>The occupation of Zhoushan Islands had allowed the KMT forces to threaten Shanghai and Ningbo, and disrupt maritime traffic coming in and out of the Yangtze Delta.

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to lose air superiority over the Zhoushan-Ningbo region, and hence the ability to protect and resupply their troops there from Taiwan.<sup>2</sup> Chiang had to pull his army out before it was too late, before all was lost. During the withdrawal from Zhoushan, which took about three days to complete, approximately 125,000 military personnel and 20,000 civilians—many dragooned locally by the Nationalists as army conscripts and slave laborers—were loaded onto naval vessels and shipped to Taiwan.<sup>3</sup> The entire operation was anticlimactic, without fierce firefights and dramatic last-minute escapes. However, it was an event that, in hindsight, became the grand finale of the Republic of China's (ROC) monumental collapse in China. Roughly two decades later, in 1972, responding to the shock created by Nixon's visit to the PRC, a group of retired Nationalist military and bureaucratic elites who had participated in the great retreat from Zhoushan Islands, produced a historical anthology to commemorate the occasion. Their chosen title for the book was *In the Same Boat at Sea* (*yinghai tongzhou 瀛海同舟*).<sup>4</sup>

The anthology was a private production. The Nationalist party-state was not involved. But like many of the same kind of publications produced during Taiwan's martial law period (1949–1987), the book harped on a familiar set of anti-communist ideology and irredentist nationalism centered on the aging Generalissimo's hackneyed slogan of “retaking the mainland” 反攻大陸. There was no mention of the widespread plundering of indigenous communities on Zhoushan Islands in early 1950 by renegade KMT soldiers or the massive social disruption caused by the sudden influx of war refugees from Nanjing, Shanghai, and Ningbo. And there was certainly no mention of the tens of thousands of local fishermen and farmers that the Nationalists had press-ganged to build airstrips, docks, and military installations—a large number of whom were later forcibly taken to Taiwan.<sup>5</sup> These poor folks did not see their families in China for another four decades, if at all.<sup>6</sup> Rather, the main point of the book is the unity between the displaced people and the displaced party-state—to be in the same boat at sea. The idea is probably a derivative of a well-known Chinese idiom: “helping one another in the same boat” 同舟共濟.<sup>7</sup> In the context of Nationalist Taiwan, it describes a symbiotic relationship, a mutually reinforcing interdependency between the displaced Nationalist regime and the displaced refugees.

<sup>2</sup>Lin Tongfa 林桶法, 1949 *dachetui* 1949 大撤退 (Taipei: Lianjing, 2009), 64–65; Chen Ling 陳玲, *Zhoushan chetui jimi dangan: liushinian qian de yiye cangsang* 舟山撤退機密檔案: 六十年前的一頁滄桑 (Taipei: Shiyang, 2010), 92–94.

<sup>3</sup>The figure of 125,000 was the number reported by the Nationalist military at the time. The exact number of Zhoushan civilians whom Chiang's army forcibly transported to Taiwan remains unknown. Based on a rudimentary survey done by the Zhoushan local government in 1990, PRC historian Chen Ling proposes that number could be around 13,000. Chen, *Zhoushan chetui*, 95.

<sup>4</sup>Zhang Xingzhou 張行周 ed., *Yinghai tongzhou 瀛海同舟* (Taipei: Minzhu chubanshe, 1972).

<sup>5</sup>Faced with a much stronger foe who now controlled vast regions and human resources of the Chinese mainland, the Nationalists took as many able-bodied men they could before leaving for Taiwan.

<sup>6</sup>This traumatic history is now told by the elderly former Zhoushan residents in democratized Taiwan and also in China. See Dominic Meng-Hsuan Yang, “One Man's Quest: Chiang Ssu-chang, Roots, and the Mainlander Homebound Movement in Taiwan,” in *Reconsidering Roots: Race, Politics, and Memory*, ed. Erica L. Ball and Kellie Carter Jackson (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017), 191–92; Changtian chuanbo 長天傳播, Ding Wenjing 丁雯靜, and Tang Yining 唐一寧 eds., *Zuihou daoyu jishi—Taiwan fangweizhan 1950–1955 最後島嶼紀實—臺灣防衛戰 1950–1955* (Taipei: Shizhou wenhua, 2012), 42–55; Chen, *Zhoushan chetui*, 243–347.

<sup>7</sup>Other similar constructions include 同舟涉海 and 風雨同舟.

In Taiwan, the Chinese civil war exiles and their locally born children are commonly referred to as *waishengren* 外省人. *Waishengren* literally means “people from other provinces” in Chinese, which is different from “mainlanders,” the most commonly used word to describe the same group of migrants in the English-language scholarship. During the Japanese invasion of China, which produced a vast number of refugees, local Chinese communities called displaced folks arriving from other provinces *waishengren* and the refugees themselves also self-identified as such.<sup>8</sup> In post-1945 Taiwan, the word was used in a similar fashion, though many native Taiwanese, resentful of KMT rule and the mainlander dominance, had other, derogatory, terms for the newcomers from China, such as “pigs” or “mountain people” (*a-sua* 阿山). Before the island’s democratization, the Nationalist officials also made a conscious effort to sustain this *waisheng* (外省 other provinces) and *bensheng* (本省 local province) division, particularly in tabulating the population registry. The Nationalists did so to maintain semblance of a popularly elected government with people and representatives from all over China.<sup>9</sup>

Since democratization, the capitalized *Waishengren* has become an ethnic label, representing one of the “four major ethnic groups” 四大族群 that form the island state’s post-liberalization national community. Roughly 10 to 13 percent of Taiwan’s current residents can be considered persons of mainlander origin. The other three groups Hoklo 福佬, Hakka 客家, and Indigenous Peoples 原住民 constitute about 70 percent, 15 percent, and 2 percent respectively.<sup>10</sup> That said, because of the historical division described above, the first two groups are customarily lumped together and called *benshengren* 本省人或 *Taiwanren* 台灣人, which English-language works on Taiwan usually translate as “native Taiwanese.” Hoklo and Hakka are the descendants of early ethnic Chinese migrants from southern Fujian and northeastern Guangdong who had colonized the island since the seventeenth century at the expense of the indigenous communities. The elderly native Taiwanese had lived under the Japanese colonial rule (1895–1945), as opposed to *waishengren* who arrived with the Nationalists after World War II.<sup>11</sup>

Whether the still-surviving former civil war exiles and their Taiwan-born offspring identify with the ethnic label of *Waishengren*, and exactly how they identify, is a complicated issue that falls outside of the scope of this article. Simply put, though the word *waishengren* has been part of the daily vocabulary in Taiwan since the mid-twentieth century, a self-consciously collective *Waishengren* or Mainlander identity did not emerge until the end of that century.<sup>12</sup> For this reason, I employ the lowercase *waishengren*/mainlanders when referring to the civil war exiles in 1950s Taiwan throughout this article. I do the same for *benshengren*/native Taiwanese.

For both *waishengren* in contemporary Taiwan and for children of the great exodus who now live in other parts of the world, many in the United States, the boat metaphor

<sup>8</sup>Dominic Meng-Hsuan Yang and Mau-kuei Chang, “Understanding the Nuances of *Waishengren*: History and Agency,” *China Perspectives* 2010.3 (2010), 111, note 20; Ru Yin 茹茵, “Jiexian” 界線, *Zhongyang ribao*, December 12, 1950, 6.

<sup>9</sup>Yang and Chang, “Understanding the Nuances,” 112.

<sup>10</sup>There has been a fifth and growing group called “New Residents” 新住民, comprised of recent immigrants from Southeast Asian states, Euro-American countries, and mainland Chinese brides from the PRC.

<sup>11</sup>Yang and Chang, “Understanding the Nuances,” 110.

<sup>12</sup>For more on the historical formation of *Waishengren* identity, see Dominic Meng-Hsuan Yang, *The Great Exodus from China: Trauma, Memory, and Identity in Modern Taiwan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

remains significant.<sup>13</sup> Catching “last boat/last plane/last train” out of China in 1949 is a recurrent leitmotif in their collective memory. It represents the trauma of forced migration and involuntary family separation. Nevertheless, back in Chiang Kai-shek’s military dictatorship on Taiwan, the boat symbolized the same fate shared by the civil war exiles and the regime in exile. In light of the island state’s post-liberalization politics, the idea seems to make a lot of sense. Even after the end of the Nationalist single-party rule, *waishengren* as a minority group are known for their strong support of the KMT or “Pan-Blue Camp” 泛藍陣營 candidates in democratic elections.<sup>14</sup> Yet, if the abovementioned withdrawal from Zhoushan Islands is any indication, anyone can see the apparent logical contradiction of an authoritarian migrant state and the people whom this state had previously abducted developing an amicable and interdependent relationship.

The bond between the Nationalist Party and the mainlanders in Taiwan is not just a straightforward story of the remnants of KMT army/government escaping across the sea, as most people would believe. This article uncovers the complicated relationship between the regime in exile and the people in exile. It sheds light especially on the interaction between the Nationalist state and socially atomized lower class *waishengren* in the 1950s, many of whom had been pressed into the KMT army. When describing mainland exiles from humble backgrounds as “socially atomized,” I do not mean a complete and total separation of these people from the larger state or society. Rather, my intention is to underscore a situation where involuntary migrants produced by war and revolution were abruptly deracinated and cut off from their previous family connections and personal networks in China to become relatively isolated individuals socially in Taiwan. The article argues that the interdependency between the displaced government and the displaced people was formed gradually due to two main factors: wartime displacement of the mainland refugees and the need for the migrant state and the migrant population to face an unfriendly local majority population together. The research that backs up this argument is based on oral history, as well as evidence drawn from newspapers, magazines, population census, and declassified official documents produced in 1950s Taiwan.

### Sailing into Uncharted Waters: Rethinking Modern Chinese Migration

The human exodus from China to Taiwan during and following the collapse of the ROC and the founding of the PRC is one of the largest forced migrations in modern East Asia. About one million mainlanders were uprooted from different parts of the Chinese mainland and displaced across the sea to Taiwan.<sup>15</sup> Seventy years have passed since the initial move took place, and this massive and complicated relocation of people

<sup>13</sup>For examples, see Helen Zia, *Last Boat Out of Shanghai: the Epic Story of the Chinese Who Fled Mao’s Revolution* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2019); Zhang Dianwan 張典婉, *Taipinglun yijiusijiu: hangxiang Taiwan de gushi* 太平輪一九四九：航向台灣的故事 (Taipei: Shangzhou, 2009).

<sup>14</sup>“Pan-Blue Camp” is an umbrella term describing a loose coalition of political parties in contemporary Taiwan that views both the Nationalist legacy in Taiwan and building closer ties with the PRC favorably. The main parties include the KMT itself, the People First Party (PFP), the New Party (NP), and the Chinese Unification Promotion Party (CUPP). For more on party politics in democratized Taiwan, see Dafydd Fell, *Party Politics in Taiwan: Party Change and the Democratic Evolution of Taiwan, 1991–2004* (London: Routledge/Curzon, 2005).

<sup>15</sup>For a detailed discussion of the size of the mainland exodus to Taiwan, see Yang, *The Great Exodus*, 63–65.

remains a poorly understood subject in the field of Chinese migration studies. This is despite sizable literature on related topics, namely, the 1949 Chinese Communist Revolution and Taiwan–China–US relations during the Cold War.

Of course, scholars of modern China are not completely oblivious to the mass displacement and family separation produced by the KMT–CCP struggle and the ensuing Cold War. There have been some discussions of the mainland elites who decided to stay in “New China,” as well as population flow in the exact opposite direction: the “return migration” or *guiqiao* 歸僑 to the PRC after 1949.<sup>16</sup> There have also been works that examine the mainland Chinese flight to Hong Kong in the late 1940s and early 1950s through the lenses of British colonial housing and welfare policy and Cold War international politics concerning the humanitarian crisis there.<sup>17</sup> Recently, some studies have touched upon certain aspects of the involuntary migration between China and Taiwan. Examples include Rebecca Nedostup’s research on the burial of war dead for displaced communities and David Cheng Chang’s *The Hijacked War* (2020), which probes into the story of Chinese People’s Volunteer Army POWs in the Korean War, many of whom were later transported to Taiwan.<sup>18</sup> That said, on the whole, historians have paid little attention to the Chinese civil war exiles in Taiwan. It was only in the early 2010s that we see two pioneering monographs that focused on the trauma and displacement of *waishengren*: Joshua Fan’s *China’s Homeless Generation* (2011) and Mahlon Meyer’s *Remembering China from Taiwan* (2012).<sup>19</sup> Fan and Meyer both rely heavily on oral history. They are the beneficiaries of mainlander communities’ post-liberalization “memory boom.” Human memories are an invaluable source to recover suppressed lived experiences. But they are also unavoidably selective, myopic, and self-centered. This is why I use both documentary evidence and oral history to paint a more comprehensive picture of *waishengren*’s conditions of displacement and state–society relations in 1950s Taiwan.

Overall, in the fields of modern Chinese history and Chinese migration studies there has been an unsubstantiated conventional wisdom about the relocation from China to Taiwan in the mid-twentieth century. The dominant thinking is that this was primarily a military withdrawal operation and a relocation of government. Consequently, little effort is devoted toward understanding the event as a colossal and enormously

<sup>16</sup>For family strategies of Chinese elites, see Joseph W. Esherick’s essay (chapter 13) and Sherman Cochran’s essay (chapter 15) in *Dilemmas of Victory: The Early Years of the People’s Republic of China*, ed. Jeremy Brown and Paul G. Pickowicz (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 311–36, 359–85. For *guiqiao*, see Glen Peterson, *Overseas Chinese in the People’s Republic of China* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Shelly Chan, *Diaspora’s Homeland: Modern China in the Age of Global Migration* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), chapter 5.

<sup>17</sup>For examples, see Alan Smart, *The Shek Kip Mei Myth: Squatters, Fires and Colonial Rule in Hong Kong, 1950–1963* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006); Chi-Kwan Mark, “The ‘Problem of People’: British Colonials, Cold War Powers, and the Chinese Refugees in Hong Kong, 1949–62,” *Modern Asian Studies* 41.6 (2007), 1145–81; Glen Peterson, “To Be or Not to Be a Refugee: The International Politics of the Hong Kong Refugee Crisis, 1949–55,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 36.2 (2008), 171–95; Laura Madokoro, *Elusive Refuge: Chinese Migrants in the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

<sup>18</sup>Rebecca Nedostup, “Burying, Repatriating and Leaving the Dead in Wartime and Postwar China and Taiwan, 1937–1955,” *Journal of Chinese History* 1.1 (2017): 111–39; David Cheng Chang, *The Hijacked War: The Story of Chinese POWs in the Korean War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020).

<sup>19</sup>Joshua Fan, *China’s Homeless Generation: Voices from the Veterans of the Chinese Civil War, 1940s–1990s* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Mahlon Meyer, *Remembering China from Taiwan: Divided Families and Bittersweet Reunions after the Chinese Civil War* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012).

complicated population movement, and hence a lost opportunity to reflect on issues that can offer new thinking and perspectives on the current scholarship.

Other than filling a lacuna in the less-discussed topic of forced migration produced by war and revolution, why should scholars of Chinese migration concern themselves with the mainlanders in Taiwan? In light of the historical conditions and development revealed in the following pages, I argue that there are at least two larger points to think about. The first point is the difficulty of placing this population movement in existing categories, which suggests a need to reconsider two established divisions in the study of modern Chinese migration: between “internal” and “external” migration and between “political refuge” and “settler colonialism.” Scholars such as Adam McKeown, Philip Kuhn, and Steven Miles have questioned the analytical divide of the first two. For them, the distinction between “domestic” and “overseas” movement separated by political borders of the Chinese state is problematic because these two forms of migration are usually connected as part of an integrated migrant network.<sup>20</sup> The situation was somewhat different and arguably more intricate for the forced migration between China and Taiwan. To begin with, there was a division of the Chinese state itself, and *waishengren* migrated with an expelled government. This provided them with different degrees of political power and sociocultural privilege over the locals the native Taiwanese and the indigenous peoples. Also, rather than maintaining some sort of long-distance connections, most *waishengren* were essentially cut off from their families, social networks, and hometown communities in China. This went on for decades until the late 1980s and early 1990s. Lastly, half a century of Japanese colonialism had turned Taiwan into a virtual foreign land for the mainland exiles.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, this relocation of people sits uncomfortably on the fence not only between external migration and internal migration, but also between mass expulsion and colonial dominance over the local population.

The difficulty of placing this particular population movement in these supposedly dichotomous categories should make scholars in the field think more deeply about the possible “dual nature” or multiple dimensions of the respective migrant phenomenon they study. In the context of the historical experience revealed in this article, a new category of “exile-colonizer” could perhaps be created for the mainlanders in Taiwan. Some might think that such a category is redundant, given that many instances of settler colonialism in world history could be considered “forced migration.” So the purported dichotomy itself, between exiles and colonizers, is a straw man. In the first half the seventeenth century, religious intolerance drove the Puritans to sail across the Atlantic Ocean to New England. In the late nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century, man-made and natural disasters pushed tens of millions of impoverished peasants from Shandong and Hebei Province to seek new livelihoods in the sparsely populated Manchuria. Notwithstanding the coercive nature of these relocation experiences, the central issue that needs to be considered is the drastically different mindsets between migrants who voluntarily seek greener pastures elsewhere and migrants who are violently, abruptly, and unexpectedly displaced, and the different kinds of communal and state–society relations that are created by this latter form of mass displacement.

<sup>20</sup>Adam McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, and Hawaii, 1900–1936* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Philip Kuhn, *Chinese Among Others: Emigration in Modern Times* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008); Steven Miles, *Chinese Diasporas: A Social History of Global Migration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

<sup>21</sup>Joshua Fan is the first historian to point this out. See Fan, *China’s Homeless Generation*, 7.

Whereas Shandongese migrants to Manchuria or Taishanese who left southern Guangdong Province for “Gold Mountain” in the United States were able to formulate strategies to cope with long-distance family separation, the mainlanders in Taiwan were deprived of this planning and volition by the turmoil of their traumatic displacement.

When arriving in Taiwan, most *waishengren*, even those pressed into military service by the KMT, thought they were taking a short, temporary refuge in their nation’s peripheral hinterlands, similar to what people had done during the previous Japanese invasion. The strong desire to return home as early as possible occupied the minds of mainland exiles throughout the 1950s. In daily life, the exiles encountered a semi-Japanized host population mainly of Hoklo and Hakka descent that were both alien and antagonistic. *Benshengren* were inhospitable to the newcomers from China for two main reasons: the Nationalist suppression of the Taiwanese uprising in early 1947 (the 2-28 Incident) and the unequal power relations between the mainland migrants and the local population in general. Due to the 2-28 Incident and prior experience of living under Japanese colonialism, the locals saw the mainland refugees, regardless of social class and relationship with the KMT, as rulers and colonizers. Meanwhile, the refugees themselves, many victimized by Japan’s invasion of China earlier, looked down on the native Taiwanese. The mainlanders detested the fact that a lot of the locals still preferred to speak Japanese. More importantly, during the 1950s, most *waishengren* thought they would eventually return home. Many did not see the need to put down roots or invest in local communities. There was little incentive to cultivate a better relationship—or any kind of relationship—with the unwelcoming and, in their view, unsophisticated local people negatively influenced by malicious and inferior Japanese culture.

The second key point, which closely relates to the first, is that this migration offers a remarkable opportunity to investigate the evolving relationship between an exiled regime and people in exile in the context of the Cold War. The historical research in the ensuing sections shows how war-related displacement powerfully shaped this relationship in 1950s Taiwan. Family separation and social atomization produced by the Chinese civil war and the great exodus, combined with the general alienation from the local population, drew uprooted *waishengren* to the authoritarian migrant state. This was especially true for many lower class migrants who were conscripted or abducted by the Nationalist army. At the same time, the KMT also needed the mainlanders. Notwithstanding American aid, party reorganization, White Terror tactics, and relatively successful land reform, the Nationalist regime was still vulnerable during its first decade on Taiwan. Facing an unfriendly local majority population with fresh and bitter memory of the 2-28, a constant threat of Chinese Communist invasion coming from across the strait, and an uneasy relationship with their American ally, the exiled Nationalist leaders needed to build support and loyalty among the exiled people, with whom they shared the common goal of returning to the mainland one day. And they did so by providing livelihoods and material benefits—things that many deracinated and socially isolated mainland refugees needed to survive. This was how the bond between the Nationalist Party and the mainlanders was forged historically.

A minor point that we might also reflect upon is what scholars of migration who are mainly concerned with PRC/CCP history might gain from understanding the Taiwan/KMT side of the story. There are two general areas to consider. The first area is how mass displacement and social atomization produced by decades of total warfare continued to shape state–society relations on both sides of the Taiwan Strait after the supposedly watershed year of 1949. Had the prevailing conditions of uprootedness and

dislocation inside China aided the consolidation of the CCP party-state in the early 1950s, and in what particular ways? Had some of the most suppressed social or minority groups in the PRC been forcibly incorporated into the new socialist state system by adverse circumstances? Had some of them later become the staunchest supporters of the same system? The second area is how the new migrant category of “exile-colonizer” could be broadly applied to different groups of involuntary political migrants in the PRC—counterrevolutionaries, rightists, urban evacuees, sent-down youth, etc.—when they came into contact with other ethnic Chinese or non-Chinese populations in the border regions of the country. These forced migrants were victims of the CCP state. But they might also serve as agents of the state’s colonizing and centralization efforts, both willingly and unwillingly.

### Being all at Sea: Diversity, Displacement, and Atomization

Today, when we imagine the mass departure from Communist China in 1949, we think of the social chaos produced by the Nationalist collapse and the disintegration of the Generalissimo’s grand army. We conjure up an image of KMT elites, privileged foreigners, and wealthy capitalists getting on overloaded ships with gold bars, silver dollars, and jewelry in their chests. Looking at things from the standpoint of the mainlander exodus to Taiwan, the picture is not fundamentally wrong. But it is only partial. There were certainly tens of thousands of China’s elite families, many with strong ties to the Nationalist military and bureaucracy, who fled across the strait with Chiang Kai-shek’s expelled regime. However, there were also hundreds of thousands more common folks who were also displaced across the sea. Among these were individuals who had only marginal or no prior connections with the Nationalist Party on the mainland: a large army of conscripted soldiers from the peasantry, young students, and war refugees from different walks of life.

The social diversity of this migrant population can be observed in the classified ad section of the newspaper *Zhongyang ribao* 中央日報 published during this time. There were a large number of commercial advertisements posted by new businesses and services that had relocated from China especially from major cities and ports in the eastern seaboard. The owners of these businesses and services had relocated to escape the destruction of the civil war or simply to seek new opportunities and clients in Taiwan. [Figure 1](#) and [Figure 2](#) provide two snapshots of these ads. In [Figure 1](#), we see a hair salon establishment that relocated from Shanghai; two gynecologists who moved their practices from Wuhan and Shanghai respectively; a plastic surgeon who migrated from Beiping (i.e. Beijing). In [Figure 2](#), we see two grocers and an herbalist from Shanghai who took their businesses to Taipei. There were literally hundreds of these ads posted in the late 1940s and early 1950s. They covered a wide range of occupations: dentists, lawyers, tailors, barbers, distillers, restaurateurs, and so forth. In addition to the commercial ads posted by individual proprietors, there were also those paid for by the numerous “professional trade associations” 同業公會. Following their members, these civil associations also migrated to Taiwan.

*Zhongyang ribao* or “Central Daily News” was the main party organ of the KMT, as *Renmin ribao* 人民日報 was for the CCP. It was also the newspaper with the largest circulation volume in early postwar Taiwan. While the paper’s front page news was infused with a heavy dose of government propaganda, its classified advertisements were paid for by real individuals or communities with real needs. They are thus



Figure 1. *Zhongyang ribao*, classifieds, January 17, 1950, 5

Figure 2. *Zhongyang ribao*, classifieds, Feb 3, 1951, 1

indicative of many important social phenomena on the island during this time, including the great migration from China.

Apart from newspaper ads, the social diversity of *waishengren* in Taiwan is also illustrated by an occupational survey conducted by the Sino-American Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction in 1953 on the civilian population (see Table 1). The survey data show that only 23 percent of the sampled mainlander population held jobs in the public sector. Those who worked in mining, industry, commerce, transportation, self-employment, and personnel service account for 2 percent, 22 percent, 23 percent, 12 percent, 9 percent, and 5 percent respectively. A side-by-side comparison with the native Taiwanese (*benshengren*) underscores the notable differences between a migrant population and a local population in areas such as agriculture/forestry/fishery and public sector.

**Table 1.** Percentages of Occupation: *benshengren* vs. *waishengren*, 1953<sup>22</sup>

Occupation	<i>benshengren</i>	<i>waishengren</i>
Agriculture, forestry, and fishery	25%	2%
Mining	4%	2%
Industry	20%	22%
Commerce	20%	23%
Transportation	5%	12%
Public sector	9%	23%
Self-Employment	4%	9%
Personnel service	9%	5%
Others	4%	2%
Total	100%	100%

Before the main human tidal waves began to cross the Taiwan Strait in late 1948, there were approximately 70,000 *waishengren* from China already living in Taiwan.<sup>23</sup> These people also became involuntary exiles when the “central government” 中央政府 relocated to the island in late 1949 and started to prohibit people from returning to the communist “bandit territory” 匪區. This early mainlander population was also diverse. In addition to civil servants who worked for the Nationalist government, there were former employees of Japanese puppet regimes in China, traveling merchants, and migrant laborers from Fujian Province.<sup>24</sup> There were also mainland intellectuals and college students, many of whom were leftists and anti-Nationalists. These educated individuals came to the island to tutor and influence the semi-Japanized Taiwanese after 1945. A fair number of them were arrested and persecuted by the authorities along with the native Taiwanese writers, activists, and students they had managed to influence in the late 1940s and early 1950s.<sup>25</sup> The purge signified a new level of KMT White Terror in Taiwan. In May 1949, the Nationalist authorities officially declared martial law on the island. The law was not rescinded until the island’s democratization in 1987.

Another important piece of evidence that can help contemporary scholars better understand the mainlander migration is the 1956 census—the first island-wide

<sup>22</sup>Cited from Li Dongming 李棟明, “Jutai waishengji renkou zhi zucheng yu fenbu” 居臺外省籍人口之組成與分佈 *Taipei wenxian* 11/12 (1970), 73. This set of data has two limitations. First, the size and characteristics of the original sampled population are unknown. Second, some of the mainlanders working in the mining, industry, and transportation sectors could be working indirectly for the government, as many companies in these sectors were affiliated with state monopolies in the 1950s.

<sup>23</sup>Taiwansheng hukou puchachu 台灣省戶口普查處 ed., *Zhonghuaminguo hukou pucha baogaoshu* 中華民國戶口普查報告書, vol. 2:1 (Taipei: Taiwansheng hukou puchachu, 1956), 719–20.

<sup>24</sup>Ye Shitao 葉石濤, *Taiwan wenxue shigang* 台灣文學史綱 2nd ed. (Kaohsiung: Chunhui chubanshe, 1993), 83–84.

<sup>25</sup>For two prominent cases, see Wu Wenxing 吳文星 ed., *Taiwan shengli shifan xueyuan “Silu shijian”* 臺灣省立師範學院「四六事件」 (Nantou City: Taiwansheng wenxian weiyuanhui, 2001); Zhang Yanxian 張炎憲 and Gao Shuyuan 高淑媛, *Luku shijian daocho yanjiu* 鹿窟事件調查研究 (Panchiao: Taipei xianli wenhua zhongxin, 1998).

population survey carried out by the Nationalist regime since it withdrew to Taiwan. Different from other KMT statistics produced during this time, which could sometimes be unreliable and sketchy, the 1956 census was relatively accurate and comprehensive. The investigation was conducted with a lot of planning and care because it was done for both administrative and security purposes.<sup>26</sup> With swarms of people from China without identification entering Taiwan on a daily basis during and immediately following the Nationalist collapse, the local authorities simply lost track of the island's population in the early 1950s. Not having the most basic demographic information on the great migration generated problems with economic planning and taxation. It also created some security concerns. Thus, the Generalissimo himself gave strict instructions for household registration officials to undertake this massive head-counting operation precisely.<sup>27</sup> The information collected was fairly reliable as a result. The total number of non-military civil war refugees recorded by the survey was 640,072.<sup>28</sup>

Unfortunately, the 1956 census excluded *waishengren* who served in the military at the time. The Nationalists did conduct a separate survey in their units concurrently. However, they puffed up the numerical strength of their armed forces to deter PRC invasion. All military personnel were incorporated into the regular census in 1969. Yet, by this time, a large portion of the mainland exiles had already retired into the general population. Statistically, they got mixed up with the newborn babies and became part of the "annual increase" of *waishengren* in the official population registry. In the meantime, troop figures reported in the 1950s by military bureaucracy were released by the Nationalist government decades later. But the accuracy of these numbers remains doubtful. This is why scholars in Taiwan today, though given relatively free access to government archives, have not been able to determine exactly how many people had moved from China to Taiwan from 1948 to 1955. With all things considered, the most likely figure is probably around one million.<sup>29</sup> Hence, the 1956 census offers information on roughly 64 percent of the exodus population.

A palpable characteristic of the mainlander population illustrated by the 1956 census is gender imbalance. Male refugees outnumber female by a ratio of roughly 2 to 1. If the military personnel (almost 100 percent male) left out by the census are included, the ratio could reach 3 to 1.<sup>30</sup> That means for every four *waishengren* who were displaced to Taiwan, there was only one woman. This imbalance becomes even more pronounced when we consider different age groups. In the middle-aged cohorts from 35 to 54 years old, the ratio was about 2.5 to 1; in age cohorts 40–44, 45–49, 50–54, the ratios reach 3.7 to 1, 4.5 to 1, and 4 to 1 respectively.<sup>31</sup> What these figures demonstrate is that there were

<sup>26</sup>Wang Depu zuo zhaoji taisheng hukou pucha zhuguan" 王德浦昨召集台省戶口普查主管, *Lianhe bao*, July 31, 1956, 3; "Banhao quanguo hukou pucha" 辦好全國戶口普查, *Lianhe bao*, August 13, 1956, 2; "Huzheng shi shang kongqian chuanguo taimin hukou pucha mingchen lingshi kaishi jiangyu mingchen liushi wancheng" 戶政史上空前創舉臺閩戶口普查明晨零時開始將於明晨六時完成, *Lianhe bao*, September 15, 1956, 1.

<sup>27</sup>"Zongtong zhongshi taimin hukou pucha banling xunchi qieshi banli" 總統重視台閩戶口普查撥令訓飭切實辦理, *Lianhe bao*, September 7, 1956, 1.

<sup>28</sup>Taiwansheng hukou puchachu ed., *Zhonghuaminguo hukou pucha baogaoshu*, vol. 2:1, 719.

<sup>29</sup>For more, see Yang, *The Great Exodus*, 63–65.

<sup>30</sup>Cited from Li, "Jutai waishengji," 66. For the original census data, see Taiwansheng hukou puchachu 台灣省戶口普查處 ed., *Zhonghuaminguo hukou pucha baogaoshu* 中華民國戶口普查報告書 vol. 2:2 (Taipei: Taiwansheng hukou puchachu, 1959), 1–6. Volume 2 of the 1956 census was published in 1959.

<sup>31</sup>Li, "Jutai waishengji," 69.

a large number of socially atomized single men in Taiwan, not only in the army but also among the civilian population. These people had left behind their family members and female relatives in China.

Other than the numbers, my interpretation here is further substantiated by two other types of evidence in *Zhongyang ribao*: a substantial number of ads that searched for relatives, friends, and coworkers 招尋 and ads that sought to “hire maids” 徵女傭. Figure 3 illustrates both kinds of ads as they appeared in the newspaper. The first type of ads was a lot more numerous than the second type. Most were posted by a single individual, usually man, who tried to locate separated family members or former associates after arriving in Taiwan. As we see here, among the five search-for-person(s) ads in Figure 3, only one was a female looking for perhaps a husband or a boyfriend, and this was the general pattern we tend to see in these ads. All four of the “hire maids” ads asked for candidates who could speak Mandarin. One asked specifically for a maid from Zhejiang Province. This interesting request indicates that the line of division not only ran between the mainland exiles and the local Taiwanese, but also among the mainlanders themselves. In short, the frequency and number of both type of ads in *Zhongyang ribao* reveals a prevailing condition of family separation and social atomization produced by the Chinese civil war and the chaotic flight to Taiwan. There were a large throng of displaced men looking for connections locally through these ads in order to rebuild their shattered social networks. The large demand for “mainlander maids” to work in single-man households suggests that there was not only a shortage of mainlander women, but lower-class mainlander women. This means that for many of the common soldiers and destitute *waishengren*, it was more difficult to form new families and end their bachelorhood in Taiwan.

While army personnel made up roughly 30 to 40 percent of the one million civil war exiles in Taiwan, close to 90 percent of this military population were penniless foot soldiers from humble backgrounds that had very little formal education.<sup>32</sup> A considerable number of these people had been press-ganged into service in the late stage of the Chinese civil war. Their stories are now being told by the hundreds and perhaps thousands of published personal narratives that circulate in democratized Taiwan. These personal recollections began to appear in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the Nationalist taboo on discussing the 1949 fiasco was relaxed and then lifted.

The traumatic exodus stories told by the elderly and still surviving first-generation *waishengren* in Taiwan during the late 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s offer a remarkably detailed picture of the human tragedy caused by the KMT army’s exit from China. They fill gaps in the existing accounts. For example, in *China on the Eve of Communist Takeover* (1963), a timeless classic on the Chinese Communist Revolution, Arthur Doak Barnett, as a young journalist back then, reported on the Nationalist refugee situation on Hainan Island in late 1949:

Within Haikow itself, there is almost no place that is not jammed with soldiers and their families ... On all the main streets, one has to thread through open-air

<sup>32</sup>Xingzhengyuan guojun tuichuyi guanbing fudao weiyuanhui 行政院國軍退除役官兵輔導委員會 ed., *Xingzhengyuan guojun tuichuyi guanbing fudao weiyuanhui yewu gaikuang* 行政院國軍退除役官兵輔導委員會業務概況 (Taipei: Xingzhengyuan guojun tuichuyi guanbing fudao weiyuanhui, 1967), unpaginated report; “Guojun zhengmou gaijin shibing shizilü” 國軍正謀改進士兵識字率, *Zhongyang ribao*, September 18, 1952, 4.



Figure 3. Zhongyang ribao, classifieds, February 10, 1950, 7

“homes” to go anywhere. People and belongings are piled together in an incredible, filthy mess.<sup>33</sup>

Barnett’s coverage vividly described the ordeal suffered by many low-ranking Nationalist personnel in the final days of the Chinese civil war. Yet, it was also somewhat limited because his stay there was rather short.<sup>34</sup> As many routed and depleted Nationalist divisions began to arrive on Hainan, right around the time Barnett visited, their commanders resorted to mass kidnapping of civilians, mostly from the local farming and fishing communities, to replenish their dwindling ranks. Barnett did not mention any of this in his account. The same kind of action took place on Zhoushan Islands shortly after. This is the event with which I started this article. Massive roundups were also carried out by the Generalissimo’s retreating armed forces near the vicinity of the port city of Qingdao 青島 in Shandong Province and on Dongshan Island 東山島 in southern Fujian Province.<sup>35</sup>

Li Liangyi 黎良詒 was a young farmer living on the eastern coast of Hainan Island near the present-day Wanning City 萬寧市. He was among the tens of thousands of Hainanese lads who were drafted into the KMT army during this time. The Nationalists seized him along with a large group of civilians and young students when they passed through Wanning. On the day of his capture, Li visited Wanning’s main market to purchase a few things for his family. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time:

When I was captured, I felt miserable on the road. Many had escaped, but we couldn’t because soldiers pointed their weapons at us at all times. If you run they could shoot you dead with impunity, so we wouldn’t dare. We saw other [captured] fellow natives on our ship’s deck. [Desperate] soldiers who couldn’t board the [overfilled] ship fired their guns randomly. Some of us got hit. There was so

<sup>33</sup>A. Doak Barnett, *China on the Eve of Communist Takeover* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), 297–98.

<sup>34</sup>Barnett left Hainan in the same month and went on to report the situation in Taipei. In his coverage of Taiwan, Barnett focused mostly on KMT elite politics and the island’s defensive preparations.

<sup>35</sup>Yang, *The Great Exodus*, 41–42.

much blood and it spilled on me. After the ship sailed, they threw people who were shot overboard.<sup>36</sup>

Li's father and brothers were deceased. He was the only surviving son, and he was responsible for farming and taking care of his aging mother. He had also recently married, and he and his wife had an eight-month-old baby at the time when he was snatched by KMT troops. Decades later in the late 1980s, when contact resumed between Taiwan and China, Li attempted to find the loved ones he had left behind on Hainan. Sadly, he was told that none had survived.

Li's experience was by no means exceptional. It happened to tens of thousands and perhaps hundreds of thousands of unlucky men and young boys at different locations toward the end of the war. Jian Bucheng 簡步城 was a middle-ranking officer in the Nationalist 64th division that was evacuated from Hainan. His testimony allows contemporary researchers to gauge the extent of the mass kidnapping that took place on Hainan. Jian recalls that when the remnants of his division stepped off the boat in Hualien 花蓮, eastern Taiwan, roughly 14 percent (approximately 1,000) of the less than 7,000 survivors were teenage Hainan boys taken by the division's soldiers.<sup>37</sup>

Lin Fusheng 林福生 lived in a small fishing village on Dongshan Island. He was twenty-one years old in 1950. Lin was tending his family's cow and digging weeds in the peanut field when a KMT trooper suddenly appeared out of nowhere and abducted him at gunpoint. When he reached a collection area, Lin talked to several fellow villagers who were also detained. He learned that the Nationalists had apprehended most of the able-bodied men in his village. Lin was then forced to put on a uniform and some gear. He was squeezed into a jam-packed ship bound for Taiwan carrying about one thousand people. Only two hundred of the passengers were armed guards. The rest were local Dongshan residents.<sup>38</sup>

Other than farmers and fishermen, a considerable number of teenage students were also forcibly incorporated into the Nationalist army during the course of the exodus. The most prominent case was the approximately 8,000 "exiled students from Shandong" 山東流亡學生. These middle/high school students and their teachers came from Jinan 濟南, Yantai 煙台, and counties on the tip of the Shandong Peninsula. Due to their family backgrounds (most were children of landlords and rich merchants), they evacuated with the KMT when their towns fell to the CCP. However, in July 1949, en route to Taiwan on Penghu Islands (Pescadores Islands), the student group ran into two garrison commanders from Shandong Province who wanted to conscript the male students. The students and their teachers rebelled and protested vehemently. Annoyed and embarrassed, the commanders had the "ringleaders" (two school principals and five student leaders) framed as "communist spies." These individuals were shipped to Taipei, brutally interrogated, and then executed by firing squads. Back in Penghu, hundreds of recalcitrant teachers and pupils were also jailed, tortured, and killed to frighten the rest into submission.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup>Changtian, Ding, and Tang, *Zuihou daoyu jishi*, 98.

<sup>37</sup>Wang Dakong 王大空 et al., *Likai dalu de nayitian* 離開大陸的那一天 2nd ed. (Taipei: Jiuda wenhua, 1989), 148.

<sup>38</sup>Yang Shengzhan 楊昇展, *Nanying juancun zhi* 南瀛眷村誌 (Tainan: Tainan xianzhengfu, 2009), 117–19.

<sup>39</sup>For more on the Shandong students, see Wang Peiwu 王培五, Gao Huiyu 高惠宇, Liu Taiping 劉臺平, *Shizijia shang de xiaozhang—Zhang Minzhi furen huiyilu* 十字架上的校長：張敏之夫人回憶錄

### Not in The Same Boat: Migrant State and People vs. The Local Majority Population

The contour of the population exodus to Taiwan sketched in the previous section has illuminated the differences between the expelled Nationalist state and the displaced mainland refugees. Contrary to popular belief, the two were simply not the same entities. That said, interesting enough, many mainlander groups previously victimized by the Generalissimo's regime decades later grew into the KMT's most loyal supporters in Taiwan. For example, a lot of former Shandong exiled students joined the party and the army. These individuals advanced through the ranks and achieved high positions. They became part of the conservative forces that defended the party-state against challenges from democratic protesters and reformers in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>40</sup> Anthropologist Hu Taili 胡台麗 (1950–) is the first scholar in Taiwan to conduct ethnographic fieldwork on the destitute and socially marginalized “old soldiers” or *laobing* 老兵 in the mid-1980s. She suggests that these retired Nationalist veterans, many of whom had been press-ganged into service in China, have developed a strong “totem” sentiment 「圖騰」情感 for the Nationalist Party forty years later. For these uprooted elderly mainlanders, the party has become the main source of their collective identity.<sup>41</sup>

Why do so many mainlanders, especially those who sit at the very bottom of the social ladder, end up developing an intimate and symbiotic relationship with the Nationalist regime? Why do so many *waishengren* ended up becoming instruments of the same authoritarian apparatus that had previously abducted or suppressed them? The reason is a combination of two factors. The first factor was the prevailing conditions of social leveling and atomization created by wartime displacement. The second factor was the monopolistic power of the expelled state to offer means of survival and a chance to rebuild shattered lives for the uprooted and socially atomized people. This part of the story will be examined further in the next section. Before we move on to this development, we need to first understand the centrifugal forces that estranged the island's semi-Japanized local population of Hoklo and Hakka descent from *waishengren*.

The Nationalist misgovernment in early post-World War II Taiwan had alienated the six million native Taiwanese from the KMT and from *waishengren* in general. This story has been told in great detail by George H. Kerr, Lai Tse-han, Ramon H. Myers, Wei Wou, and Steven E. Phillips.<sup>42</sup> Their works revolve around the Taiwanese uprising in early 1947 (2-28 Incident) and the ruthless suppression that followed.

On February 28, 1947 (hence 2-28), about a year and four months after Taiwan's formal retrocession from Japan and the Nationalist takeover in late October 1945, a massive anti-government riot broke out in the island's capital city Taipei. The upheaval soon spread to other major cities on the island. Angry Taiwanese mobs lynched mainlanders and ransacked state properties. The insurgency forced some terrified mainland

(Taipei: Wenjingshe, 1999); Tao Yinghui 陶英惠 and Zhang Yufa 張玉法 eds., *Shandong liuwang xuesheng shi* 山東流亡學生史 (Taipei: Shandong wenxianshe, 2004); Xu Wentang 許文堂 et al., *Penghu yantai lianzhong yuanyu an koushu lishi* 澎湖煙台聯中冤獄案口述歷史 (Taipei: Zhongyangyanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, 2012).

<sup>40</sup>Xu, *Penghu yantai*, xxxv.

<sup>41</sup>Hu Taili 胡台麗, “Yuzai yu fanshu—Taiwan rongmin de zuqun guanxi yu rentong” 芋仔與蕃薯—臺灣「榮民」的族群關係與認同, *Zhongyangyanjiuyuan minzuxue yanjiusuo jikan* 69 (1990), 124–26.

<sup>42</sup>George H. Kerr, *Formosa Betrayed* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965); Lai Tse-han, Ramon H. Myers, and Wei Wou, *A Tragic Beginning: The Taiwanese Uprising of February 28, 1947* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991); Steven E. Phillips, *Between Assimilation and Independence: The Taiwanese Encounter Nationalist China, 1945–1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

businessmen and migrant workers to flee the island while KMT officials and garrison troops barricaded themselves in a few strongholds waiting to be rescued. Triggered by a relatively minor incident, the riot was a culmination of local people's pent-up rage against the new mainland regime since retrocession. The Nationalist rule in early postwar Taiwan was notorious for its gross mismanagement. The provincial administration was extremely unpopular for its harsh economic exploitation through rigid price controls and state monopolies. The entire bureaucracy was plagued by corruption, nepotism, rampant discrimination against Japanese-speaking Taiwanese, and carpetbagger-like behaviors of many mainland officials.<sup>43</sup>

In response to the uprising, Chiang Kai-shek sent a punitive expedition to the island. In the ensuing reign of terror that lasted several months, the Generalissimo's forces and security agents slaughtered, jailed, and tortured a substantial number of Taiwanese civilians and some mainland dissidents.<sup>44</sup> The Nationalists targeted the Japanese-educated Taiwanese elites in particular. The move effectively eliminated the cream of the crop of the local leadership while cowing the rest into submission and collaboration.<sup>45</sup> The catastrophic event consolidated the thinking on the part of the native Taiwanese that the Nationalist rule was just another form of colonialism—one that was perhaps worse than the previous Japanese rule. Outwardly, the KMT propaganda touted the brotherhood of Chinese mainlanders and the native Taiwanese, which was sealed in blood relations and common ancestry. Yet, the Nationalist leaders, in their own internal discussions on local affairs in Taiwan, talked about the need to indoctrinate the rebellious elements within *benshengren*, especially those from age 20 to 35 at the time, who had been influenced the deepest by Japanese colonialism. In their minds, these unruly locals needed to be reeducated to instill a correct “nation-state concept” 國家民族觀念, so they would stop hating the mainlanders.<sup>46</sup> In any case, the trauma of the 2-28 became a hidden scar and a taboo subject for the local Taiwanese communities. The island's majority population would remain largely silent on the issue until democratization forty years later.

Roughly a year and a half after this tragedy, initial waves of the great exodus began to reach Taiwan. Some of the newly arrived mainland refugees might have heard of the Taiwanese insurgency in early 1947. Nevertheless, because the authorities had covered up the real reasons for the uprising and downplayed the extent of the massacre, most *waishengren* knew very little about the injustice that *benshengren* had suffered prior to their arrival.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, given the scope of casualty, destruction, and social

<sup>43</sup>For more, see Li Wangtai 李旺台 et al., *Ererba shijian zeren guishu yanjiu baogao* 二二八事件責任歸屬研究報告 (Taipei: Ererba shijian jinian jijinhui, 2006), 19–35.

<sup>44</sup>The Nationalist authorities had tried their best to conceal the massacre, so the exact number of people killed cannot be determined. The mostly likely figure is from 18,000 to 28,000. Wangtai et al., *Ererba shijian zeren guishu yanjiu baogao*, 73.

<sup>45</sup>Wangtai et al., *Ererba shijian zeren guishu yanjiu baogao*, 77–85.

<sup>46</sup>Zongtongfu 總統府, “Zongtongfu dian xingzhengyuan yuanchang Chen Cheng wei chaofa Taiwan minqingbaogao ji jianyi yijian” 總統府電行政院院長 陳誠為抄發臺灣民情報告及建議意見 (August 7, 1950) NHDAAH, 071/098.

<sup>47</sup>A number of official reports were produced by different Nationalist bureaucracies after the uprising was suppressed. All of them minimized the scope of the conflict and civilian deaths. They also blamed Japanese colonialism and the CCP for the upheaval. In the meantime, the leftist writers and newspapers in China affiliated with the CCP lauded 2-28 Incident as an armed struggle of the Taiwanese masses against the reactionary and totalitarian dictatorship of Chiang Kai-shek.



dislocation in civil war-torn China at the time, nor would the incoming refugees care much about the death and suffering of a tiny bunch of Taiwanese, whom they felt little for. Instead, these traumatized and deracinated forced migrants were deeply immersed in their own misery.

Many newcomers did realize quickly that they faced a majority host population that was somewhat alien and unfriendly in spite of government propaganda saying that the native Taiwanese were their fellow compatriots. However, their views on *benshengren*, as well as their attitude toward this communal divide, were greatly influenced by their previous displacement in China during the Japanese invasion. The dominant thinking among the mainlanders in the 1950s was “We have been refugees back on the mainland and now we are refugees here on this island. We will return home shortly, like we did before, so there is no need to get too involved with the people here.”<sup>48</sup> In a way, this prevailing sojourner mentality ensured that the communal divide and lack of understanding between the migrants and the locals would almost certainly continue in Taiwan.

This mentality is clearly illustrated by a 1950 opinion piece in *Zhongyang ribao* written by the paper’s editor-in-chief, Geng Xiuye 耿修業 (1915–1998). Sticking to the party line, Geng assures his fellow mainland exiles that the Taiwanese are part of the Chinese race; they are also sons of the Yellow Emperor. The chasm resulted from fifty years of Japanese colonialism is apparently deep but by no means impassable. Time and goodwill from both parties in their common struggle against communism will eventually end this division. Geng evokes not too distant memories of the forced migration to the inland Sichuan Province during the Resistance War. Back in those days, there was a lot of tension. There was a lot of mutual misunderstanding and name-calling between the indigenous Sichuanese and the war refugees from the lower Yangtze region. This tension was perhaps more serious than the current tension in Taiwan. But then everything works out in the end.<sup>49</sup>

A lifestyle piece by writer Zhou Junliang 周君亮 published in the non-political travel magazine *Changliu* 暢流 in 1954 is also informative of this sojourner mentality. In a rambling, freewheeling manner, Zhou talks about poetry in relation to the weather pattern in Taiwan and the noises in Taipei City. He makes constant comparisons to Wuhan, Beijing, and other places that he had taken up temporary abodes in early times.<sup>50</sup> Zhou writes that he is fascinated by the diverse provincial dialects of the street hawkers in Taipei, but cannot quite make out what they mean, especially the local ones. He offers no apology for the fact that he has been living in Taiwan for four years and has not picked up one single Taiwanese word.<sup>51</sup> Zhou’s article is typical of a large number of the same kind of non-political, prosaic essays written by mainland refugee intellectuals in Taiwan during the 1950s. They exhibit a self-absorbed condition of exile with all its agony, mundaneness, sublimeness, and aporia. One thing that this kind of personal reflections clearly demonstrates is their authors’ superficial understanding or complete disregard for the local peoples, languages, and cultures.

Other mainlander writings produced during this time were more critical of the Taiwanese. They displayed a paternalistic condescension and a pedagogical drive to

<sup>48</sup>People in Taiwan call this 過客心態, which can be translated as “sojourner mentality.”

<sup>49</sup>Ru Yin, “Jiexian,” 6. Ru Yin was Geng’s penname.

<sup>50</sup>Junliang 君亮, “Taipei xiaoyan” 台北小言, *Changliu* 8.10 (1954), 55.

<sup>51</sup>Junliang, “Taipei xiaoyan”, 56.

re-Sinicize the semi-Japanized locals.<sup>52</sup> When commenting on Taiwanese-language movies that were gaining popularity among the island's masses in the 1950s, famous mainland writer and newspaper columnist Xia Chengying 夏承楹 (1910–2002) disparagingly attributed this cultural phenomenon to “low level of appreciation and taste” 低下的欣賞水準與口味 of the native Taiwanese audience.<sup>53</sup>

Part of this contemptuous attitude toward their host society came from a Sinocentric prejudice against other ethnic Chinese (and non-Chinese minorities) living on the fringe of “China proper.” Part of it came from *waishengren*'s hatred of the Japanese and visible traces of Japanese colonialism in *benshengren*. Many mainland refugees, regardless of social class or prior relationship with the Nationalist regime in China, had suffered dearly during Japan's invasion of China in the previous decades. Unsurprisingly, they felt annoyed and insulted when they observed residual Japanese influence on their Taiwanese “compatriots.”

One thing that many *waishengren* absolutely could not stand was some *benshengren*'s habit of speaking Japanese casually in public. In the mid-1950s, the clerks of local government offices and township bureaus near Taipei were apparently still using Japanese. This really offended the mainlanders who heard these conversations.<sup>54</sup> Jiang Sizhang 姜思章 (1936–) was fourteen years old when he was kidnapped by KMT army near his fishing village on Zhoushan Islands. He and his friends were ruthlessly beaten by soldiers when they cried and begged to be released. Though he held the deepest grudge against the Nationalists for abducting and abusing him, he was also fervently anti-Japanese. During the Japanese occupation of Zhoushan, one of his uncles was executed by a Japanese lieutenant who was stationed there. His granduncle was also arrested. The poor old man was tortured and crippled for life. Jiang recalls: “When I first got to Taiwan, I often heard some of the older local people speaking Japanese in public either on the bus or in the movie theaters. When that happened, I couldn't restrain myself. I would thrust forward and give them hell. This would lead to some back-and-forth wrangling sometimes.”<sup>55</sup>

### Sailing Together: Forging of The Bond Between The Migrant State and The Migrants

Jiang's case is telling of the predicament faced by many uprooted and socially atomized mainland exiles in Taiwan and the close relationship they ended up forming with the authoritarian Nationalist party-state, the same party-state that had previously abducted

<sup>52</sup>The social and local news sections of both *Zhongyang ribao* and *Lianhe bao* in the 1950s were filled with negative portrayals of the native Taiwanese. The locals were considered uncultured, backward, superstitious, vain, shallow, and licentious. The mainlanders liked to focus in particular on the over-the-top extravagance of the Taiwanese religious festivals. See “「Baibai」daguan: Taiwan minjian de yizhong jingren langfei” 「拜拜」大觀：臺灣民間的一種驚人浪費, *Zhongyang ribao*, February 12, 1951, 4; Jiang Menglin 蔣夢麟, “Dui quansheng nongmin tongbao de jidian xiwang” 對全省農民同胞的幾點希望, *Zhongyang ribao*, February 5, 1952, 4; “Sanchung zhen 「bai」zai” 三重鎮「拜」災, *Lianhe bao*, June 5, 1956, 5.

<sup>53</sup>He Fan 何凡, “Taiyu pian de neirong” 台語片的內容, *Lianhe bao*, February 20, 1957, 6. He Fan was the penname of Xia. Most of the readers in Taiwan during this time knew Xia as “He Fan.”

<sup>54</sup>Gong Shi 貢士, “Chengxiang xiaodiao: Shancheng jinshuo riyu” 鄉城小調 山城禁說日語, *Lianhe bao*, November 16, 1954 “Xishuo ribenhua yifei zhongguoren beixian jinyou riyou jiaotan” 喜說日本話疑非中國人 北縣禁用日語交談, *Lianhe bao*, January 7, 1955, 5.

<sup>55</sup>Jiang Sizhang 姜思章, *Xiangchou—yige 'waishengren' de liuli jiyi wu youshang* 鄉愁：一個「外省人」的流離、記憶與憂傷 (Taipei: Wenjintang, 2008), 301.

them. Jiang had a miserable time during the 1950s. Being forcibly taken away from his native village and mishandled at such a young age, he was deeply traumatized by the experience and was extremely resentful of the KMT. He missed his family back on Zhoushan Islands dearly and used to cry himself to sleep at night in the barracks.<sup>56</sup> His superiors in the army saw him as a “troublemaker.” They had other soldiers bully him and put him under constant surveillance. Jiang tried to escape the military in Taiwan. But he was captured, court-martialed, and sentenced to three years in prison.<sup>57</sup> His life did not improve until he got out of prison, and decided that it was futile to resist the way he did.<sup>58</sup> The former abductee took state-sponsored exams and got accepted into the department of music at the KMT cadre school.<sup>59</sup> Essentially, he became a cog in the Generalissimo’s governing machine. Like many rank-and-file military and party personnel, he did his time in service and then retired to become a schoolteacher.

Jiang later led a popular protest against the Nationalist regime in the late 1980s. The movement forced Chiang Kai-shek’s eldest son and successor Chiang Ching-kuo to finally lift the travel ban to the communist “bandit territory” and opened the door for the contemporary cross-strait trade and interaction.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, back in the 1950s and in fact, prior to the 1980s, Jiang could not do anything that would challenge the system. Even if Jiang had been able to successfully escape into the larger society, he would have faced an unsympathetic local population and other mainland refugees that were part of the same dictatorial party machine. No one would offer him shelter. He would be apprehended soon and put in jail or back into circulation in the army.<sup>61</sup>

Most of the English-language research on state–society relations in early postwar Taiwan concentrates on the KMT policy toward the native Taiwanese and the indigenous peoples. There is actually little discussion that highlights the relationship between the displaced Nationalist state and the displaced mainlanders. Civil war and the mass flight to Taiwan contributed to material deprivation and social leveling of most of the exiled population. Even some of the top Nationalist elites lost a majority of their worldly possessions when arriving in Taiwan. The forced migration from China also produced a large throng of uprooted and socially isolated male population that the

<sup>56</sup>Jiang, *Xiangchou—yige ‘waishengren’ de liuli jiyi wu youshang*, 383.

<sup>57</sup>Jiang, *Xiangchou—yige ‘waishengren’ de liuli jiyi wu youshang*, 8.

<sup>58</sup>Jiang met a mature and sophisticated Nationalist air force pilot in prison from Guangdong Province who became his surrogate big brother and best friend. This became the turning point in his life. The pilot advised him not to resist, but to accept his fate and wait for the right time to act against the KMT. The flight officer was on death row for a failed attempt to steal a fighter jet and fly back to China. Later, Jiang watched him being taken away from their cell for the execution. Jiang Sizhang, interviewed by the author, Academia Sinica, Taipei, July 27, 2014.

<sup>59</sup>This was the former School of Political Cadre (政工幹部學校) in the Peitou District of Taipei City. Today, the institution is reorganized into Fu Hsing Kang College of the National Defense University (復興崗學院/國防大學政治作戰學院).

<sup>60</sup>For more on this story, see Yang, “One Man’s Quest,” 182–201.

<sup>61</sup>In the early 1950s, the Nationalist police and security forces rounded up thousands of vagrants and suspected army escapees on the streets of Taiwan every year. Most were sent back to their original units or to prisons, mental institutions, and almshouses. For examples, see Wu Guozhen 吳國楨 “Taiwansheng baoan silingbu sanshijiu niandu gongzuo baogaoshu” 臺灣省保安司令部三十九年度工作報告書 (1950) NHDAH, 0040/0410.03/4032.3/1; Taiwansheng baoan silingbu 臺灣省保安司令部, “Taiwansheng baoan silingbu sishi niandu yi zhi jiu yue fen zhengsu gongzuo shishi tongjibiao 臺灣省保安司令部四十年度一至九月份整肅工作實施統計表 (January–September 1951) NHDAH, 0040/0410.03/4032.3/2.

displaced regime could easily persecute, discipline, and absorb into its coercive ruling structure. Jiang's story was not an anomaly. Rather, it was a common experience shared by hundreds of thousands of mainland soldiers and other low- and mid-ranking Nationalist personnel.

"Letters from readers" published in the political magazine *Ziyou Zhongguo* 自由中國 in the 1950s revealed the same kind of dynamics demonstrated by Jiang Sizhang's personal testimony decades later. The fortnightly journal was founded in November 1949 by a group of prominent liberal/anti-communist intellectuals, many from the May Fourth generation. It was the only open public forum where opinions on politics and socioeconomic matters could be freely expressed in 1950s Taiwan.<sup>62</sup> Initially, Chiang Kai-shek had tolerated the magazine, and even contributed some money to it. Nevertheless, when the liberal intellectuals behind the magazine started criticizing Chiang's politics and brutal dictatorship in the second half of the 1950s, the relationship between the KMT and *Ziyou Zhongguo* began to deteriorate rapidly. In 1959, the magazine's editor-in-chief Lei Zhen 雷震 (1897–1979) led a public campaign against the Generalissimo's third-term presidency, which the exiled liberal intellectuals thought was unconstitutional. When this voice of discontent fell on deaf ears, Lei began working with several leading native Taiwanese politicians in 1960 to form an opposition party to the KMT. At this point, Chiang ordered the arrest of Lei and several of Lei's colleagues. In September 1960, the magazine was effectively shut down, so was the planned opposition party.<sup>63</sup>

The demise of *Ziyou Zhongguo* was a huge blow to Taiwan's liberal opposition. There would not be an effective and concerted effort to challenge the KMT politically until the late 1970s. But the magazine's existence for a decade offers historians remarkable insights into the state and society in 1950s Taiwan. Much of this information has not been explored in full by the island state's scholars today. For our investigation of the relationship between the migrant state and the migrant population, the most informative pieces in the magazine are personal letters sent from *Ziyou Zhongguo*'s readers, who were predominantly mainlanders.<sup>64</sup> These writings usually appear at the end of every issue. The authors are common folks or low-ranking Nationalist personnel. Most of these letters are written anonymously for fear of reprisal from the authorities, but some of the letter senders are brave enough to use their real names. The letters cover a broad range of topics. They discuss and debate the views previously expressed by the editors or other contributors; expose corruption and abuses in public institutions or in the military; offer comments on egregious forms of social injustice or provide interesting commentaries on notable social phenomena.<sup>65</sup>

In February 1959 an anonymous letter described a private conversation between two good friends in the army who got together to celebrate the Chinese New Year. The

<sup>62</sup>Notable figures included the group's spiritual leader Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962), Lei Zhen, Fu Sinian 傅斯年 (1896–1950), Wang Shijie 王世杰 (1891–1981), Mao Zishui 毛子水 (1893–1988), Zhang Foquan (張佛泉 (1907–1994), Xiao Daoping 夏道平 (1907–1995), Yin Haiguang 殷海光 (1919–1969), and Fu Zheng 傅正 (1927–1991).

<sup>63</sup>For more on the magazine, see Xue Huayuan 薛化元, *Ziyou Zhongguo yu minzhu xianzheng: 1950 niandai Taiwan sixiangshi de yige kaocha* 《自由中國》與民主憲政: 1950年代台灣思想史的一個考察 (Panchiao: Daoxiang chubanshe, 1996).

<sup>64</sup>The magazine started publishing letters from readers in early 1951. See Shi Zhang 士璋, "Duzhe laishu: 'Zhengqu renmin' duhougan" 讀者來書: 「爭取人民」讀後感, *Ziyou Zhongguo* 4.3 (1951), 35.

<sup>65</sup>Fu Zheng 傅正, "Cong benkan de 'duzhetoushu' shuodao guoshi wenti" 從本刊的「讀者投書」說到國是問題, *Ziyou Zhongguo* 21.10 (1959), 36.

conversation demonstrates the situation faced by many mainland refugees who served in the Generalissimo's army:

- A: Did you ever think about the teachings and instructions in the military, whether they were right or not?  
 B: I have never thought about it—no—I dared not even thinking about it.  
 A: Why?  
 B: Because there are a lot of [KMT] party members in the military. Those who are not party members are constantly being watched. If one is not careful, he could be sent to “troublemakers’ units” (the name has now been changed to “military discipline units”). The treatment one receives in these units is inhumane.  
 A: How could you get used to a life under constant surveillance?  
 B: It was painful at first, but I got used to it.<sup>66</sup>

It is obvious that the magazine's editors intended to use an anonymous letter like this from the rank and file to pressure Chiang Kai-shek to end the mutual surveillance and political cadre system in the military. Even so, the letter also exposes how common folks, in particular uprooted and socially atomized lower class mainlanders would respond to a repressive governing system, when there were no other clear alternatives. They usually fell in line and tried living their lives the best they could.

This situation is illustrated by other readers' letters published in *Ziyou Zhongguo*. The mainlanders would complain vociferously, constantly, and repeatedly about unemployment, meager salaries/benefits, censorship, political arrests, and official corruption.<sup>67</sup> But they generally wanted better treatment from the government. Different from the exiled liberal intellectuals who were behind the magazine, ordinary *waishengren* cared less about uniting to make a stand against the Nationalist state politically, let alone forming an alliance with the native Taiwanese to do so. Most mainlanders saw their stay on Taiwan as temporary in the 1950s. They were deracinated people still hoping to return to their mainland roots. From their perspective, the expelled party-state, despite all its failings and authoritarian ways, was still their safest bet—the surest ticket to that big boat home.

The Nationalist state also needed the mainland refugees, especially those who had little or no prior relationship with the party. The remarkable thing is that if the ROC was still in power in China, the KMT authorities would have very little consideration for the same kind of people. In the 1950s Chiang Kai-shek's newly expelled government faced a serious external threat (i.e. the PRC invasion). The regime's relationship with its backers in Washington DC was also intense and uneasy. The Americans supported the Nationalists to check the Soviets and the Chinese Communists. But they feared that the aging Generalissimo's unrealistic dream of reconquering the mainland would

<sup>66</sup>Tian Xin 田心, “Duzhe toushu (yi): Xinnian yutong” 讀者投書(一): 新年語痛, *Ziyou Zhongguo* 20.4 (1959), 29.

<sup>67</sup>For examples, see Xia Gupei 夏貴培, “Duzhe toushu (er): yige junren de hua” 讀者投書(二): 一個軍人的話, *Ziyou Zhongguo* 18.9 (1958), 31; Ding Kaicheng 丁開誠, “Tuichuyi guanbing daiyu zhiyan” 退役官兵待遇直言, *Ziyou Zhongguo* 19.6 (1958), 31; Chen Zhechun 陳哲春, “Duzhe toushu (er): Gonggong changsuo, motan guoshi!” 讀者投書(二): 公共場所, 莫談國事!, *Ziyou Zhongguo* 16:9 (1957), 29; Yiqun lujun zhongxiaji jinguan 一群陸軍中下級軍官, “Women duiyu tiaozheng daiyu an de kangyi” 我們對於調整待遇案的抗議, *Ziyou Zhongguo* 23:2 (1960), 29.

drag the United States into World War III.<sup>68</sup> On top of all of this, the Nationalists knew that they needed to cope with a silenced but still resentful local majority population. Therefore, the exiled state came to see the exiled population as its ?? potential allies. Despite some really unhappy past, there was at least this common goal of returning to China. And the Nationalists were certainly in position to dish out benefits and favors. The dictatorial party-state, which had a monopoly in distributing limited resources in 1950s Taiwan, offered impoverished and socially atomized mainland refugees accommodation, jobs, and a sense of belonging as time progressed.

For many mainland refugees who arrived on the island with only the clothes on their backs and could not find much assistance and connections locally in Taiwan, the choices were rather limited. It was either accepting this offer from the KMT or living perpetually on the margins of society. Of course, a considerable portion of ordinary *waishengren* population in Taiwan had initially worked for the Nationalists on the mainland. Even so, different from that previous relationship back in China, which was less binding and coercive, people did not have the option of quitting and returning to their hometowns and families. The fact is that the KMT did not control the entire mainland China at any given time. The reach of the Nationalist dictatorial state in China could not be compared with the reach of the Nationalist dictatorial state on Taiwan. For the hundreds of thousands of draagooned soldiers and civilian refugees that had no prior relationship with the KMT on the mainland, the exiled regime was their only viable option for some kind of a livelihood in 1950s Taiwan.

When we begin to see the migration across the Taiwan Strait in the late 1940s and early 1950s as a massive population movement instead of a military withdrawal or a relocation of a government, we start to appreciate the historical circumstances that produced the close ties between the KMT and *waishengren*. The following account in travel magazine *Changliu* was written by a mainlander journalist who toured Taiwan's major cities in 1950. It offers a vivid portrayal of the housing shortage created by the influx of mainland refugees and the special privileges individuals received when they worked for the government in these rather difficult times:

The most difficult challenge one faced living in Taiwan is the lack of housing. There is no workable solution to this problem, which is visible everywhere. There has been an increase in population, but no new housing projects being built. Those who came to the island with gold bars have no trouble renting or buying [a place]. However, ordinary citizens such as freelance writers are in deep trouble. They cannot even find a place to rent. Moreover, the payment is shockingly high. A dwelling the size of “yizhang jianfang” 一丈見方 (3.3 square meters) will cost up to one “dan” 担 (50 kilos) of rice a month. Fortunately, the state provides accommodations for those who are in the army, the civil service, and in the education. These people do not have to live on the streets. In the streets of Taipei, Kaohsiung, and Taichung, one can see a lot of *waisheng* people camping out on the streets. This is such a disgrace to the scenery 大煞風景.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>68</sup>For the uneasy partnership between the United States and Chiang Kai-shek's exiled regime on Taiwan, see Nancy Tucker, *Strait Talk: United States-Taiwan Relations and the Crisis with China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 1–28; Lin Hsiao-ting, *Accidental State: Chiang Kai-shek, the United States, and the Making of Taiwan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

<sup>69</sup>Qing xin 清心, “Lutai zaxie” 旅臺雜寫, *Changliu* 2.10 (1951), 30. For a similar account, also see Xie Bingying 謝冰瑩, “You huodong fangzi xiangqi” 由活動房子想起 *Changliu* 1.2 (1950), 20–21.

The classified ads section of *Zhongyang ribao* in the early 1950s was filled with personal advertisements posted by mainland exiles that recently arrived from China (See Figure 3). These folks were not only searching for their family members. They were also looking for friends, fellow provincial natives, former coworkers, former classmates, and anyone they had known previously on the mainland who they thought might have also fled to Taiwan. As recently arrived refugees, these people needed others with local knowledge or connections to help them find jobs, obtain housing, and rebuild their lives again. Those who could not get local help or had no prior relations with the Nationalist state and military were reduced to living in shantytowns. Many shantytowns were formed in Taiwan's major cities during this time, especially in Taipei. The destitute residents of these slums fought the municipal authorities' efforts to raze their communities repeatedly throughout the 1950s.<sup>70</sup> There were also many jobless, able-bodied mainlander men looking for work and asking for help from the general public.<sup>71</sup> Facing this situation, civil organizations such as the mainlander native-place associations and some of the local private charities did step in to offer relief to the neediest mainland refugees.<sup>72</sup> However, the resources that these non-government organizations were able to gather in the economically depressed 1950s Taiwan paled in comparison with the benefits that a monopolistic authoritarian regime could provide.

Notwithstanding low pay, corruption, and political control, working for the Nationalist state or staying in the army meant that people would at least be provided with three meals a day and have a roof over their heads. In the early 1950s, when many mainland refugees not employed by the exiled regime were still struggling to obtain respectable accommodations, the Nationalist authorities were reducing the rent for civil servants and teachers who enjoyed the privilege of living in state-owned properties.<sup>73</sup> These properties were mostly confiscated Japanese housing, dormitories, and facilities. In 1959, *Ziyou Zhongguo* published a single middle school teacher's pay slip and his detailed monthly expenses.<sup>74</sup> The teacher was a mainlander exiled from Hunan Province. This was part of the magazine's campaign to turn public opinion against the KMT. The objective of providing this information was to echo the civil servants' constant complaints about their low wages throughout the 1950s. Interestingly, this teacher's pay slip demonstrates one simple fact: though the base salary of public school teachers was quite low, the Nationalist state provided them with supplementary allowances in different categories. They included positional bonus, research funding, money for clothing, and medical care. These allowances essentially doubled their

<sup>70</sup>“Guiqiu jiuming!” “跪求救命!” *Zhongyang ribao*, February 19, 1951, 1; Beishi tuojian Luosifu lu zhengfu juewu wancheng weijian jinqi fenduan chaichu” 北市拓建羅斯福路政府決予完成連建今起分段拆除, *Zhongyang ribao*, July 11, 1955, 4.

<sup>71</sup>“Fuwulan: Qiuye de husheng! Pan shehui renshi ciyu yuanshou” 服務欄 求業的呼聲! 盼社會人士賜予援手, *Lianhe bao*, September 27, 1951, 7.

<sup>72</sup>For examples, see “Dongbei tongxianghui choukuan jiuji tongxiang” 東北同鄉會籌款救濟同鄉, *Zhongyang ribao*, July 16, 1949, 4; “Jiangsu tongxianghui jue dengji shiye tongxiang” 江蘇同鄉會決登記失業同鄉, *Zhongyang ribao*, December 15, 1949, 4; Li Huang 理璜, “Jingtao hailang zhong de fangzhou—fang sili Taipei Aiai jiujiyuan” 驚滔駭浪中的方舟—訪私立台北愛愛救濟院, *Zhongyang ribao*, January 13, 1951, 4.

<sup>73</sup>Taiwansheng gongchan guanlichu 臺灣省公產管理處, “Taiwansheng gongchan guanlichu gonggao ‘geji jiguan gongjiao ren yuan zuyong guoyou tezhong fangwu jiaozu banfa’” 臺灣省公產管理處公告「各級機關公教人員租用國有特種房屋繳租辦法」(1952) NHDAA, 275-1/02109.

<sup>74</sup>Hu Xuyi 胡虛一, “Jiaoshi yu ‘qiong’!—jieshao zhongxue jiaoshi de daiyu jiqi shenghuo” 教師與「窮」!—介紹中學教師的待遇及其生活, *Ziyou Zhongguo* 20.11 (1959), 16-17.

monthly income. On top of this, the state also distributed, on a monthly basis, a set amount of rice, cooking oil, salt, and coal to government personnel and their families based on the size of the household. This male teacher was rationed twenty-six kilos of rice every month and this was the standard amount for a single-person household!<sup>75</sup>

The benefits enjoyed by civilian staff were also extended to army officers. The KMT army settled its officers and their families in “military families’ villages” or *juancun* 眷村. There were once close to 900 of these distinctive mainlander communities all over Taiwan.<sup>76</sup> Some of the oldest villages were established in the late 1940s when individual KMT units placed their dependents in empty Japanese facilities near their barracks. In 1956, Madame Chiang Kai-shek started a charity drive to build a set of new compounds all over the island to accommodate more military personnel.<sup>77</sup> These villages later developed into strong bastions of electoral support for the Nationalist Party before most of them were torn down to make way for city planning and new public housing projects at the turn of the twenty-first century. Finally, for the foot soldiers, many of whom were pressed into service in China, the Nationalist regime founded the Veterans Affairs Council of the Executive Yuan 行政院國軍退除役官兵就業輔導委員會 (VAC) in late 1954. Until 1966, the VAC placed 12,749 in its retirement homes (1,141 officers and 11,608 soldiers), helped 71,311 (10,298 officers and 59,877 soldiers) find new employment, and released about 50,000 into the general population.<sup>78</sup> The state also put a fair number of these retired soldiers to open up new farms and build public infrastructure projects in remote areas of the island with funding from American aid. The most well-known among these projects was the Central Cross-Island Highway 東西橫貫公路, which was completed in May 1960.<sup>79</sup>

### Conclusion: Sailing into The Future

Why do so many of the lower class mainland refugees in Taiwan, especially those who had been on the receiving end of Nationalist state violence, ended up becoming steadfast supporters of the same oppressive party system decades later? The answer lies in the specific historical conditions created by the Chinese civil war, by the chaotic exodus across the sea, and by Taiwan’s half century of separation from China as a Japanese colony. While not denying the fact that tens of thousands of mainlanders who reached Taiwan were the ruling Nationalist elites and their families, hundreds of thousands more were foot soldiers, low-ranking civil servants, and war refugees from different walks of life. These people had very little stake initially in the survival of the defeated Nationalist regime. Many had only minimal or no prior connections with the KMT “central government” in China. Yet, in 1950s Taiwan, they were gradually absorbed into the displaced party-state/military apparatus or had their relationship with this authoritarian apparatus transformed and deepened as the perceived temporary sojourn slowly became a permanent exile. Longing for home and being cut off from family,

<sup>75</sup>Hu, “Jiaoshi yu,” 16.

<sup>76</sup>He Simi 何思暉, *Taipeixian juancun diaocha yanjiu* 臺北縣眷村調查研究 (Panciao: Beixian wenhua ju, 2001), 23.

<sup>77</sup>“Cong Chiang furen de weida yundong kan fangwu zhengce” 從蔣夫人的偉大運動看房屋政策, *Zhongyang ribao*, May 26, 1956, 2.

<sup>78</sup>Xingzhengyuan, *Xingzhengyuan guojun*. There was also the category of “righteous people” 義民 that did not belong to the categories of officers and soldiers.

<sup>79</sup>Wen Nong 文農, “Ziyou zhongguo dongxi hengguan gonglu de jianshe” 自由中國 東西橫貫公路的建設, *Ziyou Zhongguo* 19.7 (1958), 12–13.



native-place, and other personal networks that had previously existed in the mainland, the socially atomized ordinary refugees had no other alternatives. Each individual became a cog in the Generalissimo's dictatorial party machine in "Free China," even as some of them continued to be victimized by the same party machine. *Waishengren's* residual resentment towards Japan, the 2-28 Incident, and the unequal relationship between *waishengren* and *benshengren* in general made the alliance between the suppressed mainland exiles and the suppressed local majority Taiwanese impossible.

In exploring this complicated and lesser-known instance of forced migration between China and Taiwan in the mid-twentieth century and the ensuing state-society relationship that developed, this study opens the way for scholars of migration to look at other similar instances of involuntary displacement in world history where a functioning state and a motley group of people were compelled to relocate together.

The research contained in the preceding pages also questions the long-standing division between internal and external population movement in the study of Chinese migration. The reality of a divided state aside, the "hard" national border simply did not correspond to the "soft" social border that mainland migrants and the local people had to cross on a daily basis when interacting with each other. Based on the historical situation described in this article, I propose the migrant category of "exile-colonizer," which could provide a novel framework for scholars to examine the relationship between displaced political migrants and other ethnic Chinese or non-Chinese minorities in the PRC or in other periods of Chinese history.

Last but not least, this work speaks to the significance of understanding mass displacement associated specifically with brutal military conflicts, state persecution, or natural disasters in modern China, Taiwan, and East Asia. Given the amount of war, famine, revolution, and social upheaval that common people experienced in these parts during the past century, refugee or political exile, broadly defined, should be considered the most common form of migration in modern Chinese and East Asian history, and not traveling merchants or indentured laborers, though different forms of migration did in fact intersect one another. It will be for scholars of migration to sort out this entangled history as we sail into the future.