

Taiwan and Korea : Agenda for Socio- Cultural Understanding

Kwang-Ok Kim

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I. Introduction

The present essay is basically concerned with the nature and contents of mutual understanding between Taiwan¹⁾ and Korea especially in the field of society and culture. For a convenience of I would like to focus mainly on how Koreans have approached

1) Politically it should be referred to as Republic of China. If we deal with the island as a cultural and social unit, however, I would propose to call it Taiwan.

Taiwan. My point of departure is the fact that a world is defined by politics and thus, it is a political construct. This tradition inevitably leads us to rethink the possible discrepancy between the political rhetoric and social reality.

Korean's perception of Taiwan as a real political entity representing the whole China was mainly moulded through the especially intimate relationship between the Korean government and the late President Chiang, Jie-shi (Kai-shek). However, there has been a tendency among Koreans to regard Taiwan as a cultural periphery of "China", or even to think Taiwan as a cultural entity independent from "China". Also, when we say "China" including Taiwan, it has been perceived as a homogeneous unity in terms of ethnic and cultural composition. Because of the fact that the Han Chinese are predominant in politics, economy, and culture both in the Mainland and Taiwan, quite often non-Han Chinese ethnic groups and their cultural varieties are not recognized at all. It is commonly known that there are fifty-five national minorities in the Mainland and nine ethnic groups in Taiwan²⁾ and they all consist the nation as a cultural community. "Cultural community" here means an entity in which the inhabitants recognize each other as proper member of their own society based on shared way of life, social institutions, common historical experiences, and world-view so that they have a special sense of belonging and identity. A nation is, in this regard, the maximal cultural community though

2) They are Ami, Tayal, Saisaiat, Tsou, Bunun, Paiwan, Rukai, Puyuma, and Yami.

quite often politically constructed regardless of heterogeneity and internal conflicts among the ethnic, cultural, and political groups.

Being virtually ignorant of the Chinese political and social reality, Koreans understand Taiwan mostly based on some touristic informations and experiences of Aborigines folk villages and their beautiful surroundings, in addition to some intellectual experiences of Chinese culture at museums and temples.

II. High Frequency of Communication without Mutual Understanding.

"Brothers" was the euphemism for the nature of relationship between Taiwan and Korea, and untill recently there have been very intense and frequent contacts between them not only in the fields of politics and culture, but also for business and trade both at governmental and non-governmental levels.

While the mainland was closed to the outside world, Taiwan was regarded as the most ideal place for the Sinologists with well equipped language training institutions, advanced living condition, favourable research facilities, and many cultural elements including cuisines and folk traditions. Especially students in the field of humanities are benefited from the existence of authorities in Chinese history, literature, philosophy who have migrated from the mainland,

and from the access to invaluable materials and academic informations in their respective sub-fields.

It is noted, however, Korean scholars in the field of humanities have mostly concentrated their interest in the study of "China" of Mainland and that of the "traditional" period. In a word, there was neither a single study of China of "modern" or "contemporary" period, nor of "Taiwan". Only a couple of novels of the contemporary Taiwanese writers such as Jing Yao and Huang Suanming were recently translated, but there was no serious study of Taiwanese history, society and cultural tradition.

During the Colonial occupation, Japanese scholars carried out extensive investigations on social institutions of the Aborigines on the one hand, and folk tradition and customary law of the Han Taiwanese on the other. Studies of the former category were done for their political purpose of distinguishing Taiwan from the mainland China while those of the latter category were attempted in their search for more effective colonial exploitation.

Western anthropologists began their fieldworks in Taiwan since 1960's not only because the mainland was closed but also in their belief that Taiwan is a part of China. Through their empirical studies of the contemporary Han Taiwanese societies, they tried to prove or disapprove the theoretical model of Chinese society and culture as proposed by M. Freedman. For example, A. Wolf and M.

Wolf, E. Ahern, R. Weller, S. Sangren, and S. Feuchtwang, through their fieldworks in northern Taiwan, focused on the folk tradition and its relation with the state. B. Gallin, R. DeGlopper, and L. Crissman carried out their fieldworks in central Taiwan to study regional systems and economic activities. B. Pasternak, M. Cohen, S. Michio, K. Kim focused on the Hakka communities in southern Taiwan in order to study lineage organizations and religions for local politics and regional networks.

Local anthropologists under the aegis of Academia Sinica³⁾ were mostly concerned with the investigation of the Aborigines whilest sociologists, though not so popular, paid attention to the "psychological" adaption of people to the rapid changing Taiwanese society under the banner of modernization during the 1960-70's.(see publications of Chiu Haiyuen; Wen Chung-i; Yang Guo-ch'u etc.) As the whole nation was in the fever of development, any "structural" analysis of negative side effects of rapid change, i.e. unequal distribution of economic opportunity, urban poverty, environmental deterioration etc. was discouraged. It is only since 1980's that Taiwan, instead of being treated as a part of the "traditional China mainland", became the explicit subject of study within the local academic community both in humanities and social

3) Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica, and Department of Anthropology, National Taiwan University, were the leading institutions for researches on the Aborigines as well as the Han Chinese. Under the leadership of Professor Li Yih-yuan(both of Academia Sinica and National Taiwan University), well trained anthropologists and sociologists carried out vigorously extensive researches, the results of which were published as monograph series of the Academia Sinica.

sciences.

The lack of proper study of by Korean scholars Taiwan's society and culture was partly resulted from the dominance of political science in the academic cooperation between Korea and Taiwan. The two countries have been under the same situation in terms of confrontation with the subversive Communist threat and thus, academic as well as political cooperation for information and strategy was necessary. For this, political scientists have been most active.

Excessively obsessed by the importance of politics and ideological manipulation for internal integration and external unity, however, politicians and political scientists did not properly estimate, the significance of social and cultural understanding. Under the Cold War mentality, power elite groups of the two countries have paid little attention to the social and cultural studies not only of their own country but also of their counterpart.

Because of this lack of understanding of the society and people in their everyday reality context, Taiwan is usually not properly recognized of its cultural identity. Influenced by the informations produced by the Japanese colonial government which emphasized the existence of the Aborigines, some might regard Taiwan as a land of different culture from the Chinese or as a periphery of the Chinese culture.

Also, the special law implemented by the government with regard to foreigner's property and tax in late 1970's limited the economic activities of the Overseas Chinese in Korea. Their economic condition collapsed, most of the huachiao emigrated to the U.S. following their Korean customers while some chose to resettle in Taiwan. This "nationalistic" treatment of the Korean government against the huachiao made many of the Chinese become suspicious of Korean's friendship and even feel resentment against Korea. The sharp decrease of Chinese population in Korea brought a decrease of the mutual contacts between Korea and Taiwan both at the governmental and non-governmental levels.

III. Similarities and Differences

The problematics arosed from the misunderstanding are described as follows. First, Koreans do not have a good knowledge of Taiwnese politcal and social history which is often described as a multiple tension among the mainlanders, native Taiwanese, and the Aborigines. Of Taiwan's population of 18 million, about 14 percent, or more than 2 million, are those who came over from the China mainland since 1945 or their descendants. There are marked differences of dialect and custom between these recently arrived mainlanders who are called wai-sheng-ren (people of outside the Taiwan province) and the Taiwanese. But there are also divisions within each group. The ancestors of most Taiwanese, called

min-nan-ren, emigrated from southern part of Fujian Province on the mainland during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But there is a large minority, the Hakkas, whose forebears came from Guangdong Province during this same period and who speak a distinctive dialect. The so-called mainlanders, who came from various parts of China after 1945, speak a variety of other dialects. Thus, although the division between Taiwanese and Mainlanders is the most important one for political purposes, the differences within each group, not only in spoken dialect but also in social and economic status, tended to blur and soften the clash of interests between the two major groups.

Friction and tension between mainlanders and Taiwanese developed early. The newcomers were initially welcomed by the Taiwanese, who expected that the reunion of Taiwan with China and the departure of their Japanese colonial rulers would give them a greater part in running the island. Unfortunately, the first wave of mainlanders under governor Ch'en Yi deteriorated their relationship with the local people by their elitism and hostile attitude. By the incident of February 28, 1947 sporadic rioting was set off, which soon spread throughout the island. The uprising and suppression around the February 28 left behind a lasting legacy of hostility and suspicion between mainlanders and Taiwanese despite the KMT government's effort to reform and modernize the island.

Whilst Taiwanese were allowed to enjoy prosperity in private

business sectors, those mainlanders, though minority in number, occupied privileged field of politics and administration, and state enterprises. Some of anti-KMT activists established their organizations for Taiwan Independence Movement in China mainland and Japan. The pro-Communist activists in the mainland took the view that Taiwan was an integral part of China and should be "liberated" from the control of the Nationalists government while the Tokyo group called for overthrowing the Nationalist government and setting up an independent state of Taiwan to be governed by Taiwanese. Drawing on the memory of the February uprising to stimulate Taiwanese antipathy to KMT rule, their publications elaborated the historical and legal arguments for regarding Taiwan as a political entity separate from China.

Confronted with the subversive Communist mainland on the one hand and challenges from anti-KMT Taiwanese activists in and outside Taiwan on the other, the Nationalist government exercised exclusive power for the sake of national security and economic prosperity sometimes at the expense of social justice. It is only latest years when opposition parties began to have their own voices along with the changes in the political atmosphere.

Compared with this historical background of the political structure, Korea as a uni-ethnic community has undergone conflicts and tension between military coup d'etat and civilian tradition. Manipulating people's experience of colonial exploitation, devastation

and poverty as a war-torn nation, the military groups and power oriented technocrats attempted to establish the absolute state authority. Anti-governmental protests during past forty years in Korea, therefore, should be understood in the context of Korean's intellectual history and the Confucian culture which gives priority to the *literati* tradition.

Second, Taiwanese people appear to be more open to outside world enough to accommodate external cultural influx without any serious conflict whilst Koreans are relatively concerned with the issue of cultural nationalism. This open minded attitude of the Taiwanese is contrasted with the protectionist one among the Korean. As the native inhabitants of their own land, Koreans have strong sense of national identity and territory. Under the strong influence of Confucian tradition, Koreans are oriented toward lineage and clan as the basis of their social community, and ancestor worship is the cultural mechanism through which they develop their distinctive historical consciousness and principles of social organization.

Chinese, on the other hand, are well experienced of multi-ethnic community, and thus appear to be more practical and individual. Based on their own rationality, they establish special personal relationship, *guan-xi* and emotional ties, *kan-ch'ing*, for inter-dependence network. Although Confucian culture is also embedded in everyday lives, it is Taoism that represents the

Chinese religious life and world-view. Due to their shallow historical background of immigration, they have not elaborated lineage institution so that sentiment based on locality is more important than blood ties. For them, rituals for territorial connection is more important than individual ancestor worship ceremony at family level. Because of this cultural principle of social structure, the Chinese are more rationalistic and pragmatistic in dealing with political compromise and business contracts.

Differences in social and cultural tradition affects people's behaviour and attitudes. Koreans are sometimes discontented with the native Taiwanese positive attitude toward Japan. While Koreans repeatedly express their criticism against Japanese colonial exploitation and oppression, the native Taiwanese are not so strong in their reaction against their historical experiences of colonialism. One must recognize that Taiwan had been a waste land before it became the Japanese colony in 1905. Mostly they regard Japanese colonial rule to have contributed to the modernization of Taiwan. Elites of older generation were educated in Japan, which they are proud of as they display the academic degree obtained from Japan in their name plate on the main gate of their houses. Pro-Japanese attitude can be interpreted as a symbolic reaction of Taiwanese to mainlanders. Those of old landlords who lost their land through the land reform carried out by the KMT, and officials in the colonial government whose position were replaced by elite of KMT after the liberation expressed their resentment by producing their

private imagery of "good old days" of the Japanese occupation. Therefore, there is a tension underneath between the elites of Mainlanders who were educated in the Western countries and engaged in anti-Japanese fights.

In this regard, Koreans share the view point with mainlanders rather than Taiwanese, especially about historical experiences of the modern period. From the anthropological point of view, ancestor worship makes Koreans more historically conscious. In Korea, agnatic ancestors and their wives within the four generations from the oldest living descendant of the senior generation are annually commemorated through various occasional rites. At a ritual, all the descendants are supposed to gather where life histories of the ancestor concerned are told. If we count one generation as 30 years, then one's private history is repeated and transmitted through generations over 120 years. Because of this, together with Koreans' sense of cultural superiority over Japan, they cannot forget easily the past history. In the form of story-telling and ritual, the past history is continuously reproduced and redefined in people's mind.

Third, Taiwanese are more concerned with economy, private as well as public, while Koreans are oriented to politics. Taoism and folk traditions including Chénghuang, T'udikong, Mazu (tienhou), Chóssukong, which are ubiquitous and worshipped at popular level in Taiwan, and this implies that people are inclined to pursue

private welfare and individual achievement with regards to economic prosperity, secular success, health and stability. The proliferation and popularity of folk religions and rituals against the governmental denouncement indicate people's manipulation of relationship between the state and society through the ownership of economy.

But in Korea, except some attempts to apply shamanistic ritual and popular art performance by anti-government activists for their dramatising political message, people in general tend to respond to the state politics without religious manipulation. In this regard, Koreans may appear to be more active in politics while Taiwanese are engaged in economy and religion. This is partly because major political and administrative positions at national level were predominantly occupied by the KMT elites and thus the native Taiwanese in general are not given proper opportunity for them.

An entire generation has now been educated in the national language and many young Taiwanese speak it with a better accent than older mainlanders, whose Mandarin is heavily accented with their native Cantonese, Hunanese, or Shanghai dialect. Although Taiwanese generally prefer to use their own dialect at home or among themselves, there is no longer a significant communications barrier between the two groups. They even find nowadays that doing business in the mainland is benefited from their ability to speak Mandarin. Not only are Taiwanese learning Mandarin in school, but also many younger generation mainlanders have learned

to speak Taiwanese.

Children born in Taiwan of mainlander parents now outnumber the mainlanders who came from the mainland. These young mainlanders have no personal experience on the mainland. Like the Taiwanese, Taiwan is the only home they have known, and their values and attitudes differ little from those of the Taiwanese. Although there is still a tendency for mainlanders and Taiwanese to socialize more with members of their own group than with each other, mainland-Taiwanese intermarriage has become quite common. As the young mainlanders and their Taiwanese contemporaries move up into increasingly responsible position in the society, the differences between the two groups will steadily narrow.

IV. Need for Comparative Studies in Social and Cultural Fields

Recently, changes in Taiwanese social structure became one of the main subjects of sociological studies (Hsiao, Hsin-huang, Chang Ying-hwa, Chiu Hai-yuan, etc.) It is pointed out that the rapid industrialization and urbanization has produced middle class and urban working class over agricultural sector, and the class conflict in consumer behaviour and material quest in the "explosive" economic affluence often threatens the social integration of Taiwan.⁴⁾

4) See monograph series of the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica including

Here, a comparative study of socio-economic transformation in Korea and Taiwan is necessary in order to locate political, social, and cultural problems and to find out some solutions.

Also, comparative study of culture between Korea and Taiwan is necessary. How to maintain the local cultural identity in globalization movement, how to achieve the cultural integration for a political unity or in the political heterogeneity, and how to construct a cultural community for regional economic bloc are a few among many serious problems for policies on socio-cultural change at the national level.

It is noted that an interesting trend is found both in Taiwan and Korea as to the realization of importance of culture. In case of Taiwan, people now turn their eyes from economy to culture whilst in Korea people are shifting their concern from politics to culture. This is not only out of the quest for national identity but also in their recognition that culture is the most fundamental mechanism for political and social integration.

Through various foundations such as Chang Ching-Kuo Foundation and Pacific Cultural Foundation, studies on Chinese culture are encouraged among the local and foreign scholars. The scope of areas expands to include the mainland and co-operative

Chiu and Chang eds. *Social and Cultural Changes of Taiwan* (1980), and *Proceedings of the International Conference on Anthropological Studies of Taiwan Area*, held by National Taiwan University in 1985.

research projects between scholars in Taiwan and those in the mainland are developed. Compared with this trend, curiously enough, any joint research work between Taiwanese and Korean scholars is almost not attempted despite the fact that there are significant cultural relationship and social similarity between the two countries.

Here I purpose to focus on the "contemporary" phenomena in order to achieve a proper understanding of Taiwanese society and culture. Different from the mainland China where the traditional patterns of culture were mostly destroyed during the past five decades of the so-called "socialist revolution", they are still practised in people's everyday life in Taiwan. Of course it is noted that popular cultural traditions have been manipulated both by the state and the peasant for their respective social and political purposes in the mainland. However, it is in Taiwan where we can experience properly and fully the meanings and functions of "Chinese" culture, because Taiwan is one of the core areas of China.

As mentioned earlier, students of humanities have used Taiwan as the center for materials for the study of ancient and traditional China, and political scientists established the cooperative system with those of Taiwan for their watching the politics in the mainland. As a result, there is not a proper study of Taiwan itself. In this regard, empirical studies of Taiwanese society, people, and culture in contemporary context should be attempted. Paralleled with

politics and economy at macro level, we need to examine contemporary social and cultural phenomena i.e. popular culture, folk customs, local level politics and economy, performance arts, life styles and behaviour patterns of different generations, gender issues among others. Through the studies of "society" rather than the state, we can achieve a better understanding of similarities and differences in social structure, cultural tradition, historical background, and even behavioural codes between the two countries.

This is needed because the proper understanding of people is the basis of mutual relationship both in international politics and economy between the two countries. And the Taiwan-Korea cooperation is necessary not only for the successful confrontation against the mainland and north Korea but also, or more importantly, for promoting the leading role of the two countries in the international environment in Northeast Asia.