

# Immigrants in American History

Arrival, Adaptation, and Integration

*Elliott Robert Barkan, Editor*

VOLUME THREE

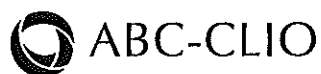


# Immigrants in American History

ARRIVAL, ADAPTATION, AND INTEGRATION

VOLUME 3

ELLIOTT ROBERT BARKAN, EDITOR



Santa Barbara, California • Denver, Colorado • Oxford, England

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1940–Present, 1247

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South Americans, 1940–Present, 1285

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Southeast Asians and Southeast Asian Americans,

1940–Present, 1295

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Spanish and Spanish Americans, 1940–Present, 1315

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Swedes and Swedish Americans, 1940–Present, 1321

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Taiwanese and Taiwanese Americans,

1940–Present, 1331

*Jonathan H. X. Lee*

Turks and Turkish Americans, 1940–Present, 1341

*John J. Grabowski*

Ukrainians and Ukrainian Americans,

1940–Present, 1353

*Myron B. Kuropas*

Vietnamese and Vietnamese Americans,

1975–Present, 1365

*Kimberly Kay Hoang*

West Indians and West Indian (English-Speaking)

Americans, 1940–Present, 1375

*Suzanne Model*

West Indians and West Indian (French-Speaking)

Americans, 1940–Present, 1387

*Violet Showers Johnson*

West Indians and West Indian (Spanish-Speaking)

Americans, 1940–Present, 1399

*Violet Showers Johnson*

*Index, I-1*

## VOLUME 4

### PART 4 ISSUES IN U.S. IMMIGRATION

*Introduction: Issues in U.S. Immigration, 1415*

*Elliott Robert Barkan*

Immigrants and Native American

Populations, 1421

*Roger L. Nichols*

Indigenous Peoples and Borderlands, 1435

*Yuka Mizutani*

Borderlands and the American Southwest, 1449

*Manuel G. Gonzales*

Immigrant Ports of Entry, 1465

*Robert Eric Barde*

U.S. Immigration Laws and Policies, 1870–1980, 1485

*Diane C. Vecchio*

U.S. Immigration Policies, 1986–2011, 1503

*Christina Gerken*

Refugees, Asylees, and Immigrants, 1521

*Carl Bon Tempo*

Unauthorized Immigration to the United States, 1539

*Shannon Gleeson*

Nativism and Immigrants, Past and Present, 1553

*David M. Reimers*

# Taiwanese and Taiwanese Americans, 1940–Present

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Jonathan H. X. Lee

Taiwan, an island nation-state, was born in 1949 when two million Nationalists, or Kuomintang (KMT) affiliates fled to Taiwan, and established a government after it lost the civil war to the Chinese Communist Party on mainland China. Taiwan has historically been Chinese territory but military defeat during the First Sino-Japanese War forced China to cede Taiwan to Japan, which maintained colonial power until 1954, nearly a decade following the end of World War II. Since the war, Taiwan democratized and established local representation in its overall governing structure. In 2000, Taiwan accomplished its first peaceful transfer of power from the Nationalist Kuomintang Party to the Democratic Progressive Party. Post–World War II Taiwan experienced a great economic transformation and modernization and became one of East Asia’s “economic tigers.” The biggest national issue for Taiwan ever since its establishment is the question of mainland China and its “One China” philosophy, which threatens Taiwan’s sovereignty. Even though Taiwan is a relatively small island geographically, its population as of 2011 was 23.07 million.

Although the “Taiwanese American” can be subsumed in the category of “Chinese American,” there are various Taiwanese ethnic groups (Hakka, Zhangzhou, Quanzhou, and other Fujianese “Taiwanese”) and indigenous communities that distinguish themselves from the “mainlanders” who fled to Taiwan in the wake of the Communist victory. Hence, the cultural, social, economic, and political background of the Taiwanese makes their experience different from other Chinese immigrants. There are two types of Taiwanese from Taiwan: The Fujianese and Hakka compose the majority of the population on the island and are called

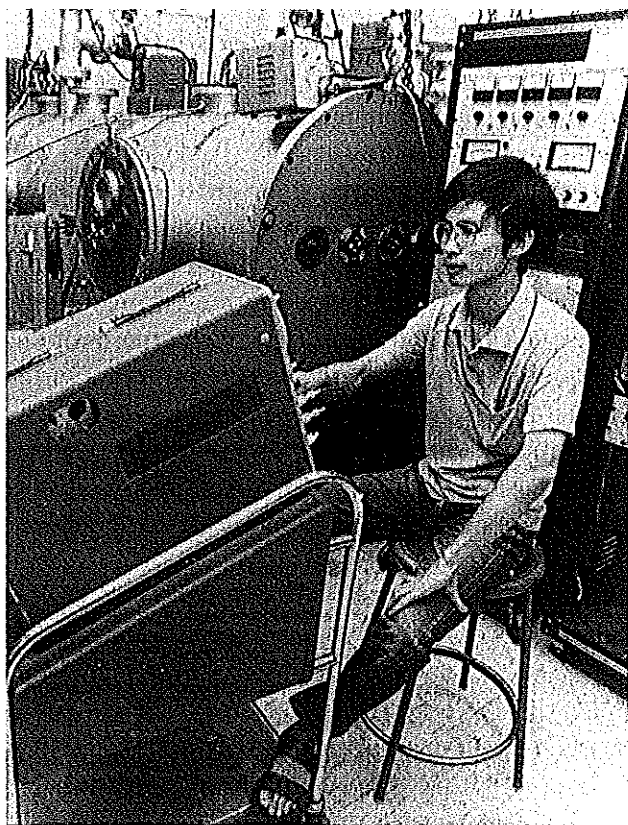
“*benshengren*” or “local people.” Mainlanders who immigrated to Taiwan after World War II are called “*waishengren*,” or “outside people.” These so-called outside people are mainly Mandarin-speaking Taiwanese. Since the 1990s, both *benshengren* and *waishengren* on Taiwan and abroad refer to themselves distinctively and declaratively as “Taiwanese.” Therefore, Taiwanese Americans are any subjects who immigrated to Taiwan and are loyal to Taiwan’s geopolitical sovereignty.

The million-dollar question for scholars studying Taiwanese Americans is: “Is Taiwan Chinese?” This question is much debated, both in academia and in politics between Taiwan and mainland China, as well as within their respective national borders. The question “Is Taiwan Chinese” must take into consideration the intersection of cultural, political, and national identities between and among the various ethnic groups in China and Taiwan. For the purposes of this essay, in discussing Taiwanese immigrants in the United States, we will specifically refer to them as “Taiwanese Americans,” and therefore emphasize their Taiwan origins because their experiences are different from other “Chinese American” communities.

## Taiwanese Immigration History

Taiwanese immigration to the United States unfolded in four distinct periods. The first took place from the end of World War II to the passage of the 1965 Immigration Reform Act. This period witnessed mostly Taiwanese exchange students seeking to get advanced degrees. Between 1954 and 1976, the Taiwan government administered exams to students who wished to study abroad, but only after they have fulfilled their mandatory

military service. Before this period, students from Taiwan mainly studied aboard in Japan and England. According to Taipei's Ministry of Education statistics, the number of students going aboard to study gradually increased, such that in 1963 there were 2,125 students aboard, and in 1969, 2,925. On average, the United States received roughly 2,000 Taiwanese students annually throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s. However, after receiving master's and doctoral degrees, the majority of these students remained in the United States, which resulted in the phenomena that many scholars call the "brain drain." This period also includes the immigration of Taiwanese spouses of American personnel, mainly U.S. soldiers who were stationed in Taiwan after the Korean War. The Korean War and the enveloping Cold War prompted the United States to pledge support of Taiwan's geopolitical safety with the signing of the Mutual Defense Treaty in 1954. Chinese-American



A Taiwanese engineering doctoral student, in August 1975, was one of about 1,000 Chinese and Taiwanese people living in New Haven, Connecticut. (AP Photo/Bob Child)

military personnel also brought their Taiwanese wives back to the United States with them.

The second period is from 1965 to 1979. The 1965 Immigration Reform Act raised the ceiling for Chinese immigrants to 20,000, including Hong Kong and Taiwan. China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan were not treated as separate entities until the 1980 census. This included a provision for the reunification of families of U.S. citizens that was not restricted by numerical limits. Additionally, there was a clause that allowed preferential admissions of immigrants with vital and exceptional skills, such as technical and scientific skills in critical employment arenas. As a result, engineers, scientists, and skilled professionals from Taiwan, trained in either Taiwan or the United States, were able to gain permanent residency status. This too, magnified the "brain drain" that had begun in the first period of Taiwanese immigration.

The third period starts in 1979 and continues as of 2011. The overall Chinese population in America increased considerably in 1979, when the United States normalized geopolitical relations with the People's Republic of China, mainland China. Official relations with Taiwan thus ceased. Therefore, instead of an embassy in Taipei, the United States established an American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) that functions like a quasi-embassy and is staffed by U.S. State Department personnel. In 1982, taking into account protests from Beijing, the United States established a separate quota for Taiwan at 20,000. This occurred in the context of rapid modernization and economic growth in Taiwan. Trained professionals were not able to find employment in Taiwan because job creation lagged behind economic growth. Consequently, many sought employment in America. This period also increased the impact of the "brain drain" from Taiwan. The Immigration Act of 1990 maintained a preference clause for professionals and those with exceptional skills in key growth areas (i.e., computer and other high technologies). Additionally, the 1990 act's employment provisions include investors who saw economic opportunity in the United States. The 1990 act made it easier for such investors to move into the United States, which resulted in what has been labeled "flexible citizenship." Flexible citizens are wealthy Taiwanese (and Chinese) immigrants who

move between Taiwan (and Hong Kong and Singapore) and maintain dual citizenship, thereby making use of economic policies and fluid nation-state borders.

The normalization of geopolitical relations between the United States and mainland China in 1979 aroused fear of China's conquest of Taiwan. Many Taiwanese residents were apprehensive that China might make a move to unite with Taiwan under its "One China" philosophy. Accordingly, many anxious Taiwanese began moving their financial capital to other countries, in particular to the United States. A similar phenomenon unfolded in Hong Kong during this period. Together, this period witnessed an increase of Taiwanese immigrants (also Hong Kongese) seeking permanent residency status in the United States.

A fourth distinct migration period can be discerned which was most manifest in the 1990s and throughout the early 2000s. This period can be described as the "transnational period" of Taiwanese immigration. Chinese immigration to the United States has always been transnational in nature, meaning that immigrants have maintained connections to their homeland. Early Chinese immigrants from Canton in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were transnational because Chinese male immigrants intended to return to China after securing wealth primarily from the California Gold Rush. Families and kinship networks facilitated an early transnational lifestyle whereby husbands have worked in the United States and sent money home to China.

Families in the homeland grew because husbands would return to China and become intimate with their wives. The same husbands might have a family and second wife in the United States. The encounters and face-to-face meeting were limited and occasional, even though transnational. Taiwan lifted martial law in 1987, which, coupled with economic development in Taiwan, created a new type of transnational flow. The new type of transnationality during the 1990s and 2000s was facilitated by further advances in travel and telecommunications. As a result, scholars have called these new transnational persons from Taiwan (also from Hong Kong and Singapore) "*taikongren*" ("astronauts"), meaning Taiwanese subjects who move back and forth between the United States and Taiwan for business and work. The families of these

so-called Taiwanese astronauts are described as "split transnational families."

This period also witnessed the growth of transnational Taiwanese student populations in the United States. This is partly a consequence of the competitive nature of the examination system in Taiwan for advancement in school. As a result, parents with the means to do so send their children to the United States to receive an education. The economic boom in Taiwan during the 1980s–1990s facilitated this phenomenon. These students have been sent to live with relatives, or with close family friends, or live in homes their parents purchased. They are called "parachute children" or "*xiao liuxuesheng*," literally meaning "little overseas students." The toll that such transnational Taiwanese family structures have on marriages and on family relations has been documented and found to be, overall, negative and stressful.

In addition, today's Taiwanese-American transnational subjects fly back to Taiwan to vote, and Taiwanese politicians travel to the United States to campaign in Taiwanese-American communities. For instance, during the 2004 and 2008 presidential elections in Taiwan, many Taiwanese Americans traveled back to the island to vote because absentee voting was not allowed. While approximately 2,000 Taiwanese New Yorkers returned to vote in 2004, nearly 10,000 Taiwanese Americans returned from California to Taiwan in 2008 in order to vote. This phenomenon, labeled "political transnationalism," especially includes Taiwanese Americans who actively participate in the politics of their native countries, especially with regard to U.S. foreign policy.

Even though the 1980s and 1990s witnessed high levels of the new transnationalism by Taiwanese subjects living between the United States and Taiwan, it has subsequently revealed a decrease in emigration from Taiwan for the same reasons that there has been an increase in the number of returning transnational Taiwanese and Taiwanese Americans, namely due to economic development, better work opportunities for highly skilled and highly educated professionals, better living conditions, and the end of martial law in 1987. Although many Taiwanese students are staying in Taiwan for their education and advance degrees,



as of 2009, Taiwan still ranked ninth among all countries with students in the United States.

The factors that inform Taiwanese immigration to the United States are complex and multilayered. They range from political factors, such as cross-strait relations with China; national security; and, during the early period, restrictions on freedoms due to martial law. However, one still find many Taiwanese pushing to leave Taiwan for educational and economic opportunities as a result of a rigorous examination system for educational opportunities as well as a lack of an adequate number of jobs for highly skilled professionals in relation to the number of Taiwanese obtaining advanced degrees. Changes in U.S. immigration policy after 1965 made it possible for Taiwanese immigrants to gain permanent residency status and sponsor their kinfolds during the ensuing years. Taiwanese Americans, both first and second generation, have made their presence well known within Chinese-American communities. Their experiences, economic background, and history set them apart from earlier Chinese immigrants as well as more recent ones from mainland China.

### Taiwanese-American Demographic Background

According to a Taiwanese government survey, there were approximately 627,000 persons of Taiwanese ancestry—"members of the Taiwanese diaspora"—living in America in 2008. As of that time, there were among them 342,000 Taiwanese immigrants who had made the United States their home. Those Taiwanese comprised the 24th-largest immigrant group in the United States, comparable in size to the Japanese- and Iranian-American populations. Overall, these immigrants were concentrated in California and possessed high levels of education and lower levels of poverty than did many other immigrant and native-born American groups.

Based on the U.S. Census Bureau's 2008 American Community Survey (ACS), the 2000 decennial census, and the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS) for 2008 and 2009 (data from these sources are found in Tables 1, 2, and 3), the following conclusions can be drawn about the Taiwanese-American population:

**Table 1. Total and Taiwanese Foreign-Born Population, 1980 to 2008**

Year	Foreign-born	Taiwan-born	Share of all foreign-born	Rank
1980	14,079,906	75,353	0.5%	32
1990	19,797,316	244,102	1.2%	19
2000	31,107,889	326,215	1.0%	21
2008	37,960,773	342,444	0.9%	24

*Source:* Data for 2000 from the 2000 census; data for 2008 from the American Community Survey 2008. Data for earlier decades from Campbell Gibson and Emily Lennon, "Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850 to 1990" (Working Paper No. 29, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 1999).

**Table 2. Taiwanese-American Communities by State, 2008**

California	160,675	46.9%
New York	29,954	8.7%
Texas	24,781	7.2%
New Jersey	14,085	4.1%

*Source:* American Community Survey 2008.

First, of the 342,000 foreign-born Taiwanese living in the United States, half lived in California, and women (54.6 percent) outnumbered the immigrant men (45.4 percent). One-third of these Taiwanese foreign-born had immigrated to the United States in the 1980s, almost 29 percent during the 1990s, and 93,000 more (nearly 30 percent) were admitted during the decade between 2000 and 2009.

Second, Taiwanese immigrants had a higher rate of naturalization than did many other immigrant populations, but, between 2000 and 2009, the 86,362 Taiwanese who became U.S. citizens equaled only one-eighth the number of mainland Chinese naturalized. However, the percentage of foreign-born who

**Table 3. Taiwanese-American Communities by Metropolitan Areas, 2008**

Los Angeles–Long Beach–Santa Ana, CA, Metropolitan area	83,294	24.3%
New York–Northern New Jersey–Long Island, NY–NJ–PA	39,617	11.6%
San Jose–Sunnyvale–Santa Clara, CA	30,562	8.9%
San Francisco–Oakland–Fremont, CA	23,299	6.8%

*Source:* American Community Survey 2008.

became citizens and the rapidity with which they applied was not surprising, given that 7 out of every 10 Taiwanese-born adults possessed a bachelor's degree or higher. More than half of the Taiwanese immigrant men were employed in high-skilled professional careers, such as finance, information technology, engineering, and health sciences.

Third, roughly 113,000 Taiwanese-American children under the age of 18 resided in a household where at least one parent was a Taiwanese immigrant. Seventy-six percent of the Taiwanese Americans were home owners. About one in nine Taiwanese immigrants (11.2 percent) did not have health insurance in 2008—much lower than the one-in-three uninsured rate (32.9 percent) among all immigrants and slightly lower than among the native-born (12.9 percent).

As noted, nearly 93,000 Taiwanese immigrants gained lawful permanent residency in the United States between 2000 and 2009. Furthermore, two-thirds of all Taiwanese immigrants receiving lawful permanent residency in 2009 were admitted based on the family reunification clause. Between 2000 and 2009, as noted above, over 86,300 Taiwanese immigrants became naturalized Americans.

## Taiwanese-American Settlement and Communities

Unlike the Chinese immigrants of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, immigrants from Taiwan arrived in the United States with relative wealth and higher levels of education. As a result, they did not resettle in the predominately old Cantonese- and Taishanese-speaking Chinatowns. Instead, they moved into suburban communities and established what have been referred to as the “new suburban Chinatowns.” Since the late 1970s and into the early 1980s, Taiwanese immigrants settled in Monterey Park, California, within Los Angeles proper. As a result of the high number of Taiwanese immigrants moving in, Monterey Park was vernacularly called “Little Taipei” or “Xiao Taipei.” Similarly, on the East Coast, Flushing, New York, became “Mandarin Park,” which distinguished it from the old Chinatown of New York City. By the mid-to-late 1990s, Los Angeles area Taiwanese immigrants started to move

eastward, into the suburban communities of Arcadia, Rosemead, and the San Gabriel Valley of Los Angeles proper. Later, Taiwanese immigrants who were more affluent—and had more established families—moved east to suburbs like San Marino or South Pasadena, or to Orange County suburbs, such as Tustin and Anaheim Hills. The high-tech boom during the late 1980s and early 1990s in the San Francisco Bay Area's Silicon Valley attracted more Taiwanese immigrants than ever before. However, Monterey Park remains the cultural and business capital of Taiwanese in Los Angeles and, by extension, in the rest of the country.

## Taiwanese-American Networks

The Taiwanese-American community remained strong in its association. New immigrant families would connect with the growing organizations that were established with the first immigrant communities. In the 1970s, the Taiwanese American Association was one of the first nationwide networks of locally active chapters in most major metropolitan areas. Taiwanese Americans established cultural, economic, and political networks to maintain their interests in the United States and Taiwan. In 1982, the North American Taiwanese Professors Association (NATPA) was created; in 1984, the North American Taiwanese Medical Association (NATMA) soon followed; in 1985, the Taiwanese American Citizens' League was founded; and in 1988, the North American Taiwanese Women's Association (NATWA) was established. Each of these organizations held local meetings, sponsored cultural events, and met at national conferences.

Often, these were vehicles by which the community would voice their support for Taiwanese independence and for democratic reform. Such organizations as the Formosan Association for Public Affairs and the Formosa Foundation were formed to support Taiwan on the political front and help establish its recognition on the international stage. Second-generation Taiwanese Americans established themselves through new organizations, including Taiwanese American Professionals (TAP), Intercollegiate Taiwanese American Students Association (ITASA), and Junior Taiwanese American Student Association (JTASA, high school-level network). A whole host of other

organizations would reflect the visions and dreams of the parent organizations that spawned them.

### Taiwanese-American Identity and the Second Generation

Among second-generation Taiwanese Americans, identity—national, cultural, linguistic—are important for everyday life. Second-generation Taiwanese Americans have an understanding of the political implication of Chinese versus Taiwanese identities. The growth of Taiwanese-American student associations on college campuses, especially Ivy League campuses, illustrates the importance of Taiwanese cultural and national identities among second-generation Taiwanese Americans. For instance, students at the University of California at Berkeley, Yale, Princeton, Cornell, Brown, Johns Hopkins University, and New York University, all house a Taiwanese-American student association with a stated mission of promoting unity and cooperation among Taiwanese-American students and their communities. Additionally, they aim to develop leadership skills among Taiwanese-American students to build strong cultural and social bonds among and within Taiwanese Americans and their communities. These Taiwanese-American student associations employ new social media, particularly Facebook, to network and engage with other Taiwanese-American students across the country. The use of social media was key in the 2010 U.S. census write-in “Taiwanese” campaign.

The 2000 U.S. census shows that there are 144,795 self-identified Taiwanese residents in the United States. This number, argued many Taiwanese-American leaders, is an underrepresentation of the real population and grossly inaccurate. As a result, Taiwanese-American political organizations launched a campaign during the 2010 U.S. census to write in “Taiwanese.” Student associations on college campuses across the United States were a major agent for this write-in campaign. This reveals that second-generation Taiwanese Americans, although they may self-identify as “Chinese” American, are also keenly aware of the Taiwan origin and connection. Moreover, it reveals that they are concerned about the geopolitical welfare of Taiwan and are proud of their unique history and experience as Taiwanese Americans.

### Immigration and Religion in Taiwanese-American Communities

Taiwanese immigrants have arrived in the United States armed with increasing technology and wealth, and so they lived across an ocean and a nation, markedly changing their American experience. The experience of religion in mainland Chinese versus Taiwanese societies was drastically different; Taiwan fostered religious communities, rituals, and temples, benefiting from the great wealth produced during the 1970s and 1980s. On the other hand, programs of socialist-state secularization marked the religious experience in China, which only recently has been able to appear in public as “religion.”

The majority of Taiwanese Americans practice Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and folk religious traditions. Some will identify strictly as Buddhist, such as Ciji volunteers, but this does not mean that they will not visit Taoist temples. Confucian morals and ethics are transmitted primarily through the home, expressed in relationships between elders and young people. Taiwanese-American religious life in contemporary America is unique in that it is transforming due to the forces of globalization and modernization. The shifting composition and trend in Taiwanese immigration to the United States—in terms of establishing a transnational citizenry and, by extension, a transnational community between Taiwan and America—is reflected in the establishment of uniquely global Taiwanese religious communities. These communities have also adapted to American civic culture and society in offering social and medical services to the broader communities in which they operate.

Taiwanese Buddhist organizations and temples from Taiwan have enjoyed rapid global growth in recent years. The Hsi Lai Temple, the largest Buddhist monastery in North America, completed in 1988 at a cost of \$26 million, is situated on 15 acres of a hillside at Hacienda Heights in Los Angeles, near “Little Taipei,” a rapidly growing community populated mostly by Taiwanese Americans. Hsi Lai is a satellite community of the mother temple, Foguangshan “Buddha Light Mountain,” located at Kaohsiung (Gaoxiong) in southern Taiwan. Foguangshan was

founded by Master Xingyun, who is the 48th patriarch of the Linzhi School of Chan (Zen) Buddhism. Foguangshan has branches across the United States, including Denver, New York, San Francisco and San Diego, as well as in other major cities worldwide. Hsi Lai Temple has also established the Hsi Lai University, offering undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Another global Buddhist organization has left an influential footprint in the American religious landscape, the Tzu Chi Compassion Relief Society (Ciji-Gongdehui), a worldwide network with centers throughout Europe, Latin America, Southeast Asia, and North America. The headquarters of Ciji in the United States is located in Los Angeles, in a predominantly Chinese-immigrant community of Monrovia. Ciji has established itself in the new American religious landscape through the promotion of social services, primarily through its free clinic program. Dharma Master Zhengyan, along with a group of 30 followers, founded Ciji in Hualian, Taiwan, in 1966. Currently, Ciji is the largest civil organization in Taiwan. In 1993, the Ciji Foundation established its free clinic in Alhambra, California. The clinic is a general health care facility providing medical assistance to financially disadvantaged residents in Los Angeles. It incorporates traditional Chinese healing with Western medicine and Buddhist philosophies of compassion to serve clients without regard to age, sex, race, class, or religious affiliation.

In addition to these two major global Taiwanese Buddhist communities, there is Zhuangyen Monastery located at Carmel, New York, and serving New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Another major center is the Jade Buddha Temple, associated with the Texas Buddhist Association in Houston, Texas.

Taiwanese Taoist or Buddho-Taoist temples have also appeared in the American religious landscape. The worship of the Empress of the Heaven, Goddess of the Sea, known in Taiwan as "Mazu"—an affectionate kinship term denoting "Granny," otherwise known as Tianhou—is the most popular female object of devotion within Taiwanese communities. The first Tianhou/Mazu temple was, not surprisingly, founded in San Francisco's Chinatown in 1852, as immigrants who landed there immediately wanted to return thanks to her for safely guiding their ships on

the arduous three-week journey across the Pacific Ocean.

Today, Tianhou/Mazu travels to America by plane. She is no longer solely venerated as a sea goddess: she is protector of women and children, listener of prayers and illnesses, giver of prosperity, and protector of family and community. In 1986, the growing Taiwanese community established the Ma-tsu Temple USA with links to the mother temple in Beigang, Taiwan. From the beginning, the Ma-tsu Temple USA has adapted to American civic culture by participating in the annual San Francisco Chinese New Year Parade, which also doubles as the traditional celestial inspection tour to be performed later on her birthday. Taiwanese temples will differ from other Chinese temples found in the United States in that they will house other deities, popular to people from Taiwan, such as Qingshui Zushi, who is popularly venerated in San-hsia north of Taipei.

The Taiwanese Christian community is also vibrant. Christianity came to Taiwan in the seventeenth century with the Europeans, the Dutch introducing Protestantism and the Portuguese introducing Catholicism. Compared to Taiwan, a larger percentage of Taiwanese Americans attend churches in the United States, perhaps because many of the educated Taiwanese immigrants were Christian even before immigration. In America, Taiwanese-Christian communities are places for religious fellowship, as well as Taiwanese solidarity.

Taiwanese Americans will celebrate and observe all the major Chinese festivals and holidays, such as Chinese New Year, Spring and Autumn Festival, and the Lantern Festival. During Chingming (Tomb Sweeping Festival), Taiwanese Americans will travel back to Taiwan to visit the graves and tombs of their ancestors. However, there are some festivals that are unique to Taiwanese religiosity. For example, since the Empress of Heaven is a major cult in Taiwan, her birthday celebrated in March calls for big fanfare in the United States at local temples where she is enshrined, such as the Ma-tsu Temple USA. Taiwanese Americans, like other Chinese Americans will also practice *fengshui*, the science of placing things in the home and in business sittings to enhance wealth. Taiwanese Americans will also frequent fortune tellers during Chinese New Year. Grandmothers

and mothers will burn incense in the morning and in the evening at their home altar for the health and well-being of their family.

Taiwanese Americans and their religions, like their identity, are increasingly global and transnational in scope, utilizing the latest technology—the Internet—to establish imagined communities across borders and oceans. Taiwanese Americans find fertile grounds in the pluralistic religious landscape of the United States to transplant their religions while creatively adapting to their new life.

## Planting Roots and Contributing to American Culture

### Notable Taiwanese Americans

Elaine Chao, U.S. secretary of labor in the George W. Bush administration

John Chiang, Democratic politician; became California state controller in January 2007

Steven Chu, 1997 Nobel Prize in Physics, first Asian American to run one of the 16 national laboratories operated by the Department of Energy (Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory), U.S. secretary of energy in the Barack Obama administration

Ang Lee, film director of *Brokeback Mountain* and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, winner of Best Director Oscar in 2005 for *Brokeback Mountain*

Wen Ho Lee, nuclear physicist, wrongly accused for espionage and then acquitted

Yuan-tseh Lee, 1986 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry  
Jeremy Lin, first Taiwanese American in NBA (National Basketball Association)

Justin Lin, film director of *Better Luck Tomorrow* and *The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift*

John Chun Liu, New York City comptroller and the first Taiwanese American elected to city office in New York City

Lucy Liu, actress who started in *Kill Bill Volume 1* and *Charlie's Angels*

Kevin Tan, 2008 Beijing Olympics bronze medalist, U.S. gymnastics team

Chien-Ming Wang, first Taiwanese American Major League Baseball pitcher, currently with the Washington Nationals

Jason Wu, the fashion designer who created First Lady Michelle Obama's inaugural gown

Jerry Yang, cofounder and former CEO of Yahoo! Inc.

### Taiwanese Food in America

Taiwanese have brought their unique Taiwan style cuisine to the United States. The milk tea with tapioca balls or *zhenzhu naicha* is available at many U.S. Chinese restaurants and delis. Popularly called "bubble tea" or tapioca tea, or "boba milk tea," in the United States, *zhenzhu naicha* was invented in Taiwan in the 1980s. It is a drink that is a blend of ice tea with a flavoring (e.g. taro, coffee, cantaloupe melon, etc.). The tapioca balls are chewy and made of starch. These drinks first spread to nearby Asian countries, then to Canada, then to the United States and Europe in the 1990s. It is popular among West Coast college towns (Berkeley, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles) and available at the Quickly Tea Café located in nearly all Chinatown communities across the United States, new and old. It is also found in other Asian ethnic enclaves, such as the Vietnamese American Little Saigon, and on Japan towns.

Another notable Taiwanese food that is popular and successful in the United States is Din Tai Fung, a Shanghai-style dumpling restaurant founded in Taipei. In 2000, Guohua Yang (aka Frank) opened a Din Tai Fung in Arcadia, California. The restaurant became an immediate success because of the notoriety of Din Tai Fung in Taipei, Taiwan. Besides local Taiwanese Americans, other Chinese and non-Asian foodies from all over ate at the restaurant. It serves roughly 2,000 dumplings a day. Among some Taiwanese-American patrons, Din Tai Fung Arcadia reminded them of life and family back in Taiwan. In Taiwan, the restaurant uses bamboo steamers, which was not allowed in Los Angeles because of health issues. The owner, Frank Yang, was concerned that using steel steamers would comprise the flavor profile of his dumplings. Even so, Din Tai Fung is one of the most popular Taiwanese dumpling houses in Southern California.

A local favorite of many Taiwanese is stinky tofu, *choudoufu*. In Taiwan, the smell of stinky tofu can be picked up miles away from a stinky tofu stand or shop. Stinky tofu is a fermented tofu that is appreciated for its pungent flavor and smell. As the saying goes, “the stinkier, the better.” Stinky tofu can be eaten cold, steamed, or stewed, but is most commonly deep fried. It is often served with pickled cabbage and red chili paste. Little Taipei commercial areas are known for serving stinky tofu, but many Taiwanese Americans will complain that it is not as stinky as stinky tofu in Taiwan.

### Taiwanese Heritage Week

In 1992, President George H. W. Bush signed Act H.R. 5572, proclaiming May as the Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. In May 2010, the U.S. Congress passed a resolution declaring Taiwanese American Heritage Week, which is celebrated in mid-May. Oregon Democrat David Wu, the first Taiwan-born U.S. member of Congress in the House of Representative and cochair of the Congressional Taiwan Caucus, introduced the resolution that was supported by 26 cosponsors. Taiwanese American Heritage Week, observed each Mother’s Day weekend, was created by the Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA) in 1999. During the first Taiwanese American Heritage Week celebration, former U.S. President William Clinton stated in a letter addressed to FAPA: “Americans of Taiwan descent can be proud of their roots and of their vital role in the continued growth of our nation. This observance offers us an opportunity to learn more about the outstanding contributions that men and women from Taiwan have made to our nation and the world” (Lowther 2010, 3). While speaking to the House of Representatives on his resolution, Congressman Wu said, “Taiwanese Americans have greatly enriched the fabric of American society and the mutual understanding between the peoples of the United States and Taiwan. I encourage Congress and the American people to absorb the legacy, culture and achievements of the Taiwanese American community” (Lowther 2010, 3). As a result, cities with sizable Taiwanese-American populations—such as San Francisco,

California; Orlando, Florida; Houston, Texas; and New York City—have organized Taiwanese-American cultural festivals annually every mid-May.

### Conclusion

Taiwan is a dynamic new democracy that has experienced two peaceful exchanges of power since its establishment under martial law. The term “Taiwanese” and hence “Taiwanese American” has crystallized over time to refer to someone from Taiwan who is interested in Taiwan’s geopolitical sovereignty. It is also someone who is culturally connected to Taiwan through religious practices and associations. Taiwanese Americans have relatives from Taiwan and are able to return to Taiwan regularly to reconnect with their kinfolds. A Taiwanese-centric consciousness has developed in the United States among second-generation Taiwanese Americans as illustrated by the establishment of student and professional organizations and associations. The new generation of Taiwanese Americans maintains multiple identities, which they negotiate situationally and politically. Taiwanese Americans are simultaneously Chinese American and Asian American.

The geopolitical situation between mainland China and Taiwan is not lost among second-generation Taiwanese as attested to by the establishment of Taiwanese American Student Associations across American college campuses. Instead of joining the already established Chinese American Student Associations, they elected to make a conscious political, cultural, and, to a certain degree, ethnic declaration of being from Taiwan and of being Taiwanese. As such, they are concerned about Taiwan’s geopolitical future and sovereignty. Economic interests and Taiwanese investors in mainland China maintain the current status of cross-straits relations, one of political grandstanding by officials on both sides of the Taiwanese Straits. The U.S. geopolitical support of Taiwan’s political sovereignty results in a wholesale pro-America and pro-American sentiment on the island nation-state and among Taiwanese Americans residing in the United States. The future of Taiwanese Americans and their communities rest on Taiwan’s

ability, and China's desire, to maintain the current status quo, which has secured relative peace.

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