Editorial

A Perspective on Taiwan's Human Geography

Roger M. Selya*
University of Cincinnati

Jack F. Williams**
Michigan State University

At first glance, assembling a group of essays devoted to the Human Geography of Taiwan might seem at best misguided or at worst naïve. After all, for the better part of the last 20 years it has been The People's Republic of China (PRC), not Taiwan or the remaining three (South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore) of the "Four Little Tigers," that has captured the attention and imagination of those interested in the development process, especially among professional geographers (Cannon and Jenkins,1990; Chiang, 2005; Hsieh and Lu, 2004; Pannell. 1990; Wei, 1999; Williams, 2002; Yeung and Zhou, 1991). As a result of the Four Modernizations and other reform policies begun by Deng Xiao-ping in the late 1970s, China has emerged as an economic powerhouse to be reckoned with, due to its seemingly inexhaustible ability to provide goods to the world markets, its accumulation of foreign reserves, its increasingly active participation in world economic, political, and sports arenas, and its military modernization and build-up, as well as its potential for disruption of both local and world environmental systems (Economy, 2004; Liu and Diamond, 2005; Smil, 2004).

Yet, exactly because of all this attention, there is both a need and value to refocusing attention on Taiwan. Without getting bogged down in the debates regarding whether Taiwan is a part of China or not, or whether Taiwan is even Chinese or not (Brown, 2004) or is merely a part of a so-called "Greater China," there needs to be a recognition that virtually every development problem the PRC is encountering has been experienced and to some extent been debated and/or resolved in Taiwan. Geographers have played an important role in publicizing both the problems and

* Department of Geography, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH, 45221 USA. E-mail:selyarm@uc.edu

** Department of Geography, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, 48824, USA. E-mail: jfw@msu.edu

solutions involved in Taiwan's passage from an underdeveloped country to one of the Four Little Tigers and to a full member of the post-1997 globalizing world economy. The inclusion of the Taiwan experiences alongside those of China's thus can provide an opportunity to see the impact of different scales and political cultures on even understanding, let alone resolving, development-related problems. Even irrespective of China, Taiwan, as one of the world's more important islands and a discrete region unto itself, with a unique history and human geography, is highly worthy of intensive study. Unfortunately, the storehouse of knowledge regarding Taiwan's development is not as well publicized and recognized as it might be.

There are a number of reasons for this state of affairs. For one thing, once China opened up economically and politically, geographers outside of China turned their attention away from Taiwan (Knapp, 1978) to the experiences of the PRC, joining the stampede by other scholars outside China (especially in the Western world) to get inside the country that had been isolated from the world for a quarter century. As a result, the volume of materials being published by geographers about Taiwan diminished. Taiwan came to be seen by many as peripheral to the more important object of study – China. Research funding further stimulated the trek to China, as private foundations and government agencies greatly increased their level of support for scholars working in and on the PRC. For many geographers, Taiwan simply did not have the allure that the PRC had. In addition, for geographers inside of Taiwan, the profession of geography up until the late 1970s was largely an importation from the mainland, via Chinese geographers who joined the mass exile to Taiwan with the Republic of China (ROC) in the late 1940s. Because of the authoritarian political system of Taiwan, under the KMT-dominated government (that lasted in various ways until the late 1980s), there were very real restrictions on what geographers (and other scholars) could or could not do. Thus, the study of China was largely restricted to the China of pre-1949, as if everything after that never happened. Maps produced on Taiwan continued to show the political boundaries of 1949 China, as the ROC government pretended it was the sole legitimate government of all of China. Even the study of Taiwan, though, was restricted, in terms of teaching and research about the geography, history, or ethnography of the island, in the (ultimately) futile effort by the KMT government to re-sinicize the ethnic Taiwanese majority population, by strictly limiting how much and what kind of knowledge about Taiwan could be taught or studied. Anything critical of the ROC government, or in any way suggesting that Taiwan had not always been and was forever a part of Greater China ("One China"), was considered heresy and dangerous.

Hence, (mainland-born) geographers on Taiwan, joined over the years after 1950 by native Taiwanese drawn to the field through the university examination system (a system that did not always allow maximum freedom of choice of field of study), tended to stick to safe subjects, especially physical geography. Even there, it could be unwise for scholars, for example, to veer off into such areas as environmental abuses from development of the island's natural resources, if such were critical of govern-

ment policies. Human geography thus was either totally ignored or practiced in severely circumscribed manner. Thus, one cannot entirely blame outside (Western) geographers from deserting Taiwan for seemingly richer pastures in the PRC, even though the PRC government was also highly restrictive on the kinds of topics and research that it allowed geographers (and other scholars) to practice on the mainland, especially in the early post-Mao years of the 1980s.

Nonetheless, geography as a profession did survive and continue to grow on Taiwan through the decades of restrictions. Then, with the weakening of the authoritarian system in the 1980s and the end of martial law in 1987, Taiwan's political and social culture began to flower and geography blossomed (as did many other social sciences and formerly restricted fields of study). Geography has long been dominated by one principal center of teaching and research: National Taiwan University (NTU). Founded by the Japanese in the 1920s as Taihoku Imperial University during the colonial era (1895-1945), NTU strengthened in the post-1950 era as the principal graduate-training and research-focused institution on the island. The Department of Geography at NTU (which just celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2005) thus has always been the leading department on the island. It gets the cream of the crop of each year's entrance examination applicants, many of whom go on to do Ph.D.s abroad, and many of whom fill teaching slots in academic and research institutions all over the island. All of the contributors to this special issue of GRF are graduates or current graduate students of NTU; five of them are current faculty members of the department at NTU.

As for the other centers of geographic teaching and research on Taiwan, the number two department of geography is located at National Taiwan Normal University, also in Taipei and sited not far from NTU. The "Normal" in the title refers to the institution's principal role as a training center for teachers in the K-12 system. Thus, the department's role at NTNU is to train geography teachers (unlike in the U.S., geography is a required and explicitly labeled subject in the K-12 school system in Taiwan). Nonetheless, the department's faculty also do some research and publishing. Indeed, the two departments (NTU and NTNU) individually publish the two leading geographical journals in Taiwan. Indeed, geographers in Taiwan use the two Chinese language publications, the *Journal of Geographical Science,* published quarterly by the Department of Geography, National Taiwan University, and *Geographical Research,* published bi-annually by the Department of Geography, National Taiwan Normal University, as major outlets on the island for their research. Kaohsiung Normal and the Cultural University (below) also publish bi-annual journals.

Besides NTU and NTNU, other secondary centers of geography in Taiwan are found at Changhua Normal University, Kaohsiung Normal University, and the Chinese Cultural University. Geographers are also sprinkled in various departments around the island, such as social education, in former teacher training colleges that recently became Universities of Education, such as at Hsinchu, Tainan, Taipei,

Hualien, and Chiayi. Some of these geographers do research and publication, but their primary mission is teacher training. Thus, research activities are primarily concentrated at NTU and NTNU in Taipei. Geographers on the island have their professional association in the Geographical Society of China (also an importation from the pre-1949 mainland), which currently has 74 dues-paying members who teach in universities on the island. Altogether, there are some 160 geographers in various institutions and universities all over Taiwan.

As part of the effort to internationalize the educational system in Taiwan, in line with the island's already vigorous participation in the global economy, and to elevate the level of academic research to what the government and university administrators regard as "international" standards, there has been a strong push in recent years for scholars on Taiwan to publish in international, foreign-language (especially English), referred journals that are cited in SSCI and SCI.

This issue of GRF is an indirect consequence of that effort. The two guest editors for this issue, drawing on long-standing academic linkages with NTU and its Department of Geography, invited members of the department to submit papers for consideration for publication in a special issue, designed to highlight the talents of geographers in Taiwan, but especially those affiliated with NTU. We did so in the belief that there is great talent among Taiwanese geographers, and the valuable research they do should receive greater visibility and appreciation by geographers outside Taiwan. We decided to limit the issue to human geography, on the rationale that physical geography is alive and well represented on Taiwan, and does not really need any assistance from us. Human geography, although it has made enormous progress in the last 20 years, still lags somewhat behind.

Thus, we come to this collection of papers. The seven papers represent a cross-section of Taiwanese geographers today, with four females among the total of 14 authors involved (as in the U.S., women geographers are growing in numbers and impact on geography, but still lag somewhat behind males). The authors also range from senior scholars who were educated in the martial law era to much younger graduate students who have known only a system of virtually complete freedom of inquiry. Five of the papers are co-authored, in a trend similar to that in the U.S., and one encouraged by university administrators in Taiwan. One of the authors is a sociologist, working in collaboration with a geographer, a practice common in the U.S. and increasingly so in Taiwan, as scholars cross disciplinary boundaries. The co-authoring also includes established faculty working with advanced graduate students, to give the students a chance at professional publication early in their career, another pattern similar to practices in the U.S. and one to be strongly encouraged by all. Five of the papers deal with topics solely restricted to Taiwan, while the remaining two papers examine facets of Taiwan's linkages with other parts of the Asia-Pacific region. Only one of the papers deals partially with China, reflecting one of the striking consequences of the martial law era on geographic research in Taiwan, namely, the relative paucity of work being done about the PRC, in marked contrast,

say, to geographers in Hong Kong, or even Singapore, who do some of the best work on China currently being produced in the world. The relative hands-off policy toward China may be, in part, a reflection of the political tensions that continue to plague relations between Taiwan and the PRC; yet, several of the scholars at NTU have very close personal linkages with departments and scholars in China and travel there frequently. Still, the study of China is a relatively untapped and vital area of research awaiting the attention of Taiwan's geographers.

We begin with two papers that examine some of Taiwan's linkages with other parts of Asia. Sue-ching Jou and Dung-sheng Chen look at one of the most important phenomena of the post-1987 era in Taiwan—the growing volume of overseas investment by Taiwan companies, especially into China and Southeast Asia. Their paper examines the direction and characteristics of the flow of Taiwan capital over the past 20 years, as Taiwanese companies have struggled to remain competitive in the face of rising labor (and other) production costs in Taiwan. The authors particularly focus on how Taiwanese companies have sought to establish production networks in advantageous sites, such as the Yangtze and Pearl River Deltas in China, and in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand especially, with China proving the more irresistible lure. Lan-hung Nora Chiang and Jung-chung Richard Hsu look at Taiwan's thrust into Australia, via the growing number of Taiwanese who have emigrated there in recent decades. Through examination of published data, reinforced by interviews and fieldwork in Australia, the authors present a very detailed analysis of who emigrates to Australia, where they settle, their occupations, how well they adapt to life there, and other facets of life in their adopted homeland, and generalizations that can be made based on the experience of many thousands of Taiwanese immigrants. The authors' conclusion is that their adaptations and their self-identities between the two societies are complex. As with immigrants everywhere, some of the Taiwanese have succeeded very well in Australia, others have not.

Two papers examine different aspects of Taiwan's population. Ji-ping Lin looks at labor migration in Taiwan, especially during the last two decades. Using the 1990 and 2000 censuses, Lin provides a detailed analysis of the large migration of labor within Taiwan as urban/industrial growth patterns have changed over recent years. He points out that the metropolitan areas of northern Taiwan have been growing the fastest, but primarily now in the suburban secondary cities between Taipei and Taoyuan/Hsinchu. That region also attracts higher quality labor, reinforcing the region's dominance of Taiwan's economy. Yi-ling Chen presents a feminist study of the relationship between Taiwan's housing policies and single mothers during the period of dominance by the KMT (1949-2000). Chen notes the gender inequality that has characterized Taiwan's society over recent decades, particularly in terms of housing and its links with family, labor market structures, legal systems, and state policies. She also points out that housing policies under the KMT tended to favor wealthy home buyers and state supporters, a system that is only beginning to be reformed.

Two of the papers deal with different facets of Taiwan's economy. Jinn-yuh Hsu

and Pin-hsien Chen examine the futures trading industry in Taiwan and how that industry has been shaped by state policy. He observes how the industry arose in spite of state opposition and conservative attitudes, until finally the state was forced to accept reality and develop policies to regulate the industry. The result was an industry dominated by individual investors, with little foreign capital participation, and relying upon social networks to function effectively. Chin-cheng Ni and Ch'ang-yi David Chang look at the tourism industry in Taiwan, in relation to the Penghu Islands (a prefecture off the southwest coast of the main island of Taiwan), formerly known as the Pescadores. Island tourism, as the authors point out, has unique characteristics and problems. The authors analyze both public and private sectors as they relate to Penghu's emergence as a major tourism destination in Taiwan, primarily for domestic tourists, but with a growing international visibility as well.

The final paper is an examination of public participation GIS and its use in the study of indigenous peoples in Taiwan. Indigenous mapping is increasingly used in different parts of the world to reclaim territory and rebuild traditional knowledge. Bor-wen Tsai, Ch'ang-yi Chang, Chun-chiang Lin, and Yung-ching Lo analyze how PPGIS is being used in Taiwan to help the aborigines and the government work out issues of territory and autonomy in the coming years, as part of a new partnership agreement. This process has important implications for the future of Taiwan's land use, especially in the mountain areas.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Chang-yi David Chang (Ph.D. in Geography, University of Texas, Austin) is Professor of Geography at NTU, and former Chair of the Department. A specialist on the environment, his research interests focus especially on perception and behavior, conservation, hazards analysis, and marginal regions, plus land use survey, cultural preservation, and aboriginal studies.

Pin-hsien Chen (M.A. in Geography, NTU) is a doctoral student at NTU. Her research interest concentrates on financial geography, and particularly the institutional diversity of the financialization across the East Asia region.

Dung-sheng Chen (Ph.D. in Sociology, University of Minnesota) is Professor of Sociology at NTU and Director-General of Humanities and Social Sciences in the National Science Council, Taiwan. His research interests include urban sociology and the sociology of organizations.

Yi-Ling Chen (Ph.D. in Urban Planning and Policy Development at Rutgers University) is Assistant Professor in the Department of Local Studies at National Hualien University of Education. Her research interests are in gender and housing, governance and policies of redevelopment in marginal cities of Taiwan, and community development.

Lan-hung Nora Chiang (Ph.D. in Geography, University of Hawaii) is Professor

of Geography at National Taiwan University. She was the former Chair of the Department, as well as Director of the Population and Gender Studies Center at NTU, and currently Coordinator of the Australian Studies Center at NTU. Her research interests are in rural-urban migration, cultural identity and ecotourism, environmental impact and hazard perception, and Taiwanese immigrants in Australia.

Jinn-yuh Hsu (Ph.D. in Geography, University of California, Berkeley) is Associate Professor of Geography at NTU. An economic geographer, his research interests focus on high-technology industries and regional development in late-industrializing countries, particularly Taiwan.

Jung-chung Richard Hsu (Ph.D. in Geography, NTU) is Associate Professor in Social Studies Education at Taipei Municipal University of Education. His dissertation was on residential mobility of Taiwanese migrants in Australia.

Sue-ching Jou (Ph.D. in Geography, University of Minnesota) is Professor of Geography at NTU. Her research interests focus on urban policy and politics, and cross-border investment of Taiwan capital.

Chun-chiang Lin (Ph.D. in Geography, National Taiwan University) is a recent graduate whose research interests are environmental conservation and management, political ecology, indigenous studies and public participation GIS.

Ji-ping Lin (Ph.D. in Geography from McMaster University, Canada) is a researcher with the Research Center of Humanities and Social Sciences, Academia Sinica, Taiwan. A specialist in quantitative study, his research interests are in labor migration, medical geography, and labor markets and social security policy.

Yung-ching Lo is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Geography at NTU. With a background in anthropology, Lo is devoting himself to the study of indigenous peoples.

Chin-Cheng Ni (Ph.D. in Geography, National Taiwan University) is Associate Professor in the Department of Regional Studies in Humanity and Social Sciences, National Hsin-chu University of Education. Ni specializes in tourism, regional development, and environmental perception and spatial behavior, with current research focused on tourism development in marginal regions, including small islands.

Bor-Wen Tsai (Ph.D. in Geography, NTU) is Assistant Professor of Geography at NTU. His research interests concentrate on geographic information science, spatial cognition, and land use/cover change.

REFERENCES

Brown, M. (2004) *Is Taiwan Chinese?* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Cannon, T. and Jenkins, A., (eds.) (1990) *The Geography of Contemporary China: The Impact of Deng Xiao-ping's Decade.* New York: Routledge.

Chiang, T.C. (2005) Historical Geography in China. *Progress in Human Geography,*

29:148-64.

Economy, E.C. (2004) *The River Runs Black. The Environmental Challenge to China's Future*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Hsieh, C.M., and Lu, M. (eds.) (2004) *Changing China: A Geographical Appraisal.* Boulder: Westview Press.

Knapp, R.G. (1978) The Geographer and Taiwan. *China Quarterly*, 74:356-68.

Liu, J.G and Diamond, J. (2005) China's environment in a globalizing world. *Nature*, 435: 1179-84.

Pannell, C.W. (1990) China's Urban Geography. *Progress in Human Geography,* 14:214-36.

Smil, V. (2004) *China's Past, China's Future: Energy, Food, Environment.* New York: Routledge Curzon.

Wei, Y.D. (1999) Regional Inequalities in China. *Progress in Human Geography*, 23: 49-59.

Williams, J. F. (2002-03) Geographers and China. *Issues and Studies*, 38/39: 217-247.

Yeung, Y.M., and Zhou, Y.X. (1991) Human Geography in China: Evolution, rejuvenation, and prospects. *Progress in Human Geography* ,15: 373-94.