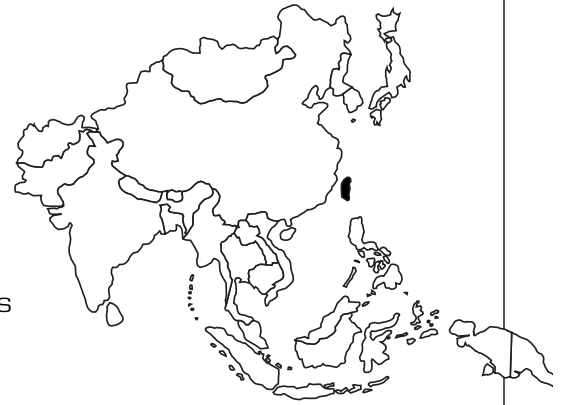


# TAIWAN

TAIWAN, FORMERLY FORMOSA, IS THE SEAT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CHINA, BUT IS ALSO CLAIMED BY MAINLAND CHINA AS A PROVINCE. DESPITE ITS TINY SIZE, TAIWAN'S INDUSTRIAL OUTPUT SUPPLIES MUCH OF THE WORLD'S COMPUTER PARTS.



## population

- Population: 23 million
- Density: 714 per sq km

The population of Taiwan is made up of three main groups: Taiwanese [74%] and Hakka [10%], descendants of Chinese who emigrated from China between the 16th and 19th centuries; Mainlanders [14%], who came across from China after Second World War and the aboriginal peoples [2%], who are descendents of Melanesian/Polynesian and Southeast Asian peoples. The workforce of overseas laborers from Thailand and the Philippines exceeds the number of aboriginal peoples.

## religions

- Chinese/Buddhist 93%
- Christian 1-4% [figures vary]
- Other 2.6%
- Muslim 0.4%

Most people in Taiwan follow a mixture of animism, Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, with a strong emphasis on ancestor worship. There are more than 16,000 registered temples, and Taiwan has more temples per capita than any other country in the world.

Folk religion in Taiwan is syncretistic and polytheistic. There is a strong belief in ghosts and a system of ancestor worship to ensure that households are not troubled by "hungry" ghosts [deceased family members who are not honored and bring havoc upon an individual or family as sickness, discord or financial loss].

## language

Mandarin, the official language, is universal because it is the language of education. But Taiwanese [Hokkien Chinese] is very popular now and has almost become the second official language. Other Chinese dialects are also used. Aboriginal peoples speak dialects of the Malayo-Polynesian language group.

## geography

Taiwan lies 90 miles off the southeastern coast of China. It is only 224 miles long, but has a lofty mountain range reaching 13,113 feet and broad, fertile arable plains. About 75 percent of the population lives in urban areas.

## climate

The warm, humid Taiwan summer extends from May until October; temperatures average about 28°C [83°F]. The mild winter season lasts from December until February; temperatures average about 18°C [65°F]. Typhoons occur between June and October.

## history

Taiwan's history is littered with a succession of invasions. Chinese annals record an expedition undertaken by China against the island as early as 603 AD. Bands of Japanese are said to have conquered portions of the island in the 12th century and from the 15th century, Japan regarded the eastern half of Taiwan as its possession.

The Portuguese, in 1590, were the first Europeans to visit the island, which they called Formosa ["beautiful isle"]. Subsequently, the Spanish attempted to found permanent settlements, but were thwarted by the Dutch.

With the defeat by the Manchus of the Ming dynasty in China in the 17th century, the Mings drove the Dutch from Taiwan and occupied much of the island. Over the following decades the island again became an almost unnoticed part of the vast Chinese empire and many more people settled there from China.

Taiwan was returned to China at the end of the Second World War after 50 years of Japanese occupation. Within a few years, the Chinese Mainland was occupied by the Communists. The Nationalist government of China, led by Chiang Kai-Shek, was driven out by Mao's armies and established its headquarters in Taipei in December 1949. So there were two governments claiming to be the "real" government of China.

Communist plans to invade Taiwan were thwarted by the United States who, for decades, acted as a military buffer between the two Chinas.

During the 1950s and 1960s the U.S. extended massive economic and military aid to the Taiwan regime, enabling it to build up its economy. The island became a showcase of modern economic prosperity, with a growth rate far above that of most other Asian nations.



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Neither of the Chinese governments of China or Taiwan would have diplomatic relations with any nation that recognized the other. Worldwide diplomatic support for Taiwan dwindled from the mid-1960s as countries began to recognize the People's Republic [the China Mainland] instead of the Republic [Taiwan].



Chiang Kai-Shek, embittered by this desertion after 25 years as president, died in 1975.

In the 1970s and 1980s Taiwan's economy continued to expand with an aggressive industrialization program. It now supplies much of the world's computer parts.

Martial law, in effect since 1949, was finally lifted in 1987. Opposition parties were allowed in the 1989 general election. In May 2000 Chen

Shui-bian from the opposition party [DPP] became the new president of Taiwan, making the KMT the opposition party. Political tension still runs high.

There have been tentative talks more recently between China and Taiwan. But China's hardening of attitude, including military exercises off the Taiwan coast in 1996 and sabre-rattling during the presidential elections in 2000, have made the people of Taiwan unwilling to trust the Beijing government. Many would prefer to see Taiwan as a totally independent nation. Others think that unification is hard to avoid and that it would help the economy.

### christianity

Missionaries from Holland came briefly

in the 17th century, but consistent work was only begun in the late 19th century.

Missionaries of all kinds followed the refugees to Taiwan after the Communist takeover of the mainland, CIM/OMF members among them. In those early days OMF agreed not to establish another denomination, but to work with the existing churches.

OMF's primary role has always been to build stronger churches by lay and leadership training and by evangelism. Work with students is a key means of achieving this. In the early days, literature work was started to give the church the tools it needed. Once under way, this was handed over to Chinese Christians.

From 1950-1960 the church experienced rapid growth but this slowed with rapid industrial and economic development. Materialism sapped spiritual hunger and vision. The rising cost of living and uncertainty of their usefulness led many mission workers to leave.

Taiwan's church today is mostly middle class. Christians tend to be well-educated and there are quite a number of growing and vibrant middle class churches. Yet Christianity has had virtually no impact on the population. Less than 0.5 percent of the 13-15 million working-class population [60-70 percent of the whole population] is Christian.

### OMF's strategic priorities

- Working-class evangelism and church-planting
- Youth outreach, especially among the junior and senior high students
- Urban marginalized people such as people with HIV/AIDS, alcoholics and troubled youth
- Leadership training

### opportunities

See strategic priorities above, plus:

- Church planters for secondary cities to reach the working class
- Teachers and dorm parents for the children of OMF missionaries and other mission workers
- Theological education

## how to pray

- Taiwan's political future is a matter for intense political debate and international diplomacy. Pray for wisdom and guidance for leaders.
- Pray for the removal of barriers preventing the growth of the church:
  - Resurgence of Buddhism and Taoism and subjection to the spirit world. Few Chinese want to give up ancestor worship.
  - Disillusioned young people are turning to crime.
  - Taiwanese society is very materialistic. There are many Pachinko parlors, lotteries and other forms of gambling.

Taiwan is the only major Chinese society where there has not been significant church growth this generation.

- Pray for a nationwide prayer movement to unite the church.
- Pray for a breakthrough among the working class. Taiwan's Christians are generally highly educated and do not find it easy to reach out to their working-class neighbors.
- Pray for more missionaries to go to Taiwan and that those who are called may be encouraged and willing to stay.
- There is a lack of pastors and full-time workers. Many experienced pastors emigrate to Western nations. In small churches the congregation expect the pastor to do all the work.
- In big cities there are some large vibrant churches that are flourishing. Pray for relevant, spiritual training and more effective lay training.
- The witness among students is encouraging and students are now permitted to form Christian groups in schools.
- Pray for an awakening of interest and commitment to pray and send out missionaries.
- Pray for sales of Christian literature in the secular book market.
- The creative use of video/DVD, music and the internet in evangelism.