

Taiwanese Immigrants and Evolution of Kobe Chinese Societies in Post-War Japan

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ABSTRACT

There were more than 40,000 Chinese in post-war Japan; and about half of them were from Taiwan. After World War II, Taiwan was no longer a Japanese colony; and many overseas Taiwanese in Japan joined the Chinese Society and they outnumbered those from other Chinese provinces. Such change in the composition of the Chinese Society not only had a profound impact but also became its key feature. With the end of 51-year Japanese colonial rule in Taiwan, the overseas Taiwanese in Japan embraced their new identity as “Chinese”. Nevertheless, their national identification was inevitably affected by the political situation in their “Motherland”; in particular, the 228 Incident in Taiwan and the split of power in China after the civil war in 1949. Furthermore, the tension among Taiwan, China and Japan during the Cold War had much influence the overseas Taiwanese and their relationship with the Chinese Society in Japan. After experiencing a series of government handovers and identity transformations, some overseas Taiwanese chose to identify themselves with the People’s Republic of China (P.R.C) and started forging the relationship between China and Japan and promoting Chinese socialism. Conflicts arose, resulting in the split of the Chinese Society.

Kobe had a well-established Chinese Society. In fact, it had the second largest overseas Chinese population from the post-war period to the end of the 50s. Kobe and Tokyo were the major Chinatowns in Kanto and Kansai areas, respectively. During the colonial era, there were only a few Taiwanese in Kobe; but the Taiwanese population increased dramatically after World War II, so did their roles in the Chinese Society and their support to the P.R.C. This article focuses on the overseas Taiwanese in Kobe who supported the P.R.C. The research objectives are to study the changes in relationship

between overseas Taiwanese and the Chinese Society in Kobe, and to examine the interactions in the Chinese Society in Tokyo in order to understand the policy of the P.R.C. government toward overseas Chinese in Japan.

Keywords: Kobe Chinese Societies in Japan, Taiwanese Immigrants in Japan, Overseas Chinese Democracy Promotion Association in Japan, Kobe Overseas Chinese Cultural and Economic Association, Overseas Chinese Association