

Martyrs of Development

Taiwanese Agrarian Development and the Republic of Vietnam, 1959–1975

Under your great leadership the Vietnamese nation has made remarkable achievements in its fight against communism and in the task of national reconstruction—to the great admiration of the Chinese people. As partners in our common struggle against communist aggression and by working closely together, both our nations shall be able to hasten the triumph of our common cause.

—CHIANG KAI-SHEK

INTRODUCTION

On November 13, 1963, Taiwanese rice technician Zhang Dusheng (張篤生, Chang Tusun) was in a jeep returning to Saigon after visiting a rice experiment station approximately seventy kilometers outside the city when his convoy was ambushed by Vietnamese Communist forces and he was killed by gunfire.¹ In the subsequent months, Zhang was made into a martyr, not of war but, rather, of development. *Cheng Hsin Daily News* (徵信新聞報, Zhengxin xinwenbao, later renamed *China Times* [中國時報, Zhongguo shibao]), a pro-government and pro-Guomindang newspaper in Taiwan, wrote that Zhang was “one of the many technical experts who are away from their homes to help foreign nations, as under-developed as or more under-developed than ours, in developing their resources. They have enabled many [foreign nations] to understand more correctly of [sic] the industrious spirit and the scientific knowledge of our countrymen. Their contribution[s] in foreign countries are as great as in their own country.”²

In the dozens of newspaper articles, interviews, and speeches that followed, Zhang’s martyrdom forged a new narrative of Taiwan’s engagement with the world. Following its defeat at the hands of the Chinese Communist Party, the ruling GMD regime framed the Republic of China’s (ROC) international affairs

around an existential battle with Communism and the People's Republic of China (PRC) regime. As I show in this chapter, agrarian development missions to Vietnam beginning in 1959 expanded this narrative beyond retaking mainland China from the Chinese Communists to include development. The ROC was demonstrating its technology, perseverance, and modernity to the Global South. In the rural villages of Vietnam, dozens of Taiwanese teams worked side by side with Vietnamese farmers to showcase greener, lusher vegetables, more efficient and practical farm implements, and stronger Taiwanese rural organizations. The fervent anti-Communism of the Cold War was present, but it was complemented by a new narrative of development rooted in the discourse of modernity and strength through economic self-sufficiency. By the 1970s and 1980s, with the thawing of the Cold War in East Asia, economic growth and success increasingly became an important point of legitimacy and state power for the GMD to the extent that they eventually eclipsed the Cold War anti-Communism as predominant subjects of state discourse.

International development marked a new frontier for Taiwan's interactions with the world. The 1959 Vietnam mission was the first such effort that placed Taiwanese technicians and experts in rural areas outside the island. This initial mission was modest in scope, just over a dozen technicians specializing in plant breeding, fisheries, and farmers' associations, who were then tasked with aiding Vietnamese state-led efforts in crop improvement and rural welfare. From the ROC perspective, anti-Communism and GMD leader and dictator Chiang Kai-shek's quest to form Cold War alliances provided geopolitical incentives for offering assistance. By the mid-1960s, technical assistance to the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) and other non-Communist Asian regimes became a significant complement to military assistance.³ Chiang incorrectly believed that North Vietnam was completely controlled by the PRC regime. He viewed actions in Vietnam as part of a greater international anti-Communist strategy that could not be limited to the borders of any one country and development offered an additional means to stop Chinese Communist advances.⁴ Development became an increasingly vital tool in ROC international diplomacy. In turn, development grew more influential in shaping the Taiwanese state and national identity.

The Vietnam missions beginning in 1959 were especially significant as the first international development missions undertaken by Taiwan. Over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, Taiwanese agrarian missions expanded from one to two dozen, covering every corner of the developing world—Asia, Africa, the South Pacific, and Latin America. The African missions during that period were a form of development diplomacy and a cornerstone of ROC foreign policy, especially in the context of PRC-allied Communist-bloc pressure in the United Nations. ROC officials traded agricultural development assistance for votes from newly decolonized, UN-voting member-states from the African continent. There, they deployed many of the lessons learned in the Vietnam missions, including evoking the discourse of Third World solidarity and commonality through non-whiteness and the strength

of non-Western knowledge and methods for achieving postcolonial strength and independence, as the following chapter will explore.

From 1959 until the end of the Second Indochina War (Vietnam War) in 1975, the once limited Vietnam teams represented a new means of legitimacy for the ROC regime. Through development missions, ROC planners demonstrated that they were developed enough where they could assist foreign nations to achieve the same wealth and rural livelihood of Taiwan. At home, this evidence of technical mastery reinforced a new facet of ROC authoritarianism and state power—the celebration of the modern, economically independent nation that staked its claim internationally as much as domestically and on equal grounds with the West. No longer was the ROC a developing nation but a nation whose advanced agrarian development brought demand for its expertise globally and put it at the global vanguard.

In the English-language literature, political scientist John Garver had written about ROC assistance to the RVN, albeit briefly and only within a diplomatic context.⁵ Historian Hsiao-ting Lin has written on the ROC-RVN diplomatic relationship, focusing mostly on military assistance.⁶ More consequentially, historian Simon Toner has written about how RVN officials under President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu looked to Taiwan and South Korea as potential development models.⁷ Toner makes the important claim that Vietnamese officials found relevance in their Asian neighbors instead of the United States or the West because “Taiwan and South Korea offered an alternative model of governance that appealed to the [RVN government]: depoliticized masses, loyal to the authoritarian state and mobilized for economic development.”⁸ Like Taiwan, South Korea and Japan also engaged in international development, especially in Southeast Asia, where they were present for decades rendering agricultural, medical, and infrastructural development.⁹ For RVN leaders, states like Taiwan represented a “romance” or “imagining” of what an idealized RVN could be: a developed, authoritarian state.

This chapter, integrating archival sources from Taiwan, Vietnam, and the United States, traces how Taiwanese experts attempted to transplant elements of their own modernity abroad. It then shows how the development project in Vietnam became an imaginary for the Taiwanese. The purpose of development was as much performative as modernizing, and that performance was in furtherance of ROC objectives to portray itself as a modern, technologically advanced, humanitarian, and prosperous society to the Global South and especially at home.

WHY TAIWAN?

In 1955, Ngô Đình Diệm took power as president of the newly declared Republic of Vietnam in a coup that deposed Bảo Đại, the head of the State of Vietnam. Diệm was a fervent nationalist and anti-Communist opposed to both French colonial presence in the State of Vietnam and Hồ Chí Minh’s Democratic Republic of Vietnam regime that occupied Vietnam north of the seventeenth parallel. By then,

US aid had been increasing after French losses to Communist insurgency in Indochina, and Vietnam was seen as a crucial territory that required US guidance and tutelage.¹⁰ Several prominent American development experts were appointed to serve in Vietnam, including the land reform expert attached to the US Department of Agriculture, Wolf Ladejinsky. As historian Edward Miller has observed, experts like Ladejinsky and others in charge of technical aid and rural development policy in Vietnam all had prior experience in other Asian countries.¹¹ This was certainly the case for William H. Fippin, director of agriculture for US Operations Mission to Vietnam (USOM/Vietnam).

Before he served as director of agriculture for USOM/Vietnam, Fippin was one of two American commissioners from 1952 to 1957 on the Sino-American Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction (JCRR) in Taiwan. Consisting of five commissioners—three Taiwanese and two American—the JCRR was tasked with formulating agricultural policy for the entire island. Fippin was a farmers’-organization specialist who had overseen several of the farmers’ association reforms in the early years of JCRR tenure.¹² As a result of his five years in the JCRR, Fippin was not only intimately familiar with the operations and specialty of the JCRR in farmers’ associations but also held that Taiwan was a particularly successful case of agricultural development.

In 1957, the International Cooperation Administration (one of the predecessors to the US Agency for International Development) moved Fippin to Vietnam, an area of increasing security concern. For the RVN, agricultural development became a key concern of not just the Americans in Vietnam and in Washington but also for the Diệm government. Shortly after his arrival, Fippin wrote to former colleague JCRR commissioner Shen Zonghan (沈宗瀚) that “the agricultural program is the largest and in their eyes most important (except of course the military)” for the Vietnamese, especially in the context of seeking American aid to fight the growing communist threat.¹³

On April 4, 1959, in a memorandum to the deputy minister of foreign affairs, a Taiwanese foreign affairs official in Vietnam wrote that “in discussion with USOM Agricultural Director Fippin and RVN Agricultural and Forestry Minister Lê Văn Song, the US has prepared \$300,000 USD, to invite twenty or thirty foreign agricultural experts to direct and assist.”¹⁴ The initial decision to invite Taiwanese experts was made on the recommendation of Fippin, stemming from his experience as JCRR commissioner. “Because of Fippin having been in Taiwan for many years,” the Taiwanese official in Vietnam continued, “and having worked well with many people within our agricultural circles, he has strongly advocated to invite [experts] from our side. The RVN Agricultural and Forestry Minister, however, is interested in hiring French experts.”¹⁵ The RVN preference for French experts was unsurprising given the long colonial relationship between France and Indochina. The decision to choose Taiwanese experts was unusual because it broke with colonial preferences for French experts, marking the power of American

advisers under Diệm. It was not Vietnam's first exposure to Taiwanese development, however.

Vietnamese officials in Bảo Đại's State of Vietnam (1945–54) that preceded Ngô Đình Diệm's Republic of Vietnam government had as early as 1949 been observing the developments of the JCRR in China and Taiwan. In a document from the State of Vietnam Ministry of Public Works and Transportation (Bộ Công Chánh và Giao Thông), possibly a translation of English-language JCRR documents by Vietnamese officials, the JCRR was described as focused on "bringing earnings to the rural population" and "also recognizing the value of long term research and education."¹⁶ It continued to explain that the JCRR was not a program designed to funnel large amounts of US currency, "because experience has shown in Asia, it was difficult, at least in the beginning, to expend large sums quickly and in a reasonable (wise) manner. On the contrary, it is a lively, dynamic program that begins by finding what is necessary for an ordinary farming family."¹⁷ Though it is not entirely clear where this translation originated, it was most likely read by officials of the Ministry of Public Works and Transportation. In contrast with development programs that are seen as highly capital intensive, a picture emerges of JCRR as being more attuned to the needs of the rural peasant.

Nonetheless, the decision to invite Taiwanese development experts in 1959 should mostly be attributed to the presence of William Fippin. Fippin's position as head of USOM/Vietnam Agriculture and as former head of the JCRR gave him a direct link to the Taiwanese, but there were also intellectual reasons behind the choice beyond mere coincidence and convenience.

Vietnam's agrarian "problem" was construed at the time as social and economic, with significant political consequences for the RVN government. The countryside was where the National Liberation Front (called "Việt Cộng" or Vietnamese Communists, by anti-Communists in the South) operated and drew support. Both the RVN and the US thus targeted rural areas, leading to "pacification" counterinsurgency campaigns beginning in 1954 (and even earlier under French colonial rule and the State of Vietnam), and the Strategic Hamlet Program of 1961 designed to bring counterinsurgency military tactics to the countryside.¹⁸ However, approaches for programs to counter Communist insurgency differed between the two allies. Fippin and other US officials realized that Diệm's demands were centered on amassing as many US dollars with as few strings attached as possible. Fippin sought to discourage this by emphasizing low-cost, high-impact solutions that could be realistically achieved with American assistance. Translated into policy, this meant focusing on projects that could be easily implemented and would not require significant capital or labor resources. "Water," he wrote, was the "biggest, and most difficult problem, but one that we can do relatively little about. Problem is too large. Have seen an old French estimate that control of the Mekong would run to the magnitude of several billion US dollars. Will be a long, long time before anything much is done in that direction so all we can do is a

歷年本國服務省份一覽圖

1. Quang Tri 廣治
2. Thua Thien 承天
3. Quang Nam 廣南
4. Quang Ngai 廣義
5. Binh Dinh 平定
6. Phu Yen 富安
7. Darlac 達樂
8. Khanh Hoa 建和
9. Ninh Thuan 寧順
10. Tuyen Duc 宣德
11. Long Khanh 隆慶
12. Phuoc Tuy 福祿
13. Bien Hoa 達和
14. Binh Duong 平陽
15. Tay Ninh 西寧
16. Hau Nghia 厚義
17. Saigon 西貢
18. Long An 隆安
19. Kien Tuong 建祥
20. Vinh Long 永隆
21. Sa Dec 沙撈
22. An Giang 安江
23. Chau Doc 朱篤
24. Phong Dinh 豐盈
25. Kien Giang 建江
26. Ba Xuyen 巴川

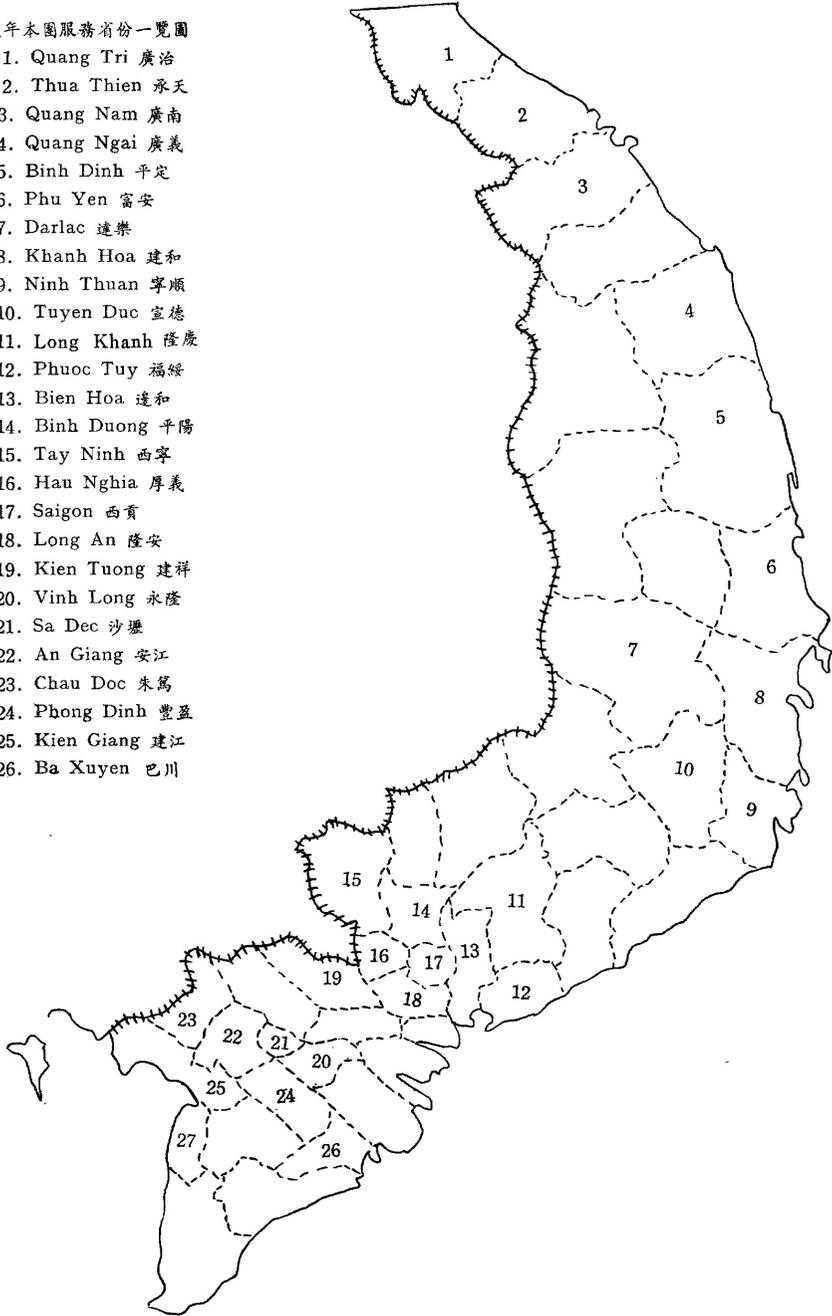


FIGURE 18. A map of the Republic of Vietnam showing provinces where Taiwanese technical assistance was rendered from 1959 to 1973. Zhang, "Twelve Years in Vietnam."

dab here and a dab there.”¹⁹ Water was indeed a major topic of discussion among twentieth-century development experts, and the Mekong in particular was a target of the US Bureau of Reclamation as well as Japanese overseas development.²⁰ Fippin, however, was more concerned with factors he could invite the Taiwanese to assist with.

Instead, Fippin homed in on practices that the Taiwanese excelled at: “varietal improvement, fertilization, pest control and cultural practices.” These four were core practices of the JCRR dating back to the Nanking-Cornell cooperation and National Agricultural Research Bureau in Republican-era mainland China. Taiwan benefitted from an extensive hydrological legacy left by Japanese colonialism and water infrastructure projects continued under the JCRR with US funding. However, Taiwan’s innovations in cheaper and more easily transferable forms of development were more prominent and were certainly noteworthy for Fippin. Finally, Fippin also observed that for “very much of the southern area floating rice is all that can be grown, and yields are pitifully low—slightly over one metric ton per hectare. One crop.”²¹ Taiwanese teams were well versed in high-yield rice selection and breeding, having contributed the semi-dwarfing parent, ‘Dee-Geo-Woo-Gen’ (低角烏尖, ‘Dijiao Wujian’) to the miracle rice IR-8 (see chapter 7). Taiwanese were also observant of soil conditions and climate that would welcome non-rice crops, such as corn or mustard greens, which were planted by Taiwanese teams in Vietnam.

TRANSPLANTING TAIWANESE SCIENCE TO VIETNAMESE CONTEXTS

In December 1959, the ROC began its development assistance missions to the RVN. The Vietnam missions consisted initially of technicians and scientists in farmers’ organizations (associations and cooperatives), crop improvement, fisheries, and sugarcane. Over the course of its roughly fifteen years, it expanded to include plant breeding, veterinary medicine, entomology, soil science, and irrigation.

A major portion of the 1959 mission focused on crop improvement, with renowned plant breeder Ma Baozhi (馬保之, Paul C. Ma) at its head.²² Ma began his career as an agricultural scientist in China, graduating in 1929 from one of the preeminent centers of agricultural science, University of Nanking, followed by his doctorate in plant breeding at Cornell University on fellowship and a year doing research at Cambridge University.²³ Upon returning to China in 1934, he took a position with the National Agricultural Research Bureau (NARB), in charge of operating the NARB Guangxi Extension Station. In 1944, he was appointed the head of the Agricultural Division within the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MOAF) of the Republic of China, as well as later the deputy chief for the Agricultural Rehabilitation Commission established by the MOAF to work with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration in China. After moving

to Taiwan with the Nationalist regime, he became the dean of the College of Agriculture in the preeminent National Taiwan University. In choosing Ma as the leader of the first Crop Improvement Mission to Vietnam, the ROC sent one of its most experienced and respected plant breeders abroad. A well-traveled scientist, Ma was likely as highly regarded as far as technocrats went, and after his brief time as head of the Crop Improvement Mission in Vietnam, he spent over a decade employed by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization as the dean of the College of Agriculture in the University of Liberia (see following chapter).

Under Ma's guidance, the Crop Improvement Mission produced lengthy reports on the state of Vietnamese agriculture. Rice was a key concern given that like Taiwan, Vietnam was primarily a rice-consuming culture. In 1964, Taiwanese experts approximated that 2.5 million hectares produced 5 million metric tons of rice annually in Vietnam.²⁴ One of the key reports was published in February 1960, titled *Rice Seed Production in Vietnam*.²⁵ It surveyed and summarized rice production in the RVN, examining each step from production to district farmers, including inspection, storage, distribution, financial subsidies, and dissemination of information. The broad scope of the report mirrored 1950s JCRR reforms in Taiwan, where in addition to focusing on plant breeding and application of new agricultural seeds and technologies, JCRR technicians also developed farmers' associations that served as intermediaries for providing agricultural credit and selling agricultural products to wholesalers and the market. Taiwanese studies in Vietnam also considered new ideas of applied economics and agricultural extension that worked hand in hand with surveys and policymaking. The focus on the full cycle of production to consumer reflected a lesson learned from the JCRR experience on Taiwan, that basic science was inseparable from the society in which it operated. Thus the application of science also considered new ideas of applied economics and agricultural extension that worked together with policymaking and social observations. Most of the report recommendations fell into this category.

The report's primary concern was plant breeding. The Crop Improvement Team observed that rice produced in Vietnam originated mostly from government-run primary-seed multiplication farms. The rice produced from the primary farms was sent to secondary-seed multiplication farms that then produced enough seeds to be distributed to farmers to plant for the season. One significant problem was that at the primary level, multiplication seed was filtered only for off-types, rice varieties not intended for distribution onward. As a result, the team wrote that "the desirable level of purity can hardly be thus maintained," implying that standards for multiplied rice were too lax.²⁶ Furthermore, selection for the primary-seed multiplication farms was made fifteen years prior to the report, in 1945, and no further selection was performed on a regional basis at the secondary-seed multiplication farm level. The report implied that Vietnam was relying on outdated rice and that selecting newer varieties would likely improve production. The team suggested instead that the government agencies responsible for rice breeding work



FIGURE 19. Taiwanese technician showing a Vietnamese farmer how to use a rolling marker to maintain ideal distance while transplanting rice seedlings. “嚴家淦總統數位照片—臺灣農技團在越南工作成果” April 1965, archival collection number 館藏號 006-030202-00011-001, Yan Jiagan Papers, Academia Historica, Taiwan.

closely with the seed multiplication farms in order to select and produce seeds that were suitable for the local regions they supplied.

This recommendation on seed multiplication was in line with the fundamentals of agricultural science of the twentieth century—with its focus on production using disciplined, rationalized practices—that helped define the Green Revolution. In this case, improving the national seed production system adhered to the goal of scientific selection and breeding, which was to create higher-yielding seeds rather than allowing the multiplication of lower-yielding varieties. Localization was also a part of selection, which involved ensuring that varieties accommodated the specific soils, climates, growing seasons, and other conditions in the wide rural areas where seeds would be distributed.

Rationalization also extended to cultural practices, such as maintaining precise and consistent distance between rice seedlings to ensure enough room for growth without underutilizing much needed land. Taiwanese farmers introduced new agricultural implements that could aid Vietnamese farmers in easily marking distances through imprinting grids in the soil (figure 19).

In the following years, the Chinese Agricultural Technical Mission (CATM), as the Taiwanese teams to Vietnam were collectively known early on, established a rice experiment center in Mỹ Tho, located in the Mekong delta, with experiment stations located throughout Vietnam, including Long Xuyên and Cần Thơ in the Mekong River delta and Phan Rang in southern Vietnam.²⁷ The 1968 annual report from the CATM indicated that the Mỹ Tho Experiment Center had collected 710 varieties for comparative trials, including 84 newly-introduced foreign varieties from the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in Los Baños in the Philippines, and 37 varieties from Cambodia and Thailand. These were then distributed to the regional experiment stations for field trials to determine which varieties would perform best for each region. The seeds sourced from neighboring Southeast Asian nations reflected the belief among Taiwanese scientists (and IRRI scientists, too) that different areas of Vietnam shared ecological similarities with much of Southeast Asia. Indeed, terrain and geography as varied as central and southern Vietnam, which spanned not just latitude but also topographical, precipitation, and soil differences, made seeds one way in which development was seen spatially, not just nationally.

IR-8 rice produced by IRRI showed impressive yields, nearly doubling the native check variety (used as a control) at 5,744 kg per hectare compared with 3,049 kg per ha. IR-8, often called “miracle rice” because of its high yields or sometimes “god of agriculture” (*thần nông*, or TN-8) in Vietnam, implying supernatural power, was the most famous product of IRRI.²⁸ Bred in the early 1960s as a cross of two varieties, Indonesian Peta and Taiwanese ‘Dee-Geo-Woo-Gen’, its global dissemination allowed for significant improvements in yield across many South and Southeast Asian rice-growing regions. IR-8 became an integral contributor to the Green Revolution in Asia, though along with monoculture and reliance on chemical fertilizers, it also led to dependence on chemicals and commercialized agriculture with potentially disastrous ecological consequences.²⁹ Assistant director for USAID/Vietnam, James P. Grant, who was born and raised in Beijing as the son of Canadian missionaries and became a longtime development advocate, wrote to Shen Zonghan of his visit to a Taiwanese demonstration plot near Biên Hòa where IR-8 was being planted. He remarked of “the fine work done by your JCRR technicians in Vietnam” in helping to transform the formerly “crude demonstration plot” to “a major rice research center” on his second visit a year later. He included to Shen a *New York Times* clipping showcasing the gift of IR-8 from Vietnam to the United States, a symbol of its gratitude as appreciation for the US introducing the new cultivar in Vietnam.³⁰

IR-8 did not perform well in all field tests. One of IR-8’s differentiating characteristics was its semi-dwarfing allele, *sd1*, which it inherited from its Taiwanese parent, ‘Dee-geo-woo-gen’. Dwarfing allowed IR-8 stalks to be short and stocky and resist toppling, which would submerge rice under water, making it impossible to harvest and thus reducing yields. But IR-8 in Định Tường and Phong Dinh



FIGURE 20. Comparison of the American variety 'Dixie Queen' watermelon (*left*) at 14 kg introduced by the Taiwanese agricultural team compared to a native variety (*right*) in Đĩnh Tường. "嚴家淦總統數位照片—臺灣農技團在越南工作成果," April 1965, archival collection number 館藏號 006-030202-00011-001, Yan Jiagan Papers, Academia Historica, Taiwan.

suffered from the opposite problem. There, due to higher rainfall, water levels in paddy fields were high enough to submerge the shorter dwarf-type rice. The CATM instead suggested earlier plantings in April and November to harvest in July and March and thus avoid flooding in the later season.³¹ Taiwanese efforts to distribute field tests of different varieties was in recognition of the difficulties of national-scale development across different cultural, social, and ecological contexts. As historian David Biggs has argued, the specificities of place and locality had outsized consequences for American development on the ground in An Giang province.³² In the Taiwanese missions, the downsides of using IR-8 were avoided by adjusting planting seasons to account for local hydrological conditions. Nonetheless, the unexpected obstacles facing IR-8, known for its universal applicability and extraordinary yield, exemplified the issues facing development not just by Taiwanese teams in Vietnam but everywhere in the world.

Taiwanese teams expanded beyond rice to include other food crops, including onions, carrots, garlic, sweet potatoes, watermelon, soybean, cabbage, lettuce, peanuts, sorghum, corn, and mung bean. Varieties were sourced from countries throughout the Global North and South, from the United States, Australia, and

Korea. Experiment stations run by Taiwanese compared varieties, which could include up to twenty-eight varieties as in the case of onions ranging from 'Texas Early Grano 502' to 'Early Lockyer Brown'.³³

Simultaneously with seeds, another aspect of Green Revolution methods was also touted by Taiwanese teams: chemical fertilizer. In a 1964 report written by the Taiwanese mission to Vietnam to the JCRR, chemical fertilizer was identified as being used "very little" because "rice farmers are not familiar with chemical fertilizers." Their conclusion was of course that increased usage was "absolutely necessary." This conclusion is unsurprising, given the Green Revolution paradigm of the 1960s that relied heavily on chemicals and varieties that responded well to chemical fertilizer, despite its being short-sighted due to the environmental consequences. Taiwan had utilized chemical fertilizers extensively for decades, dating back to the Japanese colonial era, and relied heavily on chemicals for its own agricultural miracle in the 1950s and 1960s (see chapter 3). In the resulting solution, implemented at the recommendation of the Taiwanese team in Vietnam, newly established Vietnamese fertilizer committees (one central and eighteen provincial) sold fertilizers on credit through farmers' associations and cooperatives, similar to the system in Taiwan. The report detailed that logistical issues (tardiness and confusion) were problematic but excusable given how "new" fertilizer was.

Fertilizer usage similarly followed after rigorous field trials across the rice experiment stations. Across Ba Xuyên, Cần Thơ, Huế, and Phan Rang experiment stations, three types of chemical fertilizers were tested in growing rice at various ratios: Nitrogen (N), Phosphorus Pentoxide (P_2O_5 , or phosphoric acid), and potassium oxide (K_2O , or potash). Responses differed dramatically, with some showing a near two-fold increase in yields, while rice grown in Huế responded negatively to fertilizer compared to use without fertilizer.³⁴

In the language of the 1964 memorandum, the Taiwanese team leader described how "fertilizer distribution and utilization in Taiwan, Republic of China, has won praises of countries in Southeast Asia." This self-affirmation served to encourage Taipei to accept a team of four Vietnamese fertilizer distribution specialists to observe demonstrations of fertilizer distribution and usage in Taiwan, but it nonetheless reinforced a narrative of Taiwan's success being welcomed and recognized by receiving countries like Vietnam in the Global South.³⁵

RURAL ORGANIZATIONS, GENDER, AND AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION

The ROC team recommended a series of measures centered on agricultural extension and demonstration. An early suggestion during the first year of the mission in early 1960 was to establish demonstration fields for proper planting and care of seeds selected by the state. To complement demonstration, the team suggested providing training in conjunction with 4-T, the Vietnamese equivalent of 4-H in

the United States that was also funded by US agricultural development missions in Vietnam. 4-T and 4-H were both rural organizations that integrated agricultural and public health practices as a means of community youth activity (see chapter 3). In the context of the ROC recommendations, 4-T club members would be utilized along with village leaders to disseminate information about seed planting. Other suggestions to help knowledge dissemination included printed materials, similar to *Harvest*, which was written and distributed in Taiwan by the JCRR in conjunction with the US Information Service. Finally, the report also suggested that Vietnamese officials establish contests for the highest per-unit area of rice production, in which the “winning farmer will receive [an] award and will be asked to tell other farmers the ways and means by which he achieve[d] [his] goal.”³⁶ By incentivizing demonstration through informal competition, Taiwanese experts were hoping to create new information venues for rural Vietnamese farmers to learn from their own.

Zhang Lianjun (張廉駿), who led the farmers’ association team and later the entire CATM, reflected on his time in Vietnam. He wrote, “Vietnam’s agricultural environment, cultivation methods, and cultural habits on the whole are very close to that of Taiwan’s those who are knowledgeable on the issue all believe that to develop agriculture one must draw upon the experiences of Taiwan (以台灣為借鏡 *yi taiwan wei jiejing*).”³⁷ This perspective of Taiwan providing an invaluable model for other Global South nations to follow because of its similar ecological and cultural characteristics was pervasive in writings on Taiwanese development.

The Vietnam mission was not just focused on the agricultural sciences. Among the greatest needs of Vietnam were perceived to be social in nature. With the expansion of the Vietnamese Communists in northern Vietnam, the Republic of Vietnam prioritized the needs of its farmers, the most vulnerable to Communist organization. Despite attempts to replace French colonial administrators with Vietnamese administrators under Diệm’s government, Communist insurgency was not stemmed by pacification campaigns. Diệm and other RVN officials turned to rural and community development, which emphasized the community as a durable unit of governance from which positive social change could be replicated from the bottom-up and thus throughout rural Vietnam.³⁸ It was here that Fippin’s aforementioned connection with Taiwan was fateful. In May 1959, approximately one month after Fippin’s suggestion to invite Taiwanese experts on farmers’ associations, Trần Ngọc Liên, the commissioner general for cooperatives and agricultural credit, traveled to Taiwan with Fippin and several other RVN officials to observe Taiwanese farmers’ associations firsthand. After the trip, Liên formally requested Taiwanese experts in farmers’ associations and cooperatives. Ten Taiwanese agricultural experts were requested to be sent to the RVN on a six month provisional basis, to “work especially at village levels, he said, encouraging, guiding, training, and assisting Vietnam’s newly formed farmers’ associations to get firmly established and operating.”³⁹ Along with teams from other “Free World”



FIGURE 21. Vietnamese farmers visit a Taiwanese demonstration farm. My interviewee, Taiwanese technician Zhang Jiming, noted that by his arrival in Vietnam in 1968, a large number of farmers consisted of women, which he attributed to the drawing away of men to fight in the ongoing war. “嚴家淦總統數位照片—臺灣農技團在越南工作成果,” April 1965, archival collection number 館藏號 006-030202-00011-001, Yan Jiagan Papers, Academia Historica, Taiwan. Zhang Jiming, retired agricultural technician, interview by author, Taichung, Taiwan, January 14, 2019.

nations brought in through US mediation, the work of the Taiwanese technical mission would help form the basis of counter-communist insurgency efforts that were designed to win the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese peasants.

On October 27, 1959, Republic of Vietnam vice president Nguyễn Ngọc Thọ sent to eleven province chiefs the objectives and scope of the Taiwanese assistance mission in farmers’ associations.⁴⁰ The October agreement increased the Taiwanese technicians to eleven, among whom eight were to focus on establishing farmers’ associations and cooperatives, two on fisheries and crop cooperatives and the remaining technician on training. The eight were split into three teams and were responsible for vast territories of central and southern Vietnam, roughly four to five provinces per team. After familiarizing themselves with local conditions, the RVN regime placed the onus upon local governments “to let these specialist conduct their activities without hindrance” and furthermore to “must have new ideas and make clear problems that require specialists’ help and investigation” to send up to the Central Farmers’ Association Committee and central government authorities.⁴¹ Though spread thin, the Taiwanese advisors were meant to encourage new ideas within the local governments that would be actionable, and thus contribute toward the South Vietnamese regime’s efforts in a national rural policy.



FIGURE 22. Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國, Jiang Jingguo), premier of the ROC and son of Chiang Kai-shek, visits a 4-H chapter in Biên Hòa Province, Republic of Vietnam. Zhang, “Twelve Years in Vietnam.”



FIGURE 23. As part of the agricultural extension and demonstration program, Taiwanese technicians trained selected Vietnamese farmers to serve as demonstration supervisors. This picture shows the Taiwanese-trained supervisors teaching soybean planting methods to other Vietnamese farmers. “嚴家淦總統數位照片—臺灣農技團在越南工作成果,” April 1965, archival collection number 館藏號 006-030202-00011-001, Yan Jiagan Papers, Academia Historica, Taiwan.

From the Taiwanese side, these objectives needed to be translated from diplomatic objectives, defined by the realities of anti-Communist warfare, into development policy objectives, defined by organizational directives. On April 9, 1959, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a memorandum to the Ministry of Economic Affairs, which oversaw the JCRR and agricultural development policy in Taiwan. In the memo, MOFA outlined the work details. First, “work comes into contact with broad social strata, including central and local, to the lowest stratum of village farmers’ associations.”⁴² Following that, “work scope includes matters related to leading, extension, and training, with achieving farmers association self-sufficiency and independence as the objective.”⁴³ These objectives were supplemented by goals of the farmers’ association to “produce agricultural products.”⁴⁴ The focus on the lowest levels of Vietnamese social strata reflected the rural emphasis of development from the Taiwanese model and also the diplomatic desire to engage at the village level. The Taiwanese success at organizing farmers’ associations and using them as the unit by which to distribute fertilizers and engage in distribution of knowledge via extension in this case dovetailed with Vietnamese and American objectives.

In defining how these projects would be carried out, Taipei chose a different approach from the United States. Whereas the ICA and its predecessors chose to send experts with extensive scientific training for its missions abroad, Taiwanese planners instead sought blue-collar technicians. The same April 9 memo continued that Taiwanese “workers do not require higher education, but rather require long term service in farmers’ associations or related organizations as well as wide ranging practical experience managing farmers’ associations or related organizations.”⁴⁵ This change was pragmatic, reflecting the importance of on-the-ground experience interacting with “the lowest stratum” of rural society. It also saved on costs; technicians received significant hardship bonuses for working abroad in Vietnam, and many were eager to take the salary bump. Even the relatively few scientists who led the technical teams were represented as working in the rural countryside and with Vietnamese farmers. In reports written for audiences outside of Taiwan, especially for Americans and “Free World” allies like Vietnam, Taiwanese documents presented university science professors as working “shoulder to shoulder” with Vietnamese farmers.⁴⁶

My interview with a retired technician, Zhang Jiming (張基明), who worked in Vietnam from 1968 to 1969, indicated that the majority of technicians were recruited from agricultural vocational schools (農校, *nongxiao*). Zhang’s own background was from the Taichung Agricultural Vocational High School (台中高農) in agronomy (綜合農藝, *zonghe nongyi*). He underwent two months of training designed by the JCRR for technicians performing technical work abroad and was assigned to a four-person team approximately 35 km northwest of Saigon. Zhang engaged in all manner of work, from demonstration to extension, thus showing local Vietnamese farmers how to plant rice, grains, vegetables, and use agricultural equipment. At each stage, representatives from local Vietnamese



FIGURE 24. National Taiwan University professor C. I. Lin (*left*) demonstrates transplanting rice “shoulder to shoulder” with Vietnamese farmers. “嚴家淦總統數位照片—臺灣農技團在越南工作成果,” April 1965, archival collection number 館藏號 006-030202-00011-001, Yan Jiagan Papers, Academia Historica, Taiwan.

farmers’ associations would be invited to their Taiwanese team demonstration farm. Usually, each day after dinner, Taiwanese technicians would hold meetings for one to two hours to teach usually around ten Vietnamese farmers different agronomic techniques.⁴⁷

Taiwanese extension and demonstration teams in Vietnam worked not only in agricultural sciences and farmers’ associations but also in “home improvement.” Demonstration centers included rural handicraft production equipment that could be utilized within “home economics,” a gendered notion that home-based labor was also productive labor. In Taiwan beginning in the 1960s, rural organizations like 4-H had begun to organize women to produce handicrafts that could then be sold in markets. This was tied with 4-H in the United States, where 4-H originated, and its gendering of boys and girls.⁴⁸ It continued into Taiwan, along with work on community development, and persisted well into the 1970s, 80s, and 90s with Taiwanese government promotion of married women labor to fuel rural home-based production that formed the “satellite factories” of Taiwan’s later industrialized economic growth.⁴⁹ In Vietnam, women played a prominent role in rural areas. Zhang Jiming indicated that by his arrival in Vietnam many men were involved in the ongoing war, and thus women often participated in extension and demonstration activities.⁵⁰



FIGURE 25. “Home improvement agents” shown here are using straw-rope-making machine at a Taiwanese demonstration center in Biên Hòa. “嚴家淦總統數位照片—臺灣農技團在越南工作成果,” April 1965, archival collection number 館藏號 006-030202-00011-001, Yan Jiagan Papers, Academia Historica, Taiwan.

Though most extension and demonstration were performed in person at demonstration centers and farms, they were also complemented with written materials. In Taiwan, magazines, pamphlets, and other materials were distributed by farmers’ associations and government agents as a core strategy in extension. *Harvest* included morality tales, comics, and other means of attracting a wide swath of Taiwanese rural society.

In Vietnam, Taiwanese development included written materials as well. In one instance in 1973, a Vietnamese request for an emergency shipment of Taiwanese fertilizers and seeds was accompanied with literature on proper usage of fertilizer in Vietnamese. Simply titled “Seed and Fertilizer Usage Guide,” the cover also indicated that the seeds and fertilizers were a gift of the Republic of China (“中華民國敬贈”) with a short message that wished “peace and happiness” to “the prosperous village farmers of the Republic of Vietnam.”⁵¹ The guide elaborated the technical contents of fertilizer, including chemical composition, but was also a means to showcase humanitarian actions and goodwill of Taiwanese assistance. Boxes containing vegetable seeds were adorned with both flags of the Republic of China and Republic of Vietnam side by side, showing the origins of the gift along with partnership for the RVN peoples.

In the official ceremony handing over the roughly fifty thousand packages of seeds and fertilizer, ROC ambassador to Vietnam Xu Shaochang (許紹昌)

presented a speech that outlined ROC perspectives on the alliance. Throughout the speech, he emphasized that the ROC was similar to the RVN in social and cultural terms; the gift, he affirmed, was “from one farming people to another.” In relaying the hopes of the ROC, the ambassador’s speech also evoked modernist language of economic prosperity as well as valorization of the rural. The seeds and fertilizer were intended to give “a helping hand to the individual small farmer to stand on his own feet again.” These packages to individual farmers were then accompanied with a large number of “high-yielding hybrid corn seed” that were “designed for the purpose of demonstrating profitable corn-growing in various provinces in Vietnam to pave the way for large-scale production of corn both for domestic use and for export in the future.”⁵² The capitalist language focused on scientific modernism of high-yielding hybrids in order to achieve high productivity and large export numbers, which would then resolve both problems of basic human need as well as national economic prosperity.

REPRESENTING DEVELOPMENT AT HOME

In Taiwan, the continued demand for Taiwanese development assistance abroad was continually reported on domestic news outlets. On a regular basis from 1959 until 1974, newspaper articles delivered updates on the progress and incidents of the Taiwanese team in Vietnam. Though often short, they compensated for their brevity with regularity. Changes in team leadership, project accomplishments, and particularly contract renewals were all reported on by major Taiwanese newspapers. These newspapers, which at the time were run by or closely affiliated with the Guomintang regime, served official state interests, to report on the efforts of the ROC abroad helping other developing nations.

The aforementioned 1963 death of agricultural technician Zhang Dusheng demonstrated the importance of overseas development to ROC foreign policy officials. Zhang was a Taiwanese rice technician who was killed in the line of duty by Vietnamese communist forces near Saigon. He was born in 1935 and raised in Tainan, in southern Taiwan. After graduating from Tainan No. 1 High School, he enrolled in the Taiwan Provincial Agricultural College in Taichung (today National Chung Hsing University, 國立中興大學) for his secondary education. Upon graduation, he underwent training as a reserve officer and was assigned to grassroots political organization work. After completing his military service, he taught at the Yuanlin Agricultural School (員林農校, Yuanlin Nongxiao) briefly in 1961 before moving on to work at the Taichung District Agricultural Improvement Station (台中農業改良場, Taizhong Nongye Gailiang Chang), where he worked for two years in rice improvement. On October 10, 1963, he left Taiwan to join the Taiwanese Agricultural Technical Assistance Team to Vietnam.

On November 13, 1963, Zhang was in a jeep returning to Saigon after visiting a rice experiment station approximately forty *li* (seventy kilometers) outside of Saigon when his convoy was ambushed by Vietnamese Communist forces and he

was killed (“遭越共伏擊死亡”) along with a Vietnamese translator.⁵³ Based on an interview I conducted with a Taiwanese rice technician who had also participated in Taiwan’s later development missions abroad, it seems likely that Zhang’s death was collateral and accidental and that Zhang was not the intended target of the ambush. Taiwanese technicians would on occasion be caught in the middle of military operations. Another incident involving three Taiwanese technicians being surrounded by Vietnamese Communist troops occurred in Hué in 1968, but usually the Taiwanese technicians emerged without issue due to intervention by allied forces.⁵⁴ My interviewee expressed that it was likely Zhang’s group may have panicked and attempted to flee upon being ambushed by Vietnamese Communists, who usually did not explicitly target Taiwanese agricultural technicians for attacks, and Zhang was unfortunately killed as a result. One memorandum sent by the Taiwanese technical team to a Vietnamese agricultural official referenced “Vietcong snipers” as being responsible for Zhang’s death.⁵⁵ Yet newspaper portrayals of the incident left out details of the incident, instead pointing to the patriotic nature of Zhang’s work and the work in general conducted by the Taiwanese agricultural technical teams.

Newspaper editorials, especially those from Guomintang-affiliated papers, *United Daily News* (聯合報, *Lianhe Bao*) and *Cheng Hsin Daily News*, provided venues for the Guomintang to use development as a means of propaganda.

One *United Daily News* article cited Provincial Department of Agriculture and Forestry director Zhang Huiqiu (張慧秋, H. T. Chang), who after being interviewed following Zhang Dusheng’s death stated that Zhang Dusheng was “exactly the type of youth that our country needs [正是國家所最需要的].” Elaborating further, Zhang Huiqiu explained that young technicians like Zhang Dusheng served a crucial role. Since 1953, Taiwan’s agriculture “had primarily relied on practical and relatively simple experimental research results [主要依賴實用性的比較簡單的試驗研究的結果]” but by 1963 “had already attained such high levels that in order to further develop, it requires engaging in even more refined and profound research [但現在本省的農業已達到很高的水準, 再要改進, 必須從事較精密高深的研究].” Thus, going abroad to Vietnam represented positive opportunities for experts like Zhang, where work in Taiwan was often poorly compensated (“待遇菲薄”), so that they could “on the one hand accomplish our national mission of assisting our allies, and on the other hand, after accumulating savings, return home to work with peace of mind [一方面達成我國協助友邦的任務, 一方面可於略有積蓄後返國安心工作].”⁵⁶

Zhang Huiqiu’s goal in emphasizing aspects of pragmatism and advanced research not only reinforced that Taiwan possessed unique and useful expertise but also informed the domestic Taiwanese audience why Taiwanese youth needed to be abroad in Vietnam to benefit both their own careers and their nation. Zhang Dusheng’s status as *benshengren* (本省人), or native Taiwanese, was never explicitly mentioned in these accounts, as official accounts would not acknowledge

such ethnic divisions under official GMD policy that treated the *benshengren* as Chinese. However, Zhang's birthplace of Tainan was mentioned on occasion, and combined with his birth year of 1935, which predated the arrival of the GMD, the reader could easily deduce Zhang was *benshengren*. Many of the blue collar technicians who worked in rural areas in Taiwan and then were sent abroad to Vietnam and other foreign locales in the 1960s were *benshengren* like Zhang Dusheng, as opposed to the bureaucrats and scientists in positions of power like Shen Zonghan and Ma Baozhi, who were *waishengren* (外省人), "mainlanders" who arrived in Taiwan with the Guomindang in 1949. This common background of Zhang perhaps made international development more sympathetic to *benshengren* audiences, tying in the political and diplomatic objectives of the *waishengren* Guomindang with the sacrifices made by *benshengren* on behalf of representing Taiwan abroad.

Most importantly, development legitimized the GMD state in the eyes of *benshengren*. The need for Taiwanese aid abroad and Taiwanese willingness to put their lives on the line to help other nations gave the Taiwanese a sense of nationalistic pride, demonstrating superior Taiwanese qualities of "industriousness" and "scientific knowledge."⁵⁷ Economic growth, humanitarian largesse, and expertise in modern science and technology were the characteristics that the GMD sought to cultivate in their public image to maintain their authoritarian grip on Taiwan.

REPRESENTING DEVELOPMENT ABROAD

While Zhang Dusheng was crafted into the image of the idealized Taiwanese under the developmentalist Guomindang at home, the targeted audiences were not just limited to Taiwanese and the rural Vietnamese. The GMD portrayed itself as the leaders of "Free China" internationally—the legitimate Chinese regime. This included the overseas Chinese (華僑, *huaqiao*) diaspora. For late Qing revolutionary activists such as Sun Yat-sen, overseas Chinese had played an important role, from funding early GMD revolutionary efforts to providing the technical expertise for nation-building.⁵⁸ During the Cold War, the overseas Chinese became a particularly important demographic for the GMD in order to substantiate its own claims of legitimacy as the true guardians of "China." Without the majority of its territories prior to its retreat in 1949, the GMD made extensive efforts to garner support in major overseas Chinese communities abroad in places like Southeast Asia, as historian Chien-Wen Kung has argued, to "mobilize a deterritorialized Chinese nation and destroy Chinese Communism in pursuit of a unified China under its leadership."⁵⁹

Vietnam was certainly no exception. Vietnam and greater Southeast Asia were home to a large Chinese population that had begun emigrating in the seventeenth century with the end of the Ming dynasty. Many overseas Chinese originated from south China, particularly speakers of Cantonese, Chaozhou (Teochew),

and Minnan (Hokkien). A large number settled into the southern Vietnam city of Chợ Lớn just outside of Saigon and later integrated and merged into Saigon. ROC official diplomacy targeted these Chinese populations as part of their global efforts to build a *huaqiao* identity under ROC patronage. Historian Mei Feng Mok argues that the Chinese community in Chợ Lớn in particular developed transnational diaspora ties with Chinese outside of Vietnam, in Taiwan, Malaya, and Hong Kong, partially through the connections fostered by the ROC state.⁶⁰ The ROC, for example, encouraged Vietnamese-Chinese to attend universities in Taiwan by offering scholarships and reserved spots for overseas Chinese as incentives.⁶¹

Chinese communities in Vietnam thus became another discursive battleground for the GMD to win over. Utilizing the same language and imagery, GMD development was covered in Vietnamese newspapers serving Chinese communities in Chợ Lớn and elsewhere in Vietnam. One of the largest Chinese newspapers by circulation in Vietnam was the *Yuen Tuong Jih Pao* (遠東日報, *Yuandong Ribao*, “Far Eastern daily”), founded in 1940 by Zhu Jixing (朱繼興), a *huaqiao* businessman of Chaozhou descent, and distributed as far as Laos and Cambodia.⁶² *Yuen Tuong*’s regular columns discussed matters of everyday life, such as education, gender, literature, and film, along with coverage of ROC actions in Vietnam. In the July 14, 1960, issue of *Yuen Tuong*, a journalist interviewed Crop Improvement Mission head Ma Baozhi and relayed the goals of the Taiwanese team in beginning technical assistance to Vietnam.⁶³ Thereafter, *Yuen Tuong* reported with regularity the actions of the Taiwanese teams, ranging from visits of irrigation experts to contract renewals.⁶⁴ In the aforementioned instance where Taiwan gifted seeds and fertilizer in 1973, *Yuen Tuong* reported on the consequences of the gift by borrowing the same language and phrasing as utilized in Ambassador Xu Shaochang’s speech. In detailing the goals of the gift, *Yuen Tuong* wrote that gifted seeds were intended “in the future not only to supply the food needs of this nation, but also to expand its crop exports.”⁶⁵

The ROC portrayed the Taiwanese-Vietnamese alliance in nationalist, Asian-centric, and anti-Communist terms that appealed to the anticolonial legacy of RVN and of Ngô Đình Diệm. Diệm came to power on what Ed Miller has called “an unimpeachable reputation as a nationalist” that culminated with deposing the French-backed Bảo Đại and ended French colonial influence in Vietnam.⁶⁶ Though fiercely anticolonial, he also gained US support for his regime through his vehement anti-Communism as well, particularly against Hồ Chí Minh’s Democratic Republic of Vietnam. As historian Nu-Anh Tran has argued, the RVN engaged in an anti-Communist internationalism imagining the RVN in friendships with Cold War allies and as a member of the “Free World.”⁶⁷ This included participation in the Asian People’s Anti-Communist League, of which the ROC was a founding member, along with delegations from South Korea, Thailand, Macau, Hong

Kong, the Ryukyu Islands (Okinawa), the Philippines, and the RVN.⁶⁸ RVN anti-Communists “conceived of anticommunist internationalism as the natural response to communist imperialism” and as a result the RVN emphasized its international relationships.⁶⁹

A 1960 document from the RVN Ministry of Public Works and Transportation (Bộ Công Chánh và Giao Thông), most likely a Vietnamese translation of an ROC official report of Diệm’s visit to Taiwan, likened the two nations as being “two peoples [or nations, *dân-tộc*] that share the same cultural root which communism is destroying now.”⁷⁰ It elaborated on the existential threat (“the existence of two countries is also currently in danger”) from Communism to both nations. The report praised the accomplishments of the Guomindang’s 1911 revolution that led to the establishment of the Republic of China and Diệm’s founding of the Republic of Vietnam.⁷¹ The struggles of the “free” peoples of Asia became a point of pride and of common history. Both sides perceived themselves to be linked with a recent revolutionary past, rooted in their violent opposition to Communism.

The translated ROC report furthermore favorably compared the nationalist ideologies espoused by both leaders, the Three Principles of the People of Sun Yat-sen adopted by Chiang Kai-shek as the political ideology of the Republic of China, and Diệm’s personalism theory (Thuyết Nhân vị).⁷²

Both personalism and the Three Principles shared basic tenets. Personalism was Diệm’s answer to finding a path between radical Communism and French colonial-defined liberalism. Personalism can be traced back to the writings of French Catholic philosopher Emmanuel Mounier, who critiqued liberal capitalism and individualism in the wake of the 1930s Great Depression, while also rejecting Marxism and its tendency toward oppression of individuals.⁷³ Diệm’s brother Ngô Đình Nhu, who played a crucial advisor and political role in the Diệm regime, was exposed to personalism while studying in France as an archivist. As argued by historian Jessica Chapman, personalism eventually became the “official state philosophy” of the RVN under Diệm.⁷⁴ Phi-Vân Nguyen and other historians have shown that the RVN constitution of 1956 reflected personalist principles.⁷⁵

Yet personalism as articulated by Diệm’s brother Ngô Đình Nhu and adopted in the RVN context was also, in Ed Miller’s words, “maddeningly opaque.”⁷⁶ This was in part due to its role as an indigenous ideology and to serve as a platform for postcolonial consolidation. As Geoffrey Stewart has put it, the Ngôs needed an “authentic Vietnamese ‘cultural formula’ to imbue the population with the appropriate sense of national spirit to willingly participate in the nation-building process.”⁷⁷ Personalism was this formula. In imagining the ideal Vietnamese village, the Ngôs believed that conservatism and spiritualism of personalism were needed to enact the social ties between community and the modern Vietnamese nation.⁷⁸ Through his examination of the resettlement of northern refugees into southern Vietnam, Jason Picard has argued that the Ngôs saw

in traditional northern villages their ideal of “a corporate, close-knit community” that needed to be replicated across rural Vietnam.⁷⁹ Personalism tied into this vision, and hence the emphasis on the rural village.

Like personalism, Sun Yat-sen’s Three Principles as an ideology provided justification for a revolutionary regime without being too dogmatically onerous. Beginning in 1905, Sun had elaborated publicly on the Three Principles—*Minsheng zhuyi* (民生主義, usually translated as “livelihood of the people” or less often as welfare), *Minquan zhuyi* (民權主義, usually translated as democracy), and *Minzu zhuyi* (民族主義, usually translated as nationalism)—as an organizing principle for his revolutionary platform, culminating in the 1924 published eponymous work. Sun was a pragmatist, and the Three Principles served as a malleable political tool to allow Sun and the ROC to garner popular political support in an anti-Manchu and anti-imperial sentiment in early twentieth-century China. In the words of Sun Yat-sen biographer Marie Claire-Bergère, the Three Principles were “a work of propaganda, a long political tract designed to win followers rather than to instill conviction, an appeal to action rather than to thought” aimed to “diffuse a number of ideas rather than to analyze them.”⁸⁰ As discussed in chapter 2, some of the concepts, such as *Minsheng zhuyi*, entailed specific references to taxation policies. Continuing under Chiang Kai-shek’s ROC, the Three Principles were largely used as a symbolic platform, deployed to demonstrate the ROC’s welfarist or revolutionary roots when convenient. Integrated into curricula across schools and military academies, for example, the Three Principles were meant to build loyalty to and support for the authoritarian ROC regime.

Though personalism and the Three Principles were both often used for propaganda purposes, its deployment often resulted in real networks, movements, and institutions, such as the Asian People’s Anti-Communist League and Moral Re-armament, that affected perceptions and foreign policies. As Mitchell Tan has argued, “The production and proliferation of a national ideology was an important way in which nascent Asian nation-states like the RVN sought to define themselves not just to their people but also in relationship to a Region divided, at least in part, by a conflict of ideas.”⁸¹ In the ROC-specific Cold War, the defining and legitimation of the Guomintang regime was unquestionably of the highest priority. In this sense, the Three Principles expressed not only a political or social ideology but a developmentalist one as well. Economic welfare, the providing for the well-being of the Taiwanese and global peoples like the Vietnamese against Communism, became crucial.

Alluding to common political ideologies and revolutionary origins was inherent to Taiwan’s imagining of its development missions to Vietnam and the rest of the Global South. Taiwan’s missions to Africa and land-reform training of Third World bureaucrats also reflected how the Guomintang became adroit at using the language and discourse of decolonizing nations to demonstrate solidarity and commonality. In Vietnam, the ROC seized upon personalism, the founding of the

RVN, and the background of Diệm and his family to enable the representation that it found most ideal, centered on Taiwan's revolutionary and technical modernity and steadfast anti-Communist solidarity.

CONCLUSION

The Vietnam mission proved to be a success for the Taiwanese, at least in terms of continued demand from the RVN. The original six-month mission was extended to three years. In 1961, the JCRR attempted to reassign the leader of the farmers' association team, Yang Yukun (楊玉昆, Y. K. Yang) back to Taiwan, where work related to farmers' associations needed his attention. But this resulted in a deeply impassioned plea from Trần to the JCRR chairman at the time, Jiang Menglin:

The establishment of numerous Strategic Hamlets has greatly improved security conditions in the rural areas and will afford greater opportunities to more effectively expand the services of our [farmers' associations]. This situation intensifies the urgent need of the specialists who have become familiar with our conditions. . . . Mr Chairman, I must earnestly request that you reconsider your three year service policy in the light of the present situation in Vietnam. We are deeply engaged in an active war, and our resources are stretched to the maximum. The focus of this war is in the country-side and among the rural people. Experienced direction and leadership is of special importance at this time.⁸²

With the implementation of the Strategic Hamlet program that sought "pacification" of rural villages by increasing support and thus ostensibly lessening rural ties with Communist insurgents, the Republic of Vietnam sought Taiwanese expertise in rural organization.

By 1970, the United States had expended US\$2,036,088 for the Taiwan missions, paying for capital costs involved in technical assistance.⁸³ In a 1972 evaluation of the contract with the ROC, Ralph Gleason, USAID deputy associate director for food and agriculture in Vietnam, described the Taiwanese mission as attaining mission goals "in a very practical manner . . . for instance, demonstration fields were elaborately set up and operated by the contractor as an intermediate goal towards attainment of the final goal of widespread extension of improved varieties and cultural practices." As a result, "farmers benefiting from CATG assistance have experienced substantial increases in income through increased harvests of crop produce of high value." However, Gleason cast doubt on the ability of the Republic of Vietnam to fulfill its end of the agreement, stating that "final goal of nationwide extension rests in the capacity and competence of the cooperating country" and lamenting that "more could have been accomplished if host country support were more adequate." In a matter of a few years, Gleason was proved correct.⁸⁴ Despite the "intermediate" success of the Taiwanese technical mission in realizing higher incomes and a system of extension and demonstration, these efforts were

ultimately unable to save the Republic of Vietnam regime. Taiwanese missions were continually renewed until 1975, until the demise of the Republic of Vietnam ended Taiwanese missions to Vietnam.⁸⁵

Taiwanese development to Vietnam began a decades-long project to portray itself as leading a vanguard of the development world. After having achieved success in agricultural science, farmers' association, and rural improvement in Taiwan, GMD planners sent Taiwanese scientists and technicians abroad to develop other nations. Taiwanese missions deployed specific practices of modern high-yielding seeds and chemical fertilizers to reproduce Taiwanese success. At the same time, it also emphasized its rural modernity as accomplished through a history of farmers' association success. In representations of Taiwanese development through public diplomacy, Taiwanese planners portrayed Taiwan as a primarily rural society that succeeded through achieving modern science (of developing high-yielding seeds), ingenuity (through agricultural machinery), and hard work (of farmers and technicians). This imaginary of Taiwanese modernity marked a larger shift within the GMD technocracy and ROC state itself, which saw its development success deployed for diplomatic objectives as well as to strengthen its domestic rule. Not only did the ROC demonstrate its anti-Communist conviction to a "Free World" ally, Vietnam, but it also burnished its developmentalist credentials at home and diverted from a repressive authoritarian regime. As shown in the official speeches and writing of Zhang Dusheng, the GMD imagined a modern and humanitarian ROC that sacrificed its youth to save other nations. This undergirded the emergence of a developmentalist platform that continued to define the GMD for decades to come.