

## “Straw Hat Diplomats”

### *Taiwanese Agrarian Development and Africa, 1961–1971*

*The colonial powers can no longer use the methods of the past to continue their plunder and oppression. The Asia and Africa of today are no longer the Asia and Africa of yesterday. Many countries of this region have taken their destiny into their own hands after long years of endeavours.*

—ZHOU ENLAI

*After the Second World War, there occurred a number of events of historic importance in the community of nations. One of these was the awakening of the peoples of Asia, Africa and other areas of the world. Hundreds of millions of people have emerged from colonial rule and freely formed themselves into new independent States which now exercise considerable influence in the United Nations.*

—SHEN CHANG-HUAN, ROC MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

## INTRODUCTION

On a chilly December evening in 1978, deputy minister of foreign affairs Yang Xikun (楊西崑, Yang Hsi-kun) presided as the flag of the Republic of China (ROC) was lowered amid a light drizzle in the grounds of the ROC embassy, Twin Oaks, in Washington, DC.<sup>1</sup> An eighteen-acre estate located in the wealthy Cleveland Park residential neighborhood of Washington, Twin Oaks served for over forty years as the residence of the ROC diplomat to the United States from 1937 to 1978. In 1979, with the severance of diplomatic relations between the ROC and the United States, Twin Oaks ceased to serve as the official embassy for the ROC.

Yang's presence at that fateful moment was befitting of the irony of Taiwanese history. Taiwanese and African newspapers dubbed Yang “Mr. Africa” (非洲先生, Feizhou Xiansheng), a reference to the internationalization diplomacy of Taiwan

during the 1960s aimed at obtaining United Nations allies among the newly decolonizing and vote-carrying nation-states of Africa and Asia. On the ground, this diplomacy consisted of the ROC sending agricultural technical teams abroad, beginning with South Vietnam in 1959 (see previous chapter). These were a concerted effort by the ROC to leverage its success at agricultural technology and science as a form of diplomacy, buoying its international prestige via humanitarian action, and in some cases directly trading development assistance for votes.

In 1961, these efforts were organized into Operation Vanguard (先鋒計劃, Xianfeng Jihua or 先鋒案, Xianfeng An) under the direction of the ROC Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA).<sup>2</sup> These newly emerging Third World allies were crucial for the ROC's continued international existence. When the ROC regime was defeated by Communist forces in 1949 and retreated to the mainland, it continued to be recognized as the legitimate government of all of China and thus retained control of its crucial seat in the UN. Almost immediately after its victory, the PRC, led by Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai, sought that UN seat. Albania, at the time one of the closest international Communist allies of the PRC, continually introduced resolutions in the UN to recognize the PRC as the official representative of China, which would delegitimize the ROC and force the ROC to forfeit the seat it held. This led to a unique global Cold War, battled between the PRC and ROC, waged culturally, economically, and developmentally in order to win influence among vote-carrying nations that would support their respective UN positions. Yet efforts to curry favor among African and Asian nations ultimately proved a failure for the ROC. In 1971, the ROC lost its seat in the United Nations, and by 1979, the United States formally extended diplomatic recognition to the PRC in lieu of the ROC.

The efforts of the ROC amid a diplomatic proxy war with the PRC is largely told as one of states and statesmen—secret deals made behind closed mahogany doors, Nixon and Kissinger, and Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping. Though the Cold War is crucial throughout this history, what is lost in this narrative of high diplomacy was a little known yet robust development campaign launched on the part of the MOFA to secure its international position. This campaign of development diplomacy reached over two dozen African, Latin American, and Asian nations at its peak, and it continues into the present. The United States provided partial secret funding. Postcolonial leaders across the Third World welcomed Taiwanese technical missions. All the while, Taiwanese technocrats outlined a vision of the developing world as following in the footsteps of Taiwan's own modernity.

This chapter recovers a lost history of Taiwan's development—its agricultural technical missions abroad to the developing world. It focuses specifically on the agricultural technical missions to Africa, Operation Vanguard, and it discusses the visions of modernity contained within the missions as shaped by the Chinese technocrats in charge of their implementation. The chapter simultaneously explores the international and global circumstances constraining the actions of the ROC leading it toward "development diplomacy" as well as consequences of this

diplomacy on the ground. In other words, it is necessary to unpack the meanings of modernity, the Third World, and the Cold War to understand how they influenced what types of agricultural technologies and practices Taiwanese technicians were implementing in places like Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, and Gabon. I argue that ROC foreign-policy officials and scientists packaged elements of Taiwan's agricultural development "experience" into a Taiwanese model that they portrayed as being better suited for the tropical and subtropical agrarian societies of Africa and shows that this portrayal became essential to the ROC's search for an identity after losing the mainland.

The history of Taiwan's development missions abroad is important for our understanding of the waging of the Cold War on the ground, the transformation of development toward South-to-South connections, and the evolution of international worldviews among postcolonial societies like Taiwan. Funded by US dollars, Operation Vanguard was seen by US planners as an avenue to generate support for its ally, the ROC. Simultaneously, the United States also sought to attract decolonizing nations into its orbit and away from the allure of Communism. Taiwan served as a front, a guise under which the United States could attain its Cold War objectives.

However, Vanguard's serving as a proxy for funneling US dollars did not detract from the robustness of the theories and practices embedded within Vanguard missions; nor did it remove the agency of Taiwanese development practitioners who co-opted Vanguard to demonstrate the superiority of Taiwanese development. Since its funding status was kept secret, Vanguard planners possessed significant leeway to exercise intellectual freedom in constructing their model of development. Drawing on their own technical expertise, Taiwanese development goals reflected an idealized image of Taiwan itself. This reflection was deeper than a matter of technical comparative advantage. Many of the Taiwanese elites who had overseen the rapid growth in agricultural production in Taiwan took particular pride in its success, especially vis-à-vis other decolonizing nations internationally. Furthermore, by the 1960s, Chiang Kai-shek's repeated rhetoric of retaking the mainland began to appear increasingly unrealistic as the PRC consolidated its regime and built up its military force. The reality of possible permanent separation from the mainland began to set in. In staking their international interactions on a rising international standard of nation-building—economic development—Taiwanese intellectuals were beginning to locate a postcolonial identity through South-to-South aid.

Despite that language of aiding the Global South, these missions were largely performative. Taiwanese agricultural technicians were well intentioned and technically capable, but teams were deeply limited in terms of human and physical capital. Ironically, the Taiwanese touted the benefits of modern science that obviated the need for capital intense approaches like the United States or the Soviet Union. In conferences, study tours, and demonstration farms, Taiwanese technicians and

scientists emphasized how a poor and postcolonial society could achieve rapid agrarian development. But the massive countries of Africa, especially compared to Taiwan, meant that a dozen or even a hundred technicians made relatively little impact. These missions reinforced the contradictory nature of development, argued by anthropologists such as James Ferguson and Arturo Escobar, that its apolitical claims and faith in modernity and technology were usually counterproductive. Indeed, Taiwanese development in Africa was more about the Taiwanese themselves. For the ROC elite, this was coming to terms with an impending existential crisis.

Relatively few scholars have written about this history.<sup>3</sup> Although diplomacy explains why these missions were initiated, this chapter seeks to examine not just foreign policy and geopolitical calculations but also the content of Vanguard missions and what they meant to those practicing development. Within the policy blueprints, mission reports, and even propaganda articles and speeches, a picture emerges of Taiwan's efforts at utilizing its development expertise as a means of postcolonial identity. This chapter illuminates why development and postcolonial thought converged in this era, and what it meant for the evolution of development history and Taiwan.

#### THE UNITED NATIONS

The founding of the United Nations in 1945 from the ashes of World War II saw the Republic of China included as one of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. Serving as a permanent member on the Security Council proved valuable to the ROC's international interests. In 1955, the ROC used its Security Council veto power to prevent the admission of Mongolia as a member of the United Nations, pursuant to its claim over Mongolian territory from the founding of the ROC in 1912 as a continuation of Qing territory. In 1949, after the Communist victory over the Guomindang, the Republic of China became a government in exile, exercising *de facto* governance over the island of Taiwan and governing the rest of China in name only. The Chinese Communist Party established the People's Republic of China on the mainland. Despite losing control of the majority of its previously governed territory, the ROC retained its seat in the United Nations, though this would not last long.

Shortly after the establishment of the PRC, beginning in January 1950, Chinese foreign minister (and later also premier) Zhou Enlai sent messages to the United Nations General Assembly contesting the legitimacy of the Guomindang regime ("Chinese Kuomintang reactionary remnant clique.")<sup>4</sup> By the 1960s, PRC ally Albania began submitting resolutions to the United Nations General Assembly to recognize the PRC in lieu of the ROC. These received the support of the Communist bloc of nations. In response, the United States and its allies in the United Nations put forth in 1961 UN General Assembly Resolution 1668, which dictated that any change stemming from two governments contesting legitimacy over a

seat be regarded as an “important question,” thus requiring a supermajority vote of two-thirds of the General Assembly before any action is taken.<sup>5</sup>

Resolution 1668 gave the ROC a temporary respite, but with decolonization coming into full force, new nations among the former European colonies in Africa were joining at a rapid rate. Western nations that voted predominantly with the United States and that outnumbered the Communist bloc, in contrast, were fixed in number. Given the arithmetic reality, ROC Foreign Ministry planners understood that they needed votes among the newly decolonizing nations in order to prevent a supermajority from forming on behalf of Beijing to oust the ROC.

### OPERATION VANGUARD

In 1961, the MOFA officially inaugurated its various international development missions under the Operation Vanguard project. Officially, it consisted of technical missions, like the one to Vietnam, except under Vanguard, it had expanded its scope from one mission to one country to what would eventually be over two dozen. Unofficially, with the rise of the People’s Republic of China as an international power and the scant likelihood of the GMD wresting the mainland back from the Communists, the Vanguard program was the Foreign Ministry’s attempt at agricultural development diplomacy. It offered technical missions, with Taiwanese technical expertise and American funding, to African nations in exchange for diplomatic support, especially in the emerging global Cold War against the Soviet Union and PRC. The United States funded Vanguard with the hopes of using its proxy ally to build an alliance among developing nations—a Global South ally in the Global South. This means of currying international favor became more important as the Communist bloc in the United Nations attempted to replace the seat of the Republic of China with that of the People’s Republic of China on the mainland, which was increasingly being viewed as the legitimate and rightful representative of China.

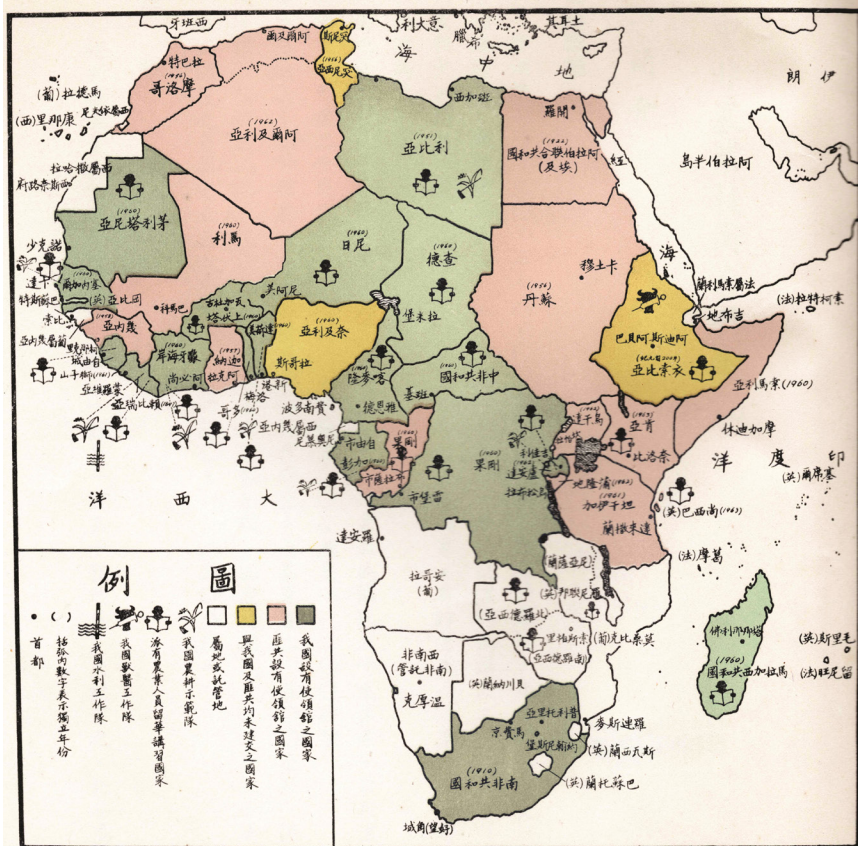
Based on oral history interviews with many Taiwanese agricultural technicians who worked on the ground in Africa, ranging from two to over two dozen years of experience, as well as archival documents from the ROC Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United States National Archives, a picture emerges of attempts to bring a unique Taiwanese experience, rooted in science and practical, low-capital methods of the bootstrapping ethic of hard work, free from the colonial trappings and elite-centered development legacies from the West.

### RACE

In Africa, Taiwanese teams met political circumstances in which they could take advantage of their status as outsiders unburdened by the colonial legacy of the West. ROC foreign minister Shen Changhuan (沈昌煥, Shen Chang-huan), recounted an anecdote to US vice president Hubert Humphrey. In 1963, Shen was near Brazzaville. He was crossing the Congo River when he was stopped,



# 圖况概作合術技業農非中



月四年三十五國民華中

製繪會員委合與興復利農國中

FIGURE 26. A 1964 Taiwanese map showing African countries receiving ROC agricultural technical assistance missions (in green), PRC missions (in red), and both (in yellow). Jin Yang-gao, "Sino-African Agricultural Technical Cooperation Summary."

presumably by non-government armed soldiers, and "would have been shot had he not been able to point out that his skin was neither white nor black." The lesson of this anecdote, Shen related, was that everywhere in Africa, "he found suspicion of all white people."<sup>6</sup>

Race was almost never openly discussed in development documents, but the language of postcolonial solidarity was present throughout public speeches, conferences, newspapers, and other published media. Whereas in Vietnam, race was coded as having "similar cultures" or "similar peoples," commonality in Africa was coded from the Taiwanese side through shared socioeconomic, historical, or cultural markers. This included, for example, the legacies of colonialism referenced privately by Shen Changhuan. Publicly, solidarity was established through assertions of shared perseverance and hard work, implying a commonality within the basic human condition of subsistence or rural societies. In front of Humphrey, Shen was likely aware that his audience was an American one, and Shen was possibly justifying the continued US financial support of Operation Vanguard by emphasizing what the Taiwanese offered that the Americans could not in Africa—freedom from a white colonial legacy. Nonetheless, Taiwan's portrayals of its unique position as a Global South development power in fact integrated an anti- or postcolonial sentiment at times.

In the same example, Shen also conveyed that there was also little patience for "American red tape and other difficulties" that produced results too slowly. This perhaps hinted at the more pragmatic elements of development diplomacy. Given the relative lack of democratic oversight on budgets, the authoritarian ROC was more likely to oblige with gifts. Humphrey emphasized that "cultural, technical assistance and information activities are not expensive and the [Republic of China] can perhaps do better in these activities than the U.S."<sup>7</sup> It was this postwar moment that the ROC hoped to take advantage of, where the development plans of American experts carried the legacies of European colonialism and provided an opportunity for Taiwan to seize the global stage.

## ON THE GROUND

The Vanguard program sent technical missions to over a dozen African nations, beginning in 1960 with Liberia.<sup>8</sup> While Operation Vanguard was imagined from the heights of MOFA as a Cold War project, its actual implementation on the ground involved different concerns, centered on translation of technologies from Taiwan to Africa, on the contestation between labor and environment, and most importantly on the actions of the crucial intermediaries: the Taiwanese agricultural technician. In the words of one agricultural technician interviewee, Peng Ruiduan, "Diplomacy is diplomacy. What we did was actual work."<sup>9</sup>

In the 1975 document on technical cooperation, Vanguard missions were described as following five steps:

1. Land reclamation work: Reclaiming a predetermined area of jungle, swamp, wilderness, hills, inside the city into usable farmland for tillers.
2. Experimentation work: In accordance with local climate, water resources, land type, and other natural environmental factors, implement variety, planting

season, fertilizer amount, and planting methods comparative experiments. Use these selected improved varieties, most suitable planting seasons, and appropriate planting methods for the usage of demonstration and extension.

3. Demonstration work: Using improved varieties, appropriate planting techniques, and new agricultural implements to perform demonstrations of plantings. To increase production results, farmer viewing and emulation meetings are held to initiate local farmers' interests and to build their confidence.
4. Training work: Our tilling teams in Africa utilize a "learning while doing" (做中學習, *zuozhong xuexi*) method, while working on a field, using practical manual work methods, leading African farmers in using agricultural implements, and to familiarize them with our planting methods.
5. Extension work: Uses the agricultural production techniques and experience obtained from each step of experimentation, demonstration, and training, to encourage African farmers to practically adopt these in order to improve farmers' lives and agricultural development.<sup>10</sup>

Experimentation, demonstration, training, and extension formed the core principles constituting agricultural development for Chinese and Taiwanese planners as far back as 1920. In both mainland China in the early Republican era (see chapter 1) and in Taiwan under Japanese colonial rule (see chapter 3), state-led agricultural policies led to an expansion of experimentation centers that produced both seeds and technologies. Experimentation was followed by demonstration and extension through a variety of channels, including farmers' associations, 4-H youth groups, and printed media.

Across the dozens of missions in Africa, missions in actuality differed greatly depending on the specific needs of the government receiving assistance, the local social and economic conditions, environmental and ecological considerations, and diplomatic negotiations between the ROC and their African counterparts. Given that most of the missions were often limited in terms of capital and human resources, with most teams averaging between a half dozen and a dozen members, Taiwanese leaders chose to focus on demonstrating the potential of newly introduced Taiwanese varieties or Taiwanese-selected local varieties of crops as well as Taiwanese methods of planting, fertilization, harvesting, and so on. The overall goal was to show first of all that Taiwanese methods could grow far more quantities of crops through demonstration farms and that once local farmers saw the results firsthand, they would be open to learning about these techniques through extension. Taiwanese agricultural technicians I interviewed between 2012 and 2019 often claimed that local African farmers were intrigued by the results of Taiwanese demonstration farms, and many were eager to likewise reproduce those results on their own farms.

Most Taiwanese technicians sent to Africa came from modest, rural backgrounds in Taiwan. When the Vanguard program was introduced, a search for



technicians focused on the state-owned enterprise Taiwan Sugar Corporation and agricultural experimentation stations. Ecological considerations played a role, too. According to one former technician, recruitment focused on southern Taiwan with the belief that southern Taiwanese climate made technicians hailing from the south more able to acclimate to the tropical climates of sub-Saharan Africa. Because Vanguard missions were expected to involve significant physical hardship, candidates were required to be between twenty-five and thirty-five years of age and in good health, with sufficient stamina to endure the challenges of field work. Technicians were limited to graduates from technical agricultural schools (農校, *nongxiao*), technical schools that trained agricultural technicians to perform the labor of experimentation, farming, and extension work. However, unlike in Taiwan, where monthly salaries for young technicians was often limited to 350 New Taiwan Dollars (NTD) per month, Vanguard salaries offered at least \$270 USD per month (this would increase each year that Vanguard operated), which at the exchange rate of the time, was approximately 10,000 NTD, or a thirty-fold increase in salary. Despite the hardship, young Taiwanese technicians jumped at the opportunity.<sup>11</sup> Over the course of Operation Vanguard's history, according to Yang Xikun, around six hundred Taiwanese technicians in total worked in Africa, and many stayed six to seven years during their deployments.<sup>12</sup>

In Africa, Taiwanese technicians indeed faced significant challenges. Yang Xikun called technical labor in Africa “extremely arduous.”<sup>13</sup> In many Vanguard missions, including the first 1961 mission to Liberia, Taiwanese were sent to rural areas that lacked infrastructural development. The Liberian Vanguard team on arrival was thus forced to begin with the difficult work of land reclamation, clearing forested jungle to develop suitable land for agriculture. It was only after a full season of clearing land, planting crops, and nearing harvest that the Vanguard team was able to begin its demonstration work for neighboring villagers. Most Vanguard teams operated in rural areas without electrification, running instead on generators, which limited their usage of irrigation pumps to gas-powered generators and required that most of their irrigation infrastructure be constructed by their own teams. This extended to personal living conditions too, where many Vanguard teams depended on generator-powered electricity, if there was electricity at all, in their dormitories. If lucky, some teams were given prefabricated accommodations by the local government. In the case of Liberia, the Vanguard team was considered fortunate for having chosen a location where an American agricultural team had recently built a small dormitory and abandoned it just prior to the Taiwanese arrival, which the Taiwanese promptly took up as their own. In Chad, the Taiwanese team set up their own *siheyuan* (四合院), a classic courtyard house, though my interviewee conveyed that when it rained, conditions inside their poorly constructed *siheyuan* were not too different from being outdoors.<sup>14</sup> In their free time, Taiwanese technicians resorted to basic activities of playing cards or basic outdoor sports for their leisurely activities. Many Taiwanese

technicians, all men, fathered a number of mixed race children, many of whom were tragically left behind when technicians returned home to Taiwan, similar to the mestizos legacy of colonial regimes around the world.<sup>15</sup> For the most part, Vanguard technicians operated as farmers would in Taiwan, with the goal of demonstrating how farming techniques from Taiwan could help their African counterparts.

With limited capital resources, many Taiwanese technicians emphasized ingenuity and practicality as characteristics of Taiwanese development in African contexts. Vanguard funds did not provide for a significant budget for capital expenditures, much less equipment such as power tillers that were then expensive even for Taiwanese farmers. This left the Taiwanese technicians to piece together their own tools from everyday, common objects. Another interviewee, Chen Dianxin described how Taiwanese teams managed. In Côte d'Ivoire, Taiwanese teams welded a metal plate onto a gasoline barrel, then attached wheels, to create a makeshift plow. A tree trunk would be dragged across land to smooth out tilled soil.<sup>16</sup> The focus on pragmatism, which became a key aspect of representing Taiwan's development model in Africa, took prominence in many of the Vanguard missions, where Taiwanese teams were not able to set up experiment stations to select suitable local cultivars.

Vanguard demonstration farms included local training centers, which were responsible for the important aspect of technological translation typically practiced in agricultural extension. One Taiwanese team member was responsible for each training center and set up a class schedule for local farmers. In the case of Sierra Leone around 1967, each class had about ten local farmer participants, sent by their home village and each representing a different village from the vicinity. Training instructors would distribute seeds to class participants, though farmers still needed to procure their own fertilizer. Training centers focused primarily on showing practices using demonstration plots that were a priority for the local Vanguard teams. In Swaziland (today Eswatini) in 1971, Peng Ruiduan conveyed that initially, a training class recruiting participants even with help of the local village chief was only able to recruit ten locals. That initial class assigned two plots of land to each participant and guided them to plant Taiwanese-provided cabbage. After a short two-month growing season, according to Peng, the sales of cabbage to local markets netted such profit for the ten locals that the next class enrolled forty participants.<sup>17</sup> The Taiwanese ability to showcase the value of producing and consuming Vanguard-grown crops on demonstration plots was crucial to their mission in Africa.

The politics of crops and planting demonstrated the intertwined nature of Taiwanese diplomatic objectives, colonial legacies, technician expertise, and local environmental conditions. In one example, Taiwanese diplomats promised officials in Chad that the Taiwanese mission could develop paddy rice agriculture. Upon arrival in 1965, Taiwanese technician Peng Ruiduan discovered that this was impossible. The local environmental conditions were too dry to practice

paddy rice cultivation, yet the ROC embassy took no interest in addressing their promises made without reference to ecology. Peng's team instead introduced sugarcane, a crop that Taiwan produced in abundance and that was deeply intertwined with Taiwan's own colonial history dating back centuries. Yet French agricultural experts, who continued to hold significant influence even in postcolonial Chad, objected to Taiwanese efforts to introduce sugarcane. (Peng states that French agricultural experts had never seen sugarcane in the field prior to encountering them in Taiwanese demonstration farms, indicating complete unfamiliarity.) Peng believed that this opposition stemmed from French vested interests in maintaining tangerine exports to France.<sup>18</sup> As historian Tiago Saraiva has argued, citrus groves in Algeria, bringing together white French settlers and cloned California citrus fruit, demonstrate the materiality of colonialism through "movements of thick technoscientific things that bind science, technology, and politics together in a continuum."<sup>19</sup> The contestation between Taiwanese and French influences in Chad, played out through competing colonial-era crops of sugarcane and citrus, represented how development in postcolonial Africa was often constructed through legacies of colonial science, economics, and politics.

#### BY THE TAIWANESE "METROPOLE" FOR A GLOBAL AUDIENCE

In Taipei, missions in Africa became integrated into a narrative about Taiwanese development abroad that was then represented to global audiences. *Free China Review*, a monthly English language publication from the information service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, served as a public media platform for the ROC regime targeting foreign observers. Though it was a state-published media venue under an authoritarian regime, thus likely tightly controlled in terms of how it presented information and narratives, reading *Free China Review* as a form of public diplomacy and as visual and discursive representations of Taiwan's developmentalist visions still renders valuable insight for understanding what Taiwanese postcolonial development entailed.

The May 1962 issue of *Free China Review* underscored how ingenuity and hard labor were deployed across Africa. Titled "Straw Hat Diplomats," the article reported on the 1962 Seminar on Agricultural Techniques for Africans, which invited African trainees from Central African Republic, Congo, Dahomey, Côte d'Ivoire, Libya, Madagascar, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Togo to Taichung and Tainan to see Taiwanese demonstration farms and learn agricultural methods in upland crops and rice cultivation (figure 27).<sup>20</sup>

Taiwanese technical ingenuity with everyday implements and blue-collar willingness to roll up sleeves and dig trenches became centerpieces in representations of Taiwanese development in Africa. Aside from showing invited African trainees donning "Taiwan hats" (straw hats), *Free China Review* also showcased



FIGURE 27. “Straw Hat Diplomats,” an article in *Free China Review*, a monthly English-language magazine published by the ROC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reported on the Taiwanese agricultural technicians engaging with African nations. Pictured here are African invitees participating in the 1962 Seminar on Agricultural Techniques for Africans in Taiwan donning “Taiwan hats.” Wang, “Straw Hat Diplomats.”

pictures from the early Taiwanese agricultural team in Liberia utilizing a makeshift land level, with a Taiwanese technician lying flat on the ground with his level atop an ordinary wooden stool, a similar instance of achieving agricultural technical needs with everyday implements as described by retired agricultural technician Chen Dianxin (figure 28). In another picture, Taiwanese technicians are shown digging a drainage ditch alongside African farmers when machine labor was too expensive or inaccessible, an example of the labor that *Free China Review* was eager to valorize, epitomizing the hardworking nature of Taiwanese technicians sent to help Africans. In a final photograph two Taiwanese technicians are shown bare chested, wearing work trousers or jeans and a baseball cap while holding a shovel (figure 29). In contrast with the formal suits and ties of agricultural scientists and economists, these technicians are represented in a blue-collar fashion, likely denoting their rural backgrounds and willingness to undertake difficult labor.<sup>21</sup>

Demonstration was a central defining feature of Taiwanese methods. Through printed media, documentary films, and actual farms, demonstration allowed Taiwan to showcase its carefully curated modernity. Agricultural extension requires the utilization of demonstration sites in rural areas for easy access to rural farmers, but Vanguard also integrated perhaps the ultimate form of demonstration—the tour of Taiwan. A select few were given roundtrip airfare, lavish hotel stays, extravagant banquets (often featuring shark fin soup among other delicacies), and packed



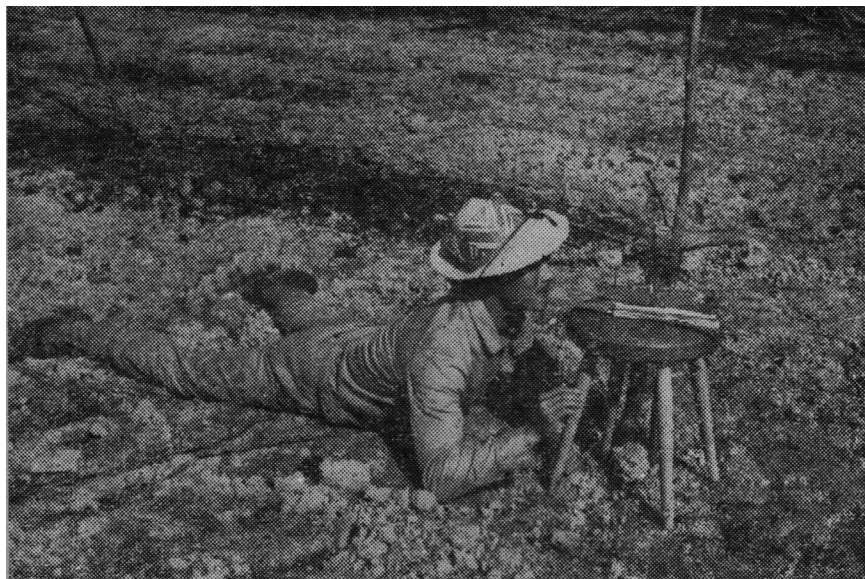


FIGURE 28. “Straw Hat Diplomats” exemplified the ingenuity of Taiwanese technicians in conditions where state-of-the-art tools were too expensive or difficult to acquire. The one pictured here was a member of the Taiwanese team in Liberia shown with a “makeshift level” on an ordinary stool. Wang, “Straw Hat Diplomats.”



FIGURE 29. This photo from *Free China Review* features Taiwanese technicians, shown bare chested and wearing jeans and a cap or work trousers, side by side with a Liberian woman and children. Though reminiscent of colonial photography, the Taiwanese technicians are attired in a way that signals their working-class background. Wang, “Straw Hat Diplomats.”

# FREE CHINA REVIEW

APRIL, 1962  
VOL. XII, NO. 4



FIGURE 30. *Free China Review* featured on its cover of the April 1962 issue Malagasy Republic president Philibert Tsiranana sitting atop a glossy, Taiwanese-made power tiller. “Farmer-President” Tsiranana, the title given to him in the *Free China Review* article, was the first chief of state from the African continent to visit Taiwan. Chu, “Free China Receives a Farmer-President.”



full island itineraries. Taiwanese tours were, above all, performative. Regardless of whether guests were chiefs of state or young agricultural extension agents, visits incorporated stops throughout the Taiwanese countryside and agricultural centers of knowledge to showcase the modern ideal-type in person.

One of the earliest African state visits to Taiwan was from President Philibert Tsiranana of the Malagasy Republic, an anti-Communist ally of the ROC, in 1962. The visit was a regal matter. Published in the April 1962 volume of *Free China Review* was a vivid color photograph of Tsiranana, sitting atop a new, glossy, bright orange power tiller produced by Taiwan-based firm Zhongguo Nongji (中國農機). In 1962, the power tiller was still relatively rarely used in Taiwan, with only 6,154 total counted throughout the entire country, thus showcasing some of the most modern and expensive pieces of agricultural machinery.<sup>22</sup>

The language within *Free China Review* evoked the Afro-Asian postcolonial solidarity of the Bandung Conference, except expressed with a subtle pro-Taiwanese spin. Tsiranana was praised for his leadership in the decolonization transition that resulted in a peaceful and implicitly strong nation-state:

Such leadership is rare, especially among the emerging Afro-Asian nations. Many of these countries gained their independence after bloody struggles with the old colonialists. A few of them even turned to the Communists for help. Not so with the Republic of Malagasy. Under the guidance of their patriotic President, the Malagasy people achieved their independence speedily and in peace, thereby preserving strength for the building of their new nation.<sup>23</sup>

Within this praise for foreign nations was a reflection of Guomindang political discourse. Despite the militant nature of Guomindang authoritarianism under martial law utilizing surveillance tactics and executions without trials, outward public diplomacy emphasized the pacific nature of the Republic of China. Nation-building in peace meant that its citizens would benefit economically and would profit, a point in favor of Guomindang legitimacy as it began to be increasingly defined by its agrarian transformation and nascent economic success in the early 1970s. The emphasis on peace and prosperity at home engendered an internalization of the regime's patriarchal duties, such that many Taiwanese in Taiwan saw themselves as beneficiaries of a form of capitalist state welfare, despite the violent repression of political liberties.

Commonality and solidarity once again reached across historical and socioeconomic ties, not just political and postcolonial ones. *Free China Review* emphasized the rural roots of both Tsiranana (and by extension, the Malagasy Republic) and the Republic of China. "Some," the article referenced, perhaps apocryphally, "have attributed President Tsiranana's wise leadership to the fact that he comes from a rural area and is long on horse sense and short on impetuous bluster."<sup>24</sup> Here, the valorization of Tsiranana's social origins from the rural countryside reinforced Taiwan's ongoing emphasis on rural modernity. Taiwan's own expertise in rural development needed emphasis, and bringing to the fore Tsiranana's

rural roots offered another means of demonstrating similar historical narratives in the ongoing rural-colonial to modern-nation transition among both postcolonial states. This type of identification extended to most Vanguard recipients.

More unique to the Malagasy Republic was an emphasis on diasporic and migration ties. “Although separated by an ocean and sub-continent, the two established contact more than a century ago when Chinese emigrants settled in Madagascar.” The article continued, “Today there are about 8,000 Chinese residents among the 5.5 million Malagasy people. Many Chinese settlers have married into Malagasy families and are actively participating in the economic development of the host country.”<sup>25</sup> Again the importance of economic development took priority, where the presence of Chinese migrants in the Malagasy Republic were seen as a positive sign because of the economic contributions to its development.<sup>26</sup>

Like *Free China Review*, the magazine *Xinwen tiandi* (新聞天地) featured news of Taiwanese development missions. Originally published in the mainland during the Republican era, after 1949 *Xinwen tiandi* moved its publication office to the British colony of Hong Kong, outside of the control of the Communists, but still able to reach Chinese reading audiences in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and elsewhere in the Sinophone world. The March 31, 1962 issue *Xinwen tiandi* featured on its cover a picture of six of the technicians within the seven person Taiwanese team to Libya. One of the articles in the issue was titled “Going to the Sahara Desert to Plant Rice.”<sup>27</sup> The photographs of the technicians, again plainly dressed in rolled up pants and in the fields, represented the down-to-earth nature of Taiwanese assistance. The article title also conveyed a sense of environmental miracle: planting rice, typically requiring wetlands or irrigation, in the desert.

#### REPRESENTING THE TAIWAN MODEL

For the agricultural scientists in the Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction (JCRR, 中國農村復興聯合委員會, Zhongguo Nongcun Fuxing Lianhe Weiyuanhui) who were tasked with planning the missions, the Vanguard program became a point of pride. Taiwan, like many of its Vanguard targets, was a colony just three decades prior to the start of Vanguard. In the eyes of the development planners, Taiwanese ingenuity, determination, and skill allowed it to not only resume exporting agricultural products, by the late 1960s becoming a heavyweight exporter in canned fruits and mushrooms, but also to have the unique insight of what it is like to rapidly succeed as a developing nation. JCRR commissioner Shen Zonghan, in correspondences with his American agronomist colleagues, would often reiterate proudly that Taiwan had a lot to teach the world. In the context of the ongoing Cold War, this representation of success was necessary in order to contrast its model of development with the Communist model from the PRC, which also competed on the notion of Third World solidarity. As a consequence, Taiwanese technical missions attempted to duplicate the Taiwanese agricultural miracle.

This became evident in the Sino-African Agricultural Technical Cooperation Conference (SAATCC) (*Séminaire Afro-Chinois pour la Coopération Technique Agricole*), hosted from July 26 to 30, 1965, in Côte d'Ivoire. Organized by the ROC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it invited agricultural experts and bureaucrats from Taiwan and over a dozen African nations, including Ivory Coast, Liberia, Cameroon, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Congo, Gabon, French Upper Volta (Haute Volta, today Burkina Faso), Congo-Leopoldville (Zaire), Madagascar, Niger, Rwanda, Chad, and Togo. ROC officials included Shen Zonghan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs diplomats, and heads of experiment stations, crop improvement stations, and fertilizer associations in Taiwan. Also included were the Taiwanese team leaders of the various Vanguard missions, including Vietnam Crop Improvement Mission head and later FAO official Ma Baozhi and his successor as the Vietnam Mission head, Jin Yanggao (金陽鎬).

The conference began with an opening speech by an ROC diplomat describing the importance of agriculture, both for humankind and for their respective nations. The speech began with hope and praise: "Africa is expansive and possesses ample resources, its soil fertile, and possesses optimal conditions for agricultural development; that is to say, it possesses the fundamental conditions to build a strong and prosperous nation" (建立富強國家的基本條件).<sup>28</sup> He further exhorted that if Africa were to "increase research and improvement in agricultural techniques, each African ally's future would be limitless."<sup>29</sup> The ROC's goal was to "contribute all of its agricultural knowledge, experience, and techniques . . . under a common desire and objective, to assist our African allies to fully utilize their own manpower, intelligence, and resources, to increase production, improve the environment, and raise citizen living standards."<sup>30</sup> Under the Vanguard program, Taiwan emphasized its friendship as well as its experience, using its role to educate and lead African nations toward self-reliance and success.

After establishing their vision for how Taiwan would benefit African nations seeking to improve their respective citizens, Taiwanese leaders then moved on to qualify Taiwan's *bona fides* and to describe what constituted Taiwan's success in agrarian development. Shen Zonghan, who in 1965 had recently been promoted to chairman of the JCRR after the passing of Jiang Menglin, presented a detailed analysis of Taiwan's development history as an introduction for African dignitaries in the first substantive speech of the conference. Shen began immediately by drawing parallels, pointing out that Taiwan's "environment and agricultural development are, in many respects, similar to those of the African countries."<sup>31</sup>

Shen continued on to describe most tropical and subtropical countries in the world as "confronted with somewhat similar problems," that "they have not yet adequately developed their natural resources and their economies are primarily agricultural." As a result, "poor and dissatisfied, they are easily taken in by Communist propaganda." Shen was referring obliquely to the rival diplomatic efforts by the PRC and by the USSR to likewise sway the Third World.<sup>32</sup> In associating

Communism with propaganda, he was dismissing the legitimacy of Communist methods in actually creating better livelihoods: "Only with increased farm production and increased income can their livelihood be bettered and the social and political order be stabilized and democratic institutions strengthened."<sup>33</sup> Discrediting Communist methods were important to Shen, as in fact many of the reasons to which Shen would later appeal regarding the suitability of Taiwanese methods in some respects appeared similar to Communist agricultural development. Specifically, themes of self-reliance, low capital investment, and utilization of native resources and labor resembled agricultural development policies in the PRC.<sup>34</sup> Taiwanese officials pointed out that Communist methods were often far more violent and radical, relying on forced collectivization and sometimes the loss of lives, though these were more often raised in discussions of land reform as opposed to agricultural improvement.

Following a history of agriculture in Taiwan first under Japanese colonialism and then under the transition to the Nationalist government, Shen went on to describe the contributions of the JCRR and its role in guiding agricultural development, starting by:

[Building] up a small but highly qualified technical staff, put its fingers on the most important production and marketing problems, established priorities among them, and made grants to stimulate the expansion of agricultural research, education and extension in order to solve those problems. It has also assisted the government in implementing land reform, reorganizing farmers' associations, and planning and coordinating agricultural programs for the economic development of Taiwan.<sup>35</sup>

This story of agricultural development being led by certain state policies focusing on research, education, extension, land reform, and farmers' associations reflects the unique aspects of the Taiwanese approach to agricultural development. These aspects were indeed grounded in reality (see chapter 2), but by the 1960s, these characteristics began to be solidified into what I have termed the "Taiwan model" that was packaged and marketed throughout the Third World, at conferences like SAATCC, by officials such as Shen Zonghan.

Shen laid out the benefits of the Taiwan model. Complemented by graphs and projections, Shen listed off the impressive statistics of the Taiwan miracle (see figure 1). "Aggregate agricultural output of crops, livestock, fisheries and forest products in 1964 almost doubled that of the 1950–1952 average or that of the prewar peak year. The average annual growth rate of agriculture was 6.0 percent under the First Four-Year Plan, 4.6 percent under the Second, and 4.9 percent under the Third." Most impressive was the growth in rice productivity, which increased in "per hectare yield from 1,998 kg of brown rice in 1952 to 2,937 kg in 1964." These figures supported "an expanding population" as well as the maintenance of "a large military force."<sup>36</sup>

Shen attempted to collate the concrete steps of the Taiwan development model that would be replicable for his African audience, breaking them down into

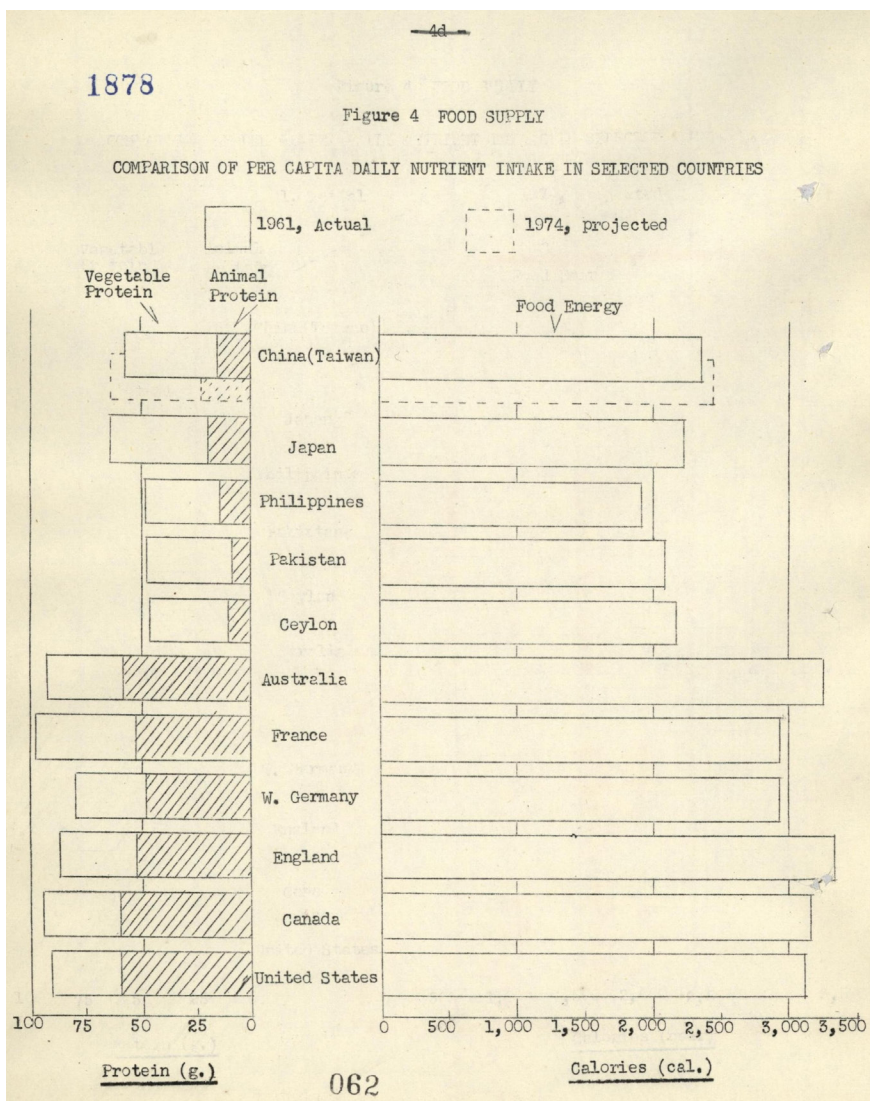


FIGURE 31. A comparison of per capita nutrient intake in Taiwan compared to other developed and developing countries, demonstrating Taiwan's accomplishments in achieving high average caloric intake. Included and likely shown to audience members in Shen Zonghan's speech to the Sino-African Agricultural Technical Cooperation Conference held in Ivory Coast, July 26-30, 1965. 中非農技合作討論會 [Sino-African Agricultural Technical Cooperation Conference], July 16, 1965, page 1878, archive number 020000039124A, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Collection, Academia Historica.



1896 **TABEAU DE LA REPARTITION DES MISSIONS DE COOPERATION  
TECHNIQUE AGRICOLE DE LA REPUBLIQUE DE CHINE A L'AFRIQUE  
JUN 1965**

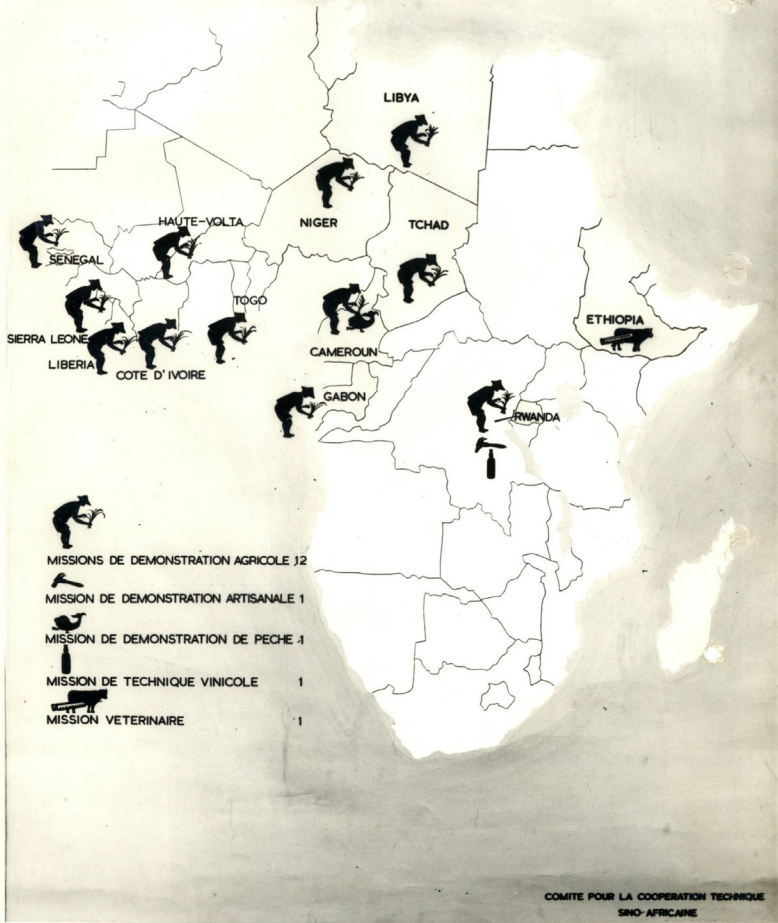


FIGURE 32. A French-language map visualizing Taiwanese development missions throughout the African continent in 1965. Included and likely shown to audience members in Shen Zong-han's speech to the Sino-African Agricultural Technical Cooperation Conference held in Ivory Coast, July 26–30, 1965. 中非農技合作討論會 [Sino-African Agricultural Technical Cooperation Conference], July 16, 1965, page 1896, archive number 020000039124A, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Collection, Academia Historica.



"(1) resources endowment, (2) technological factors, (3) organizational factors, (4) economic incentives, and (5) human incentives." Among these, Shen homed in on those aspects that once again characterized the Taiwan model. Shen rapidly dismissed resource endowment, even going so far as saying that the resource endowment of Taiwan "is only moderate," which was a fair assessment. Technological factors were attributable to basic and applied research, in improved varieties of plants and livestock, cultivation, fertilizer, and pesticide methods, and usage of irrigation and soils. Organizational factors reflected the other end of the Taiwan model spectrum, also dating back to the Republican era in China, where special focus was paid to social organizations such as farmers organizations and extension "for channeling the resources and the technology down to the village and farm level for increasing output."<sup>37</sup> In other words, Shen was describing the marriage of science and society that was at the heart of the Taiwan model.

Economic incentives demonstrated the qualities of Taiwan's state-capitalist approach to development that more sharply divided it from Communist development. Shen elaborated that economic incentives involved capitalistic mechanisms that provided stable markets and subsidies for farmers, including "land reform," "supported . . . guaranteed, or negotiated prices," "improved marketing systems of export crops," "adequate supply of farm requisites such as fertilizers, pesticides, farm implements, and feeds," and "the supply of agricultural credit."<sup>38</sup> These were all elements of Taiwan's approach to state-sponsored capitalism, combining elements of free market principles, such as credit mechanisms for private farmers and compulsory but financialized sales of land holdings (see chapter 2 for more on the capital raising techniques used in Taiwan's land reform), combined with state subsidies, aid, and regulatory oversight in order to provide stability and availability of critical supplies and market access.

The final element, human incentives, conveyed something that the previous elements did not, which was the closest to a direct political intervention into the state level. Though the state was closely involved in setting economic incentives and structuring markets, these policies are set from the top-down. In contrast, in describing human incentives, Shen began to describe the elements that constitute a developmentalist state: "a progress-oriented stable government," "a small group of agricultural leaders with advanced training and long experience," "a large number of graduates from agricultural colleges and vocational schools working in government and private organizations," and "an intelligent and literate farming population."<sup>39</sup> These factors were indeed crucial for Taiwan's own miracle. However, these elements were the most difficult to accomplish, as they would necessitate large-scale mobilization of resources and restructuring of government, institutions, and society, perhaps sustained over decades. Members of Shen's audience were neither equipped nor empowered to enact such changes. Instead, here and in other instances of development, these issues are depicted as technical, when in fact they are fundamentally political and require structural change at all levels of state and society.

Wrapping up his speech, Shen pointed to the signs of success and encouragement from the missions established in the early 1960s up until 1965. In the Ivory Coast, he proudly presented results of the Taiwanese assistance team planting 93.97 hectares of rice “according to Chinese cultural practices,” with some teams even reporting “that the per unit area yield of various crops planted in the demonstration fields is even higher than the highest per unit area yield achieved in Taiwan itself.” Shen attributed this “to the fact that most of your lands are virgin lands which have never been cultivated before and, therefore, are rich in plant nutrients.” This was cause for immense optimism for Shen, who added that “such being the case, if your lands properly utilized, their productivity will certainly be very high.” Thus, Africa’s natural fertile soils, its “plentiful supply” of labor, combined with Taiwanese guidance to bring an “emphasis on trial and extension so as to make it easier for the local farmers to accept Chinese cultural practices” would bring “very bright” prospects. Taiwanese methods, combined with the natural African abundance of fertility and labor, could overcome other obstacles, such as the lack of capital, since in “the initial stage of agricultural development not much capital is needed anyway.”<sup>40</sup> For Shen, the Taiwan model was the pathway for Africa to greater productivity and better livelihoods, as its strengths suited the strengths of Africa, and its low-capital methods compensated for its weaknesses.

#### VANGUARD AT HOME

By 1969, Operation Vanguard missions were ongoing in twenty African countries: Liberia, Côte d’Ivoire, Gabon, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Niger, Cameroon, Upper Volta (Haute Volta, today Burkina Faso), Chad, Togo, Malawi, Gambia, Congo-Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Dahomey (Benin), Malagasy Republic (Madagascar), Botswana, Lesotho, Central African Republic, and Ghana. Vanguard at that point also included three missions to Latin America (Chile, Brazil, Dominican Republic) and one to Asia (Thailand), with annual PL480 allocation from the United States to Vanguard exceeding \$650 million New Taiwan Dollars.<sup>41</sup>

Behind the scenes of Vanguard was the tireless politicking of Yang Xikun, “Mister Africa,” the vice minister of foreign affairs. Yang had studied international relations at Columbia University and then served as a bureaucrat with the Guomindang in various roles within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. By 1958, he was participating in the ROC delegations to the United Nations, and by 1959, he had been appointed director of the West Asian Department of the MOFA, then director of the African Affairs Department. American observers in the State Department credited Yang as the “initiator and executor” for the MOFA’s United Nations diplomacy strategy in Africa.<sup>42</sup>

In 1969, Yang Xikun penned two letters. The first was to the Taiwanese agricultural experts, copying several important technocrats in the JCRR and across

ROC government bodies, expressing his appreciation and reflections on the value of the Vanguard missions. On May 24, 1969, Yang wrote that Vanguard missions "were not only establishing a historical example by the Chinese people for the African people . . . but furthermore have redressed the mistaken impressions of the Chinese people due to the infiltration and subversion caused by the invasive nature of the Maoist bandits (毛匪, *maofei*)."<sup>43</sup> To that end, he wrote a second letter directed to the agricultural development team leaders and technicians on the ground in Africa to further encourage their work in assisting their "African allies."

The internal letter to the agricultural technical teams repeated several of the principles that Shen had presented to his African audience: the uniqueness of Taiwan's contributions, the importance of their work, and the success they achieved. Yang emphasized that "industriousness and frugality [克勤克儉]" was a "traditional virtue of us Chinese people" and "African countries were just like ours, we are all developing countries," hence it was necessary to practice the same industriousness and frugality agricultural work in Africa. The goal was to "spend as little in order to achieve the greatest results" so that "after leaving Africa, our African friends could also accomplish what we did."<sup>44</sup> These points emphasized the uniqueness of Taiwan's development approach and also reiterated that Taiwan's successes made that approach more easily taught and implemented in other similar developing contexts.

The letter also revealed Yang's insight into the purpose of agricultural technical cooperation and how it benefitted Taiwan as well as a greater humanitarian mission. He wrote:

We are a developing nation [開發中的國家]. In these past few years, that we can unexpectedly participate in the economic development of other developing countries, especially with regards to agricultural productivity, and serve the people of our allied African nations, win their trust, and furthermore attain such ardent support and approval in our country and abroad, ought to be the greatest honor that all of those working in agriculture can hope to achieve.<sup>45</sup>

Yang appealed directly to the sense of pride among the Taiwanese for working from humble beginnings and with modest resources to accomplish enormous tasks abroad. These tasks were not merely to further diplomatic objectives, but also to serve the betterment of peoples internationally, and to bring meaning to agricultural work.

## CONSEQUENCES

However, in many of its African missions, the replication of the Taiwan experience met significant obstacles. As historian Philip Hsiaopong Liu has written, with faith in the production capabilities of its rice seed and technology, one Taiwanese MOFA official wanted to replace African diets of maize and cassava

with rice. For the average Taiwanese, rice formed the backbone of daily diet. But Taiwanese rice, usually of the starchy, sticky ponlai (蓬萊, *penglai*) variety, was bred for a Taiwanese consumer, meaning that it suited Taiwanese cultural taste preferences. When Taiwanese technical teams produced rice in Liberia, for instance, local market conditions meant that imported rice was often cheaper than the rice that the Taiwanese were able to produce locally.<sup>46</sup> This was a consequence of both the low cost of imported rice and its higher demand vis-à-vis rice brought over by the Taiwanese for local production. Cultural affinities for particular foods and its effect on food markets have of course been an issue in China, Taiwan, and elsewhere in the world for centuries, including in reaction to the Green Revolution and monocultures, and should not have come as a surprise for the Taiwanese teams in Africa.<sup>47</sup>

Furthermore, the success of Taiwanese rice depended in part on conditions that were fairly unique to Taiwan's economic and social circumstances: the availability of capital to purchase agricultural machinery and chemicals and a relative surplus of available agricultural labor that allowed for cheap, labor intensive processes like planting and harvesting rice. Without the ability that the JCRR had possessed to shape the political economy through state policies and access to the top echelons of government to implement changes and intervene in society, Taiwanese technical missions could rely on success only within their small, contained demonstration plots, such as aforementioned training centers in Sierra Leone and Swaziland. Taiwanese teams tended to cherry-pick locations with high fertility potential for their demonstration funds, and with an abundance of American funding through Vanguard, they were able to purchase irrigation pumps, fertilizers, pesticides, and labor that would not have been sustainable for locals without access to foreign capital. Thus, after Taiwanese teams left and the equipment they left behind fell into disrepair, many of these demonstration farms reverted to old farming methods used prior to Taiwanese arrival.<sup>48</sup>

In other instances, Taiwanese teams achieved limited success. Liu provided Rwanda as a counterpoint, where a relatively cheaper cost of agricultural labor and the use of Malagasy rice as opposed to Taiwanese rice allowed for more successful rice production.<sup>49</sup> In another example, Foreign Minister Shen Changhuan related how the Taiwanese team to Dahomey allowed it to "save \$500,000 a year by producing itself materials for packing bags which it had previously had to import."<sup>50</sup> Yet productivity gains and cost savings often did not translate to lasting impact or long term improvement in livelihood. Former JCRR commissioner Bruce Billings reported on his trip to Africa in 1969 that successes were often complicated. In Sierra Leone, the farm supervised by Taiwanese technicians was "able to sell veg[etables] at a lower cost than those produced on other native farms" which led to native farmers being "not happy" with the Taiwanese for introducing unwelcome competition. Because Taiwanese teams were limited largely to supervising a handful of farms for demonstration purposes, they were not able to extend the

technologies and methods on a broad scale to insure equitable distribution like in Taiwan, and conversely inspired counterproductive jealousy.<sup>51</sup>

In Côte d'Ivoire, politics and diplomacy also limited the ability of Taiwanese teams. From 1964 to 1965, Côte d'Ivoire was one of the rotating temporary members of the UN Security Council and thus a particularly important target for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Like most Vanguard missions, the Côte d'Ivoire mission was limited in resources and manpower. In part because of these limitations, the Vanguard mission selected the personal farm of Côte d'Ivoire president Félix Houphouët-Boigny as a model farm. Billings argued this was because "the fact that the President does have a farm with Chinese technicians is important in gaining the cooperation of the natives." However, this justification obscured the ultimate goal of the Vanguard missions, which were fundamentally political in nature—to secure votes for the ROC in the UN. In Côte d'Ivoire, the benefits brought by Taiwanese techniques were not seen by Côte d'Ivoire farmers. "The rice produced by the presidential farm is given over to the Army," or in other words, directly supported President Houphouët-Boigny's regime. Billings furthermore wrote that most farm labor in Côte d'Ivoire was imported from Mali "due to the affluence of the natives," referring to the relative wealth of Côte d'Ivoire compared to its poorer neighbors.<sup>52</sup> Though investments in agricultural cash crop exports continued to bring wealth to Côte d'Ivoire in the decades to follow, Taiwanese development did not always bring techniques to the bottom rungs of subsistence farmers as might have been implied when Vanguard was reported by the media within Taiwan.

Indeed, though development proved to be successful in raising incomes among Taiwanese farmers, increasing caloric intake among Taiwanese rural populations and freeing up agricultural labor for industrialization, in Africa these long term changes were far less pronounced. Vanguard missions were hamstrung by politics in most instances, where the supposedly apolitical techniques taught by Taiwanese teams could not overcome structural issues such as inequitable distribution of resources, limited native government support, and the politics of diplomacy. The United States also limited the scope of Vanguard mission, discouraging its providing technical assistance outside of agriculture.<sup>53</sup> Billings also lamented this, implying that "if the Vanguard project could include projects other than those directly tied to agriculture" then perhaps even greater results could have been achieved.<sup>54</sup> As described by anthropologist James Ferguson, this "anti-politics machine" of development touted its technical ability to transcend politics, but successful development more often than not required not just technical capability but also political will and reform.<sup>55</sup>

By 1971, support for the PRC taking over the seat of the ROC as "China" gained enough traction such that the ROC no longer could trade favors for votes. The pro-PRC bloc gained a supermajority, and the US, the ROC's staunchest ally, had acquiesced to this reality. United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758

passed, formally recognizing the PRC as the legitimate government of China. The ROC had withdrawn its representative just prior to the vote, due to Chiang Kai-shek's perception that withdrawing would save face and prove less damaging to the international prestige of the ROC than being forced out by a vote, effectively ending its campaign to remain in the UN.<sup>56</sup>

As a consequence of the resolution, the United States ceased to fund the Vanguard program through its PL480 counterpart funds. Missions to most Vanguard nations were withdrawn or significantly reduced, though they would continue for certain allies who continued diplomatic recognition of the ROC under a different government agency, the Council for International Economic Cooperation and Development.

### CONCLUSION

Despite the short-lived status of Vanguard, its efforts nonetheless marked an important turn in light of greater histories about decolonization, the Global South, development, and knowledge. By the 1960s, the elite of the Guomindang had begun to lose sight of regaining the mainland. For Chiang Kai-shek, military reconquest was always at the fore, but for the mid-level bureaucrats in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the JCRR, Taiwan had become a new home and governing reality. The Vanguard missions provided an opportunity to expand that horizon. Abroad, they provided proof of national greatness, that ROC techniques and technology were as useful, if not more useful, than those practiced by the United States or Japan. ROC missions abroad dedicated to these technologies could put these to use for those nations and peoples who needed them because hunger and poverty still plagued them. These humanitarian actions reinforced the notion that because the ROC could afford to be a donor abroad, that it had conquered these issues at home. And carving out this international niche as a groundbreaking nation in agricultural development allowed the ROC to perceive itself as being in the international "vanguard."

The home front was perhaps even of greater importance for many of these intellectuals and bureaucrats. By pointing to the demand for ROC technical assistance abroad and by reinforcing its position as one of humanitarian goodness, agricultural technology became a means of proving the success of the ROC state to a domestic audience. No longer was Taiwan a sleepy colonial backwater that planted rice for others abroad. It became the producer of technologies, the model for others to follow. This sense of legitimacy provided immense propaganda value for a regime that needed continued support from the average citizen to justify its authoritarian rule and Chiang's continued quest for military build-up. It also provided a sense of nationalism for the GMD elites, which by the 1960s, after growing increasingly disillusioned about the prospects of retaking the mainland, also began to show signs of agitation against Chiang.<sup>57</sup>



The idea of being in the vanguard and providing a model for others to follow was also unique from a historical perspective because of the Cold War in Asia and the state of development at the time. Unlike the Cold War in Europe or in the United States, Taiwan's Cold War was waged primarily for its international legal status, an almost existential question of whether it was a state at all. Development was one field in which this unique Cold War produced rival scientific and technical regimes between the ROC and PRC. While development had largely been practiced by what were considered First World and Second World powers like the United States and the Soviet Union, the engagement of a former colonial territory like Taiwan in the field marked a significant shift. Today, South-to-South cooperation is far more commonplace, but in the 1960s, Taiwanese aid to Third World countries was novel and a source of pride for both Taiwanese and Americans (who saw Taiwan as an Agency for International Development “graduate”). The introduction of practices from a former colonial space also meant technologies and practices evolved from social settings quite different from US and Soviet development. Thus, emphasis on farmers' associations, for example, proved to be a unique area of contribution in many Vanguard missions. Taiwan's contribution in farmers' associations, combining top-down and bottom-up knowledge techniques, demonstrate that knowledge can coalesce in different ways when constructed in South-to-South networks.