

May 26, 1983

Dear Ng Boksu,

I am responding at length to your inquiry about Taiwanese in the U.S. just before WWII. To my knowledge there were only two of us, Chiong Khe Beng of Tamsui and myself from Tainan. I was told of this during the time the U.S. Navy Department was looking for Taiwanese in 1943-44 to help in a project conducted at Columbia University in New York City which had to do with the projected invasion of Taiwan in order to take the island over from the Japanese. At that time I was pastor of a small Japanese church in Chicago, assisting them while I was still a student at the University of Chicago Divinity School.

Chiong Khe Beng (1912-1958) was the son of Chiong Thian Ki (?) Boksu of Tamsui. We met at Doshisha while we were high school students in the 1930's. After graduation from high school I had heard that he had left to go to the United States (1932) but had no knowledge of his whereabouts. I do not know how he managed to get a passport. I learned later from him that he had gone to Walla Walla, Washington and attended high school for a year to perfect his English. Then he enrolled at Whitman College and took his Bachelor's degree in biochemistry in 1938. He moved to Chicago in the same year where by chance we met on the campus of the University of Chicago. We roomed together at the Chicago Theological Seminary dormitory where the business manager, Mr. Robert Cashman, had befriended me when I first arrived in Chicago. Khe Beng studied at the University of Chicago for two years, then transferred to Purdue University in South Bend, Indiana in 1941 where he continued his studies for a Master's degree. Soon after WWII broke out he was drafted by the U.S. Army. (I was not because of my ministerial status.) Because of his language ability, education and character qualifications he was assigned to New Caledonia where Japanese prisoners of war were being interrogated. He returned to the U.S. to take officer's training and after commissioning was sent to Japan in 1946 with the occupation forces. He trained at Ft. Snelling in Minnesota before being sent abroad. He had meanwhile married my wife's sister, Anna and became the father of a baby girl. Two more girls were born in Japan. He died in Tokyo in March of 1958 of cancer of the throat. He had settled there after leaving the Army and started an exporting business in 1953. In 1963 my sister-in-law moved to Seattle with her three daughters where they are still living, with the exception of the youngest daughter, Mei Lan, who is just finishing her Master's degree in Urban Planning from Hunter College in New York City. BiLan, the eldest, is working in Seattle and Chu Lan, the middle daughter is married to Howard McCay and is the mother of two sons, Aaron and Adam, 5 and 3 years old respectively.

As for myself, I studied at the Theological Seminary at Doshisha University in Kyoto from 1935-1938. I applied for admission to the University of Chicago's Divinity School and was accepted. However, the Japanese government had not been issuing passports for Taiwanese to go abroad for some time. It was due to

to a personal friendship of my elder brother with an officer of the Japanese Foreign Service that an exception was made for me to study in the U.S. The passport was approved and issued four days after a telephone call to Tokyo from Taihoku. I made arrangements to board the Taiyo Maru at Yokohama in June 1938. It was due entirely to my elder brother, Ai Jin, that I was able to study in the U.S. He made my travels easier by accompanying me from Taiwan to Yokohama. He had graduated from Aoyama Gakuin and the president of the school, Dr. Abe Yoshimune kindly entertained us in Tokyo and saw me off at Yokohama.

1941  
June  
In Chicago I was granted the Master of Arts degree in 1940 and the Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1942. During my years in Chicago I was first a student pastor for a small group of Japanese Christians and was ordained while serving that church in November 1942. There is another story about our trials and tribulations from December 1941 to November 1942 having to do with finding a place to have services which I shall not go into here.

During the latter part of 1942 many Japanese and Japanese Americans from the West Coast came to Chicago to avoid being incarcerated in the concentration camps which the U.S. government had deemed a "military necessity" but later found to be a purely racist endeavor to get rid of the Japanese who had lived for decades on the West Coast. My wife was one of them. She and her mother and brothers came to Chicago in June 1942. We now have four children, three girls and a boy, all married. We are grandparents of three, a boy and two girls.

While serving the church in Chicago, I was contacted by a representative of the Navy Department who was looking for Taiwanese to work on the special project at Columbia University in New York City. Because I felt I could not leave the church I first declined to work there. But after searching for others, it was learned that I and Khe Beng were the only two in the United States in 1942 and he had already been drafted into the U.S. Army and had other commitments. Again a representative of the Navy Dept. came to Chicago, this time to convince Dr. Harrison Ray Anderson, pastor of the Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago who had been instrumental in allowing the Japanese Christians to meet in a chapel in his church for Sunday services, that my knowledge would contribute to the successful conclusion of the war and to make the occupation of Taiwan go smoothly with little loss of life and property. I, therefore, decided to go to Columbia University to help with the project. At the time over two thousand naval officers were studying all aspects of Taiwan's geographic, demographic and political features. The Navy's plan was to set up a provisional government with U.S. Naval officers after taking the island from the Japanese, but the strategy was changed in mid-course, allowing the Allied Forces to by-pass Taiwan and to invade Okinawa instead. Because of this decision the Taiwan project was then closed. The War Dept then asked if I would work with the Map Division in Washington, D.C. I was there when the war ended.

Two months later I was asked to accompany a U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey group which would go to Japan to observe and analyze the damage done during the fire bombings of Tokyo and Shikoku and also the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I saw the terrible suffering inflicted on the Japanese people, their homes destroyed and half starving from lack of food. The condition of Hiroshima and Nagasaki just two months after the war ended was still in the same pitiable state as when the bombs were dropped. I returned to Washington, D.C. the end of December after that mission was completed.

Soon after my return I was contacted by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) to work in China, reporting on the disposition of the goods sent to war-ravaged areas. However, it was learned that Chinese nationals were prohibited from working in China, so that I was not eligible. Three weeks later I was again contacted, this time by a missionary who was to take charge of the office in Shanghai. Perhaps it was due to my status as a former Japanese national that I was found to be eligible after all and papers were then processed for me to go to the Shanghai headquarters. My wife and two year old daughter went to San Diego, California to stay with her mother. When I boarded the ship in San Francisco, much to my surprise, I found that the Rev. and Mrs. Montgomery were to be fellow passengers returning to Taiwan as missionaries.

In 1947, after reporting to the UNRRA office in Shanghai I was sent to Taiwan, working out of the Taipei office as a Reports officer and wearing the khaki uniform all UNRRA officers wore. When we first arrived Governor Chen Yi welcomed all the representatives of UNRRA who were from various parts of the world. I worked closely with Allan J. Shackleton of New Zealand. The Governor, learning I had come from the U.S. and returning to my home, especially welcomed me and asked for my cooperation to work with the new government.

As I was a Reports Officer I traveled to the south of Taiwan frequently and was able to visit my home in Tainan. However, the reports that I turned in to the UNRRA office showing, for example, that the fertilizer bags had been refilled with a cheap substance containing salt that killed all the plants and were refused by the farmers, was not looked upon with favor by the local authorities who apparently had access to the reports. There were many instances of outright theft and fraud, whereby the goods sent through UNRRA were taken over by government officials and sold on the black market, the profits pocketed by them. It was not easy to write a report showing that supplies reached the farmers and townspeople intact when in fact they had not.

In February 1947 Allan Shackleton and I were in Kao Shung to interview recipients of UNRRA goods when we found that we could not buy railway tickets to return to Taipei. At the hotel, we found it was occupied by Taiwanese. Dr. Peng, a city councilman asked us to go to the occupation army's military headquarters at Siu Shan

to inform them that the people only wanted to negotiate a peaceful settlement of their grievances. But from the hotel we could see government soldiers swarming around the Municipal Office building on the other side of the square and firing at the people with guns. The soldiers then came to the hotel and called for the UNRRA officers to come out. We were then told to accompany them to headquarters for our own safety, which we finally agreed to do. This was on February 28th, 1947. We stayed there overnight and the next day returned to Kao Shung to go back to the hotel. On the way a military secret agent stopped our car and took Mr. Shackleton aside. He was told that I was to be taken in for investigation because of a robbery the night before. It was reported that a Taiwanese in an UNRRA uniform was seen to have robbed some people at gun point. Mr. Shackleton told him that was impossible because we were both at military headquarters last night and had just come back. He refused to turn me over to them knowing full well that my life was in danger. We were finally able to leave the city and return to Taipei where within ten days all UNRRA personnel were withdrawn from Taiwan and sent back to Shanghai.

Those days in Taiwan were the most horrible that I have ever experienced. People known to me, such as Dr. Lin and Mr. Wang were among the thousands who either disappeared without a trace or whose bodies were found in rivers and ravines, killed without mercy, their only crime being that they were lawyers, doctors, councilmen, respected in the community. All were slaughtered, having been accused of being communists! I cannot to this day think of those tragic days without deep sorrow and despair in my heart.

I returned to San Francisco as an immigrant (not as a student as before) and rejoined my wife and daughter in San Diego. In 1947 the Japanese were returning to their old homes on the West coast. Churches were looking for ministers to re-open and serve former Japanese churches. I was called to Seattle, Washington in January of 1948 and served there for thirty-one years, until my retirement at the age of 65 in 1978.

In the early 1950's students from Taiwan were coming to the U.S. to study. My niece, Hui Sim Tsai and her husband, Show Shan Ho, came to study in 1949. My nephew, Shinko Lee also studied here, graduating from Seattle Pacific College. At that time there were about ten students from Taiwan and my home was a meeting place--their home away from home. By the 1960's and 1970's there were many students. Many married and established households of their own. Gradually there were so many that it was not possible to know them all.

Presently in Seattle, there are over 300 Taiwanese. There is a Taiwanese church where my nephew, George Lee, is pastor. My brother, Ai Yi, and my sister Kim Siok live in Seattle. Their children are here and in many parts of the U.S.--California, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, etc. Another sister lives in New Jersey. If we counted up all our relatives in the U.S. there are more than 100.

Last year, at the time of Ai Yi's 80th birthday anniversary all his children, his three sons, and six daughters and their children had a reunion in Seattle. There were 45 of us then.

Re-reading your letter you ask how I managed to live during the war. I received tuition scholarships (at \$100. per quarter) and worked in a dining co-op at the Chicago Theological Seminary. for which I received room and board. During the summers I worked at the St. Louis Country Club in Missouri as a lowly waiter, taking orders and even serving drinks. I knew so little that I actually went to the stable when someone wanted a Horses Neck, which turned out to be a cocktail. I am much more sophisticated today! I also received a small salary as a student pastor of the Japanese church.

Through God's grace, His guidance and protection, I have reached my 69th year. When I was 60 years old I underwent open heart surgery and now through exercise and diet I am enjoying life in retirement. Now and then I preach at one of the five Japanese churches in the city and also at the Keiro Nursing Home for the Japanese elderly. These activities and seeing my children and grandchildren keep life worthwhile. Three of my children live in Seattle. BiHua, the eldest of the girls, is the mother of a 4½ year old boy, Mark, and is Vice-Principal at a middle school. Her husband retired last year but was an administrator with the Seattle School District for many years. BiSim, our youngest daughter is the mother of Kristi, nearly two years old. Her husband is working for a paper company in the city and she has just finished working for her MBA degree from the U. of Washington. She will be working for Arthur Andersen, an auditing firm. Peter, our only son, is a social worker with the city of Seattle. His wife is a pharmacist at Providence Hospital. They have no children as yet. Our second daughter, BiLin, lives in Duluth, Minnesota with her husband and 5 month old daughter, Sarah. They are both professors of chemistry at UMD (U. of Minnesota in Duluth). My wife is a librarian and is still working for the Seattle Public Library, hoping to retire toward the end of the year.

I am afraid this letter has become very lengthy and perhaps I haven't answered all your questions. In fact, you asked about organizations during my student years. With only two Taiwanese there was hardly need for one, however, my closest friends were students from Japan or Japanese Americans from Hawaii. We met every weekend in Chicago to have meals together. Khe Beng was the chief cook for among his talents was the ability to cook Chinese meals. He had learned this while a student in Walla Walla where he took a job as cook's helper in a Chinese restaurant there. All that I know about cooking I learned from him.

I trust your work is going well. Am looking forward to hearing from you again. God bless you and your family.

Sincerely,