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50 Years of Field Research in Taiwan:

An "Involved" Anthropologist at Work*

Bernard Gallin**

Department of Anthropology, Michigan State University

Introduction

I (We) have been doing fieldwork in Taiwan for over 50 years, beginning in 1956.[1] Our research experience is, perhaps, unusual because our work has been with one village, its local area, and their people and out-migrants to several of the Island's cities; in more recent decades we also have followed out-migrants who have gone to the China Mainland and other countries for business, work opportunities, and travel.

In any field research, the initial research focus and the actual field experience greatly influence what is eventually written up. But many fieldwork findings and experiences, perhaps by default, are omitted from publications entirely or included only in abbreviated form -- although these might have significant sociocultural interpretive value. Such is frequently the case with field experiences of which the researcher may only later realize their importance for the expansion of sociocultural understanding.

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** Professor Emeritus

1 As you already may be aware, my frequent use of the word "we" or "our" is because the "our" includes my colleague and wife, Dr. Rita S. Gallin, a sociologist by formal training, but whose own Department of Sociology at MSU has often referred to her as their "anthropologist in residence". You may already also be familiar with some of our published research findings, both individual and joint. I extend my many thanks to Rita's years of valued contributions to the field research and to the numerous writings and publications we ah ve so frequently done together. I also wish to acknowledge the many years of research support provided to us in our Taiwan research by the Institute of Ethnology, Academia Sinica and for the research support of numerous other institutions in Taiwan and the United States.

To some degree this has been true of my own research publications, and in this paper I focus on several field "stories" in which I inadvertently became personally involved in the lives of village and area people. Some researchers, especially in the past, would question such personal involvement, considering it inappropriate for a field anthropologist. Regardless of one's position on this issue, I will describe and discuss how, over the years, some particular cases of our personal involvement in field situations, although usually inadvertent, enlightened me about the realities of Taiwanese and Chinese life: sociocultural findings to which I had not previously been exposed either in earlier China research literature or my formal training.

I begin the paper by discussing my choice of China studies in general and of Taiwan in particular, locating it within the history and politics of China and Taiwan. I consider the political environment of the island in the 1950s and for the several decades after so as to establish the earlier context affecting fieldwork, especially by a foreign fieldworker in Taiwan.

Over the five or more decades of research, we resided either in the village of Hsin Hsing (Hsiao Lung Ts'un[2]) in Chang-hua County (*Hsien*) or in Taipei, the main residence of so many of our village and area out-migrants. After providing some background about what it was like to be the first Western anthropologist to enter the field of Taiwan research, I tell four "stories" about events that occurred while we were in the field and in which I became intimately involved. I conclude by discussing some of the insights I derived from becoming an "involved" researcher.

The Fieldwork Decision

I do not know if the story is apocryphal, but it is reported that at age four I broke a toy I was given because it was made in Japan, the invader of China. True or not,[2] I had an early fascination with East Asia, particularly China. This interest was enhanced as an undergraduate sociology/anthropology major at the City College of New York (CCNY). Given my early interest in Chinese culture and society and a growing fascination with political events in East Asia, particularly China before and after WWII and, then, the Korean War, I entered the Cornell University graduate program in anthropology in 1951.

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2 1979 Hsiao-Lung Ts'un: Pien Chung te Taiwan Nung Ts'un, Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, and Taipei: Lin King Press. (Two Chinese Language editions of Hsin Hsing, Taiwan: A Chinese Village in Change, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966.)

I had made the decision to focus on the anthropology of China despite the unlikelihood that I would be able to do fieldwork in the newly Communist-dominated PRC during the next several years. Nevertheless, a few other field sites were possible alternatives: Taiwan was then occupied and administered by the Chiang Kai-shek Nationalist government as the Republic Of China (ROC); the British colony of Hong Kong; and several Southeast Asian countries were home to significant Chinese immigrant populations. At that time, then, I postponed choosing a likely field site and began my graduate studies at Cornell, specializing in cultural anthropology and China studies.

After completing my first year of graduate work, I spent the summer of 1952 studying first-year Mandarin Chinese at Yale University's Chinese language center. My plan was to return to Cornell to continue second-year Chinese language and my anthropology graduate studies in preparation for fieldwork.

The on-going Korean War, however, finally directly intervened in my life; I was drafted into the American army in 1952. Because of my 12 weeks of Chinese language studies, and after taking the army's Chinese language test soon after entering military service, the army -- in all its wisdom -- classified me as Scientific and Professional Personnel, a China specialist. I, subsequently, was sent to Tokyo in spring, 1953, to serve as a China researcher. That experience provided me with a period of unanticipated exposure to the field of China studies.

My designation by the army as a "China Research specialist" seemed absurd. Upon arriving in Tokyo, clearly, I still knew little about China or of the Chinese language. It was, however, my army sojourn as a China research specialist during and immediately after the Korean War that solidified my interest in China studies. Still, I must admit, I continued to harbor serious concern about becoming a specialist in the anthropology of China without any likely opportunity to do fieldwork in Mainland PRC China in the near future.

As a member of an army research unit in Tokyo, I was thoroughly exposed to numerous aspects of China research with much of my work done in conjunction with a group of professional Chinese non-Communist researchers who had recently left the Chinese Mainland for Hong Kong, Japan, and Taiwan, and were then brought together in Tokyo as army civilian China researchers. My year's time in Tokyo as the research unit's main military China research specialist proved to be the most important development in solidifying my decision to make a career in the anthropology of China. I became intellectually immersed in China research as I increasingly became involved with the unit's Chinese researchers with whom I worked closely during that year. In early 1954, my work for the army research unit also took me to Hong Kong to develop a

relationship between the U.S. government and a private China research and publishing organization housed in Hong Kong.

After my military service and return to Cornell as a graduate student in Fall, 1954, my decision to specialize on China in my pursuit of a degree in cultural anthropology was confirmed. I then also made the decision that Taiwan, by default, would be the site for my fieldwork (for reasons I discuss below). And in Fall, 1956, after completing my Ph.D. coursework and examinations, I was ready for dissertation research in Taiwan.

In 1956, funded by a Ford Foundation grant, my wife and I went to Taiwan to begin fieldwork. My research application was, apparently, the only request for fieldwork in Taiwan; the likely absence of other research proposals for fieldwork, either in Taiwan or the Mainland, had practical, ideological and political roots. After all, from 1949 to almost 1980, Mainland China under the PRC government was virtually closed to foreign researchers. In addition, for several reasons, especially throughout the 1950s and early1960s, most researchers with a China interest considered Taiwan an unacceptable substitute for research on the Mainland.

First, they viewed the Mainland and the island of Taiwan through different lenses. In their eyes, the Communists' victory in the civil war was considered a result of Chiang's KMT-Nationalist government's extreme corruption and its loss of popular support. The Chinese Communists' victory, in contrast, was considered to emerge from their putative deep concern for the welfare of the country, especially the peasantry and proletariat whose support they had seemingly won.

Second, many American faculty and students often were idealistic and politically liberal. Although usually neither followers nor believers in Communism, they tended to consider the Communists' ascension to power as evidence of a successful revolutionary movement capable of restoring the well being of China and its people. For many, the Communists' success, hopefully, represented a rebirth of China, a new China, while the KMT- ROC government of Chiang Kai-shek, isolated in Taiwan after 1949, represented the remnants of a corrupt and failed system, a Chinese anachronism.

Third, beginning in the late 1940s and through the 1950s, the political climate in the U.S. was not conducive to the study of China. Referred to as the McCarthy era, that era was marked by a witch-hunt waged by Senator Joe McCarthy, who accused and smeared a significant number of the country's leading China specialists in both government service and research institutions of disloyalty to the U.S. They were accused of being Communists or Communist sympathizers and even accused of having been part of a Chinese Communist conspiracy, responsible for the fall of Chiang Kai-shek's KMT government and its flight to Taiwan and the loss of China to the Communists. As a result, many China specialists were forced out of government agencies, university,

and research positions, and any number of other aspiring academics interested in China apparently gave up or postponed their career interest in China studies.

Fourth, after 50 years of Japanese colonial rule and the assumed Japanese influence on the Island's culture and people, many considered Taiwan no longer representative of China. As such, they believed it was an unsuitable site for modern China studies. Not until the late 1950s and early 1960s, after I had begun and completed my first Taiwan fieldwork, did other China-oriented anthropologists go to Taiwan for research and language study.

While I shared some of my counterparts'earlier views, as well as their apprehension, by default, I selected Taiwan as a field site. Despite my limited knowledge of the Island, I assumed that Taiwan was likely to be more representative of Fujian than, for example, Fujian was of other provinces, such as in northern or central China; therefore, I presumed that Taiwan surely was more representative of China than of Japan. For me, then, the Taiwanese, mostly descendants of migrants from Fujian, were probably still culturally and socially close enough to those of Fujian to serve as a valid study of a particular area of Mainland China. I have never regretted my decision to work there.

First Arrival in Taiwan: Taiwan's Post -War Political Situation

Our arrival in Taiwan in November 1956 did not come at a propitious time. Political conditions clearly presented an atmosphere not conducive to anthropological research. The island was ruled with an iron hand by Chiang Kai-shek who, after the KMT's defeat by the Communists, fled to Taiwan with about two million Mainlanders who were members of the Nationalist government, the military, or civilians. As a police state, especially after the "228" uprising and the KMT 1947 government's massacre of thousands of Taiwanese, the Chiang regime enforced its rule through martial law and a sizeable military and police force, partially financed and buttressed by the U.S.

After the PRC's entry into the Korean War in 1950, the U.S. established a relatively small, but highly visible, Military Advisory and Assistance Group (MAAG) in Taiwan to support its security. Many Taiwanese, however, believed that the American government was abetting the KMT's authoritarian rule by sustaining Taiwan as a totalitarian state. Moreover, after several years, even members of the Mainlander-dominated government resented the American presence. Rumors about resident Americans being CIA agents were rife and, although we developed close friendships with both Taiwanese and Mainlanders, we soon heard of suspicion circulating about our purposes for being in Taiwan, especially during our early years in Taiwan, in both Taipei and later our village area.

While living in Taipei during our first six months, we spent a great deal of time observing and familiarizing ourselves with urban life. In the mid-1950s, Taipei and the surrounding area resembled an armed camp. Evidence of Chiang's military force, composed primarily of Mainlanders and growing numbers of young Taiwanese conscripts, was ubiquitous as soldiers seemed to be everywhere, traveling in an array of military trucks and civilian cars, occupying encampments, often in central-city buildings, and standing as armed guards at the gates and entrances of seemingly every government, military, and public facility or building in Taipei. It did not take us long to learn about the importance of local ethnic and political differences, especially between the majority Taiwanese and the minority Mainlanders who were in full control.

My wife and I worked with local language tutors, continuing the Mandarin language study we had begun before our departure to Taiwan. In our naivete, we did not question the advice we had been given to continue the study of Mandarin, the official language imposed on the Taiwanese population by the KMT government. No one had advised us that in most of Taiwan, especially in rural Taiwan, other than Japanese usually spoken by more educated Taiwanese, the principal-and often only -- language spoken was Taiwanese (*Hokkien, Min-nan hua*), or the minority Taiwanese Hakka language, neither mutually intelligible with each other or with spoken Mandarin.

Part of the problem was the general lack of adequate knowledge in the U.S. about Taiwan and, surely, as the first American to come to the Island to do anthropological research, my own ignorance about Taiwan was especially distressing. Not until I met Professor Chen Shao-hsing, a Taiwanese sociologist at National Taiwan University (NTU), did I receive my first real instruction about Taiwanese society. Furthermore, with the assistance of field agents of the U.S.-China Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction (JCRR), a carry-over of the agency from the Mainland to Taiwan, I was able to visit rural villages and get some understanding of socioeconomic life in rural Taiwan.

As I began the final search for a village to live in and study, recognizing my language problem and the necessity of having a research assistant, I hired Jerry Lai, a young Taiwanese man who was fluent in Mandarin, Taiwanese, and Japanese, and reasonably proficient in English. After numerous trips into the Chang-hua Hsien rural area, I selected my research site, Hsin Hsing, a small Taiwanese agricultural village on the west- central coastal plain. Surprisingly, at least to me, it was the only community in which I found available living quarters to house my wife and me, our assistant, and a house- keeper/cook. The three rooms we rented constituted one wing of a large brick house owned by the family of a medical doctor, a former landlord, who, we later discovered, was not liked by most villagers.

Just as we began preparing for our move to the village in May, 1957, the general political antagonism of both the KMT government and the population (both Taiwanese and Mainlanders) toward the U.S. suddenly erupted into widespread anti-American rioting. But before the KMT government sent in Taipei-area army units to reestablish order, masses of rioters sacked the American Embassy, burned the USIA building and some groups of rioters even attacked several police stations. This rioting clearly was based on the extreme distrust felt by the KMT government, the Mainlander population and, also, the Taiwanese people toward the American presence in Taiwan. In addition, since "228", the Taiwanese people especially hated the KMT government and Mainlanders whose presence in Taiwan was supported by the Americans. These open expressions of extreme antagonism toward the Americans came to the fore at the occurrence of what became known as the "Reynolds Case", in May, 1957. An American military court, under the Status of Forces Agreement between the U.S. and China, found an American Army Post Exchange (PX) official, Sergeant Reynolds, "Not Guilty" (by self-defense) in the killing of a Chinese civilian. Reynolds and his family were immediately flown off the Island, igniting the rioting.

The "Reynolds Case" and the massive rioting and destruction that followed was indicative of the tense political atmosphere in Taiwan just as we were moving from Taipei to the village. Taipei was awash with complaints of America's abuse of power, and, we assumed, as Americans, the suspicions and mistrust also attached to us.

Our Village Entry and Research

Our move from Taipei was in a rented truck my wife and amah sat up front with the driver while I sat on a chair with our meager belongings, and our dog, in the truck's open back. After the events of our last few days in Taipei, we wondered about our reception in the village. Nevertheless, despite the riots and the attendant hostility toward Americans, many curious villagers stood outside the courtyard of our new home to observe our arrival. As we unloaded our belongings and moved them into our rooms, one villager noticed me carrying a stack of bricks we had used in our Taipei house to support a small tin oven over a charcoal brazier. As the village man pointed first to the bricks I was carrying from Taipei and next pointed to the many scattered piles of bricks on the ground, everyone laughed and, finally, so did we -- somewhat easing the strain of an otherwise tense arrival.

Soon after settling into our new home, we registered with local authorities at the District Public Office and police station. A few days later, the village mayor introduced us at a village meeting. Most villagers were curious about our presence because, other

than a few Western missionaries living and preaching in the general area, we were the first foreigners to come to a village or area to live. At the meeting, my brief explanation of our academic interest in studying Taiwanese "customs and habits", was generally received with inquisitive interest and friendliness. In fact, after living in the community for a number of months, some villagers even invited their visiting relatives and friends from other villages to visit us in our house, and, perhaps, "have tea with the foreigners".

To make our presence known and familiarize ourselves with the villagers, we began the research by systematically mapping the village, recording every house and structure in the community. As the villagers became accustomed to our presence, we next carried out an initial census of village families, collecting information about people resident in the community and about those living and working outside of the local area to supplement family incomes. The migrants usually returned to the village for important holidays and propitious family affairs, events, and during the busy agricultural seasons.

Although most people in the village and area were friendly and treated us with courtesy, some apparently wondered about the strange and, in their eyes, "rich" Americans. Our questionable presence became apparent in the early months after our arrival. On numerous occasions, two local policemen would stop by our house and, during brief conversations and questions about our work, activities, and financing, would freely examine papers on desks, open drawers, look at books on shelves, and then leave.

Stories of Involvement in the Field

As a graduate student in anthropology in the early 1950s, I was taught that field workers should not become personally involved in the lives of local people or, especially, in interpersonal group politics or problems facing the people with whom they worked. Although applied anthropology was then becoming a legitimate and growing sub-field in our discipline, I expected to adopt the stance of a detached observer and interviewer recording everything I saw or heard with diligence and impassivity. I intended to conduct my research as a participant-observer and interviewer with the least possible direct involvement or effect on the lives of the people I went to live and work among. Such an approach, however, did not consider, nor can it anticipate, the potential effects of our very presence in the village, as the following stories demonstrate.

Jerry Lai Story:

During our first field research in 1957, after several visits from the local police, we noticed that some villagers became reticent in our presence and avoided talking to us with their previous openness. Concerned by this change in behavior, we discussed the problem with members of a particularly friendly village family and learned of a rumor circulating in the area linking us to the CIA. Although unaware of the rumor's origin, we assumed it was related to the police visits and to the political environment in Taiwan, marked by the KMT's concern about subversive elements, the threat of invasion, and its suspicions about the U.S.'s intentions.

This disturbing situation came to a head one day when Jerry Lai, our research assistant, did not return until late evening from a visit to the District Public Office; he was extremely upset and nervous. He had been stopped while biking past the District police station and questioned there for many hours, repeatedly being asked about the "real" purpose of my presence in the area and who I "really" was.

After several weeks without further contact with the police, our assistant received a special delivery letter from his father that included an official government order to report for army duty in two weeks; this was despite his past fulfillment of his military service responsibility. We could only assume that his sudden call-up was related to his recent police questioning and, perhaps, an attempt to disrupt or cut off our research.

To cope with the problem, I immediately sought help from officials at the American Embassy and a series of high-ranking Taiwan government officials with whom I had had some previous contact. No one, however, would consider any involvement. As the day approached when Lai was to report for army duty, I finally reached a Chinese Mainlander official who had just returned from abroad, and with whom we had become close friends soon after our arrival in Taipei. We knew that he was an important government official, although, at the time, we did not know how important or powerful he was.

My friend listened to our problems, beginning with the area police, and after first faulting me for not coming to him at the outset, he pointed out that I, of all people, should know "how things are done in China". After this admonishment, he telephoned the General in charge of the Taiwan military. Following some small talk, our friend told the General about my research, the details of our immediate problem, and the technical information on the military call-up order. Ending their conversation with some additional personal talk, my friend then told my assistant to disregard the call-up order and that he would hear no more about it, which was indeed the case.

After that incident, when the local police occasionally visited us, it was with

extreme courtesy, asking if there was anything that they could do for us. In addition officials at the District Public Office and the local land records office became unusually cooperative and open to my requests for copies of public data, such as family records (*hu-k'ou*) and land tenure records, all of which were made available for us to copy.

Li Fan story:

At the outset, I was not the protagonist in this second story. But as the village problem grew increasingly serious, I was drawn into it. One very early spring morning, we were awakened by a villager and asked to come quickly to our neighbor's house. Arriving at his courtyard, we found Mr. Li Fan and his elderly father lying on the ground, both bloody, semi-conscious, and surrounded by villagers. The two severely beaten men had been found in the fields and carried to the village. We soon learned that a small group of men from the large, well-off neighboring village had accused the two Hsin Hsing men of diverting private association, not public, irrigation water to their own rice paddy. (The two Hsin Hsing men later claimed that they had thought the water in the small, shared, ditch was public irrigation water.) The men's wounds were so severe that they were transported on an ox cart to a doctor in the nearby market town of Lukang, given emergency treatment, and then transported by taxi to a hospital in a larger nearby town. There, they spent several months before being sent home to complete their recovery.

During their hospitalization, the village mayor and several select village men met to consider possible redress for the victims. Soon after, an elderly villager, notorious for his abuse of alcohol, was delegated to approach me and ask if a group of men could meet in the privacy of our living quarters, which were somewhat separate from others in the community. I agreed, without, at the time, understanding the significance of the request.

At the first meeting, the men decided to arrange a meeting between the leaders of the two villages to discuss the situation. When this proved useless, they next agreed to invite a local mediator to intervene. He called on the assailants to compensate the beaten men with some money, but far from enough even to pay their medical bills. The offer was rejected, and the Hsin Hsing people finally reached the unusual decision to accuse their assailants in the county court.

Once in the court in Chang-hua City, the customary legal procedures, unfortunately, gave the richer and better-educated village group a major advantage in their presentation of the case and the judge ruled in the assailants' favor, agreeing with the mediator's recommendation to offer the victims limited compensation. Waiting

outside the courthouse, the villagers and I were told of the negative outcome. Everyone agreed that the case must have been inadequately presented and all was lost unless the judge could be apprised of the actual situation. The group then insisted that, if I was truly a friend of the village, I could use my "position as an important visiting foreign scholar", to convince the judge to rehear the case and change his decision.

At their insistence and although I doubted the efficacy of the status or power attributed to me, I agreed to take advantage of being an "outsider", a foreign visiting scholar interested in learning about Taiwan's court system and managed to meet with the judge. After the judge explained the court's operation to me, I was able to move the discussion to the village case he had just heard, indicating that, based on my knowledge, the facts were quite different from those presented during the brief court proceedings. With that, the judge agreed to rehear the case, after which he awarded the two beaten villagers full medical compensation and an additional payment of money for their suffering and loss of income.

My intervention helped to right a wrong. But, it also had a significant spinoff. It convinced the villagers of my great concern for their welfare. From that time on, my relationship with the villagers and its out-migrants became one of acceptance and mutual respect. These relations have been reinforced over the past 50 years, as when on several later field trips we again found it necessary to intervene on behalf of the village as well as some other people in the area.

Reconstruction of Irrigation System Story:

In a subsequent field trip to Taiwan, in 1965-66, our research focused on the lives of Hsin Hsing migrants who lived and worked in Taipei. Like many of the migrants, however, I oscillated between the city and the village. While in Hsin Hsing, a group of villagers showed me large deteriorated segments of the local earthen irrigation system that was supposed to be replaced with concrete. The irrigation ditches, however, had not been reconstructed. Aware of my relationship with people affiliated with JCCR, villagers suggested that, when next back in Taipei, I visit JCRR to ask when the officially authorized reconstruction project would be done. I agreed to do so.

Back in Taipei, I visited friends in JCRR and, after describing the problem, they opened a map of the irrigation system in question and indicated that the canals had already been reconstructed in concrete. When I informed them that on a recent site visit I found the system to be of earthen construction, the men agreed to send field agents to visit me in the village.

A week later, two agents from JCCR arrived in a jeep and, together with the village mayor and several other villagers, we discussed the problem over some requisite cups of tea. Together, we then walked out to the fields and examined several sections of the still earthen irrigation ditches, while the JCRR men noted the concrete construction indicated on their official map.

Several weeks after the JCRR visit, the village mayor told me that he had been informed that within the month the local irrigation system was to be rebuilt in concrete. Soon after, I also learned that the issue had been investigated. A few officials in the Water Conservation Bureau (located in Lukang) had embezzled the construction funds and falsely modified the irrigation system map.

The reconstruction of the irrigation system was, of course, an important event in a relatively poor village whose agricultural economy was based on wet rice cultivation. But over the years, the story of the event has lived on and has acquired mythical proportions. Almost forty years later, when I was in the village, a young man introduced me to his relatives from elsewhere and told him the story about my help in the rebuilding of the irrigation system. In the story as now told, however, rather than the two JCRR field agents coming to the village, the irrigation inspection visitor was President Chiang Kai-shek who personally ordered the reconstruction.

Non-Payment of Income Tax story:

My family and I spent our 1969-70 field trip living in Taipei where we worked with the village's out-migrants, although I continued to made frequent visits to the village. One day a villager who had traveled to Taipei from Hsin Hsing telephoned asking to visit us in our house. He soon arrived accompanied by his wife's brother and son, a man in his early twenties; we had never before met the villager's two affines (*ch'in-ch'i*) who lived in another village in the Hsin Hsing area. They arrived carrying a basket filled with several stalks of bananas and we quickly realized they had come with a problem, which the two older men related over tea.

The young man, who still lived in his natal village with his parents, worked the family's land and did odd jobs off-farm to augment the family's income. But, now the young man had a serious problem. He was being harassed for non-payment of Taiwan income tax on wages, supposedly earned working in a Taipei factory, but which he had never done. Other than pay the tax, they had no idea of what to do until their Hsin Hsing *ch'in-ch'i* suggested they come to us in Taipei for possible help. After discussing the problem, I remembered that two Chinese-American professors of economics I knew were in Taipei; they'd been invited by the Taiwan government to help reorganize the

island's tax system. After telephoning them, the economists suggested I come to their office.

Accompanied by the Hsin Hsing villager and his *ch'in-ch'i*, we went to meet with the two economists. The villagers described the problem and the economists asked many questions as they examined the young man's tax bills and other documents. Following this discussion, the two economists said they now understood what was happening. The owners of the actory had somehow gotten the names and personal information of local residents from the records in the District Public Office and then listed those local people as paid employees at their factory. The resulting increase in the factory's operating costs, therefore, resulted in the decrease in the factory's earned income and in the owners' income tax owed the government. The young man, however, became liable for income taxes on wages neither earned nor paid to him.

The two economists, once aware, pursued the issue and, apparently, uncovered a tax scam then prevalent in Taiwan. They also cleared the young man's tax record. But that was not the end of my involvement. Several weeks after our visit with the economists, the adult son and daughter of the factory owner visited me at our Taipei apartment to beg me to call off the government tax authorities; they feared their family business was threatened with ruin. But, of course, there was nothing I could do.

Discussion

What did the four stores teach me about Taiwanese society? Perhaps most importantly, they highlighted the nature of power and the way it works on the island. First, and most obviously, power is a social relationship. It involves more than one person or group. Second, power is distributed unequally. One person's advantage is achieved at the expense of another person's disadvantage. And, third, power refers to the possibility or expectation of a certain action occurring rather than to its actual occurrence. It rests on an individual's or a group's access to resources, for example, wealth, knowledge, control of information, social networks, or, simply, the reputation for power. The latter is a unique resource, and it is threaded through almost all the stories I related. A reputation for having power rests not on its possession but the belief by others that it is possessed. Between this potential for power and its manifestation, my stories revealed that my agreement to get involved and to use my *reputation* as a "powerful American" helped to mitigate some of the problems faced by the people with whom I worked.

The story also taught me about the functioning of bureaucracies in Taiwan. Each story I told involved a government authority: the military (in the case of my research

assistant, Jerry Lai); the judiciary (in the Li Fan beating case); an agricultural bureau (in the fraudulent irrigation case); and the revenue service (in the income tax scam). We saw that such bureaucracies sustain and reproduce profound inequalities of power, enabling a few individuals, those in control of the bureaucratic machinery, to exercise much more influence than others. For example, take the Lai story in which the army general involved was able to rescind a military call-up order that others, apparently for good reason, had been reluctant to engage. Or, think about the Li Fan story. The judge involved reopened the case after learning he had been manipulated by villagers with more wealth and ability to control information than Hsin Hsing villagers.

Before my first stay in Taiwan I already knew that corruption is rife in bureaucracies; after all, I do live in the U.S.. But the experiences related in my stories directly exposed me to malfeasance in action. They showed me how the moral deficiencies and human frailties embedded in officialdom taint what is theoretically a rational and logical system. Two stories (the irrigation construction and tax cases) revealed the corruption created by a state that turns a blind eye to the way its feckless officials attempt to augment their meager wages. The first case of my research assistant (Lai) also showed how an autocratic state attempts to control those it views as potential threats to its own legitimacy.

The four stories also taught me much about the fabric of social life in Taiwan, although I will conclude by discussing only one thread in this cloth: affinal ties (ties between relatives related through mother's side and marriage). Perhaps because the goal of social scientists is to discover and account for patterned relationships among phenomena, earlier studies by Chinese and Taiwanese anthropologists and Western Sinologists focused primarily on patrilineal kinship as the key organizing principle. Two of my stories, however, highlighted the significance of affinal relations, *ch'in-ch'i*, in everyday life in Taiwan, a subject otherwise noted only in novels and literature about upper-class Chinese society. Other than that, affinal ties were scarcely considered or written about until a number of years later (well after I began to write about them). In earlier years, China research and writing still focused almost exclusively on China as a patrilineal society. Yet, as I noted in the Li Fan story, several Hsin Hsing village family heads were purposely not invited to the private planning meetings to discuss the village's possible response and action in the beating case. I soon learned they were excluded because members of their households had affinal relatives living in the home village of the Li men's assailants. Consequently, the Hsin Hsing planners feared that someone in those families might possibly, unwittingly or even willfully, nform their affines about Hsin Hsing's plans to fight the beating case.

Interestingly, this exclusion was not accompanied by any feeling of censure or

even annoyance with their fellow villagers. Their exclusion, perhaps, was more to save them from their possible dilemma or problem if they were involved in case. Apparently, Hsin Hsing villagers realized and accepted their neighbors' obligation to maintain good relations with both their affinal relatives and their own village. By doing so they could avoid a possibly awkward situation of internal village conflict and, also, a problem in privately planning their action fighting the Li Fan's case.

Finally, my successful intervention with the judge in the Li Fan beating case (as well as in several cases over our later years of field work) raised the age-old issue of a field researcher's ethical commitment to non-involvement in the personal lives of people being studied. Some social researchers still question the ethics of personal involvement in the lives of human subjects. But, as we saw in my intervention with the judge in the Li Fan case, I had little choice in the matter. The villagers were sure that a negative outcome in this case would seriously jeopardize their future wellbeing.

To insist on the professional ethics of non-involvement and non-intervention clearly could have jeopardized the successful continuance of my research. From the villagers' point of view, I had a responsibility to approach the judge regarding his decision. Perhaps their most powerful argument was that my very presence in their village actually worsened their situation, i.e., everyone would say Hsin Hsing people were incompetent and helpless in their own defense, even with a "powerful American" living there. For them, it would have been a total "loss of face". Consequently, I had little choice but to attempt to help by visiting the judge. I did and our discussion of the case resulted in the complete turn-about in the judge's decision -- in favor of the beaten Hsin Hsing villagers. It was that success during my first field trip that clearly created the warm relationship of mutual trust and friendship between us. That relationship has lasted for the more than 50 years of our continuing research.

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Bernard Gallin
Department of Anthropology,
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48823
U.S.A.