

## Memoir of Taiwan's turning point

Written by Lee Hsiao-feng 李筱峰  
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Right after the end of World War II, Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) asked Tsai Pei-huo (蔡培火), an intellectual and political activist during the Japanese colonial era, whether there were any talented people in Taiwan. Tsai responded that there were two very important Taiwanese that Chiang must know about. One was Lin Hsien-tang (林獻堂), and the other Chen Hsin (陳新). Lin was the iconic leader of Taiwanese society, and Chen Hsin was a financial expert.

Unfortunately, Chen Hsin was killed by then-Taiwan governor-general Chen Yi (陳儀) during the 228 Incident. His death was an irreparable loss to Taiwan. Chen Hsin was born two years before Japan took over Taiwan, and he died two years after the Japanese left. He had welcomed the return of the “motherland” to Taiwan. His life and death occurred at a turning point of Taiwanese history, and his life was a historical tragedy in miniature.

When he returned to Taiwan after studying at the US' Columbia University, Chen established the Tatung Trust (大同信託), a Taiwanese financial institution, while Taiwan was still under Japanese rule. The Tatung Trust consolidated Taiwanese capital to act as a counterbalance against the Japanese colonial administration and Japanese consortiums. He also took part in the nationalist movement led by Lin, and was a person that the Japanese colonial government both wanted to win over and was afraid to trust completely.

After the end of World War II, Chen Hsin set up a preparatory committee to welcome the government of the Republic of China (ROC) and organized welcoming events across Taiwan for the return of the “motherland” to Taiwan. Yet, only one year and four months later, he was gunned down by the motherland that he welcomed. Such a tragic hero is worth studying and understanding.

Chen Hsin's third daughter, Chen Shuang-shih (陳雙十), wrote a memoir, *Awaiting the Dawn*. Given the life that Chen Hsin led, the historical value of his daughter's memoir is, without doubt, invaluable. Chen Shuang-shih's depiction of her father's life is emotive and touching, and the scene in which Chen Hsin gets captured is especially heartbreaking for that was Chen Shuang-shih's account of a real experience.

The book details the life of the wealthy and knowledgeable in colonial Taiwan, and it also addresses the condition of the education system; relationships between different ethnic groups; the differences between rich and the poor; the situation of the Taiwanese; postwar politics;

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economics and society; the 228 Incident and what the Taiwanese people had to go through during that period of time. It gives a witness' account of history and its historical value is incalculable. As a member of the family of a victim of the 228 Incident, the narrator recounts a personal experience that is filled with sorrow and agony.

After the 228 Incident, Chen Shuang-shih married into a doctor's family. Her father-in-law was Kao Ching-yuan (高慶元), a doctor who opened the first private obstetrics and gynecology hospital in Taiwan. After graduating from then-Taiwan Sotokufu Medical School, now the National Taiwan University College of Medicine, Kao studied in Germany, then returned to Taiwan. Chen Shuang-shih gives her father-in-law a brief but intriguing account in a historical document that, while not very extensive, provides us with valuable information about Taiwan's medical history in that period.

All in all, it is just as Chen said in her memoir: "How fortunate I was that I in my limited lifetime could meet two of the most influential elders in Taiwan's modern history."

I was also very fortunate that I had the opportunity to read the original manuscript before it was published. Moved by what I have read, I wrote this article to recommend her book and to express my utmost admiration and appreciation.

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Translated by Ethan Zhan

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