

I. The History

The History of Taipei City

Taipei City and its suburbs rise from a typical basin of the fourth series new stratum. In ancient times, the area was a large lake; dry land emerged only after several million years of alluvial deposits. Geologically, the exact moment of the Basin's birth remains a mystery; in human history, however, it is known that the Chinese began massive immigration to Taiwan during the Ming Dynasty.

Taiwan's early years were tumultuous. In 1661, Zheng Chenggong expelled the Dutch and recovered the island. He set Huang An, his lieutenant and the commander of the navy and army, to guard Tamsui. When Zheng Keshuang, Zheng Chenggong's son, took charge of Taiwan, he instituted a system of stationing soldiers in farming areas: he sent forces to Three Forts at Zhilan, along the Tamsui River, to cultivate land. A stone tablet still extant from those days is proof of this particular period of history.

In 1683, forces from the mainland were sent to Taiwan and the number of immigrants, from the coastal region of Fukien, increased as well. In the fall of 1709, Chenlaizhang, a joint-stock body corporate, was officially granted a permit to settle Zhuluo County of Taiwan Fu. Following in the steps of the corporation, residents of the mainland counties Zhang and Quan crossed the strait with their families to settle in the area between Xinzhuang and Bangka (or Wanhua, as it is known today). These settlers built towns and cities, turning the area into a Shangri-La.

In 1737, settlement expanded to Quanshan (today's Wenshan), Xikou (today's Songshan), Upper Beitou, Lower Beitou, Tatayou, Xiaogangzai, and Dalangliu. As a river port, Bangka became the shipping center of the Taipei Basin and gradually developed into a prosperous town.

After 1853, Bangka's prosperity continued. Large ships continually plied the waterways and there was always bustling activity on land. Subsequently, some of the immigrants from Zhang County moved from Bangka to Dadaocheng, where they engaged in construction and conducted business. Before long, Dadaocheng had grown to replace Bangka as the international port of the Taipei region.

In 1875, the Qing Emperor set up Taipei Fu (or province) at Dajiana Port (today's Zhongzheng District). In 1882, the surrounding city walls were completed. In 1885, three major streets - Shi Fang (or Hengyang Road, today); Ximen (or the lower end of Hengyang Road, today); and Xinqi (or Boai Road, today) - were laid down. It was then that the inner city, Dadaocheng, and Bangka were linked together to form a single great city.

After the Sino-Japanese War of 1894, Japan occupied Taiwan and abolished Taipei Fu for Taipei Xian (or County), and later changed the area's name to Taipei Zhou. The region comprised 18.65 square kilometers, which incorporated Bangka, Dadaocheng, and Dajiana Port, and the population of the region was spread among 155 settlements. In May 1897, the Taipei Planning Commission was created to develop Taipei city; however, Taipei was not officially established as a county municipality until October 1920, at which time subsequent urban planning went into effect. In 1932, the range of the city was expanded by 66.98 square kilometers and the population encompassed rose from 150,000, as originally planned for, to 600,000.

Upon the Retrocession of Taiwan in August 1945, the provincial system was reinstated and Taipei officially became a provincial municipality. In October, the central government took over the city and divided the city along existing boundaries into ten administrative districts.

In December 1966, given that Taipei City had become the political, military, cultural, economic, and financial center of Taiwan, the central government decided that the city should become a special municipality; this upgrade in status went into effect on July 1, 1967. To meet the challenges of urban construction and development, six surrounding towns – Neihu, Nangang, Muzha, Jingmei, Shilin, and Beitou – were included within the city's new boundaries, which became official on July 1, 1968 and increased the area of the city by 272.14 square kilometers and the population by 1.56 million. In May 1983, because of improvement work along the Dakeng River, the central government ordered that the boundary of the special municipality be redrawn. As a result, Taipei City's territory was again expanded, this time by 0.03 square kilometers. In July 1986, the boundaries were adjusted once more, and Taipei city lost 0.40 square kilometers. Since that time, Taipei has undergone a series of changes: rapid urban development, significant increase in population, and transformation of social structure. The city's heterogeneous geography, differing levels of development, disparity in land area and population rendered the old administrative district system ineffectual. Through combining Longshan District, Shuangyuan District, westside of Guting District and Fuxing Li, Cishou Li and Wanshou Li in Chengzhong District as Wanhua District, combining Chengzhong District and Guting District as Jhongjheng District, combining Jingmei District and Muzha District as Wunshan District, Jiancheng District and Yangping District incorporated into Datong District, and southside of Songshan separated into Sinyi District, the entire city was re-divided into 12 new administrative districts on March 12, 1990. In August 1992, Taipei City's boundaries were redrawn yet again, and the city gained an additional 0.03 square kilometers of territory. The municipality of Taipei has an area of 271.80 square kilometers and a population of 2.60 million people at the end of 2020.