

Taiwan

Warm-up: Talk with your friend and write a list of things you know about Taiwan. You can use the internet to find out more about this country. Do you know what is on the pictures below?



Based on: <https://lifeoftaiwan.com/about-taiwan/history/>

Task 1 Vocabulary matching

Match the words 1-8 with their meanings a-h.

1. Colony	_____	a. The movement of people from one place to another
2. Indigenous	_____	b. The process of making goods in factories
3. Rebellion	_____	c. A government ruled by a family for many generations
4. Manufacturing	_____	d. Native to a particular place
5. Democracy	_____	e. A system of government where people vote for their leaders
6. Migration	_____	f. Dishonest or illegal behavior by people in power
7. Corruption	_____	g. A group of people fighting against authority
8. Dynasty	_____	h. A country or area controlled by another country

The History of Taiwan

Taiwan's history has been shaped by migration, colonization, and cultural exchange. Early settlers came from the Chinese mainland around 400 years ago and turned the island—once home to Austronesian hunter-gatherers—into a busy, Chinese-speaking society. Later migrations, especially after the Chinese Civil War in 1949, added new influences. Today, Taiwan's population is known for its energy, competitiveness, and openness to the world.

For thousands of years, Taiwan was home to indigenous peoples. In the 16th century, Portuguese sailors called it *Ilha Formosa*, meaning “Beautiful Island.” In 1624, the Dutch East India Company set up a trading post near Tainan, exchanging goods like sugar, rice, and spices. But in 1661, the Chinese general Koxinga defeated the Dutch and founded the short-lived Kingdom of Dongning. In 1683, the Qing Empire of China took control of the island.

During Qing rule (1683–1895), many poor farmers from Fujian Province moved to Taiwan, creating new towns such as Taipei and Chiayi. The island became busy and multicultural, but also lawless at times. Intermarriage between Chinese settlers and indigenous people was common, and by the 19th century, many Taiwanese had Austronesian ancestry. Western and Japanese powers showed growing interest in Taiwan, and in 1885 it officially became a Chinese province.

After China lost a war to Japan in 1895, Taiwan became a Japanese colony for fifty years. The Japanese built railways, improved health and education, and reduced opium use. However, they also controlled land and resources, leading to protests and uprisings such as the Seediq Bale rebellion of 1930. During World War II, Taiwan served as a base for Japan's military. When Japan surrendered in 1945, Taiwan was returned to China.

After the war, the Chinese Nationalist government (KMT) took over the island. Poor leadership and corruption led to protests, and in 1947 the “2-28 Incident” resulted in thousands of deaths. Two years later, after losing the civil war to the Communists, KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek fled to Taiwan with 1.5 million followers. Under strict rule, his government rebuilt the economy and introduced land reform, turning Taiwan into a manufacturing power.

From the late 1970s, Taiwan began to change politically. Martial law ended, new parties formed, and the media became free. In 1996, Lee Teng-hui became Taiwan’s first democratically elected president. Since then, Taiwan has experienced peaceful transfers of power between major parties, showing a strong commitment to democracy.

Today, Taiwan is a modern and dynamic society. It is famous for its high-tech industries, excellent healthcare, and vibrant culture. Although it faces challenges such as an ageing population and a complex relationship with China, Taiwan continues to develop as one of Asia’s most successful democracies.

Task 2 Reading Comprehension Read the text “The History of Taiwan” carefully, then answer the questions below.

1. Who were the first people to live in Taiwan before Chinese settlers arrived?
2. What name did the Portuguese sailors give to Taiwan in the 16th century?
3. How did the Dutch use Taiwan in the 1600s?
4. Who defeated the Dutch and founded the Kingdom of Dongning?
5. What changes did Japanese rule bring to Taiwan?
6. What was the “2-28 Incident” and when did it happen?
7. Who was the first democratically elected president of Taiwan?
8. Name two challenges modern Taiwan faces today.

Task 3 Timeline Challenge Put these historical events in the correct order (1–6). Check in the text.

- The Portuguese name Taiwan “Ilha Formosa.”
- Taiwan becomes a Japanese colony.
- Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalists move to Taiwan.
- Taiwan becomes part of the Qing Empire.
- The first democratic election takes place.
- Koxinga defeats the Dutch and creates his own kingdom.

Task 4 Discussion (Pairs or Small Groups)

1. How do you think Taiwan’s past under Japan and China has shaped its culture today?
2. Why is democracy important for Taiwan’s identity?
3. Would you like to visit Taiwan? What places or experiences would interest you most?

Homework: **Research task:** Find one famous Taiwanese historical figure (e.g., Chiang Kai-shek, Lee Teng-hui, or Tsai Ing-wen). Prepare a short paragraph (80–100 words) describing who they were and why they are important. **Map activity:** Label Tainan, Taipei, Kaohsiung, and Alishan on a blank map of Taiwan.

