

# A Study on the Actual Situation of Elderly People in Taiwan

— Based on the Results of a Survey in September 2004 —

by Chizuru Tochimoto

## 1. Introduction - Why Did We the subjects of Study Elderly People in Taiwan?

Taiwan is a small island nation with a population of 23,000,000 and with land area of about 36,000km<sup>2</sup> - slightly smaller than the island of Kyushu in Japan. Taiwan was once a colony of Japan (1895 - 1945). Those who received education under Japanese educational system now make up most of the weak elderly people in Taiwan. In this sense, we can see extensive influence from Japan in the elderly people in Taiwan.

In addition, under the political system of the Nationalist Government in the post-war period, they had to suffer from mental and physical hardships and difficulties, not comparable with the Japanese generation of the same age, because this rigorous control system continued to exist until the lifting of martial law in 1987. Compared with Japan, the percentage of elderly population in Taiwan has been relatively low. It was only in 1993 that the percentage of elderly population (65 years old and older) exceeded the level of 7% of total population. In Japan, the percentage of elderly population exceeded 7% of total population in 1970, i.e. the increase of elderly population in Taiwan occurred 23 years later than in Japan. However, the rate of the increase of elderly population in Taiwan has been similar to that of Japan. It is now said that it would take only 26 years that the elderly population in Taiwan reaches the level of 14% from 7% to total population. This rate of elderly population increase is relatively rapid - being approximately equal to 24 years in Japan.

**Table 1**      **The Increase of Elderly Population**  
(from 7% to 14%)

	7%	14%	Time required For the increase
Japan	1970	1994	24 years
Taiwan	1993	2019	26 years
South Korea	2000	2021	21 years

Source: Hayase (Note 1)

With the progress of economic development expected in future, it is quite evident that the problem of the increase of elderly population in Taiwan would become a very important problem as in the case of Japan.

As of April 1, 2003, the percentage of elderly population in Japan was 18.9% to total

population, and this means that Japan is at the top position in the rate of increase of elderly population in the world. Under such circumstances, there is now growing interest in the world on conditions in Japan with such a rapid increase of elderly population.

In the social security system in Japan for elderly people, emphasis has been placed on three basic systems of pensions, medical care (health insurance) and health care. However, the Japanese economy has been hovering at a low level in recent years. On the other hand, total fertility rate (TFR) reached an all-time low level of 1.32, and the three basic systems of Japanese security are continuously suffering from troubles, and this now causes serious social problems. It is expected that the care insurance system initiated from April 2000 will have to be reconsidered in 2005. The initial number of the insured was about 1.5 million persons, while the most serious problem is that of financial deficit, which has doubled after four and half years since the initiation of the system.

Once there was a time when Japan had many matters to study and learn from the developed countries of Europe and North America - particularly the increase of the problem of elderly population. Now, other East Asian countries such as Taiwan and South Korea have the same problem in the rapid increase of elderly population. In this respect, it seems to be important to have an exchange of detailed information with Taiwan and South Korea instead of the countries in Europe and North America.

When we try to study the health care problems of elderly people in the Japanese society which is rapidly increasing, we may be able to see more clearly the process of the increase of elderly population in Japan through detailed analysis of actual situation in Taiwan. Not much is known about the problems in Taiwan there is now a rapid increase of elderly population and the rapid increase of elderly population is increasing with a time lag of 23 years compared with Japan. This reminds us of the importance of finding the means to cope with this problem instead of giving additional financial aid and of rearranging the system itself. In this sense, it was the primary aim of our present study to perform an investigation on the actual situation in Taiwan and to more definitely and exactly evaluate what and how Japan was 23 years ago. Our interview with elderly subjects in Taiwan was limited to those who had received education under the Japanese educational system. Here, we wish to discuss and summarize the problems in the present-day Taiwan from such viewpoints.

Also, we wish to introduce a welfare institution for elderly people in Taiwan named "Privately Managed Ai Ai Center" and to evaluate the actual situation of the elderly population in Taiwan through the study of this institution.

## 2. Rapid Increase of Elderly Population in Taiwan

In 2003, the population of elderly people of 65 years old and older in Taiwan was about 2,116,000. The rate of increase of elderly population was 9.2, and this was about one-half of the rate of increase of 19.0 in Japan (as of October 2003). However, compared with the survey in 2002, the percentage of elderly population in Taiwan showed an increase of 0.29%.

Furthermore, in 2010, Taiwan is expected to enter an era of extreme increase in elderly population with the rate of increase of 14.0% .

**Table 2** Estimated Elderly Population in Future (65 years old and older)

	2000	Estimated percentage Of elderly population in 2020
Japan	17.4	27.8
Taiwan	8.6	14.0

Source: National Research Institute for Social Security and Population Problem;  
Department of Administration, Budget Bureau

The increase of elderly population has been caused by the enforcement of the total inhabitant health insurance in 1995 in association with the rapid economic progress since the 1970's because this contributed to the improvement of health standards. The average life span in Taiwan in 2000 was 72.7 years and 78.4 years for male and female respectively (compared with 77.7 years and 84.6 years in Japan). However, the average life span in Taiwan has continued to rise, i.e. to 72.8 years and 78.5 years respectively in 2001.

**Table 3** Life Span (years) Source: National Research Institute for Social Security and

	Male	Female	Population
Japan (October 2003)	78.4	85.3	Problem;
Taiwan (2001)	72.8	78.5	Department of Administration,

The next important cause is the decrease of the birth rate mainly caused by the increase of women with high educational background.

Budget Bureau

**Table 4** Birth Rate

	2000	2001
Japan	9.5	9.3
Taiwan	13.8	11.7

Source: Japanese Ministry of Welfare and Labor;  
National Research Institute for Social Security and Population Problem;  
Department of Administration, Budget Bureau

**Table 5** Ratio of Students Who Enter University  
(4-year course)

	Male	Female	Total
Japan (1993)	36.6	19	28
Taiwan (1992)	20	16.5	18.3

Source: Japanese Ministry of Education: "Basic Investigation on Schools";  
Taiwan, Department of Education: "Statistics on Education in Republic of  
China" (2)

According to Professor Ma of Danjiang University, more than one-half of the girl students in Taiwan now take post-graduate courses in the universities.

The third reason of the increase of elderly population is a political one. After World War II, the Guomindang (Nationalist) army was defeated by the Chinese Communists and moved to Taiwan in 1949. About 1,900,000 people came to Taiwan, and this occupied about 12 - 14% of the total population in Taiwan. Young men at that time have now become old, thus increasing the elderly population.

The working rate of the workers of 65 years old or older in Taiwan is lower than that of Japan. As of June 2000, the rate was 8.15, and this was lower than 9.8 in 1995.

**Table 6** Ratio of Workers of 65 Years Old and Older

	Japan	Taiwan
1995	24.5	9.8
Male	37.3	14.4
Female	15.6	4.2

Source: Department of Administration, Committee for Old Workers, Bureau of Statistics (Statistical Investigation on Workers After Retirement in Each Local Area in Taiwan, 1996)

In Taiwan, only a part of the workers (Government office workers, teachers, and soldiers) are entitled to receive pensions. The lives of most of the people are supported by their sons and daughters after retirement (Note 4).

The first reason of the low employment rate of elderly people in Taiwan is that the employers do not want to employ the older workers. According to an investigation by the Administrative Bureau in Taiwan in 1996, the percentage of the workers of higher age to be employed for the next one year was 1.34% of the total number of the workers, and 98.6% of all companies had no plan to employ the workers of higher age.

Furthermore, according to the employment status of the workers of 65 years old and older in 1999, 49.41% of the employed workers were workers in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and workers in wholesale business, retailers and restaurants and other similar business (Note 5) (Department of Domestic Administration, Bureau of Statistics: Annual Statistical Report for Investigation of Human Resources 1999). Under such circumstances, it appears that the changes in industrial structure in Taiwan make the employment of elderly workers more difficult and serious problem.

The next reason is the influence from the concept of Confucianism called "Yanglao Fanglao", i.e. "to support elderly people, to prevent senility". It is taken as a matter of course that one must take care of and support one's parents. According to the survey in 2000, the sources of income of elderly people of 65 years and older were: 47.1% depend on remittance from sons and daughters, 15.39% on retirement allowance and insurance money, 9.26% on savings, and 13.72% on the income from work (Department of Domestic Administration, Bureau of Statistics: The Report on the Living Conditions of

Elderly People 2000). On the other hand, the sources of income of elderly people in Japan were: 69.8% depend on pension, 19.1% on the income from work, 5.4% on house rent, and 3.4% on remittance from sons and daughters (Japanese Ministry of Welfare and Labor: Investigation on Citizens' Living Conditions, 2001). These results reveal how entirely the elderly people in Taiwan depend on the remittance from sons and daughters compared with Japan.

According to the investigation performed in November 1999 on the people of middle and higher ages, those who want to work after retirement (due to age limit) accounted for 38.8% of all, those who do not have intention to work again were 57.9% (including those who could not find adequate work, which accounted for 20.6%), and those who could not make a good use of specialized skill and ability were 6.4% (Department of Administration, Taiwan Government).

At present, the government is making every effort to encourage re-employment for the people of middle and higher ages.

### **3. Ai Ai Center, a Pioneer of Welfare Activities in Taiwan**

Ai Ai Center is widely known as a welfare institution in Taiwan nowadays. It has been well known in Taiwan not as a facility for elderly people but as a salvation center for homeless beggars. With the progress and development of the economy in Taiwan, the number of homeless beggars greatly decreased and the institution is used now as welfare facility for old people. We cannot neglect Ai Ai Center when we talk about welfare activities in Taiwan.

The privately managed Ai Ai Center located on Dali Street in Taipei was founded as "Ai Ai House" in 1923; not under operation during 1945 - 1946; and it was reopened by the new name. Taipei Ai Ai House (Republic of China) in 1947, Ai Ai Salvation House in 1952, and renamed as Ai Ai Center in 1976. The late Mr. Shi Gan (born in 1899) founded this institution as an asylum for those who do not have relatives to support them. Shi Gan was a civil engineer at the Government House of Taiwan during the period of Japanese administration. During his tenure of office, he investigated the living conditions of poor people at Manhua and felt a strong need to establish an institution to protect and accommodate these people. He retired from his office and founded Ai Ai House by giving his own money when he was 24 years old. The beggars had ruined their life due to the habit to take morphine, or from the disease such as syphilis, gonorrhoea and leprosy. By gathering these beggars, young and old, he took care of these people, cutting hair and asking them to take a bath and to make themselves clean. To help them to start their new life on self-reliant basis, he allotted land lot to grow vegetables and instructed them how to keep pigs. He also taught them how to sell the vegetables and pigs to obtain money. The number of beggars gradually

decreased. More and more contributions were given from the shops nearby. The City Administration began to send diseased beggars to this institution. The achievements of Shi Gan were finally recognized, and a special imperial grant was given from the Imperial Household Agency of Japan in 1929. Subsequently, the management of the institution became much easier because of the financial aid from the City Administration and from the contributions donated by civil organizations. At first, there was only one building at Ai Ai House. Later, two buildings with two-storied structure were added. After World War II, there were no more beggars, and it was re-named as Ai Ai Salvation House in 1952.

In 1978, Mr. Kokubo visited Ai Ai Center. According to the interview by Kokubo to Teruko (wife of Shi Gan), the conditions of Ai Ai Center at that time were as follows (Note 6):

At that time, those who were suffering from leprosy were admitted at Leshen House, and those who were taking opium were accommodated at Gengsheng House. About 40 patients with mental illness were admitted to Ai Ai Center. The total number of those who were accommodated was about 250 persons.

Mr. Shi Gan, the husband of Teruko, suffered from a cerebral hemorrhage in September 1944 and died (at the age of 45). Teruko was 34 years old at that time and had 6 children. After the surrender of Japan in 1945, all Japanese living in Taiwan were sent back to Japan. But she continued to stay in Taiwan for her children and for 200 persons accommodated in Ai Ai House. Based on the wishes and the intention of her deceased husband, she tried to manage the institution.

At the time of this interview, it was 55th anniversary since the foundation of the institution. It was relatively older institution of this type for the salvation of people in Taiwan. Because it is privately managed, the management and the operation of the institution were not easy to carry out. The monthly cost for operating the institution was nearly 400,000 NT dollars. An aid of 200,000 NT dollars was given from the City Administration, and the remainder of the operating funds was based on the contributions from civil organizations. Mrs. Shi said: "In total, 253 persons are accommodated in the institution. In addition to ordinary old people, those who are bedridden or the patients with dementia are sent to Ai Ai Center because the other institutions for old people are fully occupied. There are only 8 regular members of staff at Ai Ai Center. Unlike the institutions operated under the control of the City Administration, this staff is not enough. There is a medical office in the institution, and Dr. Ohkubo comes to Taiwan once annually and takes care of the patients. Among the people accommodated in the institution, 80% are those who had come from the Chinese continent, and the people born in Taiwan account for about 20% of all."

"Tofu, or soybean curd, is made at a room on the ground floor. At one time, tofu

was sold in the market." The City Administration recommended to rebuild the institution into a three-storied building, but Teruko had no intention to make the institution bigger.

On the other hand, the city of Taipei has a publicly operated institution for old people, which was founded in 1968 (Taipei Municipal Haoran Institution for Old People).

In the Silver Industry Newspaper issued in January 2002, it was described as follows (Note 7):

At the time when the institution was founded, 120 people were accommodated in the institution. Now, 620 persons are accommodated. This is the largest institution for old people in Taipei. This institution corresponds to the special home for the care of old people in Japan. Those who are accommodated are elderly people of 60 years old or older. These are solitary elderly people, who had been living for more than 4 months in Taipei, have low income and are not under government support. The conditions for admission are that they can live independently. All those who had been admitted are entitled to receive care and all costs for the care are publicly managed.

Those who are accommodated in the house are: 520 self-reliant people, and 100 people who need care (care from nurses). They are 80 years old in average. There are about 200 women and about 400 men. Most of the men had been born outside Taiwan.

According to the Old People Welfare Law in Taiwan, there must be one care provider per 8 elderly people. In the institution for old people, 22 care providers are working for 100 elderly people who require the care. From about 1998, the Taipei City Administration began to increase the budget because the elderly people increased and heavier degree of care is needed. There are now 160 workers in the institution including 18 medical care providers such as nurses.

At the medical office, physicians offer medical consultation and examination services from Monday to Friday for the whole range of medical care. Through the tie-up with Taipei Municipal Hospital, physicians are dispatched. Pharmacists are permanently assigned. At the rehabilitation room, physiotherapists offer rehabilitation service. Some of the elderly people are 100 years old or older. In the care-providing ward, care providing services and medical care services are offered in a well-balanced manner.

The problems with the institution are: the increase of the patients with poor health conditions - in particular, the increase of the patients with Alzheimer's disease. This institution should not be regarded as "the last house to live". In case the patients are no longer suited for the services offered by this institution, they must be transferred to the other privately managed home for old people.

There are now about 90,000 elderly people who need care service in Taiwan. Among these, about 19,000 (21%) care service at the institution. However, there are not enough institutions, like Haoran Institution for Old People. And at home care service is not so

encouraged in Taiwan.

#### 4. The trend of Welfare Activities for Elderly People in Taiwan based on observation of Current Activities at Ai Ai Center

In September 2004, the present author had a chance to have an interview for survey to Shi Wujing, who is the eldest son of Mrs. Shi and is currently the director of Ai Ai Center (born in 1942), and Shi Meidai, the second daughter of Mrs. Shi (born in 1930).

Currently, Ai Ai Center is under re-construction. When completed, it will be a 6-storied building after 2 years. At present, 120 persons are accommodated at the Center. They told to the author as follows: "The institution is too small at present,

and we are asking the elderly people to have patience for a while. At present, we cannot take many people. We admit only those who are really in trouble or in really pitiful and miserable conditions. Most of these people are living alone. In Taiwan, if a man or a woman has only girls as children, they have a right to enter this institution. If he or she has a boy, even a single boy, as child, they are not entitled to enter here. A girl must take care of the parents of her husband, once married. A son must take care of his parents. From this year on, the Government changed the policy: If a son living outside the house has neither income nor work and cannot make his own living, the parents of such son may be admitted to the institution. This is a matter of course. The son may not always be able to find a job, and it is now difficult to find a job."

There are fewer and fewer beggars, and there have been substantial changes in those who are admitted to Ai Ai Center. Through the changes of the names for the institution in the past, those who were admitted to the institution had entered either of the following houses: "Yanghu House" for the patients with chronic disease, which could not be healed at Anlao Hospital for old people; "Anlao House" for those who have no relatives; and "Self-cost Anyang House", which was founded in 1992 for the people who can pay the cost.

At present, those who are accommodated in the house are roughly divided by halves as follows: those who can pay the cost by themselves, and those, for whom the costs are paid by public sources. Male-to-female ratio is 64% to 36%.

ADL (activities of daily living) of those who are accommodated in the house are divided to three stages: severe 38%, moderate 40%, and mild and normal 22%. Age distribution is as follows: those who are in the thirties 1%, 0% in the forties, 36% in the fifties, 18% in the sixties, 36% in the seventies, 36% in the eighties, and 6% in the nineties. The duration of their stay in the institution is: 42% in less than 5 years, 24% in 6 - 10 years, 18% in 11 - 15 years, and 16% in 21 years or longer. Health conditions are: 45% in normal conditions, 2% with visual disorder, 1% with mental disorder, 2%



with dementia, 5% with audio disorder, 4% with intellectual disorder, 30% with disorders of limbs, and 11% with multiple disorder (Note 8).

Those who are living on the aid from the government are divided to: those living on government aid of 25,000 NT dollars per month (bedridden patients with mental and/or physical disorder), 24,000 NT dollars (the patients with hemiplegia), and 15,000 NT dollars (the patients who can walk). In the financial conditions of 2003, the aid from the City Administration accounted for 64.21% of all costs. Those who are living on their own cost are living on 14,500 NT dollars each. This is the lowest level in Taiwan. The former director of the institution used to say: "Do not charge them with high cost. All of us may have to be under the care of the others". This is now the core of the policy of the institution. If a person who had been paying the cost becomes short of the money and cannot pay the cost, and if he has no relative, the staff in charge takes necessary steps and arranges to have government aid for such a person. Among those who were admitted to the institution, there are 65 persons (54%) who live on low income in 2003.

On the present conditions at Ai Ai Center, the director and the second daughter of the founder explained as follows: "This place is very close to Longshan Temple. Everybody goes there to visit and worship. Those who go there tend to come into this institution. Then, they never want to leave. Over 2/3 of those who are here had already stayed for more than 10 years. When they move in, they usually have slight hypertension or some mild disease. They come here usually as a couple. Then, the husband dies. Sons and daughters are already living separately, and the old woman who lost her husband has nowhere else to go. They want to stay here. For the future, the director explained as follows: "Suppose that a man or a woman is 50 years old. Monthly living cost is 25,000 NT dollars. If he or she continues to live for the next 20 years, how much will it cost? In Japanese yen, it is 1,020,000 yen per year. That is, 20,400,000 yen for 20 years. This is the reason why it is important to save money. If they have a son or daughter, they cannot request the cost from the Government. Nowadays, it is not very pleasant to live longer, I think."

There are many rich people in Taipei. Old people are divided respectively by halves: to those who are under home care and those who are under care at institution. In Taipei, the fee-paying institutions are being increasingly built, but the cost is high. According to Professor Ma or Professor Pong of Danjiang University, the cost to enter the fee-paying institution is in the range of 4,000,000 - 5,000,000 NT dollars. Ai Ai Center was turned into an institution for old people instead of beggars. A pocket money of 4,000 NT dollars is given per month for each person. We are trying to operate the institution on contributions, on donated rice, vegetables and pickles, and the remainder of the fund is allotted to the pocket money for those who live here. In

Taiwan, many people are accustomed to go to temples to worship. They give contributions on July 15, August 15 and the New Year. We have never bought rice in the past, and all rice has been donated. When we receive any contribution or donation, we submit report to the City Administration, and everything is reported in the report for 2003, for instance.

They told about recent social problems as follows: "Some of the old people are maltreated at their home. They can get rid of maltreatment only when they are separated from sons and daughters. Also, at Ai Ai Center, some daughters come to receive the pocket money for her parents. They say that, if their parents are admitted here, they may pay some money. Some of them go to the Chinese continent to give pocket money to their parents and come back here. They do not want to go out. The beggars used to be accommodated here in the past, and that is why we changed the name of the institution."

In May, next year, the building will be completed to the two-storied structure. After 2 years, a 6-storied building will be completed. A sum of 101,410,000 NT dollars is to be given from the City Administration, and we want to put emphasis on the care of the patients with dementia. The surveillance by the City Administration is very severe and they apply strict regulations when giving a license. For the patients with dementia, we must record the results of MMSE on a care document. The director and the second daughter of the founder are now learning from the welfare program of Japan by watching NHK television programs every day.

## 5. Interviews with the Elderly People in the Institution and of the Inhabitants

Firstly, description will be given on the comments of a man, who had been admitted at Ai Ai Center and who gave comments on the questions of the present author:

An 84-year-old Mr. A, who was born in Yunnan Province and came to Taiwan later. He has lived already 5 years at Ai Ai Center since he was admitted. He has three children. On two days per week (Saturday and Sunday), he goes to the sons. With a smile on his face, he replied in Beijing dialect.

Mrs. B came from Guangdong Province, but he once studied in a Japanese school. To the questions of the present author, she replied: "I am 80 years old now. I was born in 1925. I'm paying the cost here by myself. This appears to be a special room for me. Just like a hotel room. Everything I use here is offered from the institution, and there is no need to bring anything here. It's very convenient. I brought here only a television set, an electric appliance and a refrigerator. In addition, I bought a mattress, a chair, and some ornamentations by myself." she was admitted to the institution about 2 years ago. She underwent a cataract operation one week ago, and the doctor instructed her to wear special glasses. She spoke about her future life as follows: "I'm

not very accustomed with living in my daughter's house and I often used to fall down there. Here, I'm accustomed to live. I want to live all the time here in the future." She is healthy and goes out every day. The director who introduced her told: "She is happy every day."

Through the interview with these two people, the author has found that even through some of them live at Ai Ai Center but they do enjoy to go out actively. Then their activities are extended to outside of the institution. Mrs. A visits the houses of her sons and daughters. Mrs. B goes out to visit Longshan Temple and local shops and seems to be living a very happy life. Unlike those who are admitted to the same type of institution in Japan, these people in Taiwan seem to be living in a forward-looking manner and seem to take the institution as the place of living. For the management of Ai Ai Center, contributions and donations are received so that there is no need to buy rice, and this suggests the warmth of people in the surrounding area.

Next, the author tried to have an interview with those who are engaged in volunteer activities at the 228 Memorial Hall (Note 9).

(a) Chen Guogui

Mrs. Chen Guogui is now 79 years old. She was born in 1925. "It is easy to remember for me because I was born in the year when the reign of Emperor Showa began." She has three sons. At present, she is living with her third son and two grandsons. "But, actually, I'm living alone. My third son is working as an interpreter. He goes often to Cambodia and Malaysia and is absent from the house for a long time. One of my grandsons is living in a university dormitory and does not come home very often. Another grandson is busy with the preparation for university entrance examinations next year and he rarely stays at home". She once worked as a nurse in the army. After graduating from elementary school, she received an educational course on correspondence at Yoyogi, Tokyo, and she has qualification as a graduate from junior high school. In 1944, she voluntarily applied and worked as an assistant nurse at Guangdong First Army Hospital for Japan. After the Japanese surrender, she was taken to the Chinese continent and came back to Taiwan in June 1946. Because she has no official qualification as a nurse, she engaged with the family business (Chinese medicine shop in Taipei). At the age of 22, she was married to a policeman. The husband died 20 years ago, but she is still living in an official residence for Government workers, which is free of rent. She is living on the remittances from her eldest son and the second son (20,000 NT dollars each).

"It is customary here that sons support the living of the parents. But most of the elderly people here receive only about 3,000 NT dollars per month. She suffers from diabetes and visits a clinic once per month and receives medicine. It costs about 300 NT dollars, but it is not very much for her. She passed the examination for volunteer

work and participates volunteer activities once per week respectively at the Government House and 228 Memorial Hall.

(b) Long Qinfeng (74-year-old, born in 1931)

Her husband is 76 years old. Because her husband had been working as an engineer at the Communication Bureau, he now receives a pension (a sum corresponding to 100,000 yen). Mrs. Long and her husband were born in Taipei and are now participating in volunteer activities. They have a strong desire to explain about the 228 Incident to younger people. "We have been strictly controlled under the martial law for 40 years. Now, the martial law was finally lifted by the efforts of our leader Mr. Li Denghui. We feel now very happy that we have been restored to the status of free citizens." About the political conditions in Taiwan, she told as follows: "We always ask the Japanese people to help us in joining the WHO and the UN. My husband and I always ask the Japanese people whenever we meet them. Now, the Government is ruled by the Democratic Progressive Party, but the Nationalist (Kuomintang) Party has a strong influence. They have been propagating their ideas for 50 years, and there are many who are influenced by them. Taiwanese are very similar to the Japanese in both thinking and attitude." She has 4 children. Her three daughters graduated from universities in the U.S. and Taiwan. Her son is a dentist and is living separately. (The son's wife graduated from the university for medical care.) She is very strict in health care and pays attention to the balance of food and nutrition, exercise, and walking. She walks with her husband for 30 - 40 minutes every day. In particular, she likes to eat healthy food similar to Japanese food. She doesn't like the oily dishes of Taiwan cuisine.

About the living conditions of elderly people, she told as follows:

"If an old man or an old woman has no income, he or she is entitled to receive a sum of 3,000 NT dollars per month regardless of whether he or she is living alone or with family members (Old People Allowance given from local communities for the elderly people of 65 years old and older). In Taiwan, sons support the living of the parents. If there is no son, daughters take care of the parents. Now, it is a practice to have care providers from the Chinese continent, Indonesia, Philippines, or Vietnam and to ask them to take care of old people. However, it would be better to have some relatives who could take care of them. I always tell my son that I want to continue to live in this house even when I am left alone. My son replies: "I fully understand what you mean." I always love my dear old home where I brought up my children."

"My son gives me pocket money in a sum, which corresponds to 50,000 Japanese yen. I love his smile when he gives the money to me, and I'm quite satisfied. Many people in Taiwan go to work in the continent where both wages and living costs are low, but my son doesn't have to go there. Fee-paying institutions for old people are increasingly

being built in Taiwan. We are always watching Japanese television programs (NHK). We see the Japanese institutions for old people are very clean and tasty food is provided, and we have a very good impression. We have never seen actual Japanese institutions, and we want to see them some day. We love Japan and we want to know more about Japanese society. Now, I want to go out to study more. My husband entered a school from September and is eagerly learning Taiwan dialect."

(c) Chen Wanyi (73 years old; born in 1932)

Mr. Chen was in red coat and looked quite young. He told as follows:

"Once, I took my 93-year-old mother around Tokyo in a wheelchair. (I love my mother very much, and this is widely known among my colleagues in volunteer activities.) My mother told me that she has not visited Tokyo for 62 years and wanted to go there. That is why I took her to Tokyo. I have two elder sisters, but I take care of my mother. I have three daughters. My father died 2 years ago. At present, he lives with his mother and his wife. His mother has disorders in her legs since three years ago. She also has troubles in ears, heart and urine (uric acid). She visits hospital once per three months. She receives medicine once per month. The cost is 510 NT dollars (covered by insurance).

He had worked at the Alcohol Monopoly Corporation in the pre-war time. After the Japanese surrender, the office was changed to the Bureau of Procurement. He worked there until retirement due to age limit. He received 3,000,000 NT dollars as a retirement allowance (10 years ago). He can now make a living by himself but feels some anxiety for the future.

"If I encounter with some difficulty to make a living, my daughters will take care of me. If the daughters don't have ability, there is no way but to be admitted to the hospitals for old people supported by the Government. The best way is to continue to live in my own house. I always feel uneasy when I see diseased people, and I don't want to go to hospital. It has been a matter of course that sons or daughters take care of their parents. In recent years, things have changed, and I don't like it very much."

Mr. Chen has a strong longing for Japan, which has a good pension system. He likes to travel once in several months. He wants to buy the uniform of airmen of the Japanese Navy in the old times.

Common features found in the interviews of these three people are that they do not look like old people and they are very active and vigorous. One of the reasons is that they have the field of activities such as the 228 Memorial Hall. They talk about the pleasure that they can now express their own views after the lifting of martial law. They can also express now about their hostile feelings to non-Taiwanese, i.e. the people, who came from the continent, and that they have now the chances to exhibit their linguistic ability acquired through the learning of the Japanese language.

The second feature is that they regard family linkage as very important. In addition to the teachings of Confucianism, they still cherish the teachings of the Imperial Edict for Education, which they learned during the time under Japanese colonial rule.

The third feature is that the living conditions of old people are unstable. The National Pension System is not yet enforced in Taiwan. For living costs, they must be supported by their own savings and by remittances from sons and daughters. In these days, Taiwan has the serious problem of the increase of elderly population. On the other hand, Taiwan is very busy with economic expansion to the continent. This may accelerate the instability of the living conditions of elderly people in Taiwan in future.

## 6. Summary

Most of the elderly people in Taiwan interviewed by the author, have a strong longing for Japan. First, Japan is a clean and beautiful country. They think that there are many hygienic and well-furnished institutions everywhere in Japan and perfect care is provided there. Some of them expressed their desire to visit and see Japan - not merely watching on television.

In Taiwan, elderly people want to have care from their family members. In the southern part of Taiwan, it is believed as a "shameful act" if the sons and daughters do not take care of their parents at home. As a result, it is said that some of the institutions are not yet fully occupied. However, in the areas near Taipei, which is the largest city, many rich people live, and care providers offer their services, and about one-half of the old people are planning to enter such institutions. The present author is very much concerned about the possibility that Taiwan may march on the same road as Japan did in the field of welfare activities for old people. The problems are that the family ties and functions are weakened with rapid modernization of the society. At present, it is still the matter of course in Taiwan that sons and daughters take care of and support their parents. In the future, however, younger generation will not be able to endure such a burden because of rapid increase of elderly population. Also, with the increase of women with higher educational background, more women continue to work outside, and this may lead to the decrease of the birth rate.

In the present report, the extent of the investigation was limited only to the activities at a civil organization (Ai Ai Center) and to those who are engaging in volunteer activities at the 228 Memorial Hall. However, as already described, Ai Ai Center is a representative welfare institution in Taiwan. Through the investigation, tendencies and problems have been roughly identified and discussed. At Ai Ai Center, there is still no need to buy rice because the institution is perfectly operated on the contributions and the donations from various sources. It is important to have such an idea to promote

mutual aid. In Japan, the care insurance system was initiated in 2000, but it is to be reconsidered in 2005. There are problems in that services cannot be offered by the care providers if the time arranged in advance has elapsed. It seems to be rather a dreary world if welfare activities for old people are offered on the basis of time and money. For the welfare activities in Taiwan, the present author wishes that every citizen in Taiwan would be able to receive the benefit of a welfare system (such a pension system) very soon. On the other hand, the spirit of mutual aid as found among the people of Taiwan such as "Baibai spirit" (spirit of worship) is still remaining in Taiwan and the goodwill and the forward-looking attitude of its citizens should be maintained in the future (such as the contributions and donations constantly given in large amount from the worshippers at Longshan Temple).

[Notes]

- (1) Y. Hayase: "Population in Asia", The Research Institute for Asian Economy 2004, p.129.
- (2) K. Sejiyama: "Patriarchal System in East Asia"; Keiso Shobo, p.225, 2000.
- (3) Xie Yamei: "Chapter 5 Taiwan", pp. 66-67;  
<http://www.elder.jeed.or.jp/pdf/shogai14-205.pdf>.
- (4) The old age allowance to be given under the Old Age Insurance System is only one-time money in an amount corresponding to the income of 45 months at the maximum. From 1995, based on the Old People Allowance System for farmers, a monthly sum of 3,000 NT dollars is given. Average annual income in 2000 was about 300,000 NT dollars in Taiwan.
- (5) Department of Domestic Administration, Bureau of Statistics: "Annual Statistical Report on Human Resources 1999".
- (6) H. Kokubo: "A Life of Philanthropism Devoted to Ai Ai Center" (Kokubo: "The Living Taiwan"); 20th Century Publishers, pp. 90-102, 1979.
- (7) "Welfare Activities in Taiwan; Taipei Municipal Haoran Institution for Old People; Composite Services for Care and Medical Treatment; Institutions and Facilities Not Sufficiently Provided"; Silver Industry Newspaper, January 10, 2001.
- (8) Foundation Ai Ai Center in Taipei; Report in 2003: See the Materials "Ai Ai Center in Taipei".
- (9) The materials and documents on the 228 Incidents are exhibited at the 228 Memorial Hall. The incident occurred in the evening of February 27, 1947, when a non-Taiwanese squad sent to prosecute tobacco dealers in the black market attacked the people. They hit women dealers by rifles and confiscated money. The passers-by reproached and revolted. The revolt continued to rage to mid-night and to the next

day. Policemen, military police and excited crowds continued to attack each other. The anger of the Taiwanese exploded and several dozens of people were killed. In March, an oppressive policy by the Government was started, and this led to white terrorism for a long time and the enforcement of the martial law, which lasted for the next 38 years. On February 28, 1995, in commemoration of this incident, the 228 Memorial Hall was built under the advocacy of the Government leader Chen Shuibian. In the Hall, elderly volunteers provide explanation in fluent Japanese.