



Formosa Oolong Tea

異人茶跡

Author: Kiya Chang **Illustrator:** Kiya Chang **Publisher:** Gaea Books

Date: 6/2022 **Right's contacts:** bft.children.comics@moc.gov.tw

200 pages | 14.8 x 21 cm **Volume:** 5 (END)

Award: 2023 The 14th Golden Comic Awards, Comic of the year—*Formosa Oolong Tea Vol. 5: The Endless Tea Journey*

2022 The 15th Japan International Manga Awards, Bronze Award—*Formosa Oolong Tea vol.4: The Tea Enthusiasts of Dadaocheng*

2014 The 5th Golden Comic Awards, Best New Talent—*Formosa Oolong Tea vol.1: Tamsui 1865*

BFT2.0 Translator: Michael Fahey

This must-read Taiwanese classic chronicles the legendary journey of a Scottish merchant and a Xiamen trader who together sparked the global craze for Taiwanese oolong tea.

How did Taiwan's oolong tea come to be so famous? Before the Opium Wars, the major ports of Qing China bustled with sailing ships. Loaded with goods, these ships would sail away, traveling to Britain and Europe. The most significant of these goods was tea—second only to water as the most consumed beverage in the world.

After Taiwan's port Tamsui was established, the island became a new home for immigrants and adventurers. John Dodd, a Scottish merchant, partnered with Li Chunsheng, a savvy comprador. Together, they set their sights on the vast American market, betting their future on a dream product—Taiwanese oolong tea. They overcame the distrust and difficulties posed by tea farmers, government officials, inspections, and Hong Kong firms to bring their vision to life.

For the next thirty years, tea accounted for more than half of Taiwan's total export value, establishing Taipei as the island's political and economic center—a status it holds to this day. This book tells the story of two people who recognized the untapped potential of a local resource. Their pioneering efforts earned them the title of "Fathers of Taiwanese Tea."

This five-volume series captivated readers over a decade. Created by an artist from a tea-farming family in Taiwan, it tells the story of Taiwan's renowned oolong tea: how it began in the cherished Taipei district of Dadaocheng and journeyed to the world stage.



Kiya Chang

Kiya Chang, originally from a family of tea farmers in Chiayi, Taiwan, is now based in Taipei. Starting in the summer of 2010, her serialized stories chronicled the history of Taiwan's Formosa tea industry through the lives of British merchant John Dodd and Chinese merchant Li Chunsheng. From 2013 to 2023, Kiya published five volumes of *Formosa Oolong Tea* alongside a collection of short stories titled *Take Me Out to the Ball Game*. The fifth volume of *Formosa Oolong Tea* won the 14th Golden Comic Award for Best Comic. In 2022, *Formosa Oolong Tea* earned the Bronze Award at the Japan International Manga Award, while *Formosa Oolong Tea: Tamsui 1865* received the Best Newcomer Award at the Golden Comic Awards. Her work has also been adapted into a mystery-solving application and an interactive board game. *Formosa Oolong Tea* has been showcased at events like the Angoulême International Comics Festival in France and the Frankfurt Book Fair in Germany.

“Comics Are My Way of Communicating with the World”: An Interview with Kiya Chang About *Formosa Oolong Tea*

Interview by Lin Si-tong

(originally published on the website of Taiwan Creative Content Agency)

Kiya Chang was born into a family of tea farmers in Meishan, Chiayi. On weekends, her parents would take her to the family's tea farm. They hoped it would help her appreciate the hard work of farming and the privilege of being able to study. “They said I was helping, but as a child, I couldn't really do much. During tea-picking season, I would turn the leaves, which I found fun,” Kiya recalls.

Before starting *Formosa Oolong Tea*, Kiya still had only a vague understanding of her family's work. Despite spending much of her childhood on tea farms and in tea factories, she wasn't very familiar with the process of tea-making, let alone the art of tea culture. Laughing, she says that once she began working on the comic, she constantly “bothered” her father

with questions. Whenever she consulted historical records from the Qing Dynasty, she would ask her father for his input: Were ancient tea-making methods still viable today? Was the difference in production levels between the past and present realistic?

“Gathering information was hard enough, but determining its accuracy and understanding the real-life challenges was even more difficult. Since I didn't know how to make tea, I had to ask my father,” Kiya says. Fortunately, her relationship with her parents is strong, and working on *A Teatime Adventure* brought them closer. “Listening to my father talk about his work made me appreciate his job even more,” she says, smiling.

Kiya met with friends from the Creative

Comic Collection (CCC), a publication that is a part of Academia Sinica's Digital Archives Program, which aims to promote the archives through comics. Its hope is to make historical materials accessible and engaging to the public. As she put it, their thinking is, “Does promoting these archives really have to be done through dry publications? If the material is interesting enough, it will attract an audience.”

Although the CCC editorial team wasn't composed of professional comic artists, they were avid comic readers. Under their guidance, Kiya delved into the story of Scottish merchant John Dodd. Ultimately,

“Since I didn't know how to make tea, I had to ask my father,” Kiya says. Coming from a family of tea farmers, she found that working on A Teatime Adventure brought her closer to them: “Listening to my father talk about his work made me appreciate his job even more.”

she decided to base *Formosa Oolong Tea* on historical events and real people. In addition to consulting her family “advisor,” she also conducted field research, interviewing tea shop owners and elders in Dadaocheng, a historic district in Taipei. While historical records allowed her to imagine life in the Qing Dynasty, she felt that firsthand accounts from the elders brought her story to life.

Unlike typical serialized comics, *Formosa*

Oolong Tea was published volume by volume. Each captures a different phase of Dodd's efforts to introduce Taiwan's oolong tea to the world. From his arrival in Tamsui in 1865, to his collaboration with the tea farmers of Quanshan, and the establishment of a tea factory, each story is crafted carefully to reflect the historical and cultural significance of the events.

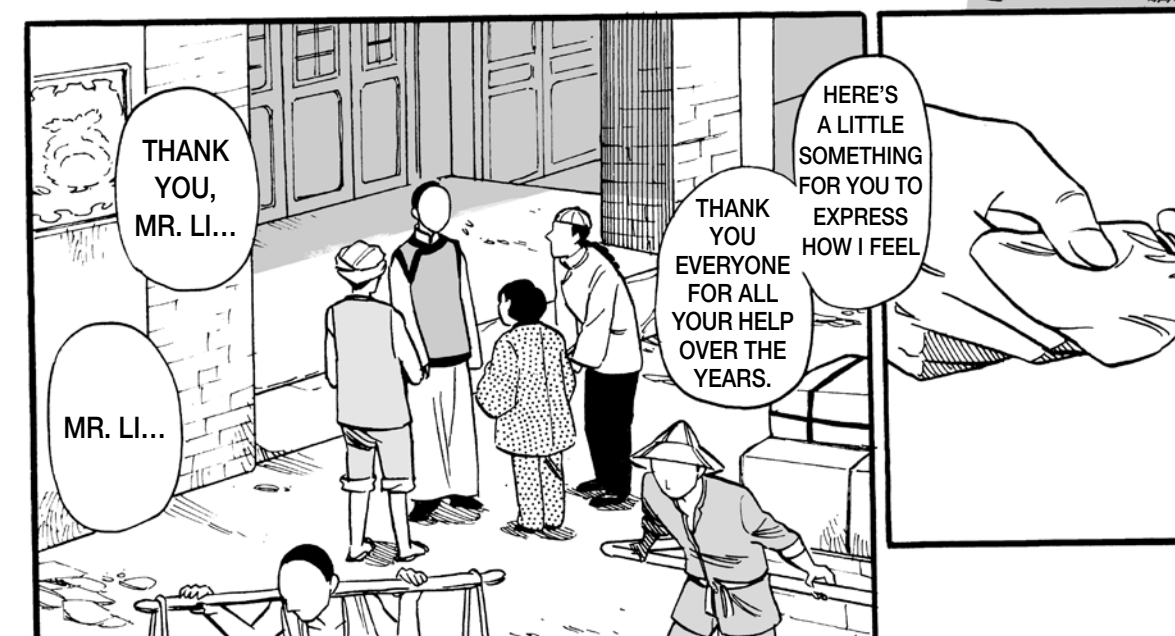
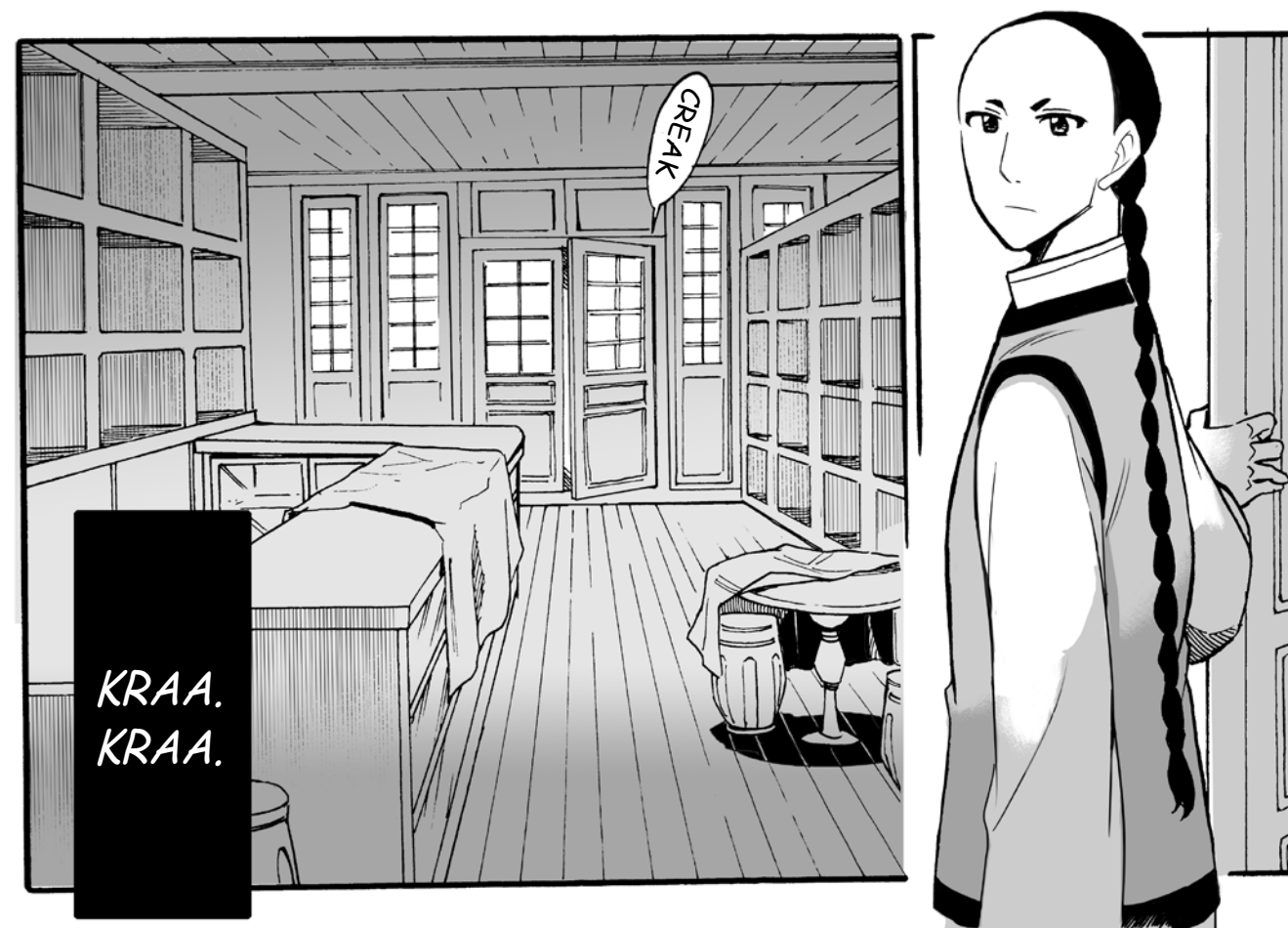
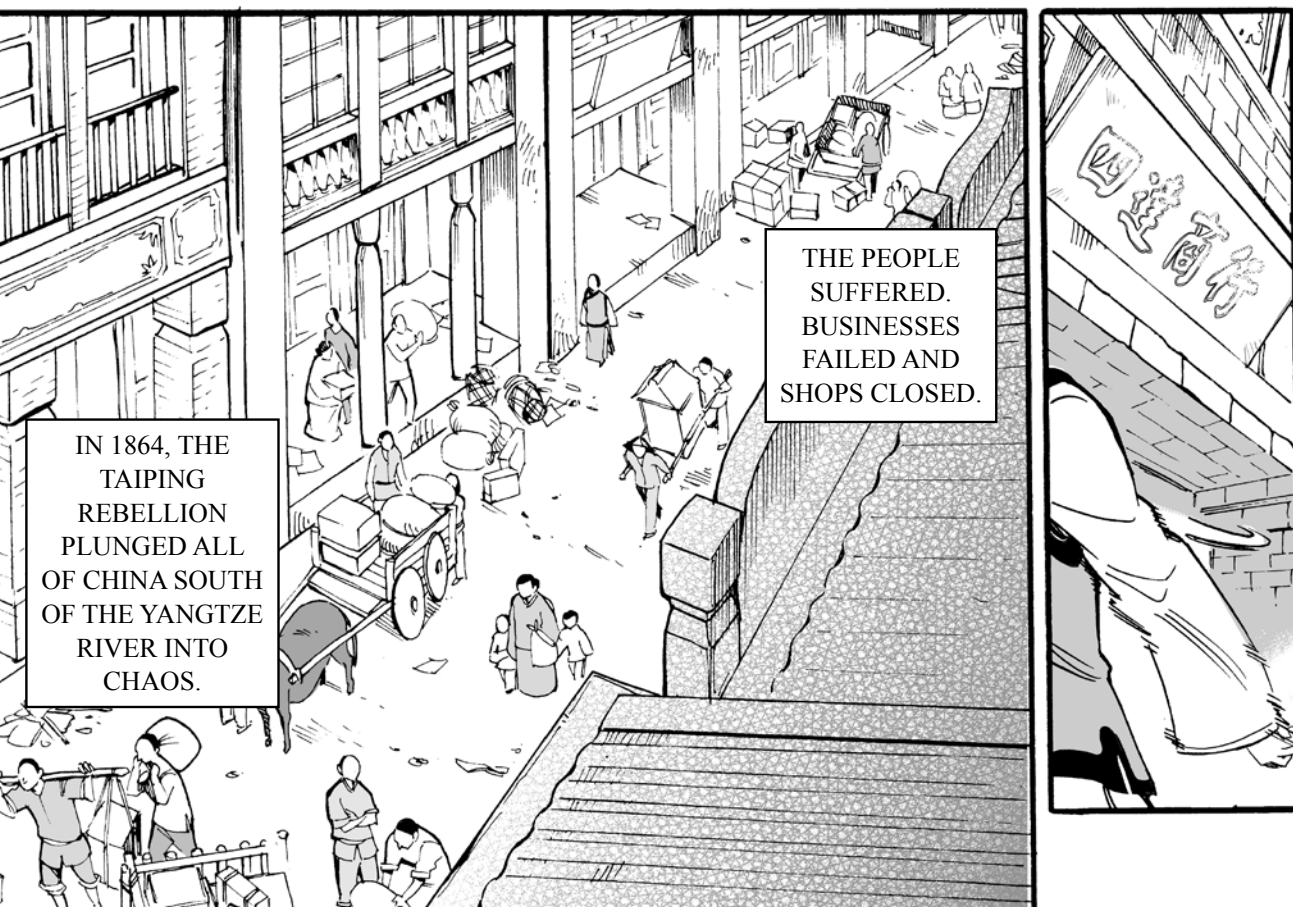
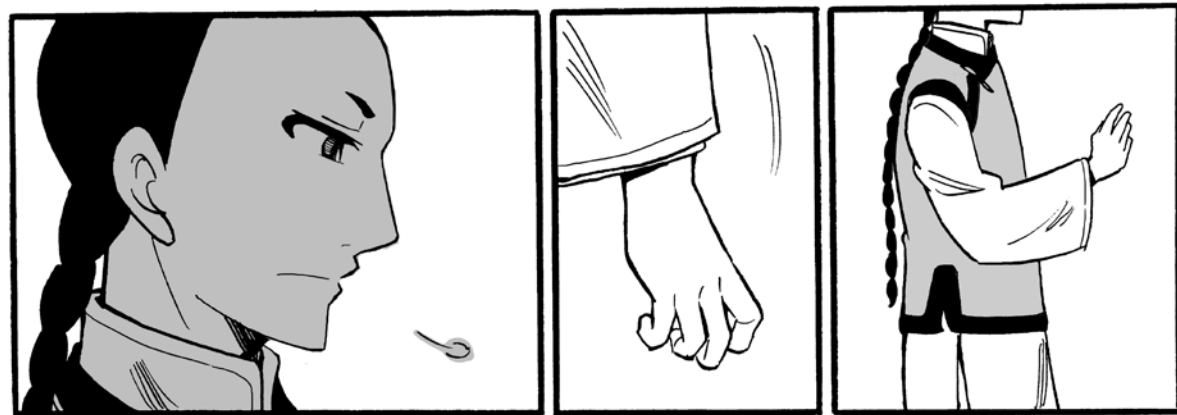
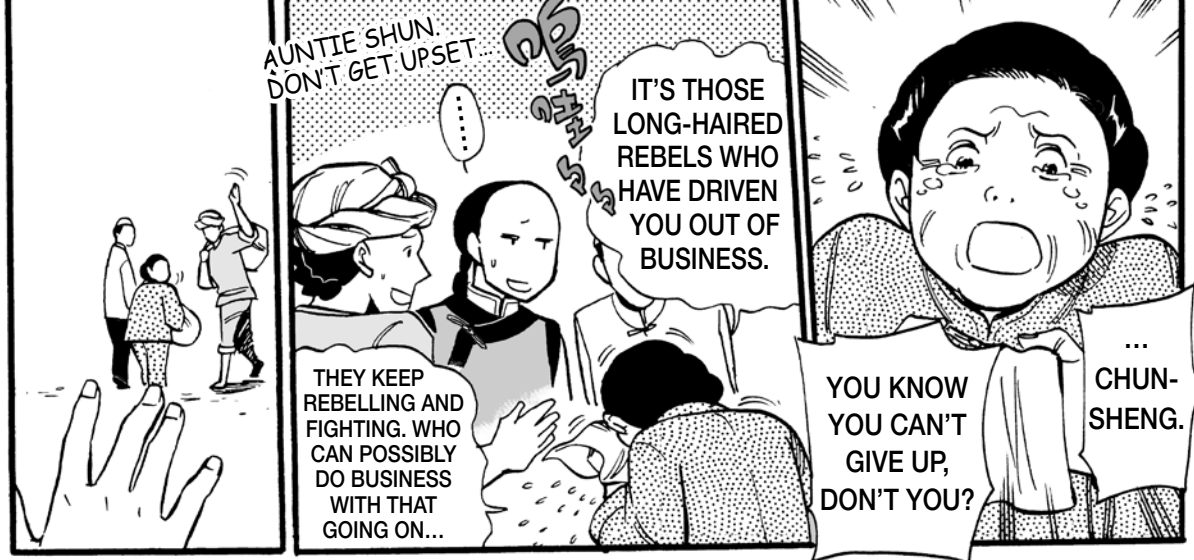
Reflecting on over ten years in the industry, Kiya has observed significant changes. When she first started, veteran comic artists lamented that they were living through the “dark age” of Taiwanese comics. There were few readers, and the connection between creators and audiences was weak. Marketing felt useless, and comics struggled to reach the public.

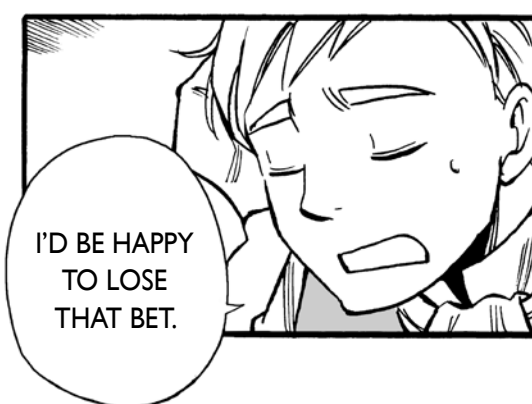
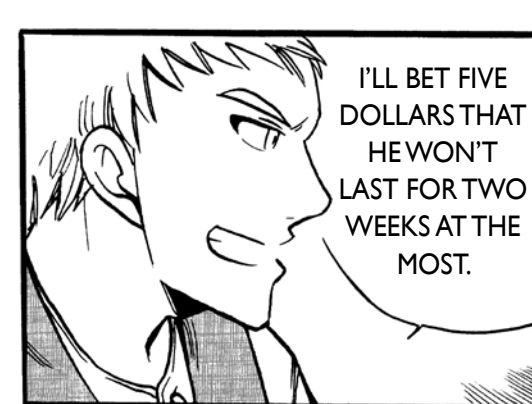
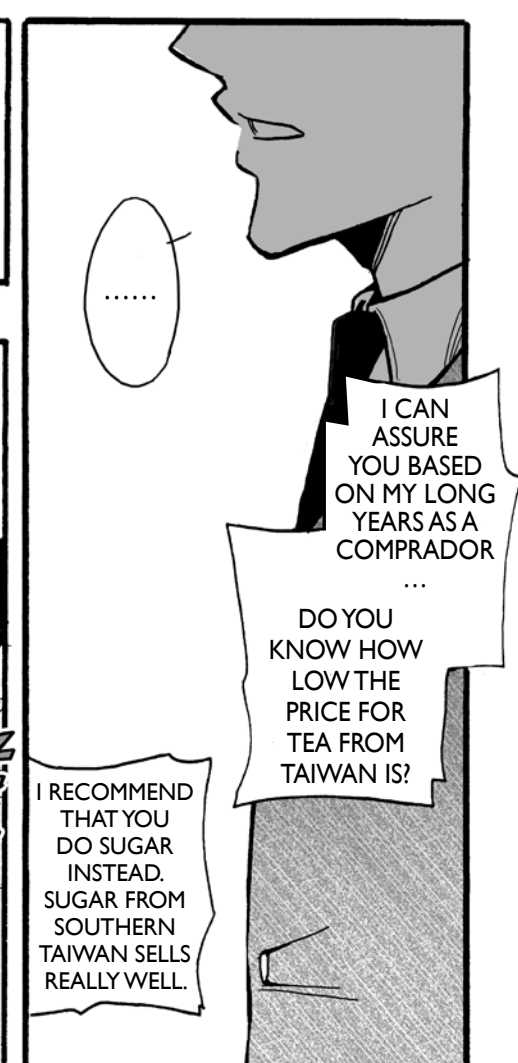
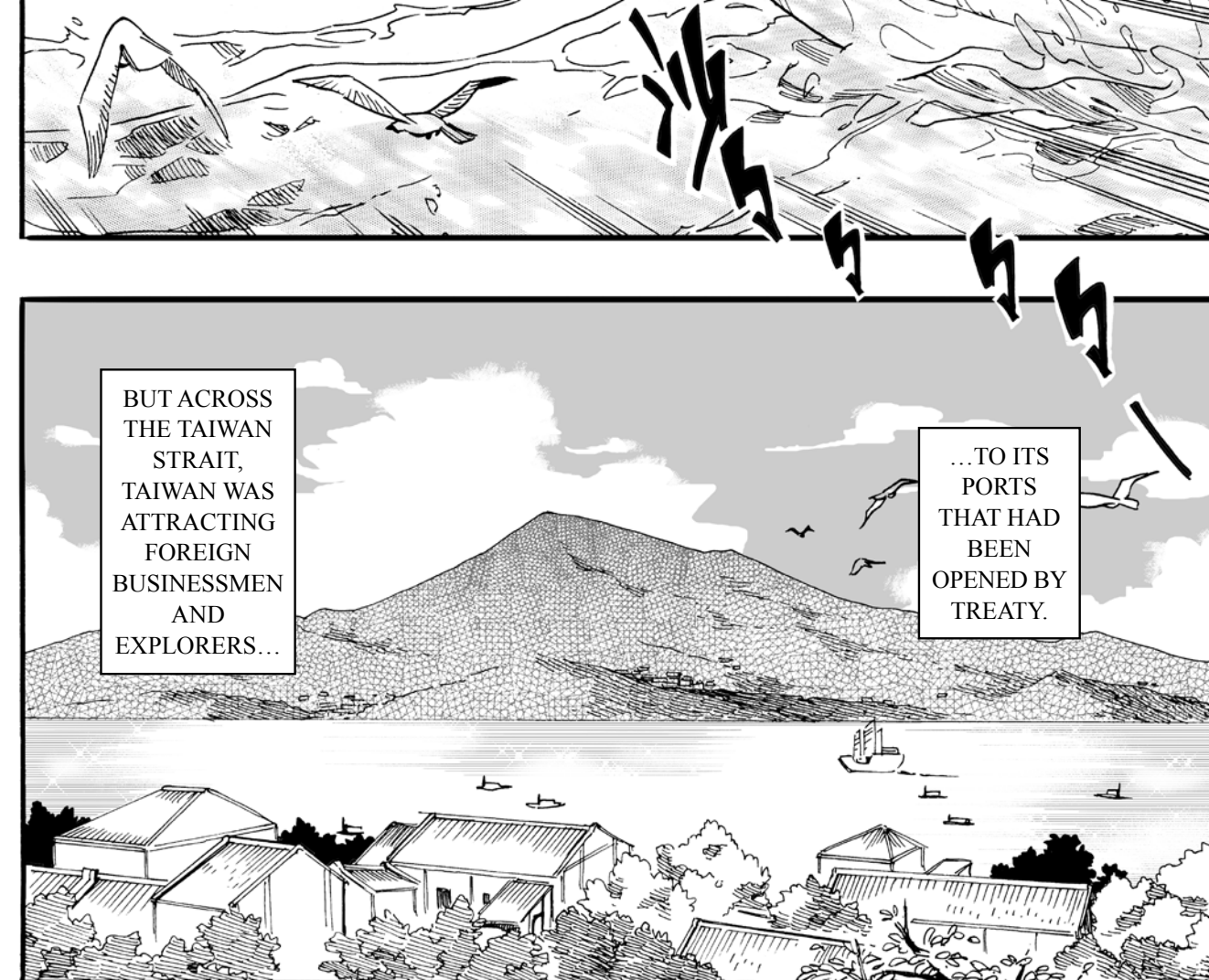
But times are changing. Thanks to the efforts of the CCC Creation Collection, government support, and platforms like the Taiwan Comic Base, Taiwanese comics are seeing a resurgence.

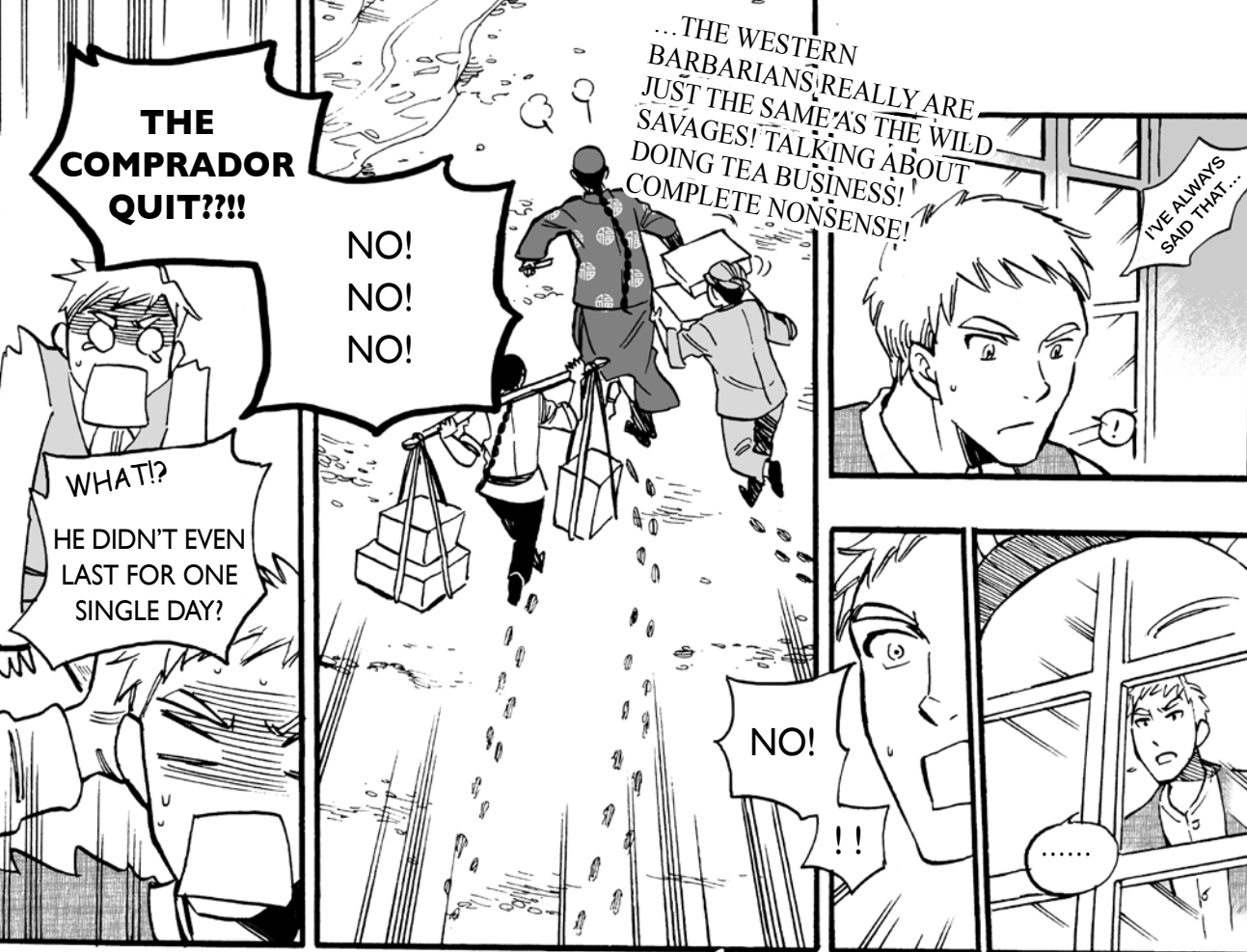
“Now when you walk into a bookstore, you'll see Taiwanese comics alongside Japanese and Western ones,” says Kiya.

For Kiya, comics are more than just a medium—they're her way of communicating with the world. “To me, being able to create comics is important because it's how I connect with the world.”

This essay has been lightly condensed for this booklet.







* 'WILD SAVAGES': THIS WORD FIRST APPEARS IN THE VERITABLE RECORDS OF THE KANGXI EMPEROR (1693). IT WAS USED DURING THE QING DYNASTY TO REFER TO INDIGENOUS AUSTRONESIAN TAIWANESE WHO HAD NOT BEEN CULTURALLY ASSIMILATED AND DID NOT PAY TAXES OR DO CORVÉE LABOR FOR THE QING STATE.

