



# 1947: The Man Returning from Afar

A Full English translation is available.

尋找陳篡地：1947 遠方歸來的人

**Scriptwriters:** Chen-Yu Chang, Che-Yu Kuo, Yueh-Shen Chuang **Illustrator:** A-Hsiang

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**BFT2.0 Translator:** David Knight

*1947: The Man Returning from Afar* is the fourth volume in the *Talking Taiwan Through Comics* series. It tells the story of Tân Chhoàn-tê from Ershui, Changhua—a doctor, community leader, and witness to one of Taiwan’s most turbulent eras. The narrative follows Dr. Tân through moments of conviction, resistance, and sacrifice.

Disturbed by Japan’s growing militarism, Dr. Tân joined an underground political group and was imprisoned for two years. He then survived the sinking of the *Shinsei Maru* during World War II and returned to Taiwan. With the arrival of the Kuomintang from China, Dr. Tân refused to submit to repression. He chose to resist, but the uprising was crushed, and he was once again imprisoned—this time with the weight of punishment falling not only on him, but also on his family and close companions.

After a number of years, he surrendered and negotiated terms of peace. He was monitored by intelligence agencies for the rest of his life.

The story illuminates the tension between thought and action faced by intelligent, determined individuals of that era. His story mirrors the struggles of countless Taiwanese who faced impossible dilemmas under shifting regimes—standing against oppression yet carrying the burden of family and community. More than the biography of one man, this volume reflects Taiwan’s larger story: a century marked by war, colonialism, authoritarian rule, and resilience. It is a powerful reminder that, amid uncertainty, humanity endures—adapting, resisting, and moving forward.



## Scriptwriter **Chen-Yu Chang**

Chen-Yu Chang is the director of World Softest Production, creating works that highlight Taiwanese culture and humanistic values. His projects span film, comics, board games, and social design, all aimed at bringing history to life. Chang's projects include *Talking Taiwan Through Comics* and the satirical series *Social Matters*.



## Scriptwriter **Che-Yu Kuo**

Che-Yu Kuo is a filmmaker and film enthusiast who creates documentaries and writes screenplays. Through his work, he is dedicated to telling Taiwan's stories from a local perspective.



## Scriptwriter **Yueh-Shen Chuang**

A native of Taitung, Yueh-Shen Chuang graduated from the Department of History at National Taiwan University. He believes that stories are metaphors for life and aspires to use his creative work to help the public discover new and varied dimensions of society.



## Illustrator **A-Hsiang**

A-Hsiang graduated from the Department of Fine Arts at National Taiwan University of Arts. Currently an illustrator for Taiwan's United Daily News, A-Hsiang has also held solo exhibitions in Taiwan.

# Making the Story of the Taiwanese People Powerfully Accessible

by I-Chen Tsai  
translated by David Knight

In today's world, younger generations can feel ambivalent toward politics, often disinterested in didactic presentations of a painful past.

That is what makes this project so important: comics and graphic novels, as a visual art form, present history in a way that is easier to absorb than traditional textbooks. Through this accessible and visually compelling medium, comic creators reach young readers with stories rooted in real historical events. With their lively rhythm, these stories move swiftly toward key facts while vividly portraying the figures and circumstances of a momentous era. This medium opens new pathways for a generation to understand Taiwan's history.

The presentation of Dr. Tân Chhoàn-tê's story is especially gripping. Grounded in historical fact, it is clear and empathetic, while rich in details that invite deeper reflection. The World Softest Production Film Company and Vanguard Publishing House have teamed up to produce this fascinating series of graphic novels about Taiwan's history. Like the previous books in this series, it is grounded in historical fact, easy to read, and deeply relatable. The story also brings out many thought-provoking details.

The story illuminates the tension between thought and action faced by intelligent, determined individuals of that era. Dr. Tân was troubled by the militaristic escalation in Japan, and upon joining an

underground political group, he found himself in prison. When the Kuomintang came from China to Taiwan, Dr. Tân could not accept the military brutality that came with it and rose up in armed resistance. He ultimately lost to superior firepower and found himself imprisoned on his own. But here too, his plight was hardly solitary; the rest of his family and friends were implicated as well.

Anyone living can imagine and empathize with such a situation. If you or I lived during that time period, would we not believe that the world should be better? What actions would we take? What ideological tools would be at our disposal, and what could we do to effect their use? Better, with our hindsight and omniscience gazing backwards, are there smarter decisions that we could have made?

This story effectively grabs the

reader's curiosity about living through such complicated times. After taking up arms against Chiang's regime, Tân Chhoàn-tê was spared from execution and allowed to practice medicine until the natural end of his life. Given that five of his family members were arrested and executed, this different outcome is a point worth considering.

The authors chose not to explicitly discuss it, and some of the reason for that may lie in the wish that readers explore it on their own. Some scholars speculate that Hsieh Tung-min (1908–2001), a native of Erh-shui as well as classmate of Tân's at Taichung First Senior High School, and later Vice President of the Republic of China (1978–84), played a role in Tân Chhoàn-tê's release. It is important to note however, that Tân Chhoàn-tê's surviving family members do not believe this to be the case.

Finally, the form of the manga itself echoes its topic. As the sections change, so too does the rhythm and manner of the illustrations. The chapters spare in dialogue are rich in visual self-explanation. These include some of the most moving and visceral scenes, such as the death of Ah-ch'eng, and Tân's reunion with Hsieh Yü-lu.

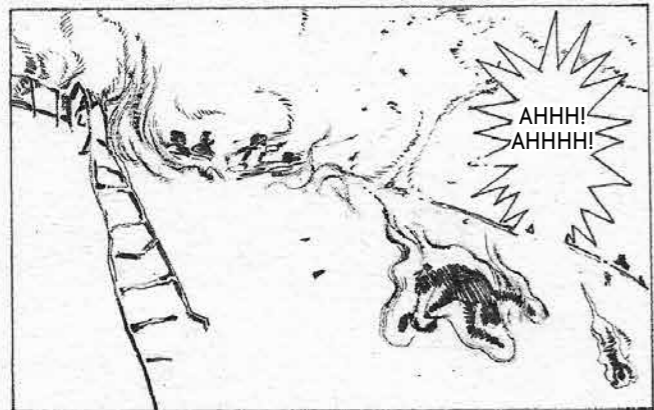
This type of interspersed style switching may, at first glance, cause the reading experience to appear fragmented. But if one thinks about Tân Chhoàn-tê's life, can it not be said, in a manner of speaking, to be fragmented? As for all of us, constant change pervaded his story, whether it was living under an authoritarian regime, being caught up in the war, grappling with political ideology, determining one's own identity, or even just trying to be alive.

In some ways, this story is precisely

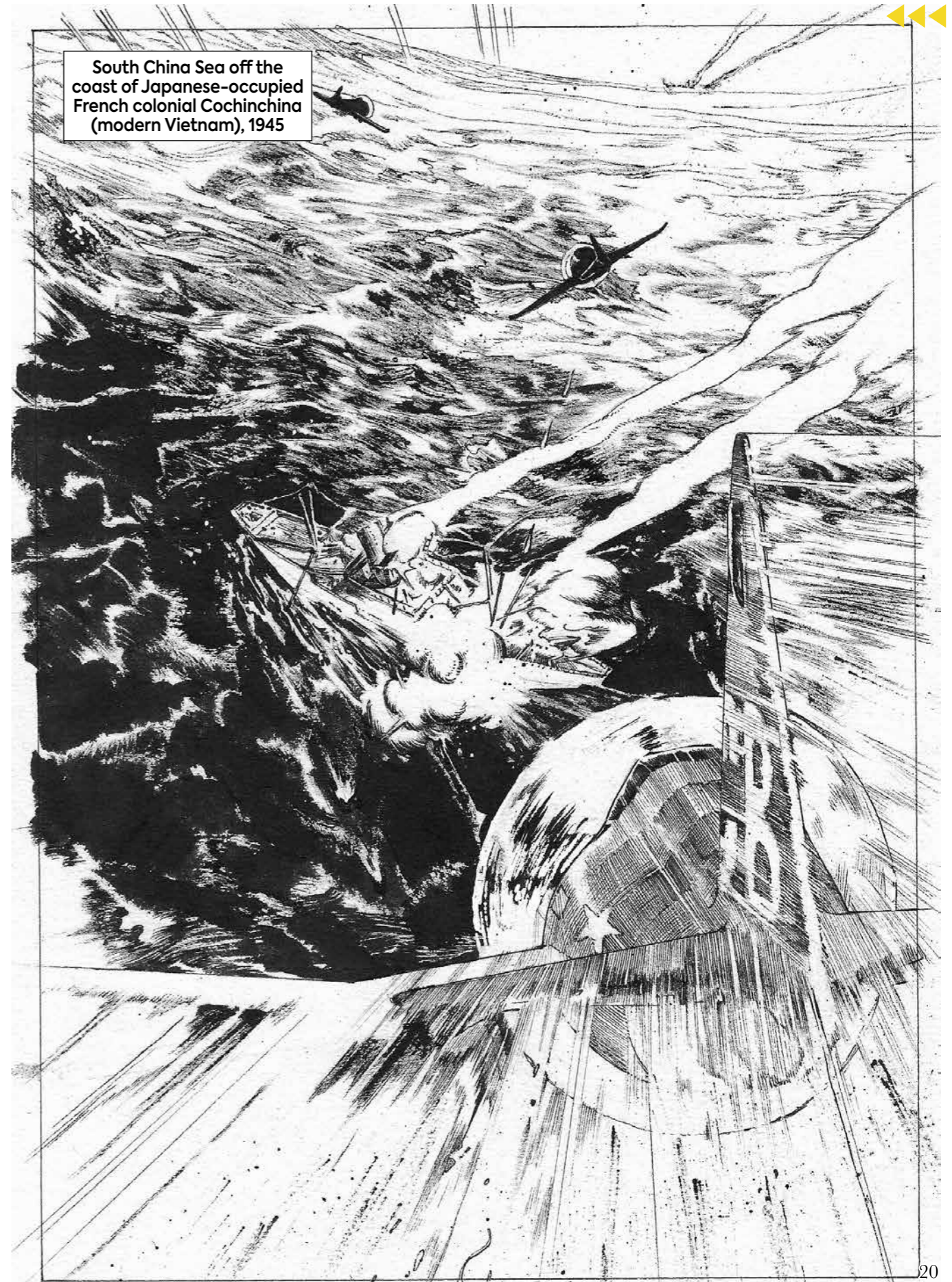
a microcosm of the Taiwanese experience for the past century. We are in the front row of a changing international situation, and there is no single fixed point of stability. The best we can do is hold goodness in our hearts, continue to adapt, continue to learn, and continue to progress.

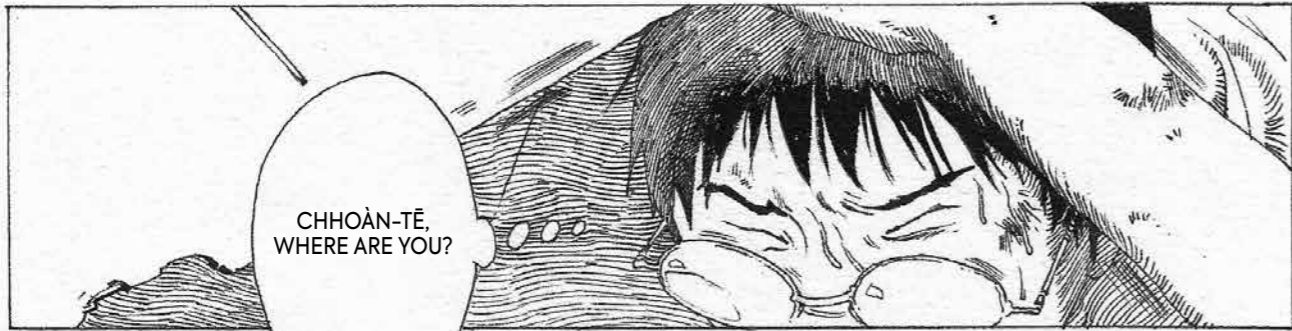
*This foreword has been edited for the purposes of this booklet.*

*I-Chen Tsai, a medical doctor from Taiwan, founder of InnoRad and Accompany You to Watch International News, and convener of the Asian Cardiac Imaging Guidelines. He is widely known for his insightful takes on global news, expertise in medical science, and unique educational perspectives.*

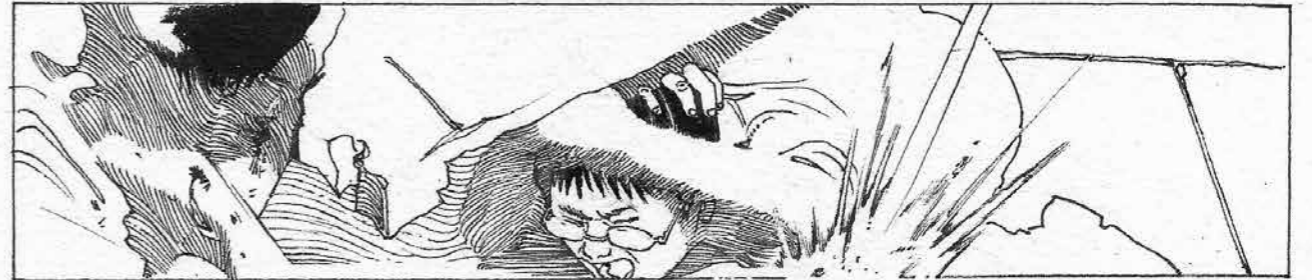
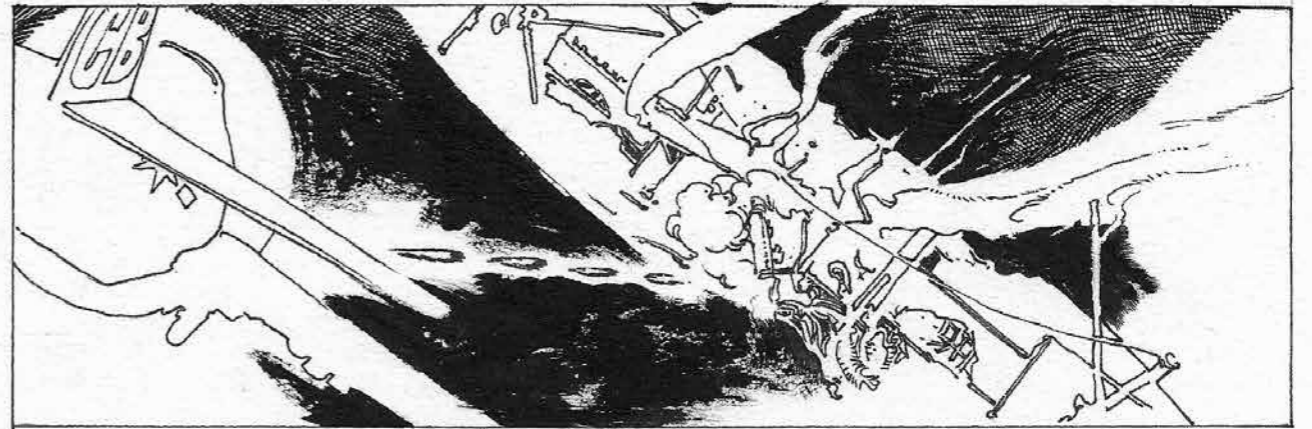
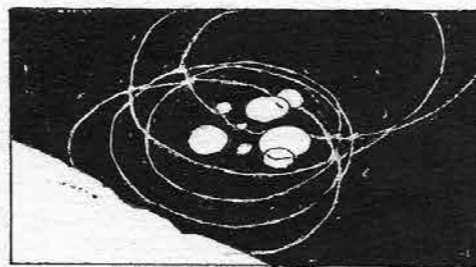


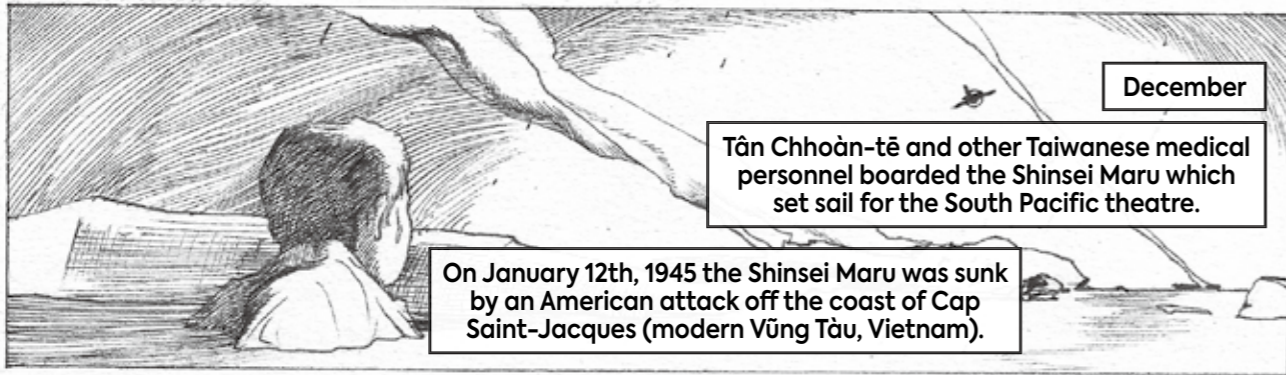
South China Sea off the coast of Japanese-occupied French colonial Cochinchina (modern Vietnam), 1945





Tân Choàn-tê during World War II

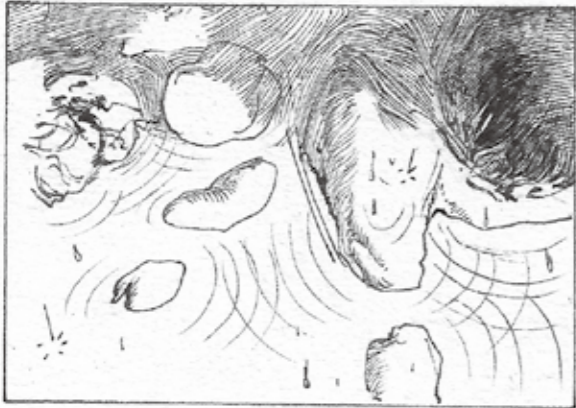




December

Tân Chhoàn-tê and other Taiwanese medical personnel boarded the Shinsei Maru which set sail for the South Pacific theatre.

On January 12th, 1945 the Shinsei Maru was sunk by an American attack off the coast of Cap Saint-Jacques (modern Vũng Tàu, Vietnam).



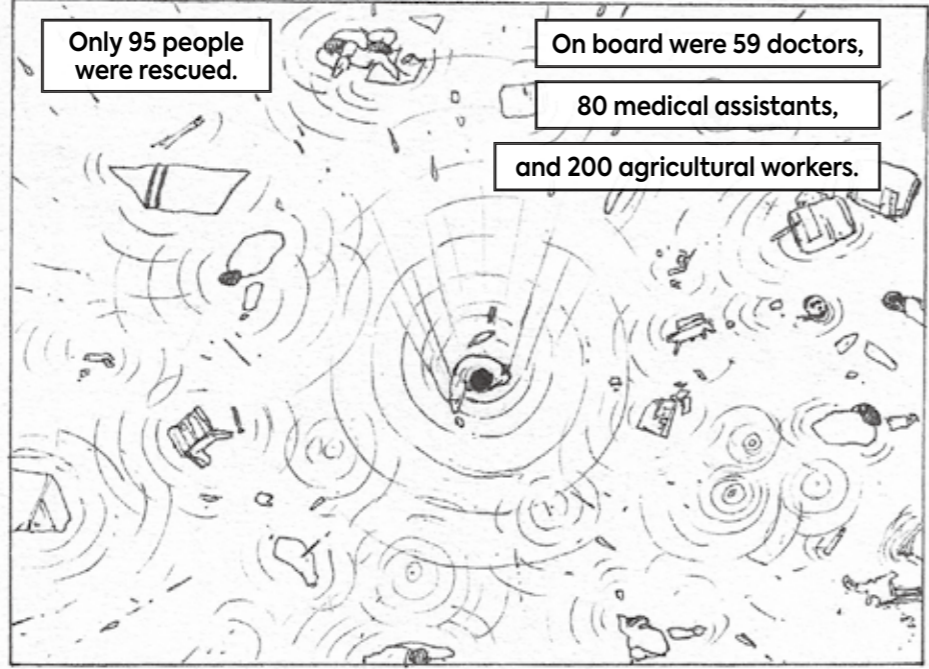
When life and death come down to a sea of fire or a hail of bullets...

Only 95 people were rescued.

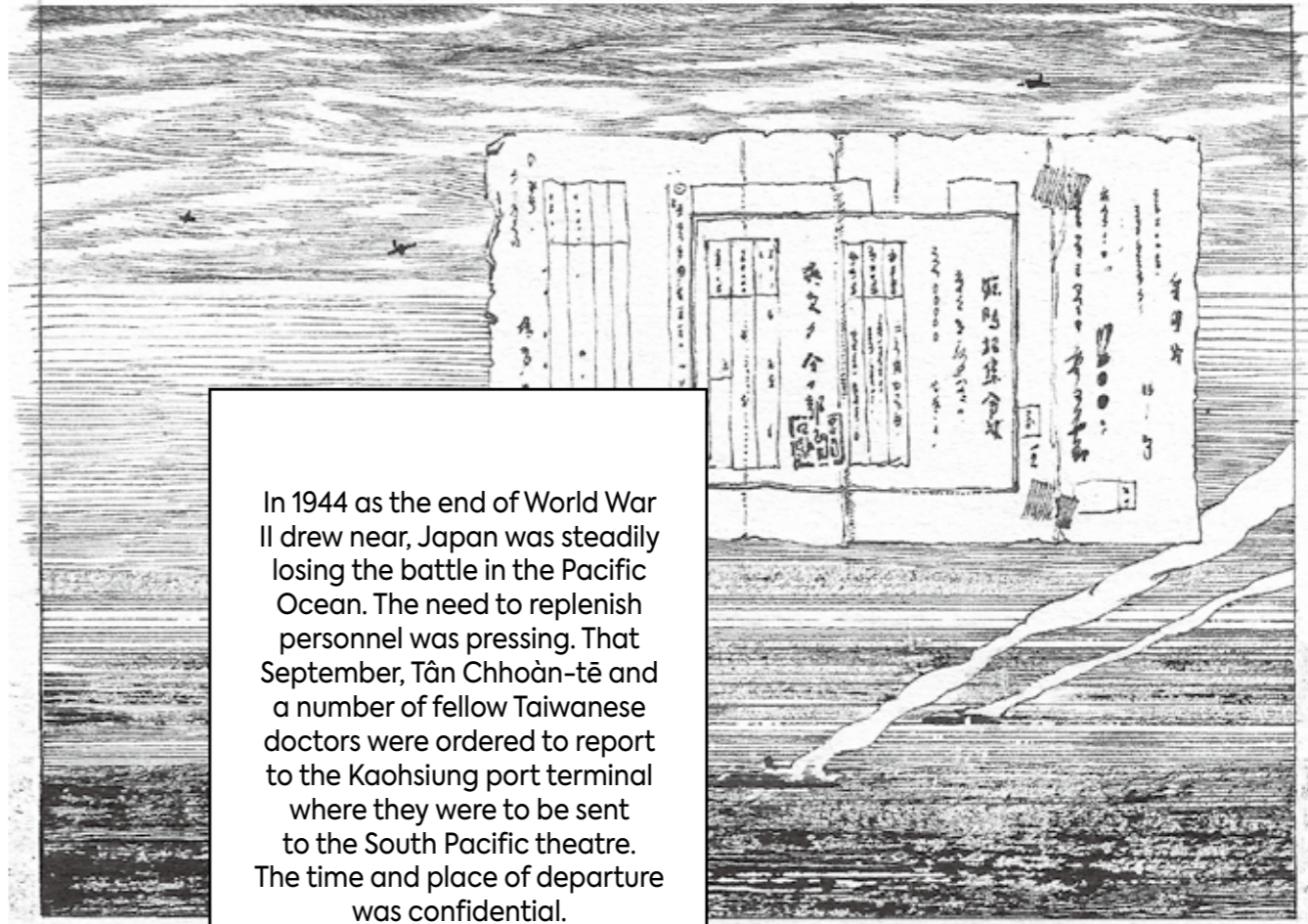
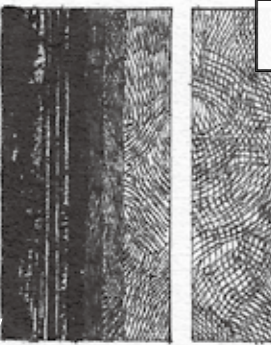
On board were 59 doctors, 80 medical assistants, and 200 agricultural workers.



No book you have read...



...Can prepare you for the choice.



In 1944 as the end of World War II drew near, Japan was steadily losing the battle in the Pacific Ocean. The need to replenish personnel was pressing. That September, Tân Chhoàn-tê and a number of fellow Taiwanese doctors were ordered to report to the Kaohsiung port terminal where they were to be sent to the South Pacific theatre. The time and place of departure was confidential.

