

## BOOK REVIEWS

### CHINA

**My fight for a new Taiwan: one woman's journey from prison to power**, by Lu Hsiu-lien & Ashley Esarey, Seattle & London, University of Washington Press, 2014, xiv, 314 pp., US\$34.95 (hardback)

In Taiwan, as in most countries that have democratised, the opposition has had to fight many difficult battles before final victory. This autobiography by Lu Hsiu-lien (also known as Annette Lu), who was Taiwan's vice-president from 2000 to 2008, makes it crystal clear that the opposition faced many challenges before the nation democratised. In this book, prepared with the assistance of Ashley Esarey, Lu Hsiu-lien takes us from her birth through to the victory of Chen Shui-bian and Lu in the presidential election of 2000 when the opposition won the presidency and vice-presidency for the first time in Taiwan's history.

Lu first became famous as Taiwan's first feminist and she makes clear that she gained many of her ideas from time spent overseas at the University of Illinois. But, to use her words, Lu remained "an untraditional girl - with surprisingly traditional expectations" (p. 43). Her feminism attracted attention and Lu's entrepreneurial spirit led to the establishment of a feminist press and the publication of several books and articles. She also gained negative attention from the government.

Through the assistance of Professor Jerome Cohen (who wrote the foreword to this book), Lu obtained a tuition waiver and entered Harvard Law School's Master of Laws program in February 1977. But, as it became clear that the United States might recognise the People's Republic of China diplomatically, Lu felt she should return home to run for the national assembly. Lu joined the *Formosa Magazine* and was arrested along with many others in the opposition following the Kaohsiung Incident of 10 December 1979. Lu's autobiography here is useful as she reveals many of the methods the dictatorial regime used to try to control and repress the opposition. She also makes clear her difficulties in gaining acceptance as part of the opposition movement and describes some of her conflicts with other opposition leaders. Chapters 5 and 6 clearly describe the Kaohsiung Incident, her arrest, interrogation, trial and imprisonment. However, sometimes the book lacks analysis of the wider story.

Owing to illness, Lu was released from prison early, after being incarcerated for 1,933 days or more than five years. After an extended period, Lu obtained permission to travel and again went to Harvard, although she also toured with Amnesty International and delivered many speeches in the United States. She won election to the legislature in 1992, was unsuccessful in her effort to become Peng Ming-min's vice-presidential candidate in 1995, and won a by-election to become Taoyuan County Executive in 1997, subsequently winning a full term in 1998. The book tells about her garbage battles in Taoyuan against the original Kuomintang and gangster power-holders as well as her efforts following the crash of a China Airlines plane in Taoyuan.

Undoubtedly, the high point of Lu's career was winning the vice-presidency as part of Chen Shui-bian's ticket. She describes both her acceptance as Chen's vice-presidential candidate and the campaign. The book ends with their electoral success, although a short Epilogue, presumably by Ashley Esarey (the book makes clear that he is the author of the Introduction) does carry the story into her vice-presidency.

One expects an autobiography to explain events from the perspective of the author. However, it is necessary to make some additional remarks. First, Lu Hsiu-lien has a very strong sense of her

own importance and abilities, an evaluation not widely shared among Taiwan's other leaders. For example, when vice-president, she told many people including this reviewer that the 19 March 2004 assassination attempt, when both President Chen Shui-bian and she were shot, was actually aimed at her. In 2014 she was upset when the Democratic Progressive Party did not nominate her for mayor of Taipei despite her poor results in polls.

Lu also tries to convey a sense that she is extraordinarily progressive, but her record suggests that she is intrinsically very conservative. On 7 December 2003, Lu stated that AIDS was a punishment from the gods for homosexuality and urged that AIDS patients be kept in special villages. On 4 August 2004, Lu suggested Taiwan's aborigines be moved to Central America where they could develop new careers. These are hardly the opinions of an enlightened progressive. For a self-described expert on international affairs, she misses the issue of dual representation and the importance of Secretary of State Rogers in trying to help Taiwan during the saga leading to Taiwan's withdrawal from the United Nations (pp. 204–205).

The book also contains a number of factual errors. Nixon's visit to China was in February, not January, 1972 (p. 75). The ROC Constitution was promulgated in 1946, not 1936 (p. 192). Lien Chan was born in 1936, not "the 1940s" (p. 266). But despite these issues, Lu's autobiography does provide a useful look at Taiwan's politics under Chiang Kai-shek, Chiang Ching-kuo and Lee Teng-hui.

J. Bruce Jacobs  
Monash University

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### **Fateful ties: a history of America's preoccupation with China**, by Gordon H.

Chang, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2015, 314 pp., US\$32.95 (hardback); US\$23.51 (eBook)

Gordon Chang's latest book seeks to unravel the riddle of American fascination for China. The timing is impeccable, as the historian puts it aptly: "China has been the central ingredient in America's self-identity from its very beginning..." (p. 8). By taking a *longue durée* perspective, Chang attempts to lay out "important patterns" in the imagining of China in the United States. One realises, however, that despite the economic and social changes in China, Sino-American relations still reveal "pronounced continuities and legacies from the past" (p. 7).

One of the most illuminating chapters is Chapter 3, "Grand Politics and High Culture". Chang is at his narrative and analytical best when painting the subtle shifts in the American cultural scene coexisting with high politics. Tapping into his previous work depicting cultural diffusions, especially in his earlier work *Asian/American/Modern Art: Shifting Currents* (2008), Chang is able to unearth a goldmine of delightful tidbits. One learns that Julia Grant and Helen Taft wore Chinese inspired dresses to their husbands' presidential inaugurations. As America entered the "Gilded Age", what better way to aggrandise their wealth especially for the nouveau riche and "robber barons" than an indulgence in chinoiserie chic? In creative circles, Chinese art inspired new works and novel interpretations; James McNeil Whistler's "Peacock Room" now on display at the Freer Gallery bears testimony to the cultural impact of China (p. 120).

The hard-hitting insights, which Chang provides in relation to the conflicted nature of early American missionary work in China, present a fascinating mirror image to the present-day

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