Review Essay

WOMEN IN TAIWAN POLITICS: OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN A MODERNIZING SOCIETY, by Chou Bih-er, Cal Clark, and Janet Clark. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990, 210 pp., $30.

THE CHOSEN WOMEN IN KOREAN POLITICS: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY, by Soh Chung-Hee. New York: Praeger, 1991, viii + 168 pp., $39.95.

by Linda Gail Arrigo

Women in Taiwan Politics appears at a time of renewed interest in Taiwan, interest centering on its position as one of the "miracle economies" of the Pacific Rim.[1] This book shares with the mainstream of this literature an absorption with formal political structures and rates of growth of gross national product.

Conceptually the book is composed of two parts: The first part is a general review of the economic and political history of Taiwan, with the addition of an analysis of formal national statistics showing women's increasing employment in various sectors, especially commerce and manufacturing. However, the categories of the statistics are too general to elucidate the changes in the social experience of women, or even their distribution among high and low occupations. The twenty-three-page historical review provides a great deal of useful government-level information. The authors frankly acknowledge that at the time of their writing the national assemblies of the Republic of China were "rubber stamp" bodies largely unchanged since 1947, consonant with a one-party system with decades of curtailed civil rights. All the same, their exclusive focus for examining issues of women in politics is the reserved-seat system, a governmental institution that reserves about one-tenth of elected posts for women.

The second part is a report on a 1985 survey of 106 women occupying seats in the major legislative bodies or who lost in a campaign for a seat, along with a control group of 43 assemblymen. The questions in this survey are directed toward individual socialization and resources, that is, asking what made it possible for these women to achieve their roles and how they compare with men who have been elected. The authors find that "women and men were surprisingly equal in the possession of political resources" (p. 190), and that both groups were predominantly from elite family backgrounds. The discussion relies exclusively on regression analysis of the variables in the survey, with no case studies or personal quotes from interviews with the subjects; it is unclear how much of the survey interviewing, if any, was done by the authors themselves (see p. 105). On the basis of the increasing number of women in elected office from the 1980s on, they conclude that the reserved-seat system as established by the constitution of the Republic of China has in effect provided suitable political tutelage for women (p. 194).

The book is thoughtfully written and shows in its text and carefully prepared footnotes a great deal of reading in the English-language literature on Taiwan. This thoroughness, however, serves only to highlight a possibly disingenuous omission of some sources and facts and avoidance of central issues that I will address later in this review: the history of the women's movement in Taiwan, and the relationship between elected status for particular women and the advancement of women's issues. A summary history of the legal and social obstacles for women in Taiwan, many of which have long been encoded in the family laws and government agency practices of the Republic of China and thus should concern their elected representatives, would

1. For example, Alice Amsden, "The State and Taiwan's Economic Development" in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skoçpol (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), pp. 78–106; and Ezra Vogel, *The Four Little Dragons: The Spread of Industrialization in East Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991). Also see a recent book by one of the authors, Cal Clark, *Taiwan's Development: Implications for Contending Political Economy Paradigms* (New York: Greenwood, 1989). For the other side, the costs of development to the environment and labor, see Walden Bello and Stephanie Rosenfeld, *Dragons in Distress: Asia's Miracle Economies in Crisis* (San Francisco: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1990).

Lee Teng-hui, the president of Taiwan, telling the National Affairs Council that the Kuomintang (KMT) should lead the constitutional reform. Lee is saying, "Of course, leadership and reform will come from him [the KMT]—in the last analysis, he has experience." The KMT, however, is presented as a clown with the wreckage of the elections of the vice-president of the Executive Yuan and the party chairman behind him. Although in recent years the KMT has been putting on a new reformist face, the excesses of the past cannot be easily forgotten, and until December 1991 only a small fraction of the National Assembly seats were subject to elections. This cartoon is by CoCo and is from Hsin Hsin-wen *(The Journalist), no. 175 (10–22 July 1990), p. 53, courtesy of CoCo,* Hsin Hsin-wen, *and C.L. Chiou.*

have added to an assessment of the role of governmental action.

It is quite possible that the authors do not see the implications that I see in these omissions from my vantage of long association with dissident intellectuals, opposition candidates, and former political prisoners. That is, the ruling Nationalist Party (Kuomintang* or KMT), emerging in the late 1980s from decades of draconian rule by the Chiangs, wants to put forth a new image for international consumption while still maintaining as much as possible the mechanisms that may allow it to dominate in a future formal and superficial democracy. Unwittingly or not, this book seems to further that purpose. This undertone is worth pondering further because it is common to much of the recent literature on Taiwan, and its short-span memory of history subtly distorts current understanding.

The president since January 1988, Lee Teng-hui, a Taiwan-born technocrat with a Ph.D. from Cornell, epitomizes the transformation of the Nationalists. The governmental publications in English, such as the *Free China Review,* are rapidly dropping the old rabid anticommunist propaganda in favor of a new reformist face.[2] Much U.S. scholarship, and this book as well, sounds the same note: The excesses of the past can be expiated and credibility retrieved by passing mention of them in a coolly sanitized account. Chiang Ching-kuo, apparently farsighted in his last years, is given credit for liberalization, as if rights of free speech and assembly were benevolently bestowed, rather than seized through mass civil disobedience under continual threats and repression. The oft-repeated promise of democracy is complacently accepted as its realization, although it was not until December 1991 that more than a small fraction of the National Assembly seats were subject to election. Lip service is given to the goals of environmental, labor, women's, and other social movements, while on the streets their demonstrations are suppressed under the cover of anticrime campaigns. Perhaps the KMT elite do deserve more credit for liberalization than they would be accorded by the opposition, but it remains to be shown through a detailed historical account[3] that they actually championed reform rather than accepting it only as a means of preemption, putting the best face on their loss of control.

Reserved representation for women in the national,

*Romanization in this article follows common usage in Taiwan.

2. See in particular *Free China Review,* vol. 42, no. 3 (March 1992), with articles on protests against sexual harassment among China Airlines stewardesses (pp. 62–67) and on new candor in studies of Taiwan's history (pp. 1–41).

3. The most detailed account is to be found in Tien Hung-mao, *The Great Transition: Political and Social Change in the Republic of China* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1989). Tien describes the regime's liberalization as an adjustment to international realities and internal socioeconomic development, but does not anticipate thoroughgoing transformation: "Political changes already under way suggest that a once exclusionary authoritarian system is now in transition. The one-party system on Taiwan is giving way to a dominant-party system in which the ruling party must compete with the DPP and several smaller parties in the electoral process. Since the KMT is likely to maintain control over the government administration, the armed forces, the mass media, the legislatures, and group activities, democratic development must occur within a corporatist structure. Conversion to a pluralistic democracy will continue to be constrained by the KMT's links to the state and society" (p. 252).

provincial, and county assemblies is only part of the corporatist structure* that was enshrined in the 1947 constitution of the Republic of China. Overseas Chinese, labor, farmers, and business have also been accorded group representatives by reservation, whose selection was until recent years readily controlled by the ruling party. Such group representation more often provides channels for government penetration of social groups and control with piecemeal co-optation, rather than voices for their popular demands. Chou, Clark, and Clark are not naive on this point; their discussion of the election of women's group representatives to the National Assembly—which elects the president and revises the constitution—is as follows:

> Because the seats reserved for women in the National Assembly are elected only by members of women's organizations, the nature of these women's groups is very important. . . . The original legislation specified that only those women's organizations lawfully registered with the appropriate government agencies could participate in this type of election. Under the Temporary Provisions [constitutional revisions valid for "the duration of mobilization to suppress the communist rebellion"], the election law specifies that Fu Nu Huei (Women's Association) is the only women's organization approved . . .
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> Thus, this provision of the women's quota seems to assume that women, like occupational groups, have a special interest in selecting the president and vice-president and need to have their own representatives in the National Assembly. However, this system also implicitly assumes that women's organizations necessarily (or automatically) represent the interest of all female electors. Conceivably, this latter assumption is fallacious. In most societies, especially developing ones, most women do not belong to any civic or voluntary organization. Only a small proportion of women, usually drawn almost exclusively from the socio-economic elite, join associations of any kind. Consequently, . . . the quota system puts the representation of women's interests into the hands of a small and unrepresentative minority.
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> This turns our attention to the second point—the nature of the officially recognized women's organization in Taiwan. Since the election law sets the conditions that a women's organization must meet in order to qualify as a constituency for the National Assembly, this quota system leaves a good deal of room for manipulation by the regime that interprets and implements the law. (p. 85)

In the national legislature (Legislative Yuan) and provincial and county assemblies, the quota system for women's representation allows more room for contesting elections. It is applied where a number of representatives are elected at large in a district, for example, out of all the candidates the top six vote-getters take office. If there are five or more slots representing the district, one is reserved for the highest-vote woman candidate, if there is one, even if she falls behind all the male candidates (p. 86).

While the authors clearly understand in the abstract that real representative democracy has not yet appeared in Taiwan on the national level, such that the significant political processes are not even vested in the national assemblies, and that reserved seats for women, among other identified groups, may even work counter to the goal of popular representation, their research design takes a very narrow scope that falls short of the general topic of women in politics and thus leads to very limited findings. It is not to be disputed that membership in the national assemblies confers some social and political authority, and is often very remunerative as well. But what significance is to be found, I would ask the authors, in showing that women have achieved some greater share of elite positions in an authoritarian regime? What is the point of promoting this reserved-seat system, as they do in their conclusions? Increasing parity with men in high positions may appeal greatly to U.S. feminists, but it has no necessary corollary in the general political participation of women in a developing nation, or in their welfare.

The opposition party, even without an effective women's policy, has done better than the KMT in advancing women's political participation.

We should understand the role of women in politics in Taiwan in its political context. Any observer of Taiwan's political scene can note that since the midseventies the major positions and camps in contention have been (1) the ruling party carrying the flag of social order and gradualistic adjustment to international and internal realities, while retaining the Republic of China label; and (2) the organized opposition and independents bearing the flag of democratization and thence Taiwan independence, espousing various degrees of social reform. The first group consists of about half mainland-born Chinese and half native-born Taiwanese, reflecting a significant incorporation of the native population into the regime; the second is overwhelmingly native Taiwanese. This cleavage, a conflation of ethnicity and class, is the source of popular passions at election time and of continuous struggles in the arenas of the national assemblies. It may be said that the same basic national issues are played out in struggles now visible within the KMT; the KMT's conservative powerholders are predominantly Chinese mainlanders, while its liberalizing technocrats, now in ascendancy, have greater Taiwanese representation.

Since neither the KMT nor the organized opposition, now the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), has championed women's causes or systematically sought women as a constituency, gender issues do not figure noticeably in their rivalry. As the authors surmise, while avoiding more definitive judgment:

> The expected relationship between KMT membership and gender is somewhat ambiguous: On the one hand, less in the mainstream, groups such as aspiring women politicians should be attracted to the more liberal opposition groups; on the other, the Nationalists might be expected to be more aggressive in recruiting women to run for the reserved seats because of their "machine's" ability to support full slates of candidates. (p. 141)

So comparing the groups' female legislators against male legislators and female losers on questions like the effect of "family obligations" on the campaign and women being "better at human relations"—each group containing both KMT and non-KMT—yields only an oblique measure of other more powerful political processes that are for the most part not directly gender-related.

*"Corporate" here indicates that "the state assumes key economic and social functions." Ibid., p. 44.

Lu Hsiu-lien and Chen Chu at a 1990 benefit auction for Lu's organization, the Coalition for Democracy. Lu Hsiu-lien is considered the founder of the women's movement in modern Taiwan and was elected to the Legislative Yuan in 1992. Chen Chu was elected to the National Assembly in 1991 and is now the director of the Taiwan Association for Human Rights. Both were imprisoned in the eighties for over five years for "sedition"—for challenging the KMT's legitimacy and pushing for reforms. For the most part the book Women in Taiwan Politics *ignores such women's groups and activists while proclaiming the regime's "commitment to sexual equality"—a commitment dramatically contradicted by these women's experiences until recent years. This photo and the next two are courtesy of Linda Gail Arrigo.*

The authors present only one table dealing directly with party membership, and find:

> As would be expected, Kuomintang members appear to be part of the political establishment, while the opposition attracts more politically oriented outsiders. Thus, non-KMT respondents were 17% more likely to have become interested in public affairs for political reasons and 22% more likely to have run for office because of personal concern about political issues. In contrast, Nationalist candidates were wealthier, more likely to be Mainlanders and Buddhists. . . . (p. 141)

Although women's issues are not prominent in political debate in Taiwan, it is notable that feminist activities and groups have been much more closely associated with the opposition than with the ruling party, especially in the early period of their development when government-affiliated ideologues accused those who exposed the dark side of society of serving as communist fellow travelers. Reportage on wife-beating, divorce, prostitution, and so forth was also seen in this light. In this context the authors' mention of Taiwan's women's movement is conspicuous for its brevity: "The growing strength of the women's movement in Taiwan, led by the feminist group [around] *Awakening* [Fu-nu Hsin-chih, a Chinese-language magazine] and other similar organizations, has stimulated both women's aspirations for political participation and public sympathy for these ambitions, developments that parallel the Western experience of the 1970s" (p. 94). Thus Taiwan's women's groups and activists are virtually ignored in a book titled *Women in Taiwan Politics,* despite the fact that the authors extensively discuss the women's movement in the West and its theories.

As I will show below, the experience of feminist activists is of considerable relevance to an evaluation of governmental policy toward women. There have been several accounts in English and in Chinese of the women's movement in Taiwan, notably recent ones by Ku Yen-lin.[4] It has also been sketched quite competently in chapter 7 of Marc Cohen's *Taiwan at the Crossroads.*[5] The recognized founder of the women's movement in modern Taiwan is Lu Hsiu-lien, whose pen name in English is Annette, who began writing articles on equal opportunity in 1971 after returning from graduate studies at the University of Illinois Law School and taking up a post in a legal commission of the Executive Yuan. Her pioneering activities, influenced by the women's movement she saw while abroad, warrant an extended excerpt from Cohen here:

> Between 1972 and 1975 . . . [Lu Hsiu-lien] made a number of attempts to "institutionalize" the women's movement. Women's organizations had of course existed previously, but . . . were subject to close KMT supervision, and suffused with the prevailing ideology of male dominance. The KMT Central Committee has an Office of Women's Activities (chaired by Madame Chiang Kai-shek) that oversees women's groups, and the party controls the Women's

4. Ku Yen-lin, "The Feminist Movement in Taiwan, 1972–87," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars,* vol. 21, no. 1 (Jan.–Mar. 1989), pp. 12–23. Similar articles appeared earlier in Taiwan in Chinese.

5. Marc J. Cohen, *Taiwan at the Crossroads: Human Rights, Political Development and Social Change on the Beautiful Island* (Washington, DC: Asia Resource Center, 1988).

Anti-Aggression League (also under Madame Chiang), which all female civil servants must join. Lu found that her efforts to develop groups with independent views brought her into conflict not only with male chauvinist attitudes, but, increasingly, with the KMT authorities. In 1972, the Taipei municipal government refused to issue her a permit to start an Association for the Promotion of Women, but she was able two years later to establish a Taipei Chapter of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women. However, the club quickly came under the control of the wives of senior KMT officials, and Lu was forced out.

Lu later established a feminist coffee house and a publishing company, which published her own works and those of a number of other young feminist writers. She also set up hotlines in Taipei and Kaohsiung to aid victims of rape and domestic violence, established a feminist research center, and conducted a number of surveys and seminars on sex roles in the household. . . . In addition, she found herself coming under increasing KMT harassment, as security agents infiltrated and destroyed a number of these organizations, and the censors suppressed several books distributed by her publishing house.[6]

The thoroughness of* Women in Taiwan Politics *only serves to highlight a possibly disingenuous omission of some sources and facts and avoidance of central issues that I will address later in this review: the history of the women's movement in Taiwan, and the relationship between elected status for particular women and the advancement of women's issues.

Finally in October 1978 Lu Hsiu-lien declared herself a candidate for national office in the opposition coalition, and she gave speeches attacking the KMT's myth of legitimacy. The elections were canceled, but the opposition regrouped and continued to agitate for democratic reform. Marked as a dangerous dissident, in early 1979 Lu drafted, without putting her name on it,[7] a proposal for a liberalized abortion law, and spurred other feminists to take on the campaign, eventually successful, to get reforms passed in the geriatric legislature. In the culmination of that watershed year of escalating public mobilization and protest, she was arrested together with other leaders and candidates in December 1979 following what is referred to as the "Kaohsiung" or *"Formosa Magazine"* incident, and she was imprisoned for "sedition" for over five years at considerable cost to her health. However, in December 1992 she was elected to the Legislative Yuan.

Lu Hsiu-lien's earlier experiences directly call into question the regime's supposed "ideological commitment to sexual equality" that is found in the self-description of the book *(p. 207)*. Added to the authors' avoidance of this history of the women's movement, their omission of well-known sources that are critical of the Kuomintang, such as Norma Diamond's 1975 article[8] tracing KMT policy on women back to its 1927 origins and influence by German fascism, seems more than an oversight. Prior to the challenge by a real women's movement, the governmental "commitment" consisted of grossly unjust family and divorce laws, unenforced regulations for equality in inheritance, discrimination in employment and benefits, and condescending patronization in the form of elite women featured in charity projects. The accumulation of economic change and employment opportunities, not KMT policy, forced an evolution in social mores.

While the KMT held secure control, the women's quota of representation was often unfilled. "At the county/city level, for instance, women never won more than their assigned minimum quota throughout the 1950s. At the national and provincial levels, moreover, the number of seats won by women did not exceed their minimum reservation significantly until the 1980s, except for the Taipei City Council and the National Assembly" (p. 93). The authors partially recognize the role of the opposition challenge in pushing women's participation beyond the minimum. They could have cited an early case: An audacious young reporter, Chen Wan-chen, was drafted by the opposition in 1978 to try to take the women's reserved National Legislature seat representing Taipei. If she had been the only woman among the candidates for the district, she would have received a seat even if she received only nominal votes. To counter her the KMT drafted Lee Chung-kuei, the educated wife of a government official. However, the December 1978 elections were canceled and the outcome of that contest was undetermined.

In the early eighties, however, the source of women's increased visibility in politics came not from feminism or from the new opposition struggles for women's seats under the quota system, but from the traditional appeals of women as objects of sympathy and as stand-ins for their husbands or fathers. In past decades women often took over county and city offices when a family political machine—usually one substantially independent from the KMT—lacked a male heir (for example, Yu Chen Yueh-ying, now county executive in Kaohsiung; and Chang Po-ya, formerly legislator from Chiayi, now minister of public health). Similarly, after elections were resumed in 1982, it was the wives of imprisoned opposition leaders who were catapulted to national public office with record-breaking votes—as in the cases of Chou Ching-yu (the wife of Yao Chia-wen and now county executive in Chiayi), Hsu Jung-su (the wife of Chang Chun-hung), and Fang Su-min (the wife of Lin Yi-hsiung, whose twin daughters were murdered by an unidentified intruder on 28 February 1980). This pattern based on traditional sentiments and protest votes has continued throughout the decade.

Similar examples are legion. Wu Shu-cheng was elected to the national legislature in 1986 after an unknown assailant

6. Ibid., pp. 110–11.

7. Personal communication with the author, May 1979.

8. Norma Diamond, "Women Under Kuomintang Rule: Variations on the Feminine Mystique," *Modern China,* vol. 1, no. 1 (Jan. 1975), pp. 3–45. Also her earlier articles, "The Middle Class Family Model in Taiwan: Women's Place is in the Home," *Asian Survey,* vol. 13, no. 9 (Sept. 1973), pp. 853–72; and "The Status of Women in Taiwan: One Step Forward, Two Steps Back," in *Women in China,* ed. Marilyn Young (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, 1973), pp. 211–42.

Lee Yuan-chen and Lin Mei-jung on their 31 December 1991 visit to the Executive Yuan's Council of Labor Affairs to discuss conditions of foreign women workers in Taiwan. Lee Yuan-chen founded Awakening *magazine, and Lin Mei-jung has been active with the Urban-Rural Mission, Amnesty International–Taiwan, and the Grassroots Women Workers Center. In the early eighties women became more visible in politics in Taiwan mainly as stand-ins for husbands or fathers, but now more women are active in politics on their own account—and many, in fact, are either divorced like Lee Yuan-chen or never married like Lin Mei-jung. The political work of both these women and many others makes it clear that there is much more to women's participation in politics in Taiwan than the formal candidacy focused on in* Women in Taiwan Politics. *Photo by Linda Gail Arrigo.*

apparently attempted to murder her husband by vehicular assault. Wu's husband, Chen Shui-pien—who had long served as a lawyer for political prisoners—escaped serious injury, but Wu was left paralyzed from the shoulders down. Chou Hui-ying has been serving in the provincial assembly since her husband, Tsai Yu-chuan, was sentenced to eleven years for presiding over an August 1987 assembly of former political prisoners that passed a resolution declaring Taiwan's independence. Yeh Chu-lan, herself originally a highly placed advertising executive, reached the legislature in the December 1989 elections after her husband, Tseng Nan-jung, immolated himself in April 1989 rather than submit to arrest for publishing a constitution for an independent Taiwan. Ong Chin-chu's husband, Liu Feng-sung, was arrested for questioning national policy in his late 1980 campaign speeches, and he served three-and-a-half years, and in recent years Ong has been a participant in the vocal opposition within the National Assembly.[9]

Unfortunately many women who come into the limelight in this manner seem to be sent back to a second rank and a subsidiary identity when their husbands emerge from imprisonment, though they remain more visible and influential than they had been before their election to public office, Hsu Jung-su being an example. Others, however, have continued their public careers. It is rare among opposition activists to possess independent means of livelihood, or inherited wealth, to allow a husband to support his own or his wife's political ambitions. But some women who reached elective office through the protest vote—for example, Chou Hui-ying and Ong Chin-chu—are continuing in office as a vocation that also provides a livelihood; their husbands, some still suffering the loss of civil rights after convictions for sedition, may enter into the work of DPP party organization or writing to promote general political awareness.

Parallel with the continuing effect of the protest vote, there has been an increase in the activism and political participation of women acting on their own, and the relationship between women's personal lives and their political participation has undergone progressive changes. In the earlier period most women active in opposition politics on their own account, like Lu Hsiu-lien (Annette) and also Chen Chu, now director of the Taiwan Association for Human Rights, chose to remain unmarried, or else they were divorced—for example, Su Ching-li and Su Chih-fen—and thus could participate because they were unfettered by family duties and obedience to their husbands. Some opposition figures, notably Lin Yi-hsiung in 1979, forbade

9. Critical analysis of events in Taiwan and the experiences of the opposition over the years is reported in English in *Taiwan Communique,* a bimonthly newsletter (published in the Netherlands but available from P.O. Box 45205, Seattle, WA 98105-0205). Major events and arrests are usually also reported in English in the weekly magazines based in Hong Kong, *Asia Survey* and the *Far Eastern Economic Review.*

their wives to participate in political activities, charging them with exclusive care for home and children. This pattern persists among the current leading figures of the women's movement, who are usually also involved in other politically charged issues: Lee Yuan-chen, founder of *Awakening* magazine, is divorced; and Lin Mei-jung (Yvonne) has never married.[10]

In contrast, Hsiao Yu-chen left behind her husband and son when she went to prison for leading the May 1988 farmers' demonstration that turned violent. She was the star of a huge party on her release from prison in August 1990. And in 1990 Chen Hsiu-huei was the president of the New Environment Homemakers Union and Foundation—an activist organization stimulating women to get out of their homes and into environmental and other movements—while her husband Ho Wen-chen, previously an opposition candidate and local party officer, has retired to private life. In December 1991 she was elected to the National Assembly and began to prepare proposals for enshrining women's rights and welfare in the constitution.

Prior to the challenge by a real women's movement, the governmental "commitment to sexual equality" consisted of grossly unjust family and divorce laws, unenforced regulations for equality in inheritance, discrimination in employment and benefits, and condescending patronization in the form of elite women featured in charity projects.

Though the Chou, Clark, and Clark book does not say so, there is also a great deal more happening in women's participation in politics in Taiwan than formal candidacy in either the KMT or the DPP camp—more that is meaningful for the issues that directly affect women and their welfare, and there are new claims to shape the social mores that women live with. Ku Yen-lin's 1989 *BCAS* article provides a recent update in English. The vanguard of the women's movement is represented by the staff and groups around *Awakening* magazine, founded in 1982. The narrow building behind the main post office in Taipei that is its headquarters also houses a number of related women's organizations—for example, a fellowship of divorced women, an outreach program to rescue young prostitutes, and planners of nonsexist children's books. While advocating equality and openness between the sexes, the *Awakening* group has assaulted the commodification of sex in demonstrations in the old red-light district, where teenage girls, often aborigines from the mountain areas, are kept behind bars. A January 1987 march organized by *Awakening* ended in front of a police station accused of protecting the trade. Presbyterian church groups and DPP notables have been cosponsors. Other activities have been mass tearing-down and burning of pornographic advertisement posters, and seminars with call girls telling their own stories. Some of these have been recorded in video by the Green Group film makers affiliated with the DPP. In one memorably funny and successful activity, the feminists staged a "Mr. Taipei" contest in parody of the Miss World pageant held in Taiwan in 1988.*

New women's organizations directed toward issues that are not overtly feminist have appeared. The League of Progressive Women is a small group of women DPP activists who want to gain an independent voice in the party and encourage other women to participate in social movements directly. The KMT's Women's Association, while still avoiding serious issues, has become a mass organization that provides recreation and group activities for women, letting them break out of housewife isolation. In recent visits to Taiwan I have found that new organizations or developments can be discovered every week. According to one observer, as women's organizations in Taiwan develop their own strength and social base they have become increasingly independent and thus autonomous from both the KMT and the DPP. Moreover, issues of national identity are not so sharp even within the women's organizations associated with the opposition as they are in the political parties, and use of Taiwanese or Mandarin dialects does not seem to be a matter of dispute.

Despite the depoliticization of feminist activities in general—they are not persecuted by the ruling party for offending Confucian morals as they were a decade ago—initiatives on women's issues are still given the widest opportunity within the purview of the opposition Democratic Progressive Party. Under DPP county executives in Taipei and Kaohsiung, respectively, Hsu Chen-shu has promoted modern counseling

10. The private lives of these women are here described from my personal contact with them, but their general circumstances are widely known and not secret. All those mentioned in this paragraph are now between the ages of thirty-nine and forty-eight. Lu Hsiu-lien (founder of the women's movement in 1971, author of *Hsin nu-hsing chu-i* (New feminism), *Taiwan kuo-ch'u yu hsien-tsai* (Taiwan past and present), and a recent book on the 1977–79 democratic movement, candidate for the National Assembly in 1979) seems to have foregone marriage in favor of her driving ambition; she still seeks a partner "who is more talented than I am." Both she and Chen Chu (twenty years as a human rights and opposition political activist, now in the National Assembly) suffered about six years imprisonment and at least as many years of political harassment before that that made it very difficult for them to carry on with their personal lives. In January 1992 a glossy tabloid alleged that Chen Chu was one of the "four women" in the life of Chang Chun-hong, then secretary-general of the DPP. Chen Chu laughed at this obscure report and quipped, "When are they going to report on the four men in the life of Chen Chu?" Su Ching-li (editor of the influential left-wing *Hsia Ch'ao* [China Tide], secretary-general of the Labour Party and then the Workers' Party), was divorced after a brief marriage to a psychiatrist who also became politically active; she seems to have never looked back to private life. Lee Yuan-chen, a mainlander, married into a traditional Taiwanese family. Her mother-in-law resented the "modern" marriage in which she did not bring a dowry, and Lee was driven out after she bore a daughter; like most divorced women in Taiwan, she lost all rights to her child. Lin Mei-jung (Urban-Rural Mission, Amnesty International–Taiwan, Grassroot Women Workers Centre) declined to marry after a long courtship because she anticipated her fiance would want her to attend to his business enterprise and she felt impelled to continue her advocacy for downtrodden groups in Taiwan—fishermen and indigenous peoples.

*A photo of this contest appeared on the back cover of the *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars,* vol. 21, no. 1 (Jan.–Mar. 1989). —EDS.

The Progressive Women's League confronting riot police while demanding the repeal of sedition laws in 1991. This is a small group of women activists in the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) who want to gain an independent voice in the party and encourage other women to participate in social movements directly. Women's organizations are proliferating in Taiwan, and as they develop their own strength they have become increasingly independent and thus autonomous from both the KMT and the DPP.

for negotiation of roles within marriage, and has even broken past taboos by publicly discussing rocky periods in her own marriage.[11] Wang Su-ying, a Rutgers Ph.D. heading a welfare center for women, youth, and children, has spearheaded community outreach programs to prevent wife and child abuse and to provide high school sex education.

The National Assembly elections of December 1991 are the most recent arena in which we can see the role of women in Taiwan politics. These are also watershed elections because this was only the second time in the history of the Republic of China that the assembly has been wholly subject to election—the last was 1947. As a step towards democratization, the seats reserved for election by women's and occupational groups were abolished in the April 1991 session of the National Assembly, which has authority over the constitution. Other changes reduced the protected quota for women in the subsequent second National Assembly elections, from a goal of 20 percent as originally stated in the constitution, to 19 out of 225 seats elected from localities, plus 10 out of 100 appointed by the major parties proportional to their total popular vote. As it turned out, in only two races did a woman edge out a male candidate with a greater number of votes due to the quota—now applied regionally as in the Legislative Yuan, rather than by group representatives; but women obtained 31 out of the 225 seats.

In January 1992 Lu Hsiu-lien wrote a report entitled "Reform of the System of Women's Quotas." Its central point was that the quota has increasingly tended to act as a ceiling rather than a floor for women's participation because the major parties only nominate women to run against women specifically for the protected slot. The suggested remedy is that the quota be gradually expanded to a maximum of 40 percent on the basis of the gains achieved in each election.

It happens that in each of the two major cities, Taipei and Kaohsiung, a woman received the highest number of votes, and both women were nominated by the KMT. This suggests a geographical analysis of the election data,[12] as follows in tables 1 and 2 as well as in the text. Taiwan is so densely populated and dotted with industry, big and small, that there is hardly a rural sector, but there is a somewhat different occupational and cultural environment in the biggest cities compared with the smaller cities and countryside.

Slightly fewer women were candidates in the big cities, but they enjoyed a much higher rate of election than the men. Likewise, in the big cities the seven successful women candidates averaged 15 percent more votes than the successful men candidates, but elsewhere successful women trailed in vote counts and averaged about 15 percent less. This may reflect a greater acceptance of women in professional

11. "Chang Kuo-lung and Hsu Chen-shu: A Marriage Relationship of Freedom and Intimacy," *Tzu-li Wan-pao* (Independence Evening News) (18 Jan. 1992), p. 13.

12. Statistics given for the 21 December 1991 National Assembly elections are calculated from official lists of the candidates and the results of the vote published in *Tzu-li Chou-pao* (Independence Weekly Post), no. 130 (29 Nov. 1991); and no. 134 (27 Dec. 1991).

Table 1

Spatial Pattern of Women's Participation in Elections, National Assembly Elections, Taiwan, December 1991

Area	Taipei and Kaohsiung Cities	Minor Cities, Towns and Country
Number of candidates	87	376
Number elected	42	183
Women as % of candidates	10%	14%
Women as % of elected	17%	13%
% men candidates elected	45%	49%
% women candidates elected	78%	45%

positions in the most modern sector, but it may also be an artifact of the major parties squaring off with their best candidates in the big cities while independents and marginal parties make a futile grab for the women's quota seat in less formidable races.

As for how women participating in elections may affect the issues that concern women, 22 DPP women candidates put out a joint broadside with vignettes of their experience of gender discrimination common to Taiwanese women—passed over for educational opportunities in favor of sons, adopted by foster families to serve as household labor, blamed for their misfortune as girls who could not carry on the patrilineage—on one side, and on the other side a litany of the sufferings of women in abusive households, in the sex industry, and on assembly lines. Of the 22, 7 were wives or daughters of former political prisoners, one herself had served six years for "sedition," and two were relatives of opposition political figures.

Whether or not this appeal to women was a conscious strategy of the opposition DPP, it can be seen in the overall statistics for the 225 seats elected from localities, below, that women have achieved a slightly higher level of participation there than within the ruling party, the KMT.

These data provide a basis for contesting a central claim of Chou, Clark, and Clark's book, that the government—which in the past has been nearly synonymous with the ruling party, the KMT—has taken the initiative in advancing women's political participation. The opposition party, even without an effective women's policy, has done better on that count. The data also hint that women may have an affinity for representing oppositional or marginal positions, as if challenging orthodoxy in personal life by taking up a traditionally male public role were matched by a proclivity for challenging repressive political structures.

This pattern is made explicit and may be analyzed in the life histories of women in the Korean National Assembly, as treated in *The Chosen Women in Korean Politics: An Anthropological Study,* by Soh Chung-Hee. This deceptively modest book serves as an antidote to the mechanistic methodology of Chou, Clark, and Clark; a great deal of what it says about Korea can be inferred for Taiwan. I am not as qualified to criticize this book, having made only two brief visits to Korea (visits that did, however, include some time with prominent women of the main opposition party and independent Christian groups), but I will compare and contrast the two experiences.

The heritage of women's struggles in both the Republic of Korea and the Republic of China is rooted in the movements against imperialism that broke out around 1919. Korea and Taiwan were both colonies of Japan at that time. Patriotic fervor merged with repudiation of oppressive relations within the traditional family and feudal social hierarchy. Women joined the national struggle, suffered imprisonment and torture along with men, and took positions of leadership. Soh suggests that "a period of major political transition generates a state of liminality, which encourages women's active participation in politics" (p. 73).

Yim Yong-sin (Louise), born in 1899, was such a heroine, leading a women's school group that defaced pictures of the Japanese emperor and refused to wear the additional long skirt (somewhat like a chuddar) traditionally worn over the head by Korean women when outside their homes (pp. 35–36). She studied abroad in Japan and the United States, lobbied the United Nations for the independence of Korea at the end of World War II, lived (unmarried) with Syngman Rhee for a time, served in high office, and later defied Rhee in the political arena when he was president (pp. 66–67, 60–61).

Table 2

Party Affiliation and Women's Participation in Elections, National Assembly Elections, Taiwan, December 1991

Party	KMT	DPP	Other	All
Number of candidates	212	95	156	463
Number elected	179	41	5	225
Women as % of candidates	13%	20%	10%	13%
Women as % of elected	12%	22%	20%	14%
% men candidates elected	85%	42%	3%	48%
% women candidates elected	78%	47%	6%	50%

In South Korea representative Kim Ok-son wears her usual suit and tie as she greets some of her constituents, members of a local Confucian club, in 1985. Kim Ok-son resolved the conflict between gender and public role by formally renouncing her female identity, a drastic step that should be less necessary for ambitious women as women's rights in public life are more accepted in South Korea. This photo is by and courtesy of Soh Chung-Hee and appeared on p. 79 of her The Chosen Women in Korean Politics, *a book that analyzes gender roles and women's political participation with admirable thoroughness and concrete detail.*

After this pioneering period of anticolonial struggles, a communist-led upheaval and civil war led to the retrenchment of neo-Confucian militarized governments in both Taiwan and South Korea. "The dominance of former military men in Korean politics and their conservative attitude toward gender-role performance have unequivocally contributed to a climate particularly inimical to women's active participation in politics" (p. 134). The charity activities of elite women were showcased in Taiwan; in Korea "the activities of women's organizations were limited to those concerning self-improvement and volunteer social work for 'national reconstruction'" (p. 84). Thus the second generation of women in politics in Korea was relatively estranged from issues of women's rights. The authoritarian regimes have only gradually been subject to liberalization in the 1980s.

These two historical parallels account for common patterns among women legislators in Korea and Taiwan, that although a previous generation of heroic women are enshrined in government hagiography, those women officials affiliated with or appointed by the ruling parties tend to be from wealthier families and to have less idealistic reasons, neither public-minded nor feminist, for entering political life, in comparison with those of the opposition parties (Chou, Clark, and Clark, p. 141; Soh, pp. 31–33, 131–33).

A third parallel is that the earlier influence of Christian missionaries—their provision of modern education to women in the early 1900s, and their model of a monogamous nuclear family operating with relatively greater equality between the sexes—was played out in the lives of women in public life, though to a much greater degree in Korea than in Taiwan. In Korea the Christian churches have provided a locus for alternative social mobility and for agitation both in the Japanese period and under the military dictatorships. Christian schooling or church membership played an important role in the lives of all but 1 of the 7 Korean elected women legislators, and half of those appointed were Christian as well (pp. 51–52). The Taiwan Presbyterian church has a similar modernizing legacy in Taiwan's history, and since 1971 has been a champion of native Taiwanese identity and active in social issues such as curtailing prostitution. The wife of Rev. Kao Chunming, thrice elected general secretary of the church, ran for election after his imprisonment in 1980.

There are some divergences between the two cases. Gender roles seem to have long been much more rigid and hierarchical in Korea, to the extent that women have not inherited the mantles of their fathers and husbands as they have in Taiwan and elsewhere (pp. 15–16). Soh explains that the usage of women's maiden names in Korean custom is due to their exclusion from the patrilineal clan, not assertion of their own identity; the same could be said for Chinese custom. There have been only 42 South Korean women legislators in the forty years from 1948 to 1988, 7 elected and 35 appointed. Soh interviewed 26 of them in 1985, and collected information from friends, relatives, and documentary sources on the others.

There are also differences in the evolution of the political environment in the two areas. In South Korea there were student movements and parliamentary struggles with opposition parties after World War II and before military rule was secured. Parliamentary political resistance seems to have continued afterward as a greater force than in Taiwan. In 1968 a young woman who ran as an independent, Kim Ok-son, finally took her legislative seat after a legal battle against election fraud (p. 62). She resolved the conflict between gender and public role by formally

renouncing her female identity, never marrying and taking on a completely male manner and appearance with suit and tie and close-cropped hair (pp. 48–49). She appears to have dedicated herself to her widowed mother, replacing the son lost during the war. We might think that in a later period, after it was known that women's rights in public life were legitimated in the United States, an assertive and ambitious woman would not need to make such an extreme transformation. Lu Hsiu-lien of Taiwan is perhaps such a case. She championed first of all women's rights to education and employment, identifying less with gender inequality within marriage. She was herself prim, proper, and single, careful not to provide ammunition to critics who insisted women's equality implied sexual license. Later she became a prominent member of the opposition. In October 1975 Kim Ok-son, by then affiliated with an opposition party, addressed the legislature with a speech sharply questioning the legitimacy of the Park regime. She was abruptly removed from the podium and forced to resign the next day (p. 107). Lu likewise challenged government legitimacy and foreign policy in her fiery campaign speeches in December 1978.

Perhaps the KMT elite do deserve more credit for liberalization than they would be accorded by the opposition, but it remains to be shown through a detailed historical account that they actually championed reform rather than accepting it only as a means of preemption, putting the best face on their loss of control.

This discussion brings us to another aspect of Soh's perceptive analysis, the nexus between women's roles and the political structure, specifically the difference between elected and appointed members of the National Assembly. This is also the difference between opposition and ruling party women in the legislature, and here again the parallel with Taiwan may be drawn. For Korea,

> what is noteworthy about the Park administration with regard to women legislators is that there was *no elected female legislator from the ruling party;* the two elected assemblywomen . . . both belonged to the opposition camp. Also, during his eighteen-year rule, President Park Chung Hee never recruited a woman into his cabinet. The majority of women President Park chose to appoint to the legislature were women in 'feminine' occupations who had no personal aspiration to be politically active. (p. 72)

Ruling-party appointments in Korea and Taiwan have been made to demonstrate that all sectors of the society, most notably the educated and the professionals, concur in the legitimacy of the regime and assist in its continuing efficacy and control. Women play a role in that demonstration, but have not been permitted to dispute the status quo of relations between the sexes.

> The relative lack of autonomy for appointed members of the National Assembly in the legislative process was clearly underlined when the eleventh National Assembly [1981–85] failed to endorse a bill concerning revision of the Family Law. All the appointed female members from the ruling party voted against it, in accordance with party policy, although they were personally in favor of revising the Family Law. (p. 110)
>
> Appointed women legislators as a group were women achievers in more conservative, gender-appropriate professions, while the elected women legislators as a group were pioneering seekers of nontraditional, masculine occupations as politicians. . . . The overriding factor that motivated their political participation was a fervent sense of patriotic mission rather than a feminist awareness that 'the personal is political'. . . . All the elected women legislators except one experienced incarceration for political reasons. (pp. 132–33)

Soh found women legislators appointed by the ruling party were often ambivalent about their service, first of all for practical reasons because of public opprobrium for the "hand-raising machine" in the legislature, because they often lost tenure in their professional jobs for the sake of a one-term appointment, and because they felt frustrated with their lack of ability to answer the needs of women, though they were assumed to represent that constituency. Moreover, in their professional careers they usually sought to be inconspicuous and to minimize gender differences; the rough-and-tumble exchange of the legislature violated what they felt appropriate to their gender.

To maintain decorum women legislators commonly have worn Western or modernized Korea dress in modest grays and navy blues. Usually excluded from men's late-night carousing and caucusing, they have had to know when to withdraw tactfully from dinner parties. Maintaining a place in informal networks of influence and information is problematic for them. Some women legislators, including some of those elected, rationalized their service as an extension of their roles as devoted wives, daughters-in-law, and mothers, that is, that they fulfilled a civic duty or performed the traditional feminine tasks of nurturing and caring for their constituencies. Many worked with their husbands as a team in political work, or achieved respect for promoting the prestige of their clans, as has Lu Hsiu-lien in Taiwan. This brief discussion just touches on the issues of gender roles and women's political participation that Soh analyzes with admirable thoroughness and concrete detail. One might long for an even more personal view of these women, but Soh seems to have been constrained somewhat in favor of protecting confidentiality in the lives of these public figures.

In the present age of democratic opening in South Korea under President Roh Tae Woo and in Taiwan under President Lee Teng-hui, the polarization between ruling and opposition parties is softening, and with this development social issues are no longer so clearly demarcated between political parties. I have observed that women enjoy a much more cosmopolitan and gender-egalitarian environment in Taiwan than in Korea, but it may be anticipated that women in both areas will make significant progress in political participation and in the legislative representation of their own interests.

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