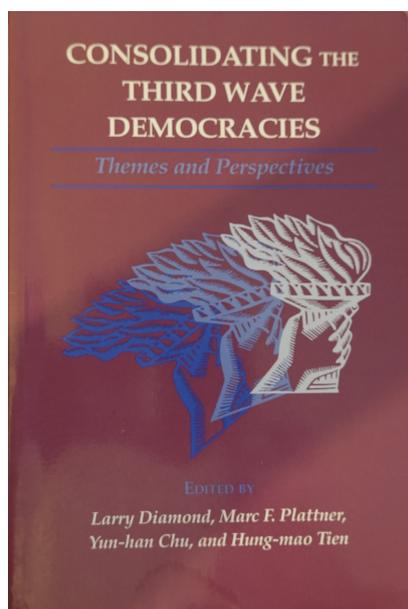


Chu Yun-han: Influential political scientist, promoter of Taiwan Studies and Sinology in Europe

Dafydd Fell and Robert Ash (SOAS Centre of Taiwan Studies)

It was with the greatest sadness that we heard of the passing of the influential Taiwanese political scientist Chu Yun-han. He died at home on 5 February 2023 – just two days after his 67th birthday. His loss is irreparable: through his own academic research and his tireless efforts as Executive Director of the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation, he exerted an enormous influence on East Asian Studies throughout Europe, as well as in many other parts of the world.

I first got to know Yun-han through his research and publications on East Asian democratization in the 1990s – a contribution that was invaluable in situating Taiwan within the comparative literature on democratization associated with the third wave of democracy (see photograph below). This early work was very influential on my doctoral studies which sought to investigate the role that Taiwan's political parties played in the country's democracy.



Chu Yun-han was a strong supporter of Taiwan Studies at SOAS and in Europe as a whole. He participated in the first ever SOAS Taiwan Conference, *Taiwan as a Development Model for the 21st Century*, which was held in September 2000. He contributed a chapter – ‘Re-engineering the developmental state in an age of globalization: Taiwan’s quest for high-tech industries’ - in the subsequent edited conference volume, entitled *Taiwan in the 21st Century: Aspects and Limitations of a Development Model*. This was co-edited by Robert Ash and J. Megan Greene, and was published in 2007.

Taiwan in the 21st Century

Aspects and limitations of a development model

Edited by Robert Ash and J. Megan Greene



Another major contribution made by Yun-han for the development Taiwan Studies was from his strong support for our proposal to develop a European Association of Taiwan Studies (EATS). This received funding from the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation in 2001, which was instrumental in facilitating the organization of the Inaugural European Association of Taiwan Studies Conference, held at SOAS in 2004. In the first decade of EATS's existence the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation was its primary source of funding, and this financial backing was crucial in making possible the evolution of EATS into the institutionalised body it is today. Despite his many academic and institutional commitments, Yun-han demonstrated his active support for European Taiwan Studies by attending the third EATS Conference in Paris in 2006, as well as several subsequent EATS events.

Chu Yun-han also had close connections with SOAS through his involvement with *The China Quarterly*. He co-edited, with Lo Chih-cheng and Ramon Myers, a special issue for the journal on 'The New Chinese Leadership: Challenges and Opportunities after the 16th Party Congress', which was subsequently published in book form in 2004, with a launch event held at SOAS.



Chu Yun-han and Robert Ash in conversation at SOAS in 2004 for Chu Yun-han's China Quarterly book launch.

In the 1990s Chu's work reflected a more positive appraisal of Taiwan's democracy. However, in the post 2000 period he became more critical. This was driven home to me in what was the most critical of the various reviews of my first book, *Party Politics in Taiwan*. This critical view was even more apparent when we both presenting papers at a conference at Stanford University in the aftermath of the 2014 Sunflower Movement.



Chu Yun-han at the Taiwan's Democracy at a Cross-Roads Conference: Stanford University, October 2015



Chu Yun-han at SOAS in 2015, when he took part in the Second World Congress of Taiwan Studies.

Chu Yun-han visited SOAS most recently in June 2015, when he attended the Second World Congress of Taiwan Studies at SOAS as representative of the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation. I do recall that in my last conversations with Dr Chu his enthusiasm about his project to establish the Chiang Ching-kuo Memorial Library. The final time we met was at a post-election panel organized by the Institute for National Policy Research in January 2016 (see photograph below). It was a special moment to share a panel with someone who had been such a major influence on my own research as well as having played such an important role in promoting European Taiwan Studies.



Bruce Jacobs, Chu Yun-han, Tien Hung-mao, Hwang Shioh-duan and Dafydd Fell at a post election panel organized by the Institute for National Policy Research in Taipei January 2016.

Professor Chu Yun-han was an outstanding academic colleague and a fine public servant. His many publications ensure that he will long be remembered for his many scholarly contributions. However, for those who were fortunate to know him personally, he will be remembered most of all for the warmth of his personality and his friendship.