

The Rise and Decline of the Asian Century

False Starts on the Path to the Global Millennium

By Christopher Lingle

Revised third edition

HONG KONG: ASIA 2000, 1998
310 PAGES + INDEX

This book is a comprehensive rebuttal of those who proclaim a coming "Asian Century," in which East Asia will replace the United States as the center of the world economy. Christopher Lingle's prescience, ironically, makes his book less valuable in the classroom than it otherwise might have been. A few years ago this book might have served as a welcome burst of contrariness against all the tomes proclaiming the East Asian economic miracle. Today, however, amidst the East Asian economic crisis, this book's assertions seem passé: the dragon Lingle seeks to slay is already gravely wounded if not dead.

Lingle examines in his book's opening chapters the concept of a coming "Asian Century"; he then turns to an exploration of whether there really is a distinctive model of East Asian development. His fourth chapter, "Economic realities and Asian illusions," discusses whether past economic growth in East Asia can continue into the future, with Lingle answering in the negative; his fifth chapter examines China's economy. Subsequent chapters explore "Asian values," "Asian democracy," and media freedom and its lack in East Asia; geopolitics in the Asian region, including ASEAN and its future, and the threat posed by a resurgent China; the environmental costs of East Asia's economic development; and the reputed decline of the West. The tenth and last chapter summarizes the book's argument that the "East Asian model" of development is fatally flawed, and indeed, a fiction. There are two additional chapters in the third edition of the book: in one, Lingle offers an overly pessimistic view of Hong Kong since its handover, and in the other he discusses the Asian economic crisis in its initial months up to February 1998.

I found this book difficult to get through. Lingle presents his arguments in what seems to me to be an overly Manichean way: "East Asia is rotten!" is the only conclusion one can draw from the book, with the United States and "the West" the model against which East Asia is judged and found wanting. Lingle is the academic who was forced to flee Singapore to avoid being unjustly sued after writing a newspaper article critical of Singapore's leaders; he thus has earned his right to feel outraged by the self-promotion by some Asian leaders as to the glories of the coming "Asian Century." However, East Asian leaders aren't the only people in the world who are self-righteous. Given the taken-for-granted

*The Life and Career
of Hung Ch'eng-
ch'ou (1593-1665):
Public Service in a
Time of Dynastic
Change*

by
Chen-main Wang

AVAILABLE SOON!

This book focuses upon the controversial character and activities of Hung Ch'eng-ch'ou, who first won distinction for his role in suppressing indigenous peasant armies in northwestern China. After being given command of the vital northeastern frontier military district, Hung was captured by the Manchu—and eventually joined his captors to assist them in conquering China and establishing the new Ch'ing dynasty. Although Hung has traditionally symbolized treachery and disloyalty, this book adopts a quite different focus. It brings mid-seventeenth century China to life in new ways, deepening our sense of the historical complexity of the era.

"Without sentimentalizing Hung Ch'eng-ch'ou, [the author] nonetheless forces us to see him as a quite understandable figure, one whose choice to serve the conqueror . . . was not without its principled underpinnings, and whose service was of decisive impact on the success of the Manchu conquest. In short, Hung can no longer be seen as a cardboard figure symbolizing political treachery, but must be recognized as a complex human of great capacities, striving and brilliantly succeeding in doing a job that he felt must be done."

Frederick W. Mott, Professor Emeritus,
Princeton University

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BOOK REVIEWS

ethnocentrism of many American students, I would feel reluctant to use this book in an American classroom, for fear that it would only confirm some students' underlying sense that "the American way is best"—the issue is of course far more complex than this, even in purely economic terms, the central language of Lingle's argument. Students in Singapore would benefit from reading this book, but students in the United States, many of whom may be only dimly aware of the earlier proclamations of the coming "Asian Century" emanating from Singapore and Malaysia, perhaps would not.

In my own class in Hong Kong on "Culture and Business," I will use Mahathir Mohamad's and Ishihara Shintaro's *The Voice of Asia* and Chris Patten's *East and West*—two utterly opposing books, with the latter similar in argument to Lingle's book, but more compelling reading—to have my students debate the question of "Asian values," and will use Lingle's book, with its often valuable economic explications, as my own reference. A good scholarly book explicating the East Asian economic crisis is sorely needed for the college classroom; perhaps Lingle, with a lighter, more detached touch, is the person to write such a book. ■

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The year 2000 is the Chinese year
of dragon, and our Spring issue
of *Education About Asia*
in the year 2000
will be a
thematic issue on
Teaching about Asian Economies.

Sharing Fruit

An Anthology of Asian and Australian Writing

Erica Manh, Editor

MELBOURNE: CURRICULUM CORPORATION
AND THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE, 1998
VII + 192 PAGES

CURRICULUM CORPORATION, P.O. BOX 177, CARLTON
VICTORIA 3053, AUSTRALIA. FAX: 61-3-9639-1616

Sharing Fruit contains thirty-six selections of poetry, short stories, and excerpts from longer works of fiction and nonfiction by twenty-three contemporary Asian and Australian authors. All but four selections were published in the 1990s. The staff of the Asia Education Foundation and the Australian education system collaborated under the editorial leadership of Erica Manh to produce the anthology.

The most well-known author included may be the Indian writer Gita Mehta, represented by three excerpts from her work *Snakes and Ladders: A View of Modern India*. Many of the authors have achieved renown in their own countries and are represented here by translated works: A. Samad Said (Malaysia), Wang Meng and Zhang Xianliang (China), Taufiq Ismail (Indonesia), Naowarat Pongpaiboon and Khammaan Khonkhai (Thailand). The text also introduces readers to less-recognized voices like Australian poet Terry Whitebeach, Chinese Australian Leslie Zhao, and Korean poet and political activist Namju Kim.

Aside from the work of Mehta and the Australians, other pieces penned in English include a short story from Sri Lankan Romesh Gunesekeera's collection *Monkfish Moon*; an extract from Lillain Ng's (Chinese Australian from Singapore) novel *Silver Sister*; and a portion of Adeline Yen Mah's (Hong Kong) autobiographical "story of an unwanted Chinese daughter," *Falling Leaves Return to Their Roots*. (Women writers, by the way, are well represented in the collection.) These last two pieces, with their focus on interpersonal relationships, will be appreciated by the teenage audience for whom the anthology is designed, as will Geoff Bolton's story of a Japanese family encountering an Australian family at a backyard picnic on a sweltering summer day.

Along with texts that will be more accessible for younger teenage audiences, there are demanding texts for more mature readers, such as two short stories from the controversial Chinese writer Ding Xiaoqi's collection *Maidenhome*. As any good anthology does, this one includes pieces that whet readers' appetites for more. That is certainly the case with the extract from Japanese British writer Kazuo Ishiguro's *A Pale View of Hills*, which gives wonderful insight into Japanese personal sensibilities, or with the excerpt from Chinese Canadian journalist Jan Wong's *Red China Blues*. Wong, an eyewitness to the Tiananmen Square massacre, writes out