

## Taiwanese Karma or China's Discarding Those It No Longer Needs?

Written by Jerome F. Keating Ph.D.  
Saturday, 12 February 2011 09:01

---

Call it fate, payback or chance, the past Year of the Tiger was not kind to the family of Lien Chan. Though the year officially ended in 2011, by December 2010 the tiger's damage had been done. Was it a belated Taiwanese karma, an example of what goes around, comes around? The Lien family was never known to be fond of the island. This is not to say that they have not profited from Taiwan; in true carpetbagger fashion, they profited immensely, but their hearts always dwelt on the other land across the Taiwan Strait. Thus at year's end, Lien Chan was exposed as a patsy for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and his son unfortunately took a bullet in the cheek at a Taiwanese political rally.

What created this family/island relationship? Lien Chan's grandfather, Lien Hong, set the tone early on. Under Japanese colonial rule, he wrote *The General History of Taiwan*, a work that some consider as the first history of the island. Intentional or not, he insulted the island, and demonstrated his own bias and lack of what makes history by expressing his yearning for China. He gave this classic comment. "Taiwan's sorrow is that it has no history."

While Lien Hong wanted his heirs to think only of China, he nevertheless also played up to the Japanese in his first edition. Like a good colonial without scruples, he sought and got his Japanese rulers' endorsement for his book. His statement that Taiwan had no history could be read to mean, no history until Japan took rule over it. Whether this helped promote sales is open to question. Needless to say, however, after the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) was forced to come to Taiwan, a second edition was printed favoring the KMT's right to rule. In that edition, the Japanese endorsement naturally disappeared.

Lien Chan's father again as a colonial seeking the best advancement began his studies in Japan, but then the grandfather quickly decided to pull up stakes and move to China. The family set their fortunes with the KMT, a party on the rise after Chiang Kai-shek's Northern Expedition had gained control of most of that country with the exception for those parts held by the communists. Taiwan at this point was never in the picture or given a second thought. But while the family prospered under the KMT, fate was not kind. The KMT lost its civil war with the communists, and the Lien family accompanying a beaten KMT was once again forced to return to the island of Taiwan.

On Taiwan, fortune again shone. Though the Lien family were basically civil servants they somehow seemed to make millions in land deals in Taiwan. Lien Chan rose in the KMT's one party state but never did very well when democracy entered. As KMT representative, Lien lost in his two bids for the presidency (2000 & 2004). His inability to win by his own merit in a

## Taiwanese Karma or China's Discarding Those It No Longer Needs?

Written by Jerome F. Keating Ph.D.  
Saturday, 12 February 2011 09:01

---

democratic election cast question on his personal ability and merit. His son, who followed him in politics, seems to have carried the same questionable trait, a dependency on appointed positions due to party pull.

In 2005 Lien hoped to change things. After his second defeated attempt at election, he decided to take things into his own hands. He made his historic Journey of Peace to China. As honorary chairman of the KMT, the so-called son of China was returning home to heal the wounds of the KMT-CCP civil war. With great fanfare, he was feted, wined and dined. He would be the hero that would bring Taiwan into the fold.

That is what makes Lien's later response in December 2010 so ironic. At that time, the CCP's one party authoritarian state was smarting over the fact that Liu Xiaobo, a man imprisoned by them, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Determined to show the world up, China offered its own Confucius Peace Prize, but who would they give it to? With great fanfare China announced that none other than Lien Chan was given the honor.

The man who could not win anything on his own had finally gotten world wide recognition from China. His grandfather would have been proud, yet when asked about the award, Lien Chan's office claimed they knew nothing of it. How very strange indeed that when the whole world knew of the award and China boasted that it was giving it to him, the man who was to receive it claimed he knew nothing about it and that he had no plans to accept it.

To be a patsy; this was the final ironic result of Lien's alleged ground-breaking peace effort of 2005 and an example of how China treats those it no longer needs. China needed a patsy for its Confucius Peace Prize and Lien Chan fit the bill. With this, any credibility Lien Chan hoped for in Taiwan was lost. He would always be known as the one who loved China before Taiwan, the one who got the first and perhaps last Confucius Peace Prize and had to claim he knew nothing about it. His reputation would follow him whether he went to live in China or stayed in Taiwan. Like many KMT, he may end up in the United States.

Sean Lien has followed his father into politics; and with his shooting the KMT's and the Lien family's past relationship with gangsters has also been raised. Fate and the family's chosen relationship to the island may have pursued him.

## Taiwanese Karma or China's Discarding Those It No Longer Needs?

Written by Jerome F. Keating Ph.D.

Saturday, 12 February 2011 09:01

---

Was the Year of the Tiger the time that the chickens came home to roost for the Lien Chan family? Would this be the final chapter for a family that made millions on the island but their heart was elsewhere? Those who wonder if there is a Taiwanese karma, think of Taiwan's 1895 Yellow Tiger Flag; maybe all was fated to happen in this past year.

Source:

[Jerome F. Keating's writings](#)