

BONFIRE ISLAND: UNTOLD STORIES OF TAIWAN'S MARTIAL LAW-ERA POLITICAL PRISON

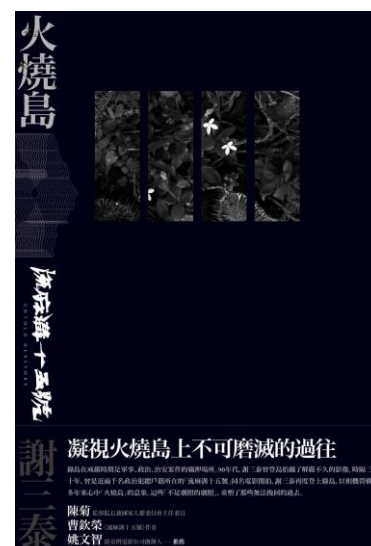
火燒島：流麻溝十五號

Hsieh San-Tai's ingenious lens takes readers thirty years back in time to "sites of injustice", offering a glimpse of Taiwan's martial law era and an almost invisible piece of history...

No. 15 Liomagou was once the address for political prisoners on "Bonfire Island" – otherwise known as Green Island, the location of Taiwan's infamous martial law-era prison. During the years of martial law, approximately 2,000 prisoners, both male and female, were incarcerated there. A film adaptation released in 2022, called *Bonfire Island: Untold Herstory*, tells the stories of female political prisoners imprisoned there in the 1950s.

The photos in this collection are divided into three sections: movie stills that are "not stills", documentary photographs taken on an initial visit to the island after martial law was lifted, and individual portraits of political prisoners from that period. Penetrating and insightful, the black and white photography provides an unflinching look at the island's indelible past, giving viewers cause to think about and reflect on historical memory.

In addition to showcasing the photographer's inimitable style, this book uses time as warp and woof, weaving together past events with the photographer's personal observations to reinterpret this previously invisible history. Everything here offers a new perspective, from the "snapshots in time" that attempt to figure out the past by reconstructing history, to the official, whitewashed version of



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“history” that prettified the facts once martial law ended and the prison was opened to the public. Even the timeworn faces and lives of the prisoners’ years after their release are included.

Throughout his long career as a photojournalist, Hsieh San-Tai has used his camera lens to document many significant events in Taiwan’s more recent history. As a native of Penghu, an outlying island much like Green Island, he undoubtedly brings his own unique wit and wisdom to this photography book.

Hsieh San-Tai 謝三泰

Hsieh San-Tai, born in 1958 in Penghu, has been active in photojournalism for many years, witnessing the course of Taiwan’s democratic movement through his lens. More recently, he has focused on themes such as ordinary people’s lives, laborer friends, disadvantaged groups, and protecting the environment. By capturing them on film, he hopes to draw more attention to events and the things happening to people in Taiwan.