

own importance and abilities, an evaluation not widely shared among Taiwan's other leaders. For example, when vice-president, she told many people including this reviewer that the 19 March 2004 assassination attempt, when both President Chen Shui-bian and she were shot, was actually aimed at her. In 2014 she was upset when the Democratic Progressive Party did not nominate her for mayor of Taipei despite her poor results in polls.

Lu also tries to convey a sense that she is extraordinarily progressive, but her record suggests that she is intrinsically very conservative. On 7 December 2003, Lu stated that AIDS was a punishment from the gods for homosexuality and urged that AIDS patients be kept in special villages. On 4 August 2004, Lu suggested Taiwan's aborigines be moved to Central America where they could develop new careers. These are hardly the opinions of an enlightened progressive. For a self-described expert on international affairs, she misses the issue of dual representation and the importance of Secretary of State Rogers in trying to help Taiwan during the saga leading to Taiwan's withdrawal from the United Nations (pp. 204–205).

The book also contains a number of factual errors. Nixon's visit to China was in February, not January, 1972 (p. 75). The ROC Constitution was promulgated in 1946, not 1936 (p. 192). Lien Chan was born in 1936, not "the 1940s" (p. 266). But despite these issues, Lu's autobiography does provide a useful look at Taiwan's politics under Chiang Kai-shek, Chiang Ching-kuo and Lee Teng-hui.

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Fateful ties: a history of America's preoccupation with China, by Gordon H.

Chang, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2015, 314 pp., US\$32.95 (hardback); US\$23.51 (eBook)

Gordon Chang's latest book seeks to unravel the riddle of American fascination for China. The timing is impeccable, as the historian puts it aptly: "China has been the central ingredient in America's self-identity from its very beginning..." (p. 8). By taking a *longue durée* perspective, Chang attempts to lay out "important patterns" in the imagining of China in the United States. One realises, however, that despite the economic and social changes in China, Sino-American relations still reveal "pronounced continuities and legacies from the past" (p. 7).

One of the most illuminating chapters is Chapter 3, "Grand Politics and High Culture". Chang is at his narrative and analytical best when painting the subtle shifts in the American cultural scene coexisting with high politics. Tapping into his previous work depicting cultural diffusions, especially in his earlier work *Asian/American/Modern Art: Shifting Currents* (2008), Chang is able to unearth a goldmine of delightful tidbits. One learns that Julia Grant and Helen Taft wore Chinese inspired dresses to their husbands' presidential inaugurations. As America entered the "Gilded Age", what better way to aggrandise their wealth especially for the nouveau riche and "robber barons" than an indulgence in chinoiserie chic? In creative circles, Chinese art inspired new works and novel interpretations; James McNeil Whistler's "Peacock Room" now on display at the Freer Gallery bears testimony to the cultural impact of China (p. 120).

The hard-hitting insights, which Chang provides in relation to the conflicted nature of early American missionary work in China, present a fascinating mirror image to the present-day

schizophrenia-like concerns. On the one hand, the Chinese people were theirs to uplift. On the other hand, the missionaries held themselves as superior to their flock. In their genuine desire to change China, American missionaries sounded no different from their expansionist imperialistic brethren such as US senator Thomas Hart Benton who held unabashed views: “The moral and intellectual superiority of the white race will do the rest: and thus the youngest people, and the newest land, will become the reviver and the regenerator of the oldest” (p. 61). Unsurprisingly, such binary characterisations are not new. Chang’s analysis of the race card compares favourably with recent incisive work brilliantly done by Matthew Jones in *After Hiroshima* (2012), which examines the racist element in the Cold War whereby nuclear weapons were construed exclusively as White-dominated.

Chang’s work is useful in underscoring other areas of the colour bar. Although earlier groundbreaking work such as Marc Gallicchio’s *The African American Encounter with Japan and China* (2000) has already covered the African-American dimension in this trans-Pacific relationship, Chang brings to the general reader a welcome reminder. It is nigh impossible to understand the racism faced by Chinese-Americans without referring to the experiences of African-Americans. Indeed, confronted by Jim Crow at home, many African-Americans found Maoist propaganda irresistible. Notable opinion makers such as Robert F. Williams, Huey P. Newton, and W.E.B. Du Bois found China a “beacon of light illuminating the way forward for the oppressed people of color of the world” (p. 211).

Chang also gives an even handed appraisal of the Nixon and Kissinger team’s rapprochement with China. The origin of this momentous event is correctly cited in Nixon’s vice-presidency under Eisenhower. Chang quotes a bemused Nixon who declared in 1959 as a yuletide jibe that he would eventually go to China. Truth be told, according to declassified State Department records, Nixon specifically recommended “containment but with trade” for mainland China as early as 1953. He further recommended that this should take place “gradually over a long range [sic] period based upon the assumption that trade is inevitable and will aid the US in getting intelligence out of China”. Hence, the task, which he gave his national security advisor Henry Kissinger apropos of China, as correctly pointed out by Chang, was long in gestation (p. 224).

At the end of the book, Chang gives readers a personal insight into his family history. Although Chang is very brief in his sketches, it is a broad canvas. His father, Chang Shuqi (Chang Shu-Chi), was a famous artist who had close ties with the Chinese cultural elites of the day. His maternal family history stretched all the way back to 1880s California. Elsewhere, in an interview with *Stanford Today* in 1996, he revealed that his mother graduated from UC Berkeley. This rich background undoubtedly gave Chang a unique perspective in writing this book. Should Chang choose to write up his family history in the next few years, it will definitely be as notable as the late Richard Baum’s celebrated memoir, *China Watcher* (2010).

This reviewer only has one minute quibble about this magisterial work. Foreign forces did join Chinese armies in many campaigns suppressing the Taipings. For example, Shanghai was taken in 1861 by a joint force (p. 62). However, the final Nanjing assault in 1864, which was responsible for breaking the Taiping Rebellion, was largely a Chinese effort in scope and scale.

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