and the United States; and it also has been included in the Trump administration's International Religious Freedom Alliance as an observer.

As mentioned with the COVID-19 response, Taiwan has become a "model" for countries to follow. This is not the first time that Taiwan has been an international model worthy of emulation. The most prominent historical example is Taiwan's economic development during the 1950–1970s. Government-led initiatives and reforms—most importantly, land reform—helped Taiwan mature into an economic powerhouse. The government first reformed the agricultural industry to level the playing field before working to industrialize the country's economy. Taiwan's economic success story is still studied to this day by developing countries. Copper credits this to "intelligent planning," whereby the government directed economic changes without becoming a planned or command economy (206). As discussed throughout this review, Taiwan's international standing is precarious at best—its so-called "international space" has greatly shrunk as a result of its 1971 expulsion from the UN, and more recently from pressure by Beijing. Copper provides an overview of the origin of these issues and how Taiwan has historically relied upon the United States as its safety guarantor. As the China threat grows, the importance of the US military for Taiwan grows. The book provides sufficient background for the reader to better understand how Taiwan got to where it is today and how its history of non-self-rule has shaped its identity.

Copper, in my opinion, downplays at least one seminal event in Taiwan's post-1945 history: the February 28 Massacre played a much more central role in Taiwanese identity and eventual democratization of the island than is depicted in the book. Copper does not explain how the Taiwanese, reacting to KMT rule, rebelled throughout the island, often taking control of key facilities. For a time in early March 1947, the KMT did not control Taiwan. Copper explains how the KMT cracked down on the Taiwanese, but fails to articulate the intent of brutality: "By the end of March order was restored, but not before thousands of Taiwanese had been killed, including many of Taiwan's potential political leaders" (62). The potential political leaders didn't just happen to die; they were purposefully found and "disappeared" by the KMT. An entire sector of Taiwan's elite (doctors, lawyers, teachers) were viewed as a threat to the KMT, and most were killed. Bodies washed up on the shores of rivers. Execution grounds were established. People were tied to stones and thrown into the ocean. It was a targeted campaign; the victims were just not casualties of fighting.

Copper's explanation for Tsai Ing-wen's use of "228" (as it is called in Taiwan) is incorrect—"In fact, 2-2-8 was a prop in the DPP's campaign to unify a nation-state or province has not been settled. He leans toward the inevitability of unification based on economic reasons, since China is Taiwan's largest trading partner. But Copper explains that unification could result in economic chaos: "The island's economy would likely suffer because Taiwan has a different kind of economy and its global trade, upon which its economic health depends, would likely be disrupted" (317). With the ongoing political crackdown in Hong Kong and other human rights abuses in China, it is difficult to imagine that unification could occur peacefully and would not cause the problems that Copper highlights. Copper acknowledges that there is no magic bullet for settling Taiwan's status one way or another. While its status in the international area is undetermined, the people of Taiwan will continue to carry out commerce, vote in local and national elections, and live as they have for some time.

**NOTES**


**THOMAS J. SHATTUCK** is a Research Associate in the Asia Program and the Managing Editor at the Foreign Policy Research Institute. Shattuck was a member of the 2019 class of scholars at the Global Taiwan Institute, receiving the Taiwan Scholarship. He received his BA in History and English from La Salle University in 2013 and his MA in International Studies from National Chengchi University in 2016. Shattuck also received a Fulbright grant to teach English in Kinmen, Taiwan, for the 2013–2014 academic year.

---

**Ghosts of Gold Mountain**

*The Epic Story of the Chinese Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad*

**BY GORDON H. CHANG**

**BOSTON: HOUGHTON MIFFLIN HARCOURT, 2020**

320 PAGES, ISBN: 978-0358331810, PAPERBACK

Reviewed by Daniel A. Métraux

The meeting of two huge locomotives on May 10, 1869, of the Central Pacific and Union Pacific Railways at Promontory Point in Utah is one of the most notable events in American history. For the first time, the United States was connected by rail from coast to coast and the journey from New York to San Francisco, which before would have taken many grueling months, could now be comfortably completed in less than a week. Fortunately, for all those involved in the construction of the transcontinental railroad, almost all the construction was completed by a virtual army of over 20,000 Chinese workers. Their hard work, reliable service, and great ingenuity allowed them to complete the building of the railway from Sacramento to Promontory Point in slightly less than four years. They had to traverse over and through a course of nearly 900 miles, through the High Sierra Mountains and through the harsh, hot deserts of Nevada and Utah to reach their final destination. Their story has almost totally disappeared from history, but author Gordon Chang, a professor of History...
and Asian Studies at Stanford University, has pieced together a copious history of the work of these Chinese in his recent book, *The Ghosts of Gold Mountain*.

For five years from 1864 to May 1869, Chinese constituted by far the largest single workforce in American industry to that date, a figure not surpassed in numbers until the Industrial Revolution in the late nineteenth century. The Chinese army of workers represented about 90 percent of the laborers hired by the Central Pacific. They held virtually every position available. They were engineers, laborers, foremen, contractors, masons, cooks, medical practitioners, carpenters, and teamsters: “Thousands more Chinese associated with them as friends and relatives, as part of the immense supply chain that provisioned them for years, and, away from the track in their off-time, as gamblers, opium smokers, prostitutes, and devout worshippers of the gods and spirits who watched over them in their perilous work.” (7)

Chang traces the origins of these Chinese to their distant rural villages located in the Pearl River Delta near Guangzhou (Canton) in Guangdong Province in southeastern China. They lived in small villages in four counties (Taishan, Kaiping, Enping, and Xinhui), known collectively as the Siyi counties. Their ancestors had lived there peacefully in small farming communities for centuries, but their tranquil way of life was suddenly devastated by intense conflicts, including the Opium War (1839–1842) and the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864) a massive uprising against the Qing dynasty that ranks as the nineteenth century’s bloodiest war; an estimated twenty million Chinese died, compared to 650,000 deaths in the American Civil War. The destruction of their land and way of life forced a large diaspora of several million Chinese, many of them male and from the Siyi region. Most of them migrated to Southeast Asia (their descendants today live in such places as Singapore and Malaysia), but a growing number also moved to North America. From the early 1850s, when they began to arrive in California in significant numbers in search of gold, to 1868, when many Chinese came to the West Coast to work for the Central Pacific, an estimated 107,000 Chinese came to the United States.

Beyond the fact that there were as many as 20,000 Chinese railway workers employed at various times in the late 1860s, we know very little about them as individuals. The workers sent tens of thousands of letters back home to their families in China, but very few of these letters have survived. Chang fortunately found an advertisement written in Chinese in China urging young men to go to California in search of gold, to 1868, when many Chinese came to the West Coast to work for the Central Pacific, an estimated 107,000 Chinese came to the United States.

The owners of the Pacific Central Railroad began searching for reliable workers in 1864 and 1865. At first, they were reluctant to hire Chinese, but when they had a hard time finding other reliable workers employed at various times in the late 1860s, we know very little about them as individuals. The workers sent tens of thousands of letters back home to their families in China, but very few of these letters have survived. Chang fortunately found an advertisement written in Chinese in China urging young men to go to California in search of gold, to 1868, when many Chinese came to the West Coast to work for the Central Pacific, an estimated 107,000 Chinese came to the United States.

The owners of the Pacific Central Railroad began searching for reliable workers in 1864 and 1865. At first, they were reluctant to hire Chinese, but when they had a hard time finding other reliable workers employed at various times in the late 1860s, we know very little about them as individuals. The workers sent tens of thousands of letters back home to their families in China, but very few of these letters have survived. Chang fortunately found an advertisement written in Chinese in China urging young men to go to California in search of gold, to 1868, when many Chinese came to the West Coast to work for the Central Pacific, an estimated 107,000 Chinese came to the United States.