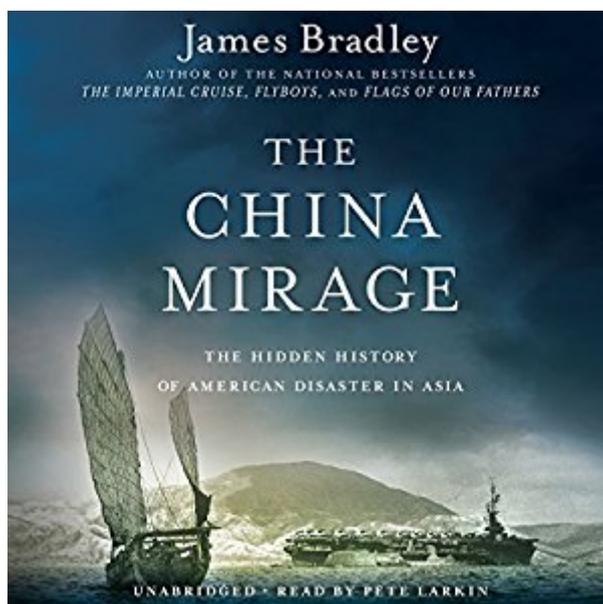


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The China Mirage: The Hidden History Of American Disaster In Asia



Synopsis

From the best-selling author of *Flags of Our Fathers*, *Flyboys*, and *The Imperial Cruise*, a spellbinding history of turbulent US-China relations from the nineteenth century to World War II and Mao's ascent. In each of his books, James Bradley has exposed the hidden truths behind America's engagement in Asia. Now comes his most engrossing work yet. Beginning in the 1850s, Bradley introduces us to the prominent Americans who made their fortunes in the China opium trade. As they - good Christians all - profitably addicted millions, American missionaries arrived, promising salvation for those who adopted Western ways. And that was just the beginning. From drug dealer Warren Delano to his grandson, Franklin Delano Roosevelt; from the port of Hong Kong to the towers of Princeton University; from the era of Appomattox to the age of the A-Bomb, *The China Mirage* explores a difficult century that defines US-Chinese relations to this day.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book attacks American foreign policy in East Asia, focusing on relationships between the Roosevelts and Japan and China. The central premise is that much of the conflict between the US and these nations could have been avoided by more astute foreign policies. The timing of the book is interesting, given the recent Roosevelt hagiography on PBS by Ken Burns. But that is probably a coincidence. There is little that is conceptually new in this book, but it contains much detail that was new, and sometimes exhausting, to me. How many times do you have to state the oft-reported observation that Chiang Kai-Shek and his wife were manipulators and crooks? The book is very uneven, focusing too much on the China Lobby and Chiang and paying too little attention to others who played important roles in these dramas, such as Mao, the Japanese leaders, Ho Chi Minh,

Korea's leaders and others. To me, the conclusions reached by the author seem a stretch. Certainly, events would have played out differently had the American leaders, beginning with the Roosevelts, been less gullible. Maybe my father would not have died in the South Pacific. But that is all speculation. Once opened by Perry, Japan seemed destined to follow a European model of colonialism, as did every emerging nation of that era. The relationship between Teddy and the Japanese was only a side show. China was the weak man of Asia, being picked apart by everyone else, much as the Ottoman Empire before WWI. That made them an obvious target for Japan. Given its history, China could not rise until a strong leader could connect with its vast population, enter Mao, only delayed by Chiang, just another warlord. And Mao, an avowed Communist regardless of his postulations, would always have been opposed by American businessmen.

Cordell Hull is shown to be very careful, but he missed a meeting of the minds with his Japanese counterpart. The Japanese showed bad judgement in posting an ambassador to the United States who was not fluent in English. All of this is happening at a time when neither the US nor Japan could risk a misinterpretation of the other's message. On the other hand, China's Nationalists were marketing wizards. They were educated in the best US Universities and knew how to use the Christianity card to their advantage. The prize for the American Christians was both the Americanization and the conversion of China, notwithstanding the existence of the Exclusion Act! The problem was the people who were responsible for executing in China were kleptomaniacs, stealing from the U.S and exploiting their own people. However, their pitch was so captivating, they convinced both the religious and political elite to support their cause, even though there were strong contrary head-winds. So what! It was a major factor in Japan's decision to attack Pearl Harbor. The Chinese lobby made an embargo of oil and the freezing of assets viable. You have to read the book to see how it was cleverly done. Hint: the President was away meeting Churchill, the Secretary of State on vacation and three very smart Ivy League hires used the power vacuum to implement the restrictions. When the decision-makers returned, they faced a fait accompli which they couldn't reverse since Japan, as a result of its outrageous conduct in China, lost the moral high ground. The book unfurled an intricate web of money and power. Unfortunately, the Nationalists were using other people's money (U.S) to amass their power. So successful were they at their game, the U.S became blind to any counterpoint.

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