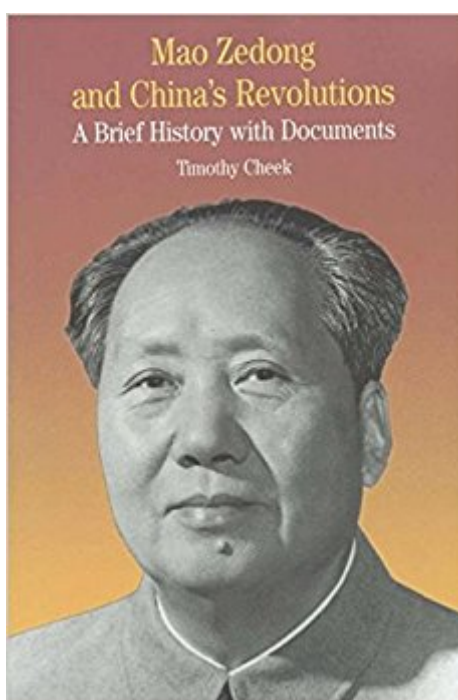


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Mao Zedong And China's Revolutions: A Brief History With Documents (Bedford Series In History & Culture)



Synopsis

Whether one views Mao Zedong as a hero or a demon, the "Great Helmsman" was, undoubtedly, a pivotal figure in the history of twentieth-century China, a man whose life and writings provide a fascinating window on the Chinese experience from the 1920s onward. Part Mao biography, part historical overview of the turbulent story of China's Communist revolutions, the introductory essay traces the history of twentieth-century China, from Mao's early career up to the Chinese Communist Party's victory in 1949, through three decades of revolution to Mao's death in 1976. The second half of the volume offers a selection of Mao's writings including such seminal pieces as "On New Democracy" and selections from the Little Red Book and writings about Mao and his legacy by both his contemporaries and modern scholars. Also included are headnotes to the documents, a chronology, Questions for Consideration, 12 images, a selected bibliography, and an index.

Book Information

Series: Bedford Series in History & Culture

Paperback: 259 pages

Publisher: Bedford/St. Martin's; First Edition edition (May 16, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0312256264

ISBN-13: 978-0312256265

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.6 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #147,713 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #210 in Books > Textbooks > Humanities > History > Asia #240 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Ideologies & Doctrines > Communism & Socialism #249 in Books > History > Asia > China

Customer Reviews

"This is a terrific collection. The documents are perceptively chosen, illuminating numerous aspects of Mao's thought and the various roles he played in the Chinese revolution... Cheek's well-crafted introduction offers important biographical background on Mao and useful context for understanding the primary and secondary readings."

Timothy Cheek is associate professor of history at Colorado College, where he has taught since 1988. His research and teaching focus on the recent history of China, especially the role of Chinese intellectuals in the twentieth century and the history of the Chinese Communist Party. His books include *Propaganda and Culture in Mao's China: Deng Tuo and the Intelligentsia* (1997); *New Perspectives on State Socialism in China* (1997), with Anthony Saich; *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao* (1989), with Roderick MacFarquhar and Eugene Wu; and *China's Establishment Intellectuals* (1986), with Carol Lee Hamrin. He is currently researching contemporary Chinese historiography and the development of professions in modern China.

The bulk of this book consists of primary documents from the hand of Mao Zedong. These documents provide the reader with a good understanding of the outlook that Mao employed, and how that outlook evolved over time. Additionally, this book contains a good selection of secondary documents that focus categorically on the good and bad consequences of Mao's leadership as well as the variety of ways in which people have perceived and continue to perceive Mao as a leader. The introduction to this volume is probably its strongest feature. Timothy Cheek gives an incredibly good run-down of Mao's influence on Chinese history, and he does so in a little more than 30 pages. Cheek roughly covers the years 1915-present, and does so in a way that both the new and more experienced students of Chinese history have something to learn. I really felt the Cheek did a masterful job of combining richness of substance with concise writing. The introduction to this book should probably be included in the syllabus for any modern Chinese history course. One more note: Cheek's analysis of Mao himself was very even-handed; not too supportive and yet not too critical. His basic thesis in this regard is that Mao started out as a very pragmatic leader who played a big role in restoring China through unification, but then Mao became detached from his party, the people, and reality. This thesis seems solid, and provides a reasonable, disinterested basis for reflecting on Mao as an historical actor.

A friend recommended this book to me for introducing me to the history of modern China, as background for my first trip to China. I found it really helpful to get a good introduction to modern Chinese history and culture. As a result, I certainly got more cultural enrichment and insight out of my trip. So I am passing this recommendation along to others. Mao is fascinating and China is a great country to visit.

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