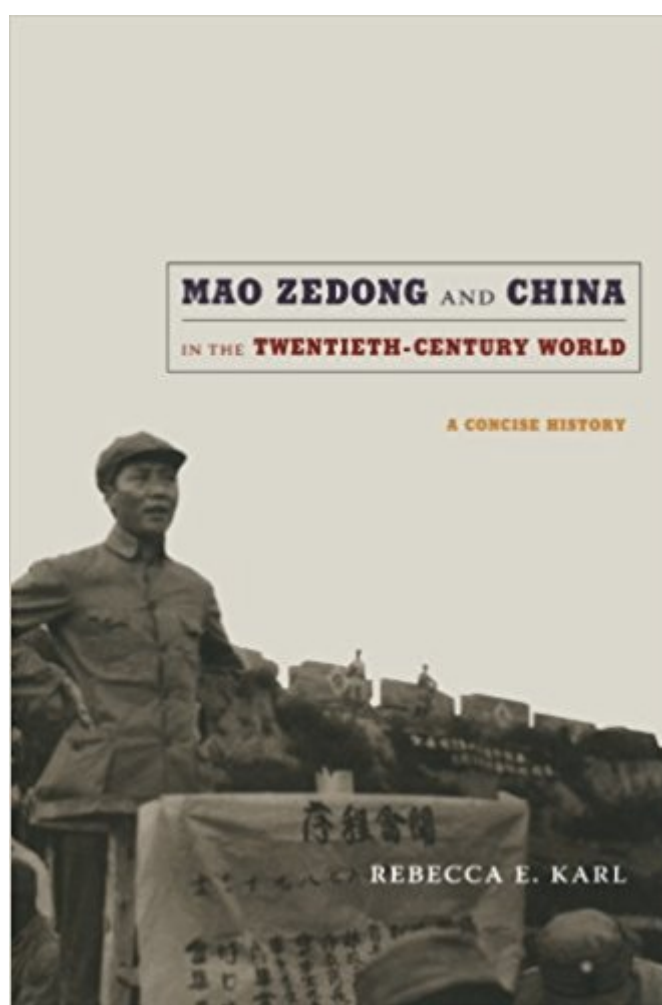


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# Mao Zedong And China In The Twentieth-Century World: A Concise History (Asia-Pacific: Culture, Politics, And Society)



## Synopsis

Throughout this lively and concise historical account of Mao Zedong's life and thought, Rebecca E. Karl places the revolutionary leader's personal experiences, social visions and theory, military strategies, and developmental and foreign policies in a dynamic narrative of the Chinese revolution. She situates Mao and the revolution in a global setting informed by imperialism, decolonization, and third worldism, and discusses worldwide trends in politics, the economy, military power, and territorial sovereignty. Karl begins with Mao's early life in a small village in Hunan province, documenting his relationships with his parents, passion for education, and political awakening during the fall of the Qing dynasty in late 1911. She traces his transition from liberal to Communist over the course of the next decade, his early critiques of the subjugation of women, and the gathering force of the May 4th movement for reform and radical change. Describing Mao's rise to power, she delves into the dynamics of Communist organizing in an overwhelmingly agrarian society, and Mao's confrontations with Chiang Kaishek and other nationalist conservatives. She also considers his marriages and romantic liaisons and their relation to Mao as the revolutionary founder of Communism in China. After analyzing Mao's stormy tenure as chairman of the People's Republic of China, Karl concludes by examining his legacy in China from his death in 1976 through the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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begs the reader to ask, what might Mao, whose portrait still looks out over Tiananmen Square, have thought of China as it rises today? And perhaps more importantly, does it matter? Given the proliferation of interest and intrigue surrounding Mao Zedong's life, Karl's history included, the CCP has done wonders to maintain the authority he created while forsaking the China he imagined.

• - Angilee Shah, *Zhào Public Square* "A reasonably balanced, clear-headed survey of the Great Helmsman's career and influence. . . . [I]f I had a class of young students approaching the period for the first time, I'd consider this book a not inappropriate textbook to hand them. And by the same measure it can also be recommended to the educated general reader.

• - Bradley Winterton, *Taipei Times* "Rebecca Karl's important new biography seeks to contextualize Mao within the history of his time, aiming to restore a degree of sanity in discussing his life and role, warts and all, as the father of modern China; and simultaneously to rescue the history of the Chinese Revolution from its detractors in the West and at home.

• - Tariq Ali, *New Left Review* "Rebecca Karl provokes both China scholars and the general public to reassess the Chairman once again. Karl's book departs from the tendencies to either depoliticize Mao or sensationalize his private life for popular consumption by recentring contemporary discussions around his public role in making revolution.

• - Jeremy Tai, *Twentieth-Century China* "Unlike many other works, [Karl's] book blends historical facts with cultural analysis, creating a work that is informative despite its brevity. . . . After bringing Mao's life-story to a close, the author provides a succinct yet meaningful analysis of his legacies. . . . [T]his is a very useful introduction to the most important leader in modern Chinese history.

• - Survival "In this succinct and compact narrative of Mao's personal and intellectual development, Rebecca E. Karl offers an impressive exposition of the formation and evolution of the theory and practice of the Chinese Revolution. Her analysis of ideological tenets in China's revolutionary movement is convincing and more sophisticated than other narratives of Mao's life and thought.

• "Ban Wang, author of *Illuminations from the Past: Trauma, Memory, and History in Modern China* "Rebecca E. Karl has written a lively, readable account of Mao's life and thought, showing how they fit into and affected the twentieth-century world.

• "Delia Davin, author of *Mao Zedong* "Karl's history offers readers a chance to see China as Mao might have seen it. She implicitly begs the reader to ask, what might Mao, whose portrait still looks out over Tiananmen Square, have thought of China as it rises today? And perhaps more importantly, does it matter? Given the proliferation of interest and intrigue surrounding Mao Zedong's life, Karl's history included, the CCP has done wonders to maintain the authority he created while forsaking the China he imagined.

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A very informative piece of scholarly work, presented in an interesting way. I haven't completely finished it yet; this is a very dense work, and requires me to re-read some portions in order to put them in context. I spent quite a bit of time in China, post-Mao of course, and am interested in how a people can still almost worship a historic figure and yet acknowledge his drastic errors. This book compiles information that is scattered. I recommend it for the serious student of China today and how it got that way.

A nice, concise (just as the title says) history of Mao Zedong's China. I found it useful for students in my IB History course for short, weekly readings. I think it could also be useful in a survey course of Chinese history at the undergraduate level. It has nice hits of information, as well as some good insight into the man himself.

It's short, sweet, and to the point. The author has a voice behind it, I like that, too. But honestly, it's just really informational as well as easy to read.

A look at China's history through the life of Mao Zedong. Essential to understand it. A pleasant read -- and you do want to read more -- yet rigorously historic. I enjoyed reading it.

Karl makes frequent and uncritical use of loaded terms such as "counterrevolutionary" that even China's Communist Party has discarded as misleading and virtually undefinable. She tries to balance her laudatory portrait of Mao as some sort of savior of China with minor criticism of his unsanitary habits such as never brushing his teeth or bathing. However, she has little criticism of his ideological rigidity in areas such as Mao's bloodline theory behind the class-based labeling of villagers and their descendants who happened to be a bit less poor than their neighbors as "evil landlords" and "evil rich farmers," a label that also doomed their children and grandchildren to discrimination and mistreatment by the party-state. There are more thoroughly researched and even-handed studies of Mao that would be preferable to Karl's, such as R. Terrill's for general readers and A. Pantsov and S. Levine's biography for grad students and academic specialists.

While teaching about Mao and Cultural Revolution, I used both Maurice Meisner's *Mao Zedong: A Political and Intellectual Portrait* and Karl's *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World: A Concise History*. My students love Meisner's book far more than Karl's. Students shook their heads and thought Karl's language is difficult (maybe "postmodern" pretension?), and I later thought and still think Meisner's research and analysis is more solid and insightful. I will keep Meisner's and drop Karl's book.

it's history, not anti-mao propaganda which is why some don't like it. a good concise history and certainly should not scare college students.

This could have been written by the Chinese Communist party. It misses, dismisses or ignores anything critical of Mao. There are much better books on China and Mao out there.

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