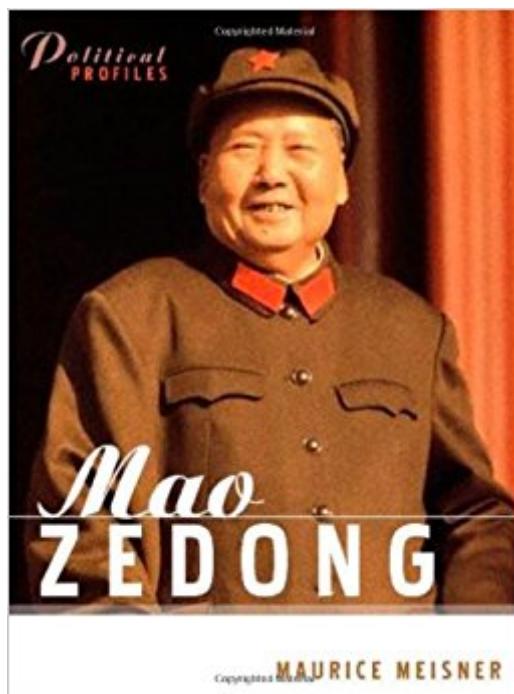


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# Mao Zedong: A Political And Intellectual Portrait



## Synopsis

Revolutionary and ruler, Marxist and nationalist, liberator and despot, Mao Zedong takes a place among the iconic leaders of the twentieth century. In this book, Maurice Meisner offers a balanced portrait of the man who defined modern China. From his role as leader of a communist revolution in a war-torn and largely rural country to the disasters of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, the relationship between Mao's ideas and his political action is highly disputed. With unparalleled authority, Meisner shows how Mao's unique sinification of Marxism provides the key to looking at this extraordinary political career. The first part of the book is devoted to Mao's revolutionary leadership before 1949, in particular the influence of the liberal and anarchist ideas of the May Fourth era, his discovery of Marxism, Leninism and his conviction that peasants held the potential for revolution. In the second part, Meisner analyses Mao's early successes as a nationalist unifier and modernizer, the failure of his socialism and his eventual transformation into a tyrant.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

âœA stimulating argument, useful for both novices and established scholars.â • History "Meisner is uniquely qualified by political commitment, professional experience, and scholarly talent to produce this important new biography of Mao. He offers a reasoned, indeed regretful, Marxist analysis of Mao's role in the Chinese revolution, acknowledging his successes but particularly seeking to understand the roots of Maos dictatorship and the many tragedies befell China under his sway. In this way, Meisner offers a useful and compelling narrative that truly provides food for thought."

Timothy Cheek, University of British Columbia "Meisner's updated assessment of Mao Zedong once

again offers the best available intellectual history of Mao's life and deeds." Lee Feigon, University of Chicago

Revolutionary and ruler, Marxist and despot, Mao Zedong takes a place among the iconic leaders of the twentieth century. In this book, Maurice Meisner offers a balanced portrait of the man who defined modern China. From his role as leader of a communist revolution in a war-torn and largely rural country, to the disasters of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, the relationship between Mao's ideas and his political action is highly disputed. With unparalleled authority, Meisner shows how Mao's unique 'sinification of Marxism' provides the key to looking at this extraordinary political career. The first part of the book is devoted to Mao's revolutionary leadership before 1949, in particular the influence of the liberal and anarchist ideas of the May Fourth era, his discovery of Marxism-Leninism and his conviction that peasants held the potential for revolution. In the second part, Meisner analyses Mao's early successes as a nationalist unifier and moderniser, the failure of his socialism and his eventual transformation into a tyrant.

Received in good order

First-rate history book which is comprehensive, balanced, and impartial in content. Edgar Snow interviewed Mao Zedong in July 1936 (pg. 82). The Manchurian campaign of 1948 illustrated, on a gigantic scale, the efficacy of classic Maoist military principles (pg. 103). In 1949, the politically victorious Chinese Communists inherited not only one of the world's most backward economies, but one that lay in ruins. Progress in the Mao era must be measured from this miserable starting point (pg. 109). The Korean War (1950-53), costly as it was in human life and economic resources, greatly fortified and expanded Mao's already powerful nationalist credentials and thus his personal political power (pg. 119). As a youth, Mao read the authors who had molded the thought of China's new Westernized intelligentsia - Adam Smith, Darwin, Mill, Herbert Spencer, Rousseau, and Montesquieu (pg. 4). The young Mao was particularly influenced by the Social Darwinism of Spencer (but not by evolutionary biology which is a completely different topic.) [Charles Darwin did not discuss the origin of life (e.g., Abiogenesis, Friedrich WÃ¶hler, inorganic chemistry), saying only, "Probably all the organic beings which have ever lived on this earth have descended from some primordial form, into which life was first breathed." Marxism contradicts the Bible verses of 1 Timothy 2:11-15, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, Joshua 10:11-14, Exodus 12:29-30, and Numbers 31:17-18.] Lenin, Stalin, and Mao deviated significantly from Karl Marx. Leninist revolutionary

strategy, growing out of conditions in largely agrarian Russia, provided a more meaningful, if still very limited, revolutionary role for peasants than original Marxism (pg. 44). Mao was doubly heretical from the viewpoint of orthodox Marxism-Leninism. First, he departed from Marx (as well as Lenin) by identifying the peasantry rather than the proletariat as the main revolutionary class. Secondly, he defied Lenin by favoring the spontaneous revolutionary creativity of the masses over the organized revolutionary consciousness of the party (pg. 49). In a land [China] so deeply impinged upon by foreign powers for nearly a century, it was inevitable that the appeals and content of Marxism would be closely bound up with nationalism (pg. 78). Maoism, far from being orthodox or "hardline" Marxism, as commonly portrayed, can better be understood in light of Mao Zedong's departures from the fundamental premises of Marxist theory (pg. 85). Many Chinese intellectuals identified capitalism with foreign imperialism, condemned both as external encroachments, and looked to indigenous sources for the socialist regeneration of the Chinese nation. These tendencies found their most powerful expression in the Maoist version of Marxism-Leninism (pg. 88). Lysenkoism may have played a minor, indirect role in the Great Leap Forward, although this concise book does not mention Trofim Lysenko. "If any civilization is to survive, it is the morality of altruism that men have to reject," preached Ayn Rand. Maurice Meisner is the preeminent expert on 20th-century Chinese history. The slightest amount of real understanding about our existence is far greater empowerment than the largest amount of blind faith.

This is an excellent book. This book goes very in-depth about Mao's life. I would purchase more books from this author. This book came in excellent condition. Shipping was quick!

I'm a journalist and graduate student in history who is taking my first class on contemporary China. This book is a concise, even-handed, and at times mesmerizing short biography of one of the most important and profoundly contradictory leaders of the 20th century. Peasant, librarian, teacher, Confucian, anarchist, revolutionary, Socialist, Communist, tyrant - Meisner's book is a huge help toward understanding the evolution of modern China.

Got to my home a lot quicker than I expected. Also, great quality for what I paid for. I am completely and wholly satisfied:

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