

CHINA

IN TRANSFORMATION

1900–1949

2ND EDITION



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Colin Mackerras

China in Transformation 1900–1949

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Colin Mackerras

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History is a narrative constructed by historians from traces left by the past. Historical enquiry is often driven by contemporary issues and, in consequence, historical narratives are constantly reconsidered, reconstructed and reshaped. The fact that different historians have different perspectives on issues means that there is also often controversy and no universally agreed version of past events. *Seminar Studies in History* was designed to bridge the gap between current research and debate, and the broad, popular general surveys that often date rapidly.

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Clive Emsley and Gordon Martel
Series Editors

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Preface

This book is designed for student use, although its author hopes that any person interested in China in the first half of the twentieth century may find it useful. It aims to give an accurate description of how China developed in that period against the background of a framework encompassing certain major themes. Most of the chapters are chronological, but several take up particular topics of importance, including the student movement, education, and aspects of social and cultural change over the half-century of focus.

The book follows the style of the series *Seminar Studies in History*. The documents given in Part Five are chosen to explain and enhance the interest of the text. References to the documents again follow the style of the series.

The system of romanization adopted here is the *pinyin*. This is now in universal currency in the People's Republic of China for publications in languages using the Roman script. It is also followed today in most scholarly work in countries with languages using Roman letters. Exceptions are made for Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek, since those two names are widely known in the forms given, which are not *pinyin*. In Part Five, the original romanizations are retained where the documents themselves are in English, but, except for Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek, *pinyin* is given in square brackets where it differs.

This book is based on a course called 'China in Transformation, 1900–1949' which the author taught at Griffith University, Brisbane, for several years, and which was established and taught for many years there by Professor Edmund Fung before he took up a Chair at the University of Western Sydney. I wish to thank both Professor Fung and those students who took the subject. Both have given me great inspiration and shared ideas concerning this fascinating and significant period. However, responsibility for the book, and in particular for its deficiencies, lies entirely with the author.

Publisher's acknowledgements

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Chronology

1900

- Summer* The Boxer Rebellion, including a siege of the legations of the powers.
- 14 August* Allied troops of eight powers, seven Western and Japan, enter Beijing and lift the siege of the legations.

1901

- 7 September* The Boxer Protocol, under which China agrees to pay an enormous indemnity to the powers for the Boxer Rebellion.

1904

- 8 February* The Russo-Japanese War begins. China declared neutrality (12 February), but the war was fought mainly on Chinese soil.

1905

- 2 September* An imperial decree abolishes the traditional examination system.
- 5 September* The signature of the Treaty of Portsmouth ends the Russo-Japanese War, giving formerly Russian interests in Manchuria to Japan.

1908

- 27 August* The court accepts a draft constitution providing for a constitutional monarchy and a parliament.
- 14 November* Death of the Guangxu Emperor, followed by that of the Empress Dowager Cixi the next day.

1909

- 5 February* Preliminary local elections begin, selecting delegates for provincial assemblies, which meet later in the year.

1911

- 10 October** The Wuchang uprising sparks the collapse of the Qing dynasty: the 1911 Revolution.

1912

- 1 January** Official proclamation of the Republic of China (ROC). Sun Yat-sen becomes provisional ROC president.
- 12 February** Formal abdication of the Qing Emperor.
- 15 February** Yuan Shikai appointed provisional ROC president in place of Sun Yat-sen.
- 25 August** The Nationalist Party founded, with Sun Yat-sen as chairman.

1913

- July–September** The ‘Second Revolution’ consolidates Yuan Shikai’s power.
- 6 October** The National Assembly formally elects Yuan Shikai as ROC president.

1914

- 10 January** Yuan Shikai suspends the National Assembly.
- 6 August** Yuan Shikai declares China neutral in the First World War.

1915

- 26 January** Japan presents its Twenty-one Demands to China.
- 25 May** China and Japan sign treaties based on the Twenty-one Demands.

1916

- 6 June** Yuan Shikai dies, having tried unsuccessfully to restore the monarchy, with himself as emperor.

1917

- 1 July** The last Qing Emperor is restored to the throne but forced to abdicate again later the same month.
- 14 August** China declares war on Germany and Austria-Hungary.
- 10 September** Sun Yat-sen establishes the Republic of China (ROC) Military Government in Guangzhou.
- 6 October** War breaks out between the Beijing and Guangzhou governments.

1918

- November** The war between the Beijing and Guangzhou governments ends with a ceasefire.

1919

- 30 April** At the Paris Peace Conference, which followed the end of the First World War, the major powers accept a demand put forward by Japan for the transfer of all previous German interests in Shandong Province.
- 4 May** Major student demonstrations against China's treatment at the Paris Peace Conference begin – the May Fourth Movement.

1920

- 29 June** China joins the League of Nations.
- 16 December** Earthquakes shake Gansu and elsewhere in north China, with several hundred thousand casualties.

1921

- 5 May** Sun Yat-sen assumes the position of extraordinary president of the ROC, with the capital in Guangzhou, his wish being to carry out a 'Northern Expedition' to reunite the country.
- July** First Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), mainly in Shanghai.

1922

- 3 February** Sun Yat-sen orders that the Northern Expedition be launched to reunite the country.
- 9 August** Sun Yat-sen flees Guangzhou, the Northern Expedition having been aborted due to a conflict between Sun and Guangdong warlord governor Chen Jiongming.
- 1 November** A presidential mandate promulgates a new American-influenced education system.

1923

- 26 January** Joint communique by Sun Yat-sen and Soviet representative Adolf Joffe.
- 7 February** A major workers' strike on the Beijing–Hankou railway is put down by the army, and over thirty workers are shot dead.
- 17 March** Having become generalissimo of a new Guangzhou government on 2 March, Sun Yat-sen appoints Chiang Kai-shek as Guangzhou government chief-of-staff.

1924

- 20–30 January** The First Congress of the Nationalist Party in Guangzhou.
- 31 May** The Sino-Soviet Agreement, by which China recognizes the Soviet Union, with the latter renouncing extraterritoriality in China.
- 26 November** The Mongolian People's Republic adopts a constitution proclaiming Mongolia independent of China.

1925

- 12 March** Death of Sun Yat-sen in Beijing.
- 30 May** A demonstration in Shanghai is fired on by British police, who kill, wound and arrest many Chinese students, leading on to strikes, demonstrations and disturbances aimed against the British and other authorities: the May Thirtieth Movement.
- 1 July** Formal establishment of the National Government of the Republic of China (ROC) in Guangzhou.

1926

- 1–19 January** Second Congress of the Nationalist Party held in Guangzhou.
- 20 March** The *Zhongshan* Incident: Chiang Kai-shek arrests Li Zhilong, a CCP member and captain of the SS *Zhongshan*, thus beginning his campaign against the CCP.
- 1 July** Chiang Kai-shek orders that the Northern Expedition begin, with the aim of reuniting the whole country.

1927

- 24 March** National Revolutionary Army troops take Nanjing on their Northern Expedition.
- 12 April** Chiang Kai-shek carries out an anti-Communist coup in Shanghai and begins large-scale slaughter of Communists.
- 18 April** Nanjing becomes the capital of the National Government.
- 1 August** A CCP-led uprising in Nanchang, capital of Jiangxi Province, begins. Although suppressed by 5 August, the CCP still celebrates 1 August as 'Army Day' because of this uprising.
- 11–13 December** A CCP-led uprising in Guangzhou is suppressed: the Canton Commune.
- 14 December** China's National Government breaks off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.

1928

- 6 June** The Northern Expedition takes Beijing, the name of which is changed to Beiping on 28 June. (Since Nanjing means literally 'southern capital' and Beijing 'northern capital', the latter city was called Beiping, literally 'northern peace', while Nanjing remained the capital.)
- 10 October** Chiang Kai-shek's formal inauguration as chairman of the National Government.
- 29 December** Manchurian warlord Zhang Xueliang submits to Chiang Kai-shek, signalling the reunification of China under Chiang Kai-shek.

1929

- 15–28 March** Third National Party Congress in Nanjing, with a Central Executive Committee (including Chiang Kai-shek, Hu Hanmin and Wang Jingwei) elected on 27 March.

1930

- All year** The number dying of starvation from the great drought-famine of 1928–30 reaches many millions.
- 1 March** Wang Jingwei is expelled from the Nationalist Party.
- 1 May** Chiang Kai-shek declares war against warlords Yan Xishan and Feng Yuxiang, winning the war in October the same year.

1931

- 28 July** The Yangzi River bursts its banks in Hankou, causing catastrophic flooding.
- 18 September** The Mukden Incident: Japanese troops occupy a Chinese barracks near Shenyang (Mukden), leading on to the conquest of all Manchuria (northeast China) by the end of the year.
- 7 November** The CCP establishes its Chinese Soviet Republic, with the capital in Ruijin, Jiangxi Province. Mao Zedong is appointed chairman of the government on 27 November.

1932

- 9 March** The Japanese-sponsored state of Manchukoku is formally set up in northeast China, with its capital in Changchun, and Qing Emperor Puyi is inaugurated as chief executive.
- 12 December** China and the Soviet Union announce resumption of diplomatic relations.

1933

- 24 February** The League of Nations Assembly resolves that its members will refuse to recognize Manchukoku, prompting Japan to withdraw from the League on 27 March.
- 31 May** Chinese and Japanese representatives sign the Tanggu Truce, under which China relinquishes control of the northeast provinces to Japan.

1934

- Most serious combination of drought and flood for several decades.
- 19 February** Chiang Kai-shek launches the New Life Movement, aimed at promoting Confucian virtues.
- 1 March** The last Qing Emperor Puyi ascends the throne in Changchun as Emperor of Manchukoku.
- 16 October** Mao Zedong and Zhu De lead the Red Army's First Front Army west, abandoning the capital of the Chinese Soviet Republic Ruijin and beginning the Long March.
- 10 November** Chiang Kai-shek's troops enter Ruijin.

1935

- 20 October** The Long March ends in Wuqizhen, northern Shaanxi.
- 28 October** Japanese Foreign Minister Hirota Koki announces his Three Principles advocating a Japan-China-Manchukoku Axis against communism and for the development of north China.
- 9 December** Student demonstrations protesting against Japanese imperialism and government failure to resist it begin in Beiping: the December Ninth Movement.

1936

- 12 December** The Xi'an Incident: Chiang Kai-shek's generals Yang Hucheng and Zhang Xueliang place him under house arrest to demand effective resistance against Japan and an end to civil war.
- Mid-late December** The CCP moves its headquarters to Yan'an, northern Shaanxi.
- 25 December** Chiang Kai-shek is released on his acknowledgment of the need for resistance to Japan.

1937

- 7 July** The Marco Polo Bridge Incident sparks the Sino-Japanese War. Japanese troops attack Chinese near the Lugou (Marco Polo) Bridge outside Beiping.

13 December Having occupied Nanjing, Japanese troops begin the Nanjing Massacre, killing at least 100,000 people.

1938

7 June Chinese troops burst the dykes of the Yellow River near Zhengzhou, Henan Province, to prevent Japanese troops from their southward advance, causing flooding so severe as to cause the river to change course.

21 October Guangzhou falls to the Japanese.

Mid-November Fire in Changsha, capital of Hunan Province, kills many people and causes great devastation. The fire, which lasted several days, had been deliberately lit in the false belief that the Japanese had occupied the city.

1939

29 September–6 October China wins the first battle for the city of Changsha.

1940

30 March A pro-Japanese government is formally established in Nanjing, with Wang Jingwei as its head.

30 November Japan recognizes Wang Jingwei's regime, the two signing a treaty leaving the main power with Japan.

1941

4–15 January The Southern Anhui Incident: Nationalist troops inflict serious damage on the CCP's New Fourth Army, the effect being to end the united front between the two parties.

1 July Germany and Italy formally recognize Wang Jingwei's government. Chiang Kai-shek breaks off diplomatic relations with both countries the next day.

8 October The Second Battle of Changsha ends with a victory for China.

9 December The National Government declares war against Japan, Germany and Italy, following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December.

25 December Hong Kong occupied by Japan.

1942

1 January China signs the United Nations Declaration.

15 January The Third Battle of Changsha ends with a victory for China.