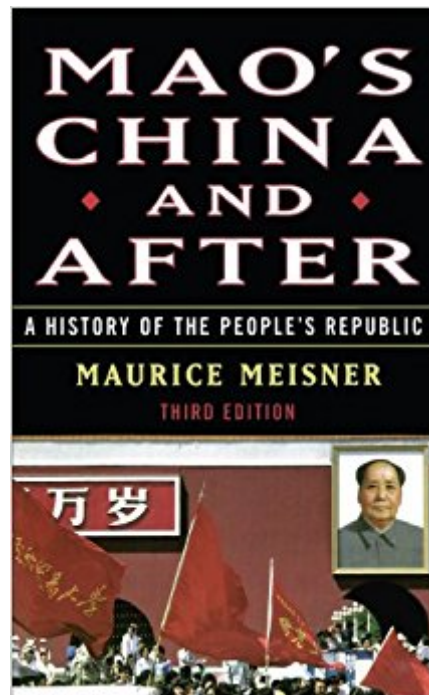


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Mao's China And After: A History Of The People's Republic, Third Edition



Synopsis

In this much-anticipated revision, Maurice Meisner again provides piercing insight and comprehensive coverage of China's fascinating and turbulent modern history. In addition to new information provided throughout this classic study, the new Part Six, "Deng Xiaoping and the Origins of Chinese Capitalism: 1976-1998," analyzes the country's uneasy relationships with democracy, socialism, and capitalism. Meisner incisively displays the contrasts between China's speech and actions regarding these subjects. Retaining the elegance, lucidity, fairness, insightfulness, and comprehensiveness he is known for, Meisner moves far beyond his previous work to paint a never-before-seen portrait of the political and social realities of China on the brink of the millennium, and the global implications of its rise to economic and political power.

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Customer Reviews

Foreign Affairs Of the thousands of books that have been written about contemporary China, only a few will stand the test of time. This is one of them. William W. Finan, Jr. Editor, Current History With this new edition, Maurice Meisner deftly places the "new" China that so captivates the West into the historical stream of policies, politics, and personalities that have ruled the country since Mao's 1949 revolution. His work is a refreshingly clear exposition of the contradictions and continuities that define China today. Zhiyuan Cui Professor of Political Science, MIT Splendidly relates the human drama of the Chinese people and their leaders, with empathetic understanding and constructive criticism. Lin Chun London School of Economics One of the foremost historians of our time, Professor Meisner offers a brilliant analysis in this new edition of the irony of Chinese socialism and

of the origins of Chinese capitalism: the single most important theme in an age of catastrophic "transitions," with implications that go far beyond the border of the PRC. William A. Joseph Chair, Department of Political Science, Wellesley College A superb and much-needed updating of a book that has been the definitive text on the history of the People's Republic of China....A deeply thoughtful and thought-provoking account of the socioeconomic, political, and ideological consequences of China's move toward the market in the post-Mao era....enriching and enthralling. Marilyn B. Young Professor, History, New York University An excellent expansion of the original.

In this much-anticipated revision, Maurice Meisner again provides piercing insight and comprehensive coverage of China's fascinating and turbulent modern history. In addition to new information provided throughout this classic study, the new Part Six, "Deng Xiaoping and the Origins of Chinese Capitalism: 1976-1998", analyzes the country's uneasy relationships with democracy, socialism, and capitalism. Meisner incisively displays the contrasts between China's speech and actions regarding these subjects. Retaining the elegance, lucidity, fairness, insightfulness, and comprehensiveness he is known for, Meisner moves far beyond his previous work to paint a never-before-seen portrait of the political and social realities of China on the brink of the millennium, and the global implications of its rise to economic and political power.

I actually read this book a few months back and suddenly the subject is very topical with the most recent global economic volatility. Read this book to understand better how and why China is acting as it is - far better (if requiring more investment of time) than most of the tosh written by journalist and so-called expert commentators. Seriously, some of the stuff I've seen written in the last couple of weeks is appalling. I have two bookshelves of academic works on China and this is one of the best books I have for explaining modern China.

Maurice Meisner, one of the US' foremost Sinologists, did an excellent job writing a popular history of the People's Republic in "Mao's China and After". Starting with the fall of the Empire and the May Fourth movement as well as New Culture, Meisner then skips to the point where the Chinese Communists have won the Civil War. He discusses the Maoist, Liuist, Dengist etc. periods in Chinese history in depth, taking a very large-scale view concentrating in particular on economic and social history, with some commentary on the position of intellectuals thrown in (in particular with the Hundred Flowers movement and the Cultural Revolution). Meisner gives a solid left-wing perspective

on all the relevant issues, focusing in particular on the successes and failures both of Mao's view of socialism, which, as Meisner points out, was itself on the left wing of the Communist Party of China. As some reviewers have noted, at times this does a disservice to his eagle's view of things, as a lot of social history in which Mao plays only a tangential role is ignored: there is no part on the position of women and changes in this, no description of the Civil War itself at all, practically nothing on the war against Japan, and even the Great Leap Forward gets only a summary description. On the other hand, this allows him to focus very strongly on the relation between economic policy and economic structures on the one hand, and the roles and views of the leaders of the Party on the other hand, surely an essential but often missing element of any serious political history. The book is eminently readable and requires absolutely zero prior knowledge of modern China, and at the same time, after finishing it, a reader will have at least a moderate level of knowledge on modern Chinese political history. This is quite an accomplishment, made possible by Meisner's talent to make complicated political entanglements seem straightforward and obvious, and his constant eye on the economic side of things. There are a lot of things that one could criticize this book on, but since it is meant as a popular introduction, it should be judged on those criteria, and there it succeeds quite well.

Great quality!

If there is an aspect in which author Maurice Meisner exceeds, is in expressing his understanding of China and the CCP. If there is an aspect in which Meisner falls short is research. The book lacks sources and citations. This makes the book tedious.

Good

Maurice Meisner got on my good side in the introduction to this, the third edition of his history of the People's Republic of China: He admitted and set about correcting errors in earlier editions - specifically, his previous, erroneous view that China's economic opening was a political expedient, not a genuine and astounding policy shift. How often do you come across an author -- or anyone! - admitting he was wrong? So I read on, confident I was in the company of an honest analyst. My rising expectations were rewarded. Meisner's analysis is fair-minded and authoritative. I've read a good bit of modern Chinese history, but almost every page of this book delivered a new insight or deepened my understanding of what I already knew. Among the things that struck me: the extent to

which the Chinese revolution originally was a rural phenomenon and the consequences of those origins; how successful the communists were in establishing order and a functioning government in the early years after their victory; the fact that much of the violence of the Cultural Revolution was started not by starry-eyed Maoist zealots but by entrenched bureaucrats diverting attention away from themselves and toward helpless intellectuals and people with "bad class backgrounds." The book is sometimes repetitious; Meisner drives home his themes again and again. And I found myself a little frustrated at times by what I took as Meisner's Utopian socialist outlook. He seems sympathetic to the idea that pure socialism - worker ownership of the means of production - would have created some kind of perfect, democratic society in China. Sometimes he measures the success of Mao and his successors not by how well they improved the lot of the people but by how well they moved China along the Marx-ordained path to socialism and on to communism. He sometimes seemed to bend over backwards to explain or minimize Mao's excesses and to expose the dark side of what he calls China's shift to capitalism. He seems to view the words "hire" and "exploit" as synonyms. More importantly, I think his apparent black-white view of socialism vs. capitalism leads him to simplify the economic changes in China; in my view, the country hasn't gone completely capitalist (though it's certainly headed that way) but is caught somewhere between the socialist and capitalist worlds - in some ways adopting the worst of both. Even so, Meisner's vision is easily broad and humane enough to compensate for what I saw as a pro-socialist tilt. My objections are actually less complaints than responses to Meisner's provocative analysis. Bottom line: Any serious student of communist China should own this book.

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