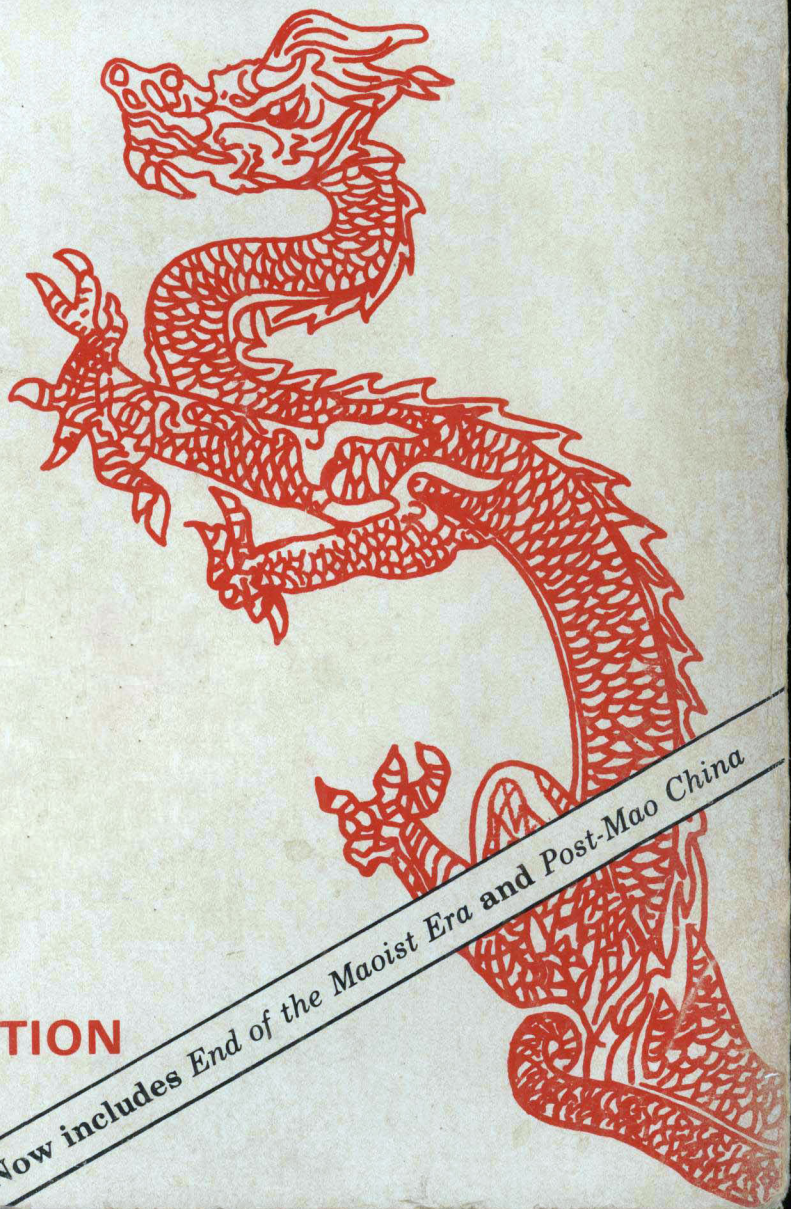


20TH CENTURY china



Now includes End of the Maoist Era and Post-Mao China

O. EDMOND CLUBB

THIRD EDITION

20TH CENTURY
CHINA

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By O. EDMUND CLUBB

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TWENTIETH CENTURY CHINA

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To Mariann

PREFACE

THE SUBJECT of twentieth century China is vast, extending as it does from the imperial era, through the transitional Republican period, and into the Communist stage of Chinese history. China's domestic affairs during that period were exceedingly complex. In the Republican era particularly, a number of self-contained separate regimes, under warlord rule, made their own minor local histories without more than casual relationship to what was happening in Peking—the putative center of the country's government. Contemporary Chinese accounts were as partisan as the politics, making for much conflict of testimony: Sun Yat-sen's version of events would be found notably different from that offered by a warlord regime at Peking, for example, and Nationalist history diverges substantially from that written by the Communists with whom the Nationalists wrestled from 1927 to 1949. This sector of China's modern history has been sadly neglected in many major aspects by scholars and is characterized by large patches of terra incognita and other elements which are still controversial. The present, Communist, stage of China's historical progression is being subjected to the most intensive research by American scholars, but here we see a process of change that defies final determinations.

This book finds its first warrant in the very circumstance that there is an acknowledged growing need, in the West, for fuller understanding of twentieth century China. The full telling would take many volumes, and within the compass of one book much must necessarily be omitted—even of the important. This volume is a political history, a bird's-eye survey aimed at tracing the main course of the developments that led to the final collapse of the

dynastic principle, the abortive experiment in republicanism, and the final resort to a Sinicized communism as the presumed solution for China's tremendous problems. And, as Chinese history would warn us, the subject is of prime importance. The Chinese now count easily one fourth of the human race, and they are a great nation in terms of cultural and political accomplishment. Unified by the iron rule of Mao Tse-tung and his fellow Communists, driven by the urge to regain a position of dominance in Asia, China shows a clear potential for playing once more, as on numerous occasions during its two thousand years of existence, a major role in the making of history.

This is a matter of great concern to the United States, which, in mid-century, with the advent of the Communists to power, abandoned its traditional China policy and embarked upon a radically different approach. Whether the present policy constitutes a fruitful strategy for dealing with the new China will be proved in the latter part of this century. The Asian situation of which China is the storm center is one of both great complexity and great instability, and it is impossible to foresee the situation as it will exist at the year 2000. It is nevertheless logical to assume that the history of the decades that have gone before suggest some of the possible future trends. And this is to be said: the dangers involved in being wrong about China today are vastly greater than they were at the time of the Battle of Manila Bay.

I express my deep thanks to Dr. Richard C. Howard and Prof. A. Doak Barnett, who kindly read, respectively, Parts I and II and Part III of the manuscript and made many helpful suggestions. I am indebted to Mr. Lu Kuang-huan for his courtesy in providing me with the Chinese characters adorning the face of the book cover, comprising the translation of "Twentieth Century China" into the Chinese language. I acknowledge further the generosity of various persons who have supplied photographs used to illustrate the work. The photograph of Dr. Sun Yat-sen comes from the work by Paul Linebarger, *Sun Yat-sen and the Chinese Republic* (New York, Century, 1925); that of Tuan Ch'î-jui is from B. L. Putnam Weale, *The Fight for the Republic in China* (New York, Dodd, Mead, 1917). I am grateful, too, to my son, Dr. Oliver E. Clubb, Jr., for helpful editorial criticism. For both valuable criticism and assistance with the typing and other matters related to the preparation of the manuscript, I am deeply indebted to my wife Mariann.

I express my thanks to the Harvard University Press for author-

ization to use, as a basis for the redrawn maps showing the borders of China at various periods of its development, certain maps contained in the work by Albert Herrmann, *Historical and Commercial Atlas of China* (Cambridge, 1935). I acknowledge likewise the courtesy of Avrahm Yarmolinsky for permitting me to quote a long passage from the work he translated from the original Russian and edited, *The Memoirs of Count Witte* (New York, Doubleday, 1921).

September, 1963

O. EDMUND CLUBB

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

As the first edition of this book came off the press, in 1964, China saw the beginnings of a "cultural revolution" which in due course came to full flowering as the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. This new edition has been designed in main to encompass that historic episode, and to bring the account down to October, 1971, when Communist China won entry into the United Nations. After a half century of existence, the Chinese Communist Party had brought China to a new stage in both its domestic condition and its foreign affairs. In the end, at the point where the revolutionary leadership of 1921-71 prepares to leave the stage of history, I have endeavored to set forth some salient features of "Mao's China," as seen today. China will change with the passing of Mao and his remaining Old Comrades; but the China of the future will still bear their imprint.

January, 1972

O. EDMUND CLUBB

PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION

IMPLEMENTATION of the Maoist doctrine of “uninterrupted revolution” resulted effectively in the institutionalization of political instability, and disorder, in the People’s Republic of China. Injection of the “class struggle” into the Party leadership structure during the course of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution exacerbated the trend toward factionalism within the ruling hierarchy proper. The purge in seriatim of close associates of Mao Tse-tung, such as Liu Shao-ch’i and Teng Hsiao-p’ing, and circumstances surrounding the death and political disgrace of Lin Piao in 1971, demonstrated that there was indeed no secure refuge from Mao’s arbitrary assaults other than a strong defensive faction. The logical operation of Maoism thus rendered highly unlikely an orderly succession to power upon Mao’s passing: in the conflict between the (radical) Maoist “revolutionary line” and the (moderate) “bourgeois revisionist line” one faction or the other would be subjected to coup and purge, and both factions knew it. Chairman Mao had himself laid the groundwork for a power struggle.

Events in the years 1971–76 bore out the logical expectation of trouble. Premier Chou En-lai at the Fourth National People’s Congress of January, 1975 made a final valiant effort to provide for an orderly succession, but his death one year later provided the occasion for a fresh coup by the Maoists against alleged “capitalist-roaders” within the leadership. That the Maoists’ tactics had, however, acted over the years to strengthen the opposition was shown when Mao died in September, 1976—and Party and Army leaders, waiting upon no further purges by the radical faction, struck swiftly and decisively at the radical leadership in turn. Successful in their

coup, the organization men then undertook the reorientation of basic national policies and the reordering of the national priorities.

This, then, is the rationale for bringing out a new edition of *Twentieth Century China* at this time. The revised work includes a record of the chief events marking the end of the Maoist era, and depicts new trends discernible at the beginning of the post-Mao stage of China's twentieth-century development, with the story brought down to the Eleventh Party Congress of August, 1977, which marked consolidation of the new leadership in power.

February, 1978

O. EDMUND CLUBB

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The Emperor Kuang Hsu

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Tuan Ch'i-jui

Sun Yat-sen

Scholar-official

Shantung peasant

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INTRODUCTION: "CONFUCIAN" CHINA

AT THE END of the thirteenth century, when Marco Polo told Europe what he had seen during his seventeen years in China, he was met with incredulity and derision. But by the eighteenth century Europe had come to believe not only Marco Polo's tales but also that China had evolved a perfect form of government. A hundred years later the Western nations undertook to break down the Middle Kingdom's exclusionism and to bring to China the "benefits" of Occidental trade and religion. As the century neared its end, the powers thought they saw China disintegrating, and some reached out to possess themselves of rich fragments. At the beginning of the present century, the United States assumed the role of China's protector, with the moral obligation of assuring that China might have unimpeded opportunity to develop its own modern political institutions. After fifty years, however, the United States abandoned the overidealized picture of its involuntary protégé. It adopted a diametrically opposed policy toward China and set about building another Great Wall of exclusionism to replace the one that had been so laboriously torn down—this time to keep China "contained" in isolation.

The violent oscillations in Western evaluation over the years indicate that China has been, and remains, as it was in Marco Polo's time, the unknown, the uncomprehended—and the unbelievable. But it behooves the Occident to study modern China assiduously. The present Chinese revolution unfolding before our eyes may radically change the course of human history.

In order to understand the China of today, one must take into account its geographical environment, its long and turbulent history, and many influences from its political and social traditions.

FROM FEUDALISM TO EMPIRE

China possessed, according to the Confucians, a Golden Age when social organization and government were perfect. But this was only a legend that attempted to describe conditions existing two millennia before Confucius lived. At the beginning of recorded history there was no "Middle Kingdom," no "China," but only a large number of feudal city-states ruled by autocrats. If, as the legend holds, they had once lived at peace with one another in accordance with the dictates of high moral principles, it is a fact that in Confucius' time the order of the day was dissension between these feudal states and misery within them.

In this period the Hundred Schools of Philosophy debated the relation of Man to the Universe and of Man to Society. Confucianism, emerging in this milieu, sought to sanction the existing feudal system, but at the same time to refine it, by recalling to the hard-bitten feudal autocrats the Golden Age of the third millennium B.C. and the worthy examples of governmental conduct provided in that far-off period by the sage-kings Yao, Shun, and Yü. Confucianism constituted a vain attempt to restore what had never existed—government by virtue and merit. As a political philosophy, it stood in middle ground, flanked on one extreme by the full-fledged altruism of the Mohists who offered universal love as the prime governing force in the world, and on the other by mankind's first philosophical totalitarianism, the thought of the Legalist School. Other philosophers offered an infinite variety of systems.

The distinguishing feature of the Chou era was the gulf existing between the Hundred (feudal) Clans and "the little folk," characterized by the saying "Ritual does not extend as far down as the people, nor the penal code as far up as the nobility." The over-all picture presented by the end of the feudal era is indicated by its common designation, the period of the Warring States. Confucianism, at the time of Confucius, was notably ineffectual.

Today China is a vast conglomerate of deserts, mountains, high plateaus, and rich river valleys; two thousand years ago the brawling feudal states held much less territory. Most of the domains were located in river valleys, and all of them were within the area that

eventually became China proper. Fertile land was of narrowly limited extent: it was bounded by arid regions, interrupted by mountainous areas, and often afflicted by floods. China was no natural paradise.

Peoples of other blood lived to the south, west, and north. The feudal states were in a more advanced stage of cultural development than their crude neighbors. But if one factor making for conflict among the feudal states in their central position was the impact of vigorous barbarian tribes on their periphery, an even greater factor was sharply increasing population pressures on the available agricultural land. Disorders grew as the peasant serfs were overloaded with ever heavier taxes and herded into the nobles' armies. It was a period of social disintegration.

The Warring States, in a fratricidal conflict that lasted 250 years, destroyed the feudal system of which they were a part. A highly centralized empire succeeded. It was not Confucianism that brought about the change, but the harsh, terribly logical philosophy of the Legalists, whose advocates guided the victorious Ch'in ruler to establish, for the first time, an empire—China. The Confucianists and followers of various other philosophical creeds got short shrift: Ch'in Shih Huang-ti (the First Emperor of Ch'in) burned all works of opposition philosophies that could be found, and buried a goodly number of scholars, to demonstrate that he would brook no further contention. The Hundred Schools of Philosophy had been able to exist by reason of the very anarchy of the times. When the anarchy ceased, free political discussion also ended.

Thus, in the third century B.C., China abandoned feudalism in favor of imperialism. Not immediately, but before the beginning of the Christian era, the autocracy proceeded to retrieve the philosophy of Confucius, adapted it to the uses of empire even though it had been framed originally for the feudal system, and established a rigid social and bureaucratic hierarchy on the basis of that transformed “Confucianism.” The essence of the doctrine was the concept that the political system was a part of the cosmic system and as unchanging, and that the social system's Truth was both eternal and of universal application. It provided for enlightened rule by a moral, ethical ruler—the emperor, Son of Heaven. The five human relationships of Confucianism, binding the subject in obedience to the ruler and defining other social ties, provided moral sanction for the hierarchy by which the empire was ruled.

This order of things did not in practice prevent social convulsions.