



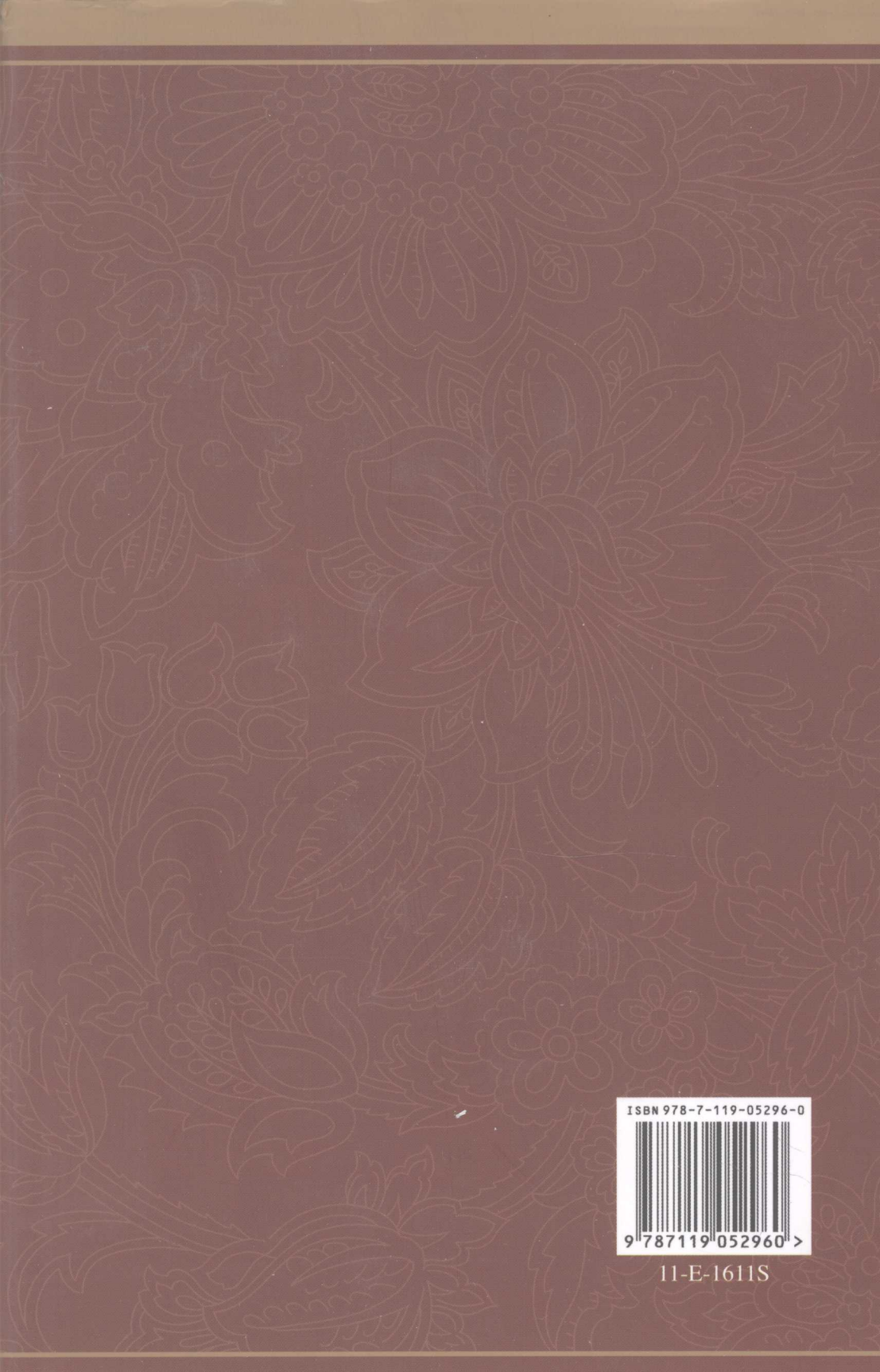
CHINA STUDIES

# AN OUTLINE HISTORY OF CHINA

Bai Shouyi



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# AN OUTLINE HISTORY OF CHINA

(Revised Edition)

**Bai Shouyi**

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## Preface

This book combines, in one volume, the English editions of *An Outline History of China*, published in 1982, and *An Outline History of China 1919-1949*, published in 1993.

In the autumn of 1997, the *History of China* in Chinese containing 22 sections bound in 12 volumes, of which I was chief editor, was completed. Mr. Wu Canfei, an editor at the Foreign Languages Press (FLP) in Beijing, suggested that the two English edition books, which had been published and distributed for many years, be bound into one volume titled *An Outline History of China* (revised edition), and be officially published by FLP after it had revised the translation. Prior to this, they had translated the Chinese editions of the two books into English, Japanese, Spanish, German, French and other languages. This was something I had wanted to do for many years. When I drew up the plan for compiling *An Outline History of China*, I considered writing about the period from 1919 to 1949 in the book, but failed to do so due to factual difficulties. The idea was realized in late 1987, and the second volume of the book came into being. It covers Chinese history from 1919 to 1949, and is now Chapter 11 in this revised edition of *An Outline History of China*. Though *An Outline History of China*, which now includes the second volume, cannot be regarded as a complete Chinese history, readers can gain an overall understanding of Chinese history more conveniently through this single-volume edition.

This combined book retains the original edition's style, content and features. However, there have been some necessary revisions and corrections made to specific historical facts, figures and regions, and

some linguistic corrections. Here I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Wu Canfei for his patient work.

We are still endeavoring to apply correct historical theories in our study of the course and characteristics of the development of Chinese history. To what degree we have managed to achieve this will be decided by our readers.

*An Outline History of China* and its follow-up have been popular among a broad range of readers since they were first published. Chinese editions have sold nearly one million copies, and foreign-language editions have sold out. The history departments of many colleges and universities use them as textbooks, showing the social demand and readers' appreciation of the work. We would like to express our deep gratitude for this. There are some issues in Chinese history of interest to everyone that, owing to a shortage of materials or research, we have been unable to address. We hope to do so in the future.

Bai Shouyi  
December 1998, Beijing

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# *Chapter I*

## **Introduction**

### **1. A Land of 9,600,000 Square Kilometres**

The People's Republic of China is situated in Eurasia, on the western shores of the Pacific Ocean. Its borders reach from the central line of the main navigation channel of the Heilongjiang (Heilungkiang) River near Mohe in the north to the Zengmu Reef in the Nansha Archipelago in the south, and from the Pamirs in the west to the confluence of the Heilongjiang and the Wusuli (Ussuri) River in the east. The total area is about 9.6 million square kilometres, making China one of the largest countries in land size in the world. With a continental land boundary of more than 20,000 kilometres, China adjoins Korea in the east, Mongolia in the north, Russia in the northeast, Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan and Tajikistan in the northwest, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan in the west and southwest, and Myanmar, Laos and Viet Nam in the south. The continental coastline is more than 18,000 kilometres long, and looks across the seas towards South Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei.

The primary administrative divisions in China today are the four municipalities directly under the central government, the twenty-three provinces, the five autonomous regions and two special administrative regions (Table I). The capital of China is Beijing.

*TABLE I*

#### **The Four Municipalities Directly Under the Central Government**

Beijing

Shanghai

Tianjin

Chongqing

### **The Twenty-three Provinces**

*North* Hebei Shanxi

*Northeast* Liaoning Jilin Heilongjiang

*Northwest* Shaanxi Gansu Qinghai

*East* Shandong Jiangsu Zhejiang Anhui Jiangxi

*Southeast* Fujian Taiwan

*Southwest* Sichuan Guizhou Yunnan

*Central South* Henan Hubei Hunan

*South* Guangdong Hainan

### **The Five Autonomous Regions**

The Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (north)

The Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region (north)

The Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (northwest)

The Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region (south)

The Tibet Autonomous Region (southwest)

### **The Two Special Administrative Regions**

Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

Macao Special Administrative Region

Underneath the provinces and autonomous regions are cities, autonomous prefectures, counties, autonomous counties and other divisions. The municipalities directly under the central government are subdivided into urban districts and suburban counties. Under the autonomous prefectures are counties, autonomous counties and cities, and under the counties and autonomous counties are townships, ethnic group townships and towns.

China has many mountain ranges, most of the major ones being located in the western regions. Running west-east are the Altay, Tian-

shan, Kunlun, Qilian, Karakorum, Gangdise, Himalaya, Yinshan, Qinling and Nanling mountains. Running north-south is the Hengduan Range, which is formed from the Daxue, Nushan and Gaoligong mountains lying side by side from east to west. In the eastern part of the country are mountain ranges running from the northeast to the southwest: to the west are the Greater Hinggan Range, the Taihang Mountains, and the Wushan, Wuling, Dalou and Xuefeng ranges; to the east are the Changbai Mountains and the Liaodong, Shandong and Minzhe highlands. These mountain ranges and highlands determine the basic features of China's topography.

The Chinese terrain varies conspicuously in elevation and consists of three tiers descending from west to east. The Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the highest and largest plateau on earth, is commonly known as "the roof of the world." To the north it is bounded by the northern branch of the Kunlun and Qilian mountain ranges and to the south and west by the Karakorum, Himalaya and Hengduan mountain ranges. Its average elevation is more than 4,000 metres above sea level. Mount Qomolangma in the Himalaya Mountains, located on the border between China and Nepal, is the world's highest peak, with an elevation of 8,848.13 metres. The Qaidam (Tsaidam) Basin northeast of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau is somewhat lower even though it has an elevation of almost 3,000 metres. This area forms the highest tier in China's topography. The northern and eastern faces of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau descend to plateaus and basins mostly between 1,000 and 2,000 metres above sea level. They include the Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau; the loess plateau which takes in central and eastern Gansu, eastern and southern Ningxia, northern Shaanxi, the whole province of Shanxi and western Henan; the Inner Mongolia Plateau; the Sichuan Basin; the Tarim Basin and the Junggar Basin in Xinjiang. These plateaus and basins form the second tier. East of the Greater Hinggan Range and the Xuefeng Range are hilly country with an elevation of less than 1,000 metres and plains of less than 200 metres. The three main plains of China, the Northeast Plain, the North China Plain and the Lower and Middle Changjiang (Yangtze River) Plain are all

in this area. The coastal plains have an elevation of less than 50 metres above sea level. These hills and plains form the third tier in the Chinese terrain.

Most Chinese rivers flow from west to east and empty into the Pacific Ocean. The major rivers all flow east along most of their courses, such as the Changjiang (Yangtze River), Huanghe (Yellow River), Heilongjiang, Zhujiang (Pearl River), Songhuajiang (Sun-gari River), Liaohe, Haihe and Huaihe. (*Jiang* and *he* are both Chinese words for medium-sized and large rivers.) Some of the south-flowing rivers, such as the Yarlung Zangbu Jiang (the Yalutsangpo or Brahmaputra) River and Nujiang (the Salween River), pass through India, Bangladesh and Myanmar to empty into the Indian Ocean; others, such as the Lancangjiang, the Mekong River and Yuanjiang, flow through Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Kampuchea and Viet Nam into the Pacific Ocean. The Ertixhe (the Kara-Irtysh River) flows north from Xinjiang into the U.S.S.R. There are also inland rivers with no ocean outlet, such as the Tarimhe, Qaidamhe and Shulehe; these are mostly confined to Northwest and West China.

The longest river in China is the Changjiang at 6,300 kilometres, which passes through Qinghai, Sichuan, Tibet, Yunnan, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangxi, Anhui, Jiangsu and Shanghai, with tributaries flowing through several other provinces including Guizhou, Shaanxi, Gansu and Henan. Next is the Huanghe, which passes through Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, Ningxia, Inner Mongolia, Shanxi, Shaanxi, Henan and Shandong. The part of the Heilongjiang which lies within Chinese territory and forms the border between China and Russia has a drainage basin which covers the greater part of the northeastern provinces. The Tarim which has few tributaries has a relatively small drainage basin. The Zhujiang, originating in the Nanpanjiang in the upper reaches of the Xijiang (Sikiang or West River), passes through Yunnan, Guizhou, Guangxi and Guangdong. The Songhuajiang in the northeast has a relatively large drainage basin, and the drainage basins of the Yarlung Zangbu Jiang (within China) and the Haihe are both more than 200,000 square kilometres.



TABLE II

**The Longest Rivers in China**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Length</b>	<b>Drainage basin</b>
Changjiang (Yangtze River)	6,300 km	1,800,000 km <sup>2</sup>
Huanghe (Yellow River)	5,464 km	750,000 km <sup>2</sup>
Heilongjiang (Heilungkiang or Amur River)	2,965 km*	
Tarimhe (Tarim River)	2,179 km	198,000 km <sup>2</sup>
Zhujiang (Pearl River)	2,129 km	425,700 km <sup>2</sup>
Songhuajiang (Sougari River)	1,840 km	545,600 km <sup>2</sup>

Lakes of all sizes are scattered throughout China but are more concentrated on the Lower and Middle Changjiang Plain and the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. The largest fresh water lakes are the Poyang in Jiangxi, the Dongting in Hunan, the Hongze in western Jiangsu and Taihu in southern Jiangsu. The most important of the salt lakes are the Qinghai Lake (Koko Nor) in Qinghai and the Lop Nur (Lob Nor) in Xinjiang; the latter has changed greatly over the last two thousand years and is now dried up. Lake Xingkai (Hsingkai) is a fresh water lake which straddles the Sino-Russian border.

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\* Length within China and along the Sino-Soviet border.