

JONATHAN SPENCE

Mao Zedong

A Penguin Life

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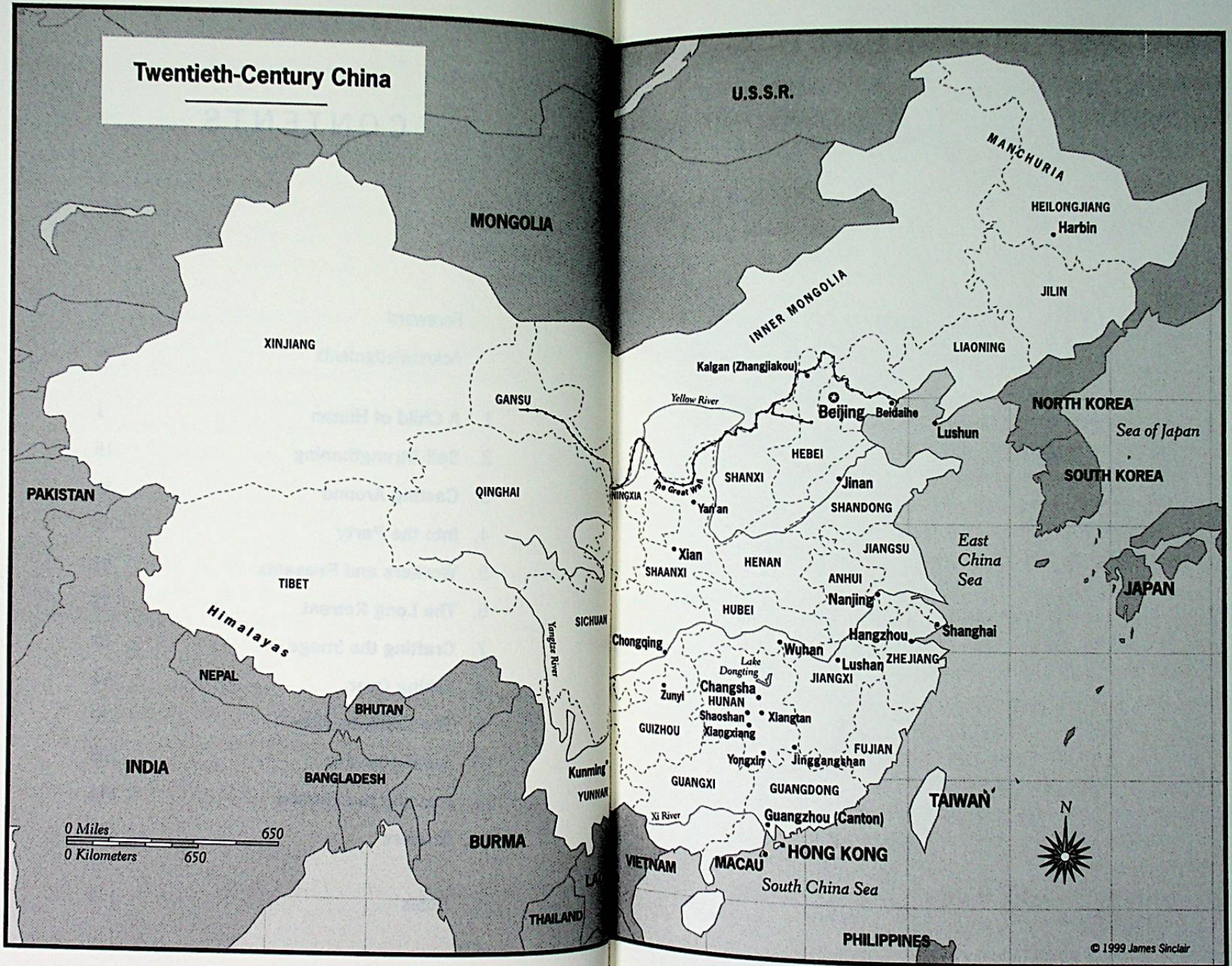
Kings ought never to be seen upon the stage. In the abstract, they are very disagreeable characters: it is only while living that they are "the best of kings." . . . Seen *as they were*, their power and their pretensions look monstrous and ridiculous.

William Hazlitt, *Characters of Shakespear's Plays*

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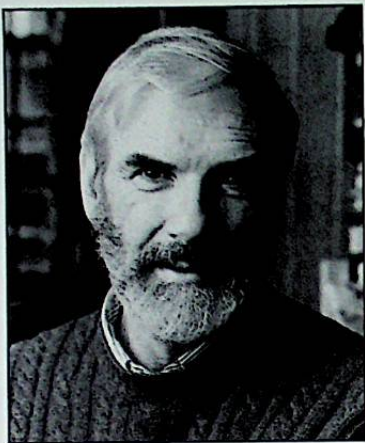
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Twentieth-Century China



From humble origins in the provinces, Mao Zedong rose to absolute power, unifying with an iron fist a vast country torn apart by years of weak leadership, colonialism, and war. In this sharply drawn and insightful account, Jonathan Spence, award-winning historian and author of acclaimed books about both the old and the new China, brings to life this modern-day emperor and the tumultuous era that he did so much to shape.

Both a canny tactician and a hardworking organizer, Mao parlayed the privations of the famous Long March and the success of his guerrilla army into a powerful cult of personality and a dominant position in the burgeoning Chinese Communist Party. The Communist victory in 1949 not only elevated him to supreme leader but made his eccentric version of Marxism official dogma; his regime was a volatile mixture of power and mystique that exploded in the havoc of the Cultural Revolution. Jonathan Spence captures Mao in all his paradoxical grandeur and sheds light on the radical transformation he unleashed that still reverberates in China today.



JONATHAN SPENCE's eleven books on Chinese history include *The Gate of Heavenly Peace* and *The Death of Woman Wang*. He teaches at Yale University. His awards include a Guggenheim and a MacArthur Fellowship.

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