# Introduction

In centuries past in China, clothing defined a realm of culture and decorum. Those who dwelt 'under heaven' (*tianxia*) wore cotton or silk and buttoned their robes on the right. In this way they differentiated themselves from the 'barbarians' of other, uncultured lands.[1] Ceremonial and even everyday dress gave substance to the idea of China as a 'realm of rituals and righteousness' and 'sovereign domain [defined by] robes and caps'.[2] Forms of clothing did not remain stable. Alterations in the cut and style of garments and fabrics used to make them show the impact of environmental, cultural and economic change over time. Moreover, 'when a dynasty changed, the clothing was altered'.[3] The establishment of a new dynasty was invariably accompanied by new protocols for the robes of state and the raiment of the servants of the state, with flow-on effects for the rest of society in the longer term.

In the twentieth century, dynasties as such ceased to exist. The last emperor abdicated in 1912 and the robes he wore quickly became historical artefacts. Yet the cultural logic linking sartorial practices to the ruling regime survived. Accordingly, when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) assumed power in 1949, it presided over a general transformation of dress. The change was inadvertent but decisive. Although

[1] Mark Edward Lewis, *The Early Chinese Empires: Qin and Han* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2007), p. 133. Cf. Zhang Ruili and Zhao Bin, 'Qin Han Xiongnu fuzhuang xingzhi tanxi' (Exploratory Analysis of the Design of Xiongnu Clothing in the Qin and Han Dynasties), *Xiyu yanjiu* 2 (2008), 62–7.

[2] These are separate four-character expressions that in the Xi Jinping era have come to be commonly coupled. For an example from the official media, see Wei Congcong and Song Runzhou, 'APEC huiyi lingdaoren fuzhuang shejishi Chu Yan zaitui xinzuo' (Chu Yan, Designer of Garments for the APEC Leaders, Again Promotes Some New Creations), *Quanguo dangmei*, 5 November 2017, at www.hubpd.com/c/2017-11-05/627157.shtml; and from a dress historian, Hua Mei, 'Zhoudai yizhuo de zhoumi yu wanbei' (The Intricacy and Completeness of Zhou Dynasty Dress), *Tianjin ribao*, 25 December 2020, at https://wenyi.gmw.cn/2020-12/25/content_34493713.htm.

[3] Ge Zhaoguang, 'Da Ming yiguan jin he zai ?' (Where Are the Robes and Caps of the Ming Dynasty Now?), *Shixue yuekan*, no. 10 (October 2005), 48.

elements in the new national wardrobe were recognizably a legacy of the Republic of China (1912–1949), the rupture with the past was absolute. The clothes people wore in the Mao years (1949–1976) were distinctive. Wearing them people showed their membership of a new order. When they ceased to wear them, it was a sign that the order was changing. This book is a history of how that clothing system come into being: what the clothes were, who made them, how they were made, and what they meant to the people who wore them.

The history of clothing in China was at one time the preserve of collectors and curators. Now it more often takes the form of fashion history. Fashion is the default English-language term for trends, taste and changes in dress over time, as well as for styling, shaping and a manner of doing things. It has long had a privileged association with the West, modernity and progress, a nexus now weakening under the impact of criticisms of Eurocentricity and a growing body of research on historical clothing cultures in other parts of the world.[4] In consequence, fashion's remit is broadening. A term that for historians once signified Paris and London in the bourgeois age is now deployed in discussions of the cultural ecology of clothing in very different times and places. The effect has been to force fashion studies to admit company that would once have been relegated to folk studies, ethnography or area studies.[5] As in other areas of history, there is a discernible move to 'provincialize Europe'.[6] An explosion of interest in fashion theory testifies to the liveliness of the debate.

Historians of Mao's China have used fashion in several registers: casually to refer to what people wore and what the clothes looked like,[7] pointedly to indicate changes in style despite political constraints,[8] and argumentatively to argue for sustained variety, dynamism and

[4] This is often discussed in the Chinese context. See variously Chen Baoliang, 'Shishang de lishi' (The History of Fashion), *Wenshi tiandi*, no. 2 (2015), 54–8; Christine Tsui, 'Fashion in the Chinese Context', in *Modern Fashion Traditions: Negotiating Tradition and Modernity through Fashion*, ed. M. Angela Jansen and Jennifer Craik (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 51–70; BuYun Chen, 'Towards a History of Fashion without Origins', in *The Cambridge Global History of Fashion*, ed. Christopher Breward, Beverly Lemire and Giorgio Riello (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2023).

[5] See the explicit statement in M. Angela Jansen and Jennifer Craik, 'Introduction', in *Modern Fashion Traditions: Negotiating Tradition and Modernity through Fashion*, ed. M. Angela Jansen and Jennifer Craik (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 3.

[6] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, new ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009). Elke Gaugele and Monica Titton, eds., *Fashion and Postcolonial Critique* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2019).

[7] Hanchao Lu, *Out of the Ordinary: Implications of Material Culture and Daily Life in China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 43–4.

[8] Juanjuan Wu, *Chinese Fashion from Mao to Now* (London: Berg, 2009), 2.

individuation in dress over time.[9] These usages carry theoretical implications, sometimes explicit. In *Unending Capitalism* Karl Gerth links fashion to consumerism in a provocative argument about the Chinese economy under the socialist banner as persistently capitalist.[10] Illustrated as it is with bright, bold images produced for propaganda campaigns, such an account of fashion almost suffices to overturn the image of drab uniformity that otherwise dominates the literature on Mao's China.

Yet there is no gainsaying the negation of fashion in the Mao years. Explicit engagements with it on the part of any Chinese authority in that era were occasional and brief. The word for fashionable dress, *shizhuang*, was used tentatively, being replaced on shop signs and in publications by the generic word for clothing, *fuzhuang*. Both as a word and as a phenomenon, fashion was vulnerable to attack on political grounds, used even against the 'Soviet revisionists'.[11] There did exist a discourse of 'new styles' (*xinying*) and 'attractiveness' (*meiguan*) under Mao. The clothing system also sporadically showed signs of contact with the fashion cycle in the outside world. Trends and taste are observable. Lacking were the institutions meant to promote fashion: industries dedicated to its production, financial instruments for its support, advertising, and free enterprise. Autonomous organizations characteristic of civil society, which typically offer possibilities for dissent, communication and innovation in the economic and cultural spheres, were absent.[12] Simply put, in the words of He Baogang, 'no such associations could develop under the rule of Mao Zedong'.[13] If exceptions can be found to all these statements, they make little difference to a general picture of poverty, restraint and internalized discipline, albeit in a society that was periodically plunged into chaos. Not only do we not find in Mao's China any 'empire of fashion' – that 'powerfully expansive nexus of design, marketing, and

[9] Yan Li, *China's Soviet Dream: Propaganda, Culture, and Popular Imagination* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 135.
[10] Karl Gerth, *Unending Capitalism: How Consumerism Negated China's Communist Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 83 ff.
[11] Anon., 'Dachui dalei tuixiao xifang shenghuo fangshi, yixin yiyi jiajin fubi ziben zhuyi: Suxiu juxing "shizhuang zhanlanhui" wuyan zhangqi chou bu ke wen' (Promoting Western Lifestyles with Fanfare, Determinedly Speeding Up the Restoration of Capitalism: The Soviet Revisionists Hold a Rotten, Stinking 'Fashion Show', *Renmin ribao*, 23 September 1967, 6.
[12] Jia Jixin, "Civil Organization – Government Relationships: Functional Cooperation and Power Dilemmas," in *Emerging Civil Society in China, 1978–2008*, ed. Wang Ming (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 209–10.
[13] He Baogang. *The Democratic Implications of Civil Society in China*. (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 19.

consumer desire' described by William Sewell[14] – even a 'socialist republic of fashion' was lacking. The Soviet Union in the 1960s had 'thousands of local fashion ateliers';[15] the People's Republic of China (hereafter PRC) had thousands of sewing groups.

This book, then, offers a history not of fashion but of a clothing system. Every society has its clothing system, which may or may not be persuasively described as a fashion system. In Mao's China, shops sold clothes, not fashion. 'The clothing system', writes Yuniya Kawamura, 'teaches us how to wear garments and what to wear in special social and cultural contexts'.[16] She was not writing about clothes in Mao's China, but she sums up how the clothing system operated. It was a pedagogical system. It was serviced by textbooks. It disseminated, as well as reflecting, social and cultural knowledge specific to the new political order.

## The Zhongshan Suit in Command

The new clothing system emerged in lockstep with the new political order, and together with it signalled a sharp break with the past. As a period of transition from one social-political order to another, the Mao years have few equals in history. The establishment of the PRC in 1949 effectively meant the end of the Republic of China, Asia's first republic, which thereafter existed only in diminished form on the island of Taiwan. The new state, self-described as a 'people's democracy based on an alliance of workers and peasants and led by the working class',[17] was in practice constituted by the CCP. Chairman Mao Zedong went from being a 'communist bandit' and 'traitor to the Han' under the old regime to 'saviour of the people' in the new. The roles once played by rural landlords, capitalists and entrepreneurs, intellectuals and religious leaders were taken over by the CCP, to be relinquished after Mao's death only in part, and after the Party had established itself deeply within Chinese society. Communist China was once a term used to distinguish the mainland from Taiwan, home of a

[14] William H. Sewell Jr, 'The Empire of Fashion and the Rise of Capitalism in Eighteenth-century France', *Past & Present*, no. 206 (February 2010), 88.
[15] Jukka Gronow and Sergey Zhuralev *Fashion Meets Socialism: Fashion Industry in the Soviet Union after the Second World War* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2015), 15.
[16] See the discussion of 'different approaches to fashion systems' in Chapter 2 of Yuniya Kawamura, *Fashion-ology: An Introduction to Fashion Studies* (London: Berg, 2004), 46.
[17] Quanguo renmin daibiao dahui (National People's Congress), 'Zhonghua renmin gongheguo xianfa (1954) [shixiao]' (Constitution of the People's Republic of China (1954)[Expired]), PKULAW.com, 20 September 1954, at www.pkulaw.cn/fulltext_form.aspx?Gid=52993.

notional 'Free China'. In this book the term is used simply to designate a country run by the Communist Party.

The ruling party in China did not seek to impose uniform dress on the populace. To the contrary, in a political system where mass mobilization was key to the implementation of policies, its most significant intervention in clothing qua clothing styles was a campaign in 1956 to beautify and diversify dress.[18] This very campaign, however, exposed the realities of the clothing system in place at that time: the scarcity of commercially available cloth due to cotton rationing; the limited capacity of the textiles and apparel sector to accommodate new styles of garment without jeopardizing other sectors of clothing production; the sorts of clothes that people had to wear to work (in many cases mandated); the amount of clothing already within the system, which was expected to last wearers for years; and what people actually wanted to wear. Most of all, the campaign exposed the difficulties inherent in encouraging people to diversify in one area of life while expecting high levels of conformity in all others. The challenge was similar to that faced in the campaign for creativity in the education system in the following century:[19] it was difficult to encourage people to be creative in one direction (science) while forbidding them to be creative in another (politics).

The new clothing system that emerged to view in the 1950s was pivoted on the 'Mao suit', in China known as the Zhongshan suit and since 1929 worn by government officials.[20] Both as a material item and as a discursive term, the Mao suit, early referred to in English as 'the blue boiler suit', encapsulates the widespread impression of homogeneity and androgyny as the main features of clothing culture in the early PRC. Along with 'Mao in his boiler suit' came 'swarms of muscular women in tight pigtails, laborers' boots and identical blue boiler suits', and 'Chinese technicians and advisers in their blue boiler-suits',[21] all adding up to 'the terrifying uniformity of the Chinese masses'.[22] References to 'boiler suit' gave way in due course to comments on 'the

[18] See further Chapter 5.
[19] This was ongoing from at least 2001. See T. E. Woronov, 'Raising Quality, Fostering "Creativity": Ideologies and Practices of Education Reform in Beijing', *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (2008), 401–22.
[20] Henrietta Harrison, *The Making of the Republican Citizen: Political Ceremonies and Symbols in China 1911–1929* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 191.
[21] William Stevenson, *The Yellow Wind: An Excursion in and around Red China with a Traveler in the Yellow Wind* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), 108; 'The Ugly & the Beautiful', *Time*, 75, no. 12, 21 March 1960, 22.
[22] Robert Guillain, *600 Million Chinese* (New York: Criterion Books, 1957), 18.

ubiquitous cotton Mao suit' that continued long after Mao's passing.[23] In Beijing in 1978 'both men and women uniformly wore severely tailored Mao suits, in dark blue, dark gray, or olive drab'.[24] The systematic differences between men's and women's clothing generally passed unnoticed by foreign observers.

According to Mao's physician Li Zhisui (1919–1995), the decision for the Chairman to wear the Zhongshan suit at the moment of the founding of the PRC on 1 October 1949 was taken by Mao himself, in face of suggestions that a Western suit would be appropriate to the occasion.[25] There is some confusion as to exactly what he wore, in terms of the material and the manufacture of the suit. Mao's personal secretary Ye Zilong (1916–2003), who supplied the cloth, recalls the coat as being made of 'coarsely woven wool produced in Yanan'.[26] On Ye's telling, Mao announced the founding of the PRC wearing clothes made of material woven by the hands of the people, embodying the revolutionary heritage of Yanan. Another tale altogether is told by Party photographer Hou Bo (1924–2017), who lived with her husband in the leadership compound in Beijing. According to Hou, the coat was American Army-issue wool (*jiangxiaoni*), uncovered by Ye Zilong during an inventory of materials discarded by Nationalist forces.[27] By this account (supported by colour footage of the events),[28] Mao was wearing a coat made not of coarse wool woven in Yanan but of Melton, a sturdy felted cloth made in the US, olive drab in colour, shipped to China probably for the supply of American troops on the ground. It may have been sourced in Hamilton House in Fuzhou Road, Shanghai, which had housed the US Military Commission and was a treasure trove of American army

[23] Orville Schell, *Discos and Democracy: China in the Throes of Reform* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2010), 85.

[24] United States 16th Congressional Delegation to the People's Republic of China, *The United States and the People's Republic of China: Report of the Sixteenth Congressional Delegation of the People's Republic of China* (Washington, DC: US GPO, 1978), 28.

[25] Zhisui Li, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao: The Memoirs of Mao's Personal Physician* (New York: Random House, 1996), 121.

[26] Ye Zilong, *Ye Zilong huiyilu* (Memoirs of Ye Zilong), ed. Wen Weidong (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2000), 144.

[27] Chi Hua, *Yi bu biti: 20 shiji Zhongguoren de fushi yu shenti* (Clothes Insufficient to Cover the Body: Dress and Bodies in Twentieth-Century China) (Nanning: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2017), 67.

[28] Soviet colour footage of the event was recovered in 2019 and used in the making of the documentary *Rebirth* (*Chongsheng*). See 'Jilupian "Chongsheng" shoudu pilu kaiguo zhengui jingtou, jinwan 21 dian bochu' (The Documentary *Rebirth*, Revealing for the First Time Priceless Footage of the Founding of the State, Goes to Air at 9 p.m. This Evening )," *Guanchazhe* (blog), 30 September 2019, at www.guancha.cn/politics/2019_09_30_519891.shtml?s=zwyxgtjbt.

surplus.[29] For Mao to wear a coat cut of this cloth could be read as his assuming the mantle of the power that had defeated Japan in the Second World War. In time, people in China would come to think that the Communist Party was in fact that power, and would hail Mao, rather than China's wartime leader Chiang Kai-shek, as saviour of the nation.[30]

From Mao's decision about what to wear at the Great Ceremony much followed: the popularity of the suit, its association with Mao himself and the CCP, its status in the hierarchical order of the Party and the wider society, its masculinity, its costliness, its ritual character. Compared to that other iconic garment of twentieth-century China, the *qipao* (cheongsam), it has been little studied,[31] but like its counterpart, the Western suit, it is a powerful garment, located at the core of a particular vestimentary order.[32] If it has sometimes seemed to outsiders that there was nothing more to that order, it is because it imprinted itself so boldly on the Chinese landscape. It was the blueprint for a variety of suits that differed from each other in minor ways but that together constituted the category of *zhifu*, or uniforms.

Scholarly publications often present the case for heterogeneity in dress during the Mao years, countering impressions that people in China all dressed much the same as each other. Researchers have pointed to signs of femininity in personal adornment and to the popularization of military styles during the Cultural Revolution as evidence of sensitivity to 'fashions' and a sustained fashion sensibility.[33] International influences on taste have been documented.[34] Sun Peidong, in the course of fieldwork

[29] *Shenbao*, March 16, 1947, 8. American uniforms were often made offshore; see the example of Australia in the Second World War, where uniforms were made for American troops based there from fabric shipped from the US. Anneke van Mosseveld, *The Australian Army Uniform and the Government Clothing Factory: Innovation in the Twentieth Century* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 97.

[30] Zheng Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 102. For an account of post-Mao revision of the relative roles of the Communist and Nationalist armies in the war, see Rana Mitter, *China's Good War: How World War II Is Shaping a New Nationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020).

[31] See Yang Chunpeng, *Zhongshanzhuang zhizuo jiyi* (The Art of Making the Zhongshan Suit) (Beijing: Zhongguo qinggongye chubanshe, 2017), which focuses on the technical specifications for making the suit; and Sean Metzger, *Chinese Looks: Fashion, Performance, Race* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), Part 3, 'The Mao Suit', which focuses on the Mao suit in Western culture.

[32] On this point with reference to the Western suit, see Anne Hollander, *Sex and Suits: The Evolution of Modern Dress* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016).

[33] Xurong Kong, 'Military Uniform as a Fashion during the Cultural Revolution', *Intercultural Communication Studies* 17, no. 2 (2008), 287–303; Li Peters, 'Uniformed Rebellion, Fabricated Identity: A Study of Social History of Red Guards in Military Uniform', *Fashion Theory* 14, no. 4 (2010), 439–70.

[34] Li, *China's Soviet Dream*, 136. Gerth, *Unending Capitalism*, 76–92.

in Guangdong province, uncovered everyday ways of resistance to political controls on dress.[35] In a much-quoted essay, Tina Mai Chen shows how clothing during the Mao years was differentiated along occupational and class lines.[36] There exists, as Chen writes, 'a diverse history of dress across both the time and space of communist China'.[37] In a slightly different vein, Calvin Hui argues that 'it is incorrect … to say that fashion and consumption are completely rejected or denied during the socialist period'.[38] In the present book, an entire chapter is devoted to identifying widely worn garments that were plainly *not* the Mao suit, describing what they looked like, and assessing their significance in the national wardrobe.

These points do little to disturb the centrality of the Zhongshan suit in the sartorial culture of the early PRC. It could be argued, in line with Frederick Teiwes's model of court politics in Beijing, that the Zhongshan suit, like Mao himself, remained in command during the Mao years. Other sartorial developments were merely reactive, or at least consistent with the stability of the centre.[39] Patterns of clothing production, instructions on how to make clothing, designs of clothing in pattern books, and the relation of these designs to each other show that the Zhongshan suit was the stable core of a system that in the third quarter of the twentieth century was gaining in size and technological complexity while gradually losing flexibility in terms of aesthetics, local initiatives and capacity to respond to international trends. There was a steady loss, too, of vocabulary, as if, by discarding words, status differences also could be discarded. The many terms that signified a variety of styles in the 1950s dropped away, along with the styles themselves, leaving an increasingly undifferentiated landscape dominated by various sorts of *zhifu*, or uniform, the very name of which helps explain the impression of uniformity left on the minds of foreign observers of the time and retained in the memories of people with lived experience of the times.[40] Imagined as a word cloud, the vocabulary set for clothing styles in the Mao years would show

[35] Sun Peidong, 'The Collar Revolution: Everyday Clothing in Guangdong as Resistance in the Cultural Revolution', *China Quarterly* 227 (September 2016), 773–95.
[36] Tina Mai Chen, 'Proletarian White and Working Bodies in Mao's China', *positions* 11, no. 2 (2003), 361–93.
[37] Tina Mai Chen, 'Dressing for the Party: Clothing, Citizenship, and Gender-Formation in Mao's China', *Fashion Theory* 1, no. 3 (2001), 165.
[38] Calvin Hui, *The Art of Useless: Fashion, Media, and Consumer Culture in Contemporary China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), 71.
[39] Frederick C. Teiwes, *Politics at Mao's Court: Gao Gang and Party Factionalism in the Early 1950s* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1990).
[40] Relatedly, see Chen, 'Dressing for the Party', 161.

*Zhongshanzhuang* (the Zhongshan suit) front and centre, and in very large font.

This clothing system has generic similarities to the dress of certain closed communities in the contemporary world: sobriety, a relative lack of differentiation and a high degree of conformity to certain norms shown in practice by its wearers. 'Closed community' is a term typically used of a culturally distinct community existing within a host society with which it does not intermarry. Examples are the Amish in the US, their dress 'often sewn at home, of inexpensive material, signaling equality and frugality', and the Holdeman Mennonites with their emphasis on 'plain dress' as 'the external manifestation of inner attitudes'.[41] The Ultra-Orthodox in Israel are comparable. Among the latter, male dress codes in particular mark 'a deviation from the prevailing order', even if (as in Mao's China) showing nuances that 'constitute expressions of subdued individuality'.[42] Albeit on a vastly expanded scale, Chinese society in the Mao years looks not unlike a closed community, seeking to remain aloof from a world on which it remained steadily dependent. Rising anxieties about dress were a hallmark of Chinese society in the early years of the Reform Era when this closed community was beginning to open up.

As a collective, bounded system that both reflected and imposed a certain social order, the clothing system in place during the Mao years can usefully be viewed as a clothing *regime*. The term 'regime' as used in international relations entails 'sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures'.[43] Transferred to a regime of everyday social practice, the definition helps identify the parameters by which a clothing regime is configured. In the case of clothing in Communist China during the Mao years, the formulation of principles was not absolutely stable over time, but never moved from the central point that clothing should be suited to the work and the worker,[44] unlike in bourgeois societies where 'clothing styles were suited to corrupt and

[41] Susan L. Trollinger, *Selling the Amish: The Tourism of Nostalgia* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2012), 17; Linda B. Arthur, 'Deviance, Agency, and the Social Control of Women's Bodies in a Mennonite Community', *NWSA Journal* 10, no. 2 (Summer 1998), 75.

[42] Uri Dorchin and Gabriella Djerrahian, *Blackness in Israel: Rethinking Racial Boundaries* (London: Routledge, 2020), 132–3.

[43] Stephen D. Krasner, 'Structural Causes and Regime Consequences: Regimes as Intervening Variables', *International Organization* 36, no. 2 (1982), 185.

[44] Fu Yingfei, *Xinfa jiancai: fengren jiaoben* (New Cutting Methods: Sewing Primer), 2 vols. (Beijing: Beijing xinsheng zhiye xuexiao, 1954), vol. 1, preface; Gu Rongbo, 'Yi ba jianzi, liangge shidai' (One Pair of Scissors, Two Different Eras), *Renmin ribao*, 5 October 1965. See further Chen, 'Proletarian White and Working Bodies in Mao's China'.

decadent lifestyles'.[45] The norms of the regime were clear: the criteria of simplicity (*pusu*), frugality (*jieyue*) and being neat or well fitting (*dafang*) for dress in New China were regularly stated. The rules of what to wear, if generally implicit, were often explicit in regulations governing occupational dress.[46] The decision-making procedures that ultimately governed what people wore were basically as articulated by Mao in 1953 when he stated, 'all major and important decisions should be settled by party committee first and then the decision is implemented by the government'.[47] The implementation was achieved through mass mobilization. All this added up to the 'prevailing practice [in China] for making and implementing a collective choice', even if 'choice' seems a counterintuitive term in a totalitarian system.[48]

From these principles, norms, rules and decisions, emerged the regime that foreigners came to denote by reference to the Mao suit, properly known as the Zhongshan suit. It could more accurately be termed a *zhifu* regime, or in other words a regime of uniforms. To convey the particular connotations and register of meanings associated with the term *zhifu* in the Mao years, this book uses the Chinese original rather than its standard English translation, 'uniform'. While the overlap between the two terms is broad, there is no real equivalent in English to the 'cadre uniform' (*ganbu zhifu*). Predominantly worn by government officials before its popularization in the 1950s, the cadre uniform is generally identified with the Zhongshan suit. In English, 'uniform' suggests military uniform in the first instance, all other instances being derivative. It was a case of 'from military uniforms to codified civility', as Jennifer Craik observes.[49] In China, this relationship is inverted.[50] During the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1644–1912) dynasties, there was a 'codified' officialdom, historically exemplified in rank badges for the nine grades of officials, with civil officials enjoying precedence over military officials. Although Western military uniforms provided the blueprint for

[45] Tianjinshi dier qinggongyeju fuzhuang shejishi, Tianjinshi Hepingqu dier fengren fuwu hezuoshe Yimin menshibu, *Fuzhuang caijian* (Garment Cutting) (Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1972), preface.
[46] See further Chapter 3.
[47] Quoted in Qianwei Zhu, 'The Decision-Making Process of the Chinese Government at the County Level', *Public Administration Quarterly* 27, nos. 1–2 (2003), 123.
[48] Krasner, 'Structural Causes and Regime Consequences', 186.
[49] See Jennifer Craik, *Uniforms Exposed: From Conformity to Transgression* (London: Berg Publishers, 2005), Chapter 2, 21–50.
[50] Slightly outside the concerns of the discussion here is Feng Jie's interesting use of 'uniform' to develop an idea of specific genres of dress in China (the *qipao* being an example) as 'units through which changes are possible'. Feng Jie, *Fashion in Altermodern China* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022), 3.