Mao Zedong’s Little Red Book (Quotations from Chairman Mao) – a compilation of the Chinese leader’s speeches and writings – is one of the most visible and ubiquitous symbols of twentieth-century radicalism. Published for the first time in 1964, it rapidly became the must-have accessory for Red Guards and revolutionaries from Berkeley to Bamako. Yet, despite its worldwide circulation and enduring presence there has, until now, been no serious scholarly effort to understand this seminal text as a global historical phenomenon. Mao’s Little Red Book brings together a range of innovative scholars from around the world to explore the fascinating variety of uses and forms that Mao’s Quotations has taken, from rhetoric, art, and song, to talisman, badge, and weapon. The authors of this pioneering volume use Mao’s Quotations as a medium through which to re-examine the history of the twentieth-century world, challenging established ideas about the book to reveal its remarkable global impact.

Alexander C. Cook is Assistant Professor of History at the University of California, Berkeley, where he teaches modern Chinese history. His research examines Maoism in its domestic and global contexts. His publications include the chapter on “Third World Maoism” in Critical Introduction to Mao (Cambridge University Press, 2010) and a forthcoming book on the Gang of Four trial in China.
Mao’s Little Red Book

A Global History

Edited by

Alexander C. Cook

University of California, Berkeley
Contents

List of illustrations vii
List of contributors viii
Preface xiii

1 Introduction: the spiritual atom bomb and its global fallout
   ALEXANDER C. COOK 1

2 A single spark: origins and spread of the Little Red Book
   in China
   DANIEL LESEE 23

3 Quotation songs: portable media and the Maoist pop song
   ANDREW F. JONES 43

4 Mao quotations in factional battles and their afterlives:
   episodes from Chongqing
   GUOBIN YANG 61

5 Translation and internationalism
   LANJUN XU 76

6 Maoism in Tanzania: material connections and shared
   imaginaries
   PRIYA LAL 96

7 Empty symbol: the Little Red Book in India
   SREEMATI CHAKRABARTI 117

8 The influence of Maoism in Peru
   DAVID SCOTT PALMER 130

9 The book that bombed: Mao’s Little Red Thing in the
   Soviet Union
   ELIZABETH MCGUIRE 147
Contents

10 Mao and the Albanians
   ELIDOR MËHILLI 165

11 Partisan legacies and anti-imperialist ambitions: the
   Little Red Book in Italy and Yugoslavia
   DOMINIQUE KIRCHNER REILL 185

12 Badge books and brand books: the Mao Bible in East and
   West Germany
   QUINN SLOBODIAN 206

13 Principally contradiction: the flourishing of French Maoism
   JULIAN BOURG 225

14 By the book: Quotations from Chairman Mao and the making
   of Afro-Asian radicalism, 1966–1975
   BILL V. MULLEN 245

15 Conclusion: In the beginning is the word: popular
   democracy and Mao’s Little Red Book
   BAN WANG 266

Index 278
## Illustrations

| Fig. 1 | Arming the people with Mao Zedong Thought. | page 14 |
| Fig. 2 | Lin Biao’s calligraphic dedication to first edition. | 31 |
| Fig. 3 | A closed circuit: reciting Mao quotations. | 53 |
| Fig. 4 | Factional alignment in Chongqing. | 63 |
| Fig. 5 | Order form for Swahili edition of the Little Red Book. | 89 |
| Fig. 6 | Chinese dancers welcome Nyerere to Beijing. | 102 |
| Fig. 7 | Album cover for Bruno Lauzi’s “Arrivano i cinesi.” | 195 |
| Fig. 8 | Slovenian Young Pioneer in loyalty oath ceremony, receiving a little red Pioneer book. | 201 |
| Fig. 9 | West German “brand book” edition of Mao’s quotations by Fischer Verlag. | 208 |
Contributors


SREEMATI CHAKRABARTI is Professor of Chinese Studies at the Department of East Asian Studies, University of Delhi, and Honorary Fellow of the Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi. She holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Columbia University and Master’s degrees from Delhi University (Political Science) and Harvard University (Regional Studies – East Asia). She has done post-doctoral research at Beijing Normal University. Currently, she is the Book Review Editor of the Sage journal China Report. Her publications include China and the Naxalites (1990), Mao, China’s Intellectuals and the Cultural Revolution (1998), and China (2007). On academic assignments she has traveled to Russia, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, the United States, and several times to China. She is on various China-related panels in Indian universities and government-run research and educational organizations. Several television and radio news channels, including the BBC, invite her to comment on China-related issues. In the year 2010, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao felicitated her with the China–India Friendship Award.

ALEXANDER C. COOK is Assistant Professor of Chinese History at the University of California, Berkeley. He is a graduate of Brown University (AB East Asian Studies) and Columbia University (MA Asian Languages, Ph.D. History) and formerly a Mellon Humanities Fellow at Stanford University. His research focuses on Maoism in its Chinese domestic and global contexts.
List of contributors

ANDREW F. JONES is Louis B. Agassiz Professor of Chinese at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of Yellow Music: Media Culture and Colonial Modernity in the Chinese Jazz Age (2001) and Developmental Fairy Tales: Evolutionary Thinking and Modern Chinese Culture (2011).

PRIYA LAL is Assistant Professor of History at Boston College. She is currently writing a book about Tanzania’s socialist experiment, the ujamaa villagization initiative of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Her writing on this topic has also been published in Africa: Journal of the International African Institute and The Journal of African History.

DANIEL EEGESE is Assistant Professor of Modern Chinese History and Politics at the University of Freiburg. He is the author of Mao Cult: Rhetoric and Ritual in China’s Cultural Revolution (2011) and the editor of Brill’s Encyclopedia of China (2009).

ELIZABETH MCGUIRE is an independent scholar teaching at San Francisco State University. She holds a Ph.D. in History from UC Berkeley and has completed a post-doctoral fellowship at the Harvard Academy of International and Area Studies. Her forthcoming first book is The Sino-Soviet Romance: How Chinese Communists Fell in Love with the Russian Revolution. She has also completed research for a second book, tentatively titled Communist Neverland: History of a Russian International Children’s Home, 1993–2013.

ELIDOR MÆHILLI is Assistant Professor in the History Department at Hunter College of the City University of New York. Previously, he held fellowships at Columbia University and the University of Pennsylvania (for a year-long Mellon-sponsored forum on “Peripheries”). He is completing a book on socialist globalization through the angle of Albania under Yugoslav, Soviet, Eastern bloc, and Chinese patronage, based on archival research in Tirana, Berlin, London, Moscow, Rome, and Washington.

BILL V. MULLEN is Professor of English and American Studies at Purdue University. His books include Afro-Orientalism (2004), a study of inter-ethnic anti-racist alliance between Asian and African Americans, and Popular Fronts: Chicago and African American Cultural Politics, 1935–1946 (1999). He has edited five other books in collaboration with Sherry Lee Linkon, James Smethurst, and Fred Ho. He has been a Fulbright lecturer at Wuhan University in the People’s Republic of China and is faculty adviser to the Purdue Students for Justice in Palestine chapter. He is currently at work on a political biography of W. E. B. Du Bois entitled UnAmerican: W. E. B. Du Bois and the
Century of World Revolution. His most recent publication is entitled “Building the Palestinian International” in the Social Text on-line dossier Periscope: www.socialtextjournal.org/periscope/2012/07/mullen.php.

DAVID SCOTT PALMER is Professor of International Relations and Political Science, and Founding Director of Latin American Studies at Boston University. He holds a BA from Dartmouth College, an MA from Stanford University, and a Ph.D. from Cornell University. His research and publications cover a variety of issues relating to Latin American politics, US–Latin American relations, and regional conflict, but includes a major focus on Peru and Shining Path. As a Peace Corps Volunteer sent to Ayacucho in the early 1960s to teach at the recently re-founded National University of San Cristobal de Huanmanga (UNSCH), he witnessed first-hand the progressive political radicalization of a unique higher education initiative designed to stimulate development of the most impoverished region of the Peruvian sierra. Fascinated by how his former colleague Abimael Guzmán Reynoso could over more than two decades apply Maoist principles to build a rural revolutionary movement that came close to victory, he has dedicated much of his research to an exploration of this phenomenon. He has several publications on the subject, including (as volume editor) Shining Path of Peru (1994).

DOMINIQUE KIRCHNER REILL is an Associate Professor in Modern European History at the University of Miami (Florida). She holds degrees from UC Berkeley (BA History) and Columbia University (MA, Ph.D. History). Her first monograph, Nationalists Who Feared the Nation: Adriatic Multi-Nationalism in Habsburg Dalmatia, Trieste, and Venice, was published in 2012 and received an Honorable Mention from the Smith Award. Currently she has been awarded the Rome Prize for Modern Italian Studies at the American Academy in Rome and the Title VIII/ACLS Fellowship in East European Studies to complete her analysis of the immediate aftermath of the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire through the lens of the independent city-state Fiume (today’s Rijeka in modern-day Croatia). Previously she has received support from the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America at Columbia University, the Remarque Institute, the Whiting Foundation, the Delmas Foundation, the German Marshall Foundation, and the Fulbright-Hays Program among others. She specializes in nineteenth- and twentieth-century European history, with a special focus on the Mediterranean, Italy, Yugoslavia, the Habsburg Empire, nationalism, regionalism, and the idea of Europe.
List of contributors

QUINN SLOBODIAN is Assistant Professor of Modern European History at Wellesley College. He is the author of Foreign Front: Third World Politics in Sixties West Germany (2012). He has been a fellow at the Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies at Harvard University, the Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung in Potsdam, and the Dahlem Humanities Center at the Freie Universität Berlin. His ongoing work follows the movement of ideas and actors in and out of modern Germany.

BAN WANG is the William Haas Professor in Chinese Studies at Stanford University and the Yangtze River Chair Professor at East China Normal University. He is the chair of the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures. His major publications include The Sublime Figure of History (1997), Illuminations from the Past (2004), and History and Memory (in Chinese, 2004). He co-edited Trauma and Cinema (2004), The Image of China in the American Classroom (2005), China and New Left Visions (2012), and Debating Socialist Legacy in China (forthcoming). He edited Words and their Stories: Essays on the Language of the Chinese Revolution (2010). He was a research fellow with the National Endowment for the Humanities in 2000 and the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton in 2007.

LANJUN XU is Assistant Professor of Chinese Studies at National University of Singapore, where she teaches modern Chinese literature and film. She received her Ph.D. in East Asian Studies from Princeton University in 2007 and has just completed a book manuscript tentatively titled The Child and Chinese Modernity: Culture, Nation and Technologies of Childhood in Modern China. She has also started to work on a new book project on the cultural interactions between China and Southeast Asian countries from the 1950s–1970s, focusing on literary translation, film, and broadcasting.

GUOBIN YANG is Associate Professor of Communication and Sociology in the Annenberg School for Communication and Department of Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of The Power of the Internet in China: Citizen Activism Online (2009) and co-editor with Ching Kwan Lee of Re-Envisioning the Chinese Revolution: The Politics and Poetics of Collective Memories in Reform China (2007). Previously he taught at the University of Hawaii at Manoa and Barnard College of Columbia University.
Preface

The year 2014 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of Quotations from Chairman Mao, commonly known outside China as the Little Red Book. At the height of its influence, the decade from the mid 1960s to the mid 1970s, this compact tome was the most printed book in the world. Official editions numbered well over a billion copies in three dozen languages, plus untold numbers of unofficial local reprints and unofficial translations in more than fifty languages.¹ The book’s characteristic physical form – pocket-sized, bright red, clad in sturdy vinyl – reflected its practical origins as an ideological field manual for soldiers of the Chinese military, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA).² The canonical revised edition that first appeared in 1965 arranged its 427 quotations into 33 thematic chapters, presenting extracts from Mao Zedong’s writings and speeches from 1929 to 1964, ranging in subject matter from philosophy to warfare to art.³ This easily digestible format drew upon two distinct literary genres: an ancient Chinese genre of collected wisdom dating back to the Analects of Confucius, and a modern genre of ideological primers embraced especially, but by no means exclusively, by Marxist–Leninists around the world. After Mao’s death, the book’s unsystematic presentation of fragments torn from their historical and textual contexts was widely dismissed as a vulgarization of Maoism (not to mention Marxism). During Mao’s lifetime, however, his quotations were adapted in China and elsewhere for many uses and in many forms – as a little red

¹ By comparison, the entire population of the world in the early 1970s did not exceed four billion people. See www.census.gov/population/international/data/idb/informationGateway.php, accessed October 1, 2012.
² For a history of the compilation of various editions, see Daniel Leese, Mao Cult: Rhetoric and Ritual in Mao’s China (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 108–27, and his expanded discussion in the first chapter of this volume.
book, of course, but also as rhetoric, art, song, performance, accessory, symbol, talisman, badge, and weapon.

This volume is the first scholarly effort to understand *Quotations from Chairman Mao* as a global historical phenomenon. A foundational premise of our work is that the Little Red Book was (and is) not just one thing. Its mass production, global circulation, and multifarious appropriation in multiple historical contexts produced meanings that cannot be exhausted from any single perspective. This demands that a global history of the Little Red Book be a collaborative effort. Each of the contributors to this volume was specially selected for his or her unique experience and expertise. The chapters that follow are the products of original research by leading scholars working around the world in a dozen different languages. As a group, we are diverse with respect to age, gender, ethnicity, and political sympathies. About half of the chapters are written by historians with various regional specializations, while the other half come from historically minded scholars of literature, area studies, political science, and sociology. While we do not pretend to provide a comprehensive history of the Little Red Book, our analytical toolkit allows us to cut sharply from a number of different angles.

From this diversity of perspectives, we have tried to identify some common themes. To this end, the contributors gathered for a conference held at the University of California, Berkeley on October 21–22, 2011, with major funding from the Townsend Center for the Humanities, the Institute for East Asian Studies, the Center for Chinese Studies, and the Department of History, and with superb logistical support by Elinor Levine. There we enjoyed intensive conversations amongst ourselves, as well as commentary and discussion from John Connelly, Brandon County, Thomas Mullaney, Daniel Sargent, Tyler Stovall, Darren Zook, and a spirited audience. (I can report that even in the twenty-first century there is no lack of public interest in the Little Red Book in Berkeley.) Later, three anonymous reviewers helped us to expand and refine our ideas. Our editors Marigold Acland and Lucy Rhymer, along with Claire Poole and the rest of the expert staff at Cambridge University Press, had the vision and skill to bring this volume to print. Throughout the process, the contributors have remained in close communication, exchanging ideas and advice. This ongoing collaboration helped us to draw together the common threads running through our work.

At the outset, we would like to draw the reader’s attention to the most prominent of these threads. The Little Red Book as a global phenomenon is first and foremost a product of its era. Despite its diminutive size, perhaps no other object proved more useful for the projection and reflection of the complexities and contradictions of the global 1960s.
The story of the Little Red Book speaks to the coming of age of the postwar generation; the unresolved legacies of fascism and totalitarianism; the disenchantment with liberalism and state socialism; the descent into the Cold War and the threat of nuclear confrontation; the often unfulfilled promises of national liberation in the postcolonial world; the accelerated globalization of capitalism; and the mass production and radical appropriation of popular culture. The Little Red Book allows us to talk about these abstract issues concretely, and each is emphasized to varying degrees within and across the chapters before you. Each chapter may be read profitably on its own, but the value of each increases as it is read in conjunction with the others. The number of different threads means that shared concerns are found in chapters far apart on the global map and in the table of contents. To take just one small example, Andrew Jones’ discussion of the pop song “hook” in China finds echoes in Elizabeth McGuire’s dissection of bawdy socialist humor in the Soviet Union and Dominique Reill’s analysis of pop culture Orientalism in Italy. This means that the chapters could have been arranged in a number of different ways.

As it stands, the chapters are organized according to a logic explained more fully in my introduction. Briefly, I argue that the Little Red Book aimed to explode the Cold War order by exploiting various fissions and fusions within and between the First World of American-style capitalism, the Second World of Soviet-style socialism, and an underdeveloped but emerging Third World. We begin with chapters that examine the Little Red Book in China. Daniel Leese details the origins, production, and dissemination of Quotations from Chairman Mao in China, and also explains the book’s eventual demise. Andrew Jones looks at the quotations set to music, exploring the technological and ideological implications of their proliferation in cross-platform and multimedia forms. Guobin Yang turns our attention to the violence wrought by Mao’s quotations, using a case study of factionalism and conflicting interpretive commitments during the height of the Cultural Revolution. Lanjun Xu’s chapter, which examines the mechanisms by which the Little Red Book was translated for export, pivots from China to the rest of the world. From there, the volume considers the Third World, Second World, and First World in turn. Sreemati Chakrabarti argues that in India, where Third World Maoism had the greatest influence during the Cultural Revolution period and where Maoism continues to exert influence today, the heyday of the Little Red Book was brief. Likewise, David Scott Palmer shows that the leaders of Peru’s Shining Path patterned their violent crusade on simplistic adaptations of Maoist principles, often to the detriment of those they claimed to defend. Priya Lal’s study of
ujamaa socialism in Tanzania reminds us that the flow of Little Red Books was merely a surface indicator of the ongoing exchange of people, ideas, materials, and technologies throughout the Third World. Our discussion of the Second World begins with Elizabeth McGuire’s chapter on Soviet reception of the Little Red Book, which was seen (like its Chinese promoters) as primitive, dangerous, and just a little bit funny. The scorn heaped on the Little Red Book in the Soviet Union earned it praise in Albania, China’s closest European ally in the fight against Soviet domination of the socialist world. This poorly understood aspect of the Cold War is detailed in Elidor Mëhilli’s chapter. Dominique Reill brings us through the Iron Curtain, revealing the Little Red Book as a symbol of common cause for anti-imperialist partisans in socialist Yugoslavia and capitalist Italy. On the other hand, Quinn Slobodian shows us both sides of the Berlin Wall to argue that fashionable fascination with the Little Red Book took fundamentally different forms in East and West Germany. In France, as Julian Bourg explains, the Little Red Book launched a popular intellectual movement rife with contradictions. Bill Mullen’s chapter narrates the history of Afro-Asian radicalism in the United States, where the Little Red Book provided a textual basis for Third World solidarity in the heart of the First World.

Ban Wang’s concluding chapter, originally delivered as the keynote address at our Berkeley conference, brings the discussion back to our fundamental premise: the Little Red Book is what people made of it. It is perhaps tempting to think of it as the sacred word of a totalitarian godhead, exerting its numinous power over the mass of enslaved idolaters – or as an ironic accessory for the nonbelievers who know better. Against the grain of such assumptions, Ban Wang argues that in China the Little Red Book – as a fixed text open to interpretation – set in motion a reformation with genuine possibilities for protest, agency, emancipation, and democracy. This volume is intended to challenge and provoke the reader; it is an opening. In the beginning is the word – but that is only the beginning.