

## Translator's Introduction

While it is true that I did translate Professor Ishikawa Yoshihiro's first book on the formative years of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), it was not my intention when I began reading the present volume to translate it as well. To be sure, there was that title, *How the "Red Star" Rose*, which immediately (as intended) made me think of Edgar Snow's classic *Red Star over China*. I was admittedly highly intrigued. If I remember correctly, *Red Star over China* was the first book I read in the field of China studies some fifty years ago, and while I have read quite a few more in the intervening half century, *Red Star over China* remains one of my all-time favorites—as much as a work of journalism on China in the 1930s as an adventure story which so many of us of a certain generation would love to have witnessed firsthand—and enjoyed almost as much vicariously.

But, while I have done a little work in the field of CCP history, my comfort zone has long been in the realm of the history of Sino-Japanese relations. So, the idea of undertaking this translation still hadn't really penetrated. And then I came to Chapter 4 and its discussion of Hatano Ken'ichi (1890–1963), and I was hooked. I have bumped into Hatano's name and work many times over many years, even before I began studying Japanese, and I always wondered how he could have known and written what he did and why. This book goes a long way toward answering that question, and it's not even one of the central concerns that Professor Ishikawa confronts. Add the Russian material and the introduction to G. B. Ehrenburg (who was related, incidentally, to Ilya Ehrenburg), and I was really hooked.

Unless you are a specialist in Edgar Snow studies or a devout believer in the Chang-Halliday view of the subject, this book is likely to transform your idea of the topic. That we never quite figure out who the initial figure identified as “Mao” really was in no way detracts from the thrust of the topic. As Professor Ishikawa notes in his “Afterword,” this book may have some of the trappings of an academic mystery novel, but many works of that genre not only do not end with a neat solution—they actually afford the reader food for thought as the mystery remains an open question. Who the image referred to repeatedly in this work as that of a “chubby Mao” is never solved, and limitations of the English language as well as understandable sensitivities prevented me from using many other adjectives to describe whoever that person was. One is reminded of the unresolved conclusion of *The Maltese Falcon* and the nickname used throughout to refer to Sidney Greenstreet's character in it.

Over the twenty-plus years that we have known one another, I have found intellectual interactions with Professor Ishikawa of a caliber second to none. Many times I have translated a sentence or listened to an argument laid out by him and thought to myself: How can that be right? Did I misunderstand something? I don't think I would be disclosing a secret by stating that Japanese is not an easy language for non-natives. And, then, the more I thought about it, the more I ruminated, clarity almost always would prevail. His work alone bears out my heartfelt belief that Japanese-language skills are an essential instrument in the tool chest of anyone researching and writing about prewar China. And, that was another prime factor in prompting me to translate this book—to make it available to the wider readership of interested parties and especially to inspire younger scholars.

One final thought about language. Ishikawa adopts a different tone here from his earlier book. That volume was strictly academic and followed a straightforward prose style. This volume, by contrast, has a more vernacular, occasionally conversational tone, a more personal touch. The author takes us with him as he pursues various conundrums to various ends. I have tried to convey that in English, though tone is one of the hardest qualities of language to translate. Any failure on that front is mine alone.

Joshua A. Fogel  
Toronto, April 2020

## Afterword to the English Edition

This volume is a revised version of my 2016 book, *Akai hoshi wa ikan ni shite nobotta ka* (How the Red Star Rose) (Kyoto: Rinsen shoten), for Anglophone readers. At the publisher's request, the original Japanese edition had virtually no notes as it was aimed at a general readership, but after it appeared in print, I rewrote some of the content for specialists and scholars around the world more broadly and provided emendations and footnotes where necessary. Two Chinese-language editions based on the original Japanese version were published by The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press (a traditional-character text, March 2020) and Peking University Press (a simplified-character text, June 2021) respectively. Now the former publisher has brought out an English-language edition.<sup>1</sup> Because of the marked difference in background knowledge of Chinese readers, I took this into account with the Chinese version, and considering the differing cultural backgrounds of Japan and China, I have revised the original text for the English version. Both the narratives in the English and Chinese editions are 20% longer than the Japanese original. In this sense the English and Chinese texts are the full editions in the essential conception that I was unable to achieve in the Japanese text.

Studies of Mao Zedong are an area of research with a high degree of difficulty. In his homeland of China, Mao is considered a great man, a founding

---

1 The publication of this book has been supported by a grant from the Resona Foundation for Asia and Oceania 公益財団法人 りそなアジア・オセアニア財団.

father, but as a result even today there are severe stipulations regarding his official image and place in history, making free discussion of or research on Mao impossible. This is, of course, true in the arena of political taboos. On the other hand, the difficulty is compounded outside China. First, the immense volume of ideological discourses that have accumulated since he was alive make discussing him in a scholarly vein difficult. One may wish to understand Mao's importance in contemporary Chinese history, but in fact contemporary Japan is not compatible with reading his written work and penetrating his world to study it. This is simply the truth about Sinologists in contemporary Japan. And, conditions are not all that different elsewhere.

One further hurdle is the mountain of scholarship that has been produced in China. Of course, because this scholarship has long been carried out within a distinctive historical framework, there are limitations to it. Nonetheless, the predominance of China, Mao's homeland, and the accumulation of research are overwhelming. Although we welcome the discovery of new materials and new facts and publish them, in truth specialists in the field of the history of the Chinese Communist Party work as hard as they can to gain the appreciative words, "you do it very well, for a foreigner." Thus, a foreigner carrying out research on Mao Zedong are, metaphorically speaking, competing with the Chinese national team in ping-pong. No matter how desperately I may practice, I can't possibly compete. Even if I try a trick play, the Chinese team has already prepared for it in their game plan, and after a one-sided match, they say "nice game" and shake hands.

Now, let me deliberately adopt a taboo or a disadvantage such as being unable to publish within China and call for originality? This, too, in the context of ping-pong, would be like a match with special rules, such as: the Chinese player had an ordinary paddle while we alone had special paddles and only we can win points. Just as an honest sportsman would not wish for such a match to transpire, an honest non-Chinese scholar would be reluctant to proudly tell Chinese scholars that one or another of Mao's flaws have never been discussed before. With all sorts of things mixed in for Mao studies, if at all possible I wouldn't want to go there. The unpopularity of research on Mao Zedong today is a result of the piling up of all these circumstances.

Can we, though, understand contemporary China without a discussion of Mao? That is, of course, impossible. He is an essential topic for research. Hence, I would like to aim at a content and standard with research in China. How about coming up with a serve or shot, or a new tactic or strategy, such as the Chinese team has thus far not seen? While contemplating such a move, the image of Mao Zedong before “Mao Zedong” occurred to me. After he became “Mao Zedong,” novel ideas seldom occurred in the realm of collecting even a little in the way of materials. But, was that the case back when he was still a man of mystery?

Take, for example, the image of a “chubby Mao Zedong” that I mention at the beginning of this book. I laughed when I first saw it. It was utterly bizarre. When I took it out and looked at it again, however, the thought struck me: “Why do I feel that this photograph is so strange?” And, as I thought about it further: “How was Mao thought of back then? Edgar Snow gained sudden fame with *Red Star over China*, but before that what kind of image was in circulation? Perhaps, no one, even specialists in the history of the Chinese Communist Party, were aware of the fact that such a strange head shot existed before Mao became the face of the CCP.” After doing a little checking, this was exactly it. So, I went on to do a thorough investigation.

In terms of research method, this book is a report on my effort to solve a riddle—namely, the riddle of the early image of Mao—by exploring materials to the extent possible. I have no particular theory or advocacy to support my work. I’m merely enthusiastic in trying to explain this enigma to which no one knows the answer. However, if I could explain the background of my interest in a paradoxical way, it might run as follows. As a result of knowing in a half-hearted manner the process and results of history, we often are unable to understand the intuition and common sense normally held by people at the time we are researching. From our perspective now, they appear to have feared what was unlikely to emerge, while at the same time paying little attention to what would likely soon occur. It may seem to us as if they were living in a completely different world from our own. The more that we know the subsequent history, the more the paradox emerges in

which, restricted to ready-made concepts, conditions at that time cannot be comprehended. Thus, Chinese specialists who are the most knowledgeable when it comes to Mao Zedong are confined by the starkest preconceptions, while by contrast we are able to understand, perhaps inaccurately, an era of uncertain information. Above all else, Mao's early image is a diffuse collision and reflection in which there is little related information outside China, and it is complicated by a great deal of false data. As such, there may actually be advantages to being a scholar of China outside the country.

I have written this book, then, on the basis of a concept of using what we don't know and knowing the era in which the people similarly did not know. I adopted a style of an academic mystery novel by which, on the one hand, we transcend the standard of "well done, for a foreigner," while at the same time attracting readers with no connection in their daily lives to the history of the CCP. Did it actually work? I invite everyone's pointers and criticism.



I have become indebted to many people in the writing of this book. First are the people who helped provide me with amassing related materials, in particular the Russian texts and journals which were the sources of numerous difficulties: Professor Alexander Pantsov (Capital University, Ohio) and Professor Irina Sotnikova (Far East Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences) were both extraordinarily helpful. In fact, Professor Pantsov, the author of his own biography of Mao Zedong, is the grandson of Georgii Borisovich Ehrenburg, a China scholar from the former Soviet Union introduced in this volume and the author of the first biography of Mao written outside China. Professor Pantsov provided me with the Russian-language biography which his grandfather composed in 1934 and allowed me to publish it in translation. Furthermore, in Japan, Ms. Hatano Maya 波多野真矢, granddaughter of Hatano Ken'ichi (the man who introduced the photograph of a chubby Mao Zedong), who also appears in this book and was a scholar of Peking opera as well, searched for relevant documents in response to my queries and provided me with a photograph of his grandfather. In the process of the pursuit of

documents to write this book, these two grandchildren of China scholars, in the USSR and Japan, respectively, pioneered research on Mao Zedong.

Over the years 2013–2014, I carried our research concerning materials on Edgar Snow's reporting work in northern Shaanxi and the photos and negatives shot by both him and Nym Wales which may be found in the archives of the University of Missouri–Kansas City, Brigham Young University, and the Hoover Institution at Stanford University; archivists there readily allowed me to photocopy materials. I have keenly felt the indispensability of the cooperation of such archives and libraries in the writing of a book such as this one that deals with numerous images and photographs. Similarly, in tracking down Chinese materials, I enjoyed the cooperation of Professor Zhang Si 張思 of the History Department, Nankai University, Professor Takida Gō 瀧田豪 of Kyoto Sangyō University, and Professor Joshua Fogel of York University. Let me now express my gratitude in print. In addition, this work received peer review by two anonymous referees prior publication by The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, and I was honored by their numerous views and suggestions in the process. They only improved the accuracy of the accounts herein.

For translating this book into an easily understood, yet sonorous English, I have to offer heartfelt thanks to Professor Fogel. A historian whom I most respect and honor, he also translated my earlier work, *The Formation of the Chinese Communist Party* (Columbia University Press, 2012). Although his field is the history of Sino-Japanese relations, his knowledge and linguistic skills go far beyond this, covering East Asian languages as well as French, German, and Russian. As the translator of this book which deals with reports on and introductions to Mao Zedong from all over the world, gaining Professor Fogel's full collaboration this time for this book was most fortuitous of all. At just the right time, from the fall of 2019 through the following March, he was resident at Kyoto University as a visiting scholar, and making good use of his spare moments during a busy time, he translated this volume. He returned to Canada shortly before the confusion caused by the contagion of Coronavirus spread worldwide, and later brought this translation to a conclusion under severe circumstances.

Finally, I need to express my gratitude to Ms. Chen Tian 陳甜 for her enthusiastic work in editing the Chinese- and the English-language editions of this book, which is a continuation of my collection of Chinese-language essays, *Zhongguo jindai lishi biao yu li* 中國近代歷史的表與裡 (On stage and backstage—Essays on the history of modern China) (Peking University Press, 2015). She edited the Chinese edition (a simplified-character text) of this book in early 2019, when she moved from Peking University Press to The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press. I had in fact spoken with her about bringing out a Chinese text in full characters with The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press. Given these circumstances, Ms. Chen took charge simultaneously of both the Chinese editions and an English edition. This sort of coincidence occurs fairly infrequently, and I'm extremely grateful for this serendipitous matching. Thanks also to Mr. Brian Yu 余敏聰 for taking over her editorial work with the same enthusiasm, and Professor He Hao 何浩 for creating an inspiring cover design of this book. While supported by people with such ties, I am especially happy that we have been able to publish the English-language edition of this study of Mao Zedong.

Ishikawa Yoshihiro

October 2021