

arguing to the Mongol leadership that taxing these communities would benefit the Mongols more in the long run than emptying the land of human settlement. The Yuan dynasty section is somewhat short but well-balanced, with figures from science, court life, literature, and the arts all included. The inclusion of the Uygur official and poet Guan Yunshi gives readers a better sense of the ethnic diversity among the Yuan elite.

The Ming dynasty is covered in the most substantial section of the volume, due perhaps to the greater abundance of biographical sources and, possibly, a stronger scholarly interest in these later events. The Ming biographies contain figures who lived in the period from the late Yuan through the earliest years of the Qing. One prominent Westerner is included, the Jesuit Matteo Ricci. As is the case in previous sections

of the book, individuals (although all male) from different sectors of Chinese society are included to paint a broader picture of the Ming world. The lives of individuals such as Ricci, the frontier leaders Altan Khan and Nurhaci, and conqueror of Taiwan Koxinga allow readers to see the many regional forces that shaped the Ming Empire's fate from beyond its borders. Several biographers in this section have also drawn connections between historical figures and their changing public images in modern-day Chinese society, offering readers a better sense of how history is produced and consumed in today's China.

In general, the writing in this volume is clear and concise. The careful use of scholarly primary and secondary sources by all its contributors gives strong support to the conclusions drawn

in the entries. The suggested readings listed at the end of each entry offer an interested reader a good launching pad for further exploration of these individuals and the times in which they lived. As educators, we know that many students, when confronted with a new research question, will turn first to online materials for guidance. As a test of this volume's usefulness in that context, I asked my fourteen-year-old niece to collect in ten minutes as much material as possible on one of the figures from this book. She returned with a stack of "hits" from Wikipedia and related sites, but none of these materials gave her a clear understanding of the society her figure inhabited and the larger significance of his life's work. Here, I believe, is where we find the true value for students: the careful scholarship conducted for this informative reference work. ■

Volume 3: Qing Dynasty through the People's Republic of China (until 1979)

Reviewed by David Kenley



DAVID KENLEY is Professor of Chinese History and Director of Asian Studies at Elizabethtown College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. His teaching and research interests focus on Chinese intellectual history and overseas migration.

In volume 3 of the *Dictionary of Chinese Biography*, Berkshire Publishing has provided a helpful and fascinating reference work that can be used by teachers in various classrooms. Covering the period from 1644 to 1979, the volume sheds valuable light on China's modern era as seen through the lives of select individuals.

Kerry Brown, the editor-in-chief of the three-volume series, unapologetically argues for the value of biography in the study of history. "While historians subscribe less and less to the 'great men and women' trope of history," Brown admits, ". . . it does help to put history within the finite boundaries of major political figures like kings and queens and their reigns. This provides an easy starting point for further exploration."¹ Indeed, a cursory look at publishing figures reveals that biography remains a popular and influential form of history writing, and Berkshire is capitalizing on this public interest. Besides, as Brown reminds us, biography has been a uniquely Chinese form of history writing since the time of Sima Qian in the first century BCE. For all these reasons, he contends, biography is an excellent medium for studying China's past.

Like the previous two, volume 3 introduces the reader to some of the most fascinating figures of the modern era. It contains thirty-six biographies, averaging approximately 5,000 words each. They all follow a similar format, including a short bio-line and a summary of the entry, followed by an informative essay and a list of texts for further reading. The entries are written for a general audience and are appropriate for both secondary school students and college-level readers.

Volume 3 contains some ancillary items not found in the other two volumes. These include a pronunciation guide and pinyin/Wade-Giles conversion table; a list of prominent people beyond those in the dictionary; an index of kings, emperors, and rulers from throughout Chinese history; an index of geographical locations; a glossary; a timeline; and an index. Perhaps most helpful is the extensive bibliography containing other biographical resources and primary documents related to the dictionary's entries.

The contributing authors in this volume come from a wide range of backgrounds, including some of the most well-respected senior scholars in the field. Most have academic ap-

pointments, while others are independent scholars. They include researchers from the United States, Europe, and China. Together, they provide a highly credible interpretation of China's modern history.

Despite being written for a general readership, the entries represent the most recent scholarship. For example, Natascha Gentz provides an excellent historiography on public portrayals of Jiang Qing (Mao's wife and leader of the Cultural Revolution). "There are few neutral biographical sources about Jiang Qing," she contends, "[and] most are either apologetic or condemnatory, containing judgments about her progressive and visionary spirit or her evil and selfish nature."² She then goes on to provide an incisive review of these sources. Other entries are quite revisionist in their approach. Ezra F. Vogel, for instance, asserts that Deng Xiaoping—not Mao Zedong, Joseph Stalin, Winston Churchill, or Franklin D. Roosevelt—"had a greater long-term impact on world history than any other twentieth-century world leader."³ There are numerous such entries that represent cutting-edge scholarship on the selected individuals.

As is the case in such a work, the process of selecting which individuals to include and which to exclude is somewhat arbitrary and inevitably leads to disagreement. Brown realizes this and in his introduction writes:

The selection of figures is highly subjective, no matter what the overt criterion. The main objective in the end is to have a broadly representative selection of figures from the main periods in Chinese history. One could have endless arguments on whom to include and

whom to leave out. The best I can say here is that this is the beginning, and perhaps in future editions we can hope to amplify, add to, and improve on the contents. We have to start somewhere.⁴

The result is a dictionary containing primarily military and political figures. Of the thirty-six entries in volume 3, twenty-eight can be considered political or military leaders, with the remaining eight loosely categorized as public intellectuals. All but three of them are men. There are many familiar names, including Emperor Kangxi, Chiang Kai-shek, Sun Yat-sen, and Mao Zedong. However, there are also a few names that will be unfamiliar to the general reader, such as railroad engineer Zhan Tianyou, poet Huang Zunxian, and party organizer Li Lisan. Though most (twenty-three) are twentieth-century figures, there is still a sizeable number (thirteen) from the Qing Era. In explaining his choice of subjects, Brown explains, "It was important to find figures who were significant during turning points in Chinese history."⁵ It would be helpful for each author to directly address the significance of their subject for these so-called "turning points."

Editor Kerry Brown further claims that "outsiders, those who came from what would be regarded as the margins of different versions or forms of Chinese society . . . were agents affecting radical and fundamental change."⁶ However,

none of the entries in volume 3 are of non-Chinese. As Brown explains, "We decided to limit these essays to individuals who were influential within China itself, and less in terms of China's relationship with other parts of the world."⁷ While it is necessary to make such decisions in determining entries, the dictionary could be enhanced by the inclusion of a small number of non-Chinese who had a profound effect on China's turning points. Some possible individuals might include the influential missionary Hudson Taylor; Comintern Agent Mikhail Borodin; or even Tibet's spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama.

Anticipating such criticism, Berkshire Publishing Group intends to use the hardcopy dictionary as "the foundation of a full-scale database of Chinese biography that will provide essential information comparable to that found easily in English about Western individuals."⁸ Presumably, this database will be far more extensive in coverage, with additional elites and important, though often overlooked, individuals from beyond the political/military spectrum. The Berkshire website (www.berkshirepublishing.com) does not contain specific details on the development timeline for this database, but it will no doubt be an immensely beneficial accompaniment to the print dictionary. Until it is available, the appendices in volume 3 provide helpful references for those seeking additional information.

Teachers in a wide range of classrooms will find the dictionary immensely beneficial. Each volume and entry can be used independently or in conjunction with the others. The relatively short entries introduce the reader not only to the life of the selected figure, but also to the socio-political environment in which s/he lived. According to Brown, "This project . . . is produced on the premise that it is better to know something about [China's] astonishing, inspiring history rather than veer away from it because it is too intimidatingly large."⁹ The entries in volume 3 go a long way in making China's history understandable and interesting. After utilizing this dictionary, students will inevitably be drawn into further study of modern Chinese history. In the end, this is the hallmark of an excellent reference work. ■

NOTES

1. Kerry Brown, introduction to the *Berkshire Dictionary of Chinese Biography (DCB)* Vol. 1 (Great Barrington, MA: Berkshire Publishing Group, 2014), xv.
2. *DCB*, vol. 3, 1440.
3. *DCB*, vol. 3, 1414.
4. Brown, *DCB*, vol. 1, xx.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Brown, *DCB*, vol. 1, xxii.
7. Brown, *DCB*, vol. 1, xxix.
8. Brown, *DCB*, vol. 1, xxx.
9. Brown, *DCB*, vol. 1, xvii.



BERKSHIRE

"All things China..."





Save 35% on all China titles

Use coupon **EAA2015**





www.berkshirepublishing.com/china


Offer ends 31 January 2015

Key Issues in Asian Studies

New!

Japan since 1945

Paul E. Dunscomb



"Concisely rendered, engagingly written, and thoughtful in its judgments, this short book is a most valuable interpretation of Japan's remarkable history since the end of World War II."

Andrew Gordon
Harvard University

"By far the best short introduction to the history of contemporary Japan available for classroom use."

William M. Tsutsui
Hendrix College

ISBN 978-0-924304-75-0, Pb: 102 pages.
List Price: \$10 (AAS Member Price: \$8)

Association for Asian Studies, Inc.
www.asian-studies.org