

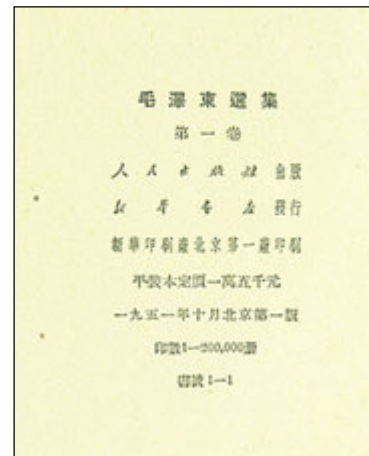


Sources and Early Printing History of Chairman Mao's "QUOTATIONS"

by Oliver Lei Han

Sometimes referred to as the "Chinese Bible", *Quotations Of Chairman Mao* ("Mao Zhu Xi Yu Lu") was first published on a very restricted basis in May 1964 and probably still holds the world record for most copies printed of a single work in under four years (720 million books by the end of 1967). Its idea was conceived by General Lin Biao (1907-1971) as a book of inspirational reading and originally printed for the General Political Department of the People's Liberation Army. For several years Lin promoted a campaign that everyone should study Chairman Mao's thoughts, and the P.L.A. newspaper printed daily extracts from Mao's selected writings and speeches which often formed topics for evening discussion groups. This was a good way for soldiers to study Mao's philosophy, since most were not well educated, and brief extracts of easy to understand words could help focus their comprehension and analysis.

Prior to the October 1949 founding of the People's Republic of China there were five editions of Mao Tse-Tung's *Selected Writings* published in various "Liberated Area" locations around China between 1944 and 1948, their texts taken from newspaper articles and oral transcriptions but apparently none sanctioned by its author. These were filled with misprints, errors and omissions, often excluding important articles entirely and including texts by other writers incorrectly attributed to Mao. Thus, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party decided a new edition of Mao's *Selected Works* was needed, so following the liberation of Peking in February 1949 a committee was formed to prepare and organize an authoritative version. The text selections were made in consultation with its author and Mao also agreed to proofread everything and organize additional notes with explanations. It was produced by The People's Publishing House



Colophon of the 1951 first edition

(Peking) and arranged in chronological sections to coincide with periods of modern Chinese history: the first revolutionary civil war (1924-1927) and second revolutionary civil war (1927-1937) [Volume One], the war of resistance against Japan (1937-1945) [Volumes Two and Three], and the third revolutionary civil war (1945-1949) against the Nationalists [Volume Four]. The first volume was printed in October 1951 to coincide with the second anniversary founding of the PRC and its

additional three parts were published over the next nine years. This became the source for selecting texts used in creating the "Little Red Book", and for that reason we include proper bibliographical citations:

Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung (Mao Ze Dong Xuan Ji).
Volume One (Di Yi Juan)

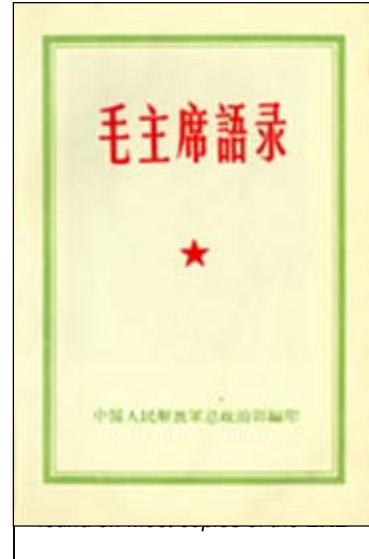
The People's Publishing House (Ren Min Chu Ban She,
Bei Jing, Zhong Guo)

Printed by Xin Hua Printing Factory, Peking First
Branch Factory

Price: 15,000 yuan 200,000 copies printed, October
1951 First edition

Measurements: 208 x 151 mm.

[i] half-title in red, [iii] title-page in red with a green ink
double border, inserted portrait plate of the author
captioned (brown ink), i-ii (Introduction), i-vi (Contents
Index), 296pp. + [i] colophon



Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung (Mao Ze Dong Xuan Ji). Volume Two (Di Er Juan)

The People's Publishing House (Ren Min Chu Ban She, Bei Jing, Zhong Guo)

Printed by Xin Hua Printing Factory, Peking First Branch Factory

Price: 25,000 yuan 500,000 copies printed, March 1952 First edition

Measurements: 208 x 151 mm.

[i] half-title in red, [iii] title-page in red with a green ink double border, [iv]
errata notice indicating that the essay "On Contradiction" which is included in
this book belongs in Volume One and will be moved in future printings, [x]
(Contents Index), (297-)805pp. + [i] colophon

Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung (Mao Ze Dong Xuan Ji). Volume Three (Di San
Juan)

The People's Publishing House (Ren Min Chu Ban She, Bei Jing, Zhong Guo)

Printed by Xin Hua Printing Factory Price: 15,000 yuan

500,000 copies printed, February 1953 First edition "1-3" code

Measurements: 208 x 151 mm.

[i] half-title in red, [iii] title-page in red with a green ink double border, i-iv
(Contents Index), (807-)1144pp. + [i] colophon

Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung (0 Mao Ze Dong Xuan Ji). Volume Four (Di Si
Juan)

The People's Publishing House (Ren Min Chu Ban She, Bei Jing, Zhong Guo)

Printed by Peking Xin Hua Printing Factory Price: 1.4 yuan

1,000,000 copies printed, September 1960 "1001.479" code

Measurements: 208 x 151 mm.

[i] half-title in red, [iii] title-page in red with a green ink double border, i-vi (Contents Index), (1121-)1520pp. + [i] colophon, with an additional errata slip inserted (8 lines) explaining that this volume has been repaginated to conform to the latest reprints (i.e. "second edition") of the earlier volumes which have been re-edited and changed format.

PLEASE NOTE that all of the above texts are printed in vertical format, which did not change to a horizontal format (left to right) until 1966.

A fifth book was planned as early as 1960, to include selected writings from the PRC period, but Chairman Mao resisted its production as he felt his essays and speeches on Socialist Construction (1949-1957) were still evolving compared to his Democratic Revolution policies contained in the earlier volumes. More perspective was needed before one could judge the best appropriate texts to join his otherwise sacred writings. But Mao did agree that a committee could begin reviewing his later work, and there survives several fascicles beginning in 1968 that were drafts printed "for internal use only" containing a selection of these



Covers of the 1951-1977 first edition set
Mao's "Selected Writings"

later essays (not all of which were eventually adopted), Less than a month following Mao's death, his successor Chairman Hua (Guo Feng) agreed on the publication of Volume Five which was published six months later. It included 70 texts by Mao from October 21, 1949 to November 18, 1957 of which 46 articles had never before been printed in any other form. Another change in party leadership the following year considered these additions too far to the left as emphasis began shifting away from Mao and his "Little Red Book". Consequently, in some circles, this Fifth book is discredited and not counted alongside the first four volumes. Nonetheless, its bibliographical citation follows:

Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung (Mao Ze Dong Xuan Ji). Volume Five (Di Wu Juan)

The People's Publishing House (Ren Min Chu Ban She, Bei Jing, Zhong Guo)

Printed by Peking Xin Hua Printing Factory

Price: 1.25 yuan First edition, April 1977 "1001.1123" code

Measurements: 208 x 151 mm.

[i] half-title in red, [iii] title-page in red with a green ink double border, inserted portrait plate of the author captioned (brown ink), i-ii (Introduction), i-viii (Contents Index), 532pp.

The first English language translation of these *Selected Works*, volumes 1-3, came out in London in appropriate red cloth by Lawrence & Wishart Ltd, 1954-1956 (in

four volumes); volumes 4 and 5 were first translated into English and published in Peking by the Foreign Languages Press in 1961 and 1977 respectively.

By 1964 the four volumes of Mao's works had become the chief reading and source of knowledge within China. Images of these glistening white paper covers lettered in red and gold were constantly reproduced on posters, in newspapers and magazines, underneath glazed ceramics, and as part of porcelain figurines. Thus, it was natural that these texts would be used to select excerpts for daily military reading. The person in charge of these selections was Tian Xiao Guang, an editor at the People's Liberation Army newspaper. In December 1963 Ms Tian began to collect together and assemble the most popular of her selections for publication as an anthology. Her first draft comprised 23 chapters and 200 different entries that she completed in January 1964, later revised to 25 chapters and 267 quotations. Eventually this became 30 chapters and 250 pages of text when it was finally published by the General Political Department in May 1964. It was titled the *Quotations Of Chairman Mao* ("Mao Zhu Xi Yu Lu") and gradually became the most identifiable icon of Red China and its eventual Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution.

Binding Variants on First Editions

This first edition version has a page size larger than subsequent printings measuring 137cm. (5-3/8 inches) height and occurs in two completely different bindings: (A) in printed paper wrappers with its title in black within an oblong red rectangular box on upper cover, the publisher's name in black at the bottom, red lettered spine and a blank rear cover, or (B) in red vinyl textured plastic incised with the title and a red star below, being a separate protective jacket where stiff plain white cardboard covers are inserted adjacent to a linen-backed spine with sewn head- and tailbands.

Although the text for both bindings appear to be identical, according to Ms Tian those in printed paper wrappers were released first while the vinyl plastic covers were still being designed/manufactured and its copies required a sturdier binding. These followed within days: the printed wrappers were intended for individual high ranking officers while the red vinyl covers were for use by brigade teams of up to eight men. By the



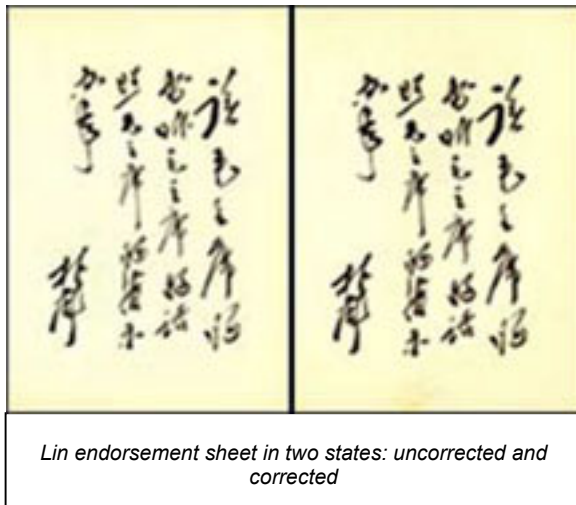
First editions of the LRB in two trial bindings (light blue, dark blue) beside published printed paper wrappers and red vinyl plastic

time of the Cultural Revolution (August 1966), the red vinyl covers had become preferred for symbolizing Red China and the more fragile paper wrappers were no longer produced.

There exists two variant copies of this first edition in trial bindings, both comprising copies of the printed paper wrappers loosely laid inside the flexible plastic: (1) of light blue vinyl with the fourth Chinese letter "Yu" meaning "Words" or "Quotations" on the incised front jacket printed in a simplified form rather than its normal Chinese character, and without any five-pointed star; and (2) of dark blue vinyl with the title text character corrected and having an oversized five pointed star. The blue color is customary in China for use with trial bindings, and both clearly predate the corrected red vinyl covers usually associated with this book.

First Edition Text Variants

It is generally accepted that all copies comprising only thirty chapters ending at page 250 are first editions. The absence of publishing data is because this was not considered an official book when it was simultaneously produced at different locations in China from stereotyped plates, thus making local distribution easier. As head of National Defense Lin Biao was invited by the G.P.D. to write an endorsement, and Lin chose three



endorsement, and Lin chose three sentences from the diary of the revolutionary hero Lei Feng: "*Study Chairman Mao's writings, follow his teachings and act according to his instructions*". He wrote them out in a calligraphic script but made a mistake with one word: a superfluous brush stroke occurring in the 2nd vertical line from the right, 2nd character from the top (ting) which means "listen to" or "obey", thus giving it in English the

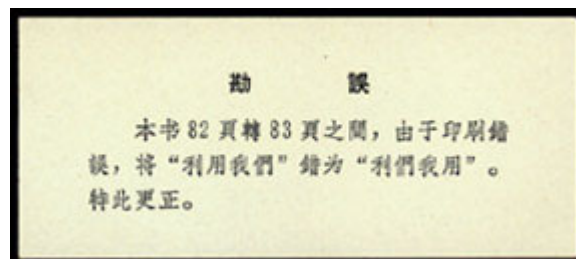
equivalent of crossing a "t" twice or dotting an "i" twice. This error was discovered only after the book had been printed and new plates were eventually made but they were apparently not used until the third edition of August 1965.

Lin had been part of the Red Army since joining Mao's forces in 1928, and gradually became a top-ranking leader: the Commander in-chief of the Chinese volunteer forces during the Korean War and in 1959 he was appointed Defense Minister, second only to Mao in the military hierarchy. His promotion of the

LRB added significant influence to his profile so by 1967 he was designated Vice-Chairman and at the Ninth Congress (1969) it was confirmed that he would be Mao's heir and successor. Jealous factions whispered rumors that Lin and his family were plotting to assassinate Mao and gain early control of the CCP. While never totally proven, it caused Lin, his wife Ye Qun and their son to suddenly leave on a military transport for an undisclosed destination when their plane was shot down over Mongolia the evening of September 12th 1971. When news was finally released, it came with a proclamation that Mao's close comrade-in-arms for nearly a half-century had disgraced himself and his name was to be eradicated from modern history. Consequently, his endorsement leaf in all copies of the **LRB** was to be torn out or otherwise defaced as a sign of loyalty to Mao and the Chinese Communist Party. Indeed, not removing it could easily be a liability. Therefore, many surviving copies in the Chinese language have that page legitimately torn away or censored following this decree.

Of the earliest printed text issued by the General Political Department of the Chinese People's Liberation Army there are three variants with NO KNOWN PRIORITY firmly established or implied:

(1) some copies in red vinyl bindings (including those from the Central Advanced Party School Library of the CCP) contain a text error at the bottom of page 82 going into 83 with a printed erratum slip: "*In this book between pages 82 and 83, because of a printing error, please read "li yong wo men" instead of "li men wo yong".*" In these copies the Lin endorsement is printed in brown ink, but no copies in printed paper wrappers have been identified with this error;



Erratum slip for error at pages 82/83 found in some copies of the first edition

(2) most copies in red vinyl binding have the text pages 82/3 correctly printed and are known with the Lin endorsement printed in either brown or black ink;

(3) all copies examined in printed paper wrappers have the corrected text at pages 82/3 and the Lin endorsement printed in black ink.

Even within the above groups one may find variations in the quality of paper used for printing as well as in the thickness of paper, apparently due to the use of stereotype plates in different printing centers throughout the country. In one instance the portrait frontispiece of Chairman Mao changes to a light brown color halftone (without any known priority).

The first four leaves for all three versions are separately printed from the rest of the book and comprises a half-title printed in red ink "Workers of the World, Unite!"; a title-page with the title and central star printed in red while the publisher's imprint below and a double-ruled border around the entire page are

printed in green; a finely delineated portrait of Chairman Mao (usually found with a tissue guard) is printed in brown; and the facsimile calligraphic endorsement by Lin Biao (always with its printing error) is printed in either brown or black ink. This is followed by all black ink letterpress text: (1/2) an introduction signed by the General Political Department dated 1st May 1964; (1/2) Table of Contents listing thirty chapters; and then paginated 1 - 250pp for Chairman Mao's text.

There are two additional versions that exist which also are considered "first editions" in China, both still conforming to thirty chapters of text and most likely issued either at the same time or soon after:

(4) identical in format and content to #3 but having a double-line imprint on both the printed front wrapper and the title-page: "The General Political Department of the Chinese People's Liberation Army [adding] The Ministry of Metallurgical Industry";



Printed paper wrappers for versions #4, #5a, and #5b

(5a) smaller format with page height 125cm (4-7/8 inches) which afterwards became the standard size for all subsequent printings of the LRB. Copies are only known in printed wrappers (following the same design as on the larger sized version) but issued WITHOUT the four inserted colored ink preliminaries, thus beginning directly with a Preface [1/2], Table of Contents [1/2], and then paginated 1-252pp. of Chairman Mao's text, here slightly expanded due to the reduced page size. It has been suggested that this version must also be considered a first printing (like #s 1-3) but without the color-printed stereotype plates which had been accidentally omitted when shipped to the regional printers [where this was printed we do not know]. However, these text pages required *new* printing plates because the text area itself got slightly reduced when the format became smaller so this argument is not wholly convincing;

(5b) identical to #5a is a similar version having a double-line imprint on the front cover (most likely produced at the same time) adding that it was made for the "Political Department of the Railway Corps of the People's Liberation Army" [still with no printing location identified]. Because the contents of both these issues comprise the original thirty text chapters, it is certainly very early in this book's history and is itself quite a rare variant.

Second And Third Edition Additions

We do not know how many copies of the **LRB** were originally printed, especially as we now understand that it was produced from stereotyped plates in several different locations simultaneously, and it was not until March 1965 that a second edition appeared, specifically imprinted in Northeast China at Harbin by the Hei Long Jiang Province People's Publishing House. This new edition adds two more chapters of text and changed the portrait image of Mao. Curiously, of the two copies located for examination, both are in printed paper wrappers and they appear never to have had Lin's endorsement included. There is also no preface and Mao's text is here expanded to 260 pages (*now with 32 chapters*).



Mao portraits found in the 1st, 2nd, and 4th editions

The first complete edition of Mao's **QUOTATIONS** is the third edition, upon which all subsequent versions and translations are based. This was published in August 1965 and adds a 33rd chapter, reverting back to a slightly smaller-size image of Mao original portrait as first printed in 1964 and expanding the text now to 270 pages. As with the earliest printings it is published for the General Political Department and intended only "for internal circulation". Copies appear in both printed paper wrappers and red vinyl plastic. For unknown reasons a few copies of this version have been recorded with the Lin endorsement in its uncorrected earlier state albeit shorter in height; but for most copies that still retain the endorsement leaf, it will be found in its later corrected form.



Colophon from third (i.e. first complete) edition, August 1965

Copies of this third edition sometimes have extra material pasted inside, such as "Latest Instructions" printed in red ink with more Mao quotations, and also small pamphlets like "When You Meet Problems or Questions, You Can Find The Answers in Chairman Mao's **Quotations**" which may list up to 100 difficulties based on daily life (cross-referenced to Mao's selected extracts) followed by a list of topics for discussion groups dealing with

Mao's thoughts, issued by the Beijing Dong Feng Printing Factory. Hereafter, many more editions of Mao were printed locally, sometimes several printings

even within the same month but from different cities, occasionally making changes like using a variant Mao portrait as printed by the Ji Lin Province People's Publishing House (November 1965). Another version from Hubei Province People's Publishing House (December 1965) added three more chapters selecting more texts from the *Collected Works* but this aberration had absolutely no influence and was apparently never repeated.

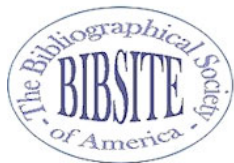
Multi-Lingual Translations of the Second Edition

A new introduction for the **LRB** appeared in newspapers on December 16th, 1966 and was subsequently added to all future printings of the book (now designated "Second Edition"), and likewise also circulated as a small leaflet for everyone to put inside their older copies. This "Foreword" is signed by Lin Biao and explains how Marxism-Leninism-Maoist thought is "a powerful ideological weapon" for opposing imperialism, revisionism and dogmatism, an inexhaustible source of strength and spiritual guidance for the masses. This also signaled the start of a major translation and publication project where the **LRB** got issued in over thirty different languages where Socialism might triumph.

Professor William B. Todd in an exhibition catalogue for the Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin (1976), described copies of *Mao Zhu Xi Yu Lu* published through September 1966 as being printed "For Internal Circulation Only", *i.e.* restricted government distribution, but this changed in October when the East Is Red Publishing House (Beijing) produced the first copies for general sale as well as the first bi-lingual edition (Chinese-English) ten months later (August 1967). As for translations into other languages, they were created, printed and distributed by the government's Foreign Languages Press between 1966 and 1972 with the following versions noted (as published): English, French, Japanese, Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, German, Italian, Portuguese, Mongolian, Arabic, Hindi, Albanian, Indonesian, Urdu, Nepali, Hausa, Norwegian, Pashto, Thai, Burmese, Swahili, Persian, Esperanto, Korean, Lao, Tamil, Bengali, Rumanian, Hungarian, Polish, Greek, and Serbian. Several Chinese printings were also produced in raised Braille letters during the 1960s, including one version actually



Stereotype plate from First English Language Printing: Peking, 1966



bound in an extra large red vinyl plastic after the original. The first American version printed in the United States appeared in March 1967 in bright red wrappers as a Bantam paperback, edited by Stuart R. Schram with an introduction by A. Doak Barnett. And in 1968 CMS Records (New York) issued their album #105 of "Direct QUOTATIONS from the 'LITTLE RED BOOK' selected by Trevor Reese" and read by Shakespearean actor Martin Donegan.

The LRB continued to be printed in huge quantities for mass distribution up until the time of Mao's death on September 9th, 1976. This brought about an official end to the Cultural Revolution (which had used the LRB as a frequent symbol). By the late 1970s a change in government discouraged its further circulation and millions upon millions of copies were collected and destroyed as obsolete paper even while the cult of Maoism continued. It was during the centenary of Mao Tse-tung's birth (1993) that copies were once again printed, this time as facsimiles in English, French and German being exact replicas dated 1966 and with "First Edition" printed behind each title-page. They can be easily distinguished by their bright shiny red laminated covers and the presence of colored photograph portraits near the front. As they can still be found all over China, most likely they have been printed again even more recently. No one denies Mao is the Father of his country, truly the last Emperor, a symbol of power and reverence who has been exonerated for the mistakes of his reign and consequently recognized for his achievements as hope for the future. His ideology forms a brilliant concept that is still readable and admired today for its political theories and strategies, and no doubt he would be very proud to know the effect he has had on his own country and the world will never forget him.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

These details are based upon personal inspection over several years researching the printing history of the "Little Red Book", interviewing senior specialists at the National Library (Beijing), and information from various private collectors and dealers throughout the People's Republic of China: Dong Zhong Chao, Gao Shang Heng, Hao Yu, Li Fan, Liu Yue Jin, Liu Zhan Quan, Shi Jin Yan, Tian Xiao Guang, Yan Hui Zeng, Zhang Wei Shu and Zhao Hong; also my thanks go to Dennis M. V. David and Justin G. Schiller of Battledore Ltd (Kingston NY) on whose behalf I have been serving as consultant and translator in China since December 2001 and also for their help in editing this article for publication. I am especially appreciative that an earlier version of this text (somewhat abridged) had been published in the *Antiquarian Book Review* (London, November 2003) and thank its editors for permission to include this expanded version on BibSite.

O.L.H.