ABSTRACT

The research materials and studies on the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) in China may be voluminous, but sparingly few have investigated its origin. Scholars from Mainland China researching the subject are generally confined by the domestic political circumstances, while studies by western researchers are far from being comprehensive.

This study has undertaken to present an objective and complete analysis pertaining to the origin of this movement against relevant social background to understand the development logic. The aspects under survey include the following: political, social, historical, ideological as well as personage influence. Focusing on the factors leading to the Cultural Revolution, the scope of the study centers around the period beginning 1957, when the Anti-Rightist movement took place, and ending 1966, the inceptive stage of this historical movement.

The first chapter of this thesis traces the creation of public opinion that ultimately triggered the revolution.

Next is a chapter to explore the mechanism of internal politics within the Chinese Communist Party resulting in Mao Zedong's final decision to ignite the revolution. The chapter also looks into the responsibilities of Radical Leftist for the occurrence.

The third chapter tries to delineate the Chinese mind in the Cultural Revolution primarily in terms of a process of radicalization, and inspects how social thinking is being shaped and how the malformed mass psychology paved the way for the revolution growing from the lower society upwards.

Chapter four describes how the breaking of Sino-Soviet bilateral ties affected the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution.

Chapter five looks at the Chinese political system under the rule of the Chinese Communist Party and the escalation of radicalism after 1949.

Chapter six explores Mao Zedong's theory of Cultural Revolution and his leading role during the movement.

Finally, the last chapter concludes with a summary of findings which indicate that no one single factor alone is sufficient in setting off the Cultural Revolution. In other words, the outburst of Cultural Revolution was necessarily pluralistic in nature. Factors such as historical background, ideological development, social settings, influence of personal cult, international environment and political conditions have each contributed in different ways at different levels to the origin of the Cultural Revolution. The analysis and exploration in this thesis serve to offer a full view on the subject under study.