Mandarin Chinese is the most widely spoken language in the world today. In China, a country with a vast array of regional and local vernaculars, how was this national language created – and how did people learn to speak it? *The Sounds of Mandarin* traces the surprising social history of a spoken standard, from its creation as the national language of the early Republic in 1913, to its journey to postwar Taiwan, and its reconfiguration as the “common language” of the People’s Republic after 1949.