

# **THE CIVILIZATION OF CHINA**

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The civilization of China by Herbert A. Giles

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**HERBERT A. GILES**

**THE CIVILIZATION  
OF CHINA**



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## P R E F A C E

THE aim of this work is to suggest a rough outline of Chinese civilization from the earliest times down to the present period of rapid and startling transition.

It has been written, primarily, for readers who know little or nothing of China, in the hope that it may succeed in alluring them to a wider and more methodical survey.

H. A. G.

CAMBRIDGE,  
*May 12, 1911.*

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## CHAPTER I

### THE FEUDAL AGE

It is a very common thing now-a-days to meet people who are going to "China," which can be reached by the Siberian railway in fourteen or fifteen days. This brings us at once to the question—What is meant by the term China?

Taken in its widest sense, the term includes Mongolia, Manchuria, Eastern Turkestan, Tibet, and the Eighteen Provinces, the whole being equivalent to an area of some five million square miles, that is, considerably more than twice the size of the United States of America. But for a study of the manners and customs and modes of thought of the Chinese people, we must confine ourselves to that portion of the whole which is known to the Chinese as the "Eighteen Provinces," and to us as China Proper. This portion of

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the empire occupies not quite two-fifths of the whole, covering an area of somewhat more than a million and a half square miles. Its chief landmarks may be roughly stated as Peking, the capital, in the north; Canton, the great commercial centre, in the south; Shanghai, on the east; and the Tibetan frontier on the west.

Any one who will take the trouble to look up these four points on a map, representing as they do central points on the four sides of a rough square, will soon realize the absurdity of asking a returning traveller the very much asked question, How do you like China? Fancy asking a Chinaman, who had spent a year or two in England, how he liked Europe! Peking, for instance, stands on the same parallel of latitude as Madrid; whereas Canton coincides similarly with Calcutta. Within the square indicated by the four points enumerated above will be found variations of climate, flowers, fruit, vegetables and animals—not to mention human beings—distributed in very much the same way as in Europe. The climate of Peking is exceedingly dry and bracing; no rain, and hardly any snow, falling between October and April. The really hot weather lasts only for six or eight weeks, about July and August—and