

**THE ANCIENT AND MODERN  
HISTORY OF CHINA:  
COMPRISING AN ACCOUNT OF  
ITS GOVERNMENT AND LAWS**

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The Ancient and Modern History of China: Comprising an Account of Its Government and  
Laws by Anonymous

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**THE ANCIENT AND MODERN  
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THE  
ANCIENT AND MODERN  
HISTORY OF CHINA;

COMPRISING

AN ACCOUNT OF ITS GOVERNMENT AND LAWS, RELIGION, POPULATION, REVENUE, PRODUCTIONS,  
MANUFACTURES, ARTS AND SCIENCES, LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE;

*CHARACTER AND MANNERS OF THE INHABITANTS;*

AND

HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERCOURSE OF CHINA WITH OTHER NATIONS,

FROM THE EARLIEST PERIOD DOWN TO THE PRESENT;

AND

A STATEMENT OF FACTS RELATIVE TO THE OPIUM TRADE

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## CHINA PROPER:

ITS SITUATION, DIVISION, GENERAL APPEARANCE, &c., &c.

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CHINA is called by the natives *Chung-Kwo*, *The Flowery Nation*, *The Land of Sages*, *The Region of Eternal Summer*: the present family gave it the name of *Ta-tsing-kwo*, *The Empire of Great Purity*; and *T'ien-chaou*, or *The Celestial Empire*. It is situated in eastern Asia, and extends 18° from north to south, and nearly the same from east to west, lying between 20° to 47° W. latitude. It has Asiatic Russia on the N.W.; the Pacific Ocean washes its Southern and Eastern shores; and Mongolia, or the province beyond the Great Wall, called by the Chinese *Fong-t'hyen-fu* on the north. The empire contains 3,010,400 square miles, 1,298,000 of which forms China Proper; 640,000,000 acres of which are arable. The streets of their towns and cities are very narrow; it is possible, in many of them, by stretching out the arms, to touch either side with the fingers.

The name *Chung-kwo*, given to it by the natives, which signifies the middle kingdom, arises from the idea they entertain of its being the heart of the earth; and a particular mountain has been pointed out by them as the navel of the earth: they suppose all other nations, states, &c., to be scattered round it, like so many tributary provinces. Some suppose, that the modern name of China is derived from the dynasty *Chin* or *Tsin*. The Siamese, and the natives of Cochin China, according to the peculiarities of their alphabet or habits of pronunciation, call it *Cin* (pronounced *Chin* or *Tsin*); and from the proximity of those two nations to China, it is considered very probable, that the modern name was derived from them. The Hindoos pronounce it *Thin*, the Arabs *Sin*—a difference which explains why we find that in the ancient geographers the city of *Thinæ* was always in the interior, while the *Sinæ* were towards the sea: it may be said that they were conversant with *Sinæ*, or *Thinæ*, they knew nothing of China Proper, and but little of what we call Cambodia and Cochin China.

It was, in the reign of the emperor *Kien-long*, divided into fifteen provinces; the three larger have, of late, been subdivided and made into six, making the total number eighteen;

they are as follows: 1. Pe-che-li, containing the present capital of the celestial empire, 2. Shan-tong, 3. Shen-si, 4. Gan-hoey, 5. Ho-nan, 6. Shen-si, 7. Tche-kyang, 8. Kyang-si, 9. Hoo-nan, 10. Se-tchuen, 11. Fa-kyen, 12. Can-ton, 13. Quang-si, 14. Koe-tcheou, 15. Yun-nan, 16. Keang-soo, 17. Hoo-pih, 18. Kan-so.

The subdivided provinces were—Kyang-nan, into Keang-so and Gan-hoey; Hoo-kwang, into Hoo-nan and Hoo-pih; Shen-so, extended westward, and called Kan-so. The provinces are divided into Foes, Choos, Tiens, and Hiens, which are almost synonymous with our counties, shires, districts, &c.

The appearance of the country is extremely various; and Mr. Barrow, who accompanied the embassy of Lord Macartney, states, that “between the capital and Canton, a distance of 1200 miles internal navigation, with but one short interruption, the traveller will observe every variety of surface, but disposed in a very remarkable manner in great masses. For many days he will see nothing but one uniform, extended plain, without the smallest variety; again for as many days he will be hemmed in between precipitous mountains of the same naked character, and as unvaried in their appearance as the plains; and, lastly, ten or twelve days’ sail among lakes, swamps, and morasses, will complete the catalogue of monotonous uniformity. There is a constant succession of large villages, towns, and cities, with high walls, more lofty gates, and still loftier pagodas; large navigable rivers, communicating by artificial canals, both crowded with barges for passengers and barks for burden, as different from each other, in every river and every canal, as they are all different from any thing of the kind in the rest of the world.” Neither trees nor hedges are to be seen throughout the country.

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#### RIVERS, MOUNTAINS, &c.

THE rivers of China are many, and deserve attention. The two principal are the Yang-tse-kyang, or the Blue River, and the Hoang-ho, or Yellow River. The Blue river rises about 200 miles W. of the Hoang-ho, then traverses a vast circuit to the south, and enters the province of Se-tcheun. It then winds N. E., collecting the waters of several tributary streams; and on reaching Hoo-pih, a province abounding with lakes, it is increased by the waters of Lake Tong-ting-ho; and is, in fact, the drain of all the lake country: it falls into the gulf of Tsong-ming, 120 miles below Nan-king.

The Hoang-ho flows in an opposite direction, having its source in the table-land of Tibet. It enters China at the N. W. extremity, in the province of Kian-suh, which it

passes through, as also that of Ho-nan, where it is joined by the Hwei-ho river. It then enters the province of Keang-tsub, where it is crossed by the imperial canal, at about fifty miles from its mouth, when it reaches the Yellow or Eastern sea.

These two rivers, upwards of 3000 miles in length, have tributary streams, equal in size to some of the largest in Europe. The lake Ton-ting-ho, 220 miles in circumference, flows into the Yang-tse-kyang, and is one of a chain extending N. and E., occupying a great part of its basin. The next principal lakes are the lake Po-yang, in the province of Kyang-si, 100 miles in circuit; and the lake Tai-hoo, S. Nanking province, which exhibits some fine scenery, and is completely surrounded with hills. There are many other lakes of great extent, nearly all of which abound with fish, which are caught (generally) by the Chinese pelican, a bird trained for the purpose, and made to disgorge them by pressing their throats, or by tying a piece of cord round them to prevent their swallowing. There are but two large rivers, the Hoan-king and the Pay-ho, that maintain an entire independence of them.

The mountains of China are extensive: the southern chain runs from W. to E. between the inland provinces of Koe-tcheou, Hoo-nan, Heo-pih, Kyang-si, and the maritime provinces—separates the basin of the Blue River from that of the Hon-kyang, which descending from the mountains of Yun-nan, flows east—end, after a course of 750 miles, falls into the gulf of Canton. They then turn to the N. E., separating the Blue river from the sea. The province of Shan-tong is full of isolated groups of mountains. Shen-sé, to the W. of Pe-che-li, is full of mountains that appear to belong to a chain extending from the banks of the Amoor across Mongolia. The mountains of the N. W. do not consist so much of regular chains, as of a succession of table lands: in the W. of the province Se-tcheou a chain runs parallel with the Yellow river from S. to N.—Central China may, therefore, be compared to a vast basin, encircled by mountains that shut it out from the rest of the world, the waters of which are collected by the Blue river.

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#### CLIMATE, &c.

THE varieties of climate in China are very wide; and the difference is much increased by the influence of the lofty mountains of central Asia on the one hand, and of the ocean on the other. At Canton the thermometer varies from 79° to 91° or 92°, during the summer; while in the winter fires are used, and ice has been found of the thickness of the 4th of an inch; yet snow is scarcely or ever seen.



The extremes of cold and heat are greater at Peking than at Madrid, though the latter is more elevated and the latitude nearly the same. The climate of China is on the whole, however, salubrious; and the people are more free from complaints and diseases than those of European nations. This may arise partly from their very abstemious habits, which are indeed pressed upon them; the majority not being able to obtain any thing beyond the commonest necessaries of life, and these are with difficulty procured, the population in some parts of the country being so dense. The coldest months are November, December, and January; the warmest July, August, and September: during the two latter months, it is exceeding sickly and hot, the wind generally blowing from the west. China is not unfrequently visited by hurricanes, which by the natives are called *Tay-fan*: they are extremely violent, yet do not much damage, the inhabitants generally being prepared for them.

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#### CHARACTER AND MANNERS OF THE INHABITANTS.

IN the people of China may be seen an instance of the fatal effect of checking the free development of the mind: here, as in India, every thing is stationary. The Chinese of the north differ much from their countrymen of the south. They have an almost square head, short and rather a flat nose; oblique eyes are prominent features in them. They are thought to approach nearer to the Mongul than to any other race. The inhabitants of the north partake more of the distinguished bluntness, unstudied frankness of manners, and ingenuousness of disposition, belonging to the Tartar warrior; and are less lively, acute, and intelligent than those of the south, who partake of more of the genuine Chinese character, which may be described as "selfish, cold-blooded, and inhumane." They are marked by an utter disregard to truth—denying or affirming a thing as it may suit their purpose, with the most daring effrontery. They are the most artful, sly, idle, and cowardly in existence. Mr. Gutzlaff, the missionary, states, "I have seen, frequently, the Chinese on board the ships composing their fleet, put to dismay by the sight of mounted brass guns on board our ships;" and the pirates, who infested the maritime provinces a few years ago, could not be put down by the whole of the imperial fleet.

They examine their prisoners by torture, which consists mostly of two descriptions; the first, which consists in placing the head of the criminal between two flat pieces of wood, which are pressed toward each other until their eyes start from their sockets;—and the second, which is performed by placing pieces of wood between the fingers and ancles, which they compress till the blood oozes from beneath the nails of the victim.

They plunder and cheat each other from the highest to the lowest; never allowing an opportunity to escape, when detection may be avoided; for neither human suffering or life are regarded by those in authority, when the infliction of the one, or the destruction of the other, can be made subservient to the acquisition of wealth or power. They will enrich themselves by the acquisition of their neighbours' property; and should they be detected, the punishment would be stayed, upon the payment of a certain sum: for, so corrupt are the streams of justice, that even the punishment of death may be compounded for. They are wholly destitute of shame; and when punishments are inflicted, the pain with which they are accompanied is all that is regarded.

They are hypocritically polite to each other, striving who can make the lowest obeisance, accompanying their visitors even to their sedans: and to contradict a guest, however improbable the thing may be he is stating, would be an unpardonable breach of etiquette. Upon making a visit, they remain at the door of the residence, until the list of their pedigree, rank, titles, &c., is inspected, which is presented as private cards are in England, and is sometimes nearly two feet long. Tea is then served by the master of the ceremonies, which each guest for himself pours water upon: this done, the master of the ceremonies kneels, and prostrates himself once, which is also returned by the guests: having drank the tea, the attendants come up in front, knock heads once, and retire: this, with sweetmeats, and various small dishes of eatables, (some of which resemble those of the French,) served at intervals, constitute the feast, which is sometimes prolonged until a very late hour. When the guests leave, they kneel and knock heads once, which is returned by the host: having risen from their knees, the guests are accompanied to the foot of the steps by the host, and to the outside of the gate by the master of the ceremonies. Theatrical performers are to be met with in the houses of the great, who generally know by heart from fifty to sixty different pieces, any of which they can rehearse at pleasure: their clownish feats consist principally in turning summersets;—some are particularly clever, turning round with great velocity: they have music sometimes, at their great feasts, the notes of which may be compared to an orchestra tuning their instruments.

The lower orders have neither chairs nor stools, but sit resting upon their heels; their houses are miserably furnished;—a few jars and basins, with an iron pot for their rice, and a portable stove, constitute their chief articles of furniture. They live on every thing that can be masticated: dogs and cats, and, in default of these, rats, snakes, and cockroaches. The starving peasant will eat animals that have died of disease, which they pick up in the streets or in the rivers: and even the bodies of those who have been pub-

lily executed have been left to be eaten: and when famines have occurred, human flesh has been sold in the markets. Of animals they eat every thing in fact, from the hide to the entrails. Their habitations are small, consisting of but one story; a room of ten feet square is quite sufficient for a family of six grown-up people, to eat, work, and sleep in: extravagance is at all times avoided.

Their treatment of the women is barbarous, and cruel in the extreme. Men have been seen driving their wives at the plough like beasts: they will sit and smoke all day long, while their wives are toiling for their subsistence; and were it not for this unfeeling conduct on the part of their husbands, they would be compelled to stay in-doors, it may be for years, without ever stirring abroad, like their more opulent countrywomen—the victims of jealousy. The women of China are club-footed, and in walking throw themselves forward, resting upon their heels, or supporting themselves upon two sticks. Their feet and ankles are, when very young, bound tightly round with ligatures, with the toes turned inward until they grow into the soles of the feet: the ankle-bones become much enlarged, and the flesh not unfrequently grows over the shoe (which is not above four inches either way), and completely buries it.

The great moral sin of the Chinese is that of infanticide. The parent is the lord or master of his offspring, whom he can sell or murder as he pleases: and as females are held in contempt, the female infant is generally the victim of its cruel father, who generally strangles it at its birth. Mr. Barrow observes, that “it is a part of the duty of the police to go their rounds in the morning with the cart, to pick up the *living* as well as the dead infants, which have been thrown out during the preceding night; when they are carried outside the city walls, and buried in one common grave.” “The Roman catholic missionaries were daily at the grave, rescuing those victims that could be restored, for the purpose of training them up in the christian faith.” Dogs and swine are let loose into the streets of the capital at an early hour, before the police go their rounds with the cart; and those who reside on or near the water throw their infants into it, with gourds tied round their necks. This unnatural crime is so common among them, that they perpetrate it without any feeling, and even in a laughing mood. From thirty to forty thousands are supposed to be thus destroyed annually.

Suicide, also, is notoriously prevalent: gambling, vexatious litigation, and oppression, in all its varied forms, driving them to desperation. “Our rulers,” say they, “want money, and care little about the means by which it is obtained. If you know this, you know the principles and practice of our government.”