

**SYNOPTICAL  
STUDIES IN THE  
CHINESE CHARACTER**

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Synoptical Studies in the Chinese Character by Herbert A. Giles

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**HERBERT A. GILES**

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偶舉學字

UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA  
SYNOPTICAL STUDIES

IN

CHINESE CHARACTER.

BY

HERBERT A. GILES,

OF H. B. M.'S CONSULAR SERVICE.

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1874.

TO  
EDWARD HARPER PARKER, Esq.,  
*of H. B. M.'s Consular Service,*  
A CONSUMMATE MASTER  
OF THE  
WRITTEN LANGUAGE OF CHINA.

747708

## PREFACE.

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**A** STUDY of the written language of China is invariably marred—in its early stages, by an irresistible tendency to confound such characters as resemble each other in general outline and appearance;—later on, even after analysis has been some time called into play, by an inability to retain in the memory without constant application those characters and groups of characters which, differing perhaps only by a dot or a dash, offer little or no handle for association of ideas, but require in each particular instance a separate mnemonic effort. This last difficulty has been felt to some extent by native scholars and obviated in a great measure by the numerous and exhaustive works on orthography which from time to time have been published throughout the empire. Anyone, however, who will turn to the section headed 分毫字辨 in the 問奇一覽, to the third volume of the 字林通考, to K'ang Hsi's chapter on 辨似, or to the 字學舉隅 in either of its four editions, will see at a glance that the stumbling-blocks of the native and the foreigner are very rarely identical; to speak more correctly, that the difficulties experienced by a foreign tyro would be ridiculously out of place in works prepared for the use of graduates desirous only of giving the finishing touches to an almost faultless orthography before becoming candidates for admission into the Han Lin Yüan. For, judging from the collections above mentioned, the blunders of the native are chiefly confined to characters written with the same radical and slightly differing phonetics, the majority of which are, if not actually obsolete, at least very uncommon. The foreign student, on the other hand, is often at a loss to distinguish between any characters at all similar in form which afford no guide through the phonetic or the radical either to their sound or sense. Of such a class are 左 and 右, which would find no place in native

collections of like characters. Nor do his troubles end here: he is frequently harassed by characters which bear but a faint resemblance to each other in mere form, but which are alike in sound and tone and perhaps somewhat similar in meaning; he is puzzled by whole families of characters the sound or approximate sound of which he can tell from their possessing a common phonetic, but to the meaning of which the radical in many cases gives not the slightest clue. Several of these phonetic lists have been inserted in this volume at the risk of entrenching upon ground already occupied by M. Callery.

What little there was in native works of practical value to foreign students has been embodied in the present collection, and for the rest, it can hardly be expected that every comparison drawn will meet with general approval. At the same time, it must be borne in mind that all the characters in any group are not necessarily to be compared one with another, though an element of sameness will be found always to pervade each group and frequently a whole series of such which have been placed intentionally in juxtaposition. Further, although this volume begins from the beginning and leaves the student on the threshold of written Chinese, yet a thorough analytical knowledge of all the characters here given will make future classification a comparatively easy matter—and the bitterness of Chinese is past.

The advantages of an Index will, it is hoped, be too patent to need any comment, except perhaps that with its assistance a character may be found even if its sound is unknown, provided that some other character be familiar in the group to which it belongs.

H. A. GILES.

HANKOW CONSULATE,

28th February, 1874.

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UNIV. OF  
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SYNOPTICAL STUDIES

IN

CHINESE CHARACTER

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1 人 — *jen*<sup>2</sup>, a man.

2 入 — *ju*<sup>34</sup>, to enter.

3 八 — *pa*<sup>1</sup>, eight.

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4 太 — *t'ai*<sup>4</sup>, excessive.

5 犬 — *ch'uan*<sup>2</sup>, a dog.

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6 矢 — *shih*<sup>2</sup>, an arrow.

7 夫 — *fu*<sup>1</sup>, a man.

8 失 — *shih*<sup>1</sup>, to lose.

9 先 — *hsien*<sup>1</sup>, before.

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10 天 — *t'ien*<sup>1</sup>, heaven.

11 夭 — *yao*<sup>1</sup>, dedicate. Hence 妖 *yao*<sup>1</sup>, supernatural.

- 12 午 — *wu*<sup>2</sup>, noon.
- 13 牛 — *niu*<sup>2</sup>, an ox.
- 14 年 — *nien*<sup>2</sup>, a year.
- 
- 15 了 — *liao*<sup>3</sup>, finished.
- 16 丫 — *ya*<sup>1</sup>, forked; a slave-girl.
- 17 子 — *tzü*<sup>2</sup>, a son.
- 18 予 — *yu*<sup>2</sup>, I or me; to give. But 矛 *mao*<sup>2</sup>, a spear.
- 
- 19 千 — *ch'ien*<sup>1</sup>, a thousand.
- 20 干 — *kan*<sup>1</sup>, a shield.
- 21 于 — *yi*<sup>2</sup>, in; at; with &c.
- 
- 22 手 — *shou*<sup>2</sup>, the hand.
- 23 毛 — *mao*<sup>2</sup>, hair.
- 
- 24 乎 — *hu*<sup>1,2</sup>, an interrogative particle.
- 25 平 — *p'ing*<sup>2</sup>, level.
- 26 半 — *pan*<sup>4</sup>, half.

27 心 — *hsin*<sup>1</sup>, heart.

28 必 — *pi*<sup>2,4</sup>, must.

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29 皿 — *min*<sup>3</sup>, dishes.

30 血 — *hsieh*<sup>3</sup>, blood.

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31 尺 — *ch'ih*<sup>3</sup>, a foot.

32 尼 — *ni*<sup>2</sup>, a nun. Hence 泥 *ni*<sup>2</sup>, mud.

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33 明 — *ming*<sup>2</sup>, bright.

34 朋 — *p'eng*<sup>2</sup>, friends.

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35 土 — *t'u*<sup>3</sup>, the earth.

36 士 — *shih*<sup>4</sup>, a scholar.

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37 木 — *mu*<sup>4</sup>, wood.

38 本 — *pên*<sup>3</sup>, origin; beginning.