

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINA

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BOSTON AND NEW YORK  
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

1917

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THE author wishes to express his appreciation of the courtesy of Professor F. W. Williams, of Yale University; Professor A. Forké, of the University of California; and Professor W. F. Ogburn, of Reed College, to whose careful and kindly criticism is due a large part of any value that this book may have.

## INTRODUCTION

THE eyes of the world are more and more turned toward China. We are coming to be profoundly interested in the fate of that greatest of Asiatic peoples. And it is well that we are. No other existing nation can look back over as long a past of continuous development as can China. When the foundations of Greece and Rome were being laid and when the great Hebrew prophets were in the midst of their ministry, a nation was being shaped and a civilization formed which have come down through the centuries with a comparatively unbroken history. There have been changes, but none of them as violent as those which have shaken the West during the same period. Only two other cultural groups — that in India and that in the Mediterranean Basin — have had as dominant an influence over as large a section of mankind. For Chinese culture has not only spread gradually over what is now China proper, with its three or four hundred million inhabitants, but it furnished the model for the old Japan, and has been to the widely scattered

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peoples of the vast outlying sections of the Chinese Empire — Mongolia, Manchuria, the New Territory, and Tibet — what that of the Mediterranean world was to the Germanic peoples of Northern Europe. The history and the fate of a culture of such antiquity and of such influence, and of the people that could produce it, must be a matter of world interest.

The Chinese are numerically the largest fairly homogeneous group of mankind. No one knows their exact number, but there are probably between two hundred and fifty and four hundred millions of them. They form between a fifth and an eighth of the population of the globe. Their future cannot fail to be of vital significance to the entire world. This is especially true since they are among the ablest of mankind, as is shown not only by their civilization, but by their industry, their thrift, their commercial ability, their physical vitality, and the achievements of their students in the universities of the West. Chinese students in American universities have frequently carried off high scholastic honors in open competition with the flower of our youth.

Mighty changes are taking place in China. It is undergoing a transformation whose re-

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sults no man can foresee. Those who know her best are the slowest to make dogmatic prophecies. It is certain, however, that the outcome will profoundly affect the entire world. The United States faces China from across the Pacific and will be especially interested. If Americans are not to blunder, if they are to make to the new China the unselfish contributions of which they are capable, if they are not to stumble into unnecessary conflict with Japan, if they are to share to the utmost in the trade and the industrial development of the new China, they must know her and must know her better than they do now.

There are already many books on China in English, and a number of excellent histories. The author has felt, however, in his own teaching the need of a short sketch for college courses which devote, as is the case with most courses on the Far East in American institutions only six weeks or so to China; a sketch which in the light of the best modern scholarship will give the essential facts of Chinese history, an understanding of the larger features of China's development, and the historical setting of its present-day problems; a sketch which does not burden the student with unnecessary details of

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unfamiliar names and dates and which gives him the main movements that have led to the China of to-day. It is hoped that such a book will be of use as well to the general reader as an introduction to larger and more specialized works. The plan followed is: first, the development of China to the time when contact with Europeans first began to have a profound effect on her, or about 1832; second, a description of the civilization of China as it was before it had undergone the changes which have followed that contact; third, the history since the contact with Europeans; and fourth, the changes and the problems brought by that contact. At the end there has been added a brief critical bibliography for the use of students who may wish to go somewhat further into details than the text has done and who have neither the desire nor the leisure for the detailed works of specialists. A somewhat greater proportion of attention has been paid to American relations with China than would have been wise had the book not been intended primarily for use in the United States.

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## CHAPTER I

### GEOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND OF CHINESE HISTORY

CHINA as we see it on the map is composed of two parts. The smaller and the more important is China proper, or the Eighteen Provinces. Three provinces have been added in the last few decades by extending the provincial form of government to Manchuria. There are thus twenty-one in all, but Manchuria scarcely belongs geographically to China proper and it is better here still to speak of the eighteen as a unit. The larger borders on China proper and is made up of various districts that have been conquered at one time and another, usually in an endeavor to protect the Eighteen Provinces against attack and to extend China to its natural boundaries. The Eighteen Provinces are the historic China and the main home of the Chinese people. The outlying districts, with the exception of Manchuria, have not been

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extensively settled by Chinese and are mostly semi-autonomous states inhabited by alien peoples.

China proper is eminently fitted by nature to be the home of a great civilization. It has a soil of fabulous fertility. For thousands of years its best sections have been subjected to nearly continuous farming, and, thanks partly to the skill of the cultivators and partly to its own original strength, it still shows no signs of exhaustion. In the North is the loess, very fertile, in places hundreds of feet deep, and probably built up by the dust from the plains of Central Asia carried south and east by the winds of many millenniums. In the central and north-eastern districts is the great alluvial plain formed of deposits laid down through the ages by the muddy waters of the Yangtze and the Yellow Rivers. In other sections there are numerous smaller plains and valleys; as, for example, the valleys that debouch at Canton, and the highly cultivated area around Ch'engtu,<sup>1</sup> the capital of the chief province of West China.

Added to the fertility of the soil is a favorable climate. China lies almost entirely in the

<sup>1</sup> For pronunciation of Chinese names see note on p. 117.

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temperate zone, which with its marked seasonal changes seems to be favorable to the development of a vigorous race. The summers are hot, and in places the humidity makes them enervating, but even in the South the winters bring a stimulus to greater activity. The heaviest rainfall comes as a rule in the late winter, spring, and summer when it is of most use to the growing crops.

Then China proper is well supplied with rivers. It is, in fact, largely made up of the great valleys of the streams that drain the eastern slopes of the high plateau of Central Asia. These streams not only provide for irrigation where this is needed, but furnish easy and inexpensive means of communication and transportation. Large ocean steamers go to-day without difficulty to Hankow, six hundred miles up the Yangtze River. The level stretches of the Great Plain — the most densely populated section of China — lend themselves readily to the construction of canals, so that the natural waterways have for generations been connected by artificial ones. The Grand Canal, designed originally to carry the tribute rice to the capital, reaches from Hangchow on the south to Peking on the north,

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a distance of a thousand or twelve hundred miles. Even in these days of railroad transportation the streams seem destined to hold their own as an inexpensive means of moving bulky, imperishable freight. This facility of communication and the absence of serious mountain barriers have made it comparatively easy to unite the Eighteen Provinces and hold them together as one political, racial, cultural, and economic whole. China proper seems destined by nature to be the home of a united nation. It is significant that it is in the southern and western sections, separated from the North and subdivided within themselves by more marked mountain barriers than exist in the central and northern provinces, that the greatest variations of language and race appear and that political unrest most frequently originates. The greatest differences in dialect are to be found in South and Southwest China and it is in these regions that rebellion against the centralized authority of the North has usually begun.

China is richly supplied with minerals. The precious metals are not plentiful, but the minerals used in industry are unusually abundant. Every one of the Eighteen Provinces has work-

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able deposits of coal, and in one province alone a German geologist has estimated that there is enough to last the entire world at the present rate of consumption for many centuries. There are extensive deposits of iron. Great fields of petroleum are known to exist. Antimony, tin, and copper are found in quantities. When one remembers that coal and iron are an indispensable basis of our modern industrial development, one sees how well China is fitted to take her place among the great manufacturing lands of the globe, especially since these gifts of nature are supplemented by an industrious, numerous, and intelligent population, and an enormous supply of food products and raw materials.

With this natural endowment it is not strange that the land has become the home of an able people, or that this people has achieved unity, and has given itself largely to the material side of life. The Chinese are primarily men of affairs, administrators, merchants, farmers. Their scholarship and religion have a preëminently practical turn. For this their natural surroundings seem in part responsible.

The boundaries of China have had a great influence on her history and on the character

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of her people and civilization. On the east is the Pacific Ocean which in the old days discouraged rather than encouraged commerce. No great peoples on its shores invited to interchange. Even Japan had little to give in exchange in trade. In the South, which was nearest India and the West, and where frequent harbors are to be found, there did indeed grow up some commerce. But until very recently the South has not been predominant in moulding Chinese life. To-day, the Pacific invites to commerce, and the Chinese in the future may not be as exclusively a landsman as he has been in the past. To-day the sea is a highway over which come commerce, invaders, and new ideas and influences. The steamship and the cable have made of it the path by which the new era has come to China. But until the last century the sea was a barrier across which but little trade made its way. It shielded China from outside influences and the Chinese showed little disposition to cross it.

China's land boundaries reinforced her isolation. On the west, northwest, and southwest are great mountain chains, some of them among the highest in the world. They are buttressed by vast elevated semi-arid plateaus.

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In the old days these formed barriers which shut her off from the rest of the civilized world, and were the homes of those nomadic peoples whose pressure into the fertile valleys to the east and south has been so large a factor in her history.

The isolation was nearly complete. On the southeast and the northeast, to be sure, the barriers are not so effective, but until the last hundred years there were not in either of these directions peoples from whose culture China could learn much. A long caravan route led from the most northwesterly province, Kansu, across the plateaus and the mountains to the modern Turkestan, Persia, and the Near East. By this route commerce was carried on with Central and Western Asia and the Mediterranean world. By this route Buddhism first came to China, and the early travelers from Western Europe, the Venetian merchant Marco Polo and the Franciscan missionaries of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, found their way to distant Cathay. Some Greek influences, Nestorian Christianity, and other cultural contributions from the West came to China by this path. Relatively speaking, however, the intercourse was scanty and intermit-

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tent. Man and nature conspired to hinder the merchant and the traveler. The warlike nomads of the Central Asiatic plateau made the journey perilous or impossible. At intervals strong rulers in China reduced the tribesmen to submission, and trade revived. The mighty generals of the Han and the T'ang dynasties maintained a fair semblance of order along the road. So did the Mongol and still later the Manchu emperors, but for the most part the fierce tribesmen and the petty states of the district made commerce dangerous or impossible. Then, too, the route was a long one. From the western gate in the Great Wall that separated China proper from the lands of the nomads it is between twelve and fifteen hundred miles to Kashgar and the eastern end of the pass that leads across the continental divide into what is now Asiatic Russia, the outposts of the Occident. These hundreds of miles are across deserts broken by infrequent oases. Even in earlier days when the rainfall through that arid region seems to have been greater than now, and when the oases were larger and more frequent, the journey was an arduous one.

This isolation by land, added to the scanty



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access by sea, meant a number of things for China. In the first place, her older civilization received relatively few contributions from the outside. Some early influences may have come in from the ancient culture of the Euphrates-Tigris Valley. A few traces are found of Greek influence from the outlying fragments of Alexander's broken empire. Buddhism came in, and with it contributions of religion, art, philosophy, and language from India and Central and Southern Asia. The Arabs brought to Canton and other southern ports some knowledge and some products from the West. These contributions, however, with the exception of Buddhism and possibly some others in pre-historic times, had, as far as we now know, comparatively little influence on the formation of Chinese culture. There was lacking that intimate contact between different cultural groups that has been so large a factor in the growth of the Mediterranean world and Western Europe. Our Western civilization is of composite origin. To it Babylonians, Egyptians, Cretans, Phœnicians, Persians, Hebrews, Greeks, Romans, and Northern Europeans have all contributed. From Babylonia we get part of our moral code; from Egypt comes our