

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-04554-4 - *A Residence among the Chinese: Inland, on the Coast, and at Sea*
Being a Narrative of Scenes and Adventures During a Third Visit to China, from
1853 to 1856

Robert Fortune

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A Residence Among the Chinese: Inland, on the Coast, and at Sea

China was still largely alien territory for westerners in the mid-nineteenth century. In this book, first published in 1857, Robert Fortune (1813–1880) describes his third visit there, but despite his relative familiarity with the country, his account is full of strange and bizarre sights and happenings. Beginning in Shanghai, where he was sent to collect tea samples for the East India Company, he describes an earthquake and the myths of its aftermath, along with his fears of becoming embroiled in the Taiping Rebellion. A keen botanist and entomologist in his own right, he also collected insects (a pastime that led him to become a figure of great hilarity among the locals) and explored the flora of the north. His account of his three-year expedition offers a glimpse of the Chinese language and culture through the lens of Victorian expectations, and is a fascinating resource for students and the general reader.

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Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108045544

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2012

This edition first published 1857

This digitally printed version 2012

ISBN 978-1-108-04554-4 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

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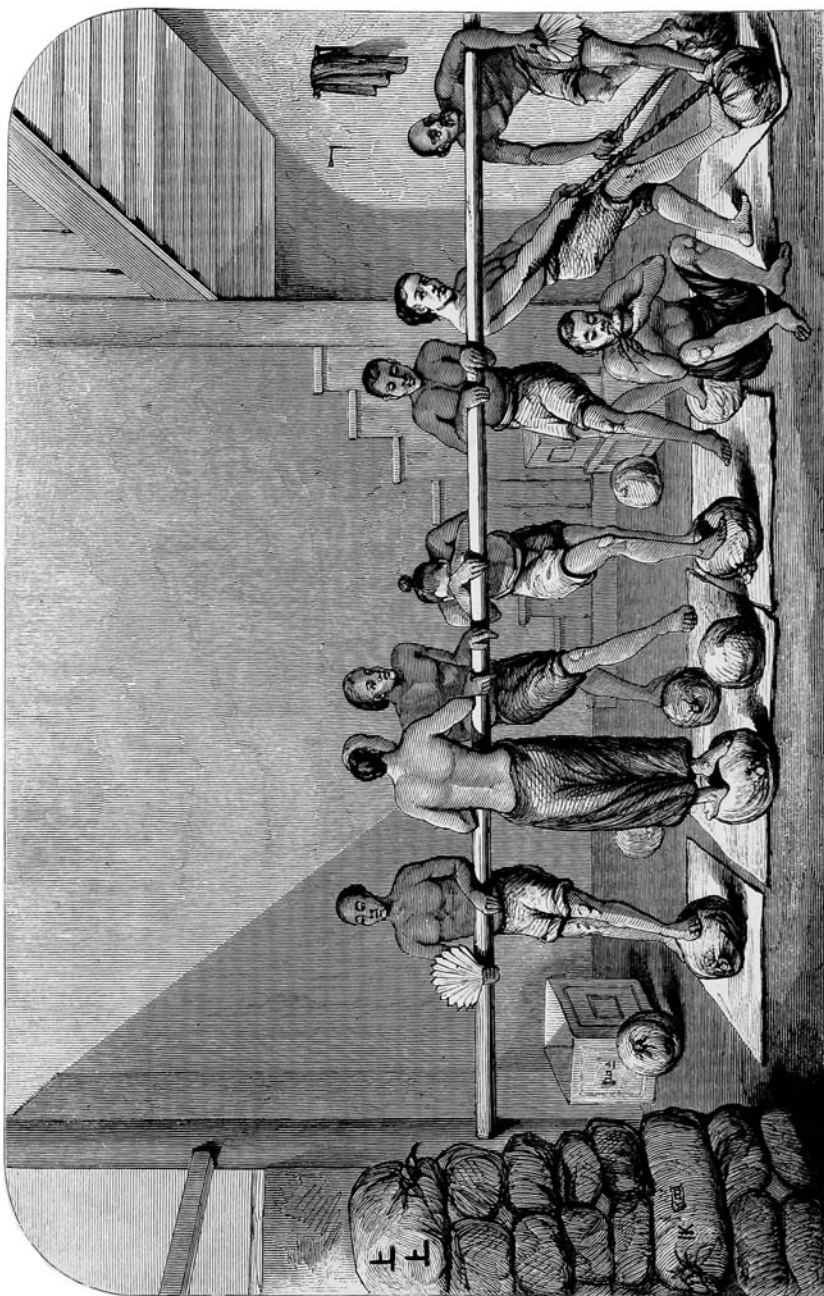
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INCLUDING NOTICES OF MANY NATURAL PRODUCTIONS AND WORKS OF ART,
THE CULTURE OF SILK, &c.;

WITH SUGGESTIONS ON THE PRESENT WAR.

By ROBERT FORTUNE,

HONORARY MEMBER OF THE AGRI-HORT. SOCIETY OF INDIA, AUTHOR OF
"THREE YEARS' WANDERINGS IN CHINA," "A JOURNEY TO THE TEA COUNTRIES," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

LONDON:
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

1857.

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P R E F A C E.



It is now nearly fourteen years since I landed in China for the first time, in the capacity of Botanical Collector to the Horticultural Society of London. From 1848 to the beginning of 1851 I was engaged by the Honourable Court of Directors of the East India Company in procuring supplies of tea-plants, seeds, implements, and green-tea makers, for the government plantations in the Himalayas. In the end of 1852 I was deputed a second time by the East India Company for the purpose of adding to the collections already formed, and particularly of procuring some first-rate black-tea makers for the experimental tea-farms in India.

The present volume gives an account of my last travels amongst the Chinese—from 1852 to 1856—which it is hoped will be found as interesting as my former ‘Three Years’ Wanderings,’ and ‘Journey to the Tea Countries.’

During my first visit my investigations were chiefly confined to the coast near the five ports at which foreigners are permitted to trade. In my second book I described some long journeys to the green and black tea countries; and in this one I have endeavoured to give the reader a minute account of some extensive districts of country

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which lie between the coast-line and the points formerly reached. For the talented sketches which illustrate the work I am indebted to my friend Mr. Scarth.

In keeping a journal of the ever-varying scenes which passed daily in review before me, I have not been unmindful of a friendly hint which I received from some reviewers of my former works. I have, therefore, endeavoured to describe more minutely the characters, manners, and customs of the Chinese in those districts in which I lived for a length of time almost like one of themselves. And with regard to this part of the performance I can only say that the figures on my canvas are such as I daily met with in the course of my travels, and are true to nature. The reader is left to draw his own conclusions; but it is hoped that those who have been inclined to form their estimate of the Chinese character from what has been written about the low rabble of Canton, will, after the perusal of these pages, look with a more favourable eye upon the inhabitants of China when seen from other points of view.

The natural productions of the country which came under my notice, whether simply ornamental in their character, or articles of commercial value, have been fully described. During a sojourn of some months in the heart of the great silk country I had an opportunity of seeing the cultivation of the mulberry, the feeding and rearing of the silk-worms, and the reeling of the silk; and these in-

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teresting operations are now described, I believe, for the first time by an English eye-witness.

The concluding chapter gives the author's views upon the late disturbances at Canton. It shows how these might have been avoided, and suggests a line of policy by which our future relations with the Chinese may be placed on a more firm and satisfactory basis. These suggestions are of importance, not to England only, but to all civilized nations in the West who trade with China, or who may be interested in her future welfare and progress.

The remarks on the climate of China, with reference to the health of our troops, are the results of long experience, and, in the event of our going to war with that country, ought to be carefully considered by those who have the direction of the expedition.

Having thus given a general idea of the scope of the work, I have only to express a hope that, while it may add to our knowledge of the people and productions of China, it may, at the same time, enable us to look with more kindly feelings on a large portion of the human family, far more ancient as a nation, and as industrious, if not so civilized, as ourselves.

Brompton, April, 1857.

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