

Echoes of Victorian Hellenism in Mid-Nineteenth-Century China

Joseph Edkins' Recurring Column "Western Literature" (*Xixue shuo* 西學說) in the Journal *Liuhe congfan* 六合叢談 (Shanghae Serial)

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Abstract In the mid-nineteenth century, the missionaries of the London Missionary Society founded the journal *Liuhe congfan* 六合叢談. Its varied contents included a recurring column titled "Western Literature" in English and *Xixue shuo* 西學說 (Explanations on Western learning) in Chinese. The section's editor, Joseph Edkins, used it to inform Chinese readers about Greco-Roman antiquity and its most important thinkers and writers. The role of literature in the spread of Western learning to China has not yet received much attention. This paper will analyse Edkins' columns, his motives for writing them, and the topics he considered worthy of publication. This will give us insight into the cultural strategies the missionaries adopted in the era between the Opium Wars and also shed some light on the development of terms like Western Learning, philosophy and literature.

Keywords Joseph Edkins. London Missionary Society. Shanghai. Missionary journals. Western learning.

Summary 1 Introduction: Introducing Qing Literati to Homer, Plato, and Cicero. – 2 The "Western Literature" Column and its Content. – 3 Reason for Writing the Column. – 4 Conflating China and Greco-Roman Antiquity. – 5 Conclusion.



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1 Introduction: Introducing Qing Literati to Homer, Plato, and Cicero

After the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842, the missionaries of the London Missionary Society (LMS) established the Inkstone Press (*Mohai shuguan* 墨海書館) in Shanghai.¹ Once settled, they began a phase of industrious translation and printing of religious and secular writings.² Sometime later, they also took over the publication of a journal with both religious and secular sections that had previously been carried out by missionaries in Hong Kong and Malacca.³ In January 1857, under the editorship of Alexander Wylie, the LMS missionaries published the first issue of the *Liuhe congtan* 六合叢談 (Shanghae Serial), a direct successor of the *Xia'er guanzhen* 遐邇貫珍 (Chinese Serial), the publication of which had ended in 1856 (Zhang 2007, 144).⁴ The publication therefore falls into the tumultuous times of the Taiping rebellion that ravaged the south and the second Opium War. Each issue of the monthly journal contained a handful of short news items and long-form articles.⁵ As Alexander Wylie summarized it in his *Memorials of Protestant Missionaries to the Chinese*, the journal covered “Religion, Science, Literature, and the general news of the day” (Wylie 1867, 173).⁶

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1 On the history of the Missionary Press in China, see Paquette 1987 and Ching 1996. For a helpful summary of the beginning of the protestant mission in China, see also Smith 2012, 1-11. For a general survey of Catholic and Protestant missionary activities in China, see Gu 1991.

2 On the Bible translation, see Hanan 2003 and Zetsche 1999. The scientific translations started in earnestness after the translations of the Old and New Testament were finished (Xiong 2013, 134). 80.7 % of the 171 titles the Press published between 1844 and 1860 were related to religion, 19.3 % to secular topics (Xiong 1994, 188).

3 Robert Morrison had begun printing a journal of this kind already in 1815 and from there on it had been a part of the strategy of the London Missionary Society to reach their target audience of Chinese literati. Shen Guowei offers a short summary of the history of these journals (Shen 2006, 5-6). For a dedicated monograph, see Zhao, Wu 2011. Chapter 6 (Zhao, Wu 2011, 133-57) is dedicated to the *Liuhe congtan*, it contains, however, little information on the literature section.

4 For a brief summary of the *Chinese serial*, see Zhang 2007, 42-3. The journal has been published in its entirety together with an introduction by Song Puzhang 松浦章 and Keiichi Uchida 内田庆市 (Song, Uchida 2005).

5 For the missionaries, the publication of the journal was an expansion of their field of missionary labours, adding to the translation of religious pamphlets, the running of hospitals and the undertaking of preaching tours in the vicinity of Shanghai. As Alexander Wylie explains in his introduction, they saw no conflict between science and religion, but rather considered them to complement each other and thus made use of both in the hope of somehow obtaining the interest of Chinese literati (Shen 2006, 1(1), 522).

6 For a detailed analysis of the content and the individual authors, including the Chinese assistants of the Press that helped with the translations, see Shen Guowei's intro-

The literary section was headed by Joseph Edkins (1823-1905, Chinese name Ai Yuese 艾約瑟), who used it as a vehicle to spread knowledge about Greco-Roman authors.⁷ He wrote a total of nine articles for the section, each of them one to four printed pages in length, to introduce his readership to topics and individuals from the period.⁸ Taken together, what Edkins presented to the readers in the *Liuhe congtan* is a surprisingly comprehensive overview of Greek and Roman literature. The biographies often contain an unexpected level of detail, despite the short format of the essays. Edkins was not the first Protestant⁹ missionary to write about Ancient Greece and Rome. A few years prior, in 1838, Karl Friedrich Gützlaff had also published a dedicated piece on Ancient Greece and its history in the similar journal *Dongxiyang kao meiyue tongji zhuan* 東西洋考每月統記傳 (Eastern Western Monthly Magazine), and had touched on the topic of Greek poetry as well (Li 2014, 91). And just two years earlier, in issue 3(11) published in November 1855, the Hong Kong-based journal *Chinese Serial* had run a biography of Cicero (Song, Uchida 2005, 454-5). However, these two pieces are exceptions and, generally speaking, the coverage of both literature and Greco-Roman times offered by these earlier journals was very sparse. Edkins' treatment of the topic, by comparison, is much more detailed. As Li Sher-shueh has remarked, Edkins' "detailed introduction of Greek literature was completely unprecedented in China" (Li 2014, 93).

The journal did not last long; the *Liuhe congtan* ceased publication after little more than a year, in 1858. Its legacy, however, far exceeded its limited run time.¹⁰ Much of its content was later republished

ductory section in his publication of the *Liuhe congtan* (Shen 2006, 1-48).

7 Edkins published prolifically on topics like Chinese language and Buddhism in English, and on Christianity, Buddhism and to a lesser extent on secular topics in Chinese. Alexander Wylie provided a list of his works (Wylie 1867, 187-90).

8 The number refers to the total of columns that Edkins wrote. Some of these contributions consisted of two parts, e.g. his double biography for Herodotus and Pliny in issue 2(2) or his double essay on Roman education and Roman poets in issue 1(4). They are counted as one column.

9 This article considers only the Protestant missionaries. It is important to note that the Jesuit missionaries had made attempts at spreading Aristotelian philosophy much earlier (for a summary, see Standaert 2003, 385-7). According to Standaert, these works had a very limited dissemination and, in some cases, circulated only in manuscripts (Standaert 2003, 387). It is unclear if the Protestant missionaries had access to them. Similarly, the treatises on friendship authored by Matteo Ricci (*Jiaoyou lun* 交友論) and Martino Martini (*Qiyou pian* 逮友篇) introduced some ideas of Cicero to a Chinese audience. But unlike in Edkins' column, the focus was on individual ideas and concepts and not on introducing the writer Cicero. For an introduction and translation of the less well-known *Qiyou pian*, see Bertuccioli 1992.

10 The readership of the journal is difficult to assess. According to a table in issue 2(2) (Shen 2006, 2(2), 750) in which the missionaries provide some basic dates on the journal, 90% of it were sold in Shanghai, and within the city 10% of the readership was

in various forms, and its reputation extended as far as Japan. The influence of the *Liuhe congfan*'s geographical and mathematical content and its afterlife in Japan have received attention from Shen Guowei, Xiong Yuezhi and others (Shen 2006; Xiong 1994; Zhao, Wu 2011, 155-7). But little regard has been given to the significance of Edkins' articles for the field of literature. This is not an isolated phenomenon. When we speak of Western learning and its spread to China, literature often comes far behind the emphasis on scientific writing. Yet we can see from Wylie's description above that the field of literature was one of the four main parts of the *Liuhe congfan*, alongside science, religion, and the news of the day. The high importance the missionaries attributed to literature is also visible in the amount of space they devoted to it: of the 240 printed pages published during the existence of the *Liuhe congfan*, the literature section comprises roughly 30.¹¹

Based on this information, several interesting questions arise. The first of these concerns the *Liuhe congfan* as a whole: Why did the missionaries include a section on literature in it at all? As we just saw, the emphasis on literature represented an innovation for a missionary journal, which begs the question of the intent behind the emphasis. Other questions arise with regard to Edkins' column: Why did he choose Greco-Roman antiquity, and what did he want to demonstrate to his readership through this choice? How did he present the historical period to make the content both palatable and understandable for a Chinese audience largely unfamiliar with Europe's past? So far, these questions have not been treated. Shen Guowei has edited a volume that gathers a complete collection of the published numbers of the *Liuhe congfan*, an introduction to the journal and several articles on the scientific contents it contained (Shen 2006). Luo Wenjun has published a detailed and helpful overview of Joseph Edkins' Chinese-language publications on literature that puts the column in the *Liuhe congfan* into a larger context (Luo 2019, 116-25). Li Sher-shiueh has published an excellent article in which he analyses and compares Edkins' portrayal of Homer to those that were written before and after, demonstrating how the depiction went from negative with the Jesuits to positive with the Protestants in the nineteenth century (Li 2014, 93). But the remaining essays written by Edkins, and, in particular, the column as a whole, have so far not been treated in depth.

The goal of this paper is therefore to offer an analysis of the content, presentation, and aims of the literature section of the *Liuhe con-*

Chinese. Judging by print numbers that fell from 5,000 to 2,500 over the run of the journal, we can assume that a maximum of 500 Chinese people held a subscription.

11 To give a better idea of the dimension: Shen Guowei included an interesting table on the amount of secular content in each of the 15 *Liuhe congfan* issues that shows that from the total of 238 pages published, 59(5) dealt with theology (Shen 2006, 24; the table is also included in Zhao, Wu 2011, 144).

gtan. The journals that preceded it will also be examined on a comparative basis, as will selected writings by the missionaries. The paper will begin with a general outline of the development of the section, the topics included in it, and what can be gleaned of the intentions behind its creation. It will then analyse the way in which Edkins introduced Greco-Roman antiquity to his readership and examine his motives for doing so. This case study will give us insight into the cultural strategies the missionaries adopted in the era between the Opium Wars. It will also extend our picture of the introduction of Western Learning in Late Qing China and shed some light on the way terms like Western Learning, philosophy and literature were translated and understood during these years.

All translations from the *Liuhe congtan* are by the Author's. The page numbers provided in the references and notes refer to the collection published by Shen Guowei in 2006, as it is the only publication that gathers all 15 *Liuhe congtan* issues in one volume.

2 The “Western Literature” Column and its Content

We will start with an outline of the columns' development and content. The column's precursor was an entry in the very first *Liuhe congtan* issue, entitled “Greece is the Ancestor of Western Literature” *Xila wei xiguo wenxue zhi zu* 希臘為西國文學之祖 (Shen 2006, 1(1), 524-6), in which Edkins pointed out the high importance of Greek culture for the West. The piece was published without the column header of “Western Literature”.

The next issue, 1(2), featured a biography of Gaius Julius Caesar that was titled “Distinguished Foreigners: Julius Caesar” *Haiwai yiren zhuan: Gaisa* 海外異人傳: 該撒 (Shen 2006, 1(2), 543-5). This piece, written by LMS assistant Jiang Dunfu 蔣敦復 (1808-1867), is mostly a summary of the civil war between Caesar and Pompey. It shares the focus on Greco-Roman antiquity of Edkins' essay from the first issue (Shen 2006, 27), and Edkins' influence on the piece is also obvious, as two Plutarch quotations suggest that the account is a summary or retelling of the Greek biography, which Jiang could not have read without assistance.¹² However, it contains no reference to

¹² The first one is inserted at the beginning of the biography. Jiang Dunfu explains the motivation of his protagonist with the following quote: “He said to somebody: ‘A great man would rather reside in the wilderness and be the first man. He is unable to be the second man at court.’” *yu ren yue: dazhangfu ning chu caoye wei di yi ren, bu neng zuo chaoting di er ren* 語人曰:大丈夫甯處草野為第一人,不能作朝廷第二人 (Shen 2006, 1(2), 543-4). In Plutarch (11.4), Caesar is quoted as saying (text translated by Perrin): “I would rather be first here than second at Rome”. The second clearly recognizable quote is Caesar's famous “veni, vidi, vici”. After a battle in Asia Minor, Jiang Dunfu

Caesar's writings, and thus differs strongly from all subsequent entries written by Edkins, which focused on the written output of their subjects. Edkins would also go on to cover Caesar's writings himself briefly in issue 1(4) (Shen 2006, 1(4), 573). And, lastly, Jiang Dunfu's piece also contains its own column header, "Distinguished Foreigners", and was not published under the column header "Western Literature". All of this would seem to indicate that this essay was not written with the overarching theme of literature in mind. It was therefore excluded from the analysis.¹³

With issue 1(3) the "Western Literature" or "Xixue shuo" column became a regularly occurring feature (Luo 2019, 119). The sole author of the subsequent seven pieces is Joseph Edkins. The nine published columns written by Edkins can be divided into two phases. Edkins began his series with overviews and summaries. In issue 1(3), he provided a detailed overview of the history of Greek literature, entitled "Short Account of the Greek Poets" *Xila shiren lue shuo* 希臘詩人略說 (Shen 2006, 1(3), 556-7), in which he offered a list of Greek authors with short summaries of their works and characteristics. To this he then added a summary of Roman education and a list of Roman writers in issue 1(4) (Shen 2006, 1(4), 573-4), and an essay on the materiality of written culture in the Westin issue 1(7) (Shen 2006, 1(7), 620-1). The following table lists the introductory columns belonging to the first phase (the English and Chinese titles chosen by the missionaries are not exact translations):

- | | |
|------|--|
| 1(1) | "Greek the Stem of Western Literature" <i>Xila wei xiguo wenxue zhi zu</i>
希臘為西國文學之祖 |
| 1(3) | "Short Account of the Greek Poets" <i>Xila shiren lue shuo</i> 希臘詩人略說 |
| 1(4) | "Education among the Ancient Romans" <i>Gu Luoma fengsu lijiao</i>
古羅馬風俗禮教 – "Short Account of the Latin Historians and Poets"
<i>Luoma shiren lue shuo</i> 羅馬詩人略說 |
| 1(7) | "Bibliographical Materials" <i>Xiguo wenju</i> 西國文具 |

writes: "The armies marched out and with three words he informed the people of that state [of Rome]: He said: 'I came,' he said: 'I saw' and he said: 'I won'" *shi chu yi san zi bao guoren yue lai yue guan yue ke* 師出以三字報國人曰來曰觀曰克 (Shen 2006, 1(2), 545). This very famous quotation is found in Plutarch (50.2; translated by Perrin): "In announcing the swiftness and fierceness of this battle to one of his friends at Rome, Amantius, Caesar wrote three words: 'Came, saw, conquered'". Plutarch was widely read in Victorian England (Hurst 2019, 563).

13 Jiang Dunfu later paired the Caesar biography with one for George Washington and included it in his collection of prose writings under the title "Biographies of Two Outstanding Foreigners" (translated in Eicher forthcoming a).

The columns' somewhat irregular publishing rhythm beginning with issue 1(4) is presumably the result of the numerous lengthy inland travels that Edkins and his colleagues carried out during the years the *Liuhe congfan* was published (Eicher forthcoming b).

After having established the basics in this way, Edkins then went on in the later issues to offer dedicated biographies of individual figures. These biographies are usually brief accounts of the lives of individual literati or thinkers, with a lengthy latter section about the works they authored. In cases where not much was known about the biographies of the subjects, Edkins discussed philological problems, i.e. whether a single historical Homer ever existed, or how Athanasius' letters had been recently discovered in Egypt. These are the more detailed biographies by Edkins that make up the second phase:

- 1(8) "Cicero" *Jigailuo zhuan* 基改羅傳 (Shen 2006, 1(8), 638-9)
- 1(11) "Plato" *Bailaduo zhuan* 巴拉多傳 (Shen 2006, 1(1)1, 682-3)
- 1(12) "Homer" *Hema zhuan* 和馬傳 – "Thucydides" *Tujutidai Zhuan* 土居提代傳 (Shen 2006, 1(12), 698-700)
- 1(13) "Festal Letters of Athanasius" *Atanuoxiu yizha* 阿他挪修遺札 – "Syrian Scriptures" *Xuliyawen shengjiao gushu* 敘利亞文聖教古書 (Shen 2006, 1(13), 715-16)
- 2(2) "Herodotus" *Heilududu zhuan* 黑陸獨都傳 – "Pliny" *Bolini zhuan* 伯里尼傳 (Shen 2006, 2(2), 751-3)

From this list it becomes obvious that Edkins attempted to cover the entirety of Greco-Roman writings in his section, including poets, philosophers and historians. Xiong Yuezhi also remarked on Edkins' contributions that they are "often concerning western culture and customs" *duo guan xifang wenhua, fengsu* 多關西方文化, 風俗 (Xiong 1994, 204). This fits well with what we know about pre-modern Chinese notions of the term *wenxue* 文學, which, as Milena Doleželová-Velingerová has pointed out, included "philosophical texts, historiographies, didactic prose, and correspondence, among other forms" (Doleželová-Velingerová 2001, 126, 133). In the English-language version of the table of contents that each issue contained, the column was also titled "Western Literature". Curiously, though, Edkins chose the Chinese column title *Xixue shuo* 西學說, which corresponds more closely to "Explanations of Western Learning" and suggests a somewhat broader meaning.¹⁴

If and how Edkins would have continued his column is unclear. As noted above, publication of the *Liuhe congfan* ended after little more than a year. There is no consensus in the literature as to why; Xiong

¹⁴ Lobscheid's dictionary published around the same time suggests *wenxue* 文學 for "literature" (Lobscheid 1868, 1119).

Yuezhi assumed that there were funding problems because expenditures exceeded income (Xiong 1994, 205). As Shen Guowei has pointed out, however, this loss was actually minimal (Shen 2006, 33-4), and profitability was not necessarily the highest goal for an organization that depended heavily on donations. In light of this, Shen Guowei and Luo Wenjun have suggested that an overall change in strategy at the press might be to blame, beginning when William Muirhead succeeded Walter Henry Medhurst in running it in 1856. Muirhead considered scientific writings unhelpful to the missionary cause and therefore reduced the efforts in this field (Shen 2006, 34-5; Luo 2019, 124). This course adjustment coincided with a noticeable lack of reader demand for the journal (Shen 2006, 34-5). In the final issue, the editors published the details on the print runs for each previous issue, noting that they had started off with five thousand copies, but had already lowered the number to four thousand in the sixth issue and printed only twenty-five hundred exemplars of the last two (2(1) and 2(2)) (Shen 2006, 2(2), 750). All these factors led to the cancellation of the *Liuhe congfan* in 1858 after only fifteen issues, and thus also to the end of the column “Western Literature”.¹⁵

3 Reason for Writing the Column

Now that we have examined the content of the column, let us look at the motivations that led Edkins to write it. We will begin with the more general question of why the *Liuhe congfan* contained a section on literature and then move on to the question of why Edkins decided to use this space to provide an introduction to Greco-Roman antiquity, and not, for example, to contemporary English literature.

There are two sources that give us insight into the conception of the journal *Liuhe congfan*. The first is an “Introduction” (*xiao yin* 小引) that Alexander Wylie included in the first issue, 1(1). In it, Wylie gives some insight into the goals behind the *Liuhe congfan*. On the one hand, the missionaries wanted to reach a broader audience but were restricted to the five treaty ports in their work. The journal was an attempt to circumvent this problem (Shen 2006, 1(1), 521). The other goal Wylie expresses is to increase understanding of the missionaries’ ideals and cause:

¹⁵ We know that Edkins wrote a piece on John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and included it in the *Zhongxi tongshu* 中西通書 (Chinese and Western Almanac) in 1855, prior to writing the column (Hao 2012, 88). He therefore also considered more contemporary writings to be worthy of introduction to a Chinese audience.

兼以言語各異，政化不同，安能使之盡明吾意哉。是以必頒書籍以通其理，假文字以達其辭。(Shen 2006, 1(1), 521)

At the same time, our languages are different, and our political systems and cultures are not identical. How might we make [the Chinese people] fully comprehend our intentions? For this reason we must distribute books and writings to make them understand their reason, and we must rely on letters and characters, so that they understand their words.

The missionaries explained to their readership that they strove to increase understanding of Western culture and its influence in order to remove misunderstandings and aid in their missionary work (see also Luo 2019, 123). They were working against language barriers, different political systems, and their physical restriction to the treaty ports. Zhao and Wu have, therefore, defined the goal of the *Liuhe congtan* as that of increasing mutual understanding (Zhao, Wu 2011, 142).

A second source for the intention behind the *Liuhe congtan* is an unpublished letter that Han Qi 韓琦 discovered in the SOAS archives, in which the missionaries propose the journal to Arthur Tidman, the London-based Foreign Secretary of the LMS. In the letter, they outline the project of the journal and ask for funding.¹⁶ As Han Qi has pointed out, this source gives a more straightforward and less diplomatic account of the missionaries' motivations. The letter writers mention three goals in particular: to help the Chinese people in government, sciences, and religion; to remove prejudices against the West; and "to demonstrate to them their true place among the other peoples of the world" *xiang tamen xianshi tamen zai diqiu shang de zhu minzu zhong de zhenshi diwei* 向他們顯示他們在地球上的諸民族中的真實地位 (Han 2004, 146). In his published introduction, Wylie did not express the wish to make Chinese readers recognize their place among the other nations by making them aware of the accomplishments of others in comparison to their own. This had, however, been a long-standing goal of the missionaries: in the final issue of the *Chinese Serial*, James Legge (1815-1897) describes the same end as having been one of the main points of the publication. He expresses his hope that missionaries in the future would pick up the task, "by means of periodical works, to stir the Chinese mind from its apathy, and circulate among the people the lessons of universal history and the accumulations of Western knowledge" (Song, Uchida 2005, 407; quoted also by Luo 2019, 120). The journal was there-

¹⁶ As the original is unpublished, the summary provided here is based on the Chinese translation of the letter by Han Qi (Han 2004, 144-6).

fore meant to promote Western learning and through it to improve the image of Western culture in the eyes of Chinese literati. From the letter to Tidman we also learn that the section for literature was planned out from the beginning: “Every issue should contain roughly one article on religion, one on a scientific topic, and one that focuses on a distinctive feature of literature and the most important national and international news” *zazhi dazhi mei qi yao baokuo yi pian shenzhi duo pian zongjiao fangmian de wenzhang, yi pian guanyu kexue zhuti de wenzhang, yi pian zongti shang shi wenxue tezheng de wenzhang, waiguo he bendi xinwen de zhaiyao* 雜誌大致每期要包括一篇甚至多篇宗教方面的文章，一篇關於科學主題的文章，一篇總體上是文學特徵的文章，外國和本地新聞的摘要 (Han 2004, 146). Details as to what writers or periods were to be treated are not given. As written above, that the journal was planned with a literature section in mind was an innovation, as the *Chinese Serial* contained very little information on this topic.¹⁷ But the general goals formulated by the missionaries help us understand why literature was to be included: the section was meant to demonstrate that Europe possessed a valuable literary heritage, and to make Chinese literati more aware of the prestige of the Western literary canon.

This leaves open the question of why Edkins chose Greece and Rome as his subjects. We have no introduction from Edkins and therefore no explicit description of his personal motivations. Based on his other writings, his educational background, and the essays themselves, however, we can still arrive to some conclusions. In his book *Religion in China*, Edkins included the chapter “Chinese Opinions on Christianity” (Edkins 1884, 153-65) in which he describes the most common reasons with which Chinese scholars have denied the validity of Christianity. Edkins tells us, for example, that Chinese literati doubted the age of Christianity and therefore considered it to be inferior to Confucianism: he describes an exchange where his adversary “said that the narrative of the death of Christ on the cross could not be earlier than the Ming dynasty” and claimed that “England [...] was a new country, compared with China. Its history as a nation did not extend back more than a few centuries”. The consequence of this was that the British missionaries “could not know the course of events so long ago as Christ was said to have lived, with any certainty” (Edkins 1884, 156). Another argument the mission-

¹⁷ There are only very few entries dealing with either literature or Greco-Roman antiquity in the *Xia'er guanzen*. Issue 2(9) (September 1854, p. 3) contains the entry “Notice on the Poet Milton, and Translation of the Sonnet on his Blindness” (Song, Uchida 2005, 618). Issue 3(3) (March 1855, pp. 6-7) contains an entry titled “The Facetiae of Hierocles” (Song, Uchida 2005, 559); and in issue 3(11) (November 1855, pp. 7-8) we have a “Life of Cicero” (Song, Uchida 2005, 454-5). The journal regularly contains fables, but nothing close to a dedicated section on literature like we find it in the *Liuhe congkan*.

aries encountered, according to Edkins, was the claim that Western learning came from the East.¹⁸ He recalls a dialogue with a critic of Christianity in which his adversary remarked that “it was preposterous in us to exhort them to virtue, for they had books that taught morality much earlier and better than ours. All our science and learning [...] was brought from the East” (Edkins 1884, 160). Greece and Rome were a means by which these two claims could be countered, as they made it clear that Western learning was a) old, and b) derived from Western antiquity and not Chinese.

Edkins’ choice of topic is further related to both his training and his personal preferences. Luo Wenjun has pointed out the importance of Greco-Roman antiquity in Victorian education (Luo 2019, 118-19). England had a long-standing fascination with Rome (Turner 1984, 1-2), and in the Victorian era a widespread fascination with Ancient Greece had developed among the elites. Turner points out that several factors were responsible for the newfound enthusiasm for Greek, that all had to do with the phenomenon that “values, ideas and institutions inherited from the Roman and Christian past had become problematical [...] in the wake of the Enlightenment and of revolution” (Turner 1984, 3). Edkins’ life strongly suggests that he shared this fascination with Greek literature. After receiving theological training at Coward College, the missionary also graduated in Arts at the University of London before leaving for China (Bushell 1906, 269). In his column, Edkins also makes it clear that he held the Greeks in high esteem and was convinced that Western culture could be traced back to them. The missionary repeatedly states that Roman literature and culture were derivatives of their Greek predecessors: “When it came to the state of Rome, at the beginning they were slow-witted and had no writings. The Greeks taught them everything” *zhi Luoma guo, qi shi chuilu wu wen, jie Xila ren jiao zhi* 至羅馬國，其始樵魯無文，皆希臘人教之 (Shen 2006, 1(1), 525). In his summary of Roman poetry, Edkins expands on this thesis and also explicitly draws a line to modern Europe: “At the beginning of the founding of the state of Rome, there had also been no writings or records. Thereupon in the battle of Jiadaqi (Corinth?) the Greeks surrendered, and then [the Romans] studied the learning of the Greeks. This marked the beginning of the learning of all Western countries” *Luoma liguo zhi chu, bing wu shuji, ji Jiadaqi zhi zhan, Xila ren xiang, ji xue Xi ren zhi xue, Taixi geguo xuewen zhi chu* 羅馬立國之初，並無書籍，及迦大其之戰，希臘人降，即學希人之學，泰西各國學問之初 (Shen 2006, 1(4), 573). Similarly, he concludes his essay about why the Greeks are the founders of European literature with the following praise: “The books they wrote are still widely known today. How magnificent! The Greeks are

18 On this phenomenon, see also Jenko 2014.

truly the ancestors of Western literature” *suo zhu yu dianji zhe, zhijin ren you chuansong zhi, yi yu sheng zai, Xila xin xiguo wenxue zhi zu ye* 所著於典籍者，至今人猶傳誦之，猗歟盛哉，希臘信西國文學之祖也 (Shen 2006, 1(1), 526). As Luo Wenjun has stated, Edkins believed that the Greeks were “the point where one had to start if one wanted to make the Chinese people understand Western culture” *yao rang zhongguoren liaojie xifang wenming, ye bi xian cong zhe yi yuantou kaishi* 要讓中國人了解西方文明，也必先從這一源頭開始 (Luo 2019, 120) and in his column he tried to demonstrate it to his readership.¹⁹

This explains why Edkins chose the subject of Greco-Roman antiquity for his section. He himself was an enthusiastic reader of the classics and was convinced that the roots of European culture lay with Ancient Greece and Rome. Existing as early as the first millennium BCE, the Greeks and Romans were also a suitable choice to achieve the overarching goals of the *Liuhe congtan* and demonstrate the comparability of Chinese and Western tradition with regards to age and value.

4 Conflating China and Greco-Roman Antiquity

Having introduced the content and the intentions behind the column, we will now look at its presentation and analyse in detail how Edkins attempted to demonstrate the equivalency of Chinese and Western literature with regards to age and value. On close reading, his essays reveal three distinct strategies that helped him achieve this purpose.

The first strategy Edkins consistently applied was to date his content according to the Chinese calendar. With very few exceptions, dates are always provided according to the Western and the Chinese calendar, for example when Edkins writes in his very first essay, “Greek is the Ancestor of Western literature”, that “this was in the year 592 B.C., the fifteenth year of King Ding of Zhou” *Shi Yesu qian wubai jushi'er nian, Zhou Dingwang shiwu nian ye* 時耶穌前五百九十二年，周定王十五年也 (Shen 2006, 1(1), 525). The same date style appears elsewhere: “This corresponds to the middle period of the Ji-Zhou dynasty in China” *Shi dang Zhongguo Ji-Zhou zhongye* 時當中國姬周中葉 (Shen 2006, 1(1), 524). Cicero’s biography in issue 1(8) is dated only using the Chinese system and Edkins does not even include the corresponding Western dates in his account. About Cicero’s birth, for example, Edkins writes simply: “He was born in the sixth year of the Yuanfeng reign of Emperor Wu of the Former Han” *sheng yu qian Han Wudi Yuanfeng liu nian* 生于前漢武帝元封六年 (Shen

¹⁹ The missionary even goes so far as to describe the Greeks as a kind of proto-Christians who were only lacking the reveal of the gospel (Shen 2006, 1(3), 557). This is one of the very few places where he mentions Christianity in the section.

2006, 1(8), 638). The missionary thus went to great lengths to clarify the classical chronology for his Chinese audience.²⁰ This strategy helped him counter the argument that Western culture was recent, demonstrating instead that the literary tradition of Western classics was equal in age to the Chinese.

But Edkins went further than this. Upon reading his entries in detail, it becomes apparent throughout that not only did he try to show the age of Europe's cultural roots, but also presented ancient Greece and classical China as roughly equivalent. Edkins never explicitly writes that the two cultures are comparable, or that it is his intention to somehow demonstrate this. Instead, he applies more subtle strategies like highlighting certain aspects of Western literary history or using specific terminology to make this point, inviting his readers to arrive at this revelation themselves. The more obvious technique and Edkins' second strategy was to focus on similarities between Greco-Roman and classical Chinese literature. He did not give overviews that strove for completeness. One example is Edkins' emphasis on the value of learning in Greco-Roman antiquity. About the education of Roman children, for example, he writes:

學問日新，為母者不忍以其兒，托于僕媪之手，以教子為己任。使之去惡從善，習於言語，嫻于禮儀。(Shen 2006, 1(4), 573)

There was constant progress in learning. Because mothers could not bear it due to the reason that they were their own children, they put them in the hands of slaves and servants, who made the education of the children their own task. They made them move away from bad and follow good; they trained them in language and made them skilled in etiquette [*liyi* 禮儀].

Edkins described the classical education system as set on instilling morals, language skills, and knowledge of appropriate behaviour and rites (the term Edkins uses for the last part is *liyi* 禮儀). The contents might have differed from a Chinese curriculum, but the emphasis on learning and morality made the Romans similar to the Chinese. Edkins also quotes Plato extensively on the importance of learning to demonstrate the same for the Ancient Greeks:

嘗云，文所以轉學，時出新意，法度井井，能令讀者喜於則效，又云，人之所貴者學問，在上帝純全之性情中，智慧為最。又云靈魂與身體為二，靈魂在身內，為身所累，必以智水自滌其穢，乃潔。(Shen 2006, 1(11), 683)

20 It should be noted that in the next issue, Plato's biography (Shen 2006, 1(11)) is then dated entirely in the Western system. It is, however, the only one of the nine columns where this is the case.

He [Plato] once said: "The learning transmitted by texts at times gives birth to new ideas. If these are measured and orderly, they are able to delight the reader who then imitates them". He also said: "What people consider valuable is learning. Among the pure and perfect innate features of the Supreme God, knowledge is the highest". He also said: "Soul and body are two entities. The soul rests in the body, and it is bound to the body. It needs to be cleansed of its dirt by the waters of wisdom, and only then is it clean".

Plato was, of course, a thinker who emphasized learning and education, e.g. in his dialogue *Nomoi*. But, as we will see in more detail below, Edkins provided only a very selective view of the philosopher's ideas. That he chose to stress Plato's positions on the importance of learning and its close ties to morality was certainly not coincidental, as it helped the missionary demonstrate his repeated point that the West had valued classical learning just as much and just as early as China.

The missionary also conflated the literary traditions of the two ancient societies. As we have seen above, he covered poetry and prose, historiography, and philosophy in his column. In all three cases, he explicitly or implicitly pointed out similarities to his readers between the Western and Chinese classical traditions. With regard to poets, Edkins regularly drew analogies between individual historical figures in an attempt to express their overall importance for Western literature. In Virgil's summary biography, for example, he wrote that "he is comparable to Li [Bo] and Du [Fu] from China" *bi Zhongguo zhi Li Du yan* 比中國之李杜焉 (Shen 2006, 1(4), 574). Elsewhere, Edkins stated that, "at first, the Greeks composed poems and songs to narrate historical events (the 21 historical songs of the Ming poet Yang Shen are of similar kind)" *Chu, Xila ren zuo shige yi xu shishi (Ming ren Yang Shen ershiyi shitanci ji lei ye)* 初, 希臘人作詩歌以敘史事, (明人楊慎二十一史彈詞即類也) (Shen 2006, 1(1), 524).²¹ This type of comparison is a particularly regular feature of the first few issues of the *Liuhe congkan*, in which Edkins provides basic overviews of Greek and Roman literature. These comparisons are rather devoid of information, since the poems of the Tang poets and Virgil's works are not comparable in either their content, their style or their respective eras. But they allowed Edkins to express how important these individual Greek and Roman figures were in his vision of the history of Western literature. The main point was that the West possessed such figures at all and thus had a venerable literary tradition.

21 Li Sher-shiueh explained the comparison with the emotions of the poem and stated that: "The verses in Ershiyi shi tanci depict absolute sadness, tragedy, heroism, and desolation" (Li 2014, 93).

Edkins also attempted to show his readers that the modes of composing prose and poetry in China and in Ancient Greece and Rome were comparable. When he explained the hexameter at length, he concluded with the remark that it “resembled the even and oblique tones in China” *you Zhongguo zhi lun pingze ye* 猶中國之論平仄也 (Shen 2006, 1(1), 525) and thus the way Chinese poetry was composed. He drew similar analogies between the prose writings of Greek authors and Chinese genres. The writings of a certain Yanagelaisi 亞那格來思, whose identity could not be ascertained, are said to have “resembled the ‘perfume case’ style in China” *ru Zhongguo xianglian ti* 如中國香奩體 (Shen 2006, 1(3), 556). Menander’s writings are described as belonging to the genre of *Chuanqi*, or fictional short stories: “At that time, there was a man called Menander who wrote several pieces of ‘short fiction’ [*chuanqi*]” *Yu shi you yi ren ming Meinante’er zuo chuanqi shuzhong* 于時有一人名梅南特爾作傳奇數種。 (Shen 2006, 1(3), 557). Again, Edkins simply equated Greek writings to those of the Chinese tradition, without giving much explanation and without the wish to point out differences. The information provided by these comparisons again does not go beyond stating the existence of similar genres and modes of expression in both traditions.

Thus far we saw that Edkins established parallels between the age and content of the literature of Western antiquity and classical China. A third strategy he applied was the use of traditional Chinese terminology to describe Greco-Roman literature. We can observe this most clearly in the field of historiography. I am not trying to reopen the old discussion of whether Western historiography and Chinese historiography can be distinguished by their goals, or whether Chinese historiography fulfils a more moralistic function than its Western counterpart. Roman historiography undoubtedly also served didactic and moral purposes (cf. Mutschler 2007), and Edkins had every reason to point this out. What this paper is concerned with are rather the language and categories Edkins chose in order to evaluate and introduce Western historians to his Chinese audience. From its beginnings, Chinese historiography was conceived as a tool for moral guidance. Accordingly, the vocabulary that developed to judge those who wrote works of historiography remained relatively stable over centuries. Edkins’ accounts of Herodotus, Sallust, and others demonstrate that he consistently applied this Chinese terminology to his Western subjects. About Sallust, for example, he writes:

不特紀事, 兼之窮理, 西人史中窮理之學, 自此始也。 (Shen 2006, 1(4), 573)

He not only recorded affairs, but at the same time exhausted their principles to the utmost. The practice of Westerners to “exhaust the principle of history to the utmost” [*shi zhong qiong li* 史中窮理] had its beginning here.

'Exhausting the principle' is a concept that Cheng Hao 程顥, Cheng Yi 程頤, and Zhu Xi 朱熹 have expounded upon in their writings. Edkins' choice of formulation is certainly intentional and not simply a translation, as he explicitly states that the Romans, too, understood and applied this principle usually associated with the Neo-Confucians. Caesar is described as one historian who was not able to do this: "His way of writing was highly refined. But he paid little thought to exhausting the principle" *wenfa jing lian, er shao qiong li zhi si* 文法精鍊, 而少窮理之思 (Shen 2006, 1(4), 573). As Nicolas Standaert has pointed out, the Jesuit missionaries of the seventeenth century had already relied on common Chinese Confucian terms to introduce Aristotelian philosophy to a Chinese audience. Slightly differently from Edkins, they used *qiongli* as "a common term to explain 'philosophy'" (Standaert 2003, 390-1). Standaert has argued that such translations - as opposed to transliterations or entirely new terms - "indicate possible correspondence or parallelism," rather than expressing "the difference that existed between Western and Chinese traditions" (Standaert 2003, 386). Below we will see that while Edkins chose a different term from the Confucian repertoire as a translation for "philosophy", his translation technique and the intention behind its application are the same as those of the Jesuits before him: he wanted to point out correspondence.

Edkins also regularly used more general tropes from the field of historiography in his columns. He said of Tacitus that "he relied on the historiographical style of Sallust and deeply studied the roots and branches of all affairs of his time. By praising the good and demoting the bad, he guided people's hearts and emotions" *yi Salu shifa, shen-jiu dangshi zhushi benmo, yi bao shan bian e, dao ren zhi qing xing* 依薩盧史法, 深究當時諸事本末, 以褒善貶惡, 道人之情性 (Shen 2006, 1(4), 573). By describing Tacitus as exerting "praise and blame" *baobian* 褒貶, Edkins is ascribing to him one of the core tasks of Chinese historiography, traditionally already associated with the *Chunqiu* 春秋. In his characterization of Herodotus, we not only read that "his method of praise and blame is extremely fair" *baobian zhi fa shen gong* 褒貶之法甚公, but also encounter a famous formulation: "Greece's old history became the words of one school" *Xi guo gushi, bi jin ju yijia zhi yan* 希國故事, 彼僅據一家言 (Shen 2006, 2(2), 752). The assertion that Herodotus completed "the words of one school" brings him close to Sima Qian 司馬遷 and his monumental *Shiji* 史記 (Grand Scribe's Records), in which the great Chinese historian "completed the words of one school" 成一家之言 (Sima Qian 1964, 3319). All these terms and phrases had a very traditional connotation for his Chinese reader-

ship, and Edkins and his assistants were certainly aware of this.²² Ultimately, their use helped Edkins to make the point that the Greeks and Romans were not only poets of vast and lasting influence, as well as a society that emphasized moral and ritual education, but also historians who were tasked with assessing the morality of their subjects.

Edkins' strategy also extends to the classical philosophers. This begins with his Chinese translation of the English term 'philosophy'. The missionary decided to use *xingli* 性理 'the Nature as Principle' or 'Nature and Principle'.²³ This is again a Neo-Confucian term that could not fail to evoke Zhu Xi and the Cheng brothers in the minds of Edkins' Chinese readership, as the term *xingli* was used as a collective term for (Neo-)Confucian thought. The missionary increased the effect of this translation choice by not defining or introducing the content of Greco-Roman philosophy. He deployed it without comment in many of his biographies. Plato and Socrates are described as authorities on *xingli*:

百拉多者，希臘國雅典人也。耶穌前四百三十一年生，少時頗喜吟詠。稍長，乃究性理之學，年二十，師事娑格拉底斯，後自成性理一大家，所著書，皆推明其師之意。(Shen 2006, 1(11), 682)

Plato was a native of Athens in the state of Greece. He was born in the year 431 before Christ. In his youth he was rather fond of singing and chanting. Once he had gotten a bit older, he exhaustively studied philosophy [*xingli*]. When he was twelve, he studied with Socrates. Later he himself became a great expert on philosophy [*xingli*], and the books he wrote all promote and explain the ideas of his teacher.

22 Edkins (Shen 2006, 1(3), 556) writes about Homer in a very similar same way: "His poems are sufficient to show the depravity or correctness of peoples' hearts, the beauty or disgust of an era's customs, or the exceptional beauty of landscapes and sceneries. Half consists of actual records; the rest comes out of the heart of the craftsman. How superior he was to the vulgar customs!" *Qi shi zuyi xian renxin zhi xiezheng, shifeng zhi mei'e, shanchuan jingwu zhi qiguai meili. ji shi zhe ban, yu chu zi jiangxin, chao hu liusu* 其詩足以見人心之邪正，世風之美惡，山川景物之奇怪美麗。紀實者半，餘出自匠心，超乎流俗。

23 During the time Edkins wrote his column, there was no consensus on how to translate the word philosophy into Chinese. Joachim Kurtz offers a summary of the manyfold terms chosen to translate 'logic' and 'philosophy' during the Nineteenth century (Kurtz 2001, 156-7). Lobscheid's dictionary, written a few years later than Edkins' column, offers the translation *lixue* 理學 for 'philosophy'; *xingli zhi xue* 性理之學, *bowu lixue* 博物理學 and *gewu zongzhi* 格物總智 for 'natural philosophy'; *wu chang zhi li* 五常之理 and *wu chang zonglun* 五常總論 for 'moral philosophy'; *xinlun* 心論 and *xin xue* 心學 for 'natural philosophy'; and *zhixue* 知學 and *lilun* 理論 for 'intellectual philosophy' (Lobscheid 1868, 1311). James Legge in his biography of Cicero had used the term *gewu* 格物 when he spoke about Cicero's interests: "His heart remained with studying philosophy, rhetoric and law" *liu xin yu gewu yanci lüfa zhi xue* 留心于格物言詞律法之學 (Song, Uchida 2005, 454-5). This suggests that Edkins' choice was intentional.

Cicero, who is depicted as a key figure in the development of Western philosophy, is said to have been “particularly fond of Greek philosophy [*xingli*]” *you hao Xila xingli* 尤好希臘性理 and to have gone “to Greece to study philosophy [*xingli*] and rhetoric” *zhi Xila xue xingli bi-anlun* 至希臘學性理辯論 (Shen 2006, 1(8), 638).²⁴ Edkins does not provide his Chinese readers with much insight as to what Western philosophy might have entailed. The closest they get to a definition in this column is the list of Cicero’s works, in which Edkins explains that Cicero’s works on philosophy can be separated into five subcategories:

性理又分五支，一，議論辯駁之法，[。。。]。二，論國政，[。。。]。三，論五倫七情，[。。。]。四，論天地原理，[。。。]。五，論天帝鬼神，占卜，[。。。]。
(Shen 2006, 1(8), 639)

Philosophy [“*xingli*”] is again divided into five branches. The first branch discusses the method of rhetoric. [...] The second branch discusses government. [...] The third branch talks about the five relationships and the seven emotional states. [...] The fourth branch talks about the principle of Heaven and Earth. [...] The fifth branch discusses gods and spirits as well as divination. [...]

The list Edkins provides is very similar to one found in William Smith’s *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* (Smith 1844, 719). Smith distinguishes Cicero’s “Philosophical works” in “A. Philosophy of Taste”, “B. Political Philosophy”, “C. Philosophy of Morals”, “D. Speculative Philosophy” and “E. Theology”. Therefore, Edkins choice to translate numbers two to five as ‘government’ *guozheng* 國政, ‘the five relationships and seven emotions’ *wulun qiqing* 五倫七情, the ‘original principle of Heaven and Earth’ *tiandi yuanli* 天地原理 and ‘god(s) and spirits’ *tiandi guishen* 天帝鬼神 again seems to be a conscious attempt to conflate Greco-Roman and Chinese thought, heavily suggesting to his readers that what fascinated the Greeks is largely analogous to what fascinated their classical Chinese counterparts.

At the end of Plato’s biography, Edkins also summarizes some of Plato’s concrete ideas by listing some of his topics and short quotations. Above, we already saw the quotations on the importance of learning. Of Plato’s ideas on correct government, Edkins writes:

其論善惡之報云，放縱私欲者，不能獲真福，心中諸情和平，即是真福。欲求真福者，必修其身，以修身為治國之本，治國與治身同，人類之附在於國，

²⁴ From the names connected with it so far - Plato, Socrates and Cicero -, one could assume that Edkins’ *xingli* refers to stoicism. But he also characterizes the epicurean Lucretius as an author who deals with *xingli* (Shen 2006, 1(4), 573-4). It is, therefore, clear that Edkins used *xingli* as a general term to translate the word ‘philosophy’.

猶四肢百骸之附在於身，故治國者，必先自去其私，絕惡之萌，乃能化行於國。(Shen 2006, 1(11), 683)

When discussing good and evil, he stated: “If one indulges in selfish desires, then one is unable to obtain true fortune. If the emotions in one’s heart are pacified, then this is true fortune. If one desires true fortune, one must cultivate oneself [*xiu shen*]. Because cultivating oneself is the root of governing a state [*zhi guo*], governing a state and governing the self are the same. People are attached to their state like the four limbs and the hundred bones are attached to their body. Therefore: those who govern a state must first rid themselves of their private [desires] and cut off the sprouts of evil. Then they can act on the state in a transformative way”.

Again, this is far from a misrendering of Plato’s ideas. But Edkins once again deliberately uses terms familiar to Chinese readers: ‘cultivating oneself’ and ‘governing a state’ were established terms, explicated in seminal texts. Take, for example, the following quote from the *Daxue* 大學 (Great Learning) (text translated by Paul Goldin):

物格而后知至，知至而后意誠，意誠而后心正，心正而后身修，身修而后家齊，家齊而后國治，國治而后天下平。

After things are investigated, knowledge is brought about; after knowledge is brought about, one’s intentions are sincere; after one’s intentions are sincere, one’s heart is rectified; after one’s heart is rectified, one cultivates oneself; after one has cultivated oneself, one’s family is regulated; after one’s family is regulated, the state is ordered; after the state is ordered, the world is at peace. (Goldin 2020, 55)

The way in which Edkins presented Plato’s ideas on how to bring order to a state makes it seem like a quotation from one of the Confucian classics. Here, too, his choice of vocabulary runs parallel to the works of the Jesuit missionaries, who, as Standaert has pointed out, “described the major aspects of Western ethics in terms directly borrowed from the canonical writing *Daxue* (*Great Learning*): *xiu shen*, self-cultivation (*ethica*), *qi jia*, regulating the family (*oeconomica*), *zhi guo*, ordering the state (*politica*), and *ping tianxia*, bringing peace to the world” (Standaert 2003, 387). That the state Plato envisioned was vastly different from that idealized by the Confucian thinkers is just one of the many divergences that go unmentioned.

As we have seen, not only did Edkins introduce European antiquity to his Chinese readers, but he also depicted its literary output and customs as very close to China’s. His column presented Greek and Roman culture as lofty and worthy of esteem, a field of study that

was in many ways comparable and even similar to pre-imperial and imperial China. Edkins achieved this forced parallelism through direct comparisons and descriptions that conflated the two cultures. It could be argued that Edkins and those who assisted him in writing the columns made subconscious choices to use Chinese terms to translate Western ideas. But nowhere in his columns does Edkins ever point out any differences between Greco-Roman and Chinese writings, instead suggesting comparability in both his content and the language used throughout. Clearly his choice of terms was deliberate and customized to his selection of content.²⁵

5 Conclusion

When starting their journal, the *Liuhe congfan*, the Shanghai-based missionaries of the London Missionary Society decided to include not only scientific and religious topics, as they had done in previous journals, but also a dedicated literature section. Their goal was to introduce their Chinese audience to Western literary culture and history, reduce communication barriers, and demonstrate that the West possessed a literary tradition comparable to the Chinese.

Joseph Edkins took charge of the section and resolved to use the space for a detailed introduction to the written culture of Greco-Roman antiquity. His goals were loftier than merely providing his readers with an overview of the history of Greek and Roman writings or informing them of the greatness of individual authors, although this was certainly a part of what Edkins wanted to achieve, being an enthusiastic reader of the classics himself. Through his column, he sought to demonstrate the extensive history and elevated status of contemporary European culture by illuminating its ancient roots. From Edkins' other writings we know that the missionaries had already encountered the belief that European culture was too recent to provide any meaningful learning to the Chinese literati. To counter this argument, Edkins used the Greco-Roman tradition he saw as the source of his own Victorian education. To strengthen his point, Edkins depicted the Greeks and Romans in a manner that the Chinese

25 A good example for how interested Edkins was in the differences between Chinese and Western thinking is his article "Notices of the Character and Writings of Meh Ts'i" published in 1858, in which Edkins analyses the differences between the Mohist concepts of *jian'ai* 兼愛 and *love* in the New Testament. He reaches the conclusion that, though similar, the Mohist one is "based on political utility" and that Mozi's "views, while resembling Christianity in form, are much more akin in reality to the opinions of Bentham and Paley, who [...] would doubtless have claimed him as an ally" (Edkins 1859, 166-7). Edkins' analysis of the concept has recently been compared to Legge's by Chu Lijuan (Chu 2021, 161-84).

would find familiar; Greco-Roman customs were described with language and concepts that would make them resemble China's. Aspects that separated Greece from China, such as its political system or the different topics the philosophers debated, were conveniently omitted.

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