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Western Classical Learning and the Protestant Missionaries: Revival in China and Korea in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

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Abstract: It has been observed that since the Early Qing Dynasty, the eastward spread of Western classics has been in decline; this article aims to look at how Protestant missionaries helped to revive it in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. First, this study examines the circumstances that Protestant missionaries faced upon arriving in China and describes the challenges, opportunities, and issues they encountered when attempting to spread Western classics as part of their missionary effort. Second, this article reveals the strategies Protestant missionaries employed to revive the Western classics, with a focus on the utilization of the translated literature, press, and academic institutions. Third, this article explores the ways the spread of Western classics by the missionaries of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century outshone the achievements of their predecessors of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Unlike the missions through secular knowledge in China, the spread of Protestantism in Korea took place in a more direct manner. This comparative study in the last section highlights the importance of each country's endowment in terms of the method and effectiveness of missionary efforts.

Keywords: eastward spread of western learning; protestant missionaries; classical reception; Joseph Edkins; *Shanghai Serial* (《六合丛谈》)



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1. Introduction

A remarkable flourishing in the history of the exchanges between Eastern and Western cultures occurred after the 16th century, the Age of Discovery, which allowed Western missionaries to travel eastward. The long history of contact and exchange between Eastern and Western cultures began with the large-scale eastward spread of Christianity in the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties, during which the introduction of Western classics was accompanied by the eastward spread of Christianity. In 1704, Pope Clement XI issued a ban prohibiting Chinese Catholics from ancestral worship, considering it contrary to the Christian faith, thus sparking the so-called “Rites Controversy” between the imperial court and the Holy See. In 1722, upon the death of the Kangxi Emperor, Yongzheng ascended the throne. In the following year, 1723, the Yongzheng Emperor revoked Kangxi’s politics of toleration and officially banned Christianity. For the next 120 years, Christianity in China was regarded as an illegal heresy, illegal to preach and illegal to believe. Since then the spread of Christianity in China has gone underground, or has been transferred to remote and impoverished areas, out of the reach of imperial power. It is also during this time that Korean emissaries in China brought Western learning to Korea. Later, Protestant missionaries took over from the Jesuits as the primary carriers of the Western classics after the 19th century, reviving the spread of Western classics in East Asia, though with a seemingly distinct focus on China and Korea.

The spread of Christianity in China has gone through different historical periods and paths. This article examines the failure of the Jesuits' attempts to spread the gospel among China's intellectual elite as a result of a shift in attitudes toward missions by the Papacy and the Qing court, after which Protestant missionaries resumed their missionary role, moving into China's remote areas and, after the country was forced to open its gates in the 1840s, into its port cities. There was a fundamental shift in the missionary paradigm: from top-down to bottom-up, which inevitably changed the content of the mission. The rise and use of mass media, the curiosity and desire of Chinese intellectuals for Western history and technology, and the tolerance of the rulers to the spread of Western knowledge were all factors that were exploited by the Protestant missionaries who entered China. This paper does not look at the introduction of Western industrial and technological knowledge, which has been the focus of most existing research, but examines the introduction of the Western classics as represented by Greco-Roman history. Ancient Greco-Roman history carries the origins of the political system of the Western countries, and it is the window for Chinese intellectuals to learn more about the Western countries in order to find the way to save their country. It is thus clear that new methods and contents of missionary work came into being in the new historical context, and their impact and effect are self-evident. The introduction of Western secular knowledge profoundly changed and fragmented Chinese society, which then led to the turmoil of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

If the mode and content of the transmission of Protestant missionaries in China from the late 19th century to the early 20th century were more oriented toward secular knowledge, and the spread of Christian doctrine was instead poorly received in Chinese society, this trend manifested itself in a very different way in Korea. Unlike Chinese society, where Confucianism is practiced from the top down, Korea has a monotheistic worship tradition, so the Korean people are more receptive to the storyline of the Christian Bible, and this fact has led to the effective spread of Christianity in Korea, where Christianity was indirectly acquired from China. The local missionaries did not have to go to great lengths to organize large-scale cultural activities to spread Christianity as in China, and it was easy for Christianity to find a foundation for self-reliance in Korea. The comparative study of Chinese and Korean history explains why modern Christian missionaries (both Catholic and Protestant) have been unable to find a foothold in China to this day after centuries of attempts to change the method and content of their missionary endeavors.

The study of Western learning has a long history in both China and Korea. In Korea, extensive research has been conducted on this subject, particularly focusing on the history of the spread of Western learning (such as Jin (1992) and Lee (2001)). In recent years, the study of the spread of Western learning has been expanded to its impact on the politics, economy, culture, and other related fields of modern Korea, and some representative figures have also become the object of specialized research (Lee 1999). In China, research on Western learning has tended towards diversification in methodology. Apart from basic studies, research on Western learning and religions has also yielded fruitful results (Xu 1990; Tang 1993; Gu 1996), among which the study on the spread of Western classics stands out. A number of scholars have examined the relationship between Chinese and the Western classics (Zhang 2002; Zhao 2001), and scholars, such as Dezheng Chen (2004), Wei Wei (2019), Zhi Zhang (2012), and Xin Fan (2013) have directly discussed the history of the acceptance of the Western classics in China in a general way.¹ Western scholars have begun to incorporate far-reaching theoretical frameworks based on analyzing the traits of Protestant missionaries in China and their effects to make the conclusions more in-depth and persuasive (Cohen 1978; Zaeri 2019). The French scholar Roux explores the development of the proscription of Catholicism enacted by the Qing government in China over more than a century (1724–1860). Issues such as the proscription, anti-Christian codes, and the lifting of the proscription are explored in depth in an attempt to dispel dichotomous conclusions. The author innovatively traces the path of the spread of the Japanese anti-Christian practice of *ebumi* across the Asian continent, explaining in a relatively small section why the practice of *ebumi* could not be transmitted directly from Japan to Korea (Roux 2023).

This paper intends to build on these studies by placing more emphasis on Western classics' spread by Protestant missionaries within a temporal and spatial context, examining in the temporal dimension its relationship with the previous period, i.e., the eastward spread of classics in the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties, and focusing on the situation in Korea in the spatial dimension. These comparisons are important for an all-encompassing understanding of the eastward spread of Western learning and the diversity of the characteristics of Western learning as well as Christianity in East Asia.

2. Path and Foundation: The Dilemma of the Spread of Western Classics

Due to the Rites Controversy, the Qing government decided to forbid Christianity and shut down its doors to western missionaries, so it did not fully take advantage of the excellent opportunity to absorb modern Western knowledge and gain insights into the development of European and American countries that came with the eastward spread of Western learning in the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties. During the two Opium Wars, the irresolution of the Qing court's legislation made the local governments' attitudes toward Christianity ambiguous, and it is worth recognizing that the Qing government's targets of repression were Chinese converts aiming at rebellion rather than Western missionaries (Roux 2023, pp. 215–35). This resulted in Protestant missionaries being able to evangelize only in a limited and specific way, but as the Qing government placed Christianity in a position where it was "neither accepted nor completely suppressed," the role of Protestants in introducing Western learning and revitalizing the Qing Empire was valued by policymakers.

However, this was by no means smooth sailing. The first group of Protestant missionaries coming to the East found themselves confronted with a closed-off country that was not receptive to their presence. They had to take a circuitous route through various parts of Southeast Asia, biding their time and waiting for the opportunity to make a move. As per the data presented in the *Chinese Repository* (《中国丛报》), prior to 1842, a total of sixty-one missionaries from various European and American churches, including the London Society, the Holland Missionary Society, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the American Baptist Missionary Society, the Episcopal Church of the United States of America, the American Southern Baptist Convention, and others, were sent to China and Southeast Asia on the eve of the Opium War, including main figures such as Robert Morrison, William Milne, Walter Henry Medhurst, William Young, William Dean, David Abeel, Elijah Coleman Bridgman, Karl Friedrich August Gutzlaff, David Collier, Samuel Dyer, Samuel Kidd, and Ira Tracy. They founded Chinese schools, published Chinese newspapers, and built missionary stations in Singapore, Batavia, and Malacca. Upon the surrender of Hong Kong and the opening of five ports to trade following the Opium War, missionaries promptly shifted their operations from Southeast Asia to these ports. A new phase in the spread of Western learning in China began (Xiong 1994, p. 63). In the Tongzhi and Guangxu years, the scope of activities of the missionaries expanded, from the northern cities such as Beijing and Tianjin to the inland in the west. The majority of them spoke Chinese really well, and some of them had even picked up various smaller dialects.²

Apart from this winding path they had to take, another difficulty faced by Protestant missionaries in spreading classical studies was the fact that the foundation of Western learning laid by the Jesuits was not really solid. Professor Xiong Yuezhi (Xiong 2010, p. 64) provided a well-recognized summary in five points: First, the impact of Western learning was primarily restricted to scholars. The majority of Catholics who were ignorant of Chinese culture, like Hu Er, An San, and other individuals mentioned in Fang Hao's *Biography of Chinese Catholic Historical Figures* (《中国天主教史人物传》), were merely allowed to join the Church and were not given any education. Second, those who accepted Western learning to a certain extent were the part of the scholars who already had certain professional foundations and knowledge, such as astronomy, mathematics, geography, medicine, and so on, while those who only concentrated on the eight-legged essay and had no interest

in science would not accept Western learning. Third, the area where missionaries were regularly active was primarily the provinces of Zhejiang, Jiangsu, and Anhui, followed by Jiangxi and Fujian, and this was where the effect of Western learning occurred. Fourth, with the missionaries' departure, the impact of Western learning rapidly declined due to the limitations of the transmission means and the disruption of the transmission. Fifth, calendrical calculation³ and mathematics were the fields where Western learning had the biggest impact.

Therefore, the task of spreading the classics, which had to be accomplished mainly by Protestant missionaries, was not carried out smoothly in the late Qing Dynasty, but it was necessary, for they needed to use Western learning as a means of spreading the gospel of God through normal preaching. The Jesuits in the previous period provided the basis for Western learning with various limitations. They published very few books, and the subjects of these books were selected to meet the needs of missionary work. Therefore, their influence on China at that time was limited. The path of preaching and spreading Western classics was both long and arduous.

3. Magazines and Books: Carriers of Western Classics

As a result of satisfying the intellectuals' need to learn about the West for self-improvement, a secular form of evangelism was eventually adopted by Protestant missionaries with the tacit approval of the Qing government. The spread of Western classics by Protestant missionaries was realized mainly by means of cultural activities. Broadly speaking, the missionary work relied on the opening of schools and the publication of magazines and books. Prior to 1842, the missionaries established printing houses, published the *Trade Bulletin* (《贸易通志》), *Ancient and Modern Foreign Compendium* (《古今外国纲鉴》), and other Chinese books, as well as the *Chinese Monthly Magazine* (《察世俗每月统记传》), the *Eastern Western Monthly Magazine* (《东西洋考每月统记传》), and other Chinese magazines. They also opened the Yinghua College, the Morrison Hall, and other educational institutions, enrolling Chinese children.

The success of this method of missionary endeavor is based on objective data. Scholarly statistics indicate that approximately 147 different types of Chinese books and magazines were published during this time. Of these, 113 types, or 77% of the total, were related to the Bible, hymns, discourses, biographies of religious figures, religious history, etc.; 34 types, or 23% of the total, dealt with geography, politics, history, and world economics. *Chinese Monthly Magazine*, *Special Selection Summary Monthly Chronicle* (《特选撮要每月纪传》), *Universal Gazette* (《天下新闻》), and *Eastern Western Monthly Magazine* were the four primary Chinese newspapers and magazines (Xiong 1994, p. 75). In the 1850s, the *Shanghai Serial* (《六合丛谈》) played a noteworthy role in the spread of Western classics in China, particularly during the two Opium Wars. Prior to *The Chinese Global Magazine* (《万国公报》), it was the most effective means of introducing Western classics.

The Chinese books related to Western classics which were written by the missionaries also included the *Chronicle of Ten Thousand Countries* (《万国纪略》) (30 pages), written by Milne and published in Malacca in 1822; *General History* (《万国史传》) (53 pages), written by Gutzlaff and published in Malacca; the *Concise Foreign History* (《外国史略》) (56 pages), written by Morrison and published in 1847 (which was also used in the *Hai Guo Tu Zhi* (《海国图志》)); the *Chronicle of Great Britain* (《大英国志》), by Willaim Muirhead, published by the MoHai ShuYuan in Shanghai in 1856; and the *Chinese Serial* (《遐迹贯珍》), edited by Medhurst and James Legge, published in Hong Kong in 1853–1856. The most important of these, which contain abundant information on Western classics and which are available to us, are Willaim Muirhead's *Universal Geography* (《地理全志》) and Morrison's *Concise Foreign History* (Chen 2004, p. 62).

In the late 19th century, missionaries' production of books and the founding of newspapers and magazines played leading roles in the spread of Western classics. By the early 1890s, there were 76 publications and magazines published, the majority of which were Western church media (Xue 1998).⁴ The publication that had been in existence the longest, published the most Western classics, and had the greatest influence was *The Chinese Global*

Magazine. If its forerunner, *The News of Church* (《教会新报》), is taken into account, it was published for thirty-nine years (1868–1907), at a time serving as the Guangxue Society's official newspaper. Among all the articles that it published, we can count more than twenty articles on Greco-Roman history only between 1874 and 1890. A few of the notable ones were Young J. Allen's "On the Customs of Ancient Greece and Rome" (《论希腊罗马古时风俗》), "On the Status of Women in Europe" (《论欧洲古今女人之地位》), and "On the Decline of the Lading People" (《论腊丁族人就衰之故》), as well as Joseph Edkins' "Greek the stem of Western Literature" (《希腊为西国文学之祖》), "Greek Antiquities" (《希腊古迹》), and "Greek Philosophy Chronicle" (《希腊性理纪略》), and Alexander Williamson's "Hellenic's Origins" (《希利尼源流备考》), "A Study on Hellenic Politics" (《希利尼律例备考》), and "Chronicle of Hellenistic Wise Men" (《希利尼贤哲纪略》), and so on. The *Peking Magazine* (《中西闻见录》), founded by missionaries William A.P. Ting, John S. Burdon, and Joseph Edkins in Beijing in the eleventh year of the Tongzhi reign (1872), was devoted to the natural sciences and demonstrated a tendency of breaking up research into different fields (Wei 2019, p. 71 and Sang and Guan 2021, pp. 77–82).

In addition to publishing periodicals and magazines on a regular basis, the missionaries also translated and published books on religion and world history, introducing foreign historical knowledge from various angles, and publishing some classical western works. Davelle Z. Sheffield's *Outlines of General History* (《万国通鉴》) and Willaim Muirhead's *Chronicle of Great Britain* were translated and published by Yizhi Shuhui, an earlier, well-known publisher. The Guangxue Society, which was founded somewhat later, translated and published several foreign history books, some of the most well-known of which were *The Nineteenth Century: A History* (《泰西新史揽要》), which Timthy Richard translated, as well as his *Record of the Changes and Prosperity of the Great Powers* (《列国变通兴盛记》), Joseph Edkins's translation of *Brief History of Europe* (《欧洲史略》), the *Brief History of Greece* (《希腊志略》) and *Brief History of Rome* (《罗马志略》), and the *Overview of Western Knowledge* (《西学略述》), among other works (Chen 2004, p. 95). Under the direction of Robert Hart, and with translation assistance from Joseph Edkins, the General Customs Administration also subsidized the publication of 16 types of *Brief History of Greece* and *Brief History of Rome* and the *Overview of Western Knowledge*, which included 12 scientific publications by the British Macmillan Company and *Brief History of Greece* (《希腊志略》) (7 volumes), *Brief History of Rome* (《罗马志略》) (13 volumes), and *Brief History of Europe* (13 volumes) in the year of 1886.

Among these publications, the number of books related to the history of the Western countries has shown a marked increase in the late 19th century. Only about 20 translations of histories of Western countries in the strict sense of the word were found in the catalog of Chinese writings of Protestant missionaries in China from 1810 to 1867 listed in the *Memoirs of Protestant Missionaries in China* (《基督教在华传教士纪念录》), and the bulk of the 760 publications were religious reading materials (Hu and Zhang 1991, p. 150). Following the 1860s and 1870s, the missionaries became increasingly interested in the collection of foreign-history books, which led to the printing and publication of several volumes on world history. Taking the Guangxue Society as an example, approximately sixty types of publications on world history, comprising one-fifth of the 258 categories of books containing Greco-Roman chronicles, were published in this period (Yuan 1992, p. 256).

4. Maintaining and Surpassing: Deepening the Spread of Western Classics

Comparing to the spread of Western classics in the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties, this period displayed a few new features. First, established disciplines continued to develop: astronomy, calendars, mathematics, geography, physics, architecture, and medicine; these disciplines continue to be promoted by Protestant missionaries. The evolution of astronomy in Europe was introduced by Alexander Wylie, who had *The Origins of Western Astronomy* (《西国天学源流》) serialized in the *Shanghai Serial* from 1857 to 1858. "The Origins of Astrology" (《星学源流》), written by John S. Burdon, published in the second volume of *Peking Magazine* in 1872, presented the accomplishments of Thales and

Pythagoras, two Greek astronomers from antiquity. Along with “ancient Greek mathematical tradition”, published in the 8th volume of *Peking Magazine* in 1873, Joseph Edkins provided brief biographies of Aristotle and Archimedes in 1875 in the same periodical.

The second is the expansion of new categories of knowledge. In 1828, the Chinese monthly magazine *Universal Gazette* was launched in Malacca by Samuel Kidding. The publication’s primary content consisted of European science, history, religion, ethics, and other related topics. The column layout of *Eastern Western Monthly Magazine* was based on scientific knowledge, including geography, astronomy, and history in Chinese and Western perspectives. The *Shanghai Serial* included science, literature, news, religion, and so on.⁵ *The Global Magazine* followed and even enlarged these categories.⁶ There was a wealth of Western scientific and cultural knowledge, including a good bit of classics, in this publication. The presentation of specific disciplines evolved in tandem with the rise in academic categories, indicating a trend toward incremental precision. Dispelling Chinese people’s misconceptions about the West was a key goal of the missionaries’ introduction of Western history. The East–West-comparison format was used to list the contemporaneous histories of China and the West separately, demonstrating that Western history was just as long as Chinese history. *The Comparative Chronology* (《东西史记和合》), penned by Walter Henry Medhurst in the early 19th century, contrasted the historical events of China with the West in two columns using a chronological method. The article “Scriptures” (《经书》), in the February edition of 1837 of the *Eastern Western Monthly Magazine*, also uses a cross-referenced methodology. It enumerated the classical writers of ancient Greece and Rome and grouped them based on their attributes, although still dated history with the Chinese period.

The introduction of new categories of knowledge during missionary work was a deliberate act by Protestant missionaries. In the inaugural issue of *Shanghai Serial*, missionary Alexander Wylie pointed out the purpose of the publication: “Desiring to share the feelings of both Chinese and foreigners, record events from afar and near, and encompass changes of ancient and modern times. Whatever is seen or heard, it shall be recorded with each issue compiled monthly, without being bound by precedent, striving to make the vastness of the sky as if within reach, and the distance of the ocean as if lying on a mat.”

Since then, history had been written in a more refined manner, and in 1838, the first and second issues of the *Eastern Western Monthly Magazine* contained “A Brief History of Greece” (《希腊国史略》) and the “History of the Greek State” (《希腊国史》). They recounted mythological stories as history: “A Brief History of Greece” introduced the stories of Iason and Medea, Hercules, Theseus, Oedipus, and the Seven Heroes’ attack on Thebes.⁷ The “History of the Greek State” introduced the story of the Trojan War. Some of the stories were obviously in Chinese styles, such as calling the Greek gods “Bodhisattvas”, Heracles “the son of the Immortal god”, describing Helen as “as delicate as a blossom, with a brow like a spring mountain”, and the hero as “clad in a quivering robe”, “Clothed with beads, helmeted with flowers, and wearing armor of light”; this should show traces of Chinese rhetorical embellishment. The purpose of this attempt was to get close to local readers, and there was clearly more depth to this narrative of history than simply listing historical events (Wei 2019, p. 42). For example, Joseph Edkins’s article “Brief History of Greece” (《希腊志略》) was more specifically devoted to the history of ancient Greece, presenting a more complete picture of Western civilization to Chinese readers (Chen and Han 2014). These accounts clearly exhibited a Chinese style, showing traces of embellishment tailored for Chinese readers, seemingly striving to resonate with the local audience. However, compared to a mere listing of events, they evidently possessed considerable depth. As for the Chinese style, it does not significantly affect the narration of historical facts (Wei 2019, pp. 42–43). On the other hand, the ability to interpret Greek texts using Chinese rhetoric demonstrates the missionaries’ familiarity with both Greek and Chinese classical literature. Otherwise, such interpretations would be impossible.

The increasing coverage of Greek history was somewhat related to the shift in strategies among missionaries at that time. Initially, each mission and missionary operated in-

dependently upon their arrival in China, with different objectives and strategies, lacking cooperation and communication. However, by the early years of the Guangxu Emperor's reign, various missions began to adjust their missionary policies continuously, reversing the sharp confrontation between Chinese and Western cultures and improving the missionary environment. In the seventh year of the Tongzhi Emperor's reign (1868), Young J. Allen established the *Church News* at the Linhua Academy in Shanghai, mainly for religious propaganda. In the thirteenth year of the Tongzhi Emperor's reign (1874), the *Church News* was renamed *The Chinese Global Magazine*, with a significant shift in its editorial direction, focusing primarily on international current affairs while also featuring scholarly articles. The Western classics, belonging to secular knowledge, therefore appeared in large quantities only after this change (Wei 2019, p. 74).

Accompanying the increase in accuracy was an increase in scholasticism. This first manifested itself in the evaluation of Greek culture. In the first month of 1837, the first issue of the *Eastern Western Monthly Magazine*, a short article entitled "Poetry" (《诗》), which introduces Western and Eastern poetry, stated that "the poetry of Homer in the Greek country" and "the poetry of Milton in Great Britain" were "the most important of the poems". "This was a generalized assessment of the status of Greek culture. Joseph Edkins, on the other hand, emphasized the importance of Greco-Roman culture to the Europeans from the perspective of the modern European knowledge system, and his "Greek the stem of Western Literature" was a programmatic document, which elucidated the relationship between Ancient Greece and Western academia, in just over a thousand words, and its significance as the source of European civilization.⁸

The study of Protestant missionaries also involved scholarly examinations of Greek philosophers, poets, and historians. From July 3 (18 August 1877) to October 20 (24 December 1877) of the third year of Guangxu, *The Chinese Global Magazine* serialized Alexander Williamson's articles, "Hellenic's Origins", "Hellenic Sage Chronicle Preparation of the Character of Hellenism" (《希利尼人品备考》), and "A Study on Hellenic Politics", which successively described the biographies of the philosophers of ancient Greece, the main points of their teachings, and dealt with the society and institutions of ancient Greece. This series of essays also focused on the biographies and doctrines of figures such as Empedocles, Democritus, Heraclitus, Socrates, Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Epictetus, Zeno, and so on. Joseph Edkins also wrote series of articles on Greek poets (《希腊诗人略说》), Cicero (《西学说: 基改罗传》), Plato (《西学说: 白拉多传》), Homer (《西学说: 和马传》), Thucydides (《西学说: 土居提代传》), Herodotus (《黑路独都》), and other ancient Greco-Roman philosophers in *Shanghai Serial* and *The News of Church* from 1857 to 1877. This sequence of publications represented the current status of classical studies (Wei 2019, p. 44).

The intentional efforts by missionaries to engage in activities beyond spreading the Gospel, in a sense, indicated the necessity for missionaries to disseminate Western learning through historical knowledge due to the ambiguous stance of the Qing government, local powers, and regional authorities regarding anti-Christian policies. In the eyes of many missionaries, publications were of vital importance to influence the Chinese empire. Timothy Richard and others emphasized consistently that the bureaucratic literati were the true soul of Chinese society, effectively controlling everything from the central to local levels. They believed that by ideologically influencing these individuals, they essentially controlled all of China. Recognizing the significant role of traditional classics in the knowledge structure of the literati, the missionaries found that the most effective way to propagate Christianity was to utilize Confucian classics and historical studies, which were familiar and easily accepted by them. Additionally, historical studies offer a much richer content, covering a wide range of topics from ancient to modern times, domestic and foreign, allowing various perspectives to be expressed. This led many missionaries to engage in compiling historical books or citing historical facts in newspapers and magazines to cater to the mindset of the Chinese literati.

The missionaries' strategy indeed yielded certain results, as evidenced by the establishment of *The Chinese Global Magazine*, which was popular among the Chinese people for

“its extensive coverage of geographies, histories and social customs of Western countries”. Furthermore, as political and military conflicts between China and the West intensified, the Qing government appeared increasingly weak, leading to a growing sense of cultural superiority among Westerners, including missionaries. Therefore, missionaries, who had already recognized in the early 19th century that science could be used to serve their missionary purposes, became even more enthusiastic about introducing Western learning to China in the late 19th century. They firmly believed that the value of introducing Western learning lay in “convincing the Chinese that they have much to learn from us” and using this to “eradicate and destroy their confidence in their own theories about the world and nature.” From this perspective, whether missionaries were driven by their missionary zeal or by the motive to eliminate the psychological resistance or even hostility of Chinese traditional literati towards Western culture, they exhibited an inherent initiative to disseminate Western learning, including Western classics, to China (Chen 2004, pp. 106–7).

5. Impacts and Interactions: The Result of the Spread of Western Classics

From the beginning of the late Ming Dynasty to the formation of the Republic of China, Chinese intellectual circles underwent a historical process that saw them reject, gradually accept, and eventually fully absorb Western learning. This process had grown increasingly profound. This shift stemmed, in large part, from the ideological affinity with the Chinese intellectual elite. Throughout the entire process of the eastward spread of Western learning, traditional Chinese culture, particularly Confucianism, was constantly questioned and scrutinized.⁹

Confucianism in the Qing Dynasty was in a precarious position, since it had abandoned the rationalist heritage of Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism and was unable to handle the challenges of Western modernization after the Opium War (Huang 1992). A few Chinese individuals developed sophisticated ideas and feelings to “open their eyes to the world” after the Opium War convulsed Chinese society as a whole. The first to propose this motto was Lin Zexu, followed by Wei Yuan and others, who started actively participating in the presentation of Western histories and the comprehension of the global situation. The basic knowledge of Ancient Greek and Roman history contained in *Eastern Western Monthly Magazine* had different degrees of influence on the Chinese elites who had opened their eyes to the world at that time, such as Wei Yuan and Xu Jishe, etc., and it became one of the main references for them to write foreign historical and geographical works. Wei Yuan’s *Hai Guo Tu Zhi*¹⁰ cites 13 issues of the *Eastern Western Monthly Magazine*, including 24 articles and 28 citations of the text (Huang 1997, p. 24). For instance, material from roughly twenty translated materials at the time was included in the revised edition of *Hai Guo Tu Zhi*, which was published after 1852. Their works introduced the geographical environment, historical evolution, political systems, economic conditions, cultural characteristics, religious beliefs, customs, and prominent figures of various countries around the world. This provided China with a tangible understanding of the history and realities of the external Western world. Additionally, it offered specific and valuable information for China to adapt to the new circumstances.

After the two Opium Wars, the Western Affairs Movement,¹¹ which centered on the study of Western artillery and science and technology with the goal of becoming stronger and richer, emerged, and Confucianism gradually gave way to aspects of science and technology that were considered more practical. China’s primary source of importing Western knowledge during this period, which spanned the 1860s to the 1890s, was the translation and introduction of Western military science, technology, and culture. At the same time, the translation institutions translated and compiled a large number of foreign-history books and published articles on foreign history, creating an atmosphere for the development of the Western Affairs Movement and facilitating Sino-foreign exchanges. The translation center of the Jiangnan Manufacturing Bureau made the greatest contribution at that time. From 1868, when the translation began, to June 1879, a total of 98 works had been pub-

lished, another 45 had been translated but not yet published, and the other 13 had not yet been translated. Sales had amounted to 31,111 books (Fairbank and Liu 2007, pp. 167–68).

Through articles in newspapers and magazines, a wide range of Western history books, and the promotion of numerous academic institutes, the influence of Western classics was progressively extended from a selected few to a group of intellectuals during the Foreign Affairs Movement. Students at Gezhi College already had a greater grasp of Western classical philosophy, as evidenced by their curricula over the years. By 1876, 5000 copies of *The Chinese Global Magazine*, which offered greater information about classical Greece and Rome, were in circulation.

Furthermore, the creation of Western-style schools contributed to the spread of Western knowledge. Language, technology, telegraphy, mining, shipbuilding, naval warfare, and land warfare were all taught in official schools. Western scientific and technological expertise was directly transferred to new degrees. Letters written by the Chinese to John Fryer, the editor of *The Chinese Scientific and Industrial Magazine* (《格致汇编》) (1876–1892), show how interested the Chinese were becoming in Western science, particularly the literati and businessmen from the ports open for commerce.

After the first Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), the key problem facing the Chinese people was not to seek strength and wealth, but to survive. The experiences of other nations were eagerly needed. Thus, subjects like the history of the nation's demise, including the rise and fall of Ancient Greece and Rome, were heavily studied. After 1900, a tide of democratic revolution surged, and the revolutionary bourgeoisie imported a large number of foreign-history books translated from Japanese. By introducing the histories of decline, reform, and anti-invasion, they aimed to inspire people to resist foreign invasions and, through revolutionary means, overthrow the autocratic rule of the Qing Dynasty and establish a bourgeois republic. Social, political, and philosophical theories from ancient Greece and Rome, which included elements of democracy and freedom, were extensively introduced to China during this period (Chen 2004, p. 158).

Then, Western classics began to permeate Chinese society at large with the growth of the Democratic Revolution Movement and the Hundred Days' Reform Movement. Western classics had become accessible to a wider audience thanks to the introduction of Western-style schools and widely read magazines. Founded in 1900, the *Xinmin Series* (《新民丛报》) could sell up to 14,000 copies. Sales offices were set throughout China, including Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, Hunan, Hubei, Jiangxi, Guangdong, Guangxi, Sichuan, Fujian, Shandong, Zhili, Shanghai, and Tianjin, and even Japan. In 1903, *The Chinese Global Magazine* had 54,396 copies in circulation. The Guangxue Society distributed free copies of the publication to 17,036 intellectuals and officials of all ranks, along with their offspring. The Kai Ming Bookstore in Shanghai selected several books to be sold during the Nanjing Imperial Examination in 1902. The best seller belonged to the history category, a total of 38 kinds in 89 volumes, of which *WanGuo Shiji* (《万国史记》), *Outline of Western History* (《西洋史要》), and other foreign-history works sold well. Even the professional military school "Yunnan Military Academy" (云南武备学堂) had a collection of Greek history works, such as *Brief History of Greece* (Chen 2004, p. 158; Fang 1981, p. 189).

However, the share of social and historical teachings, particularly the study of Western classics, in the total amount of Western information brought about by missionaries, was in fact quite low,¹² but we should also note that a significant amount of Western learning has been introduced into the few publications and journals that were independently started by missionaries. The longest-running, *The Chinese Global Magazine*, for instance, had 28 pages per volume, within which an average of over 13 pages were devoted to Chinese current affairs, making up nearly half of the newspaper; an average of nearly 5 pages were devoted to foreign current affairs; an average of over 7 pages were devoted to history, geography, and so on; and an average of 2 pages were devoted to religious knowledge and missionary activities. The introduction of foreign socio-politics and their doctrines was usually placed in the foreign current affairs and historical and geographical knowledge sections. As for monthly periodicals, each issue was 64 pages, and the missionary knowl-

edge was nearly 3–5 pages long (Fang 1981, p. 24). That is to say, the length devoted to the spread of religious information was, on average, less than one-tenth of the newspaper, and much of it was still published within the framework of Western knowledge, which included the history of the West from antiquity (Chen 2004, p. 107).

This is a very evident vein; therefore, our next questions are the following: Does the case in China mirror the role of Protestant missionaries in spreading Western knowledge in other Asian Countries? To what degree? To illustrate the argument more clearly, the instance of Korea might be compared.

6. East and Further East: A Sino-Korean Comparative Case Study

As a branch of the heterogeneous cultural sphere of Western learning, the spread of Western classics in China went through two phases: one dominated by the Catholics in the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties, and the other by the Protestants in the late Qing Dynasty. The Protestant missionaries' revival was crucial in bridging these two periods. This kind of impact, response, symbiosis, and fusion to the West is a common state when a new body of civilization enters a strong heterogeneous culture, but it is not a one-size-fits-all state of affairs, and Korea, as a member of the same East Asian cultural sphere, provides us with another kind of sample. It is quite possible that after the second half of the nineteenth century, the reaction of the Chinese and Japanese governments to Christianity was not directed against Christianity but rather a search for solutions in response to Western hegemony (Roux 2023, p. 343). In contrast, Korean society's acceptance of Christianity, especially Protestantism, seems to be based on the need for spiritual sustenance in a suffering society. The spread of Western learning in Korea shows a certain degree of lag, which is related to the fact that the Korean government and elites were more closely related to China under the Qing Dynasty. Both in the way of proscription and in the way of spreading Western learning, Korea showed a closer affinity with China.

The spread of Western learning in Korea was quite different from that in China. Western learning traveled via China before arriving in Korea, which is a significant distinction from the direct entry of Western knowledge into China. Chinese Western learning, headquartered in Beijing in the late Ming and early Qing Dynasties, gave rise to "Korean Western learning", the foreign culture that dominated Korea in the 17th and 18th centuries. It was mostly obtained through Korean ambassadors' interactions with Jesuits and Chinese religious leaders in Beijing. There are some recorded Western books read by Korean scholars, despite the fact that it is impossible to pinpoint the exact quantity and catalog of books on Western learning introduced from China into Korea during the 150 years between the 17th and the first half of the 18th century, such as *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* (《天主实义》), *Ji Ren Shi Pian* (《畸人十篇》), *The Treatise on Friendship* (《交友论》), *The Book of 25 Paragraphs* (《二十五言》), *The Seven Grams* (《七克》), *Lingyan Lishao* (《灵言蠡勺》), *The Remains of Discernment of Learning* (《辨学遗牍》), *The Shengshi Rumor-Man* (《盛世刍堯》), *The Truth of All Things* (《万物真原》), and other books on religious matters, as well as scientific and technical books and western materials including world maps such as *Zhi Li Yuan Qi* (《治历缘起》), *Tian Wen Lue* (《天问略》), *Tongwon Arithmetic Guide* (《同文算指》), *Euclid's Elements* (《几何原本》), *Collection of Western Learning* (《西学凡》), *Zhuzhi Qunzheng* (《主制群征》), *Hydromethods of the Western Countries* (《泰西水法》), *Chih-Fang Wai Chi* (《职方外纪》), and so on (Lee 2001, pp. 27–34). The renowned sinologist J. K. Fairbank stated, "The Western scientific knowledge obtained from the Jesuits through the Koreans who went to Beijing, as well as through books in Chinese, had a wide influence when the Christian faith was still a limited, shadowy presence in Korea" (Fairbank 1978, p. 887).

For quite a long period of history, the Western classics did not enter Korea in large quantities. As soon as the shocking news of the invasion of China by the Westerners reached Korea during the Opium War, Korean society felt the crisis and terror instantly, as well as the immense pressure caused by the difficult international situation in Northeast Asia. The Korean society gradually formed an awareness of coastal defense and enlight-

enment through the information spread from China. Within the restricted local culture, books on Western learning translated from Chinese were censored, Catholics faced persecution and repression, and the books on foreign affairs from the Qing Dynasty were the sole publication that broadened the Korean people's understanding of the world. The two most important sources that Korea received from the Qing Dynasty prior to the opening of ports in 1876 were *Ying Huan Zhi Lve* (《瀛寰志略》) and *Hai Guo Tu Zhi*, which were both brought to the country by envoys that traveled to Beijing. Until the *Seoul Lunar Newspaper* was founded in 1883 and the Bowen Bureau published the *Wan Guo Zheng Biao* 《万国政表》 to introduce the global situation and the conditions of each country, these books were regarded in Korea as geography textbooks with rich and authoritative contents, including modern knowledge about oceans (Lee 2001, pp. 27–34).

Since the late 19th century, Protestant missionaries directly evangelized in Korea have been akin to those in China. While some of their activities had a clear connection to religious matters, others had more to do with secular matters. According to incomplete statistics, there were at least 30 to 40 publications which focused on Korean affairs, such as *The Church* (《教会》), *The Christianity Newspaper* (《基督教教会报》), *The Christian Church in Korea* (《朝鲜基督教人教会报》), *The Korean* (《韩国界》), *The Korean Repository* (《韩国留存》), *Theological World*, *The Christian Monthly*, and so forth.

Along with “orthodox” missionary works, the “secular mission” played a nonnegligible role: a significant number of clinics, hospitals, and schools were built as Christianity spread throughout Korea. Early Christian medical and educational initiatives had a very specific aim: to pave the way for the Christian faith to grow. Nonetheless, the Church's medical and educational systems demonstrated a trend toward scientization and secularization. Certain facets of contemporary Western natural and social sciences were brought to Korea and spread through institutions like church schools and medical centers as a result of this tendency (Wang 2000, pp. 152–4). However, these establishments focused more on practical, secular aspects, and Western classics were in some sense overlooked.

The characteristics of Protestant Christianity's spread in Korea were tied to the current state of affairs. Even though China served as a bridge for the introduction of Christianity to Korea, as it went farther and deeper, it manifested itself in two countries—China and Korea—with varying degrees of acceptance and consequences.

Owing to the influence of the long-standing thoughts and the rulers' adherence to Confucianism, without finding a point of convergence compatible with traditional Chinese ideology and culture, Christianity found it difficult to gain traction in China, which resulted the emphasis on Western classics. Due to its own historical endowment, Korea has shown a completely different face to China in the process of accepting Christianity. The crucial point which made the difference relied on the fact that shamanism was revived while Confucianism (known as a religion in Korea) declined in Korean society. It was during this age of shamanic revival that Christian missionaries arrived on the Korean Peninsula. Koreans who adhered to Shamanism at that time could merge with the Christian faith because they considered Hananim, whom they named God, to be the Father of Jesus Christ and the Heavenly Father of Christianity. There were parallels between the Christian concept of Jesus as the son of God and the beliefs of Tangun, the founder of the Korean people. Tangun was the son of the Emperor of Heaven and was born through a bear woman (Ai 2014, p. 71; 2015, p. 91). Christianity was therefore able to spread throughout Korea with great ease (Palmer 1995, p. 61; Xu 2001, p. 35).

This also pertains to Korea's particular circumstances throughout the modern era, when it was fiercely opposed to Japan, the invader at the time. When Christianity was first introduced, the Korean people were anxious to save their nation from the crisis, as they were facing both internal and external pressures at the same time. Christianity provided a role of salvation in this scenario, and people gave Christianity a lot of hope in the expectation that they would find both national and personal salvation in God's reign. As they became a conduit between Christianity and their personal hope, Korean Christians looked for a way to achieve both national and ethnic independence (Ai 2014, p. 72).

The methods used by the missionaries during the period, developed by John Livingston Nevius, are attributed directly to the success of the Christianization in Korea, and in particular, to the expansion of Protestantism. The goal of the Nevius missionary method was to establish autonomous, self-propagating, self-sustaining, and self-governing local churches by emphasizing the value of education, concentrating on preparing local students to become teachers, developing local church leaders, and allowing local churches to operate independently by Western missionaries.

This missionary approach led to a strong localization of the Korean church from the very beginning of its establishment, carrying with it Korea's own cultural and historical characteristics. It is noteworthy that the self-support aspect of the Korean Church was not limited to church buildings, but extended to the establishment of institutions such as schools, hospitals, and even the distribution of Bibles, all of which were founded independently and autonomously by the Koreans. Only when the Korean missionaries could not be completely self-sufficient did foreign confreres give them some help, and once the time was ripe, the foreign missionaries' funds and manpower were withdrawn. This self-supporting approach made the Koreans less dependent on foreign funding (Ai 2014, p. 68). The spread of Western classics that served as a crucial instrument for missionaries seeking to balance Christianity and Confucianism in order to facilitate the missionary enterprise was, however, not that necessary in Korea.

7. Conclusions

After the Opium War, Protestant missionaries were able to enter China's earliest open cities, and using natural science and Western classics as the vehicle for evangelism, they worked on changing the way to promote and widen the reach of the Catholic Church, previously represented by the Jesuits. This trend coincides with the political process of rethinking the closed-door policy by the Chinese governing body in the wake of foreign invasions, and enabled China's elites to begin to learn under the influence of Protestant missionaries about the history, geography, science, technology, and military of Western countries, and the greatest evidence of this historical process was the booming development of journalism and publishing, which saw a large number of newspapers, magazines, and books published, illustrating a new phenomenon of cultural prosperity.

The main reason why the spreading mode of Protestantism in China differed greatly from that of Korea was that in China, where most elites and rulers defended and worshiped Confucianism, the missionaries had to choose a more pragmatic way of expanding the spread of Christian doctrine. These two countries, both being a part of the Confucian cultural circle of East Asia, adopted two different paths in their acceptance of Christianity: in China, Protestantism spread through the classics and emerging scientific, technological, and military knowledge; in Korea, the masses accepted the Christian faith directly, and carried out a kind of spontaneous conversion process under the leadership of Protestant missionaries. This state of affairs was the result of differences in the endowments of the two countries. First, China had a deeper Confucian tradition and there were no mainstream religion similar to Christianity playing a role at the grassroots level of society, while in Korea, the prevalence of shamanism and its general structure within the country greatly helped the spread of Protestantism. The monotheistic beliefs of this religion are similar to the worship of Christ, and the Korean public naturally integrated Christianity to their local religion. Second, the spread of Western learning in China was not replicated in Korea due to the fact that in the midst of the internal and external troubles of the Joseon Dynasty, Christianity, being perceived as a religion to be quite similar to shamanism, assumed the function of being a vent for the suffering of the Korean people. In the process of the introduction of Protestantism into China, more intellectuals accepted the essence of Western civilization propagated by the missionaries, yet Christianity failed to take deep roots in Chinese grassroots society. Comparing the historical paths of China and Korea, this paper finds that Christianity, as a foreign ideology, will always have limited acceptance by local

audiences if it cannot find a mainstream ideology that is classically compatible with it in the destination country.

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Notes

- 1 Thereafter, Fan Xin collaborated with Almut-Barbara Renger (Renger and Fan 2018) to advance the reception of Greco-Roman culture in East Asia, which presents convincing evidence that the reception has not followed a unilateral path.
- 2 Gutzlaff (Guo Shila in Chinese), for instance, was fluent in Cantonese and Fujianese in addition to the official Chinese language. The local Guo Chinese in Thailand even acknowledged him as a member of the Guo clan.
- 3 It refers to the study or science of calculating and working with calendars, dates, and historical chronology.
- 4 The great majority of these publications was published after the 1860s.
- 5 In the “Introduction” to the first issue of the magazine, Alexander Wylie stated that the purpose of the journal was “to equate China and foreign countries, to record ancient and recent events, and to understand how they have changed. To record what I see and ask, to take a pen to record, to publish one issue every month, in order to understand the things around and far away”.
- 6 The first issue of the *News of Church* was printed on the front cover with the words “Knowledge of all things is the first thing to do”, which expressed the importance it attached to the spread of knowledge. After it was renamed *The Chinese Global Magazine*, a note was printed on the title page of each issue: “This is a magazine for the promotion of geographical, historical, civilisational, political, religious, scientific, artistic, industrial and general progressive knowledge relating to the countries of the West.” The Western studies it introduced, mainly in the social sciences such as politics, history, and geography, catered to the interests of the advanced Chinese intellectuals who were searching for a way to save themselves.
- 7 It began by indicating the location of Greece and describes the route from Sichuan to Greece, which is rather peculiar.
- 8 By drawing analogies between the East and the West in this article, Joseph Edkins claimed to give Chinese readers a close experience of both the role of ancient Greco-Roman literature in teaching and the place of ancient Greek knowledge in European civilization.
- 9 It should be noted that in this process, Western missionaries also made efforts to reconcile Christian beliefs with Confucianism; for example, Joseph Edkins, in his *Overview of Western Knowledge*, attempted to correlate Confucianism’s “way of loyalty to the ruler and filial piety to the relatives” with Christianity’s “way of fearing and respecting God”.
- 10 *Hai Guo Tu Zhi* or *Hai Kuoh Tu Chi*, or *Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Kingdoms*, is a 19th-century Chinese gazetteer compiled by scholar-official Wei Yuan and others, and is regarded as the first significant Chinese work on the West and one of China’s initial responses to the First Opium War.
- 11 A late 19th- to early 20th-century initiative in China aimed to strengthen the country by adopting Western scientific techniques and managerial systems in response to the incursions by Western powers.
- 12 We have to see that this is related to the policy of the Qing rulers, since most of the translation institute as well as the orders, contents, and translators of books were controlled by them.

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