

**A GRAMMAR OF
COLLOQUIAL CHINESE:
AS EXHIBITED IN
THE SHANGHAI DIALECT**

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J. EDKINS

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OF
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BY
J. EDKINS, B.A., Univ. Coll. Lond.

Of the London Missionary Society.

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PREFACE,

TO FIRST EDITION 1853.

Among works on Chinese Grammar, that of Prémare, written a century and a half ago, still stands preeminent. Besides a more extended knowledge, he possessed a better appreciation of the peculiar beauties of Chinese style, than any other writer on the subject. But it has been justly remarked that his work, abounding in good examples, is deficient in order, and the exhibition of principles. Remusat, in his accurate and learned work, has made great use of Prémare, but he has given less attention than his predecessor, to those numerous groups, in which ideas or sounds are repeated, and he says nothing on propositions. The deficiency that the reader of these works feels in the treatment of groups of words, has been pointed out by Bazin in his clever Essay on Colloquial Mandarin. He quotes the section on words, in Gutzlaff's Notices on Chinese Grammar, containing a classification of compound words. Partly from the suggestion of that work, and more from his own researches, he has constructed a comprehensive system of grouped words (*mots composés*).

The little work now in the hands of the reader, is an attempt to elucidate colloquial Chinese, by taking a limited field of enquiry, that of the dialect of a single district. By this means it has been hoped, something might be done to help the causes of Chinese philology, by collecting facts, which writers having a wider scope, have overlooked.

There are aids for the study of the southern dialects of China, but no one has yet written on the speech of the rich and populous province of *Kiáng-nán*. On Missionary and Commercial grounds, it is time that some attempt should be made to supply this want.

The mandarin student will meet with scarcely any new idioms here. Of words, there are a few tens not used in the fashionable colloquial. It is in sounds that the greatest variation exists, and an attempt has therefore been made to form a correct nomenclature for tones, and for the alphabetic elements of spoken words. For the latter, Sir W. Jones' system, as introduced by J. R. Morrison in the *Chinese Repository*, has, with a few necessary modifications, been adopted as by far the best.

For the tones, a new nomenclature is here proposed, based on their real character, as distinct from the arbitrary names, which, though they doubtless represented exactly the tones used by their author, are not applicable, except for convenience sake, to those of other dialects.

Upwards of twenty natural tones, from which each dialect chooses its own set, varying from four to eight, are here described. The early Roman Catholic Missionaries wrote much on this singular characteristic of spoken Chinese, but Bayer in his abstract of their system, in the *Museum Sinicum*, has not given a very intelligible account of it.

Attention has been paid throughout to the mode of grouping words, as a subject second to none in interest and importance. Some similarity, though an independent one, will be found here to the system adopted by M. Bazin.

The grammars of Morrison and Marshman, beside the excellent works already alluded to, have been of occasional ser-

vice, especially the latter, which with all its diffuseness, is a useful and suggestive book.

The assistance of friends has been kindly afforded. To Dr. Medhurst special thanks are due, for revising the sheets as they passed through the press, thus adding much to the correctness of the work ; and to Rev. T. M'Clatchie, for material assistance in regard to the laws of Shanghai towns.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

PART I.

ON SOUND, 1—57.

	Page.
<i>Section 1.</i> Alphabet. Table of sounds.	1.
2. On the Chinese tones. Natural tones described. Tones of several dialects.	6.
3. On Shanghai tones. Tones in state of transition. Relation of tones to music and accents.	13.
4. Alphabetic elements of the sounds. The 36 initials of the Dictionaries, Represent the sounds of the old lan- guage, and are now a provincial pronunciation. The Shanghai dialect, a branch of that system. Finals. Comparative table of Shanghai and Mandarin finals. The final consonants n, ng and k.	43.

PART II.

ON THE PARTS OF SPEECH, 58—162

<i>Section 1.</i> Native divisions. Division proposed by a native grammarian.	58.
2. Relation of the dialect to the written language, and to other dialects. Primitive words exemplified. Relation to the mandarin of the Historical Romances. Compared with the dialect of Sù-cheu.	60.
3. On Substantives.	66.
4. On Numeral and Quantitative Auxiliary Sub- stantives. Distinctive Particles. Significant Particles. Weights and measures. Collectives.	81.
5. On Adjectives.	89.
6. On Pronouns.	101.
7. On Verbs. Modes of grouping. Kinds of Verbs. Mode. Tense.	111.
8. Propositions, and Postpositions.	134.
9. On Adverbs.	136.
10. On Conjunctions.	154.
11. On Expletives and Interjections.	160.

PART III.

ON SYNTAX, 163—214.

	Page.
<i>Section 1.</i> On Government.	163.
2. Interchange of the Parts of Speech. Adjective as Substantive. Verb as Substantive, and as Adjective, &c....	164.
<i>Section 3.</i> On Government of Words in Groups.	170.
4. On Repetition. !.....	176.
5. On Order in Groups.	181.
6. On Simple Propositions.	187.
7. On Subordinate Sentences.	196.
8. On Coordinate Sentences.	205.
9. On Antithesis. !.....	210.
10. On Rhythmus.	212.
APPENDIX I. On the 文型 or higher colloquial used by literary men.	215.
II. On the Native Tables of Initials and Finals. Imitated from the Sanscrit. Geographical outline of the dia- lects that agree with the dictionary system.	216.
Addenda.	
Errata.	

RULES FOR USING THE ORTHOGRAPHY HERE ADOPTED.

1. The accent marks long vowels *i*, *é*, *á*, *ó*, *ú*, pronounced as the vowel in *feel*, *fail*, *father*, *foal*, *fool*.
2. Vowels not accented are the five short vowels corresponding to these; e. g. in *fin*, *fen*, *fan*, *fop*, *fun*.
3. The remaining vowels are *ö*, *ü*, *au*, *û*, *eu*, pronounced as in *könig*, *unc*, *auburn*, 書, 頭
4. The initial consonants *k*, *t*, *p*, *f*, *s*, are pronounced high and with the English and Scotch sound. When *k*, *t*, *p*, take an aspirate as in the pronunciation of some parts of Ireland and the United States, they are written *k'*, *t'*, *p'*. These with the vowels and *h'* a strong aspirate, constitute the upper series.
5. The initials *g*, *d*, *b*, *v*, *z* with *ng*, *n*, *m*, *l*, *rh*, a soft aspirate *h*, and vowel initials form the lower series. The italic *k*, *t*, etc., are to be pronounced two full musical notes lower than the roman *k*, *t*, etc., and are counted as the same with *g*, *d*, &c.
6. The nasals *m*, *ng*, *n*, without a vowel are italicised.
7. Final *n* when italicised is pronounced very indistinctly.
8. The superior commas on the left and right of a word, mark the second and third tones. Final *h*, *k* and *g*, indicate the short tone. Words not thus marked are all in the first tone.

The series is known by the initial as in the native mode of spelling, 反切, *Fan-t'sih*. The capital letters denote dialects as—

S.	Shānghái sound.
M.	Mandarin "
C.	Colloquial "
R.	Reading "