

Introducing Confucianism to the West:  
Chen Jitong (1852-1907) and His Foreign Language Writings

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The late Qing diplomat Chen Jitong (1852-1907) was about the first Chinese writer who published in foreign languages. During his sixteen years diplomacy based in Europe (1876-1892), Chen wrote six books in French and two in English for the Western readers, systematically introducing the sociopolitical and cultural setups of China as primarily a Confucian state. In one book he also responded to related Western systems. Chen would later participate in late Qing reform movement as a mastermind and enthusiastically promote democracy and republicanism in China. A close reading of his Western language books in comparison with his later Chinese publications through the Chinese news media would expose how late Qing reform-minded intellectuals tried to inform the world about China and to incorporate Western ideas into their efforts to change this old empire.