



Chinese Education Tradition- The Imperial Examination System In Feudal China

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ABSTRACT

The nowadays focus in China - the national entrance examination is said to be the survival of the Imperial Examination System. The Imperial Examination System which lasted 1300 years is the longest educational system in Chinese history. As Sanderson put forth: "It is widely recognized that many of the problems of present-day society are deeply rooted in the past ..." (Sanderson 1978:3). A reflection on Chinese educational tradition which is the soul of Chinese culture would give us a deeper understanding and more enlightenment of present day Chinese educational system and provide more sound practice in the forthcoming educational transformation. The research demonstrates that the social structural conditioning is the precondition of the development of the Imperial Examination System, while the Imperial Examination System reflected the structural conditioning of its time.

Keywords : Education, Imperial, Examination System, Feudal Society

1. CHINESE FEUDAL SOCIETY (587 A.D. -1904 A.D.)

Because feudalism was practiced in many different ways, depending on location and time period, Chinese feudal society was a different one from European ones in general. In Europe, Feudalism had begun as a contract, the exchange of land tenure for military service. This was done at a formal and symbolic ceremony called a commendation ceremony comprised of the two-part act of homage and oath of fealty. During homage, the vassal would promise to fight for the lord at his command. The oath of fealty is thus a promise that the vassal will be faithful to the lord. Once the commendation was complete, the lord and vassal were now in a feudal relationship with agreed-upon mutual obligations to one another. The lord's principal obligation was to grant a fief, or its revenues, to the vassal; the fief is the primary reason the vassal chose to enter into the relationship (Devouard 2007:1-7). This traditionally formed the basis of a "universal monarchy" as an imperial alliance and a world order. By the thirteenth century, Europe's economy was involved in a transformation from a mostly agrarian system to one that was increasingly money-based and mixed. The Hundred Year's War instigated this gradual transformation as soldier's pay became amounts of gold instead of land (Devouard 2007:1-7). As more gold was put into circulation, the land-based feudalism was undermined. "In west Europe, the increasing merchants became the important force of restraining the feudal lords" (Zou 2006: 130).

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Comparatively, in China: (1) the influence of commerce was never as strong as in Europe, (2) there was no such social class centered on religion, (3) the emergence of scholars as a new social class. These scholars traveled, transmitted knowledge and participated in politics. Their ideal was to build a society with unified governing and individuals obtaining their different social status by correspondent wisdom, not by birth. They advocated agriculture as the economic base of society and changed the previous situation that only nobles could receive education and provided new human resources to serve the court besides the nobles. In China, the scholars who were neither nobles nor merchants gradually became the main force of transforming society and uprooting the feudal nobles. These scholars helped to build and maintain a Chinese feudal society that lasted for 2000 years and co-existed with agricultural economy and unified royal power polity (Zou 2006: 125-131).

These traditional Chinese elites, often referred to in English as the gentry, had no peers in other societies. "The national elites, who comprised perhaps one percent of China's population, were dispersed across the country and often lived in rural areas, where they rented to tenant farmers; they neither possessed large estates like European nobles nor held hereditary titles. They achieved their highest and most prestigious titles by their performance on the central government's triennial civil service examinations. These titles had to be earned by each generation, and since the examinations had strict numerical quotas, competition was fierce. Government officials were selected from those who passed the examinations, which tested for mastery of the Confucian Classics" (Deglopper 1987:74).

1.1 One Dominant Group: Governing Elites

Chinese feudal society once marked by military power, political stability, economic prosperity, and advance in art and literature had a typical political system based on traditional authority. The ruling power was inherited within the family clan and the emperor was regarded as the son of the heaven who was bestowed with the duty to rule the people and guide the people. The emperor was the supreme ruler of the realm. Officials in central government were appointed by the emperor. Political manipulation was the ruling pattern: centralized imperial government, centralized collection of taxes, centralized organization of defence to protect the country from natural disasters such as building dams, dikes and channels to against flood, and protect the country from nomadic invaders by building frontier fortifications.

The local authorities were quite dependent on the central government on the base that all the provincial governors were directly appointed by the central government and all urban governors were appointed by provincial governors. The relation between local authority and central government was "absence of urban autonomy" (Bendix 1962:90-115) and all of them (the officials) lived on an official salary rather than land. So, "the struggle for political power turned on the distribution of offices rather than the distribution of land. The landowning families vied for appointment of office and for the income of fees and taxes derived therefrom" (Bendix, 1962:90-115). It was quite different from the pattern of most feudal societies whose local authorities lived on land where they ruled. Large amount of officials were required and able to exist and laid a basic foundation for the imperial examination system. The government depended upon the administrative services of benefice-holders and officials who were freely removable. This structure was "intended to be perpetuated by the collective interest of the officialdom in the existing opportunities for income and prestige" (Bendix 1962:90-115). This system linked closely individual interests with officialdom and power, which strengthened the system. The Imperial Examination System built an effective bridge that linked the common people with officialdom. The opportunity for common people to participate directly in politics enhanced the system.

Dynasty after dynasty for over 2000 years, the elite ruling pattern or governing by one dominant-group of officials, as well as the hereditary system of power had not been

changed. Confucianism which was preferred by the ruling emperors had eventually become the only official philosophy. The feudal society of agriculture remained. Small-scale farming with family handicraft production continued to dominate Chinese society and economy. Throughout the centuries some 80 to 90 percent of the Chinese population has been farmers. The farmers supported a small number of specialized craftsmen and traders and also an even smaller number of land-and-office-holding elite families who ran the society. As ever, families produced for self-sufficiency, not for the market. The social stratification during these dynasties maintained similarly four strata: "officials, farmers, craftsmen and traders. Among them, the highest level was the officials, the other groups were inferior" (Xu et al., 1990:155). Polity was undoubtedly dominant in social negotiation.

In such a centralized state system, bureaucracy stood shoulder to shoulder with it and eventually led to its death. The features of the social structural conditioning in this period could be summarized as follows: Highly centralized power, high dependence of local authorities on the central government, high dependence of other interest groups such as farmers, craftsmen and traders on the state policies, tight combination of official interests with state interests and increasing bureaucracy. Since the polity manipulation was the chief negotiation pattern of the feudal society, the other groups were not in a position or competent to negotiate their interests with the dominant group, which conditioned the following educational interactions.

2. EDUCATION AS PART OF POLITICS

"You did not have to be a noble to hold a high position. To be assigned a job in high office in one of the many towns and villages, you had to pass the government exams. It was a route to riches and fame. On examination day, the day the tests were given, horses and coaches thronged the road to the city" (Lin and Maxie 2005:7). This was a vivid portrait of the ancient Chinese education which found its Golden Age in feudal society. Traditional Chinese education was combined with politics through an examination: the imperial examination or civil service examination. The imperial government had an active hand in education in administering the various levels of the imperial examinations or civil service examinations, which were used for the selection and appointment of civil servants. This imperial examination was initiated in the Sui dynasty and later was to be used by successive Chinese dynasties for over 1300 years. This was deeply rooted base of Chinese education that influenced and conditioned the subsequent educational patterns, interactions and changes.

2.1 Imperial Examination System

The Imperial Examination System was an official recruitment system in which intellectuals and officials were allowed by the royal court to enter their names in government offices for the examinations of different disciplines in different categories, from whose results of the most talented were selected and awarded with official positions. This system lasted 1300 years from the Sui Dynasty (587 A.D.) to Qing Dynasty (1904 A.D.), (see Appendix 1). It shaped, developed and ultimately faded in Chinese Feudal Society. The imperial school system, personnel system and examination system formed the talent¹ management system in feudal China. The school system was applied to the training of talents; the Imperial Examination System was applied to the selection of talents and the personnel system was applied to the use of talents. Among the three, the Imperial Examination System played a key role. It was the core of imperial education and baton of teaching and learning. The contents of this examination included such philosophies as Confucianism, Taoism, and Moism ... etc., which formed a complete set of norms of conduct and ideological theory - the essential part of Chinese feudal system and the soul of traditional Chinese culture.

The Imperial Examination was divided into several categories, mainly the Regular

Examination, Irregular Examination and Examination for military officialdom. The Criteria to enter into the Examinations did not depend on either family origin or nomination by high officials. Rather all those healthy, well-behaved, with a clean personal record, free from serving a term of funeral of one's parents could take part in the examination. This was said as "selecting despite one's family background", which greatly increased the range or scope of selection and enlarged the ruling base of the imperial empire.

2.1.1 The regular examination

The Regular Examination was the basic part of the imperial examination. It was divided into disciplines (equivalent to the classification of talents) and varied at different historical stages. In Sui dynasty, there were about four disciplines: Cultivated Talents, Presented Scholar, Outstanding Scholar (Junshi), and Classicist. After Sui, three disciplines were added. And the Classicist was further divided into Five Classics, Three Classics, Three Rites, Three Histories and Three Commentaries on Classics ... etc. Soon the two disciplines of Outstanding Scholar and Cultivated Talents were abolished. The three disciplines added were only for special talents. So the Regular Examination in Tang Dynasty had only two disciplines: the Presented Scholar and the Classicist. In early Song, there were mainly three disciplines, the Presented Scholar, the Classicist and the Zhuke. In 1071, Wang Anshi made a reform in the Regular Examination. He abolished Classicist and Zhuke, saving only one discipline the Presented Scholar, which since then became a relatively balanced test of literary ability, understanding of the classics, and the ability to apply classical precepts and historical precedents in discussions of practical governmental problems. After that, the one-discipline examination was followed in the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties (Cheng 1998:157) (Xu et al., 1990:70).

The contents of the Regular Examination were not fixed. They varied from discipline to discipline. Generally speaking, they included Confucian classics such as *The Analects*, *Mencius*, *The Record of Rites*, *The Five Classics*, *The Four Books*, *The History of Classic* and *The Spring and Autumn Annals*, poetry, essay, political science and current affairs, law code, science of wording, mathematics, history, *The Book of Master Zhuang*, *The Book of Master Lao*. (Xu et al., 1990: 70) (Chinese Culture Information Net 2003).

In Sui Dynasty, the regular examination was divided into two grades: the Qualifying Examination and Metropolitan Examination. After the establishment of the Court Examination in Song, it became three grades: the Qualifying Examination given in every prefectural capital, normally with large number of competitors; the Metropolitan Examination at the capital supervised by special groups of Examination Administrators until 1080, and thereafter by the Ministry of Rites; and the Court Examination tested in the Palace by the Emperor (Chinese Culture Information Net 2003). The procedure of the examination is as follows: The most important examination the Metropolitan Examination was normally held in the capital city of Chang An. All the examinees should go to Chang An in October. After the middle of Tang Dynasty, it took place sometimes in two cities, Chang An, the capital, and Luo Yang the former capital. In Sui and Tang, it was held once a year; since the middle of Song, once every three years. There were special rooms of examination. In Tang and Song, they were similar to the classrooms today but during Ming and Qing, they were separated small rooms. Each candidate took one room. All the activities of the examinees during the examinations would be in the rooms, e.g. examining, meals and rest. Officials would call the roll; check the examinees' clothing before the examinees enter into the examination rooms. The examinees should bring water, carbon, and grease torch, dinner set with them. The examination could last day and night. Normally when the second or third candle burnt out after the sunset, the examinees should hand in their papers (Xu et al., 1990:73) (Cheng 1998:84).

The passers of the Metropolitan Examination would be entitled Presented Scholar or "Jidi". After the establishment of Court Examination, the title Presented Scholar or "Jidi" became a qualification for Court Examination. The court examination was a re-examination on

those Presented Scholars or "Jidi" chaired by the Emperor to decide the place in the examination. Nobody was eliminated after the middle of Song in the court examination. The first place in the examination was crowned with Number One Scholar or Top Graduate; the second place was called "Bang Yen". The third place "Tan Hua" ... etc. (Xu et al., 1990:70).

The Enrolments and Celebration included: First, title crowning and place calling. They both took place in the royal palace as grand ceremonies. Second, was the banquet of celebration. In different dynasties banquets had different names. In Tang, all the new Presented Scholars would go to the Apricot Garden to have a banquet. Two younger handsome scholars would be chosen as "Flower Visiting Messengers" to visit all the famous gardens in the capital to collect all kinds of flowers to decorate the Apricot Garden. The banquet was thus called "Flower Visiting Banquet" They would have another grand banquet held in the Qu Jiang Pavilion, which was called "Qu Jiang Meeting". Third, compilation of *Who's Presented Scholar*. Fourth, was the engraving of the name on a tablet. In Tang, all the new Presented Scholars went to the Ci En Temple to engrave their names on the Da Yen Tower, which was called "Signature Meeting". Once appointed, either junior or senior officials were subject to personnel evaluations, including annual merit rating in Sui, an annual merit rating of junior official by his administrative superior, irregular evaluation of senior officials by touring censorial investigators in Tang and Song, and continual surveillance by his superior in Ming and Qing. For officials on duty at the capital there was a "capital evaluation" every six years in Ming and every three years in Qing. For officials on duty in the provinces, there was a three-year evaluation, called the Great Reckoning. These evaluations resulted in next placement, reappointment, promotions, demotions and dismissal from service ... etc. (Cheng 1998:158).

2.1.2 The Imperial Examination for Military Officialdom

Empress Wu Zetian in 702 A.D. initiated this examination, the candidates were sent to the capital by the local governments to be examined in the Ministry of War in November. They were tested on shooting on foot, on horse, weight lifting, language and type of build ... etc. Later on the military strategy books were included: *The Art of War by Master Sun*, *the Art of War by Master Sun Bin*, *the Book of Master Wei Liao*, and *Laws of Sima* and *the Book of Master Wu*. The examination was divided into three or four grades similar to the Regular Examination. Those who passed were entitled like those in the Regular Examination but military positions were awarded (Xu et al., 1990:72) (Cheng 1998:78).

2.1.3 The Irregular Examination

This examination took place by the order of the Emperors in search of special talents. Candidates were normally nominated by high-ranking capital officials and by Prefects. They were always few in number and no more than a dozen normally proved acceptable. The time and sections of this examination were at the pleasure of the Emperors. The disciplines were mainly those practical ones such as filial, incorrupt, straightforward and upright; wisdom, virtue and straight-forward and upright. Although the imperial government had an active hand in administering the various levels of the imperial or civil service examinations, this was not to say that the government actively provided for any form of "public education." A system that an educated elite class was established and steadfastly maintained, perpetuating subsequent generations of an educated elite resting incongruously on a base of mass illiteracy. The exams themselves consisted of essay questions that tested the candidate's understanding of Confucius' teachings. The students could prepare for these examinations by enrolling in the private institutions of higher education of the *shuyuan*, which existed for no other reason than to prepare students for the civil service examinations (Xu et al., 1990:72) (Chinese Culture Information Net 2003). Let us now look at the educational system in feudal China.

2.2 School System in Feudal Society

Generally speaking, schools in ancient China fell into two categories, official schools run either by the central or the local governments and private schools. Imperial schools were called Tai Xue (Supreme School) or Guo zi Jian (Directorate of Learning). Emperor Wu Di of the Han Dynasty set up ancient China's first Tai Xue to "cultivate talents and prepare them for officialdom". The Han Dynasty's Tai Xue had more than 30 thousand students at the height of its development in the early second century. In most cases, a later dynasty named the highest imperial school either Tai Xue or Guo Zi Jian. When a dynasty had both, Guo Zi Jian was meant for children of the most senior members of the ruling class (Feng and Shi 2001:108).

Since the establishment of Tang, Chinese education reached its peak in feudal society, and a complete school system had been set up, including schools run by central and local governments and private schools, quota for teachers and students, contents of teaching. In the capital, six schools were run by the central government, namely, the College of the Sons of the State, the National University, the College of the Four Gates, the College of Law, the College of Calligraphy, and the College of Mathematics. The first two were mainly for sons of high government officials with a limited number of 300 and 500 students. The last three had quite limited number of students between 30 and 50. The College of Four Gates had room for one thousand and three hundred students, among whom, five hundred of these places were filled by sons and grand sons of officials, the remaining eight hundred by promising youths of the common people. Other schools in the capital included the Institute for the Enlargement of Literary Arts, the Institute for the Advocate of Literary Arts for young nobles, sons of prime ministers and officials of first rank for professional training, and the Institute for the Extension of literary Arts, the College of the Capital, the Medical School, the Astronomy School, the Veterinary Medicine School and the Military School (Mao et al., 1981:293-295).

Outside of the capital there was a public school in each prefecture, each county and each village. The prefectural and municipal schools were divided into three levels: the lower level, the middle level, and higher level. They provided two disciplines: the classics and medicine. At the county level, schools were divided into four levels: the lower, the middle-low, the middle and higher levels. They provided only one discipline: classics (Mao et al., 1981:297). The accommodations provided for students ranged from 20 to 60 both in public schools and private schools established by scholars at these levels. Special encouragement was given to the study of medicine in prefecture and county run medicine schools in which examinations and degree were instituted. All these schools were staffed principally with erudite instructors and teachers. Six classics of Confucian were the main subjects on the curriculum. The examination system included a ten-day quiz, a monthly test, an annual examination and a graduate examination. The school education was closely connected with the imperial examination system and consequently the examinations in various schools became probationary ones for the Imperial Examination (Guo and Sheng 1993:232).

The official schools in the Tang dynasty bore the following features: (1) Segregation of social classes were strict, e.g., the College of the Sons of the State, the National University, the Institute for the Enlargement of Literary Arts and Institute for the Advocate of Literary Arts were only for the children of the most senior members of the ruling class. (2) The classics of Confucius were the main subjects on the curriculum. (3) The education by discipline had been set up such as the College of the Capital, Medical School, Astronomy School, the Veterinary Medicine School and the Military School. They were the earliest specialized schools in the world. (4) The variety of schools: besides those official and private schools, there were also teaching organizations attached to government departments and armies, through the study in those organizations, the students might obtain the qualification to enter the imperial examination. (5) Education, research and administration were always combined together. The erudite and instructors in those schools conducted both research and teaching. In some schools like medical schools, they were also officials

administering medical affairs. (6) The educational system was more specific than before, e.g. the number of teachers and enrolled students were stipulated according to the local populations (Mao et al., 1981:298).

The development of education in the Song Dynasty resulted in the popularization of the Shu Yuan or Academy of Learning. They emerged in Five Dynasties and flourished in Song. The six famous academies of learning in the Song dynasty were: (1) The White Deer Academy of Learning in Lu Mountain, Jiangxi province. in 977 A.D., thousands of students gathered there. (2) The Stone-Drum Academy of Learning in Hengyang, Hunan province, (3) The Yuelu Academy of Learning at the bottom of Yuelu Mountain, Changsha city, Hunan province (4) Songyang Academy of Learning at the bottom of Taishan Mountain, Fengdeng county, Henna province, (5) Yingtianfu academy of Learning in Shang Qiu, Henan province, 500 rooms were built as dormitory, thousands of books were kept there, and (6) The Maoshan Academy of Learning in Jiangning, Jiangsu province. At the beginning, most of the academies of learning in ancient China were run by private academies, but there were also privately run ones with government subsidies and some run by local governments. Later, some local run academies appeared under the order of the central government. The Academy of Learning was also popular in Yuan dynasty, as many intellectuals did not want to be officials in the government, and they set up academies and practiced teaching. Such Academies of Learning were sometimes forbidden, and sometimes allowed by the government (Mao et al., 1981:351).

However during the Yuan Dynasty, the schools composed four kinds: schools run by the central government, schools run by local government, Academy of Learning and schools run by communes. The last one was a new and important educational measure in Yuan. A commune was a kind of countryside organization usually with 50 households and it was stipulated "every commune should have one school, select those well-learned to be teachers, to teach children during the break of farming" (Mao et al., 1981:407). In the Ming Dynasty, the Emperor ordered that the governments at all levels were to run schools. He criticized the schools of Yuan Dynasty as "Although schools were set up, they existed only in their forms ". Strict law of punishments on students was implemented, e.g. one student named Zhaolin could not bear the situation and wrote an article to protest against it. According to the law, the article offending and insulting teachers should be punished by beating one hundred times with a cane and then service in the army. But the king had him killed, hanging his head on a pole in front of the National University. The pole stood there for more than 160 years. (Mao et al., 981:410). The Qing dynasty followed basically the educational system from the previous Ming dynasty. There were schools run by central and local governments, communes and the Academies of Learning. Teachers were not allowed to punish students but the law of punishment turned into the disciplines for intellectuals and the government tried to control the Academies of Learning. It was during the Qing dynasty that new subjects like sciences were introduced (Mao et al., 1981:466-473).

Although the dynasties after the Tang had a relatively complete set of official educational system, those studying in them were a minority, besides; they sometimes prospered and sometimes failed. The vast majority of the ancient Chinese had to rely on private schools for education. Private schools, which were initiated by Confucius, played a predominant role in education in all dynasties. Private schools were divided into several types. There were those run by individuals who made a living by teaching. Also, there were family schools run by rich merchants, landlords and officials for the education of their own children and children of their close relatives or friends. Some private schools were funded by private donations or rental receipts from land belonging to ancestral or religious temples, and therefore did not charge students for tuition. Private schools were in fact, the only institutions of primary education for the vast majority of ancient Chinese. In a private school, children began to learn to read and write characters. After learning enough characters by heart, they would be taught classics of Confucianism and composition, as well writing of classical essays and poetry (Feng and Shi 2001:108).

The relation between schools and the imperial examination was rather close. The graduates of schools had to pass the imperial examination to become officials, therefore became rich. Thus going to school was always linked with the imperial examination. To be an official became the purpose of going to schools, passing examinations became the students' school practice.

2.3 The Development of the Imperial Examination System

2.3.1 The Forming Stage

Rome was not built in a day, nor was the Imperial Examination System. It was set up on the accumulation of the past practices of official and talent selections. It gradually became a relatively effective approach for the people to express their opinions and demands, to negotiate with the elite groups in power and to participate in politics.

In the late primitive society, the highest leaders of tribes were selected democratically. Because of the low level of productive forces, people depended on common labor to make a living. They shared responsibility and equal rights. So, at that time, there were neither ruling officers nor citizen being ruled. The leaders were managers of the tribal affairs only. The leaders passed their positions to the successors recommended by the heads of each tribe (Xu et al., 1990:57-68).

In the slave society, the Shang (about 6th century B.C.) and the Zhou Dynasty (1046 B.C. - 211 B.C.), the hereditary system of power replaced the democratic selection system. The ruler, the king held the power of the country. In Shang Dynasty, the aristocrats held not only the important official positions but also common official positions. The son of the king would succeed to his father's position; the sons of the vassal lords, the ministers and all other high officials expected to inherit posts. This is called Hereditary Position and Hereditary Emolument System. Talent selection started in West Zhou (1046 B.C. - 771 B.C.) at a low level in local governments, mainly on the recommendation of officers to the king (Xu et al., 1990:59-60).

During the Warring States Period (475 B.C. - 221 B.C.) of the slave society, the new landlord class sought redistribution of power held by the slave owners and nobles. Great reforms were launched. In the State of Wei, people were appointed to official positions according to their ability instead of their social status, and high positions were given to those who had rendered excellent services to the state. The state of Chu abolished the privileges of the king's distant relatives. The most influential reform was the one in the State of Qin in 359 B.C. Strong measures were taken to establish the authority of law and royal decree. The law was to be enforced impartially without regard to status or position. In the law, it was stipulated that the rank of nobility and the privileges attached to it should be awarded only to those who rendered good service to the state, especially for valour in battle. That was referred to as the Military Exploit System (Xu et al., 1990:60).

The Servicemen System in Warring States Period. This referred to a common practice for famous nobles to maintain thousands of service men of special talents during the Warring States period. Capable and well-learned people were collected by the king and nobles, who provided them with a living and asked them for advice and suggestions for state policies. Most of the Servicemen were assigned official posts or positions as political envoy. These Servicemen were treated honourably in spite of their race, nationality and economic status. They travelled from state to state, talking about their political stands and played a major role in the fierce political and military struggles of the late Warring States Period (Xu et al., 1990:60-63).

From the Qin (221 B.C. - 206 B.C.) to the Han (206 B.C. - 220 A.D.) Dynasty, the feudal ruling was developed and completely under the central government controls. In Western Han, the old Military Exploit System and Servicemen System could no longer meet the

demand of the centralization of state power. More talents were needed to serve the government. There were two ways of official selection. One was the Recommendation (chaju) and the other was Employment (zhengpi). Recommendation was a method in which men with wisdom and virtue would be sent by the Three Dukes and Nine Ministers to the royal court and awarded official positions by the royal government. Those to be selected were normally low-rank officials and well-learned and capable commoners (Guo and Sheng 1993:204).

The positions for Recommendation were Men of Wisdom and Virtue, Straight Forward and Upright; Men of Filial Piety and Incorruptibility; Cultivated Talent; and Classicist. The scope and time and positions of Recommendation were not fixed. It usually happened in the years of great famines, floods, or plague when the Emperor would request that local talents be selected to come to the capital to make suggestions. When these men arrived at the capital, the court would seek their opinions on the most urgent political problems. This process was called Questioning by Bamboo Slips. The Emperor first raised some important questions about the administration of the country, graded them, put them on the bamboo slips and sealed them. The recommended men would draw any questions from the bamboo slips and answer it. Those whose qualification was approved would be appointed to substantive offices according to their grades. From 165 B.C., written examinations were commonly given to confirm their literacy and learning. Employment was another method in which the well-learned, famous men with high reputation were directly employed by the Emperor to work in the royal court. And low-rank officials were directly employed by high-rank officials to serve in their departments. The number employed by the Emperor was small, but the number employed by the high-rank officials was large (Guo and Sheng 1993:204).

Beside these two, there also existed a third way, which was the Supervisor Recommendation System, in which an officials above a certain level, after three years of service, could recommend one of his students to be Court Gentleman. The disadvantage was soon seen. Some officials recommended their sons, others recommended their brothers. Most of the recommended students were rich people's offspring (Xu et al., 1990:65-66). The Han Dynasty was especially esteemed for introducing these techniques of personnel administration that subsequently created in China the officialdom dominated by examination-recruited scholars or literati.

During the Wei-Jin and Northern and Southern Dynasty, the principal method of official selection was the Nine Grade Rectifier System, in which the nominees were classified into nine grades, they were upper-upper, upper-middle, upper-lower, middle-upper, middle-middle, middle-lower, lower-upper, lower-middle, lower-lower. According to this system, each commander would select, from among those who held a post in the central administration, one person of high reputation to act as Senior Rectifiers under whom there were several Junior Rectifiers and to whom the power of estimation was given. According to their estimation, the court would employ the nominees. Soon this power was in the hands of the wealthy and influential clan. In the Northern and Southern Dynasty, sons of those rich and powerful families could be employed even according to their family origin. Because of the corruption and incapability of those officials, the Nine Grade Rectifier System soon failed (Guo and Sheng 1993:206) (Xu et al., 1990:67-70). Until then, the immature and imperfection of the official selection methods had been improved and reformed.

2.3.2 The Functioning Stage

The Imperial Examination System had its embryonic form in Sui, matured in Tang and flourished in Song. After the establishment of Sui Dynasty (581 A.D. - 618 A.D.) Emperor Wen abandoned the Nine Grade Rectifier System and stipulated that all those nominees had to pass examination before employment, which was the prologue to the Imperial Examination System. In 607 A.D., Emperor Yang fixed ten classes of talents among which prospective officials should be nominated. One of the classes was the Presented Scholar.

These classes became the reference of the later disciplines of the imperial examination (Xu et al., 1990:70) (Cheng 1998:157).

The Imperial Examination System took its shape in the Tang Dynasty (618 A.D. - 907 A.D.). Tang inherited and developed the Imperial Examination System started in Sui. The basic way in Tang was fixed classes of talents in which prospective officials should be selected through examinations. The examinations were divided into two categories: regular and irregular. The regular was an annual examination for more than 10 disciplines. The irregular examination was for special talents by the emperor. Those who were entitled "Jidi" or Presented Scholar should go through a re-examination by the Ministry of Personnel. The re-examination was divided into two kinds: one was an oral examination focused on the exposition of articles; the other was a written examination on judgment of legal cases. Generally speaking, the Ministry of Rite tested literary skills, whereas the Ministry of Personnel was concerned with administrative abilities. Having passed the re-examination, the candidates then waited for substantive appointments. After the earliest Tang decades, the waiting period between attaining eligibility for office and getting substantive appointment was a very long one (Xu et al., 1990: 71-75) (Cheng 1998:157-159).

The Song Dynasty (960 A.D. - 1279 A.D.) began with a regular examination system that perpetuated the Tang pattern. The examinations were normally divided into three grades: Prefectural, Metropolitan and Court Examinations. Those who passed the Prefectural Examination would gather in the capital for the Metropolitan Examination in the next spring. Those who passed in the Metropolitan Examination could take part in the Court Examination. The enrolment of the Court Examination was classified into three grades as well: the Presented Scholar with Honour, the Presented Scholar with Qualification to Enter Service and the Presented Scholar Shared in Being Qualified to Enter Service. The most important reform of the Imperial Examination System was in the following three aspects: First, the supervisor for the Metropolitan Examination held by the Ministry of Rites was directly appointed by the Emperor instead of the Director of Ministry of Rites, which enhanced the control of the Emperor of the examination. Second, the Court Examination System was set up. All those who passed the examination could be rewarded directly with official positions. Some could even be quickly granted with high official positions. Third, the use of "Three-Hall Method". It classified the students of the National University - Guo Zhi Jian into three grades, namely, students of the Outer Hall, students of the Inner Hall and students of the Upper Hall. The number of students of the outer hall was 2000, that of the Inner Hall were 200, and that of the Upper Hall were 100. The students passed by successive examinations from the Outer Hall to Inner Hall, from Inner hall to the Upper Hall. The first grade graduate led directly to administrative offices or to the enjoyment of certain privileges. The middle grade could directly enter the Court Examination. The low grade could directly enter the metropolitan examination. Therefore the Three Hall Method went parallel with the Imperial Examination System. Fourth, Song paid special attention to the sciences (Xu et al., 1990:76-79) (Cheng 1998:159-160). In this stage, the Imperial Examination System corresponds to the social development and progress of that historical stage and played its best role in society.

2.3.3 The Stage of Formalism

Formalism often refers to "strict observance of external form, ceremony, technique often without concern for feeling or meaning" (Hornby and Li 1997:579). The stage of formalism refers to the stage when the imperial examination had existed by its form but the real functions or meaning had been changed or lost. Under the governance of the Mongol rulers of Yuan Dynasty (1271 A.D. - 1368 A.D.), people were classified into four grades: Mongolian, Mohammedans, Han people and southerners (Han people live in southern China). The Imperial Examination was also characterized with the national discrimination. In the capital there were three National Universities, one for the Han people, one for the Mongols and one for the Mohammedans. Little attention was paid to education. It was not until 1315 that the imperial examination for selecting talents was restarted, but only once

every three years. In the examination, the Mongols and Mohammedans were separated from the Han people and the Southerners. Topics of examination as well as the enrolment were easier for the former two classes. The Imperial Examination System actually fell into formalism in this historic stage (Xu et al., 1990:80-81) (Cheng 1998:160). The function of education as approach to express people's opinions and demands, negotiating with government and participate in polity was therefore greatly reduced and limited by the Mongol rulers.

2.3.4 The Declining Stage

The Imperial Examination System in Ming (1368 A.D. - 1644 A.D.) and Qing (1644 A.D. - 1911 A.D.) were quite similar. But it underwent some changes and became a purely lifeless system for recruiting officials. The imperial examination was divided into three grades: the Academy Examination, the Provincial Examination, and the Metropolitan Examination and Court Examination. The literary composition known as the Eight-Part Essay was the only content of the examinations. The Academy Examination was for the identity or title of Cultivated Talent, it included three examinations: the County Examination given by the County Magistrate, the Prefectural Examination by the Prefect and the Academy Examination by the Provincial Education Commissioners. The Provincial Examination was conducted every three years in the provincial capitals. All attendants must get the Cultivated Talent identity. The supervisors of this examination were dignitaries dispatched by the court, normally officers with the background of Presented Scholars. The principle of "Avoidance" forbade officials to hold offices in their native province. The examinations were given in three separate days in August: 9th, 12th, and 15th according to Chinese lunar calendar. The examinees should enter the examination hall at 3:00 ~ 5:00 a.m. one day ahead of each examination day by calling the rolls and strict checking. All the gates and doors of the examination hall and surrounding lanes would be closed. The examinees would leave the examination hall the next day of each examination days. Passers of the provincial examination were entitled the Recommended Man. They were qualified for low rank official appointments and could attend the Metropolitan Examination. The Metropolitan Examination was also conducted every three years in Beijing in the next spring of the Provincial Examination. All attendants must be Recommended Man. The local government paid for their travel expenses. The examination questions were prepared and graded by distinguished capital officials - Grand Secretaries, Hanlin Academicians, and censorial officials. All passers then took a short, confirmatory court examination, there to be ranked in order of excellence into categories, and all received the designation Presented Scholars. Those in the highest section were promptly appointed to offices in the Hanlin Academy, where they did advanced study and prepared themselves to become officials of the greatest responsibility and highest rank. Other Presented Scholars were assured of successful careers in the officialdom. But the ruler of Ming and Qing stipulated that the content of the examination must be Eight-Part-Essays which were the Four Books and Five Classics in a series of rather complicated and fixed patterns. They were famous for rigidity in form and poverty of ideas. Students preparing for examinations had to learn by rote, paying no attention to knowledge and skills of practical use. Thousands of people spent all their lives for them and many got their minds fettered eventually (Feng and Shi 2001:113) (Xu et al., 1990:95) (Cheng 1998:160-162).

In this stage, the Imperial Examination System did not fit the social circumstances. Early in Yuan, the cruel discrimination and lack of effective negotiation between people and government such as the suspending of the imperial examination, had aroused serious conflicts all over the country, which led to the uprising headed by Zhu Yuanzhang, the Emperor of Ming. During the later Ming dynasty, the change of the imperial examination into a lifeless system of recruitment, especially the turning of the "eight-part essay into the only content, deprived the function of education as an effective approach of negotiation between government and people, and expressing people's demands. Besides, the corrupted eunuchs seized the state power, which caused much dissatisfaction among the people. On the other hand, the foreign invasion of Taiwan and Macao had started the history of

colonization in China. In the Qing Dynasty, one of the most influential events was the Opium War (1840) launched by Britain. The Qing government was forced to cede territory and pay reparations, which marked the beginning of a semi-feudal and semi-colonial status in Chinese history. The incapability of the Qing government shook fundamentally their status in Chinese people's minds and led to the end of their rule.

2.4 The Characteristics of Imperial Examination System

First, the Imperial Examination System carried the principle of open examination, fair competition and selection according to excellence. Officials were selected no matter what one's family origin was and no nomination from high officials was required. The selection was done according to the result of the examinations. Second, the Imperial Examination System as a means of education and official selection at the end of education was part of and could not be separated from education. It promoted the development of education and society. Third, in the later stages of the system, the standards of talent selection were mainly one's understanding of Confucian classics, not one's actual ability nor the exploration of unknown fields. In another word, it focused on how well one learnt not how well one could perform, innovate or discover. Forth, the aim of this examination was to obtain power, fame and wealth by serving the country, but it was actually serving the Emperor, because the principle of conduct for the nominees was to do according to the Emperor's will. Fifth, it had built a bureaucratic society in which the officers were important, and other people were not important. Those who passed the examinations immediately became members of the nobility and the ruling class.

2.5 The Functions of the Imperial Examination System: Selection of Elites for State Government

The Imperial Examination System speeded up the decay of slave-owner structure and helped in forming and consolidating the feudal society: From the Eastern Zhou Dynasty (770 B.C. - 256 B.C.), there appeared a new class, consisting of scribes, counsellors, and teachers, many of whom had an aristocratic background. These people were concerned deeply with social chaos and moral decline brought about by the slave-owning structure and by constant wars among the states and contended vigorously in proposing solutions, thus forming various philosophical schools: Confucianism, Taoism, Moism, the logicians, the Yin-Yang School and Legal School. Later on, a Western Han philosopher added four others: Agriculture, Strategists, Eclectic School and Story telling. These philosophies formed the base of the content of the Imperial Examination. Among them, Confucianism was the highest standard for the Imperial Examination. It was a code of ethics, a system of philosophy, a philosophy of politics and government, the principle of relation between individual and family, family and society, standard of art and literature, the guideline of conduct, etc. In a certain sense, Confucianism even functioned as a religion in the ancient community. In other words, these philosophies or concepts formed a complete set of theory for the feudal system, and effectively maintained feudal China under one centralized government and political unity, avoiding the chaos and sufferings of wars. The intellectuals or well-learned individuals with new philosophical ideas thus played an active and important role in social transformation. These learned individuals or elites were products of education and it was through education their ideas were spread and passed on.

With the increasing of the small and middle landlord in the Sui Dynasty and with the rapid development of feudal economy in the Tang Dynasty, the urgent demand of power redistribution was pressing. The Imperial Examination System provided people with an effective access of upward mobility; a good chance of changing one's social position, putting one's ability to good use and obtaining power. Therefore, it adjusted the systematic and structural inequality and differences. It was vividly described by Deglopper: "Formal education provided the best and most respected avenue of upward mobility and by the nineteenth century rates in China high for a traditional peasant society. Chances of receiving

a good education were highest for the upper classes in and around coastal cities and lowest for the farmers of the interior. If schooling was not available, there were other avenues of mobility. Rural people could move to cities to seek their fortunes (and in some cases the cities were in Southeast Asia or the Americas). People could go into business, gamble on the market for perishable cash crops, try money-lending on a small scale or, as a long shot, join the army or a bandit group. Late traditional society offered alternate routes to worldly success and a number of ways to change one's position in society; but in all routes except education the chances of failure outweighed those of success" (Deglopper 1987:81). On the other hand, large number of officials was needed in the newly emerged cities and towns in order to strengthen the centralization of the state power. The Imperial Examination System not only met the demand of the middle and low landlord class for their participating in political affairs but also the requirement of the royal court to absorb talents and winning their support, then sending them to different level of institutions to secure their long-term interests. The Imperial Examination thus strengthened the social integration, mitigated social contradiction, eased social conflicts, promoted the benign cycle and coordinated development of society and provided a harmonized social environment for economy growth.

The Imperial Examination System influenced Chinese culture as well as world culture greatly because it promoted the creation and application of the four great Chinese inventions of papermaking, gunpowder, compass and printing. "As the English philosopher Roger Bacon said that China's four great inventions had changed the face of the whole world and the state of affairs of everything" (Feng and Shi 2001:29). "Karl Marx said Chinese gunpowder blew the feudal class of knights to smithereens, the compass opened up world markets and built colonies, and printing became an implement of Protestantism and the most powerful level and necessary precondition for intellectual development and creation" (Yang 1999:14). The papermaking and printing made possible quantity publishing and wide dissemination of philosophy books like Confucianism. The Imperial Examination System itself, which put high values on classics, made possible the penetrating, accumulating and transmitting of those philosophies represented by Confucianism, which was the basic content of Chinese traditional culture.

The Imperial Examination System influenced feudal society in various ways: (1) On one hand, it contributed the power of official selection to the court and enhanced the centralization of ruling power, and therefore met the demand of the ruling class. "In late imperial China the status of local-level elites was ratified by contract with the central government, which maintained a monopoly on society's most prestigious titles. The examination system and associated methods of recruitment to the central bureaucracy were major mechanisms by which the central government captured and held the loyalty of local-level elites. Their loyalty, in turn, ensured the integration of the Chinese state and countered tendencies towards regional autonomy and the break-up of the central quotas, which meant that imperial officials were recruited from the whole country, in numbers roughly proportional to province's population. Elites all over China, even in country, in numbers roughly proportional to a province's population, even in the disadvantaged peripheral regions, had a chance at succeeding in the examinations and achieving the rewards of office-holding" (Deglopper 1987:78). On the other hand, it opened the government administration and power to the whole society and became an effective upward mobility access, a vertical mobility both intragenerational and intergenerational, for common intellectuals from all levels of social classes and an effective approach of negotiation between people and government and helped in forming a national wide concept of participating in managing the country. Therefore, it was supported by the people; (2) Officials selected through the imperial examination were normally well learnt and better than those who obtained their posts by relations and purchasing. In fact, some of them had made great contributions to the social and national development then. Some were even backbones of the nation and have great influence to China even today. According to the book edited by the history department, Nanjing University: *Dictionary of Famous Persons in Chinese Successive Dynasties*, there were about 2 480 of those influential persons from the Tang Dynasty to

the May 4th movement. Among them about one thousand persons were kings, generals, and famous clans, leaders of farmer uprising and religion leaders. The remaining 1,480 persons entered the court by all kinds of accesses; more than 800 of them came through the Imperial Examination and had the title of the Presented Scholar or Jidi (Cheng 1998:163);

(3) "The examination system also served to maintain cultural unity and consensus on basic values. The uniformity of the content of the examinations meant that the local elite and ambitious would be elite all across China were being indoctrinated with the same values. Even though only a small fraction (about 5 percent) of those who attempted the examinations passed then and received titles, the study, self-indoctrination, and hope of eventual success on a subsequent examination served to sustain the interest of those who took them. Those who failed to pass (most of the candidates at any single examination) did not lose wealth or local standing; as dedicated believers in Confucian orthodoxy, they served, without the benefit of state appointments, as teachers, patrons of the arts, and managers of local projects, such as irrigation works, schools, or charitable foundations" (Deglopper 1987:78). Respecting knowledge and intellectuals became the prevailing customs under the Imperial Examination System. Study was highly valued and encouraged by the whole society. The number of students increased rapidly which increased the need of books and schools, so promoted the development of education as well as papermaking and printing technology;

(4) The text books used for the examination were mainly from the 6 schools in Warring States Period (475 B.C. - 221 B.C.), which was referred to as the age of the "hundred philosophers": Confucianism, Taoism, Moism, the Logicians, The Yin-yang School and the Legal School. The highest standard of the Imperial Examination was Confucianism. Two influential philosophers represented the Confucianism: Kong Zi and Meng Zi. Kong Zi developed the following concepts:

The Humanity. Love men, was regarded as the super virtue of all virtues such as, filial piety, loyalty, righteousness, altruism, courage, wisdom and faithfulness. It was a word embracing all those moral qualities, which should govern one man in his relation with another. "The man of humanity should not do to others what he would not wish done to himself. ² "

The Rite or Li. A noted statesman of the 6th century B.C said of it: "The Li constitutes the warp of heaven, the principle of earth, and the conduct of the people. ³ " According to Kong Zi, the rite had two major functions; first it established the standard of all conducts. It was necessary for everybody to know and obey the rites as personal and social regulation. "To restrain oneself and abide by rite is humanity ...⁴ ". Secondly, the rite was the foundation of government. Rite was believed by Kong Zi to be better and more effective as compared with laws and punishment.

The Rectification of Names meant that everything should be in its proper order, and every man should be true to his name and act accordingly.

The Doctrine of the Mean. It was one of the most important ancient cultural heritages of China. By the mean, Kong Zi meant that all things should not go beyond or fall short of it. Kong provided us with a typical example of this concept. He never went to extremes. "He had no foregone conclusions, no arbitrary pre-determinations, no obstinacy and no egoism ⁵ ".

The Heaven and the Spirits. Kong Zi was deeply religious by nature, and had a very firm belief in the one supreme, all-ruling and personal God whom he called Heaven. He believed that he had a holy mission which had been conferred on him by heaven, and in times of frustration and danger, he placed his reliance on heaven. But he did not share the superstitious belief. He was rather skeptical about spirits or demons.

The Government by Virtue was the political tradition of China. All the ancient sage-kings

were believed to have ruled through virtue and wisdom. To Kong Zi, the personal examples and moral persuasion of the rulers were more effective in governing the people than the various laws and heavy penalties. It would not only bring order and welfare to the society, but also win the love of the people. He said "to govern by virtue is like the pole-star which holds its place, and about which the multitude of stars revolve. ⁶ "

Proposing the theory that by nature men were the same and advocating universal education without class distinction, Kong Zi firmly believed that all men could be developed through learning.

The second sage of Confucianism was Meng Zi (Mencius, 372 B.C. - 289 B.C.). His philosophic idea was regarded as an amplification of the teaching of Kong Zi. The political ideal of Mencius was to carry out "benevolent government", that was "of the first importance are the people, next comes the god of land and grains and of the least importance is the ruler. ⁷ " To the relationship between the ruler and his officials, Meng Zi held that an official should not obey his ruler blindly and unconditionally. He emphasized the division of labour in the society and held that "those who work with minds rule others, those who work with their strength are ruled by others ⁸ ". In individual cultivation Mencius held his viewpoint of "nourishing his passion-nature." He rose "sacrificing one's life to get benevolence, letting life go and choosing righteousness. ⁹ " He also held that "when heaven is about to place great responsibility upon a man, it will first temper his heart and mind, fatigue his bones and muscles with toil, starve him, reduce him to utter destitution and frustrate him in all his attempts so as to stir him up, strengthen his character and develop his capabilities. ¹⁰ " Mencius laid emphasis on subjective initiative and the function of thinking. He held that under such condition that material life was basically guaranteed, universal education should be carried out. While ideally everyone would benefit from direct study of the Classics, this was not a realistic goal in a society composed largely of illiterate peasants. But Confucianism had a keen appreciation for the influence of social models and for the socializing and teaching functions of public rituals and ceremonies. The common people were thought to be influenced by the examples of their rulers and officials, as well as by public event. Vehicles of cultural transmission, such as folk songs, popular drama, and literature and the arts, were the objects of government and scholarly attention. Many scholars, even if they did not hold public office, put a great deal of effort into popularizing Confucian values by lecturing on morality, publicly praising local examples of proper conduct, and "reforming" local customs, such as bawdy harvest festivals. In this manner, over hundreds of years, the values of Confucianism were diffused across China and into scattered peasant villages and rural culture (Deglopper 1987:75).

The influence of Imperial Examination System on individuals was obvious. As an effective, systematic access of upward mobility and bestowal of status, the Imperial Examination System stimulated people's initiative of learning, creating and forging ahead, increased the vitality of society and propelled the society forward. Many parents started teaching their children as early as possible. That was why, the classics represented by Confucianism went through the whole process of the socialization of individuals.

As the reward to the well-learned talents, the high social political positions offered an overall rising of social classes, fame and reputation. Many famous high officials in Chinese history obtained their positions by participating in the Imperial Examination. For example, the well-known honest high officials Bao Zheng, Fan Zhongyan and Kou Zhun were all from ordinary or poor families. It was described as:

"Ten years of strenuous scholastic effort
Is required about by nobody,
But you are known to the whole world
Once you succeeded in establishing your fame"
(Hu 2001:169).

Along with the high official positions, another result of the Examination was wealth equivalent to the positions obtained. "When a person succeeds in an imperial examination, his thatched house will become brilliant" (Hu 2001:169) was a vivid picture of the change of the financial condition of the successors of the Imperial Examination. Some Number One Scholars were even selected as the Emperor's son-in-law and lived a cozy and wealthy life ever since.

The talents selected through the Imperial Examination became an important part of the feudal governing class. They were placed in ruling positions at all social administrative levels and directly involved in making government decisions and policies, therefore influenced the social development. It is a best example of the function of social maintenance and transformation played by education.

The Imperial Examination System as the talent selection system of the feudal society kept in line with the central ideology of "Rite" of the feudal system from the beginning to the end. "The nineteenth and twentieth century reflects the struggle over participation in education by privileged and disadvantaged social groups. Efforts were exerted to achieve a classless society by education by implementing the principle of meritocracy and by forcing the nobility to take examinations. Educational expansion brought about egalitarian effects and strengthened the role of the equal rights of all citizens" (Fend 2001:4265). It helped people to put their social behaviour into a certain orbit so as to maintain social order and to reduce social conflicts. As a part of education, the Imperial examination System played a very important role of culture transmitting and promoted the development of culture. It rooted deeply in Chinese people's minds and influences their ethic concepts, conducts, values, believes individual cultivating, interaction ... etc.

Opposite to the modern concept of education being independent of politics and government, the Imperial Examination System was a unification or combination of the learning with the officialdom and was a powerful part of the Chinese feudal government. It played a great role in sustaining the stability of Chinese feudal society and the transformation of society.

3. END OF FEUDAL SOCIETY AND IMPERIAL EXAMINATION SYSTEM

The Imperial Examination System had also its imperfections the day it was born. First, the Imperial Examination System combined the studying, examination and to become officials together, making plenty of intellectuals concentrate only on learning those classics and having no real concern about the people and the country. They concerned themselves mainly with the examination contents, standard of enrolment, and obeyed all the arrangements of the royal court. As it was stated by Reinhard Bendix (1962:90-115), "Government officials constituted the ruling stratum in China for more than two thousand years. Literacy education was the yardstick of their social prestige and the basic qualification of office." Second, "once one passed the examination and become entitled, his social position would totally and immediately changed but there were always more passers than positions. So, they had to secure advantage through connections of influence. Corruption became a very common practice. The malpractices of the supervisors and students were found frequently" (Bendix 1962:95-115). Third, it laid stresses on knowledge learned from books instead of actual ability and intellectual development; the eight-part essay especially bound people's minds and restrained people's talent and wisdom. During the Ming and the Qing Dynasty, the study of sciences would not only cause loss of fame, power and wealth but could also be persecuted. The Imperial examination was both examination biased and humanities learning biased. Therefore it hindered the development of natural sciences and became one of the main reasons of China's backwardness in natural science. Fourth, the most important content of the examination - Confucianism was, in some aspects, idealistic. It played an active and positive role in the progress of feudal society in Sui, Tang and

Song. But it was used as a tool to resist the social reform in Qing and eventually became an obstacle of social development. Esherick et al. described, "The gentry's divorce from manual labor and technical knowledge, their humanistic resistance to professional training, their conservative commitment to Confucian values, and their stubbornly successful defense of their privileged position in society made them a significant barrier to technical modernization and economic development in China" (Esherick et al., 2007:1). The last decade of the Qing dynasty was one of upheaval and renewal, witnessing an occupation among the most disastrous and destructive in China's long history and ending with the dawn of a decisive regeneration. It was not only the Qing dynasty but also Chinese civilization as a whole that was in serious decline.

The social strain came directly from the Opium War in the later Qing and was expressed in a series of movements following it: the Self-Strengthening Movement, Learning from Japan, Hundred Day Reform and New Administration. Some of them met with bloodstained suppression from the government. Anyhow, more than half a century had passed before the abolishment of the Imperial Examination System. These movements reflected the accumulated demands of people for educational and social change during a long historical period. They were the basic negotiating pattern between government and other social groups, which was typical of a centralized state.

In the imperial system, political manipulation was the basic pattern of interaction which accounted for the main part of macroscopic changes in education. The changes of education were slow and cumbersome to bring about in feudal society. It was because: first, the imperial examination, which was the guiding baton of education in feudal China, was developed in relation to the elites own goals and met their demands for education, consolidating their power by recruiting officers from the well-learned and training their own children; second, a nation-wide reform took time to think before it legislated, thirdly, the imperial elites had little idea of the modern education and scientific knowledge, therefore they held back as long as possible because the changes to them would be like a leap in the dark, even though the failure of the imperial examination was shown in the Opium War.

On the other hand, the imperial examination system was standardized, unified, and polity directed. No small changes at local or institutional level were allowed, which would draw off discontents on a day to day basis. The educational demand for change had to be accumulated, presented to the emperor, but the emperor who understood little about modern education resisted making the changes. All groups including teachers had to move outside educational fields and engage in political interaction or movements at the national level to effect educational change, which met with bloody suppression. Finally the ruler compromised under the force of circumstances. The "New Administration" was then transmitted downwards to educational institutions as polity directed change: the end of selector and introduction of modern system.

NOTES

1. The Analects by Kong Zi
2. Zuo's Commentary
3. The Analects. Yan Yuan
4. The Analects. Zi Han
5. The Analects. Wei Zheng
6. Book14 To Fully develop the Kindness of the Heart (Part B), P. 320, Mencius
7. Book 5 Duke Wen of Teng (Part A), P.116, Mencius
8. Book 11Gaozi (Part A), P.256, Mencius
9. Book12 Gaozi (Part B) P. 288, Mecius
10. 11. Social Wisdom 84, P.169,

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