CHINESE IDEAS IN THE WEST

Prepared by Professor Derk Bodde for the Committee on Asiatic Studies in American Education
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(The following is an excerpt of three sections from the full article, *Chinese Ideas in the West*. To see the entire article, please visit Asia for Educators Online at http://afe.easia.columbia.edu and go to Subject: Inventions/Ideas: China: Teaching Units.)

Author's Introduction

Today civil service is an accepted institution in all modern democracies. In the year 1941, for example, nearly 2,500,000 men and women took examinations for positions in the United States government.

So fundamental is the principle of choosing public servants on the basis of fitness that one might almost suppose it had been a cornerstone of our national thinking ever since our nation's beginnings. Yet, though few people stop to consider it, the fact is that this matter of efficiency in government is a relatively new idea in America. The first hundred years of our nation's history were racked with scandalous corruption as a result of the notorious spoils system. Not until 1883, two years after a president of the United States had been assassinated by a disgruntled office seeker, did the public wake up and demand a system of civil service examinations that would ensure the selection of most government employees on the basis of merit rather than party loyalty.

The civil service idea did not originate in our country, however, nor in Europe, though it is true that in passing this legislation, Congress followed the immediate lead of Great Britain and France, both of which had taken similar action a few decades earlier. The first county to install the merit system was China. In the year 165 B.C., China inaugurated what later became a widespread system of competitive government examinations. And during the greater part of the time from that early date until 1905, shortly before the Empire passed out of existence, the majority of Chinese applicants for public office had to prove their ability by passing one of these tests. A picture of the examination halls in Peking in which applications were locked while taking these Chinese civil service examinations is included below.

Civil service is but one of many ideas the West has received from China — ideas that have contributed significantly to our civilization in such fields as politics, economics, and literature. The extent of this contribution is not generally appreciated by Americans. Accustomed as we are to ascribe our cultural heritage to Egypt, Greece, Rome, and northern Europe, we tend to dismiss Asia as a distant continent of alien cultures possessing no possible common denominator with our own. It is not generally realized that prior to the sixteenth century, the West received more from Asia, including distant China, than it gave in return. A previous article in this series, *China's Gifts to the West*, depicts the many material *things* which China has contributed to our Western world. This pamphlet tells a similar story of the nonmaterial *ideas* we have received from China.

Many people are more interested in things than in ideas. This is easy to understand. Things are simple and concrete, and their effects on our lives are easily noticed. Ideas, on the contrary, are complex and subtle. They have a way of escaping us just when we think we have grasped them. Yet today it is increasingly evident that our lives are often shaped more by certain ideas — whether for good or evil — than by the material things that surround us.

Just now, for example, we are beginning to harness the energy concealed in the tiny atom. Its strength is all but supernatural. Yet it is as nothing beside the strength of the *ideas* of the men who will control it. Whether the atom is to be used for man's good or for his utter destruction is dependent upon these ideas. Western civilization gives abundant evidence of the mastery we have gained over physical matter. But the relations between nations today reveal how meager is their understanding one of the other. The greatest crisis before our country lies in this gap between our control of things and our understanding of other peoples. Somehow we must bridge this gap, and quickly. Otherwise, our mastery of things will simply provide us with irresistible force with which to bring about our own destruction. The future of civilization may depend on whether enough nations and groups within nations can acquire an understanding and appreciation of one another to the point where world peace is possible.

One of the ways of doing this is by studying the contributions which various peoples have made to the rest of the world. The present article is a step in this direction. And China is one of the countries with the richest possibilities for such a study. Her contributions to Western life have been varied. Many of them are significant. Some are quite surprising, as we shall see.

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China and the Age of Enlightenment

As time wore on, various Chinese inventions such as printing, gunpowder, and the mariner's compass gradually found their way to Europe, also via the Arabs, who for centuries were the leading travelers and traders between East and West. Prior to the seventeenth century, however, the purely intellectual influence of China remained slight, perhaps because it was only then that Europeans themselves began to travel to the Far East in significant numbers.

The new era of Chinese-European contacts started in the year 1601, when the famous Italian Jesuit, Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), arrived in the Chinese capital, Peking, and established there a Catholic mission. For the next two centuries the Jesuits, as well as members of other Catholic orders, remained in close touch with the Court of Peking. By 1700 they were said to have converted approximately two hundred fifty thousand Chinese to Christianity. Because these Europeans were highly educated men, they gained the respect of the Chinese, who have always placed a premium on scholarship. Many, indeed, were given important positions in the Chinese government. The Board of Astronomy, for example, was placed under their charge and remained a Christian stronghold until 1838.

Fascinated by the ancient and impressive civilization in which they found themselves, these Europeans wrote home detailed accounts of what they saw. Their letters provided material for a long series of books

on China, written usually in French or Latin and published in Paris, the European center of Jesuit activities. Among them were such works as *Confucius, the Philosopher of the Chinese* (1687); the *Description of China* (1735), in four volumes; the long series of *Edifying and Curious Letters*, in 34 volumes (1702-76); the *General History of China*, in 13 volumes (1777-85); and the lengthy *Memoirs on the History, Sciences, Arts, etc., of the Chinese*, in 16 volumes (1776-1814).

These writings gave Europeans a far more detailed and accurate picture of China than they had ever had before. They generated a tremendous enthusiasm for China and things Chinese — an enthusiasm that reached its peak in the early years of the second half of the eighteenth century. Materially, this enthusiasm powerfully influenced such fields as painting, architecture, landscape gardening, furniture, and the newly developed manufactures of porcelain and lacquerware — the well-known and charming *chinoiseries* of the eighteenth century. It also left a strong imprint on literature and on the thinking of some of the most famous intellectual figures of the period.

The timing of this impact from China was of particular importance. It reached Europe during a period of tremendous political and intellectual ferment. The Renaissance had brought to Europeans a renewed consciousness of their great classical heritage from the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome. This consciousness widened men's horizons. It helped to free them from the mental limitations that had been imposed during the Middle Ages by the dogmas of the church. Some began to question a spiritual authority that still taught that the sun and the rest of the universe revolve around the earth, well after Copernicus and Galileo had proved the reverse to be true. They were beginning to raise objections to the theory of the "divine right of kings" that permitted monarchs to rule as they pleased, without regard for the welfare of their people; to express doubts regarding the justice of a social system that allowed feudal aristocrats to lead lives of luxury while their peasant serfs starved; and to urge that men of education be given an increasing voice in public affairs.

Such ideas, gaining strength in the seventeenth century, led in the eighteenth to what was known as the Age of Enlightenment. Leaders of this movement, such as the Frenchman, Voltaire (1694-1778), believed that any human problem could be solved if men would only consent to live with one another on a basis of reason and common sense. Ideas of this sort culminated politically in the French Revolution of 1789. Socially, they gave a new dignity and freedom to the individual. Intellectually, they created a new, scientific method of thinking, based upon objective experimentation and observation, in place of the old, blind acceptance of unverified tradition. Thus were made possible the tremendous material advances that were to come later with the Industrial Revolution.

Confucius as seen by the Chinese

A black-and-white paper "rubbing" reproduced from a carving on a large stone tablet. The tablet is a copy of a painting by one of China's greatest artists, Wu Tao-tzu (died A.D. 792). The large inscription at the top reads: "Portrait of Confucius, the First Teacher, Conducting His Teaching." The smaller inscription in the upper right-hand corner reads: "His virtue equals that of Heaven and Earth. His principles are unsurpassed in past or present. He edited and transmitted the Six Classics. He has left to us an example for 10,000 generations." The inscription in the lower left-hand corner reads: "Drawn by Wu Tao-tzu of the T'ang dynasty."

To men infected with these new ideas, China provided a powerful stimulus. For in China they saw a great civilization that had evolved quite independently of, and earlier than, their own. Although not a Christian nation, it had nevertheless developed in Confucianism a high system of morals of its own. And, unlike Europe, it had done so without permitting a priesthood to become so powerful as to challenge the state's authority. The emperor of China, furthermore, though seemingly an absolute ruler, was in actual fact limited by the teachings of Confucianism, which declared that "the people are the most important element in the state; the sovereign is the least." Particularly was China admired as a land where government did not rest in the hands of a feudal aristocracy, as in Europe. Instead, it was managed by the mandarins — a group of highly educated scholars — who gained their official positions only after proving their worth by passing a series of state-administered examinations. We know today that this highly favorable picture of China was somewhat over-painted. Yet there is little doubt that the China of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was, both politically and economically, in many ways ahead of Europe.

The story of how European thinkers of this period reacted to Chinese thought is a fascinating one that can only briefly be told here. The most striking example in the seventeenth century was the German philosopher, Leibniz (1646-1716), one of the most internationally minded men who ever lived. He read extensively on China, corresponded with Jesuits who had lived there, and wrote on Confucian philosophy. In a letter written in 1697, he announced: "I shall have to post a notice on my door: Bureau of Information for Chinese Knowledge."

Leibniz found in the mystic symbols contained in an ancient Chinese classic support for his own mathematical theories. There are striking parallels, too, between his philosophy and certain Confucian ideas. Above all, however, he had the dream of creating a new civilization that would be truly universal. This could be done, he believed, by consciously selecting and bringing together the best elements in Chinese and Western culture. This dream he expressed in a little book of 1697, *Novissima Sinica* or *Latest News from China*, in which he wrote: "I almost think it necessary that Chinese missionaries should be sent to us to teach the aims and practice of natural theology, as we send missionaries to them to instruct them in revealed religion." Leibniz's dream still remains, alas, only a dream!

By many of his contemporaries, however, such theories were regarded as dangerous and revolutionary. A disciple of Leibniz, Christian Wolff (1679-1754), suffered persecution because of his admiration for China. In a lecture delivered at the University of Halle in 1721, he praised the Chinese system for successfully harmonizing individual happiness with the welfare of the state. He maintained that Confucianism was fully adequate as a way of life; that there was no real conflict between it and Christianity. For these bold words he was immediately accused of atheism, and, after a bitter attack, was forced to give up his position in the university.

But the most famous leader of the Enlightenment to fall under the Chinese spell was Voltaire (1694-1778), to whom Confucius was the greatest of all sages. A portrait of Confucius adorned the wall of his library. He regarded China as the one country in the world where the ruler is at the same time a philosopher (Plato's "philosopher-king"). He praised it because it had no priesthood owning 20 percent of the land, and contrasted the religious tolerance of the Chinese, who had never tried to send missionaries to Europe, with the European habit of always forcing their own religious ideas upon other people. "One need not be obsessed with the merits of the Chinese," he wrote in 1764, "to recognize . . . that their empire is in truth the best that the world has ever seen."

In 1755 Voltaire produced a play, *The Chinese Orphan*, which he adapted from an old Chinese play that had been published in French translation in 1735. This play, significantly described by him as "the morals of Confucius in five acts," was written as an answer to the theories of Rousseau (1712-78). Rousseau, as we all know, wanted people to follow a back-to-nature movement, and argued that the arts, sciences, and human institutions generally, are harmful because they corrupt the simple goodness of human nature. Voltaire, to disprove these ideas, deliberately changed the original seventh century B.C. setting of his play, laying it instead in the thirteenth century A.D., when the Mongols, under Chingghis Khan, conquered China. His purpose in so doing was to prove the superiority of human art and culture by showing how Chinese civilization finally triumphed over the warlike barbarism of the Mongols.

Voltaire died only eleven years before the French Revolution. This world-shaking event, followed by the wars of Napoleon and the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century, turned men's minds away from China to things nearer at home. In Europe the enthusiasm for China died. In America, however, there was at least one nineteenth century thinker who, quite independently of the European Enlightenment, fell under the influence of China. He was Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82), who eagerly read many translations of the Confucian classics. India, to be sure, inspired some of his more important ideas, such as the theory of the Over-Soul, and of the unreality of the world as we see it. But from China he accepted the Confucian concept of the true gentleman, the belief that good government must be based on a sound moral foundation, and the emphasis upon the responsibilities that each individual in society holds toward other individuals. These ideas still have value for us today. We call them American ideas. Few of us realize that they were expressed long ago in China.

Political and Economic Theories

It should not be supposed that all thinkers in the Age of Enlightenment were preachers of revolution. Many, indeed most, were willing to continue with the accepted institution of monarchy. In France, the center of the Enlightenment, the monarchy had reached the extreme of absolutism under Louis XIV (1643-1715). The reign of his successor, Louis XV (1715-74), however, saw signs of growing weakness, coupled with corruption and gross social and economic abuses. Many thinkers, therefore, came to realize that the monarchy could be preserved only by carrying out various drastic reforms. As a result, it became their aim to create an *enlightened despotism* that would rule for the benefit of the people as a whole, rather than merely for a small, privileged group. In the example of China these men found powerful support for their theories. For in China, as we have seen, Confucianism, though it accepted the idea of an absolute ruling power, at the same time set certain moral restraints upon the abuses of that power.

Most prominent among the men who voiced such ideas was a group of French political economists known as the "Physiocrats." They came into existence shortly after 1756 under the leadership of Francis Quesnay (1694-1774), who was a doctor at the French Royal Court.

Quesnay and his fellow Physiocrats maintained that government, if enlightened, must operate in conformity with certain economic and social laws, which they called the "Natural Order." Basic in this Natural Order, they believed, was the principle that the entire wealth of any country comes, in the final analysis, from that country's land, as a result of such activities as agriculture, mining, and lumbering. Manufacture and trade are secondary activities, since they concern themselves merely with the raw materials derived from the land. Hence, the manufacturer and merchant, though performing useful functions, were, according to Quesnay and his group, "sterile" and nonproductive. The state should,

therefore, give special encouragement to all activities, such as agriculture, that increase the land's productivity. It should not, on the other hand, aid the "sterile" processes of manufacturing and commerce by offering them tariff protection or permitting the creation of great private monopolies, for this, in their opinion, would interfere with the natural processes of distribution and violate the Natural Order.

Since the revenue of the state, like the wealth of its people, comes ultimately from the land, they believed that the only really fair form of taxation is a single land tax levied upon the land's productive capacity. This doctrine was an attack upon one of the greatest abuses in the France of Quesnay's time: the existence of great land estates, owned by feudal aristocrats, who paid in taxes only an insignificant part of what their land produced.

Confucius as seen by the Europeans

This image, showing Confucius standing in the Chinese National Academy of Learning, is taken from *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* or *Confucius, the Philosopher of the Chinese* (Paris, 1687). Some of the earlier translations of the Confucian writings were published in this book. Notice the Roman-style arch in the background of the picture and the non-Chinese use of perspective. The two large characters at the top read: "National Academy of Learning." Those on either side of the arch read: "Confucius, the First Teacher under Heaven." The books in the cases along the sides of the room bear titles of the various Confucian classics. Underneath them are tablets inscribed with the names of Confucius' disciples.

The Physiocrats also argued that education should be separated from the church and made universal, for only in that way could the best available talent of the country be brought forward and trained for public service.

Most of these ideas bore an amazing resemblance to those found in Confucian political and economic philosophy. For thousands of years the Chinese had believed that there can be good government only when a perfect harmony exists between the "Way of Man" (governmental institutions) and the "Way of Nature" (Quesnay's Natural Order). China had always been a predominantly agrarian country, in which industries and trade played only a minor part. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Chinese regarded agriculture as "primary" and worthy of intensive government support, while commerce was looked upon as nonproductive and, therefore, "secondary." For this reason they traditionally ranked the merchant near the bottom of the social ladder, well below the honored place they gave the farmer.

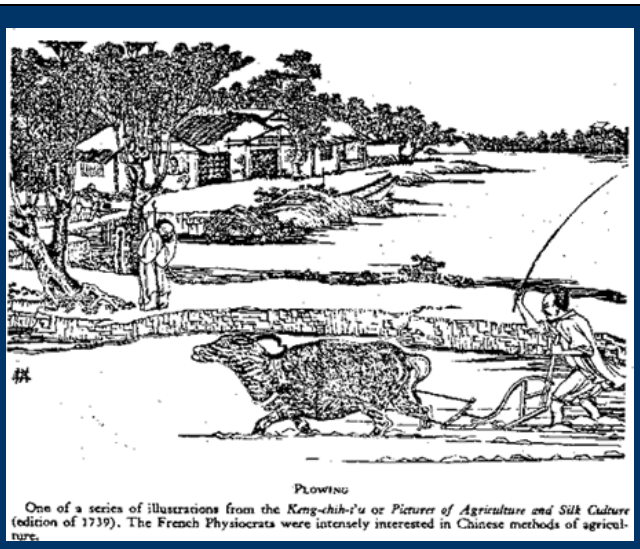
The Chinese government even went so far as to place restrictions upon the development of private trade. Herein lies the major point of difference between Chinese theory and that of the Physiocrats. Though Quesnay and his group thought that the government should do nothing that would encourage trade, they at the same time believed in the doctrine of laissez faire — that trade should be permitted to operate free from government restrictions.

In their educational theories the Physiocrats were also clearly influenced by the example of China, with its famous examination system that ensured the admission of men to government service on the basis of education rather than rank.

The tremendous debt of the Physiocrats to China is evident in Quesnay's book *The Despotism of China* (1767), in which he presents his ideas of what a truly enlightened despotism means. In its first seven chapters he paints a glowing picture of Chinese political and economic conditions, drawing his material directly from Jesuit writings on China. In the eighth, and final, chapter he develops his own theories along the lines described above, linking them directly with the example of China.

One of the customs that most aroused Quesnay's enthusiasm was the annual ceremony performed since early times by each Chinese emperor in the spring: that of the ritual plowing of a sacred plot of land, to mark the moment when Chinese farmers were to begin their spring cultivation. In 1768, when Quesnay's influence was at its height, this ancient ceremony was symbolically performed by the son of Louis XV at the French Court, using a small-scale model of a plow as evidence of the government's benevolent interest in agriculture! The following year the act was repeated by Emperor Joseph II of Austria, this time with a full-size plow. No wonder that Quesnay, the inspirer of these imitations of Chinese ceremonial, was called by his followers "the Confucius of Europe"!

One of the most prominent admirers of the Physiocrats was the statesman Turgot (1727-81), who was French minister of finance from 1774 to 1776. In 1765 he showed his very practical interest in China when he heard of the impending return there of two young Chinese who had been sent to France for their education by the Jesuits in Peking. To these Chinese, Turgot handed a list of fifty-two questions about economic and social conditions of China. Through the answers, which he asked them to send him after arriving in China, he hoped to obtain information that could be usefully applied to the reform of the French government. The practical nature of these questions is shown by such examples as: "Are there in China many rich people?" "Are there many people there who live on the interest from loans?" "By what sorts of men are the great positions in China usually filled?" "How much rice does a man commonly consume in a year?" "In China what is the ordinary daily wage of a workingman?" Unfortunately, however, the answers to his questions were never received.



PLOWING
One of a series of illustrations from the *Keng-chih-t'u* or *Pictures of Agriculture and Silk Culture* (edition of 1739). The French Physiocrats were intensely interested in Chinese methods of agriculture.

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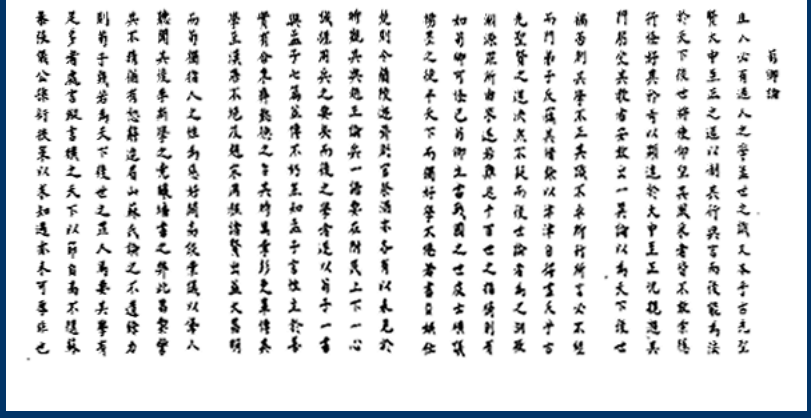
One of a series of illustrations from the *Keng-chih-t'u* or *Pictures of Agriculture and Silk Culture* (edition of 1739). The French Physiocrats were intensely interested in Chinese methods of agriculture.

Turgot was an able and sincere man who tried earnestly during his period of office to put the Physiocrat doctrines into practice. These doctrines, however, while well suited to an agrarian economy such as that of China, proved to be ill-adapted for France, where a modern system of capitalism was already beginning to develop. The forces of corruption and reaction ranged against Turgot were too great, and he was forced to resign. His attempt to reform France from the top failed. The attempt that was to succeed came violently from below some years later. It was the French Revolution in 1789.

Though the Physiocrats failed in the practical application of their doctrines, their impact on later economic theory was strong. This influence is particularly evident in the ideas of Adam Smith (1723-90), author of the classical economic work of modern times, *The Wealth of Nations* (l776). Thus the Physiocrats may truly be said to rank among the founders of modern Western political economy. And, in their insistence upon the need for universal education, they led the way in a movement that in the nineteenth century was to become a standard practice in Western democracies.



A Chinese Examination Paper

Paper of Ch'en Shih-jui, who graduated as 261st among the 314 successful candidates receiving their *chin-shih*, or doctor's degree, in the Chinese national examination of May 25, 1894, held in Peking. For this examination he wrote two essays and one poem. Reproduced is the first one of the essays, dealing with the famous Confucian philosopher, Hsün Tzu, of the third century B.C. It reveals the beautiful handwriting required from any successful candidate. The question for the essay was received at 10:00 A.M. and had to be answered in about two thousand words by sunset, that is, around 7:30 P.M. In the nine and one-half hours thus permitted, the candidate first had to compose a rough draft of his essay and then copy it into the stylized characters here shown. The copying alone, even for rapid writers, required about seven hours. The original of Ch'en's paper is in the Library of Congress.

Civil Service

Though the European enthusiasm regarding China died away after 1789, it left behind it one very important practical heritage. This is the modern civil service system now prevailing in many Western countries.

As mentioned earlier, the Chinese examination system, from which the various European civil service systems are ultimately derived, seems to have been started in 165 B.C., when certain candidates for public office were called to the Chinese capital for examination by the emperor on their moral excellence. In following centuries the system grew until finally almost anyone who wished to become an official had to prove his worth by passing written government examinations.

From A.D. 1370 onward, the system was adjusted to include three sets of examinations, one held in the local counties, another in the capitals of the provinces, and a third — the highest examination of all — in Peking, the national capital. Some were conducted annually, and others once every three years. The honors thus attained corresponded roughly to our B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees. This system operated with great regularity until it was finally abolished in 1905. Even today the government of China is officially pledged to its re-establishment, though in greatly modified form.

The examinations took place within huge walled enclosures, inside of which were thousands of small brick cells, laid out in straight rows like the houses of a town. Each cell contained a bench and table, and housed a nervous candidate. Every precaution was taken to prevent cheating. Candidates were searched before entering the enclosure, carefully watched while the examination was in progress, and not permitted to leave until it was over. Each examination commonly lasted several days and was of unbelievable difficulty.

In 1889, for example, out of more than 14,000 candidates taking the examination in Peking, only slightly over 300 passed. The reward for success, however, was entry into the honored ranks of the mandarins who governed the country.

The chief defect in this system was its emphasis upon literary style and a detailed knowledge of the Chinese classics, at the expense of more practical matters. Another was the failure of the Chinese government to provide anything approaching a national system of free education. Hence, most candidates had to prepare themselves for the examinations at their own expense and the inevitable result was that the majority of those able to take them came from the well-to-do. Nevertheless, the system had two important advantages. It was open, with trifling exceptions, to all members of society, thus making it the world's most democratic means, before modern times, for selecting government officials. And it ensured the presence in the government of men of high education.

Nothing like such a system seems to have been known among the other great civilizations of antiquity. In the universities of Europe, written examinations seem to have been unheard of before 1702. As for government-administered civil service examinations, these were of considerably later date. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Chinese examinations were described repeatedly in Western literature on China of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and aroused intense admiration among such men as Voltaire and Quesnay.

In France the earliest civil service system seems to have been established in 1791 shortly after the outbreak of the Revolution. After ten years, however, it was allowed to lapse, but was re-established in the 1840's. Though little attention seems to have been given to its early history, several writers on French history maintain that it owes its origin to the Chinese example.

The origins of the British civil service are better known. During the eighteenth century a number of Englishmen wrote in praise of the Chinese examination system, some of them going so far as to urge the adoption for England of something similar. The first concrete step in this direction was taken by the British East India Company in 1806. In that year the Company established a small college near London whose purpose was to train Company employees for administrative service in India, the British-controlled portions of which were at that time still governed by the Company on behalf of the British Crown. The proposal for establishing this college came, significantly, from members of the East India Company's trading post in Canton, China. Thus the principle was established of using for public administration men who possessed certain preparatory qualifications.

During the next several decades many Englishmen referred to the example of China as an argument for establishing a universal civil service system in England itself. Most persistent among them was Thomas Taylor Meadows, a gifted man who served for many years in the British diplomatic service in China. In 1847 he published a book, *Desultory Notes on the Government and People of China*, whose main purpose, in his own words, was "to urge the institution of Public Service Competitive Examinations for all British subjects with a view to the Improvement of the British Executive and the Union of the British Empire." In it he described the Chinese system and argued that "the long duration of the Chinese empire is solely and altogether owing to the good government which consists in the advancement of men of talent and merit only."

Such public statements finally led the British government to create a committee to investigate the matter. In l853 this committee presented to Parliament a report entitled "The Organization of the Permanent Civil Service." The report recommended that a central board of examiners be formed to prepare examinations on the general knowledge of the candidates; that these examinations should be held regularly and should be open to all; and that promotion in government service should be based on merit instead of favoritism. All these were principles that had governed the Chinese system for many centuries. Though bitterly attacked in Parliament, the report resulted in the creation of Britain's first civil service commission in 1855.

The British example was undoubtedly chiefly responsible for the establishment in America of a similar civil service system. Nevertheless, some Chinese influence is also apparent. When, for example, Thomas A. Jenckes of Rhode Island first recommended to Congress in 1868 that an American civil service system be created, his report on the subject contained a chapter on the civil service in China. The same year Emerson, who, as we have seen, was interested in China, made a speech in Boston at a reception in honor of a visiting embassy from China, in which he praised the Chinese examination system and urged that the Jenckes proposal be adopted.

As in England, however, many people who derived personal benefit from the old spoils system strongly opposed the new idea. Some protested that the use of examinations to determine the fitness of candidates for office was Chinese, foreign, and, therefore, "un-American!" Consequently, it was not until 1883 that the proposal of l 868 was finally passed by the Congress.

Today the principle of the civil service system has been accepted in virtually all democratic countries. More and more, persons are entering government service because of personal merit rather than political favoritism. As a result, much of the political corruption that was so common a century ago has disappeared. The civil service system is undoubtedly one of China's most precious intellectual gifts to the West.

(The preceding is an excerpt of three sections from the article *Chinese Ideas in the West*. To see the entire article, please visit Asia for Educators Online at http://afe.easia.columbia.edu and go to Subject: Inventions/Ideas: China: Teaching Units.)

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