

# [Chinese civil service examination](https://assignbuster.com/chinese-civil-service-examination/)

Imperial examination in ancient China was developing based on the nine-rank system. From Sui and Tang dynasties to Guangxu year, Qing dynasty, it took more than 1300 years to evolve. The Imperial Examination is officially called Keju Examination in China, which was an important part ofeducationsystem of feudal society in ancient China. In the mean time, it was a kind of officer-selecting system as well. It played a significant role in cultivating, selecting, and making use of talents.

Modern examination system also takes example by the imperial examinations in ancient China. So we should attach importance to researching and studying it due to its enlightenment to the innovation of education system. Have you ever wondered why there is an examination this kind of stuff which makes students “ suffer” a lot and how it comes about? What is its origin? And how did it develop? Actually, China has a long history in examination system. So, I will talk about the imperial examination system in China which has a far-reaching impact to other Asian countries. The establishment of the nine-rank system A certain system cannot be created without foundation and time, it must have an origin, and before the establishment of the system, there must have been a predecessor originating gradually”.

Imperial examination did not arise suddenly. Before the imperial examination was created, the nine-rank system was considered to be the precursor of it. According to Ci Hai dictionary, the explanation of the word “ nine-rank system”: At the end of the Eastern Han dynasty, Cao Cao was in power, he advocated “ Wei Cai Shi Ju”, which means everyone has an opportunity to be an official as long as he is outstanding enough.

In the year 220, Cao Pi adopted Ministry of Personnel, Chen Qun’s suggestion that every prefecture could elect a reputable man to be the “ Zhongzheng” (a kind of official), and the government classified them as nine ranks according to their capability. Cao Pi maintained Cao Cao’s principle that pedigree will not be the prerequisite. According to baike. baidu. com, at the beginning when nine-rank system was established, the criterion for estimating candidates was focused on extraction, morality, and ability. However, with the development of nine-rank system, extraction became the prerequisite, event the sole touchstone.

When it came to Western Jin Dynasty, there had been a situation that first-class positions only admitted aristocrats and inferior-class positions only admitted people who didn’t have eminent background. Until the Northern Dynasty, national minority was in charge of the government. So the nine-rank system couldn’t efficiently work as before and became formalistic. Finally, it was abolished because of the lapse of aristocrats by Sui Dynasty. The establishment of Keju System (The Imperial Examination System) Sui Dynasty: In 589, Sui Wendi (the emperor) set up two subjects of Xiu Cai and Ming Jing.

In 606, Sui Yangdi (the next emperor) started to add another subject of Jin Shi. Therefore, it became the mark of the establishment of Keju System. Tang Dynasty: Tang Dynasty carried forward the system from Sui Dynasty practicing Keju System which used the subject of Jin Shi as the dominative way to select dedicates to upper level. Those who hoped to be the officials of the bureaucracy should compete in the Jin Shi exams, which tested their knowledge about the Five Confucian Classics.

Thanks to this policy, many people who were born miserably could have a fair access to higher level of bureaucracy. Ming and Qing Dynasty: The Imperial Examination System reached its final form under Ming Dynasty, and was adopted almost intact by the succeeding Qing dynasty. Metropolitan Examination was holding every three years in Jing Cheng (Beijing), and officials were rotated every three years in order to prevent them from building up a power base. The admission criterion was divided into three levels. The top level included three quotas: Zhuang Yuan, Bang Yan, and Tan Hua.

The other levels would enroll several examinees. The subject matter of the examinations was about the Four Books and Five Confucian Classics. The form for an examination paper became the stylized “ eight-legged essay” (Ba Gu Wen), which had eight main headings, used 700 characters or less, and dealt with topics according to a certain set manner. According to www. Newworldencyclopedia. org. ? By 1370, the examinations lasted between 24 and 72 hours, and were conducted in spare, isolated examination rooms; sometimes, however, it was held in cubicles.

The small rooms featured two boards which could be placed together to form a bed, or placed on different levels to serve as a desk and chair. In order to obtain objectivity in evaluation, candidates were identified by number rather than name, and examination answers were recopied by a third person before being evaluated to prevent the candidate's handwriting from being recognized. The examinations were often criticized because the ability to do well on the examination did not necessarily reflect the ability to govern well, and because they gave precedence to style over content and originality of thought.

The exam system was abolished in 1905. The rulers realized that in order for the country to survive in the 20th century, they had to abandon the Confucian-classics-based education system, and adopt a Western-type, science-and-technology-based system. How many types of degrees could people get? What were the sorts of those degrees? The sort of degrees can reflect the completeness of Chinese Imperial Examination System.

Soon after passing the metropolitan test, the candidate would take the Palace Examination and be conferred the Jin Shi(?? ) degree. The exam was given at Beijing once every three years. What kind of influence does it have? Is it beneficial or detrimental for the social development? The Imperial Examination System was more like a double-edged sword, since it brings the uniformity to the country but reluctance to innovate and change.

The advantageous and disadvantageous influence Positive impact

* Keju System facilitates traditional Confucianculturepopularized and made the society generate a lively, critical, academicenvironment. From Song dynasty, no matter how humbly the examinees were, they had the equal opportunity to enter a high position in government as other aristocrats had. So this system not only expanded the scope of selecting talents, but also played an important part in maintaining the stability of society. During Ming and Qing dynasty, about half of Jin Shi was born in poor families. \*
* The strict system provided impartial chances to commoners so that government had a good reputation at that time.
* As the country who invented examination system, China has been known by other countries in the world.

The Keju System is regarded as a cornerstone of other exam patterns. It has a far-reaching impact to East Asia and Western world. From 8th to 10th century, Japan had imitated the Keju System, and so as Korea and Vietnam. In 1855, the civil official examination system was officially established in Britain. " It is widely acknowledged by Western scholars today that China's imperial examination system exerted direct influence on the modern civil service examination system in the West," said Li Shiyu, a guest-visitor to the exhibition and researcher with the Institute of History under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.?

Negative impact

* Keju system didn’t radically solve the problem that public officials appointed people by favouritism. With strengthen of centralization of authority, Keju System was gradually controlled by monarch or high-level officials. And the number of enrollees was not enough at all so that people who had relationships with officials could easily slip through and pass the examination.
* Keju system cannot help enhance administrative efficiency in its original sense. Because of the complicated bureaucracy set, people who passed the examinations could not adapt the complicacy and put knowledge into practice. It caused people to have a rigescent thought.
* Most people took the Keju examination just in order to change theirfamilyfinancial condition instead to change the decayed political condition. What they learned could not match the reality well and help a lot so that executive system verged to conservative and closed. With time going on, China gradually lost many chances to innovate.
* Many multitudes gave up their jobs, many young males lay their farm land wasted so that they could have plenty of time to prepare for the examinations.

To some extent, the crop yield took a hit because of a large number of strong adults wanted to be an official instead of a farmer. Purpose of Imperial Examination System In ancient China, most people lived at the bottom of the society, the only way they could change their destiny was to take Imperial Exams. Since the process of studying for the examination was time-consuming, most male adults had to do farming work during the daytime, but those wealthy land-owning gentries could have plenty of spare time to study. So they became the main candidates for high-ranking government officials.

The examination system distributed its prizes according to provincial and prefectural quotas, which meant that imperial officials were recruited from the whole country, in numbers roughly proportional to each province's population. Elite individuals all over China, even in the disadvantaged peripheral regions, had a chance at succeeding in the examinations and achieving the rewards of holding office. In earlier period, it was a fair method for commoners to change their social status, however, under some late dynasties the imperial bureaucracy became corrupt, examinations were abolished and official posts were either sold or given as rewards.

At these times, the public morale diminished, and some type of reform was often introduced to restore traditional Confucian values in the government. The uniformity of the content of the examinations helped maintain the basic cultural values. Even only few people could pass the exam and finally get title, the preparation for and the hope of eventual success on a subsequent examination sustained the interest of those who took them. Those who failed to pass—most of the andidates at any single examination did not lose wealth or local social 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. With the Imperial examination, the society was in a dense academic atmosphere. After Qing Dynasty collapsed, what is the examination system like? What is its difference or similarity between Western countries and China?

The Examination System After 1912 After 1912, soon the Chinese revolutionary league was established. It was led by Sun Zhongshan( considered as the Father of Republic of China). Sun had been studied abroad in Japan and had a very progressive thought. He adopted a lot of excellent western ideas and devoted himself to reform and innovation. Not only in political and economic aspects, but also in education. He zealously sparkplugs western-style education system. A lot of public schools were built. Ordinary people could afford their children to get education.

It was a good start in New China. Today, Chinese Communists studying capitalist civil service systems have been making a similar point. Deng Xiaoping has said, in reference to economic reforms, " It doesn't matter if the cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice. " The current Chinese civil service reform (CSR) is an adjunct to the economic reforms begun in 1978. Regional and city governments, as well as a few national ministries, began experimenting with Western civil service techniques (particularly the use of examinations for selection).

With the improvement of the education system, the quality of common people is also promoted. With United Nations' help (United Nations Development Program, 1987, 1989), the Chinese have been bringing foreign personnel experts to China and sending Chinese administrators abroad to study Western personnel technology. Although they are studying foreign systems, in the end, they insist that they will adopt a system with distinct " Chinese characteristics."