PROBLEMS OF CHINESE EDUCATION

By

VICTOR PURCELL
Ph.D.

LONDON
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRUBNER & CO. LTD.
BROADWAY HOUSE: 68-74 CARTER LANE, E.C.
1936
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chap.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td></td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>The Old System</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>Contact with the West</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>The Aim of Education</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>The Language Problem</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>San Min Chu I</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>The Present Period</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Index</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PREFACE

The first two chapters of this study are introductory, but the information has not been collected elsewhere in the form considered necessary to illuminate the questions later discussed. The bulk of the fourth chapter, on language, is an examination of Chinese neologisms on a new system. In the fifth chapter a summary of San Min Chu I is given with the Chinese original of the key words and phrases in brackets. This is to enable the summary to be read in conjunction with the language chapter. The final chapter describes the situation at the present day and concludes with some tentative suggestions.

The Chinese characters rather than the romanized equivalent are nearly always given because romanization often conveys very little to the expert (especially to one who reads Chinese in some dialect other than Mandarin), whereas the characters convey everything. The reader who does not know Chinese will be made no wiser by romanization than he is by the characters. But an even weightier reason for inserting characters in the text is that they are necessary to give the proper "feel" to the subject matter. Romanized Chinese is insipid and grudgingly informative at the best; Chinese characters are living things which reveal instantly their identity to the eye at the same time that they please it with their beauty.

The original intention was to provide a complete conspectus of Chinese education, but it was found that the mass of laboriously collected statistics, translations of extracts from books by teachers, and descriptions of educational organizations, clogged the narrative and obscured the essential issues. In looking over the material discarded at this juncture, I find that the only omission I now regret is an account of the Mass Education Movement associated with the name of Mr. Y. C. James Yen.

One thing this study has revealed and that is the warming
truth that a student has only to decide which of the savants of the world can best guide his special course and they with the generosity of learning will at once agree to do it. To daily conversations with Dr. Van Stein Callenfels I owe an increased sense of the modest scale of my enquiries compared with the astronomic stretches of pre-history. To Sir Arthur Keith I owe an enhanced belief that cultural differences must not too readily be interpreted in terms of anthropology. To Professor Rupert Emerson, of Harvard, I owe the discovery that humanism, especially American humanism, can be an intellectual as well as emotional creed. To Professor Moule who directed my studies at Cambridge I owe the beginnings of a Chinese literary education and a sense of perspective lacking from my severely practical studies as a civil servant.

At this point an uneasy feeling comes over me that a catalogue of indebtedness is in the nature of a promise of repayment of some sort in the present study (a promise, I fear, without hope of fulfilment), but nevertheless I must continue it. I am grateful to Professor Duyvendak, of Leiden, for the close scrutiny he have to my fourth chapter, and to Professor Ernest Barker for the equally minute way in which he commented upon Chapter V. The suggestions of Professor Duyvendak I have, I trust, followed in every point; those of Professor Barker I have endeavoured to follow similarly, but my deficient knowledge of political science has, I know, prevented me from doing this with uniform success. I thank Mr. Li Chi Wa, Inspector of Schools, Mr. Chan Ping Kee, Mr. Cheng Hui Ming, and Mr. Lin Chong Hsin for the assistance they gave me, and not least of all Professor Dyer and my wife who have read over the complete manuscript.

Victor Purcell.
Innovation is more acceptable to a people if it is offered to them as a reversion to a former age in their own history rather than as a novelty invented at home or imported from without: in Rome the new *jus gentium* was ultimately hailed as the natural law; Rousseau in France harked back to a time when man was still uncorrupted. The Chinese within the last few decades have been induced by the force of events to abandon almost entirely an age-old system of literary education in favour of one derived from the West, and the native sponsors of the change, whilst constrained to admit that the models offered are Western in their immediate origin, are yet able to point to their prototypes in ancient China. It is a game that the Chinese have been playing from at least the sixth century B.C., when Confucius and Mo Tzü, under traditional appearances, and perhaps with the authentic desire to revert to the principles of antiquity, yet turned upside down the existing state of things without reproducing anything that had been known before.\(^1\) In 1865 Prince Kung relied upon historical argument to advocate the introduction of mathematics as a subject into the hitherto purely literary civil service examinations—"We find," he said, "that Western sciences borrowed their roots from ancient Chinese mathematics. Westerners still regard their mathematics as coming from the East,"\(^2\)—and the many persons who memorialized the

---

Throne during the latter reigns of the Ch'ing Dynasty in favour of Western innovations, always resorted to historical argument and searched through China's past in quest of precedents. Contemporary writers on education still find themselves able to indicate a period in Chinese history when utility and not literature was the basis of public instruction. Their contention is that before the Han Dynasty, education did not end with a mastery of the classics but economic needs were given a first place in the curriculum. Thus is a leaf of native and often plausible gilt found for an alien pill.

What sort of things was a Chinese taught in this pre-Han period, and how was he taught them? The information given by the classics themselves is not always in the round; it fades so often into feudal remoteness. The Book of Rites, *Li Chi* (禮記), which purports to describe the ancient ritual, tells us that, "for the purpose of education among the ancients, each village of twenty-five families had its school (塾), each district of five hundred families its academy (庠), and each department of two thousand five hundred families its college (學)," but in default of a description of what these institutions were like and what their curriculum was, the terms I have used rather arbitrarily in translation.

1 When a few years ago a phonetic alphabet was adopted to simplify the language, the symbols for it were not borrowed from the Roman alphabet or the international phonetic script, but from the *Shuo Wen* (說文), a dictionary of the first century A.D. (e.g. 丁, 尤, 向, 而). 古書今讀法 by 胡懷瑾. Shanghai, 1932, p. 15. “Ku Yen-wu, who founded the scientific branch of Chinese phonology, actually hoped that his studies might help to bring about a restoration of Chinese speech to the classical pronunciation of the ancients.” Hu Shih, *The Chinese Renaissance*, Chicago, 1934, p. 77.

2 e.g. 中國教育史大綱 by 王鳳喈. Commercial Press, Shanghai, 1926.

3 Legge (*Sacred Books of the East*, vol xxvii, p. 346) says that the names of these different schools are very perplexing, and his quotation from a commentator of the eleventh century does not clarify the matter to any extent. Mr. 王鳳喈, in his 中國教育史大綱 (before cited), p. 34, gives a somewhat different list of schools in the Chou Dynasty, i.e. 塾, 商校, 夏序, and 虢庠.
may lead us far astray. At the beginning of the Chou Dynasty (1122 B.C.?) all candidates for official employment were required to give proof of their acquaintance with the Five Arts—music, archery, horsemanship, writing, and arithmetic—and to be thoroughly versed in the rites and ceremonies of public and social life, an accomplishment that ranked as a sixth art. The Book of Rites records that the Minister of Music devoted himself to honouring the arts of poetry, writing, ceremonial, and music in the tradition of the ancient kings. In spring and autumn he taught ceremonial and music; in winter and summer he taught poetry and the histories. Ritualism, we see, had already established a hold on the Chinese mind, a hold that it was to extend in ages to come until, long before the Han Dynasty, a set form was prescribed for every action of the day. But as Dr. Kuo Ping-wên remarks, "the word 'ceremony', often regarded as the equivalent of the work li (禮), does not at all convey the true import of the word, for li includes not only the external conduct, but also involves the right principles from which all true etiquette and politeness spring." The Minister of Ceremonies and Public Instruction on one occasion assembled the old men of the capital at the Imperial College. He then went through archery practice in their presence in order to do honour to those who shot well, and he drank their health in order to do respect to their age. Chosen pupils of the college were present to profit by the Minister's example. The Imperial College admitted the most promising pupils of the realm,

2 Li Chi, book iii, sec. iv.

In his Outlines of the History of Chinese Philosophy (中國哲學史大綱), Commercial Press, Shanghai, 1925, p. 134, Dr. Hu Shih (胡適) says, "Li in a broader sense means all proper action and behaviour recognized by the Government. It was first applied to religious ceremony and then to correct behaviour. It is intended to regulate men's passions, to cultivate their character, and to form good habits."
and once they were entered no further reference was allowed to the elevation or baseness of their birth.

The education of the Chou Dynasty (1122 B.C. –255 B.C.) has at all times been the object of admiration of the Chinese themselves. The curriculum is described in the Book of Rites. It consisted in the Six Virtues—wisdom, benevolence, goodness, righteousness, loyalty, harmony—the Six Praise-worthy Actions—honouring one’s parents, being friendly with one’s brothers, being neighbourly, maintaining cordial relationships with relatives by marriage, being trustful, and being sympathetic—and the Six Arts—ritual, music, archery, charioteering, writing, and mathematics. A liberal education included five kinds of ritual, five kinds of archery, five ways of directing a chariot, six kinds of writing, and nine operations of mathematics. Music was stressed as having an influence in modelling the character. The musical instruments were the drum, the bell, the lute, and the Pandean pipes; dancing was with the shield, lance, plume, and flute.

The Book of Rites gives in detail the model careers of a boy and a girl 1:

"At six years, they were taught the numbers and the names of the cardinal points; at the age of seven, boys and girls did not occupy the same mat nor eat together; at eight, when going out or coming in at a gate or door, and going to their mats to eat and drink, they were required to follow their elders—the teaching of yielding to others was now begun; at nine, they were taught how to number the days.

"At ten, (the boy) went to a master outside, and stayed with him (even) over the night. He learned the (different classes of) characters and calculation; he did not wear his jacket or trousers of silk; in his manners he followed his early lessons; morning and even he learned the behaviour of a youth; he would ask to be exercised in (reading) the tablets, and in the forms of polite conversation.

“At thirteen, he learned music, and to repeat the odes, and to dance the *ko* [shao ḟ ] (of the Duke of Kao). When a full-grown lad, he danced the *hsiang* [象] (of the Duke of Wu). He learned archery and chariot-driving. At twenty, he was capped [冠], and first learned the (different classes of) ceremonies, and might wear fur and silk. He danced the *ta hsiā* [大夏] (of Yū), and attended sedulously to filial and fraternal duties. He might become very learned, but he did not teach others;—(his object being still) to receive and not to give out.

“At thirty he had a wife, and began to attend to the business proper to a man. He extended his learning without confining it to particular subjects. He was deferential to his friends, having regard to the aims (which they displayed). At forty, he was first appointed to office; and according to the business of it brought out his plans and communicated his thoughts. If the ways (which he proposed) were suitable, he followed them out; if they were not, he abandoned them. At fifty, he was appointed a Great Officer, and laboured in the administration of his department. At seventy, he retired from his duties . . .

“A girl at the age of ten ceased to go out (from the women’s apartments). Her governess taught her (the arts of) pleasing speech and manners, to be docile and obedient, to handle the hempen fibres, to deal with the cocoons, to weave silks and form fillets, to learn (all) woman’s work, how to furnish garments, to watch the sacrifices, to supply the liquors and

---

1 This sentence is translated quite differently by Dr. Kuo Ping-wên in his version of the passage (p. 20, op. cit.). He renders it as: “If the orders of his superior are conformable to good rules then he obeys them, if not he withdraws from public life.” The Chinese words are 道 合 則 服 從. 不 可 則 去. M. Callery, in his translation of part of the Book of Rites (I say part because he had lit on one of those expurgated editions once common), gives, “… on marche d’accord dans la même voie (avec son souverain), de manière à occuper toujours l’emploi qu’on a ; car, si on ne peut pas marcher d’accord (avec lui), il faut se retirer . . .” The commentary by 鄭 玄 (second century) renders the passage: “If the way is fitting, then he obeys and follows (it); if he cannot do so then he goes.” Whether *Tao* (道) is proposed to him or by him cannot be determined by the text, though the probabilities are in favour of the latter.

2 Dr. Kuo (op. cit.) gives “sixty” as the age for retiring, but “seventy” is given in all the Chinese texts I have been able to consult.