

## A CULTURAL HISTORY OF IMPERIAL CIVIL EXAMINATION TO CONTEMPORARY CHINESE EXAMINATION

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**ABSTRACT.** *A Cultural History of Imperial Civil Examination to Contemporary Chinese Examination.* Examination is an evaluation to check if students understand the lessons as well as a stimulating method to help students have progress efficiently. With the long history of imperial civil examination, Chinese examination in modern society is of rigorousness and high-difficulty, and exam-oriented education is very popular. Examination system with influence from imperial civil examination has its advantages and disadvantages, and Chinese language examination designed by Chinese teachers with Chinese exam features is not very welcomed by foreign students. This paper is to have a comprehensive understanding of imperial civil examination in view of its development, its relationship with Confucianism and its influence to contemporary Chinese language education. With the comparison of attitudes to exam, exam function, question design between Chinese exam and Romanian exam, we can make use of the advantages of various exam mechanisms to improve students' language level, knowledge of culture, and dialectic thinking.

**Key words:** *imperial civil examination, Confucianism, contemporary education.*

**REZUMAT.** *O istorie culturală de la examinarea civilă imperială și până la examinarea chinezească contemporană.* Examinarea este o evaluare al cărei scop este acela de a verifica dacă studenții au înțeles lecțiile predate, dar, în același timp, reprezintă și o metodă stimulatorie, care îi ajută pe studenți să cunoască un rapid progress. Având în spate istoria îndelungată a examinării civile imperiale, examinarea chinezească din societatea modernă este una riguroasă și extrem de dificilă, educația orientată spre examinare fiind foarte populară în prezent. Acest sistem de examinare derivat din examinarea civilă imperială are avantajele și dezavantajele sale, examinarea nivelului de cunoaștere a limbii chineze gândit de profesorii chinezi, potrivit specificului examenelor chinezești, nefiind foarte apreciată de studenții străini. Acest articol își propune să ofere o înțelegere comprehensivă a examinării civile imperiale de-a lungul etapelor sale de dezvoltare, relației cu sistemul filosofic

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confucianist precum și influența sa asupra studierii limbii chineze contemporane. Comparând atitudinea față de examinare, funcția și structura examinării în sistemul de educație chinezesc și românesc, se pot folosi avantajele cunoașterii mai multor mecanisme de examinare, cu scopul de a îmbunătăți nivelul de limbă, cultură și gândire dialectică al studenților.

***Cuvinte cheie:** examinarea civilă imperial, Confucianism, educație contemporană.*

## **1. Introduction**

We know that the four inventions from China, which are printing technology, paper making technology, compass and gun powder, influenced the western countries in industry, navigation, wars and politics since they were learnt and deployed. Some scholars name the imperial exam system as the fifth great invention in China because it plays an important role in western civil official system. The establishment of the western civil official system borrowed experience in elite selection and administration reform from imperial civil examination.

The imperial civil examination system (ICES) is a system deployed by imperial government selecting and recruiting civil officials based on merit and knowledge rather than family or political connections. Exam candidates have to study many arcane and complicated Confucian classics and take the rigorous and long-term exams based on classical literature and philosophy. It had multiple levels requiring extensive knowledge of Confucian classics, law, government, and oratory amongst other subjects. The concept of a countries ruled by men of ability in governance and virtue was an outgrowth of Confucian philosophy (Cartwright, 2019). This examination is like a competition requests candidate should possess 1) internalization of a common classical language, 2) memorization of a shared canon of classics, and 3) a literary style of writing known as the “eight- legged essay” (Elman, 2009). Central government organized the final imperial exam and the emperor decided the winners in this final round. It was a way strengthened the imperial power to control the officials. Several subjects and strict exam procedures of ICES prevented corruption in official selection, promoted the social mobility in different classes, and eased conflicts between traditional official class and peasant class (Deng, 2019).

As an important part of Chinese culture, ICES has deep impact on political system, economic system, education system as well as other various aspects of culture. The purpose of this paper is to research the relationship between ICES and Chinese traditional culture, especially with the Confucianism, then we can have a more comprehensive and profound understanding of the source, evolution

of it, as well as the influence and effects from ICES on Chinese language examination design and operation. The comparison between Chinese language exam and Romanian language exam in exam design and operation can unveil the reason for the misunderstanding of Chinese examination, which is beneficial for people to understand Chinese examination better. What's more, this paper may help more teachers to find a more suitable way for local Chinese learners by means of Chinese language examination, and students understand the importance and function of Chinese style exam.

## **2. The elite selection system before the imperial civil examination**

A developed country should have organizations to operate different jobs effectively, and the talented people is key part for the efficient operation of a normal country. The selecting system of talented people is eminent (Lü. 2016).

Before the appearance of imperial civil examination, which is the most significant way of election, hereditary was the only way to pass power to make the function of country normally. The disadvantage of hereditary is obvious that the really talented people are not easy or impossible to become leader or officials as the legal heir immediately inherits new position. Contrary to hereditary, election can promise the talented people to be elected to work in suitable position and the election population is more than that in hereditary. However, when election was appeared, it was only applied to official positions lower than position of scholar because of the development of autocracy, authority should be controlled by emperor and reliable notions rather supplying opportunity for foreign nations. And it is also a way to show the imperial power that the rules of election were decided by emperor alone.

Before the utilization of imperial civil examination, there were several other ways used to select talented people. 1) Appointment by emperor. When a person is famous for his talent and emperor can appoint him to be official in capital. 2) Recommendation. Officials can recommend people whom they know well or not to be officials. There is no limitation in laws and regulations about recommendation system, but the practice of it is seldomly recorded. 3) Promotion for minor officials. In feudal society, those minor officials were named Li who could do very trivial jobs in government with little power. With regulations or recommendation from important officials, they can be promoted to be normal officials. 4) Experts in certain occupation. The people who were specialized in an area, such as astronomy, history, laws, and medical, were cultivated by government or related organizations. They had little opportunity to do other jobs once they had decided to be an expert in above mentioned job (Lü. 2016). Besides those ways, in some historical books, it was recorded that rich people could buy official positions, which is not real. It is illegal to donate money to government for a formal

official position, but being a minor official is possible. There was business about selling and purchasing officials recording in history, but they were corruption and forbidden by emperor. These are all ways to become officials and the purpose of them is to find talented people to meet emperor's need to govern country better. Until the appearance and popularity of imperial civil examination, the procedures of selection of talented people became more mature and standard. The main purpose of ICES is to select elites in political activities rather than specialist in a certain domain, so the experts in many other occupations were trained especially. And it gradually leads to the cultural phenomenon that being officials is the greatest success than any other achievement.

### **3. The imperial civil examination system**

The imperial civil exam system (ICES) is also known as the civil service examination system, it is a system deployed by imperial government selecting and recruiting civil officials based on merit and knowledge rather than family or political connections. It has played a very important role in Chinese social and intellectual life and it has been the guarantee for the sound development from the Sui and Tang dynasties to the Ming and Qing dynasties for more than 1000 years. The examination is very rigorous and the contents are about Chinese classical literature and philosophy (Elman. 2009).

The earliest story of ICES dated back to the Han dynasty (206 B.C.–A.D. 220) and it was abolished by the Qing dowager empress Tz'uHsi in 1905 under pressure from leading Chinese intellectuals. Because success in the examination system was the basis of social status and because education was the key to success in the system, education was highly regarded along Chinese history (Elman. 2000). If a person passed the provincial examination, his entire family was raised in status to that of scholar gentry, thereby receiving prestige and privilege. In the Tang dynasty (618–906) the examination system was reorganized and more efficiently administered. Because some scholars criticized the too much emphasis on memorization without practical application and the narrow scope of the examinations, the system underwent further change in the Sung dynasty (960–1279). Wang An-shih reformed the examination, stressing the understanding of underlying ideas and the ability to apply classical insights to contemporary situations. In the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) the commentaries of the Sung Neo-Confucian philosopher Chu His were adopted as the orthodox interpretation of the classics. Although only a small percentage of students could achieve office, students spent 20 to 30 years even whole life on memorizing the orthodox commentaries in preparation for a series of complicated examinations. By the 19th century, as this system stressed too much the knowledge of the Confucian classics, it yielded a rigid and stultifying institution stopping China developing

to a modern and scientific society. After it was abolished, mass education along with a western type curriculum was promoted (Elman. 2000).

The most impressive component of the ICES is the Stereotype Writing, also known as an “Eight - Legged Essay” based on Chinese Baguwen, which adheres to rigorous structure and exactitude. In the exam, candidates have to explain ideas from the Confucian classics, and used those ideas to solve problems in government (Szczepanski, 2018).

The connection between imperial exam and Confucianism was very strong and lasting for several centuries. Since 134 B.C in Han Dynasty, Confucianism has been taken as the standard for selecting elites. It is the beginning of ICES. With development along following dynasties, the contents of ICES have been strictly limited in Confucian thoughts and knowledge from Four Books and Five Classics relating to governmental ideas. The Four Books are *the Great Learning*, *the Doctrine of the Mean*, *the Analects of Confucius* and *Mencius*, and the Five Classics are *the Book of Songs*, *the Book of History*, *the Book of Changes*, *the Book of Rites* and *the Spring and Autumn Annuals* (Wang. 2019). ICES achieved the mature mode in Ming Dynasty, which is operated by government unified. In this period, the exam standard is strictest and the Stereotype Writing became the only official writing structure and influenced a lot on exam in Qing Dynasty even present education. 八 (ba) in Chinese means eight, and Baguwen means eight parts in one essay which are strictly designed what candidates can write, including opening, amplification, preliminary exposition, initial argument, central argument, latter argument, final argument, and conclusion(Elman. 2009). Each part has its own function and structure, and innovation is not allowed in eight-legged essay writing.

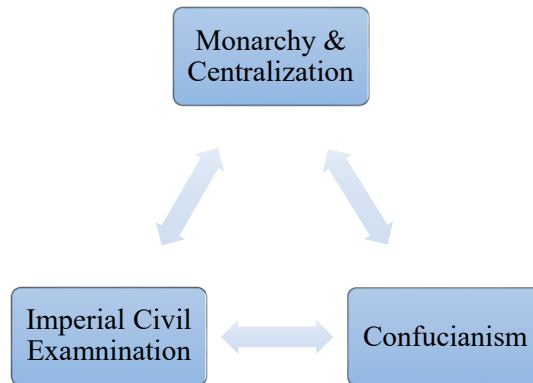
The influence from Stereotype Writing is that the Confucian classical books became the unique textual standard for ICES and reversely ICES is the form of official selecting focusing on knowledge and application of Confucian ideas. The virtue of Stereotype Writing includes that for the purpose of administering a large group of exam-takers, this structure allowed convenient regulation as the exam-takers were not likely to deviate from the requirements. Thus, this format contributed to ensuring standard and fairness in examination. The examiners could reduce the amount of time spent in grading exams by being accustomed to this format, and uncertainties in the grading schemes were reduced (Chen.1961). When it comes to its shortcoming, the system did not allow for any personal opinion and was completely impartial controlled and it led to the gradual narrowing of people’s innovative thinking and consequently their minds, thus achieving a constraining effect on Chinese people and the nation as the result, for a long-term the exam-oriented mechanism is dominate (Elman. 2013). For Chinese contemporary education, textual learning is more important than speaking and practice of knowledge. Writing good articles in governance with typical thoughts from classical books and beautiful language is more important.

When Qing Dynasty went to the end in 1911, autocracy from Qing government lost the control of feudalism ideology as the culture centralized tool, at the same time, Confucianism was no longer the stated ideology which has existed over one thousand years. Although the ICES is gone, the influence from it is still in contemporary education and examinations. The exam contents have become more various and scientific, and the academic fields are more comprehensive. This is a tendency of education development with the influence from economy and culture. The weakness of Confucian classical theory that is focusing on cultivating gentlemen exclusively in spirit rather than practice is the paradox against the mainstream education ideology that learning scientific knowledge and practice knowledge. The ICES is not applied anymore, while the Chinese exams in different subjects still have influence from ICES, such as the strict question forms, importance of scores, very serious attitude to exams, and the functions of exams. Some of them are appreciated while some of them are against to the correct education.

### ***3.1. the relationship between Confucianism and imperial civil examination system***

The development of ICES is based on Confucianism and reversely it promotes the prevalence of Confucianism. It is very difficult for a county to have a stably political and geographical unification, and Chinese civilization has existed for over 5000 years with help of ICES and Confucianism. The state unification was realized by means of the system of civil servants that refers to the regulations and organism of the civil service, which arrange, distribute, regulate, maintain and exercise the powers and the rights of the national administration and reduce bureaucracy. The faith of this most important class of politics and social activities was Confucius thoughts and it was the common belief among scholars because of imperial civil exam. Confucius thoughts were the spiritual power that consociates whole country. ICES consist of centralization from emperor, power from Confucius school students and classical ideas from Confucianism. First, emperor used ICES to select talented people in national administration with strong knowledge of Confucianism. Second, people can become officials only by means of imperial civil exam. Third, the content of imperial exam is all from Confucian classical books including The Four Books and The Five Classics. Exam candidates must learn them very well and possess good abilities in writing and expression, as well as resilience. So, centralization, Confucian scholars and thoughts, and imperial civil examination are in a symposia relationship who share mutual benefits and promote each other. Taking Confucian classics as key contents in exam, ICES made Confucianism the outstanding status in Chinese history and academy, and made scholars

understand Confucianism more profoundly in aspect of education, culture and sociology. The officials who have good knowledge and ethics of Confucianism made it the most prevailing and prosperous thought. Besides, emperor obtained expected talented people to help him in national administration with Confucian ideas including benevolence and righteousness.



The relationship between Monarchy & Centralization, ICES and Confucianism  
Source: author's research

Culture is embodied with numerous ways from literature to songs, from food to custom, from language to ideology. The most obvious way of culture carrier is book, which is also known as textual culture. ICES has a significant effect in carrying and passing Chinese textual culture. The prosperity of Confucianism and poetry in Dany Dynasty give evidence for the importance of ICES. Taking ICES as medium, Confucianism became the only state worshiped ideology since Han Dynasty, and the classical poetry achieved the top. The prosperity of textual culture with assistance of ICES yields the good situation that most scholars and official are good at reading and writing than thinking and speaking, which is the ideal way for emperor's governance, but it is not beneficial for a long-term development in culture.

#### 4. Impact from ICES

Culture is the products of human being activities in social practice after long history, including material culture, system culture and spiritual culture. System culture is the rules and regulations that maintain social activities

normally and the normal relationship between individuals, organizations and government. System culture is a part of culture as well as human being society, and the development of society is changing system culture at the same time. It is used to satisfy the need from different areas including political system, economy systems education system and examination system (Liu. 2018). In Chinese history, ICES is the system which has longest history, most complemented function, and most stable development. It has controlled profoundly and lastingly over other political, economic and educational system for a long time.

#### ***4.1. The impact from ICES to Chinese political system***

With purpose of selecting political elites, ICES has a strong relationship with feudal governance. There are three main characteristics of Chinese feudal governance: monarchy, centralization, and bureaucracy (Liu. 2018). And ICES is the main reason resulting in and method maintaining these features.

ICES began to be deployed since Sui dynasty and changed the situation that royal and noble families monopolized political system. Gradually it became the powerful tool of centralization. Emperor has the absolute control over the standard and implementation of it. From local exams to higher level exams, ICES is carried out from foundational level to gradual higher level. All these procedures are decided and controlled by emperor with purpose of selecting talented officials.

ICES meets the request from centralization by emperor, also it is the foundation of monarchy. It is always the utmost mission for emperor that how to manage officials effectively. A reason for the stable development of ICES is that it can meet the request that all the outstanding persons in governance and Confucian thoughts can be selected effectively and to make contribution for government. As the popularity of ICES, talented people only can become officials to realize their dreams by means of taking imperial exams, which means they have to be managed by emperor. There is an important thought in ancient China, that is being official is the exclusive goal for every single good learner. With this popular idea, bureaucracy and classical academy are bonded strongly, imperial exam improves officials' knowledge in Confucian school and protects feudal governance, and at the same time it is a determinant part of bureaucracy system.

Another influence from ICES to Chinese political system comes from the abolition of ICES at the end of Qing dynasty, in 1911. At that time, official selecting system was chaotic as governors cannot utilized the traditional selecting ways either new standards with openness, justice and fairness. The government payed for the abolition of ICES with time and elites.



#### ***4.2. The impact from ICES to Chinese economic system***

With the popular values that being official is the main goal for good learners in feudal society, ICES hindered the development of commodity economy and brought negative influence to economy (Liu. 2018).

Firstly, ICES valued the importance of Confucius thoughts and depreciated the value of business. In feudal society, nature economy was the main economic form, which was consist of agricultural activities mainly. It was against to the professional classification of various industries and services as well as the code and conduct. The management of nature economy was embodied by tax and application of tax. Before Qing dynasty (1636-1912), there was no budget, or government didn't know the importance of budget. The lacking of elites in economics management and the officials only knowing the upright and benevolence, resulted in the situation that slow increasing of handcraft industry and business, and hard development of commodity economy.

Secondly, ICES produced and strengthened stable bureaucracy class which impedes capitalism economy. We have known that ICES took Confucianism as the only exam contents, and business was despised by Confucian school as merchandises were believed the incarnation of treacherousness and unrighteousness. In Confucians ideology, gentlemen should not care about materials rather think highly of morals and spirits. The sequence of professions according to their values, from high to low was officials, peasants, artisans and businessmen. So, businessmen were despised by officials and scholars. What's more, businessmen were difficult to have business activities without help from government. In this situation, learning hard to win a good position with ICES was the best and most choice for people. When a merchant had enough money, he would choose to donate money for a minor official position or become a student from very beginning in order to change his identity from merchant to scholar. In this way, Chinese feudalism controlled over nature economy, and feudal landlord economy system was born and kept firmly, which is unbeneficial for the further improvement of capitalism economy.

#### ***4.3. The impact from ICES to Chinese education system***

ICES and education system were symbiosis relationship. Education system was cultivating and supplying candidates for examination and ICES was used to select elites from candidates. The purpose of education was preparing candidates for examination (Wang. 2002). So, ICES guided, managed even controlled the direction of education in purpose, contents, methods.

Firstly, ICES influenced the contents and practice of education. Since Tang dynasty, ICES began to develop effectively and produced more influence

to society as well as education. From central government to local schools, there were relatively mature academy systems, and the academical administration was improved correspondingly. The contents and methods of ICES directly influence the contents and methods of education. In Tang dynasty, candidates had to study current affairs and *Zhaoming Wenxuan* which is a literature work including more than 700 poetries and articles in different literary forms, because these were requested by ICES in Tang. Besides, teaching evaluation was related to ICES. The examination was held every year with different levels, such as Xiucai, Mingjing, and Jinshi, which were similar to bachelor degree, master degree and doctoral degree. The Jinshi degree was the most difficult to attain. In Tang dynasty, every year hundreds of candidates took the Jinshi exam but only one or two can pass. And only passing Jinshi exam means success of the years of hard study. Those who passed Jinshi exam would attend a lavished banquet and their names would be announced in the Ci'en Temple (Ho. 1962). And the evaluation for teachers was also pertinent to the population of passing Jinshi exam.

Secondly, ICES was closely related to formal official academic system as well as the informal academic organizations named Shuyuan. Shuyuan education system was formed in Tang dynasty and completed in Song dynasty, and the contents was mainly about philosophy from Zhu Xi, a philosopher in Ming dynasty. Shuyuan was the supplement for official education, but Shuyuan and official academic system were competitors. There were two kinds of people who took imperial civil examination. The students chosen by Shuyuan were called Shengtū; the others passed the examination held by prefectures and counties were called Xiangsheng. When official academy was more popular than Shuyuan, then Shuyuan developed slowly. When there were war and people were more focused on war, Shuyuan has the responsibility to cultivate students for ICES and government, as well as the development of academy. The contents in Shuyuan may influence ICES. Since the appearance of ICES, education was all the time working for it and giving influence to it correspondently.

After China was forced to open for foreign countries in Opium war in 1840s, sociology and science were introduced to Chinese students in new form schools. However, the influence from ICES to Chinese education has been over one thousand years, the development of new style schools was impeded with strong traditional thoughts. During the conflict between ICES and western scientific and new education, ICES finally went to the end. The influence from ICES didn't disappear together with abolishment of ICES, in contemporary education, passing examinations in various areas and levels are always the purpose of education, and the results of exams are so important that can even decide the future of students, evaluation of teachers and the family future.

Actually, the measurements deployed by ICES are worthy of learning for contemporary education, especially in foreign language teaching.

In ICES, the questions of exam were designed and classified in advance, only emperor and a few officials could access the questions. And the officials who designed questions were isolated in a quiet place. Before imperial exam, every candidate should take a number from government blindly, and the number represented the student in the following exams. The point is to avoid students' names influencing the judges. After exams, several officials were appointed by emperor to judge papers. Each paper has to be judged by more than two officials. During the process, the names of students were replaced by numbers. According to the different education in different counties and areas, the standard of enrollment was different. This is similar to Gaokao, which is known as the university enrollment examination. All these measurements in ICES has an impact on the contemporary education and examination. Compared to other ways of selecting elites, examination is more justice because it only focuses on students' knowledge and thoughts on paper rather than relationship and family background. It can stimulate all student to study hard and comprehensively including Chinese traditional culture, mathematics, foreign language, science, computer knowledge and so on, which is beneficial to the improvement of whole society.

#### ***4.4. The impact from ICES to the public service system***

The most important features of ICES are openness and impartiality (Zhou, 2009).

Openness of ICES means that all the people could take the exam in spite of their career, family, hometown and other limitations. There was no limitation in admission quota. This feature of ICES broke the monopoly in public service system from blood relation and brought fairness for people without relationship with officials. Many famous and talented officials in Tang and Song dynasty realized their dream of being an official and worked for country by means of ICES. In order to have a good result in exam, many students chose to study day and night. When they felt sleepy or tired, they would wash face with cold water in winter, and would not eat fully avoiding sleepy feeling. In feudal society, human relationship was more important than talents and ability in public service system, ICES gave opportunities for more elites to become officials to promote the society.

Impartiality was reflected on the science and justice of ICES procedures. With the principle that all procedures of exam and reviewing following rules strictly, ICES had comprehensive rules to avoid cheating. The goal of the strict rules was to promise imparity to the greatest extent. The operation of ICES stimulated more talented people from poor families to study hard for honor, and it gradually formed the learning atmosphere in whole state. Compared to recommendation system, it helped more than 900 talented people from peasant family realized the goal of being an official and had a better life.

The selected officials passed imperial civil examination have accumulated enough knowledge of Confucian classics and consisted the intellectual class and the government responsible to the prosperity of China. ICES guaranteed the quality and ability of officials in Confucian thoughts and avoided the disadvantages from previous official selections, such as prejudice, corruption and monopoly. It was more advanced than hereditary as the new power from new class prevented the monopoly and promoted society to advance. It is believed that ICES was the oldest and best system in elite selection and made great contribution to Chinese nation even all human being. It was very important not only in cultivating many talented officials, and statemen who were good at governing a country, but also in making China's civilian politics increasingly mature, which had spawned many famous and outstanding thinkers, artists, writers, poets, scholars, educators and scientist who made contribution to Chinese civilization. Civilian politics was closely connected to power, prosperity, status and education, which formed the traditional Chinese education value that stressing education and studying hard extremely. Education background and degree became more important for career and future, which is the influence from IECS.

## **5. The difference between Chinese and Romanian examination**

In this part, the attitude to examination, functions of examination, score mechanism of examination and the questions design would be compared between Chinese exam culture and Romanian exam culture, and the influence from imperial civil exam to the difference would be discussed.

### ***5.1. The attitude to examination***

Influenced by ICES since Sui and Tang dynasty, Chinese students treat examination very seriously no matter in what age or degree. It is believed that the result of exam can imply everything, such as the study time, study method, and exam skills. The most important exam for Chinese students and their family is Gaokao. The Gaokao is officially known as the National Higher Education Entrance Examination. The Chinese characters for Gaokao literally mean "high exam." Chinese people treat Gaokao as the most important thing for a person's life which is equal to marriage and career. Some people even believe that it is the only way to change life and embrace the promising future. In the classroom of students who will take Gaokao soon, there is a countdown board reminding students how much time left. Students spend every minute on studying and parents even other family members do other housework. Parents go to temples or churches to pray for high marks for their children. Examination attracts all attention of students and guides and controls young people's life to some degree.

Compared to the attitude Chinese people take for exam, Romanian students treat it more relaxed. Romanian students prepare for exam seriously while they don't take exam as the only way deciding their future life neither a way to prove their talent in certain aspect. There are many other ways to show ability, and exam is the most efficient and intuitive method. Without the long history of examination in Romania, the schedule of examinations shows democracy and humanization. In China, the date for a certain exam is fixed and only once. In Romania, the date for exam can be 2 times and some exams date can be decided by professor. Romanian parents would not deny the attitude and hardworking from student even if they didn't get good result.

### ***5.2. The function of examination***

As the main function and goal of ICES were to select the people talented in political administration according to emperor's request, the purpose was determined by emperor and was very limited. Students gradually form the thought that only to meet the request of emperor can succeed in imperial civil examination. The purpose of emperor has been achieved but the candidates sacrificed their whole life for the feudal society. When we look at the contemporary education in China, we can find that students only meet the objective standard can be regarded as the talented and hardworking people.

The function of exam in Romania is to check if students understand the knowledge taught by professor, which is a kind of tool to exam the degree of understanding and deployment of knowledge rather meeting someone's request. According to different subjects, exams are various, but if candidates can achieve the pass score then they pass it. However, as the big population in China, the pass rate is decided by the percentage of expected number.

### ***5.3. The score mechanism of exam***

In China, the full score of an exam usually is 100, some exams may have 150, 200 or 300. The more score means more importance the exam possesses. The pass score usually is 60 or 60% of full score. Some question is 5 scores, and some is 0.5. Students are taught every difference of 0.5 may change a student's future. Usually, scores, not people, define worth. Chinese parents and teachers consider scores to be the only evaluating criteria for the students (Zang & Kirkpatrick. 2011).

In Romania, the full score of paper usually is 10, and 5 is the pass score. In some exams, level A to D is used instead of score, which can avoid the embarrassment caused by score.

### 5.4. The design of papers

In Chinese exams, there are two parts of questions, subjective and objective questions. Although there are subjective questions, the answer should meet the request of question designer. And most questions are objective questions. In a paper, there should be several kinds of questions, such as multiple choice, true or false, match, reading, listening, writing. And the question repetition rate is strictly controlled. As the imperial civil examination is exclusively about the Confucian thoughts and the stereotype writing, contemporary examination tried best to make the questions diverse.

In this aspect, exam in Romania has less diverse forms of questions, and subjective questions account for a big percentage. Take the language exam as example. Chinese level exam, according to different level, it is divided into 6 levels, equal to 6 kinds of exams. Each exam represents a Chinese level. Every exam includes listening, reading and writing. Romanian level exam is not divided into several level exams but in the same paper. According to the score of the paper, students can have the level of their Romanian language.

#### Several Aspects of Examination Comparison Between Chinese and Romanian Exams

	In China	In Romania	Influence from ICES
<b>Attitude to exam</b>	Very seriously or extremely seriously	Seriously	Imperial civil exam was the only way people can use to become official and have higher social status and fame
<b>Purpose of exam</b>	To select talented students To divide different groups To evaluate teaching	To check if students really understand the knowledge	Imperial civil exam was the way used by emperor to select elites in Confucius classics and national administration
<b>Score mechanism of exam</b>	Usually full score is 100 or more 60% of full score is the pass score	Full score is 10. The pass score is 5. Levels from A to D are used.	The limited information in Confucianism has to be deployed to produce non-repeating question in every exam. Every detail count for the result of exam and the future of candidate.
<b>The design of exam paper</b>	A large number of complicate questions. More objective questions than subjective questions	Normal questions Subjective and objective questions are in a balance. Reasonable individual ideas are important	Because of the limited Four Books and The Five Classics, the questions have to be designed very detailed. To check if Confucius students understand Confucius thoughts and ideas rather their owns.

Source: author's research

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper, we have the idea about the imperial civil examination system that was the method used to choose talented men for official positions according to emperor in order to stabilize autocratic monarchy and centralization. The ICES was the advanced mechanism replaced hereditary system helping more talented people from normal family become officials to promote the development of society. Although at the end ICES became a rigid and stultifying institution with only focus on knowledge of the Confucian classics exclusively, and it hindered China from adopting modern scientific methods, it cannot be denied that it was an excellent system for selecting civilians and its good influence in political system, public service system, economy system and most importantly the contemporary education. In ancient time, ICES was in a symbiosis relationship with autocratic monarchy and Confucian school, and they were beneficial to each other and influencing each other. First, ICES was the approach used by emperor to realize the centralization and collecting more talented people in public service, and reversely the prosperity of autocratic monarchy and centralization emphasized the statues of ICES which was the only way to realize the goal of being officials. Second, that scope of imperial civil exam was Confucian classics, the Four Books and Five Classics, which naturally enhanced the importance of Confucianism as the state ideology. Reversely, the thoughts in Confucian classics as the contents of exam, they made the quality and ability of candidates improved a lot and candidates believed the benevolence and upright. It was another reason of the successful development of the political system in feudal society. Third, since Han dynasty, Confucianism became the state ideology as the Confucian scholar Dong Zhongshu adapted Confucian theory to the needs of centralized politics and he advocated suppressing the other Schools of thoughts and making Confucianism the state ideology. Emperor was impressed by Dong's theories and filled his administration with Confucian scholars. Confucianism thereby gained a foothold as the dominant ideology in ancient feudal society. The positive thoughts in Confucianism, such as the political rule should be based on virtue not on force, by morality not by tyranny, influenced the governance to a better direction.

After having understanding of the influence from IECS to Chinese culture and contemporary education, there is a comparison of several aspects of examination between Chinese and Romanian. Obviously, there are advantages and disadvantages in both exam goal, main function, score mechanism, questions design. In perspective of the efficacy, validity, and fairness of today's examination system in China, both the national and provincial educational examination authorities have been actively engaged in experimenting with testing reforms

and technical innovations as well as learning about psychometrics from abroad (Wang, 2006). For international students in learning Chinese as foreign language, it is meaningful to understand the cultural history of imperial civil exam to contemporary exam mechanism, therefore to make the Chinese language and culture teaching activities more effective and efficient avoiding unnecessary misunderstanding. The advantages of exams with Chinese features, for example, the high request in fundamental education, improved the entire academic level of society.

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