

The Changing Role of Historical Knowledge in Southern Provincial Civil Examinations during the Ming and Ch'ing*

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This paper uses late Ming and early Ch'ing civil service examination papers in southern provincial examinations (*hsiang-shih* 鄉試) to describe the changing relationship between classical studies (*ching-hsueh* 經學) and historical studies (*shih-hsueh* 史學) in the seventeenth century. The rise of historical studies to almost parity with classical studies in the eighteenth century in *k'ao-cheng* 考證 intellectual circles can thus be assessed according to the changing nature of the civil examination curriculum. The primary examination sources contained in the No. 1 Historical Archives in Beijing and the Ming-Ch'ing Archives in Taiwan provide us with a unique source to assess educational change among elites in late imperial China.

Initially the paper presents statistical summaries of policy questions (*ts'e* 策) classified by topic during the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties in the Yangtze delta, followed by tables describing the Ming and Ch'ing dynasty frequency of specialization (*chuan-ching* 專經) on one of the Five Classics in South China provinces. This latter information allows us to estimate the number of candidates and graduates of provincial examinations who specialized on either of the two historical Classics, the *Documents Classic* 書經 or the *Spring and Autumn Annals* 春秋.

Secondly the paper traces the evolution of policy questions from the Han to the

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Ch'ing dynasties and compares them in importance to the eight-legged essays (*pa-ku-wen* 八股文) during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The role of policy questions on provincial, metropolitan (*hwei-shih* 會試), and palace examinations (*tien-shih* 殿試) is also noted. In addition, important collections of policy questions and answers during the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties are presented.

Finally the paper assesses the content of policy questions dealing with historical studies and historiographical issues in the 1516 Chekiang 浙江, the 1594 Fukien 福建, and the 1658 Kwangtung 廣東 provincial examinations. For comparative purposes, the 1685 metropolitan examination policy question on history is also evaluated to give a fuller account of the nature of change in historical studies on the civil examinations during the Ming-Ch'ing transition.

1. Historical Studies in Late Imperial China
2. The Role of Policy Questions in Civil Service Examinations
3. Questions and Answers Concerning History in 1516 Chekiang Policy Questions
4. Questions and Answers Concerning History in 1594 Fukien Policy Questions
5. Questions and Answers Concerning History in 1654 Kwangtung Policy Questions
6. Conclusion

1. Historical Studies in Late Imperial China

In the middle of the Ch'ing dynasty (1644-1911), the Chekiangese literatus Chang Hsueh-ch'eng 章學誠 (1738-1801) enunciated what was afterwards to become one of the most commented upon slogans in late imperial and modern Chinese intellectual circles: "The Six Classics are all Histories" (*liu-ching chieh shih yeh* 六經皆史也). Since the Han dynasties (206 B.C. – A.D. 220), the Classics had been referred to as the "sacred Classics" (*sheng-ching* 聖經), and along with the Four Books had become the basis for a Confucian education in schools and at home. For the civil service examination system, questions

from the Five Classics were required since the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), although during both the T'ang (618-906) and Sung (960-1279) dynasties quotations from the "Nine Classics" or "Thirteen Classics" had also been required. To become a public official, study of the Five Classics was obligatory.¹

In Chang Hsueh-ch'eng's time, however, the preeminent position of the Classics was increasingly challenged. In its place, eminent Confucian scholars from the Yangtze delta in South China such as Chang Hsueh-ch'eng, Ch'ien Ta-hsin 錢大昕 (1728-1804), Wang Ming-sheng 王鳴盛 (1722-1798), and Chao I 趙翼 (1727-1814) among others, attempted to put historical studies (*shih-hsueh* 史學) at the top of what counted for Confucian scholarship. Chang's famous slogan accordingly reflected the changing intellectual trajectories between classical studies (*ching-hsueh* 經學) and historical studies in the eighteenth century. During the late Ch'ing, historical studies gradually replaced classical studies as the dominant framework for scholarly research. In the early twentieth century, the eclipse of classical studies was complete. Ku Chieh-kang 顧頡剛 and others who participated in the *Ku-shih-pien* 古史辨 debates concerning ancient Chinese history in the 1920s made the Classics the object of historical study, not the premise for historical studies. (See Tu 1962: 13-48, 99-121; Elman (1984, 1990): 70-76)

In the eighteenth century, for example, although the perennial relationship between classical and historical studies remained an important consideration among orthodox Confucians, with the rise in status of historical studies almost to parity with classical studies, the demarcation between the universality of the Classics and the particularity of the Dynastic Histories was called into question. Such doubts even penetrated the imperial civil service examinations. The noted evidential research scholar Lu Wen-ch'ao 盧文弨 (1717-1796), while serving as a senior examination official at the 1767 Hunan provincial ex-

amination, prepared one of the five policy questions (*ts'e* 策) given on session three of the examination. He pointedly asked the candidates for the *chū-jen* 舉人 (“raised scholar”) degree to reconsider the relationship between the Classics and Histories:

The Histories have different uses from the Classics, but they derive from the same sources. The *Documents Classic* and *Spring and Autumn Annals* are the historical records of the sages, which have become Classics. Later ages honored the latter and divided [the Histories and Classics] into two genres. Can you grasp [how this happened] and then explain it? (Lu 1937: (4)327)

Ch'ien Ta-hsin went even further when he claimed that there was no difference between the Classics and Dynastic Histories. This artificial division of genres, Ch'ien contended, had not existed in the classical era. Rather, the demarcation of genres had been first used in the *ssu-pu* 四部 (“four divisions”) system of classification after the fall of the Later Han dynasty (A.D. 25-220), when the Classics for the first time were demarcated from History, Philosophy, and Literature. On these grounds, Ch'ien rejected the priority given the Classics over History and concluded that both were essential historical sources for retrieving from antiquity the wisdom of the sages. Placed in its own proper historical context, then, Chang Hsueh-ch'eng's often cited claim that “the Six Classics are all Histories” reflected the growing historicization of Confucian learning in the eighteenth century. Chang was unprecedented, however, in placing the Classics unequivocally under the purview of historical studies. (Ch'ien 1937: “Hsu” 序1)

The changing role of historical knowledge vis-à-vis classical studies is for the most part confirmed when we examine the nature of the policy questions and answers found in the civil service examinations during the Ming and Ch'ing

dynasties.² We are fortunate, for example, in having complete records that allow us to reconstruct the range of policy questions prepared by examiners in Ying-t'ien 應天 prefecture³ during the Ming dynasty and in Chekiang province during the Ch'ing dynasty. For the Ying-t'ien provincial examinations, we have complete records covering questions for 47 *hsiang-shih* 鄉試 over the 126 years from 1474 to 1600. On the Chekiang provincial examinations we have complete lists of policy questions for 92 examinations covering 213 years from 1646 to 1859. The range of policy questions during the Ming and Ch'ing in these two southern regions is summarized in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Ming Dynasty Policy Questions Classified by Topic:
Ying-t'ien Prefecture, 1474-1600, 230 questions, top 15 ranks only.

| | | |
|----|---------------------------|------|
| 1 | Learning/Selection 學 / 取士 | 9.6% |
| 2 | <i>Tao-hsueh</i> 道學 | 8.3 |
| 3 | Ming rulers 太祖 · 太宗 / 成祖 | 7.4 |
| 4 | World-ordering 治國 | 7.0 |
| 5 | Economy/Statecraft 經濟之學 | 5.7 |
| 6 | Ruler-official 王臣 | 5.2 |
| 7 | National defense 國防 | 4.3 |
| 7 | Classical studies 經學 | 4.3 |
| 9 | Law 法 | 3.5 |
| 9 | Military matters 兵事 | 3.5 |
| 11 | Literature/Poetry 文 / 詩 | 3.0 |
| 11 | Astronomy/Nature 天文 / 自然 | 3.0 |
| 13 | History 史學 | 2.6 |
| 13 | Agriculture 農 | 2.6 |
| 13 | Customs/Values 俗 / 化民 | 2.6 |

Source: *Nan-kuo hsien-shu* 南國賢書 (Record of civil examination success in the Southern Capital Region). Compiled by Chang Ch'ao-jui 張朝瑞. Ca. 1600 edition.

Table 2. Ch'ing Dynasty Policy Questions Classified By Topic:

Chekiang Province, 1646-1859, 460 questions, top 15 ranks only.

| | | |
|----|-------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Classical studies 經學 | 14.1% |
| 2 | Learning/Selection 學/取士 | 10.7 |
| 3 | Economy/Statecraft 經濟之學 | 9.6 |
| 4 | World-ordering 治國 | 7.8 |
| 5 | History 史學 | 7.4 |
| 6 | <i>Tao-hsueh</i> 道學 | 6.1 |
| 7 | Literature/Poetry 文/詩 | 5.1 |
| 7 | Local governance 吏治 | 5.1 |
| 9 | Philology 小學 | 4.2 |
| 10 | National defense 國防 | 3.8 |
| 11 | Law 法 | 3.1 |
| 11 | Literati training 士習 | 3.1 |
| 13 | Agriculture 農 | 2.7 |
| 13 | Military matters 兵事 | 2.7 |
| 13 | People's livelihood 民生 | 2.2 |

Source: *Pen-ch'ao Che-wei san-ch'ang ch'üan-t'i pei-k'ao* 本朝浙
 閩三場全題備考 (Complete listing of all questions from the three
 sessions of the Chekiang provincial civil examinations during the
 Ch'ing dynasty). Compiled ca. 1860.

While these results can be read in many different ways, they reveal that questions on history in the third session of the examinations had moved from 13th in rank in Ying-t'ien during the Ming dynasty to 5th in Chekiang during the Ch'ing. Moreover, 73% of the history questions on the Chekiang examinations were prepared from 1777 on, thus coinciding with our earlier discussion of the late eighteenth century rise in popularity of historical studies among scholars in South China. In other words, of the 33 policy questions devoted to history in the Chekiang examinations for which we have records during the Ch'ing dynasty, only 9 were asked between 1646 and 1777; 24 were asked between 1777 and 1859, when the records stop because of the Taiping Rebellion

and its impact. Indeed, history questions rank a close second in frequency, after classical studies, for the period 1777-1859.

What is also clear from the two tables, however, is that policy questions on classical studies also increased in frequency from the Ming to the Ch'ing, ranking 7th overall in Ming Ying-t'ien and 1st in Ch'ing Chekiang. Slipping noticeably in frequency of occurrence from the Ming to Ch'ing were questions concerning "Tao Learning" (*Tao-hsueh* 道學), or what we usually refer to as "Neo-Confucianism"), which moved from 2nd to 6th. By the eighteenth century, both classical and historical studies had eclipsed Neo-Confucianism as topics for policy questions, a finding that should not surprise us when we take into account the popularity of Han Learning and *k'ao-cheng* 考證 ("evidential research") during the Ch'ien-lung (1736-1795) and Chia-ch'ing (1796-1820) reigns. (Elman 1983: 67-89)

Overall, questions on learning, statecraft, and world-ordering remained among the top five policy questions in terms of frequency during both the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties. But by Chang Hsueh-ch'eng's time, we can clearly see that classical and historical studies were almost equal in parity, when measured in terms of the changing frequencies of policy questions during the Ming and Ch'ing. And with hindsight we know that history was destined to surpass classicism as the dominant scholarly discourse in modern China.

We should qualify our findings somewhat, however, due to the fact that: (1) we have complete evidence from only two adjacent provinces in the Yangtze delta of South China; (2) we are only counting the questions given on the third and last session of the provincial examinations. To the first qualification, we can add that even if Kiangsu and Chekiang provinces may not be representative of all other provinces they are likely representative of other provinces in South China, such as Fukien and Kwangtung, where the frequency of elite

families possessing the financial wealth and cultural resources required to prepare students for the state examinations far exceeded provinces in North China and elsewhere.

Concerning the second qualification, we need to be more careful. Throughout the Ming and Ch'ing, policy questions were considered less important than the essays on the Four Books and one of the Five Classics (until 1787) required for session one of the provincial and metropolitan (*hui-shih* 會試) civil examinations. To prepare answers on quotations from the Four Books and Five Classics selected by the examiners, candidates were required to: (1) follow the strict format known as the "8-legged essay"; (Tu 1975: 393-406) and (2) "take the place of the sages and worthies" (*tai sheng-hsien li-yen* 代聖賢立言) in "enunciating moral truths". During the Ming such essays were usually 500 characters in length, increasing to 700 and then 800 in the Ch'ing. Examiners also expected students to include in their essays relevant insights from Sung dynasty "Tao Learning" masters such as Ch'eng I 程頤 (1033-1107) and Chu Hsi 朱熹 (1130-1200). (Elman 1991: 65-88)

Consequently, even as the nature of the policy questions on session three changed, Neo-Confucianism remained the unchanged core curriculum of the first session. Neither classical studies, except for the Classic that each student chose as his specialty (*chuan-ching* 專經), nor history—at first-sight—mattered very much on session one. Moreover, as both examiners and students knew very well, questions on the first session were the key to the final ranking of graduates. Given the extremely high number of examination essays that examiners were expected to read in roughly 20 days, it was no accident that papers from both sessions two and three were usually used by examiners to confirm the rankings from the first session. Even as policy questions on "Tao Learning" were diminishing in frequency from the Ming to Ch'ing, the

teachings of the Sung Neo-Confucians remained intact in all 8-legged essays on session 1.

Complicating our analysis even further is the fact that until 1787, the Four Books took priority over the Five Classics in the examination curriculum. This was because students from 1384 until 1787 only had to master one of the Five Classics. In fact, Ku Yen-wu 顧炎武 (1613-1682), among others, was chagrined to point out that classical studies during the Ming dynasty had declined to the point that students no longer bothered to read the Classics themselves. They merely picked out phrases and sentence patterns that they needed from compendiums of the latest 8-legged essays published by booksellers throughout South China. Moreover, Ku complained that historical studies had declined during the Sung and Ming dynasties because of excessive concern on examinations for literary talent. He urged restoration of T'ang-dynasty-style examination essays devoted solely to history. (Ku 1962: 16.385-86; 16.391-92) Those who were more conscientious usually mastered only one of the Five Classics, leaving the other four largely unexamined.

Which of the Five Classics were students most likely to select as their specialty? This question is important for historical studies, because, of the Five Classics, two were essentially historical in format and content: the *Documents Classic* and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. If students were choosing to specialize on either the *Documents* or the *Annals* in large numbers, then we could argue that history was an important part of the first session of the civil examinations, even while the frequency of policy questions focusing on history was increasing from the Ming to the Ch'ing. Again, we are fortunate to have sources from South China that permit us to answer this question. Tables 3 and 4 present information for Ying-t'ien prefecture and Fukien province during the Ming dynasty. Table 5 presents the pattern of specialization on one of the

Five Classics for Kiangnan during the Ch'ing dynasty, while, for comparative purposes, Table 6 gives figures for Shun-t'ien prefecture, the Northern Capital Region, during the Ch'ing.

Table 3. Ming Dynasty Frequency of Specialization (%) on one of the Five Classics in Ying-t'ien Prefecture, 1474-1630.

| CLASSIC | YEAR | | | | | | |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | 1474 | 1501 | 1525 | 1549 | 1576 | 1600 | 1630 |
| Change | 17.8 | 20.7 | 29.6 | 30.3 | 32.6 | 33.6 | 33.3 |
| Documents | 25.9 | 24.4 | 20.7 | 18.5 | 20.7 | 21.4 | 22.0 |
| Poetry | 39.3 | 43.7 | 40.0 | 37.8 | 34.8 | 32.1 | 31.3 |
| Annals | 9.6 | 5.2 | 5.2 | 7.4 | 5.9 | 6.4 | 6.7 |
| Rites | 7.4 | 5.2 | 4.4 | 5.9 | 5.9 | 6.4 | 6.0 |

Note: From 1474 until 1588 the quota for *chū-jen* in Ying-t'ien was 135 graduates. In 1600 the quota increased to 140; in 1630 there were 150 graduates.

Source: *Nan-kuo hsien-shu* 南國賢書 (Record of civil examination success in the Southern Capital Region). Compiled by Chang Ch'ao-jui 張朝瑞. Ca. 1600 edition; *Ying-t'ien-fu hsiang-shih lu* 應天府鄉試錄 (Record of the provincial civil examination administered in Ying-t'ien prefecture), 1630 edition.

Table 4. Ming Dynasty Frequency of Specialization (%) on one of the Five Classics in Fukien Province, 1399-1636.

| CLASSIC | YEAR | | | | | | |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | 1399 | 1453 | 1501 | 1549 | 1600 | 1624 | 1636 |
| Change | 17.5 | 16.8 | 33.3 | 36.7 | 33.3 | 32.6 | 32.6 |
| Documents | 36.8 | 25.6 | 16.7 | 20.0 | 18.9 | 20.0 | 22.0 |
| Poetry | 29.8 | 31.4 | 33.3 | 28.9 | 34.4 | 33.7 | 33.7 |
| Annals | 12.3 | 11.7 | 6.7 | 7.8 | 6.7 | 6.3 | 6.3 |
| Rites | 3.5 | 14.6 | 8.9 | 6.7 | 6.7 | 7.4 | 7.4 |

Note: From 1399 to 1453 the quota for *chū-jen* in Fukien ranged between 46 and 128 graduates. In 1465 the quota was set at 90, which lasted until 1624 when the quota increased to 95.

Source: *Min-sheng hsien-shu* 閩省賢書 (Book about civil provincial examination worthies in Fu-chien). Compiled by Shao Chieh-ch'un 邵捷春. Printed Ca. 1636.

Table 5. Ch'ing Dynasty Frequency of Specialization (%) on one of the Five Classics in Kiangnan, 1678-1747.

| CLASSIC | YEAR | | | | | | |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | 1678 | 1684 | 1720 | 1738 | 1741 | 1744 | 1747 |
| Change | 31.5 | 31.5 | 35.2 | 31.7 | 29.4 | 30.9 | 31.6 |
| Documents | 23.3 | 23.3 | 17.0 | 23.0 | 22.2 | 19.0 | 18.4 |
| Poetry | 31.5 | 31.5 | 30.7 | 29.4 | 30.2 | 31.8 | 34.2 |
| Annals | 6.8 | 6.8 | 11.4 | 5.6 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 7.0 |
| Rites | 6.8 | 6.8 | 5.7 | 5.6 | 7.1 | 7.1 | 4.4 |
| 5 Classics | — | — | — | 4.8 | 4.8 | 4.8 | 4.4 |

Note: In 1678 and 1684 the quota for *chü-jen* in Kiangnan was set at 73 graduates. In the 1720 provincial examination the quota was 99, but the names of 11 of those graduates are missing. From 1738 to 1747, the quota was set at 126, although in 1744 the quota dipped to 114. During the Ch'ien-lung reign, in addition to one of the Five Classics, students were also allowed to answer questions for all of the Classics, thereby obviating the requirements to answer questions from other parts of the examination.

Source: *Chiang-nan hsiang-shih lu* 江南鄉試錄 (Record of the Kiangnan provincial civil examinations), 1678, 1684, 1720, 1738, 1741, 1744, 1747. Kiangnan provincial examinations included candidates from Kiangsu and Anhwei provinces.

Table 6. Ch'ing Dynasty Frequency of Specialization (%) on one of the Five Classics in Shun-t'ien Prefecture, 1654-1759.

| CLASSIC | YEAR | | | | | | |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| | 1654 | 1657 | 1660 | 1729 | 1735 | 1756 | 1759 |
| Change | 28.3 | 29.6 | 29.5 | 29.7 | 31.4 | 29.6 | 27.9 |
| Documents | 20.3 | 20.4 | 20.9 | 22.3 | 20.8 | 22.9 | 19.7 |
| Poetry | 38.0 | 35.4 | 34.3 | 31.4 | 26.1 | 30.4 | 33.2 |
| Annals | 7.3 | 8.3 | 7.6 | 11.4 | 8.9 | 11.9 | 13.9 |
| Rites | 6.2 | 6.3 | 7.6 | 4.9 | 8.2 | 5.1 | 4.8 |
| 5 Classics | - | - | - | 0.4 | 8.2 | - | - |

Note: In 1654 the quota for *chü-jen* in Shun-t'ien was set at 276 graduates.

In the 1657 and 1660 provincial examinations the quota was reduced first to 206 and then 105 graduates. From 1729 to 1759, the quota ranged between 229 and 253 names.

Source: *Shun-t'ien-fu hsiang-shih lu* 順天府鄉試錄 (Record of the provincial civil examinations administered in Shun-t'ien prefecture), 1654, 1657, 1660, 1729, 1735, 1756, 1759. Shun-t'ien prefecture handled the provincial examinations for the Northern Metropolitan Region.

In general, the findings for both the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties are analogous. Most students, usually around 60-65%, chose to specialize on either the *Change Classic* or the *Poetry Classic*. Only around 20% chose the *Documents Classic*, and only 6-10% usually selected the *Spring and Autumn Annals* for their specialization. Consequently, about one-quarter of the provincial examination graduates chose a Classic dealing with history for their specialization. Certainly, this number is not minimal, but it lags behind the number who chose the metaphysics/cosmology of the *Change Classic* or the literature of the *Poetry Classic* for their specialization.⁴

We need to be careful at this point because the figures cited above only take into account the small percentage of graduates who became *chū-jen*. Normally scholars have isolated those who were graduates from the larger pool of examination candidates. We are thereby usually left with a skewed population of “survivors” in the examination system. This unfortunately presents us with a false perspective on the overall function of education in the selection process. To understand the full range of influence historical studies had on the civil examinations, it would be more useful to stress the role of examinations in creating a broad class of classically literate and historically knowledgeable males that encompassed all who competed in the selection process, including the failures. We need then to take into account the number of candidates who took the provincial examinations in South China, as well as those who were fortunate to pass. Tables 7 and 8 present this information for Ming Ying-t’ien and Ch’ing Kiangnan. (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977: 141-167)

Table 7. Ming Dynasty Ratio of Graduates to Candidates in Ying-t'ien Prefecture Examinations.

| YEAR | CANDIDATES | GRADUATES | PCT. |
|------|------------|-----------|------|
| 1474 | 2300 | 135 | 5.9% |
| 1477 | 2500 | 135 | 5.4 |
| 1480 | 2700 | 135 | 5.0 |
| 1492 | 2300 | 135 | 5.9 |
| 1519 | 2000 | 135 | 6.8 |
| 1540 | 4400 | 135 | 3.1 |
| 1549 | 4500 | 135 | 3.0 |
| 1561 | 5400 | 135 | 2.5 |
| 1630 | 7500 | 150 | 2.0 |

Source: *Nan-kuo hsien-shu* 南國賢書 (Record of civil examination success in the Southern Capital Region). Compiled by Chang Ch'ao-jui 張朝瑞. Ca. 1600 edition; *Ying-t'ien-fu hsiang-shih lu* 應天府鄉試錄 (Record of the provincial civil examination administered in Ying-t'ien prefecture), 1630 edition.

Table 8. Ch'ing Dynasty Ratio of Graduates to Candidates in Kiangnan Examinations.

| YEAR | CANDIDATES | GRADUATES | PCT. |
|------|------------|-----------|------|
| 1684 | 10,000 | 73 | 0.7% |
| 1738 | 17,000 | 126 | 0.7 |
| 1744 | 13,000 | 126 | 0.9 |
| 1747 | 9,800 | 114 | 1.2 |
| 1893 | 17,000 | 145 | 0.8 |

Source: *Chiang-nan hsiang-shih lu* 江南鄉試錄 (Record of the Kiangnan provincial civil examinations), 1684, 1738, 1744, 1747, 1893.

What stands out from these figures, of course, is the intensely competitive nature of the examinations, whereby in the late Ming the odds against passing the Ying-t'ien examinations were 50 to 1; the odds increased to over 100 to 1 in Kiangnan during most of the Ch'ing dynasty. Hence, if we focus merely on the graduate population we miss the true picture of the role of historical studies on the triennial provincial examinations. If we can assume that the conservative ratio of 25% for graduates choosing classical history texts for their specialization roughly held for those who failed the examination,⁵ then we can extrapolate that in late Ming Ying-t'ien prefecture about 1250 to 1875 candidates chose either the *Documents* or *Annals* for their specialization for the triennial tests. Similarly, for Ch'ing Kiangnan in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, 2500 to 4250 candidates chose historical Classics to specialize on. Given the magnitude of population growth from the late Ming to Ch'ing, we see that examination rules and quotas were such that a growing number of students were studying history to prepare for the seventeen triennial provincial tests.

In turning now to the questions and answers concerning historical studies on the provincial examinations in South China, we can carry with us two overall conclusions from the above statistical analyses: (1) The importance of history as a field of study for candidates preparing for the civil examinations during the Ming and Ch'ing dynasty was increasing both in terms of numbers of students specializing on one of the historical Classics and in terms of the increasing frequency of history in the policy questions; (2) The late eighteenth-century turn from "Tao Learning" and classical studies to historical studies, championed by Chang Hsueh-ch'eng, among others, reflected wider educational changes in Ch'ing society and in the examination curriculum.

2. The Role of Policy Questions in Civil Service Examinations

One of the major problems in evaluating policy questions prepared by examiners for the provincial and metropolitan examinations is their subordination in standing during the Ming and Ch'ing to the 8-legged essays on the Four Books required for session one of the tests, which we have mentioned above. Such subordination has led historians of the late empire to overlook the importance of policy questions and to miss the long term evolution of such questions from the Former Han dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 9) to the end of the civil examinations in 1905. Viewed over this historical continuum of two millennia, policy questions cannot so easily be dismissed by appeal only to a literary genre of 8-legged essays that lasted some four hundred years. Historically speaking, study of policy questions tells us more about the continuities between late imperial Chinese examinations and those from the early and middle empires.⁶

The Han origins of policy questions can be traced to Han emperors' "questioning by bamboo slips" (*ts'e-wen* 策問) candidates described as "men of wisdom and virtue" (*hsien-liang* 賢良); the latter "answered by bamboo slips" (*tui-ts'e* 對策) based on their opinions concerning the most urgent political problems of the day. Most famous of these Han dynasty examinations are the three questions administered by Emperor Wu 漢武帝 (r. 140-87 B.C.) in 134 B.C. to the famous Confucian, Tung Chung-shu 董仲舒 (179-104 B.C.), who as a result of his persuasive examination essays (known as "Three Policy Answers of One Chosen Wise and Virtuous" (*Hsien-liang san-ts'e* 賢良三策) became one of the Emperor's most influential advisors. (See Pan 1962: 2495-2524) Tung Chung-shu's articulation in his policy answers of a coherent and syncretic program for Confucian statecraft remained influential into the

late empire. In the eighteenth century, the Ch'ien-lung emperor made Tung's famous *ts'e* one of the guiding elements in the emperor's eighteenth-century notions of statecraft and world-ordering. (Chang 1974: 554-556)

Tung Chung-shu's policy answers also became stylistically praised and emulated. During the Ming, for instance, T'ang Shun-chih 唐順之 (1507-1560), a leading literary stylist, included Tung's policy answers as model essays of "ancient-style prose" (*ku-wen* 古文) in T'ang's literary compilation known as the *Wen-pien* 文編 (Compilation of essays). Consequently, policy essays, like 8-legged essays, were valued for their aesthetic and literary standards. In fact, Tung's policy essays were the lead writings that T'ang chose for his volume, not contemporary examination essays (*shih-wen* 時文).⁷ Moreover, Emperor Wu's use of policy questions to test men like Tung Chung-shu for official appointments became the precedent for palace examinations, which during the T'ang, Sung, Yuan, Ming, and Ch'ing dynasties were the last hurdle for examination candidates seeking the exalted *chin-shih* 進士 ("enter the roll of literati") degree required for high political appointment. Before 1070, the Sung dynasty palace examination had included only a poetry and rhyme-prose question; after 1070, however, the palace examination was changed to a single policy question administered by the emperor to rank the candidates for official appointments. This format remained intact until the twentieth century.⁸

The policy question thus has survived since the Han as a measure of talent in the selection process, even if it was made subordinate to the 8-legged essay for final rankings in late imperial times. Particularly heralded have been the policy answers prepared by the *optimus* (*chuang-yuan* 狀元), *secundus* (*pang-yen* 榜眼), and *tertius* (*t'an-hua* 探花) for the triennial *chin-shih* degree examinations, which are included in many Ming and Ch'ing dynasty collections.⁹ In addition to the policy question on the palace examination,

candidates were required to answer five policy questions during the third session of both the provincial and metropolitan examinations. Policy questions evolved during the T'ang and Sung dynasties as vehicles for addressing political and institutional problems, sometimes including dissenting opinions, that complemented the overriding literary focus on poetry and rhyme-prose in civil examinations during the middle empire.¹⁰

Perhaps the most famous single policy essay ever written in Chinese history was the ten-thousand-character (actually about 9600 characters) long answer composed by the celebrated Southern Sung loyalist Wen T'ien-hsiang 文天祥 (1236-1283) in the 1256 palace examination. Wen's essay was written in reply to the emperor's policy question on how the "Tao Learning" metaphysical notions of the Ultimateless (*wu-chi* 無極) and Great Ultimate (*t'ai-chi* 太極) had set in motion the natural processes for world-ordering. At the time, the Southern Sung capital of Hangchow was increasingly threatened by the Mongol invasion of South China and the possible extinction of the dynasty, explaining perhaps why the emperor's mind was on the eternal verities rather than the present catastrophe. Wen's rambling essay on the "unity of the Tao in heavenly and worldly affairs" has thus been read by succeeding generations of Confucians as the last testament of a stout Confucian moralist who later chose starvation and death rather than accept the invitation to serve the victorious Mongols when Hangchow eventually fell to their onslaught.¹¹

Beginning in the Yuan dynasty, when poetry and rhyme-prose were eliminated from the civil examinations because of their frivolity,¹² essays on the Four Books and Five Classics became the mainstay of the late imperial examinations to test student mastery of classical models for world-ordering. The policy question was retained to test "classical and historical knowledge to be applied in contemporary affairs."¹³

Although subordinate to the Four Books and Five Classics over the long run, policy questions were frequently deemed essential and thus highly prized by examiners and scholars. In debates over examination reform during the Northern Sung dynasty, for example, Ou-yang Hsiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072) suggested that policy questions should be administered first so that candidates were immediately tested on their knowledge of practical matters. Those who passed this hurdle would then be tested in later sessions on their literary ability, which would still determine their final rank. Thus, no one would be able to pass the *chin-shih* examination based on literary ability alone.¹⁴ The prestige of policy questions increased dramatically during the late Ming Wan-li emperor's reign (r. 1573-1620), when policy answers often reached over 3500 characters per answer.¹⁵ During this period, two compilations of outstanding policy questions and answers were undertaken. The first, completed in 1604, was entitled *Huang-Ming t'se-heng* 皇明策衡 (The Balancing of civil policy examination essays during the Ming dynasty).¹⁶ Arranged by reign period and by question topic, it contained samples of metropolitan and provincial policy examinations administered between 1504 and 1604. The overall content of these questions parallels the pattern of questions described in Table 1 above. The collection was later enlarged in 1633 to include questions from sessions two and three of the civil examinations from 1504 to 1631 under the title *Huang-Ming hsiang-hui-shih erh-san-ch'ang ch'eng-wen hsuan* 皇明鄉會試二三場程文選 (Selection of model examination essays from the second and third sessions of the provincial and metropolitan civil examinations during the Ming dynasty).¹⁷

During the early reigns of the Ch'ing dynasty, Manchu emperors continually criticized the fact that examiners and candidates alike had relegated policy questions to obscurity. In 1728, the Yung-cheng emperor (r. 1723-1735)

ordered examiners “not to emphasize exclusively the first session of questions [on the Four Books] at the expense of [policy questions on] later sessions.” Similarly, the Ch’ien-lung emperor throughout the 1750s bemoaned the overly literary focus in examination essays and tried to encourage attention to more practical matters.¹⁸ Later in the 1760s, when efforts to reemphasize the policy questions on a par with 8-legged essays were unsuccessfully tried, the Ch’ien-lung emperor had his examiners issue a collection of the best policy answers prepared during the provincial examinations of 1756, 1759, 1760, and 1762. The work was entitled *Chin-k’e ch’üan-t’i hsin-ts’e fa-ch’eng* 近科全題新策法程 (Models of complete answers for new policy questions in recent provincial civil examinations). Patterned after similar imperial collections of 8-legged essays by then known as *shih-wen* 時文 (“contemporary-style essays”), this mid-century collection of policy questions included questions and answers, as well as comments in the margins to highlight the strengths of the policy essays.¹⁹

By the nineteenth century, the evolution of policy questions, both in terms of format and content had evolved into a fluid but still discernable pattern (See also Table 2 above). Based on study of the provincial and metropolitan examinations held in the No.1 Historical Archives in Peking and the Ming-Ch’ing Archives in Taiwan, I have arrived at the following arrangement for the five policy questions on provincial examinations in the late Ch’ing: (1) Classical studies; (2) Historical studies; (3) Literature; (4) Institutions (*fa-tu* 法度); and (5) Local geography (*ti-li* 地理). This is not to say that the order was obligatory, or that these five types of questions were always included, but a reading of nineteenth-century provincial policy questions and answers shows this order to be generally in use. Until the nineteenth century, it is much more difficult to arrive at this sort of general order, as both Table 1 for Ming Ying-t’ien prefecture and Table 2 for Ch’ing Chekiang province reveal. Moreover,

the metropolitan examinations I have studied were less likely to follow this pattern.

Nevertheless, we can generally conclude that those who prepared the policy questions devoted a substantial proportion of them to the study of history. In addition, most policy questions that did not take history as an object of scholarly focus presumed that the student would prepare for his answer an historical account on whatever topic he was asked, whether dealing with institutions, Classics, flood control, local governance, etc. Below we will address those policy questions on provincial examinations in South China that focused on history as a discipline and historiography as a scholarly problem. But we should keep in mind that few policy questions remained untouched by the overall Confucian concern for moral truth and historical change and development. Philosophy and history were virtually inseparable in Ming policy questions.

3. Questions and Answers Concerning History in 1516 Chekiang Policy Questions

For a Ming example of a policy question devoted to historical studies per se, we can begin by turning to the Chekiang provincial examination of 1516. As the third policy question on session three of the tests, the question on history followed two earlier questions, one on the sage-kings model of rulership, and the second on the “orthodox transmission of the Way” (*tao-t'ung* 道統) and the role of the mind (*hsin-fa* 心法) in the emperor’s personal cultivation. We will first examine the question on history and then compare it with the other policy questions prepared in 1516. Following that, we will then turn to history questions and answers prepared for the 1594 Fukien and 1654 Kwangtung provincial examinations to further elaborate on the nature of historical

knowledge required in provincial civil examinations in South China during the late Ming and early Ch'ing dynasties.²⁰

The examiners' 1516 question (of some 345 characters) on history opened by defining the chief genres that made up history:

Chu Wen-kung [Hsi] has said that the forms of ancient history can best be seen in the *Documents* [Classic] and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. The *Annals* is a chronicle that comprehensively reveals the chronology of events. The *Documents* records each matter separately in order to grasp its beginning and end. (*Che-chiang hsiang-shih lu* 1516: 5/2681)

History was divided according to the longstanding distinction between pure chronologies (*pien-nien* 編年), that is "annalistic history," which used the *Annals* as their model, and topical accounts (*chi-chuan* 紀傳) that were based on the *Documents Classic*. Hence, lurking within the assumptions that the examiners presented in their question was the view that historical studies could be approached in terms of pure chronology (i.e., in an annalistic format) or discrete topics (i.e., in a topical format). "Process vs. structure" may be an overly modern interpretation of how Ming Confucians viewed the genres of historiography, but it is clear that in premodern China, scholars and students thought about history in light of the nature of change and the role of continuity.²¹

For the 1516 examiners, both Ssu-ma Ch'ien's 司馬遷 (145-90? B.C.) *Shih-chi* 史記 (Records of the grand historian) and Pan Ku's 班固 (A.D. 32-92) *Han-shu* 漢書 (History of the Former Han dynasty) represented outstanding historical works, but because neither followed exactly the classical genres that had preceded them they were criticized by later generations. Implicitly, the examiners suggested that Han historians had not lived up to classical mod-

els. This suggestion became explicit when the examiners described how some considered the *San-kuo-chih* 三國志 (History of the Three States period) that followed the Han histories as “the betrayer of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*.” Candidates were asked to identify the author of the latter and discuss whether or not such charges were right.²²

Next the examiners brought up T'ang through Sung dynasty histories, criticism of which candidates were also asked to evaluate. Actually, these questions turned out to be simply a prelude to what the examiners were really getting at in their question, for they then turned to Ssu-ma Kuang's 司馬光 (1019-1086) *Tzu-chih t'ung-chien* 資治通鑑 (Comprehensive Mirror of History) and Chu Hsi's condensed version known as the *T'ung-chien kang-mu* 通鑑綱目 (Condensation of the Comprehensive Mirror) as historical works. Ssu-ma Kuang's work was likened to the *Tso chuan* 左傳 (Tso's Commentary to the *Spring and Autumn Annals*), while Chu Hsi's condensation was said by some “to have gotten the essential meaning of the *Annals*.” In closing, the examiners brought up for evaluation later Sung historians who had filled in lacuna in the *Comprehensive Mirror*, such as Chin Lü-hsiang 金履祥 (1232-1303). Hu An-kuo 胡安國 (1074-1138), who had written an authoritative commentary to the *Annals* that was part of the examination curriculum until the late eighteenth century, was cited prominently by the examiners. They asked candidates to elaborate on Hu's claim that the *Annals* was an “important canon on the transmission of the mind” (*ch'uan-hsin yao-tien* 傳心要典). Finally, the examiners asked:

Today in order to produce outstanding history that aspires to the sages' important canon on the transmission of the mind [that is, the *Annals*], what best should those whose minds are set on history follow? (*Che-chiang hsiang-shih lu* 1516: 5/2682-2684)

In effect, the examiners had dissolved a question on history into a classical framework that equated Confucius' *Spring and Autumn Annals* with Sung "Tao Learning" stress on the "transmission of the mind." Moreover, Han and post-Han histories were criticized, while Sung histories were praised. Just as Han and T'ang Confucians had failed to transmit the essential moral teachings of the sages, i.e., the *tao-t'ung*, they had also failed in their histories to transmit the proper legacy of Confucius' *Annals*. History served philosophy, and Chu Hsi became the historian who had best captured the legacy of the *Annals*. It did not seem to matter to the examiners that Chu Hsi had at times belittled the *Annals* as an irrelevant record of ancient facts and details. Nor were they deterred by a fact, frequently pointed out by later *k'ao-cheng* scholars, that the terms usually associated with Sung dynasty theories of the mind did not occur anywhere in the *Annals* but were derived from the Four Books as well as Buddhist and Taoist sources. Moreover, Chu Hsi had only compiled a brief *T'ung-chien t'i-yao* 通鑑提要 (Essentials of the Comprehensive Mirror) in which he set the overall guidelines for his followers to compile the detailed *Kang-mu*. As in the case of the *Chia-li* 家禮 (Family rituals) and *Hsiao-hsueh* 小學 (Elementary education), during the Ming dynasty Chu Hsi received total credit for works such as the *Kang-mu*, which were substantially completed by his later followers.²³

The best policy answer to the history question was written (in about 960 characters) by Kung Hui 龔輝, a student from the Yü-yao county school who had specialized on the *Poetry Classic* and ranked second overall on the 1516 provincial examination. Over 2200 candidates had competed for the 90 places on the Chekiang provincial quota for *chü-jen*, a ratio of 24 to 1. Of those who passed, 34.4% had concentrated on the *Change Classic*, 17.8% on the *Documents*, 34.4% on the *Poetry*, 7.8% on the *Annals*, and only 6.6% on

the *Rites Classic*. Kung Hui was an example, then, of a typical student who, although he had not chosen to specialize on one of the historical Classics, still had enough of a general knowledge of them to compose the best history policy answer. One of the associate examiners commented that “in testing candidates on history one wanted to ascertain the breadth of their knowledge.” One of the two chief examiners noted that this candidate “recorded his knowledge broadly and in harmony; his argumentation was precise and correct [such that it was clear that] he was one who was well-versed in historical studies.” Consequently, we can conclude that all students had to study history, regardless of what Classic they had chosen to specialize on and regardless of how well they had mastered 8-legged essays on the Four Books. (*Che-chiang hsiang-shih lu* 1516: 5/2794-2795)

The answer Kung Hui prepared was pretty much what the examiners had asked for. First, Kung Hui enunciated the underlying principles governing history:

If first one takes the public good of the empire to write history, then one's writings will be transmitted. If first one takes the public good of the empire to criticize history, then the debate will be settled. History is defined as the measure of right and wrong; it is the great model for making the empire serve the public good. (*Ibid.*: 5/2795-2796)

These principles gave history an important role in assessing the present in light of the past. Moreover, Kung's essay stressed at the outset that the *Documents* and *Annals*, the first compiled by and the second written by Confucius, represented the “greatest public good imaginable”:

Therefore, we can say that the *Documents* is a history included as a Classic. The *Annals* is a Classic included as a history. Later

historians all have been classified according to the authority of the *Documents and Annals*. (Ibid.: 5/2796-2797)

When measuring Ssu-ma Ch'ien's *Shih-chi* and Pan Ku's *Han-shu* against these orthodox standards, Kung found that because both had given priority to the Taoist teachings of the Yellow Emperor and Lao-tzu and relegated the Six Classics, their works had immoral implications. Similarly, Ch'en Shou's 陳壽 (A.D. 233-297) *San-kuo-chih* had failed to measure properly the political legitimacy (*cheng-t'ung* 正統) of the competing states, thus bequeathing moral confusion to posterity and deserving the epithet of "the betrayer of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*." (Ibid.: 5/2797-2798)

Coming to the Sung historical works by Ssu-ma Kuang and Chu Hsi, prominently identified by the examiners, Kung Hui's essay described how both had been composed to continue Confucius' *Annals* for the 1362 years (403 B.C. to A.D. 959) up to the Northern Sung. Moreover, because Chu Hsi had faithfully modelled his condensed history on the moral principles of the *Annals*, Chu deserved to be known as the successor to Confucius. Chu Hsi's precursor Hu An-kuo had correctly perceived that the "praise and blame" (*pao-pien* 褒貶) judgments in the *Annals* were equivalent to the heavenly principles and that, accordingly, the *Annals* was indeed an "important canon on the transmission of the mind." In choosing the best models for writing history, Kung Hui contended that Chu Hsi, after Confucius, was the "Grand Historian," not Ssu-ma Ch'ien:

It is commonly said that the greatest good of the Three Dynasties (Hsia, Shang, and Chou) resided in Master [Confucius]. Therefore, we have the *Documents and Annals*. The greatest good after the Three Dynasties resided in Master Chu [Hsi]. Consequently we have the *T'ung-chien kang-mu*. If students wish to produce [historical]

prose, then the *Shih-chi* and *Han-shu* are sufficient [to study]. If, however, one wants to clarify the Tao, then what is there besides the *Annals* and *Kang-mu* to choose from? Do not all the methods needed for writing history and preparing critical historiography arise from them? (Ibid.: 2797-2802; for discussion see Hervouet 1978: 75-76)

It is intriguing that Chu Hsi, whom we normally associate with the "Tao Learning" moral and philosophic orthodoxy of late imperial times, was also considered by mid-Ming examiners to have been equally important as a historian. But this surprise is lessened by the fact that the sort of history the examiners were testing candidates on was more akin to what we would today call "moralizing historiography." The historiographic differences between narrative and topical history initially raised in the question were quickly relegated to the background. We will see in later policy questions on history that the division of history into two different genres would itself become the issue, not just whether both genres served as "mirrors" for moral and political governance. In the 1516 history question, the only "Histories" that really mattered were "Classics." Thus, the *Shih-chi* and *Han-shu* were mere histories reflecting their time; the *Annals* and *Kang-mu* were Histories for the ages. In the sixteenth century, Confucians were still a long way from granting historical studies an independent status equal to classical studies. The Classics were still sacred and paramount.

If we compare the history policy question, to the second policy question immediately preceding it, which was focused on the issue of the "orthodox transmission of the Way" and the role of the "transmission of the mind" (*ch'uan-shou hsin-fa* 傳授心法) in enabling the moral mind (*Tao-hsin* 道心) to reach its goals of "absolute refinement, singleness of purpose, and alle-

giance to the mean" (*ching-i chih-chung* 精一執中), we find similarities in the content and phraseology of the two policy questions. One was devoted to "Tao Learning;" the other to history. Yet, because history as we have just seen was dissolved by the examiners into "Tao Learning," both questions wound up reflecting similar moral and philosophic concerns. The examiners stressed in their second policy question, for example, that spiritual and mental subtlety were the keys to unraveling the ties between individual self-cultivation of the moral mind and public mastery of the comprehensive handles of government. Study of nature and principle were presented as the Sung dynasty reconstruction of the mind set of the sage-king Yao 堯 who had passed on the lesson of the middle way of governance to his chosen successor Shun 舜. (Ibid.: 5/2679-2681)

Although we are working our way backward from the third policy question on history to the second question on "Tao Learning," we should complete our discussion of the 1516 civil examination by also looking at the first policy question on rulership, since this was, in the eyes of the examiners, the most important question. It was standard in a Ming dynasty civil service examination, such as the Chekiang provincial examination of 1516, that the political authority of the ruler should be confirmed in the manner questions required of candidates were presented. The first policy question, for example, asked students to comment on the way the sagely two emperors and three kings of antiquity took upon themselves the concerns of the empire. The question stressed that such concerns could be seen in the present ruler's own mindful efforts to cultivate his virtue, which was based on his seriousness of purpose.

The examiners noted that these ideals had been realized in antiquity, but in subsequent dynasties such as the Sung few emperors had lived up to them. Earlier T'ang dynasty rulers had been especially negligent in their duties, the

examiners pointed out. The rhetorical flourish at the end of their question, which took the form of an historical narrative of the early Ming dynasty, quickly dispelled any likelihood that the examiner's impartial political criticism would be directed at the present dynasty as well:

Our nation has endured for over 100 years from the Hung-hsi [r. 1425] to Hung-chih reigns. Five imperial ancestors have successively embodied the realm, and all have preserved seriousness of purpose and imperial majesty. None has been remiss in his concerns for the empire, nor have any failed to preserve and protect the law-models [*fa* 法] of their predecessors. It is likely that they have matched the [achievements of the] Three Dynasties [of antiquity] in recreating for today the glorious peace and prosperity [of yore]. (Ibid.: 5/2676-2679)

In asking students, who of course “were more filial and respectful of their ruler than even the examiners,” for their considered opinions, the latter had successfully narrowed the terms of reply for this policy essay to a literary form of an oath of allegiance to the state. Renowned for his profligacy, dabbings in esoteric Buddhism, and lechery, however, the Cheng-te Emperor (r. 1506-1521) seemed an unlikely candidate for such pompous praise. His reign was dominated by powerful eunuchs such as Liu Chin 劉瑾 (d. 1510), against whom Confucians such as Wang Yang-ming 王陽明 (1472- 1529) had unsuccessfully mobilized (Wang was jailed, beaten, and exiled in 1506 for his efforts). Eunuch cliques thereafter remained a powerful element in court politics. (Goodrich and Fang 1976: 308-309, 1409-1410; see Elman 1989: 379-418)

Moreover, Wang Yang-ming as a native son of Chekiang province, who had resided most of his life in Shao-hsing, passed the provincial examination in Hangchow in 1492. Both the provincial examiners and local candidates for

the 1516 Chekiang examinations likely were aware of how far the first policy question overpraising Ming emperors had strayed from reality. Was the inflated rhetoric a form of disguised criticism? If so, then under the circumstances in 1516 the stakes were very high. Punishment awaited anyone caught at even veiled criticism of his imperial majesty. Judging by the top answer to the first policy question prepared by Chang Huai 張懷 (1486-1561), also from Yü-yao county and a specialist in the *Change*, for which the examiners spared no praise, no examination candidate dared to read into the question any explicit suggestion of contemporary imperial impropriety. Certainly not the number one ranked *chū-jen*, as Chang turned out to be.²⁴

In summary, then, Chang Huai's carefully crafted opening policy essay typified the expectations that students fulfilled in the first three 1516 policy answers.²⁵ The student's job in the first question was to affirm in the clearest terms possible his personal loyalty to the political system devised by the ancients and replicated in the present. In the second, the student acknowledged his commitment to the moral philosophy of the state's "Tao Learning" orthodoxy. For the third, the student followed the examiners' lead in linking historical studies to state orthodoxy. The first three policy questions and answers in the Chekiang proceedings were in essence a ritualized exchange of orthodox political, classical, and historical beliefs that legitimated the state and extracted a written oath of loyalty from the student. Given this ceremonial duet between the examiner appealing to imperial majesty and the student affirming that majesty, political criticism was best left implicit. The function of the history policy question was to affirm the classical underpinnings of state orthodoxy. If the ruler was presented in the questions as both sage to his subjects and teacher to his examination candidates, Chu Hsi was both moral philosopher and historian without compare. Legitimate power belonged to the

ruler; ultimate truth was the monopoly of "Tao Learning."

4. Questions and Answers Concerning History in 1594 Fukien Policy Questions

In the 1594 provincial examinations, examiners in Fukien province prepared a policy question on *shih-hsueh* 史學, whose answer in over 3000 characters was selected for inclusion in the aforementioned *Huang-Ming ts'e-heng* (The Balancing of civil policy examination essays during the Ming dynasty). Unfortunately, we have no information concerning the examiners or the student who composed the policy answer. Nevertheless, the question and answer both show remarkable continuity and consistency with the 1516 policy question just discussed. In addition to Fukien, similar policy questions on history were also prepared for other 1594 provincial examinations, including those in Shun-t'ien, Shensi, and Szechuan. (*Huang-ming ts'e-heng*: "Mu-lu" 目錄, 10a-12a)

As the third policy question in Fukien, the 1594 history question was preceded by two questions, one on the proper use of talented men for state governance (*ying-jen* 用人) and the other on ways to end natural disasters (*mi-tsai* 弭災). It was then followed by a fourth question on the equal-field system as a basis for military organization and a fifth dealing with the "Wako" (*Wo-k'ou* 倭寇) Japanese pirates. It is interesting that not a single policy question was framed in terms of "Tao Learning" or classical studies. In fact, all five of the policy questions in Fukien dealt directly or indirectly with historical matters or issues.

The policy question on history opened by broaching the difference between annalistic and topical history and then asked candidates to "point out the strengths and weaknesses of the two genres." Ssu-ma Ch'ien was brought

up as the historian who had led the change in ancient historiography from chronicles to topical histories. So much so, the examiners noted, that Ssu-ma Ch'ien's favored genre had become "orthodox history," while chronicles in the style of the *Annals* had virtually died out. Candidates were asked to comment on the after effects of this reversal in historical genres. The revival of annalistic history in the Sung by Ssu-ma Kuang, according to the examiners, had reversed the earlier trend that had favored topical histories. What advantages did Ssu-ma Kuang's *p'ien-nien*, the examiners asked, have over Ssu-ma Ch'ien's *chi-chuan*? Finally, the candidates had to discuss what improvements Chu Hsi had brought to Ssu-ma Kuang's *Comprehensive Mirror*? As an afterthought, or so it may have seemed, the examiners ended by writing that although the chronicles were the most ancient form of historiography, there were many "who today groundlessly contend that besides [Ssu]-ma Ch'ien's [*Shih-chi*] there is no history." Clearly, the intent behind the 1594 policy question on history was to debunk Ssu-ma Ch'ien as the "Grand Historian."²⁶

The policy answer opened by elaborating on the importance of history for the ruler. The ruler had the power to demote the unworthy and promote the worthy, but he relied on history to weigh right and wrong. The ruler's power was limited to his reign, but the "rights and wrongs of history" extended for ten thousand generations. While the ruler's power had limits, the rights and wrongs of history extended in all directions and provided the ruler with a guide for his policies. "History contained both words and meanings. Meanings harbored both right and wrong." All good historians can use vivid and flowery language to write history, but the words were insufficient in and of themselves. Only sages could capture the "pattern of meanings" (*i-fa* 義法) and "scales" (*ch'üan-heng* 權衡) of right and wrong revealed through words. (*Huang-Ming ts'e-heng*: 13, 17b)

As in the policy question of 1516, a clear distinction was made between historical classics and mere histories. Sages, according to the 1594 policy answer, had enunciated the principles of history in three Classics: (1) the *Documents*; (2) the *Poetry*; and (3) the *Annals*. The first contained the directives and instructions of the sage kings, but was incomplete. The second supplemented the *Documents* with the songs and chants of ancient people that had reversed Chou dynasty trends in immorality. But it was only the *Annals* that had captured the “mind set” (*hsin-fa* 心法) of the sage-kings through Confucius’ explication of the rights and wrongs of history in his account of the history of the state of Lu. Therefore, Confucius had said of his work: “It will be on account of the *Annals* that people will know me. It will be due to the *Annals* that people will condemn me.” (Ibid.; see also *Meng-tzu yin-te*: 25/3B/9)

Although not yet explicitly stated, the author of the answer had clearly placed Confucius’ chronicles on a far higher historical plane than mere histories, such as Ssu-ma Ch’ien’s topical history. The answer then praised Tso Ch’iu-ming 左丘明, who had aided Confucius by compiling an authoritative commentary to the *Annals* that enabled later ages to grasp the “affairs” (*shih* 事) and “meanings” (*i* 義) encoded in the chronicle of events, Tso thereby becoming the “loyal official of the ‘uncrowned king’ and the drummer who spread the word of the ‘Unicorn Classic.’ ” The *Annals*, as annalistic history, exemplified the most ancient ideal of historiography.²⁷

According to the candidate, this ancient historiographical tradition had been overturned when Ssu-ma Ch’ien created the topical history as an alternative to the chronicle. In so doing, Ssu-ma Ch’ien’s *Shih-chi* had become the model for orthodox history from the Han dynasty onwards. Following the lead of the examiners, the student answer rejected this tradition by pointing

out that Ssu-ma Ch'ien himself had been guilty of heterodoxy when he had granted the Yellow Emperor and Lao-tzu intellectual priority over the Confucians and the Six Classics. In addition, he had included in his history accounts of immoral adventurers and tricksters that served to delude rather than edify his readers. The rights and wrongs of history were no longer apparent. More importantly, however, this genre of history had focussed on the strengths and weaknesses of individuals and delineated the ins and outs of historical events without correctly divining the reasons for the rise and fall of the nation (*kuo-yun* 國運). "How could a topical history be seen as superior to a chronicle and thereby arbitrarily overturn the genre of history?" (*Huang-Ming ts'e-heng*: 13, 19a-b)

After the Former Han dynasty, the essay continued, historians such as Pan Ku and Ch'en Shou had emulated Ssu-ma Ch'ien. Annalistic history almost disappeared, but there had been some who had kept the genre alive by producing limited chronicles based on a single dynasty. Enough so that the author of the policy answer rejected claims made by earlier Confucians that "after [Tso] Ch'iu-ming there was no history." Nonetheless, it was not until Ssu-ma Kuang completed his *Comprehensive Mirror* in the eleventh century, that the *pien-nien* genre revived, thereby illuminating the history of sixteen dynasties over 1362 years and earning Chu Hsi's praise for being the most important history since the Han dynasties. (Ibid.: 13, 19b-22a)

Though Ssu-ma Kuang had followed the model of Confucius' *Annals*, his massive historical compilation had, however, confused the vital historical issue of the political legitimacy (*cheng-t'ung* 正統) of states during the periods of disunity before the rise of the Han dynasty. The policy answer noted that such oversight, according to some, demonstrated that Ssu-ma Kuang was morally deficient in his historical analysis and was unclear about the difference between

a legitimate king (the Chou dynastic ruler) and illegitimate usurpers (*wang-pa chih pien* 王霸之辨). Accordingly, the historian who saved the *Comprehensive Mirror* from its flaws was Chu Hsi. With a penetrating understanding of the classical principles of political legitimacy bequeathed by Confucius' *Annals*, Chu Hsi prepared guidelines (*fan-li* 凡例) for the *Kang-mu* condensation of Ssu-ma Kuang's work that eventually made it into a textbook of political ethics replete with *Annals*-like "praise and blame" historiography. Chu's great achievement was to restore to history its concern for the "mind set" of the sages:

I dare to say that Ssu-ma Kuang used the methods of the *Annals* and at times captured its intent. Chu Hsi got the [full] intent of the *Annals* and also was marvellous in employing its methods. Since the "Unicorn Classic," this is the only compilation that counts. (Ibid.: 13, 22a-23a)

The main points made, and the grand climax reached, it was only left for the essay to end by giving a brief account of historiography after the Sung dynasties. Later historians had produced continuations to the *Comprehensive Mirror* that kept it up to date and carried it further back in time. Moreover, during the Ch'eng-hua reign (1465-1487), the emperor authorized an imperial supplement that included the Sung and Yuan dynasties and brought the *Comprehensive Mirror* up to 1367. The model for the twenty-two dynastic histories up to the Ming remained the *Annals*, but the essay reached a conciliatory conclusion concerning the two genres of annalistic versus topical histories. According to the candidate, the distinction was a product of Ssu-ma Ch'ien's misguided historiography. Previously the two genres had been unified. Consequently, "it was wrong to honor topical history at the expense of annalistic history. But it was equally mistaken to prepare annalistic history

and overlook topical history.” What was required of contemporary historians was for them to reunite the two genres and recapture the classical model for historiography that preceded Ssu-ma Ch’ien. (Ibid.: 13, 23a-25a)

Overall, the 1516 and 1594 policy answers resonated with each other. Ssu-ma Ch’ien and his topical historiography were attacked on moral grounds.²⁸ The *chi-chuan* genre of historiography placed a premium on style and language, but its authors had missed the forest for the trees. Uninformed by moral vision, historical events became meaningless. Although separated by 78 years, both examination essays stressed that moralizing historiography was the key. And both answers contended that after Confucius only Chu Hsi had recaptured the *cheng-t’ung* 正統 of the rise and fall of dynasties. “Political legitimacy” was the historical correlate to the “orthodox transmission of the Tao” (*Tao-t’ung* 道統), which “Tao Learning,” leaping over T’ang and Han Confucians, traced back to Confucius and Mencius. In both philosophy and history, then, Confucians after the Han had lost their way. Not until the Sung was the moral vision of antiquity restored in classical and historical studies.²⁹

5. Questions and Answers Concerning History in 1654 Kwangtung Policy Questions

The two Ming policy questions on history we have studied in detail both subsumed history under “Tao Learning.” As we turn now to early Ch’ing policy questions, we should recall our earlier discussion of the changing trajectories of historical vis-à-vis classical studies in the eighteenth century. In mid- and late-Ch’ing policy questions on history, the earlier focus on “Tao Learning” historiography increasingly receded into the background and moralizing historiography became less important. In the process, Ssu-ma Ch’ien and Pan Ku emerged as historical models who exemplified the best Han models of his-

toriography. Just as Ch'ing dynasty Han Learning classicists stressed Han dynasty classical studies over now suspect Sung and Ming "Tao Learning," so too eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Han Learning historians emphasized Ssu-ma Ch'ien and Pan Ku, rather than Chu Hsi, as exemplary historians.³⁰

In the 1654 Kwangtung provincial examination, for instance, the second policy question addressed the relationship between the Classics and the Dynastic Histories. We know that over 2600 candidates took this examination, of whom only 86 (3.6%) passed. Of the latter, 25.8% specialized on the *Change Classic*, 17.2% on the *Documents*, 43% on the *Poetry*, 6.5% on the *Annals*, and 7.5% on the *Rites Classic*. As in our tables in part one, we find that roughly 25% of the graduates, as well as candidates, mastered one of the historical Classics in their preparations for the Kwangtung provincial examination of 1654. And in addition all students had to answer the policy question raising the issue of the boundaries between historical and classical studies.³¹

In his introduction to the official record of the examination proceedings, the chief examiner Chang Feng-pao 張鳳抱, a 1643 *chin-shih* from Tientsin, noted that during the Ming dynasty Kwangtung had produced an outstanding scholar of "Tao Learning" in Ch'en Hsien-chang 陳獻章 (1428-1500) and a historian of major stature in Ch'en Chien 陳建 (1497-1567), suggesting the centrality of classical and historical studies among Confucian scholars. Ch'en Chien had passed the Kwangtung provincial examination in 1528 but failed twice in the metropolitan examinations. Ironically, his annalistic history of the Ming dynasty up to 1521, entitled *Huang-Ming t'ung-chi* 皇明通紀 (Comprehensive records of the Ming dynasty), became a handy reference book for examination candidates and was first published in 1555 and in several later editions. In this vein, we should add that all five of the policy questions prepared by Chang Feng-pao and his associates assumed a historical under-

standing of various policy matters: (1) education for the ruler; (2) classics and histories; (3) creating and employing talented men; (4) military structure and agricultural labor; (5) the need for reform to keep pace with change. As in 1594, we again find no policy question directly questioning students about "Tao Learning." (*Kuang-tung hsiang-shih lu* 1654: 10a, 8b-14b; cf. Goodrich and Fang 1976: 148-51, 53-56)

The 1654 policy question on history vis-à-vis the Classics was quite different from the earlier Ming dynasty questions we looked at. Students were asked to discuss in detail the "origins and development" (*yuan-liu* 源流) of the Classics and the "core and branches" (*pen-mo* 本末) of the Histories. In other words, candidates were to delineate the evolutionary pattern of the Classics from six in number originally to thirteen by the Sung dynasty. This completed they were then asked to take up the evolution of historical writing from Tso Ch'iu-ming to Ssu-ma Ch'ien and Pan Ku. Historical and classical studies in effect stood on equal ground, as the examiners noted: "Earlier Confucians have said that classical studies focused on matters of the mind (*hsin-shu* 心術); historical studies have stressed actual achievements (*shih-kung* 事功)." Ssu-ma Kuang and Chu Hsi were not the focus of attention. (Ibid.: 10a-11a)

Chosen as the best policy answer for this question was Ch'en I-hsiung's 陳一熊 (n.d.) essay in some 2300 characters. The examiners rated it as "penetrating," "comprehensive," and "elegant," suggesting that they valued both historical knowledge and narrative style. Ch'en I-hsiung's essay opened with the usual general discussion of the importance of history that we have seen in earlier policy answers, but he noted that the Classics and the Histories taken together represented the proper standard for public well-being: "The Classics are the stars, planets, sun, and moon in the human realm; the Histories are the lofty peaks and the Yangtze and Yellow rivers of our human realm." By

advancing our knowledge through the penetration of things (*chih-chih ko-wu* 致知格物) one could master the Classics. The *Spring and Autumn Annals* should be mastered for it contained the “rights and wrongs” essential for public well-being. (Ibid.: 61b-63b)

Classical studies were still the provenance of “Tao Learning,” as the pat appeal to the doctrine of *ko-wu* 格物 demonstrates. Similarly, the *Annals* remained the core of the orthodox moralizing historiography. In this regard, Ch’en’s essay was in essential agreement with his Ming predecessors. Moreover, Ch’en contended that while historical circumstances changed, the principles underlying those changes remained eternal. The Classics already contained the essentials of the Histories, while the Histories were based on the unified vision informing classical studies. This vision, however, had been lost during the period of disunity after the fall of the Later Han dynasty and not recovered until the great “Tao Learning” masters of the Sung, best represented by the “original meanings” (*pen-i* 本義) elucidated by Chu Hsi. (Ibid.: 63b-64b)

In theory, Ch’en I-hsiung’s essay diverged very little from earlier essays that dissolved history into the classical philosophy of “Tao Learning.” But in practice, there were some important differences. First of all, Ch’en was forced by the examiners to detail Han and T’ang dynasty vicissitudes in classical and historical studies, which had been undervalued during the Ming. More importantly, however, Ch’en’s essay, although it prominently displayed Confucius’ *Annals*, made no significant mention of Ssu-ma Kuang’s *Comprehensive Mirror* or of Chu Hsi’s condensation, which Ming examiners and candidates had virtually worshipped as the model for orthodox historiography. The Chu Hsi that appeared in Ch’en’s 1654 policy essay was circumscribed. Chu was hailed for his classical studies but ignored for his history. In effect, the question on classical and historical studies revealed a rudimentary but still noticeable

distance that the examiners had placed between the two disciplines. Ch'en wrote:

Those who study the Classics worry that they will not be focused enough; those who use the Classics worry that they will not be comprehensive enough. Those who collect historical materials worry that they will not be broad enough in their search; those who correct histories [that is, produce the orthodox dynastic histories] worry that they will be insufficiently terse and solemn. (Ibid.: 64b-69b)

In his concluding remarks, Ch'en emphasized that historians should base themselves on the "mind set" (*hsin-fa*) of the *Annals*, but this was more formulaic than substantive. In Ming essays, that "mind set" had been articulated in light of Ssu-ma Kuang's and Chu Hsi's revitalization of the genre of annalistic history as a textbook for political ethics. Without the latter guidelines, or the earlier premeditated attacks on Han and post-Han historians for their heterodox views, Ch'en's use of the stock terminology of "Tao Learning" had lost some of its normative power. After Confucius, who was to be included as a model historian and who was to be excluded was not made clear. Ch'en's answer had lost the self-righteous conviction that informed Ming essays. (Ibid.: 69a-70a)

6. Conclusion

To conclude our account of the changes occurring in historical studies during the seventeenth century, as measured by policy questions prepared for the provincial civil examinations, we can refer briefly for comparative purposes to the 1685 metropolitan examination held in Peking. By this time the K'ang-hsi emperor (r. 1662-1722) had established an office to compile the history of the Ming dynasty, which likely affected thinking about historiographical for-

mats. As part of the 1685 examination, the second policy question also tested candidates on the distinction between classical and historical studies. As in 1654, the examiners asked candidates to describe in detail the evolution of the Thirteen Classics and Twenty-one Dynastic Histories. Along the way the examiners expressed what was then a common position among Ch'ing Confucians concerning the provenance of the Histories: "The *Annals* is a Classic of history; [Ssu-ma] Ch'ien and [Pan] Ku are the patriarchs of history." The late Ming exclusion of Han historians from the lineage of orthodox historiography was effectively over. (*Hui-shi lu* 1685: 13a-15a)

What concerned the examiners was not the disjunction between annalistic and topical history. Rather they asked students to discuss how orthodox history (*cheng-shih* 正史) had rightly become modelled on the histories by Ssu-ma Ch'ien and Pan Ku. Han and post-Han dynastic historians were now offered to candidates as perfectly respectable scholars. This relative openness, when compared to the relatively "closed" Ming policy questions, allowed successful students such as Chin Ch'ü-ching 金居敬 (n.d.), whose essay was selected as the best policy answer for the 1685 question on classical and historical studies, to itemize the Twenty-one Dynastic Histories as individual works. He thereby could exclude such comprehensive histories as Ssu-ma Kuang's *Tzu-chih t'ung-chien* from mention. Chin's model essay included criticism levelled at individual histories by Confucian scholars such as Liu Chih-chi 劉知幾 (661-721) (conspicuously missing in the 1516 and 1594 examinations questions), but the aim of such criticism was not to exclude the dynastic histories from consideration. Rather the criticism was meant simply to correct or reconsider earlier accounts. (*Ibid.*: 74a-76a)

Chu Hsi was discussed in light of the Classics and not the Histories. Both the examiners and Chin Ch'ü-ching made clear that the distinction between

annalistic and topical histories was part of the classical legacy itself and not the heterodox invention of Ssu-ma Ch'ien. As Chin noted at the outset of his prized essay, "Ancient histories were also Classics. The *Documents Classic* followed the genre of topically recording [history]. The *Annals* followed the genre of chronicling events." In the process, dynastic history had evolved into the accepted form for "state history" (*kuo-shih* 國史). Unlike the Ming views of historiography we have analyzed, the Ch'ing examiners did not think it acceptable that chronicles had taken precedence, as Ssu-ma Kuang and Chu Hsi had wanted it, over topical histories. In the early Ch'ing, if anything, the genre of *chi-chuan* was preferred over *pien-nien*. (Ibid.: 74b)

The 1685 metropolitan examination question on history also had gone one step further than the 1658 Kwangtung policy question by dropping all mention of the Tao Learning "mind set" still part of the 1658 question and answer on history. Instead, the 1685 examiners gave the "doctrines of the mind" (*hsin-hsueh* 心學) prominence of place in the first policy question devoted solely to the "orthodox transmission of the Tao." There, separate from questions of history, "Tao Learning" orthodoxy still held sway. In the policy question on classical and historical studies, however, the scope of "Tao Learning" had been curtailed. There had been a clear diminution of Chu Hsi as a historian. No longer was history automatically reduced to the Classics. No longer was historiography simply a question of the proper moralizing historiography. But neither were any of the Classics themselves yet reduced to history. Nor were the historical Classics denied their priority. Changes were brewing but another century would pass before late eighteenth-century Confucians such as Chang Hsueh-ch'eng would begin to gainsay the priority of the Classics and dissolve classicism into historical studies. (Ibid.: 11a-13a)

Notes

- 1 Before the abolition of the Confucian examination system in 1905, the Five Classics and Four Books were the backbone of the education system. The Five Classics included the *Change*, *Documents*, *Poetry*, *Rites*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. A *Music Classic* had been lost in the classical period. These basic “Five Classics” were later augmented during the T’ang and Sung but took their final form during the early Ming. The Four Books were the *Analects*, the *Mencius*, the “Great Learning,” and the “Doctrine of the Mean.” The latter two were drawn from the *Rites Classic*.
- 2 For an outdated but still “stock” perspective on the unchanging nature of the curriculum in civil examinations, which is based on no archival research, see the “Minutes” recording the following exchange that occurred between Wm. Theodore de Bary and Lynn Struve at the October 5, 1985, meeting of the Columbia University Neo-Confucian Seminar in New York City: “Dr. de Bary raised a question about the existence of any discussion or debate among intellectuals of the Ch’ing over the restructuring of the civil service exams. He noted that the Yuan was the only period in which the civil service examination system or its curriculum was debated after Chu Hsi’s revision of the curriculum in the Sung. At the onset of the Yuan, Kubilai made the decision to adhere to Chu’s curriculum, and the decision apparently was never reconsidered. Huang Tsung-hsi also recommended the curriculum recommended by Chu Hsi. Dr. Struve agreed that the intellectual task in the Ch’ing was very much perceived as an attempt to reassert the old, respected institutions. Ku Yen-wu was concerned that the preparation for the exams did not provide a rigorous education so much as it provided rigorous training for passing

the examinations. His program of intellectual reform was designed to ensure that modern institutions lived up to the standards and reputation of their historical antecedents. In this way, the k'ao-cheng movement was less of a break with the traditional methods of education of the Sung and Yuan than it is supposed to have been. The k'ao-cheng movement rather addressed the question of how to bring the modern educational system back into line with the high standards of institutions designed in the Sung and implemented in the Yuan."

- 3 Ying-t'ien was the "Southern Capital Region" during the Ming; it became Kiangsu and Anhwei provinces, together known as "Kiangnan," during the Ch'ing.
- 4 Such specialization frequencies are about the same for the Ming and Ch'ing metropolitan examinations that I have examined.
- 5 This assumption is strengthened by the fact that in provincial and metropolitan examinations all candidates were divided equally into "wards" (*fang* 房) according to the Classic chosen for specialization. During the Ming in 1580 and 1583, Ku Yen-wu tells us there were 18 wards: 5 each for the *Change* and *Poetry*; 4 for the *Documents*; and 2 each for the *Annals* and *Rites*. See Ku, "Shih-pa-fang" 十八房 (The 18 examination wards), in *Jih-chih lu chi-shih*, 16.382-83. In the Ch'ing, until the specialization requirement was dropped, there were usually 5 or 6 wards of students specializing on the *Change*, 4 wards on the *Documents*, 5 or 6 wards on the *Poetry*, and 1 ward each for the *Annals* and *Rites Classics*. See *Chin-shih san-tai lü-li pien-lan* 進士三代履歷便覽 (Overview by region of backgrounds to three generations of civil *chin-shih* graduates from 1646 to 1721). N.d. Thus, the historical Classics constituted during the late Ming 33% and during the Ch'ing 28% to 31% of the total number of

wards in the examinations.

- 6 Policy questions during the late empire frequently did not involve current government "policy." Typically such questions were defined according to issues drawn from the "Classics, the Dynastic Histories, or practical affairs" (*ching-shih shih-wu ts'e* 經世事務策). On the historical importance of policy questions see *Ch'ang-t'an* (Everyday discussions on the civil examinations), compiled by T'ao Fu-lu 陶福履 (Shanghai: Commercial Press *Ts'ung-shu chi-ch'eng ch'u-pien*, 1936), pp. 21-24.
- 7 The *Wen-pien* was included in the 1780s in the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu* 四庫全書 (Complete Collection of the Four Treasuries) (Taipei: Commercial Press reprint), 1377: 101-117.
- 8 *Huang-Ming kung-chü k'ao* 皇明貢舉考 (Survey of civil examinations during the Ming dynasty). Compiled by Chang Ch'ao-jui 張朝瑞 (Ming Wan-li edition, ca. 1578) 1.73b-74a. See, for example, the emperor's policy question in 1148, in *Shao-hsing shih-pa-nien t'ung-nien hsiao-lu fu-lu* 紹興十八年同年小錄附錄 (Minutiae and supplement for graduates of the 1148 civil examination) (Ming edition with 1491, 1595, and 1835 afterwords), pp. 5a-5b. Coming early in the Southern Sung era (1127-1279), the 1148 palace question asked candidates to comment on the reasons why the Kuang-wu reign (A.D. 25-57), which followed the fall of the Former Han dynasty in A.D. 8, was the most glorious era since antiquity, intimating that the Southern Sung quartered in Hangchow would also surpass its Northern Sung predecessor despite the fall of the north to the Jurchen Chin dynasty (1115-1234). This is one of the only two surviving Sung dynasty examination records (the other is for 1256—see below) and survives because Chu Hsi took his *chin-shih* on this examination, placing number 90 in the third rank at the age of only nineteen.

See p. 47a. See also Kracke (1947), pp. 105-19, which discusses both the 1148 and 1256 examination lists.

- 9 See for example, *Huang-Ming chuang-yuan ch'üan-ts'e* 皇明狀元全策 (Complete set of policy answers prepared during the Ming dynasty by optimi for the palace civil examination), compiled by Chiang I-k'ui 蔣一葵 (1591 edition), *Chuang-yuan ts'e* 狀元策 (Policy examination essays for the palace civil examination by optimi), compiled by Chiao Hung 焦竑 and Wu Tao-nan 吳道南 (Continued for Ch'ing dynasty, 1733 Huai-te-t'ang edition), and *Chuang-yuan ts'e* 狀元策 (Policy examination essays for the palace civil examination by optimi) (Chia-ch'ing edition).
- 10 Examples of T'ang policy questions for both the *chin-shih* and *ming-ching* 明經 ("clarify the Classics") tests can be found in *Wen-yuan ying-hua* 文苑英華 (A gathering of masterpieces of literature) (Peking: Chung-hua Bookstore), *ch'üan* 473-502, and Ch'üan Te-yü 權德輿, *Ch'üan Tsai-chih wen-chi* 權載之文集 (Collected essays of Ch'üan Te-yü) (Shanghai: Commercial Press, pp. 23, 198. *Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an* edition, 1919-37), 40.3b-11b. Cf. McMullen (1988), pp. 23, For examples of Sung policy answers see Ch'en Liang 陳亮, *Lung-ch'uan wen-chi* 龍川文集 (Collected writings of Ch'en Liang) (Late Ch'ing edition), 11.1a-36a, and Tillman (1988), pp. 403-31.
- 11 See both the emperor's policy question and Wen T'ien-hsiang's complete (although damaged) policy answer in the 1522 edition of the *Pao-yu ssu-nien teng-k'e-lu* 寶祐四年登科錄 (Record of the ascension to *chin-shih* rank on the 1256 palace civil examination), pp. 1a-7a, 104a-129b. An incomplete version of the answer appears in *Nan-Sung teng-k'e-lu liang-chung* 南宋登科錄兩種 (Two types of records of ascension to the *chin-shih* degree in the Southern Sung) (Taipei: Wen-hai Press, 1981),

pp. 301-49. Wen's answer has been reproduced in many Ming-Ch'ing collectanea and in the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu*. For an account of his career, see *Sung li-k'e chuang-yuan lu* 宋歷科狀元錄 (Record of optimi from palace examinations of the Sung), compiled by Chu Hsi-chao 朱希召 (Taipei: Wen-hai Press reprint of Ming edition), 8.10a-15b.

- 12 See Ming Ta'i-tsu's 1370 decree reestablishing the civil examination process of selection and basing the examination curriculum on the Yuan dynasty examinations because of their more concrete — less literary — requirements, in *Huang-Ming kung-chü k'ao*, 1.17b-18b. See also Dardess (1973), p. 36, for discussion of the Yuan disparagement of T'ang-Sung literary examinations, and Dardess (1983), pp. 194-95, for early Ming echoes of the Yuan examination process. We should quickly add, however, that late in the Ch'ien-lung reign, a poetry question was added to the examination that lasted until 1900.
- 13 Yuan dynasty policy questions can be found in Huang Chin 黃潛, *Chin-hua Huang hsien-sheng wen-chi* 金華黃先生文集 (Collected essays of Huang Chin from Chin-hua) (Shanghai: Commercial Press, *Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an*, 1919-37), pp. 191-200. Early Ming policy questions prepared by Su Po-heng 蘇伯衡 (1329- 1392?) in 1385 can be found in *Huang-Ming wen-heng* 皇明文衡 (Balancing of essays from the Ming dynasty) (Shanghai: Commercial Press, *Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an*, 1919-1937), 23.220-222. See also the 1370-71 provincial, metropolitan, and palace policy answers by the first Ming optimus Wu Po-tsung 吳伯宗 (n.d.) in the *Ssu-k'u ch'üan-shu* (Taipei: Commercial Press reprint), 1233: 217-236.
- 14 Ma Tuan-lin 馬端臨, *Wen-hsien t'ung-k'ao* 文獻通考 (General history of institutions and critical examination of documents) (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1936), pp. 289-90. Ou-yang's ideas were not put into effect,

however.

- 15 For examples, see *Ming Wan-li chih Ch'ung-chen chien hsiang-shih-lu hui-shih-lu hui-chi* 明萬曆至崇禎間鄉試錄會試錄彙集 (Digest of provincial and metropolitan civil examination records from the Wan-li and Ch'ung-chen reigns of the Ming dynasty) (Late Ming edition).
- 16 *Huang-Ming ts'e-heng* 皇明策衡, compiled by Mao Wei 茅維 (Wu-hsing, 1605 edition).
- 17 *Huang-Ming hsiang-hui-shih erh-san-ch'ang ch'eng-wen hsuan*, compiled by Ch'en Jen-hsi 陳仁錫 (1633 Pai-sung-t'ang edition).
- 18 See *Ch'in-ting mo-k'an t'iao-li* 欽定曆勘條例 (Imperially prescribed guidelines for the civil examination review) (1834 edition), 2.7b-13b, and 2.21b-25a.
- 19 *Chin-k'e ch'üan-t'i hsin-ts'e fa-ch'eng* compiled and annotated by Liu T'an-chih 劉坦之 (1764 edition).
- 20 *Che-chiang hsiang-shih lu* 浙江鄉試錄 (Record of the Che-chiang provincial examination), 1516, in *Ming-tai teng-k'o-lu hui-pien* 明代登科錄彙編 (Compendium of records for examination rankings during the Ming period) (Taipei: Student Bookstore, 1969), 5/2643-2830.
- 21 Political institutions, social family histories, and economic processes described in Chinese topical histories were never presented in purely structural terms and still stressed the role of human agency in historical change.
- 22 *Che-chiang hsiang-shih lu*, 1516: 5/2682. The Han histories as examinable texts had been the mainstay of the T'ang civil examination questions on history, thus putting these Ming examiners at odds with their T'ang predecessors; see McMullen (1988), pp. 197-99.
- 23 See *Chu Wen-kung wen-chi, hsu chi* 朱文公文集續集 (Shanghai: Com-

mercial Press, *Ssu-pu ts'ung-k'an* edition, 1934-35), 2.6b. On Chu's limited role in compiling the *Kang-mu*, see Sung Lien 宋濂, *Sung Wen-hsien kung ch'üan-chi* 宋文憲公全集 (Complete collection of Sung Lien) (Shanghai: Chung-hua Bookstore, *Ssu-pu pei-yao* edition, 1927-37), 12. 14b-15a. Cf. Elman (1983A), pp. 175-222.

- 24 *Che-chiang hsiang-shih lu*, 1516: 5/2778-80. See also *Ming-Ch'ing chin-shih t'i-ming pei-lu suo-yin* 明清進士題名碑錄索引 (Index to Ming-Ch'ing *chin-shih* [examination] stelae name lists of successful candidates) (Taipei: Wen-shih-che Press reprint, 1982, 3 vols.), 3/2504. Curiously, however, the fourth policy question raised the issue of official remonstrance (*chien* 諫): "the official shows his loyalty through good remonstrance; the ruler shows his sageliness by obeying [such] remonstrance." See 5/2684-86. This question suggests that examiners were not imperial lackeys and could use the policy questions to invoke the official's moral high ground vis-à-vis the ruler, even one like the Cheng-te emperor. My thanks to Peter Bol for suggesting other ways to decipher the deliberate overpraise in these examination essays.
- 25 To keep from going too far afield, I will not discuss other 1516 policy answers here.
- 26 *Huang-Ming ts'e-heng*, 13.17a. See also 7.54a-59a for the policy question and answer in the 1582 Kwangtung provincial examination that focused on the *Shih-chi*. As in 1594, Ssu-ma Ch'ien, for all of his strengths using the *chi-chuan* genre, was taken to task by the examiners and candidates for his moral heterodoxy and his fascination with historical persons of questionable repute.
- 27 *Huang-Ming ts'e-heng*, 13.18a-b. Reference to Confucius as an "uncrowned king" (*su-wang* 素王) and the *Annals* as the "Unicorn Classic"

- (*lin-ching* 麟經) derive from the *Kung-yang Commentary*, not the *Tso chuan*, which the essay in a curious way has rhetorically covered up. For discussion see Elman (1990), chapters 4-7.
- 28 The 1582 Kwangtung question and answer on the *Shih-chi* did the same; see above.
- 29 If one compares the 1594 Fukien policy question and answer on history with the ones in Shun-t'ien and Shensi the same year, the chief difference one finds between them is that the latter paid more attention to the two genres of annalistic versus topical histories per se and focused much less or hardly at all on the "Tao Learning" moralizing historiography. See *Huang-Ming ts'e-heng*, 12.13a-18b, 13.83a-90a.
- 30 See for example the *Shun-t'ien hsiang-shih-lu* 順天鄉試錄, 1831: pp. 4a-5a, pp. 64a-66b, and *Hui-shih lu* 會試錄 (Record of metropolitan examinations), 1685: pp. 13a-15a, 74b-77a. On the latter, see further below.
- 31 *Kwang-tung hsiang-shih lu* 廣東鄉試錄 (Record of the Kwangtung provincial civil examination), 1654: "Hsu" 序 (Preface), pp. 1a-5a, and pp. 15a-20a.

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明清華南鄉試中史學知識角色的轉變

艾爾曼

摘要

本文利用明末清初華南各省鄉試考卷的內容，來敘述十七世紀時經學與史學關係的轉變。根據科舉考試科目的改變，可推知十八世紀時，在考證學界中，史學幾乎與經學居同等地位。北京第一歷史檔案館和台灣中研院的明清檔案所收藏的科舉資料為評估清代優秀人才教育的演變提供獨特線索。

首先，本文提出明清兩代長江流域各鄉試中「策問」的分類統計資料，並表列南方各省應試者在五經中「專經」的選擇頻率。我們可利用後者的資料來推算應試者之專經選擇與史學經典——書經及春秋——的人數。

其次，本文探索由漢代至清代「策問」的演變，並將其與十七、十八世紀的八股文相比較。「策問」在鄉試，會試及殿試中的角色，亦被提及。此外，並介紹明清兩代重要的「策問」及答案的資料。

最後，本文評估1516年浙江鄉試，1594年福建鄉試，及1658年廣東鄉試中關於史學的「策問」內容。對1685年的會試中有關歷史的「策問」亦加以評估，以為明清兩代科舉內容中史學地位的轉變提供更完整的解釋。