

CHINESE IDEAS IN THE WEST

Prepared by Professor Derk Bodde for the Committee on Asiatic Studies in American Education
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Introduction

In addition to material inventions that came to the West from China (discussed in the article *China's Gifts to the West*), Chinese "ideas" also influenced political and social development in the West. The article *Chinese Ideas in the West* discusses the Chinese origins of and influence on: the **civil service** (see note below), **alchemy and chemistry**, **agricultural methods**, thought in the **Age of the Enlightenment**, **Western literature**, and **Western political and economic theories**.

The discussion in this article assumes a more advanced background in Western history than does the article on Chinese inventions. The material might best be assigned to selected students who would report back to the class, or it might be presented by the teacher.

Note: Since the development of a civil service was a highlight of the Chinese political system, teachers might wish to draw upon the information in this section of the pamphlet when discussing Confucian China.

Foreward

It is more important today than ever before that men of all cultures understand themselves, understand other cultures, and understand the interchange and expansion of ideas which have created a common denominator of all civilization. Unless that understanding can be gained and used as a basis for wise action, the nations of the modern world may destroy themselves and civilization as we know it.

Education has a major responsibility for widening horizons and advancing understanding among citizens. This excellent article, third in the series of the American Council on Education and second from the deep learning and gifted pen of Derk Bodde, is intended to aid in the promotion of Asiatic studies in American education. The article is addressed to teachers, secondary school pupils, and college students — to all who are interested in where our ideas came from and in the contributions of China to our civilization. The article will be useful for classes in literature, in science, in history, and in civics, and for the general reader. In it, in simple terms, are outlined accounts of "a Chinese Cinderella," of "alchemy — forerunner of modern chemistry," of China's contributions to Europe's Age of Enlightenment, to current political and economic theories, to civil service, to Western literature, and to agricultural economy. The selected bibliography on these topics will be of value to students and to curriculum-makers who are interested in further emphasis on Asiatic studies in American schools and colleges.

The Committee on Asiatic Studies is most grateful to Dr. Bodde for his careful preparation of the manuscript and takes pride in presenting the article as an aid in the readjustments of education which are necessary for the development of international understanding.

Howard E. Wilson, *Chairman*
Committee on Asiatic Studies in American Education
July 1948

Chinese Ideas in the West: Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

Just now, for example, we are beginning to harness the energy concealed in the tiny atom. Its strength is all but supernatural. Yet it is as nothing beside the strength of the *ideas* of the men who will control it. Whether the atom is to be used for man's good or for his utter destruction is dependent upon these ideas.

Western civilization gives abundant evidence of the mastery we have gained over physical matter. But the relations between nations today reveal how meager is their understanding one of the other. The greatest crisis before our country lies in this gap between our control of things and our understanding of other peoples. Somehow we must bridge this gap, and quickly. Otherwise, our mastery of things will simply provide us with irresistible force with which to bring about our own destruction. The future of civilization may depend on whether enough nations and groups within nations can acquire an understanding and appreciation of one another to the point where world peace is possible.

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

A Chinese Cinderella

It is not generally realized, for example, that a tale written in China in the ninth century is the world's oldest known version of the story of Cinderella. The next earliest was not published until seven hundred years later — in Lyons, France, in 1544. And the one generally known to us, in which Cinderella's fairy godmother sends her to the ball in a pumpkin coach drawn by six mice which have been changed into horses, dates from 1697 and is also French.

Almost three hundred and fifty other stories have been collected that are related in some way to Cinderella. They come from practically every country of Europe, as well as the Near East, India, Indo-China, North and South Africa, Chile, and the West Indies. Many of them differ so greatly from one another that only a specialist in folklore can recognize them as belonging to the same general group. But in the case of the Chinese version, with its evil stepmother and the incident of the fitting of the shoe, there can be no doubt.

It was written by a Chinese scholar named Tuan Ch'eng-shih, whose hobby it was to gather all the stories he heard about strange and supernatural events. In the year 853 C.E. he published a collection of these under the title *Miscellaneous Offerings from Yu-yang*. (Yu-yang was the name of a place in central China.) Among them is one that he says he heard from a servant, whom he describes as a "caveman" from South China. In other words, the servant was a non-Chinese tribesman coming from a part of the country that at that time was still a wild area only thinly populated by Chinese. "He remembered much," says our author, "about the strange stories of the south." Here, somewhat abbreviated, is the story as this tribesman told it:

Long ago there was a chief of a mountain cave who had two wives. One of them died, leaving him a clever and intelligent daughter named Sheh Hsien. After he himself died, however, she was always treated badly by her stepmother. One day she caught a small fish which she kept in a bowl until it grew so large that she had to put it into a pond behind her house. There she fed it scraps of food, and it became so tame that whenever she approached, it would rise out of the water and rest its head on the bank. The stepmother learned of this and wanted to see the fish for herself, but when she came near, it refused to show itself. So one day, after sending Sheh Hsien away on an errand, she disguised herself in Sheh Hsien's clothes and went to the pond. When the fish, fooled by this trick, came out, she killed and ate it. Then she hid its bones under a dunghill.

When Sheh Hsien returned and could no longer find the fish, she wept bitterly. But suddenly a man, with long flowing hair and wearing old clothes, came down from heaven and consoled her, saying: "Do not weep. Your stepmother has killed the fish and hidden its bones under the dunghill. Take them secretly to your room, and if you want anything, only pray to them. Your wish will be fulfilled." The girl did as she was told, and as a result got gold, pearls, dresses, and food whenever she wanted.

One day the stepmother went away to a cave festival, leaving the girl to watch the house. After she had gone, the girl dressed herself in beautiful clothes, put on a pair of golden shoes, and also went to the festival. There, unfortunately, she was recognized by her stepmother's daughter. As a result, she had to run home so quickly that she left one of her shoes behind.

The cave people then sold this shoe to the neighboring country of T'o-huan, where it fell into the hands of the king. He told the ladies of his court to try it on, but it was so small that it fitted nobody. The same thing happened when he ordered all the women of his kingdom to try it. Then he sent searchers everywhere to look for its owner. Finally they found Sheh Hsien, who put the shoe on her foot and it fitted perfectly. After that, they brought her before the king. She was married to him and went away with him to his kingdom, taking with her the fish's bones. But the evil stepmother and her daughter were stoned to death.

The first year after he was married, the king prayed so greedily to the bones for precious stones of all sorts, that after a while his wishes were no longer granted. So he buried the bones on a beach, and enclosed them in a golden parapet. One night a high tide came up and washed them away.

The Cinderella stories fall into two main groups. In one, interest is centered on Cinderella's ball, while comparatively little attention is paid to the supernatural animal that helps her. This is the type most familiar to us and most commonly found in western Europe. In the other, much attention is paid to the helpful animal, but Cinderella's ball is omitted. This type is most common in Russia and other Slavic-speaking countries. The Chinese story contains both the helpful animal — the fish — and the ball — the cave festival — and thus seems to be related to both types.

Old though it is, the Chinese version shows definite signs of having been derived from still earlier — and now lost — versions. The incident of the cave festival, for example, is vaguely told and only mechanically linked with the remainder of the story. It seems very much as if the author had borrowed this incident from some still earlier version, but without clearly understanding its significance. It will also be remembered that the king who married Sheh Hsien came from a country called T'o-huan. Though this country is not identified in the story, we know from Chinese historical writings of that time that there was a country by that name located near a region called "T'o-ho-lo." And T'o-ho-lo can be identified with fair certainty as close to the modern city of Bangkok, the capital of Siam. This makes it probable that the Chinese story of Cinderella did not originate in China, but was taken there from southeast Asia, perhaps by the Arabs and others who went as traders to Canton in large numbers.

This story shows that the same code of human ethics, the same simple virtues which are regarded as basic in the Western world, have been emphasized for centuries in China and other parts of Asia. It is but one example of the way a story or an idea can travel all over the world.

Alchemy — Forerunner of Modern Chemistry

The Chinese were also pioneers in the ancient art of alchemy which antedated modern chemistry. This field of experimentation, which concerned itself with efforts to convert base metals into precious ores, attracted the attention of men until the eighteenth century, when its theories were exploded.

We are all familiar with the romance which surrounded the lives of Roger Bacon and the other notable European alchemists of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Who has not seen pictures of them laboring over their smoky furnaces in secret laboratories, vainly trying to produce artificial gold or silver from such base metals as lead and mercury? Today they are regarded by many people as mere quacks. They themselves, indeed, helped to give this impression of magic by the vague and mystical language with which they described their art — a language which they used purposely to prevent uninitiated outsiders from learning their precious secrets.

Yet, despite the mystical practices that undoubtedly entered their work, modern historians recognize that these men were often much more than ordinary quacks. Some, indeed, ranked among the most learned scholars of their time. The thirteenth century Roger Bacon, for example, is regarded as one of the fathers of modern science. His theories and those of other alchemists of the Middle Ages, though disproved today, were based upon principles which in their own age were almost universally accepted. And though they failed in their immediate purpose of making gold, their discoveries of various compounds and dyes definitely helped to increase the knowledge of mankind. Alchemy, indeed, as its very name shows, was in some ways the forerunner of our modern chemistry.

The syllable "al," in the name "alchemy," tells us something about the history of the word. It shows us that it is of Arabic origin, as are several other words that have "al" as their first syllable, such as "alcohol," "algebra," or "alkali." ("Al" means "the" in Arabic.) But though the Arabs undoubtedly brought alchemy to Europe, they were not its originators.

Traditionally, alchemy is believed to have started in Alexandria and other Egyptian cities among metalworkers who lived there during the early centuries after Christ. These men, in their turn, are commonly believed to have followed philosophical ideas going back to the ancient Greeks.

It is now established, however, that Chinese alchemy is more than two centuries older than that of the Alexandrians. Though it is not yet absolutely proved that Western alchemy had its origin in China, we do know that the world's earliest recorded attempt at alchemy appears in an official history of China in 133 B.C. In that year, a certain old man came before the emperor with the claim that at the age of seventy he had discovered a way to keep from growing older. When the emperor asked for the secret of this magic power, the old man told him that if he would worship the Goddess of the Kitchen Stove, he would find himself miraculously able to change a mercury-sulfur compound called "cinnabar" into gold. And by eating from plates made of this artificial gold, he could prolong his life indefinitely as he, the old man, had done. The emperor eagerly followed these instructions, but unfortunately for their success, the old man himself soon fell ill and died!

Several other equally unsuccessful attempts are recorded in the official Chinese histories and in other literature during the next two centuries. It is not surprising, therefore, that much prejudice developed against would-be alchemists. Even the death penalty, in fact, seems to have been decreed for anyone convicted of trying to produce artificial gold. This severe punishment, however, did not stop the alchemists from secretly continuing their work, and around A.D. 150 a very important treatise on alchemy appeared. It contains the world's earliest detailed recipe for manufacturing artificial gold in order to produce the magic elixir of immortality. Its language, however, is purposely made so abstruse that no modern chemist would dare to follow its directions! Nevertheless, some of its symbolism, as when it speaks of mercury as "the tiger" and sulphur as "the dragon," is remarkably similar to that found later in European literature on alchemy.

Chinese alchemy was based on the theory that the fundamental law of the universe is one of change — in other words, that everything in the universe is constantly evolving from one state to another and nothing remains permanently the same. The transformation of one metal into another by human means, therefore, was regarded simply as a particular instance of the operation of this universal natural law. Gold was the chief metal that Chinese alchemists concentrated on producing. This was not because they were particularly desirous of wealth, but rather because they hoped to discover a means of preparing an elixir of immortality. Gold was regarded as the most suitable substance for their experimentation, as it does not rust or corrode under chemical action. They reasoned that it must, therefore, be an "immortal" mineral, which, if taken as a medicine by mortals, would endow them with similar immortality.

These ideas appear in a famous Chinese treatise on alchemy written by a recluse scholar, Ko Hung, around the year 325. In this he says, for example:

Flying, running, and crawling creatures all have definite forms. Yet all of a sudden they may discard their old bodies and change into new creatures. Among all creatures, man is the noblest. Yet there are not a few cases when men and women have been changed into a crane, a stone, a tiger, a monkey, sand, or a turtle.... Transformation is the natural law of the universe. Why, then, should we suspect that gold and silver cannot be made out of other things?

But success, he warns, is possible only when working in solitude and after long spiritual preparation:

The preparation of the elixir should be done in some lonely spot on a famous mountain, with not more than three people present. One should first fast for one hundred days and wash oneself with the five fragrant things until one is perfectly purified. One should not approach any impure things or have contact with vulgar people. Furthermore, one should not allow doubters of the Art to know about the matter, for if any slander is made of the Divine Elixir, it will surely fail.

Having prepared oneself, one goes to work as follows:

Use an iron vessel, nine inches long and five inches in diameter. Fill it with a paste made of ground arsenic sulphide, mixed with powder made from worms, crickets, beetles, etc. Two measures of "elixir powder water" may be added. Place it over a fire of horse dung until it is extremely dry..."

Several more processes of this kind are carried out, until.

the furnace is heated to redness over a charcoal fire. Mercury is added. When the mercury begins to stir, lead is poured in. Yellowness will then rise up from the sides and meet in the middle. Upon pouring this on the ground, gold will be obtained.

This gold is then mixed with two unidentifiable substances for a hundred days, until it becomes soft and can be kneaded into pills. The eating of these pills three times a day

will drive away all diseases. A blind man will regain his sight, a deaf man his hearing, and an aged man will become again as if he were but thirty years old. It will be possible to enter fire without being burned, and to be invulnerable to all evils, poisons, cold winds, heat, or dampness.

In these ideas Chinese alchemy shows important differences from the practices of the Alexandrian metallurgists, who never claimed to be able to make *genuine* gold and silver out of other metals. They merely said they could change the *color* of these other metals, and thus *make them look* like gold or silver. Furthermore, their aim in so doing was to gain wealth by palming off their *imitations* of precious metals on other people. They did not have the belief, as did the Chinese, that gold is an "immortal" metal, and that it could, therefore, be used to give immortality to human beings.

This fundamental Chinese idea crops up again in later Arabic and European alchemy, though often mixed with other ideas that go back to the Alexandrians. Thus, in European alchemy we often see references to the "philosopher's stone," the "elixir of life," and the "fountain of perpetual youth." (It will be remembered that when the Spanish explorer, Ponce de León, discovered Florida in 1521, he was searching for such a "fountain of youth.")

By the thirteenth century, when alchemy was attracting attention in Europe, it had become largely discredited in China. Before that time, however, Chinese alchemists had succeeded in persuading even emperors to try their elixirs. Among them were some who actually died from the effects! What is more important is the fact that the experiments of the Chinese alchemists probably resulted in certain inventions of great practical value for mankind. Among them, it has been suggested, were porcelain and gunpowder. The use of gold in modern medicine, especially in treatment for arthritis, has still to be traced historically, however.

In Europe, alchemy lingered many centuries longer than in China. Its deathblow was dealt only in 1783, when Lavoisier (1743-94), the famous French father of modern chemistry, published an epoch-making treatise. In this he demonstrated, by making careful weight measurements of things before and after they had been burned, that fire cannot possibly exist as a separate element. He thus disproved the old theory that all things are formed from the constantly changing combinations of only a few basic elements, of which fire is one. In its place he laid the foundations for our modern classification of chemical elements. And our grandfathers came to consider alchemists quacks or magicians.

We have no definite evidence of how the Chinese art of alchemy was brought to Western Asia, but very probably it was carried there over the Central Asiatic trade route by traders, religious pilgrims, or possibly even soldiers. In the case of paper, for example, we know that the Arabs learned the secret of its manufacture from Chinese soldiers whom they captured in battle in the year 751. As Arabic alchemy begins not long after this event — in the ninth century — it, too, might very possibly have been learned by the Arabs from the Chinese through chance contacts of this sort.

China and the Age of Enlightenment

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

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

Fascinated by the ancient and impressive civilization in which they found themselves, these Europeans wrote home detailed accounts of what they saw. Their letters provided material for a long series of books on China, written usually in French or Latin and published in Paris, the European center of Jesuit activities. Among them were such works as *Confucius, the Philosopher of the Chinese* (1687); the *Description of China* (1735), in four volumes; the long series of *Edifying and Curious Letters*, in 34 volumes (1702-76); the *General History of China*, in 13 volumes (1777-85); and the lengthy *Memoirs on the History, Sciences, Arts, etc., of the Chinese*, in 16 volumes (1776-1814).

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

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

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

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

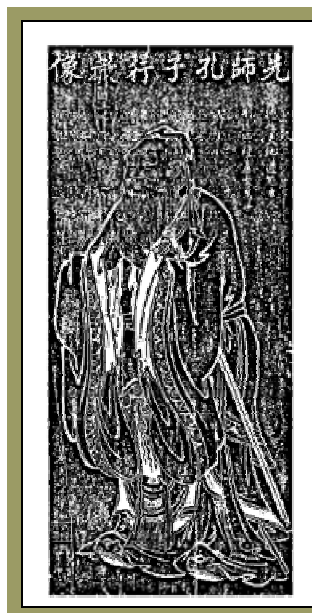
The story of how European thinkers of this period reacted to Chinese thought is a fascinating one that can only briefly be told here. The most striking example in the seventeenth century was the German philosopher, Leibniz (1646-1716), one of the most internationally minded men who ever lived. He read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

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

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

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

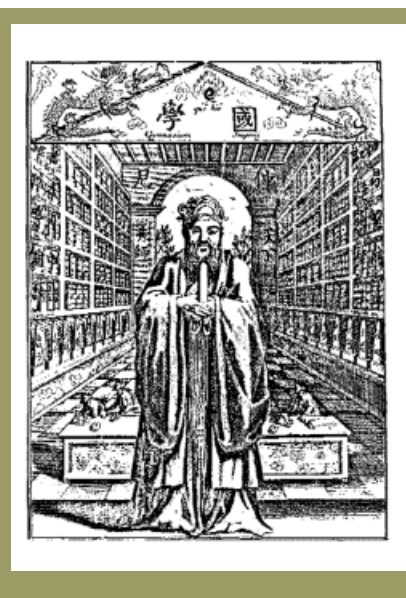
In 1755 Voltaire produced a play, *The Chinese Orphan*, which he adapted from an old Chinese play that had been published in French translation in 1735. This play, significantly described by him as "the morals of Confucius in five acts," was written as an answer to the theories of Rousseau (1712-78).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



Confucius as seen by the Chinese

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

Voltaire died only eleven years before the French Revolution. This world-shaking event, followed by the wars of Napoleon and the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century, turned men's minds away from China to things nearer at home. In Europe the enthusiasm for China died. In America, however, there was at least one nineteenth century thinker who, quite independently of the European Enlightenment, fell under the influence of China. He was Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82), who eagerly read many translations of the Confucian classics. India, to be sure, inspired some of his more important ideas, such as the theory of the Over-Soul, and of the unreality of the world as we see it. But from China he accepted the Confucian concept of the true gentleman, the belief that good



Confucius as seen by the Europeans

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

government must be based on a sound moral foundation, and the emphasis upon the responsibilities that each individual in society holds toward other individuals. These ideas still have value for us today. We call them American ideas. Few of us realize that they were expressed long ago in China.

Political and Economic Theories

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

found powerful support for their theories. For in China, as we have seen, Confucianism, though it accepted the idea of an absolute ruling power, at the same time set certain moral restraints upon the abuses of that power.

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

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

productivity. It should not, on the other hand, aid the "sterile" processes of manufacturing and commerce by offering them tariff protection or permitting the creation of great private monopolies, for this, in their opinion, would interfere with the natural processes of distribution and violate the Natural Order.

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

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

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

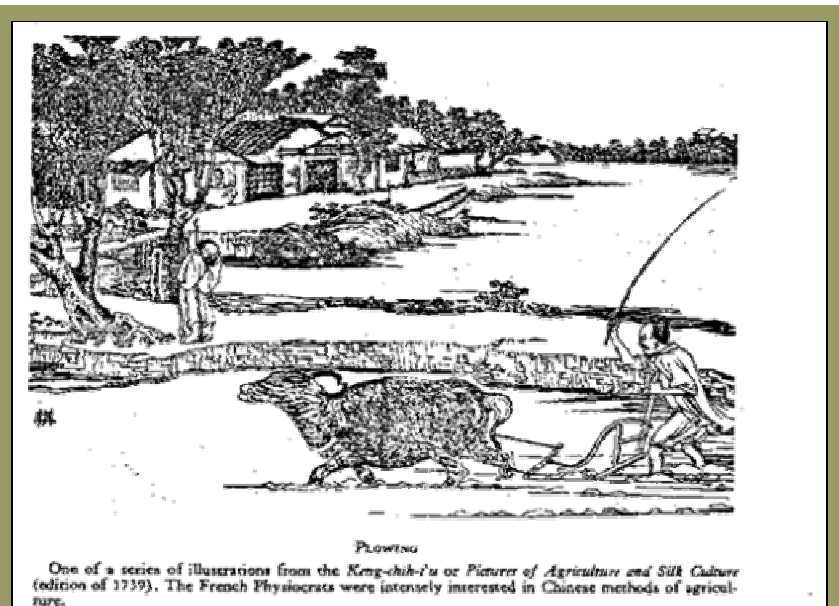
The Chinese government even went so far as to place restrictions upon the development of private trade. Herein lies the major point of difference between Chinese theory and that of the Physiocrats. Though Quesnay and his group thought that the government should do nothing that would encourage trade,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

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

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

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

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



Plowing

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

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

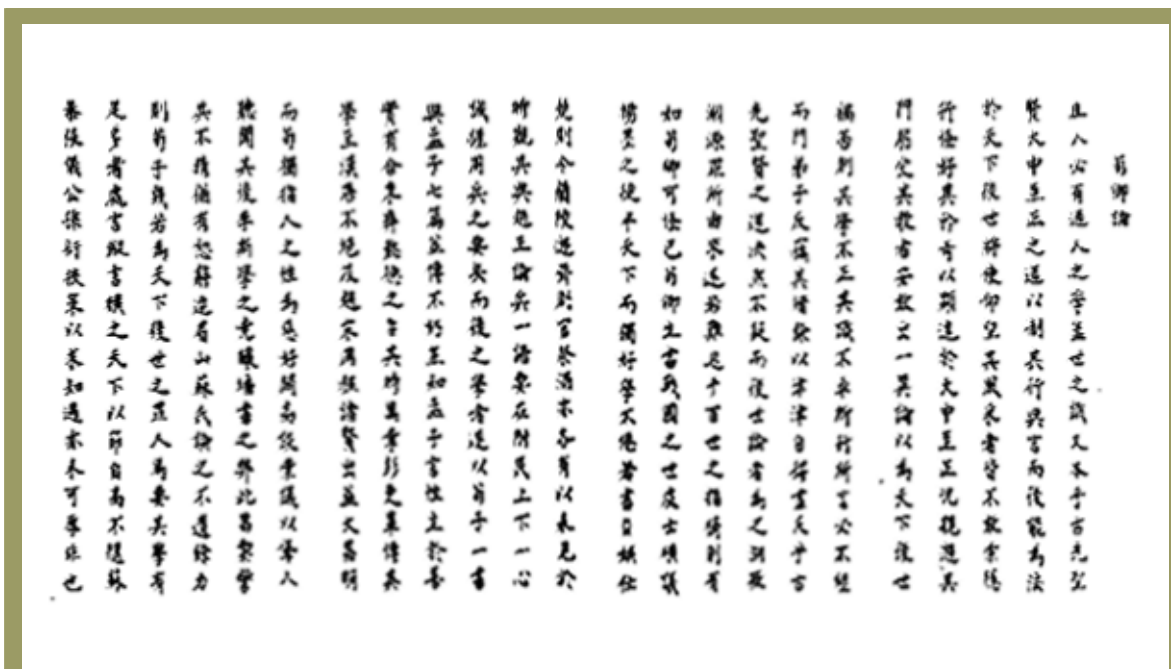
Though the Physiocrats failed in the practical application of their doctrines, their impact on later economic theory was strong. This influence is particularly evident in the ideas of Adam Smith (1723-90), author of the classical economic work of modern times, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). Thus the Physiocrats may truly be said to rank among the founders of modern Western political economy. And, in their insistence upon the need for universal education, they led the way in a movement that in the nineteenth century was to become a standard practice in Western democracies.

Civil Service

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

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

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



A Chinese Examination Paper

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

The examinations took place within huge walled enclosures, inside of which were thousands of small brick cells, laid out in straight rows like the houses of a town. Each cell contained a bench and table, and housed a nervous candidate. Every precaution was taken to prevent cheating. Candidates were searched

before entering the enclosure, carefully watched while the examination was in progress, and not permitted to leave until it was over. Each examination commonly lasted several days and was of unbelievable difficulty. In 1889, for example, out of more than 14,000 candidates taking the examination in Peking, only slightly over 300 passed. The reward for success, however, was entry into the honored ranks of the mandarins who governed the country.

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

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

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

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

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

Such public statements finally led the British government to create a committee to investigate the matter. In 1853 this committee presented to Parliament a report entitled "The Organization of the Permanent Civil Service." The report recommended that a central board of examiners be formed to prepare examinations on the general knowledge of the candidates; that these examinations should be held regularly and should be open to all; and that promotion in government service should be based on merit instead of favoritism. All these were principles that had governed the Chinese system for many centuries. Though bitterly attacked in Parliament, the report resulted in the creation of Britain's first civil service commission in 1855.

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

As in England, however, many people who derived personal benefit from the old spoils system strongly opposed the new idea. Some protested that the use of examinations to determine the fitness of candidates for office was Chinese, foreign, and, therefore, "un-American!" Consequently, it was not until 1883 that the proposal of 1868 was finally passed by the Congress.

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

Influence on Western Literature

References to China abound in French and English literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In the latter century, particularly, a great many stories appeared which attempted to use Chinese themes or were written in a supposedly Chinese manner. Indeed, the vogue for China led to the development of an entirely new form of literature, known as "Chinese letters," in which the hero was usually an imaginary Chinese sage, supposedly traveling through Europe, who wrote accounts of what he saw on his journey to his friends at home. This literary form was cleverly used to express all sorts of shrewd and amusing criticisms of European civilization. It has interest for us today because of the frequent comparisons made between Europe and China, and the picture thus given us of the attitudes of eighteenth century European writers toward China.

The first such "Chinese letters" seem to have been written by a certain French author in 1739, and numerous imitations followed both in France and England in the next several decades. Oliver Goldsmith (1728-84), author of the *Vicar of Wakefield*, was the most famous writer to use the device. His *Chinese Letters*, written in 1759-60 and reissued two years later as *The Citizen of the World*, reveal a considerable knowledge of China.

We have already seen how a Chinese play was used by Voltaire as the basis for a play of his own, *The Chinese Orphan* (1755). The same Chinese play enjoyed success in other countries as well. It was translated into English in 1741, into Italian in 1748, and provided the inspiration for *Elpenor* (1783), an unfinished tragedy by Germany's greatest poet, Goethe (1749-1832). Perhaps the reason why Goethe never succeeded in finishing it is that he tried to put it into an ancient Greek setting. Another play, *Turandot*, is an interesting example, in European dress, of the blending of cultural influences from both China and the Near East. Its story is that of a cruel Chinese princess who lives in Peking. She has sworn to marry no one who cannot guess three riddles she has prepared. All suitors who fail must suffer execution. So beautiful is she, however, that many have tried, though none successfully. Finally a Near Eastern prince, coming to Peking in disguise, guesses the riddles, wins her hand, and by his love turns her from her cruelty. This story, though Chinese in setting, is quite un-Chinese in spirit and actually goes back to a Persian tale. A French translation made of it in 1710 was the basis for an Italian play written fifty-two years later by a Venetian dramatist, Count Carlo Gozzi (1720-1806). Gozzi's play became in turn the basis in 1802 for a German version by the great poet, Schiller (1759-1805). Weber (1786-1826), the German composer, contributed incidental music to Schiller's play, including a "*Chinese Overture*." This, interestingly enough, he derived from a Chinese melody contained in Rousseau's *Dictionary of Music* (1767).

Of the several later plays and operas inspired by the story of *Turandot*, the most notable is that by Puccini (1858-1924), composer of *Madame Butterfly* and other famous operas. Puccini's work was unfortunately not entirely finished before his death and was first performed only two years later. But it has since been acclaimed by some critics as his greatest opera. In it he uses several genuine Chinese melodies, including a main theme based on a popular Chinese song, "*The Beautiful Plum Blossom*." This song had already been made known in Europe as early as 1804 through a book, *Travels in China*, by John Barrow. The author had visited Peking in 1793 as a member of an official British embassy sent there in that year.

Turning now to Western literature in the nineteenth century, one of the warmest enthusiasts for China was Judith Gautier (1850-1917), daughter of the famous French poet, Théophile Gautier (1811-72). Though she never visited China herself, she studied Chinese as a girl under a Chinese tutor, and in 1867 published *The Book of Jade*, a collection of poems written in the Chinese manner. Her book has been read and praised by many men of letters. In the following year she published an original novel, *The Imperial Dragon*, which was probably the first French novel to have a Chinese setting, a plausible Chinese plot, and Chinese characters. Not long afterward, the American, Bret Harte (1856-1902) was writing sympathetically of the Chinese he knew in California, though admittedly with no knowledge whatever of Chinese civilization or literature.

Far greater than either of these was the Russian, Tolstoy (1828-1910), author of *War and Peace* and other immortal novels. Though his interest in China has been almost completely overlooked, this is perhaps in part because it appears only in his later philosophical writings rather than in his more widely read novels. During the last thirty years of his life, Tolstoy read more than thirty books on China and Chinese thought. The sayings of Confucius and Lao Tzu especially interested him. Indeed, the latter philosopher is said to have been "his favorite among the sages of antiquity." So deeply impressed was he by Chinese thought that he wrote, or had his followers write, no less than nine articles and pamphlets on China. Most of these were published by Tolstoy's own press in cheap editions, selling for only a few cents a copy, so that they might reach the widest number of Russian people. As late as the final year of his life, when he was in his eighties, Tolstoy is reported to have exclaimed: "Were I young, I would go to China!"

Tolstoy's famous doctrine of nonresistance to evil is admittedly greatly inspired by Christian teaching. Yet there is good reason to believe that it was considerably influenced by Lao Tzu's philosophy as well. And it in turn, as is well known, influenced Gandhi in his equally famous theory of political passive-resistance.

Likewise, the Confucian attitude toward music seems to have been well known to Tolstoy when he developed his own remarkably similar theory that music is not merely something to be enjoyed, but also acts as a powerful moral force that can be used to influence men for either good or evil.

Moving into the twentieth century, we find that Chinese poetry inspired the Austrian musical composer Gustav Mahler (1860-1911), to create his greatest choral work, *The Song of the Earth* (1908). The words of this composition are taken from six poems in Hans Bethge's *Chinese Flute* (1907), a collection of verses in German based upon Chinese originals.

Most striking during these years, however, was the influence of Chinese poetry upon the literary movement known as Imagism. The Imagists were a group of young English and American poets who began in 1909 to hold meetings in London to discuss their new literary theories. They wanted to get away from what they considered the artificiality of nineteenth century English poetry. They avoided rhyme and wrote in free verse. They favored simple, everyday speech in place of high-sounding, vague language. They tried to make their poetry as clear and concrete as possible so as to give the most vivid picture in the fewest words — hence the name "Imagist." From 1914 to 1917 they published four collections of Imagist verse which raised a storm of argument in literary circles because of its unconventional nature.

French poetry gave the Imagists their chief inspiration, but Chinese poetry has been described by one of them as their "foster-father." Its influence was particularly evident in the case of three Americans: Ezra Pound (born 1885), John Gould Fletcher (born 1886), and Amy Lowell (1874-1925). The interest of these three in China is not surprising, for Chinese poetry possesses the same qualities of compactness, vivid pictorial portrayal, and use of concrete language, with which they themselves were experimenting.

In 1915 Pound published his *Cathay*, a book of verse based upon some rough translations of Chinese poems that had been given him by a Boston friend. The meter used by Pound in this book has been followed by practically all translators of Chinese poetry since. Fletcher eagerly read Judith Gautier's *Book of Jade*, Bethge's *Chinese Flute*, and other translations or adaptations of Chinese verse. *His Blue Symphony* (1914), which is regarded as one of the masterpieces of Imagist poetry, is Chinese in setting and spirit. And Amy Lowell, whose brother, Percival, had lived in Korea and Japan, looked to China and Japan for the inspiration of her *Lacquer Prints* (1919) and many other poems. In 1921 she collaborated with Florence Ayscough, an American who had long lived in China, in a translation of Chinese poetry called *Fir-Flower Tablets*.

Despite the interest of these poets in China, it must be confessed that they did not always succeed in catching the real essence of the Chinese spirit. This is probably because none of them (except Florence Ayscough, not herself an Imagist) ever went to China or knew the Chinese language themselves. In recent years, however, there have been more and more writers and translators who possess these qualifications, and whose work, therefore, has a more authentic "feel." In Germany there was Richard Wilhelm (1873-1930), who originally went to China as a missionary and returned a firm convert to Chinese culture. His books on China have enjoyed enormous popularity both in Germany and abroad. In England there is Arthur Waley, whose magnificent translations of Chinese poetry are unsurpassed. And in America there are not only such popular writers as Pearl Buck and Lin Yutang, but a host of others as well, many of whose books have become best-sellers. Of particular interest is the fact that the works of living Chinese writers are now becoming increasingly well known through English translation. Lao Shaw's (Lao She's) *Rickshaw Boy*, a powerful novel of social protest, is a notable example. Thus, as knowledge of China increases, it seems certain that Chinese literature will exert an ever-growing influence upon that of the West.

Agriculture

In the years when Henry A. Wallace was Secretary of Agriculture (1933-50), he introduced many legislative measures for the relief of agriculture. Among them are some that are commonly referred to today under the general title of "the ever-normal granary." At the time they were inaugurated, these were criticized by some people as being too "radical" and "revolutionary." Yet in actual fact, the ever-normal granary is anything but new, for it was started in China more than two thousand years ago and has continued there almost ever since under various names and forms.

In the first decade of this century there was a Chinese student of political economy working for his doctor's degree at Columbia University, whose name was Chen Huan-chang. In 1911, he published for his doctor's thesis a huge two-volume work called *The Economic Principles of Confucius and His School*, in which he described, among many other things, how China's first ever-normal granary was established by a certain statesman in 54 B.C.

The essential idea of this institution was for the government to buy up grain from the farmers in years of surplus and keep it in government granaries until a period of famine, when it was sold to the people at a fixed price. In this way the government maintained a constant supply of grain at all times and prevented fluctuations in its price. This was called the "ever-normal granary." In Chen's words, "All provinces... should establish granaries. When the price of grain was low, they should buy it at the normal price, higher than the market price, in order to profit the farmers. When the price was high, they should sell it at the normal price, lower than the market price, in order to profit the consumers." He adds that as the result was good for the people, the emperor gave the title of marquis to the man who originated the idea.

Many Ph.D. theses have a sad way of being forgotten soon after they are written. Chen's book, however, enjoyed a happier fate, for it chanced to fall into the hands of Mr. Wallace, then editor of a weekly paper in Des Moines, Iowa. It must have made a strong impression on him, for he took from it the idea of the ever-normal granary and made it a permanent part of his own thinking.

He wrote about the ever-normal granary in *Wallaces' Farmer*, first in 1918, and again in 1926 and 1927. In the issue of December 6, 1918, he wrote: "If any government shall ever do anything really worth while with our food problem it will be by perfecting the plan tried by the Chinese three thousand years ago; that is, by building warehouses and storing food in years of abundance, and holding it until years of scarcity." On October 6, 1926, he said of the ever-normal granary: "Its principle had in it more of statesmanship than can be found in the vast majority of plans suggested for the relief of American agriculture." And on January 21, 1927, he wrote again prophetically: "Some day the 'ever normal granary' idea will be made to fit modern conditions."

That day arrived when Mr. Wallace became Secretary of Agriculture in 1933. His first effort was to try to control the increasing surpluses of wheat and other commodities which American agriculture, using improved production methods, had been piling up during the 1920's. The resulting lowered prices and loss of farm income had been one of many factors that helped bring on the depression in 1929. The first Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933, therefore, provided that the government should pay subsidies to those farmers who agreed to reduce their acreage of surplus commodities according to fixed quotas. Thus this act was intended primarily to prevent surpluses from accumulating, rather than, as in the Chinese ever-normal granary plan, to make use of such surpluses as a reserve for time of need.

The disastrous droughts of 1934 and 1936 showed that such legislation, designed largely for handling surpluses rather than shortages, was not enough. Once more, therefore, Mr. Wallace turned to the ever-normal granary idea. In a radio speech of June 6, 1934, he pointed to its use in China and urged the adoption of something similar here. During the next few years he spoke and wrote repeatedly on the same subject. As a result, the ever-normal granary idea found an important place in the new Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1938. On February 16 of that year, the day that the act became law, Mr. Wallace said of it: "The Act aims at a more substantial abundance than we have ever had. Various provisions will help, directly or indirectly, in setting up the Ever-Normal Granary plan." Thus, twenty years after he had first written about it, the ever-normal granary became an integral part of American life.

As since practiced in American agriculture, the ever-normal granary consists of not one but several activities, all intended to maintain an even balance in the production and prices of agricultural commodities. Some of these, such as measures for soil conservation and for the voluntary reduction of surplus crops (a holdover from the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933), did not exist in the ever-normal granary plan of ancient China. The basic Chinese idea of storing up surpluses from good years for use in bad, however, has been retained in the American system of commodity storage loans. Under this system, the government loans money to farmers who, in years of overproduction, agree to keep a part of their crops in storage until a stronger demand develops. The Chinese storage idea also appears in the American plan for government crop insurance. Under this plan, wheat, cotton, and flax growers pay insurance premiums to the government in kind or in money, while the government, in return, indemnifies these farmers in case of crop failure.

Because Chinese agriculture is carried on almost entirely by hand labor on comparatively small plots of land, its yield per cultivator (though not necessarily per acre) is low. Therefore, the primary aim of the ever-normal granary in China has been, through government storage, to guard against possible scarcity of food. American agriculture, on the contrary, is highly mechanized and conducted on large areas of land, so that its yield per cultivator is high. Therefore, the American ever-normal granary program, to be effective, must not only cope with the age-old problem of possible scarcity, but must at the same time be prepared to handle

the new one of overproduction, arising from our industrialized type of society. This, probably, is the main reason why the American ever-normal granary is so much broader in scope than its Chinese original.

In an article that appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in January 1942, Mr. Wallace looked forward to a future application of the ever-normal granary idea on a world-wide basis. He wrote:

As part of the effort to win the peace, I am hoping that what might be called the "ever normal granary principle" can be established for a number of commodities on a world-wide scale. It will be remembered that the fourth of the eight points agreed upon by Roosevelt and Churchill in the Atlantic Charter mentioned the enjoying by all states, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access on equal terms to the raw materials of the world. To give this lofty ideal a more definite substance should be one of our chief objectives in the months that lie immediately ahead.

In the year following the end of World War II, there seemed a good chance that this prediction might come true. In August 1946, for example, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations announced its intention of creating a World Food Board as "an internationalization of the 'ever-normal granary' plan instituted in the United States by Henry A. Wallace, as Secretary of Agriculture, in the 1930's." This board, it was said, would act to stabilize prices of agricultural products on the world markets, establish a world food reserve as a protection against crop failures, and provide funds with which surplus products could be disposed of to countries in need. Thus, its general aim would be "to keep poorer nations from going hungry while others pile up tremendous unmarketable food surpluses."

Hardly was this plan announced, however, than it came under heavy attack from several nations — among which, it must be admitted, the United States was most prominent. The plan, as a result, was eventually tabled. And today, as these lines are written, the greater part of the world is torn by hunger and suffering, and faces imminent economic collapse.

Back in 1911, when Chen Huan-chang wrote the book from which Mr. Wallace learned about the ever-normal granary, he ended it by saying: "The Great Similarity of Confucius will come and the world state will appear. Then the brotherhood of nations will be established, and there will be no war, but perpetual peace." Must we today face yet another war before we realize the simple fact that complete world peace — whether we call it "One World," "The Great Similarity," or any other name — is the only alternative to complete world destruction?

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