

文史哲研究系列



ABOLITION OF IMPERIAL EXAMINATIONS AND MODERN CHINESE SOCIETY

(修订版)

关晓红 著



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关晓红 汉族,广东开平人,1957年出生于广州。中山大学历史系教授、博士生导师,历史学博士,广东文史馆馆员。从事晚清民国时期的社会政治与文化研究。曾获教育部、国务院学位办公室颁发的2002年全国优秀博士学位论文奖,获教育部颁发的第七届高等学校科学研究(人文社会科学)优秀成果二等奖、第六届广东省哲学社会科学优秀成果一等奖。在《中国社会科学》《历史研究》《近代史研究》等刊物发表多篇学术论文,主要代表作有《张之洞与晚清学部》《从幕府到职官——清季外官制的转型与困惑》《陶模与清末新政》《清末州县考绩制度的演变》《晚清局所与清末政体变革》《辛亥革命时期的省制纠结》等。专著《晚清学部研究》(广东教育出版社,2000)2001年获新闻出版总署颁发的第二届全国教育图书奖二等奖。近年曾主持国家清史纂修工程主体项目"清史·学政表"、教育部重大攻关项目"近代中国的知识与制度转型"子课题等多个国家科研项目,应邀到日本京都大学人文研究所等机构做访问学者。目前研究领域为近代政治制度、近代教育与文化、晚清史等。

## 内容提要

延绵近1300年的科举,是除皇帝世袭制外,对中国影响最长久与深远的制度。1905年清廷下诏停止科举,于近代社会转型至为关键,亦为中西学地位转换之枢纽。科举终结百年仍众说纷纭,与其过程不少重要史实迄今未明不无关联。

晚清科举改革 60 多年,经历前后不同的两个阶段,前者试图纳学堂于科举,因开办经济特科、废八股、改策论成效不彰,新政伊始后转向纳科举于学堂。科举改革与清末政情关系密切,京师修复贡院的讨论是形势逆转之节点,枢机人事变动与六督抚联衔入奏配合,催生了清廷立停科举的诏令,也留下了翻案隐患。立停科举的初衷,旨在将科举、学堂合并为一,清末各类考试频繁的现象并非"科举余毒",而是力求抡才与培才统一的失败尝试。停科举善后措施的实际观照面,较原计划覆盖更宽广,导致舆论非议及仕途拥挤,对有功名士子安排优渥,却忽视心理疏导及道德重建。直至清末民初,有旧学功名的士子不仅未被边缘化,反而凭借更多的权力资源和多样化的渠道,广泛进入各级权力圈,占据社会权势的重要位置。科举停废不仅导致了清末官制和铨选制改革,也在催兴百业、开民智及近代文化事

业兴起等方面起到重要作用。科举改革本身因应社会变动而发生,其改革及停废又进一步加速了社会的变化。只是晚清以来"中学无用""西学有用"的观念随着科举终结而尘埃落定,既往为科举考试主导内容的经史,在分科治学的西方学制引进后地位明显下降,已无力承担其在文化传承及道德教化方面的重任。因科举改革过程急功近利而遗留的若干重要问题,对百年来中国社会的道德失范与价值多元化不无负面影响。

#### Abstract

In existence for 1,300 years, the imperial examinations system in China was, in terms of both duration and influence, matched to the hereditary system of imperial powers. The order issued by the Qing government in 1905 to terminate the examinations not only marked a turning point in modern China's social transformation process, it was also a watershed in the ongoing dynamic interactions between classical Chinese and traditional western knowledge systems and learning practices. That lively debates about how the examination system came to an end continue more than a hundred years after it happened has much to do with the fact that a good deal about what exactly transpired in the process remains unknown to us.

Over a period of about six decades toward the end of the Qing dynasty, the Qing government tried to reform the imperial examinations. In the first of the two phases of reform, the school system and the official curriculum were overhauled to form a better fit with the examinations. However, poor results of these efforts led the government to change course in the second phase in which it tried instead to overhaul the examinations so they would be better integrated with the existing school system and official curriculum. The entire reform process was deeply influenced by and to some degree intertwined with the political goings-on at the time. A number of high-

profile issues and events helped shape the reform trajectory and determine its eventual outcome. For example, debates about renovations of the Imperial Examination Hall were critical in shifting the general orientation of the reform, and while personnel reshuffling at the court and the joint petition by six governors were catalysts for the government's decision to halt the examinations immediately, they also sowed the seeds for future reversal of that decision. The original motivation behind the immediate suspension of the exams was to integrate the school system and the examinations. The great excess in imperial examinations in the closing years of the Qing dynasty was not symptomatic of the alleged malaise that was the examination system itself but rather the result of a failed attempt at coordinating the selection and the cultivation of talents.

Measures put in place in the wake of the abolition of the examinations had a broader scope than had originally been envisaged, giving rise to controversies and misgivings. The move made the competition for government jobs fiercer than ever and while many of those who had established themselves in the circle were treated rather generously, in general the psychological wellbeing of those affected, the maintenance of morale and even the reconstruction of morals were largely overlooked. In the final years of the Qing dynasty and the early years of the Republican era, those who had obtained qualifications and credentials under the defunct examination system not pushed to the peripheries of the power circle. On the contrary, many of them were able to find their way into the upper echelons of the bureaucratic hierarchy and occupy important government positions by availing themselves of richer resources and more diverse channels of influence. The abolition of the examination system did more than paving the way for reform of the recruitment system for government jobs, it also facilitated the growth of other sectors of the economy, notably the cultural sector. In this dynamic process of two-way influence, changes in social conditions that had brought about the abolition of the examination system were in turn expedited when the curtain finally came down on it. Just as importantly, abolition cemented in the minds of many the notion that Chinese learning is useless while western learning useful. As the latter, noted for its fine disciplinary divisions, made further inroads into the practices of teaching and learning in Chinese society, the former's grip on the lettered class continued to loosen and its role in disseminating knowledge and passing down values from one generation to the next quickly diminished. The hastiness and even recklessness with which abolition was pushed through, however, did give rise to a number of problems to which the moral disarray and loss in value plurality in the past over one hundred years can largely be attributed.

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