

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERS IN ANCIENT CHINA, ROME, AND PERSIA

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## ABSTRACT

Each society holds a unique perspective of leadership and the goal of education in producing leaders. Education has played a critical role in developing leaders in both ancient China (Feudal Age, 1500 BCE – 221 BCE and the First Empire 221 BCE – 221 CE) and ancient Rome (Republican Rome, 509 BCE – 27 BCE and the early Roman Empire, 27 BCE – 285 CE) as the production of leaders was the primary purpose of education under each regime. Ancient Chinese educational philosophy was single-mindedly geared toward enlightening students to the wisdom of the ages because they believed that, through this enlightenment, great leaders were created. The ancient Roman system, in contrast, moved from an initial disdain for formal teaching to valuing schools of rhetoric and law in support of the Roman conception of the orator as the ideal leader. The author concludes that a uniformity of mission, culture, and leadership education contributed to the longevity of the Chinese system of government just as dissonance between these elements contributed to the eventual collapse of the Roman Empire. Comparing the above with the Persian system of education for leadership, the author uses the history of ancient Persia (6000 BCE – 651 CE).

## INTRODUCTION

Ancient China and ancient Rome were two great, yet strikingly different civilizations. This article explores the philosophies and systems of education used by each of these remarkable societies to obtain their leaders. The goal of this article is to provoke insight into the systems each

civilization designed to produce its leaders in the hope of revealing, in part at least, sources of the peerless longevity of the Chinese system and possible problems contributing to the fall of the Roman Empire. The time periods examined were from the later Chou Dynasty (Feudal Age, 1500 BCE – 221 BCE to the First Empire (Ch'in and Han Dynasty, 221 BCE – 221 CE) in China and from Republican Rome (509 BCE<sup>1</sup> – 27 BCE) through the early Roman Empire (27 BCE – 285 CE).

First, this article introduces a detailed understanding of how each society viewed the role of education in developing bureaucrats. Following this analysis, the approaches of these two ancient empires are compared and the effectiveness of each system for grooming officials is discussed. The author concludes by comparing the leadership education of ancient China and Rome with that of the Persian Empire (6000 BCE – 651CE).

## ANCIENT CHINA

While an evolution of the Chinese system of education is evident, throughout history Chinese educational philosophy showed a remarkable consistency of purpose. The ancient Chinese demonstrated an exceptional loyalty to the teachings of their great philosophic masters and this loyalty was strongly reflected in their educational methods.

This section will first explore the educational philosophy underlying the ancient Chinese system then present an overview of the educational system itself and look at the reasoning behind the educational focus chosen. Finally, one aspect of the education system, the civil service examinations, will be explored.

*Educational Philosophy of Ancient China*

The ancient Chinese educational philosophy was primarily rooted in the teachings of Confucius (551 BCE – 478 BCE). The ancient Chinese believed that education should be based on morality and used the Confucian concept of the “Golden Mean” as the centerpiece of their educational thought. Confucius’ concept of the “Golden Mean” states that individuals should subscribe to the laws of propriety, meaning that people should avoid all excesses and extreme passions. In elaborating on the “Golden Mean,” Confucius introduced the doctrine of the “superior man” who represented the best in education (Mayer, 1960). Confucius believed that a “superior man” would be eager to learn but would not impose his opinions upon others and would be willing to accept the opinions of others without anger and violence. Therefore, followers of Confucius saw most issues as having more than one side and respected ideas different from their own. Chinese philosophy, then, espoused that one person or group could not monopolize the truth and discouraged dogmatism.

Confucius believed that “sincerity” was the goal of education. In order to obtain “sincerity,” one must continuously cultivate oneself by learning new ideas and concepts (Mayer, 1960). He taught that, “if a man keeps cherishing his old knowledge so as to be acquiring new, he may be a teacher of others” (*Ibid.*, 58). Thus, while learning was based on past knowledge and memorization, “Confucius consistently urged his followers to do original scholarship and avoid imitation” (Thut and Adams, 1964:261).

According to ancient Chinese thought, individuals must improve themselves first before society can improve. He taught that the “superior man” would try to perfect his mind and character but would not do this by living in an “ivory

tower.” This person would attempt to reform society while being respectful, righteous, and sincere. Confucius advocated that government be based upon these qualities and be led by such “superior” men. Therefore, he made a connection between education and those who should rule the government.

Yet other philosophers of the period had differing views of the purpose of education. For example, Hsun-Tzu (300 BCE-237 BCE) believed that education should be mandated due to man’s inherent evil. He conceived education as a form of social control. Yang-Chu (440 BCE –360 BCE), on the other hand, suggested that education was a means of deriving hedonistic pleasures. He reasoned that, since life is full of suffering, education makes living worthwhile by distracting individuals from their pain. Taoists, in contrast, believed that common people were better off without education altogether and embraced a concept similar to the “Natural Man” theory professed by Rousseau by advocating that man should follow their instincts rather than following the indoctrinated ideas of a formal education.

Generally, however, the ancient Chinese believed that education had definite social consequences and viewed the purpose of education as being for the welfare and stability of society and the state and serve the social order. Chinese educational philosophy and Chinese philosophy in general center on relations between human beings as part of social groups. According to Balaza (1964:195), “Chinese philosophy is primarily political philosophy.” The Chinese believed that government was sustained through training efficient, loyal, educated administrators. “The old maxim, ‘Employ the able and promote the worthy’ expressed the ideal of a government whose greatest officials and statesmen were also literary and philosophical contributors to

China's intellectual heritage" (Woody, 1970:116).

Ancient Chinese philosophy taught that, through education, the individual, and ultimately society, become virtuous. They envisioned this process as being accomplished as follows (*Ibid.*, 117):

The ancients who wished to illustrate virtue throughout the kingdom first ordered well their states. Wishing to order well their states, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. The extension of knowledge is by their investigation of things. Things being investigated, their knowledge became complete. Their knowledge became complete, their thoughts were sincere.

The Chinese believed that these "sincere" thoughts would ultimately lead to their kingdom being rightly governed in a state of tranquility and happiness. Education was the gathering of knowledge and this knowledge led to virtue.

It was also believed that one's rank should correspond to his virtue and one's salary should be commensurate with his virtue. Therefore, the greater one's wisdom and virtue, the higher his rank and salary. The great philosopher Mencius (373 BCE – 288 BCE) stated that, "when the state is in good order, men of little virtue are submissive to those of great, and those of little worth to those of great" (Chu, 1957:238). In other words, a good government could be obtained only when the virtuous were wealthy and honored. In achieving such a government, "the Chinese stressed the importance of practical education and applying scholarly

ideals to daily existence” (Mayer, 1960:67).

### *Educational System in Ancient China*

In the early Feudal Age, Chinese society was based on noble descent and clanship. The nobility owed their position to heredity and not education. The number of nobility and clans were not numerous yet they were separated from the masses and controlled all of the power. The nobility also controlled the armies and filled the offices of the courts. The masses, on the other hand, cultivated their masters’ lands, paid taxes, and served as soldiers in the army.

Even though the nobility had power due to their descent and not their education, education was highly honored by the ancient Chinese and was the one means through which non-nobility could rise in society. However, while Confucius believed that all men, no matter what their social status, should attend school, this philosophy was not evident as most peasants’ sons had neither the leisure nor the money to attend. Schools were attended by “aristocrats, courtiers who served as counselors, officers, and governors in time of peace, and as generals and warriors in war” (Fitzgerald, 1961:61).

Be that as it may, while education was confined almost exclusively to the nobility because of economic necessity, philosophically any individual with the means to attend school could do so without regard to his birth lineage. If an individual could prove himself to be a scholar through successfully completing a series of civil service examinations (discussed in detail below), that individual would be promoted to serve in public office and would receive the rewards commensurate with his position.

Further, during the later parts of the feudal period, even

members of the hereditary mobility lost power and position if they could not demonstrate scholarship by passing the civil service examinations. This practice conformed to the philosophy of the “superior man” which iterated the concept that only educated men should rule. “[S]ocial rank in China [was] determined more by qualification for office than by wealth” (Chu, 1957:250). The means to obtain the knowledge required to pass these examinations, however, were not readily available.

Initially, ancient China did not have a national system of education. The elementary schools were private and voluntary throughout the realm. There was no state control at all. “The state provided no public education of any sort, except on the highest level for scholars who had already advanced themselves through the imperial examinations” (Smith, 1955:85). During the early feudal period, nobles were instructed by the emperor through example and decree. The good students obtained government posts and the poor were banished.

During the First Empire of Han period (206 BCE – 221 CE), however, a nationally controlled educational system and a fixed curriculum were developed whereby an able boy could matriculate and move along a path from a district school to a university. At these schools, students learned archery and battle on chariots but, primarily, education was more philosophically focused and included learning the four books (*The Great Learning*, *Doctrine of the Mean*, *Confucian Analects*, and the works of Mencius) and “the classics” such as music, arithmetic, poetry, and the rites and ceremonies governing social relationships.

The classics were divided into five books:

1. *Book of Changes* or *Book of Divination* described methods of divination and interpreted the results.

2. **Book of History** detailed historic documents such as proclamations of rulers.
3. **Book of Odes** or **Book of Songs** presented an anthology of poems, folk songs, and hymns.
4. **Record of Rituals** or **Book of Rites** provided a comprehensive and particular explanation of philosophic rules for self and the universe and included a description of the educational curriculum as well as a text covering the six virtues<sup>2</sup>, six praiseworthy actions<sup>3</sup>, and six arts<sup>4</sup>.
5. **Spring and Autumn Annals** chronicled historic events from 722 BCE – 481 BCE.

These five classics were pre-Confucian except for a portion of **Spring and Autumn Annals**, “[y]et in each work Confucius is said to have played at least the role of a commentator” (Thut and Adams, 1964:260).

All education in China was oriented toward the civil service examinations. The government did not need to maintain schools with a curriculum other than to facilitate students in passing the civil service examinations. By emphasizing the four books, the classics, archery, and charioteering, students learned the six virtues, the six praiseworthy actions, and the six arts necessary to be a leader.

The Chinese method of education was based on memorization and initiation (Cloyd, 1917:403):

In learning to write, the character, because of its peculiar form, had to be exactly imitated, in reciting the classics, the



wording was unalterable, in essay writing, the form in the sacred literature was the model. This method gave the set to the Chinese mind that necessarily belonged to the spirit of ancestry worship.

Therefore, while the teachings of Confucius were revered, after a superficial analysis one could argue that the essence of his words regarding independent thought were largely unheeded. Following a deeper examination of Chinese philosophy, however, the purpose for the seeming dogmatic approach is revealed; only through a profound understanding of historic thought could one reach "sincerity," see ancient understanding as being new, and meaningfully contribute thoughtful independent ideas.

Teachers in ancient China were highly respected. The Chinese educational system placed great emphasis upon the moral character of its teachers because the Chinese believed that, through the process of imitation, a child would reproduce the qualities of his teacher. Interestingly, however, while quite knowledgeable and moral, most of the teachers were individuals who were unsuccessful at passing the state exams. Scholars who successfully passed the exams assumed responsible positions in government service leaving only those who were unsuccessful to teach.

### *Civil Service Examinations in Ancient China*

While much of the data from the feudal age and the first empire are sketchy concerning the examinations, information about the examinations can easily be obtained from data generated by the Sung Dynasty of the Second Empire (960 CE-1127 CE). The descriptions of these Second Empire exams, provide ample insights into the content of the entire exams, however, because, while the exams

increased in intricacies and complexities, and refinements continuously were made to the method of the process, generally the underlying purpose of the exams, only to promote the best into government office, remained unaltered. Moreover, regardless of the time period, these exams had a number of other commonalities; they were open to almost all males of any age and tested one's memory and understanding of the writings of Confucius, one's knowledge of poetry, and one's ability to write intellectually on moral and political issues (Durant, 1963).

Ancient Chinese civil service exams were initiated during pre-Confucian times and were in place as early as 2205 BCE during the Hsia period. The early use of these exams was to test government officials already in place. However, during the Feudal Age, these exams were used as a screening device for entry into the national "university," a body of scholars participating in advanced study at the capital. Ensuring that only the most capable students attend the "university" was important since the actual selection of officials was based upon recommendations from the "university" (Thut and Adams, 1964).

The only way a person other than a noble could rise in ancient China was through passing the civil service examination, yet certain persons were banned from taking these exams. These individuals, slaves, prostitutes, entertainers, and beggars were called "mean people" probably because their occupations in some way naturally violated the Confucian Golden Mean. Because they did not conform their behavior to the Confucian ideal of the Golden Mean, "mean people" could never be considered part of the group of "superior men." Therefore, in keeping with the "superior man" concept, "mean people" would never be fit to rule.

Sometimes the exams were both oral and written and sometimes only written. Exam content primarily tested

Confucian canons, more specifically the Four Books and the five Classics. During the Tang Dynasty (618 CE-906 CE), study guides or monographs were developed in order to assist individuals studying for the examinations and, since candidates had to write essays and poems according to traditional styles, anthologies providing these models were prepared. Eventually, the exam contents were solidified during the Sung Dynasty (960 CE-1279 CE) and remained substantially unchanged until 1905 CE. The common denominator for these examinations was that they were all long, physically and mentally challenging, and were passed by only a few.

This system gave stability to governmental office and to the political and social philosophy of the nation. While the merits of using such exams are apparent, this system preserved certain weaknesses as well. The narrow concepts fostered by these examinations were a disadvantage. New concepts and techniques were rarely tested. In addition, the exams failed to satisfy zealous Confucians who believed that character should be tested not simply ability. Further (Thut and Adams, 1964:269):

... seldom was attention given to evaluating candidates in the professional requirements of specific governmental positions. The scholar-official, being completely lacking in a knowledge of any language, literature, history or geography other than that of China, was understandingly provincial in outlook.

## ANCIENT ROME

In analyzing the ancient Rome belief structure regarding education and bureaucracy, one must consider two time frames in Roman history, incorporating Rome as a

Republic and Rome as an Empire. While certain characteristics permeate both time frames, the Roman approach toward education differed between periods. This section will review the role education had in developing future bureaucrats during both time frames. The certain commonalities exhibited in Roman educational philosophy regardless of the existing form of government will first be analyzed. Then the emphases of the Republic and Early Empire on education as a means of entering the bureaucracy will each be examined independently.

### *Educational Philosophy of Ancient Rome*

According to tradition, Rome was founded in 753 BCE.<sup>5</sup> “Archeological evidence shows that there were permanent settlements by different people—Latins, Sabines, Etruscans—well in advance of 1000 BC” (Smith, 1955:152) and some say that Rome may have been founded by Latins colonizing the area to halt the expanding Etruscan tribes (Durant, 1972). More realistically, however, the date of Rome’s creation probably approximates 508 BCE although it was not a powerful nation until the mid-third century. Without detailing the battles and conquests, Rome was in a constant state of warfare for survival through the early part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. These struggles shaped and formed the Roman belief structure and, in turn, Roman educational philosophy. Therefore, the early Roman by necessity became soldiers as they had no alternative but to fight or perish (Woody, 1970:497):

Romans portrayed their wars as a fight for liberty. In war one must be victor, to be vanquished is to be enslaved. Others can endure slavery; but the Roman people are assured liberty. The Romans, Florus says, took up arms first to

secure liberty, then to increase their bounds, afterwards to defend their allies, and ultimately to gain "glory and empire." That all people had an equal right to independence did not occur to the Romans. Their empire was founded on a belief in Latin race supremacy.

With this backdrop of battle, it is understandable that the character of Roman education generally exhibited patriotism, seriousness, and intensity but also led the early Romans to unduly conservative, unimaginative, and distrusting of freedom and individuality. This survival-driven environment was not conducive to the development of intellectual or artistic interests. The purpose of education in ancient Rome was the perseverance of the established pattern of Roman life. Being practically minded, the Romans had no use for pure philosophy and were suspicious of it, believing it could be used as a method of dissolving tradition. Yet, "the opposite was true of ethical and political theorizing. They were deeply concerned with human happiness and knowledge was to them a means to such happiness" (Smith, 1955:180).

The ancient Romans were innovative in the legal arena. The Laws of the Twelve Tables, drawn up in the fifth century BCE, made way for the replacement of religious law by civil law. In forming the Twelve Tables, the Senate in 454 BCE sent a commission consisting of three patricians to Greece to study and report on the legislation of Solon and other lawmakers. Upon their return, the Assembly chose ten men to formulate this new code (Durant, 1972). Even though these laws were relatively crude, they served as a foundation for the future development of a growing body of civil law. The Twelve Tables, while amended and supplemented numerous times through legislation and various decrees, lasted for 900 years as the basic

law in Rome (Durant, 1972).

Moreover, priests were replaced by magistrates as the administrators of the law thereby profoundly altering perceptions of this aspect of the governmental bureaucracy. The Romans believed that their Constitution was superior to all others and their laws were based on the work of many rather than being the vision of one. Study of the law was therefore valued in ancient Roman society. Cicero regarded the learning of this law as an intellectual training ground for entering into public affairs, as the Twelve Tables

Comprised the whole “science of government,” surpassing the learning of all philosophers, “both in weight of authority and in plenitude of utility.” Since Rome seemed to him pre-eminently “the seat of virtue, empire, and dignity,” her “spirit, customs, and discipline” should be the “first objects of study,” for “as much wisdom must be thought to have been employed in framing such laws, as in establishing so vast and powerful an empire. (Woody, 1970:528).

Quintilian, in his *Institutio Oratorio* (93 CE), believed that the ideal orator was a good citizen who could be relied upon to manage both private and public business. He would also be able to guide the State by his counsels, establish laws, and have solid judgments. According to Quintilian (Woody, 1970:602-603), the aim of education was to develop the perfect orator but

[t]he orator must first of all be a good man, endowed with unusual gifts for speaking. Individual candidates vary, and all men profit to some extent by education; but rules as futile unless there is natural talent. Good voice, power of lungs, health, endurance, and grace are necessary and can be improved; if lacking, study cannot make up the deficit.

Cicero and Quintilian were, therefore, two major Roman advocates of formal education, even though they believed that many of the qualities of an orator were produced by both nature and genius and that education alone might not be enough to create an orator. Both also believed that the orator and the philosopher were one and the same. According to Cicero, the orator is a philosopher who has “wisdom united with eloquence” (Woody, 1970:601). Cicero, in relating philosophical studies to the needs of the orator, believed in the value of dialectic because (Bonner, 1977:86)

[I]t taught the student to define his terms, to distinguish the genus from the species, and to relate the parts to the whole and to one another, thus it was useful for any kind of systematization. It also provided a training in close reasoning, and could be regarded as the counterpart of rhetoric, which encouraged copious expression.

Overall, both these scholars believed that an orator was to be broadly trained in the liberal arts and in philosophy, jurisprudence, and history, even though some of these areas, such as philosophy and liberal arts, were generally viewed with skepticism.

### *Educational System of the Roman Republic*

Early Roman tradition favored family teaching over institutional education. During the Roman Republic, no government regulations existed for education as the state believed that life should dictate the curriculum. Both mothers and fathers were teachers, the father’s influence being paramount. The goal of education was to imbue knowledge to make children, especially sons, useful to the

state. For example, a father could train his son in affairs concerning the farm and the army. Yet, because there was no governmental interference, “it might be held that any father had a perfect right to neglect his children and allow them to grow up quite illiterate” (Dobson, 1963:95). Fathers, however, were unlikely to allow this neglect to occur because of a strong sense of state patriotism. While “education was by the family, it was for the state” (Woody, 1970:506).

Even though the Romans did not support a uniform system of education, formal education in terms of schools can be traced back to as early as 250 BCE<sup>6</sup> although, due to the strong Roman belief in home schooling, the formal schools that did exist were private. As for the very few schools that existed, the *ludus* of the *literator*, or private elementary school, was the first level of schooling. The *ludus* received boys and, in some cases, girls, roughly at the age of six and kept them until around the age of thirteen. At the *ludus*, educational content was limited to a minimal of reading, writing, and counting. Memorizing the laws of the Twelve Tables was also required. The *ludus* was really a substitute for the education that would normally be applied by a family and was used by fathers who were unable to teach.

During this period, teachers, or *literator*s, were paid very minimally or received only gifts. The instructors had very little equipment available aside from maps and historical handbooks. Teaching and other wage-earning occupations were frowned upon and carried no prestige. Not only was teaching “a despised occupation, [it was] the lowest of all professions—tiring, arduous, and badly paid (Marrou, 1964:361).

It was not until the second century BCE that the influence of Hellenism gained momentum. By the second



century BCE, the Romans had accepted the teachings of the Greeks and abandoned the nationalistic tendencies spurred by Cato the Censor, a powerful Roman senator. This Greek influence led to the development of the post-elementary schools of Grammaticus and Rhetor in the mid-first century BCE. While early education largely remained in the hands of Roman families, these post-elementary schools were attended by children whose families could afford the tuition and the children's time away from their labors. The rhetoric school completed formal education for most Romans though some still continued at the university level to study philosophy but in a foreign country such as Greece.

The role of the school of Grammaticus was to train students in grammar and literature. Supplementary items learned were geometry, astronomy, history, and music. These schools received primarily boys at about the age of thirteen and kept them until around the age of sixteen. After completing this school, students interested in a public career entered the next level of education, the rhetoric school, because of the importance of having the skills to persuade government officials and members of the Senate during the days of the Republic. The instruction in the rhetoric schools was designed to train public speakers and was patterned after the Greek schools of rhetoric. Roman politicians learned from the Greek democracies how "to get on the right side of the crowd, how to influence the voting in the assembly, how to inspire the troops, how to harangue a tribunal" (Marrou, 1964:326).

The rhetoric training fell into three divisions: preliminary exercises, types of rhetoric, and declamations. Preliminary exercises principally dealt with confirming or refuting historical, fictitious, and realistic narratives. Pupils also examined laws and moral essays and were presented with exercises meant to improve their judgment and

inventiveness. Next, students were trained to classify rhetoric by type, demonstrative, deliberative, or judicial, and to approach the rhetoric through: 1) invention (finding proper material); 2) arrangement of material; 3) expression (choice of language); 4) memorization; and 5) dignified and graceful delivery. At the declamation stage, the final component of their education, pupils learned effectively to address concrete cases as well as abstract propositions through “deliberative eloquence” and “judicial oratory” (Woody, 1970:586).

As referred to above, the Romans placed tremendous emphasis on the Laws of the Twelve Tablets. Study of these laws occurred at the rhetoric schools, by apprenticeship or through both means. The process of apprenticeship occurred under the tutelage of the student’s father or some man of age and prestige. Under the apprenticeship, the pupil would attend Senate sessions and learn: 1) the right way of proposing any law to the Senate; 2) the privilege a senator had in delivering his opinion; the additional powers of senators who are magistrates; 4) the rules concerning yielding; 5) the length of time to speak and when to be silent; and 6) how to discuss an amendment.

During the last half-century of the Republic, the practical opportunities to develop skills in rhetoric greatly expanded due to political corruption, assassinations, poisonings, and other types of violence. Since there were no state prosecutors at this time in Rome, the field was wide open for private citizens to prosecute and, just like there were opportunities to be a prosecutor, ample opportunities to work the defense existed as well. Because prosecution was a better leapfrog into a career in public service, most budding orators chose prosecution. However, these orators did not provide Rome appropriate leadership as the legislation enacted by these politicians did not justify economic

considerations. The main function of the orator was to persuade, to incite people into action. While an orator in ancient Rome would ideally have high morality and good intention, these requirements did not guarantee wisdom regarding promoting important issues for the Republic or for the Empire's future. This single-minded focus on debate, in effect, left the Republic "... helpless in a social order that changed in spite of them" (Smith, 1955:193).

### *Educational System of the Early Roman Empire*

While Grammaticus and Rhetor were established during the mid-first century BCE, it was not until the first century CE that formal education became firmly rooted under the Roman Empire. During the close of the Republican era, a new appreciation of education took hold. Plato convinced Cicero that "those who rule should devote themselves to learning so that the state may be better governed" (Woody, 1970:596). Roman emperors began to favor education and, as a general policy, were highly educated. Imperial heads of states, even the bad ones, had excellent training and some of them, such as Augustus, were distinguished for learning.

Due to these changes, elementary education became widespread under the Empire. While schools were still not state supported, emperors such as Augustus offered subsidies to instructors in order to increase the opportunities for students to attend. These subsidies were designed to aid working-class families as middle-class families were presumed to be able to afford the low fees.

Although schools were neither compulsory nor free, municipalities were required, progressively, to assume responsibility for providing at least elementary instruction, while the

state itself became increasingly involved in controlling and even stimulating education” (Bowen, 1972:197).

Since most of the instructors were foreign, mostly Greek, under the Republic instructors and philosophers were expelled during tight fiscal times. During the early Empire, however, teachers were highly prized and, therefore, were exempted from expulsion during fiscally tight periods. This was a very important fundamental change in policy. All teachers at every level of education benefited financially and otherwise from the new view of education. Instructors became respected as contributors to the state.

Books and public libraries were also by-products of the new development in educational beliefs. However, the most important change from the Republic to the Empire was Rome’s recognition of the need for a well-trained civil service which required an educated populace. By the second century CE, the ratio of illiterates in the population was at an all time low despite the tremendous population growth of the Roman Empire and this growth required a literate public service to maintain the city’s operation. Further, the growing number of civil servants supported the continuous expansion by the Empire. This gave civil servants social mobility and educational attainments were valued as a means of advancement. The Roman civil service included doctors and architects and the upper division included the magistrates.

With the mounting power of the Roman Empire, oratory ceased to be an important instrument of government, apart from the legal role it played, because of the corresponding decline in the authority of the Senate. This change was reflected in the Roman educational system as private school teaching law developed from the schools of oratory. This branching out was a natural course of events because one of

the functions of orators was to represent clients before the courts. Before the period of the Empire, private teachers primarily taught students court procedures. During the Empire, private schools were created specifically to teach law. "They developed the teaching of law into an art and had some influence upon the development of Roman law. The method was to read and memorize the law and the comments of famous jurists upon it" (Frost, 1966:90). In Rome, there existed a science of law even so far as the 4<sup>th</sup> Century CE. Emperor Theodosius outlawed private instruction of law and required its teaching at state-mandated universities.

While it was highly debated in the Republican period whether Latin or Greek should be the language of choice for higher education, the manner of teaching was not at issue. During the Empire, however, teaching methods also started to be debated. For example, Master Flaccus believed that competition among students should be encouraged and that prizes should be awarded for the victors. Quintilian, on the other hand, believed that lessons should be taught at a comfortable level for the pupils. He advocated that beginning masters should imitate other trainees and not the lead master in developing their pedagogical skills. He was also conventional in believing that students learn best by repetition and by expressing the same thought in various ways.

### CHINESE AND ROMAN SYSTEMS

The aim of education in both China and Rome was the creation of state stability and community welfare although each pictured their objectives differently. While neither ancient China nor ancient Rome initially had a national system of education, both Chinese and Roman educational philosophies espoused that education had definite social

consequences; through a knowledgeable populace, society would prosper. Yet, while both societies believed that all should have the opportunity to participate in education for the ultimate good, the poor in both societies were largely excluded from this endeavor due to financial constraints.

The concept of an ideal “superior”/“educated” man was also shared by both cultures and in both cultures these ideal men were to lead in the public sector. In China, the “superior” man represented the best in education, was virtuous, and “sincere.” The Chinese believed that education led to knowledge and this knowledge led to virtue. For government to succeed, the virtuous must lead and be honored. The “superior” man would apply his learning to society to better it and government would utilize these talented individuals.

The Romans had similar ideals but under the caption of the “educated man” who as an orator who could incite people into action for the benefit of the state. Like the “superior” man, these orators had high moral characters and good intentions. As the Roman Republic ended and the Empire began, beliefs regarding the ideal orator were modified to include the orator as one who had great wisdom and education, thus approaching ever further the Chinese conception of the “superior” man. According to Cicero, a leader is a man with an obligation to society. “His education and training from birth must steep him in tradition, give him a clear moral sense of right and justice, and equip him with the best that learning has to offer” (Frost, 1966:85).

One area where differences emerged between these nations was in viewing the role of philosophy in education. The Chinese heavily prized it. While China recognized the importance of practicality in its education, scholarly, philosophical content was also incorporated. In contrast, the

Romans placed very little emphasis on philosophy. Rome, due to its struggles to survive as a republic, emphasized customs, conservatism, and patriotism. As referred to earlier, their philosophy was not conducive to intellectual and artistic interests. Yet, towards the end of the Republic and the beginning of the Empire, philosophy started to gain acceptance in some quarters, as the ideal orator would have an understanding of philosophy, according to Quintilian and Cicero.

Another area of divergence between these nations is the respect and status given to teachers. In ancient China, teachers were given the utmost respect. While teachers did not attain the highest intellectual achievement, they were knowledgeable and had passed portions of the civil service exams. Although, in practice, the Chinese teacher was not paid very well, the Chinese believed that one who possesses wisdom should be compensated accordingly. Philosophically, in other words, the ancient Chinese believed that teachers should be paid quite well. Even though the reality of teaching in ancient China may have lacked substantial monetary remuneration, teachers were bestowed vast intrinsic rewards, including the admiration of others. The Romans, on the other hand, until the middle of the Roman Empire, did not place high esteem on the teachers. Many were freed slaves or foreigners with little ability. They were paid minimally and generally reviled as common wage earners.

While both civilizations expressed that education would lead to a prosperous civil service career, the educational means toward this end differed. In China the use of civil service examinations was the means. These exams were opened to almost all and those who passed the examination were entitled to a civil service position. This method encouraged merit and quality. Toward the later part of the

Roman Republic, rhetoric schools began to grow. These schools taught the students the skills necessary to become orators and students who excelled at persuasion became the leaders and civil servants. As the gift of persuasion has much to do with the company one keeps, one might speculate, however, that contacts and family connections had more to do with success in ancient Rome than did oratory skill. The Roman system developed under the Empire to include schools of law and to place importance on political skill and learning, however, was probably more to exclude incompetents from service rather than to open the doors to only the most qualified. By this time, the culture of the nation would have been long ingrained with the understanding that who you know was more important than what you know.

This theory is supported by the development of the civil service under the early Roman Empire. The Roman Imperial Civil Service was solidified under Augustus (63 BCE-14 CE). This bureaucracy that was to control the Roman world-state was trained based on the education system described above. Augustus' "vast burden of work was also gradually lightened by the expansion of his own staff to include, at the higher level, a number of knights. Although this personal staff was still relatively small, its development announced the beginning of a civil service which ha[d] never existed during the Republic but was destined to become a vital feature of the imperial system" (Grant, 1978:206). These valued civil servants came from all backgrounds, including Senators, Equestrians, and even slaves, suggesting that education might not be the only route to a career in public service. Also, for example, during the early Empire, Emperor Hadrian from the period of 117 CE to 138 CE asserted that the Roman expansion needed competent and well-trained employees to manage it. As such,



“he paid them well and gave rewards for hard work, initiative, and efficiency” (Heichelhelm and Yeo, 1962: 360). However, many times appointments were based not on education but on wealth as Hadrian appointed equestrians to top public office with or without higher education. Therefore, while the role of education had expanded, it was probably viewed more as a support to the existing method of advancement rather than a replacement of what had come before.

Another poignant difference between their systems centered upon their concepts of government. The Romans viewed government as serving the primary purpose of preventing invasion and overthrow and perhaps even promoting expansion. The Romans lived in a survival-oriented paradigm that was generally not forward-looking. The key to their system of education was to indoctrinate students into supporting the current leadership and established ways. Rome was a creator of culture based on practicality not on idealism. Rome was an (Frost, 1966:80):

[i]nstitution dedicated to acculturating the young, teaching them the ancient virtues and ideals; impressing upon them the importance of obedience to authority, manliness, reverence, and all the character traits that time and experience had woven into the concept of the good man.

The Chinese, however, viewed the purpose of government as transcending invasion and leadership changes. To the ancient Chinese, a violent revolution would not necessitate a new government form so they looked to the creation of patterns to promote superlative leadership, regardless of the party in power.

This is not to say, however, that the ancient Chinese system continued uninterrupted into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Under

the reign of Han Huan Ti (146 CE -167 CE), for example, the emphasis on selecting public officials based on the civil service exams took a back seat to the promotion of relatives. "Promotions and appointments depended on eunuch goodwill, and their favour was only to be purchased with gold. Honours, rewards, titles and power were bestowed upon those whom the eunuchs praised to the Emperor" (Fitzgerald, 1961:252).

After the death of Han Huan Ti, numerous civil wars took place and ultimately China was divided into a South partition and a North partition from approximately 317 CE to 587 CE. Due to the philosophy of Han Huan Ti, the educated civil servants left and went to the South partition. Under the control of these scholars and civil servants, the South partition grew "more and more marked in succeeding ages, until the southern provinces became the true centre of the empire" (Fitzgerald, 1961:204).

## CONCLUSION: COMPARISON WITH PERSIA

Any system geared to produce great leaders for a nation must first look toward the objectives of that nation for guidance. Consistency of mission, culture, and systems is imperative for organizational strength and growth whether in the public or private sectors. Ancient China exhibited such consistency and thus China thrived well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The mission for ancient China was to produce a stable, enlightened state. The culture of ancient China supported this mission by valuing education. Finally, the ancient China bureaucracy and educational systems furthered the mission by promoting valued leaders capable of creating and enduring government.

Ancient Rome, on the other hand, displayed dissonance between each variables. The Roman mission can best be

characterized as militaristic, survivalistic, and expansionistic. In contrast, the culture of ancient Rome reviled teachers and was based on the promotion of the wealthy and well-connected, whereas the educational system strove to produce orators gifted in rhetoric and persuasion or knowledgeable in the law. Without a homogeneous purpose to permeate each thread of government's structure, a government is doomed eventually to flounder. Ancient Rome's educational system may be characterized therefore as being inferior to that of ancient China because it failed to support the vision of the Empire. In the case of ancient Rome, systems designed to produce and elevate military giants gifted in raising funds to support military actions would have been superior.

This theory seems to be supported by the history of ancient Persia (6000 BCE – 651 CE). Persian political existence began as the city-state of Susa and then continued for 2500 years as the capital of one of the major ancient empires, feudal Elam. “[Persian] administrative traditions flourished during the powerful Aryan rule under the Median empire and, particularly, under the world-state Achaemenid Empire founded by Cyrus the Great” (Farazand, 1998:25). During this great period of strength (837 BCE – 331 BCE), the Persian empire was able to conquer and maintain control over Media, Lydia, Babylon, Egypt, Armenia, Afghanistan, and the Indian Punjab. The Achaemenid Empire lasted until it was conquered by Alexander the Great in roughly 331 BCE. Persian rule, however, then resurfaced shortly thereafter in around 200 BCE with the rise of Parthia and lasted through the Sasanid Empire until that empire fell to Islamic Arab forces around 651 CE.

Xenophon<sup>7</sup>, in one of his greatest writings, *Cyropaedia*, chronicles the education, life, and career of Cyrus the Great, the Persian conqueror (Miller, 1960). In this work,

Xenophon “sets forth his conception of a suitable education for a young prince to fit him to become a ruler. But first he briefly sketches the ordinary Persian system of education, or rather, his own idealized picture of it” (Beck, 1964:245). Like both ancient China and ancient Rome, education in Persia was open to all boys but, in practice, only the wealthy were typically able to attend school. The Persians viewed education as a lifelong journey. Schools were divided into four age groups: 1) boys; 2) youths; 3) mature years; and 4) men past military age (elders). Fundamentally, boys “were taught only three things—to ride a horse, to use the bow, and to speak the truth” (Durant, 1963:376). Some students were also taught oratory and justice by examining cases. These teaching included lessons in morality and self-control.

Typically, when students entered the youth school, they learned physical education, hunting, and survival techniques. The Persians believed that thus was the best way to train for war. After completing the youth school, students could enroll into the maturity school. At this level, men were available to perform public services and to participate in warfare. They could not, however, be teachers as this vocation was limited to the next order. The importance of the vocation of teaching to the Persians is evident from the fact that only the elderly were allowed to teach (Beck, 1964). The school for elders was for graduates over fifty. At this level, the elders were responsible for selecting magistrates as well as for dispensing justice. Progression from one group to the next was not automatic but was based upon a student’s merit and integrity at each stage (*Ibid.*). Therefore, those men reaching the final school, the order of elders, must have exhibited the higher levels of achievement.

“Cadet” schools trained “Persian boys for appointments

to the army, the court offices, and administrative posts” (Farazmand, 1998:55). Schools were often attached to military centers and boys were trained for both military and civil service (Farazmand, 1998). No clear distinction was made between the education provided soldiers and that of administration and leaders. Ethics, morality, justice, and character-building played crucial roles in the Persian educational system in addition to military and management skills. “After the king and the noble-led army, the bureaucracy was the most powerful institution of the Persian world-state Empire (Farazmand, 1998:52). Military and administrative leaders were inextricably intertwined.

The idea that a leader inspiring willingness in his followers was central to the Persian conceptualization of an effective leader and was key to a Persian military/administrative leader’s institutional legitimacy. For example, in *Cyropaedia*, Xenophon (trans. 1914:111, 113) recounts Cyrus’ view of the qualities needed to run a state. To obtain “willing” obedience, Cyrus held that citizens and soldiers alike must believe that the leader is wiser and stronger than they are. In warfare, “the general must show that he can endure the heat of the sun better than his soldiers can and that he can endure cold better than they if it be in winter; if the way lead through difficulties, that he can endure hardships better. All this contributes to his being loved by his men.” In addition, Cyrus was said to have stressed the importance of a acumen in finances and economics for maintaining the necessary supplies to carry out military engagements. For this reason, Xenophon states that Cyrus strove to learn all that was possible.

According to Xenophon (*Ibid.*, 81), Cyrus described great leaders as follows:

I think that no virtue is practiced by men except with the aim

that the good, by being such, may have something more than the bad, and I believe that those who abstain from present pleasures do this not that they may never enjoy themselves, but by this self-restraint they prepare themselves to have many times greater enjoyment in time to come. And those who are eager to become able speakers study oratory, not that they may never cease from speaking eloquently, but in the hope that by their eloquence they may persuade men and accomplish great good. And those also who practice military science undergo this labour, not that they may never cease from fighting, but because they think that by gaining proficiency in the arts of war they will secure great wealth and happiness and honour both for themselves and for their country.

Therefore, Persians viewed virtue as leading both to good for the empire and to rewards for the individual and sought to educate leaders in lessons of character as well as administrative and military proficiency.

While the missions of both Persia and Rome were geared toward developing military powers and loyalty to the state, only Persia promoted an educational philosophy consistent with this mission. For example, like Rome, Persia recognized the importance of oratory to the standard curriculum. Unlike that of Rome, however, the underlying goal for the development of these skills under the Persian system was to promote and inspire military action rather than to influence the creation of law. The educational objective for the study of oratory in Persia, therefore, was consistent with the empire's mission. Also, unlike Rome's, Persia's overall educational focus was on military operations either for the defense of the empire or for future expansion and included substantial curriculum pertaining to military preparedness and operations.

The Persian empire matched its great military ambitions “with refined skills in government and administration” (Farazmand, 1998:32). Linked with the educational system, promotion through the military and civil service ranks was based on experience and merit. Because promotion was based on merit, however, like in ancient China, any man capable of proving his worth could excel in government services. The Persian system also paralleled that of ancient China to the extent that a civil service exam was used and teachers were valued. The Persians “mastered the statecraft of both military and civil administration” by developing “an administrative system based on a trained bureaucracy with high expertise and prestige” (Farazmand, 1988:31). The leaders of Persia were therefore great military leaders as well as accomplished administrators. Only those capable of inspiring followers through knowledge, skill, and oratory were bestowed leadership positions.

The versatility of Persian military leadership education is exemplified by the tolerant governance of Darius I<sup>8</sup>. While allowing conquered realms to maintain their own languages, religions, and institutions, Darius stationed both a commander-in-chief of the armed forces and a tax collector in each province. Together these two high officials ensured both the presence and the maintenance of the Persian military. Darius appointed inspectors with their own independent armed forces to guarantee the loyalty of his immense administration. Through this corps of officers, Darius was kept abreast of the events in his empire and was able to monitor the diverse group of local rulers. To maintain fluid communication with his emissaries and to facilitate the transportation of troops and the gold and supplies supporting the Persian military, Darius created an expansive network of roads. Messages, primarily for government communications between the central administration and the

provincial centers, were expedited by a relay of skilled horsemen utilizing these roadways.

Finally, Darius developed advanced monetary and tax systems to finance his military. Under his rule, land was surveyed and yearly taxes were established based upon the average yield of the land.<sup>9</sup> The Persian people were exempt from paying taxes but instead were required to serve as troops and government officials thus further ensuring the loyalty of those holding administrative power. Darius also legitimized the use of coins by guaranteeing and standardizing an official tender. This development of uniform coinage simplified the collection and accounting of taxes. “[T]he main reason for the coinage of silver was for military purpose” and much of “the gold was used in war” (Frye, 1963:110). The coins themselves even reinforced the military purpose and presence in Persia by often depicting Darius as an idealized archer-warrior.

The Persians, as the Chinese and Romans, conceptualized the perfect leader, however, the Persian conceptualization seems immersed in military undertones in addition to its civil and community motivation. The Persian tradition of military prowess in their conceptualized ideal leader, for example, is poignantly illustrated by the inscription on the tomb of Darius: “I was a friend to my friends. As a horseman and bowman, I proved myself superior to all others, as a huntsman, I could do everything” (Olmstead, 1948:125-126). Even Persia’s depictions of the kings and the artistic works of Persian society in general were often saturated with military imagery.

Therefore, while the missions of both Persia and Rome rest on traditions of warfare and military importance, only Persia’s mission permeated into both the society’s culture and systems. Persia’s educational approach sought to prepare leaders in the techniques necessary to achieve and



manage the empire's expansionist objectives. Persia's administrative systems were structured to support these same goals and its culture was also aligned with its militaristic/administrative vision. Just as the absence of this connection could have contributed to the collapse of Rome, the resultant stability of a strong connection between Persia's mission, culture, and systems could have contributed to the longevity of Persian governance.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This article grew out of a project prepared during the Spring of 1999 Conceptual Foundations of Public Administration class taught by Dr. Ali Farazmand at Florida Atlantic University. The author would like to thank Dr. Farazmand for his insight and guidance, particularly in the area of Persia. Without his contribution, this work would not have been possible.

### NOTES

1. While most historians have designated the years around 509 BCE as the beginning of the Roman Republic, Rome at this time was relatively a weak city-state covering roughly only 350 square miles (Durant, 1972). It was not until its conquest of Italy in the mid-third century BCE or some would say its final conquest of Carthage and Greece in the mid-second century BCE that Rome became a power (*Ibid.*) although still small in comparison to the great power of its time, Persia and Greece.
2. "The six virtues are wisdom, benevolence, goodness, righteousness, loyalty, and harmony" (Thut and Adams, 1964: 262).
3. "The six praiseworthy actions are honoring one's parents. Being friendly to one's brothers, being neighborly, maintaining cordial relationships with relatives through marriages, being trustful, and being sympathetic" (*Ibid.*).

4. Since the Gauls burned Rome in 390 BCE, most historical records of Rome's birth were destroyed (Durant, 1972). Tradition and folklore assigned April 23, 753 BCE as the date of Rome's birth, yet this date has no archeological confirmation (Durant, 1972).
5. Plutarch, a Greek biographer, dates the first Roman school to about 250 BCE but Livy, a Roman historian, dates the first Roman school to as early as 450 BCE through recounting a biography in which a student attended grammar school during this period (*Ibid.*). Durant assessed Livy's account, however, to be more romantic than factual.
6. Xenophon, born in approximately 429 BCE, was a general, historian, and philosopher.
7. Darius ruled the Persian Empire from 521 BCE through 486 BCE.
8. "Previously, taxes had varied considerably, so Darius sought to stabilize and fix the taxes" (Frye, 1963:108).

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