Confucianism

For Confucius, education was more than gaining knowledge; it was also a means of building character. Confucius believed that self-improvement naturally led a person to want to help others, so government service was the logical career for a Confucian scholar. Although he was unsuccessful in influencing Chinese politicians of his time, Confucius gathered thousands of followers. At the end of his life, he dedicated himself to teaching and writing.

1. What did Confucius believe about education and self-improvement? What seemed logical to him?

Confucianism lost favor after the fall of the Han Dynasty in 220. It became popular again in the seventh century. Its focus was shifted due to the influence of Buddhism. Education was still important, but it was seen as a way to achieve morality, not simply a means of advancing in life. In keeping with the Confucian belief that government was built on the skill of its people, the **Sui (Sway) Dynasty** started to give the civil service examination once more. Those who passed the test received government positions. This method of awarding government jobs meant that the most qualified and capable Chinese men were in charge of the country’s affairs.

2. How did China's ideas about education change during the seventh century?

3. In what way did the Sui Dynasty use the civil service exam? What was the role of Confucianism?

**Tang emperors** (618-907) built upon Confucian ideas of government. They expanded the civil service exam. The result was a complex and advanced government system, staffed by an elite group of scholar-officials.

4. What was the result of the civil service exam during the Tang Dynasty?

Under the **Sung (Song) Dynasty** (960-1279), the civil service exam was improved and included more practical subjects. This expanded the number of scholar-officials and drew them from classes other than the wealthy upper class. More schools were started to increase the number of educated candidates.

5. How did the civil service exam change under the Sung (Song) Dynasty?

The **Mongols** (1279-1368) kept the organization of the Chinese government, but they discontinued the state exam. They kept the Chinese out of high government offices and instead appointed Mongols or foreigners to these posts. The Chinese served as local officials. Under Kublai Khan, Confucianism won back some acceptance. Later the state examinations were started again, but good results on the test did not guarantee a government position.

6. What changes did the Mongols make to the Chinese government? Why?

7. How did the state exam change during the time of Kublai Khan?