

THE PRACTICAL TRAINING OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS UNDER THE EARLY CH'ING, 1644-1795

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It has been maintained by historians that there was no practical training for the Civil Service of the Ch'ing Dynasty. Aside from the ideological and literary training which they would obtain from the competitive examinations, the would-be officials were inexperienced hands in administrative affairs. How could they run the government machinery? Historians like T'ung-tsu Ch'ü explain the whole matter by pointing out the important part played by the private secretaries in the Government.¹ Others like C. K. Yang, however, are of the opinion that the specialists (the private secretaries), though indispensable within the government structure, needed officials who possessed general administrative and literary knowledge to guide and direct them. Yang goes on to say that in spite of the fact that the "generalist" (the official) was not an expert in any administrative branch, he "was compelled to acquire a certain amount of practical knowledge himself". Yang has noticed that "in the central government, regulations provided for a year's practice for the novice in a department before cases were assigned to him". In the provincial level, he has also noticed that "officials were promoted from among experienced men who already had had their internship in other, usually lower, positions, and their assignment to special departments was often directed by their reputation or aptness at certain lines of work as developed in their previous service".² Personally, the writer agrees with Yang that there was some practical training provided for scholar-officials before their substantive appointments. Unfortunately, Yang does not go further to explain clearly what was the nature or the degree of the practical training at the Capital and in the provinces. The following account is an attempt to supplement the views advanced by Yang on the training of early Ch'ing officials.

Practical Training in Government Department at the Capital (*The System of Kuan-cheng 觀政 and Hsüeh-hsi hsing-tsou 學習行走*)

In the early years of the Emperor Shun-chih 順治 reign, there was the

¹ See Ch'ü Tung-tsu, *Local Government in China under the Ch'ing* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1962).

² See C. K. Yang, "Some Characteristics of Chinese Bureaucratic Behaviour" in *Confucianism in Action*, D. S. Nivison and Arthur F. Wright, eds. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1959), pp. 134-64.

practice that second-class honours (*erh-chia* 二甲) and third-class honours (*san-chia*) *chin-chih* [holders of the Third Degree 三甲進士 other than those selected as Probationers to the Hanlin Academy (*Shu-chih-shih* 庶吉士)] were despatched by the Government to any of the six Government Boards or the Transmission Office (*T'ung-cheng ch'u* 通政處) or the Censorate (*Tu-ch'a Yüan* 都察院) or the Court of Judicature and Revision (*Ta-li sze* 大理寺) to observe administrative procedure for three months before official appointment. The practice was known as *kuan-cheng* (observation of administration).³ The purpose was to enable new *chin-shih* to know more of government practices so that in the near future they could confront administrative problems with some experience. But in his last years and the early years of his successor, the Emperor K'ang-hsi 康熙, the practice was not carried out according to the original scheme. *Chin-shih* attended for only a few days at the assigned Boards or departments and then applied for home-leave, which was usually granted.⁴ In the sixteenth year of the Emperor K'ang-hsi (1677), a censor named Hsü Hsü-ling 徐旭齡 could not tolerate the situation any more. He suggested that *chin-shih* attending Government departments for practice should be present in the early morning and sign their names on the register assigned to check their attendance. They should pay more attention to Government procedure. For instance, Hsü said, when they were in the Board of Civil Service, they should learn the procedure of promotion, transfer and demotion. When they were in the Board of Revenue, they should become familiar with accountancy and calculation.⁵

The memorial of Hsü Hsü-ling was echoed by others presenting their suggestions and this finally led the Government to take action of some kind. In 1689 the Government despatched some future provincial officials to take practice in the Government Boards for three years, after which they would be appointed District Magistrates. However, it must be noted that only the "arrogant and ignorant" Chinese or Chinese Bannermen were thus despatched.⁶ Thus, it seems that the practice was rather a kind of punishment for mediocre would-be officials than a general rule for all prospective officials for gaining administrative knowledge.

³ Ho ch'ang-ling (1785-1845) 賀長齡 ed. *Ch'ing (Huang)-ch'ao ching-shih wen-pien* 皇朝經世文編 [(Collection of the Practical Writings of the Ch'ing dynasty). 120 *chüan* in 64 *ts'ü*, 1827], 17:38a-b.

⁴ Ch'en Tung-yüan 陳東原 *Chung-huo chiao-yü shih* 中國教育史 (History of the Chinese Education, Shanghai, Commercial Press, 1936), p. 402 declares that the observation system was abolished in 1661. But it seems that some sort of practical training taken up in another name, *hsüeh-hsi hsing-tsou* 學習行走, existed throughout the early Ch'ing.

⁵ Ho Ch'ang-ling, *Ch'ing (Huang)-ch'ao ching-shih wen-pien*, 17:38a-b.

⁶ Chang Shou-yung 張壽鏞 (1878-1945), *Huang-ch'ao chang-ku hui-pien, nei-pien* 皇朝掌故彙編之內編 [(Political Encyclopaedia of the Ch'ing), 60 *chüan*, 1902], 3:14b.

In 1717 a more brilliant suggestion was presented by another censor named Hsü Wei-mo 許惟模. He said:

"... those who obtain the *chin-shih* degree do not suffer from unfamiliarity with literary writings. They [however] suffer from the lack of general knowledge and knowledge on economics. Therefore [the Government] should teach them affairs about taxation, defence and legal problems. There is no need to ask them to undertake further study in the Classics and history and require them to write poems and essays to see their standards, like the teaching of the Hanlin officials. Your minister understands that in the early years of our Dynasty, new *chin-shih* after the publication of the Examination results would follow the traditional practice of being despatched to various Boards to observe administrative affairs for three months before official appointment. This was to enable new officials to know about the routine work of the Board... However, they only went to take practice in one Board [respectively] and were ignorant of affairs of other Boards. Your minister requests that from now on after each *k'o* 科 (examination), except for those being admitted to the Hanlin Academy, the rest of the *chin-shih* are to be sent to every Board in accordance with the practice of observation of Government affairs (*kuan-cheng*). They are to be in each of the Boards for three months in turn and there they will be led to know the regulations so that they can learn to work. (In this capacity), it only needs two years to know all government affairs of the Boards. Among those who are thus sent, if there are able and good ones... Manchu and Chinese Presidents of the Board should present their records for special appointment. They should each be accorded an imperial audience and then given the post of District Magistrate much more quickly than the rest. The rest on completion of their terms [as apprentice-officials] should be reported to the Government for appointment in the normal way according to their year of obtaining the Degree."⁷

Hsü's memorial did not for the moment receive any definite Government response. It was not until 1730 that the next Emperor (the Emperor Yung-cheng) 雍正 took action in the matter of administrative training of officials. In that year, new *chin-shih*, excluding those being admitted into the Hanlin Academy, were called upon to take practice in the Boards as "Probationary Special Secretaries" (*E-wai chu-shih hsüeh-hsi hsing-tsou* 額外主事學習行走). These Boards despatched them to various sub-departments by lot to gain experience. They were to remain working as

⁷ Huang-Ch'ing tsou-i 皇清奏議 [(The Memorials of the Ch'ing), 68 *chüan* in 64 *ts'e*, 1936], 24:43a-45a.

apprentice-officials for three years after which their respective department heads would report their conduct and ability to the Emperor for consideration of substantive appointment. Those who were exceptionally talented were recommended for immediate appointment after only one year as student-officials. All of them received a salary equivalent to that paid to Special Secretaries of the Boards.⁸

Notice that Hsü's advocacy of a longer period of administrative training was conceded to and even exceeded (for the period advocated was only two years but now the Government required them to practise for three years). However, Hsü's suggestion that *chin-shih* should be despatched to each of the Six Boards in turn was disregarded, though they were sent to various sub-departments within a Board. The probable reason is that the constant transfer of apprentice-officials entailed extra work for the Boards, which had already been overburdened with their various functions. Moreover the Government might have felt that though the Boards had different assignments to perform, the principle of doing them remained the same. Thus, a student-official familiar with the routine work of one Board could learn that of other Boards with relative ease.

The practice of sending new *chin-shih* to Government Boards for practical training was carried out throughout the remaining years of Emperor Yung-cheng. Unfortunately, the system was abolished in the second year of the next Emperor (1737), when new *chin-shih* were to be appointed at once without being assigned to Government Boards for practice.⁹ The abolition of the practice may be accounted for by the fact that the Emperor desired to provide the holders of the Third Degree with quicker opportunities for advancement. Considering that the Government accepted Na Ch'in's 訥親 proposal to despatch *chü-jen* 舉人 to take practice in the Boards a few years later,¹⁰ we may surmise that though the *chin-shih* and the *chü-jen* (the holders of the Second Degree) were often eligible for the same posts (*i.e.* District Magistrate), the Government, particularly that of Emperor Ch'ien-lung 乾隆, was trying its best to enable the *chin-shih* to be appointed sooner than the *chü-jen*. The abolition of the practice period for the *chin-shih* and the adoption of more or less the same procedure for the *chü-jen* was one way of aiming in this direction. It also revealed the fact that the Government came to form the opinion that the better the degree was the lesser the necessity for the holder to take any practical training.

We have so far discussed the practical training of new *chin-shih*. As to

⁸ *Ch'ing-ch'ao t'ung-tien* 清朝通典 [(Political History of the Ch'ing), ed. by Chi Huang 稽瑛 and others, 100 *chüan*, Shanghai, 1935], p. 2142; *Ch'ing-ch'ao wen-hsien t'ung-k'ao* 清朝文獻通考 [(Political History of the Ch'ing), 300 *chüan*, 1882, Shih-t'ung edn., ts'e, 841-1000], 49:22a-b.

⁹ *Ch'ing-ch'ao t'ung-tien t'ung-k'ao*, 50:11a

¹⁰ See the following paragraph on Na Ch'in's proposal.

new *chü-jen*, we derive much information from the memorial of Na Ch'in presented in 1744. In it he declared:

"... It can be noticed that [new] *chü-jen* were despatched to various Boards for practice in the past. But later after consideration by the Board [of Civil Service] on the different nature of functions in the Boards and the Provincial departments, and the fact that problems about finance, taxation, legal cases could only be solved on the spot and could not be learnt about in the Boards, the system was discontinued. Personally, I also think that the functions of the Boards are unlike those performed in the provinces, but they also deal with affairs of the provinces. The principle [of dealing with them] is the same. Those learning in the Boards may not gain any definite practical skill but in the course of time, they must obtain some knowledge and experience. This certainly helps in producing good officials... [The Government should therefore] inform the provincial Governors-general and Governors to select young and able *chü-jen* to the Board [of Civil Service] for re-examination. They should be despatched by lot to various Government Boards for taking practice. Those who have reported to the Boards are to be examined by high mandarins and then sent to take practice at various Government Boards. They will serve in this student-official capacity for one year and if found to be efficient, their respective department heads should recommend them for the post of District Magistrate to the Emperor who will give their particulars to the Board of Civil Service for appointment in accordance with their seniority in getting the Second Degree... Those who do not deserve official recommendation will wait for (more junior) posts as Chou Director of Studies (*Hsüeh-cheng* 學正) or Director of Studies (*Chiao-yü* 教諭). Those who are willing to do so may also take the lower post of Chou Sub-Director of Studies (*Hsün-t'ao* 訓導)." ¹¹

This memorial met with imperial approval and in the early Ch'ien-lung reign, *chü-jen* were to be sent by lot to various Government Boards for practical training after the re-examination by the Board of Civil Service according to Na Ch'in's request. As recommended in his memorial, the period of training was one year, after which the Presidents of the Board of Civil Service would test their ability. Those who were found competent were granted an imperial audience for appointment for the post of District Magistrate. The mediocre *chü-jen* were to be appointed as educational officials.¹² Later in the Ch'ien-lung reign, the period was extended to three years. The Presidents of the Board under which they took practice were

¹¹ *Ch'ing-ch'ao ching-shih wen-pien*, 17:36a-37b.

¹² *Ch'ing-ch'ao t'ung-tien*, p. 2142; Chou Yin-t'ang, "Chü-jen chih ch'u-lu" 闕隆堂 舉人之出路 [(The Advancement Process of the Second-Degree Holders). *Tung-fang tsa-chih* 東方雜誌, *chüan* 42, No. 9 (May, 1946)], p. 23.

exhorted to pay great attention to their administrative ability and character.¹³

The system as suggested by Na Ch'in and adopted by the Government was certainly a good one. Unfortunately, the pressing problem of the day was not the lack of practical training but the discovery of a way to settle the excessive number of would-be officials. Thus, as time went on, the Government seemed to pay less attention to the practice of prospective officials than it did in the earlier part of the Dynasty.¹⁴

Besides the new *chin-shih* and the new *chü-jen* being called upon to take practice at the Government Boards at the Capital, Probationers and members of the Academy also needed to serve as student-officials for official positions such as that of Secretary of a Board. At the end of 1723, we find that Emperor Yung-cheng decreed that twenty to thirty Probationers, Correctors 檢討 and Second-Class Compilers 編修 of the Hanlin Academy who were willing to learn legal affairs in the Board of Punishment would be selected for imperial interview. They would be despatched to various sub-departments of the Board for practice, and those who did well would be given preferential appointment.

Notice the point that the Emperor only asked them to take practice in the Board of Punishment; this may indicate that legal affairs were regarded as the most difficult work of the Boards. Again, we also see that those members of the Academy were not compelled to take practice there. Only those who were willing were sent. We deduce from this that inmates of the Academy were given much more individual freedom in deciding what suited them best.¹⁵

As to the *pa-kung* 拔貢 who passed the examination specially set for them in the Capital and who were therefore eligible for any Capital post of the seventh rank, it was decreed in 1736 that they had to gain experience in various government Boards for three years. The heads under whom they took practice would examine their ability and some brilliant ones would be appointed Second-Class Sub-Prefects 通判 (rank 6A). In 1749 a similar decree despatching *pa-kung* to Government Boards for training for three years was promulgated. This time, they would be appointed Second-Class Assistant Department Magistrates of Chihli province (rank 7B) 直隸州州判.¹⁶ *Yin-sheng* (descendants of senior officials and nobles)

¹³ *Ch'ing-ch'ao t'ung-tien*, p. 2143.

¹⁴ It was recorded that in the early years of Emperor Ch'ien-lung, some *chü-jen* (holders of the Second Degree) had to wait more than thirty years for the post of District Magistrate. See *Ch'ing-shih kao* 清史稿 [(The Draft History of the Ch'ing), 536 *chüan* in 65 ts'e, 1928 edn.], *hsüan-chü chih*, 選舉志, 5:12b.

¹⁵ *Ch'ing-ch'ao t'ung-tien*, p. 2142; Ku Ching-te, *Hsiu-ts'ai, chü-jen, chih-shih* 賈景德 秀才舉人進士 [(The First, Second, Third Degrees of the Chinese Civil Service Examinations), Hong Kong 聯盛印務公司, 1956], p. 30.

¹⁶ *Ta-Ch'ing hui-tien shih-li* 大清會典事例 [(Collected Statutes and New Precedents of the Ch'ing), ed. by Li Hung-chang, 李鴻章 and others, preface dated 1886], 46:2a, 21b.

蔭生 like the *pa-kung*, waiting for low positions at the Capital, were also called upon to take practice at the various departments first.¹⁷

Viewing the practice system in retrospect, we see that though every class of candidates to office from the *yin-sheng* to the Probationers was required to gain experience of some sort in the Government departments, the degree of training varied in different reign periods. In general, the practical training applied both to aspirants for Capital as well as provincial posts. To those who wanted to become provincial officials, a further chance of becoming familiar with government affairs was provided during the period of their waiting for substantive positions at the provincial capitals. We shall discuss the arrangements in the provinces in the following pages.

Period of Expectancy (Hou-hsüan) 候選 in the Provinces

We have seen that before a candidate was substantively appointed, he frequently had to undergo a period of practical training in Government departments at the Capital. Some, like the *chin-shih* after 1737, were not called upon to do so. However, if he was appointed to a provincial post, he still had to pass through a period of expectancy during which he would be given opportunities to be familiar with administrative affairs before becoming a permanent official of the State.

The period of expectancy in short was the interim which occurred between nominal appointment at the Capital and conferment of a substantive post in the province. The Government despatched its appointees to various provinces generally in excess of the number of vacancies arising in local government departments. The situation was dictated by the inevitable circumstance that the number of persons eligible for office was far too great for the Civil Service to absorb.¹⁸ In order not to frustrate these literary elements of society, the Government often appointed them to nominal offices first (*chih* 職). The Government thought with reason that once scholars became expectant officials, with the hope of acquiring official positions in the near future, they would remain quiet and contented. This was the main reason for the origin of the system of *hou-hsüan* in the province.

Another reason for the evolution of the system of expectancy can be sought from the nature of the Chinese Civil Service. In spite of China's vastness of territory, the Chinese officialdom was the least staffed in the world.¹⁹ A district which could be as large as an English county was run by

¹⁷ *Ta-Ch'ing hui-tien* 大清會典 [(Collected Statutes of the Ch'ing Dynasty), 100 *chüan*, 1899 edn.], 7:2a.

¹⁸ See f.n. 14.

¹⁹ Linebarger, *Far Eastern Governments and Politics, China and Japan*. (2nd edn., Princeton, N.J., London: D. Van Nostrand Co. Inc., 1956), p. 60; J. K. Fairbank, *The United States and China* (new edn., completely rev. and enl., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 91.

only a few regular officials, some of whom were only sinecure holders. There was a dire need for competent persons to perform the various necessary administrative functions. The gentry of the locality did help immensely in aiding officials in their execution of public functions.²⁰ None the less, the provincial government needed more handy assistants than the gentry. Here the expectant officials entered into the whole scheme. As student-officials, they were to serve on a temporary basis in various Government assignments, for which provision had not been made in the regular administrative bracket.

The role played by the system in providing prospective officials with opportunities to gain administrative experience was less obvious, but equally important to the smooth running of the bureaucracy. With regard to the conditions under which the expectant officials would take practice, we draw much light from the memorial presented by O-er-t'ai 鄂爾泰 (1680-1745) in 1725.

"According to Assistant Governor Yüan Chan-ch'eng 元展成 (d. 1744), [the practice] of sending [new] *chin-shih* to various prefectural departments to take practice was adopted in the early Ch'ing and [therefore should be continued]. Your Majesty has given consent and ordered Governor-General and Governors to discuss the actual carrying out [of the practice]. Your minister (O-er-t'ai), further to the above memorial, suggests that *chin-shih* of this *k'o* (examination series) should be sent to [provincial] departments of the Commissioners of Justice 按察使 and Finance 布政使, where they will learn Government procedure for three years, after which they will serve on probation [for one year] in the province where they have been despatched before substantive appointments. [The reason for shifting the practice centre from prefectural departments to the provincial headquarters of the Commissioners of Justice and Finance is that] the department of the Commissioner of Finance is the centre of taxation of the province, [while] the department of the Commissioner of Justice is the centre of all legal affairs of the province. If they practice attentively for three years, they are bound to be versed in these administrative skills.

"In Yüan Chan-ch'eng's memorial, he says, 'Though the administrative affairs of the province all cluster in the provincial headquarters, the work in the latter differs from that to be performed by District Magistrates. Moreover, the settlement of finance [at the headquarters of the Commissioner of Finance] followed a set pattern and there is no need to take any real training [to be familiar with it]. As to robberies and other legal affairs, they are to be sent from the district department to the prefectural department. When they reach the department of the Commissioner of Finance,

²⁰ See T'ung-tsu Ch'ü, *Local Government in China under the Ch'ing*, ch. X, pp. 168-92 and Chang Chung-li, *The Chinese Gentry* (Seattle, Washington: University of Washington Press 1955) pp. 51-70, on the functions of the Chinese Gentry.

they have become more or less settled affairs [that is, evidence, plaintiffs etc. have been secured]. Even when there is irregularity in the reasoning in the cases, it is to be re-considered by the prefectural department [and not by the provincial headquarters]. Detailed legal affairs of the commoners can not be performed adequately by the department of the Commissioner of Justice alone. [The prefectural level will be in a much better position to manage such affairs]. If [new *chin-shih*] are ordered to learn in the departments of the Commissioners of Finance and Justice, there is also the risk that they will establish an illegal relationship with the private secretaries [administrative experts employed by officials on a private basis] and cause corruption. Thus, *chin-shih* despatched to provinces for practical experience should do so in the prefectural departments [rather than at the headquarters of the Commissioners of Finance and Justice].

"Your minister is of the opinion that officials should not know only how to deal with taxation and legal cases. They have to learn the appropriateness of administrative actions at an important focus of administrative direction [such as the provincial capital]. If [new *chin-shih*] are not ordered to take practice in provincial headquarters, but required to do so in prefectural departments, it is as well to ask someone looking for water to find it in ditches rather than in rivers [metaphorical saying meaning the discarding of a good way in favour of a bad one]. Your minister considers that besides sending them to the provincial departments of the Commissioners of Justice and Finance, they should also be despatched to the Governor-general's or Governors' departments or other departments in charge of food, salt and censorial functions. All these are situated at the provincial capital and therefore easily accessible. Unlike sending *chin-shih* to prefectural departments, despatching them to provincial headquarters does not have the disadvantage of difficulty of communication [between the provincial authorities and the new *chin-shih* under practice] so that their performance can be easily assessed. [When they take practice in the headquarters], the chief officials can have more contacts with them than when they are in the prefectural departments [and are therefore in a better position to teach them]. Only if there is teaching is there learning . . . It is not confined to the short moment at court [in the prefectural departments] when [*chin-shih*] are ordered to stand in silence can they be expected to learn. [They can even learn more when they are under the guidance of provincial chief officials], who would occasionally require them to draft verdicts for legal cases or answer [administrative] affairs or judge an [administrative] problem or to attend missions of investigation, or go to supervise the paying of taxes or to describe topographical condition of the area. From their conversation and performance, [the chief provincial officials] can know more of their ability and knowledge and inform them whether they are right or wrong so as to let them correct their own mistakes. Learning in this capacity for three

years, half of the *chin-shih* taking practice might become good future officials.

"As to the problem of illegal contacts and corruption with the private secretaries which might arise if *chin-shih* took practice at provincial headquarters . . . [this is a matter of individual integrity] and will take place anywhere, and not only inside the premises of the headquarters. Therefore, within the precincts of the headquarters, two or three rooms should be selected for the quarters [of the new *chin-shih*] under training. They should be paid so that they can care for their own livelihood.

"Among the nine new *chin-shih* assigned for my disposal in Yunnan Province [O-er-t'ai was the Governor-general of the province], I have sent the first-class and second-class *chin-shih* to take practice at the departments of the Governor and the Commissioner of Finance. The worst two *chin-shih* remain in my department [Department of the Governor-General] as student-officials. They are frequently assembled and tested on what they have learnt. Their diligent performance or lazy disposition will be marked out to give them encouragement or warning. [I understand] your Majesty's wish to foster talents. Since conditions vary in different provinces, there is no need to ask for uniformity of actions [in the details of carrying out the practice system]."²¹

O-er-t'ai's memorial reveals to us that before his time, new *chin-shih* were already required to gain experience in provincial Government departments, only that the centres of training were prefectural departments rather than provincial headquarters of the Commissioners of Finance and Justice. From it, we also see that before the Emperor's consent to shift the training centre, he himself had done so. This shows that different methods of practical training were adopted in different provinces according to the initiative and frame of mind of different Governors-General or Governors concerned.

It was not until 1730 that the Government showed definite approval of the shift of centres of practice from the prefectural departments to provincial headquarters as advocated by O-er-t'ai. Furthermore, the Government stipulated that they should be trained in administrative procedure there for three years after which they would need to be on probation for one year before substantive appointment. During the three years, these student-officials were not allowed to fill up vacancies even if they occurred. Only extremely able and competent *chin-shih* were to be recommended for immediate appointment before the completion of the practice period. Mediocre student-officials unable to follow up administrative procedure could be allowed to be appointed to educational offices before the completion

²¹ *Ch'ing-ch'ao ching-shih wen-pien*, 17:39a-40b. For the biography of O-er-t'ai see Arthur Hummel, ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1943-44), Vol. 1, 601-3.

of the three years of training. During the period of practice, they were to be paid from the public treasury of the Governor-General or Governor concerned.²²

In the provincial departments, expectants performed various functions, both official routine work and specific assignments. The former included attendance at Government departments on certain days of the month, assistance given to the legal affairs of the province and miscellaneous functions such as document-drafting and attending Government ceremonies.

On stipulated days of the month, expectant officials and other junior officials were expected to attend the departments of the Governor-General and the Governor.²³ The general custom was to visit the highest provincial official, that is, the Governor-General, first. On their arrival they submitted their cards and then gathered in the *yamen* 衙門 hall to wait for a summons. The Governor-General would interview those to whom he had assignments to give or words to say. Others who were not interviewed left the *yamen* of the Governor-General and went to visit the Governor's department.

There were other days when expectant officials were ordered to visit the departments of the Salt Commissioner and the Commissioners of Justice and Finance.²⁴ The apparent purpose of these visits was twofold: to pay respect to senior officials and to receive assignments and instructions from them if any. The underlying effect was, however, less obvious. They provided good opportunities for expectants to mix with officials and exchange ideas through informal conversation in the departmental halls.

Besides such formal and compulsory visits, would-be officials were expected to call on officials and members of the gentry class as frequently as possible. They were also urged to discuss matters of doubt with other expectants and scholars coming to the provincial capital to sit for the Civil Service Examinations.²⁵

Expectants were called upon to give assistance in the settlement of provincial legal affairs. There were three kinds of Government departments dealing with judicial matters: the department of the Commissioner of Justice, that of the Prefects and that of the Magistrates. It was stated that those

²² *Ch'ing-ch'ao t'ung-k'ao*, 49:22a-b.

²³ Justus Doolittle wrote in the nineteenth century that the dates were the 3rd, 13th, 23rd, 8th, 18th, and 28th days of every month. Justus Doolittle, *Social Life of the Chinese, with some Account of Their Religious, Governmental, Educational and Business Customs and Opinions* (2 vols., New York, 1865), Vol. I, 302; Ting Jih-ch'ang (Hummel, *Eminent Chinese*, Vol. II, 721-3) said that it was the custom that the expectant officials were interviewed in batches (Ting Jih-ch'ang, 丁日昌 *Fu-wu kung-tu* 撫吳公牘 [(The Public Letters of Ting Jih-ch'ang during His Governorship in Kiangsu), 50 *chüan*, 1877], 29:7b.

²⁴ Doolittle, *Social Life of the Chinese*, Vol. I, p. 302.

²⁵ Hsü Tung 徐棟 (1792-1865) ed. *Mu-ling shu* 勅令書 [(The Guide-book for Local Officials), 23 *chüan* in 18 *ts'ei*], 2:1b.

officials who had not served in these judicial departments as expectant-officials would suffer a great handicap in their future official work and sometimes cause ludicrous and embarrassing circumstances in their first discharge of legal affairs. The same authority, however, was of the opinion that only a very few officials had not experienced a period of practice in such departments before their appointments.²⁶

Other miscellaneous functions classified as general administrative work to be performed by expectant officials were the reading, drafting, receiving and sending of documents, and participating in the Confucian rites.²⁷

The more specific functions were generally temporary assignments which entailed travelling of some kind. Expectant officials selected for these, known as *wei-yüan* 委員, were usually sent by the Commissioners of Finance and Justice to collect taxes or bring back plaintiffs in legal cases, or investigate murder or robbery cases, or to help in relief work in other parts of the province,²⁸ or even perform miscellaneous functions such as the supervision of the transportation of books from the Capital to other Government departments.²⁹ They received their allowances from the department from which they were sent. Sometimes these semi-officials extorted extra remuneration from Magistrates who had been helped. This was, however, legally prohibited.³⁰ In fact, the conferment of temporary assignments on the expectants was determined by their show of integrity and their efficiency in carrying out their assigned jobs.³¹ If they wanted to make a good impression on their superiors so that they would be given more assignments in the near future, they had to perform their missions well. More assignments meant that their superiors had more confidence in them.

The above functions, general and specific in character, were what they might be called on to do. The number of assignments, however, varied among individuals and, as we have just mentioned, was determined by their impression on their superiors. Nevertheless, the period of expectancy was also a time which the expectant officials could profitably use in preparing future work on a private basis. As we have seen, the expectants did not have regular functions to perform, since they were not yet active members of the bureaucracy. They were therefore in a better position to further their study and learn more about the affairs of society through wider personal contacts and a favourable atmosphere at the provincial capital, which was the centre of official and literary activities in the province.

Expectants at the provincial centres were often exhorted to read the

²⁶ Ku Ching-te, *Hsiu-ts'ai, chü-jen, chin-shih*, p. 30; also see Hsü Tung, *Mu-ling shu*, 2:12b-16a.

²⁷ Hsü Tung, *Mu-ling shu*, 2:14b.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Ting Jih-ch'ang, *Fu-Wu kung-tu*, 47:26.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:7.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 2:12.

local gazetteers (*sheng-chih* 省志) to be more familiar with the customs and geography of the province. Indeed, prior to their coming to the province, they should find ways to gather information on the particular province where they were sent, such as the traditional amount of taxation and the number of taxable persons of the localities, from the *Fu-i ch'üan-shu* 賦役全書, a collection concerning all the materials about taxation and finance of the whole Empire prepared and kept by the Board of Revenue.³² The conscientious expectants too should study legal principles during their spare time, which, *Hsü Tung* 徐棟, an experienced Ch'ing official stated, could be mastered with one or two years of concentrated study. Nevertheless, it was rare for expectants to find time and energy to pursue a comprehensive study of the laws and legal precedents of the Empire. They could, however, have enough time to learn the more practical aspects of the legal documents such as those on land tenure, marriage, debts, robbery, murder, fighting, management of court affairs, rape, and false charges, *Hsü* maintained. Only if they gained some knowledge of the laws and their application could they be independent of the undue influence of the aides and assistants of their future posts.³³

If in any doubt as to the practical application of the knowledge gathered from the above sources, expectant officials could still consult officials of the locality where they worked and from them they could obtain more ideas about the traditions and customs of the area which might not be contained in books or documents.³⁴

The period of expectancy was a good system in meeting existing circumstances and providing provincial officials with some knowledge of administration before their substantive appointments to office. Unfortunately, its usefulness faded into the background when its accompanying evils became prominent in the nineteenth century. As time went on, the number of expectants grew too fast to be absorbed by the Civil Service within a short time. Many expectants waited so long for a post that their trust in the Government vanished and their hope of serving society turned into acts of irresponsibility. Some lived idly and extravagantly at the provincial Capital, others strove to shorten their period of expectancy by purchasing seniority from the Government. All these faults were luckily not so magnified during the early Ch'ing period under review, since the conditions of the Civil Service were as yet firmly under the imperial control.

In conclusion, we may say that the early Ch'ing officials underwent a period of administrative training whether at the Capital or in the provinces. The amount of such training, however, was determined by different circumstances of the time and the initiative of the individual concerned. In

³² *Hsü Tung, Mu-ling shu*, 2:1b, 8a.

³³ *Ibid.*, 2:13a-b.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 2:13a.

general, it provided the prospective official with some knowledge of government affairs, though it was not sufficient to enable him to be versed in all branches of the Government. The multifarious functions of a local official, say the District Magistrate, made it impossible for the prospective official to know all of them beforehand. This is the reason why the private secretaries entered into the whole scheme. In short, it was not the complete ignorance of officials but the complicated functions of a local post which called for the existence of private administrative assistants.