

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910465137703321
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Titolo	Civil examinations and meritocracy in late Imperial China / / Benjamin A. Elman
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Cambridge, Massachusetts ; ; London, England : , : Harvard University Press, , 2013
ISBN	0-674-72693-6 0-674-72604-9
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (416 p.)
Disciplina	352.6/3076
Soggetti	Civil service - China - Examinations - History Electronic books.
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Description based upon print version of record.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	part I. Becoming mainstream : "way learning" during the late empire -- part II. Unintended consequences of civil examinations -- part III. Retooling civil examinations to suit changing times.
Sommario/riassunto	During China's late imperial period (roughly 1400-1900 CE), men gathered by the millions every two or three years outside official examination compounds sprinkled across China. Only one percent of candidates would complete the academic regimen that would earn them a post in the administrative bureaucracy. Civil Examinations assesses the role of education, examination, and China's civil service in fostering the world's first professional class based on demonstrated knowledge and skill. Civil examinations were instituted in China in the seventh century CE, but in the Ming and Qing eras they were at the center of a complex social web that held together the intellectual, political, and economic life of imperial China. Local elites and the court sought to influence how the government regulated the classical curriculum and selected civil officials. As a guarantor of educational merit, examinations tied the dynasty to the privileged gentry and literati classes--both ideologically and institutionally. China eliminated its classical examination system in 1905. But this carefully balanced, constantly contested piece of social engineering, worked out over centuries, was an early harbinger of the meritocratic regime of college

boards and other entrance exams that undergirds higher education in much of the world today.
