Chinese education tradition not only absorbs the essence of traditional Chinese culture, but also continues to incorporate excellent cultural heritages from countries all over the world. When we talk about the influence of Western culture on Chinese education, it is more complicated than that exerted by traditional Chinese culture. Traditional Chinese culture has remained approximately the same for thousands of years. However, Western culture, which is more varied, was introduced to China through a complicated and tortuous process and it exerted different influences on Chinese education in different periods and through different channels. It was mentioned in Chapter Two that the communication between Chinese culture and Western culture can be dated back to many centuries ago—for instance, Buddhism was introduced to China from India and Arabian civilization passed into China through the Silk Road. Although they both greatly influenced Chinese education, the influence was indirect and exerted mainly through the merging of cultures. It was the dissemination of Western learning to the East beginning from the late Ming and early Qing dynasties that had a direct impact on Chinese education. Therefore, the present chapter will be devoted to this issue.

1. **Dissemination of Western Learning to the East and Its Impact on Traditional Chinese Culture**

Western learning disseminated to the East primarily refers to European culture, science and technology. Western learning was not directly and easily accepted in China; instead it was absorbed into Chinese culture through a tortuous process and a fierce cultural conflict. Most historians believe that the dissemination of Western learning to the East lasted three hundred years, starting from the late Ming and early Qing dynasties and ending in the time of the May Fourth Movement. However during this time, the dissemination has changed greatly in terms of its nature and channels, and therefore can be divided into three major periods. The first period includes the late Ming and early Qing dynasties when
western missionaries evangelized in China, bringing western science and technology along with them. In this period, the Ming and Qing governments considered themselves a celestial empire and took a very arrogant attitude towards western learning. The second period was after the Opium War when China was reduced to a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country and forced to accept Western learning through various unequal treaties. Western missionaries preached in China with the aid of warships and guns; they also set up missionary schools which facilitated the quick spread of Western learning in China. The third period was after the May Fourth Movement when pioneer intellectuals realized the backwardness of feudal Chinese culture and the advancement of Western ones. They were determined to reform Chinese society by learning from the West. In this period, Western learning was borrowed consciously. This historical review therefore shows the dissemination of Western learning to the East has gone through a tortuous process—from the refusal to learn, to forcible learning and then deliberate and conscious learning. And of course, struggles and conflicts between Western learning and Chinese culture, as well as the merging of the two, happened in every period. The present chapter mainly focuses on the first two periods of the dissemination and their influence on Chinese education.

The dissemination of Western learning to the East started from the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. In fact, the seed of capitalist production relations had already appeared in China in the mid-Ming Dynasty. At that time, handicraft workshops developed quickly due to flourishing business demand and the development of textile and porcelain industries was also especially striking. As a result, large and middle-sized cities began to emerge and the non-agricultural population increased dramatically. China was a closed country during the Ming Dynasty with a policy banning maritime trade; tributary trade was therefore the only legal avenue for foreign trade. However the smuggling private trade was never obliterated. During the late Ming Dynasty, private foreign trade was legalized and the imperial court opened a few ports along the coast of Fujian for exportation. The relation between China and foreign countries was then established and developed especially after Emperor Cheng-tsu (Zhu Li) of Ming Dynasty sent Zheng He to the West to enhance his influence. The West of that time mainly referred to the Indo-China Peninsula, the Malay Peninsula, Indian Ocean and the east coast of Africa. Zheng He was sent on diplomatic missions seven times and he greatly improved relationships between China and foreign countries.