

# Influence of confucianism on the han dynasty

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Question Confucianism had five significant influences on the Han dynasty. Describe them. The Chinese empire was instrumental in birthing several important schools of thought and philosophies. Perhaps one of the most influential philosophies was Confucianism. Confucianism was created by a talented scholar and philosopher by the name of Confucius. According to Howard Spodek, author of the book entitled *The World's History*, at its core, Confucianism emphasized the importance of “humanity, benevolence, virtue, and culture” within society (Spodek, 2006). He also believed that humans were inherently good and had the ability to be educated (Spodek, 2006). Confucianism became quite popular under the Han dynasty and influenced it greatly in terms of politics, history, education, law, and the role of women.

According to Spodek, Confucianism influenced politics in the Han dynasty by changing the hierarchy of power within society. In a Confucian society, scholars were the most powerful, “followed by farmers, artisans, and merchants” (Spodek). In this new hierarchy, scholars had the most influence over how the Han empire ran on a day to day basis.

Confucianism also had a great impact on history and its importance within the Han dynasty. According to Spodek, court historians were utilized in a much greater capacity than in previous dynasties. This change was due to the fact that Confucianism emphasized the “importance of tradition and continuity” (Spodek, 2006). This emphasis, therefore, dictated that histories should be documented more frequently and carefully.

Education and law were other areas that were especially influenced by Confucianism. Within the Han dynasty, special schools were set up to teach

Confucian principles(Spodek, 2006). Spodek states that “ the emperor declared that the knowledge of Confucian classics would be a basis for promotion in the imperial civil service”(Spodek, 2006). This was a significant change as before the shift to Confucianism, only the aristocracy was really brought into the imperial civil service(Spodek, 2006). Law also changed as Confucian scholars were given the power to change and inform the laws within the Han dynasty in order to reflect Confucian principles(Spodek, 2006).

Lastly, the role of women was influence by Confucianism. According to Spodek, Confucianism taught that women were inferior and should dedicate themselves to serving men such as their brothers, fathers, and husbands(Spodek, 2006). Confucianism established the way women should behave in that they were seen as subservient to the males within their society.

Confucianism is a school of thought that changed the landscape of the Han dynasty and molded Eastern philosophy. Much of its influence was quite positive as values of knowledge and peace were deemed to be important aspects of humanity. Its influence, like many other schools of thought and philosophies, did have some problems, however, such as its negative impact on women’s roles. In the end, regardless of the positive or negative aspects, the Han Dynasty would have looked very different without the incorporation of Confucianism.

## References

Spodek, H. (2006). The worlds history (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, N. J.: Pearson Prentice Hall.