

# Major differences between classical athens and han china



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Classical Athens and the Han Dynasty in China were two of the most famous and successful early civilizations. Even though they were in different geographical regions and existed in different centuries, they were both able to make their civilizations relevant in different ways. The differences in these civilizations include size/population and geographically where the civilization was, their government, and their different ways of life.

Size/population and geography were big differences between Classical Athens and the Han Dynasty in China. Where each civilization was located is one of the many major differences between the Han Dynasty and Classical Athens. According to Document A, the Han Dynasty is shown to be near the Pacific Ocean on the other side of Asia, putting the civilization basically in isolation. On the other hand, although Athens is near the Eurasian Steppes near the Aegean and Mediterranean Sea which would allow making trading with other countries like Persia and Egypt easier because the Mediterranean Sea was a great trading ground during the times of Classical Athens. Size also is a big difference because Athens is a city in the area of Attica while the Han Dynasty is a little bit smaller than the current size of China today.

Population were also two other big differences between the Han Dynasty in China and Classical Athens. According to Document B and Document C, the ratio of people living in Athens compared to the Han Dynasty was largely in the Han Dynasty's favor. Classical Athens population in the year 432 BCE was composed of about 50,000 free male citizens, 50,000 free male non-citizens (citizens under the age of 18 and residents without Athenian parentage), 100,000 free females and 115,000 slaves for a total of about

315, 000 people. The Han Dynasty on the other hand was roughly 200 times the size of Classical Athens population wise.

There were an estimated 1, 000 emperors and appointed officials, 130, 000 educated bureaucrats, 1, 300, 000 landed aristocracy, 58, 500, 000 peasant farmers and some skilled urban workers, 50, 000 merchants, and 5, 000, 000 unskilled workers, street artist and household slaves for a grand total of roughly 65, 000, 000 people. Although these numbers can not be the accurate actual populations of both civilizations, these documents give a basic understanding as to how big each civilization was. These numbers concerning the two civilizations show how different population wise each civilization was with Classical Athens looking relatively small compared to the Han Dynasty.

The governments of both The Han Dynasty and Classical Athens were also different. Classical Athens had a democratic type of government while The Han Dynasty had a monarchical/central type of government. Many citizens in Classical Athens viewed democracy as a the role model for other countries and a precedent for future governments. Indeed, Athens' democracy did set a precedent for many democracies today because there are many glaring similarities between Classical Athens' democracy and a current democracy today such as the United States of America. Similarities include the Athenian Assembly and today's current elections on laws and future leaders because both are using a representative type of government (Document E).

According to Pericles in Document D, Classical Athen's government was the best form of government because the administration of the government is in

the hands of all the people, very unlike the Han Dynasty's government which, because of the Mandate of Heaven, kept the government of the Han Dynasty in the hands of the royal family passing down the dynasty from generation to generation in the Han family (Document F). The Han Dynasty's governments main focus was expanding the powers of bureaucracy which would play a very pivotal role in the amount of territory controlled by the dynasty. The emperors of the dynasty would also appoint officials to be in charge of each part of his territory in the name of the emperor. The appointed officials would act very much like an emperor to the section of the territory they were assigned (Document G). This is very different from Classical Athens because Classical Athens had a representative type of democracy where they would have a representative represent their point of view on a issue where as in the Han Dynasty, all decisions and issues were decided by either the officials of the sections approved by the emperor or the emperor himself. In Classical Athens, according to Pericles in Document H, a good citizen of Athens must be well informed on general politics because it is for the well being of Athens since every citizen is involved in the deciding of issues, laws, etc.

That would not be the case in the Han Dynasty because whatever the emperor says goes and the citizens can only follow the law. Document I talks about the time after the Athenians lost their war with Sparta and their democratic government was destroyed. Instead their government transformed into a type of monarchy where their main focus was on the enemies inside and outside of Athens that would try to overthrow them. This is important because of the way Classical Athens had converted to a kind of

monarchy that was similar to the Han Dynasty with the fact that it was a type of monarchy but still different because in the Han Dynasty if you were able to pass the test to become a government official, you could be a part of the government whereas during this time in Classical Athens, there was a group of men and only those men who controlled the government.

Confucius in Document J talks about how any person who is doing good to others can have influence upon the government which would also mean they are a part of the government. This is very much Confucius' way of interpreting representation in the Han Dynasty's government, a difference from Classical Athens because Athens' democracy directly lets citizens have a say in the government while the Han Dynasty indirectly lets their citizens have a say in the government. An additional document of an average citizen living in both Classical Athens and the Han Dynasty would create a greater understanding and another point of view on both how effective and successful each government was. Both governments were able to lead to the relative success of each civilization, however both governments' ways of making their civilization successful in different ways.

Living in two different parts of the world, Classical Athens' way of life is completely different from the Han Dynasty's way of life. According to Document L, the Han Dynasty was a very isolated and kept to themselves while Document K shows the Greek culture of the Ancient Olympics which was the gathering of Greeks to celebrate, very much different from the Chinese culture of isolation. Also in the Han Dynasty the child was the lesser between the parent and the child. Filial Piety is the child showing respect to the parents while working for them, showing that the elders are more

<https://assignbuster.com/major-differences-between-classical-athens-and-han-china/>

important that the child in the Han Dynasty's way of life (Document P). The theory that the parent is more important than the child is also shown in Document O in which Wan Can explains an event where he saw a woman let go of her child in the weeds and the woman walk away, basically condemning the baby to a death sentence.

The note beneath the document also gives more evidence to this idea, stating that in order to limit family size, abandonment and infanticide were accepted means in the Han Dynasty and usually occurred on the third day of the infants life where the parents would then decide whether to let the infant live or die. Although this also occurred in Classical Athens, many people, including Socrates, do not agree with this practice (Document M). If the child were to live beyond infancy, they were provided a life of nourishment for basically their first six years of life and after the age of six they were introduced to the Greek version of the real world, which meant school for boys and working the loom for girls (Document N). This is very different from the Han Dynasty because in the Han Dynasty, the children spend their lives respecting and working for their parents while in Classical Athens, children are treated wonderfully for their early years and then sent to work. The way of life in each civilization was drastically different from each other, and this was just another way of showing the differences between Classical Athens and the Han Dynasty.

The differences between Classical Athens and the Han Dynasty are very major and important. From the size of each civilization to the way both civilizations ran their government to their way of life, although both

civilizations had similar success and fame, they were drastically different in many ways from each other.