

# China's government assignment



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The dominant philosophy in China, Confucianism, is based on the teaching of Confucius. He lived more than 1,000 years before the Song dynasty. His ideas, though, had a dramatic effect on the Song system of government. Confucian ideas Confucius teachings focused on ethics, or proper behavior, for individuals and governments. He said that people should conduct their lives according to two basic principles. These principles were *Ren*, or concern for others, and *Li*, or appropriate behavior. Confucius argued that society would function best if everyone followed *Ren* and *Li*.

Confucius thought that everyone had a proper role to play in society. Order was maintained when people knew their place and behaved appropriately. For example, Confucius said that young people should obey their elders and that subjects should obey their rulers. After his death, Confucius ideas were spread by his followers, but they were not widely accepted. In fact, the Han dynasty officially suppressed Confucian ideas and teachings. By the time of the Han dynasty, Confucianism had again come into favor, and Confucianism became the official state philosophy.

During the Period of Disunion, which followed the Han dynasty, Confucianism was overshadowed by Buddhism as the major tradition in China. Many Chinese people had turned to Buddhism for peace and comfort during those troubled times. In doing so, they largely turned away from Confucian ideas and outlooks. Later, during the Sui and early Tang dynasties, Buddhism was very influential. Unlike Confucianism, which focused on ethical behavior (related to the rules of conduct or proper behavior), Buddhism stressed a more spiritual outlook that promised escape from suffering.

As Buddhism became more popular in China, Confucianism lost some of its influence. . Neo- Confucianism Late in the Tang dynasty, many Chinese historians and scholars again became interested in the teachings of Confucius. Their interest was sparked by their desire to improve Chinese government and society. During and after the Song dynasty, a new philosophy called Neo - Confucianism was similar to the older philosophy in that it taught proper behavior. However, it also emphasized spiritual matters.

For example, Neo - Confucian scholars discussed such Issues as what made human beings do bad things even If their basic nature was good. Neo - Confucianism became much more Influential under the Song. Its Influence grew even more later. In fact, the ideas of Neo - Confucianism became official government teachings after 11. Scholar - Officials ere Song dynasty took another major step that affected China for centuries. They improved the system by which people went to work for the government.

These Markers formed a large bureaucracy, or a body of unelected government officials. They Joined the bureaucracy by passing civil examinations. Civil service means service as a government official. Or become a civil servant, a person had to pass a series of written examinations. The examinations tested students' grasp of Confucianism and related ideas. Because the sets were so difficult, students spent years preparing for them. Only a very small fraction of the people who took the tests would reach the top level and be appointed to a position in the government.

However, candidates for the civil service examinations had a strong incentive for studying hard. Passing the tests meant life as a scholar - official - an educated member of the government. Scholar - officials Newer elite members of society. They performed many important Jobs in the government and were widely admired for their knowledge and ethics. Their benefits included considerable respect and reduced penalties for breaking the law. Many also became wealthy from gifts given by people seeking their aid.