

## Ancient Civilizations of Asia—China

### Section 2



#### MAIN IDEAS

1. Han dynasty government was largely based on the ideas of Confucius.
2. Han China supported and strengthened family life.
3. The Han made many achievements in art, literature, and learning.

### Key Terms and Places

**sundial** a device that uses the position of shadows cast by the sun to tell the time of day

**seismograph** a device that measures the strength of earthquakes

**acupuncture** the practice of inserting fine needles through the skin at specific points to cure disease or relieve pain

### Section Summary

#### HAN DYNASTY GOVERNMENT

Liu Bang (lee-oo bang), a peasant, led the army that won control of China after the collapse of the Qin dynasty. He earned the people’s loyalty and trust. He lowered taxes for farmers and made punishments less severe. He set up a government that built on the foundation begun by the Qin. Liu Bang’s successor, Wudi (woo-dee), made Confucianism the official government philosophy of China. To get a government job, a person had to pass a test based on Confucian teachings. However, wealthy and influential families still controlled the government.

Which feature of the Qin dynasty did the Han preserve?

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#### FAMILY LIFE

A firm social order took hold during Han rule. In the Confucian view, peasants made up the second-highest class. Merchants occupied the lowest class because they merely bought and sold what others had made. However, this social division did not indicate wealth or power. Peasants were still poor and merchants were still rich.

Why does Confucian thinking devalue merchants?

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During Wudi’s reign, Confucian teachings about the family were also honored. Children were taught from birth to respect their elders. Within the

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family, the father had absolute power. Han officials believed that if the family was strong and people obeyed the father, then people would obey the emperor, too. Chinese parents valued boys more highly than girls. Some women, however, still gained power. They could influence their sons' families. An older widow could even become the head of the family.

**Who had absolute power in the family under the Han?**

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**Circle the sentence that explains which women could become heads of families.**

**HAN ACHIEVEMENTS**

The Han dynasty was a time of great accomplishments. Art and literature thrived, and inventors developed many useful devices. Han artists painted portraits and realistic scenes that showed everyday life. Poets developed new styles of verse. Historian Sima Qian wrote a complete history of China until the Han dynasty.

The Han Chinese invented paper. They made it by grinding plant fibers into a paste and then letting it dry in sheets. They made “books” by pasting sheets together into a long sheet that was rolled into a scroll.

Other Han innovations included the **sundial** and the **seismograph**. They developed the distinctive Chinese medical practice of **acupuncture** (AK-yoo-punk-cher). These and other Han inventions and advances are still used today.

**Name the greatest and most far-reaching Han invention.**

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**CHALLENGE ACTIVITY**

**Critical Thinking: Drawing Inferences** Could the Han dynasty have flourished if the Qin had not set up a strong government structure? Write a brief essay presenting your point of view on this question.