III. Confucianism and Government

• Confucian thought influenced the Song government.
A. Confucianism underwent changes and influenced Chinese government.

1. The dominant philosophy in China was Confucianism, based on the teachings of Confucius.

2. His teachings focused on proper behavior.

3. Confucius taught that people should conduct their lives according to two basic principles.
   - One was *ren*, or concern for others.
   - The other was *li*, or appropriate behavior.
1. After his death, Confucius’s ideas were spread by his followers, but as Buddhism became more popular, Confucianism lost some influence.

2. Buddhism stressed a more spiritual outlook that promised escape from suffering.

3. Neo-Confucianism developed due to a desire to improve Chinese government and society.

4. It was similar to the older philosophy but emphasized spiritual matters.

5. Neo-Confucianism became more influential under the Song, and became official government teaching after the Song dynasty.
C. Scholar-officials ran China’s government during the Song dynasty.

- The Song dynasty improved the system by which people went to work for the government.
- These workers formed a large **bureaucracy**, or a body of unelected government officials.
D. Civil Service Examinations

1. Officials joined the bureaucracy by passing civil service examinations.

2. Civil service means service as a government official.

3. These were a series of written examinations that tested students’ grasp of Confucianism and related ideas.

4. The tests were difficult, and students spent years preparing.

5. Passing the exam meant life as a scholar-official, an educated member of government.
E. Scholar-Officials

1. Scholar-officials were elite members of society and were widely admired for their knowledge and ethics.
2. They performed many important jobs in the government.
3. Benefits included being respected and having reduced penalties for breaking the law.
4. Many became wealthy from gifts given by people seeking their aid.
5. This system helped the stability of the Song government.