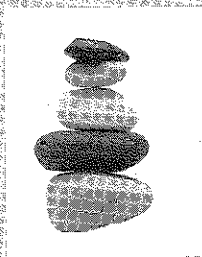


ber of different groups lived in this area, and the most distinctive feature of their culture was the construction of enormous earthen mounds built as stages for ceremonies, platforms for dwellings, and burial sites. The largest and most important mound-builder settlement of this period was at **Cahokia**, located near modern-day East St. Louis, Illinois. It appears as if the people who built Cahokia built other settlements around the Mississippi River valley, but Cahokia is the most impressive, with about eighty mounds of different sizes there. The site was abandoned about 1300 for reasons still not understood. Since peoples north of Mexico had no writing, information about their societies comes almost exclusively from archaeological discoveries, and we know little about their political and social organization and religious beliefs. By 1450, most people in the Western Hemisphere lived in small kinship-based groups that spoke a variety of languages and practiced different customs. From Alaska to South America, nomadism was common, as was subsistence agriculture. Two large empires controlled areas that were a considerable distance apart: the Aztecs in Mesoamerica, and the Inca in the Andes region of South America. These two empires were all that stood in the way of Spanish conquerors when they arrived in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century.

## IDENTIFICATIONS AND CONCEPTS

ayllus  
 Aztecs  
 Cahokia  
 chinampas  
 classical, post-classical Mesoamerica  
 Inca  
 khipus  
 Maya  
 mit'a  
 Moche  
 Quechua  
 Quetzlcoatl  
 slash and burn (shifting) agriculture  
 stelae  
 Tenochtitlan  
 Teotihuacan  
 Toltecs  
 Topiltzin  
 tribute system



## CHAPTER EIGHT: CENTRAL AND EAST ASIA: THE REVIVAL OF CHINA AND THE IMPACT OF THE MONGOLS

Like the Western Roman Empire, the Han Empire was beset by nomadic invasions during its latter years. When the dynasty fell in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century C.E., China fragmented into regional kingdoms that fought constantly with one another for almost 400 years. This Era of Division saw the Chinese bureaucracy collapse, and the position of the scholar-gentry declined sharply as families with large landholdings vied for power. Non-Chinese nomadic warlords ruled much of China, and Buddhism gained popularity, challenging Confucianism as the prime cultural force in East Asia. Without a central political force to maintain it, the Great Wall was poorly defended and did little to keep nomadic people from crossing it to raid the kingdoms. Trade and city life declined throughout the bickering kingdoms, reminiscent of the Warring States Period that had occurred between the Zhou and Qin Dynasties. Just as Shi Huangdi emerged to unite China at the end of the Warring States Period, a member of a prominent north Chinese noble family rose to reunite China at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century to establish the **Sui Dynasty**. Although the Han and Roman Empires suffered many of the same setbacks that led to their downfall, Chinese civilization eventually rose again, whereas Roman civilization disappeared forever.

### THE SUI-TANG ERA

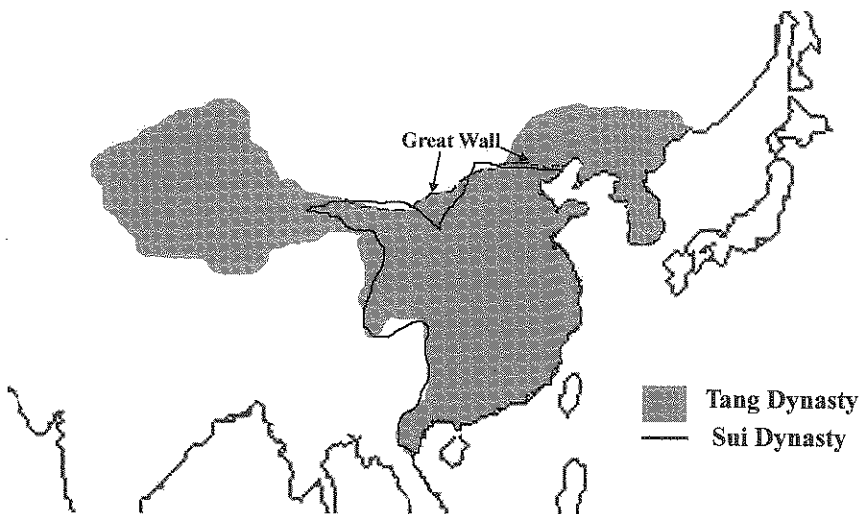
China was reunited in 589 C.E., when Wendi, a Chinese nobleman, first forged a marriage alliance with a neighboring kingdom in the north, and then gained the support of nearby nomadic military commanders. Reunification of China came with the defeat of the Chen kingdom, which had long ruled much of the south, so that most areas that the Han had ruled centuries before were now united as the Sui Dynasty under Wendi. The turmoil, however, did not end with Wendi's victories. Just as Shi Huangdi's short-lived Qin Dynasty paved the way for the long-lasting Han Dynasty, the Sui Dynasty paved the way for the **Tang Dynasty** that ruled China for almost three hundred years. Wendi was murdered by his son, Yangdi, whose extravagant and demanding personality inspired his ministers to assassinate him in 618. Instead of falling back into chaos, the tenuous

Chinese empire was held together by one of Yangdi's officials, Li Yuan, the Duke of Tang, who became the first of the Tang emperors.

The Tang emperors and nobility descended from the Turks who had built small states in northern China after the Han era, as well as from Chinese officials who had lived in the area. They upheld Confucian values, but they also were very much influenced by the cultures of central Asia, including Buddhism and a strong military organization. The Tang established a capital at Chang'an near the old Qin capital, where the emperors presided over one of the most brilliant epochs of China's long history.

### Political Organization

Li Huang, together with his son, Tang Taizong, built the foundation for the great dynasty by extending the empire's borders and placating the nomadic people who had long threatened Chinese stability. The emperors played one nomadic group off another to gain control, and they completed repairs to the Great Wall that the Sui had begun. The Tang military forces were formidable, and succeeded in getting leaders of Turkic tribes to submit as vassals to the Tang rulers, who took the title "heavenly khan." Daughters of the Turk leaders often married into the Tang family, and sons were sent to Chang'an as hostages, where they learned Chinese ways and loyalties. The Tang armies also defeated kingdoms on the Korean peninsula, and received tribute from the Silla Kingdom that long remained a loyal vassal to the Chinese.



**The Sui and Tang Dynasties.** The short-lived Sui Dynasty united regional kingdoms in 589 C.E., but fell to the Tang Dynasty in 618. The Tang united much the same land space that the Han had ruled during the Classical Era.

The early Tang emperors also rebuilt the elaborate bureaucracy that had developed during the Han era. Even though the Tang were heavily influenced by their central Asian roots, they identified with Chinese culture, and very much valued the scholar-gentry tradition based on knowledge and appreciation of Confucianism. The bureaucracy was much needed, especially with the expansion of the empire, and the scholar-gentry also helped to offset the power of the land-holding aristocrats whom the Tang recognized as threats to their rule. In the Tang era, the numbers of educated scholar-gentry rose far above those in the Han era, and the examination system was greatly expanded. The scholar-gentry class filled most of the high government positions and oversaw a vast bureaucracy in an arrangement that was to continue in later dynasties.

The Tang managed to establish regional **hegemony** (control) over much of east Asia through military prowess and the reestablishment of a tributary (payment by subjects) system. The Chinese called their empire "**The Middle Kingdom**" because they saw themselves as central to the world around them, and their demands for gifts from neighboring lands and peoples were part of the natural order of Chinese domination. Envoys from tributary states delivered their goods to the Tang Court with a **kowtow**, a deep bow before the emperor in which the forehead touched the ground. The Chinese returned the favors with gifts of their own, and even though subordinate lands often did as they pleased otherwise, the ceremonies established diplomatic contacts and encouraged trade and cultural exchanges.

### **Economic Changes and Social Distinctions**

An important accomplishment of the early Tang emperors was their check on the power of aristocratic land-owning families by establishing the **equal field system** that restricted the inheritance of land. When a farmer died, his land went to the government and was allotted to individuals and their families according to the fertility of the land and the needs of the people. About one-fifth of the land remained under hereditary control, but the rest was available for redistribution. In this way, the equal field system not only checked the power of the aristocrats, but very much improved the lot of the average peasant, making them much happier with their benevolent rulers.

The Tang's reemphasis on the scholar-gentry also impacted the social class system in China, elevating the status of the bureaucrats and relegating the landed aristocracy to marginal government positions. The imperial university first established by the Han was expanded to allow about 30,000 students to train each year for the examinations, and it was possible for bright commoners to enter the university (usually with the sponsorship of their villages), pass the examinations, and successfully land a high position in government. Birth and family connections continued to be important, however, and often established

bureaucrats used their influence to see that family members received government positions.

During the Tang period, Chang'an became one of the largest cities in the world as the hub of a vast trade network at the eastern end of the revived Silk Road. Though the 1100-mile **Grand Canal** built by the Sui did not reach Chang'an, it linked the Yellow River with the Yangzi as a key component to internal trade within the empire. Other urban areas grew along the trade routes, and urban life was quite diverse, with perhaps as many as 100,000 west Asians living in Chang'an by the end of the Tang period.



### **MARKER EVENT: CONSTRUCTION OF THE GRAND CANAL**

Although China's Grand Canal is not as internationally renowned as the Great Wall, its construction is every bit as impressive a technological accomplishment. By connecting two large east/west river systems - the Yangzi and Huang He (Yellow) Rivers - it facilitated trade between northern and southern China. The Canal was one of the world's largest waterworks projects before modern times, extending for more than 1100 miles and measuring about forty paces across. Roads ran parallel to the waterway on either side. Sui Emperor Yangdi used canals dug as early as the Zhou dynasty, but he linked them into a network that allowed food crops to be transported easily across the empire, particularly the abundant rice crops of the Yangzi River valley.

More than just a technological achievement, the Grand Canal not only integrated the economies of northern and southern China, it served as a basis for political and cultural unity as well, making it possible for China to maintain hegemony over east Asia for many years. The Canal was the major conduit for internal trade in China until railroads were built in the 19th century, and even today it still serves vital trade functions.

### **Cultural Developments**

The cosmopolitan Tang Dynasty was shaped by both Chinese and Turkic culture. The leaders continued the Confucian examination system for candidates

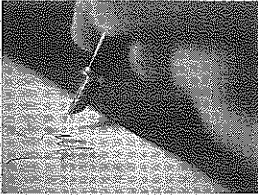
for the bureaucracy, but they also valued central Asian expertise in horsemanship and the use of iron stirrups. Massive statues of the Buddha were carved out of rocky cliffsides, and the style was strongly influenced by that of central and even west Asia. The statues are better known for their sheer size than for artistic refinement, but stone cutting and metalworking skills were clearly well developed. Tang artists and sculptors often focused on the horses and two-humped camels used along the Silk Road, and their human images were of foreigners from all over central Asia, including camel drivers and grooms for the horses. Tang literature described foreign foods, music, and customs, and one of the favorite pastimes of aristocrats – both men and women – was polo, a game which originated in Persia.

During the Tang era an accomplished gentleman was expected to be able to write poetry, a skill necessary for passing the civil service examinations. Over 48,000 Tang poems by some 2,200 writers have been preserved, with two of China's most beloved and admired poets – **Li Bo** and **Du Fu** – living during the Tang era. Li Bo is known for his freedom of spirit and a love of nature so strong that it is said that he died by drowning while trying to fish out the reflection of the moon on the waters of a lake. In contrast, Du Fu's poetry was more formal and more concerned with social injustice and the suffering of ordinary people.

Although the government relied on Confucian knowledge, Buddhism was very influential, especially during the early Tang era. The most famous traveler of the time was a Buddhist monk, Xuanzang, who traveled to India and returned in 645 C.E. with hundreds of Buddhist texts that he used to advance the understanding of Buddhism in China. Xuanzang's efforts helped to popularize Buddhism, and monasteries were established all over the empire. A number of sects flourished, including Chan (Zen), which emphasized the importance of meditation in reaching nirvana. Buddhist monasteries and temples often performed important economic functions, such as operating mills and oil presses and performing banking services. The temples also held much land, and they profited from their connections with wealthy patrons who sought to avoid taxes by registering land under a temple name. Much temple wealth was channeled into building and the arts.

By the mid-9<sup>th</sup> century, Confucian and Daoist rivals began to attack Buddhism as an impure influence on Chinese society. The Confucian scholar-administrators eventually convinced the Tang rulers that the wealthy monasteries posed an economic challenge to the government, particularly since they could not be taxed. Under Emperor Wuzong (842-847), thousands of monasteries and Buddhist shrines were destroyed, and hundreds of thousands of monks and nuns were forced to return to civilian lives. Monastery lands were divided among landlords and peasants and became fully taxable. These actions had disastrous

effects on Buddhism, and even though the religion survived, Buddhists never again had as much political influence and wealth as they did during the early Tang Dynasty. Instead, Confucianism emerged as the central ideology of Chinese civilization from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but Buddhism remained central in Southeast Asia, Tibet, and parts of central Asia.



### ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS: HAN YU'S MEMORIAL ON BUDDHISM

One of the leaders of the Confucian counterattack on Buddhism during the early 9<sup>th</sup> century was Han Yu, a classical prose stylist and poet. His "memorial" so enraged Emperor Tang Xianzong that he banished Han Yu from the court, but his witty essay stands as a famous example of the tensions that existed between Buddhism and Confucianism. In the excerpt below, Han Yu makes fun of the custom of gathering artifacts from the Buddha, including a bone from Buddha's finger.

"Now I hear that by Your Majesty's command a troupe of monks went to Fengxiang [a western city] to get the Buddha-bone, and that you viewed it from a tower as it was carried into the Imperial Palace; also that you have ordered that it be received and honored in all the temples in turn...How could a sublime intelligence like yours consent to believe in this sort of thing? ...Now the Buddha was of barbarian origin. His language differed from Chinese speech; his clothes were of a different cut...He did not recognize the relationship between prince and subject, nor the sentiments of father and son...How much the less, now that he has long been dead, is it fitting that his decayed and rotten bone, his ill-omened and filthy remains, should be allowed to enter in the forbidden precincts of the Palace? Confucius said, 'Respect ghosts and spirits, but keep away from them.' ...Your servant is truly alarmed, truly afraid."

*Reference:* Han Yu's *Memorial*, from *Ennin's Travels in Tang China*, Edwin O. Reischauer, pp. 221-224.

### The Decline of the Tang Empire

As early as the mid-700s the Tang Dynasty was weakened by a neglectful emperor who inspired a rebellion that grew into a devastating war that encompassed the empire. The dynasty never recovered, although it did put down the rebels. As so often occurred during Chinese history troubles began along the northern borders. This time a nomadic Turkish people, the **Uighurs**, sacked Chang'an

and Luoyang as payment for their aid in defeating the rebels. During the 9th century a series of rebellions spread through the Chinese countryside and fueled popular discontent. The Tang emperors granted more and more power to regional military commanders, and the great empire gradually lost control over them, with the last Tang emperor abdicating his throne in 907.

## THE SONG DYNASTY

With the collapse of the Tang Dynasty, China again fell into a time of chaos that followed each of the strong dynasties. Warlords competed for regional power, and by 960 three major states competed to replace the Tang:

- 1) **The Liao Empire** – The Khitan people, pastoral nomads related to the Mongols, established this empire on the northeastern frontier of China. They governed from several cities, but the emperors spent time going from one nomadic encampment to another.
- 2) **The Xi Xia (Tangut) Empire** – The Minyak people established the Xi Xia Empire in western China, named to reflect their connections to the former Tang Empire.
- 3) **The Song Empire** – In 960 a military commander, who would come to be called Emperor Taizu, reunited much of China under central imperial control, although the empire never had as much military strength as the Tang Empire had.

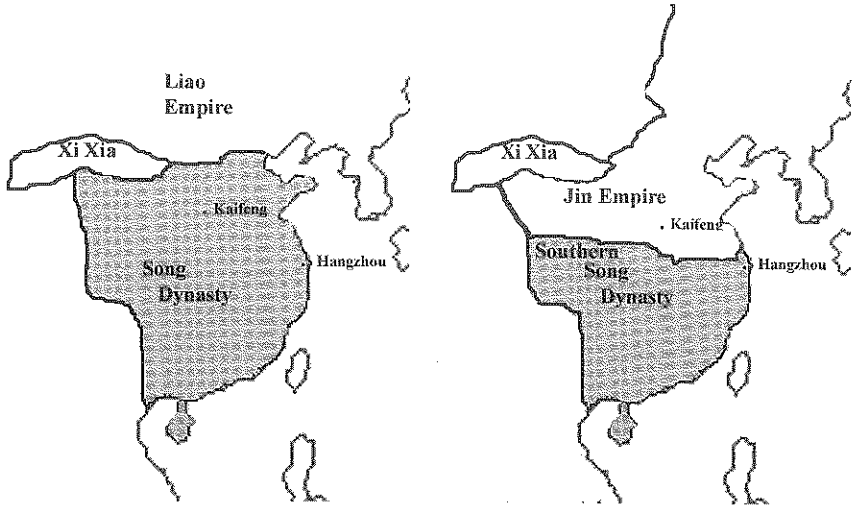
Although the Song Empire unified China, its leaders were under constant pressure from the northern and western empires. Beginning in 1004 the Song leaders were forced by military defeats to pay tribute to the Liao Empire to keep it from raiding Song domains. Only a few years later, a northern people called the Jurchens destroyed the Liao capital in Mongolia and proclaimed their own empire – the Jin. The Jurchens exacted tribute from Song China, took a significant part of their land, and forced the Song to relocate their capital from Kaifeng to Hangzhou. This invasion of the Jurchens marks the division between the two eras of the Song Dynasty: the years from 960 to 1127, often called the “Northern Song,” and the era from 1127 to 1279, referred to as the “Southern Song.”

### Political Development of the Song Empire

Even during their early years the Song never matched the Tang in political or military strength, partly because the empire was designed to address the weaknesses of its predecessor. The Tang had fallen when regional military commanders became independent rulers who raised their own armies and collected their own taxes. To remedy this, the Song subordinated the military to the civilian administrators of the scholar-gentry class, allowing only civil officials to be



governors. They further weakened the military by rotating military commanders from region to region, subjecting them to the authority of the Confucian scholar-gentry. The result was a reinvigoration of Confucian thought as well as a military organization that could not consistently resist the advances of the Xi Xia, Liao, and Jin Empires.



**China during the Song and Southern Song Dynasties.** The map on the left shows the Song Dynasty as it existed about 1100 C.E., and the map on the right shows the extent of the dynasty by 1140, after military defeats to the Jin Empire that captured the Song capital at Kaifeng. The Southern Song paid tribute to the Jin until the Mongols conquered them in 1234. The Southern Song fell to the Mongols in 1279.

The scholar-gentry class filled the bureaucracy through a broadening of the civil service examinations at three levels: district, provincial, and imperial. Standards were adjusted so that more candidates passed the exams and filled the growing number of government positions, and political power flowed from the aristocrats and Buddhist rivals to the Confucian scholar-gentry. The growing bureaucracy put pressure on the imperial treasury, and when the emperors tried to raise taxes, the peasants rebelled, increasing the need for military action and increasing the imperial debt. Scholar bureaucrats led Song armies in the field and made military decisions, even though they had little military education, making them vulnerable to defeat by the strong armies of the northern empires.

### **Economic Development of the Song Empire**

Despite its military and political limitations, the Song Dynasty is known for the revolutionary economic changes that occurred in industry, agriculture, and commerce. Industrial growth peaked during the earlier era, whereas agricultural and commercial growth continued even after the loss of the north in 1127.

- **Industry and production** – Paper making and all the processes involved in book production advanced during the Song Dynasty, as did salt and tea processing and the production of ceramics. In north China, as later in Europe, deforestation provided the incentive for coal production, with much of the coal used to smelt iron, making China's coal and iron industry the most advanced in the world. The Chinese developed the technology for smelting iron and carbonizing it to produce steel. Much of the iron and steel went into the production of military equipment, such as swords, armor, and arrow tips. Other products were tools for farmers and craftsmen, stoves, nails, needles, bits for drilling wells, and chains used to support suspension bridges. Two other important technologies were gunpowder and printing. Daoist alchemists had discovered how to make gunpowder during the Tang Dynasty, and by the Song era, gunpowder was used in bamboo "fire lances" and primitive bombs. The earliest gunpowder had limited military effectiveness, but knowledge of gunpowder chemistry diffused through Eurasia, and gained military importance with the development of metal-barreled cannons in the late 13th century. Before the Song era, printers used wooden blocks to print entire pages with ink. By the mid-11th century printers were experimenting with reusable, movable type, so that individual characters could be rearranged for new printings. As a result, the printing process became much more flexible and less expensive, so that texts could be produced quickly in large quantities.
- **Commerce** – Song commerce built on the earlier trade developed during the Sui and Tang Dynasties. The Song capital, Kaifeng, was located near the junction of the Yellow River and the canal system leading to the prosperous southeast, where it served as a government and commercial center. Kaifeng was a center for textiles, drug and chemical shops, shipyards, building material suppliers, and a thriving restaurant and hotel industry. Professional guilds, similar to those developing in Medieval Europe, were located there. When Kaifeng was conquered by the Jin Empire, the political loss was greater than the economic loss, since by this time a good two-thirds of China's population and wealth were in the South and remained under Song control. Commercial transactions were facilitated by the use of paper money, a Chinese innovation. In the 11th century, paper money was issued for the first time by the government, although it eventually suffered from severe inflation when the government printed too much of it. China's oceangoing ships were large, capable of carrying several hundred men, and were navigated with the aid of the compass, also produced by the Chinese. The greatest of the trading cities of the south was Hangzhou, which also became

the capital of the Southern Song and home to merchants, craftsmen, and government officials. Its primary exports included silks, copper coins, and ceramics. Shards of the highly desirable ceramic objects have been found throughout south and Southeast Asia, in the Middle East, and along the east coast of Africa.

- **Agriculture** – Industry and commerce could not have been supported without a remarkable increase in agricultural yields, since the Chinese population surpassed 100 million during the Song era. The size of harvests was increased by the use of improved farm tools, advances in water control, wider application of fertilizers, and the introduction of new varieties of rice. Different strains of rice were cultivated to suit particular locations, and in the southeast many rice paddies produced two crops a year. Because most of this agricultural growth occurred in the south, it was not disturbed by the Jurchen invasion of the north, and in contrast to the coal and iron industries in the north, agricultural production continued to grow during the era of the Southern Song.

### Cultural Change in Song China

After the closure of Buddhist monasteries during the late Tang era, persecution of Buddhists eased, but the Song emperors actively supported Confucianism, sponsoring Confucian scholars and subsidizing the printing and distribution of Confucian writings. The appeal of Buddhism forced Confucians to rethink their philosophy, creating **neo-Confucianism**, a new version of the older ideology. Neo-Confucianism emphasized the interpretations of **Mencius** (370-290 B.C.E.) of the old master's thought, and was most famously expressed by Zhu Xi, in his commentaries on the four books, or the classical Confucian works. Neo-Confucianism continued to emphasize complementary opposites, such as the ancient yin and yang, but more central to their thought was the pairing of "li" and "qi". This li is not to be confused with the earlier term meaning ritual, and is usually translated as "principle." Li is the underlying pattern of reality that defines the essence of life, and qi is its material form that is presented in all forms of nature, including earth, rocks, and air. In many ways, these thoughts borrow from the Buddhist tradition of logical thought about the nature of the soul and the individual's relationship with the cosmos. However, neo-Confucianism differed from Buddhism in its emphasis on the importance of social life and its rejection of withdrawal through individual meditation. Neo-Confucians thought that formal education in morals and the arts and sciences was an absolute necessity for a decent life, and that it could not be left to the "enlightenment" of the individual seeker to determine the welfare of the community. Neo-Confucians emphasized traditions that reinforced class, age, and gender distinctions, particularly as they were expressed in occupational roles. Because the Confucians were reacting

to Buddhism for their revised philosophy, the Song era was very rich in philosophical thinking that encouraged consideration of both belief systems, as well as Daoism.

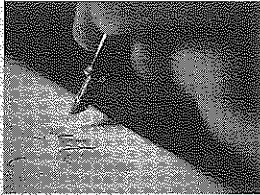
The re-emphasis on Confucian male-dominated hierarchy had an impact on family life and the status of women. During the Tang and early Song era, women enjoyed access to a broad range of activities, as is indicated by a surviving pottery figure from the early Tang period of a young woman playing polo. One of the early Tang emperors, **Wu Zhao**, was the only woman in Chinese history to rule in her own name. She turned to Buddhism for legitimacy, claiming that she was an incarnation of Maitreya (Buddha of the Future), and she favored Buddhists and Daoists over Confucians in her court and government. Under Empress Wu, Tang power reached its furthest geographic extent, but later Confucian writers expressed contempt for Wu and other powerful women. Empress Wu was accused of grotesque tortures and murders, and powerful concubine Yang Guifei was blamed for the outbreak of a major rebellion in 755. The neo-Confucians attacked the Buddhists for promoting careers for women, such as scholarship and the monastic life, at the expense of marriage and raising a family. They created laws that favored men in inheritance, divorce, and family interactions, and they excluded women from an education that might allow them to enter the civil service.

Perhaps no better example of female subordination during the late Song era is the practice of **foot binding**. The origins of the practice are obscure, but by this era upper-class men had developed a preference for small feet for women. Foot binding involved tightly wrapping a young girl's foot so that it could not grow normally, but instead the toes broke and usually curled under the feet. Women with bound feet could not walk normally, and they needed canes to walk by themselves. Their condition assured that they would not venture far from home and that their lives would be managed by their husbands or other male guardians.

### **OTHER EAST ASIAN SOCIETIES: KOREA, VIETNAM, AND JAPAN**

By the era from 600 to 1450, other societies in east Asia had developed distinctive identities and cultural traditions, including Korea, Vietnam, and Japan. All three societies were involved in world trade patterns, and all were deeply influenced by Chinese political, economic, and cultural developments. Chinese armies occasionally invaded Korea and Vietnam, and Chinese merchants traded with merchants from Korea, Vietnam, and Japan. Buddhism spread to these societies after it had been filtered from India through Chinese society and culture, bringing much diversity to the religion as it gradually diffused. These east Asian societies emphasized their links to China more than links to the wider

world, a fact that tended to isolate Korea and Japan even though they struggled to keep their autonomy. Vietnam was not as isolated because it had a strategic location in the Indian Ocean trade basin, and its interactions with India and other cultures in Southeast Asia kept the Vietnamese highly involved with non-Chinese regions.



### ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS: SONG POETRY

As in the Tang era, poetry-writing was highly valued during the Song Dynasty, and despite the general decline in the status of women, one of the most celebrated Song poets was a woman, Li Qingzhao. Both of her parents were well educated, and she was raised in the family of a scholar-official. She became well known for her talent in writing poetry when she was still a teenager. In the lyric below, Li Qingzhao describes bringing out an old dress in autumn:

“Up in heaven the star-river turns,  
in man’s world below curtains are drawn.  
A chill comes to pallet and pillow, damp with tracks of tears.  
I rise to take off my gossamer dress  
and just happen to ask, “how late is it now?”  
The tiny lotus pods, kingfisher feathers sewn on;  
as the gilt flecks away the lotus leaves grow few.  
The same weather as in times before, the same old dress -  
only the feelings in the heart are not as they were before.”

*Reference: An Anthology of Chinese Literature*, Stephen Own, translator and editor (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), pp. 581-2.

## Korea

Sometime before the 2nd century B.C.E. people on the Korean peninsula had organized a state called Jeoson, but the northern part of the peninsula was conquered by Han China in 108 B.C.E. Korean tribes managed to win some of the territory back, and during the 2nd century C.E., several Korean tribes united to form the state of Koguryo. Two other states – Paekche and Silla – formed a little later, joining Koguryo to be called “The Three Kingdoms.” Buddhism, which the Koreans learned from the Chinese, became the chief religion. By the

600s Silla had conquered the other two kingdoms and taken control of the entire peninsula. Confucianism, like Buddhism, had diffused from China, and became a strong influence on Koreans of the Silla Kingdom.

The **Silla Dynasty** ruled Korea from 668 until the late 9<sup>th</sup> century, when they were replaced by the **Koryo Dynasty** that ruled until 1892. It was during this period that Chinese influences peaked and Korean culture achieved its first full flowering. During the 7<sup>th</sup> century Tang armies conquered much of the Korean peninsula, but the Silla armies prevented them from taking over their capital. A compromise was reached when Chinese forces withdrew from Korea in exchange for the Silla king's recognition of the Tang emperor as his overlord. In theory, Korea was a tributary state to Tang China, but in reality the Silla Kingdom operated with a great deal of independence. The arrangement benefitted both sides, with envoys of the Silla kings regularly delivering gifts to Chinese emperors in exchange for gifts from China to Korea. Most importantly for the Koreans, the tributary relationship opened the doors for Korean merchants to trade in China. The Silla capital at Kumsong was rebuilt to look like the Tang capital at Chang'an.

Although Confucianism and Buddhism became a part of Korean traditions during this era, Chinese and Korean societies differed in many ways. Some Korean elites studied the Confucian texts and took the exams, but Korea never established a bureaucracy based on the examination system, and political control remained very much in the hands of the royal family and the aristocracy. No strong conflicts emerged between Confucianism and Buddhism as happened in China during the late Tang era. Instead the Korean elite tended to favor Buddhism over Confucianism, and the Korean royal family lavishly endowed monasteries. Buddhist monks attended the ruler and the royal family, and both Buddhist and Confucian schools were founded. More than in China, a small aristocratic elite controlled Korea, with their members filling most of the posts in the bureaucracy and dominating the social and economic life of the entire kingdom. Artisans were seen as their servants, and no distinct social class developed for merchants or traders.

Koreans often rivaled the Chinese in artistic and technological endeavors. Although the Koreans first learned techniques for manufacturing porcelain from the Chinese, the Koreans created pale green-glazed bowls and vases called "celadon" that the Chinese admired and collected and that remain today highly prized items for both individuals and museums. Korean woodblocks were also superb, and the oldest surviving woodblock prints in Chinese characters were produced in Korea in the middle 700s. Like the Song Chinese, Koreans experimented by the early 13<sup>th</sup> century with movable type, although the demand for books was less than in China because fewer of the Korean elite were literate.

Still, many Koreans today believe that movable type was first discovered in the Koryo Kingdom, not in Song China.

## Vietnam

Vietnam had been invaded and occupied in earlier years by Han Chinese forces, and when the Tang attacked them, they put up a fierce resistance, and even after they were defeated, rebellions broke out sporadically against the Chinese conquerors. The Viet people, who had settled in the region around the Red River, nevertheless absorbed Chinese culture and technology rather readily. The Viets adopted Chinese agricultural methods and irrigation systems, they studied the Confucian texts, and they traded merchandise with the Chinese. However, even though some Vietnamese authorities formed tributary relationships with the Chinese court, the Viets resented Chinese efforts to dominate their land, and when the Tang Empire fell, they won their independence. Still, Chinese traditions impacted Vietnam substantially. Vietnamese authorities modeled the Chinese administrative system and bureaucracy, and Buddhism came to Vietnam from China as well as India.

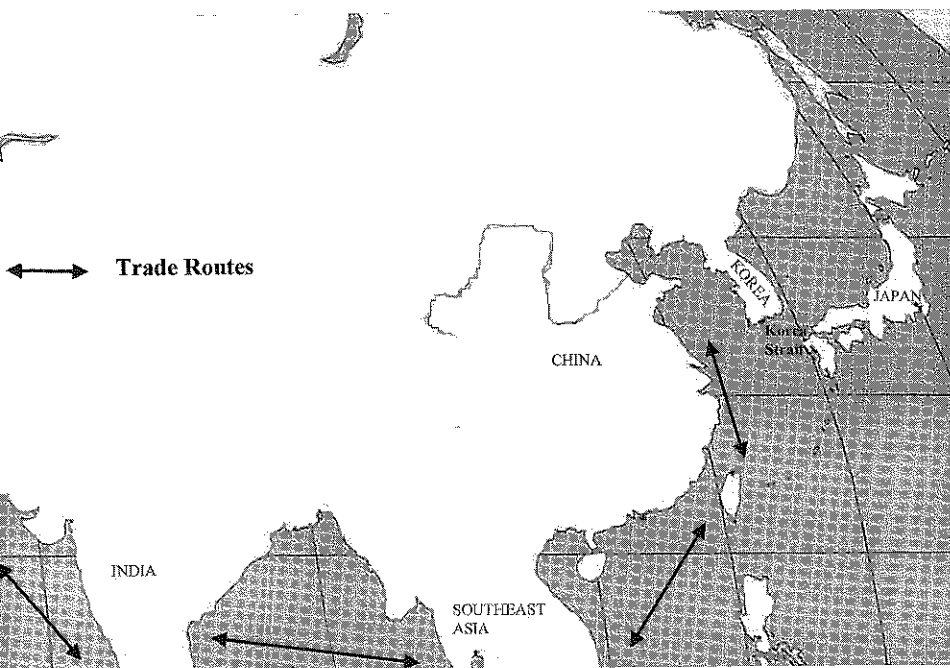


### PERSPECTIVES: CHINESE AND VIETNAMESE POINTS OF VIEW

The Chinese first referred to the Viets as a group of “southern barbarians,” and thought of them as inhabitants of just another rice-growing area to be annexed to their ever-expanding civilization. However, the Viets had a separate identity based on a sophisticated, embedded culture of their own. The Viet language was not related to Chinese, and they valued village autonomy and the nuclear family in contrast to Chinese political centralization and emphasis on the extended family. They traded regularly and shared cultural traits with India and other Southeast Asian cultures. Vietnamese women also had greater influence and freedom than their Chinese counterparts, and they preferred long skirts to the black pants that nonelite women wore in China. The Viets also tended to be much more devout in their Buddhist beliefs, and their literature was distinct from Chinese literature. Chinese officials found it hard to conceal their disdain for these “barbaric” differences, and as a result, the strong-willed Vietnamese resisted their overlords to win an independence that lasted from 939 until the 19th century, when they were conquered by the French.

## Japan

For most of its early history Japan developed in relative isolation without much contact with people on mainland Asia. Its earliest inhabitants were probably nomadic peoples from northeast Asia, although some scholars have theorized that some early settlers came from islands to the south. As the population grew, groups that were separated by the mountainous terrain developed into small states dominated by aristocratic clans. Japan's geographical isolation from the mainland meant that the language that developed was unrelated to Chinese, as was its native religion, **Shintoism**. Shintoism is an animistic religion that emphasizes nature and spirits, or kami, that inhabit objects in nature. Japan's early clans, or uji, worshipped their own special kami, with some becoming more powerful than others by the 7<sup>th</sup> century C.E. By that time, the Japanese clans were well aware of the Tang Empire, and even though the Tang never conquered them, some trade existed, and Japanese emissaries visited China. When the Yamato clan began to centralize power, they established a court modeled on the Tang court in Chang'an.

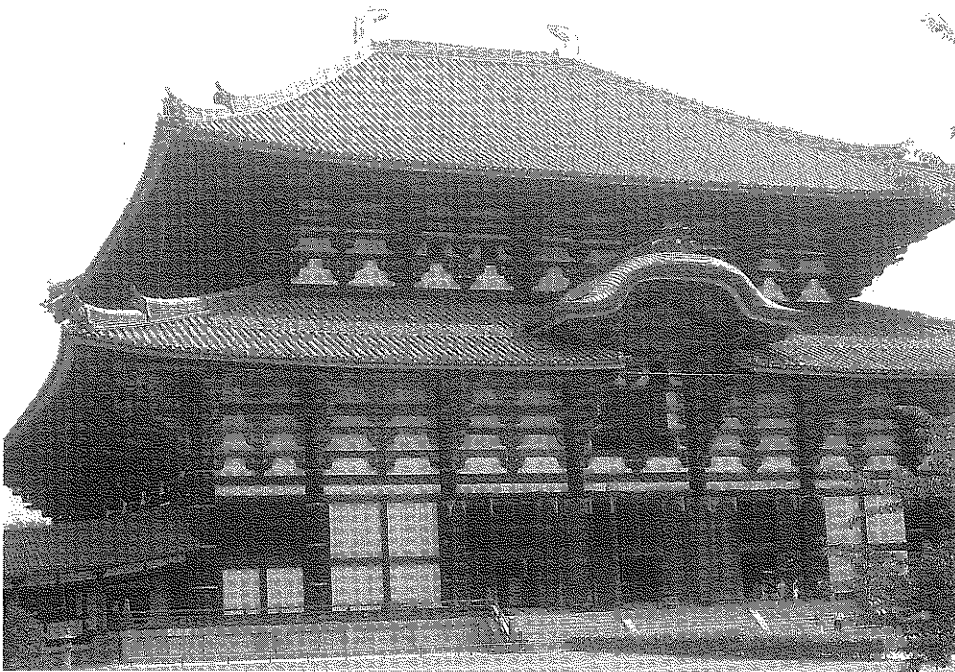


**Geographical Relationships in East Asia.** Like all other places on earth, Japan's geographical location has greatly impacted its development. Its location northeast of major trade routes that connected China, Southeast Asia, and India often kept it out of the line of attack and invasion. Unlike Korea, Japan is an island, and could only be reached by sea. To further insulate the islands, the waters of the Korea Strait are treacherous and very difficult for an invading navy to cross. As a result, Japan was one of the few areas in east Asia that China never successfully attacked.



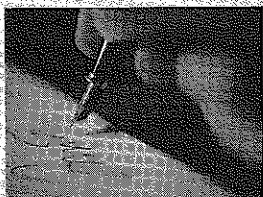
## Fujiwara Rule

By the mid-8th century Confucianism and Buddhism were established in Japan, although the native Shintoism remained influential. The Japanese mastered Chinese building techniques and established massive Buddhist temples that rivaled and perhaps surpassed the grandeur of Chinese structures. The earliest capitals were at Nara and Kyoto, where legally centralized government lasted until 1185. Members of the **Fujiwara family** controlled power and protected an emperor, who belonged to a family that was believed to have ruled Japan since the beginning of history. Unlike the changing Chinese dynasties, the ruling Japanese dynasty never changed, enduring largely because it never wielded true political power. During times of turmoil, the ruling families, parties, or factions have been thrown out, but the imperial house has survived. In the era between 794 and 1185, known as the **Heian Era**, the Fujiwara family was the power behind the throne, and they very much appreciated Confucian learning and Chinese classics, painting, poetry, and interior decoration.



**Todaiji Temple.** This enormous Buddhist temple was built in the 8th century near Nara, and provides a splendid example of the fine wooden architecture of early Japan. In 752 dignitaries from all over Asia gathered at Todaiji to celebrate the “eye-opening” ceremony of the Great Buddha statue. Todaiji is reputedly the largest wooden building ever constructed in world history.

The refined court of the Fujiwara family was captured in a remarkable novel, *The Tale of Genji*, written by the noblewoman Murasaki Shikibu. The book was the first to be written in Japanese, and it described the life of a fictitious prince named Genji, who lived a life of refinement, writing poetry in his fine calligraphic hand to woo the ladies of the court. The detail of the novel provided a fine view of the lives of the nobility, as told by a lady-in-waiting in the Heian court. Because the elite families of Fujiwara Japan did not encourage education for women, it is notable that the most important piece of literature in a court that prided itself on its sophistication was written by a woman.



### ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS: *THE TALE OF GENJI*

Murasaki Shikibu's acclaimed novel, *The Tale of Genji*, was written about 1000 C.E., and provides a vivid description of life in the Heian court of Japan during the time that the Fujiwara family ruled. One skill that was important for both men and women of the court was spontaneous poetry writing. The passage below describes a scene when Prince Genji walked past the house of a lady he had been visiting in strict secrecy. When no one answered his knock at the door, he wrote a poem for an attendant to read to the lady:

Even when I wander  
lost under mist-shrouded skies  
at break of day,  
I cannot pass beyond  
the gate of my beloved.

The lady promptly answered:

If you have halted,  
loath to pass the rustic fence  
enshrouded in mist,  
the closed door of a grass-thatched hut  
should prove no obstacle.

*Reference: Genji & Heike*, translated by Helen Craig McCulough (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 106.

Since the noble Fujiwara family spent most of their time pursuing their elegant lifestyles, they tended to entrust responsibility for local government, policing, and tax collection to their warriors. By the mid-1100s the nobility lost control

of the government, and the warriors fought one another for power. Two powerful warrior families – the Taira and the Minamoto – struggled for years, and the Minamoto emerged victorious in 1185. Like the Fujiwara before them, the Minamoto ruled in the name of the emperor, who maintained a separate court. The clan leader was installed as **shogun** – a military governor who ruled in place of the emperor – who lived in Kamakura, near modern Tokyo, while the imperial court remained at Kyoto. The Minamoto clan dominated political life in Japan for the next four centuries.

### Japanese Feudalism

After they defeated the Taira family in 1185, the Minamoto clan established the **bakufu** (“tent”), or military government, beginning the medieval period of Japanese history that lasted until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. As in Europe, a feudal political order developed in which regional lords wielded power and authority in areas where they controlled land and economic affairs. These lords competed for power, which they gained through military prowess. In contrast to the Fujiwara family, these warrior clans valued military talent and discipline rather than etiquette and courtesy. The lords were supported by devoted professional warriors called **samurai**, who provided police and military services in exchange for food, clothing, and housing. They lived by the code, *bushido*, (“the way of the warrior”) that emphasized absolute loyalty to one’s lord. If a samurai were to fail his master, he ended his life by *seppuku*, (also called *hari-kiri* or “belly slicing”) a ritual suicide by disembowelment. The entire era is characterized by much in-fighting, even within the ruling families. Farmlands were ravaged as the samurai of rival lords clashed and the power of the shogun was challenged. The danger was so great that the shogun’s palace had devices installed beneath the floors that reproduced bird singing to warn the master of the presence of tiptoeing intruders.

Despite the original inspiration from the Tang Empire, Japanese society had taken a very different form from that in China. Japan borrowed from China Confucian values, Buddhism, and the ideal of centralized imperial rule, but the feudalistic system they developed had more in common with western European societies of the day. They had no use for elaborate bureaucracies, and loyalty ties between lords and warrior-vassals were emphasized, with peasants providing the necessary agricultural labor. Both feudalistic systems developed rituals to demonstrate relationships among the elite. Both Japanese and European political systems were less sophisticated than those of empires such as the Tang, partly because neither area had the resources or experience to create a well-developed bureaucracy. However, despite their similarities, some important differences remained between western European and Japanese feudalism:

- 1) Western feudalism placed more emphasis on written contracts. In the west, feudal loyalties were sealed by negotiated contracts that spelled out exactly what benefits all parties would receive. Japanese feudalism relied more on group and individual loyalties that were cemented by ideals of honor, not written contracts. This difference had important consequences for each area, with the West developing parliaments to defend their contracts, and Japan relying on collective decision-making teams that connected to the state. Even in today's world, with the globalizing effect of international business, western businesses still rely more on written contracts, while Japanese companies have more awareness of "honor codes" that govern business relationships.
- 2) Samurai were granted land rights from their lords, but they did not own land; European knights often received land ownership for their services. As a result, the social division between lord and samurai remained clear, whereas knights often became lords themselves. Both systems had intricate loyalty relationships, but the system of lords and overlords in European kingdoms was endlessly baffling.

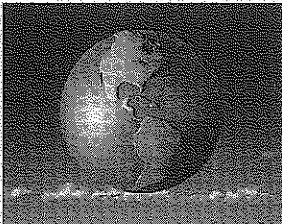
## THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MONGOLS

During the Foundations period of world history (before 600 C.E.), nomadic people occupied many parts of the world and were in contact with people who lived more sedentary lives. Nomadic people often connected one civilization to another, such as the traders that travelled the Silk Road, or the camel herders that traversed the Sahara and Arabian Deserts. Nomadic migrations, such as those of the Huns and the Germanic peoples, greatly impacted the civilizations of the day and played a major role in the decline of the classical civilizations. In this era (600 to 1450 C.E.) we have already seen how the nomadic people of the Arabian Peninsula united under Muslim leaders to conquer territories from Spain to the Middle East and eventually became sedentary themselves. Of the many nomadic groups that have played roles in the unfolding of the world's history, perhaps the most impressive was the Great Mongol Empire that began in the steppes of central Asia and eventually formed the largest, if not the longest lasting, empire of all times.

### Genghis Khan and the Rise of the Mongols

Before their rise to power, the Mongols were a relatively small group of steppe (dry grassland at high elevation) nomads whose sources of food included herds of livestock and the bounty of their hunting. Their strong Mongol ponies could survive the brutal weather of the northern steppes, and the Mongols were excellent horsemen, fighting with bows and arrows from the backs of the ponies. They lived in portable houses called yurts, and they were politically organized

into kinship-based clans and tribes. It was in this setting that **Temujin** was born, later known to the world as **Genghis Khan**, one of the most famous warriors in history. As a young man he sought vengeance by decimating the rival clan who had poisoned his father. Very early on he gained a reputation for ferocity and brutality, killing survivors rather than taking captives, and boiling defeated enemies alive. Beyond these frightful characteristics, however, he was also a shrewd diplomat who understood loyalty to allies and demonstrated an ability to convince unaffiliated tribes to side with him. Genghis Khan also was quite capable of turning on troublesome allies, and gradually strengthened his position to rule all of the Mongol tribes by the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. In 1206 at a meeting of clan elders at the capital of Karakorum, he accepted the title of “universal ruler,” or “Genghis Khan.”



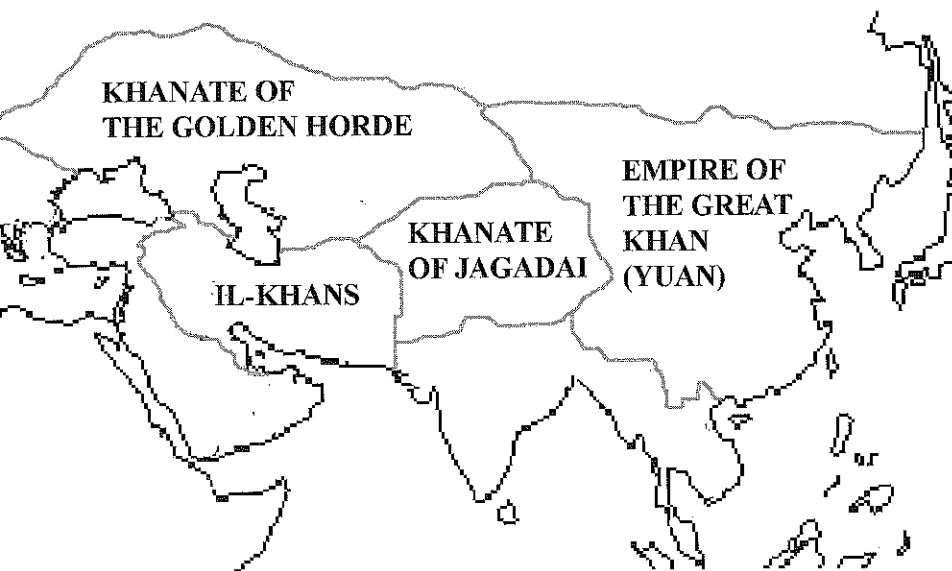
### **THE BIG PICTURE: THE IMPORTANCE OF NOMADIC MOVEMENTS**

In the era 600 - 1450 C.E., the impact of nomadic movements reached its greatest extent in world history. In the 7<sup>th</sup> century the Bedouins of the Arabian Desert carried their Islamic faith to their many conquered territories, only to have the last major caliphate destroyed by the Mongols in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The Mongols also conquered the Russian principalities, central Asian kingdoms and empires, and the Southern Song of China. A third group of people whose movements affected a great many Eurasians were the Turks. Turkish people never formed a single, homogeneous group, but were organized into clans and tribes that often fought bitterly with one another. They spoke related languages and believed that shamans interceded between humans and nature spirits. Turkish peoples entered Persia, Anatolia, and India at different times and for different purposes. Many converted to Islam, like the Seljuk Turks that the Christian Crusaders from Europe fought. The Turks moved far beyond their original homes in central Asia, and their conquests served as a prelude to the massive onslaught staged by the Mongols during the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Genghis Khan combined traditional Mongol fighting strengths with new methods of organization. He organized his armies under a pyramid of officers leading units of 100, 1000, and 10,000 mounted warriors. These units not only improved the accountability of his officers, but they also served to break up old alliances

based on tribes or clans, leaving all to be loyal ultimately to him. His highest officials were family members, and his four top military commanders were his sons, and after his death, the great Mongol organization passed to grandsons and other relatives. The armies were further divided into light and heavy cavalry, with the light cavalry able to move more swiftly, and the heavy cavalry able to wear Chinese-style armor for greater durability. Despite his tendency to favor family members for military leadership, promotion within the army was usually based on merit, and intertribal quarrels declined significantly.

Once he unified the Mongols, Genghis Khan turned east toward China, pierced the Great Wall of China in 1211, and took the Jin capital (later Beijing) in 1215. By the time of his death in 1227, he had also conquered Xi Xia, the great Tangut empire that had long fought against the Southern Song. There he mastered their weapons of siege warfare: the mangonel and trebuchet that could catapult huge rocks, giant crossbows mounted on stands, and gunpowder launched in bamboo tubes from longbows. The Mongol bow was short enough to maneuver from horseback, and Mongol arrows found their marks from long distances away. Mongol leaders were also fond of conducting fake retreats that caught their enemies off guard before they abruptly turned back to resume the battle. The Mongol armies turned west as well, conquering the central Asian empire of Kara-Khitai and the Turkish empire, Khwarizm. Genghis Khan went as far as Tabriz and Tbilisi in the Caucasus area between the Black and Caspian Seas before he turned back toward China in the years before he died in 1227.



**The Mongol Empire in the Mid-13<sup>th</sup> Century.** After Genghis Khan's death, the empire was divided into four khanates, each ruled by one of Genghis' sons or grandsons. The empire was the largest political state to ever exist in world history.

## The Mongols After Genghis Khan

As reflected in his title (“universal ruler”), Genghis Khan had large ambitions for conquest, and his sons and grandsons that followed him continued the quest for territory. They returned to Russia to add to the previous conquests, and drove the army of the legendary Teutonic Knights of Germany almost back to the walls of Vienna. Only the sudden death of the Great Khan Ogo dei (Genghis Khan’s son) saved western Europe from Mongol attack, since all leaders were called back to Karakorum to choose another leader. Persia and Iraq, however, were not spared, as Genghis’ grandson, Hulegu, returned to the tottering Abbasid Caliphate to defeat and kill the last Baghdad caliph and his son. Some of the caliph’s relatives fled to Egypt where a much-reduced caliphate continued to exist under the protection of the Mamluk Sultanate. The conquest of China was completed in 1279 by **Kubilai Khan**, another of Genghis’ grandsons. The empire at its greatest extent in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century stretched from eastern Europe to the Pacific Ocean, encompassing most of Asia north of India, much of the Middle East, and eastern Europe.

After Genghis Khan’s death, his heirs divided the vast realm into four regional empires that grew as new conquests were made:

- 1) **Khanate of the Great Khan** – This empire was first ruled from the old capital at Karakorum in Mongolia, but was moved to Khanbalik, the Mongol name for the old Jin capital at Beijing. This Khan was seen as the successor to Genghis Khan, and the position was first held by Ogo dei and eventually by Kubilai Khan. In China, this khanate was called the Yuan Dynasty.
- 2) **Khanate of Jagadai** – This khanate in central Asia was ruled by the descendents of Genghis’ son, Jagadai. The leader **Timur** (Tamerlane) later rose from this khanate, although he never assumed the title *khan* because he was a Turk with only an in-law relationship to Genghis’ extended family.
- 3) **Khanate of the Golden Horde** – The origins of the name is not clear, but one story is that it is based on the sun catching the shields and weapons of the great Mongol army as it marched toward its victims. This khanate conquered southern Russia and established their capital at Sarai on the Volga River, where they ruled over a Muslim Turkic population. The most famous leader of the Golden Horde was Batu, another of Genghis’ grandsons.
- 4) **Il-Khan** – Established by Hulegu, yet another grandson, this state controlled parts of Armenia, all of Azerbaijan, Mesopotamia, and Iran.

Hulegu's forces captured the Abbasid's capital in Baghdad in 1258, but were defeated decisively at Ain Jalut by the Mamluk forces from Egypt. As a result, all Islamic lands did not go to the Mongols, but Hulegu and his successors ruled the Islamic heartlands from Azerbaijan for almost a hundred years.

The Mongol expansion was made possible by the superior Mongol bow that could shoot arrows about one-third farther than those of the enemy. The Mongols also enlisted men from conquered territories, so that in their later years their armies were composed of truly international forces.



### PERSPECTIVES: VIEWS OF THE MONGOLS

Historians must always be alert to the fact that descriptions of nomadic people are usually written by more literate urbanites, who tend to view their subjects as inferior people. Many accounts written about the Mongols reflect such biases, but a very valuable source of information was actually written by a Mongol, perhaps even a member of Genghis Khan's household. *The Secret History of the Mongols* is clearly an insider's account, written just after Genghis Khan's death. The Mongols were illiterate before the time of Genghis Khan, who adopted the script of the Uighurs of central Asia that was used in this book. The passage below describes the importance of *anda*, a bonding between Mongol males, in this case Temujin and Jamugha, a young noble.

So Temujin and Jamugha said to each other:

"We've heard the elders say,

'When two men become *anda* their lives become one.

One will never desert the other and will always defend him.'

This is the way we'll act from now on.

We'll renew our old pledge and love each other forever."

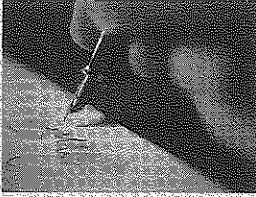
...They held a feast on the spot

and there was great celebration.



## The Fragmentation of the Empire

The Mongols dominated the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but by the time that Kubilai Khan died in 1294, the parts of the huge empire had split along ethnic lines. Just as other large empires before it, the sheer distance between its capital and its borders made it impossible to maintain unity for long. First China, then Russia and the Middle Eastern lands separated, weakened and divided not only by distance but by serious feuds between khans of the Golden Horde and Il-Khan. Another



### ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS: WILLIAM OF RUBRUCK ON MONGOL WOMEN

Once the Mongols invaded eastern Europe, the Pope initiated a series of embassies to various Mongol khans to discover their designs regarding western Europe and to convert them to Catholic Christianity. One of the earliest missionary-ambassadors to the Great Khan was William of Rubruck, a Franciscan priest who kept detailed accounts of his journey. He was usually very objective, and his description of Mongol roles for men and women generally confirm the tendency for women to have higher status in nomadic societies than in the early civilizations. He describes social gatherings where the wife of the headman sits side by side with her husband, and men and women enjoy music and drinking together. However, his opinions of Mongol customs come through in the following description:

“... they believe that [a widow] will always return after death to her first husband. This gives rise to a shameful custom among them whereby a son sometimes takes to wife all his father's wives, except his own mother... When anyone has made an agreement with another to take his daughter, the father of the girl arranges a feast and she takes flight to relations where she lies hid. Then the father declares: ‘Now my daughter is yours; take her wherever you find her.’ Then he searches for her with his friends until he finds her; then he has to take her by force and bring her, as though by violence, to his house.”

*Reference: The Mongol Mission, Christopher Dawson, ed. (New York: Sheed and War, 1955), pp. 103-104.*

reason for the empire's fragmentation was the tendency for Mongol rulers to adopt the cultural preferences of the people that they conquered. For example, Kubilai Khan favored Buddhism, and the rulers of Il Khan and the Golden Horde adopted Islam, although the Russian people remained Eastern Orthodox

Christians. By the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Mongol-ruled khanates had disappeared from Eurasian maps, and the largest empire in world history was no more.

### Impact of the Mongols

One important overall impact of the Mongol conquests was at first the disruption, and then the encouragement of the long-distance trade routes of Eurasia. After the initial shock of Mongol attacks, a **Pax Mongolica** (Mongol Peace) was established that created a similar order that the Romans had created in their heyday (*Pax Romana*). Lines of direct communication opened between east Asia and western Europe. For about a century, people, goods, ideas, and even diseases traveled faster than ever before from one end of the Eurasian landmass to the other. When the empire broke up, so did the *Pax Mongolica*, and the trade along the Silk Road disappeared forever, although many turned to the Indian Ocean trade instead.

Another important impact of Mongol unification was the creation of one of the worst pandemics in world history, known in Europe as the “**Black Death.**” As occurred with the interactions of the earliest civilizations, one cost of increased contacts among distant peoples is the spread of disease along trade routes. In southwestern China the bubonic plague had festered in Yunnan province since the early Tang period. Mongol troops established a garrison in the area, and the military and supply traffic allowed flea-infested rats to carry the plague into many parts of China and central Asia. The terrible plague spread out of Asia and struck Mongol armies attacking the city of Kaffa on the Black Sea in 1346. A year later traders from Genoa in Italy carried the disease from Kaffa to Italy and southern France. During the next two years the Black Death spread across Europe, sparing some places and killing two-thirds of the population in others. In many ways the plague brought more devastation than the Mongol attacks themselves, and the disruption it caused to Eurasian societies was a factor in the breakup of the Mongol Empire.

### The Mongols and Islam in the Middle East

The conflict between Mongol and Muslim beliefs is illustrated by the fate of the last Abbasid caliph when Hulegu’s troops stormed Baghdad in 1258. In accordance with Mongol customs for the execution of high-born persons, the caliph had been rolled in a rug and trampled to death by horses to prevent his blood from spilling on the ground. Muslims were shocked and outraged by this behavior, and over time remained repelled by the Mongols’ worship of idols in their shamanistic religion. The tension was not relieved until the Il-Khan ruler, Ghazan, converted to Islam in 1295. Eventually the Il-Khans declared themselves the protectors and advocates of Islam, and all Mongols in the Il-Khan

Empire were ordered to convert to Islam. The Il-Khan legal code was altered to include the principles of Islam, and the rulers supported scholars, historians, astronomers, and mathematicians in their studies that contributed to the reputation of the era as the “Golden Age of Islam.” In these ways, the mighty Mongols were “civilized” by Islamic culture, illustrating the superior holding power of religion as the “glue” that held societies together during this period of world history.

The peace of the Il-Khan was broken by the ambitions of **Timur**, or Tamerlane, who came from the Khanate of Jagadai to attack the entire area between northern India and Moscow during the late 14<sup>th</sup> and early 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Timur was also a Muslim, but that did not prevent him from destroying virtually everything in his war path. He ruled from his capital in Samarkand, and like Genghis Khan, conquered huge amounts of territory. However, he ruled through tribal leaders who were his allies, and did not create an imperial administration, so after his death, his empire fell apart, although his successors held on to control of the region from Persia to Afghanistan for more than a century. Timur was Turkish, and in many ways, his conquests opened the door to more Turkish migrations into the Middle East. Among those that came was **Osman**, who settled in Anatolia and gathered a following of supporters. In 1299 he declared independence from the Seljuk Turks and established himself as the founder of the **Ottoman Turks**, named in his honor. By the 1440s the Ottomans began to expand into the Byzantine Empire and eventually capture Constantinople in 1453, renaming the great city “Istanbul.”

### The Mongol Impact on Russia

When the Mongols invaded Russia, they found an area divided into many petty kingdoms, each ruled by local princes. The great trading city of Kiev was in decline by the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and another major center had developed to the northeast in Novgorod. Because the kingdoms refused to cooperate, they were roundly defeated by the Mongols, with Kiev, which had reached a population of more than 100,000, falling in 1240. Novgorod survived, largely because its prince, **Alexander Nevskii**, agreed to Mongol demands for tribute. For two and a half centuries, the Mongols dominated Russia, and Russian princes served as vassals of the khan of the Golden Horde. Fear of Mongol raids almost certainly forced peasants to seek protection from the nobility, and they bound themselves to the land as serfs, a condition that lasted in Russia until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, many Russians benefitted from the Pax Mongolica through increased trade, including the princes of Moscow, who along with the Novgorod princes, almost completely eclipsed the power of Kiev. Moscow became a tribute collector for the Mongol khans, spread their control over towns as punishment for failing to pay their dues, and grew much wealthier and influential as a result, eventu-

ally becoming more powerful than Novgorod. Once Mongol power declined, the Moscow princes were strong enough to step forward to claim independent power and set Russia on the road to eventually become a unique world power.

Historians don't always agree on the importance of Mongol rule in shaping Russian development. Since Kiev was already declining by the time of the invasion, perhaps it was inevitable that some other city, such as Moscow or Novgorod, would come to power. Russia was already shaped by Orthodox Christianity and other influences of the Byzantines, setting the Slavic people of the area on a very different path than western Europe. However, Mongol rule arguably cemented Russia's isolation from Christian lands farther west, cutting them off from the changes brought about by the Renaissance in the west, while at the same time protecting them from attack by Christian knights from more powerful kingdoms to the west. For example, the Teutonic Knights, a militant crusading Christian order of Germany, were determined to free the area of Orthodox Christianity, which they considered to be a heresy to Catholicism. Because of Mongol protection, the Russian princes escaped the knights' fervent efforts to control them, and were left to rule their feudal kingdoms in relative isolation.

### China under Mongol Control

The Mongols rose to power during the era of the Southern Song, a time when China was militarily and politically weaker than it had been during the Tang era. The Song emperors were paying tribute to the Jin Empire of the Jurchen people who controlled all of northern China. By 1215 the Mongols had captured the Jurchen capital near modern Beijing and renamed it Khanbalik ("city of the khan"). The Jurchens continued to fight the Mongols for many years, and thwarted Genghis Khan's desire to conquer China in his lifetime. The Southern Song managed to hold them off until the Khanate of the Great Khan fell to Genghis' talented grandson, **Kublai Khan**. From his base in Khanbalik, he attacked the Song dynasty in southern China, and the Song Empire lasted only three years after Kubilai captured their capital at Hangzhou in 1276. In 1279 he proclaimed himself to be the Chinese emperor and founded the **Yuan Dynasty** that lasted until 1368. Despite his success in China, Kubilai never conquered Vietnam or the other kingdoms of Southeast Asia, and he famously failed twice in his attempt to attack Japan across the treacherous waters of the Korean Strait. On both occasions, typhoon winds deflected his vessels, and the Japanese retained their independence, aided by what they came to call the kamikaze ("divine winds").

The China that Kubilai Khan organized included many ethnicities other than the Han Chinese that formed the basis for the identity and unity of the Song Empire. Not only were Mongols included, but also the Jurchens, the Tanggut, Tibetans, and many other people of central and northern Asia. Confucian schol-

ars and other Han Chinese still thought of themselves as inhabitants of the great “Middle Kingdom,” and saw the Mongol intruders as foreigners and barbarians. Yet they had to submit to Kubilai Khan and his successors. The Mongol rulers were certainly aware of the biases against them that of course also existed in other “civilized” parts of their empire, including Islamic lands. With this knowledge, Kubilai organized his government with Mongols as the top officials who replaced the authority of the Confucian scholars, and he dismantled the old Confucian examination system. The scholar-gentry often retained positions with the government, but they were reduced to middle-level administrators with statuses lower than even the central Asians and northern Chinese who outranked them because they had come under Mongol control almost two generations earlier. The resentments of the Confucians boiled below the surface until they were able to reassert themselves as Mongol power waned in the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century. One reason for their hostility is an old one that had played a role in the breakup of the Tang Dynasty – many subjects of the Yuan Dynasty were Buddhists and represented a threat to the deep Confucian roots of China.

Another important difference in the orientation of Yuan leaders was their favoring of merchants, who were often Middle Easterners or central Asians. To the Confucians, merchants were quite inferior to scholars since they contributed little to society by just trading items that already existed. The Yuan also elevated the status of physicians, who were regarded by the Confucians as mere technicians. Instead, Yuan leaders encouraged the sharing of Chinese medical and herbal knowledge with westerners from Christian and Muslim lands. To keep the Confucian scholars from challenging Mongol authority, Kubilai passed many laws intended to keep Mongol and Chinese identities separate. Chinese scholars were forbidden to learn the Mongol script, and Mongols were not allowed to marry ethnic Chinese. As an example, Kubilai included no ethnic Chinese women in his large harem. Mongols also retained their religious beliefs and showed a keen interest in Buddhism, especially the versions favored in Tibet.

Despite these differences, Kubilai Khan was fascinated by Chinese civilization. His capital in the north was built on the site occupied by earlier dynasties, and he retained Chinese rituals and music in his court proceedings. He also used the Chinese calendar and made sacrifices to his ancestors. Khanbalik was surrounded by Chinese-style walls, and the complex – the forbidden city – was retained and expanded. Confucianism, while not encouraged, was at least tolerated, reflecting the Mongols’ open attitude toward other ways of life. Kubilai was very curious about other ways of life, and his cosmopolitan court reflected his tastes with a welcoming attitude toward travelers and emissaries from many foreign lands, including the famous Marco Polo from Italy.

## The Decline of the Yuan and Rise of the Ming

Even before the end of Kubilai Khan's long reign, the dynasty showed signs of weakening. Not only were relations tense between Mongols and Han Chinese, but Kubilai's failure to defeat Japan and Vietnam undermined his strength. The last years of his rule were not his strongest, as he sank into an apathy probably brought on by the deaths of his favorite wife Chabi as well as the son he hoped would succeed him. The rulers that followed Kubilai were weak, and their bureaucracies were characterized by greed and corruption. The scholar-gentry encouraged others to rebel against their "barbarian" oppressors, and banditry was widespread in the countryside, as was piracy on the open seas. China fell into a familiar chaos as the dynasty dissolved, but this time, rather than a regional warlord, power was claimed by a poor peasant named Ju Yuanzhang, who founded



### COMPARISON: CUSTOMS AND ATTITUDES OF MONGOL AND CHINESE WOMEN

Both Mongol and Chinese societies were patriarchies, but true to their nomadic roots, Mongol women had more freedoms and independence during the Yuan Dynasty than their Chinese counterparts. They refused to bind their feet, and they kept their rights to own property and move about outside their homes. Many accounts of the day, including that of William of Rubruck, described Mongol women participating in activities that were reserved for men only in China. For example, Mongol women formed their own hunting parties, and one of Kubilai's female relatives married the only one of her suitors that could throw her in a wrestling match.

Kubilai's favorite wife, Chabi, reflected the spirit of Mongol women as the influential adviser to her husband. Like other Mongol women, she was politically savvy, encouraging her husband to respect Chinese culture while retaining Mongol control. Like her husband, Chabi had cosmopolitan tastes, and was equally curious about other ways of life than her own. However, the Mongol era was too brief in Chinese history to bring about any permanent change in male and female gender roles, and even before the overthrow of the Yuan Dynasty, the pattern of old inequalities had clearly settled in again.

the Ming (“brilliant”) Dynasty that was to rule China for the next three centuries.

In 1368, Ju Yuanzhang was renamed Hongwu, the first Ming emperor, and his most important goal was to remove all traces of Mongol rule. Once the Mongols retreated to the steppes, he established a government on the model of traditional Chinese dynasties. He revived the Confucian educational and civil service systems and restaffed the bureaucracy, and he centralized authority in the new capital, Nanjing, far south of the Mongol capital at Beijing. The Ming emperors insisted on absolute obedience to their directives and were highly suspicious of any non-Chinese subjects. They relied on emissaries called mandarins, who visited local officials to be sure that the emperor’s directives were followed. Even more than earlier emperors, the Ming relied on eunuchs (castrated males) for governmental services, since they could not have families that might challenge the dynasty’s power.

The Ming emperors believed that China had been weakened by its contact with other people, and so they were much more cautious in their trade with outsiders, and much more likely to believe that it was best for China to remold itself in the greatness of the past. China still had many desirable products to trade, especially once Ming craftsmen began creating distinctive and beautiful blue-and-white porcelain. The dynasty understood that the empire’s wealth rested on trade, but its leaders were always wary of outsiders, afraid to lose China again to rule by non-Chinese. So they set about to rebuild the empire as independently as possible, repairing irrigation systems, factories, internal trade connections, and even the Great Wall. Ming emperors actively promoted Chinese cultural traditions, particularly the Confucian and neo-Confucian schools. During its early years the Ming Empire lived up to its name (“brilliant”), and built a strong China that clearly reflected its age old conflict between opening its doors to others and swinging them tightly shut to keep the intruders out.

## IDENTIFICATIONS AND CONCEPTS

bakufu

Black Death, bubonic plague

Du Fu

equal fields system

foot binding

Fujiwara family

Genghis Khan

hegemony

Heian Era

Il-Khan

Jagadai

## 222 UNIT TWO

Khanate of the Golden Horde

Khanate of the Great Khan

Koryo Dynasty

kowtow

Kubilai Khan

Li Bo

Liao Empire

Mencius

“The Middle Kingdom”

Ming Dynasty

neo-Confucianism

Nevskii, Alexander

Osman, Ottoman Turks

Pax Mongolica

samurai

Shintoism

shogun

Silla Dynasty

Song Dynasty

Sui Dynasty

*The Tale of Genji*

Tang Dynasty

Temujin

Uighurs

Wu Zhao

Xi Xia Empire

Yuan Dynasty