In Eurasia, overland trade along the Silk Road, which had begun before the Roman and Han empires, reached its peak during the era of the Mongol empires. Beginning in 1206 with the rise of Genghis Khan, the Mongols tied Europe, the Middle East, Russia, and East Asia together with threads of conquest and trade centered on Central and Inner Asia. For over a century and a half, some communities thrived on the continental connections that the Mongols fostered, while others groaned under the tax burdens and physical devastation of Mongol rule. But whether for good or ill, Mongol power was based on the skills, strategies, and technologies of the overland trade and life on the steppes.

The impact of the Mongols was also felt by societies that escaped conquest. In Eastern Europe, the Mediterranean coastal areas of the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Japan, fear of Mongol attack stimulated societies to organize more intensively in their own defense, accelerating processes of urbanization, technological development, and political centralization that in many cases were already underway.

By 1500, Mongol dominance was past, and new powers had emerged. A new Chinese empire, the Ming, was expanding its influence in Southeast
Asia. The Ottomans had captured Constantinople and overthrown the Byzantine Empire. And the Christian monarchs who had defeated the Muslims in Spain and Portugal were laying the foundations of new overseas empires. With the fall of the Mongol Empire, Central and Inner Asia were no longer at the center of Eurasian trade.

As the overland trade of Eurasia faded, merchants, soldiers, and explorers took to the seas. The most spectacular of the early state-sponsored long-distance ocean voyages were undertaken by the Chinese admiral Zheng He. The 1300s and 1400s also saw African exploration of the Atlantic and Polynesian colonization of the central and eastern Pacific. By 1500 the navigator Christopher Columbus, sailing for Spain, had reached the Americas; within twenty-five years a Portuguese ship would sail all the way around the world. New sailing technologies and a sounder knowledge of the size of the globe and the contours of its shorelines made sub-Saharan Africa, the Indian Ocean, Asia, Europe, and finally the Americas more accessible to each other than ever before.

The great overland routes of Eurasia had generated massive wealth in East Asia and a growing hunger for commerce in Europe. These factors animated the development of the sea trade, too. Exposure to the achievements, wealth, and resources of societies in the Americas, sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia enticed the emerging European monarchies to pursue further exploration and control of the seas.
12 Mongol Eurasia and Its Aftermath, 1200–1500

CHAPTER OUTLINE
The Rise of the Mongols, 1200–1260
The Mongols and Islam, 1260–1500
Regional Responses in Western Eurasia
Mongol Domination in China, 1271–1368
The Early Ming Empire, 1368–1500
Centralization and Militarism in East Asia, 1200–1500
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When the Mongol leader Temüjin was a boy, a rival group murdered his father. Temüjin’s mother tried to shelter him (and protect him from dogs, which he feared), but she could not find a safe haven. At fifteen Temüjin sought refuge with the leader of the Keraits, one of Mongolia’s many warring confederations. The Keraits spoke Turkic and respected both Christianity and Buddhism. Gifted with strength, courage, and intelligence, Temüjin learned the importance of religious tolerance, the necessity of dealing harshly with enemies, and the variety of Central Asia’s cultural and economic traditions.

In 1206 the Mongols and their allies acknowledged Temüjin as Genghis Khan*, or supreme leader. His advisers included speakers of many languages and adherents of all the major religions of the Middle East and East Asia. His deathbed speech, which cannot be literally true even though a contemporary recorded it, captures the strategy behind Mongol success: “If you want to retain your possessions and conquer your enemies, you must make your subjects submit willingly and unite your diverse energies to a single end.”

1 By implementing this strategy, Genghis Khan became the most famous conqueror in history, initiating an expansion of Mongol dominion that by 1250 stretched from Poland to northern China.

Scholars today stress the immense impact Temüjin and his successors had on the later medieval world, and the positive developments that transpired under Mongol rule. European and Asian sources of the time, however, vilify the Mongols as agents of death, suffering, and conflagration, a still-common viewpoint based on reliable accounts of horrible massacres.

The tremendous extent of the Mongol Empire promoted the movement of people and ideas from one end of Eurasia to the other. Specialized skills developed in different parts of the world spread rapidly throughout the Mongol domains. Trade routes improved, markets expanded, and the demand for products grew. Trade on the Silk Road, which had declined with the fall of the Tang Empire (see Chapter 10), revived.

During their period of domination, lasting from 1218 to about 1350 in western Eurasia and to 1368 in China, the Mongols focused on specific economic and strategic interests and usually permitted local cultures to survive and continue to develop. In some regions, local reactions to Mongol domination and unification sowed seeds of regional and ethnic identity that grew extensively in the period of Mongol decline. Societies in regions as widely separated as Russia, Iran, China, Korea, and Japan benefited from the Mongol stimulation of economic and cultural exchange and also found in their opposition to the Mongols new bases for political consolidation and affirmation of cultural difference.

As you read this chapter, ask yourself the following questions:

- What accounts for the magnitude and speed of the Mongol conquests?
- What benefits resulted from the integration of Eurasia in the Mongol Empire?
- How did the effect of Mongol rule on Russia and the lands of Islam differ from its effect on East Asia?
- In what ways did the Ming Empire continue or discontinue Mongol practices?

THE RISE OF THE MONGOLS, 1200–1260

The environment, economic life, cultural institutions, and political traditions of the steppes (prairies) and deserts of Central and Inner Asia contributed to the expansion and contraction of empires. The Mongol Empire owes much of its success to these long-term conditions. Yet the interplay of environment and technology, on the one hand, and specific human actions, on the other, cannot easily be determined. The way of life known as nomadism gives rise to imperial expansion only occasionally, and historians disagree about what triggers these episodes. In the case of the Mongols, a precise assessment of the personal contributions of Genghis Khan and his followers remains uncertain.
Descriptions of steppe nomads from as early as the Greek writer Herodotus in the sixth century B.C.E. portray them as superb riders, herdsmen, and hunters. Traditional accounts maintain that the Mongols put their infants on goats to accustom them to riding. Moving regularly and efficiently with flocks and herds required firm decision making, and the independence of individual Mongols and their families made this decision making public, with many voices being heard. A council with representatives from powerful families ratified the decisions of the leader, the khan. Yet people who disagreed with a decision could strike off on their own. Even during military campaigns, warriors moved with their families and possessions.

Menial work in camps fell to slaves—people who were either captured during warfare or who sought refuge in slavery to escape starvation. Weak groups secured land rights and protection from strong groups by providing them with slaves, livestock, weapons, silk, or cash. More powerful groups, such as Genghis Khan’s extended family and descendants, lived almost entirely off tribute, so they spent less time and fewer resources on herd management and on warfare designed to secure greater tribute.

Leading families combined resources and solidified intergroup alliances through arranged marriages and other acts, a process that helped generate political federations. Marriages were arranged in childhood—in Temüjin’s case, at the age of eight—and children thus became pawns of diplomacy. Women from prestigious families could wield power in negotiation and management, though they ran the risk of assassination or execution just like men (see Diversity and Dominance: Mongol Politics, Mongol Women).

Families often included believers in two or more religions, most commonly Buddhism, Christianity, or Islam. Virtually all Mongols observed the practices of traditional shamanism, rituals in which special individuals visited and influenced the supernatural world. Whatever their faith, the Mongols believed in world rulership by a khan who, with the aid of his shamans, could speak to and for an ultimate god, represented as Sky or Heaven. This universal ruler transcended particular cultures and dominated them all.

The Mongols were not unfamiliar with agriculture or unwilling to use products grown by farmers, but their ideal was self-sufficiency. Since their wanderings with their herds normally took them far from any farming region, self-sufficiency dictated foods they could provide for themselves—primarily meat and milk—and clothing made from felt, leather, and furs. Women oversaw the breeding and birthing of livestock and the preparation of furs.

Mongol dependency on settled regions related primarily to iron for bridles, stirrups, cart fittings, and weapons. They acquired iron implements in trade and reworked them to suit their purposes. As early as the 600s the Turks, a related pastoral people, had large ironworking stations south of the Altai Mountains in western Mongolia. Neighboring agricultural states tried to limit the export of iron but never succeeded. Indeed, Central Asians developed improved techniques of iron forging, which the agricultural regions then adopted. The Mongols revered iron and the secrets of ironworking. Temüjin means “blacksmith,” and several of his prominent followers were the sons of blacksmiths.

Steppe nomads situated near settled areas traded wool, leather, and horses for wood, cotton and cottonseed, silk, vegetables, grain, and tea. An appreciation of the value of permanent settlements for growing grain and cotton, as well as for working iron, led some nomadic groups to establish villages at strategic points, often with the help of migrants from the agricultural regions. The frontier regions east of the Caspian Sea and in northern China thus became economically and culturally diverse. Despite their interdependence, nomads and farmers often came into conflict. On rare occasion such conflicts escalated into full-scale invasions in which the martial prowess of the nomads usually resulted in at least temporary victory.

**The Mongol Conquests, 1215–1283**

Shortly after his acclamation in 1206 Genghis set out to convince the kingdoms of Eurasia to pay him tribute. Two decades of Mongol aggression followed. By 1209 he had forced the Tangut rulers of northwest China to submit, and in 1215 he captured the Jin capital of Yanjing, today known as Beijing. He began to attack the west in 1219 with a full-scale invasion of a Central Asian state centered on Khwarezm, an oasis area east of the Caspian Sea. By 1221 he had overwhelmed most of Iran. By this time his conquests had gained such momentum that Genghis did not personally participate in all campaigns, and subordinate generals sometimes led the Mongol armies, which increasingly contained non-Mongol nomads as well.

Genghis Khan died in 1227. His son and successor, the Great Khan Ögödei” (see Figure 12.1), continued to

Ögödei (ERG-uh-day)
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DIVERSITY AND DOMINANCE

Mongol Politics, Mongol Women

Women in nomadic societies often enjoy more freedom and wield greater influence than women in villages and towns. The wives or mothers of Mongol rulers traditionally managed state affairs during the interregnum between a ruler’s death and the selection of a successor. Princes and heads of ministries treated such regents with great deference and obeyed their commands without question. Since a female regent could not herself succeed to the position of khan, her political machinations usually focused on gaining the succession for a son or other male relative.

The History of the World-Conqueror by the Iranian historian 'Ata-Malik Juvaini, elegantly written in Persian during the 1250s, combines a glorification of the Mongol rulers with an unflinching picture of the cruelties and devastation inflicted by their conquests. As a Muslim, he explains these events as God's punishment for Muslim sins. But this religious viewpoint does not detract from his frank depiction of the instruments of Mongol domination and the fate of those who tried to resist.

When [Qa’an, i.e., Ögödei, Genghis Khan’s son and successor] was on his hunting ground someone brought him two or three water-melons. None of his attendants had any [money] or garments available, but Möge Khatun [his wife], who was present, had two pearls in her ears like the two bright stars of the Lesser Bear when rendered auspicious by conjunction with the radiant moon. Qa’an ordered these pearls to be given to the man. But as they were very precious she said: “This man does not know their worth and value: it is like giving saffron to a donkey. If he is commanded to come to the ordu [residence] tomorrow, he will there receive [money] and clothing.” “He is a poor man,” said Qa’an, “and cannot bear to wait until tomorrow. And whither should these pearls go? They too will return to us in the end. . . .”

At Qa’an’s command she gave the pearls to the poor man, and he went away rejoicing and sold them for a small sum, round about two thousand dinars [Note: this is actually a very large sum]. The buyer was very pleased and thought to himself: “I have acquired two fine jewels fit for a present to the Emperor. He is rarely brought such gifts as these.” He accordingly took the pearls to the Emperor, and at that time Möge Khatun was with him. Qa’an took the pearls and said: “Did we not say they would come back to us?” . . . And he distinguished the bearer with all kinds of favours. . . .

When the decree of God Almighty had been executed and the Monarch of the World. . . . Qa’an had passed away, Güyük, his eldest son, had not returned from the campaign against the Qifchaq, and therefore in accordance with precedent the dispatch of orders and the assembling of the people took place at the door of the ordu, or palace of his wife, Möge Khatun, who, in accordance with the Mongol custom, had come to him from his father, Chinggis-Khan. But since Töregene Khatun was the mother of his eldest sons and was moreover shrewder and more sagacious than Möge Khatun, she sent messages to the princes, i.e. the brothers and nephews of the Qa’an, and told them of what had happened and of the death of Qa’an, and said that until a Khan was appointed by agreement someone would have to be ruler and leader in order that the business of state might not be neglected nor the affairs of the commonweal thrown into confusion; in order, too, that the army and the court might be kept under control and the interests of the people protected.

Chaghatai [another of Genghis’s sons] and the other princes sent representatives to say that Töregene Khatun was the mother of the princes who had a right to the Khanate; therefore, until a quriltai [family council] was held, it was she that should direct the affairs of the state, and the old ministers should remain in the service of the Court, so that the old and new yosas [imperial decrees] might not be changed from what was the law.

Now Töregene Khatun was a very shrewd and capable woman, and her position was greatly strengthened by this unity and concord. And when Möge Khatun shortly followed in the wake of Qa’an [i.e., died], by means of finesse and cunning she obtained control of all the affairs of state and won over the hearts of her relatives by all kind of favours and kindnesses and by the sending of gifts and presents. And for the most part strangers and kindred, family and army inclined towards her, and submitted themselves obediently and
gladly to her commands and prohibitions, and came under her sway.

And when Güyük came to his mother, he took no part in affairs of state, and Töregene Khatun still executed the decrees of the Empire although the Khanate was settled upon her son. But when two or three months had passed and the son was somewhat estranged from his mother on account of Fatima [see below], the decree of God the Almighty and Glorious was fulfilled and Töregene passed away.

And at that time there was a woman called Fatima, who had acquired great influence in the service of Töregene Khatun and to whose counsel and capability were entrusted all affairs of state.

At the time of the capture of the place [Mashhad, Iran] in which there lies the Holy Shrine of 'Ali ar-Riza [the eighth Shi'ite Imam], she was carried off into captivity. It so chanced she came to Qara-Qorum [Karakorum], where she was a procuress in the market; and in the arts of shrewdness and cunning the wily Deliiah could have been her pupil. During the reign of Qa'an she had constant access to the ordù of Töregene Khatun; and when times changed and Chinqai [a high official] withdrew from the scene, she enjoyed even greater favour, and her influence became paramount; so that she became the sharer of intimate confidences and the depository of hidden secrets, and the ministers were debarred from executing business, and she was free to issue commands and prohibitions. And from every side the grandees sought her protection, especially the grandees of Khorasan [where Mashhad is located]. And there also came to her certain of the sayyids [i.e., descendants of Muhammad] of the Holy Shrine [the tomb of 'Ali ar-Riza], for she claimed to be of the race of the great sayyids.

When Güyük succeeded to the Khanate, a certain native of Samarqand, who was said to be an 'Alid [i.e., descendant of Muhammad], one Shira... hinted that Fatima had bewitched Köten [another of Töregene Khatun's sons], which was why he was so indisposed. When Köten returned, the malady from which he was suffering grew worse, and he sent a messenger to his brother Güyük to say that he had been attacked by that illness because of Fatima's magic and that if anything happened to him Güyük should seek retribution from her. Following on this message there came tidings of Köten's death. Chinqai, who was now a person of authority, reminded Güyük of the message, and he sent an envoy to his mother to fetch Fatima. His mother refused to let her go saying that she would bring her herself. He sent again several times, and each time she refused him in a different way. As a result his relations with his mother became very bad, and he sent the man from Samarqand with instructions to bring Fatima by force if his mother should still delay in sending her or find some reason for refusing. It being no longer possible to excuse herself, she agreed to send Fatima; and shortly afterwards she passed away. Fatima was brought face to face with Güyük, and was kept naked, and in bonds, and hungry and thirsty for many days and nights; she was plied with all manner of violence, severity, harshness and intimidation; and at last she confessed to the calumny of the slanderous tale-bearer and avowed her falseness... She was rolled up in a sheet of felt and thrown into the river.

And everyone who was connected with her perished also. And messengers were sent to fetch certain persons who had come from the Shrine and claimed to be related to her; and they suffered many annoyances.

This was the year in which Güyük Khan went to join his father, and it was then that 'Ali Khoja of Emil accused Shira of the same crime, namely of bewitching Khoja. He was cast into chains and remained imprisoned for nearly two years, during which time by reason of all manner of questioning and punishment he despaired of the pleasure of life. And when he recognized and knew of a certainty that this was [his] punishment he resigned himself to death and surrendering his body to the will of Fate and Destiny confessed to a crime which he had not committed. He too was cast into the river, and his wives and children were put to the sword...

In that same year, in a happy and auspicious hour, the Khanate had been settled upon Mengü Qa'an... And when Khoja was brought to the Qa'an, a messenger was sent to 'Ali Khoja, who was one of his courtiers. Some other person brought the same accusation against him, and Mengü-Qa'an ordered him to be beaten from the left and the right until all his limbs were crushed; and so he died. And his wives and children were cast into the baseness of slavery and disgraced and humiliated.

And it is not hidden from the wise and intelligent man, who looks at these matters in the light of understanding and reflects and ponders on them, that the end of treachery and the conclusion of deceit, which spring from evil ways and wicked pretensions, is shameful and the termination thereof unlucky... God preserve us from the like positions and from trespassing into the region of deliberate offenses!

**QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS**

1. How do the stories of Töregene Khatun and Fatima differ in their presentation of female roles?
2. What does the passage indicate concerning the respect of the Mongols for women?
3. What does Güyük's refusal to take over the affairs of state while his mother is still alive imply?

assault China. He destroyed the Tanggut and then the Jin and put their territories under Mongol governors. In 1236 Genghis’s grandson Batu˚ (d. 1255) attacked Russian territories, took control of all the towns along the Volga˚ River, and within five years conquered Kievan Russia, Moscow, Poland, and Hungary. Europe would have suffered grave damage in 1241 had not the death of Ögödei compelled the Mongol forces to suspend their campaign. With Genghis’s grandson Güyük˚ installed as the new Great Khan, the conquests resumed. By 1234 the Mongols controlled most of northern China and were threatening the Southern Song. In the Middle East they sacked Baghdad in 1258 and executed the last Abbasid caliph (see Chapter 8).

Although the Mongols’ original objective may have been tribute, the scale and success of the conquests created a new historical situation. Ögödei unquestionably sought territorial rule. Between 1240 and 1260 his imperial capital at Karakorum˚ attracted merchants, ambassadors, missionaries, and adventurers from all over Eurasia. A European who visited in 1246 found the city isolated but well populated and cosmopolitan.

The Mongol Empire remained united until about 1265, as the Great Khan in Mongolia exercised authority over the khans of the Golden Horde in Russia, the khans of the Jagadai domains in Central Asia, and the Il-khans in Iran (see Map 12.1). After Ögödei’s death in 1241 family unity began to unravel. When Khubilai˚ declared himself Great Khan in 1265, the descendants of Jagadai and other branches of the family refused to accept him. The destruction of Karakorum in the ensuing fighting contributed to Khubilai’s transferring his court to the old Jin capital that is now Beijing. In 1271 he declared himself founder of the Yuan Empire.

Jagadai’s descendants, who continued to dominate Central Asia, had much closer relations with Turkic-speaking nomads than did their kinsmen farther east. This, plus a continuing hatred of Khubilai and the Yuan, contributed to the strengthening of Central Asia as an independent Mongol center and to the adoption of Islam in the western territories.

After the Yuan destroyed the Southern Song (see Chapter 10) in 1279, Mongol troops crossed south of the Red River and attacked Annam—now northern Vietnam. They occupied Hanoi three times and then withdrew after arranging for the payment of tribute. In 1283 Khubilai’s forces invaded Champa in what is now southern Vietnam and made it a tribute nation as well. A plan to invade Java by sea failed, as did two invasions of Japan in 1274 and 1281.

In tactical terms, the Mongols did not usually outnumber their enemies, but like all steppe nomads for many centuries, they displayed extraordinary abilities...
on horseback and utilized superior bows. The Central Asian bow, made strong by laminated layers of wood, leather, and bone, could shoot one-third farther (and was significantly more difficult to pull) than the bows used by their enemies in the settled lands.

Mounted Mongol archers rarely expended all of the five dozen or more arrows they carried in their quivers. As the battle opened, they shot arrows from a distance to decimate enemy marksmen. Then they galloped against the enemy’s infantry to fight with sword, lance, javelin, and mace. The Mongol cavalry met its match only at the Battle of Ain Jalut*, where it confronted Mamluk forces whose war techniques shared some of the same traditions (see Chapter 8).

To penetrate fortifications, the Mongols fired flaming arrows and hurled enormous projectiles—sometimes flaming—from catapults. The first Mongol catapults, built on Chinese models, transported easily but had short range and poor accuracy. During western campaigns in Central Asia, the Mongols encountered a catapult design that was half again as powerful as the Chinese model. They used this improved weapon against the cities of Iran and Iraq.

Cities that resisted Mongol attack faced mass slaughter or starvation under siege. Timely surrender brought food, shelter, and protection. The bloodletting the Mongols inflicted on cities such as Balkh† (in present-day northern Afghanistan) spread terror and made it easier

*Ain Jalut (ine jah-LOOT)

†Balkh (bahlk)
for the Mongols to persuade cities to surrender. Each conquered area helped swell the “Mongol” armies. In campaigns in the Middle East a small Mongol elite oversaw armies of recently recruited Turks and Iranians.

**Overland Trade and the Plague**

Commercial integration under Mongol rule strongly affected both the eastern and western wings of the empire. Like their aristocratic predecessors in Inner Asia, Mongol nobles had the exclusive right to wear silk, almost all of which came from China. Trade under Mongol dominion brought new styles and huge quantities of silk westward, not just for clothing but also for wall hangings and furnishings. Abundant silk fed the luxury trade in the Middle East and Europe. Artistic motifs from Japan and Tibet reached as far as England and Morocco. Porcelain was another eastern luxury product that became important in trade and strongly influenced later cultural tastes in the Islamic world.

Traders from all over Eurasia enjoyed the benefits of Mongol control. Merchants encountered ambassadors, scholars, and missionaries over the long routes to the Mongol courts. Some of the resulting travel literature, like the account of the Venetian Marco Polo* (1254–1324), freely mixed the fantastic with the factual. Stories of fantastic wealth stimulated a European ambition to find easier routes to Asia.

Exchange also held great dangers. In southwestern China bubonic plague had festered in Yunnan province since the early Tang period. In the mid-thirteenth century Mongol troops established a garrison in Yunnan whose military and supply traffic provided the means for flea-infested rats to carry the plague into central China, northwestern China, and Central Asia. Marmots and other desert rodents along the routes became infected and passed the disease to dogs and people. The caravan traffic infected the oasis towns. The plague incapacitated the Mongol army during their assault on the city of Kaffa* in Crimea* in 1346. They withdrew, but the plague remained. From Kaffa rats infected by fleas reached Europe and Egypt by ship (see Chapter 14).

Typhus, influenza, and smallpox traveled with the plague. The combination of these and other diseases created what is often called the “great pandemic” of 1347–1352 and spread devastation far in excess of what the Mongols inflicted in war. Peace and trade, not conquest, gave rise to the great pandemic.

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Marco Polo (mar-koe POE-loe)  Kaffa (KAH-fah)  Crimea (cry-MEE-ah)

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**THE MONGOLS AND ISLAM, 1260–1500**

From the perspective of Mongol imperial history, the issue of which branches of the family espoused Islam and which did not mostly concerns their political rivalries and their respective quests for allies. From the standpoint of the history of Islam, however, recovery from the political, religious, and physical devastation that culminated in the destruction of the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad in 1258 attests to the vitality of the faith and the ability of Muslims to overcome adversity. Within fifty years of its darkest hour, Islam had reemerged as a potent ideological and political force.
By 1260 the Il-khan state, established by Genghis’s grandson Hülegü, controlled parts of Armenia and all of Azerbaijan, Mesopotamia, and Iran. The Mongols who had conquered southern Russia settled north of the Caspian Sea and established the capital of their Khanate of the Golden Horde (also called the Kipchak Khanate) at Sarai on the Volga River. There they established dominance over the indigenous Muslim Turkic population, both settled and pastoral.

Some members of the Mongol imperial family had professed Islam before the Mongol assault on the Middle East, and Turkic Muslims had served the family in various capacities. Indeed, Hülegü himself, though a Buddhist, had a trusted Shi’ite adviser and granted privileges to the Shi’ites. As a whole, however, the Mongols under Hülegü’s command came only slowly to Islam.

The passage of time did little to reconcile Islamic doctrines with Mongol ways. Muslims abhorred the Mongols’ worship of idols, a fundamental part of shamanism. Furthermore, Mongol law specified slaughtering animals without spilling blood, which involved opening the chest and stopping the heart. This horrified Muslims, who were forbidden to consume blood and slaughtered animals by slit ting their throats and draining the blood.

Islam became a point of inter-Mongol tension when Batu’s successor as leader of the Golden Horde declared himself a Muslim, swore to avenge the murder of the Abbasid caliph, and laid claim to the Caucasus—the region between the Black and Caspian Seas—which the Il-khans also claimed (see Map 12.2).

Some European leaders believed that if they helped the non-Muslim Il-khans repel the Golden Horde from the Caucasus, the Il-khans would help them relieve Muslim pressure on the crusader states in Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine (see Chapter 8). This resulted in a brief correspondence between the Il-khan court and Pope Nicholas IV (r. 1288–1292) and a diplomatic mission that sent two Christian Turks to western Europe as Il-khan ambassadors in the late 1200s. Many Christian crusaders enlisted in the Il-khan effort, but the pope later excommunicated some for doing so.

The Golden Horde responded by seeking an alliance with the Muslim Mamluks in Egypt (see Chapter 8) against both the crusaders and the Il-khans. These complicated efforts effectively extended the life of the crusader states; the Mamluks did not finish ejecting the crusaders until the fifteenth century.

Before the Europeans’ diplomatic efforts could produce a formal alliance, however, a new Il-khan ruler, Ghazan (1271–1304), declared himself a Muslim in 1295. Conflicting indications of Sunni and Shi’ite affiliation on such things as coins indicate that the Il-khans did not pay too much attention to theological matters. Nor is it clear whether the many Muslim Turkic nomads who served alongside the Mongols in the army were Shi’ite or Sunni.

Like the Turks before them (see Chapter 8), the Il-khans gradually came to appreciate the traditional urban culture of the Muslim territories they ruled. Though nomads continued to serve in their armies, the Il-khans used tax farming, a fiscal method developed earlier in the Middle East, to extract maximum wealth from their domain. The government sold tax-collecting contracts to small partnerships, mostly consisting of merchants who might also work together to finance caravans, small industries, or military expeditions. The corporations that offered to collect the most revenue for the government won the contracts. They could use whatever methods they chose and could keep anything over the contracted amount.

Initially, the cost of collecting taxes fell, but over the long term, the exorbitant rates the tax farmers charged drove many landowners into debt and servitude. Agricultural productivity declined. The government had difficulty procuring supplies for the soldiers and resorted to taking land to grow its own grain. Like land held by religious trusts, this land paid no taxes. Thus the tax base shrank even as the demands of the army and the Mongol nobility continued to grow.

Ghazan faced many economic problems. Citing the humane values of Islam, he promised to reduce taxes, but the need for revenues kept the decrease from being permanent. He also witnessed the failure of a predecessor’s experiment with the Chinese practice of using paper money. Having no previous exposure to paper money, the Il-khan’s subjects responded negatively. The economy quickly sank into a depression that lasted beyond the end of the Il-khan state in 1349. High taxes caused widespread popular unrest and resentment. Mongol nobles competed fiercely among themselves for the decreasing revenues, and fighting among Mongol factions destabilized the government.

In the mid-fourteenth century Mongols from the Golden Horde moved through the Caucasus into the

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**Mongol Rivalry**

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**Islam and the State**

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**Il-khan** (IL-con)  **Kipchak** (KIP-chahk)  **Sarai** (sah-RYE)
western regions of the Il-khan Empire and then into the Il-khan’s central territory, Azerbaijan, briefly occupying its major cities. At the same time a new power was emerging to the east, in the Central Asian Khanate of Jagadai (see Map 12.1). The leader Timur, known to Europeans as Tamerlane, skillfully maneuvered himself into command of the Jagadai forces and launched campaigns into western Eurasia, apparently seeing himself as a new Genghis Khan. By ethnic background he was a Turk with only an in-law relationship to the family of the Mongol conqueror. This prevented him from assuming the title khan, but not from sacking the Muslim sultanate of Delhi in northern India in 1398 or defeating the sultan of the rising Ottoman Empire in Anatolia in 1402. By that time he had subdued much of the Middle East, and he was reportedly preparing to march on China when he died in 1405. The Timurids (descendants of Timur) could not hold the empire together, but they laid the groundwork for the establishment in India of a Muslim Mongol-Turkic regime, the Mughals, in the sixteenth century.

Timur (tem-EER)
The historian Juvaini (d. 1283), the literary figure who noted Genghis Khan’s deathbed speech, came from the city of Balkh, which the Mongols had devastated in 1221. His family switched their allegiance to the Mongols, and both Juvaini and his older brother assumed high government posts. The Il-khan Hülegü, seeking to immortalize and justify the Mongol conquest of the Middle East, enthusiastically supported Juvaini’s writing. This resulted in the first comprehensive narrative of the rise of the Mongols under Genghis Khan.

Juvaini combined a florid style with historical objectivity—he often criticized the Mongols—and served as an inspiration to Rashid al-Din, Ghazan’s prime minister, when he attempted the first history of the world. Rashid al-Din’s work included the earliest known general history of Europe, derived from conversations with European monks, and a detailed description of China based on information from an important Chinese Muslim official stationed in Iran. The miniature paintings that accompanied some copies of Rashid al-Din’s work included depictions of European and Chinese people and events and reflected the artistic traditions of both cultures. The Chinese techniques of composition helped inaugurate the greatest period of Islamic miniature painting under the Timurids.

Rashid al-Din traveled widely and collaborated with administrators from other parts of the far-flung Mongol dominions. His idea that government should be in accord with the moral principles of the majority of the population buttressed Ghazan’s adherence to Islam. Administratively, however, Ghazan did not restrict himself to Muslim precedents but employed financial and monetary techniques that roughly resembled those in use in Russia and China.

Under the Timurids, the tradition of the Il-khan historians continued. After conquering Damascus, Timur himself met there with the greatest historian of the age, Ibn Khaldun (1332–1406), a Tunisian. In a scene reminiscent of Ghazan’s answering Rashid al-Din’s questions on the history of the Mongols, Timur and Ibn Khaldun exchanged historical, philosophical, and geographical viewpoints. Like Genghis, Timur saw himself as a world conqueror. At their capitals of Samarkand and Herat (in western Afghanistan), later Timurid rulers sponsored historical writing in both Persian and Turkish.

A Shi’ite scholar named Nasir al-Din Tusi represents the beginning of Mongol interest in the scientific traditions of the Muslim lands. Nasir al-Din may have

Juvaini (joo-VINE-nee) Rashid al-Din (ra-SHEED-ad-DEEN) Ibn Khaldun (ee-bin hal-DOON) Nasir al-Din Tusi (nah-SEER-ad-DEEN TOO-si)
joined the entourage of Hülegü during a campaign in 1256 against the Assassins, a Shi’ite religious sect derived from the Fatimid dynasty in Egypt and at odds with his more mainstream Shi’ite views (see Chapter 8). Nasir al-Din wrote on history, poetry, ethics, and religion, but made his most outstanding contributions in mathematics and cosmology. Following Omar Khayyam* (1038–1131), a poet and mathematician of the Seljuk* period, he laid new foundations for algebra and trigonometry. Some followers working at an observatory built for Nasir al-Din at Maragheh*, near the Il-khan capital of Tabriz, used the new mathematical techniques to solve a fundamental problem in classical cosmology.

Islamic scholars had preserved and elaborated on the insights of the Greeks in astronomy and mathematics and adopted the cosmological model of Ptolemy*, which assumed a universe with the earth at its center surrounded by the sun, moon, and planets traveling in concentric circular orbits. However, the motions of these orbiting bodies did not coincide with predictions based on circular orbits. Astronomers and mathematicians had long sought a mathematical explanation for the movements that they observed.

Nasir al-Din proposed a model based on the idea of small circles rotating within a large circle. One of his students reconciled this model with the ancient Greek idea of epicycles (small circles rotating around a point on a larger circle) to explain the movement of the moon around the earth. The mathematical tables and geometric models devised by this student somehow became known to Nicholas Copernicus (1473–1543), a Polish monk and astronomer. Copernicus adopted the lunar model as his own, virtually without revision. He then proposed the model of lunar movement developed under the Il-khans as the proper model for planetary movement as well—but with the planets circling the sun.

Sponsorship of observational astronomy and the making of calendars had engaged the interest of earlier Central Asian rulers, particularly the Uighurs* and the Seljuks. Under the Il-khans, the astronomers of Maragheh excelled in predicting lunar and solar eclipses. Astrolabes, armillary spheres, three-dimensional quadrants, and other instruments acquired new precision.

The remarkably accurate eclipse predictions and tables prepared by Il-khan and Timurid astronomers reached the hostile Mamluk lands in Arabic translation. Byzantine monks took them to Constantinople and translated them into Greek, while Christian scholars working in Muslim Spain translated them into Latin. In India the sultan of Delhi ordered them translated into Sanskrit. The Great Khan Khubilai (see below) summoned a team of Iranians to Beijing to build an observatory for him. Timur’s grandson Ulugh Beg* (1394–1449), who mixed science and rule, constructed a great observatory in Samarkand and actively participated in compiling observational tables that were later translated into Latin and used by European astronomers.

Maragheh (mah-RAH-gah) Ptolemy (TOHL-uh-mee) Uigur (WEE-ger) Ulugh Beg (oo-loog bek)
A further advance made under Ulugh Beg came from the mathematician Ghiyas al-Din Jamshid al-Kashi, who noted that Chinese astronomers had long used one ten-thousandth of a day as a unit in calculating the occurrence of a new moon. This seems to have inspired him to employ decimal fractions, by which quantities less than one could be represented by a marker to show place. Al-Kashi’s proposed value for π was far more precise than any previously calculated. This innovation arrived in Europe by way of Constantinople, where a Greek translation of al-Kashi’s work appeared in the fifteenth century.

## Regional Responses in Western Eurasia

Safe, reliable overland trade throughout Eurasia benefited Mongol ruling centers and commercial cities along the length of the Silk Road. But the countryside, ravaged by conquest, sporadically continuing violence, and heavy taxes, suffered terribly. As Mongol control weakened, regional forces in Russia, eastern Europe, and Anatolia reasserted themselves. All were influenced by Mongol predecessors, and all had to respond to the social and economic changes of the Mongol era. Sometimes this meant collaborating with the Mongols. At other times it meant using local ethnic or religious traditions to resist or roll back Mongol influence.

### Russia and Rule from Afar

The Golden Horde established by Genghis’s grandson Batu after his defeat of a combined Russian and Kipchak (a Turkic people) army in 1223 started as a unified state but gradually lost its unity as some districts crystallized into smaller khanates. The White Horde, for instance, came to rule much of southeastern Russia in the fifteenth century, and the Crimean khanate on the northern shore of the Black Sea succumbed to Russian invasion only in 1783.

Trade routes east and west across the steppe and north and south along the rivers of Russia and Ukraine conferred importance on certain trading entrepôts, as they had under Kievan Russia (see Chapter 9). The Mongols of the Golden Horde settled at (Old) Sarai, just north of where the Volga flows into the Caspian Sea (see Map 12.1). They ruled their Russian domains to the north and east from afar. To facilitate their control, they granted privileges to the Orthodox Church, which then helped reconcile the Russian people to their distant masters.

The politics of language played a role in subsequent history. Old Church Slavonic, an ecclesiastical language, revived; but Russian steadily acquired greater importance and eventually became the dominant written language. Russian scholars shunned Byzantine Greek, previously the main written tongue, even after the Golden Horde permitted renewed contacts with Constantinople. The Golden Horde enlisted Russian princes to act as their agents, primarily as tax collectors and census takers. Some had to visit the court of the Great Khans at Karakorum to secure the documents upon which their authority was based.

The flow of silver and gold into Mongol hands starved the local economy of precious metal. Like the Il-khans, the khans of the Golden Horde attempted to introduce paper money as a response to the currency shortage. This had little effect in a largely nonmonetary economy, but the experiment left such a vivid memory that the Russian word for money (denga*) comes from the Mongolian word for the stamp (tamga*) used to create paper currency. But commerce depended more on direct exchange of goods than on currency transactions. Alexander Nevskii (ca. 1220–1263), the prince of Novgorod, persuaded some fellow princes to submit to the Mongols. In return, the Mongols favored both Novgorod and the emerging town of Moscow, ruled by Alexander’s son Daniel. These towns eclipsed devastated Kiev as political, cultural, and economic centers. This, in turn, drew people northward to open new agricultural land far from the Mongol steppe lands to the southwest. Decentralization continued in the 1300s, with Moscow only very gradually becoming Russia’s dominant political center (see Map 12.2).

Russia was deeply affected by the Mongol presence. Bubonic plague became endemic among rodents in the Crimea. Ukraine*, a fertile and well-populated region in the late Kievan period (1000–1230), suffered severe population loss as Mongol armies passed through on campaigns against eastern Europe and raided villages to collect taxes.

Historians debate the Mongol impact on Russia. Some see the destructiveness of the Mongol conquests and the subsequent domination of the khans as isolating

*denotes new words
Russia and parts of eastern Europe from developments to the west. These historians refer to the "Mongol yoke" and hypothesize a sluggish economy and dormant culture under the Mongols.

Others point out that Kiev declined economically well before the Mongols struck and that the Kievan princes had already ceased to mint coins. Moreover, the Russian territories regularly paid their heavy taxes in silver. These payments indicate both economic surpluses and an ability to convert goods into cash. The burdensome taxes stemmed less from the Mongols than from their tax collectors, Russian princes who often exempted their own lands and shifted the load to the peasants.

As for Russia's cultural isolation, skeptics observe that before the Mongol invasion, the powerful and constructive role played by the Orthodox Church oriented Russia primarily toward Byzantium (see Chapter 9). This situation discouraged but did not eliminate contacts with western Europe, which probably would have become stronger after the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453 regardless of Mongol influence.

The traditional structure of local government survived Mongol rule, as did the Russian princely families, who continued to battle among themselves for dominance. The Mongols merely added a new player to those struggles.

Ivan III, the prince of Moscow (r. 1462–1505), established himself as an autocratic ruler in the late 1400s. Before Ivan, the title tsar (from "caesar"), of Byzantine origin, applied only to foreign rulers, whether the emperors of Byzantium or the Turkic khans of the steppe. Ivan's use of the title, which began early in his reign, probably represents an effort to establish a basis for legitimate rule with the decline of the Golden Horde and disappearance of the Byzantine Empire.

New States in Eastern Europe and Anatolia

The interplay between religion, political maneuvering, and new expressions of local identity affected Anatolia and parts of Europe confronted with the Mongol challenge as well. Raised in Sicily, the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (r. 1212–1250) appreciated Muslim culture and did not recoil from negotiating with Muslim rulers. When the pope threatened to excommunicate him unless he went on a crusade, Frederick nominally regained Jerusalem through a flimsy treaty with the Mamluk sultan in Egypt. This did not satisfy the pope, and the preoccupation of both pope and emperor with their quarrel left Hungary, Poland, and other parts of eastern Europe to deal with the Mongol onslaught on their own. Many princes capitulated and went to (Old) Sarai to offer their submission of Batu.

The Teutonic Knights, however, resisted. Like the Knights Templar in the Middle East (see Chapter 8), the German-speaking Teutonic Knights had a crusading goal: to Christianize the Slavic and Kipchak populations of northern Europe, whose territories they colonized with thousands of German-speaking settlers. Having an interest in protecting Slav territory from German expansion, Alexander Nevskii cooperated in the Mongol campaigns against the Teutonic Knights and their Finnish allies. The latter suffered a catastrophic setback in 1242.

Ivan (ee-VAHN)  Teutonic (two-TOHN-ik)
Mongol Domination in China, 1271–1368

After the Mongols conquered northern China in the early 1230s, Great Khan Ögödei told a newly recruited Confucian adviser that he planned to turn the heavily populated North China Plain into a pasture for livestock. The adviser reacted calmly but argued that taxing the cities and villages would bring greater wealth. The Great Khan agreed, but he imposed the oppressive tax-farming system in use in the Il-khan Empire, rather than the fixed-rate method traditional to China.

The Chinese suffered under this system during the early years, but Mongol rule under the Yuan Empire, established by Genghis Khan's grandson Kublai in 1271, also brought benefits: secure routes of transport and communication; exchange of experts and advisers between eastern and western Eurasia; and transmission of information, ideas, and skills.

Lithuania (lith-oo-WAY-nee-ah)
The Yuan Empire, 1279–1368

Just as the Il-khans in Iran and the Golden Horde in Russia came to accept many aspects of Muslim and Christian culture, so the Mongols in China sought to construct a fruitful synthesis of the Mongol and Chinese religious and moral traditions. **Khubilai Khan** gave his oldest son a Chinese name and had Confucianists participate in the boy’s education. In public announcements and the crafting of laws, he took Confucian conventions into consideration. Buddhist and Daoist leaders visited the Great Khan and came away believing that they had all but convinced him to accept their beliefs.

The teachings of Buddhist priests from Tibet called **lamas** became increasingly popular with some Mongol rulers in the 1200s and 1300s. Their idea of a militant universal ruler bringing the whole world under control of the Buddha and thus pushing it nearer to salvation mirrored an ancient Central Asia idea of universal rulership.

**Beijing**, the Yuan capital, became the center of cultural and economic life. Where Karakorum had been remote from any major settled area, Beijing served as the eastern terminus of the caravan routes that began near Tabriz, the Il-khan capital, and (Old) Sarai, the Golden Horde capital. An imperial horseback courier system utilizing hundreds of stations maintained close communications along routes that were generally policed and safe for travelers. Ambassadors and merchants arriving in Beijing found a city that was much more Chinese in character than its predecessor in Mongolia.

Called Great Capital (Dadu) or City of the Khan (**khan-balikh**), Marco Polo’s “Cambaluc”), Khubilai’s capital featured massive Chinese-style walls of rammed earth, a tiny portion of which can still be seen. Khubilai’s engineers widened the streets and developed linked lakes and artificial islands at the city’s northwest edge to form a closed imperial complex, the Forbidden City. For his summer retreat, Khubilai maintained the palace and parks at Shangdu, now in Inner Mongolia. This was “Xanadu” celebrated by the English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, its “stately pleasure dome” the hunting preserve where Khubilai and his courtiers practiced riding and shooting.

“China” as we think of it today did not exist before the Mongols. Before they reunified it, China had been divided into three separate states (see Chapter 10). The Tanggut and Jin empires controlled the north, the South-
ern Song most of the area south of the Yellow River. These states had different languages, writing systems, forms of government, and elite cultures. The Great Khans destroyed all three and encouraged the restoration or preservation of many features of Chinese government and society, thereby reuniting China in what proved to be a permanent fashion.

By law, Mongols had the highest social ranking. Below them came, in order, Central Asians and Middle Easterners, then northern Chinese, and finally southern Chinese. This apparent racial ranking also reflected a hierarchy of functions, the Mongols being the empire’s warriors, the Central Asians and Middle Easterners its census takers and tax collectors. The northern Chinese outranked the southern Chinese because they had come under Mongol control almost two generations earlier.

Though Khubilai included some “Confucians” (under the Yuan, a formal and hereditary status) in government, their position compared poorly with their status as elite officeholders in pre-Mongol times. The Confucians criticized the favoring of merchants, many of whom were from the Middle East or Central Asia, and physicians. They regarded doctors as mere technicians, or even heretical practitioners of Daoist mysticism. The Yuan encouraged medicine and began the long process of integrating Chinese medical and herbal knowledge with western approaches derived from Greco-Roman and Muslim sources.

Like the Il-khan rulers in the Middle East, the Yuan rulers concentrated on counting the population and collecting taxes. They brought Persian, Arab, and Uighur administrators to China to staff the offices of taxation and finance, and Muslim scholars worked at calendar making and astronomy. For census taking and administration, the Mongols organized all of China into provinces. Central appointment of provincial governors, tax collectors, and garrison commanders marked a radical change by systematizing government control in all parts of the country.

The scarcity of contemporary records and the hostility of later Chinese writers make examination of the Yuan economy difficult. Many cities seem to have prospered: in north China by being on the caravan routes; in the interior by being on the Grand Canal; and along the coast by participation in maritime grain shipments from south China. The reintegration of East Asia (though not Japan) with the overland Eurasian trade, which had lapsed with the fall of the Tang (see Chapter 10), stimulated the urban economies.

The privileges and prestige that merchants enjoyed changed urban life and the economy of China. With only
a limited number of government posts open to the old Chinese elite, great families that had previously spent fortunes on educating sons for government service sought other outlets. Many gentry families chose commerce, despite its lesser prestige. Corporations—investor groups that behaved as single commercial and legal units and shared the risk of doing business—handled most economic activities, starting with financing caravans and expanding into tax farming and lending money to the Mongol aristocracy. Central Asians and Middle Easterners headed most corporations in China in the early Yuan period; but as Chinese bought shares, most corporations acquired mixed membership, or even complete Chinese ownership.

The agricultural base, damaged by war, overtaxation, and the passage of armies, could not satisfy the financial needs of the Mongol aristocracy. Following earlier precedent, the imperial government issued paper money to make up the shortfall. But the massive scale of the Yuan experiment led people to doubt the value of the notes, which were unsecured. Copper coinage partially offset the failure of the paper currency. During the Song, exports of copper to Japan, where the metal was scarce, had caused a severe shortage in China, leading to a rise in value of copper in relation to silver. By cutting off trade with Japan, the Mongols intentionally or unintentionally stabilized the value of copper coins.

Gentry families that had prepared their sons for the state examinations moved from their traditional homes in the countryside to engage in urban commerce, and city life began to cater to the tastes of merchants instead of scholars. Specialized shops selling clothing, grape wine, furniture, and religiously butchered meats became common. Teahouses featured sing-song girls, drum singers, operas, and other entertainments previously considered coarse. Writers published works in the style of everyday speech. And the increasing influence of the northern, Mongolian-influenced Chinese language, often called Mandarin in the West, resulted in lasting linguistic change.

Cottage industries linked to the urban economies dotted the countryside, where 90 percent of the people lived. Some villages cultivated mulberry trees and cotton using dams, water wheels, and irrigation systems patterned in part on Middle Eastern models. Treatises on planting, harvesting, threshing, and butchering were published. One technological innovator, Huang Dao Po, brought knowledge of cotton growing, spinning, and weaving from her native Hainan Island to the fertile Yangzi Delta. Some villagers came to revere such innovators as local gods.

Yet on the whole, the countryside did poorly during the Yuan period. After the initial conquests, the Mongol princes evicted many farmers and subjected the rest to brutal tax collection. As in Iran under the Il-khans, by the time the Yuan shifted to lighter taxes and encouragement of farming at the end of the 1200s, it was too late. Servitude or homelessness had overtaken many farmers. Neglect of dams and dikes caused disastrous flooding, particularly on the Yellow River.

According to Song records from before the Mongol conquest and the Ming census taken after their overthrow—each, of course, possibly subject to inaccuracy or exaggeration—China’s population may have shrunk by 40 percent during eighty years of Mongol rule, with many localities in northern China losing up to five-sixths of their inhabitants. Scholars have suggested several causes, not all of them directly associated with Mongol policies. While Chinese silks and porcelains affected elite tastes at the western end of the Silk Road, Il-khan engineering, astronomy, and mathematics reached China and Korea. Just as Chinese painters taught Iranian artists appealing new ways of drawing clouds, rocks, and trees, Muslims from the Middle East oversaw most of the weapons manufacture and engineering projects for

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**Huang Dao Po** (hwahng DOW poh)

**Yunnan** (YOON-nahn)
Khubilai’s armies. Similarly, the Il-khans imported scholars and texts that helped them understand Chinese technological advances, including stabilized sighting tubes for precisely noting the positions of astronomical objects, mechanically driven armillary spheres that showed how the sun, moon, and planets moved in relation to one another, and new techniques for measuring the movement of the moon. And Khubilai brought Iranians to Beijing to construct an observatory and an institute for astronomical studies similar to the Il-khans’ facility at Maragheh. He made the state responsible for maintaining and staffing the observatory.

Muslim doctors and Persian medical texts—particularly in anatomy, pharmacology, and ophthalmology—circulated in China during the Yuan. Khubilai, who suffered from alcoholism and gout, accorded high status to doctors. New seeds and formulas from the Middle East stimulated medical practice. The traditional Chinese study of herbs, drugs, and potions came in for renewed interest and publication.

The Fall of the Yuan Empire

In the 1340s power contests broke out among the Mongol princes. Within twenty years farmer rebellions and feuds among the Mongols engulfed the land. Amidst the chaos, a charismatic Chinese leader, Zhu Yuanzhang, mounted a campaign that destroyed the Yuan Empire and brought China under control of his new empire, the Ming, in 1368. Many Mongols—as well as the Muslims, Jews, and Christians who had come with them—remained in China, some as farmers or shepherds, some as high-ranking scholars and officials. Most of their descendants took Chinese names and became part of the diverse cultural world of China.

Many other Mongols, however, had never moved out of their home territories in Mongolia. Now they welcomed back refugees from the Yuan collapse. Though Turkic peoples were becoming predominant in the steppe region in the west of Central Asia, including territories still ruled by descendants of Genghis Khan, Mongols retained control of Inner Asia, the steppe regions bordering on Mongolia. Their reconcentration in this region fostered a renewed sense of Mongol unity. Some Mongol groups adopted Islam; others favored Tibetan Buddhism. But religious affiliation proved less important than Mongol identity.

The Ming thus fell short of dominating all the Mongols. The Mongols of Inner Asia paid tribute to the Ming only to the extent that doing so facilitated their trade.

The Mongols remained a continuing threat on the northern Ming frontier.

The Early Ming Empire, 1368–1500

The history of the Ming Empire raises questions about the overall impact of the Mongol era in China. Just as historians of Russia and Iran divide over whether Mongol invasion and political domination retarded or stimulated the pace and direction of political and economic change, so historians of China have differing opinions about the Mongols. Since the Ming reestablished many practices that are seen as purely Chinese, they receive praise from people who ascribe central importance to Chinese traditions. On the other hand, historians who look upon the Mongol era as a pivotal historical moment when communication across the vast interior of Eurasia served to bring east and west together sometimes see the inward-looking Ming as less dynamic and productive than the Yuan.

Zhu Yuanzhang, a former monk, soldier, and bandit, had watched his parents and other family members die of famine and disease, conditions he blamed on Mongol misrule. During the Yuan Empire’s chaotic last decades, he vanquished rival rebels and assumed imperial power under the name Hongwu (r. 1368–1398). He ruled a highly centralized, militarily formidable empire.

Hongwu moved the capital to Nanjing (“southern capital”) on the Yangzi River, turning away from the Mongol’s Beijing (“northern capital”; see Map 12.3). Though Zhu Yuanzhang the rebel had espoused a radical Buddhist belief in a coming age of salvation, once in power he used Confucianism to depict the emperor as the champion of civilization and virtue, justified in making war on uncivilized “barbarians.”

Hongwu choked off the close relations with Central Asia and the Middle East fostered by the Mongols and imposed strict limits on imports and foreign visitors. Silver replaced paper money for tax payments and commerce. These practices, illustrative of an anti-Mongol ideology, proved as economically unhealthy as some of the Yuan economic policies and did not last. Instead, the Ming government gradually came to resemble the Yuan.
rulers retained the provincial structure and continued to observe the hereditary professional categories of the Yuan period. Muslims made calendars and astronomical calculations at a new observatory at Nanjing, a replica of Kubilai’s at Beijing. The Mongol calendar continued in use.

Continuities with the Yuan became more evident after an imperial prince seized power through a coup d’état to rule as the emperor Yongle (r. 1403–1424). He returned the capital to Beijing, enlarging and improving Kubilai’s imperial complex. The central area—the Forbidden City—acquired its present character, with moats, orange-red outer walls, golden roofs, and marble bridges.

Yongle (yoong-LAW)
Yongle intended this combination fortress, religious site, bureaucratic center, and imperial residential park to overshadow Nanjing, and it survives today as China's most imposing traditional architectural complex.

Yongle also restored commercial links with the Middle East. Because hostile Mongols still controlled much of the caravan route, Yongle explored maritime connections. In Southeast Asia, Annam became a Ming province as the early emperors continued the Mongol program of aggression. This focus on the southern frontier helped inspire the naval expeditions of the trusted imperial eunuch Zheng He from 1405 to 1433.

A Muslim whose father and grandfather had made the pilgrimage to Mecca, Zheng He had a good knowledge of the Middle East; and his religion eased relations with the states of the Indian subcontinent, where he directed his first three voyages. Subsequent expeditions reached Hormuz on the Persian Gulf, sailed the southern coast of Arabia and the Horn of Africa (modern Somalia), and possibly reached as far south as the Strait of Madagascar (see Map 12.3).

On early voyages he visited long-established Chinese merchant communities in Southeast Asia in order to cement their allegiance to the Ming Empire and to collect taxes. When a community on the island of Sumatra resisted, he slaughtered the men to set an example. By pursuing commercial relations with the Middle East and possibly Africa, he also publicized Yongle's reversal of Hongwu's opposition to foreign trade.

The expeditions added some fifty new tributary states to the Ming imperial universe, but trade did not increase as dramatically. Sporadic embassies reached Beijing from rulers in India, the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia. During one visit the ruler of Brunei died and received a grand burial at the Chinese capital. Occasional expeditions continued until the 1430s, after the death of both Yongle and Zheng He, when they stopped.

Having demonstrated such abilities at long-distance navigation, why did the Chinese not develop seafaring for commercial and military gain? Contemporaries considered the voyages a personal project of Yongle, an upstart ruler who had always sought to prove his worthiness. Building the Forbidden City in Beijing and sponsoring gigantic encyclopedia projects might be taken to reflect a similar motivation. Yongle may also have been emulating Khubilai Khan, who had sent enormous fleets against Japan and Southeast Asia. This would fit with the rumor spread by Yongle's political enemies that he was actually a Mongol.

A less speculative approach to the question starts with the fact that the new commercial opportunities fell short of expectations, despite bringing foreign nations into the Ming orbit. In the meantime, Japanese coastal piracy intensified, and Mongol threats in the north and west grew. The human and financial demands of fortifying the north, redesigning and strengthening Beijing, and outfitting military expeditions against the Mongols ultimately took priority over the quest for maritime empire.

Technology and Population

Although innovation continued in all areas of the Ming economy, advances were less frequent and less significant than under the Song, particularly in agriculture. Agricultural production peaked around the mid-1400s and remained level for more than a century.

The Ming government limited mining, partly to reinforce the value of metal coins and partly to control and tax the industry. Farmers had difficulty obtaining iron and bronze for farm implements. The peace that had followed the Mongol conquest resulted in a decline in techniques for making high-quality bronze and steel, which were especially used for weapons. Central Asian and Middle Eastern technicians rather than Chinese cast the bronze instruments for Khubilai's observatory at Beijing. Japan quickly surpassed China in the production of extremely high-quality steel swords. Copper, iron, and steel became expensive in Ming China, leading to a lessened use of metal.

After the death of Emperor Yongle in 1424, shipbuilding also declined, and few advances occurred in printing, timekeeping, and agricultural technology. New weaving techniques did appear, but technological development in this field had peaked by 1500.

Reactivation of the examination system as a way of recruiting government officials (see Chapter 10) drew large numbers of educated, ambitious men into a renewed study of the Confucian classics. This reduced the vitality of commerce, where they had previously been employed, just as population increase was creating a labor surplus. Records indicating a growth from 60 million at the end of the Yuan period in 1368 to nearly 100 million by 1400 may not be entirely reliable, but rapid population growth encouraged the production of staples—wheat, millet, and barley in the north and rice in the south—at the expense of commercial crops such as cotton that had stimulated many technological innovations under the Song. Staple crops yielded lower profits, which further discouraged capital improvements. New
foods, such as sweet potatoes, became available but were little adopted. Population growth in southern and central China caused deforestation and raised the price of wood.

The Mongols that the Ming confronted in the north fought on horseback with simple weapons. The Ming fought back with arrows, scattershot mortars, and explosive canisters. They even used a few cannon, which they knew about from contacts with the Middle East and later with Europeans (see Environment and Technology: From Gunpowder to Guns). Fearing that technological secrets would get into enemy hands, the government censored the chapters on gunpowder and guns in early Ming encyclopedias. Shipyards and ports shut down to avoid contact with Japanese pirates and to prevent Chinese from migrating to Southeast Asia.

A technology gap with Korea and Japan opened up nevertheless. When superior steel was needed, supplies came from Japan. Korea moved ahead of China in the design and production of firearms and ships, in printing techniques, and in the sciences of weather prediction and calendar making. The desire to tap the wealthy Ming market fueled some of these advances.

In the late 1300s and the 1400s the wealth and consumerism of the early Ming stimulated high achievement in literature, the decorative arts, and painting. The Yuan period interest in plain writing had produced some of the world’s earliest novels. This type of literature flourished under the Ming. Water Margin, which originated in the raucous drum-song performances loosely related to Chinese opera, features dashing Chinese bandits who struggle against Mongol rule, much as Robin Hood and his merry men resisted Norman rule in England. Many authors had a hand in the final print version.

Luo Guanzhong, one of the authors of Water Margin, is also credited with Romance of the Three Kingdoms, based on a much older series of stories that in some ways resemble the Arthurian legends. It describes the attempts of an upright but doomed war leader and his followers to restore the Han Empire of ancient times and resist the power of the cynical but brilliant villain. Romance of the Three Kingdoms and Water Margin expressed much of the militant but joyous pro-China sentiment of the early Ming era and remain among the most appreciated Chinese fictional works.

Probably the best-known product of Ming technological advance was porcelain. The imperial ceramic works at Jingdezhen experimented with new production techniques and new ways of organizing and rationalizing workers. “Ming ware,” a blue-on-white style developed in the 1400s from Indian, Central Asian, and Middle Eastern motifs, became especially prized around the world. Other Ming goods in high demand included furniture, lacquered screens, and silk, all eagerly transported by Chinese and foreign merchants throughout Southeast Asia and the Pacific, India, the Middle East, and East Africa.

Luo Guanzhong (LAW GWAHB-JOONG)
Jingdezhen (JING-deh-JUHN)
From Gunpowder to Guns

Long before the invention of guns, gunpowder was used in China and Korea to excavate mines, build canals, and channel irrigation. Alchemists in China used related formulas to make noxious gas pellets to paralyze enemies and expel evil spirits. A more realistic benefit was eliminating disease-carrying insects, a critical aid to the colonization of malarial regions in China and Southeast Asia. The Mongol Empire staged fireworks displays on ceremonial occasions, delighting European visitors to Karakorum who saw them for the first time.

Anecdotal evidence in Chinese records gives credit for the introduction of gunpowder to a Sogdian Buddhist monk of the 500s. The monk described the wondrous alchemical transformation of elements produced by a combination of charcoal and saltpeter. In this connection he also mentioned sulfur. The distillation of naphtha, a light, flammable derivative of oil or coal, seems also to have been first developed in Central Asia, the earliest evidence coming from the Gandhara region (in modern Pakistan).

By the eleventh century, the Chinese had developed flamethrowers powered by burning naphtha, sulfur, or gunpowder in a long tube. These weapons intimidated and injured foot soldiers and horses and also set fire to thatched roofs in hostile villages and, occasionally, the rigging of enemy ships.

In their long struggle against the Mongols, the Song learned to enrich saltpeter to increase the amount of nitrate in gunpowder. This produced forceful explosions rather than jets of fire. Launched from catapults, gunpowder-filled canisters could rupture fortifications and inflict mass casualties. Explosives hurled from a distance could sink or burn ships.

The Song also experimented with firing projectiles from metal gun barrels. The earliest gun barrels were broad and squat and were transported on special wagons to their emplacements. The mouths of the barrels projected saltpeter mixed with scattershot minerals. The Chinese and then the Koreans adapted gunpowder to shooting masses of arrows—sometimes flaming—at enemy fortifications.

In 1280 weapons makers of the Yuan Empire produced the first device featuring a projectile that completely filled the mouth of the cannon and thus concentrated the explosive force. The Yuan used cast bronze for the barrel and iron for the cannonball. The new weapon shot farther and more accurately, and was much more destructive, than the earlier Song devices.

Knowledge of the cannon and cannonball moved westward across Eurasia. By the end of the thirteenth century cannon were being produced in the Middle East. By 1327 small, squat cannon called "bombards" were being used in Europe.
Centralization and Militarism in East Asia, 1200–1500

Korea, Japan, and Annam, the other major states of East Asia, were all affected by confrontation with the Mongols, but with differing results. Japan and Annam escaped Mongol conquest but changed in response to the Mongol threat, becoming more effective and expansive regimes with enhanced commitments to independence.

As for Korea, just as the Ming stressed Chinese traditions and identity in the aftermath of Yuan rule, so Mongol domination contributed to revitalized interest in Korea’s own language and history. The Mongols conquered Korea after a difficult war, and though Korea suffered socially and economically under Mongol rule, members of the elite associated closely with the Yuan Empire. After the fall of the Yuan, merchants continued the international connections established in the Mongol period, while Korean armies consolidated a new kingdom and fended off pirates.

Korea from the Mongols to the Yi, 1231–1500

In their effort to establish control over all of China, the Mongols searched for coastal areas from which to launch naval expeditions and choke off the sea trade of their adversaries. Korea offered such possibilities. When the Mongols attacked in 1231, the leader of a prominent Korean family assumed the role of military commander and protector of the king (not unlike the shoguns of Japan). His defensive war, which lasted over twenty years, left a ravaged countryside, exhausted armies, and burned treasures, including the renowned nine-story pagoda at Hwangnyong-sa and the wooden printing blocks of the Tripitaka, a ninth-century masterpiece of printing art. The commander’s underlings killed him in 1258. Soon afterward the Koryo king surrendered to the Mongols and became a subject monarch by linking his family to the Great Khan by marriage.

By the mid-1300s the Koryo kings were of mostly Mongol descent, and they favored Mongol dress, customs, and language. Many lived in Beijing. The kings, their families, and their entourages often traveled between China and Korea, thus exposing Korea to the philosophical and artistic styles of Yuan China: neo-Confucianism, Chan Buddhism (called Sŏn in Korea), and celadon (light green) ceramics.

Mongol control was a stimulus after centuries of comparative isolation. Cotton began to be grown in southern Korea; gunpowder came into use; and the art of calendar making, including eclipse prediction and vector calculation, stimulated astronomical observation and mathematics. Celestial clocks built for the royal observatory at Seoul reflected Central Asian and Islamic influences more than Chinese. Avenues of advancement opened for Korean scholars willing to learn Mongolian, landowners willing to open their lands to falconry and grazing, and merchants servicing the new royal exchanges with Beijing. These developments contributed to the rise of a new landed and educated class.

When the Yuan Empire fell in 1368, the Koryo ruling family remained loyal to the Mongols and had to be forced to recognize the new Ming Empire. In 1392 the Yi* established a new kingdom with a capital in Seoul and sought to reestablish a local identity. Like Russia and China after the Mongols, the Yi regime publicly rejected the period of Mongol domination. Yet the Yi government continued to employ Mongol-style land surveys, taxation in kind, and military garrison techniques.

Like the Ming emperors, the Yi kings revived the study of the Confucian classics, an activity that required knowledge of Chinese and showed the dedication of the state to learning. This revival may have led to a key technological breakthrough in printing technology.

Koreans had begun using Chinese woodblock printing in the 700s. This technology worked well in China, where a large number of buyers wanted copies of a comparatively small number of texts. But in Korea, the comparatively few literate men had interests in a wide range of texts. Movable wooden or ceramic type appeared in Korea in the early thirteenth century and may have been invented there. But the texts were frequently inaccurate and difficult to read. In the 1400s Yi printers, working directly with the king, developed a reliable device to anchor the pieces of type to the printing plate: they replaced the old beeswax adhesive with solid copper frames. The legibility of the printed page improved, and high-volume, accurate production became possible. Combined with the phonetic han’gul* writing system, this printing technology laid the foundation for a high literacy rate in Korea.

Yi publications told readers how to produce and use fertilizer, transplant rice seedlings, and engineer reservoirs. Building on Eurasian knowledge imported by the Mongols and introduced under the Koryo, Yi scholars

Hwangnyong-sa (hwahng-NEYAHNG-sah)
Tripitaka (tri-PIH-tah-kah)  Koryo (KAW-ree-oh)

Yi (YEE)  han’gul (HAHN-goor)
developed a meteorological science of their own. They invented or redesigned instruments to measure wind speed and rainfall and perfected a calendar based on minute comparisons of the systems of China and the Islamic world.

In agriculture, farmers expanded the cultivation of cash crops, the reverse of what was happening in Ming China. Cotton, the primary crop, enjoyed such high value that the state accepted it for tax payments. The Yi army used cotton uniforms, and cotton became the favored fabric of the Korean civil elite. With cotton gins and spinning wheels powered by water, Korea advanced more rapidly than China in mechanization and began to export considerable amounts of cotton to China and Japan.

Although both the Yuan and the Ming withheld the formula for gunpowder from the Korean government, Korean officials acquired the information by subterfuge. By the later 1300s they had mounted cannon on ships that patrolled against pirates and used gunpowder-driven arrow launchers against enemy personnel and the rigging of enemy ships. Combined with skills in armoring ships, these techniques made the small Yi navy a formidable defense force.

**Political Transformation in Japan, 1274–1500**

Having secured Korea, the Mongols looked toward Japan, a target they could easily reach from Korea and a possible base for controlling China’s southern coast. Their first thirty-thousand-man invasion force in 1274 included Mongol cavalry and archers and sailors from Korea and northeastern Asia. Its weaponry included light catapults and incendiary and explosive projectiles of Chinese manufacture. The Mongol forces landed suc-
cessfully and decimated the Japanese cavalry, but a great storm on Hakata Bay on the north side of Kyushu Island (see Map 12.4) prevented the establishment of a beachhead and forced the Mongols to sail back to Korea.

The invasion deeply impressed Japan’s leaders and hastened social and political changes that were already under way. Under the Kamakura Shogunate established in 1185—another powerful family actually exercised control—the shogun, or military leader, distributed land and privileges to his followers. In return they paid him tribute and supplied him with soldiers. This stable, but decentralized, system depended on the balancing of power among regional warlords. Lords in the north and east of Japan’s main island were remote from those in the south and west. Beyond devotion to the emperor and the shogun, little united them until the alien and terrifying Mongol threat materialized.

After the return of his fleet, Khubilai sent envoys to Japan demanding submission. Japanese leaders executed them and prepared for war. The shogun took steps to centralize his military government. The effect was to increase the influence of warlords from the south and west of Honshu (Japan’s main island) and from the island of Kyushu, because this was where invasion seemed most likely, and they were the local commanders acting under the shogun’s orders.

Military planners studied Mongol tactics and retrained and outfitted Japanese warriors for defense against advanced weaponry. Farm laborers drafted from all over the country constructed defensive fortifications at Hakata and other points along the Honshu and Kyushu coasts. This effort demanded, for the first time, a national system to move resources toward western points rather than toward the imperial or shogunal centers to the east.

The Mongols attacked in 1281. They brought 140,000 warriors, including many non-Mongols, as well as thousands of horses, in hundreds of ships. However, the wall the Japanese had built to cut off Hakata Bay from the mainland deprived the Mongol forces of a reliable landing point. Japanese swordsmen rowed out and boarded the Mongol ships lingering offshore. Their superb steel swords shocked the invaders. After a prolonged standoff, a typhoon struck and sank perhaps half of the Mongol ships. The remainder sailed away, never again to harass Japan. The Japanese gave thanks to the “wind of the Gods”—kamikaze—for driving away the Mongols.

Nevertheless, the Mongol threat continued to influence Japanese development. Prior to his death in 1294, Khubilai had in mind a third invasion. His successors did not carry through with it, but the shoguns did not know that the Mongols had given up the idea of conquering Japan. They rebuilt coastal defenses well into the fourteenth century, helping to consolidate the social position of Japan’s warrior elite and stimulating the development of a national infrastructure for trade and communication. But the Kamakura Shogunate, based on regionally collected and regionally dispersed revenues, suffered financial strain in trying to pay for centralized road and defense systems.

Between 1333 and 1338 the emperor Go-Daigo broke the centuries-old tradition of imperial seclusion and aloofness from government and tried to reclaim power from the shoguns. This ignited a civil war that destroyed the Kamakura system. In 1338, with the Mongol

Hakata (HAAH-kah-tah)  Kyushu (KYOO-shoo)
Kamakura (kah-mah-KOO-rah)  kamikaze (KUM-i-kuh-zee)
threat waning, the Ashikaga Shogunate, took control at the imperial center of Kyoto.

Provincial warlords enjoyed renewed independence. Around their imposing castles, they sponsored the development of market towns, religious institutions, and schools. The application of technologies imported in earlier periods, including water wheels, improved plows, and Champa rice, increased agricultural productivity. Growing wealth and relative peace stimulated artistic creativity, mostly reflecting Zen Buddhist beliefs held by the warrior elite. In the simple elegance of architecture and gardens, in the contemplative landscapes of artists like Sesshu Toyo, and in the eerie, stylized performances of the No theater, the unified aesthetic code of Zen became established in the Ashikaga era.

Despite the technological advancement, artistic productivity, and rapid urbanization of this period,
competition among warlords and their followers led to regional wars. By the later 1400s these conflicts resulted in the near destruction of the warlords. The great Onin War in 1477 left Kyoto devastated and the Ashikaga Shogunate a central government in name only. Ambitious but low-ranking warriors, some with links to trade with the continent, began to scramble for control of the provinces.

After the fall of the Yuan in 1368 Japan resumed trade with China and Korea. Japan exported raw materials as well as folding fans, invented in Japan during the period of isolation, and swords. Japan’s primary imports from China were books and porcelain. The volatile political environment in Japan gave rise to partnerships between warlords and local merchants. All worked to strengthen their own towns and treasuries through overseas commerce or, sometimes, through piracy.

The Emergence of Vietnam, 1200–1500

Before the first Mongol attack in 1257, the states of Annam (northern Vietnam) and Champa (southern Vietnam) had clashed frequently. Annam (once called Dai Viet) looked toward China and had once been subject to the Tang. Chinese political ideas, social philosophies, dress, religion, and language heavily influenced its official culture. Champa related more closely to the trading networks of the Indian Ocean; its official culture was strongly influenced by Indian religion, language, architecture, and dress. Champa’s relationship with China depended in part on how close its enemy Annam was to China at any particular time. During the Song period Annam was neither formally subject to China nor particularly threatening to Champa militarily, so Champa inaugurated a trade and tribute relationship with China that spread fast-ripening Champa rice throughout East Asia.

The Mongols exacted submission and tribute from both Annam and Champa until the fall of the Yuan Empire in 1368. Mongol political and military ambitions were mostly focused elsewhere, however, which minimized their impact on politics and culture. The two Vietnamese kingdoms soon resumed their warfare. When Annam moved its army to reinforce its southern border, Ming troops occupied the capital, Hanoi, and installed a puppet government. Almost thirty years elapsed before Annam regained independence and resumed a tributary status. By then the Ming were turning to meet Mongol challenges to their north. In a series of ruthless campaigns, Annam terminated Champa’s independence, and by 1500 the ancestor of the modern state of Vietnam, still called Annam, had been born.

The new state still relied on Confucian bureaucratic government and an examination system, but some practices differed from those in China. The Vietnamese legal code, for example, preserved group landowning and decision making within the villages, as well as women’s property rights. Both developments probably had roots in an early rural culture based on the growing of rice in wet paddies; by this time the Annamese considered them distinctive features of their own culture.

**Conclusion**

Despite their brutality and devastation, the Mongol conquests brought a degree of unity to the lands between China and Europe that had never before been known. Nomadic mobility and expertise in military technology contributed to communication across vast spaces and initially, at least, an often-callous disregard for the welfare of farmers, as manifested in oppressive tax policies. Trade, on the other hand, received active Mongol stimulation through the protection of routes and encouragement of industrial production. The Mongol regimes were characterized by an unprecedented openness, employing talented people irrespective of their linguistic, ethnic, or religious affiliations. As a consequence, the period of comparative Mongol unity, which lasted less than a century, saw a remarkable exchange of ideas, techniques, and products across the breadth of Eurasia. Chinese gunpowder spurred the development of Ottoman and European cannon; Muslim astronomers introduced new instruments and mathematical techniques to Chinese observatories.

However, rule over dozens of restive peoples could not endure. Where Mongol military enterprise reached its limit of expansion, it stimulated local aspirations for independence. Division and hostility among branches of Genghis Khan’s family—between the Yuan in China and the Jagadai in Central Asia or between the Golden Horde in Russia and the Il-khans in Iran—provided opportunities for achieving these aspirations. The Russians gained freedom from Mongol domination in western Eurasia, and the general political disruption and uncertainty of the Mongol era assisted the emergence of the Lithuanian, Serbian, and Ottoman states. In the east, China, Korea, and Annam similarly found renewed political identity in the aftermath of Mongol rule, while Japan fought off two Mongol invasions and transformed its internal political and cultural identity in the process. In every case, the reality or threat of Mongol attack and domination encouraged centralization of government, improvement of military
techniques, and renewed stress on local cultural identity. Thus, in retrospect, despite its traditional association with death and destruction, the Mongol period appears as a watershed establishing new connections between widespread parts of Eurasia and leading to the development of strong, assertive, and culturally creative regional states.

Key Terms

- Mongols
- Genghis Khan
- Ottoman Empire
- nomadism
- Yuan Empire
- bubonic plague
- Il-khan
- Golden Horde
- Timur
- Rashid al-Din
- Nasir al-Din Tusi
- Alexander Nevskii
- tsar
- ottoman empire
- Khubilai Khan
- lama
- Beijing
- Ming Empire
- Yongle
- Zheng He
- Yi
- Kamikaze
- Ashikaga Shogunate

Suggested Reading


The only “primary” document relating to Genghis Khan, *Secret History of the Mongols*, has been reconstructed in Mongolian from Chinese script and has been variously produced in scholarly editions by Igor de Rachewilz and Francis Woodman Cleaves, among others. Paul Kahn produced a readable prose English paraphrase of the work in 1984. Biographies of Genghis Khan include Leo de Hartog, *Genghis Khan, Conqueror of the World* (1989); Michel Hoang, *Genghis Khan*, trans. Ingrid Canfield (1991); and Paul Ratchevsky, *Genghis Khan: His Life and Legacy*, trans. and ed. Thomas Nivison Haining (1992), which is most detailed on Genghis’s childhood and youth.


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Notes