Overland trade along the Silk Road peaked under the Mongols. The empire formed on Genghis Khan’s conquests made Mongolia the center of an administrative and trading system linking Europe, the Middle East, Russia, and East Asia. Some lands flourished; others groaned under tax burdens and physical devastation.

Societies that escaped conquest also felt the Mongol impact. Around the eastern Mediterranean coast and in eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, and Japan, fear of Mongol attack stimulated defense planning and accelerated processes of urbanization, technological development, and political centralization.

By 1500, Mongol dominance had waned. A new Chinese empire, the Ming, was expanding its influence in Southeast Asia. The Ottomans had overthrown the Byzantine Empire, and Christian monarchs in Spain and Portugal, victorious over Muslim enemies, were laying the foundations of new overseas empires.

As Eurasia’s overland trade faded, merchants, soldiers, and explorers took to the seas. State-sponsored long-distance voyages undertaken by the Chinese
Martin Waldseemüller's Map of the World

This map, published in 1507 and included in a German geography book entitled Cosmographiae Introductio, marks the first usage of the name America, placed one-third of the way from the bottom of the New World's southern continent. Amerigio (original spelling) Vespucci sailed twice to the New World as a navigator in 1499 and 1501. Letters he wrote misled the author into thinking that Vespucci, and not Columbus, had been the first to land on the mainland. "I do not see what right any one would have to object to calling this part after Americus, who discovered it and who is a man of intelligence, [and so to name it] Amerige, that is, the Land of Americus, or America: since both Europa and Asia got their names from women." (Library of Congress)

Admiral Zheng He were spectacular but without long-term results. Africans explored the Atlantic, and Polynesians colonized the central and eastern Pacific in the 1300s and 1400s. By 1500 Christopher Columbus had reached the Americas; within twenty-five years a Portuguese ship would sail around the world.

The overland routes of Eurasia had generated massive wealth in East Asia and a growing hunger for commerce in Europe. These factors similarly spurred the development of maritime trade. Exposure to the achievements, wealth, and resources of the Americas, sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia guaranteed the further expansion of European exploration and maritime power.
Defending Japan  Japanese warriors board Mongol warships with swords to prevent the landing of the invasion force in 1281.  
(Imperial Household Agency/International Society for Educational Information, Japan/DNP Archives)

- What accounts for the magnitude and speed of the Mongol conquests?
- How did Mongol expansion and Islam affect each other?
- What benefits resulted from the integration of Eurasia into the Mongol Empire?
- How did Mongol rule in China foster cultural and scientific exchange?
- In what ways did the Ming Empire continue or discontinue Mongol practices?
- What are some of the similarities and differences in how Korea and Japan responded to the Mongol threat?
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

Diversity and Domination: Observations of Mongol Life

Environment and Technology: From Gunpowder to Guns

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 Keraites*, one of Mongolia's many warring confederations. The Keraites 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.

Temüjin (TEM-uh-jin) Keraites (keh-ratos)
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." 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. However, European and Asian sources of the time, such as the painting introducing this chapter, 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.

**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.

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**Nomadism in Central and Inner Asia**

The pastoral nomads of the Eurasian steppes played an on-again, off-again role in European, Middle Eastern, and Chinese history for hundreds of years before the rise of the Mongols (see Chapter 7). The Mongol way of life probably did not differ materially from that of those earlier peoples (see Dominance and Diversity: Observations of Mongol Life). 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 khagan. 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 herding and more on warfare designed to secure greater tribute.
<table>
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<th>1200</th>
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<td>1370–1405 Reign of Timur</td>
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<td>Reign of Yongle</td>
<td>1453 Ottomans capture Constantinople</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Observations of Mongol Life

The Mongols, despite the power, geographical extent, and durability of their empire, are known mainly from the observations made by non-Mongols who either traveled in their territory or worked for them. The following passages come from three such authors.

William of Rubruck, a Franciscan friar, journeyed to the court of the Great Khan Möngke in 1253–1255 after living for some period of time in crusader territory in the Middle East. He carried a letter from the French king, Louis IX (ruled 1226–1270), asking that the friar and a companion be allowed to stay with the Mongols, preach Christianity, and comfort German prisoners. William never made contact with the Germans, but his highly personal observations on Mongol life fascinated European readers.

The dwelling in which they sleep is based on a hoop of interlaced branches, and its supports are made of branches, converging at the top around a smaller hoop, from which projects a neck like a chimney. They cover it with white felt; quite often they also smear the felt with chalk or white clay and ground bones to make it gleam whiter, or sometimes they blacken it. These dwellings are constructed to such a size as to be on occasion thirty feet across; I myself once measured a breadth of twenty feet between the wheeltracks of a wagon, and when the dwelling was on the wagon it protruded beyond the wheels by at least five feet on either side. I have counted twenty-two oxen to one wagon, hauling along a dwelling, eleven in a row, corresponding to the width of the wagon, and another eleven in front of them. The wagon's axle was as large as a ship's mast, and one man stood at the entrance of the dwelling on top of the wagon, driving the oxen.

The married women make themselves very fine waggons. One rich Mo'ol [i.e., Mongol] or Tartar has easily a hundred or two hundred such waggons with chests. Baatu has twenty-six wives, each of whom has a large dwelling, not counting the other, smaller ones placed behind the large one, which are chambers, as it were, where the maids live: to each of these dwellings belong a good two hundred wagons. When they unload the dwellings, the chief wife pitches her residence at the westernmost end, and the others follow according to rank. Hence the court of one wealthy Mo'ol will have the appearance of a large town, though there will be very few males in it.

One woman will drive twenty or thirty wagons, since the terrain is level. The ox- or camel-wagons are lashed together in sequence, and the woman will sit at the front driving the ox while all the rest follow at the same pace. If at some point the going happens to become difficult, they unite them and take them through one at a time. For they move slowly, at the pace at which a sheep or an ox can walk.

The History of the World-Conqueror by the Iranian historian Ata-Malik Juvaini, who worked for the Mongols in Iran, was written in elegant Persian during the 1250s. It combines a glorification of the Mongol rulers with an unflinching picture of the cruelties and devastation inflicted by their conquests. He [i.e., Chingiz-Khan] paid great attention to the chase and used to say that the hunting of wild beasts was a proper occupation for the commanders of armies; and that instruction and training therein was incumbent on warriors and men-at-arms. Whenever the Khan sets out on the great hunt (which takes place at the beginning of the winter season), he issues orders that the troops stationed around his headquarters and in the neighborhood shall make preparation for the chase.

The right wing, left wing and center of the army are drawn up and entrusted to the great emirs; and they set out together with the Royal Ladies and the Concubines, as well as provisions of food and drink. For a month, or two, or three they form a hunting ring and drive the game slowly and gradually before them, taking care lest any escape from the ring. Finally, when the ring has been contracted to a diameter of two or three paragons [approximately 7 to 10 miles] they bind ropes together and cast felt over them; while the troops come to a halt all around the ring, standing shoulder to shoulder. The ring is now filled with the cries and commotion of every manner of game and the roaring and tumult of every kind of ferocious beast; lions becoming familiar with wild asses, hyænas friendly with foxes, wolves intimate with hares.

When the ring has been so much contracted that the wild beasts are unable to stir, first the Khan rides in together with some of his retinue; then after he has wearied of the sport, they dismount upon high ground in the center. . . . to watch the princes likewise entering the ring, and after them, in due order, the nöyans [chiefs], the commanders and the troops. Several days pass in this manner; then, when nothing is left of the game but a few wounded and emaciated stragglers, old men and greybeards humbly approach the Khan, offer up prayers for his
well-being and intercede for the lives of the remaining animals asking that they be suffered to depart to someplace nearer to grass and water... .

Now war—with its killing, counting of the slain and sparing of the survivors—is after the same fashion, and indeed analogous in every detail, because all that is left in the neighborhood of the battlefield are a few broken-down wretches.

Hsu Sze-hui, a physician of Chinese-Turkic family background, presented the Yuan emperor with a manual entitled Proper and Essential Things for the Emperor's Food and Drink in 1330. His work reflects both the meat-heavy diet of the steppe and traditional Chinese concern with good nutrition.

Foods That Cure Various Illnesses [60 entries]

Donkey's Head Gruel
It cures apoplexy—vertigo, debility of hand and foot, annoying pain of extremities, and trouble in speaking:

*Black donkey's head (one; remove hair and wash clean), black pepper (two measures), taoask cardamon (two measures). Cook ingredients until overcooked. Add the five spices in fermented black bean juice. Flavor with the spices. Flavor evenly. Eat on an empty stomach.*

Donkey's Meat Soup
It cures wind mania and depression and pacifies the heart:

*Meat of black donkey. [The quantity does not matter. Cut up.] Cook ingredient until overcooked in fermented black beans. When done add the five spices. Eat on an empty stomach.*

Fox Meat Gruel
It cures infantile convulsion epilepsy, spiritual confusion, indistinct speech, and inappropriate singing and laughing:

*Fox meat. [The quantity does not matter. Include organ meat.] [To] ingredient add the five spices according to the regular method. Cook until overcooked. When done eat on an empty stomach.*

Bear Meat Gruel
It cures the various winds, foot numbness-insensitivity, and five fluidities tendon and muscle spasms:


Sheep's Stomach Gruel
It cures the various apoplexies:

*Sheep's stomach (one; wash clean), non-glutinous rice (two measures), green onions (several), sauted fruits, Chinese flower pepper (remove the closed up corn, roast to bring out the juice; 30 corns), sprouting ginger (two measures and a half cut up finely). Combine the six ingredients evenly and put inside the sheep's stomach. Cook until overcooked. When done, flavor with the five spices. Eat on an empty stomach.*

Foodstuffs That Mutually Conflict [55 entries]

Horse meat cannot be eaten together with granary rice.

Horse meat cannot be eaten with cocklebur. It can eaten with ginger.

Pork cannot be eaten together with beef.

Sheep's liver cannot be eaten together with pepper. It wounds the heart.

Hare meat cannot be eaten together with ginger.

Beef cannot be eaten together with chestnuts.

Marc's milk cannot be eaten together with fish hash. It produces obstruction of the bowels.

Venison cannot be eaten together with catfish.

Beef stomach cannot be eaten together with dog meat.

Ouail meat cannot be eaten together with pork. The face will turn black.

Pheasant eggs cannot be eaten together with onions. It produces vermin.

Meat of sparrows cannot be eaten together with plums.

Eggs cannot be eaten together with turtle meat.

Shrimp cannot be eaten together with sugar.

Soybean sprouts cannot be eaten together with pork.

Fresh onions cannot be eaten together with honey.

Lettuce cannot be eaten together with cream.

Ground mustard cannot be eaten together with hare meat. It produces sores.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. Can you determine from the subject matter of these passages the different viewpoints of a European, an Iranian, and a Chinese?

2. Is there anything in these passages to indicate that the Mongols were Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, or Confucians?

3. Do you expect the observations of a traveler to be more or less valuable as historical sources than those of someone who served a Mongol ruler?


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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.

The wives and 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. 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.

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 1208 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 Ögedei (see Figure 12.1), continued to assault China. He destroyed the Tangut and then the Jin and put their territories under Mongol governors. In 1236 Genghis’s grandson Batu (d. 1255) resumed his grandfather’s attack on 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 Ögedei compelled the Mongol forces to suspend their campaign. With Genghis’s

Ögedei (uh-day)  Batu (BAH-oo)  Volga (Vohl-gah)
grandson Gıyūk instated 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. Ögedei 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.

Gıyūk (gi-yik) Karakorum (kah-rah-KOR-um)

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 Jagatai domains in Central Asia, and the Il-khans in Iran (see Map 12.1). After Ögedei's death in 1241 family unity began to unravel. When Khubilai declared himself Great Khan in 1265, the descendants of Jagatai 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.

Jagatai's descendants, who continued to dominate Central Asia, had much closer relations with
Turkicspeaking 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 Haiphong 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 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 on 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.

Passport

The Mongol Empire facilitated the movement of products, merchants, and diplomats over long distances. Travelers frequently encountered new languages, laws, and customs. The pasje (from a Chinese word for “card” or “sign”), with its inscription in Mongolian, proclaimed that the traveler had the ruler’s permission to travel through the region. Europeans later adopted the practice, thus making the pasje the ancestor of modern passports. (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, purchase bequest of Dorothy Graham Bennett, 1993 [93.256]. Photograph © 1997 The Metropolitan Museum of Art.)

Ain Jalut (ain jah-LOOT) Balkh (bahlk) Marco Polo (mar-ko POE-loe)
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.

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.

Mongol Rivalry

By 1260 the Il-khan state, established by Genghis's grandson Hulegu, 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 Saray 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, Hulegu himself, though a Buddhist, had a trusted Shi‘ite adviser and granted privileges to the Shi‘ites. As a whole, however, the Mongols under Hulegu'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 slitting 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. 1278–1292) and a diplomatic mission that sent two Christian Turks to western Europe as Il-khan ambassadors in the late 1290s. 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.

Yunnan (YUHN-nahn)  Kaffa (KAH-fah)  Crimea (KRIH-nee-ah)
Il-khan (IL-kahn)  Kipchak (KIP-chahk)  Saray (sah-RAH)  Ghazan (GHAZ-uhn)
Islam and the State

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 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.

**Culture and Science in Islamic Eurasia**

The Il-khans of Iran and the Timurids of Central Asia presided over a brilliant cultural flowering in Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia based on the sharing of artistic trends, administrative practices, and political ideas between Iran and China, the dominant urban civilizations at opposite ends of the Silk Road. The dominant cultural tendencies of the Il-khan and Timurid periods are Muslim, however. Although Timur died before he could reunite Iran and China, his forcible concentration of Middle Eastern scholars, artists, and craftsmen in his capital, Samarkand, fostered advancement in some specific activities under his descendants.

The historian Juwaini (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 Juwaini 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 Juwaini’s writing. This resulted in the first comprehensive narrative of the rise of the Mongols under Genghis Khan.

Juwaini 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 tiny 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 joined the entourage of Hülegü during a campaign in 1256 against the Assassins, a Shi‘ite religious sect derived

**Rashid al-Din** (ra-SHEED al-DIN)  
**Ibn Khaldun** (ee-bin hal-DOON)  
**Nasir al-Din Tusi** (nah-SER ad-DIN TOO-si)
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 Seljiks. 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.

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

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Omar Khayyam (oh-mar khe- Yam) Seljuk (SEL-jook) Maragheh (mah-RAH-gah)

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Tomb of Timur in Samarkand  The turquoise tiles that cover the dome are typical of Timurid architectural decoration. Timur’s family ornamented his capital with an enormous mosque, three large religious colleges facing one another on three sides of an open plaza, and a lane of brilliantly tiled Timurid family tombs in the midst of a cemetery. Timur brought craftsmen to Samarkand from the lands he conquered to build these magnificent structures. (Sassoon/Robert Harding Picture Library)
Astronomy and Engineering Observational astronomy went hand in hand not only with mathematics and calendrical science but also with engineering as the construction of platforms, instruments for celestial measurement, and armillary spheres became more sophisticated. This manual in Persian, completed in the 1500s but illustrating activities of the Il-khan period, illustrates the use of a plumb line with an enormous armillary sphere. (Istanbul University Library/Robert Harding World Imagery)

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 $\pi$ ($\pi$) 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 reassessed 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 (tangga) 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 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 Kievian 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.

Transformation of the Kremlin Like other northern Europeans, the Russians preferred to build in wood, which was easy to handle and comfortable to live in. But they fortified important political centers with stone ramparts. In the 1300s, the city of Moscow emerged as a new capital, and its old wooden palace, the Kremlin, was gradually transformed into a stone structure. (Novosti)

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 10). 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.

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 to 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 Nevski cooperated in the Mongol campaigns against the Teutonic Knights and their Finnish allies. The latter suffered a catastrophic setback in 1242, when many broke through ice on Lake Chud (see Map 12.2) and drowned. This destroyed the power of the Knights, and the northern Crusades virtually ceased.

The "Mongol" armies encountered by the Europeans were barely Mongol other than in most command positions. Mongol recruitment and conscription created an international force of Mongols, Turks, Chinese, Iranians, a few Europeans, and at least one Englishman, who had gone to the Middle East as a crusader but joined the Mongols and served in Hungary.

Initial wild theories describing the Mongols as coming from Hell or from the caves where Alexander the Great confined the monsters of antiquity gave way to more sophisticated understanding as European embassies to the Golden Horde, the Il-khan, and the Great Khan in Mongolia reported on Mongol trade routes and the internal structure of Mongol rule. In some quarters terror gave way to awe and even idealization of Mongol wealth and power. Europeans learned about diplomatic passports, coal mining, movable type, high-temperature metallurgy, higher mathematics, gunpowder, and, in the fourteenth century, the casting and use of bronze cannon. Yet with the outbreak of bubonic plague in the late 1340s (see Chapter 14), the memory of Mongol terror helped ignite religious speculation that God might be punishing the Christians of eastern and central Europe with a series of tribulations.

In the fourteenth century several regions, most notably Lithuania (see Map 12.2), escaped the Mongol grip. When Russia fell to the Mongols and eastern Europe was first invaded, Lithuania had experienced an unprecedented centralization and military strengthening. Like Alexander Nevski, the Lithuanian leaders maintained their independence by cooperating with the Mongols. In the late 1300s Lithuania capitalized on its privileged position to dominate its neighbors—particularly Poland—and ended the Teutonic Knights' hope of regaining power.

In the Balkans independent and well-organized kingdoms separated themselves from the chaos of the Byzantine Empire and thrived amidst the political uncertainties of the Mongol period. The Serbian king Stephen Dushan (ca. 1308–1355) proved to be the most effective leader. Seizing power from his father in 1331, he took advantage of Byzantine weakness to raise the archbishop of Serbia to the rank of an independent patriarch. In 1346 the patriarch crowned him "tsar and autocrat of the Serbs, Greeks, Bulgarians, and Albanians," a title that fairly represents the wide extent of his rule. As in the case of Timur, however, his kingdom declined after his death in 1355 and disappeared entirely after a defeat by the Ottomans at the battle of Kosovo in 1389.

The Turkic nomads from whom the rulers of the Ottoman Empire descended had come to Anatolia in the same wave of Turkic migrations as the Seljuks (see Chapter 9). Though centered in Iran and preoccupied with quarrels with the Golden Horde, the Il-khans exerted great influence in eastern Anatolia. However, a number of small Turkic principalities emerged farther to the west. The Ottoman principality was situated in the northwest, close to the Sea of Marmara. This not only put them in a position to cross into Europe and

Ivan (ee-VAHN) Teutonic (two-TOHN-ik)

Lithuania (lith-OO-WAY-nee-ah)
take part in the internal dynastic struggles of the declining Byzantine state, but it also attracted Muslim religious warriors who wished to extend the frontiers of Islam in battle with the Christians. Though the Ottoman sultan suffered defeat at the hands of Timur in 1402, this was only a temporary setback. In 1453 Sultan Mehmet II captured Constantinople and brought the Byzantine Empire to an end.

The Ottoman sultans, like the rulers of Russia, Lithuania, and Serbia, seized the political opportunity that arose with the decay of Mongol power. The new and powerful states they created put strong emphasis on religious and linguistic identity, factors that the Mongols themselves did not stress. As we shall see, Mongol rule stimulated similar reactions in the lands of east and southeast Asia.

**Mongol Domination in China, 1271–1368**

After the Mongols conquered northern China in the 1230s, Great Khan Ögedei 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 Khubilai 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.

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 Confucians 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 Asian 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 Tangut and Jin Empires controlled the north, the Southern 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.

Lama (LAH-mah)  khan-balikh (kahn-BAL-ik)  Shangdu (shahng-DOO)  Xanadu (ZAH-nah-DOO)
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 calendrical 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 makes 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 southern 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—in vestor 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 previously 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, opera, and other entertainments previously considered coarse. Writers published works in the style of everyday speech. And the increasing influence of the northern, Mongol-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, encouragement of farming at the end of the 1200s, it was too late. Servitude and 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 rule: prolonged warfare, privations in the countryside causing

Huang Dao Po (hwahng DOW poh)
people to resort to female infanticide, a southward movement of people fleeing the Mongols, and flooding on the Yellow River. The last helps explain why losses in the north exceeded those in the south and why the population along the Yangzi River markedly increased.

The bubonic plague and its attendant diseases, spread by the population movements, contributed as well. The Mongol incorporation of Yunnan, a mountainous southwestern province where rodents commonly carried bubonic plague, into the centralized provincial system of government exposed the lowlands to plague (see Map 12.1). Cities seem to have managed outbreaks of disease better than rural areas as the epidemic moved from south to north in the 1300s.

Cultural and Scientific Exchange

Government officials in Yuan China maintained regular contact with their counterparts in Il-khan Iran and pursued similar economic and financial 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 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 artillery 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 are divided 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.

Yunnan (YOON-nahn)

Zhu Yuanzhang (joo-yoven-JAHING)
Ming China on a Mongol Foundation

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

Nanjing (nahn-JING)
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. Ming rulers retained the provincial structure that fostered closer control of local affairs and continued to observe the hereditary professional categories of the Yuan period. Artisan families met their tax obligations by supplying goods to the government. 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.

Military service also became a hereditary obligation. Despite anti-Mongol feeling, Mongols continued to serve in the army. The emperor recognized that the Yuan had been legitimate rulers even though they were not Chinese. He declared: "Those Mongols and Inner Asians who live on our land are our children, and those among them who possess talent and ability also shall be selected and appointed to office by us."\(^2\)

Continuities with the Yuan became still more evident after an imperial prince seized power through a coup d'etat to rule as the emperor Yongle\(^\star\) (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 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\(^\star\) 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 enured 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\(^\star\) 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 Kubilai 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.

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Yongle (yoong-LAW)  Zheng He (JEHING HUH)

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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.

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Brunei (broo-NIE)
Examination Cells. Students taking examinations on the Confucian classics to gain admission to the class of officials occupied these cells for 24 to 72 hours, depending on the level they were attempting. In the city of Guangdong there were 7,500 cells in long rows. Candidates were identified only by number, and their essays were rewritten to prevent their handwriting being recognized. Approximately five percent of the candidates passed the examination. (Courtesy, Church Mission Society, London)

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 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 80 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, scattered shot 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.
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 colonizing 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.
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.

**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.

Luo Guanzhong (LAW GWAHB-JOONG)

Hwangnyong-sa (hwahng-NEYAHNG-sah)

Triptaka (tri-PIH-tah-kah)

Koryo (KAW-ree-oh)
Movable Type  The improvement of cast bronze tiles, each showing a single character, eliminated the need to cast or carve whole pages. Individual tiles—the ones shown are Korean—could be moved from page frame to page frame and gave an even and pleasing appearance. All parts of East Asia eventually adopted this form of printing for cheap, popular books. In the mid-1400s Korea also experimented with a fully phonetic form of writing, which in combination with movable type allowed Koreans unprecedented levels of literacy and access to printed works.  (Courtesy, Yushin Yoo)

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 dynasty 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 *hangeul* writing system, this printing technology laid the foundation for a high literacy rate in Korea.

Yi (YEE)  *hangeul* (HAHN-goo)
that patrolled against pirates and used gunpowder-driven arrow launchers against enemy personnel and the rigging of enemy ships. Combined with skills in arming ships, these techniques made the small Yi navy a formidable defense force.

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 successfully 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, Kubilai 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 shogunai 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.

Hakata (HAIH-kah-tah) Kyushu (KYOO-shoo)
Kamakura (kah-mah-KOO-rah)

kamikaze (KUM-i-kuh-zee)
Nevertheless, the Mongol threat continued to influence Japanese development. Prior to his death in 1294, Kublai 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 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 1336, with the Mongol 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, which led to population growth.

After the fall of the Yuan in 1368 Japan resumed trade with China and Korea. Japan exported raw materials, 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 militarily incompetent but artistically sophisticated shogun Yoshimasa (1436–1490) introduced or popularized many cultural practices that later became hallmarks of Japan: the highly stylized Noh drama, sand gardens, black ink painting, translucent paper panels as room dividers, tatami mat floors, and the tea ceremony. Zen Buddhism, a contemplative philosophy that stresses meditation rather than temple rituals, guided Yoshimasa’s aesthetic taste. Eventually Zen became the preferred religion of the warrior elite.

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. When Yoshimasa, at age twenty-nine, announced plans to retire from the shogunate in 1464, a dispute broke out. He wanted his brother to succeed him, while his wife preferred their son. When rival warlord families became involved in either side, the disagreement boiled over in the Onin War, a decade-long struggle between warlords that ended, in 1477, with the city of Kyoto devastated and the Ashikaga Shogunate a hollow shell of a government. In the aftermath, ambitious but low-ranking warriors, some with links to trade with the continent, began to scramble for control of the provinces.

**Ashikaga** (ah-shee-KAH-gah)
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 (a resented Chinese designation meaning "subdued South") 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, the land of the Chams, a people who spoke a Malayo-Polynesian language, 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, though 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. Religiously the dominant faith was Mahayana Buddhism, and the most numerous sects were ones that were also popular in China. This religious orientation distinguished Annam from the societies of Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar to the west, which practiced Theravada Buddhism.

**SUMMARY**

- What accounts for the magnitude and speed of the Mongol conquests?
- How did Mongol expansion and Islam affect each other?
- What benefits resulted from the integration of Eurasia into the Mongol Empire?
- How did Mongol rule in China foster cultural and scientific exchange?
- In what ways did the Ming Empire continue or discontinue Mongol practices?

Nomadic mobility and endurance, expertise in military technology, and systematic army organization made the armies of Genghis Khan all but invincible. While the Mongols did not usually outnumber their enemies, they were experts on horseback and used superior bows. Turkic pastoral peoples who suffered defeat were often enrolled in the Mongol ranks, thus magnifying the power of the Mongols themselves.

As rivalries mounted between the Il-khan and Golden Horde states, Islam became a point of contention. For a time Mongol rulers were loose in their observance and affiliations, but the Il-khans came to value urban Muslim culture. Nevertheless, economic disruption caused by oppressive taxes on agriculture steadily weakened the Il-khan state, allowing Golden Horde Mongols to conquer much of its territory. Meanwhile, Timur rose to power in Jagadai territory and undertook conquests in Central and western Asia, the Middle East, and northern India. The Il-khans, Timur, and his successors, the Timurids, presided over an important flowering of Islamic culture that drew upon Iranian and Chinese cultural elements. These rulers encouraged artists and intellectuals, who produced notable achievements in historical writing, art, mathematics, and astronomy.
Mongol military might made the court of the Great Khans a political center to which emissaries came from all parts of Eurasia. Traders flocked to sell goods to the imperial rulers, and the Silk Road was strongly revitalized. In the long run, the cultural contact between east and west that Mongol rule facilitated had greater impact than the Mongols' political power. Muslim astronomers and calendar makers found a welcome reception in China, and Chinese artistic styles became popular in Iran. Mongol rule, or the threat of Mongol conquest, also provided non-Mongol political leaders with an enemy they could use to galvanize popular support for local state building.

In China, Yuan rule reestablished connections with the peoples and cultures of Inner Asia that had earlier contributed to the strength of Tang rule (see Chapter 10). Imperial service depended more on a person's skills than on ethnic or linguistic identity. This made for a dynamic cultural scene in Beijing, the Yuan capital, even though the turmoil of the period took its toll demographically in war casualties, spread of disease, and migration to southern China.

The Ming, who overthrew the Yuan, strongly reaffirmed Chinese ethnicity as a central aspect of their rule. They moved away from Beijing to make their capital in the south, strengthened the study of the Confucian classics, and relied on the examination system for choosing imperial officials. Nevertheless, Mongols could still serve in the army, and after a time Beijing again became the capital. While some Yuan administrative practices were continued, the Inner Asian trade that had fruitfully connected China with lands to the west dwindled because of political disunity in the core areas of the old Mongol Empire.

Incorporation into the Mongol Empire had proved a stimulus for neighboring Korea. The Korean rulers remained loyal to the Yuan and benefited from access to new technologies and administrative techniques. But when the Yuan fell, a new non-Mongol dynasty emerged that imitated the Ming in stressing non-Mongol ethnicity and reviving the earlier Mongol domination, yet at the same time retaining many of the innovations of that period.

Across the sea, Japan, which had twice repelled Mongol invasions, remained highly militarized. Yet the emergence of regional warlords coincided with cultural innovations, many of them inspired by Chinese example, that subsequently became central to Japanese identity. Zen Buddhism, Noh drama, and the ritual of the tea ceremony united the Japanese elite even as the warlords, with their samurai armies, seized control from the ineffective imperial government.

**KEY TERMS**

Mongols p. 324
Genghis Khan p. 324
nomadism p. 324
Yuan Empire p. 329
bubonic plague p. 331
Il-khan p. 331
Golden Horde p. 331
Timur p. 333

Rashid al-Din p. 333
Nasir al-Din Tusi p. 333
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tzar p. 337
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Ming Empire p. 340
Yongle p. 342
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Yi p. 346
kamikaze p. 347
Ashikaga Shogunate p. 348

**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 Rachewiltz and Francis Woodman.


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NOTES

1. Quotation adapted from Desmond Martin, Chingis Khan and His Conquest of North China (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1950), 305.