

Asia

Asian Expansion and Empires



Asian Dynasties

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Thematic Icons



Economics



Geography



Historical concepts



Government

Icons



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page

For more instructions, see the *User Guide*.





Where is Mongolia?





In around 1162, a boy called Temüjin was born to a Mongol tribal chief and his wife. This boy would go on to become **Genghis Khan**, the founder of the Mongol Empire.

When he was around nine years old, Temüjin's father was poisoned and the family were abandoned by their own tribe.

Despite some setbacks, including being captured by a rival, over the next thirty years Temüjin successfully built up his reputation and a strong support base. He did this by rewarding loyalty, assigning positions based on merit rather than family ties, and defeating his enemies.





By 1206, Temüjin had successfully taken control of many of the nomadic tribes and smaller countries in the area.



At a meeting of Mongol chiefs in 1206, he was proclaimed Khan (ruler) of the united tribes and given the title “**Universal Ruler**”, or Genghis Khan.

Genghis Khan introduced a single, official writing system, forbade the kidnapping of women and encouraged freedom of religion.

How would this gain Genghis Khan support and help unite his empire?



Campaigns to extend Mongol power were bloody and brutal, with many lives lost.

Genghis Khan first turned his attention to China and, in 1209, threatened the capital of the **Xi Xia** empire. He then began to fight the **Jin dynasty** in 1211. The capital was captured in 1215, but the Jin were not fully defeated until after his death.

Genghis Khan also looked westwards and opposed both the **Kara Khitai** and **Khwarezm** empires of central Asia during the early 1200s.



The Mongols after Genghis Khan

Genghis Khan died in 1227, when he was around 60 years old. The cause of his death is unknown and he was buried in an unmarked grave in Mongolia.



Before his death, Genghis Khan appointed his third son, **Ogedei**, as his successor as **Great Khan**, although the empire itself was divided between his four sons.

Genghis Khan's sons and grandsons continued his military campaigns to conquer Asia and Europe and expand the Mongol Empire.

How successful do you think they were?

Mongol expansion





The Mongols and Korea



Between 1231 and 1270, the Mongols fought a series of campaigns against Korea, then known as the kingdom of **Goryeo**.

At first, the military might of Goryeo managed to hold the Mongolians off. However, in 1270, under Wonjong, Goryeo became a **vassal** of the Mongolian Yuan Dynasty.



Goryeo paid **tribute** to the Mongolian Empire, and intermarriage was encouraged. This lasted until the 1350s, when the kingdom was able to throw off Mongolian control.

Why do you think the Mongols invaded Goryeo?



Chinese history is generally divided into different ruling **dynasties**. Dynasty refers to a succession of rulers who all come from the same family. Often dynasties would rule for hundreds of years.

The period from when Qin Shi Huangdi styled himself as the first emperor of China in 221 BC until the creation of the Republic of China (now the People's Republic of China) in 1912 is referred to by historians as **Imperial China**.

As in the early period, Imperial China was ruled by a series of dynasties and there were many advances made during this time. However, power was not absolute and the collapse of a dynasty could lead to major disorder.

How might the situation in China have helped Mongol invaders?





In 1259, Möngke Khan died and a battle for leadership began between his two brothers, Kublai and Arigböge.

The Mongol Empire began to break apart and eventually split into four separate **khanates**: the Ilkhanate in the southwest, the Golden Horde in the northwest, the Chagatai Khanate in the center and the **Yuan dynasty** in the east, which was founded by Kublai Khan in 1271.



Despite the split, in 1260, Kublai was elected to the position of Great Khan of the Mongol Empire and began to turn his attention to conquering China.





By the time Kublai Khan announced the start of the Yuan dynasty in 1271, the Mongols were already in control of a large part of China.

The capital of the Yuan dynasty was moved to Dadu (modern-day Beijing) and the last pocket of resistance, the **Southern Song dynasty** were finally defeated in 1279. For the first time, the Mongols controlled the whole of China.



The rulers of the Yuan dynasty adopted a Chinese approach to ruling, due to the Mongols' lack of experience in governing such an empire.

How successful do you think the dynasty was?

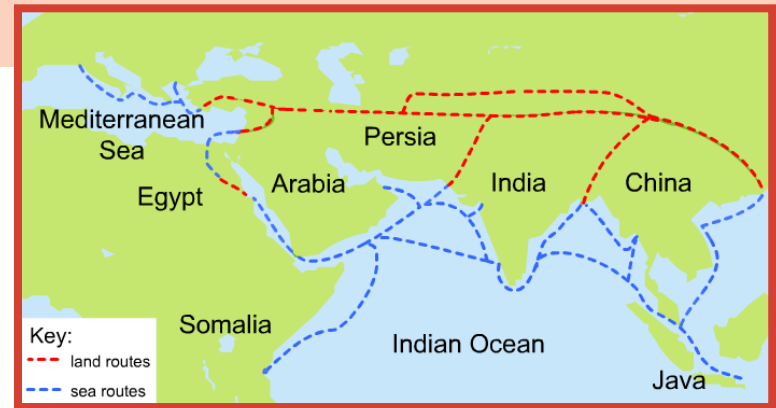


The impact of Mongol expansion



In places such as China and Korea, where Mongol invasion was successful, Mongol influence led to some unity. They were united under a single emperor and ideas could be exchanged across the empire.

Links with Europe also improved. The **Silk Road** reopened helping to spread ideas and technology, and improving the economy.



However, the Mongol invasions had resulted in much blood lost and many deaths. In some places there was resentment at being ruled by foreigners and the Chinese sat at the bottom of the Mongol social system.

How might this have affected Mongol power and authority?



The Yuan dynasty would not rule China for long. During the 1300s, Yuan leaders faced both social and political unrest, and the people began to rebel.

By 1368, after several years of fighting, **Zhu Yuanzhang**, a former monk, had successfully defeated the Yuan dynasty and brought China back under Chinese control. He became Hongwu, the first emperor of the **Ming dynasty**.

The Ming dynasty lasted for nearly 300 years and was a time of major building projects.



Can you name anything that was built during the Ming dynasty?





Ming building projects





Ming exploration



Foreign trade led to the growth of manufacturing and commerce in China, yet the country did not industrialize.

This was mainly due to **Confucian** ideology, which rejected materialism. Merchants were seen as lower class, and taxes on manufacturing and trade increased.

As a result, China's economy was mainly agricultural.

Despite China's trade restrictions, European missionaries continued to visit China in an effort to spread Christianity.

In addition to their religion, the missionaries brought news and technology from the West, but many Chinese continued to feel that they were better off without European influence.





During the later 1500s and early 1600s, China faced several years of great political and social hardship.

During these years, China experienced several natural disasters, including flooding and famine, and the Ming government was weak.

The people started to believe that the Ming emperors had lost the **mandate of heaven** (right to rule) and several rebellions occurred.



In 1644, rebel forces led by Li Zicheng captured Beijing and the Ming emperor committed suicide.

How would this affect the Ming dynasty?





At the same time, the **Manchu** army, which had been threatening to invade for some time, was rapidly advancing from Manchuria in the north.

It is said that a border general let the Manchus into China and they captured Beijing, starting the **Qing dynasty**.



The Qing dynasty would last for over 260 years. They expanded China to include Taiwan, Mongolia, Tibet and parts of central Asia, and brought peace to the country.

Why do you think the border general let a foreign army into China?

Qing success was largely due to the work of two emperors.

Kangxi became emperor in 1661. During his 60 year reign, he managed to reduce the government's budget and lower taxes.

Kangxi was a scholar and a patron of the arts. He believed in granting government positions based on personal merit.



China grew to its greatest size under Kangxi's grandson, **Qian-long**, who ruled from 1736 to 1795.





Qing trade



Increased stability raised the standard of living for many. In the 17th and 18th centuries, improved farming techniques and new crops from the Americas caused a population boom.

Most Chinese families preferred male children. Only men performed certain religious rituals and remained at home after marriage to care for their aging parents.

Because daughters would live with their in-laws after marriage, many parents felt they were too expensive to raise. This led to female infanticide, the murder of female babies.

Despite their low place in society, Chinese women had many responsibilities. They worked in the fields, managed family finances and oversaw their children's education.



Even as trade and innovation brought changes to China, Chinese culture mostly remained the same.

Chinese paintings showed traditional scenes of everyday life. Artists valued technique over creativity. Drama told familiar stories of Chinese heroes and myths.



What effects do you think traditional emphasis had on the Chinese people?



Ming or Qing?





Mongol invasions of Japan



Kublai Khan turned his attention to Japan during the 1270s. In 1274, several years after the Japanese had refused to acknowledge the Great Khan's authority and pay tribute, Kublai Khan sent around 900 ships to invade.

When they reached Hakata Bay on the island of Kyūshū, Kublai Khan's troops were met by around 10,000 Japanese **samurai**.

The samurai had developed a code they followed, called **bushido**, which involved fighting one-on-one. However, this was not the system followed by the Mongols, who would all attack the single samurai at once.



What do you think happened?

The situation looked bleak for the Japanese. However, overnight, the Mongol forces drew back and fell victim to a heavy storm, or **typhoon**.

In 1281, a second attack was launched. The samurai were severely outnumbered, but had some successes. A strong defensive wall had been built and they were able to use the darkness of night to sneak out and attack Mongol ships.

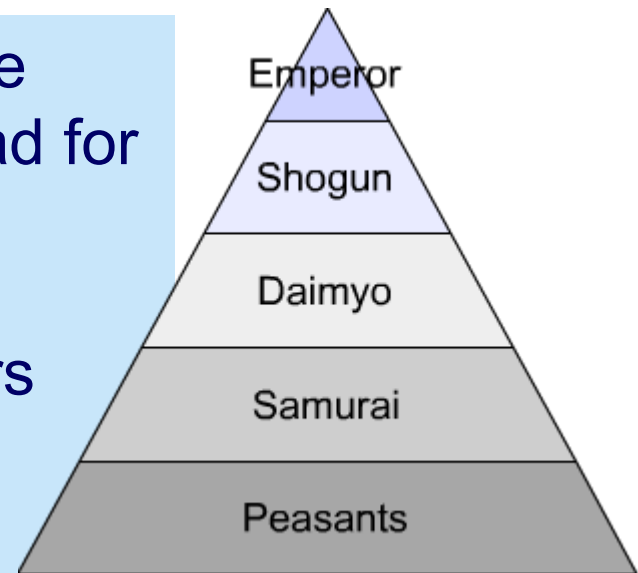
However, it still seemed as though the Mongols would win until, yet again, their fleet was destroyed by a typhoon. The Japanese believed both storms were sent by the gods and called them **kamikaze** (“divine winds”). Kublai Khan abandoned his attempts to capture Japan.

Why do you think Kublai Khan chose to stop attacking Japan?



At this time, Japan had a **feudal** social system. Unlike in China and Korea, which became more united following conquest, the failure of the Mongol invasions of Japan allowed this feudal system to continue.

At the top of the social structure sat the emperor, who was more of a figurehead for the military **shogun** than a leader. They were followed by the **daimyo** (nobility) who retained samurai warriors for protection. At the bottom sat the peasants and merchants.



How does this compare to the European feudal system?

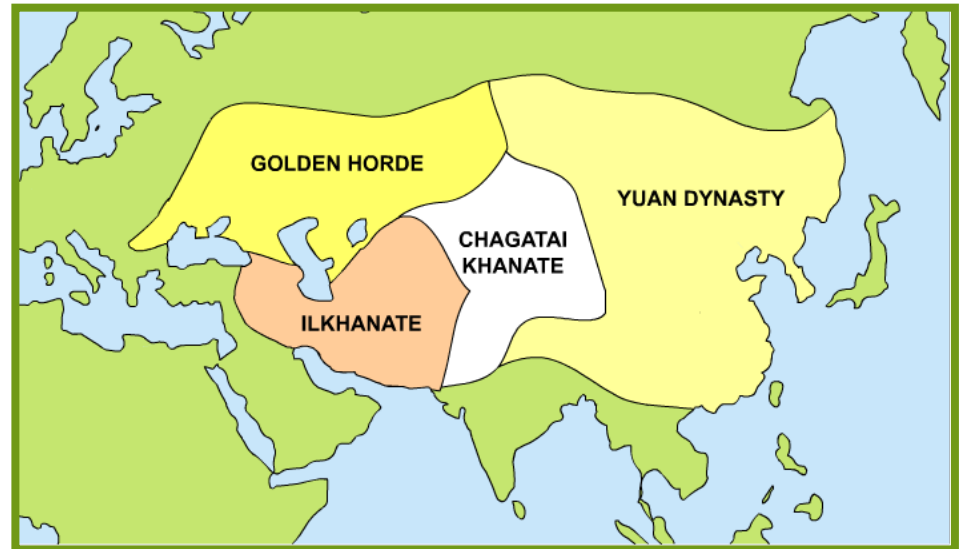


Downfall of the Mongol Empire



The Mongol Empire fell for several reasons.

- Newer subjects of the Mongol Empire resented foreign rule and rebelled against their leadership.
- The Mongols lacked the experience of governing such a large empire.
- The splitting of the empire into four separate **khanates** destroyed the unity of the empire and made each individual khanate much weaker.



What other reasons might lead to the collapse of an empire?

Keywords

