6
Mongol expansion
(c. 1206–1368)

6.1 Overview

6.1.1 Links With Our Times

Wrestling is Mongolia’s national sport. The popularity of wrestling today is one of many ways in which modern-day Mongolia continues to reflect the Mongolian Empire of the Middle Ages, a nation that rose to prominence because of its military prowess. Under the leadership of Genghis Khan, one of history’s most fearsome fighters, the Mongol army conquered over a quarter of the known world, creating the largest land empire in history. Mongol power contributed to the revival of learning in Europe, reunited China and expanded frontiers. Trade, knowledge and ideas flowed along the Silk Road under Mongol protection. It is no wonder, then, that the world of the thirteenth and fourteenth century is often called the age of the Mongols.

Big Questions

As you work through this topic, look for information that will help you to answer these questions:
1. What was China like before the Mongol invasion?
2. What were the achievements of the Mongol Empire?
3. How did Genghis Khan’s rule differ from that of his descendants?
4. How did the Mongol Empire reshape the world?
5. What led to the collapse of the Mongol Empire?

Starter Questions

1. What do you know about the Mongol army and its most famous leader, Genghis Khan?
2. What purpose does the Great Wall of China serve today?
3. Do you think China’s technology would have been more or less advanced than the Western world during the Middle Ages? Why?
4. What evidence of Chinese culture can you see in your own city or town? Based on this evidence, what do you know about Chinese culture and beliefs today?
6.2 Examining the evidence

6.2.1 How do we know about the Mongol expansion?
In this topic, we will explore the age of the Mongols, from about 1206 to 1368 CE. For many people, this was a time of war and destruction at the hands of the Mongol army. For others, it was a time of relative peace when ideas and religions could be expressed freely and cultural barriers were lowered between Europe and Asia.

6.2.2 Official records
To ensure they are remembered by the generations to come, governments often commission official histories to be created. Just a few decades after his death, the Mongol leadership commissioned an anonymous writer to document the life of Genghis Khan, leader of the Mongol army, as well as that of his son, in *The Secret History of the Mongols*. Intended to be read by only the Mongolian ruling class, the book was based upon the oral stories passed down within the empire and celebrated Khan's heroic deeds. Written in a flowing style, it included lessons for keeping the empire strong (see SOURCE 1).

6.2.3 The writings of explorers
China was known as the ‘middle kingdom’ in Europe during the Middle Ages, and legends of its wealth and mystery filled the popular imagination. Following the publication of *The Travels of Marco Polo*, interest in the region increased. Sources such as SOURCE 2 give information about both the Mongols and what other societies thought of the Mongols.

6.2.4 Everyday objects
To better understand the lives of the Mongol people, it is important to look at the everyday objects they left behind (see SOURCE 3). Much can be learned by looking at seemingly simple things such as the tools they used, the jewellery they treasured, the houses they lived in and the food they ate.
6.2.5 An artistic view

Artwork gives great insight not only into the feelings of the artist but also into the audience for which the artwork was created. During the reign of the Mongols, Chinese artists worked for their Mongol rulers, producing calligraphy and paintings that depicted everyday life, landscapes and famous battles (see Source 4). There were also many artworks created centuries after the fall of the Mongol Empire. Some of these, such as the painting shown in Source 5, depict the power of the Mongol army.

Source 4 This thirteenth-century artwork depicts Kublai Khan, son of Genghis Khan, in a hunting party. This source was created using ink and colour on silk during the Mongol expansion.

Source 5 A sixteenth-century illustration of the Mongol army engaged in battle with Chinese Song dynasty forces. This is a secondary source as it was created many years after the event it depicts.

6.2 Putting it All together

Using Historical Sources as Evidence

1. What lesson do you believe was meant to be learned by the boys in Source 1?
2. In Source 2, the explorer Marco Polo describes a large battle. What adjectives or phrases does he use to describe the khan and his forces? What adjectives or phrases does he use to describe the khan’s enemies? Whose side was Marco Polo on (if any), and how can you tell?
3. Source 3 is an example of an everyday object used by government officials. What does it tell you about the society in which they lived?
4. What is depicted in Source 4? Why would an artist create this scene?
5. Is Source 5 a primary or secondary source? Explain your answer.
6. List the similarities and differences between the portrayals of battle in Sources 2 and 5.
7. Examine Sources 1, 2, 4 and 5. Which one would you trust to depict Mongol culture mostly accurately? Why?
8. Using the sources in this subtopic and what you have already read about the Mongol expansion, suggest why the Mongol Empire expanded so quickly during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

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6.3 Life in imperial China before the Mongol conquest

6.3.1 The Song dynasty

In the twelfth century, over 100 million people lived under the rule of the Song. The Song Empire covered 4 million square kilometres of rich agricultural land and bustling cities. In 960 CE, the first Song emperor, Taizu, established his control of central China when he led the army in a rebellion against the government. Once in power, Taizu turned away from using military force to rule the people.

The emperors of the Song dynasty built their authority through a strong civilian government:

- civil servants were selected by a series of examinations and interviews
- an imperial academy and university trained government officials
- governors and magistrates were appointed to run government at a local level
- senior government officials were made responsible for drawing the emperor's attention to public opinion and problems
- taxation of trade and industry raised the revenue to finance important government works such as irrigation programs
- prices were regulated through government control of big industries such as salt, tea and wine.

Life in the Song cities

Peace in Song-dynasty China led to a massive growth in population because farming techniques improved, irrigation systems were rebuilt and trade grew. As a result, Song city streets were bustling places, crowded with the congestion of horses, mules, carts, rickshaw boys and porters carrying goods dangling from poles balanced across their shoulders. People stopped to shop at the booths and stalls marked by tall posts and banners advertising their wares. In the Song cities of Kaifeng and Hangzhou, the wealthy could shop for exotic items such as rhinoceros horn from Bengal and ivory from Africa. Street stalls and shops stayed open until 2 am. At the tradesmen's stalls, there was knife sharpening, pot mending, coffin making and tailoring on offer. Crowds also gathered to listen to fortune tellers, watch magicians and consult healers.

SOURCE 1 An illustration created in the twelfth century of the beautiful city of Kaifeng, the capital of the Song dynasty. In the eleventh century it had a population of more than one million people.
Song cities were built in the shape of a square and had thick defensive walls. People entered the city through guarded gates and walked down straight streets that criss-crossed from north to south and east to west. Houses were grouped into wards, enclosed by another protective wall that was locked every night. In cities teeming with people, the government was responsible for community health and hygiene. Garbage was regularly removed from the streets and transported on barges to dumps in the countryside. Every day the ‘pouring men’ came to cart away the city’s human waste, which was dried and used as fertiliser for the local vegetable gardens.

**6.3.1 Activities**

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. How did the Song emperors build their authority?
2. What were the key features of the civilian government?
3. Why did the population grow so rapidly in Song-dynasty China?
4. What were some of the things that could be bought at the markets?
5. How were the cities designed? Explain how this helped protect the citizens.
6. What features of life in the Song cities are shown in **SOURCES 1** and **2**?

**sources**

- **SOURCE 2** A group of wealthy Song women dressed in their fine silk robes enjoying a New Year feast.

**ward** a district in a city or town

**learn on**

To access videos, interactives, discussion widgets, image galleries, weblinks and more, go to www.jacplus.com.au
6.3.2 Home and the Chinese family

Traditional life in China was in stark contrast to life for the nomadic Mongol warriors. The Chinese way of life centred on agriculture. Every member of the Chinese peasant family was needed to work on farming tasks such as draining and ploughing fields, fertilising crops and irrigating. Most people living in traditional Chinese communities were bound to the land for their survival. Traditional Chinese culture emphasised a person’s duty to their family, including dead ancestors who were continually honoured through religious rituals. Loyalty to the family was more important than loyalty to the government. The father was the head of the family and made all the decisions. Wives and children were expected to obey.

During the Song dynasty, China had many small villages where between 200 and 400 people lived in family cottages made from mud bricks. Chinese families also lived on boats, called sampans, along the busy waterways of the large river systems. Within the harbours of the port cities, thousands of boat people lived in floating villages. The strong Chinese family network provided security in a land where natural disasters like insect plagues, floods and droughts frequently destroyed harvests and homes.

SOURCE 3 The ideal traditional Chinese family (from the southern Song dynasty, tenth century)

6.3.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. What work did the traditional Chinese peasant do?
2. What was more important than loyalty to the government?
3. How did the strong Chinese family network provide security?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
4. Examine SOURCE 3 closely. What work are the people in the fields doing?
5. What does the scene within the house in SOURCE 3 tell us about the hierarchy within the family unit?
6.3.3 Song inventions and ideas

Many inventions and ideas began in ancient China. From the fourth century CE, the Western world was greatly influenced by Chinese developments such as:

- the loom for weaving silk
- the compass for establishing directions and distances
- the breast strap harness and the foot stirrup for horse riding
- the stern post rudder for steering ships
- the wheelbarrow
- the blast furnace for obtaining metals
- the mechanical clock to keep time and track the movements of the sun, moon and stars.

The Chinese discovered that a combination of coal, saltpetre and sulfur would make gunpowder 300 years before the Western world discovered it. The Song dynasty leaders recognised the military usefulness of gunpowder and used it to set off fires and create frightening clouds of smoke. Song China defended itself against the Mongol army by hurling gunpowder grenades from catapults and shooting flaming arrows from thick bamboo tubes.

SOURCE 4 A water-powered Song clock in Kaifeng that moved through its cycle by the tipping of water from one bucket into another. The clock wheel rotated every 14 minutes and 24 seconds.

SOURCE 5 A Song dynasty description of one of the uses of gunpowder

At the end-of-year festival . . . there were many firecrackers . . . there were fuses so arranged that when you lit one it set off hundreds of others . . . [Some] fireworks . . . were like wheels and revolving things, others like comets, and others again shooting along the surface of the water, or flying like kites . . .

Spreading the word

Printing began in China 700 years before it appeared in Europe. In 750 CE, sheets of paper were stamped with inked blocks of wood into which Chinese characters had been carved. It was a quick and easy process known as ‘block printing’. By the ninth century, the blocks had become much larger and each could print a whole page. Over the centuries, labour-saving methods of printing were developed. The Song dynasty printer Bi Sheng made characters out of clay and set them in a frame. These clay characters could then be removed and new characters arranged for printing the next page.

6.3.4 The dynasty crumbles

Behind the splendour of the Song dynasty was weakness. North of the empire was the land of two powerful tribes called the Khitan and the Jurchen. In 1004 CE, the Song dynasty made the first of many peace agreements with the Khitan, agreeing to give an annual
tribute of silver and silk to their northern neighbours. The peaceful policies of the Song eventually strengthened the position of the Khitan who continued to launch raids into Song territory.

In 1120 the Jurchen were at war with the Khitan. The Song supported the Jurchen in the belief that defeat of the Khitan would free them from the annual tribute payment. However, the decision was disastrous for the Song. Jurchen forces defeated the Khitan and then turned south to invade the Song Empire. The Jurchen took control of Kaifeng in 1126, humiliated and murdered the members of the imperial family and then drove the Song from northern China. The Jurchen established the Jin dynasty in the north, with a capital in Beijing.

The southern Song
The surviving members of the Song dynasty fled south and established a new capital at the town of Linán, now known as the city of Hangzhou. This southern Song settlement was protected by the dense forests of the lower Yangtze River valleys. Linán was located in the wealthiest agricultural land in China. The southern Song secured themselves in this prosperous region by building a navy to defend the coast and developing more sophisticated military technology. The southern ports flourished as Song sailors and their fleets of ships made long voyages in search of trade. They held their power in this southern empire for another 150 years, until they faced a more powerful foe than the Khitan — the Mongols.

SOURCE 6 This artwork, held in the Summer Palace in Beijing, shows a battle between the Jurchen and the Song in the twelfth century. The artist and date of creation are unknown.

6.3.4 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. What was the weakness behind the Song dynasty?
2. a. What saved the city of Kaifeng from being attacked by the Khitan?
   b. What was the consequence of this for the Song imperial family?
3. How did the Song survive their foes?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
4. What are the weapons being used in SOURCE 6?
5. Who won the battle shown in SOURCE 6?
6.3 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE
1 Explore the reasons that the Song dynasty created such a flourishing culture that allowed for so much growth and creativity.
2 Design a timeline and record the major events in the downfall of the Song.
3 Debate why the Northern Song dynasty only lasted for just over 150 years, despite being so prosperous. After your debate, list the top five reasons for the defeat of the Song. Justify your answers.

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
4 Evaluate the statement that China was way ahead of Europe in technology and culture during the Middle Ages.
5 What elements of the Songs’ way of ruling a city can be found in Australian society today?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
6 SOURCES 1–3 provide valuable information about the art and architecture of Song China. Using the sources as your evidence, write a brief description of the particular features of the gardens and buildings, and the way the artist has chosen to paint the scenes.
7 Imagine you are one of the people in any of the sources. Write a short description of where you are and what is happening, emphasising the relevant achievements of the Song dynasty that are clear to you from the source.

6.4 The Mongol people and their land

6.4.1 The Mongol homeland

The Mongols were nomadic tribal people from Mongolia, the cold and barren land to the north and west of China. The Mongol homeland was bordered by the high Altai mountain range to the west, the Gobi Desert to the south and Lake Baikal to the north.

The people raised animals on the vast treeless grasslands of Mongolia because the region was too cold and dry for growing crops. The Mongols lived off their herds of cattle, goats, yaks and sheep. Fleece was used to make clothing and line the walls of homes, known as yurt. They collected the sheep manure for fuel and made cheese and butter from milk. Mutton was also a major part of the Mongol diet. The Mongols used camels to cross the harsh deserts, oxen to move heavy loads and horses for transport, hunting and warfare.

Source 1 A traditional Mongolian yurt was easily collapsed and transported. The conical shape allowed rain to run off and provided resistance against strong Mongolian winds. Sections of the wooden frame were secured with strips of rope to form a cylinder shape over which felt was stretched for insulation. Roof poles supported the outer covering.

Life in Mongolia was shaped by the land and the seasons. Every year the Mongols migrated south from summer pasture lands on the open plains to their winter pastures in the sheltered mountain valleys. Survival in the unforgiving climate was a struggle and so Mongol territory remained sparsely populated. ‘Luxuries’ such as grain, metals, textiles and tea were obtained through raiding or trading with the settled agricultural people living to the south of China’s Great Wall.

From 400 BCE, the Chinese constructed walls to defend themselves against raids from the tribes living along their northern border. China’s huge population was concentrated in the river valleys where the people cultivated crops, constructed roads and built great cities. The Great Wall marked the boundary between two very different ways of life: the wealth and sophistication of Imperial China, and the poverty and simplicity of nomadic Mongolia. The Chinese regarded the Mongols as ‘barbarians’.
Yaks are perfectly suited to the Mongolian landscape. They can survive extreme temperatures, live on rocky slopes and flat plains, and can forage through snow for fodder, which is essential in a country where snow covers the ground for almost half the year. Hangai yak provided Mongols with meat, milk and transport.

Mongolia lay to the north of China. The stark northern landscape was the home of people the Chinese regarded as barbarians. This Song dynasty illustration shows the Chinese view of the Mongol homeland as barren and harsh.

6.4.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 What animals did the Mongols use and why?
2 How was Mongol life shaped by the land and seasons?
3 Why was the Great Wall of China built and what did it signify?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
4 Using SOURCE 1, explain how the Mongolian yurt was perfectly created to work within the conditions in which the Mongolians lived.
5 Look closely at the landscape in SOURCE 2. What makes yaks so suited to their landscape?
6 Describe the elements in SOURCE 3 that show the Song illustrator thought the Mongol landscape was harsh and barren.
6.4.2 Mongol society

The Mongols lived in small clans. Groups of clans were bound together by marriage and blood relationships to form a Mongol tribe. A chieftain, or khan, governed the tribe. The khan was not born to rule, but kept the position of power through constantly proving personal strength and protecting the tribe. Within clan groups, the people belonged to a particular social class which determined everything, from what they were given to eat at a banquet to how they were armed and dressed when they went into battle.

The role of women

Mongol women had power, influence and considerable freedom because they managed daily life in the camp. Their tasks included:
- herding and milking all the livestock
- making cheese, yoghurt and butter
- packing the yurt
- making felt by soaking and beating sheep fleece for winter insulation of the yurt
- rearing the children, cooking and sewing animal skins into warm winter clothing.

Marriage ties were very important to Mongol tribal organisation. Marriages were arranged through discussion with clan leaders and were regarded as an important step into adulthood. Men were permitted to have many wives. Once married, a woman was responsible for her own yurt. The location of the yurt, in relation to the man's yurt, indicated seniority amongst the women. The first married wife placed her yurt to the east of her husband's and subsequent wives placed their yurts to the west. If the husband died, it was expected that the youngest son or brother would take care of the widow. Married women had particular status in Mongol society and were identified by elaborate headdresses.

SOURCE 4 An extract from a first-hand report written by European Giovanni da Pian del Carpini, who visited the Mongols between 1245 and 1247 at Pope Innocent IV's command

Girls and women ride and gallop as skillfully as men. We even saw them carrying quivers and bows, and the women can ride horses for as long as the men; they have shorter stirrups, handle horses very well, and mind all the property. The Tartar (commonly used term for Mongols) women make everything: skin clothes, shoes, leggings, and everything made of leather. They drive carts and repair them, they load camels, and are quick and vigorous in all their tasks. They all wear trousers, and some of them shoot just like men.

Hunters and horses

Horses were the Mongol’s greatest asset. The herders and hunters of Mongolia spent their lives in a saddle. From childhood they were taught to hunt from horseback. This outdoor life gave the Mongols independence and mobility. Traditional hunting expeditions, called the nerge, also provided military training. By riding in a vast circular formation, the Mongol horsemen gradually forced wild game such as deer and boars into a corral, or enclosure. The hunt required great teamwork, skill and endurance. Mongol warriors were known to ride for days without rest, surviving on dried milk curd and the blood drawn from an incision into the veins on their horse’s neck. The life that the Mongol nomads knew from birth created powerful warriors.

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 Why was clan and family so important to the survival of Mongol society?
2 a Who was the ruler of the clan?
   b How did they maintain their power?
3 What were some of the tasks that the women managed in daily life?
4 What were the traditions associated with marriage?
5 What were the biggest differences for men and women in Mongol society?
6 Why were horses the Mongols’ greatest asset and treasure?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
7 After reading SOURCE 4, are there any other tasks that you would add to your list from question 3?
8 What was Giovanni da Pian del Carpini’s view of Mongol women? Explain your evidence for saying this.

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6.4 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT
1 Identify how the landscape the Mongol people lived in shaped their living conditions.
2 Referring to all the sources in this subtopic, describe the Mongol people’s relationship with:
   • the land
   • their animals
   • the weather
   • the Imperial Chinese
   • each other.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
3 SOURCES 1, 3 and 4 give information about Mongolian life. Using these sources, suggest why the Chinese regarded their northern neighbours as ‘barbarians’.
4 Pretend you are a Mongol tribe member who has made the journey to trade with the settled agricultural people to the south of the Great Wall. Using the sources in this subtopic as a basis, tell the farmers about your home and why you continue to live there despite the harsh conditions.

6.5 The rise of Temujin

6.5.1 Early life
The details of Temujin’s early life are unclear, but it is believed that he was born around 1162 and was the son of a warrior and minor chieftain named Yusegei. Mongol legend claims that Temujin was born clasping a clot of blood in his right hand, a sign that he was destined to become a hero.

Temujin was a member of a Mongol tribe known as the Oirat. When Temujin was still a young child his father was poisoned by another band of nomads and his family was abandoned by their clan. It was left to his mother, Yulun, to instruct him in the skills of the warrior: riding horses and shooting the Mongol bow and arrow.

At that time, the Mongols were divided into many tribes that constantly went to war with each other in their efforts to gain the best hunting grounds and pastures. Warriors also went on raiding parties, kidnapping women from other tribes to be brought back as additional wives. A shaman named Teb-tengri described life on the steppe when Temujin was a boy by saying, ‘There was no respite, only battle. There was no affection, only mutual slaughter.’

As a young man, Temujin was noted for his height, his broad forehead and his piercing green eyes. He learned to survive by developing military superiority and the skills of diplomacy and negotiation.

6.5.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 Of what tribe was Temujin a member?
2 What happened to his family when he was young?
3 What was life like for the Mongols when Temujin was a boy?
4 In his early life, Temujin displayed impressive physical characteristics and skills. What were they?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
5 What well-known aspects of Temujin are captured in the sculpture in SOURCE 1?
6.5.2 The creation of a khan

By the time he was in his twenties, Temujin had built alliances with a number of other Mongol clans. He gained a reputation as a fierce warrior and a man of great influence, leading to his being given the position of tribal chief in 1189. In 1206 — the year of the leopard — his greatness was recognized when he was elected as the khan over all his fellow tribal chieftains. Temujin took on the new title of Genghis Khan, meaning ‘the universal ruler’.

To strengthen the bond between the Mongolian tribes, Genghis Khan relied upon three ties that were familiar to the nomadic tribes:

- **quda** — tie of marriage. A skilled politician, Genghis Khan used marriage as a tie to bind together old enemies, even marrying one of his daughters to a rival tribe after they submitted to him without a fight.
- **anda** — tie of sworn brotherhood. As a child, Temujin had made this tie with a friend named Jamuka by exchanging knuckle bones and a bow and arrow. As a man, Genghis Khan exchanged valuable items such as sable coats with other warriors to create ties that were considered stronger than the tie between real brothers.
- **nokör** — tie of friendship. This was a bond similar to that of a European lord and liegeman, in which the follower promised to obey and defend his leader, leaving his family behind to travel with his leader.

**Source 2** When a new camp was established, the khan’s tent was the first to be erected. In this image, created in the fourteenth century, the khan is surrounded by his court officials. In the trees outside, the yak tails hang as a symbol of the presence of the khan.
The Great Khan commanded loyalty from his companions and obedience from his soldiers, but accepted criticism from his advisers, including his mother, Yulun. He was also noted for his tolerance of other religions, a position that he adopted because it made it easier to work with and manipulate others. Under the brilliant leadership of Genghis Khan, the warring Mongol tribes were finally united.

Genghis Khan’s first military victory as the universal ruler was against the Tanguts of Xi Xia, south of the Gobi Desert. Rather than battle the forces of Genghis Khan, the Tanguts chose to pay a tribute to him. The Great Khan now controlled a major section of the Silk Road, giving his army direct access to China.

**SOURCE 3** Genghis Khan met with a Taoist holy sage, or holy man, in 1221. The record of his conversation with Ch’ang-Ch’un presents a different image of the Great Khan.

> I hate luxury and exercise in moderation [the Khan wrote]. I have only one coat and one food. I eat the same food and am dressed in the same tatters as my humble herdsmen ... In the space of seven years I have succeeded in accomplishing a great work, uniting the whole world in one empire. I have not myself distinguished qualities ... But as my calling is high, the obligations incumbent on me are also heavy and I fear that in my rule there may be something wanting. To cross a river we need boats and rudders. Likewise we invite sages and choose assistants to keep the empire in good order ... I implore thee to move thy sainted steps. Do not think of the extent of the sandy desert. Commiserate with the people in the present situation or have pity upon me and tell me the means to preserve life.

**SOURCE 4** Genghis Khan’s ferocious reputation was created through statements that Yuan-dynasty writers attributed to him.

> The greatest joy a man can know is to conquer his enemies and drive them before him; to ride their horses and take away their possessions; to see the faces of those who were dear to them wet with tears ...

### 6.5.2 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

2. In what ways did Genghis Khan show great leadership?
3. What did Genghis Khan gain from his first military victory as the universal ruler? Why was it so important?
4. Match the names in column A with the description in column B.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column A</th>
<th>Column B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Temujin</td>
<td>Genghis Khan’s mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yusegei</td>
<td>The Mongol tribe Genghis Khan belonged to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yulun</td>
<td>Title meaning ‘the universal ruler’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anda</td>
<td>The Mongol leader who became Genghis Khan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genghis Khan</td>
<td>Mongol warrior who was the father of Temujin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oirat</td>
<td>A tie of sworn brotherhood</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

5. How does **SOURCE 2** visually recognise the Khan’s great power?
6. How long had Genghis Khan been the universal leader by the time the conversation in **SOURCE 3** took place?
7. The Yuan dynasty was established by Genghis Khan’s grandson Kublai Khan. Is **SOURCE 4** a primary or secondary source? Why would they want to establish a fierce reputation for Genghis Khan?
6.5 Putting it all together

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE
1 Explain the terms quad, anda and nokor in your own words. Describe how these terms were used to create strong bonds between the Mongolian tribes who became a great force in the region.
2 Using the knowledge you have gained from this subtopic, write a paragraph explaining the qualities Genghis Khan had that allowed him to become such a great leader.
3 What aspects of the Mongol life did the Khan draw on to create a superior warrior force?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
4 How is Genghis Khan depicted in SOURCES 2, 3 and 4? What might account for the difference in these depictions?

6 Which source do you think is the most reliable? Explain your answer using evidence.
6 Using the internet or your library, research the importance of the Silk Road.
a Who built the Silk Road and why?
b Where was it? What were travelling conditions like on the road in the thirteenth century?
c Explain the road’s strategic importance to Genghis Khan.
d Name some of the products and ideas that were transported via the Silk Road in the days of the Great Khan.

6.6 The Mongol army

6.6.1 Mongol soldiers
With a mighty army consisting of the Mongol tribes from the southern deserts, the steppe lands of central Mongolia and the mountains of the freezing northern frontiers, Genghis Khan invaded China in 1211. Swift-footed horses carried the Mongol cavalry with incredible speed over vast distances. The cavalry combined military skill with discipline and toughness; Mongol commanders believed that winter provided the best opportunity for war, and used frozen lakes and rivers as their highways to battle.

The Mongol soldier was well equipped and carried a variety of weapons:
- a lance fitted with a hook for pulling enemies from their horses
- a curved sword and a dagger that was strapped to the arm
- two bows; one used to shoot from horseback and another heavier bow for use on foot. The typical Mongol bow could shoot arrows that pierced armour 200 metres away
- a shield, an iron helmet and armour made from leather that was waterproofed with a coating of lacquer.

The Mongol warrior’s greatest strength lay in his horse, a short and stout wild animal that was tough and hardy like the soldier that rode it. Mongol horses could survive the bitter winter of the north because they had coarse coats and the ability to find and feed from the grasses that lay beneath winter snow. The Mongol army provided each soldier with about five horses to accompany him on campaign, as the rule was that no horse could be ridden for more than one day in four. It was said that Mongol soldiers could live in the saddle for up to ten days and would eat the raw meat of dogs, rats, mice and horses when they were on campaign. Stories of the discipline and strength of the Mongol army spread fear across Asia and Europe.

SOURCE 1 Mongol horsemen could turn and shoot arrows from their composite bow with great accuracy and speed. The composite bow was made from combining a layer of sinew, wood and horn to create the frame.

cavalry a unit of the army mounted on horseback
6.6.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1 Briefly describe the weapons carried by a Mongol soldier.
2 What made the Mongol horse so useful for the warriors?
3 How many horses did each soldier take with him on campaign? Explain why.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

4 Describe the weapons and armour that you can see in SOURCE 1.

6.6.2 Military structure and discipline

Mobilising an army

The Mongol tribal organisation developed military strength. Even in peacetime all able-bodied men between fifteen and sixty years of age were under military orders, meaning that they could be called upon to fight. Promotion in the Mongol army was not related to high birth, but achieved as recognition of bravery and skill. The Mongol army was reformed and reorganised under Genghis Khan. It was composed of:

- *arban* — a group of ten men from different Mongol clans, ordered to be loyal to each other regardless of clan connections
- *zuun* — a company, consisting of ten arban
- *myangan* — a battalion, consisting of ten zuun
- *tumen* — an army, consisting of 10 myangan.

The tribal links of the clan groups were broken up by the army structure to ensure old loyalties could not threaten Mongol unity. In battle the close-knit and tightly drilled units used skills developed in the traditional Mongol hunt, encircling, trapping and then cutting the enemy to pieces. The use of couriers enabled the various sections of the Mongol armies to keep close contact with each other.

Death and duty

One of the most important features of the Mongol army was the principle of strict discipline known as *Yasa*, meaning an order or decree. The thirteenth century writer Juvaini explains the Yasa as a ‘rule for every occasion and a regulation for every circumstance while for every crime there was a penalty’. Genghis Khan was unable to read and write because Mongol civilisation had not developed literacy. Adapting Uigher script from the northern Turkic tribe, the Great Khan had the rules of the Yasa written down on scrolls. During wartime, desertions, failing to rescue captured colleagues, plundering without permission, sleeping on duty, fighting with other tribal groups within the army and showing unnecessary kindness to a captive were all punishable by death.

**SOURCE 2** Genghis Khan declared in the Yasa that ‘if the military leaders and the leaders of the many descendants of the ruler who will be born in the future, should not adhere strictly to the Yasa then the power of the state shall be shattered and come to an end’. Although a complete list of the laws has never been found, it is believed that they covered all aspects of public and private life. The Yasa was of particular importance to the discipline and structure of the army.

- The ruling that divides men of the army into tens, hundreds, thousands, and ten thousands is to be maintained. This arrangement serves to raise an army in a short time, and to form the units of commands.
- The moment a campaign begins, each soldier must receive his arms from the hand of the officer who has them in charge. The soldier must keep them in good order, and have them inspected by his officer before a battle.
- Forbidden, under death penalty, to pillage the enemy before the general commanding gives permission; but after this permission is given the soldier must have the same opportunity as the officer, and must be allowed to keep what he has carried off, provided he has paid his share to the receiver for the emperor.
- To keep the men of the army exercised, a great hunt shall be held every winter. On this account, it is forbidden any man of the empire to kill from the month of March to October, deer, bucks, roe-bucks, hares, wild ass and some birds.
6.6.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. What was the basis for promotion in the Mongol army?
2. Why were the tribal links of the clans broken up by the army structure?
3. How did the different sections of the army communicate during the battle?
4. a. What was the Yasa? What script was it written in?
   b. Why did Genghis Khan not just use his own language for the Yasa?
   c. Why did Genghis Khan have the Yasa developed?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

5. Read the laws outlined in the Yasa in SOURCE 2.
   a. What was the benefit of dividing the army into tens, hundreds, thousands and tens of thousands?
   b. Whose responsibility was it to hand out the arms to the soldiers?
   c. Are the soldiers allowed to pillage (rob violently) the enemy at all?
   d. How did Genghis Khan intend to keep his armies fit during winter?

6.6.3 Conquering the world

Mongol military campaigns involved thorough planning and **reconnaissance**. Not only did this make it possible for the Mongols to defeat their foes, but they were also able to learn new battle strategies from their enemy. From the Chinese and the Persians, the Mongols learned about siege machines and gunpowder. They then transported catapults on horseback to the battlefield and hid their movements behind smoke grenades and firebombs.

**SOURCE 3** The *tulughma* was a Mongol tactic using heavy and light cavalry in tight formation. Heavy cavalry charged the enemy and broke enemy lines. Light cavalry were protected by heavy cavalry and used lightning speed and manoeuvrability to launch a second wave of attack.

Most people in the path of the Mongol army had a choice: surrender and live or resist and die. If a city rebelled after agreeing to surrender, the population was massacred and the city was annihilated. As the Mongols moved across western Asia, they used terror as a weapon of war, exterminating town after town and encouraging the spread of stories about their conquests. Genghis Khan began his invasion of China by attacking the Jin (pronounced ‘chin’) people of northern China and Manchuria. In 1213, the Mongol armies broke

**Topic 6** Mongol expansion (c. 1206–1368) 229
through the Great Wall of China and within two years conquered and destroyed the Jin capital city of Yanjing (later known as Beijing). So many thousands of people were killed in the conquest of northern China, it was said white hills appeared that were made of the bones of the dead.

In 1227 Genghis Khan died during a campaign in China. His vast empire was divided between the four sons and grandsons of his chief wives to create four Mongol kingdoms:

- Kublai Khan ruled China — the Yuan dynasty.
- Hulegu ruled Persia — the IlKhanate.
- Batu Khan ruled southern Russia — the Golden Horde.
- Chagatai ruled Central Asia — the Chagatai Khanate.

In 1268, the Mongols launched their second colossal invasion of China. Mongol forces were now led by Genghis Khan’s grandson, Kublai Khan. Kublai Khan's army blocked the Yangtze River and began advancing on the cities of the southern Song. The Song were well defended with their modern gunpowder weapons, such as rockets and flamethrowers. The Mongol armies changed their fighting tactics and surrounded the great walled Song cities, cut off supplies and starved them. For four years the sieges continued until the Mongols were victorious. Every Song city that fought against the Mongols was destroyed. The only chance for survival was unconditional surrender.

The closing defeat of the southern Song came in 1276. The Mongols again used their siege tactics to destroy the Song navy. For two weeks they encircled the Chinese fleet and blocked all supplies. With the last Song forces weakened, the Mongols attacked on a morning shrouded

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**SOURCE 4** A map of Mongol military campaigns that would create the largest empire the world had ever seen, covering over 33 million square kilometres.
in rain and fog. Mongol victory was swift. Among the thousands of Chinese who died on that
day was the last Song emperor, a child named Bing, and his empress mother. Mongol victory was
complete when Kublai Khan declared himself the first foreign emperor of China. By this time,
the Mongol army had conquered territory stretching from the Arctic Ocean to the Persian Gulf
and from Hungary to Korea.

**SOURCE 5** Despite the Mongol army’s domination of much of Asia, attempts to conquer Japan failed,
as shown in this nineteenth-century Japanese woodcut. In both 1274 and 1281, Mongol invasions
were thwarted by a combination of resistance from Japanese warriors and destructive typhoons, which
shattered the Mongol ships and killed many thousands of the Mongol invaders.

![SOURCE 5](image_url)

6.6.3 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. What was the purpose of reconnaissance in a military campaign?
2. What did the Mongols learn from the Chinese and Persians?
3. What did Genghis Khan achieve outside of Mongolian lands? What was his main tactic?
4. When did Genghis Khan die?
5. What happened to Genghis Khan’s empire after he died?
6. What was Kublai Khan’s great military achievement?

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

7. Explain the military tactic, *tulughma*, as shown in the diagram in **SOURCE 3**. What is its benefit as
   a form of attack?
8. The Mongol Empire continued to expand after the death of Genghis Khan. Examine **SOURCE 4**,
   which the expansion of the Mongol Empire.
   a. How far west did Genghis Khan’s campaigns go?
   b. Which three Asian empires were conquered by the Mongols?
   c. What region was the focus of Kublai Khan’s campaign and empire?
   d. What city was at the centre of the Mongol lands?
   e. Which modern countries were once part of the Mongol Empire?
9. Using the illustration in **SOURCE 5**, as well as the information in the caption, explain why the
   Mongols attempts to conquer Japan was unsuccessful.
6.6 Putting it All Together

Identifying Continuity and Change
1. Begin a timeline of the history of Mongol expansion, beginning with the conquest of the Jin. Leave enough room so that, as you learn more about the creation of the Mongol Empire, you can continue adding details of events and personalities to your timeline.

Analysing Cause and Effect
2. Draw a diagram that shows the decimal structure of the Mongol army, as restructured by Genghis Khan. Make sure that your diagram is labelled clearly. Identify how this made the army stronger and more efficient.
3. During a discussion with your classmates, identify what you see as the five main causes of the successful growth of the Mongol Empire. Put these in order of importance with the top being the most important. Justify the order you choose.

Using Historical Sources as Evidence
4. Imagine you have been given the task of training a group of young Mongol warriors. Refer to Sources 1–3 to write a speech you will present to your trainees clarifying how they should dress, the skills they will need and the rules they will have to follow.
5. Look back to your work in subtopic 6.5. Using the internet and/or your library, find out about the significance of the Silk Road in bringing the Black Death to medieval Europe around this time and discuss your findings with the class.

Determining Historical Significance
6. Based upon what you now know about the Mongol army’s strategy, write two short accounts of one of the final battles before the fall of the southern Song stronghold during the siege of 1276. The first should be written from the perspective of a member of the Song royal family and the second from the perspective of a Mongol warrior.

6.7 Mongol Rule — the Yuan Dynasty

6.7.1 Yuan Government
Now the emperor of China, Kublai Khan named his new dynasty Yuan, meaning ‘creative force’. He abandoned the old Mongol capital of Karakorum and established the imperial Chinese capital in the modern-day city of Beijing, where he developed a very different style of government that blended Mongol and Chinese traditions. By doing so, he created a Chinese state that was bilingual, multicultural and tolerant of religious differences.

Kublai Khan brought Confucian scholars to his court to help govern Yuan China. He appointed a General Secretariat, composed of 14 trusted officials, to enforce his laws and ensure efficient government.

The population of China was divided into four groups or classes:
- Mongols — the elite of Yuan dynasty society who were given all the most important government jobs. The Mongols did not have to pay taxes and were granted large estates that were worked by Chinese peasant labourers.
- non-Chinese allies and mercenaries from the west — appointed as government officials across the empire
- northern Chinese — Khitans, Jurchens and Koreans
- southern Chinese — all subjects of the former Song dynasty.

The northern and southern Chinese had limited rights, were punished more severely than non-Chinese, were forbidden to gather in public and paid heavy taxation to support the Yuan government.

SOURCE 1 A thirteenth-century painting of Kublai Khan, the first emperor of the Yuan dynasty. As emperor, the khan placed the whole of China under Mongol control.

**mercenary** a soldier who fights for money rather than for patriotic reasons
6.7.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. What name did Kublai Khan give to his new dynasty and what did it mean?
2. Where did Kublai Khan establish his new rule?
3. a. What were the different groups or classes of people in the population of China at this time?
   b. What were their rights?
   c. Why were the Chinese treated more harshly than non-Chinese?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
4. Describe how **SOURCE 1** portrays Kublai Khan. Do you think that the painter was trying to show him in a good light or not? Explain your answer.

6.7.2 Rebuilding China

Millions of workers were set the task of rebuilding China after decades of Mongol war and conquest. Transport links were constructed with thousands of kilometres of roads and a Grand Canal linking north and south China. To protect against possible famine, granaries were built throughout the empire. Kublai Khan built schools, hospitals and orphanages, and established a regular postal service connecting every corner of his Yuan kingdom. The khan also sent explorers to map China’s great river systems and record the geography of the vast land. This encouraged merchants to journey overland to the Middle East and South-East Asia, and eventually led to the development of trade links with Europe. In 1269 Kublai Khan established a printing office so that pamphlets could be published to communicate government decrees to the people. He also encouraged the printing of books on a wide range of subjects including agriculture, law, medicine, mathematics, art and history. Yuan dynasty printing presses were so widespread that books were mass produced and cheap to buy. Paper money was printed with such success that, for the first time in human history, paper money became the main form of currency.

**SOURCE 2** The coat worn by the emperors showing the 12 symbols of power in China

The 12 symbols and their meaning

- **A** Moon — of Heaven and enlightenment
- **B** Fu — justice
- **C** Water weed — purity
- **D** Constellation — Heaven and enlightenment
- **E** Axe — punishment
- **F** Cups — respect for parents
- **G** Sun — Heaven and enlightenment
- **H** Dragon — adaptability
- **I** Fire — brilliance
- **J** Mountains — Earth and protection
- **K** Pheasant — literary achievements
- **L** Grain — abundance for the people
Despite the positive achievements of the Yuan dynasty, the population of China plummeted due to the harsh conditions imposed upon them by Mongol rule. This Yuan-dynasty painting by a Chinese artist shows death luring a baby away from his sister. His mother is powerless to save him.

### 6.7.2 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. Why did China need rebuilding at this time?
2. Summarise the main developments that Kublai Khan achieved in reconstructing and rebuilding Chinese society.

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

3. Examine [SOURCE 2](#). From what you know of Kublai Khan’s achievements in rebuilding China, which of the 12 symbols would he have valued and why?
4. Examine [SOURCE 3](#) carefully.
   
a. What comment is the artist making about life in Yuan China?
   
b. Given that Kublai Khan put so much effort into rebuilding China, why do you think the artist might feel like this?

### 6.7.3 Fantastic cities and ‘gardens bright’

Kublai Khan built a magnificent palace for himself in his winter capital, on the site of the ancient city of Chung-tu. He renamed it Tai-du, meaning ‘Great Capital’. The khan's city was an architectural marvel of Arabic, Mongolian, western Asian and Chinese styles. It was said that the elaborately decorated dining room seated more than six thousand guests. In inner Mongolia, approximately
300 kilometres north of Beijing, Kublai Khan built his summer city Xanadu. It was designed according to the layout of a traditional Chinese city, but also included many features of nomadic Mongolian culture. Here, the khan slept behind screens of ermine skin to remind him of the hunt.

SOURCE 4 An excerpt from Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s nineteenth-century poem Xanadu. The poem was based on Marco Polo’s account of Kublai Khan’s summer palace.

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

6.7.3 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. Where was Kublai Khan’s winter palace? In what styles was it built?
2. What elements in his summer palace tell you that, despite embracing Chinese culture fully, he never forgot his origins?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
3. How long after Kublai Kahn’s rule did Samuel Taylor Coleridge write his poem Xanadu (SOURCE 4)?
4. After reading the extract of the poem in SOURCE 4, do you think Coleridge imagined Kublai Khan’s palace accurately?

6.7 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT
1. Which of Kublai Khan’s achievements in rebuilding China would have had the most impact on the people? Explain why you think this?
2. What were the negative aspects of the changes brought about by the khan? Who suffered the most?
3. Could you argue that the Yuan social policy was discriminatory?
4. Write a newspaper article as an observer over the first ten or so years of Kublai Khan’s rule over China, reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of his achievements.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
5. What symbols in SOURCE 2 would the people in SOURCE 3 feel that the emperor has not lived up to?
6. Refer to the text and SOURCE 4. Using the same metre, write your own poem about an aspect of Kublai Khan’s rebuilding of China.

6.8 Culture and beliefs at the Khan’s court

6.8.1 Honouring China’s heritage

During the Yuan dynasty, Kublai Khan’s court was the centre of political, artistic, philosophical and religious debate and expression. In order to maintain stability within the empire, the khan sought to find a balance between Chinese and Mongolian culture.
The influence of royal women had begun with Genghis Khan’s mother. It continued into the reign of Kublai Khan. His wife, Chabi Khatun, played an important role in shaping the government of the empire when her support of Tibetan monks encouraged many members of the Mongol ruling class to convert to Tibetan Buddhism. The emperor’s mother, Sorghaghtani Beki, realised that Kublai Khan would need to understand the Chinese if he was going to successfully rule over the 100 million people of Yuan China, and encouraged him to study their belief systems. Taking his mother’s advice, Kublai Khan invited scholars and religious leaders to attend his court and debate matters of religious and philosophical importance. During the Yuan dynasty, Chinese religion, ideas, art and culture flourished.

Yin and yang
The Chinese believed that two opposing forces shaped the universe. Known as yin and yang, these forces were two halves of the same whole and could be seen in the rise and fall of the tides, the yearly cycle of the seasons and the cycle of night and day:

• Yin was the female forces — darkness, cold, wet, softness, earth, moon and even numbers.
• Yang was the male forces — brightness, heat, dryness, activity, heaven, sun and odd numbers.

6.8.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 a Who was Kublai Khan’s wife?
   b What was her influence in shaping the government?
2 a Who was Kublai Khan’s mother?
   b What effect did her beliefs have on Yuan China?
3 Explain what the Chinese concept of yin and yang are.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
4 How does the visual representation of yin and yang in SOURCE 1 help explain its meaning?

6.8.2 The path to enlightenment
During the Song dynasty, three great religious traditions had merged to produce a set of beliefs and principles shared by Chinese people of all social classes:

• Confucianism — developed in the sixth century BCE by the Chinese philosopher Confucius, this philosophy valued qualities of honesty, morality, loyalty, self-sacrifice, love and good manners. Confucianism also taught people about their place in society.
• Daoism — a way of thinking based on the teaching of the philosopher Laozi who stressed the importance of living a simple life that honoured the natural world. Daoism eventually became a religion with deities, temples and priests, and taught people how to improve society by understanding their place in nature.
• Buddhism — a religion that came to China from India in the first century CE, Buddhism emphasised the need to reject material possessions as a path to enlightenment. Buddhism gave people a hope of life after death.

SOURCE 1 The relationship between yin and yang is often compared to the movement of the Sun over a mountain or valley. The yin is the shady place while the yang lies in the sunlight. Over the course of the day, the yin and yang change places, expressing their unity.

DID YOU KNOW?
It was not until 1707 that the Europeans were able to imitate the Chinese process of producing porcelain.
SOURCE 2 In this seventeenth-century painting the farmer and his family are shown making offering to the gods at the family shrine. Even the poorest home had a shrine located in the central part of the house where the names of ancestors were recorded and offerings of food, incense and flowers were made every day. Symbols that came from Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism were included in daily religious rituals.

6.8.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 What were the three main religious traditions shared by the Chinese people during the Song dynasty?
2 Briefly outline each religion identified in question 1, with an emphasis on what it gave or taught the Chinese people.

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
3 In Song China it was said that ‘the three teachings flow into one’. Describe how the harmonious relationship between China’s three religious traditions has been expressed in SOURCE 2.
6.8.3 Art and culture

In Chinese culture, painting, poetry and calligraphy were known as the ‘three perfections’. Poets and painters aimed to express spiritual peace and tranquillity through their art, while the calligrapher aimed to capture the beauty of every line of a Chinese character. Traditionally, Chinese art was rich in symbolism. Plants and animals represented objects and ideas of importance.

- The butterfly represented the human spirit or joy.
- The chrysanthemum represented courage.
- The crane represented a long life and great happiness.

With Kublai Khan’s encouragement, Chinese writers, painters and calligraphers recorded the history of the earlier Tang, Jin and Song dynasties. Although many Chinese artists agreed to work for their Mongol emperors, some expressed their true feelings about the Mongol occupation of China through art and literature.

The most highly regarded painters of this period were known as the literati. These scholarly Chinese artists turned away from depicting everyday life in China and concentrated on painting landscapes. Rather than painting images designed to please their audience, they sought to depict nature as they experienced it, a practice that would influence generations of artists to come.

**SOURCE 3** In this poem, the hawk symbolises the Mongols and the thrush represents what remained of Chinese culture under Mongol rule.

In the eighth month the Mongol hawk flies low over the ground; In a flurry [the thrush] takes refuge under a tree. The beautiful little bird knows in advance to hide itself; How much more should people act according to circumstances.

**SOURCE 4** Huang Gongwang was the oldest of the four painters known as the Masters of the Yuan dynasty. This painting shows the Fuchun Mountains to which he retired after serving briefly in the Mongol administration.

6.8.3 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. What were the ‘three perfections’?
2. What did the poets, painters and calligraphers aim for in their work?
3. Who were the literati? What did they do?

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

4. Read **SOURCE 3**. Explain the symbolism of the birds and the message the Chinese artist is expressing.
5. Explain how the artist of **SOURCE 4** can be seen as a member of the literati from this painting.

To access videos, interactivities, discussion widgets, image galleries, weblinks and more, go to [www.jacplus.com.au](http://www.jacplus.com.au)
6.8.4 Visiting the court of Kublai Khan

Kublai Khan’s palace was a vibrant place full of visitors from around the Mongol Empire and beyond its borders. The khan was attended by religious and political advisers, and encouraged the free exchange of ideas. Although the court was multicultural and was tolerant of its members practising different religions, it still had its share of conflict.

SOURCE 5 A modern artist’s impression of the court of Kublai Khan

A Foreign dignitaries were welcome at the court of Kublai Khan. Such visits were an opportunity to increase trade between the East and the West.

B Under the rule of Kublai Khan, Tibetan Buddhism thrived and became one of the official religions of the Yuan dynasty.

C Women who were close to Kublai Khan were encouraged to engage in political discussions during his rule. His mother and wife were particularly influential.

D Confucianists, some of whom had advised the Song, were invited to the khan’s court. Xu Heng was a well-respected Confucianist and educator, and was appointed the first leader of the dynasty’s National Academy in 1271.

E The court was filled with poets, artists and calligraphers, whose work was displayed for all to see. Influential poets included Zhang Yanghao, who challenged government policies, and Huang Gongwang, who was one of the four great painters of the Yuan dynasty. After retiring to the mountains, he spent three years painting one scroll.

F Diet was of great importance. It was believed many diseases could be cured or prevented through diet alone. Assorted foods that may have been eaten included duck, chicken, fish, rice and vegetables.

G In the thirteenth century, the court of Kublai Khan regularly saw high-level meetings between the Mongolian ruling class and dignitaries from around the world. Through these meetings, ideas flowed into China, while tales of the now-famous emperor spread all over the world.

H During the Yuan dynasty, there were many debates between Daoists and Buddhists at the khan’s court. After losing a debate in 1281, Kublai Khan ordered many Daoist texts to be burned.

6.8.4 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 Why was Kublai Khan’s court a vibrant and exciting place to be?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
2 Use SOURCE 5 to explain where there might have been possible sources of conflict within the court, despite its multiculturalism and political stability.
6.8 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE
1 a Describe how the court of Kublai Khan was different from the courts of the past?
   b What was still the same, or similar?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
2 Imagine that you have the opportunity to meet the poet and artist of SOURCES 3 and 4. Compose a series of questions to find out more about their perceptions of Yuan art, literature, beliefs and values. Do you think that they would have similar views, or would they be opposing?
3 Drawing on all the information given in this subtopic — both text and images — write a short report on the topic ‘Art and beliefs during the Yuan dynasty’.
4 Using the internet and/or your library, research one of Confucianism, Daoism or Tibetan Buddhism and answer the following:
   a How and where did this belief system begin?
   b When and how did it enter China?
   c Why might it have appealed to the people of China during this time period?
   d How may its teachings have guided Kublai Khan in ruling over the Chinese people?

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
5 Is it fair to describe Kublai Khan’s rule as an ‘occupation’ of China? Why or why not?
6 You are an outsider who has been invited to visit the khan’s court in order to share your ideas on religion and politics. Write a short piece back to your country’s ruler describing your feelings upon approaching his court for the first time.

6.9 The travels of Marco Polo

6.9.1 Building ties with the Far East
In 1260 two brothers, Nicolo and Maffeo Polo, departed from the rich Italian trading city of Venice on a long and dangerous journey to China. They eventually arrived in China by way of the ancient trade route known as the Silk Road. Like many before them, they were amazed by the grandeur of Kublai Khan’s court and the splendour of his palace. The brothers journeyed back to Venice by 1269 and immediately began planning to return.

SOURCE 1 Polo’s work for the khan would take him around Asia and Europe and through many of the lands conquered by the Mongols.
Kublai Khan was fascinated by the Polo brothers and their distant homeland. He was keen to learn more about their strange beliefs and customs, so he invited European teachers and Christian missionaries to Yuan China. The brothers returned to Europe as ambassadors for the Yuan dynasty.

In 1271 the Polo brothers left Venice for China once more, this time with the task of presenting a message from the Pope to the Great Khan. The brothers were accompanied by Nicolo’s young son, Marco. After a four-year journey through the Holy Land, Persia and Tartary, they entered the Khan’s court in Cambuluc (Beijing), where they received a warm welcome.

6.9.1 Activities

**CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING**

1. Why was Kublai Khan interested in the Polo brothers?
2. What was the purpose of the Polo brothers’ 1271 journey back to China?
3. Which route did they take for this journey and how long did it take them?

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE**

4. According to **SOURCE 1**, where did the Polo brothers first sail to on their 1271 journey to China?
5. Where does **SOURCE 2** show the brothers leaving from? What evidence does the illustration contain to support this?

6.9.2 Marco Polo becomes the khan’s ambassador

While Nicolo and Maffeo concentrated on establishing trade between China and Europe, Marco studied the Mongol language and culture. When Kublai Khan asked him to travel for six months to a distant part of his territory, Polo agreed and brought back a number of relevant observations that the khan’s older advisers had failed to notice. He spent the next seventeen years of his life as the khan’s trusted adviser and ambassador, carrying messages and collecting information and even taxes for the Yuan Empire. Having gained the khan’s trust, he was promoted to governor of the city of Yangzhou.

**SOURCE 2** An eighteenth-century illustration showing the Polos setting sail for China

*To access videos, interactives, discussion widgets, image galleries, weblinks and more, go to [www.jacplus.com.au](http://www.jacplus.com.au)
6.9.3 Spreading the legend

Marco Polo returned to Venice in 1295, but his adventures did not end there. After accepting the position of ‘gentleman commander’ of a Venetian galley, he joined the battle of Curzola. With the Venetian Navy defeated, he was taken prisoner by the Genoese.

Between 1296 and 1297, Marco Polo was held as a prisoner in the city of Genoa, during which he told the story of his remarkable travels to a writer named Rusticello of Pisa, a novelist who had previously written *The Romance of King Arthur*. Based upon their conversations, Rusticello of Pisa wrote *The Travels of Marco Polo*, which was peppered with tales of strange customs and legends, marvellous creatures, powerful warlords and lands of untold wealth.

How much of *The Travels of Marco Polo* is true was questioned by people in the fourteenth century but, even on his deathbed at the age of 70, the intrepid explorer insisted that *The Travels* was a true account of his experiences. When asked by a priest to retract his ‘fables’, Marco Polo said, ‘I have not told half of what I saw’. Whether the stories were true or not, what cannot be questioned is Marco Polo’s influence on the popular imagination of the day. When Christopher Columbus set off to find China more than a century after Polo’s death, he carried a copy of the book with him. To Columbus, as to many others, Marco Polo was both inspiration and guide.
SOURCE 4 As an ambassador for Kublai Khan, Marco Polo was given the duty of retrieving a holy Buddhist relic from Sri Lanka — the tooth of Buddha.

... They succeeded in getting two of the grinder teeth, which were passing great and thick; and they also got some of the hair, and the dish from which that personage used to eat, which is of a very beautiful green porphyry. And when the Great Kaan’s ambassadors had attained the object for which they had come they were greatly rejoiced, and returned to their lord.

SOURCE 5 In The Travels of Marco Polo, experiences are often ‘larger than life’, leading to claims by many people that the book was more fiction than fact. Some people have even claimed that Marco Polo never made it to China.

... I will tell you another very wonderful thing; for there are men in this kingdom who have tails like dogs, larger than a palm, and who are covered with hair. They remain in the mountains, never visiting the towns. There are unicorns, with various beasts and birds for hunting.

6.9.3 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 When did Marco Polo return to Venice?
2 a What was the next position he accepted?
   b What happened to him in this position?
3 a Who wrote The Travels of Marco Polo?
   b Under what circumstances did he write it?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
4 What task in SOURCE 4 does Marco Polo undertake for Kublai Khan? What does this tell us about how the khan viewed him?
5 What aspects of SOURCE 5 are beyond belief?

6.9 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
1 Based on SOURCES 4 and 5, what descriptive language did Rusticello of Pisa use to create a sense of excitement about the travels of Marco Polo?
2 Using the sources and information in this subtopic, make a timeline of the journeys and events in the life of Marco Polo, illustrate it using images from the internet or hand drawings if you can.

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
3 What sort of person was Marco Polo? How can you tell?

4 Many people of the time nicknamed Marco Polo’s book The Million Lies because they found it so hard to believe; however, he left a famous epitaph, ‘I have not told half of what I saw’. Debate whether or not you think The Travels of Marco Polo was a true account. Find evidence to support your opinion.
5 Based upon what you know of Kublai Khan, would he have been happy with the publication of The Travels of Marco Polo? Explain.
6 What was the long-term impact of Marco Polo’s journey and his tales?

6.10 Defeat of the Mongol Empire

6.10.1 A failing leadership
From its humble beginnings on the steppe, the Mongol Empire grew to become the largest land empire the world has ever seen. Although its beginning was marked by military conquest and unity between the tribes, its end was marked by corruption, in-fighting and the rebellion of its citizens.

When Kublai Khan died in 1294 he was succeeded by his grandson Temur, who called himself Emperor Chengzhong. Temur ruled according to his belief in the principles of Confucianism and worked towards establishing a more just society:

• he brought northern and southern Chinese into the government
• he held an investigation into government corruption and found 18,473 officials guilty of stealing from the state.
Following Temur’s death in 1307, the Yuan leadership was in an almost-constant state of flux, with seven emperors taking the throne within 25 years. These emperors lacked Kublai Khan’s strength and vision, and were increasingly distrusted by Mongolians because they were seen as being too Chinese. In trying to re-establish their Mongolian identity, these emperors distanced themselves from Chinese society by passing harsh laws discriminating against the Chinese. The Chinese continued to regard the Yuan emperors as foreigners heading an occupying army. Over time, Yuan government became weak and corrupt.

For generations, Mongol women had been noted for their independence and the influence they held within traditional Mongol society. By the fourteenth century, however, the granddaughters of Kublai Khan no longer played a prominent role in government. Although the binding of the feet of the Song Chinese women was never accepted by Mongol rulers, life for the women at the Yuan court had become more limited, reflecting the adoption of Imperial Chinese traditions. As the Mongols of Persia embraced Islam, women’s traditional Mongolian dress was replaced by the chador, a symbol of piety.

SOURCE 1 To many cultures, the Mongols always remained ‘barbarians’. This Japanese artwork depicts the Mongols as lacking sophistication.

6.10.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1 What happened to the Yuan leadership following Kublai Khan’s grandson Temur’s death?
2 How did the Chinese view their Yuan leaders? How did this lead to a weakening of their leadership?
3 How did the role of Mongol women change over the generations?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
4 There are many Chinese artworks similar to SOURCE 1 that depict Mongols in unflattering ways. Describe what you can see them doing here. Do you think that this is an accurate portrayal?
6.10.2 Rebellion
With their leadership weakening, the powerful Mongol clans began fighting with each other and disobeying the emperor. During the fourteenth century, there were numerous Mongolian rebellions against the Yuan and China was hit by a series of natural disasters. The Yellow River broke its banks, thousands drowned and China starved in the terrible famine that followed the flood. The Yuan government increased the suffering of the Chinese people when it forced armies of Chinese peasants to work on the rebuilding of the Yellow River's dykes and waterways. As conditions worsened, rebellion spread. In addition to this, it is believed that the bubonic plague started somewhere in China during the fourteenth century and had a significant negative impact on the population of Yuan China.

SOURCE 2 In the first century BCE, the historian Yuan Káng explained the Chinese belief in the mandate of heaven and the principles of good government.

The king Tsu Chia [from the Shang dynasty] had been one of the ordinary people. When he came to the throne he knew what the people needed and so was kind and protective towards them. He didn't dare treat with contempt those who needed him. He remained on the throne for 33 years...

The kings of the later Shang dynasty did not know anything of the hardships of the peasants and so did not know their people. They didn't know anything except the pursuit of pleasure; and so not one of them had a long life. They only ruled for three or four years.

Zhu Yuanzhang
Chinese hatred of Mongol rule led to the growth of Chinese secret societies and rebellions against the Yuan dynasty. The most successful rebel leader was a peasant named Zhu Yuanzhang. After his family died in the famine, he became a bandit and rebel leader. In 1356, Zhu Yuanzhang led an army of rebels to capture the strategically important city of Nanjing. Over the next decade, from his stronghold in Nanjing, Zhu Yuanzhang used his knowledge of military strategy and government policy to extend his control over all of southern China. In 1368, he moved his army north and captured Beijing without a fight. Victorious, Zhu Yuanzhang declared himself the first emperor of the Ming dynasty, meaning ‘brilliance’.

The last Yuan emperor, Töghun, fled Beijing and the Mongols retreated with him to the vast grasslands and open plains of their homeland. Only a century after the death of Genghis Khan, the mighty Mongol Empire had fallen.

SOURCE 3 Zhu Yuanzhang rose from humble beginnings to lead the rebellion that destroyed the rule of the khans.

Zhu Yuanzhang rose from humble beginnings to lead the rebellion that destroyed the rule of the khans.

6.10.2 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. Why did the Mongol tribes start fighting among themselves?
2. How did the flooding of the Yellow River lead to a Chinese rebellion against the Yuan government?
3. What was the family background of Zhu Yuanzhang?
4. What year did he become emperor?
5. Name the new dynasty that Zhu Yuanzhang started?
6. What happened to the Mongol rulers after this?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
7. Read SOURCE 2 carefully. Explain what the Chinese belief of the mandate of heaven and the principles of good government were.
8. Examine SOURCE 3. Describe the pattern on Zhu Yuanzhang’s robe? What might it symbolise?
6.10 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

ANALYSING CAUSE AND EFFECT

1. Write a paragraph explaining how and why the Yuan dynasty fell. Using highlighters, identify where you have outlined the main reasons for the retreat of the Mongols back to their homelands.

2. Examine the background and life of Zhu Yuanzhang in the lead-up to becoming emperor. What did he do that supported his rise from peasant to emperor?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE

3. Examine SOURCES 1 and 3. What do these sources tell us about the attitudes of the artists to their subjects? Analyse the reasons that they may have made the decisions that they did in creating the images.

4. Reread SOURCE 2 and, using your earlier summary, explain how, in the eyes of their Chinese subjects, the khan of the Yuan dynasty broke the ‘mandate of heaven’.

5. Imagine you are a Mongol artist and have been asked to make alterations to the artwork in SOURCE 1. Explain the changes that you intend to make to communicate your sense of Mongol leadership.

6.11 The Mongol legacy

6.11.1 Pax Mongolica

The rule of the khans led to a period in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries of relative peace across their realm. This peace, referred to by Western scholars as Pax Mongolica, or the ‘Mongolian peace’, broke down the walls separating the great civilisations of Europe from those in the Middle East and Asia. During the rule of the khans, different ways of living and different belief systems were brought together: farmers and nomads; Asians and Europeans; and Christians, Muslims and Buddhists. Mongol control of the Asian trade routes gave protection to the caravans of precious goods, and encouraged European merchants to make the long journey to the Far East. During the reign of the khans, the region was so tightly controlled that it was said ‘a maiden bearing a nugget of gold on her head could wander safely throughout the realm’.

As people and their trade goods moved back and forth across the Eurasian world, they brought with them skills and understanding. European travellers to China brought goods such
as silver, fine cloth, horses, linen and musical instruments, and important foods like the cereal grass *sorghum*. They also spread technical knowledge of processes such as sugar refining and **distillation**. From Persia, Europeans gained Islamic insight into mathematics, astronomy and science. From China, they adopted the wonderful technical, medical and scientific advances pioneered by the Song dynasty, including:

- printing
- new methods of paper-making
- the magnetic compass
- gunpowder
- porcelain.

The Mongols created the first paper money accepted by any government as payment for tax, and the value of Yuan dynasty paper money was guaranteed through exchange for gold or silver.

The long distance trade of the Pax Mongolica introduced new ways for people to do business:

- merchants could use bills of exchange rather than having to carry metal coins
- a banking system that allowed deposit and withdrawal of money
- insurance for valuable cargo.

The cities of the Pax Mongolica trading empire grew rapidly in size, prospering from the influx of European money. Within the multicultural Mongol empire, freedom of religion was guaranteed, as was the safety of envoys or ambassadors from foreign lands. The Yasa provided the principles of law and order that governed Mongol territory. With each Mongol victory, civilisations were joined, new trade routes established and new technological and economic advances made. In bringing together these diverse people and cultures, the Mongol Empire began to shape the modern world.

But not everybody was guaranteed safety within the realm of the khans. The suffering of the Chinese people under Mongol rule can be judged by the number of people who did not survive. The total population of China is estimated to have been approximately 120 million when the Mongol invasion began in 1225; by the end of the Yuan dynasty, it had fallen to 85 million.
6.11.1 Activities

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING
1. Explain the term Pax Mongolica.
2. What did China learn from the European travellers?
3. What did the European world learn from China because of trade?
4. What were the benefits of the creation of paper money?
5. What were the benefits of the multiculturalism of Mongol China?
6. What provided the rules for law and order for the Mongol Empire?
7. Who may have suffered under Mongol rule? How do we know?

USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE
8. List the items in SOURCE 1 given to the rest of the world by the Mongols through trade.
9. What is the Mongol sport, depicted in SOURCE 2, that which is still played today?
10. a. Read SOURCE 3. What is the ‘secret of alchemy’? You may need to refer to other sources to find this out.
   b. Marco Polo seems to see money-making as an almost mythical process. What words and phrases contribute most to this sense? Quote them.

6.11 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

IDENTIFYING CONTINUITY AND CHANGE
1. Imagine you are a Yuan dynasty official. Write a sort speech summarising the biggest changes to China under Mongol rule.
2. Explore who gained the most from the Mongol expansion? Who lost the most?
3. Look back to the cultural and technological items you listed from SOURCE 1 that the Mongols had introduced to the world. Which do you think has had the most significant impact upon the world. Justify your answer.

DETERMINING HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
4. Was the term Pax Mongolica an appropriate description for the Mongol Empire? Why or why not?
5. Was the legacy of the Yuan dynasty positive or negative? Explain.
6. What could we learn today from the successes and failures of the Mongol Empire?

6.12 SkillBuilder: Analysing different perspectives

Why is it important to recognise different perspectives?
Sources help you develop a balanced picture of history by analysing the perspectives different people have had about events of the past and how reliable those sources actually are.

Go to your learnON course to access:
- An explanation of the skill (Tell me)
- A step-by-step process involved in developing the skill with an example (Show me)
- An activity to allow you to practise the skill (Let me do it)
- Questions to test your application of the skill (Applying skills)
**6.13 Review**

This final subtopic provides a range of opportunities for you to review and respond through:

i. revising and checking your historical knowledge

ii. demonstrating your ability to apply historical concepts and skills.

**Go to your learnON course to access:**

- A key chronology of events relevant to the topic
- A summary of the key knowledge presented in the topic
- A ‘Big Questions’ activity
- A multiple choice topic test
- Short answer or extended writing responses

**Interactivity**

**Mongol expansion timeline**

Create a visual timeline of key events in the Mongol expansion (c. 1206–1368 CE).