

Ancient Civilizations of Asia—China

Section 5



MAIN IDEAS

1. The Mongol Empire included China, and the Mongols ruled China as the Yuan dynasty.
2. The Ming dynasty was a time of stability and prosperity.
3. The Ming brought great changes in government and relations with other countries.

Key Terms and Places

Beijing present-day city near the capital of the Yuan dynasty

Forbidden City a huge palace complex that included hundreds of imperial residences, temples, and other government buildings

isolationism a policy of avoiding contact with other countries

Section Summary

THE MONGOL EMPIRE

In 1206, a powerful Mongol leader known as Genghis Khan (jeng-uhs KAHN) led huge armies through much of Asia and Eastern Europe. He first led his armies into northern China in 1211, then headed south. By the time of Genghis Khan's death in 1227, all of northern China was under Mongol control.

Genghis Khan's grandson, Kublai Khan (KOO-bluh KAHN), completed the conquest of China and declared himself emperor in 1279. This began the Yuan dynasty, a period also known as the Mongol Ascendancy.

Kublai Khan did not force the Chinese to accept Mongol customs, but he did try to control them. One way was by having the Chinese pay heavy taxes, which were used to pay for building projects. One such project was the building of a new capital, Dadu, near the present-day city of **Beijing**.

Kublai Khan's regime preserved much of the structure of the Song dynasty, including the civil service and trade routes. The Italian merchant Marco Polo, who traveled in China between

How many years did it take for the Mongol armies to conquer all of China?

Which two aspects of Song civilization would you say Kublai Khan appreciated the most?

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1271 and 1295, wrote of his travels and sparked Europeans’ interest in China.

Two failed campaigns against Japan and expensive public works projects weakened the Yuan dynasty. Many Chinese groups rebelled, and in 1368, Zhu Yuanzhang (JOO yoo-ahn-JAHNG) took control and founded the Ming dynasty.

THE MING DYNASTY

The Ming dynasty lasted nearly 300 years, from 1368 to 1644. Ming China proved to be one of the most stable and prosperous times in Chinese history. Great Ming achievements include the remarkable ships and voyages of Zheng He (juhng HUH), the Great Wall of China, and the **Forbidden City** in Beijing. The Forbidden City was a massive palace of residences, temples, and government buildings. Common people were not allowed to enter the Forbidden City.

What do you think was the original reason for building the Great Wall?

CHINA UNDER THE MING

Emperors during the Ming dynasty worked to eliminate foreign influences from Chinese society. China entered a period of **isolationism**. Ironically, the consequences of this policy included a weakness that allowed opportunistic Westerners to seize considerable power in some parts of China as China’s imperial glory faded.

Name another major country whose history includes a period of isolationism.

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Drawing Inferences Draw a street map of an imaginary city. Include a “forbidden city” within it that is restricted to a certain group of your choosing.