Objectives

- Summarize how Mongol armies built an empire.
- Describe China under Mongol rule.
- Understand how the Ming restored Chinese rule.
- Explain why the Ming explored the high seas for only a brief period.
Terms and People

- **steppe** – a vast, treeless plain or grassland
- **Genghis Khan** – a brilliant Mongol chieftain who united warring Mongol clans in the early 1200s and conquered a vast empire in Asia
- **Kublai Khan** – Genghis Khan’s grandson, who toppled the last Song emperor in China in 1279 and ruled all of China, Korea, and Tibet
- **Yuan** – the Chinese name Kublai Khan adapted for his dynasty
Terms and People (continued)

- **Marco Polo** – the Italian merchant who visited China during the Yuan dynasty and spent 17 years in Kublai’s service

- **Ming** – a new Chinese dynasty founded in 1368 by Zhu Yuanzhang, who toppled the Mongols

- **Zheng He** – a Chinese admiral and diplomat who voyaged overseas to promote trade and collect tribute
The Mongols came out of Central Asia and conquered a huge empire in around 1200, imposing their rule on China.

After Chinese toppled the Mongols in 1368, the Ming dynasty was founded.
The warring tribes of Mongols were united by Genghis Khan in the early 1200s, and went on to conquer a vast empire in Asia.
The Mongols conquered the steppes first with a force of skilled horsemen.

- To attack walled cities in China, they used cannons.
- Though Genghis Khan did not finish the conquest of China, his heirs expanded the Mongol empire and dominated Asia for 150 years.
Once Mongols conquered a territory, they ruled tolerantly and established peace and order.

- Khan respected scholars and artists and listened to their ideas.
- During the 1200s and 1300s, Mongols maintained order, a period now called the Pax Mongolica by historians.
- Political stability led to economic growth and flourishing trade. Cultures mixed as tools and inventions spread.
Genghis Khan’s grandson **Kublai Khan** completed the task of conquering China when he toppled the Song dynasty in 1279.

- He ruled China, Korea, and Tibet from his capital at Khanbaliq, modern Beijing.
- He decreed that only Mongols could serve in the military.
- Kublai Khan adopted the Chinese name **Yuan** for his dynasty.
One of the visitors to China at this time was the Italian merchant Marco Polo.

• He left Venice in 1271 and spent 17 years in the service of Kublai Kahn.

• Polo returned to Italy and wrote of his time in China, describing its wealth and efficient mail system.

• His writing sparked European interest in Asia.
When Kublai Khan died in 1294, the Yuan dynasty declined.

There were frequent uprisings due to heavy taxes and corruption.

A peasant leader, Zhu Yuanzhang, created a rebel army and toppled the Mongols.
The Ming dynasty was founded in 1368 by the rebel leader.

- Ming rulers worked to restore Chinese greatness.
- They restored the civil service exam, restored the primacy of Confucianism, and rooted out corruption.
- Under the Ming, the economy once again grew, thanks to improved farming methods and trade.
Ming China fostered a revival of the arts.

- Ming blue and white porcelain vases became the most valuable Chinese products exported to the West.

- A new form of popular literature, the novel, emerged. One example, *The Water Margin*, was about ending injustice.
Ming emperors sent fleets of Chinese ships to distant places.

- **Zheng He** traveled as far as East Africa. One notable voyage included 262 vessels and 28,000 sailors.

- The goals of these expeditions were to **promote trade, collect tribute**, and show local rulers the power of the Chinese.
In 1435, the Ming emperor banned the building of seagoing ships.

- Historians think he may have done so because fleets were expensive or because Confucian scholars wanted to preserve ancient Chinese culture without outside interaction.

- Fewer than 60 years after this decision, Christopher Columbus sailed and made Spain a major power.
Section Review

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