

Mongol Impact on China: Lasting Influences with Preliminary Notes on Other Parts of the Mongol Empire

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This essay, based on an oral presentation, provides the non-specialist, with an evaluation of the Mongols' influence on China and, to a lesser extent, on Russia and the Middle East. Starting in the 1980s, specialists challenged the conventional wisdom about the Mongol Empire's almost entirely destructive influence on global history. They asserted that Mongols promoted vital economic, social, and cultural exchanges among civilizations. Chinggis Khan, Khubilai Khan, and other rulers supported trade, adopted policies of toleration toward foreign religions, and served as patrons of the arts, architecture, and the theater. Eurasian history starts with the Mongols. Exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art confirmed that the Mongol era witnessed extraordinary developments in painting, ceramics, manuscript illustration, and textiles. To be sure, specialists did not ignore the destruction and killings that the Mongols engendered.

This reevaluation has prompted both sophisticated analyses of the Mongols' legacy in Eurasian history. The Ming dynasty, the Mongols' successor in China, adopted some of the principles of Mongol military organization and tactics and were exposed to Tibetan Buddhism and Persian astronomy and medicine. The Mongols introduced agricultural techniques, porcelain, and artistic motifs to the Middle East, and supported the writing of histories. They also promoted Sufism in the Islamic world and influenced Russian government, trade, and art, among other impacts. Europeans became aware, via Marco Polo who traveled through the

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Mongols' domains, of Asian products, as well as technological, scientific, and philosophical innovations in the East and were motivated to find sea routes to South and East Asia.

Keywords: Mongols, sinicization, linking the world, cultural diffusion, Ming Dynasty

This essay offers an expansion of a lecture delivered remotely at a conference at Keimyung University.¹ It is designed for non-specialists who have not studied the Mongols and focuses on the general themes relating to Mongol influence on China, together with preliminary remarks on other parts of the Mongol Empire. Specialists will be aware of most of these subjects. Thus, the essay is not meant to be comprehensive, but it provides non-specialists with some of the major issues concerning the Mongol influences and reflects, in particular, the themes the author himself has addressed. The works of some scholars and writers who have dealt with the same or similar themes will be mentioned, but the studies of other distinguished authors will regretfully be omitted because the focus will be on specific themes.

Many traditional Chinese accounts tended to downplay the impact of the nomadic pastoral or hunting and fishing societies who resided north of China on Chinese society. The traditionalists restated the common refrain that the foreigners were assimilated when they settled down and attempted to rule China. The distinguished Sinologist Ho Ping-ti, for example, presented this viewpoint about the Manchus and the Qing dynasty becoming sinicized during their rule of China from 1644 to 1911. The New Qing History scholars, including Evelyn Sakakida Rawski, challenged that conception and asserted that the Manchus preserved much of their culture and language until the middle of the nineteenth century.² The New Qing History did not describe the Manchus as totally assimilating or to use the Chinese phrase *laibua* ("come and be transformed").

The *laibua* interpretation is less convincing for the Mongols. After all, the Mongols survived as a distinct group, with their own language, culture, religion, and State. Even the Mongols under foreign rule retained their identities. The question that remains is, did the Mongols have any lasting influence beyond their reign over China (from 1234 to 1368 in the north and from 1279 to 1368 in the south). The distinguished historian David Robinson has made a case for Mongol impact in some areas of Ming society,

¹ I have included, in the footnotes, sources that are accessible and not overly specialized. I have limited the number of such sources, since this article is meant for the general reader.

² See Evelyn Rawski, "Presidential Address: Re-envisioning the Qing Period in Chinese History," *Journal of Asian Studies* 55, no. 4 (1996): 829-850 and Ho Ping-ti, "In Defense of Sinicization: A Rebuttal of Evelyn Rawski's 'Reenvisioning the Qing,'" *Journal of Asian Studies* 57, no. 1 (1998): 123-155. See also Joanna Waley-Cohen, "The New Qing History," *Radical History Review* 88, no. 1 (2004): 193-206.

particularly at the court. He has demonstrated that the Emperors from the time of the Yongle reign (r. 1403-1424), like the Mongol Khans, repeatedly showed their skills in archery and riding, wore hunting clothes, had their portraits painted in hunting apparel, played polo, and established menageries of animals. They participated in hunts as a means of “demonstrating dynastic power and facilitating diplomacy.”³

I. New Views of the Mongols

Until the 1980s, the conventional images of the Mongols portrayed them as barbaric plunderers and killers who, during their campaigns, showed scant concern for renowned cities, distinguished monuments, and human life. Contemporary sources described the razing of buildings and massacres of hundreds of thousands from the time the Mongols emerged from Mongolia in 1207 to the conquest of the Southern Song dynasty in 1279. Yet these writings reflected the views of the Mongols’ enemies, most of whom they had subjugated. On occasion, these non-Mongol sources exaggerated the damage and the loss of life the Mongols wrought. The Mongol side of the history is unavailable because the *Secret History of the Mongols*, the only contemporary Mongolian source, scarcely deals with their foreign campaigns.⁴

Starting in the 1980s, several specialists on the Mongols, including David Morgan, Thomas Allsen, and I, as well, among others attempted to restore the balance and to report on the positive aspects of Mongol rule, without ignoring or downplaying the destruction the Mongols unleashed. They pointed out that perhaps the Mongols’ most important contribution was to bring East Asia, the Middle East, and Europe in touch with each other and that Eurasian history began with the Mongols’ creation of the largest contiguous land empire in world history. The Mongols also built splendid cities, promoted the economies, fostered the sciences, technologies, and the artistic advances in their domains.⁵

These reevaluations of the Mongol era have also given rise to vulgarizations, not mere popularizations, and have resulted in distortions. Non-specialists who cannot conduct research on the Mongol empire because they do not have facility in the languages of the primary sources and have had scant training in the interpretation of such texts have written sensationalized accounts with extraordinarily erroneous claims. One writer

³ David Robinson, *Martial Spectacles of the Ming Court* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 29.

⁴ The best translation of the work, with voluminous notes, is Igor de Rachewiltz, *The Secret History of the Mongols: a Mongol Epic Chronicle of the Thirteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

⁵ On the possible impact (or lack thereof) of nomads on sedentary civilizations, see Anatoly Khazanov, “Nomads in the History of the Sedentary World” in *Nomads in the Sedentary World*, eds. Anatoly Khazanov and André Wink (Richmond: Curzon, 2001), 2-4.

has asserted that Chinggis Khan was a democrat, an advocate of international law, and a proponent of religious toleration and women's rights. He has also credited the Mongols with a role in the development of the Renaissance.⁶ These absurd formulations have stimulated interest in the Mongols, but they cannot stand up to strict scrutiny, and they undermine proper descriptions and evaluations of the Mongol impact on global history. These gross distortions may have contributed to the selection in the late 1990s of Chinggis Khan as the "Man of the Millennium." Although this designation and these ascriptions are positive, they will not convince non-Mongol historians and may challenge specialists' more substantial insights about the Mongols.

II. Mongols and Trade

The Mongols' lifestyles in the steppes shaped their policies as rulers of a vast empire. As nomadic pastoralists, the Mongols could not fulfill all their requirements for survival in the demanding environment of Mongolia. Harsh winters with considerable snow and ice, which occurred about once every five years, devastated their economy, resulting in the deaths of numerous animals. Under these circumstances, Mongol herders needed to trade, mostly with China, to obtain foodstuffs, mostly grains. In addition, their frequent migrations to locate water and grass for their herds precluded the transport of tools and equipment required to produce manufactured products, including pots, barrels, shears, and other necessities. Again, they obtained such items mostly from China. Thus, the Mongols needed and supported trade. On the other hand, China professed self-sufficiency and, at least in theory, scarcely valued commerce and imposed limitations on foreign trade. Naturally, in practice, Chinese merchants and even officials profited from trade. Yet Confucian ideology relegated merchants to a relatively low social status. In addition, the Chinese Imperial courts imposed restrictions on commerce and often enacted sumptuary regulations that prohibited merchants from displaying their wealth. Unlike the Chinese, the Mongols had no ideological objections and, in fact, needed and craved trade.⁷

The Mongols' favorable attitude toward commerce translated into sponsorship of trade throughout the domains they subjugated. They lifted many of the restrictions on trade in China, and they also aided merchants. The Yuan dynasty of China built roads, canals, and bridges and allowed merchants to lodge and obtain supplies at the

⁶ See Jack Weatherford, *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2004).

⁷ For a brief description of the importance of trade for the Mongols, see Elizabeth Endicott-West, "Merchant Associations in Yüan China: The Ortogh," *Asia Major* 3rd 2, no 2 (1989): 127-154. For a time, some anti-Muslim policies in the Yuan dynasty impeded trade but the policies were quickly rescinded.

empire's official postal stations, which facilitated the traders' travels. It also reduced confiscatory taxes, provided low-interest loans to merchants, and issued and backed paper money.⁸ Similarly, the Mongols who ruled in the Central Asian lands occupied oases that depended on trade. Thus, the Mongols' arrival on the world stage and the so-called Pax Mongolica, which was not as stable as the term implies, led to increased travel.

Yet travel along the Silk Roads remained treacherous, as caravans faced innumerable obstacles on the trade routes. Travelers' reports of corpses of men and animals observed along the trails attest to these hardships. Manmade barriers were as critical as the inhospitable natural environment. Extortionist middlemen and states often demanded bribes or tariffs. Bandits plagued Silk Roads travelers, and caravans loaded with valuable and easily transportable goods attracted looters. If powerful kingdoms or empires failed to maintain garrisons, watchtowers, and postal stations, caravans faced even more perilous journeys.⁹ Still another difficulty was the enormous capital required for long-distance trade. The Mongols responded by stimulating the development of *ortogh* or merchant associations to engage in such trade. If a caravan failed to reach its destination, under the *ortogh* system, the losses would be spread among several merchants instead of wiping out the resources of one specific trader. Despite the hazards, expenses, and insecurities of long-distance trade, it is clear that merchants could make substantial profits and thus persisted in dispatching caravans.¹⁰ Short distance commerce remained the norm and was more economically significant, but long-distance travel persisted and had great cultural importance.

The romantic vision of long-distance or Silk Roads trade has often overshadowed maritime commerce and interactions. In the Yuan dynasty's case, the disastrous naval expeditions against Japan and Java appeared to confirm that the Mongols were not adept at sea. Yet the Yuan established Maritime Trade Superintendencies (*shibo tijusi*) in Quanzhou, Qingyuan, and Guangzhou, special Maritime Trade Offices (*shibosi*), and a Boat Building Superintendency (*zaochuan tijusi*). It recruited Arab and Persian Muslims for positions in these offices.¹¹ The Mongols' desire for such luxury products as textiles, gold, medicines, and spices stimulated maritime trade, which often superseded political considerations. Japan, which had endured Yuan dynasty attacks in 1274 and 1281, resumed commerce with China within a decade after the abortive typhoon-afflicted

⁸ Morris Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 122-124.

⁹ On the *ortogh*, see Endicott-West, "Merchant Associations," 127-154.

¹⁰ See Morris Rossabi, "The Muslims in the Early Yuan Dynasty," in *China under Mongol Rule*, ed. John Langlois (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 257-295.

¹¹ Song Lian, *Yuanshi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976) 2401 and 2315.

second invasion.¹² In 1290, Japanese ships were permitted to land in Yuan-governed ports. A Chinese vessel that sank in 1298 in Hizen confirms the commercial relations of these two countries, which had been sworn enemies less than two decades earlier.¹³

Seaborne commerce with South and Southeast also flourished. As Tansen Sen has observed. “For local economies in East and South Asia, the increasing significance of international commerce may have been a principal reason for [an] upsurge in diplomatic missions from the Yuan court to India in the late thirteenth century.”¹⁴ Sixteen missions from the Yuan court reached India between 1272 and 1296, and India dispatched eighteen embassies to the Mongol court. The renowned Arab jurist and traveler Ibn Battuta bears witness to Sino-Indian trade during this era in recounting the arrival of a Chinese embassy loaded with velvet cloth, musk, quivers and swords, and a jeweled robe to his city.¹⁵ The Yuan maritime policies initiated the largest trade turnover in history between China and India. The Indian ports also offered access to the main seaborne links between the Yuan and the Mongol Khanate of the Middle East. In this trade with Hormuz and other Persian Gulf sites, the Yuan received precious stones, medicines, pepper, nutmeg, and other spices and exported silk, ceramics, and copper coins. As important, the Yuan Emperors could thus remain in touch with another major domain of the Mongol Empire, the Ilkhanate in Iran. An additional stimulus to seaborne commerce was the hostile relationship between the Yuan and Central Asia, which on occasion blocked overland trade.¹⁶ The Yuan was compelled to explore and expand maritime trade. Its success in fostering maritime commerce resulted in a substantial increase in commercial taxes from 4,000 ingots of silver in 1272 to 450,000 ingots by 1286. Most of the ships in this trade were from Iran, the Arab lands, Southeast Asia, and India.¹⁷

Yet ships from China also took part in overseas commerce. Recent excavations of shipwrecks yield clues about the massive scale of this trade. A ship that sank off the coast of Korea, which had been headed for Japan, contained tens of thousands of

¹² For the Japanese invasions, see Thomas Conlan, *In Little Need of Divine Intervention: Takezaki Suenaga's Scrolls of the Mongol Invasion of Japan* (East Asia Program, Cornell University, 2001) and Kozo Yamamura, *Cambridge History of Japan: Medieval Japan*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 411-422.

¹³ Yamamura, *Cambridge History of Japan*, 422-423.

¹⁴ Tansen Sen, “The Yuan Khanate and India: Cross Cultural Diplomacy in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries,” *Asia Major* 19 (2006): 303.

¹⁵ H. A. R. Gibb, *The Travels of Ibn Battuta, A.D. 1325-1354*, Vol.4 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1958-1994) 773-774; see also Peter Jackson, “The Mongols and the Delhi Sultanate in the Reign of Muhammad Tughluq (1325-1351),” *Central Asiatic Journal* 19 (1975): 118-157.

¹⁶ On the main protagonist, see Michal Biran, *Qaidu and the Rise of the Independent Mongol State in Central Asia* (Richmond Surrey: Curzon, 1997). Hosung Shim, “The Postal Roads of the Great Khans in Central Asia under the Mongol-Yuan Empire,” *Journal of Song and Yuan Studies* 44 (2014): 428 asserts that the struggle between the Yuan and Central Asia did not impede trade as much as has been argued.

¹⁷ Rossabi, “The Muslims,” 279.

porcelains.¹⁸ The profitability of this trade eventually improved the building of ships, and some were “ocean liners boasting staterooms, wine shops ... (and were) sturdily built, with watertight bulkheads, and the larger ones had lifeboats in tow.”¹⁹ In addition, Muslim and Hindu communities residing in Southeast China were helpful and offered advice and information about travel and trade. The missions of the Muslim eunuch Zheng He during the Ming dynasty have overshadowed Yuan maritime commerce. Zheng led a flotilla of ships and thousands of men on seven journeys from 1405 to 1432, and his remarkable embassies reached all the way to the east coast of Africa, a notable achievement which has tended to draw attention away from the Yuan maritime successes.²⁰ Yet Yuan maritime trade operated on a large scale and perhaps was more economically significant than the overland Silk Roads commerce. It should also be noted that the Yuan portrayed seaborne relations with other lands as part of a tribute system, with China as the superior partner, which thus bolstered its perception of itself as a global ruling force. Whatever the Mongols’ claims or assumptions, the sea linked Asian civilizations, another Mongol legacy.

III. Mongol Legacy and Diffusion in the Sciences and the Arts

Such travels and trade fostered geographic knowledge, another major Mongol contribution. A map in the *Yuan Jingshi dadian* has survived and is much more inclusive than earlier Chinese versions. It shows the four Mongol Khanates, as well as important cities stretching to Isfahan and Damascus, and provides a generally accurate depiction of Eurasia. Travelers certainly contributed to such knowledge, but in addition, the arrival of Muslims in Daidu (or Beijing) during this period offered experts who devised more precise delineations of maps and incorporated latitudinal and longitudinal grids, concepts that derived from the Islamic world. The Mongols also commissioned the compilation of an Imperial Geography, the *Yuan da yigong zhi*, and fashioned other maps, which are no longer extant.²¹ Muslim geographers and astronomers played roles in this heightened knowledge of geography.

At the same time, the Mongol era also witnessed enhancements of Islamic and

¹⁸ See the exhibition catalog *Sinan Shipwreck*: Seoul: National Museum of Korea, 2016 for a description of the porcelains.

¹⁹ Lo Jung-pang, “Emergence of China as a Sea Power during the Late Sung and Early Yuan Periods,” *Far Eastern Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (August, 1955): 500.

²⁰ For an account of his travels, see J.V.G. Mills, *Ying-yai Sheng-lan: The Overall Survey of the Ocean's Shores (1433)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

²¹ Hyunhee Park, “Cross-Cultural Exchange and Geographic Knowledge of the World in Yuan China,” in *Eurasian Influences on Yuan China*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013), 125-127 and 132.

European knowledge of Eurasian geography and of the fashioning of maps. Hamd Allah Mustawfi al-Qazwini (ca.1281-1339), an Iranian historian and geographer, produced remarkably sophisticated maps of the world, which delineated the coastlines and in the center of the map showed the various climates. The Yuan map is so similar to this map that some historical geographers have suggested that the Chinese version may have been based on al-Qazwini's map.²² Yet definitive proof is lacking.

Merchants were not the only voyagers who capitalized on the relatively peaceful situation created by the Pax Mongolica. The flow of travelers, including soldiers, physicians, envoys, clerics, entertainers, artisans, merchants, princes, astronomers, administrators, translators, artillery experts, scribes, geographers, cooks, scholars, engineers, and financial specialists, promoted diffusion and borrowings, as these individuals interacted with numerous different groups during their travels.²³ Christian envoys and missionaries traveled to the Mongols' original capital in Khara Khorum and then to Daidu when the Mongols moved their capital into China. Several came as ambassadors from the Pope or the European monarchs and sought to prevent further Mongol invasions in Europe and to forge peaceful relationships, but they also alienated the Mongols by urging them to accept Papal superiority and to convert to Christianity.²⁴ The Mongols in China also recruited Iranian astronomers, including Jamal al-Din, to assist them in observations of the sky and stars, in constructing astronomical observatories similar to the Maragheh observatory in Iran, and in developing a calendar, which was eventually produced by the eminent astronomer Guo Shoujing, as well as physicians in advancing medical knowledge.²⁵ They compelled craftsmen to move from one part of their domains to another to introduce new motifs and technology. Foreign soldiers whose states or peoples had submitted sometimes joined and traveled with the Mongols. Chinese specialists in siege warfare offered their skills to the Mongols in Central Asia and Iran, while Muslim experts provided catapults and assisted the Mongols in their campaigns against the Southern Song.²⁶

The Mongols' love of beautiful objects would have dramatic ramifications for the arts. They served as intermediaries in transmitting Chinese motifs and technology to the Middle East and thus promoted artistic diffusion. The dragon and the phoenix, the Chinese symbols for the Emperor and Empress respectively, appeared on Persian

²² Ibid., pp. 140-141.

²³ On these interactions, see Thomas Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

²⁴ For translations of the accounts of these envoys, see Christopher Dawson, *Mission to Asia* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966) and William of Rubruck, *The Mission of Friar William of Rubruck*, trans. Peter Jackson (London: Hakluyt Society, 1990).

²⁵ Song, *Yuanshi*, 2297.

²⁶ Biographies of two such Muslim engineers, see Song, *Yuanshi*, 4544-4545. On one battle in which they took part, see Chen Bangzhan, *Songshi jishi benmo* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), 892-900.

ceramics and tilework. Song dynasty scenes from landscape paintings, including the depictions of trees and mountains, were replicated in such Iranian illustrated manuscripts as the *Shah nameh* and Rashid al-Oin's universal history.²⁷ Iranian potters imitated Chinese celadons and then blue-and-white porcelains. Unlike traditional explanations of the Mongols' roles, which downplayed their contributions, recent research confirms that they were influential in the development of porcelains. Mongols were in charge of the government office of porcelains and alerted Chinese potters to the tastes of the Islamic world for specific shapes and motifs. Later, they would transmit cobalt blue for the production of blue and white porcelains.²⁸ Central Asian and Iranian textiles also influenced Chinese versions, due to the Mongols' forced migration of weavers from the so-called Western Regions to China.²⁹ The culmination of the movement of weavers was the production of *nasij*, gold-threaded textiles that the Mongols admired. In sum, the Mongols fostered extensive artistic diffusion, both in bringing motifs from one region of their domains to another and by serving as customers for luxury articles created by artisans. Exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the National Palace Museum in Taipei have confirmed the extraordinary artistic diffusion during this era.

Leading a demanding and often perilous lifestyle, as well as having a persistent problem with the consumption of alcohol, the Mongols were concerned about their bodies. Prior to their conquests, they relied on shamans for treatment or cures. As they emerged from Mongolia, they learned about physicians and sought their counsel. Nestorian Christians, as well as Muslim physicians and pharmacologists, and Korean doctors, played major roles in introducing foreign medical practices, beliefs, and medicines into the Mongol and Chinese worlds. The *Guanghu si* (Broadening Benevolent Office) treated Mongols in Daidu and Shangdu. Placed under the supervision of the Academy of Medicine (*Taijiyuan*), it persisted throughout Mongol rule under Nestorian leadership, though Muslim physicians were also involved.³⁰ The Academy had access to thirty-six volumes of Muslim medical texts in the Imperial Library. Muslims also introduced medicinal drugs into China through a Pharmaceutical Bureau. In China, "the Mongol rulers recruited and promoted a vast number of doctors in

²⁷ For a catalog showing these illustrated manuscripts, see Linda Komaroff and Stefano Carboni, *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256-1353* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2002).

²⁸ Morris Rossabi, "Mongol Empire and Its Impact on Chinese Porcelain" in *Early Global Interconnectivity Across the Indian Ocean, Volume II*, ed. Angela Schottenhammer (Cham: Springer, 2019), 255.

²⁹ See James Watt and Anne Wardwell, *When Silk Was Gold* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997). See also Thomas Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 35-36.

³⁰ Angela Schottenhammer, "Huihui Medicine and Medicinal Drugs in Yuan China," in *Eurasian Influences on Yuan China*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2013), 79.

the central government because of their needs as world conquerors, and the medical administration, in turn, created and expanded the network of medical institutions.”³¹ Physicians accompanied the Khans during their travels. Like artistic diffusion, medical diffusion became a significant Mongol contribution, with the intermingling of some medical practices from the Middle East and China. It should be noted, however, that the fundamental Islamic and Chinese medical systems did not merge and instead remained separate.

The Mongols’ vaunted religious toleration affected the religions in their Khanates. However, contrary to the conventional view, they adopted policies that, on occasion, harmed specific religions. In China, they sided with Buddhists in disputes with Daoists and turned over Daoist property to the Buddhist monasteries.³² Still, the Mongols frequently supported foreign religions to ingratiate themselves with the clergy, who, they believed, could facilitate rule over the entire population. They did not necessarily believe in religious toleration. Instead, they used religion for political stability.³³ Despite this realpolitik policy, they, nonetheless, became involved and promoted several religions. Tibetan Buddhism attracted Khubilai’s wife Chabi and led him to invite the Tibetan Buddhist Phags-pa to serve as the head of the Buddhist establishment in China, as well as to develop a new written script and to recruit Tibetan and Nepalese artisans for the court.³⁴

IV. Mongol Impact on China

The Mongols fostered considerable diffusion and interaction, but was there an enduring legacy after the Mongol collapse? This legacy may best be observed in China. The Ming, a native dynasty which took power in 1368, proclaimed its desire to rid itself of Mongol influence and, at first, divorced itself from the Mongol policy of a relatively free flow of people from all over Eurasia into China. It limited contacts with foreigners and restricted trade and tribute missions from nearby and distant regions. In actual practice, such *sakoku* or “closing of the country” was not carried out. Korea, for example, dispatched 391 so-

³¹ Reiko Shinno, *The Politics of Chinese Medicine under Mongol Rule* (London: Routledge, 2016), 117.

³² Song, *Yuanshi*, 234.

³³ For more on this point, see Morris Rossabi, “Notes on Khubilai Khan: Religious Toleration or Political Expediency?” in *Festschrift for Isenbike Togan*, eds Ilker Evrim Binbas and Nurten Kulic-Schubel (Istanbul: Itaki, 2001), 119-129.

³⁴ Morris Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 155-158. On Phags-pa, see his biography in Song, *Yuanshi*, 4517-4518, as well as Miyoko Nakano, *A Phonological Study on the Phags-pa Script and the Meng-ku Tzu-yün* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1971) and Nicholas Poppe, *The Mongolian Monument in bP’ags-pa Script*, trans. and ed. John R. Krueger (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1957).

called tribute embassies from 1392 to 1450,³⁵ and envoys and merchants arrived from the Jurchens of Manchuria, Japan, Thailand, and the Timurid domains in Samarkand and Herat, among other locations. The stated policy entailed considerable limitations to avert the threat of another foreign invasion and replication of the so-called Mongol yoke, but the Mongol support for merchants and trade influenced the Ming. Even the status of merchants was bolstered, perhaps a holdover from the Yuan dynasty.

Looking beyond the stated policy, there is considerable evidence of Mongol influence on the Ming. For example, quite a number of Mongols decided to remain in China after the collapse of the Yuan dynasty and served as translators or interpreters and as members of the Imperial Guard (*Jinyiwei*). Zhu Yuanzhang, the founder of the Ming, employed loyal Mongols in these positions, and some Mongols, seeking to avoid the turbulence in Mongolia, settled in China and were granted rice allowances, pastureland, and hay for their horses.³⁶ Second, the Emperor did not wish entirely to denigrate the Yuan and anointed the Mongol Emperors because they secured the Mandate of Heaven and recruited able Confucians as advisers. Even more important, several of the Ming Emperors allegedly claimed legitimacy based upon a Mongol model. Several scholars have recently argued that these Emperors adopted the Yuan emperors' claims to universal rule and portrayed themselves as successors to the Chinggisids. Zhu Yuanzhang's son Zhu Di reputedly went so far as to portray himself as the successor to Khubilai Khan.³⁷ This effort to capitalize on the Mongol legacy persisted until the mid-fifteenth century and ended when a new elite, based on the civil service examinations and the bureaucracy, displaced the more military-oriented Ming rulers.

The Ming certainly borrowed from the Mongol military system. As Edward Dreyer, a specialist on the Ming military, explained, "The deliberate creation of a military elite that was set above the civil service exams was a new departure for a dynasty of Chinese origin."³⁸ Adopting Mongol policies, the Ming court established a hereditary

³⁵ Donald Clark, "Sino-Korean Tributary Relations under the Ming," in *Cambridge History of China, Volume 8, The Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644, Part 2*, eds Denis Twitchett and Frederick Mote (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 280. Morris Rossabi, *The Jurchens in the Yuan and Ming* (Ithaca: Cornell East Asia Papers, 1982); Wang Yi-t'ung, *Official Relations Between China and Japan, 1368-1549* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953); Tilemann Grimm, "Thailand in the Light of Official Chinese Historiography: A Chapter in the History of the Ming Dynasty," *The Journal of the Siam Society* (July, 1961):1-20; and three works by Morris Rossabi, "Ming China and Inner Asia," 251-271; "Ming China and Turfan," *Central Asiatic Journal* (1972): 206-225; and "Ming Foreign Policy: The Case of Hami" in *China and Her Neighbors*, eds Sabine Dabringhaus and R. Ptak (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997), 79-97.

³⁶ Henry Serruys, "Remains of Mongol Customs in China during the Early Ming Period," *Monumenta Serica* 16 (1957): 143, and Henry Serruys, "Landgrants to the Mongols in China," *Monumenta Serica* 25 (1966): 394-405.

³⁷ David Robinson, "The Ming Court and the Legacy of the Yuan Mongols" in *Culture, Courtiers, Competition: The Ming Court (1368-1644)*, ed. David Robinson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 368.

³⁸ In Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, 5.

and registered military officer class, which had considerable power. It also borrowed features of Mongol military organization. Basing itself on a decimal system, it started with a chillarchy (*qianhuso*) and five chillarchs comprising a Guard (*wei*), and then it relied on military colonies (*tuntian*), originally a Chinese system but used extensively in the Yuan, with soldiers acting as farmers and supplying themselves. The Bureau of Military Affairs (*shumiyuan*) centralized control over the new military, except for the Imperial Guard, the Emperors' protectors, and closest comrades. The Ming thus witnessed a greater emphasis than the last native dynasty, the Song, on the military, which was likely a reflection of Mongol influence.³⁹ It also does not appear to be an accident that the Ming produced more military texts than all the previous dynasties combined, surely a Mongol influence.⁴⁰

The Ming imposed substantial control over the civil bureaucracy. It borrowed the institution of the Censorate, which existed before the Yuan dynasty, but was "far more pervasive" in Mongol-ruled China. Censors in the Ming traveled throughout China and acted as spies on the bureaucracy.⁴¹ After tours of inspection on local governments, they sent reports directly to the Emperors about violations of the public trust, malfeasance, and incompetence. This system contributed to the developing despotism of the Ming rulers because it provided the Emperors weapons, mostly accusations of corruption or nepotism, to counter the literati who attempted to control the bureaucracy. In sum, the view that there was a "conscious effort on the part of the Ming Emperors to identify themselves with the political tradition of their Mongol predecessors is evident also in the bureaucratic structure of the government, which borrowed directly from the Mongols" is at least partially valid.⁴²

Yuan dynasty rule also had cultural influences on the Ming. The Mongols' interest in Tibetan Buddhism spilled over into the Ming. The Ming Emperor Zhu Di repeatedly invited Tsong-kha-pa, the founder of the Yellow Sect of Tibetan Buddhism, to come to the court and provided valuable gifts for Tibetan Buddhist envoys.⁴³ Such relations frequently assisted Ming Emperors to depict themselves as sponsors of Buddhism and as Universal Rulers. Imperial portraiture also had an impact on the Ming rulers. Paintings or tapestries of Ming Emperors on hunts, a quintessential Mongol activity,

³⁹ Edward Farmer, *Early Ming Government: The Evolution of Dual Capitals*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 92 and Wang Yuquan, *Mingdai di junlun* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuyi, 1965).

⁴⁰ Joseph Needham, Robin Yates, et al., *Science and Civilisation in China V, part 6: Chemistry and Chemical Technology: Missiles and Sieges* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 29-31. See also Morris Rossabi, "Ming Conflicts with her Neighbors, 1368-1644," in *Cambridge History of War*, ed. David Parrott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

⁴¹ Charles Hucker, *The Censorial System of Ming China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), 27.

⁴² Okada Hidehiro, "China as a Successor State to the Mongol Empire" in *The Mongol Empire and Its Legacy*, ed. Reuven Amitai-Preiss (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 265.

⁴³ Dora Ching, "Tibetan Buddhism and the Creation of the Imperial Image" in Robinson, *Culture*, 321-364.

reflected Mongol models, with the rulers wearing Mongol tunics and headgear and showing their prowess in riding horses and with bows and arrows.⁴⁴ The paintings not only reflected the Emperors' martial skills but also their industriousness and avoidance of luxuries. Such depictions would convey notions of the empire's glory and power. Another Mongol legacy was the recognition that the Persians had made great strides in astronomy. Following the Mongol precedent, the Ming established a Bureau of Muslim Astronomy to provide climate and weather information, among its other duties.⁴⁵ Yet, the underlying Chinese and Iranian astronomical systems remained distinct. The Ming legal codes, on occasion, adopted the Mongol practice of restitution to aggrieved parties rather than punishments. The Mongol impetus for geographic knowledge had reverberations in the Ming. The court commissioned several geographic works, the most renowned of which was the *Da Ming yitong zhi*, as well as a map, the *Da Ming hunyi tu*, which offered a fine delineation of Western Asia and North Africa.⁴⁶ Physicians, astrologers, and diviners all had higher statuses, another product of Mongol influence. At the same time, the Ming Emperors founded a College of Interpreters (*Huitongguan*) and a College of Translators (*Siyiguan*), an indication that they needed experts on foreigners and that the Ming court's policies of isolation and limited contact with foreigners were not successful.⁴⁷

Other Mongol influences were related to daily life and activities. Some Mongol words, the two-stringed fiddle, and a few foods, which became part of the Chinese diet, were specific examples. Mongol blood mixed in with the Chinese genetic pool through rape, concubinage, and intermarriage. Mongol DNA has been found in substantial segments of the Western and Central Asian populations, but the extent of Mongol impact on the Chinese population has not been studied. Several historians have suggested that the Mongols contracted the plague bacillus and transmitted it along the Silk Roads to West Asia, contributing ultimately to the Black Death. This hypothesis sounds, on the surface, to be plausible, but it is still speculative and lacks specific evidence.

It is important to bear in mind, however, that there was a darker side to the Mongol impact on China. The level of violence introduced by the Mongols was astonishing. The censuses of North China before and after the Mongol invasion attest to great loss of life, and the Chinese sources describe considerable destruction. The Ming emphasis on the military and on the production of numerous military texts was, in large part, a

⁴⁴ Robinson, *Culture*, 388-392.

⁴⁵ Ho Peng-yoke, "The Astronomical Bureau in Ming China," *Journal of Asian History* 3, no. 2 (1969), 137-157.

⁴⁶ For these works, see Wolfgang Franke, *An Introduction to the Sources of Ming History* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1968), 237-240.

⁴⁷ Pamela Crossley, "Structure and Symbol in the Role of the Ming-Qing Foreign Translation Bureaus," *Central and Inner Asian Studies* 5 (1991), pp. 38-70.

legacy of this carnage and destruction.

V. Notes on Mongol Legacy in the Golden Horde and Ilkhanate

These preliminary notes, which are not meant to be absolutes, reveal that some Sino-Mongol practices spread to Russia, but controversies remain concerning the impact of the Golden Horde on Russia.

The Mongol occupiers of much of Russia received perhaps either the mostly notoriously harsh assessments or, in the works of some nineteenth and early twentieth-century historians, were not seriously considered. Russians often stigmatized the Mongol period as the era of the “Tatar yoke.” They accused the Mongols of destroying or pillaging numerous towns and cities, massacring untold hundreds of thousands, and enslaving others. The poet, playwright, and novelist Alexander Pushkin (1799-1837), for example, wrote that “Is it perchance the dark dominion of the Tartars?”⁴⁸ He also noted that “the schism [brought about by the Mongols] separated us from Europe and we took no part in any of the great events which stirred her...”⁴⁹ Some pre-twentieth century historians added that the Mongols did not make any positive contributions to Russia. In his twelve-volume history of Russia, *Istoriya gosudarstva Rossiyskogo* (1816-1826), Nikolay Mikhailovich Karamzin (1766-1826) asserted that the Mongols were responsible for Russia’s backwardness. Yet he hedged his views about these “Dark Ages.” He wrote that although the Mongols did not, in any way, contribute to Russian civilization, their demise led to unity, the greatness of Russia, and the establishment of the autocratic system, of which he approved. The so-called Slavophiles expanded on his views, asserting that isolation from “decadent” Catholic and Protestant Europe, which relied exclusively on rationalism, led to positive results. They added that the unique Russian heritage was preserved, with its devotion to and leadership of the Orthodox Church after the collapse of Byzantium, and a strong Russian State developed.

However, many historians argued that the development of a Russian autocratic government, precipitous separation from the rest of Europe and the ensuing lack of a Renaissance or Enlightenment, led to the almost irreparable damage to the economy, the cheapening of the value of human life, and the subversion of traditional literature and arts and crafts all of which were attributed to Mongol or Tatar influences. They asserted that all these influences were disastrous for Russian history. In the twentieth century, many “historians have blamed the Mongols for all the ‘failings’ of Russian

⁴⁸ Avram Yarmolinsky, ed. *The Prose, Poems, and Plays of Alexander Pushkin* (New York: Random House, 1936), 343.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Orlando Figes, *Natasba’s Dance: A Cultural History of Russia* (New York: Henry Holt, 2002), 368.

society at one time or another,”⁵⁰ several groups had a more positive view. Historians in the USSR were decidedly not part of those groups. They had negative views of the so-called Tatars. They expressed horror at the destruction and massacres wrought by the Mongols, and also maintained that the Mongols’ demands for tribute and taxation and pillaging of cities subverted trade and handicrafts. The economy did not develop, and feudal relations rather than commercial and industrial progress prevailed. The lack of economic development precluded political centralization. The eventual unification of Russia in the sixteenth century ran counter to Mongol influences, which prospered with Russian disunity.⁵¹

However, a group of Eurasian historians in the West had a more positive view and noted that the Mongols actually fostered unity, a more powerful and centralized government, and a road to Statehood from the pre-Mongol steppe and city governmental structure. The Russians adopted the Mongol conception of the State and simultaneously became linked to the East in trade. Isolation from the West contributed to a unique Russian identity and strengthened the Orthodox Church.

Research starting in the late twentieth century appeared to indicate some Mongol influences on Russia. The Mongols accepted and then introduced some Chinese institutions in their far-flung domains. The most prominent notion was the establishment of a dual administration, one civilian and the other military. In Russia, an official similar to the one known by the Mongols as the *darughachi* conducted censuses, collected taxes, and administered the system of justice, while the *basqaq* served as the military governor. This dual administrative structure had developed as early as the Tang dynasty (618-907, if not earlier, in China, and the Mongols borrowed it as they organized the Yuan dynasty, often turning over the civilian system to non-Mongols while retaining control over the military. The Mongols’ concept of land ownership also derived from the Chinese system. Animals were privately owned in the steppes, but pastureland was available to all. The Mongols’ exposure to China, in which the ruler, in theory, owned the land and allotted it to his people shaped their approach to land in Russia. The Khans, similarly, allotted land to their own people and their subjects, and, in particular, offered land grants to the military, which would be used to support soldiers and their families while they were on campaign. Muscovy would adopt this same system.

Still another institution the Mongols adopted from China was the postal station system, which could deliver official messages at a rapid clip. They vastly expanded the number of postal stations (according to the written sources, building one every twenty

⁵⁰ Charles Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde: The Mongol Impact on Medieval History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 116.

⁵¹ For a useful survey of these differing interpretations, see Anil Çiçek, “The Legacy of Genghis Khan: The Mongol Impact on Russian History, Politics, Economy, and Culture,” *International Journal of Russian Studies* 5, no. 2 (July 2016): 94-115.

miles throughout the empire), which became a vital part of their communication, their intelligence efforts, their military success, and were pervasive in Russia as well. Finally, Muscovy's eventual victory and establishment of a Russian-dominated government did not end Mongol influence. Some Mongols and so-called Tartars remained in Russia, converted to Christianity, were accepted into Muscovite service, became part of the Tsarist aristocracy, and thus had an impact on later Russian history.⁵²

The Golden Horde pursued some of the same policies as in other Mongol domains. It supported trade, which turned out to benefit Muscovy. Mongol protection of the trade routes permitted Russian trade with Europe and China. North Russia exported furs, honey, and wax to Europe and received fabrics, wine, and spices in return. Recent excavations in Russia have uncovered an extraordinary number of Chinese ceramics and silks.⁵³ Like the Khanates in China and Iran, the Golden Horde supported and patronized artisans, resulting in the creation of spectacular gold artifacts and textiles. Muscovite princes and clergymen garnered substantial profits from this commerce. Such resources permitted and contributed to Muscovy's drive toward unifying Russia. Money also influenced the law. As in other Mongol lands, monetary compensation for victims often replaced punishments.

Charles Halperin and Donald Ostrowski, two specialists on the Mongol era in Russia, challenge several of the Golden Horde's alleged negative influences. First, the view that the Golden Horde cut Muscovy off from Europe and prevented the Renaissance and other Western movements from reaching Russia does not jibe with Mongol promotion of commerce and of technological and artistic diffusion. Novgorod and other North Russian cities indeed continued to trade with Northern Europe throughout the period of the Golden Horde. Second, the Mongol impact on the reputed seclusion of women is contradicted by the rights Mongol women enjoyed and by the authority of Mongol elite women. In the early years of the Mongol empire, such women as Ögödei Khaghan's wife Töregene, Khubilai's mother Sorghaghtani Beki and wife Chabi, and Hülegü's wife Dokhuz Khatun had extraordinary influences on public policy.⁵⁴ Third, Ostrowski then counters the perception that the Mongols were responsible for the introduction of so-called Oriental Despotism into Russia. He observes that the Mongol Khans were not all-powerful. The princes and nobility could restrict the Khan's authority and had

⁵² Documentation derives from Halperin, *Op cit.* and Donald Ostrowski, *Muscovy and the Mongols: Cross-Cultural Influences in the Steppe Frontier, 1304-1589* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁵³ For such examples of Chinese porcelains, see *Zolotaya ord I Prichernomorie* (Moscow: Mardjani Foundation, 2019).

⁵⁴ On Töregene, Sorghaghtani Beki, and Chabi, see Morris Rossabi, "Khubilai Khan and the Women in His Family," in *Studia Sino-Mongolica: Festschrift für Herbert Franke*, ed. Wolfgang Bauer (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1979), 153-180 and id., "The Study of the Women of Inner Asia and China in the Mongol Era," *Gest Library Journal* 5, no. 2 (1992), 17-28. On Dokhuz Khatun, see Anne Broadbridge, *Women and the Making of the Mongol Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 198-199 and 263-264.

been granted leverage by their right and power to elect a new Khan. Finally, Ostrowski and Halperin question the extraordinary damage and loss of life during the Mongol invasions, as described in the Russian contemporary chronicles. They suggest that these accounts are exaggerated. Acknowledging that many buildings were razed due to their wooden construction, they still maintain that the destruction and killings did not match the descriptions related in the Russian sources. They do not deny the violence and sometimes indiscriminate slaughter but assert that such incidents were not as pervasive as the native writings would suggest.

Instability characterized IlKhanate Iran. Conflicts that erupted into warfare shaped IlKhanate relations with the Mamluks of Egypt to the west, the Golden Horde in the north, and Chaghadaï Central Asia to the east. Yuan China was the only Khanate with which the Ilkhanate was on good terms. That one relationship proved crucial because it generated trade and permitted considerable diffusion and borrowing from each other's cultures.⁵⁵ Khubilai Khan sent a princess named Kökechin, who was accompanied by the Polos, from China to be married to an Ilkhan, which provides additional confirmation of the Yuan's close relations with the Ilkhanate, as does the regular exchange of diplomatic missions.⁵⁶ Yet the Ilkhanate was plagued with many problems.⁵⁷ Struggles over the succession to the Ilkhanate resulted in the executions of three Ilkhans before Ghazan Khan restored stability for several decades in 1295. Moreover, during the seventy-year period of Ilkhanate rule, only one vizier had a natural death, further evidence of instability. The first Ilkhan Hülegü's initial discrimination against Muslims and appointment of Buddhists, Nestorians, and Jews in official positions and the later Ilkhan Ghazan's conversion to Islam and his purge of Buddhists created further difficulties.⁵⁸ On the other hand, Ghazan evinced considerable interest in China and Chinese culture, and his successor Öljeitu supported the Yuan by challenging its vaunted enemy in Central Asia. Hülegü and his descendants also had rights to land and animals in China, which further cemented close relations with the Yuan.

Such harmonious relations between the Yuan and the Ilkhanate explains the Mongol legacy in Iran and the Middle East, although it is important not to overemphasize their impact on these regions. The arrival of Chinese, Mongols, and eventually Europeans exposed the IlKhanate to developments in each of their cultures. These foreigners

⁵⁵ For a listing of sources, see Morris Rossabi, "Tabriz and Yuan China," in *Aspects of the Maritime Silk Road*, ed. Ralph Kauz (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010).

⁵⁶ Francis Cleaves, "A Chinese Source Bearing on Marco Polo's Departure from China and a Persian Source on His Arrival in Persia," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 36 (1976): 181-203.

⁵⁷ Including wars with the Golden Horde and the Mamluks of Egypt. See, for example, Reuven Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks: Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, 1260-1281* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁵⁸ Peter Jackson, *The Mongols and the Islamic World: From Conquest to Conversion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 368-369.

brought information about the outside world, which incidentally contributed to Rashid al-Din's universal history. Indeed, the multi-ethnic Ilkhanate and Ghazan's fear of the possible loss of Mongol identity prompted him to commission Rashid al-Din to write a history of the Mongols, which then morphed into histories of Iran, Islam, Jews, Franks, Chinese, and other peoples.⁵⁹ The flow of people also sparked greater knowledge of geography and more precise delineation of maps, and Rashid al-Din's work benefited from such geographic information.

Chinese and Ilkhanate science and technology also influenced each other although the caveat about overemphasis holds true here as well. The Iranians' underlying conceptions of the sciences and the operation of the world were not abandoned. Nonetheless, Chinese agriculture, which was among the world's most productive, had an impact on Iran. Although Iranians knew about rice, contact with China led to greater planting, as well as the more frequent use of rice in their cuisine. Rhubarb, which grew wild in China and was believed to have medicinal properties, also reached Iran.⁶⁰ This great interest prompted Rashid al-Din to write a book on agriculture.⁶¹ On the other hand, Iran did not adopt printing nor did it accept paper money, fearing that its introduction was an Ilkhanate ploy to gather up precious metals and to enrich itself.⁶²

In sum, the Mongols served as vital intermediaries between China and Iran and contributed to borrowing and cultural diffusion between the two civilizations. These cross-cultural exchanges centered on the Mongols' cultural, political, military, and scientific norms and needs. They found, protected, and employed individuals with the skills they required, whether they be financial experts, physicians, astronomers, craftsmen, soldiers, or administrators. One of their most significant legacies was the policy of recruitment of foreigners with special skills.

VI. Mongol Influence in Central Asia

Central Asia is the least studied of the Khanates that the Mongols influenced.⁶³ Granted

⁵⁹ For a partial translation of this work, see John Boyle, *The Successors of Genghis Khan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), and for a complete translation, see Wheeler Thackston, *Compendium of Chronicles: A History of the Mongols* (Cambridge: Harvard University Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 1998). For a recent study, see Stefan Kamola, *Making Mongol History: Rashid al-Din and the Jami' al-Tawarikh* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019).

⁶⁰ See the fascinating work by Clifford Foust, *Rhubarb: The Wondrous Drug* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

⁶¹ On this work, see Jackson, *The Mongols*, 230-231.

⁶² Karl Jahn, "Paper Currency in Iran," *Journal of Asian History* 4, no. 2 (1970), 101-135.

⁶³ One solid and not overly specialized study is Michal Biran, *Qaidu and the Rise of the Independent Mongol State in Central Asia* (Surrey: Curzon, 1997).

as an appanage to Chinggis Khan's son Chaghadaï, it was riven by dynastic struggles, with non-Chaghadaï leaders, rather than Chaghadaï's descendants, often serving as rulers. It was also repeatedly in conflict with the Yuan dynasty to the east and Ilkhanate Iran to the west.⁶⁴ The ensuing disunity weakened both the Chaghadaï and non-Chaghadaï potentates. Topography, with Central Asia's daunting deserts and mountain ranges, also contributed to disunity, with oases and towns frequently acting on their own and not abiding by the policies of the central authorities.

Yet the Mongols' encouragement of trade favored Central Asia, as land-based caravans needed to traverse the region. After the initial Mongol conquests, which were described in sometimes gruesome and exaggerated detail by the Iranian historian Juvaini, the Central Asian towns revived rather quickly.⁶⁵ Commerce flourished, which translated into flows of Iranians, Turks, Chinese, Armenians, and even Europeans arriving at Central Asian towns. Learning about the Central Asian Muslims' expertise in trade and finance, the Mongols in China recruited them to serve in the Ministry of Finance and to serve as tax collectors, including the infamous Ahmad who raised considerable sums for the Mongol rulers but was eventually assassinated by a cabal of men who accused him of corruption.⁶⁶

This flourishing economy provided the underpinnings of developments in the arts and sciences. Mongol patrons and customers supported the production of textiles, with gold thread, illustrated manuscripts, and miniature paintings. The rise of Temür, or Tamerlane, led to innovations in architecture, including his own tomb and the Registan, a square eventually composed of three madrassahs.⁶⁷ Tamerlane's architectural projects were, in part, based on the example of the construction in the Mongol capital of Tabriz, including the tomb of the Ilkhan Öljeitü. Science, in which Central Asia had had considerable achievements before the Mongol invasions, witnessed considerable developments, culminating in the construction of Ulugh Beg's famous observatory in Samarkand.⁶⁸

This presentation has focused on the legacy in the four Khanates that the Mongols established, but they also influenced Georgia, Armenia, Vietnam, and Japan, among other states. That is the subject for other lectures.

⁶⁴ On its conflicts with Yuan China, see Morris Rossabi, "Mongolia in Yuan Times," in *The Cambridge History of the Mongol Empire*, eds. Kim Hodong and Michal Biran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

⁶⁵ Translation of Juvaini's account is found in John Boyle, *The History of the World Conqueror* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956).

⁶⁶ Herbert Franke, "Ahmad" in *In the Service of the Khan: Eminent Personalities of the Early Mongol-Yüan Period*, ed. Igor de Rachewiltz (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1993), 539-557.

⁶⁷ Beatrice Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁶⁸ On Ulugh Beg, see W. Barthold, *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia, Volume 2* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1956-1962).

In sum, perhaps the most significant Mongol legacy entailed linking the various civilizations in Eurasia. This era witnessed the first direct contact between the two distant areas in Eurasia, Europe, and China. It is not necessary to emphasize the conventional stories of the Mongols' stimulus to the Age of Exploration or to Christopher Columbus' carrying Marco Polo's book on his voyage to confirm the importance of the Mongol era. Their era set the stage for the early modern and modern worlds.

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