

CHAPTER
12

Summary

CHAPTERS IN BRIEF *Empires in East Asia, 600–1350*

CHAPTER OVERVIEW Under Tang and Song rulers, China became the most advanced culture in the world. Then fierce warriors from Central Asia swept over China, creating a new empire that encouraged trade. In ruling China, the Mongols reached great heights. Japan developed its own culture based on ideas and practices borrowed from China. Chinese influence extended to Korea and Southeast Asia.

1 Tang and Song China

KEY IDEA During the Tang and Song dynasties, China experienced an era of prosperity and technological innovations.

Starting in A.D. 220, China went through a long period of troubles during which no single ruler was strong enough to unite the entire area. In 589, Wendi changed that. He brought the northern and southern regions under his power and named himself emperor. His new dynasty—the Sui—lasted only during his rule and that of his successor. However, these two rulers were important. They built the Grand Canal, a long waterway that connected the two major rivers of China. It linked the people of the cities in the north to the rice-growing regions in the fertile south.

The Tang Dynasty followed and lasted for 300 years. Tang rulers retook northern and western lands that had been lost under the Han Dynasty. Under the Empress Wu—the only woman ever to rule China as emperor—the Tang captured parts of Korea as well.

Early Tang rulers made the government stronger. To run their empire, they revived the practice of using men educated in the writings of the philosopher Confucius. Schools were set up to train people in these works. Candidates for government jobs had to pass tests in order to win work.

The Tang Dynasty began to weaken when the rulers once again levied heavy taxes. While the Chinese people became angry over these burdens, nomads attacked the empire's western lands and began to capture some areas. In 907, the last Tang ruler was killed, and a new dynasty—the Song—took its place. It, too, lasted about 300 years. The Song Dynasty ruled a smaller area than did the Tang. However, China under its rule was strong.

During the Tang and Song periods, China made many advances in technology. The Chinese

invented the use of movable type, allowing them to print books. They also invented gunpowder for use in fireworks and weapons. The Chinese grew more food, based on advances in farming and an improved variety of fast-growing rice. Trade increased, first through Central Asia on the land route called the Silk Road and later over the oceans. This allowed Buddhism to spread from China to Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. Tang and Song China became famous for their artistic advances.

These developments brought about changes in Chinese society. The old noble families lost power, while the scholar-government officials gained power. Below them was an urban middle class, laborers, and peasants. The status of women became worse.

2 The Mongol Conquests

KEY IDEA The Mongols, a nomadic people from the steppe, settled across much of Asia.

Much of Central Asia is covered by flat grassland that cannot support farming. Nomadic herders lived in this area. They traveled from place to place seeking grass to feed herds of sheep and goats. From time to time over the centuries, these nomads struck out to attack the settled farming peoples to the east, south, and west. In the early 1200s, the Mongols began such an attack. Under the leadership of Genghis Khan, they met huge success. In just over 20 years, he led his people to conquer Central Asia.

Three factors contributed to the Mongols' military success. First, they organized their army in a logical, easy-to-control way with experienced fighters in command. Second, Genghis Khan was able to outthink and outwit his enemies. Finally, the Mongols used cruelty as a weapon. This helped convince other cities to surrender without a fight.

After Genghis Khan died in 1227, the Mongol armies continued to advance. Under Genghis's sons and grandsons, the armies conquered China, took parts of Korea, captured Russia, and threatened eastern Europe. By 1260, the remaining empire was divided into four areas called khanates. The rulers in these areas gradually adopted the culture of the people they ruled. Those in the west became Muslims. Those in China took on Chinese culture. In this way, the four khanates grew apart.

The Mongols proved able rulers who brought about a long period of peace in Central Asia. They promoted trade and the exchange of ideas between Asia and Europe. Along with this trade, they may have brought a deadly disease—the plague—that caused widespread death in Europe in the 1300s.

3 The Mongol Empire

KEY IDEA *Kublai Khan ruled China and encouraged foreign contact and trade, but the Yuan Dynasty was beset by problems.*

The Mongols needed several decades to complete their conquest of China begun by Genghis Khan in 1215. In 1260 Kublai Khan, grandson of Genghis, took the title of Great Khan. Finally, in 1279, Kublai Khan managed to defeat the last Chinese army in the south. He became the first foreigner to gain complete control of China and rule the land.

Kublai Khan founded the Yuan Dynasty that ruled China for only about 100 years. The dynasty was important because it united China for the first time in several hundred years and opened China to trade with the west. The Mongols did not disrupt Chinese government or culture but, in fact, adopted it for themselves. Kublai Khan adopted Chinese ways and built a new capital in the city of Beijing.

However, the Mongols still wanted further conquests. Kublai Khan launched two attacks on Japan in 1274 and 1281, but both failed.

To rule his empire, Kublai Khan continued to follow Chinese practices. The Mongols kept the top government jobs for themselves. They also hired many people from other lands for these jobs, trusting them more than they did the Chinese.

Kublai Khan rebuilt the Great Canal. He promoted foreign trade, which took such Chinese inventions as printing, gunpowder, paper money, the compass, and playing cards to Europe. This activity led the European trader Marco Polo to journey to

China. He lived there for many years and traveled throughout the Mongol Empire. When he returned to Italy in 1292, he told Europeans fantastic stories about Chinese wealth.

In the last years of his rule, Kublai Khan ran into trouble. Attacks on Southeast Asia failed, costing many lives and much treasure. After Kublai's death in 1294, Mongol leaders struggled for control of the empire. These fights helped weaken Mongol rule, which allowed parts of China to erupt in rebellion. In 1368, some rebels finally won control of the Chinese government from the Mongols. They established a new dynasty called the Ming.

By this time, the whole Mongol Empire had begun to collapse. Mongols lost control of Persia in the 1330s and Central Asia in the 1370s. They continued to rule Russia until the late 1400s, however.

4 Feudal Powers in Japan

KEY IDEA *Japanese civilization was shaped by cultural borrowing from China and the rise of feudalism and military rulers.*

Japan gained from its location. It was near enough to China to benefit from the influence of Chinese culture. It was also far enough to be able to protect itself from complete Chinese domination.

Japan is not one island but several thousand islands of varying sizes. Most people, though, live on the four largest of them. The islands have few natural resources, such as coal and oil. Also, the many mountains leave little land that can be used for farming.

Early in its history, Japan was broken up into many small areas, each led by a clan. These clans believed in their own gods. Later, all these beliefs were combined to form Japan's religion, Shinto. The main ideas of Shinto were to respect the forces of nature and the ancestors of a family.

In the A.D. 400s, the Yamato became the most powerful of these clans. They claimed that they were descended from a sun goddess. Later, Yamato leaders began to call themselves emperors. The emperor remained an important figure in Japan. Even when other groups took control of the government, they retained the position of the emperor and said they were ruling in his name.

During the 400s, Japan began to feel the influence of Chinese culture. Buddhism traveled from China to Japan and became an important religion in the islands. The emperor sent people to

China to learn Chinese ways and bring them back to Japan. The Japanese also adopted the Chinese system of writing, painting, and other parts of Chinese culture. Around the late 800s, though, the Japanese stopped sending people to China to learn Chinese culture.

From 794 to 1185, Japan's noble family ruled the country from the capital at Heian. This era represented the peak of Japanese culture, when the people of the court led lives of complex rituals, careful manners, and artistic good taste. Women writers of the time provide a detailed view of this refined court life.

Over time the power of the emperor declined and nobles with large land holdings began to assert their power. They hired private armies, and these soldiers began to terrorize farmers. For protection, farmers gave up some of their land to the lords. Thus began a time of local power like Europe's Middle Ages. The local lords used a group of trained soldiers called samurai to protect them from attacks by other lords. These samurai followed a strict code of honor.

After a period of war, one of these lords arose as the most powerful. The emperor named him the shogun, or superior general of the emperor's army. While the emperor remained in power in name, the new shogun ran the country. This pattern was followed in Japan from 1192 to 1868. Shoguns led a defense of Japan against invasions of the Mongols from China.

③ Kingdoms of Southeast Asia and Korea

KEY IDEA *Several smaller kingdoms prospered in East and Southeast Asia, a region culturally influenced by China and India.*

Southeast Asia lies between the Indian and Pacific oceans and stretches from China almost to Australia. It includes such mainland areas as modern Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia, and Vietnam and the islands of Sumatra, Java, and Borneo, among others. The region has never been united culturally or politically.

From about A.D. 800 to 1200, the Khmer empire of modern Cambodia was the main power on the mainland of Southeast Asia. The main source of wealth of this empire was the growing of rice. The Khmer had large irrigation works to bring water to their fields. Rulers built huge and beautiful temples

and palaces. At the same time, a trading empire called Srivijaya arose on Java and nearby islands. Its capital became a center for the study of Buddhism.

These two cultures were influenced by India. Another culture—Vietnam—fell under the influence of China. China controlled the area from about 100 B.C. to A.D. 900. Vietnam became an independent kingdom, known as Dai Viet, in 939. While taking Buddhism and other influences from China, the Vietnamese developed their own special culture. Women, for instance, enjoyed more rights in Vietnam than they did in China.

Korea, like Japan and Vietnam, was influenced by China but maintained its own traditions as well. From China, the Koreans learned Buddhism, the teachings of Confucius, the benefits of central government, and a system of writing. The Koryu Dynasty ruled Korea from 935 to 1392. It had a government similar to China's. However, Korea's method of using examinations to fill government jobs did not keep wealthy landowners from dominating society. The dynasty, though, produced many great artistic achievements in Korean culture.

Korea fell to the Mongols and was occupied until the 1350s. The heavy tax that they demanded made the country poor and led the people to revolt. When the Mongols lost power, a new dynasty took control of Korea and ruled for 518 years.

Review

1. **Clarifying** Identify two changes in technology or society that took place in Tang and Song China.
2. **Analyzing Causes** What factors helped create Mongol success in war?
3. **Determining Main Ideas** What kind of relations did the Mongols have with the Chinese?
4. **Summarizing** What pattern of government developed in Japan?
5. **Drawing Conclusions** What two cultures influenced the people of Southeast Asia? How does geography help explain why?