

History
UNFOLDING

CHINA

FROM HAN TO THE MANCHUS



MindSparks
CHALLENGING STUDENTS TO THINK HISTORICALLY

Contents

Introduction	2
Lesson 1	The Challenge of Nature.	4
Lesson 2	Buddha, Tao, and the Confucian Order	8
Lesson 3	From Tang to the Mongols	12
Lesson 4	The Mongols to the Manchus.	16
Appendix	Image Close-ups	21

Introduction

China's Classical Age

This MindSparks set is the second of two on China before the modern era. The first is *Ancient China* (HS841).

Here the story is carried forward from the chaotic time after the fall of the Han dynasty in 220 CE. No effort is made to examine each dynasty in detail. Instead, the aim is to touch on a few key themes in the enormously rich mosaic of Chinese history, such as how the natural setting has shaped China's past, or how its unique systems of philosophy and religion have affected its thought and culture. In the process, just a small sampling of its many accomplishments are examined as a way to illustrate the variety and creative energy of this ancient civilization.

This set uses 12 visual displays to focus on these key themes. Each lesson uses three visual displays to explore one broad topic. Briefly, the four lessons are as follows:

The Challenge of Nature

A look at some of the daunting natural features that have challenged the Chinese to adapt and innovate over the centuries.

Buddha, Tao, and the Confucian Order

The focus here is on the central role of Confucian philosophy in China's religious, spiritual, social, and political life. Buddhism and Taoism also had a huge impact, but often also in relation to Confucian thought.

From Tang to the Mongols

The illustrations and maps here call attention to the cultural triumphs of China under the Tang and Song dynasties and to the sudden eruption of the Mongol Empire as a force in both China's history and the world's.

The Mongols to the Manchus

The Mongol disruption stabilized under Kublai Khan, though his new Yuan dynasty was not long lasting. The images here call attention to the dynamic yet inward-looking nature of Chinese culture under both the Ming dynasty and the Manchus' Qing dynasty.

Using Photos, Cartoons, and Other Visuals to Teach History

Many textbooks are full of colorful visuals. However, all too often these visuals function primarily as window dressing. They make the text more entertaining, or at least more palatable. Only occasionally do the visuals in textbooks do more than offer simple pictorial reinforcement of ideas already presented in the text. In many cases, they pander to the visual orientation of the young while doing little to help young people master the challenges of the visual media that dominate their lives.

By way of contrast, our approach to using visual materials emphasizes their unique strengths as historical documents. The lessons in this booklet focus students on the visual symbols and metaphors in editorial cartoons, the dramatic qualities of certain photographs, the potential of many images to make abstract ideas more specific and concrete, the implicit biases and stereotypes in certain images, their emotional power, and their ability to invoke the spirit of a time and place. In the process, we make every effort to strengthen students' visual literacy skills in general, as well as their ability to think critically and engage in spirited but disciplined discussions.

How to Use This Booklet

The booklet is divided into four lessons, with three illustrations per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

A BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET This page provides brief summaries explaining the three illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

DIGITAL IMAGES The booklet's PDF allows you to project the images for use in your class discussions.

DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY SHEETS

Each sheet displays one illustration. It includes a sequence of questions to help you plan an all-class discussion while using the projected images. The questions take students step by step through an analysis of the illustration. If you wish, you may reproduce these pages and hand them out. In addition to the discussion questions on the illustration itself, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. Some of these can be made into individual assignments. Others will work best as small-group or all-class activities.

OBJECTIVE:

1. Students will better understand how key natural conditions have affected the development of civilization in China over the centuries.

The Challenge of Nature

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

China is vast, but only small parts of it are fertile. Two main rivers—the Huang He (Yellow River) in the north and the Yangtze in the south—deposit rich soil onto nearby plains as they near the sea. China's earliest civilization grew up along the Huang He. This photo shows the arid but fertile Loess Plateau through which the Huang He passes in several areas. This plain was a major crop producer for ancient China. Ringing such plains are rugged mountains, deserts, and jungles cutting China off from the west, south, and north. The sea is a barrier to the east. Nature left China isolated. It also posed other challenges, such as the periodic raging floods of the Huang He (called “China’s Sorrow”), which have brought havoc and misery as well as life-giving soil and water.

Illustration 2

From an early time, the Chinese learned to tame their rivers with dams, dikes, and complicated irrigation systems. Such systems only work if villages cooperate and plan together. As population grew, every bit of land had to be used. Wheat and millet were the main crops in northern China. Rice was better suited to southern China's warmer and moister climate. In time, the Chinese there built amazing systems of irrigated and terraced rice paddies on hillsides such as this one. Rice production takes a great deal of backbreaking labor. But rice is also a rich, nutritious food able to support a large number of people per acre. The Chinese became masters at using every bit of arable land to produce it.

Illustrations 3A & 3B

China's geography presented challenges that only strong governments could solve. Fierce nomads to the north had to be contained. To do that, the Great Wall was built piece by piece over the centuries. China's main rivers flow west to east. The Grand Canal, part of which is shown here, was built north to south to link the Huang He with the Yangtze to the south. Much of its construction took place during the Sui dynasty (589–618 CE). The canal was key to helping both the Tang (618–907 CE) and Song (960–1279 CE) dynasties better control southern China and its enormous rice crop. Like the Great Wall, the canal took millions of laborers to build. Both are examples of how natural challenges helped bring China's complex civilization into being.

Lesson 1 — The Challenge of Nature

Illustration 1



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Discussing the Illustration

1. Passing through this plain in several places is a major river in China. More than 3000 years ago, China's earliest civilizations grew up along this river on plains like this. Can you name this river?
2. Thousands of years before the earliest Chinese civilizations, very small farming settlements existed on this plain. Why do you think the word "civilization" is not also used for those earlier societies?
3. This plain is part of the Loess Plateau. What is loess? From what you know about loess, the Huang He, and what you see here, explain why a huge civilization could grow up first on plains such as this one.
4. To the south of the Huang He is another huge river, which has also been of great importance to Chinese civilization. Can you name it?
5. Aside from these rivers and their plains, much of China is mountains and deserts. These have helped to keep China isolated from the world for much of its history. Can you explain why?

Follow-up Activities

1. Learn more about the Huang He in China. Create your own map of the river from its origins near the Bayankala Mountains high on the Tibet Plateau through its loops north, south, and then east to the sea. Show all the key geographic regions through which the river flows, and mark its basin or the entire area it drains. Also mark key cities and historical sites along the river. Use your map and information on these sites to create a tour guide for a trip along the Yellow River. Share your map and guide in a brief presentation to the class.
2. The Huang He is also often called "China's Sorrow." Why? Learn more about the Huang He and the role it has played in China's history. Find at least one account of a great disaster connected with this river. Prepare a newspaper-style report on that disaster and post your "news story" on the bulletin board.

Illustration 2



Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division

Discussing the Illustration

1. Along the Huang He, the key crops were millet and wheat. But in the southern part of China, especially along the Yangtze, another crop is grown, one for which China is famous. That's the crop growing here on this terraced hillside. What crop is it?
2. Rice is often grown in wet fields such as these paddies. Fields such as these became common in China as its civilization began to expand. Using this photo, can you explain the effect China's geography and its huge and rapidly growing population had on its land-use practices?
3. China's rivers bring fertile soil and water to the surrounding plains, especially near the sea. Yet the rivers also cause problems, and these terraced fields help reduce one such problem. Can you explain? Even the dangers of flood and erosion posed by the rivers have also encouraged the development of complex civilizations. Can you guess how?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Rice is very nutritious, but it takes a great deal of time and labor to produce. The wet rice paddies in the above photo show rice in the middle stages in this process. Learn more about the stages of wet rice production as traditionally carried out by farmers in China. These include growing and transplanting seedlings, preparing wet rice paddies, harvesting the crop, and threshing, hulling, and other tasks needed to make the rice usable as food. Make drawings of rice plants and of each of these stages in the process of producing rice.
2. The above photo is an example of the huge effort the Chinese have made to use natural resources in the most efficient way. Learn more about how China has done this. Specifically, find out how the need to use resources carefully has affected the following areas of life: farming, the raising of fish and game, the use of forest products, and developing sources of energy. Write a brief essay summarizing what you learn.

Lesson 1—The Challenge of Nature

Illustrations 3A & 3B

3A



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3B



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Discussing the Illustrations

1. These are photos of two of China's greatest engineering triumphs. Can you guess what they are and their names? What else do you know about them?
2. The Great Wall was built over many centuries using millions of laborers (as was the Grand Canal). From this fact and from the photo of the Great Wall, what does this suggest about the power and reach of China's imperial government?
3. China's two main rivers, the Huang He and the Yangtze, flow from the mountains in the west to the sea in the east. This made it hard for China's rulers in the regions to the north along the Huang He to gain full control of the southern part of China. Why do you suppose that was so?
4. The Grand Canal linked the lands along the Huang He with those along the Yangtze. How might the canal have helped to strengthen the rulers based in the north? In what other ways might the canal have helped improve life in China?

Follow-up Activities

1. Learn more about the construction of the Grand Canal. Also, learn more about the key cities and regions linked by the canal. Create a map of and a tour guidebook for the Grand Canal. Divide the map and the guidebook in ways that help to show the various phases in the building of the canal. Also, try to describe how the canal affected various areas through which it passed. Share your map and guide in a brief presentation to the class.
2. **Small-group activity:** The Chinese have for centuries worked hard to control their rivers and use water resources effectively. In recent years, a debate has been going on about the Three Gorges Dam project on the Yangtze River. Learn more about this project and about the views of all sides in the debate over it. Create a diagram showing what the project will do. Then in front of the class, conduct a balanced debate for and against the project. Focus on such topics as environmental impact, flood control, resettlement, local culture, power generation, and cost.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will better appreciate the key role Confucian thought played in Chinese life and in the development of its government.
2. Students will better understand the way Chinese philosophies contrasted and complimented one another.

Buddha, Tao, and the Confucian Order

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

K'ung-fu-tzu (Confucius) was China's most renowned thinker. And his philosophy of humanity and courtesy was central to the way China was ruled. That's because Confucian ideas came to form the basis of a system of exams used to select China's government officials. This ninth-century illustration shows the final and highest of these exams being conducted in the presence of the emperor. This system evolved slowly, coming into its own fully during the Song Dynasty. Confucianism taught that the official must respect his superiors, as a son does his father. A ruler must be firm but honest and compassionate with his subjects, as a father is with a son. The exam system created a class of scholar-officials with shared ideas based on a single written language. It was thus a powerful unifying force in a land of many regions and spoken dialects.

Illustration 2

Confucianism stresses social order and social morality. Taoism stresses the individual's relationship to nature and nature's underlying "Tao," or "Way." What this means is not easy to say. It is expressed poetically in the Tao Te Ching written by Lao Tzu, about whom little is known for certain. As the words here suggest, Taoism stresses accepting the natural order rather than striving to change or control it. Chinese nature paintings such as the one here often show Taoist influence in the way human figures are dwarfed by a harmonious and enfolding natural order. Individuals often turned to Taoism in troubled times when they had lost faith in society and its traditional rules for social order.

Illustration 3

Buddhism first came to China from India during the disorderly centuries after the collapse of the Han Dynasty (220 CE). Like Taoism, its stress was on the individual's spiritual quest, in this case for enlightenment through acceptance of the Four Noble Truths. Also like Taoism, it attracted support at a troubled time when the Chinese had little faith in Confucian order and were searching for more personal spiritual guidance and peace of mind. For a time, China's rulers welcomed Buddhism and helped found many Buddhist monasteries. But as the words on the bottom show, some in the late Tang period came to see Buddhism as a threat to Confucian values, and steps were taken to limit its spread.

Illustration 1

The Duke Ching, of Ch'i, asked Confucius about government. Confucius replied, "There is government, when the prince is prince, and the minister is minister; when the father is father, and the son is son."

Chi K'ang asked Confucius about government, saying, "What do you say to killing the unprincipled for the good of the principled?" Confucius replied, "Sir, in carrying on your government, why should you use killing at all? Let your evinced desires be for what is good, and the people will be good. The relation between superiors and inferiors is like that between the wind and the grass. The grass must bend, when the wind blows across it."

K'ung-fu-tzu (Confucius)
from Book 12 of *The Analects*



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Discussing the Illustrations

1. Supposedly, the answers to the above questions were given by China's most famous philosopher, K'ung-fu-tzu, known in the West as "Confucius." What do you know about Confucius? Can you explain why we say these are "supposedly" his words?
2. Confucius called for kind, polite, humane behavior. He stressed social cooperation and respect between those with authority and those whom they rule. His writings and ideas became the main topics on exams given to select officials for China's government. From Confucius's words here, why do you think China's rulers based these exams on Confucian ideas?
3. On the right is a ninth-century illustration of the final and highest of these exams being conducted before the emperor. In what ways does this drawing help illustrate the Confucian ideal for such officials?
4. In what ways are Confucian ideals like or unlike ideals widely held in our own society today?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Read through the collection of sayings by Confucius titled *The Analects*. Have each group member choose three passages that seem best to express Confucius's overall views. As a group, discuss these and choose a final five passages that you think best sum up the Confucian ideal. Share these passages with the entire class and explain your group's choices.
2. Confucius viewed ritual as an important part of the emperor's duty. In fact, ritual and sacrifice were a key part of what China's emperor was expected to do. The emperor was called the "Son of Heaven." The sacrifices he made to Heaven, his ancestors and other spirits were seen as a way to maintain the proper balance between Heaven and Earth and ensure peace and prosperity. Learn more about the ritual sacrifices the emperor had to make. Write a brief essay about this aspect of the emperor's role and its importance in China's history.

Illustration 2

Tao—The Way

43.

The softest thing in the world

Will overcome the hardest.

*Non-being can enter where there
is no space.*

*Therefore I know the benefit of
unattached action.*

*The wordless teaching
and unattached action*

Are rarely seen.

Tao Te Ching

Translated by Charles Muller



The Granger Collection, New York

Discussing the Illustrations

1. Confucianism dealt mainly with social behavior. China's other main philosophy, Taoism, dealt less with society than with the individual's place in the whole natural order. What do you know about Taoism? Taoism was supposedly founded by a man we really know nothing about for sure. Can you name him?
2. Followers of Taoism say its meaning is hard to put in words. "Tao" itself means "the Way." In the *Tao Te Ching*, a short book of verse, the Way seems to call for a humble, accepting, yielding attitude. Do you think the above verse from this book does suggest such an attitude? Why or why not? What do you think the phrase "unattached action" might mean?
3. Chinese landscape paintings, such as the one shown here, often express a Taoist spirit. Notice the size of one individual and the man-made objects, the mood evoked by the natural setting, even the use of empty space. How do you think these features help express Taoist ideas such as those in the verse shown here?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Learn more about traditional Chinese landscape paintings such as the one here, made by artist Sheng Mao in the 1300s. Bring in copies of several such paintings to use in a bulletin-board display. Organize the display around this theme: "Chinese Landscapes and the Tao." Write descriptive paragraphs on each painting that clarify this theme. One good source of ideas on this is in *China: Its History and Culture*, Third Edition, by W. Scott Morton (McGraw-Hill, 1995), pp. 104–114. See also the section on Taoism on pp. 38–42.
2. **Small-group activity:** Read through the *Tao Te Ching*. Have each group member choose three verses that seem best to express the basic ideals of Taoism. As a group, discuss the verses and choose a final five that you think best sum up Taoist philosophy. Share these verses with the entire class and explain your group's choices. (A number of translations of the *Tao Te Ching* can be found on the Internet. You may wish to compare translations of the verses you choose.)

Illustration 3

The Four Noble Truths

- All human life is suffering
- All suffering is due to human desire or attachment to the impermanent
- Human suffering can end once desire ends
- The way to end desire is to follow the Middle Path of right thought and action



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

For Buddha was a barbarian. His language was not the language of China; his clothes were of an alien cut. He did not utter the maxims of our ancient rulers, nor conform to the customs which they have handed down. He did not appreciate the bond between prince and minister, the tie between father and son.

Han Yu, a key Tang official (819 CE)

Discussing the Illustrations

1. Like Taoism, Buddhism emphasizes the individual's search for spiritual guidance, truth about the universe and enlightenment. But Buddhism came to China from another land. What land? What do you know about Buddhism and its Four Noble Truths?
2. The illustration above is a small part of a 68-foot Chinese scroll. Who is the central seated figure? In what way does this typical portrayal of Buddha help illustrate the Buddhist ideal of enlightenment?
3. Buddhism really began to spread in China during the troubled centuries after the Han dynasty collapsed (220 CE). This was a time of war and disunity within China. Many educated Chinese in these times were attracted to both Buddhism and Taoism as opposed to Confucianism. Why do you think that was so?
4. At first, officials of the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE) supported Buddhism. But by the late Tang era, they had begun to turn against it. From Han Yu's words, can you explain why they objected to its teachings?

Follow-up Activities

1. The above listed Four Noble Truths of Buddhism may seem somewhat vague and general as they are summarized here. To better understand their meaning, it may help to learn more about the founder of Buddhism, Siddhartha Gautama, and the events that are said to have led to his "enlightenment." Based on what you learn, write a brief essay in which you use the story of Siddhartha's life to help explain the real meaning of the Four Noble Truths.
2. How did Buddhism find its way to China? Monks and missionaries from both India and China helped to spread this religion. One of the most famous of these figures was a Chinese monk named Xuan Zang. His travels to India lasted from 629 to 645 CE. Learn more about him and the popular plays and stories in China about his travels and adventures. Based on what you learn, create a map showing Xuan Zang's long pilgrimage to India and back. Use the map in a brief talk to the class on Xuan Zang and his place in China's history.

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will better appreciate the cultural achievements of China during the Tang and Song dynasties.
2. Students will understand why the nomads north of China were a constant problem for it at various times in its past.

From Tang to the Mongols

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustrations 1A & 1B**

During the Tang and Song eras, China achieved great things in all areas of social and economic life. Along with feats such as the Grand Canal, China gave the world many inventions. Illustration 1A shows a Chinese papermaker in the 1600s dipping a bamboo frame into pulp, which is then spread thinly across the frame to dry. Chinese paper-making really began in the second century CE, if not earlier. Printing with woodblocks (and later with movable type) was also discovered first in China, long before Johannes Gutenberg developed it in a different way in Europe in the 1400s. Illustration 1B shows some astronomical instruments developed by a Chinese scientist in the 13th century to determine the relative positions and distances of stars and other objects in the sky.

Illustration 2

China is a huge, diverse land that was held together under the Tang and Song dynasties by the scholar-bureaucrats of a powerful central government. As this map shows, the Tang extended China's control to the south and far into Central Asia. This helped secure access to the Silk Road, a series of overland trade routes linking China with western Asia and Europe. However, powerful nomadic peoples have always threatened China from the north. The Great Wall was begun long before the Tang dynasty to keep out these warriors. Later Chinese rulers continued to add to it—and for good reason.

Illustration 3

The efficient taxation of agricultural wealth was the key to keeping China's central government strong. But military threats often put a great strain on this system, leading to internal troubles as well. The later Song empire faced such troubles in the 12th century, topped off by the Mongol invasions in the 13th. The Mongols were a nomadic people from the steppe lands northwest of China. In the early 1200s, they united under Temuchin, who took the title "Genghis Khan" ("universal ruler"). The Mongols were not as advanced as the Chinese. But they were terrifyingly effective warriors on horseback. As this map shows, within Genghis Khan's lifetime, they conquered the largest land empire the world has ever known. And shortly after his death, the Mongols completed their conquest of China and established a new dynasty, the Yuan.

Lesson 3—From Tang to the Mongols

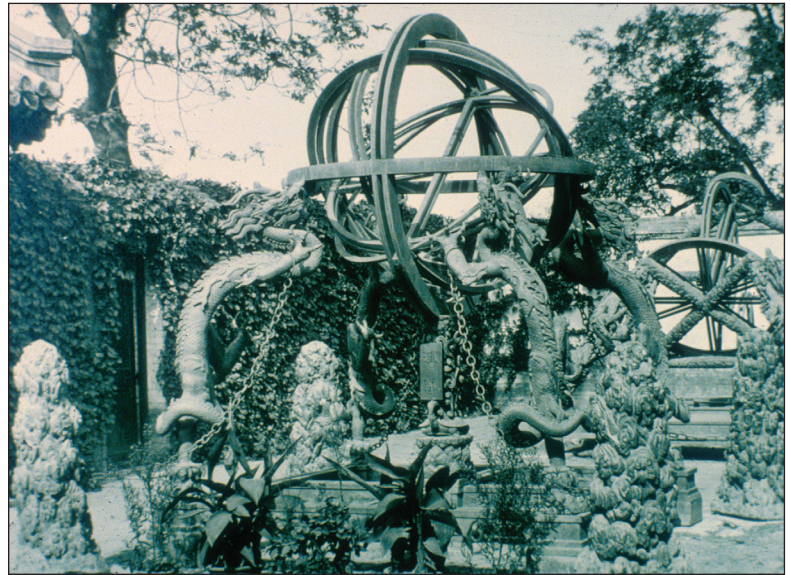
Illustrations 1A & 1B

1A



The Granger Collection, New York

1B



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Discussing the Illustrations

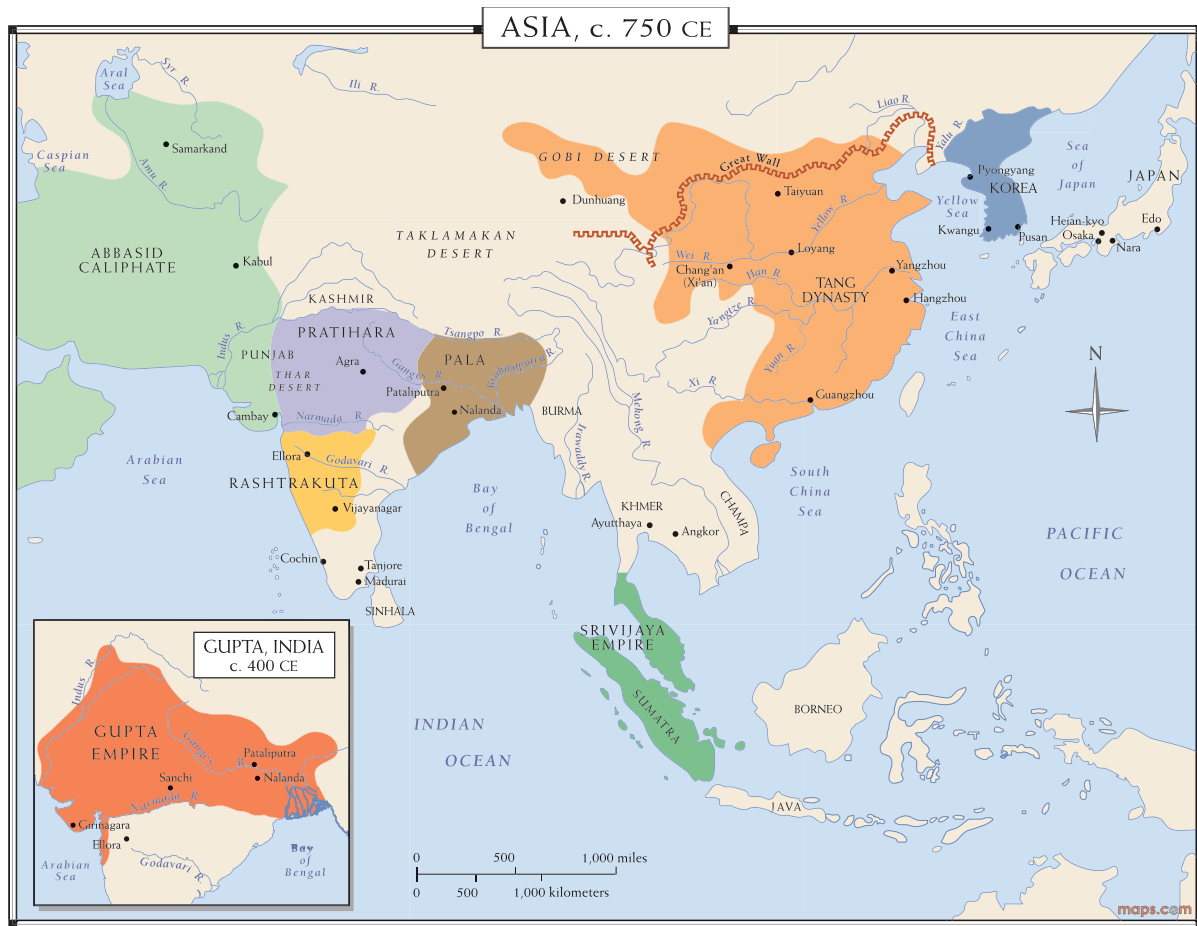
1. Along with feats such as the Grand Canal, China gave the world many inventions and goods, including one shown being manufactured in Illustration 1A. Can you guess what product is being made?
2. Chinese paper-making began as early as the second century CE. The Chinese soon learned to print on paper, first with woodblocks and, by the 11th century, with movable type. What famous European printer discovered a somewhat different process of printing with movable type, and in what century did he make this discovery? Can you name some other important technological innovations made first by the Chinese?
3. Illustration 1B shows some instruments developed by a 13th-century Chinese scientist. What do you suppose these are for? Given the role of the emperor as the “Son of Heaven,” it is not surprising that the Chinese would have a strong interest in what these instruments could do. Can you explain?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** Historians say paper-making in China goes back as far as the second century CE. Some forms of printing appeared even earlier. Create a timeline of paper-making and printing in China from these early times up to the 1400s, when Gutenberg invented his printing method. Be sure to find out about woodblock printing and Chinese forms of movable type. Use your timeline in a brief talk to the class. In your talk, try to make clear how these early Chinese printing techniques were and were not like the process Gutenberg invented.
2. The Chinese invented gunpowder. One commonly held myth about the Chinese is that they never used gunpowder for military purposes. Learn more about China’s invention of gunpowder. Give a brief talk to the class about the discovery of gunpowder by the Chinese and the uses they made of it, both military and non-military.

Lesson 3—From Tang to the Mongols

Illustration 2



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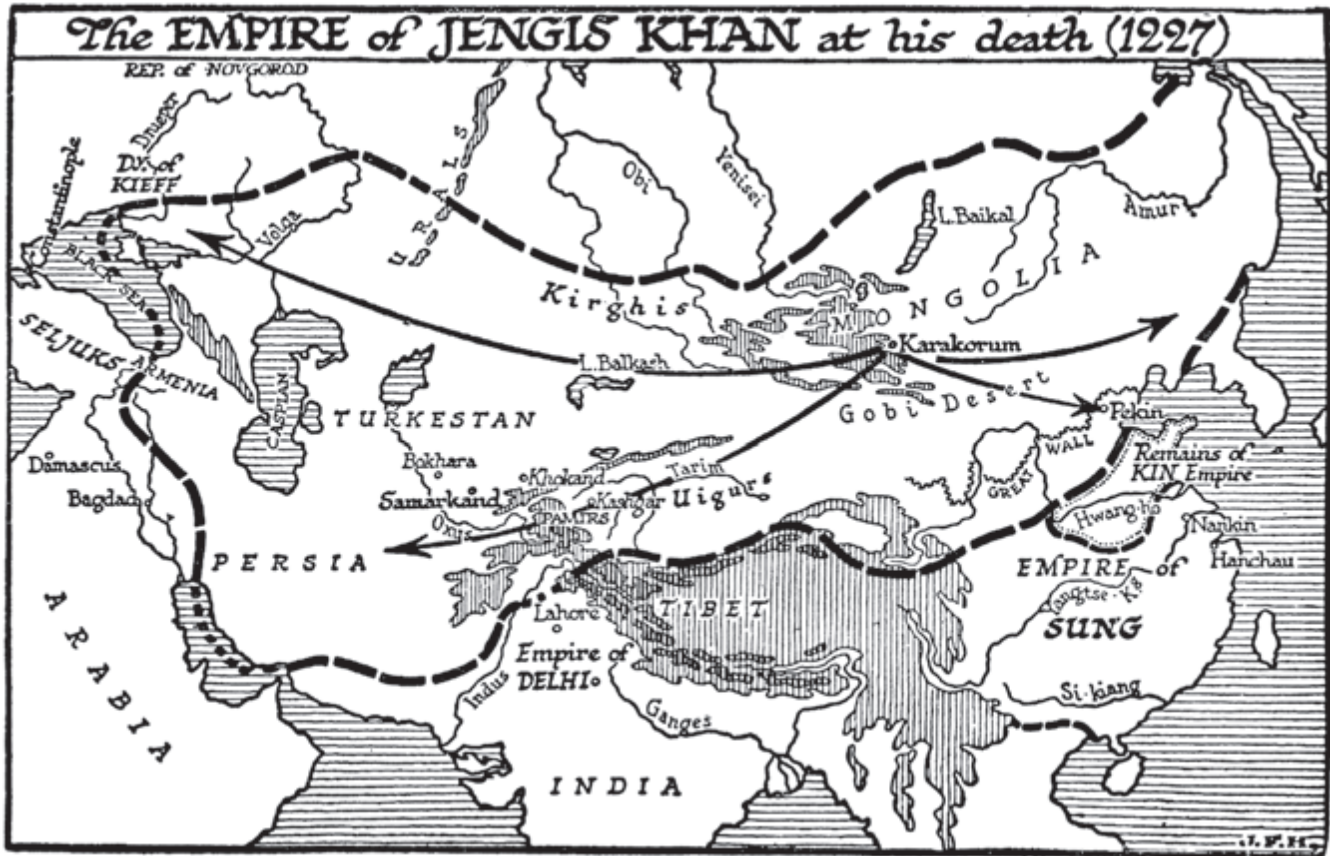
Discussing the Illustration

1. China is a huge, diverse land. This map shows it during the middle of the so-called Tang dynasty. Can you explain what is meant by the term “dynasty” in the case of ancient China?
2. This map shows that the Tang extended China’s control well to the south of the Huang He (Yellow River) area and far to the northwest into Central Asia. One reason the Tang sought to control these northwestern regions had to do with the threat of nomads. Can you explain what nomads are and what threat they posed to China in the Tang era and later?
3. What feature on the map shows how great an effort the Chinese made to protect against this danger?
4. Another goal of expansion under the Tang and later dynasties was to secure China’s access to the “Silk Road.” What was the Silk Road, and why would China’s rulers have been concerned about it?

Follow-up Activities

1. The Great Wall known today was mainly built during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). However, smaller walls were first linked together in a longer barrier in the third century BCE. Even then, nomadic tribes north of China were a big threat. The most important of these were the Hsiung-nu. Learn more about the Hsiung-nu, their lands, lifestyle, and fighting tactics. Pretend you are a Chinese official in the third century BCE. Based on what you know about the Hsiung-nu, write a letter to the emperor explaining why you do or do not think the idea of a Great Wall is a good one.
2. Learn more about the Silk Road. You should be able to find information easily that will enable you to create a map of your own of the main Silk Road routes. Mark five interesting spots on the Silk Road. Now pretend you are a merchant who was able to travel the whole length of the Silk Road (in reality this rarely if ever happened). Write imaginary diary entries for each of the five spots. Post your entries on the bulletin board, along with Silk Road illustrations.

Illustration 3



Stock Montage, Inc.

Discussing the Illustration

1. Two strong dynasties ruled China for much of the time from the seventh century CE to the middle of the 13th century CE. But then, a time of troubles set in, and in the mid-1200s, the most powerful nomadic force in history altered Chinese history in a major way. Using this map, can you explain who they were and what they did?
2. The leader who united the Mongols and created this huge empire is still one of the most feared figures in history. Can you name him?
3. The Mongols, like the other nomads of the vast steppe of Central Asia, were fierce warriors on horseback whose lightning raids and swift military tactics enabled them to conquer many societies that were in other ways far more advanced than they. Why do you think the nomads of the steppe were able to master horse-riding skills so well and become a threat to all of the civilizations near them?

Follow-up Activities

1. **Small-group activity:** After his death, Genghis Khan's empire was divided up among his four sons into the Khanate of Kipchak (the "Golden Horde"), the Khanate of Persia (the "Ilkhanate"), the Khanate of Chagatai, and the Khanate of the Great Khan. Create a map clearly showing all four khanates. Then have each group member research one of them. As a group, create a presentation for the rest of the class on the Mongol Empire, its khanates, and their fate. In your talk, try to explain why the Mongol Empire grew as large as it did and also why none of its four khanates lasted much more than a century or two after Genghis Khan's death.
2. The Mongols were feared mainly because of the devastating tactics of their mounted warriors. Learn more about these tactics. If possible, create a diagram of a battle to illustrate how the military forces of this small nomadic society were able to conquer the armies of much larger and wealthier societies. Give a brief talk to the class on this topic.

OBJECTIVE

1. Students will understand some of the ways China affected the rest of the world even though it had limited direct contact with societies outside Asia.

The Mongols to the Manchus

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION**Illustration 1**

In 1279, Genghis Khan's grandson Kublai Khan defeated the last forces of the Song dynasty. Here he is shown riding into battle with other military men atop a howdah held up by several elephants. As Marco Polo's words make clear, Kublai Khan was a powerful military leader. But he was not driven merely by a desire for plunder. While his top officials were Mongols (some with Muslim assistants), most lower officials were Chinese. Kublai Khan fostered trade, built roads, and rebuilt parts of the Grand Canal. He supported the arts and tolerated many religions. Later Mongol rulers were not as careful. Soon their weakness and rising Chinese discontent led to huge new upheavals. The brief Yuan dynasty collapsed in 1368.

Illustrations 2A & 2B

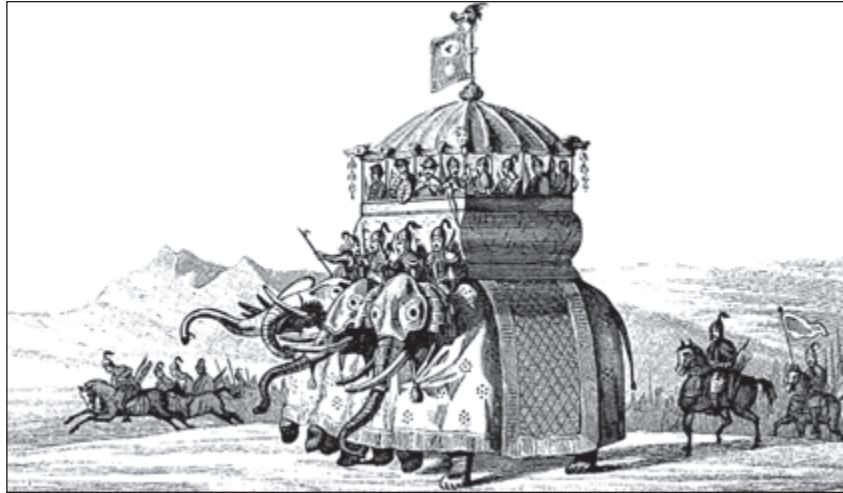
Under the Mongols, China was more open to the outside world than before, as Marco Polo's stay suggests. The Ming dynasty (1368–1644) also at first engaged in overseas exploration. In the early 1400s, several huge naval expeditions under the command of Zheng He sailed to India, East Africa, and the Persian Gulf region. But the Ming soon pulled back from further exploration. Instead, it was Europe that expanded overseas, and some Europeans came to China in the 1500s to trade and exchange ideas. For a time, Catholic Jesuits were influential in China. Illustration 2B is Jesuit Matteo Ricci who entered China in 1583, gained a position at the imperial court, learned Chinese and worked to adapt Christian teachings to the Confucian and Buddhist views of China's ruling officials.

Illustrations 3A & 3B

In spite of growing contacts with outsiders, China remained focused inward, sure of its superior place in the world. The Ming emperors built Beijing's famous Forbidden City, for example. Later, the conquering Manchus continued to use it after establishing their Qing dynasty (1644–1911). The huge compound of palaces express this Chinese sense of confidence. Illustration 3B is the Hall of Supreme Harmony. The emperor was the "Son of Heaven," who had to oversee all human affairs and even keep the *yin* and *yang* of the cosmic order in balance. Emperors held court in splendor in the Forbidden City, whose halls and gates even in their very names ("Gate of Supreme Harmony," "Hall of Heavenly Peace," etc.) convey China's sense of serene, proud self-confidence.

Lesson 4—The Mongols to the Manchus

Illustration 1



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Nor have there ever been such forces in the field in actual fight, especially of horsemen, as were then engaged—for, taking both sides, there were not fewer than 760,000 horsemen, a mighty force! and that without reckoning the footmen, who were also very numerous. The battle endured with various fortune on this side and on that from morning till noon. But at the last, by God's pleasure and the right that was on his side, the Great Khan had the victory, and Nayan lost the battle and was utterly routed.

Marco Polo, describing a battle in 1287 between Kublai Khan's forces and those of the Khan's uncle and rival, Nayan.

Discussing the Illustrations

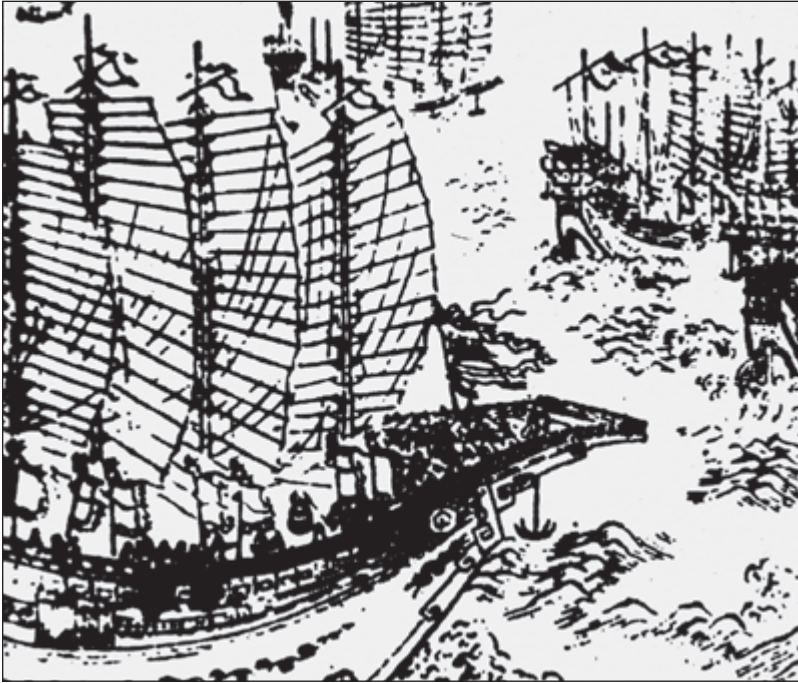
1. Genghis Khan never lived to complete the conquest of China. But his grandson did, in 1279. He went on to become one of China's most powerful emperors. Can you name him?
2. This drawing is of Kublai Khan and his forces riding into battle in a *howdah* on several elephants. How does this image help explain why the Mongols were so feared? How does it back up Marco Polo's words here. Who was Marco Polo, and why would he have known anything about Kublai Khan?
3. Kublai Khan was more than just a warrior. As emperor of China, he worked hard to foster trade, rebuild roads and extend the Grand Canal. He tolerated various religions in China, but allowed only Mongols to hold the highest government offices. Why do you suppose he followed these policies? Some historians say his refusal to appoint Chinese as top officials was one factor that weakened support for Mongol rule, which collapsed in 1368. Why do you suppose these historians think that?

Follow-up Activities

1. Marco Polo's own account of his years in China, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, has been published many times. Find a version of his account, either complete or abridged. Choose five passages in the book that you think by themselves illustrate the most important aspects of Marco Polo's story. Share these passages with the class, tell the story of Marco Polo's travels, and talk specifically about the passages you chose and why you chose them.
2. The Mongols were excellent military conquerors and empire builders. But they were not nearly as good at holding onto power in the settled societies they conquered. Why not? Try to answer this question by reading more about the fate of the Mongols in China after the death of Kublai Khan in 1294. Create a timeline based on the series of emperors that ruled China from 1294 to 1368. Use this timeline as part of a brief talk to the class on the last Mongol emperors and why they lost power in 14th-century China.

Illustrations 2A & 2B

2A



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2B



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Discussing the Illustrations

1. Under the Mongols, China was more open to the outside world than before. At first, the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) also showed this same spirit, in the form of a great undertaking by a Muslim Chinese official named Zheng He. Using Illustration 2A, can you explain?
2. In 1433, however, the Ming rulers suddenly changed their policies regarding overseas ventures of this sort. They stopped them and even allowed the huge ships Zheng He used to rot in their harbors. What else do you know about this shift in policy and how would you explain it?
3. Europeans arrived to trade with China in the 1500s. Also, the Catholic Jesuits became involved in China, often sharing their knowledge of maps, math, and astronomy. Illustration 2B is of the most famous of these Jesuits, a man who learned Chinese and tried to adapt Christianity to the Confucian views of his hosts. Can you name him?

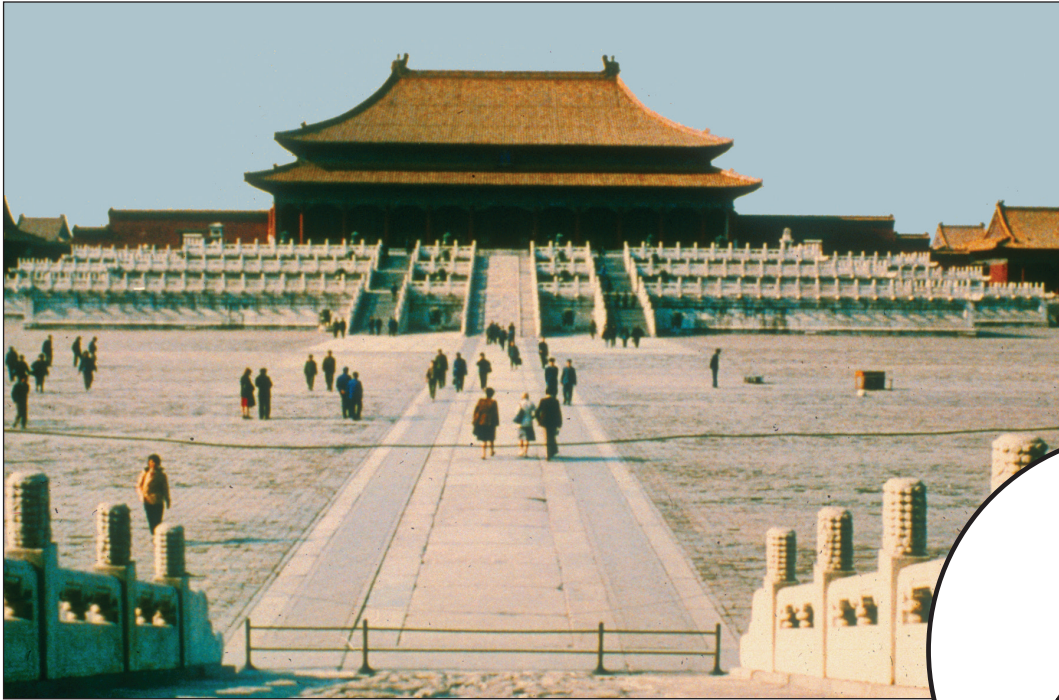
Follow-up Activities

1. Among the many vessels making up Zheng He's enormous expeditions were his "treasure ships." Learn more about these ships, the purposes of Sheng He's expeditions, and the reasons historians give for why the Chinese imperial government turned away from further state-run overseas ventures. Give a talk to the class on what you learn. One very good source is the book *When China Ruled the Seas: The Treasure Fleet of the Dragon Throne, 1405–1433*, by Louise Levathes.
2. The Italian Jesuit priest Matteo Ricci learned a great deal about Chinese culture while in China. He also learned much about Buddhism there. In fact, some Chinese even came to call him "Bodhisattva Ricci." Learn more about Matteo Ricci. Also find out what a bodhisattva is. Give a brief talk in class in which you describe Ricci's stay in China, what he did there that was historically important, and how he earned the nickname Bodhisattva.

Lesson 4—The Mongols to the Manchus

Illustrations 3A & 3B

3A



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3B



Discussing the Illustrations

1. From the 1500s on, China's contacts with nations outside of Asia did increase. Yet, for the most part, China continued to look inward, with a sure sense of its superiority to the rest of the world. Why do you think China as a whole had such pride in itself?
2. This confident sense of satisfaction can easily be felt by a visit to the magnificent palace complex built by the powerful Ming emperors. Illustration 2A shows one palace in this complex. Can you name this complex and the city it is in?
3. The emperors all lived in the Forbidden City. The Chinese emperor was called the "Son of Heaven." His task was to oversee all human affairs and even keep the *yin* and *yang* of the cosmic order in balance. Illustration 3B is a typical Chinese *yin/yang* symbol. What do you know about it? What do you think this symbol—and the Forbidden City—help to show about Chinese society in the past?

Follow-up Activities

1. Organize text, photos, and diagrams that you would use to create a tour guidebook for the Forbidden City. Find photographs and diagrams of the entire compound of palaces and halls. Include information on the Meridian Gate, the Gate of Supreme Harmony, the Hall of Supreme Harmony, the Hall of Medium Harmony, the Hall of Protective Harmony, the Hall of Heavenly Peace, the Hall of Union and Peace, and the Hall of Earthly Peace—and any other features you think should be a part of the tour. Write brief paragraphs describing each of these features and explaining their purpose in the overall plan of the Forbidden City.
2. Learn more about the *yin/yang* symbol shown here. Write a brief report on the symbol, its meaning, and how it helps illustrate key concepts of importance in Chinese culture and society.

Image Close-ups

The Challenge of Nature

Illustration 1



© Instructional Resources Corporation

The Challenge of Nature

Illustration 2



Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division

The Challenge of Nature

Illustrations 3A & 3B

3A



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3B



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Buddha, Tao, and the Confucian Order

Illustration 1

The Duke Ching, of Ch'i, asked Confucius about government. Confucius replied, "There is government, when the prince is prince, and the minister is minister; when the father is father, and the son is son."

Chi K'ang asked Confucius about government, saying, "What do you say to killing the unprincipled for the good of the principled?" Confucius replied, "Sir, in carrying on your government, why should you use killing at all? Let your evinced desires be for what is good, and the people will be good. The relation between superiors and inferiors is like that between the wind and the grass. The grass must bend, when the wind blows across it."

K'ung-fu-tzu (Confucius)
from Book 12 of *The Analects*



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Buddha, Tao, and the Confucian Order

Illustration 2

Tao—The Way

43.

The softest thing in the world

Will overcome the hardest.

*Non-being can enter where there
is no space.*

*Therefore I know the benefit of
unattached action.*

*The wordless teaching
and unattached action*

Are rarely seen.

Tao Te Ching

Translated by Charles Muller



The Granger Collection, New York

Buddha, Tao, and the Confucian Order

Illustration 3

The Four Noble Truths

- All human life is suffering
- All suffering is due to human desire or attachment to the impermanent
- Human suffering can end once desire ends
- The way to end desire is to follow the Middle Path of right thought and action



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

For Buddha was a barbarian. His language was not the language of China; his clothes were of an alien cut. He did not utter the maxims of our ancient rulers, nor conform to the customs which they have handed down. He did not appreciate the bond between prince and minister, the tie between father and son.

Han Yu, a key Tang official, 819 CE

From Tang to the Mongols

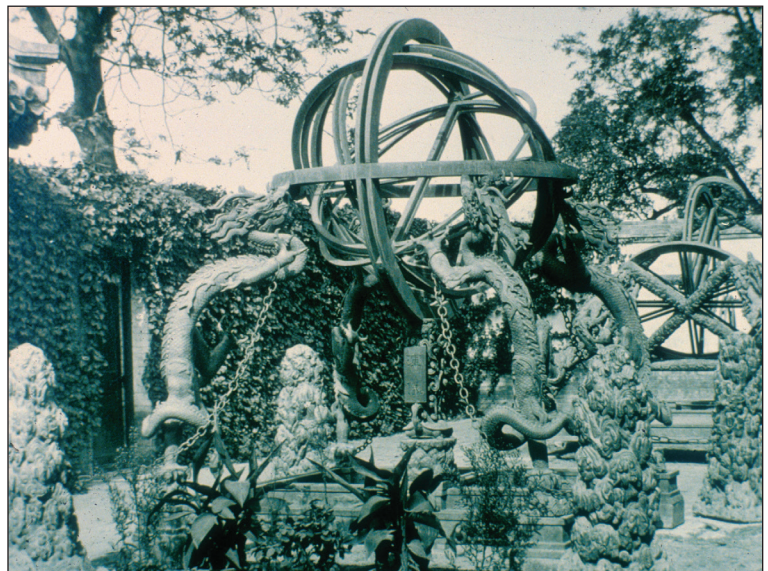
Illustrations 1A & 1B

1A



The Granger Collection, New York

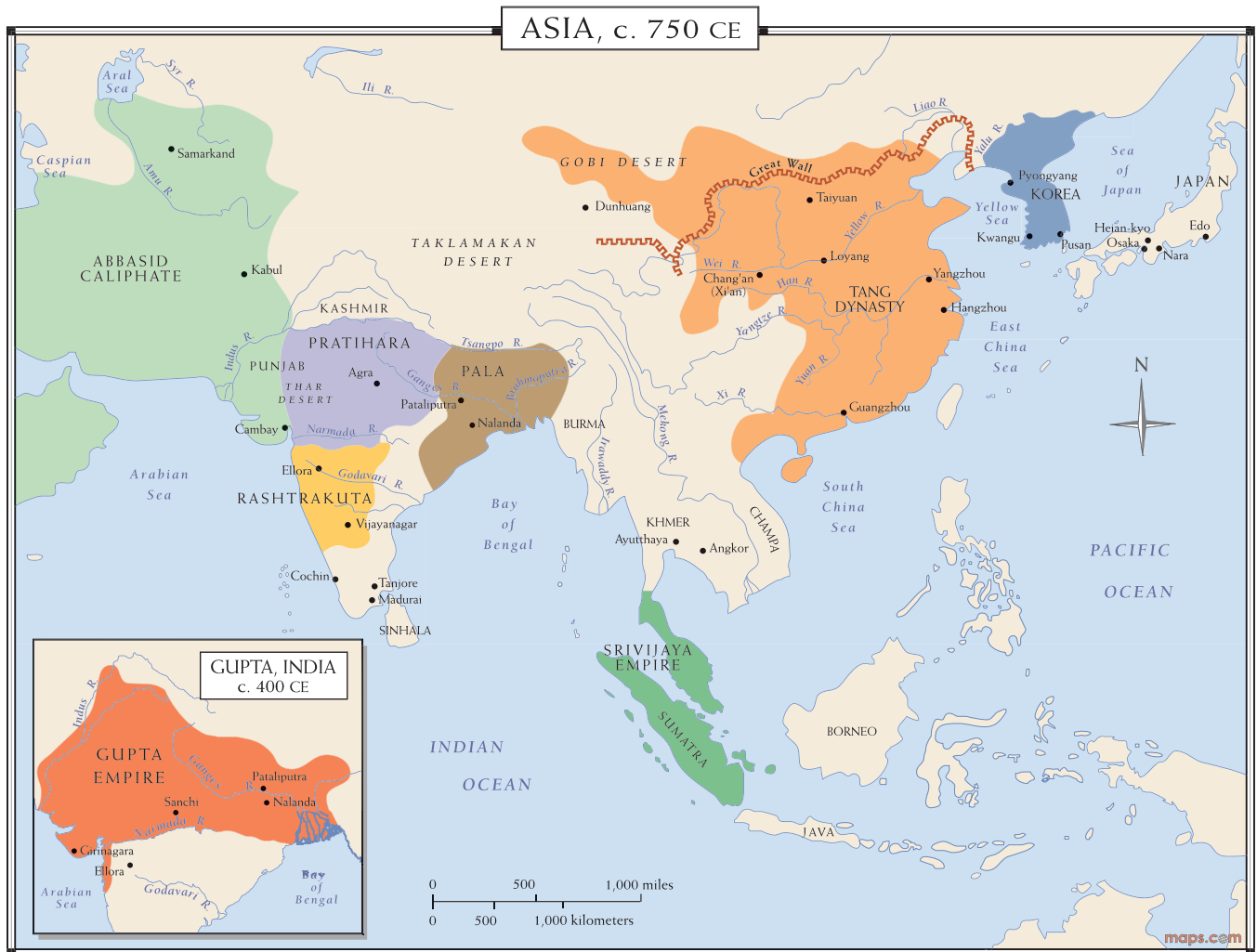
1B



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From Tang to the Mongols

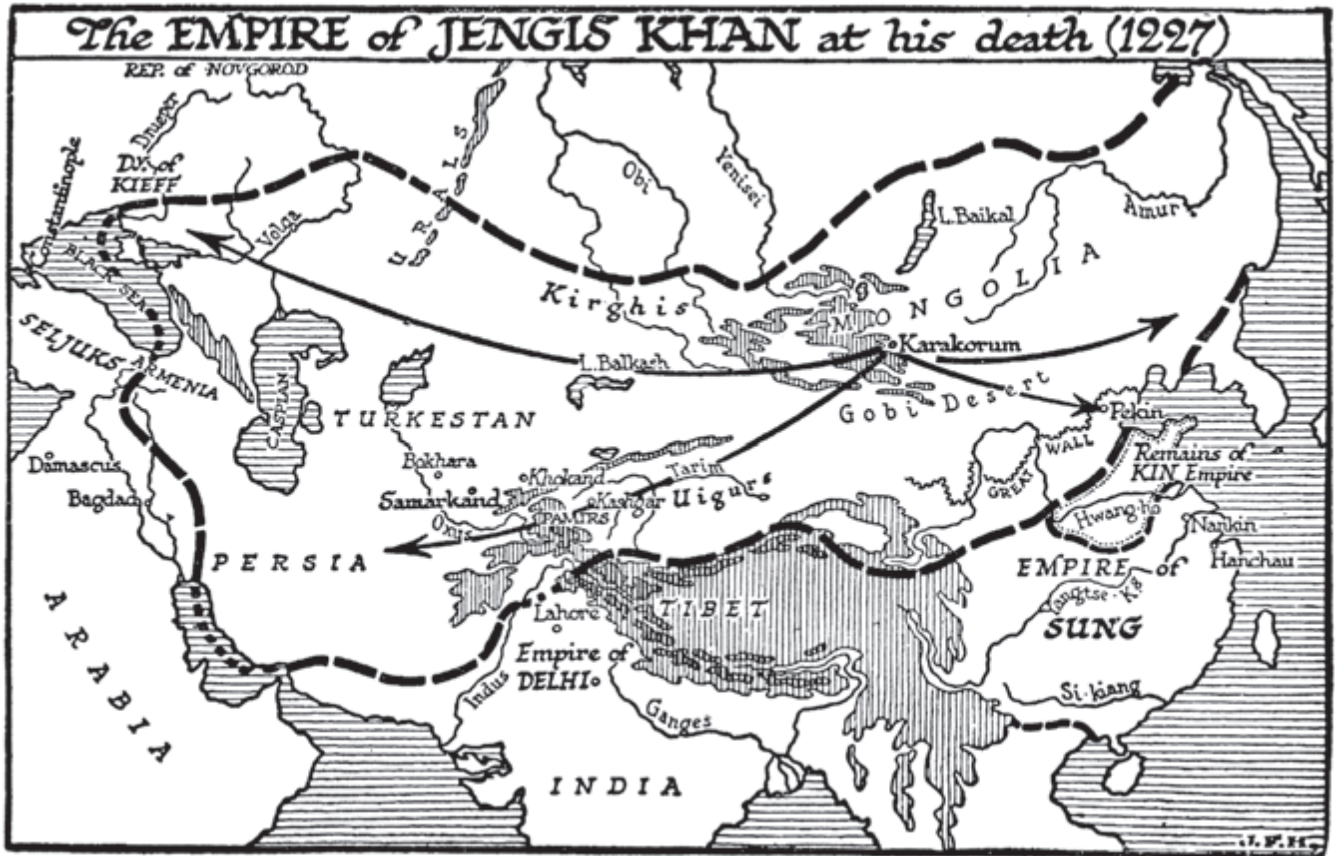
Illustration 2



© Maps.com

From Tang to the Mongols

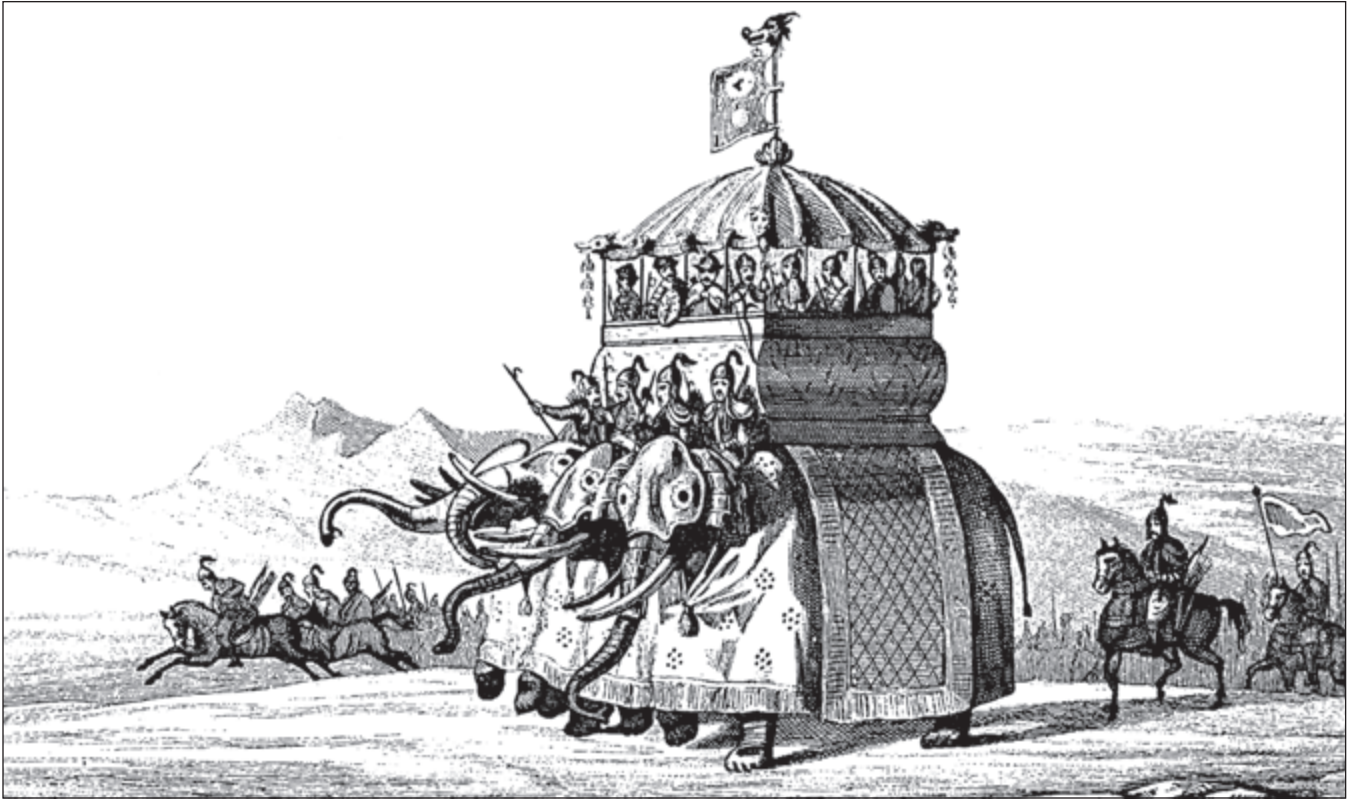
Illustration 3



Stock Montage, Inc.

The Mongols to the Manchus

Illustration 1



Stock Montage, Inc.

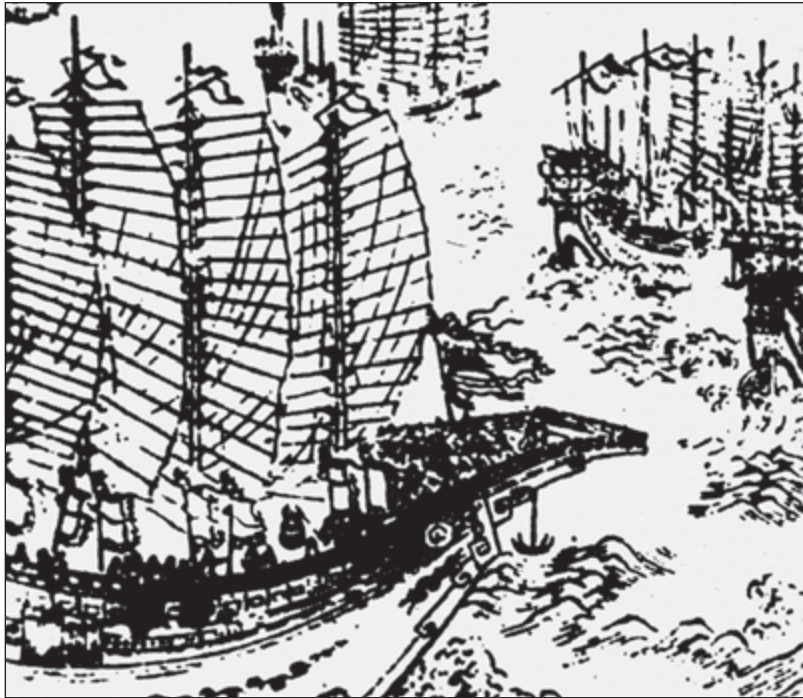
Nor have there ever been such forces in the field in actual fight, especially of horsemen, as were then engaged—for, taking both sides, there were not fewer than 760,000 horsemen, a mighty force! And that without reckoning the footmen, who were also very numerous. The battle endured with various fortune on this side and on that from morning till noon. But at the last, by God's pleasure and the right that was on his side, the Great Khan had the victory, and Nayan lost the battle and was utterly routed.

Marco Polo, describing a battle in 1287 between Kublai Khan's forces and those of the Khan's uncle and rival Nayan.

The Mongols to the Manchus

Illustrations 2A & 2B

2A



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2B

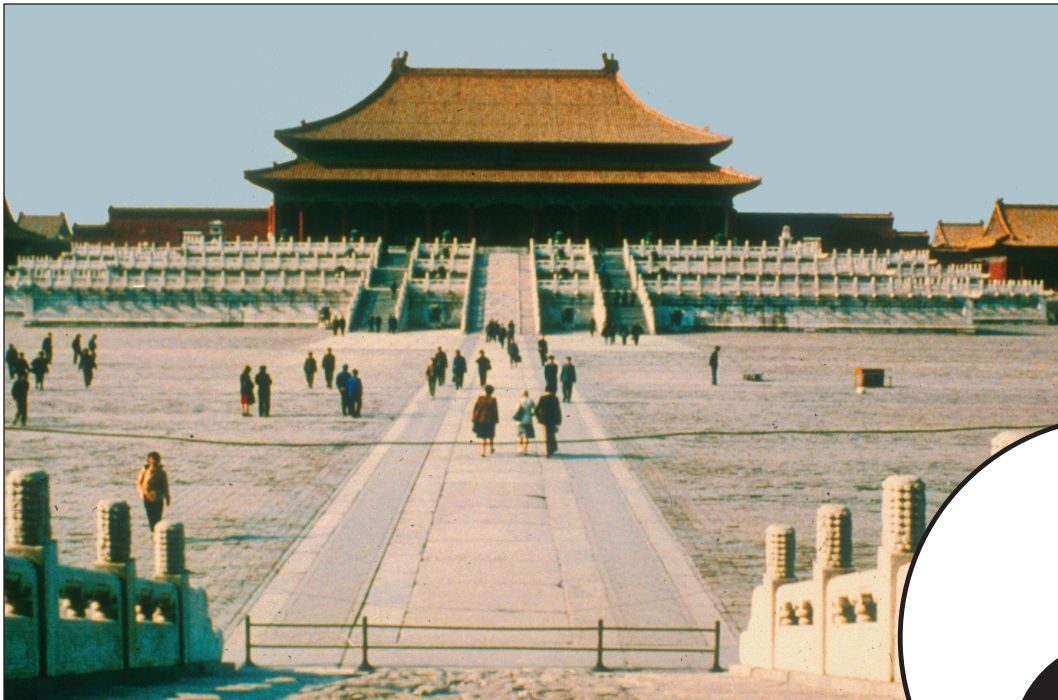


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The Mongols to the Manchus

Illustrations 3A & 3B

3A



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3B



