

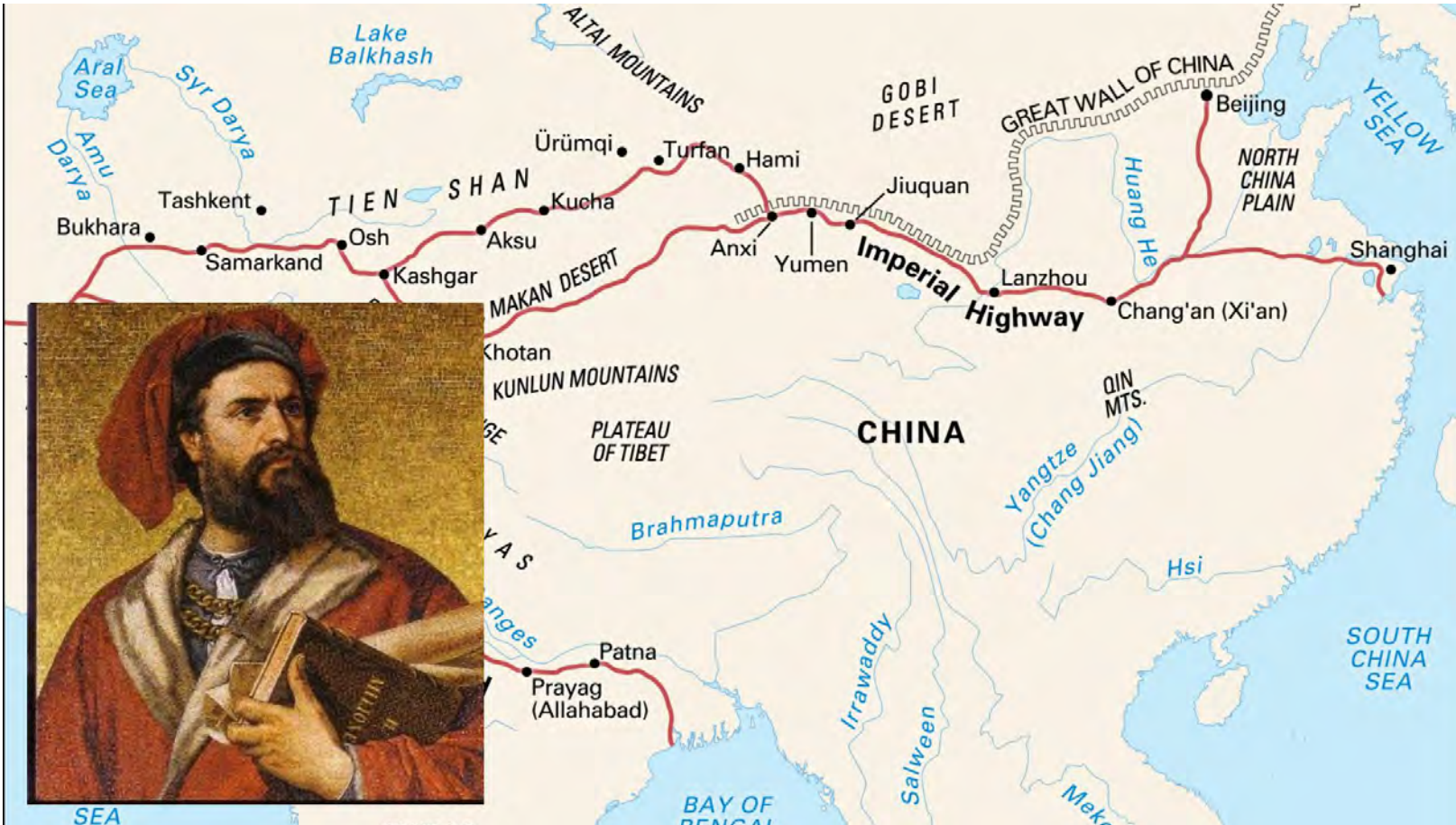


China, from Earliest Times through 20thC

Fall 2025 Marist CLS – Class Five

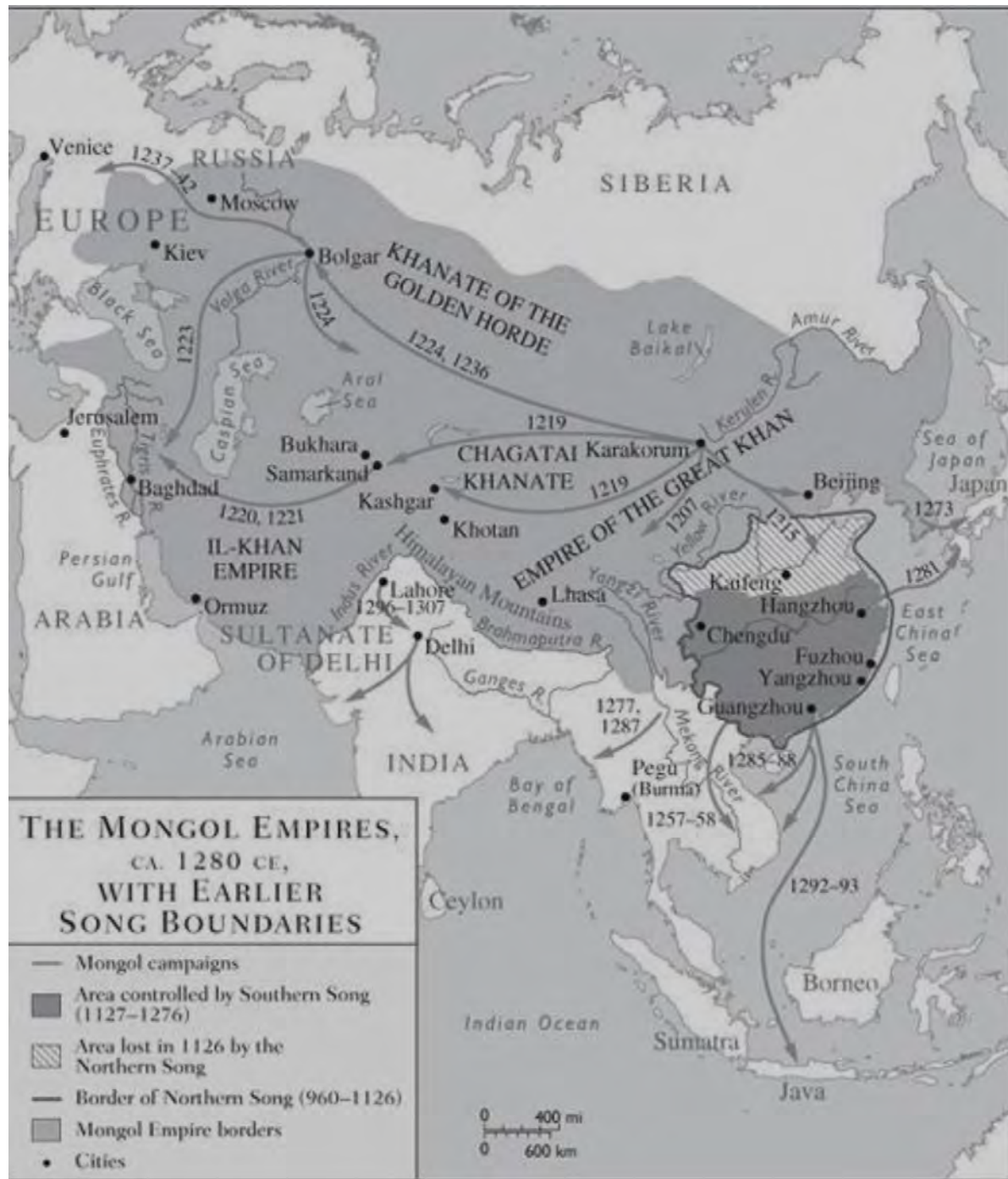
The West Discovers the East

- Marco Polo's travels: 1271-1295
- Member of an experienced trading family
- He probably served in the government in South China
- His book described the mysterious cultures of the Eastern world
- He gave glowing reports of wealth and great size of China during the Yuan Dynasty
- Also gave Europeans their first comprehensive look at:
 - Japan
 - Persia
 - India



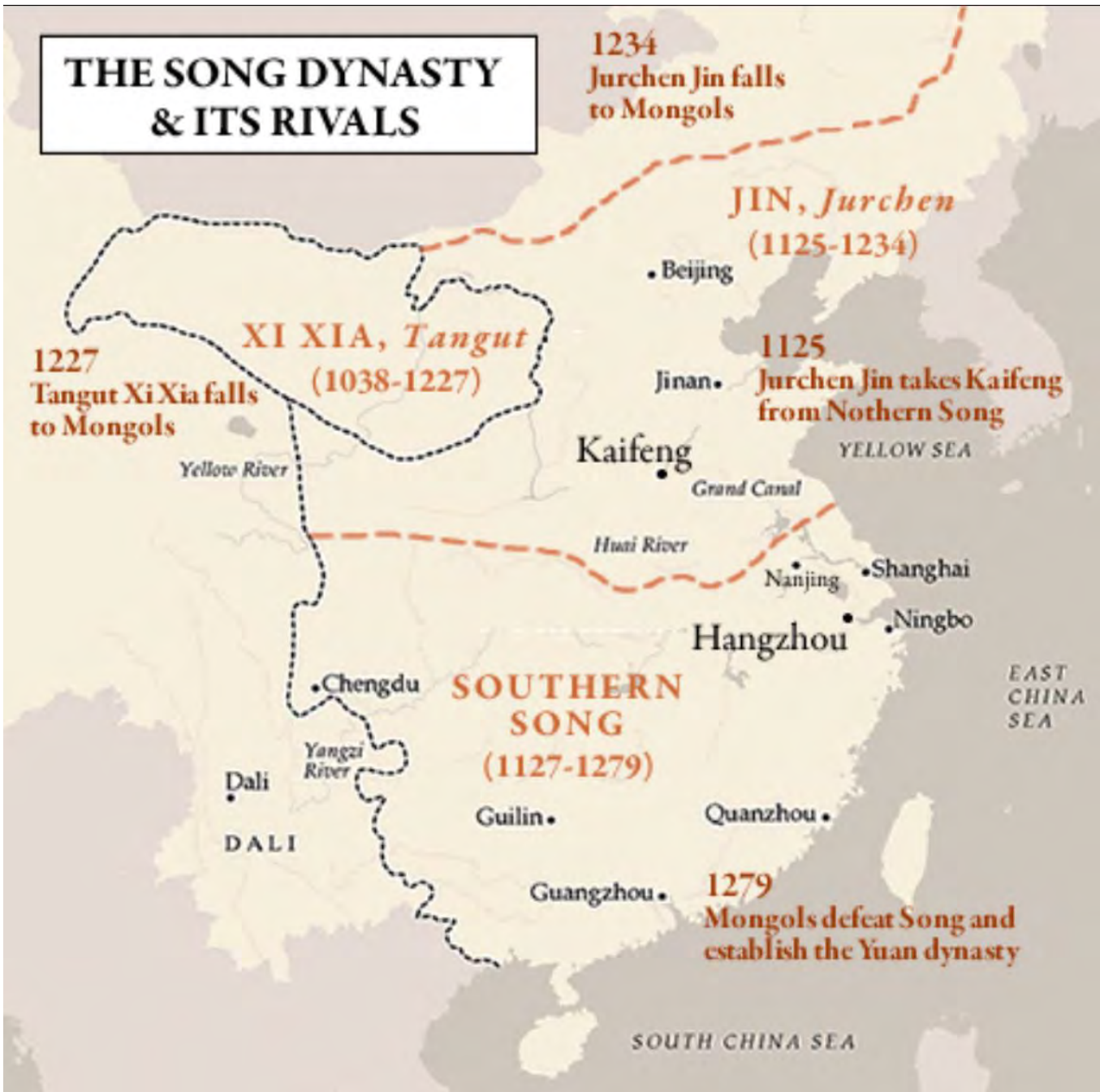


Mongol Expansion



- Despite the economic prosperity, intellectual brilliance, and artistic greatness of the Song dynasty, it was continuously under military pressure from its nomadic neighbors to the north and west and in the thirteenth century succumbed to a newly arrived nomadic force, the Mongols of Central Asia
- Before defeating the Southern Song, Chinggis (Genghis) Khan created the most effective fighting force and the largest land empire the world had ever seen.
- Troops traveled with three to five horses per soldier so they could carry supplies and weapons, change mounts regularly, and keep moving rapidly for days on end

THE SONG DYNASTY & ITS RIVALS



Mongolian Soldiers in Time of Chinggis Khan

- Military commanders used flags, torches, and message carriers to maintain effective communications between units. Soldiers wore light armor made of leather with metal scales and helmets of leather or iron and carried leather-covered wicker shields
- Each soldier carried two powerful compound bows and a large quiver of at least sixty iron-tipped arrows. With the use of iron stirrups, soldiers could shoot arrows accurately from a standing position while riding on horseback at full gallop
- Today, their Mongolian descendants proudly display horsemanship by age six

Modern Mongolian Horsemanship



Origin of the Yuan Dynasty

1271-1368 CE

- Kubilai Khan was the Grandson of Chinggis Khan of the Mongols
- Mongols controlled the old North China area the Song Dynasty never included, by replacing the Jurchen rulers
- Decades later, when the Yuan Dynasty controlled the Chinese Heartland, it did not control rest of Mongol territory
- Mongols had made Korea a vassal; later Kubilai attempted expansion into nearby Japan



Examples of Chinese “Diplomacy” towards Japan

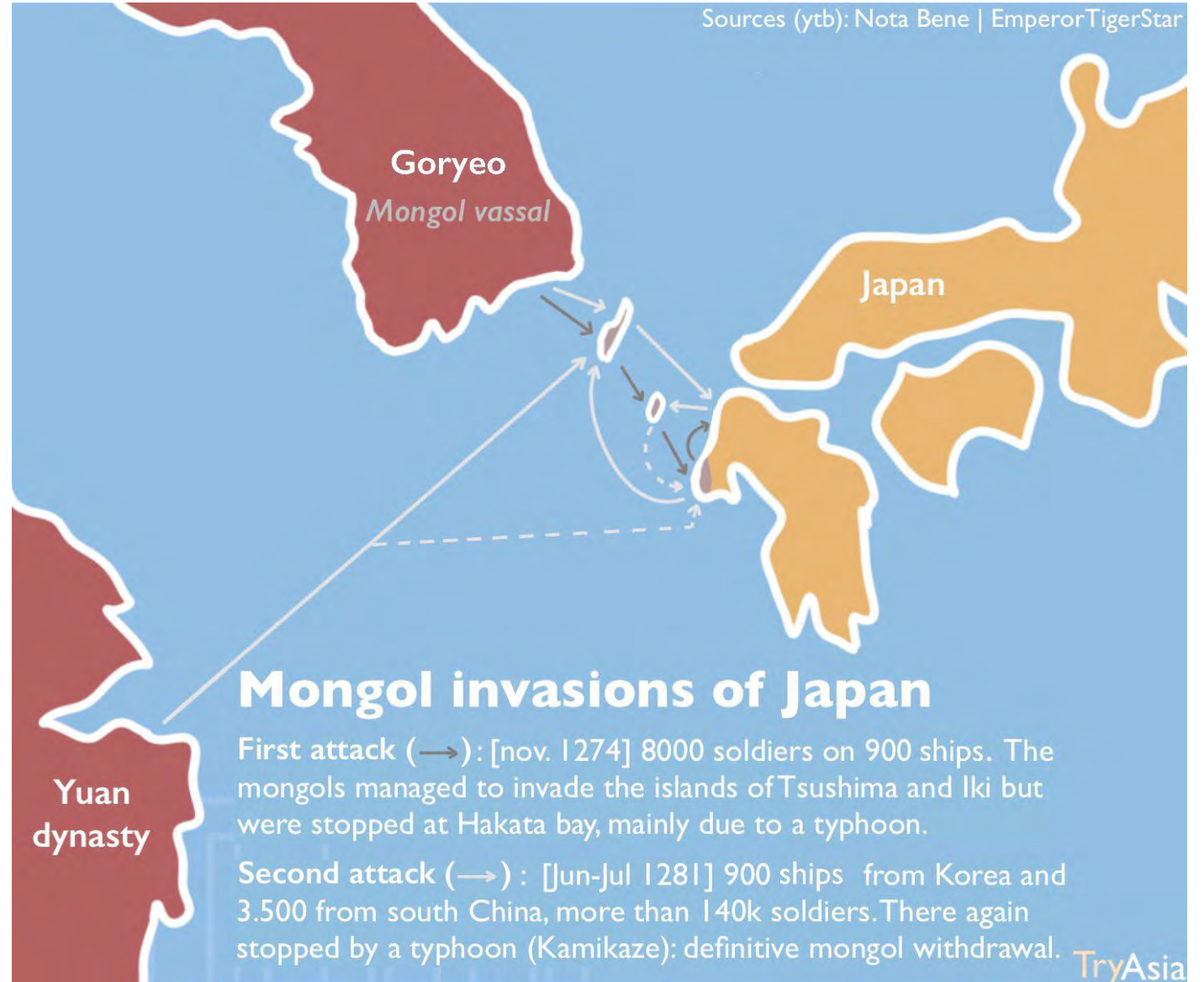
- In 1266, Kublai Khan dispatched emissaries to Japan. The Japanese anticipated that the demand was really for Japan to become a vassal of the Yuans
- Kubilai’s initial letter to Japan in 1266; excerpts:
- “Cherished by the Mandate of Heaven the Great Mongol Emperor sends this letter to the King of Japan. The sovereigns of small countries, sharing borders with each other, have for a long time been concerned to communicate with each other and become friendly...Goryeo (Korea) rendered thanks for my ceasefire and for restoring their land and people when I ascended the throne. Our relation is feudatory like a father and son. You probably already know of this. However, Japan has never dispatched ambassadors since my ascending the throne. You should establish friendly relations with each other from now. Nobody would wish to resort to arms”

After No Response from Japan:

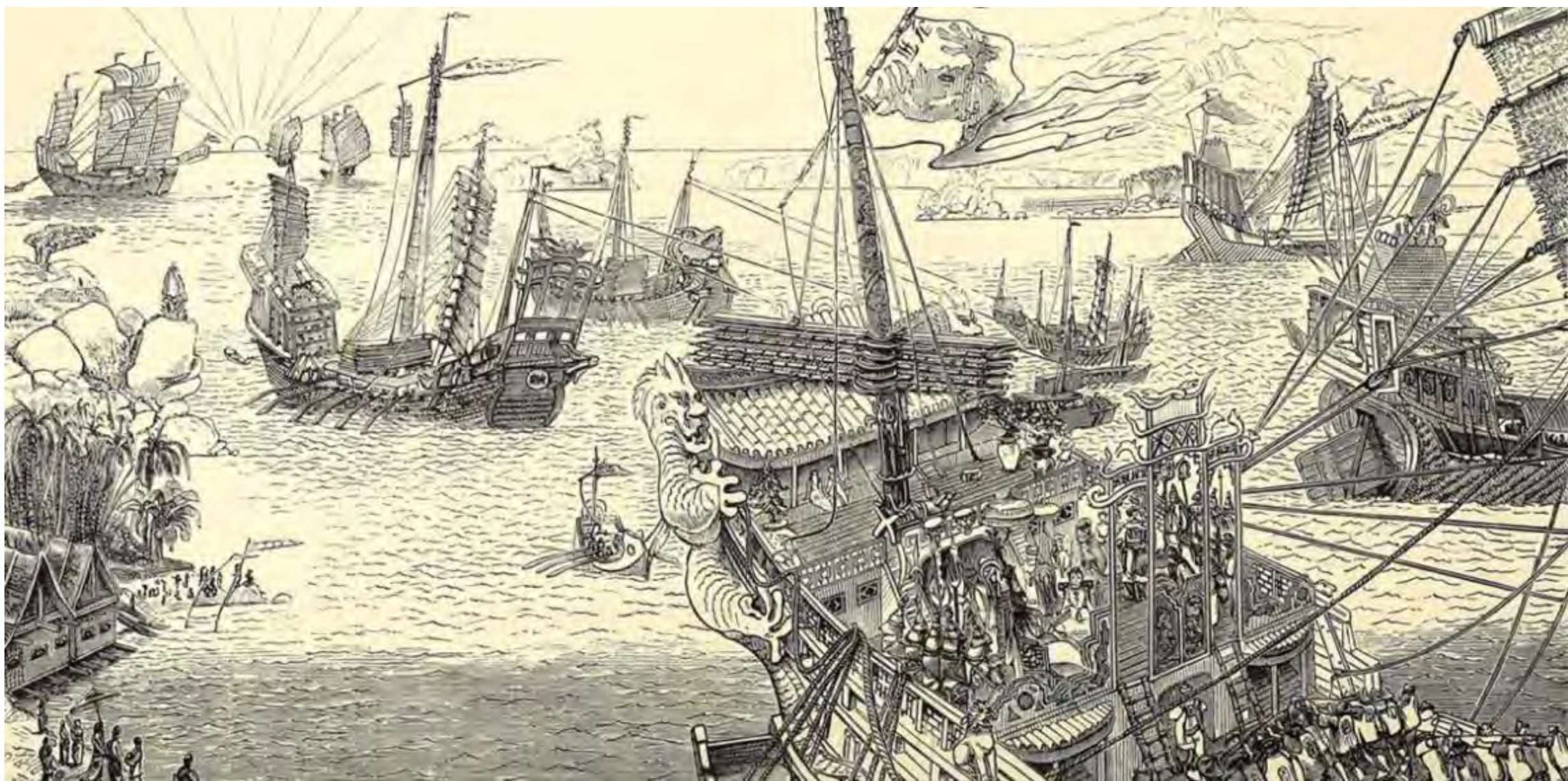
- In 1267, Kublai Khan's ministers sent another letter to Japan:
- The Japanese live ten thousand *li* across the sea and although they were in constant contact with China, they did not carry out the practice of sending annual tribute. Yet, in the past, the Chinese did not care. They would treat them [the Japanese] kindly when they came and would not interfere with them if they did not come. The old policy of the Chinese was that the receipt of tribute [from abroad] added little to the culture of kings nor the absence of tribute detracted [little] from the prestige of the emperors. But now, under our sage emperor, all under the light of the sun and the moon are his subjects. You, stupid little barbarians. Do you dare to defy us by not submitting?
- These letters were followed by Yuan emissaries who were unable to secure any progress with the warlord of Japan (who had exaggerated his own title as “King of Japan”)

Attacks on Japan Fail

- Kubilai's actions set a milestone for future Japan-China relations
- The outcomes set limits on Mongol expansion
- The invasions inspired works of fiction and are the earliest events for which the word Kamikaze ("divine wind") is widely used
- One of the earliest use of gunpowder outside of China. China used explosive, hand-thrown bombs







Yuan Governance

- Modeled after Chinese institutions; Mongols and their Central Asian allies in the most important positions
- Conquest of China took a terrible economic toll. The Song iron industry was devastated; destroyed farmland and irrigation works, and in places Mongol princes and generals turned rice-producing land into parks and pastures
- Warfare reduced the population; spread of infectious diseases, such as bubonic plague, from Central Asia to China produced several epidemics
- From the Han Chinese perspective, the Mongols were generally regarded as a curse, setting stage for Ming Dynasty that followed with 100 years

Emaciated Horse

- Gong Kai was a Song loyalist and refused to serve Kublai's government
- His painting represents his own poverty-stricken conditions that he imposed on himself since he refused to serve as a government official.





Aspects: Yuan

- Communication system superb; nomadic control of a settled civilization
- Use of foreign talents in subduing Song in South and Japan showed limitations of military versus diplomatic/cultural issues
- Rigid attitudes towards ethnic and cultural groups short changed Chinese capabilities
- Use of BEIJING showed military value of a northern hub
- Despite fear of Southern disloyalty, that region carried the economy
- Han attitudes towards barbarian culture, showed in popular street plays such as “The Injustice to Dou E; aka Snow in Midsummer,” when corruption happened to initially prevail. “Snowing in June” since became a metaphor for miscarriage of justice

Peasant to Emperor



- Zhu Yuanzhang is born into a poor peasant family
- The 1344 floods cause an epidemic which kills his parents and two brothers
- Zhu joins a local Buddhist Temple to help survive with his remaining brother
- The Yuan Military burns the temple, thinking it part of the Red Turban Movement
- Zhu joins the Red Turban Army; rises in leadership
- His troops occupy Nanjing in 1356
- He breaks with Red Turbans, eliminates rivals
- Declares the Ming Dynasty in 1368; becomes the Hongwu Emperor
- Orders empire-wide land and population survey
- Establishes efficient local village self-governance; monthly readings of Confucian standards to be read in each village
- Demands a lean bureaucracy in the capital
- Paranoia however takes over during much of his thirty-year reign: 100,000 officials executed



End of Formal Presentation