

East Asia Part 2 - The Mongols

Mongols... Beginning on the steppes to the north of China (birth place of the Huns and Turks), the Mongols were a tribe of nomadic horsemen. Led by the great leader Genghis Khan, in 1206 the Mongols violently stormed across Asia and Europe, forming what would become the largest empire in the history of the world. The Mongols were fast and ruthless. They controlled from the Pacific Ocean to Germany; crushing all in its path. This included the Song Dynasty in China, making the Mongols the only “outsiders” to ever rule over all of China.

Ironically, the Mongol ruthlessness in conquering their opponents helped established the Pax Mongolica: a golden age of peace across Asia and Eastern Europe. Under Mongol rule, the Silk Road reopened, allowing wealth, people, ideas and religion to flow freely from China to Italy. It was said that a person could walk from the Middle East to China with a gold plate on his head, and no one would harm him.

By 1300, the Mongol empire was too big to be ruled by one person. The Mongol empire broke up into large Mongol states, with Kublai Khan sitting on the throne in China and Timur the Lame ruling over the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

S. Asia/India

With the fall of the Gupta Empire, India fell into a period of regional kingdoms and outside invasions. In the southern and eastern parts of India, regional kingdoms carried the flame of Hindu culture. To the West, the Muslim Turks had invaded and brought Islamic culture to India. From 700-1300 was a period of persistent conflict.

When the Silk Road was reestablished, India's location between the Middle East & East Asia allowed them to be the central hub of trade. This brought much financial gain and allowed India to diffuse its religions and culture across the world. While the land was divided into small kingdoms, India controlled 1/3rd of the worlds wealth.



North America

Between 400-1300 AD, there were three distinct areas of agriculture: the Mississippi River Valley, South-West America (present day Nevada/ California) and Central Mexico. The lack of native domesticable plants and large mammals prevents most of the continent from developing agriculture.

In Mexico... By 200 AD, the early Olmec Civilizations had collapsed and the Mayan Civilization begun to spread their culture throughout the region.

The Mayans reached their peak by 750 AD, boasting one of the most advanced cities in the world: Teotihuacan. The Mayan were polytheists who built huge stone temples and pyramids, created complex writing and mathematical systems, while also being experts in astronomy. Around 900 AD, the Mayans mysteriously declined, most likely due to climate change and over-use/killing of the soil, limiting food production.

By 1300 AD, a new regional power began to emerge: the Aztec Empire.



South America

North West/Andes Region... From 200AD-1300AD the Andes Highland hosted a half-dozen civilizations. They consisted of city-states and small kingdoms. One of these civilizations was the Incan Kingdom, who are beginning its military conquest and expanding its borders.

The rest of South America consisted of mainly small farming communities. The Arawak people from Amazonia rapidly grew in numbers and migrating throughout South America and the Caribbean between. By 1215 AD, the Arawak people have established city-states and small kingdoms along the Atlantic Coast.



Oceania/Australia

As the Oceania region moved into the Medieval Era, very little changed. The vast populous were hunters and gatherers, as the climate, plant and animal life did not support agriculture. On a few islands, hybrid societies developed that cultivated bananas and tropical fruit while also hunting/fishing/gathering. However, a vast majority of the people in Oceania were hunters and gatherers. By 1400 AD, small societies had spread through the islands into the 1400s AD.



Closing

This period was an time of great change. In Europe, the Middle East and Asia the Medieval times started with the collapse of great civilizations. It was followed by a period of great cultural change and the emergence of even more powerful empires. The foundations for the “modern” societies we know and enjoy today were laid during this very trying and tumultuous time period.



ASSIGNMENT

- 1) Read & Update the Content Matrix
- 2) Fill out this chart with the the strengths/positives and weaknesses/negatives of each region.

| Region | Strengths | Weaknesses |
|---------------|-----------|------------|
| E. Asia | | |
| S. Asia/India | | |
| N. America | | |
| S. America | | |
| Oceania | | |

- 3) Create an impact chart. As you read you are to evaluate each area on the level of impact the people in that region had on the world culturally, militarily, and economically.
- Rate each area as to how impactful you believe them to be at the at 300 CE (■) and at 1300 CE (▲).
 - Draw arrows to show whether they grew or shrunk in impact and influence.
 - If there is change, ask yourself “What caused them to grow or shrink or stagnate in their influence?” and make note of it on your chart.

How to rate each region:

- Local: Mainly Hunter/Gatherers and Small Villages; people barely impacting those outside of their small circles.
- Regional: Kingdoms, Small Empires.
- Continental: Large empire(s) that span across/impact/consume most of the continent.
- Inter-Continental: Massive empire(s) that span across/impact/consume multiple continents.
- Global: Massive empire(s) that span across/impact/consume most of the world.

Examples

