



## **2. Ethnic Relations and Political History Along The Silk Roads**

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## Unit D

# THE HAN, THE XIONGNU, AND CHINA'S TRADITIONAL FOREIGN RELATIONS

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**Essential Question:** How did the Chinese and Xiongnu establish and maintain diplomatic relations during the Han dynasty and what impact did it have on both cultures?

**Learning Experience:** Students will learn how China dealt with its northern nomadic neighbors during the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE).

**Anticipatory Set:** Students will define and become familiar with some basic terms that frame the topic of this unit: cultural conflict, tribute system, nomad, dynasty, frontier, and expansionism.

**Context:** China's traditional view of itself as the "Central Kingdom," the source of all that was civilized, was a key factor in determining its pre-modern foreign policy. At the core of this world view was the tribute system.

Being a tributary state meant acknowledging subservience to China and its emperor, presenting token tribute gifts, and sending hostages to the Chinese court. In return for such symbolic gestures, steppe nomads and other foreigners received valuable goods such as silk, cash, gold jewelry, and ornaments, as well as the right to trade at frontier markets. Trading rights were extremely important since the nomads lacked the resources and craftspeople to produce the things they got from Chinese merchants—textiles, clothing, utensils, wine and other foodstuffs (Barfield 1989: 59-60). China, for its part, valued the horses, cattle, and furs imported from the steppe.

What was the historical context that gave birth to the tribute system? After China became a unified state under the Qin dynasty (221-206 BCE), its borders gradually began to expand. Under the succeeding Han dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE), colonies were established in what is now northern Vietnam and northern Korea. There was also ongoing settlement in the southeast.

The most critical area, however, was in the north and northwest (see **Map E** and **Color Map**), where the Chinese established military garrisons and towns to defend against nomadic raids and invasions. This was because Xiongnu<sup>1</sup> tribes were creating an extensive empire in what is today Mongolia at about the same time that China was becoming a unified empire under Qin and Han:

The relationship between China and the nomads appears to have been of secondary importance to Chinese history until it exploded ... during the Qin-Han period. The emergence of the Xiongnu empire, in 209 BCE, struck the newly born Chinese empire with unprecedented strength, forcing upon it the realization that the north had become a major antagonist, politically, militarily, and culturally (Loewe 1999: 886-887).

The first hostilities between Xiongnu and Chinese took place in 201-200 BCE when Xiongnu forces surrounded the first Han emperor and his army. It was only after extensive negotiations that the Xiongnu allowed the Chinese to escape. Formal relations were then established between the two

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<sup>1</sup> Although "xiong" might be the Chinese transliteration of a sound by which the Xiongnu referred to themselves, it also has the Chinese meaning of "savage" or "cruel." "Nu" means "slave." Many pre-modern Chinese names for non-Chinese peoples (so-called "barbarians") had similar negative connotations.





nations. China had to agree to make annual payments of silk and other commodities not normally available to the steppe people. The Han and the Xiongnu were to be regarded as equal states. Later on, the Xiongnu also demanded, and received, the right to trade with the Chinese at border markets. As long as the Xiongnu confederation was strong, “periods of war alternated with periods of peace in order to extract ever-increasing benefits from China” (Barfield 1989: 35-36, 51).

Establishing the tribute system as a way of managing the northern tribes was one of the basic aims of Emperor Wu (r. 141-87 BCE) of the Han dynasty. The system was to remain a central part of China’s foreign relations from Han times down to the Ming period (1368-1644 CE).

Emperor Wu’s reign also saw China aggressively seeking allies and alliances in Central Asia to counter and destroy the Xiongnu. The fabled mission of Zhang Qian (undertaken between 139-126 BCE; see Document 4, below), sent west by Emperor Wu to seek allies and warhorses, was part of this. Zhang returned from the “Western Regions” with the first direct news about these neighboring lands.

The Chinese scored some victories against the nomads but, by the end of emperor Wu’s reign, were on the defensive. Furthermore, frontier warfare was enormously expensive. Critics of the government claimed that war with the steppe peoples would ultimately bankrupt the state. These policies were abandoned after the emperor’s death.

The Xiongnu, however, also had political problems in the decades after emperor Wu’s death. In 54 BCE, as a result of internal political struggles and civil war, they finally accepted the Chinese tribute system. No steppe people ever really challenged it again (Barfield 1989: 56, 57, 60, 61). It was not until China’s dealings with the European powers and Japan in modern times that the tribute system crumbled.

By investigating the problems and issues involved from the perspective of both the Chinese and the Xiongnu, students will gain insight into a key issue in Chinese history: the clash between the sedentary, agrarian Chinese and the nomadic Xiongnu.

**Rationale:** Students will assess the benefits and risks on each side in the foreign policy game played by the Han court and the Xiongnu. They will use a map and other sources to (1) study the history of Han-Xiongnu relations; (2) evaluate why the Xiongnu needed to establish peaceful relations with the Han; (3) assess the impact of this relationship on both China and the Xiongnu.

**Time:** Two forty-minute sessions.

**Instructional Resources:** Fourteen resource documents, including a map of the Han empire (**Map E**).

Some documents are primary sources and some are secondary materials selected from various books and articles. Primary sources are marked with an asterisk. \*

**Procedure:** Teachers will need to set up the context for this exercise by explaining the difference between the nomads and the Chinese and ask students to hypothesize potential sources of conflict.

1. Divide the class into pairs. Students will be asked to read the documents and answer the following basic questions. They must use evidence from the documents to support their answers.
  - What tactics did the Xiongnu employ to establish peaceful relations with the Han?
  - How did the Han establish peaceful relations with the Xiongnu?
  - What impact did Chinese-Xiongnu relations have on the Chinese? On different levels of Chinese society?
  - What impact did Chinese-Xiongnu relations have on the Xiongnu?





- Have one member of each pair play the role of a Chinese official and one a Xiongnu official. The “officials” then write a dialogue that takes place between them, first creating a scenario to set the scene. For example: The Xiongnu official has come to the Han capital to discuss ongoing skirmishes at the border. Students should use words from the documents. The teacher can provide these or the class can generate a list. The dialogue should include ten or fifteen exchanges. Two or three pairs of students may read their completed dialogues to the class.

To synthesize the results, a three-column list can be made on the board:

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
What did the Chinese want from the Xiongnu?	What did the Xiongnu want from the Chinese?	What were the grounds—diplomatic, military, commercial, territorial, and so forth—for compromise between the Chinese and the Xiongnu?

- Summary. Answer the essential question: How did the Chinese and Xiongnu establish and maintain diplomatic relations during the Han dynasty?

**Whole Group Reflection:** In discussing Han-Xiongnu relations, the class should keep in mind the tremendous difference between Xiongnu and Chinese society—one nomadic and one agricultural. Are the differences so great that the two cultures can never have real peace? Can students think of other situations in history or everyday life where cultural differences result in conflict?

**Instructional Modifications:** This lesson is geared to students who are reading at grade level and above. However, in order to reflect other learning styles, the following modifications are suggested:

- Instead of pairs, groups of three or more can be formed mixing more advanced with less advanced students.
- Students can do parts of the unit as homework, depending on time constraints.
- Create questions for each document that ask students to recall specific information. Questions can also cover the reasons a document was written, descriptions of the authors (in the case of primary materials), and summaries of the main ideas.

**Application:** You are a Chinese official and have just met with a Xiongnu official. Write a letter to the Emperor and give him advice on how to establish relations with the Xiongnu. This can be done in class or as homework.

***Ornaments Like This Gold Belt Buckle Were Valued By Nomadic-Pastoral Peoples Such As The Xiongnu.***



*Belt Buckle: Paired Felines Attacking Ibexes, Xiongnu type, 3rd-2nd Century. BCE. Mongolia or Southern Siberia. Gold; 2 5/8 x 3 1/8 in. (6.7 x 7.9 cm) Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 (17.190.1672) Metropolitan Museum of Art*

(Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917 [17.190.1672] Photograph, all rights reserved, The Metropolitan Museum of Art) [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/ho/04/nc/ho\\_17.190.1672.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/ho/04/nc/ho_17.190.1672.htm)





## DOCUMENT 1: THE NOMAD LIFESTYLE\*

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Farmers live on the land, stay on the land, and rarely go far from home. Nomadic peoples live off their animals. They move with the seasons, constantly in search of food and water for their herds. This difference in lifestyles sets the stage for more than fifteen hundred years of Chinese foreign policy, beginning with the struggle between China and the Xiongnu during the Han dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE).

. . . The animals they raise consist mainly of horses, cows, and sheep, but include such rare beasts as camels, asses, mules, and . . . wild horses . . . They move about in search of water and pasture and have no walled cities and fixed dwellings, nor do they engage in any kind of agriculture. Their lands, however, are divided into regions under the control of various leaders. They have no writing, and even promises and agreements are only verbal. The little boys start out by learning to ride sheep and shoot birds and rats with a bow and arrow, and when they get a little older they shoot foxes and hares, which are used for food. Thus all the young men are able to use a bow and act as armed cavalry in time of war. It is their custom to herd their flocks in times of peace and make their living by hunting, but in periods of crisis they take up arms and go off on plundering and marauding expeditions . . . If the battle is going well for them they will advance, but if not, they will retreat, for they do not consider it a disgrace to run away (Watson 1961: 154).

## DOCUMENT 2: THE *HE QIN* POLICY

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After the first Han emperor narrowly escaped being captured by the Xiongnu in 200 BCE, peace was negotiated and a policy referred to as *he qin* was established—*he* means “harmonious” and *qin* means “to be near” (like a family member). It had four provisions:

1. The Chinese made fixed annual payments of silk, wine, grain, and other foodstuffs to the Xiongnu.
2. The Han gave a princess in marriage to the Xiongnu.<sup>2</sup>
3. The Xiongnu and Han were ranked as co-equal states.
4. The Great Wall was the official boundary between the two states (Barfield 1989: 46).

## DOCUMENT 3: “THE FIVE BAITS”

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The Han government originally viewed the *he qin* policy of subsidies to and appeasement of the Xiongnu as a way to avoid costly disruptions on the northern frontier. They also hoped that the gifts and subsidies could be used as an economic weapon to weaken and eventually destroy the Xiongnu. This strategy was referred to as “the Five Baits”:

1. Elaborate clothes and carriages to corrupt their eyes;
2. Fine food to corrupt their mouths;
3. Music to corrupt their ears;
4. Lofty buildings, granaries, and slaves to corrupt their stomachs;
5. Gifts and favors for the Xiongnu who surrendered (Barfield 1989: 51).

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<sup>2</sup> See Unit U on Wang Zhaojun





## DOCUMENT 4: EMPEROR WU OF HAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

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The Xiongnu formed the first confederation of nomadic tribes in Inner Asia in the late third century BCE. The First Emperor of Qin sent 100,000 troops against them in 213 BCE. The early Han emperors tried conciliatory policies, wooing the Xiongnu leaders with generous gifts, including silk, rice, cash, and even imperial princesses as brides. Critics of these policies feared that they merely strengthened the enemy; and indeed, in 166 BCE, 140,000 horsemen raided deep into China, reaching a point less than 100 miles from the capital

Emperor Wu took the offensive. He sent 300,000 troops far into Xiongnu territory in 133 BCE. Subsequent expeditions, such as those in 124, 123, and 119 BCE, often involved over 100,000 men.

. . . Emperor Wu turned his attention to Central Asia as well, in part to find allies, in part to improve the supply of horses to the army. In 139 BCE, he sent one of his officials, Zhang Qian, west in search of allies to fight against the Xiongnu. Captured and kept prisoner for ten years, Zhang eventually escaped and made his way to Bactria and Ferghana, returning in 126 BCE . . . In 101 BCE, after three years' effort, a Chinese army made its way beyond the Pamir Mountains to defeat Ferghana, seize large numbers of its excellent horses, and gain recognition of Chinese overlordship (Ebrey 1996: 68, 69).

### Places and Place Names

Bactria is in modern northeast Afghanistan.

Ferghana is located in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyztan.

Pamirs Located mainly in Tajikistan. They form a hub from which five great mountain ranges, including the Himalayas, extend.

## DOCUMENT 5: WHAT WAS THE TRIBUTE SYSTEM?

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Chinese armies could never permanently conquer nomad peoples such as the Xiongnu. Even if they won a major victory, the nomads could retreat beyond the reach of Chinese forces and regroup. Consequently, the northern borderlands were, at certain times in China's history, a constant source of nomad raids and invasions.

The most important method developed to deal with nomads was the tribute system. The tribute system was a part of Chinese foreign policy from Han times (c. 100 BCE) to the seventeenth century CE.

A tribe or state that entered into the tribute system acknowledged the rule of the Chinese emperor. They presented tribute gifts and sent hostages to the Chinese court. In return, steppe nomads and other foreigners received valuable goods such as silk, cash, gold jewelry and ornaments, and the right to trade at frontier markets. Trading rights were extremely important since the nomads lacked the resources and craftspeople to produce the things they got from Chinese merchants—textiles, clothing, utensils, wine and other foodstuffs. China, for its part, valued the horses, cattle, and furs imported from the steppe.





## DOCUMENT 6: POEM BY A TRIBUTE PRINCESS\*

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Xijun, the author, was a relative of Emperor Wu. Around 110 BCE she was married off to the ruler of a tribal kingdom in what is today China's far northwest, Xinjiang province.

### *The Collapsible Frame of a Yurt*



(Source: Cressey 1934: 258)

The “canvas hut” referred to is a yurt. Yurts were the traditional dwellings of steppe people. They were made of sheets of felt laid over a wooden framework. A yurt could be set up quickly, knocked down, and carried easily on a wagon or on camel back. This made yurts the ideal form of shelter for people who had to move their homes along with their herds and the seasons.

My family married me to a lost horizon,  
Sent me far away to the Wusun king's strange land.  
A canvas hut is my mansion, of felt is its walls,  
Flesh for food, mare's milk for drink.  
Longing ever for my homeland, my heart's inner wound.  
I wish I were the brown goose going to its old home.  
(Translation by Anne Birrell; Mair 1994: 446)

## DOCUMENT 7: SUPPORT FOR AN AGGRESSIVE FOREIGN POLICY\*

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*The Debate on Salt and Iron* records a discussion held at the Chinese court in 81 CE. It took place after the death of Emperor Wu, the ruler who had tried for decades to destroy the Xiongnu. In this passage a high official advocates the use of tax revenues to support border defense.

. . . the Xiongnu have frequently revolted against our sovereignty and pillaged our borders. If we are to defend ourselves, then it means the hardships of war for the soldiers of China, but if we do not defend ourselves properly, then their incursions cannot be stopped. The former emperor [Wu] took pity upon the people of the border areas who for so long had suffered disaster and hardship and had been carried off as captives. Therefore he set up defense stations, established a system of warning beacons, and garrisoned the outlying areas to ensure their protection. But the resources of these areas were insufficient, and so he established the salt, iron, and liquor monopolies . . . in order to raise more funds for expenditures at the borders. Now our critics, who desire that these measures be abolished, would empty the treasuries and deplete the funds used for defense. They would have the men who are defending our passes and patrolling our walls suffer hunger and cold (de Bary 1999: 361).







DOCUMENT 8: OPPOSITION TO THE FRONTIER POLICY\*

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. . . warfare prolonged over a long period often gives rise to rebellion, and the burden of military service is apt to lead to disaffection, for the people along the border are subject to great strain and hardship until they think of only breaking away, while the generals and officers only grow suspicious of each other and begin to bargain with the enemy (Barfield 1989: 57).

DOCUMENT 9: A HAN DYNASTY BALLAD—*AT FIFTEEN I JOINED THE ARMY*\*

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The commoners who served in the Han armies suffered and died while fighting on the frontier. Han ballads such as *At Fifteen I Joined the Army* tell of their grief.

Popular songs and ballads of the Han do not glorify war, nor do they celebrate national victories. It is ironic that they sprang from the great age of Chinese imperialism, when Han armies pushed the frontiers eastwards far into Korea, north into the steppes, west to Central Asia, and south into Vietnam (Birrell 1995: 116).

*At Fifteen I Joined the Army*

At fifteen I joined the army,  
 At eighty I first came home.  
 On the road I met a villager,  
 “At my home, what kin are there?”  
 “Look over there—that’s your home!”  
 Pine, cypress, burial mounds piled, piled high,  
 Hares going in through dog-holes,  
 Pheasants flying in through rafter tops;  
 The inner garden grown wild with weeds,  
 Over the well wild mallow growing.  
 I pound grain to serve for a meal,  
 I pick mallow to serve for broth.  
 Once broth and meal are cooked  
 I’m at a loss to know whom to feed.  
 I leave by the gates, look east.  
 Tears fall and soak my clothes.

(Translation by Anne Birrell; Birrell 1993: 125)





## DOCUMENT 10: INCREASE IN THE VALUE OF GIFTS TO THE XIONGNU

The Chinese were never able to destroy the Xiongnu state.

Having obtained a peace treaty with the Xiongnu by offering aid and trade as part of the tributary system, the Han court constantly worried that offending the Xiongnu might provoke an extensive and unwarranted frontier war. By examining just the official allocations of silk made to successive tributary missions it is clear that the longer the peace lasted the more expensive it became, with a steady increase in the value of gifts allotted to each *Shanyu* who visited the Han court:

Year of visit:	Silk floss: <sup>3</sup>	Silk fabric:
51 BCE	6,000 jin <sup>4</sup>	8,000
49	8,000	9,000
33	16,000	16,000
25	20,000	20,000
1	30,000	30,000

. . . The Xiongnu, not the Han court, requested these visits and, far from being welcomed, the Han dreaded them because of their vast expense to the state . . . (Barfield 1989: 65).

## DOCUMENT 11: XIONGNU FOREIGN POLICY

The Xiongnu state owed its continued existence to its effectiveness in dealing with China in war and peace. The number of nomads was small, perhaps about a million people, yet they confronted a Han state that ruled over 54 million people. Therefore they had to be organized in a way that compelled the Han court to recognize their interests. The *Shanyu* [the Xiongnu chieftain] had to influence decision-making at the highest levels of Han government because frontier policy was made at court, and not by frontier governors or border officials. To this end the Xiongnu devised a predatory strategy of extortion aimed at impressing the Han court with their power. Their “outer frontier” strategy took full advantage of the nomads’ ability to suddenly strike deep into China and then retreat before the Chinese had time to retaliate. It had three major elements: violent raiding to terrify the Han court, the alternation of war and peace to increase the amount of subsidies and trade privileges granted by the Chinese; and the deliberate refusal to occupy Chinese land even after great victories.

The Xiongnu were not naturally violent, but they did cultivate violence as a tactic in dealing with the Chinese. The Han court could never ignore the Xiongnu or their demands, and they were obliged to treat the *Shanyu* as a ruler equal to the Han emperor, a status granted no other foreign ruler (Barfield 1989: 49-50).

<sup>3</sup> “Floss” is the silk as it’s reeled off the silkworm’s cocoon, before being twisted into thread.

<sup>4</sup> This measure of weight is called a “catty” in English. Today it equals about one pound.





## DOCUMENT 12: A WARNING TO THE XIONGNU\*

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A Chinese official who defected to the Xiongnu urges them not to become attracted to Chinese goods.

All the multitudes of the Xiongnu would not amount to one province in the Han Empire. The strength of the Xiongnu lies in the very fact that their food and clothing are different from those of the Chinese, and they are therefore not dependent on the Han for anything. Now the Shanyu has this desire for Chinese things and is trying to change the Xiongnu customs. Thus, although the Han sends no more than a fifth of its goods here, it will in the end succeed in winning over the whole Xiongnu nation. From now on, when you get any of the Han silks, put them on and try riding your horses through brush and brambles! In no time your leggings will be torn to shreds and everyone will see that silks are no match for the utility and excellence of felt and leather garments. Likewise when you get any of the Han foodstuffs, throw them away so that people can see that they are not as practical or tasty as milk and kumiss! [fermented mare's milk] (Watson 1961: 170-171).

UNIT  
2 - D



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## Unit E

### THE SPREAD OF ISLAM (634-750 CE)

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**Essential Question:** How did Islam spread outside the Arabian peninsula?

**Learning Experience:** Students will learn about the spread of Islam in the context of the geography and history of West Asia in the seventh and eighth centuries CE.

**Anticipatory Set:** By the mid-eighth century CE, Islam had become the dominant power from North Africa to the borders of India. This unit discusses some of the factors that took the Arabs from a loosely connected group of nomadic tribes to a force that came to replace great empires.

**Context:** The spread of Islam from Arabia to the rest of the Middle East and beyond is one of the great military and political achievements of the ancient world. The story begins with the *Hijra* (Arabic for “Migration”) in 622 CE, when Muhammad (c. 570-632) and his followers went from Mecca to Medina to escape powerful enemies and forge new alliances. Some time before the migration, God had given Muhammad permission to fight against those who oppress others on account of their faith:

Permission is granted those who (take up arms) to fight because they are oppressed. God is certainly able to give help to those who were driven away unjustly from their homes for no other reason than that they said “Our Lord is God” (*Qur’an* 22: 39; Peters 1994: 71).

The battles fought against Arab rivals during the last decade or so of the Prophet’s life were extremely important for the future Islamic empire. They are the beginnings of a process that transformed tribal raiding parties into disciplined armies led by Muhammad’s immediate successors.

#### Chronological Table: The Early Arab Conquests

- **634** Battle of Ajnadayn. Arabs defeat a Byzantine army east of Gaza. The first time Arab forces come together as an army rather than as raiding parties seeking plunder.
- **636** A Byzantine army is defeated by the Arabs at the Battle of Yarmuk, ending centuries of Roman rule in Syria.
- **637** Battle of Qadisiya. Beginning of the destruction of the Sasanian empire (224-651). The Arabs take the imperial capital.
- **641-643** Conquest of the Byzantine province of Egypt.
- **642** Battle of Nehavand seals the fate of the Sasanian empire. With the death of the last Sasanian emperor in 651, the conquest of Iran is completed.
- **643** Arabs take Tripoli. This begins the conquest of North Africa.
- **660/668/717** Three failed expeditions to conquer the Byzantine capital of Constantinople.





- **661** Establishment of the Umayyad caliphate (661-750). The Umayyads move the empire's capital from Medina to Damascus.
- **711** Conquest of North Africa completed.
- **711-759** Spain taken by Muslim armies.
- **712-713** Transoxiana (modern Uzbekistan) in Central Asia falls to Muslim armies.
- **732** Muslim advance into Europe stopped by Charles Martel at the Battle of Poitiers.
- **750** Establishment of the Abbasid caliphate (750-1258). The empire's capital is moved to Baghdad. The Islamic empire now stretches from Spain to Central Asia.
- **751** A Tang army is defeated by the Arabs at the Battle of the Talas River. Chinese control over Central Asia is now a thing of the past.

Muhammad never united all the Arabian tribes, nor did he choose a successor. Consequently, a group of the Prophet's oldest and closest followers created the office of Caliph ("Successor to the Prophet") after his death. This ensured the survival of the Muslim religious community. Abu Bakr, Muhammad's father-in-law, was the first Caliph.

The Caliphate had . . . come into existence by "the consensus of the men around Muhammad," and the Caliph was, in fact, the chief executive of the *umma* [the Muslim religious community]. He decided military strategy and was commander of the armies of Islam. He was the chief justice and principal fiscal officer of the new regime (Peters 1994: 121).

After Muhammad's death, many Arab tribes sought to free themselves from Muslim control. In dealing with them by force, Abu Bakr not only extended the power of Islam in Arabia, but also created a military that was the foundation of the early Muslim conquests:

What began as large-scale intertribal skirmishing to consolidate a political confederation in Arabia ended as a full-scale war against the two empires [the Byzantine empire and Sasanid Iran] (Lapidus 1988: 39).

In 634, an Arab army defeated a Byzantine army at the Battle of Ajnadayn:

This was the first battle in which the Arabs acted as an army rather than as separate raiding parties. With this victory their ambitions became boundless; they were no longer raiders on the soil of Syria seeking booty, but contenders for the control of the settled empires (Lapidus 1988: 39).

This was the beginning of the Islamicization of the Middle East and Iran:

The conquests began the long historical process that culminated in the absorption of both the Sasanian empire and the eastern regions of the Byzantine empire into an Islamic empire, and the eventual conversion of the majority of Jewish, Christian, and Zoroastrian<sup>1</sup> peoples to Islam (Lapidus 1988: 37).

<sup>1</sup> See p. 32 for Zoroastrianism, the state religion of pre-Islamic Iran.



The power of the first four caliphs was a result of their close association with the Prophet. The last of these—Ali, Muhammad’s son-in-law—was assassinated in 661 CE. Subsequently, a political rival founded the Umayyad caliphate (661-750). The Umayyads ruled territory stretching from Spain to the Indus River.

### The Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258) and the “Golden Age” of Islam

The Abbasid caliphate is often referred to as Islam’s “Golden Age.” The Abbasids encouraged patronage of literature, as well as the translation of numerous Persian and Indian texts into Arabic.

Muslim scientists contributed to knowledge about astronomy, mathematics, medicine, chemistry, zoology, and other fields.

Art and architecture also flourished, with craftsmen deriving inspiration from Greek, Roman, Byzantine, and Sasanian sources.

Greek philosophy had a tremendous influence on Muslim thinkers. Islam preserved many aspects of the Western classical tradition that had disappeared in Europe with the fall of the Roman Empire:

To think of medieval Europe . . . it would be impossible to predict the direction the Renaissance would have taken without the translations of the scientific and philosophical texts from Arabic . . . Without this decisive contact with Arabic texts, Europe, and by extension, the rest of modern civilization, would have been quite different from what they came to be (Saliba 1997: 51).

The Islamic conquests were not simply religious in nature, they were important economically for the reunited Arab tribes, which not only realized enormous wealth from them in the form of booty but also soon began to migrate into the new lands as administrators, military garrisons, and settlers (Denny 1994: 84).

As long as they paid tribute, the peoples of the Middle East were allowed to remain Jews, Christians, or Zoroastrians: “The Arabs had little missionary zeal” (Lapidus 1988: 43).

### The Words “Islam” and “Muslim”

“Islam” is Arabic for surrender or submission. A Muslim is “one who has surrendered” to God (Denny 1994: 390, 392).

**Rationale:** The rise of Islam is a mixture of politics and religion. Understanding this history will help students understand the role of Islam in the contemporary world.

**Time:** One class session.

**Instructional Resources:** Large area map for classroom reference. Each student receives the documents, and three maps—“Central and Southwest Asia” (**Map F**) “The Middle East on the Eve of the



Muslim Era” (**Map H**),<sup>2</sup> and “The Arab-Muslim Empire to CE 750” (**Map I**).

Some documents are primary sources and some are secondary materials selected from various books and articles. Primary sources are marked with an asterisk. \*

**Procedure:** Before the lesson, students should read about the spread of Islam from an appropriate textbook.<sup>3</sup>

- **First Day:** The class is divided into groups, ideally with no more than five students in each group. The documents are to be divided as follows:

Each group will study the assigned documents and maps. They will then answer, in writing, the ques-

Group:	I		II		III		IV		V	
Documents:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

tions relating to their documents. Students in each group may (1) write by themselves, coordinate their answers, and prepare one written piece, or (2) discuss the documents and then write together. In any case, there should be one written set of answers from each group and every group member should have a copy of it.

- **Second Day:** The class will be divided into five new groups. Each new group will have a member from each of the previous groups in it. Each group member will explain his group’s answer to the question. Then, each second group will answer the essential question: How did Islam spread outside the Arabian peninsula? This process should take fifteen to twenty minutes.

**Whole Group Reflection:** How do empires begin and grow? Is the history of Islam different from that of other empires?

### Instructional Modifications:

- Instead of dividing the class into groups, students can work on their own. They may do all the documents or ones selected by the teacher. Alternately, more documents can be assigned to fewer groups.
- In order to include those with varying abilities, the teacher will divide students into groups. Group leaders will be appointed to assist in integrating the other students into the group. The teacher will select the final writer in advance.
- A supplementary web quest: “The Middle East Before the Arab Conquests.” Using the internet, students research the history and achievements of the Byzantine and Sasanian empires. (See information box, p. 125.)

**Application:** How does the history of Islam compare to the spread of other universal faiths, such as Christianity and Buddhism?

<sup>2</sup> Students can ignore the Ghassanids (a tribal confederation) and the Lakhmids (a kingdom), sandwiched between Arabia and the Sasanian empire.

<sup>3</sup> Such as the section on the spread of Islam from *World History—Connections to Today*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1999, pp. 260-266.



## DOCUMENT 1: THE ARABS BEFORE ISLAM

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The old Arabian way of life was highly conservative, with change coming rarely . . . The Arab pastoralist's main means of livelihood was raising camels and sheep, hunting, occasionally serving as bodyguards or escorts to caravans, or being hired out as mercenaries in such fringe areas as the Syrian and Iraqi frontiers . . . Another means of gaining goods, if not great wealth, was by raiding. This was done among Bedouin groups as well as between them and sedentary peoples . . . Only by attacking settled peoples, who produce the goods of this life, could the Bedouin significantly add to their meager possessions. The raiders particularly hoped to capture camels, horses, slaves [both male and female], gold, fine fabrics, and other luxury items but often had to settle for much less. The raid . . . was more than a means of adding to the clan's or tribe's store of goods; it was . . . a "sort of national sport," with well-understood rules that included refraining from bloodshed if at all possible (Denny 1994: 45-46).

**1. Before 660 CE, how did most Arabs earn a living?**

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**2. What was the economic purpose of the traditional practice of raiding?**

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**3. What skills would make tribal nomads like the Arabs good at staging raids?**

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The spread of Islam from Arabia to the rest of the Middle East and beyond is one of the great military and political achievements of the ancient world. The story begins with the *Hijra* (“Migration”) in 622 CE, when Muhammad and his followers went from Mecca to Medina to escape powerful enemies and forge new alliances. Some time before the migration, God had given Muhammad permission to fight against those who oppress others on account of their faith:

Permission is granted those who (take up arms) to fight because they are oppressed. God is certainly able to give help to those who were driven unjustly away from their homes for no other reason than that they said “Our Lord is God” (*Qur’an* 22: 39; Peters 1994: 71).

**1. Why did Muhammad and his followers go from Mecca to Medina? How did the Muslims justify fighting?**

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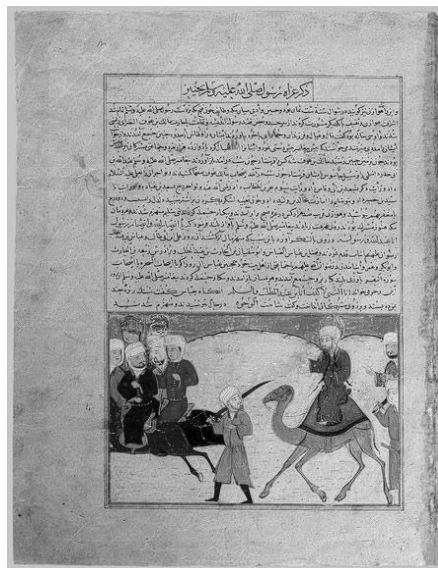


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**The Persian Text Above The Picture (below) Tells Of The Prophet Muhammad Advancing To Meet The Enemy In A Famous Battle**



(Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Cora Timken Burnett Collection of Persian Miniatures and Other Persian Art Objects, Bequest of Cora Timken Burnett, 1956 [57.51.9] Photograph, all rights reserved, The Metropolitan Museum of Art) [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/nd/isla/ho\\_57.51.9.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/nd/isla/ho_57.51.9.htm)

Journey of the Prophet Muhammad; Leaf from a Copy of the *Majma' al-tawarikh* (*Compendium of Histories*), ca. 1425; Timurid, Herat, Afghanistan  
 Colors, Silver, and Gilt on Brownish Paper; 16 7/8 x 13 in. (42.8 x 33 cm)  
 Cora Timken Burnett Collection of Persian Miniatures and Other Persian Art Objects, Bequest of Cora Timken Burnett, 1956 (57.51.9)  
 Source: Metropolitan Museum of Art



## DOCUMENT 3: A MAP OF THE MIDDLE EAST ON THE EVE OF THE MUSLIM ERA (MAP H)

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To answer these questions, you will also need a copy of the Map of Central and Southwest Asia (Map F).

This map shows how the Middle East was divided politically between two great empires. To interpret it and answer the questions, you first need to carefully look at the key in the lower left-hand corner.

**1. What two great empires ruled over most of this region?**

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**2. Was Arabia, the birthplace of Islam, part of either of these empires?**

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**3. What modern countries were once parts of the Byzantine Empire?**

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**4. What modern countries were once parts of the Sasanian empire?**

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## DOCUMENT 4: WARFARE AND RELIGIOUS DOCTRINE\*

There are three basic reasons why the Arab-Muslim armies were able to rapidly conquer Byzantine territories in the Middle East, as well as the whole of the Sasanian empire:

1. Wars between Byzantium and the Sasanians had weakened both sides.
2. Even before the Arab invasions, both empires had to fight nomad invasions. The Sasanians faced the Huns and other northern steppe peoples. The Byzantines fought Germanic tribes in Italy and the Balkans.
3. The large Christian populations of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq were deeply dissatisfied with Byzantine and Sasanian rule. For instance, although the Byzantine empire was Christian, its doctrines differed from those of Egyptian Christians. The Byzantine rulers treated Egyptian Christians as heretics. In general, Muslims didn't interfere with the beliefs of conquered peoples.

Contemporary Christian writers saw the conquests as a plague. Arab chronicles, however, had a different view. In his *History*, one of the most important works on early Islam, al-Tabari (c. 839-923) records the words of an Arab commander to a Persian general:

God has sent us and has brought us here so that we may release those who so desire from servitude to people [here on earth] and make them servants of God; that we may transform their poverty in this world into wealth . . . and bestow on them the justice of Islam. He has sent us to bring His religion to His creatures and to call them to Islam (Adapted from al-Tabari 1992: 12. 67).

1. **True or False**: The Arabs were the only enemies the Byzantines and the Sasanians had to face.

2. **True or False**: Religious tolerance was practiced in the Byzantine empire.

3. **According to the Arab commander, what is Islam's attitude toward earthly rulers?**

### Vocabulary

Heretic: Someone whose religious beliefs differ from those of an accepted religion.

Servitude: The condition of being forced to work for others.



UNIT  
2 – E



## DOCUMENT 5: THE CALIPHS

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Muhammad died in 632. His role as leader of the Muslim community, although not his unique prophetic role, was assumed by a succession of four Caliphs (“Caliph” is from the Arabic word *khalifa*, meaning “successor”), chosen from among his former companions, under whose direction the Arabs extended their conquests to include the eastern provinces of the Byzantine empire and the greater part of the Sasanid empire . . . The last of the first four caliphs was the Prophet’s cousin and son-in-law, Ali (656-661). Following his assassination, a political opponent . . . established the dynasty of the Umayyad caliphs. Distantly related to the prophet, the Umayyads transferred the capital of the expanding Arab empire from Medina to Damascus . . . The Umayyads ruled from 661 to 750 and extended the frontiers of the Islamic world from Spain to the Indus River (Adapted from Farmer 1986: 229).

**1. How was leadership chosen after Muhammad’s death?**

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**2. Who was responsible for the eventual spread of Islam?**

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**3. How far did the Umayyads extend the Islamic empire?**

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## DOCUMENT 6: A MAP OF THE ARAB-MUSLIM EMPIRE TO CE 750 (MAP I)

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To answer these questions, you will also need a copy of **Map F**, Central and Southwest Asia.

This map shows the spread of Islam up to 750 CE. To interpret it and answer the questions, you first need to look carefully at the key in the lower left-hand corner.

**1. Which of the empires from the map in Document 3 survived the Muslim conquests? What modern countries were once parts of this?**

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**2. Roughly speaking, what rivers formed the boundaries of the Arab-Muslim empire?**

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**3. By what date had the Muslim empire conquered most of its territory? \_\_\_\_\_**

**4. Between 660 and 750 what regions had been conquered? Name the modern countries.**

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## DOCUMENT 7: BAGHDAD AND THE ISLAMIC EMPIRE

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The successor to the Umayyads was the Abbasid caliphate (750-1258). Early in their reign, the Abbasids built a new capital called Baghdad.

Never had there been a Middle Eastern city so large. Baghdad was not a single city, but a metropolitan center, made up of a conglomeration of districts on both sides of the Tigris River. In the ninth century it measured about 25 square miles, and had a population of between 300,000 and 500,000 . . . Baghdad was larger than Constantinople [capital of the Byzantine empire], which is estimated to have had a population of 200,000, and larger than any other Middle Eastern city until Istanbul in the sixteenth century. In its time, Baghdad was the largest city in the world outside of China.

. . . As a capital city it was the center of economic opportunity. Baghdad grew into a great city of international trade and of immensely productive textile, leather, paper, and other industries. Most important in Middle Eastern history, however, was the cosmopolitan character of its population. Jews, Christians, and Muslims, as well as secret pagans, Persians, Iraqis, Arabs, Syrians, and Central Asians made up its populace . . . Baghdad, then, was the product of the upheavals, population movements, economic changes, and conversions of the preceding century; the home of a new Middle Eastern society . . . under the auspices of the Arab Empire and the Islamic religion (Lapidus 1988: 69-70).

**1. For what reasons might you travel to Baghdad?**

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**2. Using the web or a world atlas, find a modern city with roughly Baghdad's population.**

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### ***The Id Kah Mosque In The City Of Kashi (Xinjiang Province, China) Dates Back To The Fifteenth Century***



(Source: Photograph courtesy of Marleen Kassel, 2001, Xinjiang)



UNIT  
2 – E



## DOCUMENT 8: CONVERSION TO ISLAM

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Throughout the regions that the Islamic governments came to rule, many of the indigenous peoples gradually converted to the new religion. But this process was slow, and there were always significant groups that retained their traditional faiths. But Islam eventually became the majority religion, and the Muslim governments were fairly tolerant, though condescending toward Christians and Jews (Denny 1994: 85).

. . . Arab-Muslims did not, contrary to reputation, attempt to convert people to Islam. Muhammad had set the precedent of permitting Jews and Christians in Arabia to keep their religions, if they paid tribute; the Caliphate extended the same privilege to Middle Eastern Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians . . . The Arabs had little missionary zeal (Lapidus 1988: 43).

The question of why people convert to Islam has always generated intense feeling. Earlier generations of European scholars believed that conversions to Islam were made at the point of the sword and that conquered peoples were given the choice of conversion or death. It is now apparent that conversion by force, while not unknown in Muslim countries was, in fact, rare. Muslim conquerors ordinarily wished to dominate rather than convert, and most conversions to Islam were voluntary (Lapidus 1988: 243-244).

**1. What was Muhammad’s attitude toward non-Muslim religions?**

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**2. What did early European scholars believe about conversion to Islam? Were they correct?**

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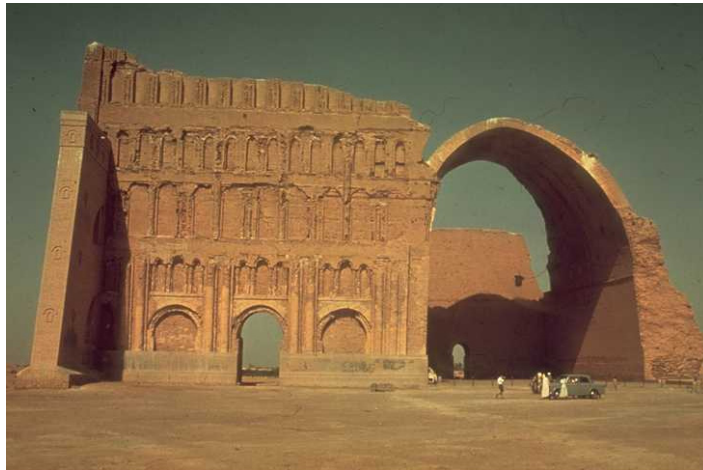
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***The Great Arch of the Sasanian Place at Ctesiphon (3rd Century CE),  
Twenty Miles South of Modern Baghdad, Iraq.***



(Source: Electronic Cultural Atlas Initiative, ECAI)  
<http://ecai.org/sasanianweb/sites/Ctesiphon0021.html>

At its height, the Sasanian empire included Iraq, Iran, And parts of Central Asia. In 642 the Arabs defeated the Sasanians at the Battle of Nehavand. With the death of the last Sasanian emperor in 651, the Islamic conquest of Iran was completed.

The Sasanian empire (224-651 CE) was one of the most powerful and belligerent regimes ever to control the Iranian plateau and eastern part of the Fertile Crescent (Farmer 1986: 180).

The heritage of Sasanian Iran that was transmitted to the Arabs was enormous, for the Arabs conquered the entire Sasanian empire, whereas they took possession of only outlying provinces of the Byzantine empire. A complete model of imperial rule was thus presented to the Arabs by the Persian realm, and the Arabs borrowed from Sasanian Iran more than from any other source (Frye 1963: 7).

By the mid-eighth century the Islamic empire constituted the dominant power system across the arid zone from the Atlantic to the frontiers of India (Denny 1994: 93).

**1. Which empire, Byzantine or Sasanian, had the greater influence on the Arabs?**

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**2. Which part of the Byzantine empire successfully resisted the Arab armies?**

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## DOCUMENT 10: AN IRANIAN MESSENGER GOES TO CHINA\*

This interview supposedly took place in 643 CE. It is recorded in the History of al-Tabari (c. 839-923).

Fleeing from Arab armies, the last Sasanian emperor sends a messenger to the emperor of China. That emperor was the second ruler of the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE), Xuanzong (r. 627-649 CE), considered one of the greatest monarchs in Chinese history.

A messenger from the last Sasanian emperor went to China and sought help from the emperor. The Chinese emperor spoke to the messenger as follows:

“I know that in truth rulers must give aid to other rulers against those who overthrow them. So describe these people who drove you out of your land. I notice that you mention that they are few and you are many. Such a small number shouldn’t affect you in this way, with your great numbers. They can do this only if they are good and you are evil.”

*The Iranian messenger suggests the emperor ask him any question he wishes to ask.*

*Emperor:* “Do [the Arabs] keep their agreements?”

*Messenger:* “They do.”

*Emperor:* “What do they say before they make war on you?”

*Messenger:* “They call upon us to choose one of three things: To accept their religion—if we do, we will be treated as equals; to pay tribute to them, and make the Arabs our protectors. If we don’t choose these two, then the third thing is to be prepared for combat.”

*Emperor:* “What do they order people to do and not to do?”

*The messenger tells him.*

*Emperor:* “Do they themselves do the things they order others not to do?”

*Messenger:* “No, they do not.”

*The messenger then tells the emperor about the clothing, camels, and horses of the Arabs.*

*Emperor:* “If these people you describe to me were to try, they could destroy mountains. If nothing were to stand in their way, they would wipe me out! Make your peace with them and try to get along” (Adapted from al-Tabari 1994: 14. 61-62).

### 1. Why does the emperor think the Arabs can destroy mountains and wipe him out?

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### **Webquest: The Middle East Before the Arab Conquests**

What was the Middle East like before the Arab conquests in the seventh and eighth centuries CE? Using the Internet, students research the history and achievements of the Byzantine and Sasanian empires.

Some suggested web sources:

#### Byzantine Empire

<http://campus.northpark.edu/history/WebChron/EastEurope/Byzantium.html>

<http://www.metmuseum.org/explore/Byzantium/byzhome.html>

<http://crusades.boisestate.edu/Byzantium/>

#### Sasanian Empire

<http://www.pbs.org/empires/islam/>

<http://www.bartleby.com/67/271.html>

<http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/westasia/history/history.htm>



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## Unit F

# CHINA UNDER MONGOL RULE: THE YUAN DYNASTY (1279-1368 CE)

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**Learning Experience:** This unit investigates why the Mongols can be considered the greatest conquerors in world history. Students will look at how the Mongol conquests changed the Eurasian world, and discuss how Khubilai Khan (1215-1294) and his advisors ruled one of the greatest prizes won by Mongol armies: China.

**Anticipatory Set:** What is important about the Mongols as world conquerors? How are they similar to (and different from) other states and peoples—including modern ones—that established empires?

**Context:** Chinggis Khan (1167-1227) first united the tribes of Mongolia in the early thirteenth century. By the late 1200s, the Mongols ruled an empire stretching from China and Korea in the east to the Persian Gulf and the Black Sea in the west (see **Map J**).

Although their conquests were based on great organizational and military skill, equally important was their ability to use non-Mongol peoples to conquer and govern their huge domains. The employment of foreigners

Though their empire lasted less than a century, it inextricably linked Europe to Asia, ushering in an era of frequent and extended contacts between East and West . . . They expedited and encouraged travel in the sizable section of Asia that was under Mongol rule, permitting European merchants, craftsmen, and envoys, for the first time, to journey as far as China. Asian goods reached Europe along the caravan trails, and the ensuing European demand for these products eventually inspired the search for a sea route to Asia (Rossabi 1988: 1).

### Chronological Table: The Background to Mongol Rule in China

- During the tenth and eleventh centuries, three non-Chinese states rose in north Asia. They were established by the Khitan (a Mongolian people), the Tangut (a Tibetan people), and the Jurchen (from Manchuria). The Jurchens adopted Chinese-style bureaucratic government when they conquered north China in 1126.
- **960-1127—NORTHERN SONG DYNASTY (CHINA)** Song China was wealthy and culturally flourishing, but not expansionist. Its strong non-Chinese neighbors prevented that.
- **1115** The Khitan state was conquered by the Jurchen.
- **1126** The Jurchens overthrew Northern Song and took north China. The Song court fled south and established its rule south of the Yangzi River—the Southern Song Dynasty.
- **1127-1279—SOUTHERN SONG DYNASTY (CHINA)** The Chinese not only paid tribute to the Jurchen, but also maintained a million man army to oppose them.





- **c. 1162-1227** Chinggis Khan. In the early thirteenth century he united the Mongol tribes and laid the foundations for the largest empire in world history.
- **1231** Mongol invasion of Korea.
- **1234** The Mongols destroyed the Jurchen state and occupied north China.
- **1259** Koreans finally surrender to the Mongols.
- **1271** Khubilai Khan, Chinggis' grandson, became emperor in north China and adopted the dynastic name Yuan.
- By the late 1200s, the Mongols ruled all Eurasia from central Europe to the Pacific. This empire was divided among Chinggis' four sons.
- **1274** Failure of first Mongol invasion of Japan.
- **1279** After years of fighting, the Mongols finally defeated the Southern Song dynasty. Since South China is covered with rivers, lakes, and wetlands, the Mongols had to build a navy. They employed foreign experts to run it, as well as conduct siege warfare against Chinese cities.
- **1279-1368—YUAN DYNASTY** For the first time since the Tang dynasty (618-907), China was a geographic whole under Mongol rule. By the mid-thirteenth century, excessive taxation, inflation, famine, and natural disasters sparked rebellion against the Mongols. Ultimately, one of the rebel movements expelled the Mongols and founded the succeeding Ming dynasty (1368-1644).
- **1281** Failure of second Mongol invasion of Japan.
- After the conquest of south China in 1279, Khubilai set his sights on Southeast Asia. During the 1280s, expeditions were launched against what is now Vietnam, Myanmar, and the island of Java in modern-day Indonesia. These efforts ended in defeat.

In China, the Mongols chose the dynastic name “Yuan.” The importance of this term goes far back in Chinese history, well before the beginning of the Common Era. “Yuan” refers to the creative power of heaven (*tian*). For the Chinese, heaven is not the home of the world-creating god of Judeo-Christian tradition, but the force that continually gives birth to the whole world and everything in it. It is something that is universal: “Heaven covers everything,” according to an old Chinese saying. Khubilai Khan thus proclaimed the right of the Mongols to rule not just China, but also the rest of Eurasia (see Document 2, below).

The ideal contained in the dynastic name “Yuan” contrasts with the reality of Mongol rule in China. In the words of John D. Langlois:

Mongol rule in China, like Mongol rule elsewhere, was the rule of conquerors. The Mongols' aim was to enrich themselves. Their perceptions of how best to accomplish that aim changed over time, but Mongol superiority and enrichment remained their chief concerns in China (Langlois 1981: 9).

Chinese, Persian, and Russian sources document the great destruction of life and property caused by Mongol armies. They also record the “extraordinary speed and ruthlessness” by which the Mongols accomplished their goals. Frequently neglected, however, are the economic and cultural achievements



made possible by Mongol rule over Eurasia (Rossabi 2002: 13).

Discussion of these two facets of the Mongol conquests generally fall under two headings: “communication” and “destruction” (Allsen 2001: 4).

In the former, the nomads create a pax [peace], which secures and facilitates long-distance travel and commerce, encouraging representatives of sedentary civilizations, the Polos for example, to move across the various cultural zones of Eurasia and thereby take on the role of the primary agents of diffusion. In the latter, the nomads ... impede contact and destroy culture by their ferocity and military might. For some nationalist historians, nomadic conquest, especially that of the Mongols, was a regressive force in human history accounting for their country’s “backwardness” in modern times<sup>1</sup> (Allsen 2001: 4-5).

According to Thomas Allsen, although both arguments coexist, it’s more useful to consider how cultural transmission was “embedded in the very structure of Mongolian rule and in the basic ecological requirements of nomadism” (Allsen 2001: 5):

. . . As a decided minority in their own state, the Mongols made extensive use of foreigners, without local political ties, to help them rule over their vast domains. This technique received its most elaborate development in China, where the Mongols, for the purposes of official recruitment and promotion, divided the Yuan population into four categories: Mongols, Central and Western Asians . . . , North Chinese, and South Chinese. Moreover, quotas were established so that the Mongols and West Asians were assured “equal” representation with those selected from the two Chinese personnel pools. Those so appointed were in turn served by a large number of assistants and secretaries of equally diverse social and cultural origins . . . There were, in other words, quite literally thousands of agents of cultural transmission and change dispersed throughout the Mongol realm (Allsen 2001: 6-7).

The use of foreign advisers by the Mongols in both the eastern and western parts of their empire created conditions that uniquely favored cultural diffusion.<sup>2</sup>

The documents included in this unit attempt to present a balanced picture of the Mongol achievement. In doing this, students will gain insight into the positive and negative aspects of empire.

**Rationale:** Students will be able to describe the geographical extent of the Mongol empire, understand how they achieved their military conquests, learn about Mongol rule in China, and evaluate the important contributions of the Mongols to Eurasian cultural exchange.

**Time:** One or two class sessions.

**Instructional Resources:** Documents; a map of the Mongol empire (**Map J**).

Some documents are primary sources and some are secondary materials selected from various books and articles. Primary sources are marked with an asterisk. \*

### Procedure:

- Teacher’s introduction. Distribute map and documents to students.
- Review of basic vocabulary: nomad, sedentary, agrarian, cavalry, Golden Horde, Khan, tribute, etc. (see Glossary). These terms should be assigned along with reading on the Mongol empire.<sup>3</sup> This homework should precede the lesson.

<sup>1</sup> The view of the Mongol conquest of Russia held by Russian scholars.

<sup>2</sup> Also see Daniel Waugh’s discussion of the “Pax Mongolica” on the Silk Road Seattle website <http://www.silk-road.com/artl/paxmongolica.shtml>.



- Students read the documents and answer the accompanying questions.
- The class is next divided into groups and students are given the handout entitled “What is an Empire?” (p. 140). They are asked to read it and make of list of its basic points. The teacher then asks the following questions:
  1. Which documents support the ideas in the handout?
  2. Do any of the documents contradict the handout?
  3. Do the documents include any points about the Mongol empire that the handout omits?

The groups convene to discuss these questions.

**Whole Group Reflection:** A spokesperson presents each group’s results. It is important that he or she use specific examples from the documents to back up the group’s findings.

**Instructional Modification:**

- The teacher needs to vary the makeup of the groups, putting students who need more assistance with those who require less.
- The documents can be adapted to accommodate different reading and comprehension levels. This activity should lend itself to participation by students with special needs.

**Application:** Students write a thematic essay for homework.

Directions: Read the following instructions, which include a theme and a task. Follow them to create a well-organized essay with an introduction including a thesis statement, several paragraphs explaining the thesis, and a conclusion.

Theme: “As world conquerors, the Mongols made important contributions to the history of Eurasia.”

Tasks: (1) Define Mongols—Who were they? Where did they come from? When did they make their conquests? What territories did they conquer?; (2) Describe three changes brought about by the Mongols in Eurasia; (3) Describe one positive and one negative effect that the Mongols had on Eurasian history.

***Mongol Bowmen Conquered Much Of Eurasia Riding Small, Sturdy Horses Like This***



(Source: Photograph courtesy of Augustinus Wibowo Weng Hongming, 2002, Mongolia) <http://www.worldisround.com/articles/12332/photo13.html>

<sup>3</sup> Suggested for further reading: Roger B. Bech, et al. *World History: Patterns of Interaction*. Geneva ILL: McDougal Littell & Co., 2002, pp. 294-302; or any other world history textbook.



## DOCUMENT 1: THE MONGOL EMPIRE

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Eurasian history [Eurasia is the combined land mass of Europe and Asia] begins with the Mongols. Within a few decades in the thirteenth century, they had carved out the most sizable empire in world history, stretching from Korea to Western Russia in the north and from Burma to Iraq in the south. Their armies reached all the way to Poland and to Hungary.

Though their empire lasted less than a century, it inextricably linked Europe to Asia, ushering in an era of frequent and extended contacts between East and West . . . They expedited and encouraged travel in the sizable section of Asia that was under Mongol rule, permitting European merchants, craftsmen, and envoys, for the first time, to journey as far as China. Asian goods reached Europe along the caravan trails, and the ensuing European demand for these products eventually inspired the search for a sea route to Asia (Rossabi 1988: 1-2).

**1. Describe geographically how the Mongol Empire connected Asia to Europe.**

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**2. Whom did this connection benefit?**

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UNIT  
2 – F



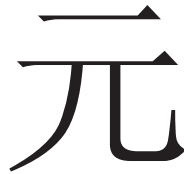
## DOCUMENT 2: CHOOSING THE NAME OF A DYNASTY

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In 1234, Chinggis Khan's third son became emperor in north China. One of the important things a first emperor had to do was select a dynastic name. His advisors chose "Yuan." Why was this name chosen?

Previous dynasties had taken their names from specific places. The "Han" in "Han dynasty" (202 BCE-220 CE), for instance, is the name of a region in southwest China. The man who became the first Han emperor was originally made king there by a powerful warlord whom he later defeated. After his victory, the King of Han named his dynasty after the place where he had first been king.

The Mongols were foreigners. Had Khubilai chosen a place connected with his personal history, it would have been outside China. This would have constantly reminded the Chinese that they were being ruled by foreign conquerors. Instead, they chose an ancient word that connected the Mongols not only to China, but also to their vast empire stretching from Korea to the Middle East and western Russia.



YUAN

The Chinese character for the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368)

"Yuan" is an ancient term meaning "original" or "creating." It refers to the power of Heaven (*tian*). For the Chinese, heaven is not the home of a god who creates the world (as in Judaism and Christianity). Heaven is a force that continually gives birth to the whole world and everything in it. It is something that is universal: "Heaven covers everything," according to an old Chinese saying. Khubilai Khan thus proclaimed the right of the Mongols to rule not just China, but also the rest of Eurasia.

**1. What did dynasties before the Yuan take their names from?**

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**2. Why did Khubilai choose the name Yuan?**

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UNIT  
2 – F



## DOCUMENT 3: “TOTAL WAR” AND THE MONGOL EMPIRE

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In the sixth decade of the thirteenth century, the armies of the Mongol Empire were on the march in Poland, Galicia [now the Ukraine and Poland], Syria, Iraq, Iran, Kashmir, southern China, Tibet, the Indochinese peninsula, and Korea . . . These campaigns were undertaken on a gigantic scale, in some cases involving hundreds of thousands of men and enormous quantities of supplies (Allsen 1981: 1).

Mongol methods of warfare have a character that is undeniably akin to the modern concept of total war. Mongol warfare had a political, economic, and psychological, as well as a purely military, dimension. The Mongol people and their nomadic allies were fully mobilized . . . The magnitude and intensity of the effort to identify and exploit the empire’s vast human and material resources likewise invites comparison with modern total wars. So, too, does the scale of Mongol operations in the 1250s, which in terms of the number of troops engaged and the distances involved was not again equaled until the wars of the Napoleonic era and not surpassed until the wars of the twentieth century (Allsen 1987: 224-225).

**1. Give two characteristics of total war.**

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## DOCUMENT 4: A LETTER FROM THE GREAT KHAN TO THE KOREANS\*

In 1231 the Mongols invaded Korea from their base in north China. They demanded that the Korean court surrender and send local products as gifts. The Koreans did this, but the Mongols weren't satisfied. This letter is from the Mongol ruler of north China, Chinggis Khan's third son. It asks for more gifts, as well as young men and women to be sent as hostages.

The Koreans did as the Mongols asked, and there was peace for six months. In the end, however, the Koreans revolted and resisted the Mongols. They finally surrendered in 1259.

Our great army has been separated from home for many days, and the clothes that we have been wearing are now all worn out. You are to consider this and bring one million military uniforms.

Besides this special presentation, you are to bring for presentation ten thousand pieces of genuine purple silk gauze.

The two hundred and thirty otter skins that you first brought are good. Now, when you come with the purple things, you are to have twenty thousand of the best otter skins brought along.

. . . You shall present to the Khan young men from the royal family, one thousand princesses, and ladies of the great princes. Besides this, you are also to bring daughters of the great officials. From your crown prince, general, great princes, young masters and great officials, we want one thousand sons and also one thousand daughters presented to the Khan. You are to say, "Yes!"

In the event that you deal with this matter speedily, you will then speed the return to peace of your lands and villages. In the event that you should not complete this matter, you will sleep forever, and grief there will be (Adapted from Ledyard 1963: 234).

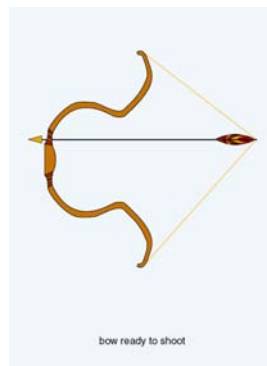
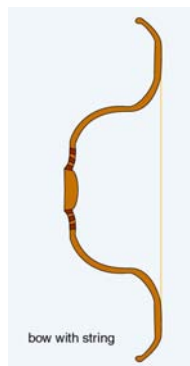
**1. What is the tone of this document? Do the Mongols look down upon the Koreans?**

---

**2. How would the Korean hostages serve as agents of cultural diffusion?**

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### ***The Mongol Bow, Made Of Wood, Horn Or Bone, Fish Glue, And Sinew, Was Perhaps The Most Powerful Weapon In The World Before The Invention Of Modern Firearms***



(Source: © 2005 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ BUS, Stockholm)  
[http://www.sonjabunes.com/illustration/mongolian\\_bow.htm](http://www.sonjabunes.com/illustration/mongolian_bow.htm)



## DOCUMENT 5: MONGOL CAVALRY TACTICS\*

Mongol boys practiced archery and riding from a very early age. When not at war, Mongol men practiced these skills by hunting. Also, the hard life of a nomadic herdsman prepared them for the hardships of military campaigns. Marco polo wrote the following about the Mongol cavalry:

They are never ashamed to flee from the enemy. They maneuver freely, shooting at the enemy, now from this quarter, now from that. They have trained their horses so well that they wheel this way or that as quickly as a dog would do . . . When they are fleeing at top speed, they twist round with their bows and let fly their arrows so skillfully that they kill the horses of the enemy and their riders too . . . As soon as they decide that they have killed enough of the pursuing horses and horsemen, they wheel round and attack (Adapted from Latham 1958: 101).

**1. How does the nomadic lifestyle of the Mongols make them skilled in warfare?**

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**2. What is the advantage of fleeing from the enemy?**

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**3. Can you name one other people who also exhibited similar military skills?**

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## DOCUMENT 6: THE MONGOLS AND SIEGE WARFARE\*

From their base in North China, the Mongols first attacked Korea in 1231. This document describes the siege of a Korean walled town in that year. Pak So is the Korean official in charge of defense. The Mongols employed foreign advisors to construct giant siege weapons.

The Mongols encircled the town in several layers and attacked the west, south, and north gates day and night. The troops in the city went out at once and attacked them.

. . . The Mongols constructed wheeled observation towers as well as great platforms wrapped with cowhide in which they hid soldiers, using it to approach the base of the town walls to excavate a tunnel. Pak So bored through the city walls and poured molten iron to burn the observation towers. The ground also collapsed, crushing thirty Mongols to death.

. . . The Mongols suddenly attacked the south of the town with fifteen large catapults. Pak So constructed platforms on the town walls, and mounting catapults on them, he hurled stones and drove the attackers off (Lee 1997: 202).

**1. How did this battle differ from the kind of warfare the Mongols were skilled at?**

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## DOCUMENT 7: WHY DID THE MONGOLS NEED FOREIGNERS?

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The Mongols ruled densely populated agrarian societies such as China by employing foreign advisors. Their aim was to get the maximum “bang for the buck” out of conquered lands.

In Chinggis Khan’s [c. 1162-1227] day the population of the eastern steppe, modern Mongolia, was somewhere between 700,000 and 1,000,000. Moreover, as pastoralists [people that lived by raising and tending herds of sheep, goats, horses, and so forth], they could hardly provide specialists from their own ranks to administer and exploit the sedentary population that fell under their military control (Allsen 2001: 5).

. . . As a decided minority in their own state, the Mongols made extensive use of foreigners, without local political ties, to help them rule over their vast domains. This technique received its most elaborate development in China, where the Mongols, for the purposes of official recruitment and promotion, divided the Yuan population into four categories: Mongols, Central and Western Asians . . . North Chinese, and South Chinese. Moreover, quotas were established so that the Mongols and West Asians were assured “equal” representation with those selected from the two Chinese personnel pools. Those so appointed were in turn served by a large number of assistants and secretaries of equally diverse social and cultural origins . . . There were, in other words, quite literally thousands of agents of cultural transmission and change dispersed throughout the Mongol realm (Allsen 2001: 6-7).

**1. Were the Mongols able to rule sedentary societies? Why?**

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**2. How did the Mongol Empire bring about cultural transmission?**

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## DOCUMENT 8: CULTURAL TRANSMISSION IN PERSIA AND CHINA UNDER MONGOL RULE

Chinggis Khan (1167-1227) first united the tribes of Mongolia in the early thirteenth century. By the late 1200s, the Mongols ruled an empire stretching from China and Korea in the east to the Persian Gulf and the Black Sea in the west.

The Mongols ruled Persia and parts of the Middle East as the Ilkhanid dynasty (1258-1353 CE). “Ilkhan” means “subordinate khan”—the Mongol rulers of Persia regarded themselves as subordinate to the “Great Khan,” the ruler of China and Mongolia (the Yuan dynasty, 1279-1368).

Under the Mongol empire a merchant like Marco Polo could travel safely from one end of Eurasia to the other. Thousands of other men and women also traveled east and west during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Some were carried off when Mongol armies conquered their homelands. The Mongols valued skilled metal workers and weavers, for instance, and would force them to go where they were most needed. Others went voluntarily in order to work for the Mongols. All of these people were agents of cultural exchange and transmission.

List (1) gives some of the skilled Arabs and Persians who worked in China under Mongol rule. List (2) shows some of the skilled Chinese (and other peoples) who worked for the Mongols in Persia and the Middle East. Study the two lists and answer the questions that follow.

### 1. *The Mongols employed Arabs and Persians in China as:*

accountants administrators architects astronomers artillerymen carpet makers clergymen	envoys geographers historians merchants musicians physicians scribes	singers soldiers sugar makers textile workers translators valets wrestlers
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### 2. *Chinese and other Mongol subjects from east and north Asia served in Persia and the Middle East as:*

accountants administrators artillerymen astronomers carpenters clergymen cooks	court merchants engineers envoys farmers physicians scribes	soldiers stonemasons translators wet nurses wives wrestlers
--	--	--

(Adapted from Allsen 2001: 6)

#### 1. What professions would the Mongols employ in government?

\_\_\_\_\_

#### 2. What professions would the Mongol court or nobility employ?

\_\_\_\_\_

#### 3. What professions might the Mongol military use?

\_\_\_\_\_



UNIT  
2 – F



## DOCUMENT 9: YELU CHUCAI

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Perhaps the most famous foreigner employed by the Mongols was a man named Yelu Chucai (1189-1243). He was adviser to Chinggis Khan's third son, the man who ruled north China before Khubilai Khan.

Yelu was a Khitan. The Khitan were a people from Manchuria who established the Liao dynasty (907-1125). The Liao were one of Song dynasty China's northern rivals.

Many upper class Khitans were sinicized. This means they adopted Chinese dress, customs, and writing. Yelu Chucai, a descendant of the Khitan royal house, was educated like an upper class Chinese gentleman. Many Khitans went to work for the Mongols.

At this period in the history of the Mongol conquests, the question was: Should we tax the farmers just like any other Chinese ruling house, or should we turn north China into pasture for our herds? Yelu Chucai contributed to court debate on this issue.

In the course of their conquests, the Mongols availed themselves of the service of numerous men with military, administrative, and diplomatic skills, drawn from the sedentary civilizations of Inner and Eastern Asia. Very prominent among them, especially in the early phase of Mongol expansionism, were a number of sinicized non-Chinese. A leading figure in the group was Yelu Chucai, whose fame rested chiefly on the administrative reforms that were carried out under his leadership during the reign of Ögödei (r. 1229-41) and on his constant endeavor to mitigate the harsh Mongol rule in north China. It is mainly for these activities that he has been praised as one of the greatest political figures in the history of Asia . . .

. . . the conquerors had to choose to either annihilate Chinese civilization or adapt themselves to it. Since they had rejected the former course thanks to the momentous intervention of men like Yelu Chucai, a change in their original policy became unavoidable. His success in preventing the devastation of north China and its reduction to pastures for the horses of the nomads was a real one (Adapted from de Rachewiltz 1993: 136, 171).

**1. What was Yelu's ethnic background? What did this show about Mongol methods of governing?**

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**2. What did Yelu's policy suggestions prevent the Mongols from doing?**

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(Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Bequest of Dorothy Graham Bennett, 1993 [1993.256] Photograph, all rights reserved, The Metropolitan Museum of Art) [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/yuan/ho\\_1993.256.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/yuan/ho_1993.256.htm)

*Mongol Passport (Paizi)*, Yuan dynasty (1279-1368),  
13th Century  
China

Iron with silver inlay; H. 7 1/8 in. (18.1 cm)

Purchase, Bequest of Dorothy Graham Bennett, 1993 (1993.256)

This iron passport is from Yuan dynasty China. Issued to government officials and important guests, it guaranteed safe passage to anyone traveling in Mongol-ruled territory. The writing on it was invented by a Tibetan monk especially for the Mongolian language. Marco Polo probably carried one of these.

The inscription on this Mongol passport says:

By the strength of eternal Heaven, an edict of the Emperor [Khan]. He who has no respect shall be guilty ([http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/yuan/ho\\_1993.256.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/yuan/ho_1993.256.htm))

The Mongols were the first to innovate a worldwide network of communications that in fact linked East and West, thus facilitating the movement of peoples and ideas. A horse relay postal system was introduced . . . in 1234 . . . The structure of the system was based on the building of a post station at stages equivalent to a day's journey; that is about 25-30 miles. The stations held stocks of horses and fodder for those who traveled. Normally, messenger traffic was about 25 miles a day, but express messengers could go much faster, 200-300 miles a day (Shagdar 2000: 133).

**1. What do the words "He who has no respect . . ." on the iron passport mean? Respect for whom?**

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## DOCUMENT 11: MONGOL DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE CHINESE

After the Mongols conquered north China in 1234, it took them almost fifty years to conquer the Chinese-ruled south. This experience affected the way they ruled China.

Within China the long and bitter struggle against the Southern Song left lasting wounds. Chinese hatred and bitterness were matched by Mongol suspicion and distrust of the southerners. The Mongols placed southerners in the lowest category in their fourfold division of society along ethnic lines. Highest status was accorded to the Mongols. Next came . . . Mongol allies, largely from Central Asia and the Near East, such as Turks, Persians, and Syrians . . . The third status group included all inhabitants of north China: those of Khitan or Korean family background, as well as native Chinese. Finally, at the bottom, were the eighty percent of the population that lived in the south. This fourfold division of society deeply affected the Yuan's treatment of its subjects. It was expressed in the recruitment and employment of government officials, in the conduct of legal cases, and in taxation (Adapted from Schirokauer 1991: 169).

### 1. Why were the Chinese discriminated against?

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### 2. How did this affect the way the Mongols treated their subjects?

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## DOCUMENT 12: MONGOL RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE\*

The Mongol tolerance of foreigners also extended to foreign religions. The early khans liked to sponsor religion debates in their courts. Also, under the Mongols all religions were granted tax exemption. Marco Polo tells us about Khubilai Khan's attitude toward Judaism, Christianity, and Islam:

Khubilai ... returned to his capital and stayed there till February and March, the season of our Easter. Learning that this was one of our most important holidays, he sent for all the Christians and had them bring with them the New Testament. After repeatedly burning incense all around it, he kissed it and desired that all his noblemen do the same. He does this on all the major holidays of the Christians, such as Easter and Christmas. He does the same thing on the important holidays of the Muslims, the Jews, and the idol worshippers [the term Marco Polo uses for Buddhism]. Being asked why he did so, he replied: "There are four prophets who are worshipped with greatest respect. The Christians say that their God is Jesus Christ, the Muslims Muhammad, the Jews Moses, and the Buddhists the Buddha . . . And I worship all four, so that I may be sure of worshipping him who is greatest in heaven (Adapted from Latham 1958: 119).

### 1. Why does Khubilai worship all four religions?

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## Student Handout:

### What is an Empire?

- (a) An empire is an institutionalized system whereby a particular elite, often but not always made up of a single nationality, exploits the populations of wide territories made up of different ethnicities.

In return, the imperial power offers various forms of protection to improve the comfort and security of life:

- (b) Physical protection by military force against outside hostile powers or foreign invasion;
- (c) Protection and promotion of economic activities such as farming, manufacturing, and trading;
- (c) Protection against attempts by powerful local elites to improve their position.
- (d) The imperial power often offers access to (or demands agreement with) a universal ideal generally seen as a positive thing for all its citizens. This sometimes takes the form of religion (Adapted from Billows 1997: 266).

#### **Vocabulary**

Institutionalized: The process of becoming an established law, custom, or practice.

Elite: A group of people regarded as superior to other groups.

Exploit: To take full advantage of, to use for one's advantage.





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## Unit G

# CHINA'S UYGHURS— A DISAFFECTED MUSLIM MINORITY

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The three lessons in this unit (1) discuss relations between the Uyghurs and the government of the People's Republic of China; (2) ask how China's two major Muslim minorities differ from one another; and (3) has students read a poem called *Awaken* (1931), a rallying cry for Uyghur resistance to the Chinese.

## LESSON 1

### *Relations Between The Uyghurs and the Government of the People's Republic of China*

**Essential Questions:** How do disaffected peoples voice their grievances? How can the Uyghur (sometimes spelled Uygur) people and the government of the People's Republic of China improve relations?

**Learning Experience:** In studying the problems facing the Uyghurs, one of China's largest minority nationalities, students will see a reflection of contemporary problems that face minority groups in other societies.

**Anticipatory Set:** In the past, the term “melting pot” described the ideal of assimilation for people emigrating to the U.S. Does it still apply today? How might minority people such as China's Uyghurs react to this concept?

**Context:** Over eight million Uyghurs live in China's Xinjiang province. Ethnically a Turkic people,<sup>1</sup> their society and culture is Muslim. They have little in common with the Han Chinese, who control government and society in contemporary China. Efforts by the Chinese government to assimilate Xinjiang and its minorities<sup>2</sup> have included the settlement of Han Chinese in the province—today about six million ethnic Chinese live in Xinjiang. This and other policies have led to mistrust, defiance, and violence by Uyghur separatists, and repression by the Chinese state. Since the early 1990s, the Uyghurs have increasingly come to see themselves as an oppressed people.

**Rationale:** Students will use the Chinese Constitution and excerpts from a *New York Times* article to examine the reasons for Uyghur discontent. They will explore possible solutions that would lessen tension between the government and the Uyghur people.

**Time:** Two forty-minute sessions

**Instructional Resources:** Map of China; map of Asia; document-based questions using three texts: (1) The basic policy statement on China's minorities from Article Three of the Constitution of the

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<sup>1</sup> The modern state of Turkey is home to only one of many Turkic peoples. Originally, the Turks came from what is now Mongolia in the sixth century CE. Many different Turkic languages are spoken from Turkey in Asia Minor to Xinjiang in west China.

<sup>2</sup> Information about China's fifty-five minority groups can be obtained from <http://www.china.org.cn/e-groups/shaoshu/index.htm>. This is a Chinese government site.



People’s Republic of China; (2) A brief discussion of China’s national minorities; and (3) Excerpts from a *New York Times* article, “Defiant Chinese Muslims Keep Their Own Time.”

Some documents are primary sources and some are secondary materials selected from various books and articles. Primary sources are marked with an asterisk. \*

**Procedure:** Full-class discussion: Why are minority groups often unhappy with their government? Write suggested reasons on the board. What solutions are there to the listed problems?

1. Distribute copies of maps of Xinjiang, China, Asia, which must be printed out from the following websites:

Xinjiang: <http://www.maps-of-china.com/xinjiang-s-ow.shtml>  
China: <http://www.maps-of-china.com/china-country.shtml>  
Asia: <http://www.maps-of-china.com/china-continent.shtml>

Point out the location of Xinjiang province, home of the Uyghur people. Make sure to indicate how close Xinjiang is to the Muslim world of Central and West Asia.

2. Have the entire class read Document 1 (Article Three of the Chinese Constitution) and Document 2 (“China’s National Minorities”) and answer the questions that follow.
3. Divide the class into groups and have students read Document 3 either silently or aloud. They will then discuss and write down the main points and answer the questions.
4. After each group has completed this task, the teacher has each group report to the class. The other students write down the most important points contained in the report.
5. At the end of the presentations, ask students which problems seem the most serious and why. Write their responses on the board.

**Whole Group Reflection:** Students explore other countries and events that are similar to the Uyghur problem and examine how minority groups attain equality in these situations. Explore the role economics and education play in these events.

**Instructional Modification:** Students can assess the situation facing the Uyghurs in the context of the U.N.’s *Universal Declaration on Human Rights*:

<http://www.hrweb.org/legal/undocs.html#UDHR>

**Application:** Using the passage from the Chinese Constitution and the *New York Times* article, write an explanatory essay about the grievances of the Uyghur people. Explore how at least two issues could possibly be solved. Use your knowledge of similar situations in the United States or world history as added examples.



## DOCUMENT 1: ARTICLE THREE OF THE CONSTITUTION OF THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA\*

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*Underlined words are defined in the glossary at the end of Document 3*

Article Three of the Chinese Constitution states the basic policy of the People’s Republic of China toward its minority nationalities.

The People’s Republic of China is a unitary multinational state. All nationalities are equal. Discrimination against or oppression of any nationality, and acts which undermine unity of the nationalities, are prohibited.

All the nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages, and to preserve or reform their own customs and ways.

Regional autonomy applies in areas where a minority nationality lives in a compact community. All national autonomous areas are inseparable parts of the People’s Republic of China.

**1. What protections are guaranteed to minorities?**

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**2. What is China determined to preserve through Article Three?**

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**3. Why does the Chinese government stress “unity” (first paragraph) and “inseparability” (last paragraph)? What fear does this express?**

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## DOCUMENT 2: CHINA’S NATIONAL MINORITIES

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Although most of China’s 1.3 billion people are Han Chinese,<sup>3</sup> more than 100 million people belong to China’s fifty-five national minority groups. Some minorities, such as China’s eight million Uyghurs, live in government-established national minority areas. To be a member of a minority group in contemporary China means

. . . economic disadvantage, poor representation at national levels, religious repression and educational disadvantage. Direct repression is only encountered when the State perceives religion as a galvanizing force in demands for independence . . . (Benewick 1999:107).

**1. About what percentage of China’s population consists of minority people?**

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**2. Name two things that result from being a member of a minority group in China.**

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<sup>3</sup> “Han” refers to the Han dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE). Because many institutions typical of later Chinese society were established in the Han period, the Chinese came to call themselves “people of Han.”



## DOCUMENT 3: “DEFIANT CHINESE MUSLIMS KEEP THEIR OWN TIME”

In this far western outpost, where a Muslim majority lives restively under Chinese rule, you can tell a lot about a man’s politics by how he sets his clock.

For the last half-century, China’s Communist leaders have required the entire country to mark the hours by Beijing time, even though this far-flung city of veiled women, spice markets, and donkey carts should be two, probably three, time zones behind.

... So many local Muslims, defiant and increasingly disaffected, set their watches two hours behind Beijing, a nod both to nature and their separate identity. “The Chinese want us to follow Beijing time, but most of us are unwilling,” said a young soda vendor named Abduljim, whose timepiece on a recent morning read 7:45, when the official time was 9:45. “We are Uyghurs—Muslims—we should follow Xinjiang time, our time, here.”

Time, like almost everything else here in Kashgar, has become suffused with questions of power, control, and ethnic divisions—between the dominant Chinese and the native Muslims, Uyghurs who speak a Turkic language and are culturally related to the peoples of nearby Central Asia. And in recent years, those divisions have intensified greatly, as more Chinese move into the region and local Uyghurs have fallen on economic hard times.

A small Uyghur separatist movement has carried out an occasional bombing in Xinjiang and Chinese leaders rail against “splittest” activities here. But far more common are the million little acts of personal defiance—small efforts to proclaim the difference—like wearing Islamic dress, refusing to speak Chinese, or setting your watch to local time.

... This rising disillusionment comes in part because government programs that once assisted minority groups have dwindled, but even more because of a vast influx of ethnic Chinese into the region—diluting the culture and taking natives’ jobs.

... The net effect is that Uyghur culture has receded in much of Xinjiang Province. Many local news programs now use Mandarin rather than Uyghur. More signs are in Chinese characters—with Uyghur script in tiny letters underneath. Urumqi, the provincial capital, has almost lost its ethnic Uyghur feel, becoming just another medium-sized Chinese city of white tiled office buildings. (Elizabeth Rosenthal, *The New York Times*, November 19, 2000).

**1. What does setting his or her watch differently from Beijing symbolize to a Uyghur?**

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**2. Define “acts of personal defiance.” Why are they important to the Uyghur?**

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**3. Name one threat to the stability of Uyghur culture.**

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**4. Name another minority people that face, or have faced problems similar to China’s Uyghurs. Describe similarities or differences.**

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## Lesson 1: Vocabulary

Abridge: To cut short, to deprive of, to diminish.

Compact: Closely packed or joined together.

Disaffected: Discontented, resentful.

Galvanize: To stimulate or excite, as if by an electric shock.

Influx: To come in, to enter.

Multinational: Of or relating to two or more nationalities.

Nationality: A people having a common origin, tradition, or language.

Rail: To complain or protest strongly.

Recede: To shrink back from a certain point.

Restive: Uneasy, anxious.

Servitude: A condition in which one lacks liberty, especially to determine one's way of life.

Suffuse: To be spread over or through, as in liquid or light.

Unitary: Undivided, whole.



## LESSON 2

### *How China's Two Major Muslim Minorities Differ From One Another*

**Essential Question:** How do China's two major Muslim minorities differ from one another?

**Learning Experience:** Students will learn about the relation between the Uyghur and Hui peoples and contemporary Chinese society by examining sets of photos in the context of social and cultural history.

**Anticipatory Set:** Do you get a shock when you look at an old family photo album? How much can you tell about the past from looking at old photos?

**Context:** By the late 1990s, there were over 17 million Muslims in the People's Republic of China. The two largest Muslim groups are the Uyghur (8.1 million) and the Hui (9.3 million). The Uyghur live mostly in China's remote northwest, in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region. They are an oasis-dwelling people speaking the Uyghur language, a Turkic dialect. Mandarin Chinese is a second language to them. Many Uyghur either do not speak it, or do not speak it well. Over the years they have sought independence from China, calling their region East Turkestan. In the last decade, tensions have increased due to the poor educational system, the central government's control of the region's natural resources, and the influx of Han Chinese migrant workers. Although many Uyghurs have assimilated into Han culture, many remain defiantly rooted in Uyghur culture.

The Hui, unlike the Uyghur, are not a homogeneous group. The Hui are of Persian and Central Asian origin, believed to be the descendants of Muslims who came to China during the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368). Over the centuries, they've intermarried with the Han people, and the only aspect that distinguishes them from the Han is religion. Unlike the Uyghur and other minority groups, they wear no distinctive clothing that sets them apart. For the most part, the Hui do not live separately from the Han. Geographically speaking, they are the most widely distributed minority people and can be found all over China.

**Rationale:** Using photos as a primary source, students will examine the differences between these two Muslim groups and explore the effects "difference" plays in each group's interaction with the Han majority.

**Time:** Two to three forty-minute sessions (depending on Internet access).

**Instructional Resources:** Photos of the Hui and Uyghur.

**Procedure:** Divide the class in half. One side will explore Uyghur culture and history, while the other will explore Hui culture and history. Each student receives a group of either three photos of Uyghur or three photos of Hui (student handout, pp. 148, 149).

Both halves of the class should then be divided into smaller groups. Each group is assigned a topic: culture, history, ethnic origins, customs, food, etc.

Students next surf the Internet to discover sites with information on their assigned topic. They take notes on the topic and then gather to debrief each other. The following are some suggested web sites with which to begin the search:



## Uyghurs

<http://www.oqya.5u.com/about.html>

## Hui

[http://www.cpamedia.com/politics/hui\\_muslims\\_in\\_china/](http://www.cpamedia.com/politics/hui_muslims_in_china/)

<http://www.china.org.cn/e-groups/shaoshu/shao-2-hui.htm>

<http://www.chsource.org/Hui.htm>

Using the Photo Analysis Worksheet (p. 150), students will then examine their three photos in detail. They should consider things such as physical features, clothing, and the environment in which the photo was taken.

In full-class discussion, students explain how the groups vary.

New, smaller groups of four students are formed. Each group is equally divided between “experts” on a Hui topic and “experts” on the same Uyghur topic. The groups share their research results. These smaller groups will attempt to answer the following questions: Why do these two Muslim groups look so different? How might Han Chinese differently view each group?

**Whole Group Reflection:** Full class discussion and debriefing on the information gathered through the Internet. What inferences can be made about how each of these Muslim groups relate to the dominant Han culture? How does the dominant culture relate to each group?

**Instructional Modification:** Students can work in pairs on one topic, perhaps pairing experienced internet users with those less experienced. A Venn diagram can also be used to compare and contrast Uyghur and Hui.

**Application:** Students will write a four page essay based on the following scenario: You are a travel writer and have been asked by a publisher to write an essay for a new guide book. The essay is to be called “The Road from Xian to Kashgar.” Using the information learnt in class and from the net, you have to explain the similarities and differences between the Uyghur and Hui.



## Student Handout: The Uyghurs

**Photo 1: Uyghur Couple**



(Source: Photograph courtesy of Sharon Shambourger, 2001, Xinjiang)

**Photo 2: Uyghur Mother and Child**



(Source: Photograph courtesy of Sharon Shambourger, 2001, Xinjiang)

**Photo 3: Uyghur School**



(Source: Photograph courtesy of Sharon Shambourger, 2001, Xinjiang)



UNIT  
2 - G





## Student Handout: The Hui

**Photo 1: Hui Anti-alcohol Committee Rally**



(Source: Photo from Gillette, Maris Boyd. *Between Mecca and Beijing*  
Copyright © 2000 by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University)

**Photo 2: Yan in Her Wedding Gown**



(Source: Photo from Gillette, Maris Boyd. *Between Mecca and Beijing*  
Copyright © 2000 by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University)

**Photo 3: Peng**



(Source: Photo from Gillette, Maris Boyd. *Between Mecca and Beijing*  
Copyright © 2000 by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University)



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## Student Handout: Photo Analysis Worksheet<sup>4</sup>

### Step 1. Observation

A. Study the photograph for two minutes for an overall impression and then examine individual items. Divide the photograph into four equal parts and study each section to see what new details become visible. Some of the things you might look for are:

- Types of clothing; facial expressions; are people in crowds or alone?
- What types of objects do you see? How might they be used?; Are there important objects in the background?
- What activities are going on? Are they related to work, religion, or leisure? Are people enjoying them?

B. Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities in the photographs.

Uyghur / Hui	Photo 1	Photo 2	Photo 3
<b>People</b>			
<b>Objects</b>			
<b>Activities</b>			

### Step 2. Inference

Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from the photograph.

1.
2.
3.

### Step 3. Questions

<b>A. What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?</b> _____ _____
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<b>B. Where could you find answers to them?</b> _____ _____
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<sup>4</sup> Adapted from the U.S. National Archives & Records Administration's Photo Analysis Worksheet  
[http://www.archives.gov/digital\\_classroom/lessons/analysis\\_worksheets/photo.html](http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/lessons/analysis_worksheets/photo.html)



## LESSON 3

### *Awaken (1931), A Rallying Cry For Uyghur Resistance To The Chinese.*

**Essential Question:** How can poetry expand and deepen one’s understanding of history? How does *Awaken* by Abdukhaliq (1901-1933), provide insight into Uyghur culture and history?

**Learning Experience:** Students will read and analyze a nationalist poem written under the pen name “Uyghur.” Abdukhaliq wrote during one of the most turbulent periods in the history of Uyghur-Chinese relations.

**Anticipatory Set:** If you wrote a poem about an important or troubling experience, how would it differ from simply describing it in prose?

**Context:** The region now called Xinjiang didn’t become part of China until the eighteenth century, under the Qing dynasty (1644-1911).

At the end of the nineteenth century, Muslim revolt brought about a brief period of independence from Chinese rule. Around the time Abdukhaliq wrote, tension between the Muslim populace and the Chinese authorities was high. In 1933, Abdukhaliq, along with twenty-six other intellectuals, was executed for inciting the people to revolt.

The life and career of Abdukhaliq became a symbol of Uyghur pride and resistance. *Awaken* is now recited by Uyghur children at times of protest.

**Rationale:** Students will explore how poetry can add to their understanding of historical events. By analyzing the poem, students can examine the power of words to stir people into action.

**Time:** One forty-minute session.

**Instructional Resources:** Text of a poem, *Awaken* by Abdukhaliq (1901-1933).

Some documents are primary sources and some are secondary materials selected from various books and articles. Primary sources are marked with an asterisk. \*

**Procedure:** The teacher reviews the concept of nationalism. The following definition might prove useful.

The term ‘nationalism’ is generally used to describe two phenomena: (1) the attitude that the members of a nation have when they care about their national identity, and (2) the actions that the members of a nation take when seeking to achieve (or sustain) some form of political sovereignty (Miscovic 2001: <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2001/entries/nationalism/>).

The teacher distributes a copy of *Awaken* and reads it aloud in order to provide a model for how it should be read. Students then read it silently to themselves. Finally, a student reads the poem aloud to the entire class.

The teacher brings up the subject of translation to make sure the class understands they are reading a text one step removed from the original.

The terms “mood” and “tone” are reviewed, as they apply to poetry.



**Mood:** The prevailing emotions of a work or of the author in his or her creation of the work.

**Tone:** The author’s attitude toward his or her audience may be deduced from the tone of the work. A formal tone may create distance or convey politeness, while an informal tone may encourage a friendly, intimate, or intrusive feeling in the reader.<sup>5</sup>

In small group discussion, the students will ascertain the mood/tone of the poem by identifying specific words and phrases. Then the students will be asked to make a list of verbs and nouns from each of the seven sections of the poem. Particular attention should be paid to the use of the word “if” and the part it plays in the poet’s view of the situation of the Uyghur people.

Students will also record what the poet specifically asks the people to do in each section and answer the following question: What is the role of the poet in this poem?

**Whole Group Reflection:** A spokesperson from each group will present his or her findings to the whole class. The list of verbs and nouns will be written on the board and examined for their power in arousing the poet’s audience.

The teacher will ask the following questions: What event do you think prompted the poet to write this poem? How does a poem give a different perspective from a piece of historical writing? What might make this poem easy to memorize?

**Instructional Modification:** Each group can be assigned five lines of the poem and, in jigsaw fashion, put the pieces of the poem together. Each group will report its reaction to these small sections to the whole class. Students could also write a response to the poem from the point of view of a Chinese government official.

**Application:** Students will choose any five lines from *Awaken* and translate them into a drawing, collage, or stick figure rendition. (All the assignments will later be put together to create a mural.) The students must write an accompanying piece explaining why the lines were chosen and why particular images were used. They should include an example from U.S. or world history of an event that might have required a similar poem—the French Revolution, for example.

*Awaken* (1931)\*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 <i>Awaken (Oyghan)</i><br>Hey! Uyghur, it is time to awaken,<br>You haven’t any possessions,<br>You have nothing to fear.  | 20 Think about it a long time.<br>If this opportunity should fall from your grasp,<br>The future will bode much hardship, much hardship.<br>My heart breaks for you my Uyghur people,<br>My brothers in arms, relatives, my family. |
| 5 If you don’t rescue yourselves<br>From this death,<br>Your situation will become very grave.<br>Stand up! I say,<br>Raise your head and wipe your eyes!  | 25 I worry for your lives,<br>So I am calling for you to awaken.<br>Have you not heard me yet?<br>What has happened to you?<br>There will be a day when you will regret,  |
| 10 Cut the heads off of your enemies,<br>Let the blood flow!<br>If you don’t open your eyes and look around you,<br>You’ll die pitifully, helplessly.<br>Your body appears lifeless.                                   | 30 And on that day you will understand,<br>Just what I have been telling you.<br>“Damn!” you will say when you realize<br>That you missed your only chance,<br>And on that day you will know that<br>I, Uyghur, was right           |
| 15 And yet you don’t worry about dying.<br>I call out to you but you do not react,<br>It seems as though you want to die unconsciously.<br>Open your eyes wide and look about you.<br>You must contemplate the future, | (Rudelson 1997: 148).   |

<sup>5</sup> From the Gale Glossary of Literary Terms [http://www.galegroup.com/free\\_resources/glossary](http://www.galegroup.com/free_resources/glossary)



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## Unit H

# FROM TSARS TO COMMISSARS TO INDEPENDENCE: THE KAZAKHS AND THE RUSSIANS

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**Essential Question:** How did the Kazakh people suffer under both Tsarist and Soviet rule?

**Learning Experience:** Students will learn about the expansion of Tsarist Russia and its impact on one important Central Asian people, the Kazakhs. In studying the fortunes of the Kazakh people, students will trace the decline of their nomadic way of life under colonialism and the rise of ethnic self-consciousness and nationalism in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

**Anticipatory Set:** By the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the European powers and China had divided up almost the entire Muslim world. They swallowed up empires, small kingdoms, and the Eurasian steppe, home to nomadic people like the Kazakhs. What does colonialism mean to colonized peoples? What did it mean to nomads like the Kazakhs?

**Context:** The people of modern Turkey are only one of many Turkic peoples. The first known Turkic state was founded in the sixth century and stretched from Mongolia to Central Asia. Later Turkic groups founded dynasties in Iran (the Safavids), northern India (the Mughal Empire), and the Middle East (the Ottoman Empire). Today, people who speak Turkic languages live not only in Turkey but also in Central Asia, northwest China, Iran, Afghanistan, and Russia.

The Kazakhs are the second most numerous Turkic group in Central Asia. A nomadic people, they used the steppe to pasture horses and sheep. All land was owned in common.

The Kazakhs first encountered Russian traders and soldiers in the seventeenth century. Pressed by enemies from the east, the Kazakhs were unable to prevent Tsarist forces from gaining a foothold in their territory. By the second half of the nineteenth century, their homeland—the steppe region north of the Aral Sea and Lake Balkash—became part of Russia (**Map A**). This was also the period when Russia completed its conquest of the rest of Central Asia.

The steppe could be turned into farmland, so the Kazakhs, unlike other Central Asian peoples, had much contact with the Russians. By the early twentieth century, forty percent of the population in some regions consisted of Russian or Ukrainian settlers. This radically changed the Kazakh way of life, since they “could not profitably continue as nomads with sharply reduced lands. By 1900, much of the Kazakh population was at least partially settled” (Manz, “Historical” 1998: 13). Many Kazakhs fled to western China or Afghanistan.

Contact with the Russians also meant, at least for some Kazakhs, education in Russian schools. Eventually, this produced an intelligentsia resentful of the Russian takeover. Although small in number, these men were influential as journalists and politicians. They were affected by nationalist movements that emphasized the unity of all Turkic peoples, including those modernizers who opposed the Ottoman Empire in Turkey at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Bolshevik revolution of 1917 was an event of great importance for Central Asians who opposed Russian rule. The communist victory “seemed to promise true liberation, for self-determination of all the subject peoples of the former Tsarist empire was one of its professed goals” (Soucek 2000: 210). The political reality turned out to be quite different. In the years after they took power, the Bolsheviks



attempted to integrate Central Asia into the Soviet Union. They created national republics based on Stalin's definition of a nation as having "common language, territory, psychological makeup, and historical experience" (Manz, "Historical" 1998: 15). In Central Asia, this definition rarely conformed to the reality of the region's complex ethnic diversity. After a brief attempt to establish an independent government, Kazakh territory became an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in 1920.

At least 1.5 million Kazakhs and eighty percent of their livestock perished under Stalin's forced collectivization efforts in the early 1930s. In the 1950s and 60s further settlement by Russians made the Kazakhs a minority in their own country.

In the wake of the dissolution of the U.S.S.R., Kazakhstan declared its independence in 1991. It is one of Central Asia's potentially richest nations, with huge deposits of oil, gas, and minerals.

More than four and a half million Kazakhs live outside Kazakhstan, whose population is over sixteen million. Many fled to China and other parts of Asia to escape famine, warfare, and political turmoil. The return of some families to a newly independent Kazakhstan is an important aspect of the nation's contemporary history.

**Rationale:** Students will review the relationship between colonial powers and colonized peoples. What reasons and justifications do colonial powers have for their policies? How do colonized peoples regain their independence? Who gains and who loses by colonialism, both during and after colonial rule?

**Time:** One to three forty-minute sessions.

**Instructional Resources:** **Map A**, **Map B**, and **Map C**, ten brief reading selections on Kazakh history from the nineteenth century to the contemporary era.

Some documents are primary sources and some are secondary materials selected from various books and articles. Primary sources are marked with an asterisk. \*

**Procedure:** The teacher distributes photocopies of **Map B**, and indicates the countries of Central Asia:

**CENTRAL ASIA:**

Xinjiang (China's largest province)  
Uzbekistan  
Kazakhstan  
Kyrgyzstan  
Tajikistan  
Turkmenistan  
Northern Afghanistan

The class is divided into pairs or groups of three, with each group receiving one selection to read. They will answer the questions after each selection. In full class, each group's spokesperson will read the selection and answer the questions for the whole class to copy down. After all selections have been explored, the full class is asked to bring up other examples in global history that are similar to, or different from the Kazakh experience. These examples will be recorded on a large sheet of newsprint and placed on a wall in the classroom.



**Whole Group Reflection:** Students will discuss how and why the Russians needed/wanted the Kazakh region. Students will also consider how nationalism develops under colonial rule and its positive and negative aspects.

**Instructional Modification:** Strong students can be grouped with weaker students. The selections can be edited or paraphrased to accommodate different reading and comprehension levels. This activity should lend itself to participation by students with special needs.

**Application:** Students will use the selections, the answers to each selection, classroom discussion, and their knowledge of global history to write an essay explaining the relationship between the Russians and Kazakhs. Using at least five of the selections and other examples from global history, they will define colonialism, discuss the relationship of the colonial power to the colonized region, and give at least one other example of colonialism that is similar to or different from the Kazakh experience. Other colonial situations that could be used are: Europe/Africa, Great Britain/India, France/Indochina, Japan/Korea.



## DOCUMENT 1: THE GORCHAKOV CIRCULAR\*

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The following is part of a document called the “Gorchakov Circular,” sent by Russia to the other European powers in 1864. Alexander Gorchakov was the Russian minister of foreign affairs. This passage explains Russia’s reasons for territorial expansion in Central Asia.

The position of Russia in Central Asia is that of all civilized states which are brought into contact with half-savage nomad populations, possessing no fixed social organization.

In such cases it always happens that the more civilized State is forced, in the interest of the security of its frontier and its commercial relations, to exercise a certain ascendancy over those whom their turbulent and unsettled character makes most undesirable neighbors (Olcott 1987: 75).

**1. Give two reasons Russia wanted to incorporate Central Asia into its territory.**

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**2. What adjective best describes Russia’s attitude toward Central Asia? Why?**

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## DOCUMENT 2: THE SUPERIORITY OF THE COLONIZER\*

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Remarks by V.V. Barthold (1869-1930), Russian historian and author of numerous works on Central Asia.

The Turkistanians have all yielded to our military superiority, but have in no way submitted to our spiritual/moral superiority. The task [we face] consists of bringing about acknowledgment of that very thing . . . we should be unable to say that we decisively earned a victory so long as they did not accept that superiority (Allworth, “Commensals” 1998: 193-194).

**1. Give one way in which the Russians feel superior to the Turkistanians.**

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## DOCUMENT 3: TSARIST COLONIALISM

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The prime motivation of the Russian conquest had been economic self-interest, and the evolution of the colony between 1868 and 1917 amply met that goal. The area became a supplier of raw materials for Russian industry and a consumer of Russian products, after the . . . colonial pattern. We have already pointed to cotton as the most important commodity sent to Russia; its cultivation increased to the verge of becoming a monoculture, and the adverse effect of this one-sidedness was made worse by the . . . decrease in the growing of cereals, which made Central Asia dependent on wheat imports from Russia. The other major aspect was the . . . colonization by agricultural settlers . . . This affected primarily Kazakhstan . . . Some of the most fertile tracts of land were thus seized, with the doubly harmful effects of expropriating the nomads' grazing grounds and of hampering their seasonal movements in search of water and pasture-land (Soucek 2000: 203).

**1. Name two features of the classical model of colonialism.**

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**2. What impact did the monoculture of cotton have on the people of Central Asia?**

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UNIT  
2 – H



The first Central Asian literature to feel the Russian invasion was naturally the poetry composed by the nomads roaming the very outer limits of the plains. From the early nineteenth century, their grazing lands began falling increasingly behind the line of Tsarist forts pushing inward along the entire northern frontier. When war struck, the conflict inspired themes of resistance to the Russian invaders and sarcasm for ineffective local generals, but before long poetry expressed the terrible despair over the vanishing of that independent life enjoyed on the plains . . . (Allworth “Focus” 1994: 398).

The poem *Kazakh Lands* is from a book of verse called *The Heroes* by Mir Jaqib Duwlat-uli (1885-1937). Duwlat-uli was a Kazakh noble educated in Russian schools. His first collection of poetry, entitled *Wake Up, Kazakh!* (1909), was banned by the Russians.

*Kazakh Lands* (1913)

Noble, influential men, pay attention to this!  
They say “Strike while the iron is hot;”  
By not following this proverb,  
You take responsibility on yourselves for the tears of future generations.

Oh, dear native land, you have gone entirely to the [Russian] settlers!  
The sacred graves of our forefathers are now amidst village streets.  
The tombs over them will be used . . . for bathhouses,  
The wooden fences [around them] will go for firewood.  
Then, finding no sign of our old graves we shall pour out streams of tears.  
The huge lakes and flowing springs, like the summer pastures and forests,  
are all taken from us.

When I think about all this I go out of my mind and burn (as in a fire) from grief.  
But we accepted citizenship without giving up our land,  
We hoped to live under the shelter of justice.  
If we now give up the last land, the cattle will have to be pastured on sand.  
The simple people are stunned . . .

Kazakhs, now where is the land on which you have lived since the Kazakh  
tribe was formed?  
They drove you off and put the land under the Russian settlements . . .  
Only the salt lakes and waterless plain, useless for agriculture, are left to us.  
(Allworth “Focus” 1994: 411-412).

**1. Which social class among the Kazakhs does the poem call into action?**

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**2. List two ways in which the poet feels that Kazakh culture will be lost.**

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**3. Why is land so important to the Kazakh?**

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## DOCUMENT 5: THE COMMUNIST REVOLUTION AND CENTRAL ASIA\*

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It was the second Russian Revolution of 1917, the Bolshevik one of October/November, that seemed to promise true liberation . . . of all the subject peoples of the former Tsarist empire . . . This was explicitly stated in two proclamations . . . the second addressed itself specifically to the Muslims and read:

*To All Muslim Workers of Russia and the Orient*

Comrades! Brothers!

. . . The world of arbitrariness and oppression is living its last days. A new world, the world of workers who have liberated themselves, is being born.

. . . Muslims of Russia . . . all you whose mosques and places of worship have been trampled on by the tsars and oppressors of Russia! From now on your beliefs and customs, your national and cultural institutions are being declared free and inviolable.

. . . Muslims of Russia! Muslims of the Orient! We expect your support and sympathy toward a rebirth of the world! (Soucek 2000: 211).

### 1. How would Muslims benefit from the 1917 Russian Revolution?

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## DOCUMENT 6: MUKHTAR AUEZ-ULI

Auez-uli (on the right in the photo, below) is one of the major Kazakh writers of the twentieth century. He was condemned as a “counterrevolutionary” and “political enemy” during the 1930s, when Kazakhstan was part of Soviet Russia under Stalin.

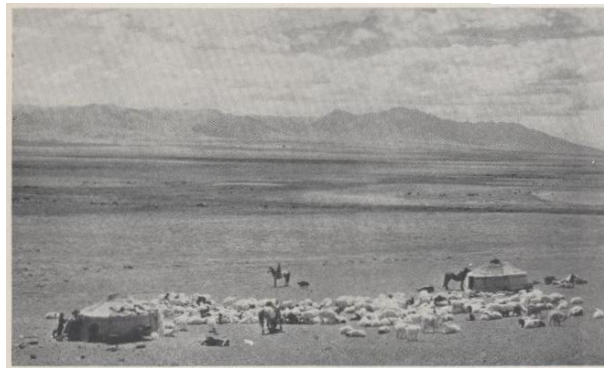
### *A Photo of Mukhtar Auez-uli (1897-1961).*



(Source: Welcome to Kazakhstan <http://www.kz/eng/aezov/aezov1.html>)

Auez-ali was the son of a nomad. As a six-year-old boy living in his grandfather’s yurt (like the one in the photo, below), he saw writing for the first time and “was amazed at the fact that songs sung by adults and children could be written on paper”

### *Yurts On The Steppes Of Central Asia. A Yurt Is A Circular Domed Tent Made Of Felt Or Skins.*



(Source: Cressey 1934: 255)

**1. What evidence of cultural diffusion (clothes, transportation, etc.) do you see in the above photo?**

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**2. Why would the poet be a danger to Stalinist Russia?**

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UNIT  
2 – H



## DOCUMENT 7: THE U.S.S.R. AND CENTRAL ASIA

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Of all the numerous problems that Central Asia and Kazakhstan are facing now, the most important one remains their underdevelopment. Modernization was pursued in this area with minimal participation by the native population, and none of its processes—industrialization, urbanization, the demographic revolution, the revolution in education, and occupational mobility—were fully implemented there. Limited industrialization was accompanied not so much by the creation of an indigenous working class as by the attraction of a work force from the European parts of the U.S.S.R. During the construction of industrial complexes neither local needs nor local traditions were taken into account. As a result, at the end of the Soviet period, the area contained large heavy industry enterprises, even entire cities, with the indigenous population comprising the minority and industrial revenues never reaching the local budget.

. . . Soviet authorities had pumped oil there (Kazakhstan) for decades and, in order not to build schools, hospitals, and day-care centers, preferred to bring in temporary workers from the North Caucasus. Every quarter planes brought in a new shift of twelve thousand people. These shifts included not only skilled workers, but also secretaries, cooks, and even office cleaners (Khazanov, “Underdevelopment” 1998: 144-145).

**1. How did the Russians make sure the Kazakhs would remain underdeveloped?**

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## DOCUMENT 8: *GLASNOST* AND CENTRAL ASIA

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. . . by the time of the Bolshevik revolution, Central Asia, including the Kazakh lands, was predominantly Muslim, and the Soviet regime attacked religion in order to assimilate the various nationalities to the new Soviet political order. Not only was separation of church and state proclaimed, but independent religious organizations were practically eliminated, . . . mosques were closed, and Muslims courts and schools virtually disappeared.

The *glasnost* policies of the late 1980s provided an opening for peoples all over the Soviet empire to express an interest in the language, customs, and religion of their past. In Kazakhstan, the rights of the . . . nationality have been receiving long overdue attention; a strong movement to revitalize the Kazakh language has developed, and numerous historical and literary associations have formed with the aim of educating the public about little-known Kazakh writers and political figures, restoring Kazakh cultural monuments, and rehabilitating victims of Stalinist repressions. At the same time, Kazakhstan has witnessed an increase in mosque attendance and the visibility of religious activities (Altoma 1998: 166).

**1. In what way did the Soviet regime try to destroy Kazakh culture?**

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**2. What affect did glasnost have on Kazakhstan?**

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## DOCUMENT 9: RETURNING HOME

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Just as the history of the Silk Roads is the history of the movement of ideas and goods, the history of Central Asia is the history of the movement of peoples. This is true of both the past and modern times. More than four million Kazakhs live outside the borders of Kazakhstan. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan became an independent country. This encouraged many Kazakhs to return home.

. . . Many Kazakhs left their homeland because of repression during the Soviet period. But some simply found themselves on the wrong side of the border . . . When the borders were drawn [by the Soviets], some ended up in different republics, notably Uzbekistan, where 1.7 million still live. Another 1.5 million are in China and 740,000 in Russia. Most are in areas close to what is today Kazakhstan.

The urge to return is not stimulated only by the desire to live in a Kazakh state. Kazakhs in China are increasingly subject to that country's fierce assimilation policy, which threatens any desire to preserve a different culture or language. Yet Kazakhs arriving from China and Mongolia speak the Kazakh language better than many Kazakhs in Kazakhstan. Seventy years of Soviet rule and enforced use of Russian have taken their toll. Only about sixty percent of the . . . Kazakh population can speak its own language, and even many of these people use Russian words that have become part of the national vocabulary (*Economist* 1999: 36).

**1. Why were so many Kazakhs living in Uzbekistan?**

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**2. What is one problem faced by the Kazakhs living in China?**

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**3. Why do only sixty percent of Kazakhs speak their native language?**

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## Vocabulary

Arbitrariness: The use of power without limits.

Ascendancy: The state of being dominant.

Assimilation: Process of being absorbed into a culture.

Bolsheviks: The revolutionary communists who seized power in Russia in 1917.

Caucasus: The mountain range stretching between the Black and Caspian seas.

Central Asia: Region consisting of Xinjiang (China's largest province), and five independent states that were formerly part of the Soviet Union: Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan.

Cereals: Grains such as rice and wheat.

Colonialism: Control by one power over an area or people.

Counterrevolutionary: A movement against revolutionary trends.

Demographic: Having to do with the study of population.

Explicitly: Fully and specifically, stated without vagueness.

Expropriating: Depriving someone of rights or possessions.

Glasnost: Soviet policy (1986) permitting open discussion of political and social issues and freer circulation of news and information.

Implement: To put into effect.

Indigenous: Born or produced naturally in a country or region.

Inviolable: To be free from assault or trespass.

Monoculture: Growth or cultivation of a single crop.

Turbulent: To be in a state of unrest.

Turkistanis: People of Turkestan, another name for Central Asia



## Unit I

# PERSIA AND THE EAST-WEST FLOW OF GOODS ON THE SILK ROADS

**Essential Question:** What role does Iran play in the cross-cultural connections made possible by the Silk Roads?

**Learning Experience:** Students will analyze how the rise and fall of empires affected Silk Road trade. They will also examine cultural communication between Iran and China.

**Anticipatory Set:** Look in your room, in your dresser drawers, in your closets—how many things are made outside the U.S.? What conditions make global trade possible? How does such exchange influence our attitudes about the world?

**Context:** Iranians call their country “Iran,” meaning, “Land of the Aryans.” The Aryans were a people who migrated to northern India and Iran during the second millennium BCE. “Persia” comes from “Persis” or “Parsa,” a region in southern Iran. This is the name the ancient Greeks and other westerners used for the whole of Iran.

Iran, twice the size of Texas and two-thirds desert and mountains, occupies a unique place between East and West (**Map A** and **Map K**). Consequently, for centuries it was a conduit for the exchange of goods and ideas between China and the Middle East and Europe.

This unit discusses Iran-China cultural exchange in the context of the rise and fall of empires between the second BCE and the eighth century CE. It focuses on the last two Persian dynasties before the rise of Islam and the first two Chinese imperial dynasties:

Persia	China
<p><b>Parthian Empire<sup>1</sup></b> <b>(227 BCE-224 CE)</b></p> <p>(See Document 2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>At its height, the Parthian empire controlled Iran, most of the Middle East, and parts of Central Asia.</li></ul> <p>The Parthians were middlemen for East-West trade and carefully controlled commerce within their empire. Chinese records say the Parthians prevented both Roman traders from crossing Iran to reach China, and Chinese from reaching Roman-controlled Syria.</p>	<p><b>Han Dynasty</b> <b>(202 BCE-220 CE)</b></p> <p>(See Document 3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Han China’s major foreign policy problem was a nomadic people living along its northern frontiers called the Xiongnu.</li></ul> <p>The early Silk Road was closely connected to Han foreign policy. In 139 BCE the soldier/explorer Zhang Qian went west to seek allies against the Xiongnu. He returned with the first direct news about regions west of China. Han expansion in these “Western Regions” was the beginning of the Silk Road.</p>

<sup>1</sup> Also see “Document 2: The Roman Empire, Parthian Iran, and Han Dynasty China.”





### **Sasanian Empire (224-651)**

(See Document 5)

- The Sasanids were one of the most powerful empires to rule the Iranian plateau and eastern part of the Fertile Crescent.

Sasanian textiles and silver were imported all over Asia. In China, weavers and silversmiths adopted Sasanian vessel shapes and decoration. The imperial court in Japan also treasured Sasanian silver, textiles, and glassware. This shallow bowl was probably used for drinking wine.



Sasanian Bowl

The Sasanians were destroyed by the rise of Islam in the early seventh century. By 651, the Arab conquest of Iran was complete. The last Sasanian emperor sought refuge in Tang China.

### **Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258)**

- The Abbasids were the second Islamic dynasty. They ruled from their capital at Baghdad, the largest city in the world outside China. The Abbasid caliphate is often referred to as Islam's "Golden Age."

By the early tenth century the Abbasid empire had broken up into various independent regimes. Also, their Central Asian domains were continually threatened by nomad invaders.

### **Period of Disunion (3rd-6th centuries)**

(See Document 4)

- One of the most violent eras in Chinese history. Except for a brief period at the end of the third century, China wouldn't be united again until 581. From the early 3rd century, north China was ruled by non-Chinese and the south was governed by refugees from the north.

During the third and fourth centuries, Buddhism began to spread in both north and south China. The Silk Road was the avenue by which Buddhist missionaries entered China.

The absence of a strong central government in China made trade more difficult and dangerous.

### **Sui Dynasty (589-618)**

- The short-lived Sui unify China.

### **Tang Dynasty (618-907)**

(See Documents 5, 6, and 7)

- Perhaps the most cosmopolitan period in China's history. Arabs, Persians, Indians, Turks, Syrians, and Tibetans, Koreans, and Japanese traveled to China to live, conduct business, and study.

Tang was a period when the Chinese upper classes were highly receptive to foreign dress, customs, arts, music, and so forth.

Up until the mid-eighth century, Tang expansion into Central Asia caused Silk Road trade to flourish. The Chinese established military garrisons and made alliances with small oasis kingdoms. The rise of Islam and internal rebellion against the dynasty destroyed China's ability to control the region.



Although Silk Road trade didn't vanish during the Period of Disunion between Han and Tang, it was difficult and dangerous (see Document 4). Why were strong empires necessary beneficial to trade and cultural exchange?

Formidable obstacles had traditionally confronted long-distance trade across Eurasia. The caravan trade required an enormous investment of time and capital. . .

. . . Since the caravans needed to obtain supplies and rest their animals en route, a series of oases, free from bandit harassment, were essential . . . The major Chinese and Persian dynasties sought to and at times actually did rule these areas, and it is no accident that the volume of trade during these periods was greater than at any other time (Rossabi 1990: 352, 353).

Persians and people of Persian origin such as the Sogdians<sup>2</sup> were major players in Silk Road trade. Document 4, a letter from a Sogdian merchant, provides a vivid picture of trade during China's violent Period of Disunion.

Another empire that affected Silk Roads trade was that of the Kushans, who controlled parts of north-west India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the southern routes of the Silk Road across the Tarim basin from roughly the second century BCE to the third century CE. Kushan control of the Silk Roads facilitated the spread of Buddhism into China.

In Tang dynasty China (618-907 CE), Iranian merchants were so common that if you wanted to poke fun at a rich man who claimed he had no money, you might say he was like a "poor Persian" (Schafer 1951: 410).

The flow of goods across the Iranian plateau left its mark on Persia from very early times. The Greek historian Herodotus (c. 430 BCE) says that

There is no nation which so readily adopts foreign customs as the Persians. Thus, they have taken the dress of the Medes,<sup>3</sup> considering it superior to their own; and in war they wear the Egyptian breastplate. As soon as they hear of any luxury, they instantly make it their own . . .

With the Islamic conquests and the decline of the Tang dynasty in the mid-eighth century, China was no longer able to maintain an imperial presence in Central Asia. The exchange of ideas and goods between Iran and China wouldn't reach another highpoint until the Mongol conquests of the fourteenth century. At that time, it became possible to travel (as Marco Polo did) from the Mediterranean to the China Sea on a Mongol passport. From the Han dynasty to Mongol-ruled China encompasses fifteen hundred years. During much of this time, the Iran-China connection was central to

. . . the exchange of spiritual and material culture between East and West . . . [and] arguably the longest sustained example of intercultural communication in world history (Allsen 2001: 8).

**Rationale:** Pre-modern Persia and China were linked by trade along the Silk Road. In learning about their interactions, students will come to understand cultural exchange and its relation to geography and the politics of empire.

**Time:** One or two class sessions.

**Instructional Resources:** **Map A** and **Map C** (You need to locate Iran and add it to **Map C**); seven document-based questions and an essay assignment based on the questions.

<sup>2</sup> The Sogdians were a people of Iranian origin who came from Central Asia. Between the fourth and ninth centuries CE they were probably the most important Silk Road merchants.

<sup>3</sup> The Medes were a tribe that settled in Iran during the second millennium BCE.



Some documents are primary sources and some are secondary materials selected from various books and articles. Primary sources are marked with an asterisk. \*

### Procedure:

- Using the maps discuss Iran’s geographical position in Eurasia and its significance in trade and cultural exchange.
- Part A: Divide the class into groups. This lesson uses the jigsaw method, so students are first divided into base groups. *All groups receive all documents* in order to be (1) prepared when, as “experts,” they enter their second groups, and (2) to be able to write the essay comprising Part B of this unit.

All students should read the *first and seventh documents*—“Persia Before the Silk Road,” and “The Decline of the Tang and the Rise of Islam”—and answer the questions. The other documents will be done by the base groups as follows:

#### Group A

2. “The Roman Empire, Parthian Iran, and Han Dynasty China”

#### Group B

3. “Emperor Wu’s Foreign Policy”
4. “A Sogdian Merchant’s Letter (c. 313-314 CE)”

#### Group C

5. “Persian Art Styles Travel to China”
6. “Iranian Dancing Girls at the Chinese Court”

Students should read the documents, discuss them with their fellow group members, and answer the questions. They should be prepared to discuss the document’s contents with the whole class.

- Rearrange the class into groups of experts. Every student is an “expert” on the documents studied in the base group. Groups should discuss all the documents in terms of the essential question.

**Whole Group Reflection:** Have students choose a speaker from each group to present their reports and answer the essential question: “What role did Iran play in the cross-cultural connections made possible by the Silk Road?”

**Instructional Modification:** The teacher should assign documents to students based on their levels of reading and comprehension.

**Application:** For homework, students will write the Part B essay.



## PART A

*These questions are designed to test your ability to work with historical documents. Some of these documents have been edited for the purposes of this question. As you analyze them, take into account both the source of each and any point of view that may be presented.*

### DOCUMENT 1: PERSIA BEFORE THE SILK ROADS\*

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The Achaemenid dynasty (530-354 BCE) ruled over a multiethnic empire that covered the Middle East, Egypt, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia. Because they had conquered so many kingdoms, their kings called themselves “King of Kings.” Later Persian dynasties looked back at this period as the greatest in the country’s history.

Since the ancient Greeks fought a series of wars against Achaemenid Persia, the historian Herodotus (484?-424 BCE) had a lot to say about Persians and the Persian empire. Even before the Silk Roads, Iran’s central geographical position made it a crossroads for cultural diffusion:

There is no nation which so readily adopts foreign customs as the Persians. Thus, they have taken the dress of the Medes [a tribe that settled in Iran in the second millennium BCE], considering it superior to their own; and in war they wear the Egyptian breastplate. As soon as they hear of any luxury, they instantly make it their own . . .

**1. Give one geographic and one cultural reason why the Persians adopted so many foreign things.**

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## DOCUMENT 2: THE ROMAN EMPIRE, PARTHIAN IRAN, AND HAN DYNASTY CHINA

The early success of the Silk Roads for the most part depended on three empires: the Chinese Han dynasty, the Iranian Parthian dynasty, and the Roman Empire. The Parthians were the middlemen in trade between China and Rome. When Parthians and Chinese controlled the oasis states and towns of Central Asia, trade went forward without interruption. From the time of the first Roman emperor (Augustus, r. 27 BCE-14 CE), Rome always had silk. This table shows some of the historical factors that shaped early trade between these four empires.

<b>ROMANS</b> (27 BCE-476 CE)	<b>PARTHANS</b> (247 BCE-224 CE)	<b>KUSHANS</b> (C. 2ND CENTURY BCE-3RD CENTURY CE)	<b>HAN DYNASTY</b> (202 BCE-220 CE)
<p><b>27 BCE-180 CE</b> The Roman Empire was at peace from Scotland to the border of Iran.</p> <p>During the reign of the first emperor, Augustus (27 BCE-14 CE), the long-distance silk trade with China greatly increased.</p> <p>Some Roman writers criticized the silk trade because it caused gold and silver to flow out of the empire; others criticized the way silk clothing revealed a woman's body.</p>	 <p>At its height, the Parthians controlled Iran, most of the Middle East, and parts of Central Asia.</p> <p><b>1st century BCE</b> Parthia sent envoys to the Rome as well as to emperor Wu of the Han dynasty.</p>	<p>The Kushans controlled parts of northwest India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the southern routes of the Silk Road across the Tarim basin.</p> <p>Kushan control of the Silk Road facilitated the spread of Buddhism to China.</p> <p>Gandhara, a region in northwest Pakistan formerly occupied by Alexander the Great's successors, is part of the Kushan empire. Consequently, Kushan art is influenced by Greek and Roman myths and art styles.</p>	<p>The Han dynasty extended China's frontiers to what is now northern Vietnam and northern Korea.</p> <p>Han's major foreign policy problem was the Xiongnu, a nomadic people living along its northern frontiers.</p> <p><b>140-87 BCE</b> Reign of emperor Wu. His aggressive policies sought to destroy the Xiongnu.</p> <p><b>121-101 BCE</b> Han armies campaigned in the "Western Regions."—modern Gansu and Xinjiang provinces.</p>
 <p><a href="http://www.ashmol.ox.ac.uk/ash/news/news035.html">http://www.ashmol.ox.ac.uk/ash/news/news035.html</a></p>	<p>Contemporary accounts say that the Parthians carefully controlled commerce in their domains. They prevented Romans from crossing Iran to reach China, and Chinese from reaching Roman-controlled Syria.</p> <p>Chinese merchants entering Parthia could go no further than the city of Merv (now Mary in Turkmenistan) to sell their silk.</p>	<p>The first images of the Buddha are produced in the Kushan period.</p>  <p><a href="http://www.med.unc.edu/~nupam/kushan1.html">http://www.med.unc.edu/~nupam/kushan1.html</a></p>	<p><b>139 BCE</b> Emperor Wu sent Zhang Qian west to seek allies against the Xiongnu. He returned with the first direct news of the regions west of China.</p>  <p><a href="http://www.calgarycoin.com/cast1.htm">http://www.calgarycoin.com/cast1.htm</a></p>
<p><b>180</b> With the death of the emperor Marcus Aurelius, government became dominated by military strongmen. Historians mark the decline of Rome from this point in time.</p> <p><b>235-284</b> Twenty-six military dictators in turn seized power from one another.</p>	<p>The border between Rome and Parthia was the Euphrates river. Relations between the two empires were unstable: during the second and third centuries, the Romans mounted major campaigns against the Parthians.</p> <p><b>224</b> A governor revolted against a royal house weakened by internal struggles and opposition from powerful nobles. He established the Sasanian dynasty that ruled Iran until the Islamic conquest in 641.</p>		<p><b>106 BCE</b> The first Chinese caravan is thought to have entered Parthian territory.</p> <p>In the Parthian city of Merv, the Chinese traded silk for gold and silver, coral, glassware, gold-embroidered rugs, cloth, precious stones, and medicines.</p> <p><b>90-130</b> China controls the Tarim Basin.</p>
			<p><b>220 CE</b> Fall of the Han. Power of the court was weakened by political corruption, rebellion, famine, and natural disasters. Regional warlords became increasingly more powerful.</p>



## DOCUMENT 2: THE ROMAN EMPIRE, PARTHIAN IRAN, AND HAN DYNASTY CHINA

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*(continued from the previous page.)*

**1. Describe how the Parthians and Kushans acted as middlemen.**

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**2. Did all Romans like silk? Why or why not?**

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**3. Give two examples of how either war or peace affected Silk Road trade.**

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## DOCUMENT 3: RETURNING HOME

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The Silk Roads developed in part as a response to China's need to destroy its number one enemy, the Xiongnu. As a result of Emperor Wu's (r. 140-87 BCE) aggressive foreign policy, China expanded into Central Asia and merchants were more easily able to travel back and forth between China and Iran.

The first confederation of nomadic tribes in Inner Asia was formed by the Xiongnu in the late third century BCE . . . The early Han emperors tried conciliatory policies, wooing the Xiongnu leaders with generous gifts, including silk, rice, cash, and even imperial princesses as brides. Critics of these policies feared that they merely strengthened the enemy; and indeed, in 166 BCE, 140,000 horsemen raided deep into China, reaching a point less than 100 miles from the capital.

Emperor Wu took the offensive. He sent 300,000 troops far into Xiongnu territory in 133 BCE. Subsequent expeditions, such as those in 124, 123, and 119 BCE, often involved over 100,000 men.

. . . Emperor Wu turned his attention to Central Asia as well, in part to find allies, in part to improve the supply of horses to the army. In 139 BCE, he sent one of his officials, Zhang Qian, west in search of allies to fight against the Xiongnu. Captured and kept prisoner for ten years, Zhang eventually escaped and made his way to Bactria and Ferghana, returning in 126 BCE . . . In 101 BCE, after three years' effort, a Chinese army made its way beyond the Pamir Mountains to defeat Ferghana, seize large numbers of its excellent horses, and gain recognition of Chinese overlordship (Ebrey 1996: 68, 69).

### Places and Place Names

Bactria is in modern northeast Afghanistan.

Ferghana is located in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyztan.

Pamirs is located mainly in modern Tajikistan. They form a hub from which five great mountain ranges, including the Himalayas, extend.

### 1. How did Chinese foreign policy help create the Silk Roads?

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## DOCUMENT 4: A SOGDIAN MERCHANT’S LETTER (C. 313-314 CE)\*

Although trade continued along the Silk Roads during periods in which Persia and/or China weren’t strong and stable, the trade was much more difficult and dangerous.

This letter was written in the fourth century CE. The period between the early third and late sixth centuries was a violent time when China was politically divided: non-Chinese peoples ruled the north, and Chinese refugees controlled the south. Sometimes called the Period of Disunion, China wouldn’t be united under a powerful native dynasty again until 589.

The Sogdians were a people of Iranian origin who came from Central Asia. Between the fourth and ninth centuries CE they were probably the most important merchants trading along the Silk Road.

The city of Luoyang mentioned at the letter’s beginning is the capital of the defeated Chinese dynasty, sacked by invaders in 311.

The original documents are in poor condition. Words and letters in brackets [ . . . ] have been added by the translator. Question marks in parentheses (?) indicate that the meaning of the text is uncertain.

And sirs, the last emperor, so they say, fled from Luoyang because of the famine, and fire was set to his palace and to the city, and the palace was burnt and the city [destroyed]. Luoyang (is) no more . . .

And, sirs, if I were to write to you everything (about) how China has fared, (it would be) beyond (?) grief: there is no profit for you to gain therefrom. And sirs, it is eight years since I sent Saghrak and Farn-Aghat “inside” [China] and it is three years since I received a reply from there. They were well . . . , (but) now, since the last evil occurred, I do [not] receive a reply from there (about) how they have fared. Moreover, four years ago I sent another man named Artikhū-vandak. When the caravan departed from Guzang, Wakhush[akk] the . . . was there, and when they reached Luoyang, bo[th the . . . ] and the Indians and the Sogdians there had all died of starvation (Sims-Williams 2001).

**1. In one sentence describe the general tone of this letter.**

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**2. What happened to the Sogdian merchants inside China?**

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**A. Bowl**



(Source: Seattle Art Museum, Charles E. Merrill Trust)

Iran, Sasanian Dynasty, 5-6th Century CE,  
Silver,  
Seattle Art Museum

The Sasanian empire (224-651 CE) was one of the most powerful and belligerent regimes ever to control the Iranian plateau and eastern part of the Fertile Crescent (Farmer 1986: 180). Sasanian textiles and silver were imported all over Asia. In China, weavers and silversmiths adopted Sasanian vessel shapes and decoration. The imperial court in Japan also treasured Sasanian silver, textiles, and glassware. This shallow bowl was probably used for drinking wine.

**B. Leaf-shaped Dish**



(Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Arthur M. Sackler Gift, 1974 [1974.268.11] Photograph, all rights reserved, The Metropolitan Museum of Art) [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/ho/06/eac/ho\\_1974.268.11.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/ho/06/eac/ho_1974.268.11.htm)

China, Tang Dynasty, Late 7th - Early 8th CE  
Silver with Parcel Gilding  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Sui dynasty (589-618) unified China after more than three centuries of political division. Its successor, the Tang (618-907), was able to extend its power into Central Asia and enable Silk Road trade to flourish for almost 150 years.

The Tang was one of the most brilliant periods in Chinese history. Its capital at Chang'an was host to Arabs, Persians, Indians, Turks, Syrians, and Tibetans, as well as Koreans and Japanese. Many Persian merchants also lived and worked in China's southeastern seaports. The Silk Road brought luxury goods from western Asia, particularly Iran, into China.

... the period from the fifth century CE [onward] was one of the principal times in Chinese history when ... the decorative arts, especially utensils for eating and drinking, were radically altered in shape, texture and

decoration by the introduction of foreign customs and motifs (Rawson 1992: 265).

**1. What aspect of Tang dynasty history provided the conditions for (A) to influence Chinese silversmiths?**

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**2. Compare (A) and (B). What decorative motif (a motif is an individual element in a design) do the two share?**

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## DOCUMENT 6: IRANIAN DANCING GIRLS AT THE CHINESE COURT\*

Chinese records tell us that Iranian dancers were sent to the Tang court several times during the eighth century CE. The women were from Sogdiana in Central Asia. The Sogdians were a people of Iranian origin. During the Tang, foreign (particularly Central Asian) music, dance, styles of art, food, clothing, and cosmetics were eagerly adopted by the Chinese upper classes.

This passage is from a poem by Bo Juyi (772-846 CE), one of the most famous poets of the Tang dynasty.

- 1 Iranian whirling girl, Iranian whirling girl—  
Her heart answers to the strings,
- 3 Her hands answer to the drums.  
At the sound of the strings and drums, she raises her arms,
- 5 Like swirling snowflakes tossed about, she turns in a whirling dance.  
Whirling to the left, turning to the right, she never feels exhausted,
- 7 A thousand rounds, ten thousand circuits—it never seems to end.  
Among men and living creatures, she is peerless;
- 9 Compared to her, the wheels of a racing chariot revolve slowly and a  
whirlwind is sluggish

(Mair 1994: 486).

**1. What kinds of instruments accompany the dancers?**

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**2. What impression do the “swirling snowflakes” of line 5 give about the dancers?**

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**3. Why does the poet compare the dancers to chariot wheels and a whirlwind (line 9)?**

## DOCUMENT 7: THE DECLINE OF THE TANG AND THE RISE OF ISLAM

Two events destroyed Chinese power in Central Asia: (1) the rise of Islam, and (2) the An Lushan rebellion (755-763). An Lushan was a non-Chinese general whose army guarded China’s northern frontier. In 755 he rebelled against the court. Although eventually defeated, the An Lushan rebellion marked the beginning of the dynasty’s decline as other warlords rose in the provinces and competed with the central government for power. For the rest of the Tang period, there was no outward expansion of Chinese power.

Also, by the mid-eighth century, Islam had become the dominant power from North Africa to the borders of India. In 751, a Tang army was defeated by the Arabs at the Battle of the Talas River in Central Asia. Chinese control over Central Asia was now a thing of the past. Commercial and cultural exchange between China and Iran wouldn’t reach flourish again until the establishment of the Mongol empire in the fourteenth century. At that time it was possible to travel (as Marco Polo did) from the Mediterranean to the China Sea on a Mongol passport.

**1. How did domestic problems prevent an aggressive Chinese foreign policy?**

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## PART B

### ESSAY

**Directions:** Write a well-organized essay that includes an introduction, several paragraphs, and a conclusion. Use evidence from at least two documents to support your response. Include additional related information.

**Historical Context:** Iran played a vital role between East and West for many centuries. Its central position on the Eurasian continent made it a middleman for trade along the Silk Road. Iran-China trade and cultural exchange rose and fell with the rise and fall of empires. The Parthian and Sasanian dynasties in Iran and the Han and Tang dynasties in China created political and economic conditions beneficial to the exchange of goods on the Silk Roads.

**Task:** Using information from the documents and your knowledge of global history, write an essay in which you

- Describe why Iran has served as an intermediary between East and West;
- Give two examples of cultural interchange between Iran and China;
- Describe two political factors that could encourage trade;
- Describe two political factors that could discourage trade.

