

Outline Lecture Three—Mongols in China: The Yuan Dynasty

Key Questions:

- 1) What challenges did the nomadic Mongol rulers face in managing a sedentary, multi-ethnic society?
- 2) How did they try to overcome them?

I) Khubilai Khan: From Nomad to Emperor of China

- a) The Four Khanates
 - i) To the West—Ilkhans in Persia
 - ii) To the Northwest—The Golden Horde in Russia
 - iii) Central Asia—Khanate of Chagatai
 - iv) To the East—The Great Khanate in China (Khubilai)
- b) Khubilai's Rise to Power
 - i) Challenge by younger brother Arigh Boke
 - ii) Costly and lengthy campaigns to suppress this challenge
- c) Economic Recovery under Khubilai
 - i) Devastation of northern China from previous wars
 - ii) Emergency measures
 - (1) Office for the Stimulation of Agriculture in 1261
 - (2) Autonomous village organizations called *she*
- d) Boost commercial infrastructure
 - i) Muslim-run merchant associations—known as *ortakhs*
 - ii) Paper currency
 - iii) Postal Stations or *Yambs*

II) The Making of a “Global” Sovereign

- a) Pragmatic sensibilities of a “global” and cosmopolitan sovereign
 - i) Appreciation for not just the symbolism but the *function* of diversity
 - (1) Recruited and used talent and experts from the entire Mongol realm
 - (2) The Case of the Polos
 - ii) Dual image as Great khan of the Mongols, but also Yuan emperor of the Chinese
- b) Ethnic Distinctions in Yuan Dynasty
 - i) Hierarchy of Four Ethnic Classes
 - (1) Mongols, *Semuren*, *Hanren*, *Nanren*
 - ii) Reliance on Foreign Administrators
 - iii) The Case of Ahmad
 - (1) Finance czar from 1262-1282
 - (a) Increase number of registered households for taxation
 - (b) Establish and reinforce more state monopolies
 - iv) The Case of Saiyid Ajall
 - (1) Appointed governor of strategic new territory of Yunnan in 1274
 - (2) Why choose an old Muslim for such a key post?
 - (3) Achievements
- c) The Negative Impact of Global politics on Mongol-Muslim Relations
 - i) Geopolitical developments in 1270-1280 affecting domestic policy

- (1) Threat of Islamic power
 - (2) Anti-Muslim decrees or *jasaghs*
- ii) Was this the cumulative effect of anti-Muslim sentiments in China?
 - (1) E.g. Christian official Ai-xue's sabotage of Muslims
- d) Conclusion:
 - i) As Mongols became more Sinicized, tipped that delicate ethnic balance

For art history buffs, check out this great website on Yuan Art:

http://tech2.npm.gov.tw/khan/english/main_h_eng.htm