

An aerial view of a traditional Chinese city, likely Nanjing, showing a large river with many boats, a city wall, and various buildings. The text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

China During The Middle Ages (500 – 1650 C.E.)

I. Introduction:

- The fall of the Han Empire left a power vacuum in China, that was filled by several small kingdoms with various political styles. Some were run in the Chinese style with an emperor and Confucian bureaucrats. Other were affected by Tibetan, and Turkic cultures which depended on Buddhism to rule.

- In 618 C.E., China was reunified under the reign of the *Li family*, who started what is called the *Tang Dynasty*.



II. The Tang Dynasty

(618-907 C.E.):



- Under the leadership of emperor *Li Shimin*, China expanded its influence by demanding tribute from Korea and Vietnam.

- He reintroduced the use of Confucian scholars in running the government.

- He established a universal law code.



- And he built the 1,100 mile Grand Canal, which linked the Yellow River in northern China with the Yangzi River in southern China. Thus improving trade and communication in China.

Grand Canal of China 運河



Tang Inventions:

1. Tang scholars developed block printing; a system of printing where characters are carved onto a wooden block. The block is then inked and pressed onto a sheet of paper.



2. Tang scientists invented gunpowder by combining saltpeter, sulfur, and charcoal. It was first simply used for fireworks.

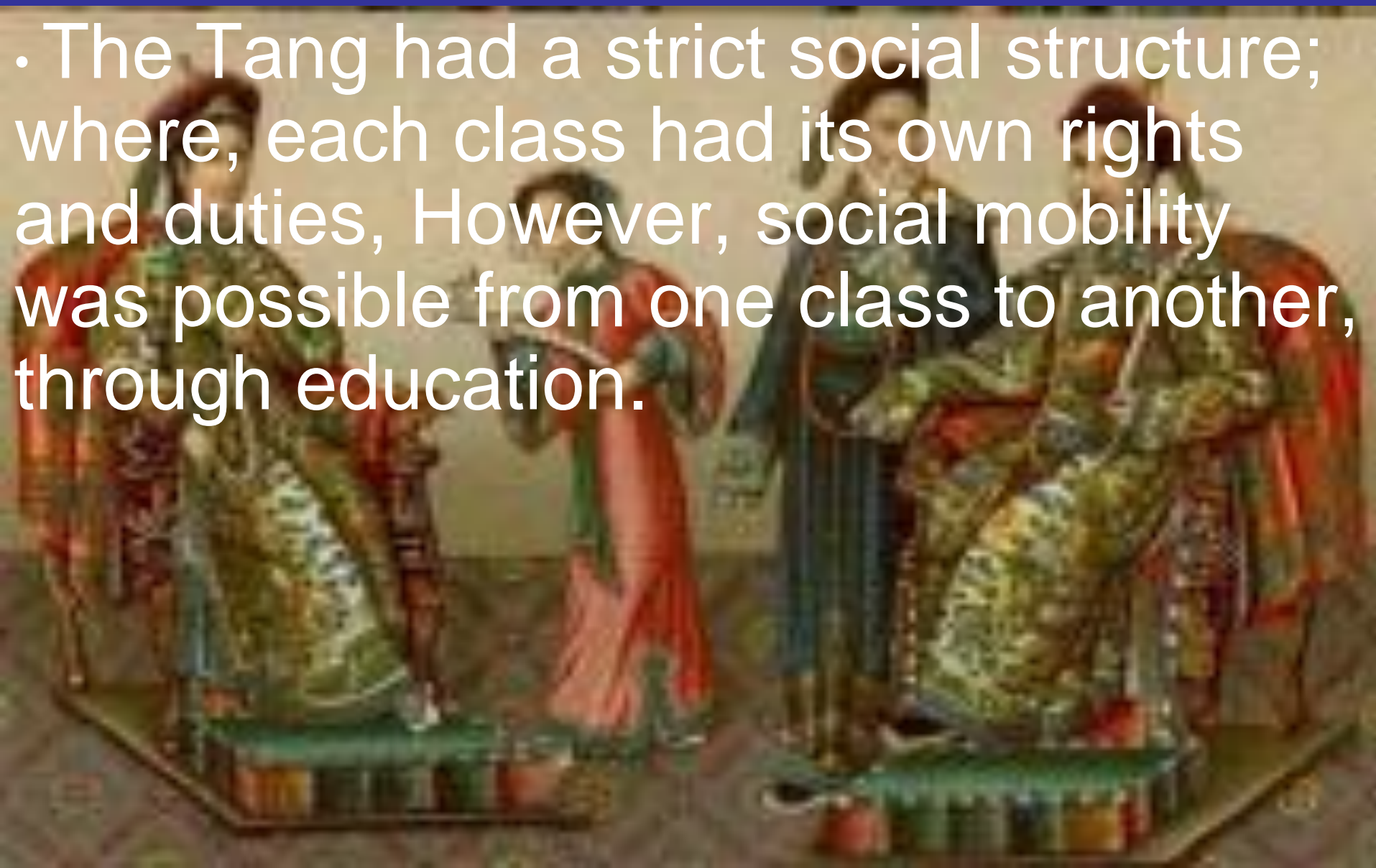


3. Tang physicians developed the small pox vaccine in the 10th century C.E.. However, the widespread use of this vaccine did not occur in China until the 16th century, and it did not reach Europe until the 17th century.



Tang Social Structure:

• The Tang had a strict social structure; where, each class had its own rights and duties, However, social mobility was possible from one class to another, through education.



- At the top of China's social ladder was the *gentry class*. Most scholars and government officials were from this wealthy landowning class. They were exempt from land taxes, and dominated the money-lending system of China.



- To avoid overextending the government's bureaucracy, Tang emperors allowed local nobles, and gentry to exercise significant power in their regions.



• Next came the peasant class. Most Chinese were peasants who worked the land. They could move up in society through education and government service.





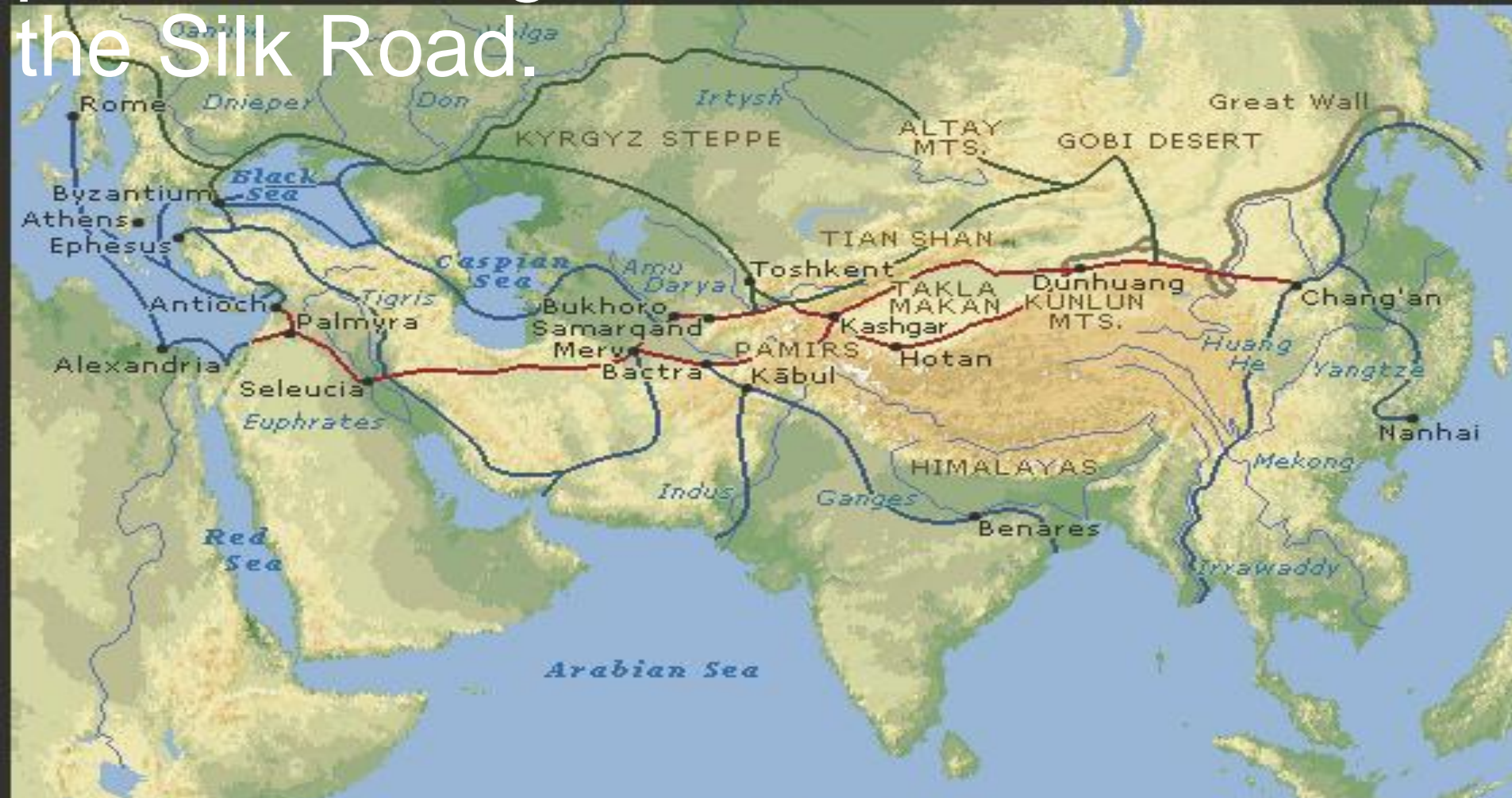
• At the social bottom was the merchant class. Merchants were lower than peasants; because according to Confucian tradition, they made their wealth off the labor of others.

- The Tang government issued curfews within urban areas to control crime. Commoners had to return to their homes between 8 and 10 p.m.



Tang Economy:

- The Tang dynasty encouraged, and protected long-distant trade routes like the Silk Road.

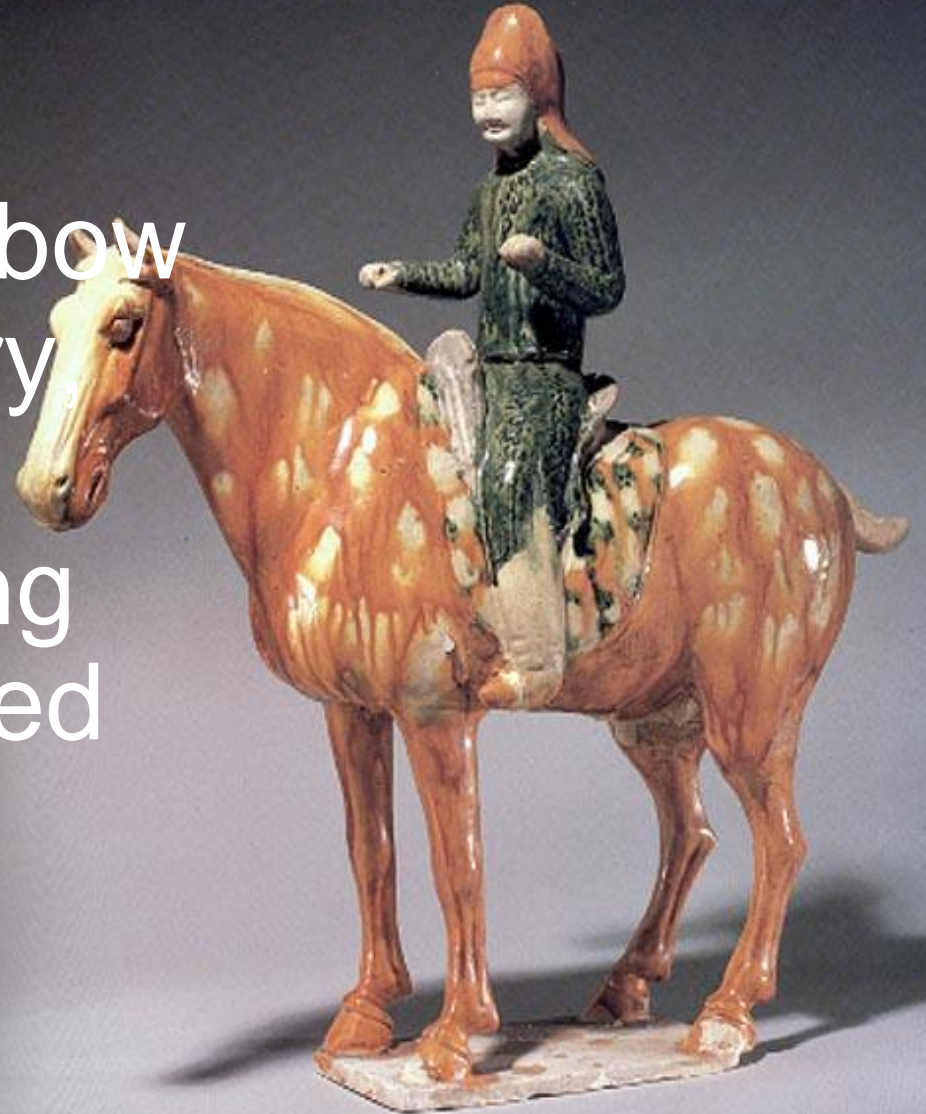


- During the Han era, China's main export had been silk; however, by the Tang period China had lost its monopoly on silk (Christian monks had smuggled silk worms out of China.)
- At the same time, Western Asia (India) had lost its monopoly over cotton. Thus Tang merchants were able to spin their own cotton cloth.

- China became the sole supplier of porcelain, during this period.
- By 1000 C.E., Chinese exports outnumbered Asian, European, or African goods by a hundred to one. Making the Tang dynasty one of the wealthiest in Chinese history.

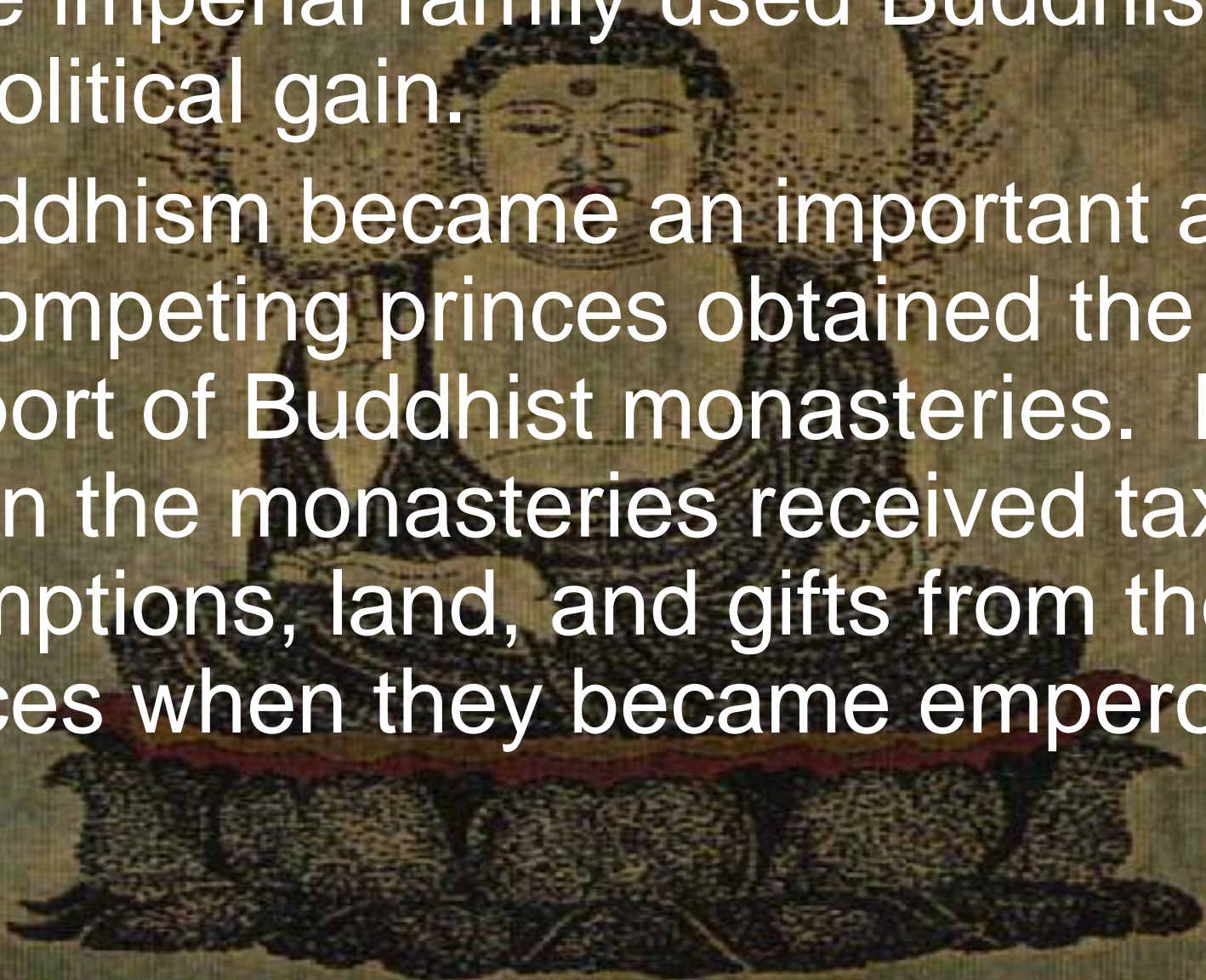
Tang Military:

- The Tang military combined Chinese weapons, the crossbow and armored infantry, with Central Asian horsemen by utilizing the stirrup (developed in Central Asia.)



Tang Religion:

- The imperial family used Buddhism for political gain.
- Buddhism became an important ally as competing princes obtained the support of Buddhist monasteries. In return the monasteries received tax exemptions, land, and gifts from the princes when they became emperor.



- Mahayana (Great Vehicle) Buddhism became the dominate Buddhist teaching in China. It fostered faith in enlightened beings, who choose to remain on the earth in order to help others achieve enlightenment.

- This Buddhist sect was popular among the Chinese; because it permitted the the absorption of local gods and goddesses into the Mahayana sainthood.

- After two centuries of Buddhist influence, members of the imperial family began to call for the eradication of Buddhist influences and restore the ancient values of hierarchy and social harmony found in Confucianism.
- Confucian scholars feared that Buddhism was destroying the family. So they pushed for a return to traditional family values.

- Their worries were realized when Wu Zhao, married into the imperial family and seized control of the government in 690 C.E.. She ruled China until 705 C.E.



- Confucian scholars had contempt for all powerful women, so they accused Wu Zhao of abuse of power by practicing torture, and murder.

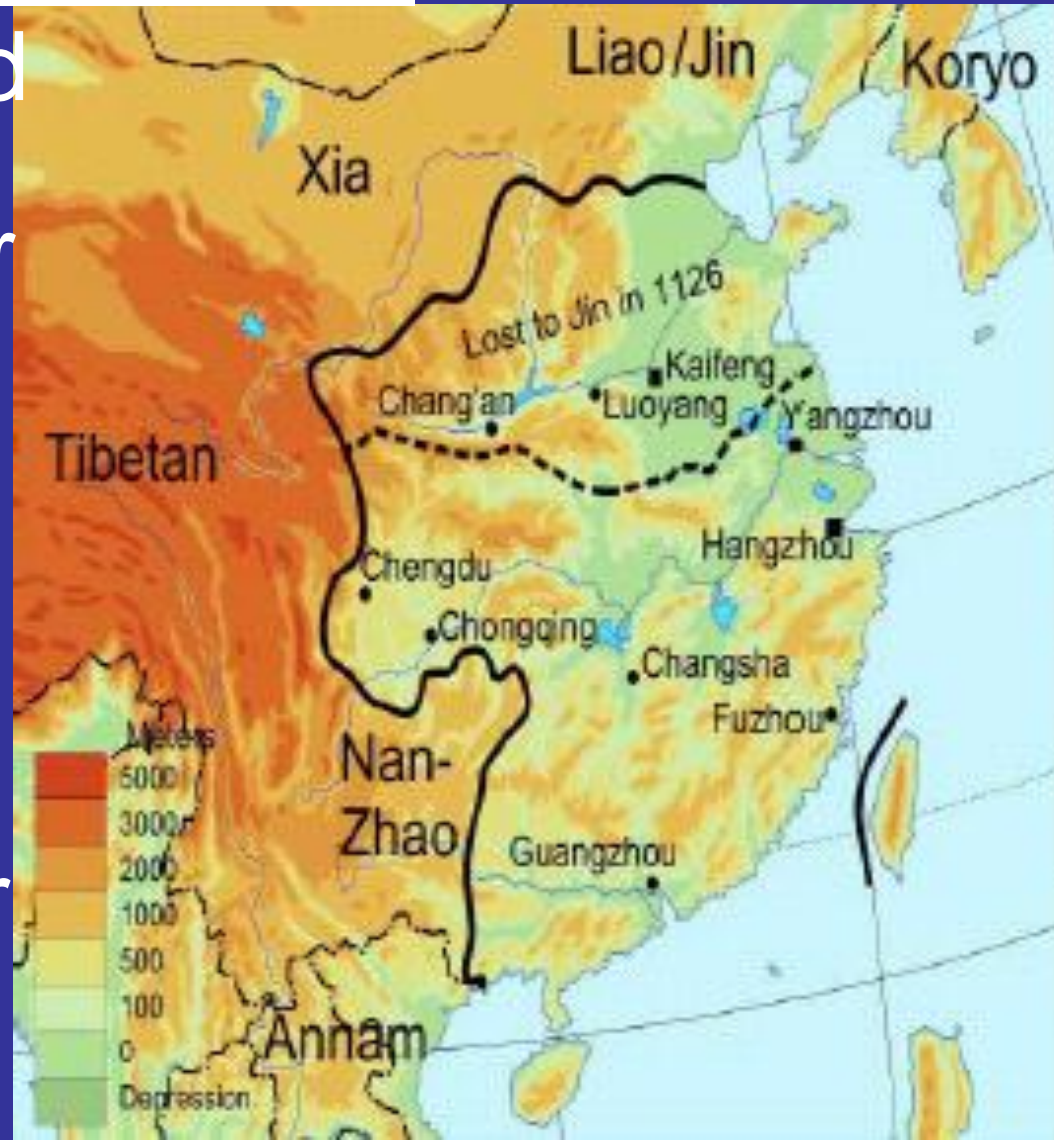


Fall of the Tang Dynasty:

1. Tang defeat at the Battle of Talas River, by a combined army of Arabs, Turks, and Tibetans ended its westward expansion, & control of the Silk Road.
2. Tang conquest in the east required extreme taxation of its citizens.
3. Disgruntled members of the gentry class began the Huang Chao Rebellion of 879-881 C.E.

III. The Song Dynasty (960-1279 C.E.)

• China experienced a short period of general chaos, after the fall of the Tang Dynasty. However, by 960 C.E. strong central governmental control was reestablished under the reign of the Song Dynasty.



Song Military:

- The Song dynasty was half the size of the Tang empire, but its army was four times as large. It contained 1.25 million men (about the size of the U.S. military today.)
- Song military leaders were educated specialists, who were tested on military subjects, and paid a regular salary.



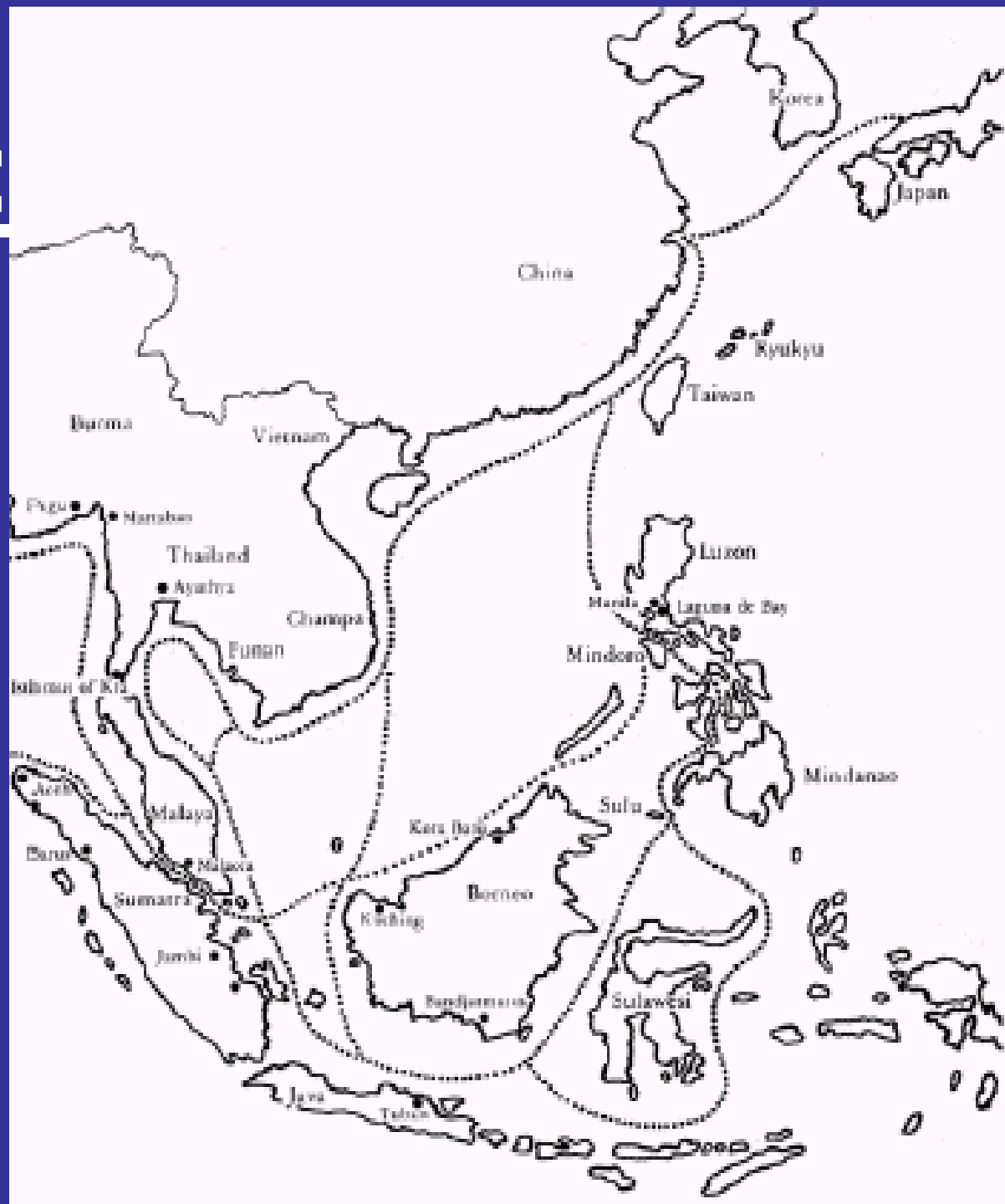
- Engineers became skilled in High-temperature metallurgy. They massed produced steel weapons, and body armor for soldiers.

- Cavalry of the northern tribes were countered by utilizing gun power to propel a cluster of flaming arrows; and, by firing shells that blew out shards of iron.



Song Economy:

- China during this period did not have access to the long-distant trade network that existed during the Tang dynasty.



- But China began extensive rice cultivation by introducing new hardy strains of rice. They were able to harvest two rice crops annually, giving them an abundance of food.



- The Song pioneered the first use of paper money. Known as “*flying money*” government issued paper certificates could be redeemed for coinage at locations throughout China.

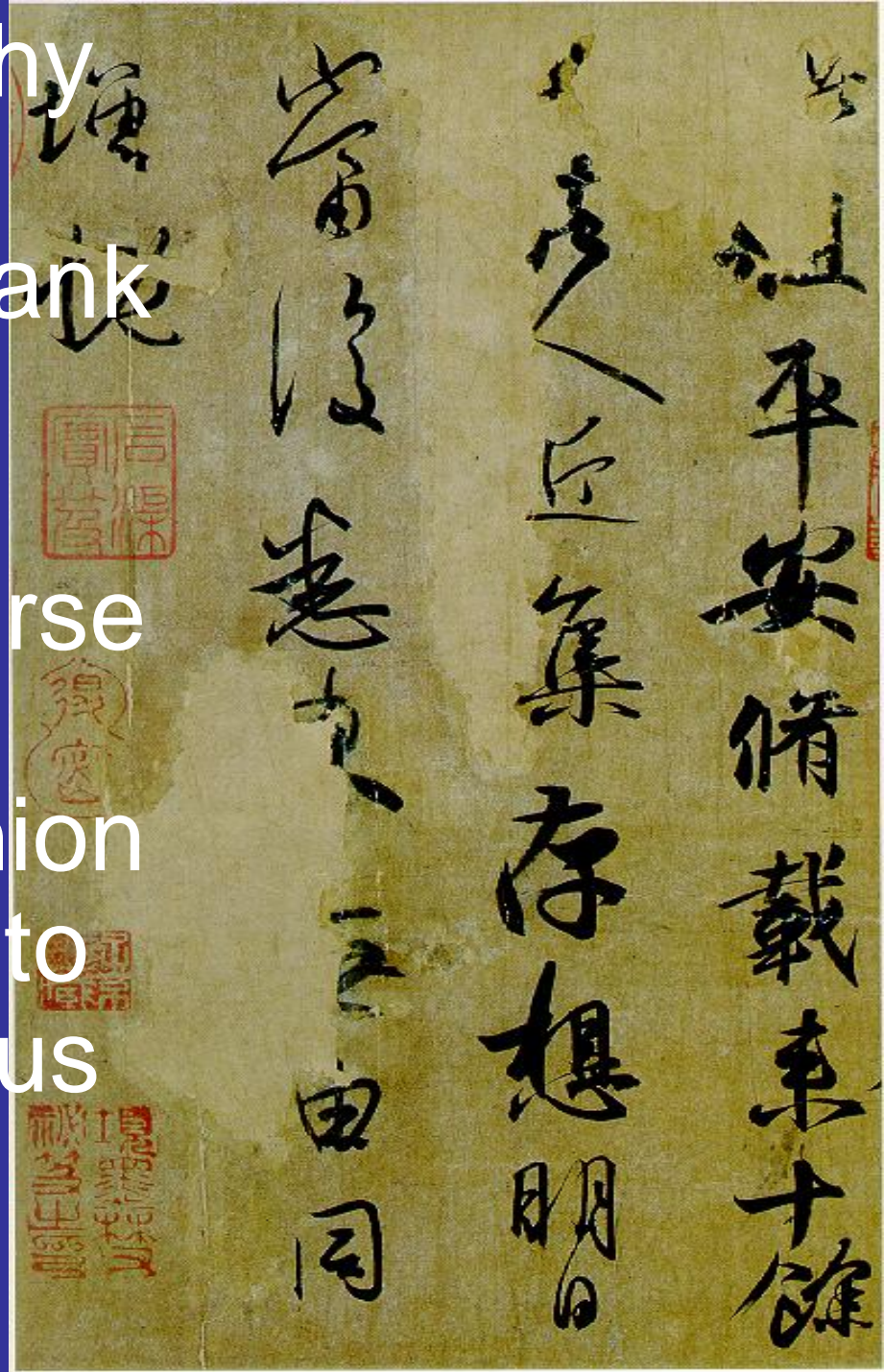


Song Arts:

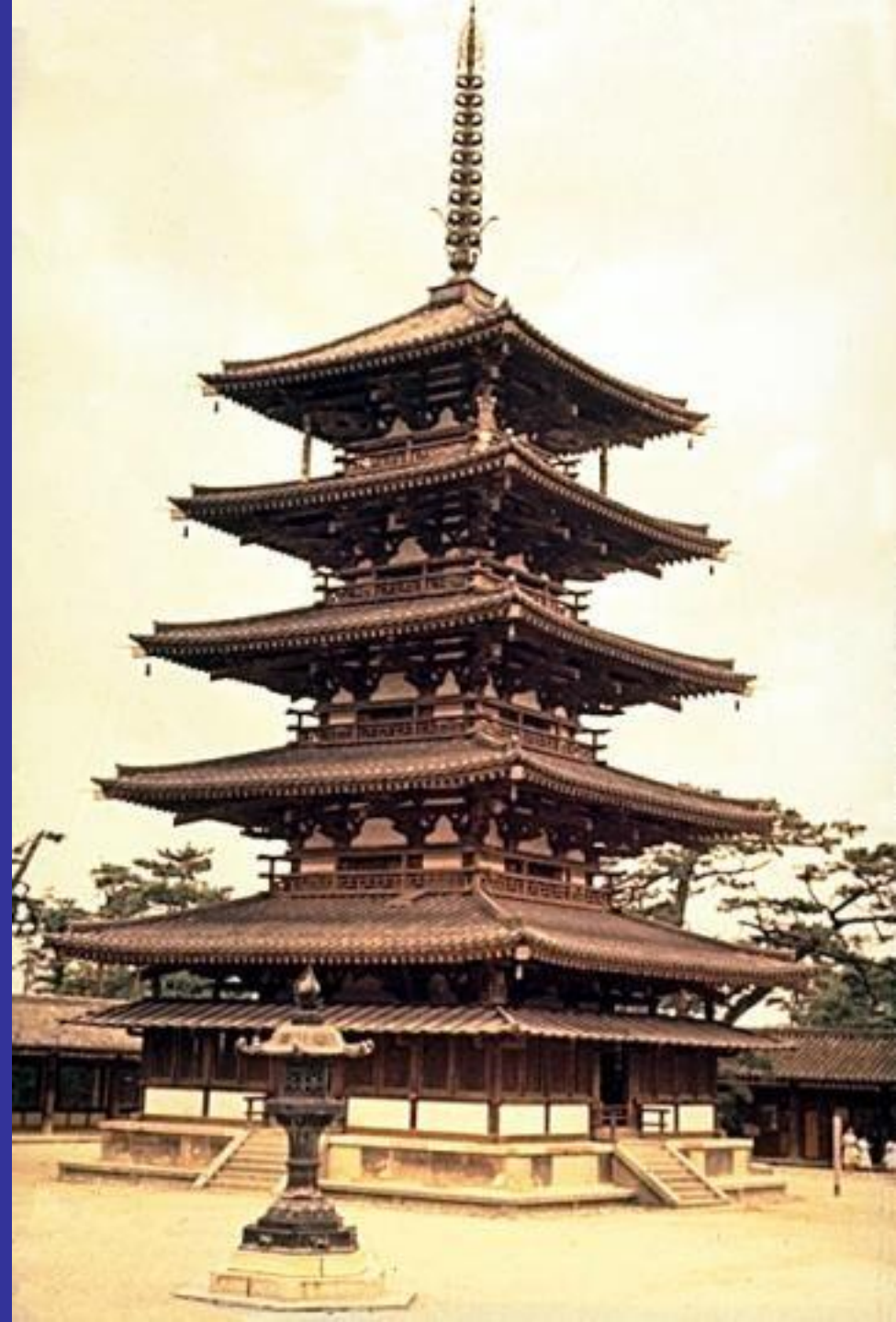
1. Song artisans were famous for their fine porcelain.



2. Chinese calligraphy became artistic & standardized. The blank sheet of paper represented the oneness of the universe before creation. The strokes reveal the union of Yin and Yang, ink to paper until harmonious oneness, the Dao, is achieved.



3. Song architects designed multistoried temples with ornate roofs called pagodas.



1 十一	2 十二	3 十三	4 十四	5 十五	6 十六	7 小暑
8 十八	9 十九	10 二十	11 廿一	12 廿二	13 廿三	14 廿四
15 廿五	16 廿六	17 廿七	18 廿八	19 廿九	20 三十	21 六月
22 初二	23 初三	24 初四	25 初五	26 初六	27 初七	28 初八
29 初九	30 初十	31 十一				

七月

2001
辛巳



荷塘采莲 清

陈枚 绘《月曼清游》图册之一

www.dpm.org.cn

4. During the Song dynasty, gardens became extremely popular; and, Chinese gardens became famous throughout Asia.

Song Technology:

1. Movable type printing was developed; which increased printing speed, thus increasing the diffusion of ideas.

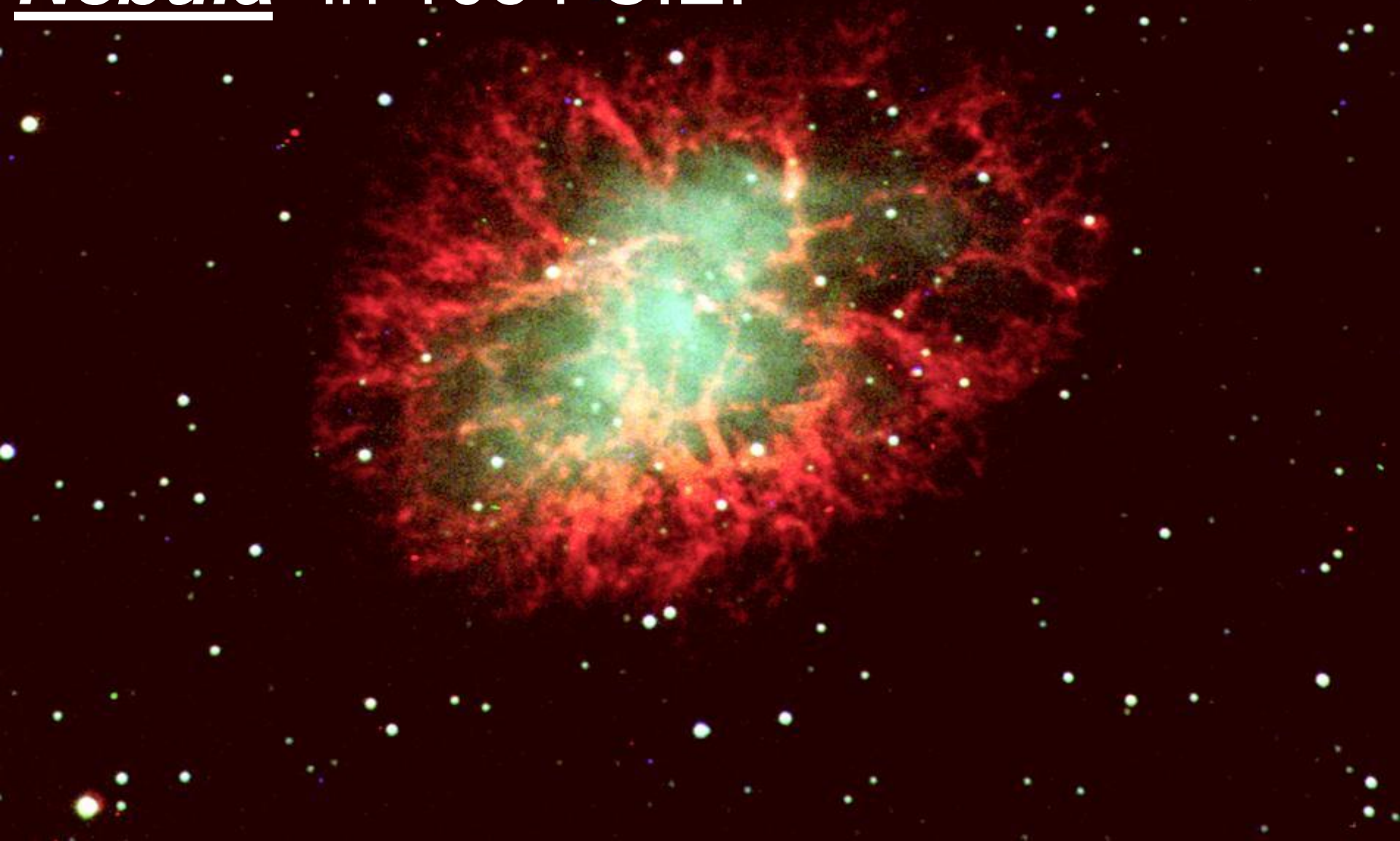
Movable type spread to Korea and Japan, and was brought to Europe by the Mongols.



2. Song mathematicians are the first known to have used fractions, which they originally employed to describe the phases of the moon.

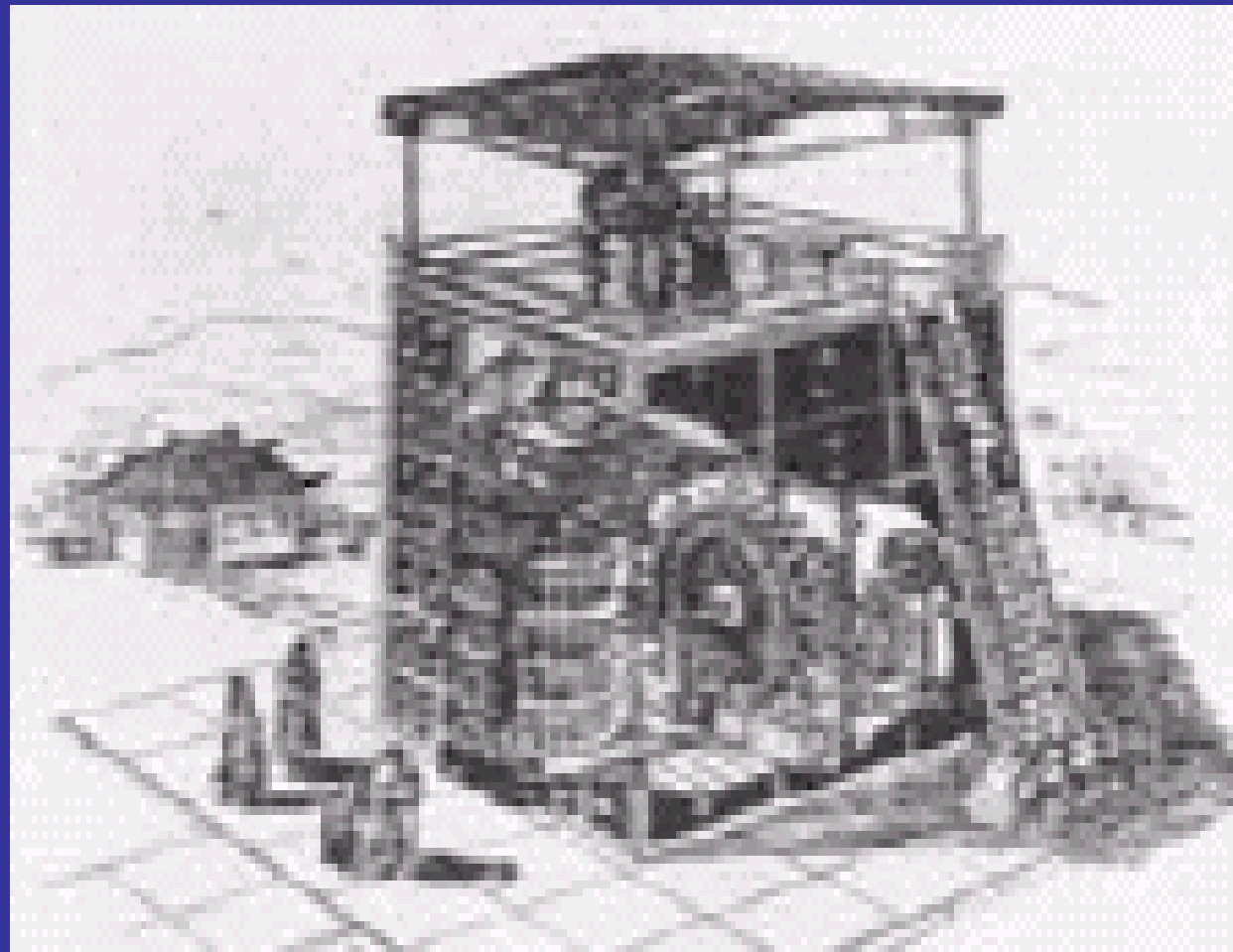


3. Song astrologers were the first to record the explosion of the “*Crab* *Nebula*” in 1054 C.E.



4. Song scholars also invented the mechanical clock, which told the time of the day and the day of the month.

In 1088 C.E.,
Su-Sung
created an
imperial clock
80 feet tall.



No. 120: Su-Sung's Clock

5. The Song also invented the spinning wheel, a machine used to make thread more easily.

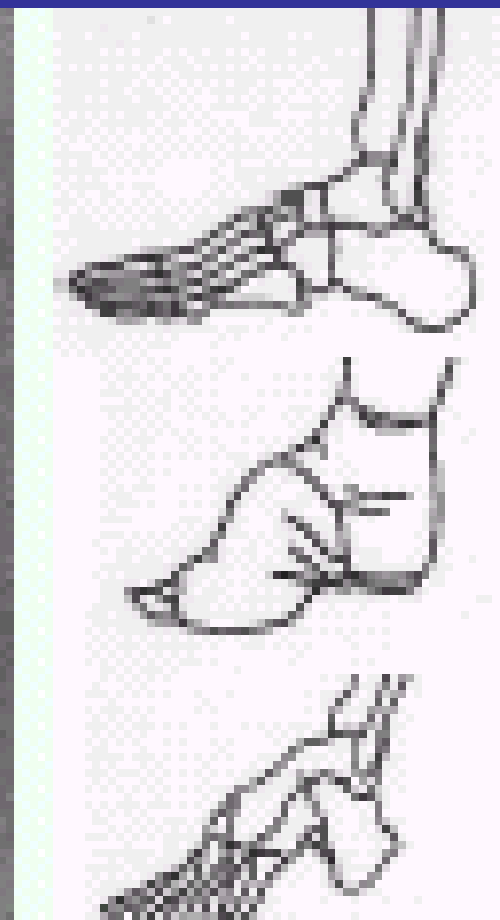
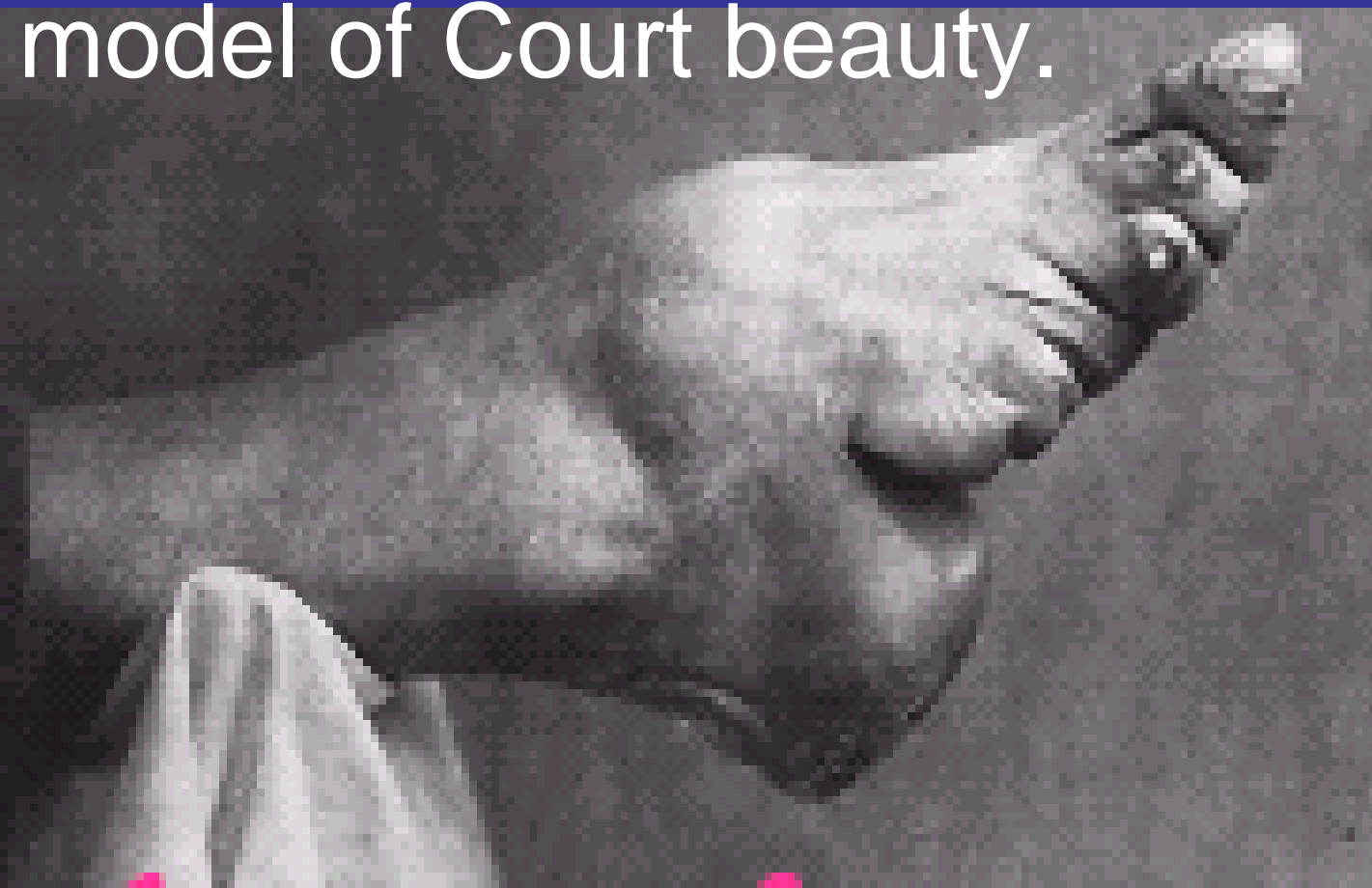


Chinese Footbinding:

- Footbinding began as a Chinese fashion during the 10th Century C.E.. Its a technique of forcing the toes under the heel, so that the bones eventually break making walking impossible.



- The Chinese practice of binding a woman's feet probably began as the result of an Empress having a club foot. She insisted that all women in the court bind their feet so that hers became the model of Court beauty.



- By 1200 C.E., the practice was firmly entrenched among the elites of society.
- The practice was formally prohibited in China in 1911 C.E.; but continued in isolated regions well into the 1930s.



•The last factory to manufacture shoes for women with bound feet ended production in 1998.



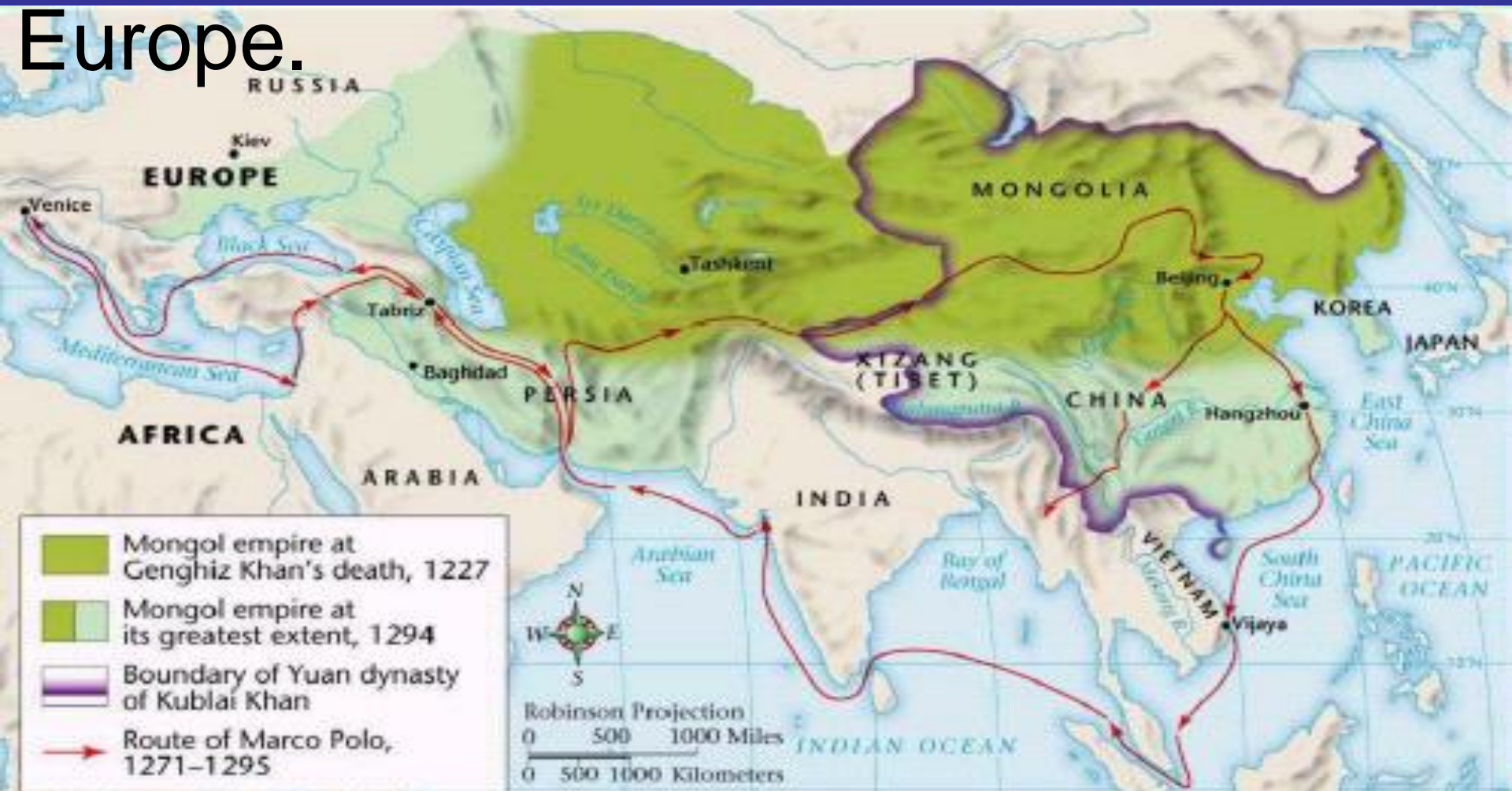
IV. The Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368 C.E.)

.The *Yuan Dynasty* was the reign of Mongol invaders in China; which began with its founder *Genghis Khan*.

- It was said that upon his birth Genghis Khan held a clot of blood in his hand, which foretold the future of his world conquest.



• During the 13th century C.E., Genghis Khan united the Mongol tribes and conquered a vast empire that stretched from the Pacific Ocean to Eastern Europe.

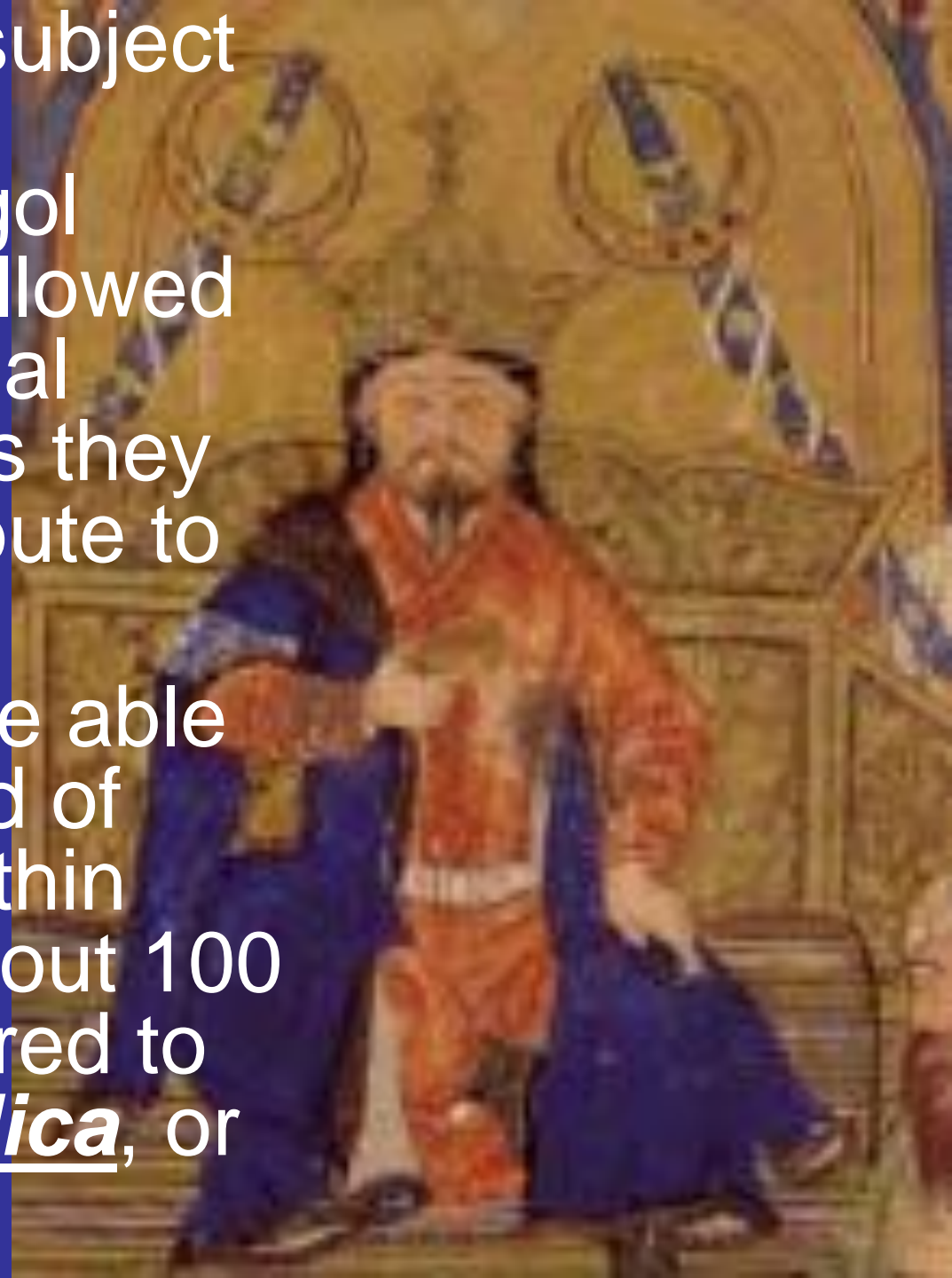


- He imposed strict military discipline on his armies, and demanded absolute loyalty. His highly trained armies contained some of the most skilled horsemen in the world.



.Once conquered, subject peoples were not oppressed by Mongol rulers. They were allowed to live their traditional lifestyles, as long as they paid their yearly tribute to the Mongols.

- Mongol rulers were able to establish a period of peace and order within their domain, for about 100 years. This is referred to as the *Pax Mongolica*, or Mongol Peace.



Kubliah Khan:

- Genghis Khan's grandson, *Kubliah Khan*, ruled the Mongol Empire in the late 1200s.
- He founded the *Yuan dynasty* that ruled China from 1279-1368 C.E.



He also established the empire's capital at *Khanbalik (present-day Beijing.)*

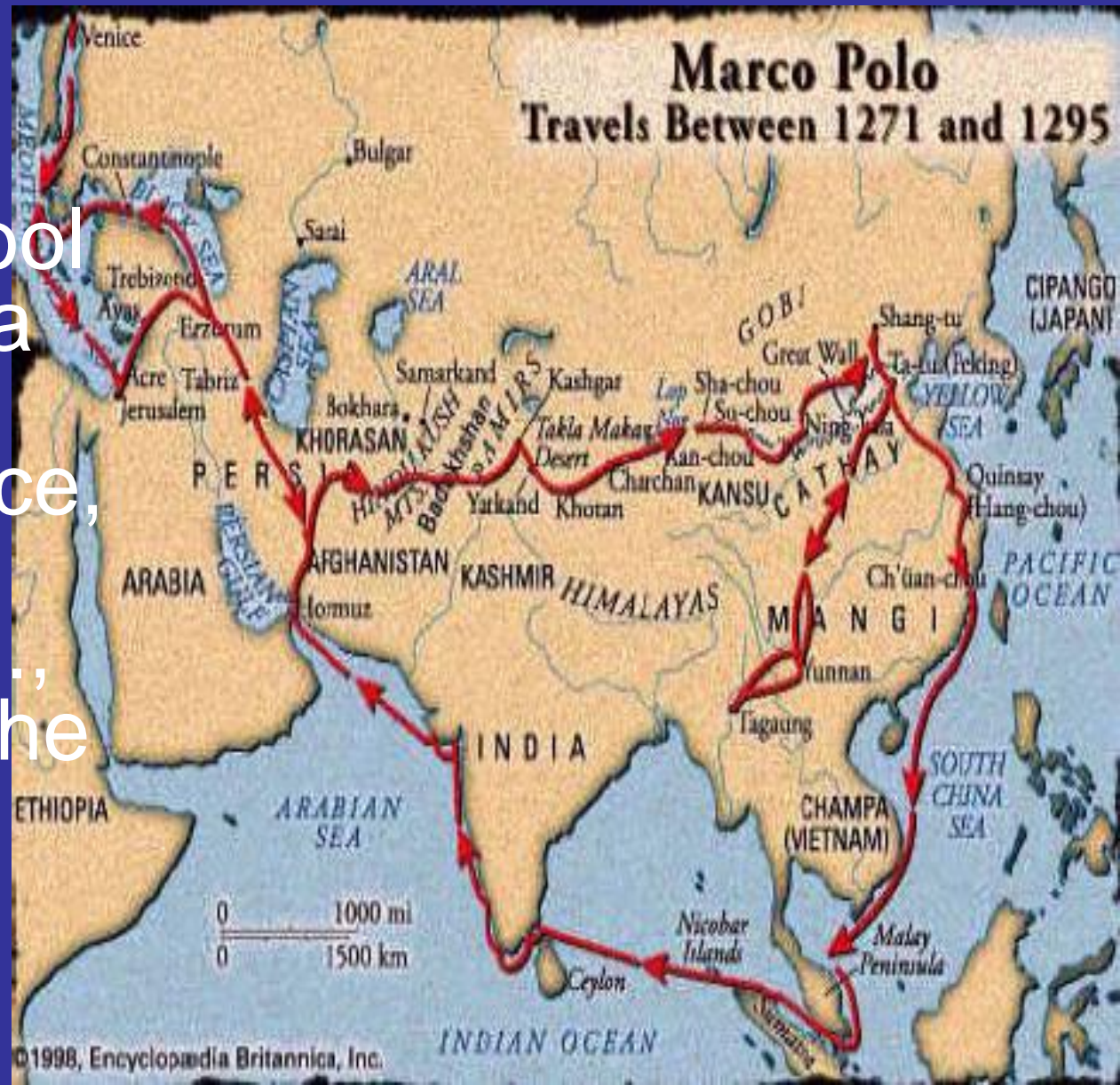




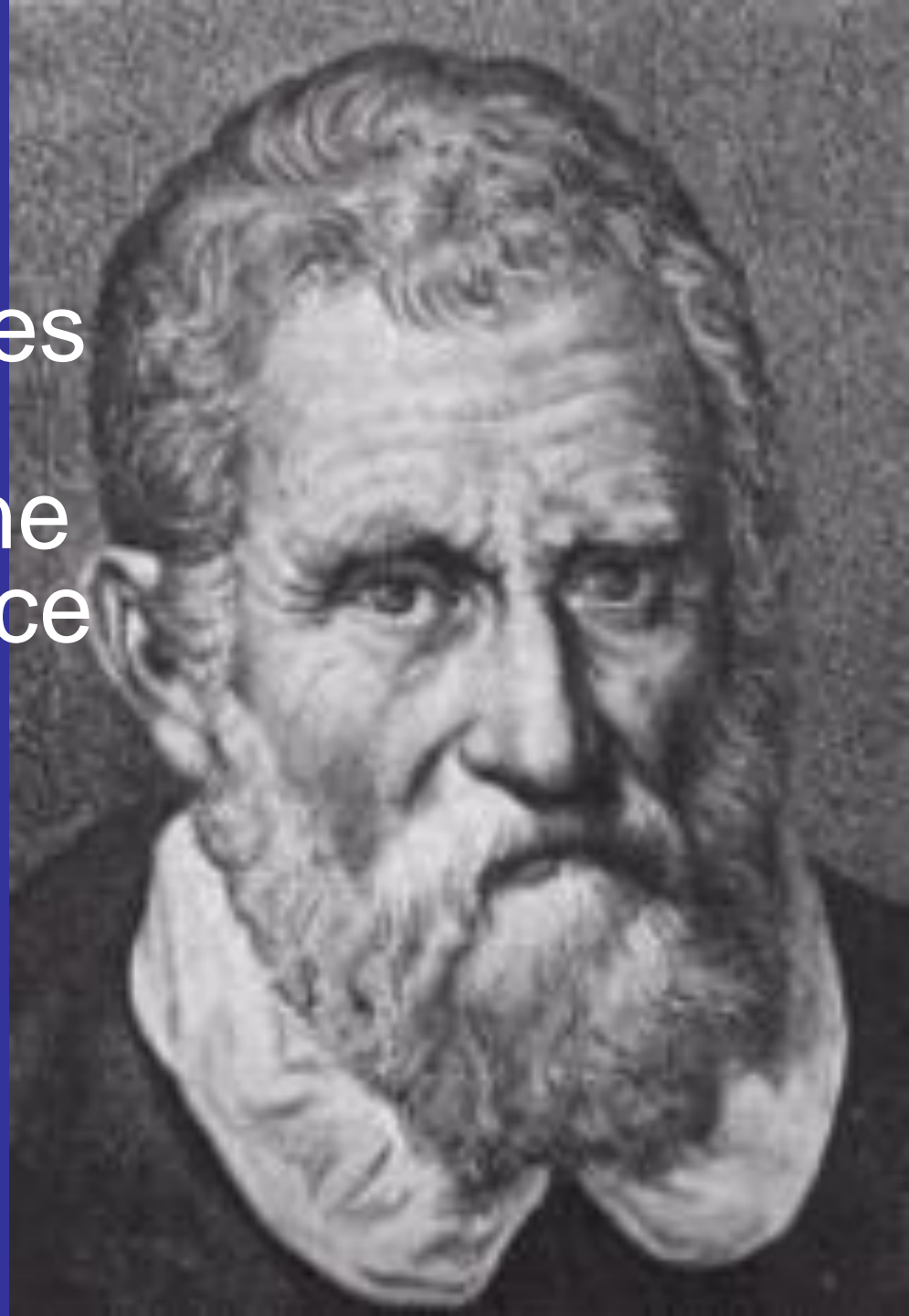
- Kublai Khan knew that an empire could be conquered but not governed on horseback. So he strived to balance Mongol and Chinese traditions within his government. However, such changes were unpopular to conservative Mongols, who wanted to remain segregated from Chinese culture.

Marco Polo (I love that Game):

• Marco Polo is more than a summertime pool game, he was a merchant from the city of Venice, Italy. Between 1271-1295 C.E., he traveled to the court of Kublia Khan.



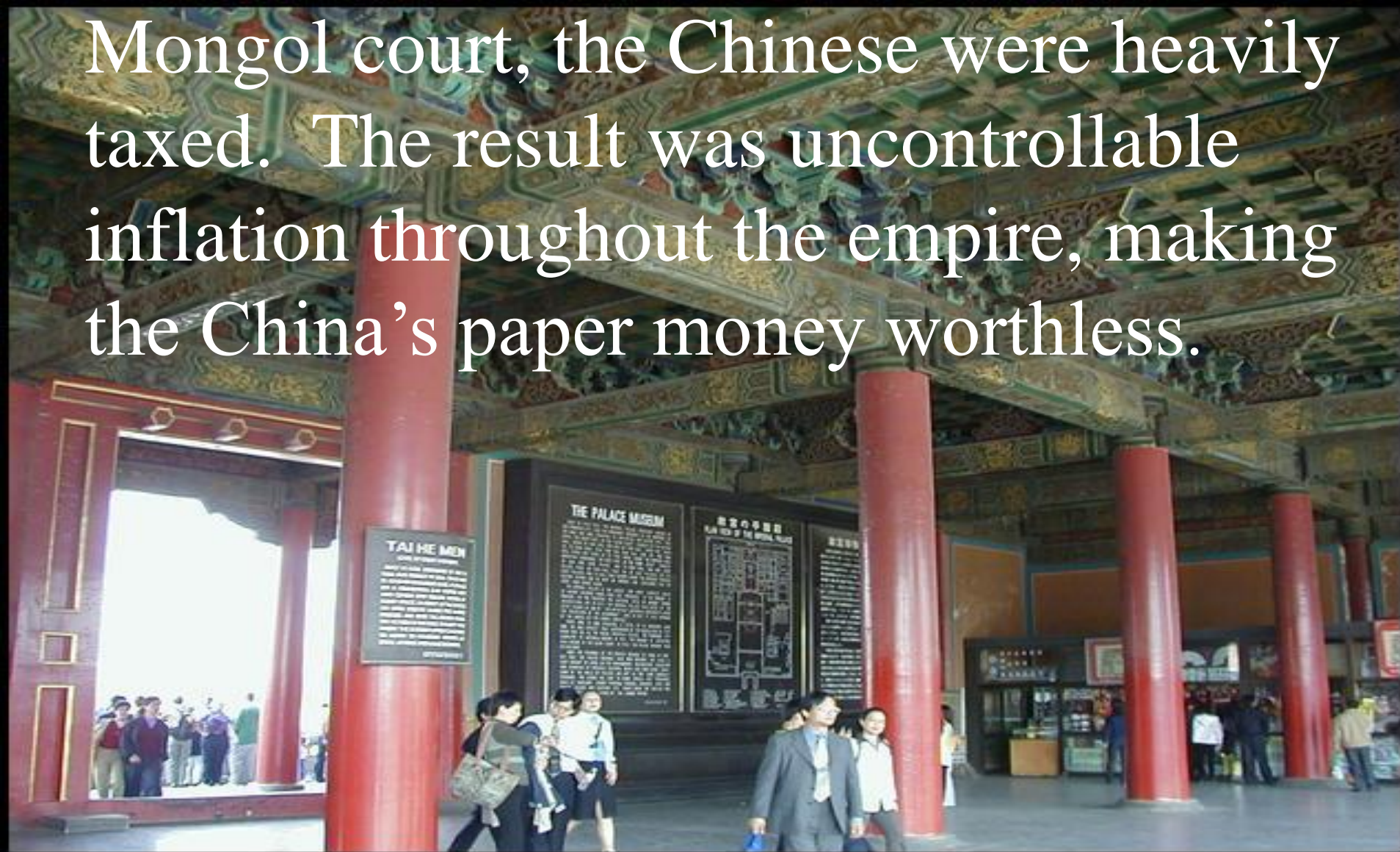
- He published a travel guide called, “The Travels of Marco Polo.” It gives an account of his journeys, and outline his 17 year of service to Kublia Khan.
- Hugely popular in Europe, his book provided the first modern record of China.



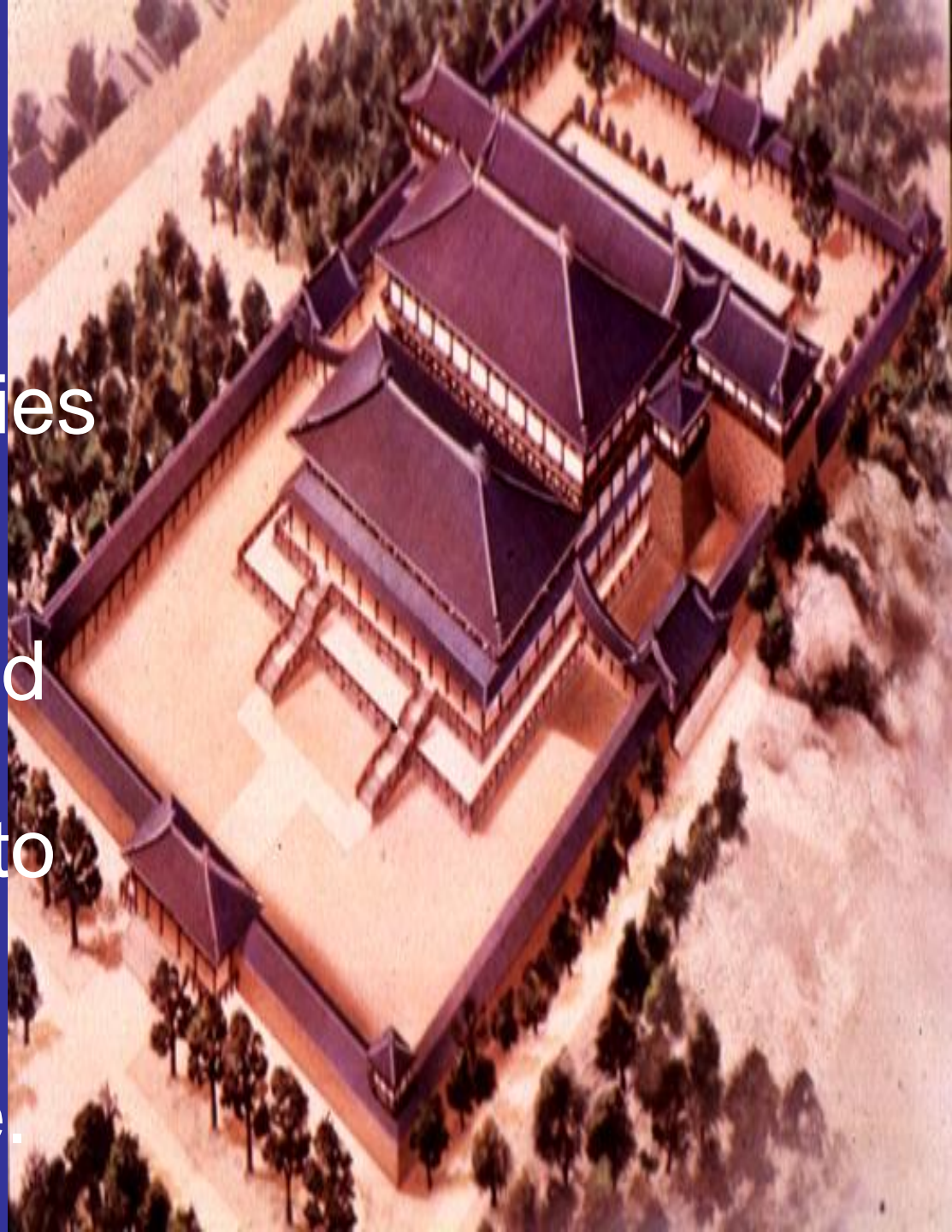
Reasons for the Fall of the Yuan Dynasty:

1. *Mongol emperors abandoned their duties to govern;* After the reign of Kubilai Khan, the government ceased to be concerned with the welfare of the people and neglected their duty to help them. Yuan officials were more concerned with seizing power, which caused revolts throughout the country.

2. *Luxurious living of the Mongols*; In order to pay for the extravagances of the Mongol court, the Chinese were heavily taxed. The result was uncontrollable inflation throughout the empire, making the China's paper money worthless.



3. Racial segregation;
China was divided into two separate societies (traditional Chinese & Mongolian.); and the Mongolians made no effort to assimilate into traditional Chinese culture.



The Chinese were prohibited from having any real power in the government.

- They were prohibited from military service.

- They were allowed to hold local positions in the provinces. But they could not be appointed to high government positions.




- By the 1350's C.E., several aristocrats living in the provinces had established themselves as independent kings. China was no longer in the control of the Emperor—it had been carved up among a dozen warlords.

One of these warlords, from a peasant family, would become the founder of the Ming dynasty. His name was Zhu Yuanzhang.

By 1368 C.E., Zhu had conquered all of southern China, marking the beginning of the *Ming dynasty*, and ruled as *Hongwu* (r. 1368-1398 C.E.)



V. Ming China:

A map of China with the territory of the Ming dynasty highlighted in light blue. A yellow circle marks the location of Dadu, which is now known as Beijing. The text "Dadu (Now known as Beijing)" is written in black below the circle. The rest of the map is colored in a light tan or brownish hue.

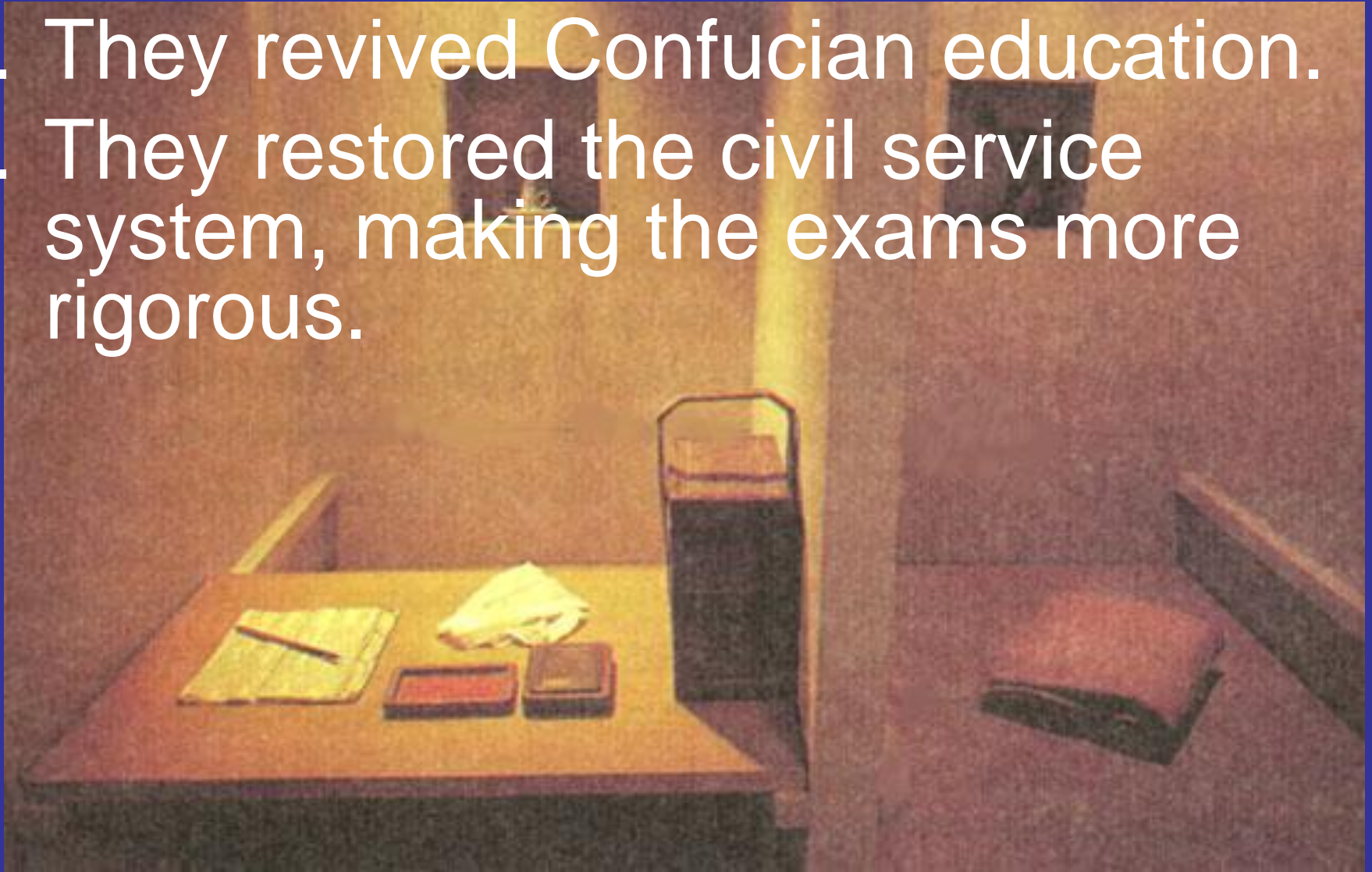
Dadu
(Now known as Beijing)

• Humiliated and oppressed by foreign rulers, the Ming dynasty came to preside over the greatest economic and social era in Chinese history. Chinese populations reached over 100 million people. However, it was the last native Chinese dynasty..



Ming Achievements:

1. They revived Confucian education.
2. They restored the civil service system, making the exams more rigorous.





3. Ming emperors repaired the canal system that had been neglected by the Mongols.

4. Chinese cities became industrial centers (for Porcelain, Paper, tools.)



5. Agricultural cultivation was increased by giving tax-exempt property to farmers who cleared new farmlands in Southern China.



6. Ming emperors supported a revival of Confucian values in Chinese art and literature.



Confucian society was based on the Veneration of Elders;

- Children must completely obey their parents.
 - Parents could sell children into slavery.
- Students were expected to obey their teachers without question.
 - Teacher could have student executed for disobedience.

- Confucian values also stated that women were expected to honor and respect first their fathers, then husbands, then son.
- Upper-class women were educated; but could not take civil service exams.
 - Most women found that the only way to gain respect was by having male children.

Ming Art:

- Ming artisans produced blue and white porcelain that is still prized today, as the highest quality China.



Ming

Technology:

- The first magnetic compasses designed for navigation were probably developed in the 11th century C.E. by Chinese navigators.
- The Ming utilized this technology to explore the Pacific and Indian Oceans.



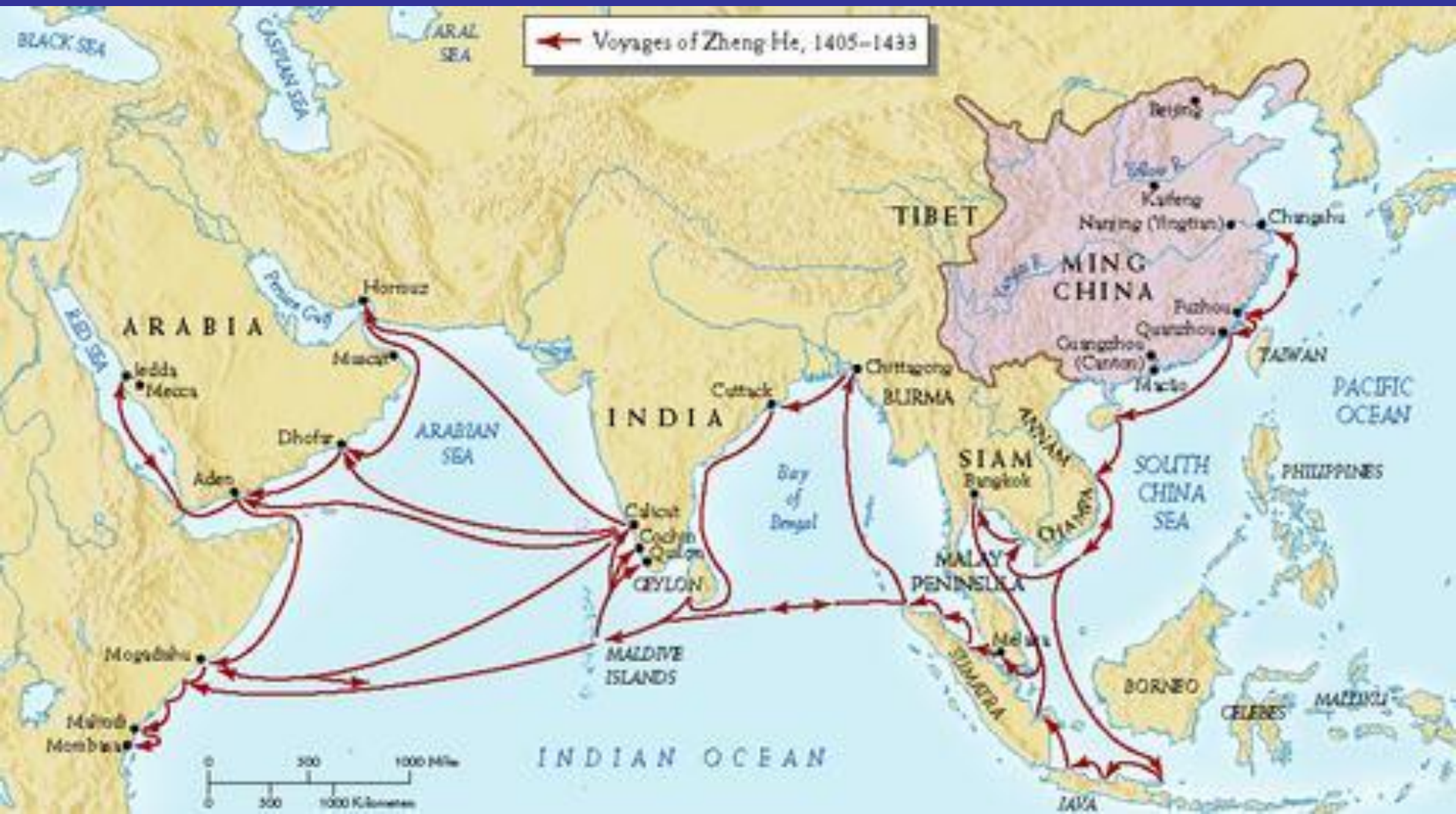
Chinese Exploration (1405- 1433 C.E.)

• Zheng He was a Chinese explorer that sailed to Southeast Asia, India, Persia, and East Africa during the 15th century C.E.

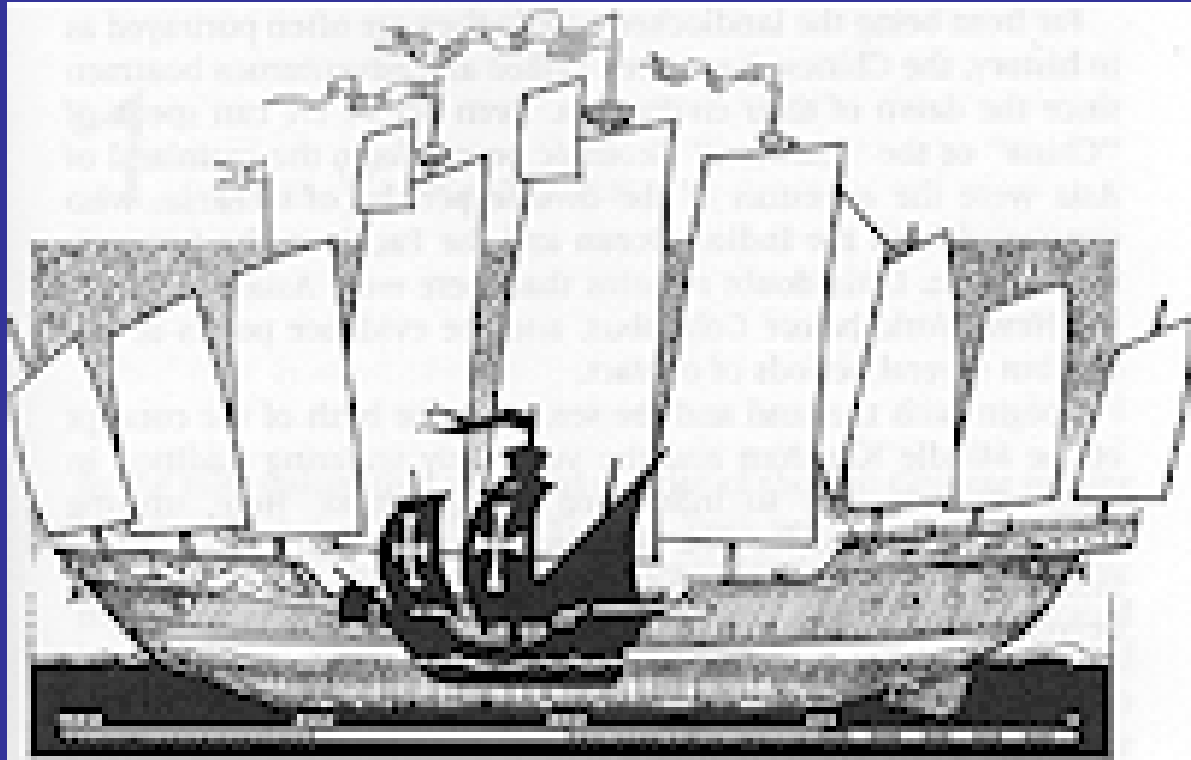


Zheng He
Institute

- His voyages allowed the Chinese to establish trade with these areas and spread the Chinese culture to the West.



- However, after Zhen He's death in 1433 C.E., the Ming Emperor ordered all voyages stopped and trade with the outside world cut off. His action limited China's development and made them an easy target in the coming centuries of the Europeans.



The small boat - Columbus 85 feet
The large boat - Zheng He 400 feet

Reasons for Ending Overseas

Exploration:

1. The Chinese wanted to preserve their ancient traditions, which they saw as the source of stability.
2. Confucian scholars had little interest in overseas trade. To them, Chinese civilization was superior to all others.
3. Fleets of seagoing ships were costly and did not produce any profits.

*Let the Fat
Lady Sing.*
The End!