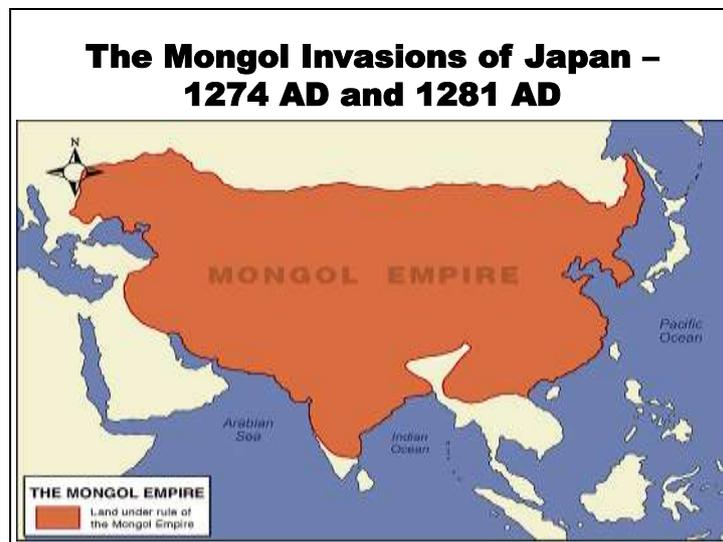


Slide 1

Mongolian Invasions

1274 AD & 1281 AD

Slide 2

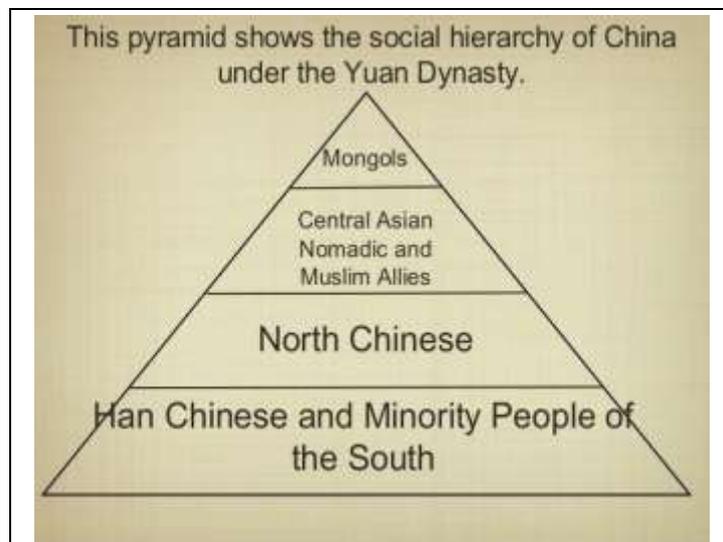


Notes

During the eleventh century AD the Mongol Empire under the reign of Kublai Khan was at its zenith.

Having recently brought about the subjugation of the Korean Peninsula, Kublai's next objective was to bring the Japans into his realm.

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Notes

Kublai Khan believed all nations belonged to the one human family, but that they existed in a hierarchy in which he considered his Mongols were at the apex, followed by China, Korea, Japan etc. in the lower layers.

In a communication to the Japanese, Kublai expressed the notion that *"Our relation is feudatory like a father and son"*.

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Notes

After sending a number of envoys to Japan seeking a peaceful acquisition and being rebuffed, in 1274 AD Kublai despatched a relatively small invasion force of approximately 10,000 soldiers from the Korean Peninsula in some 300 boats that crossed the short Korean Strait in an attempt to conquer the Japans.

The first Mongolian invasion force landed on the southern Japanese island of Kyushu. After enjoying some initial successes against fragmented and technologically backward Samurai contingents, the Mongols were forced to withdraw as greater numbers of Japanese, said to have exceeded 100,000, were mobilised by the Ashikaga Shogunate against them.

The withdrawing Mongol troops evacuated back to their ships, where unfortunately for them, they were subsequently swept up in an unseasonal typhoon which caused heavy losses of Mongol ships and men.

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Notes

One serious problem encountered by the Japanese in this series of battles was the inexperience of their commanders in managing the logistics associated with moving, co-ordinating and adequately supplying such large troop numbers.

Secondly, the samurai found the long, thin Japanese swords they used got stuck and snapped off in the thick, boiled leather armour of the Mongols.

This subsequently caused Japanese blacksmiths to re-evaluate their sword making technology after the first invasion, and led to the widespread adoption of stronger and more effective katana swords in 13th and 14th century Japan.

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Notes

Just seven years later the Mongols launched a second and much larger offensive against Japan.

On this occasion the Mongol attack was launched by ships from two directions, probably employing as many as 100,000 soldiers and sailors.

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Notes

Depiction of defensive wall at Hakata, 1293.

In the meantime however, in the period between the two invasions, the Minamoto Shogunate had built a number of defensive forts and a series of two metre high walls along much of the Kyushu coastline, which enabled an outnumbered Japanese army to push the invaders back to their ships.

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Notes

It was at that point that a massive typhoon lasting for two days struck the coastline of Kyushu, and in the process destroyed much of the Mongol navy and tens of thousands of its soldiers, forcing them once again to withdraw to the mainland, this time permanently.

Historians suggest that one reason for the high Mongol losses was the fact that in the construction of their naval fleet, instead of building more expensive craft with a curved keel suitable for ocean sailing, the Khanate instead opted to build a fleet of cheaper flat bottomed river style boats.

These craft were difficult to sail on open seas, and their design made them prone to capsize quickly in the violent seas associated with a typhoon.

From the Japanese perspective, the nation's Shinto priests told the Japanese people that their country had been saved by the *kamikaze* (divine winds) created by their ancient gods and spirits to protect their unique nation.

This would be a belief that the Japanese nation would continue to hold for many centuries, right up to 1945 and their defeat in the Pacific War.

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Notes

Although the Japanese had, with the aid of good fortune, been able to repel their Mongolian invaders, the events nevertheless had considerable and wide ranging consequences for Japan.

Firstly, the Mongol invaders had exposed the Japanese to a fighting style that was foreign to their samurai culture.

Historically, Japanese conflicts on a battle field had involved the calling of the name of a samurai from the opposing side, where upon the two individuals would then partake in **single combat** engagements, employing either swords or bow and arrows.

However the invading Mongols took no notice of such conventions, and their armies and cavalry charged in massed group formations. Whenever a lone samurai stepped forward to challenge them, the Mongols simply attacked in force, much like ants swarming a beetle.

The technique of Mongolian archers was also alien to the Japanese, who traditionally engaged in shorter range one-on-one duels by archers that relied on skill and accuracy.

Instead, Mongolian archers shot numerous arrows *en masse* from long distances into the crowded Japanese samurai ranks, causing many casualties from an unexpected tactic.

Where each samurai fought as a one man unit, the Mongols fought in cohesive groups, rather than each man for himself. Drumbeats relayed commanders' orders guiding their precisely coordinated attacks. All of this was new to the samurai—often fatally so.

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Notes

Significantly, the invasions by Kublai Khan's Mongols was the first time that samurai clans united to fight foreign troops rather than amongst themselves.

It was also the first time that samurai clans fought for the sake of Japan itself instead of for more narrowly defined clan interests.

There was a downside however.

Traditionally, at the end of significant battles, the Shogun's bakufu re-allocated the lands taken from conquered clans and granted them to their better performing Samurai warriors to reward them for their efforts.

However in this unique case involving the Mongolian invasions there were no spoils to dole out—the invaders came from outside of Japan, and left no booty behind.

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Financial Consequences of the Mongol Invasion



Notes

Remember back to the seven years interim period between the first and second Mongol invasions, when that the Minamoto Shogunate had funded the construction of a two metres high defensive wall along the coastline of Kyushu.

After the Mongol invasion had been defeated the Minamoto Shogunate bakufu now found that it lacked the finances to reward the thousands of samurai who had fought to fend off the Mongols.

In addition, this time the Shinto priests who had prayed for divine protection added their own payment demands, citing the typhoons as evidence of the effectiveness of their prayers.

The bakufu had few funds to dispense, and what they had they gave to the priests, who held more influence in the capital than the samurai.

Dissatisfaction with the Kamakura bakufu festered among the ranks of the samurai in the decades that followed.

After a bloody civil war lasting 15 years, the Minamoto Samurai armies were defeated and the position of Shogun was then assumed by the now dominant Ashikaga clan who took control of Japan from 1338 AD.

While this second Shogunate, the Ashikaga clan, would rule for a further 235 years, we will soon learn about how it oversaw a period of unparalleled violence and disruption within the Japanese nation.