

The Great Wall of China

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Introduction

Why was the Great Wall of China built? What made the two people of China and Mongolia so hostile that a vast wall had to be built to separate them? Is this wall a symbol of China's might and glory, or a symbol of tyranny like the Berlin wall? Did the wall actually keep out the "barbarians"? Can it really be seen from the moon?

For almost 2,000 year how to handle the nomads of Mongolia was the most important foreign policy question for China's rulers. At several different times and several different places from the third century BC to the twentieth century AD, they used walls to defend themselves from the nomads. The wall thus came to symbolize the social, economic, military, political, and cultural clash between China and Mongolia. Nevertheless, powerful Chinese emperors sometimes forced the nomads to submit, while at other times, as under Chinggis (Genghis) Khan, the Mongols broke through all barriers and founded dynasties to rule China.

In order to understand this conflict, students will explore fundamental issues of international relations: is conflict between different societies and cultures inevitable? Does greed always cause war or can economic interests be harnessed to make peace profitable? How much does domestic politics and ideology tie the hands of policy-makers confronting foreign threats? Can smaller powers make peace with larger neighbors without losing their independence and identity?

Readings

Readings will consist of two modern studies that explore successive phases in the border conflict between China and the northern peoples. A book of readings and the *Secret History of the Mongols* will also contain classic accounts of the border by writers, both Chinese and Turco-Mongolian nomads; these readings will illustrate vividly both how the Chinese have viewed the nomads and how the nomads have viewed the Chinese.

Assignments and Grading:

Class assignments include quizzes and essays. The five quizzes include one map quiz which will give students a demonstrate knowledge of the geography of China, Mongolia, and the neighboring border lands. The next four quizzes will familiarize the students with the names, dates, and key events in the four major periods of conflict around the Great Wall. Students will write four essays analyzing five original sources from the ancient and medieval history of China and Mongolia. A take-home final will give students an opportunity to apply this historical insight to current problems of Chinese-Inner Mongolian relations.

Grades are based on a 100-point scale. The five quizzes each count for 5 points (total 25 points). The four essays count for 10 points each and the take-home final exam 15 points (total 55 points). Class participation: 20 points. There is no midterm or final exam.

Students who miss quizzes must make them up by writing a book report. Any assignment not done or made up by the end of the semester will receive negative points (-5 for a quiz, -10 for an essay, and -15 for the take home final).

Readings

- I. Thomas Barfield, *The Perilous Frontier: Nomadic Empires and China* (1992);
- II. Paul Kahn (ed.), *The Secret History of the Mongols: The Origin of Chingis Khan* (1998);
- III. Arthur Waldron, *The Great Wall of China: From History to Myth* (2002);

V. Course Packet, including:

- 1) the “Xiongnu” chapter from Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian*, trans. Burton Watson;
- 2) the Old Turkish “Orkhon inscriptions” (translated by Talât Tekin);
- 3) the biography of Yelü Chucai from Su Tianjue’s *Sketches of Eminent Ministers of the Yuan Dynasty* (translated by Christopher P. Atwood);
- 4) the biography of Altan Khan translated by Johan Elverskog.
- 5) The Chinese report on the Mongols written by Xiao Daheng (translated by Christopher P. Atwood)

Course Schedule

Week 1: August 30, September 1, 3

Introduction to the geography; origins of farming and nomadism.

Readings: Barfield, *Perilous Frontier*, pp. 1-31; Waldron, *Great Wall of China*, pp. 1-51.

Week 2: September 6-10

Nomadism and the state: are they compatible?

Readings: Barfield, *Perilous Frontier*, pp. 32-84; “The Xiongnu” from Sima Qian (reader)

Map Quiz in class, Sept. 10

Week 3: September 13-17

The Han and the Huns (Xiongnu): the first Chinese-Inner Asian confrontation

Reading: Barfield, *Perilous Frontier*, pp. 85-130

Han-Xiongnu quiz in class, Sept. 17

Week 4: September 20-24

The Tang and the Turks: the second Chinese-Inner Asian confrontation

Readings: Barfield, *Perilous Frontier*, 131-163; Orkhon inscriptions (reader)

Han-Xiongnu essay due in class, September 22

Week 5: September 27-October 1

The Kitans and the Jurchen begin the second Inner Asian conquest of China

Reading: Barfield, *Perilous Frontier*, pp. 164-228.

Tang-Turk quiz in class, September 27.

Week 6: October 4-8

The Mongol empire: kinship, marriage, vengeance, and steppe politics

Reading: Kahn, *Secret History of the Mongols*, 1-72

Tang-Türk essay due in class, October 4

Week 7: October 11-15

The early Mongol empire: a nomadic state?

Reading: Kahn, *Secret History of the Mongols*, 72-145

Mongol empire quiz, October 15

Week 8: October 18-22

The Mongol empire and China's dynastic cycle

Reading: Kahn, *Secret History of the Mongols*, 146-190; biography of Yelü Chucai (reader)

Week 9: October 25-29

The Ming dynasty and the Mongols: the third Chinese-Inner Asian confrontation

Reading: Barfield, *Perilous Frontier*, 229-265

Mongol empire essay due in class, October 29

Week 10: November 1-5

Where was the Great Wall?; walls and China's frontiers

Reading: Waldron, *Great Wall of China*, pp. 55-121.

Week 11: November 8-12

The Ming build the Great Wall

Reading: Waldron, *Great Wall of China*, pp. 122-164; Xiao Daheng "Customs of the Northern Slaves" (reader).

Week 12: November 15-19

How the Great Wall Was Built

Elverskog, *Jewel Translucent*, pp. 63-129 (reader)

Ming-Mongols quiz, November 15

Week 13: November 22

Altan Khan

Reading: Elverskog, *Jewel Translucent*, 129-214 (reader);

Thanksgiving Break

Week 14: November 29-December 3

Horse markets, tribute, farmers, and lamas in Inner Mongolia; the Manchus

Barfield, *Perilous Frontier*, pp. 266-302

Reading: Waldron, *Great Wall of China*, pp. 167-226

Altan Khan essay due December 3

Week 15: December 6-10
Conclusion; summing up

Take home final due 5:00 PM, Friday, December 17.

Map Quiz

The following is a list of all the items found on the map. Those in bold will be tested on the map quiz. On the quiz, I will give you a list of twenty of these names, which you will write on a blank copy of the map. The descriptions of the main agricultural methods are only approximate; dry agriculture means wheat, millet, sorghum and other crops grown in dry soil, wet means paddy rice. Extensive vs. intensive refers to the yields per acre; extensive is low, intensive high.

China Proper: intensive dry and wet agriculture

Gansu (Kansu)

City: Lanzhou (Lanchou)

Shaanxi (Shensi)

City: **Xi'an** (Sian); previously Chang'an (Ch'ang-an)

Shanxi (Shansi)

Cities: **Datong** (Ta-t'ung)

Taiyuan (T'ai-yuan)

Hebei (Hopei)

City: **Beijing** (Peking); previously Yanjing (Yenching)

Shandong (Shantung)

Inner Mongolia: pastoralism and extensive dry agriculture

City: **Höhhhot** (Hu-ho-hao-t'e)

Alashan

Ordos

Khorchin (Ke'erqin)

Mongolia proper (Outer Mongolia): pastoralism

Cities: **Qara-Qorum** (Karakorum)

Ulaanbaatar

Manchuria: extensive dry agriculture, pastoralism

Outer Manchuria (Russian Far East): fishing, hunting

Korea: intensive wet agriculture

Japan: intensive wet agriculture

Xinjiang (Sinkiang)

Tarim Basin (Eastern or Chinese Turkestan): oasis agriculture

Cities: **Hami**

Turfan

Kashghar

Zunghar Basin: pastoralism, oasis agriculture

Kökenuur (Koko-nor): high-altitude pastoralism

Tibet: high-altitude farming, high-altitude pastoralism

City: **Lhasa**

Kazakhstan: pastoralism, oasis agriculture

Central Asia (Turkestan): oasis agriculture, pastoralism

Cities: **Bukhara**

Samarkand

Siberia: hunting, reindeer pastoralism, fishing

Southern Siberia: pastoralism, hunting, extensive dry farming

Afghanistan: oasis agriculture, high-altitude agriculture, pastoralism

Iran: intensive dry and wet agriculture, pastoralism

South Asian/Indian Subcontinent: intensive dry and wet agriculture

Southeast Asia: intensive wet agriculture

Nepal: intensive wet agriculture, high-altitude agriculture

Mountain Ranges

Altai

Greater Khinggan Range (Khinghan Mountains)

Tianshan

Hindu Kush

Himalayas

Lakes

Baikal

Deserts

Gobi

Taklimakan

Rivers

Yellow River (Huanghe)

Yangtze River

Irtys

Onon (Onan)

Kherlen (Kelüren)

Selenge

Yenisey