

DISCARDING THE MONGOL WAY OF WAR:  
A GEOSTRATEGIC ANALYSIS OF THE  
MONGOL EXPEDITIONS  
TO CONQUER JAPAN

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE  
Art of War Scholars

by

MATTHEW J. SCHULTZ, MAJOR, UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
B.S., York College of Pennsylvania, York, PA, 2006  
M.S., Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, 2013

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas  
2019

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited. Fair use determination or copyright permission has been obtained for the inclusion of pictures, maps, graphics, and any other works incorporated into this manuscript. A work of the United States Government is not subject to copyright, however further publication or sale of copyrighted images is not permissible.

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. <b>PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.</b>					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 14-06-2019		2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) AUG 2018 – JUN 2019	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE  Discarding the Mongol Way of War: A Geostrategic Analysis of the Mongol Expeditions to Conquer Japan				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)  Maj Matthew J. Schultz				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301				8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT The Yuan Dynasty (1271 to 1368) commissioned two expeditions to Japan in 1274 and 1281. These limited-liability campaigns aimed to subjugate the insular island nation as a vassal to the Yuan Dynasty, a <i>khanate</i> of the Mongol Empire. Despite the great resource potential of Japan, its subjugation was not a vital security interest for the dynasty. As a result, the expeditions were not aligned with the dynasty's strategic imperatives which included maintaining its territorial integrity, enforcing regional stability, and protecting the legitimacy of Kubilai's claim as <i>khan</i> of the Mongol Empire. These strategic priorities necessitated the investment of the preponderance of the dynasty's critical financial, material, and human capital resources in the pursuance of vital national interests rather than the peripheral interests associated with the expeditions to Japan. These strategic resource allocation decisions, coupled with the unique requirements of governing a massive agrarian population in China, deprived the expeditions of the warfighting capabilities required to employ the Mongol way of war. As a result, Yuan Dynasty's war against Japan ended in abject failure.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Mongol, Yuan Dynasty, Japan, Geostrategy, Geopolitics					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT (U)	b. ABSTRACT (U)	c. THIS PAGE (U)			19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code)
			(U)	145	

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

Name of Candidate: Matthew J. Schultz

Thesis Title: Discarding the Mongol Way of War: A Geostrategic Analysis of the  
Mongol Expeditions to Conquer Japan

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Thesis Committee Chair  
John D. Hosler, Ph.D.

\_\_\_\_\_, Member  
Colonel William E. Blanchard, M.S.

\_\_\_\_\_, Member  
Christopher R. Johnson, M.S.

Accepted this 14th day of June 2019 by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Director, Graduate Degree Programs  
Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.

The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

DISCARDING THE MONGOL WAY OF WAR: A GEOSTRATEGIC ANALYSIS OF THE MONGOL EXPEDITIONS TO CONQUER JAPAN, by Major Matthew J. Schultz, 147 pages.

The Yuan Dynasty (1271 to 1368) commissioned two expeditions to Japan in 1274 and 1281. These limited-liability campaigns aimed to subjugate the insular island nation as a vassal to the Yuan Dynasty, a *khanate* of the Mongol Empire. Despite the great resource potential of Japan, its subjugation was not a vital security interest for the dynasty. As a result, the expeditions were not aligned with the dynasty's strategic imperatives which included maintaining its territorial integrity, enforcing regional stability, and protecting the legitimacy of Kubilai's claim as *khan* of the Mongol Empire. These strategic priorities necessitated the investment of the preponderance of the dynasty's critical financial, material, and human capital resources in the pursuance of vital national interests rather than the peripheral interests associated with the expeditions to Japan. These strategic resource allocation decisions, coupled with the unique requirements of governing a massive agrarian population in China, deprived the expeditions of the warfighting capabilities required to employ the Mongol way of war. As a result, Yuan Dynasty's war against Japan ended in abject failure.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I must acknowledge the love and support of my wife Jennifer. She continues to amaze me with her support and patience in allowing me to pursue the professional and academic endeavors that have spanned the entirety of our relationship. Without her sound counsel and willingness to serve as the foundation to our family, I could not have overcome the obstacles posed by my cognitive shortfalls and undisciplined curiosity in the pursuit of this project.

Next, I must thank my thesis committee, consisting of Dr. John D. Hosler, Colonel William E. Blanchard, and Mr. Christopher Johnson, all of whom demonstrated absolute commitment to the maturation and development of this academic endeavor. Their wisdom, encouragement, and professionalism played an integral role in helping me to keep the project on track and balance it along with my other academic and personal undertakings over the better part of a year.

The Combined Arms Center's Combined Arms Research Library Staff deserves much thanks for assisting me in the collection of invaluable resources, ranging from obscure articles to books hidden in plain sight on library shelves. Their efforts gave the research the depth that it needed to pursue a fresh view on this oft-ignored campaign.

I must also extend my deep appreciation to Dr. Dean Nowowiejski, the Ike Skelton Distinguished Chair of the Art of War Scholars Program, who played an instrumental role in allowing me to participate in one of the greatest academic endeavors of my life. His dedication and sound counsel played a critical role in opening my eyes to the depths of the profession of arms and history alike.

Lastly, I have to thank a number of peers, to include Major Brian Jaquith (USMC), Major Mark Flynn (USA), and each of the Art of War Scholars—Major Andy Webb (USA), Major Matt Noyes (USA), Major Erik Alfesen (USA), Major Yoonie Dunham (USA), Major Aaron Brady (USAF), Major Greg Hope (USA), Major Elias Isreal (USA), Major Caleb Ling (USA), Major Michael Hosback (Ireland), Major Nicholas Stafford (United Kingdom), and Captain Gordon Richmond (USA). Each of these friends helped me refine my wild ideas and invested a lot of mental energy on engaging me with the dialogue, debate, and camaraderie needed to see this project through to its completion. Most importantly, I must thank them for helping me realize that figuring out *what* happened during the Mongol expeditions to Japan was far less interesting than figuring out *why* they failed.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE THESIS APPROVAL PAGE .....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
ILLUSTRATIONS .....	ix
CHAPTER 1 THE SEEDS OF DEFEAT .....	1
Purpose and Methodology .....	2
Parameters and Terminology .....	9
Kamikazes, Contrarians, and the Key Sources for Research.....	10
Key Sources .....	14
CHAPTER 2 THE MONGOL WAY OF WAR.....	22
Cultural Underpinnings.....	23
The Mongol Way of War.....	25
Geostrategic Context and Mongol National Interests .....	25
The Big Stick .....	29
Command and Control.....	30
Sustainment.....	35
Movement and Maneuver .....	45
Fires.....	49
Information .....	54
Intelligence.....	58
Protection .....	62
CHAPTER 3 STRATEGIC CONTEXT.....	67
A Fragile Empire .....	69
In the Pursuit of Imperial Legitimacy.....	76
Mongol Diplomacy and Preparations for War.....	77
Tailoring the Expeditionary Force .....	83
CHAPTER 4 THE WAR WITH JAPAN .....	87
The First Expedition .....	88
Actions on Objective: Kyushu .....	93

The Interwar Period .....	103
The Mongols .....	104
The Japanese .....	110
Building the Wall .....	111
The Second Expedition .....	114
The Third Expedition to Japan: Calling it off .....	122
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION: DISCARDING THE MONGOL WAY OF WAR .....	125
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	135



## ILLUSTRATIONS

	Page
Figure 1. A Fractured Mongol Empire.....	67
Figure 2. The Strategic Deployment of Forces in Support of the First Expedition to Japan .....	87
Figure 3. Foot-Mobile Pikemen, rather than Mongol Cavalry, Comprised the Majority of the Expeditionary Forces Dispatched to Japan.....	93
Figure 4. Samurai Cavalrymen Retained a Significant Tactical Mobility Advantage over the Dismounted Pikemen of the Mongol Expeditionary Forces .....	94
Figure 5. The Strategic Deployment of Forces on Two Sea Lines of Communication to Support the Second Expedition to Japan .....	115
Figure 6. Japanese Small Boats Swarm Mongol Transport Vessels .....	118

## CHAPTER 1

### THE SEEDS OF DEFEAT

Your survival or destruction will be decided at once; Heaven alone knows how much farther our strength will extend afterward.

— Kubilai Khan, *Letter to the Song Dynasty*,

The Yuan Dynasty (1271 to 1368) commissioned two expeditions to Japan in 1274 and 1281. These limited-liability campaigns aimed to subjugate the insular island nation as a vassal to the dynasty, a *khanate* of the Mongol Empire.<sup>1</sup> Despite the great resource potential of Japan, its subjugation was not a vital security interest for the Yuan Dynasty. As a result, the expeditions were not aligned with the dynasty's strategic imperatives which included maintaining its territorial integrity, enforcing regional stability, and protecting the legitimacy of Kubilai's claim to the position of *khan* of the Mongol Empire. These strategic priorities necessitated the investment of the preponderance of the dynasty's critical financial, material, and human capital resources in the pursuance of vital national interests rather than the peripheral interests associated with the expeditions to Japan. These strategic resource allocation decisions, coupled with the unique requirements of governing a massive agrarian population in China, deprived the

---

<sup>1</sup> Thomas T. Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism: The Policies of the Grand Qan Mongke in China, Russia, and the Islamic Lands 1251-1259* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 217-219. The great Mongol empire reached its apogee of power during the reign of Kubilai's brother Mongke Khan. The death of Mongke in 1259 precipitated the fracture of the Mongol empire into a number of factions known as khanates. This resulting civil wars between the khanates—the Yuan, the Ilkhans, the Golden Horde, and the Chinggisid khanate—resulted from Mongke's failure to establish a plan for the succession of power.

expeditions of the warfighting capabilities required to employ the Mongol way of war.<sup>2</sup>

As a result, both of the expeditions ended in abject failure.

Kubilai Khan's decision to pursue these limited-liability campaigns illustrates his deliberate acceptance of risk in the application of the dynasty's limited "means" to pursue his desired "ends." As a consequence, the expeditions yielded abortive results for the world's largest contiguous empire in a limited war against a small, island nation prepared to mobilize its militarized society and culture against an existential threat. In this way, the Mongol expeditions to Japan represent a classic case of asymmetry between belligerents on opposite ends of the conflict spectrum that separates limited and total war.

### Purpose and Methodology

This thesis aims to address two key elements required to understand the significance of the Mongol expeditions to Japan: the purpose of the expeditions and why they failed. These elements are largely glossed-over and dismissed as inconsequential in most modern histories of China, Japan, and Korea. Some of these studies advance fatalistic views of the campaigns, describing them as doomed from the outset. Others provide a fairer assessment of the campaigns, pointing to the occurrence of catastrophic weather events—the *kamikazes*—or the stubborn defenses of the Japanese *samurai* as the ultimate cause of failure.

---

<sup>2</sup> Strategy: A prudent idea or set of ideas for employing the instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater, national, and or multi-national objectives. Department of Defense, JP 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), GL-16.

This thesis does not intend to debate the merits of these arguments, given the dearth of archeological evidence and disparities in the extant historical records from Japan and China. Instead, it contends that while many of these postulations remain plausible and grounded in firm logic, they are not mutually exclusive. The problem is that most histories only reveal part of the story of the Mongol expeditions to Japan. They describe what happened, when it happened, and how it happened—but not why.

This thesis aims to advance our understanding of why the Yuan Dynasty commissioned the expeditions and why they failed to achieve the dynasty's national policy aims. It also explains the results of the expeditions in a geostrategic context that compelled the dynasty to employ its military might to address vital security interests on the Asian mainland rather than the projection of power across the Korea Strait. In the end, this thesis aims to spur further study of the unique dynamics faced by powerful states during periods of great change. In this case, the dynasty faced a crumbling world order that had been built with the blood and treasure of the Mongol empire over the course of a century. As with empires, world orders come and go. More often than not, the geostrategic context explains these changes over time.

This thesis does not intend to use contemporary doctrine to make judgements about the campaigns. Instead, it uses concepts and terminology from United States joint doctrine to deliver ideas from a military perspective. It will also make use of terminology

from United States Army and United States Marine Corps doctrine to describe tactical-level terms and ideas absent in joint doctrine.<sup>3</sup>

The work begins by analyzing the geostrategic situation faced by the Yuan Dynasty and presenting a conceptual model of the Mongol way of war built around the joint functions.<sup>4</sup> This background material informs a baseline understanding of the traditional “ways” and means by which the Mongols fought. This context supports an analysis across the joint functions and the levels of warfare to illuminate the differences between the Mongol way of war and the warfighting capabilities of those expeditionary forces deployed to Japan.<sup>5</sup>

This thesis emphasizes the need to couple strategic objectives and resources to the development of the right capabilities in the right capacity to deliver success on the operational and tactical levels of warfare.<sup>6</sup> It also emphasizes the importance of alignment between national strategy and military strategy, since the latter is invariably bound by the constraints of policy and the means available for execution. According to

---

<sup>3</sup> United States Joint Doctrine focuses on concepts at the strategic and operational level of warfare. The doctrine of the United States Army and the United States Marine Corps contains many valuable concepts on the tactical level of warfare that do not apply in joint doctrine.

<sup>4</sup> Jakub Grygiel, *Great Powers and Geopolitical Change* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 36. Grygiel defines geostrategy the geographic focus of a state’s foreign policy, or where a state directs its power.

<sup>5</sup> JP 3-0 lists the seven Joint Functions as command and control, information, intelligence, fires, movement and maneuver, protection, and sustainment.

<sup>6</sup> Tactical level of warfare: The level of warfare at which battles and engagements are planned and executed to achieve military objectives assigned to tactical units or task forces. Department of Defense, JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, GL-17.

Clayton James, national strategy entails the utilization of “all necessary resources—political, diplomatic, military, technological, economic—in achieving the objectives of national policy,” whereas military strategy refers to the use [or threatened use] of military force to “secure the ends of national policy.”<sup>7</sup> The abysmal results of the expeditions to Japan stemmed from overextension and a misalignment in the national and military strategies of the Yuan Dynasty. Although Kubilai acknowledged and assumed the risk involved in pursuing a war with Japan, the failure of the expeditions clearly demonstrates that Japan was beyond the strategic reach of the empire, given its limited resources and broad range of security interests.

At the tactical level, the expeditions to Japan also display how failures in battle can translate into fiascos on the strategic level.<sup>8</sup> The decision to outfit the expeditionary forces with impressed Chinese and Korean state-farm soldiers, rather than the legendary Mongol cavalry, enchaind the operational and tactical mobility of the force to foot-mobile soldiers incapable of the rapid maneuver that was the cornerstone of the Mongol way of war.<sup>9</sup> The inability to achieve decisive results at the tactical level resulted from

---

<sup>7</sup> Clayton D. James, “American and Japanese Strategies in the Pacific War,” in *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret, Gordon A. Craig, and Felix Gilbert (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 703.

<sup>8</sup> Strategic level of warfare: The level of warfare at which a nation, often as a member of a group of nations, determines national or multinational (alliance or coalition) strategic security objectives and guidance, then develops and uses national resources to achieve those objectives. Department of Defense, JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, GL-16.

<sup>9</sup> Peter A. Lorge, *The Asian Military Revolution: From Gunpowder to the Bomb* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 51.

force management decisions that designed a force of massed formations of pikemen fit for pitched battle in open terrain. In execution, the Mongol formations were unable to maneuver against an adversary who refused pitched battle and leveraged an asymmetric advantage in tactical mobility offered by *Samurai Cavalry*.<sup>10</sup> Unexpectedly, the Mongol expeditionary forces found themselves at a significant disadvantage when they clashed with professional Japanese warriors employing maneuver warfare, distributed operations, and area denial capabilities to defeat the Mongol amphibious force.<sup>11</sup>

This study also analyzes how the challenge of power projection in the maritime domain imposed serious complications for the expeditionary forces on the operational and tactical levels of warfare. The war with Japan, unlike any experience of the Mongol Empire up to that point on the Eurasian mainland, required the construction of a military force capable of crossing the Korea Strait. This prerequisite denied the expeditionary forces the ability to apply key elements of the Mongol way of war that were fundamental in enabling the remarkable rate of Mongol imperial expansion in the thirteenth century.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Maneuver: 1. A movement to place ships, aircraft, or land forces in a position of advantage over the enemy. 2. A tactical exercise carried out at sea, in the air, on the ground, or on a map in imitation of war. 3. The operation of a ship, aircraft, or vehicle to cause it to perform desired movements. 4. Employment of forces in the operational area, through movement in combination with fires and information, to achieve a position of advantage in respect to the enemy. Department of Defense, JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, GL-12.

<sup>11</sup> Amphibious Force: An amphibious task force [naval element] and a landing force [land element] together with other forces that are trained, organized, and equipped for amphibious operations. Department of Defense, JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, GL-7.

<sup>12</sup> Operational level of warfare: The level of warfare at which campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted, and sustained to achieve strategic objectives within theaters or other operational areas. This remains the level within which commanders and staffs apply Operational Art as a cognitive approach—supported by

While this thesis does not attempt to offer a hindsight solution capable of salvaging the Mongols' ambitious forays into Japan, it will highlight the imprudence of the expeditions in light of the strategic context faced by the Yuan Dynasty.

Chapter 2 provides context to the dynasty's geostrategic orientation before laying out the dynasty's vital security interests. This geostrategic orientation comes from accounts of Kubilai Khan's policy aims and priorities found in a range of historical documents, such as the *Yuan Shi*, which demonstrate where the dynasty focused its financial, material, and human capital resource investments. This analysis also considers the cultural underpinnings of the Yuan Dynasty derived from its austere, nomadic provenance on the vast expanses of the Central Asian steppe.

Next, the thesis summarizes a model of the Mongol way of war. This model plays a critical role by providing a control group against which to compare each of the expeditions and the degree of variance from Mongol norms. The model uses the seven joint functions—(1) command and control, (2) information, (3) intelligence, (4) fires, (5) movement and maneuver, (6) protection, and (7) sustainment—to organize traditional Mongol warfighting capabilities and activities across the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of warfare.

In chapter 3, the work provides an overview of the geostrategic context of the war and the Yuan's diplomatic shaping efforts that occurred in the years immediately predating the first expedition. This chapter also discusses the extensive pre-war material

---

their skill, knowledge, experience, creativity, and judgement—to develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military forces by integrating *ends*, *ways*, and *means*. Department of Defense, JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, GL-14.



preparations and manpower requirements that Kubilai levied upon the Koreans. It also discusses Japan's defensive measures enacted to counter future territorial incursions.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the first and second expeditions to Japan. It also discusses an aborted third expedition, which was canceled in the wake of substantial opposition from Kubilai Khan's trusted advisors and key stakeholders. The narrative of the expeditions relies on a number of sources, such as the *Invasion Scrolls*, to describe the conflict at the tactical and operational level of warfare.<sup>13</sup> This chapter compares the preparations undertaken by both the Yuan Dynasty and Japan during the intervening years of 1275 to 1280, hereafter referred to as the Interwar Period. This analysis reveals how the Japanese learned from the first expedition and thereafter focused the allocation of resources at the national policy level to excel in enhancing their defensive preparations. In comparison to the Japanese, the Yuan Dynasty employed a contrariwise strategy, doubling-down on the same losing solution applied to the first expedition. In both cases, the dynasty prepared for and conducted the expeditions amidst a back-drop of civil strife, Mongol intra-empire competition, and the thirst for imperial expansion.

Chapter 5 provides a conclusion to the thesis aimed at highlighting the major themes and deviations from the Mongol way of war during the expeditions against Japan. It also discusses how the failed expeditions can inform contemporary military operations in a resource-constrained operating environment.

---

<sup>13</sup> Thomas D. Conlan, *In Little Need of Devine Intervention: Takezaki Suenaga's Scrolls of the Mongol Invasions of Japan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University East Asia Program, 2001), 65-85.

## Parameters and Terminology

A few parameters warrant mention to frame the thesis and prevent confusion. First, this work interchanges the terms “expedition” and “campaign.” While these terms describe different military concepts—an expedition consisting of military operations conducted abroad and a campaign consisting a series of battles to achieve operational objectives—they both provide an accurate characterization of the dynasty’s incursions into Japan. This thesis also makes a deliberate departure from most works by avoiding the word “invasion,” due to its ambiguity and its absence in United States joint doctrine.

This thesis presents many estimates and figures regarding force ratios, material requirements, and manpower. Some of these numbers find their origin in primary sources, whereas others come from modern histories. Readers must bear in mind that many of the numbers presented in medieval sources are rough estimates or best guesses—not absolute truths. Carl Sverdrup reinforces this point, stating that the “size of Mongol armies is far from clear and has been the subject of intense scholarly debate.”<sup>14</sup> While the numbers may have flaws, their use is more informative and intellectually satisfying than their omission.

Next, this thesis uses the general term “Mongol” to describe all members of the Yuan Dynasty. This thesis stipulates cases when it uses the term Mongol to describe entities or personalities—such as Kaidu, Kubilai’s cousin and primary challenger during the 30-year civil war—that were not part of the dynasty. It also uses the term Mongol

---

<sup>14</sup> Carl Sverdrup, “Numbers in Mongol Warfare,” in *Journal of Medieval Military History Volume VIII*, ed. John France, Clifford J. Rogers, and Kelly DeVries (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2010), 109.

when describing the expeditions in order to simplify discussions of the military campaigns of the Yuan commissioned under the authority of Kubilai Khan.

This thesis references a Mongol way of war throughout its entirety. While defining a nation's "way of war" remains a practice of questionable utility amongst military historians, it employs the concept to provide a mental model for organizing characteristics about how the Mongols fought. This model provides a means to summarize the key elements of Mongol military power that enabled a pastoral, nomadic society to amass the largest contiguous land empire in human history.<sup>15</sup> Although the model presented may be better described as a "way of warfare"—as opposed to a way of war—the thesis uses the latter phrase for ease of communication and to emphasize the inextricable link to the rise of the Mongol Empire.

#### Kamikazes, Contrarians, and the Key Sources for Research

This thesis uses the conclusion of battles ashore as a demarcation line for analysis. It contends that what matters most in analyzing the expeditions from the national policy level is whether or not they achieved their stated objectives. While the body of academic work on the expeditions to Japan agree that they failed to achieve the desired end, significant disagreement exists about the cause of such abysmal results. This variance results in a divide within the historical community, wherein works tend to align with one of two camps of thought to explain the failure of the expeditions—the "Kamikazes" and the "Contrarians."

---

<sup>15</sup> Sverdrup, 109.

The Kamikaze camp accepts the traditional belief that the expeditions failed due to the untimely arrival of the *kamikazes*, the catastrophic typhoons that claimed to have decimated the amphibious forces in 1274 and 1281. Historical records from Japan and China both indicate that weather may indeed have played a role in concluding both of the expeditions; however, in the absence of substantial archeological evidence it is impossible to ascertain the true scope of destruction caused by these weather systems.<sup>16</sup> The contradiction in primary source accounts make the prospect of determining the true scope of weather impacts on military operations impossible to determine, particularly in light of the fact that the Mongols did succeed in deploying to and fighting Japan.

Marco Polo (1254 to 1324), the famed Venetian merchant and world traveler, wrote that the first expedition knew of the approaching weather system, spurring the force to withdraw from Japan.<sup>17</sup> He also said that the second expeditionary force faced far more dire consequences due to a storm that destroyed their fleet, leaving them marooned ashore to face slaughter at the hands of the *samurai*, who killed all but the 10,000 Chinese soldiers who were enslaved instead.<sup>18</sup> While a number of secondary

---

<sup>16</sup> With the exception of *The Secret History*, the very few pure Mongol records have survived the ages. The vast majority of what we know about the Mongols comes from the *Yuan Shi*, part of the Chinese dynastical histories, and references from other societies.

<sup>17</sup> Henry Yule, ed., *The Book of Ser Marco Polo the Venetian Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East, Volume 2* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), 255.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

sources agree with this assessment, the destruction foretold by Marco Polo contrasts with some Chinese and Japanese records.

The *Yuan Shi*, the portion of the 24 Histories of China devoted to the Yuan Dynasty, indicates that the “water army” of 100,000 faced poor weather but returned home in “triumph.”<sup>19</sup> Likewise, Thomas D. Conlan indicates that neither the *Invasion Scrolls*, which chronicled both expeditions from the tactical perspective, nor official records from the Japanese Kamakura *bakufu* included within *In Little Need for Divine Intervention* make any mention of weather during either of the expeditions.<sup>20</sup>

The Kamikaze camp retains much support from the general acceptance and resonance of the historical Japanese sentiment entrenched in myth of the “divine wind” over the course of centuries of Japanese history. Robert Marshall offers that the acclaimed occurrence of storms during each of the expeditions “served as proof that they [the Japanese] inhabited a land that was precious to the Gods and that the storms had been ‘divine winds’ [kamikaze] sent to sweep away the invader.”<sup>21</sup> This viewpoint grew over time and traced the rise of Imperial Japan and its extreme case of nationalist

---

<sup>19</sup> China Twenty-Four Histories, *The History of Yuan Dynasty* (Kindle e-book), accessed 20 March 2019, [https://www.amazon.com/History-Yuan-Dynasty-Part-Twenty-four-ebook/dp/B07JR885CZ/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?keywords=history+of+yuan+dynasty&qid=1553133777&s=gateway&sr=8-2](https://www.amazon.com/History-Yuan-Dynasty-Part-Twenty-four-ebook/dp/B07JR885CZ/ref=sr_1_2?keywords=history+of+yuan+dynasty&qid=1553133777&s=gateway&sr=8-2), Loc 22962. Referred to from this point forward generically as *Yuan Shi*.

<sup>20</sup> Conlan, 254-255. The Kamakura *bakufu* served as the national judicial authority of Japan charged with managing the constables known as *shugos*. The Kyoto Court, on the other hand, managed all administrative matters for Japan.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Marshall, *Storm from the East: From Genghis to Khubilai Khan* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 221.

exceptionalism in the early twentieth century. The general acceptance of this narrative persists in most histories that reference the Mongol expeditions to Japan.

In addition, with the exception of limited archeological evidence of Mongol vessels recovered off the shores of Japan, scientists have not found evidence to support the destruction of the great Mongol amphibious forces.<sup>22</sup> While the duration of the expeditions increased the likelihood of impacts from weather systems—in particular with the second expedition taking place in the heart of Japan’s typhoon season between the months of July and October—the contradictions in the historical and archeological record complicate objective assessments of the true impact of weather.

The Contrarian camp, on the other hand, argues that other factors fomented the failure of the expeditions. Its adherents display a level of discomfort with the room accorded to interpretation and exaggeration in traditional views. Many Contrarians claim that the expeditions failed due to either poor execution or a defeat at the hands of a defense force with a qualitative advantage and the benefit of fighting on familiar terrain that favored the defense. The *Invasion Scrolls*, along with a number of other Japanese accounts, play a central role in this camp, serving as proof that the Mongols fought in Japan. They also demonstrate Japan’s resolve to defeat the “pirates” and avoid the tyranny, exploitation, and humiliation they foresaw under the oppression of Mongol rule. The absence of embellishment and propagandist undertones in many of these pieces lends a level of credibility to the accounts they hold. Even Takezaki Suenaga, the *bushi*, or

---

<sup>22</sup> Randall J. Sasaki, “The Origin of the Lost Fleet of the Mongol Empire,” Master’s Thesis, (Texas A&M University, 2008), iii.

warrior, who commissioned the *Invasion Scrolls*, admits to having played a minor role in the defeat of the Mongol expeditionary forces. Similar to the Kamikaze camp, most of the Contrarians base their conclusions off of many of the same sources.

In the interest of remaining objective and focused on the central thesis, this work avoids aligning itself with either camp. Proof exists that the Mongols landed forces in Japan. The success or failure of the expeditions was strictly between the Mongols and the *samurai* on the battlefields of Kyushu and Japan's outlying islands.

### Key Sources

This thesis utilizes a wide array of primary and secondary sources to provide depth and originality to the assessment of the campaigns. Many of these sources appear in numerous related pieces; others are unique to this thesis given its focus on geostrategy and the resourcing decisions made by the dynasty.

Conlan's translation of the *Invasion Scrolls* provides an invaluable primary source on each level of warfare. The *Invasion Scrolls* provide a unique illustration of the expeditions from the Japanese perspective. The translations of captions within the *Invasion Scrolls* provide a wealth of material for analysis and the development of contextual depth. The greater value of the *Invasion Scrolls*, however, is found in the illustrations within the scrolls. These offer insights into the character of the fight while allowing a reader to compare the capabilities employed by each belligerent. Of greatest significance, these sketches also reveal how the campaigns deviated from the traditional Mongol way of war, showing formations of pikemen fit for pitched battle rather than columns of Mongol cavalrymen. While the scrolls were commissioned following the

campaigns by Takezaki Suenaga, in his attempt to gain recognition from the Kamakura *bafuku*, they provide a rare glimpse from the soldier's perspective.

The fact that the *Invasion Scrolls* chronicle both of the Mongol expeditions adds to its importance for comparative analysis of the fighting therein. For example, the *Invasion Scrolls* illustrate a greater level of defensive preparations used by the Japanese to defeat the 1281 incursion through the employment of area denial capabilities that were not used during the first Mongol expedition. While the *Invasion Scrolls* only provides one individual account of the battles, and suffers from a series of repairs and slight alterations, it provides the greatest surviving holistic view of the conflict from the warriors' perspective. Given the scarcity of additional primary source material, this thesis relies heavily upon the *Invasion Scrolls* to characterize the forces resulting from the Yuan Dynasty's decision to discard the Mongol way of war. It also refutes a common myth, that the *kamikazes* prevented the Mongol expeditionary forces from reaching the shores of Japan. The *Invasion Scrolls* suggest that the *samurai* defeated the Mongols on their own accord.

*In Little Need of Divine Intervention* also contains dozens of other strategic, policy-level documents published by political, religious, and military authorities in medieval Japan. These assorted pieces provide a unique collection of primary sources that allow for analysis of Japanese preparations to defend the homeland against the existential threat posed by the Yuan.<sup>23</sup> While this thesis focuses on the geostrategic

---

<sup>23</sup> Conlan, 201. A letter from the Zen Priest Togen Eian in 1270 wrote that the "Mongols desire to conquer Japan" before indicating that he felt that Mongols would in turn use Japan's warriors to reinforce their campaigns against China and India.



direction of the dynasty, the policies of the Kamakura reinforce the central ideas of the thesis and provide a contrast between the national strategies of the two belligerents.

The *Yuan Shi* covers one of the 24 official dynastic histories of China, providing the most comprehensive primary source of Yuan Dynasty history. This thesis uses an electronic version of the *Yuan Shi* to reinforce points from the Chinese perspective. To balance the questionable quality and translations found in this version of the *Yuan Shi*, the thesis also relies on parts of the *Yuan Shi* quoted in a number of secondary sources. Of the many pieces that include references from the *Yuan Shi*, Ch'i-Ch'ing Hsiao's *The Military Establishment of the Yuan Dynasty* provides much depth in terms of primary translation and secondary analysis. This piece contains full translations of those portions of the *Yuan Shi* focused on the military apparatus of the dynasty. These cover topics ranging from the identification of the strategic objective of operations against Japan to the structure and administration of Yuan Garrison System built to manage the great task of stability operations in China.<sup>24</sup> It also contains analysis of the struggles the dynasty faced in balancing governance in China with the need to prevail in the civil war against Kaidu.<sup>25</sup> Hsiao analyzes the arc of the Yuan's history, providing proximate assessments of the period of the expeditions balanced with general resource availability trends across its hundred year reign. Given the centrality of militarism in the rise of the Mongols, the

---

<sup>24</sup> Stability Tasks. Tasks conducted in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment and provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief. Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate, 2017), Glossary 16.

<sup>25</sup> Ch'i-ch'ing Hsiao, *The Military Establishment of the Yuan Dynasty* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 57.

dynasty found itself at a cultural impasse wherein the nomadic conquerors from the central Asian steppe found themselves exercising governance over the vast resources of a sedentary, agrarian society in China.

Igor Rachewiltz' translation of *The Secret History of the Mongols* represents one of the few surviving pieces of primary Mongol source material. *The Secret History* provides a foundation to understanding Mongol imperialism as well as the militaristic culture of the greatest nomadic conquerors in history. It focuses on the life of Chinggis Khan, the leader who unified the central Asian tribes that comprised the core of the early empire, and the rise of the Mongols. It also describes the systems and capabilities applied at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of warfare—from command and control systems to their sustainment capabilities—that provided the underpinnings of the Mongol way of war.

The last primary source for this thesis comes from the accounts of Marco Polo, the famed Venetian whose writings reflected his years spent amongst the Mongols and his personal service to Kubilai's court.<sup>26</sup> Marco Polo's accounts opened the eyes of Westerners to intrigue and economic potential of the Far East. Although neither Kubilai nor Marco Polo participated in the expeditions, Marco Polo's writing reinforces the policy objectives behind the Yuan Dynasty's desire to subjugate Japan—to expand imperial borders and increase the wealth of the empire. While each of these primary

---

<sup>26</sup> Henry Yule's translation of *The Book of Ser Marco Polo the Venetian Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East: Volume II*, provides a translation Marco Polo's first-hand accounts of his direct interactions with the Mongol Empire and Kubilai Khan.

sources grounds this thesis firmly in the historical record, a large number of modern studies provide it with its width and depth.

The central theme of Morris Rossabi's *Kubilai Khan: His Life and Times*, parallels the purpose of this thesis. Rossabi argues that most accounts of Kubilai, the first outside invader to conquer China, advance one-dimensional views of the *khan* that fail to consider the immense challenges that Kubilai faced in unifying China. This piece provides a critical link in examining the expeditions and the decisions made by Kubilai on the national policy level of his fledgling Yuan Dynasty. Rossabi provides extreme detail on Kubilai as an individual, a conqueror, and the emperor, all of which add depth to understanding his life within the context of ceaseless challenges to his authority and legitimacy as *khan*. It also provides insights behind Kubilai's monumental task of serving as a change agent amongst Mongol society as it acculturated with the great population and resources of China. Two other secondary sources warrant mention in regard to the complexities the dynasty faced in building and maintaining the administrative hierarchy and infrastructure to support governance during the unification of China.

Thomas Allsen's *Mongol Imperialism: The Policies of the Grand Qan Mongke in China, Russia, and the Islamic Lands 1251–1259*, focuses on the Mongol Empire in the years prior to Kubilai's ascent to Khan. This study focuses on Mongke Khan, who exerted great influence on Kubilai and set him on the path to completing the conquest of China, a multi-generational effort that commenced under the rule of Chinggis Khan. It provides a valuable characterization of traditional Mongol governance and a point of departure for analyzing the tectonic shift in administrative structures required by the unification of China.

In contrast, Elizabeth Endicott-West's *Mongolian Rule in China: Local Administration of the Yuan Dynasty* illustrates the inherent complexity of Yuan governance. It provides an overview of the economic, legal, and political arrangements established to support the dynasty's administrative activities used to manage national resources in the pursuance of national security interests. Administering the dynasty presented Kubilai Khan with problems that were orders of magnitude more complex than those faced by his predecessors or his rival *khanates* on the steppe. Continued expansion of influence in the reign of the Yuan Dynasty required clear direction and a focused expenditure of the right resources to achieve its policy objectives.

A number of unique sources were used to explore geostrategy and construct a suitable model for the Mongol way of the war. Jakub J. Grygiel's *Great Powers and Geopolitical Change*, provides this thesis with a coherent distinction between geopolitics and geostrategy, enabling it to advance the analysis beyond the narrative and the tactics of the expeditions. It provides concepts and ideas that offer a foundation for understanding "why" the expeditions took the form that they did. Grygiel's study relates geography—the greatest obstacle to the Mongols' ability to project military power across the Korea Strait—to the concepts of geopolitics and geostrategy through a number of cases. The most relevant case proposed by Grygiel consists of a chapter on the Ming Dynasty (1368 to 1644) and its rise to power in the wake of the Yuan's collapse.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> Grygiel, 1. He describes physical geography as "a combination of immutable geological facts such as patterns of lands, seas, rivers, mountain ranges, and climactic zones" that humans must contend with. The result of this interface between geography and the human experience defines the layout of trade routes, emphasizes the location of resources, and describes the nature of state borders.

Ironically, Grygiel argues that the Ming Dynasty's under-investment in securing its borders played a prominent role in decline of the dynasty in 1644.<sup>28</sup> The present thesis argues, however, that the Yuan Dynasty recognized the importance of keeping rival Mongol *khanates* at bay, leading to the need to assume risk in the expeditions aimed at the resources offered in Japan.

Three pieces were used extensively in the development of a conceptual model of the Mongol way of war. Colin S. Gray's *The American Way of War: Critique and Implications* provides considerations regarding the characterization and definition of an American way of war. This source provides a model for analyzing the Mongol way of war in combination with United States joint doctrine. This construct of a Mongol way of war also draws from the United States Army School of Advanced Military Studies Monograph written by Darrel C. Benfield, entitled "The Mongols: Early Practitioners of Maneuver Warfare," which describes the rise of the Mongol Empire and its operational concepts employed against the Khwarazm Empire through the lens of United States Marine Corps Maneuver Warfare Doctrine. Timothy May's *Mongol Art of War* also organizes Mongol warfighting capabilities across various functions in a similar fashion to this thesis. While these pieces establish the foundation for comparative analysis on the operational and tactical levels of warfare, a number of other secondary sources assisted in developing the narrative portions presented in this thesis.

Stephen Turnbull's *The Mongol Invasions of Japan: 1274 and 1281* provides a clear narrative of the expeditions complete with pictures, maps, and figures that tie

---

<sup>28</sup> Grygiel, 123.

together concepts and ideas delivered by a multitude of other sources. This piece serves as the “north star” of the narrative portions of this thesis, providing simple context and explanations to ideas pulled from other sources. This work also provided invaluable fragments of primary source material from Japanese and Mongol sources incorporated into this thesis and cited herein.

Ryon F. Adams’ Master of Military Arts and Science thesis from the United States Army Command and General Staff College entitled “Outfought and Outthought: Reassessing the Mongol Invasions of Japan” contributes much to this thesis. The composition of this piece provides another narrative associated with the Mongol expeditions through a contrarian viewpoint that parallels Conlan’s *In Little Need of Divine Intervention*. Aside from providing analysis on the tactical level, the piece explores general concepts on the strategic level, specifically analyzing “how” the Mongols approached the invasions (as opposed to expeditions) across the instruments of national power—diplomacy, information, military, and economics. It also provides a logical starting point to this thesis in the search for why the Mongol Expeditions failed to achieve its stated strategic objectives. Finally, Nakaba Yamada’s *Ghenko: The Mongol Invasion of Japan*, written during 1916, amid World War One and Japan’s growing imperial ambitions following the success of the Russo-Japanese War, provided much context to the thesis. Despite Yamada’s bias toward the growing prevalence and virality of Japanese exceptionalism that characterized the times, this piece provides unique insights and quotations unavailable in other pieces.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE MONGOL WAY OF WAR

To be meaningful, the high concept of an American way of war has to refer to important enduring preferences, habits of mind, and modes of behavior. Properly regarded, a way of war will reflect the persisting influence of . . . cultural assumptions.

— Colin S. Gray, *The American Way of War: Critique and Implications*

According to *The Secret History*, the Mongol empire arose from its humble beginnings along the Senggur Stream in the valleys of the Gurelgu Mountains of the Asian steppe in the late twelfth century.<sup>29</sup> In the years that followed, the empire spread like an ink blot across the continent, exposing civilization to a horse-borne military force on a size and scale unlike anything the world had witnessed before. Their campaigns delivered Mongol armies to the far corners of the Eurasian land mass, from the deserts of Iraq to the jungles of Vietnam. At the height of their power, the Mongols amassed the largest contiguous empire in human history, spanning from the eastern shores of China to the banks of the Danube River. Starting with a force of less than 100,000 nomadic horsemen in 1206, they accomplished this monumental feat over the course of just a few decades, conquering more than nine million square miles of territory.<sup>30</sup> Paradoxically, this expansion to the east reached no further than the banks of the East China Sea, held in-check on two occasions by Japan, an insular island civilization with less than 2 percent

---

<sup>29</sup> Marshall, 49.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 33.

of the total and mass of the Mongol Empire.<sup>31</sup> This chapter will first describe the cultural and geostrategic context of the empire before providing a conceptual model of the Mongol way of war. This model will utilize contemporary United States joint functions and doctrine to examine the elements of their way of war, many of which were discarded during the expeditions to Japan.

### Cultural Underpinnings

The Mongol Empire came into existence in 1206 during a traditional gathering of the eastern steppe tribes, known as a *khuriltai*. During this gathering, tribal leaders decided to unify their people for the first time under the legitimate rule of a *Qa'an*.<sup>32</sup> The tribal leaders chose Temujin to serve as their *Qa'an*, hereafter referred to as *khan*, distinguishing him from that point forward as Chinggis Khan (1162 to 1227). The rise of Chinggis unified the hitherto independent nomadic tribes of the steppe through conquest, political maneuvering, and force of personality.<sup>33</sup> He wasted no time in appointing subordinate leaders and organizing his allies to consolidate power among the steppe tribes before embarking on his legendary imperial conquests.<sup>34</sup> Chinggis and his

---

<sup>31</sup> Google, "Japan," accessed 19 January 2019, <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Japan/@31.681995,120.3034471,4z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x34674e0fd77f192f:0xf54275d47c665244!8m2!3d36.204824!4d138.252924>.

<sup>32</sup> F. W. Mote, *Imperial China: 900–1800* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 425.

<sup>33</sup> Igor Rachewiltz, *The Secret History of the Mongols: A Mongolian Epic Chronical of the Thirteenth Century*, vol. 1 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2006), 49.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.



followers set out to fulfill a mandate from Heaven to conquer the earth on behalf of his chosen race.<sup>35</sup>

The Mongols sprouted from a nomadic culture, thriving in an austere environment that required resourcefulness, resiliency, and dedication from each member of society.<sup>36</sup> The vast expanses of grassland, rolling hills, and unforgiving seasonal weather patterns presented significant ecological challenges that favored a thrifty lifestyle. Unlike the blossoming cultures of the West, or the vast agrarian population of China (estimated at more than 100 million people in the thirteenth century), life on the steppe required opportunism and animal husbandry to compensate for a dearth of agricultural and industrial productivity.<sup>37</sup> The Mongols' lack of technological, educational, and economic development came as a consequence of thriving in an environment that was ecologically incompatible with the advancements afforded to a society with a sedentary existence. The challenges of life on the steppe imbued the Mongols with a military system custom-built for expeditionary operations in austere conditions, relying heavily on the horse and the composite bow. Timothy Brook summarizes the essence of Mongol militaristic culture, writing that the Mongol "mode of life was pastoral, and conquest was the logic of its rule."<sup>38</sup> This militaristic culture formed the footing of a unique Mongol way of war.

---

<sup>35</sup> John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 207.

<sup>36</sup> Rachewiltz, 52.

<sup>37</sup> Timothy Brook, *The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasty* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 42.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

## The Mongol Way of War

The British military historian B. H. Liddell Hart captured the essence of Mongol imperial expansion: “in scale and in quality, in surprise and mobility, in the strategic and tactical indirect approach, their [the Mongols] campaigns rival or surpass any in history.”<sup>39</sup> Some military professionals have labeled the Mongols as “early practitioners of maneuver warfare,” referencing their campaigns in Eastern Europe as an exemplary example of the application of maneuver through the dispersion and rapid concentration of combat power to achieve decisive results against opposing forces.<sup>40</sup> This military system enabled Mongol imperial expansion and the achievement of its policy objectives.<sup>41</sup> Thus, an understanding of the Mongol way of war requires a grasp of how Mongol policy extended to war, which Carl von Clausewitz described as “an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will.”<sup>42</sup>

### Geostrategic Context and Mongol National Interests

Given the dearth of resources on the steppe, the Mongols had few choices beyond the pursuit of conquest as a way to accumulate and consolidate power. Grygiel states that “natural and economic resources fuel a state’s industrial and military capacity and

---

<sup>39</sup> Liddell B. H. Hart, *Strategy* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 61.

<sup>40</sup> Darrel C. Benfield, “The Mongols: Early Practitioners of Maneuver Warfare” (Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2012), ii.

<sup>41</sup> Keegan, 207.

<sup>42</sup> Carl von. Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 75.

consequently are strategic goods the control over which bestows influence and power.”<sup>43</sup>

In many ways, the growth of the empire became an end in itself. Thus, conquest served as a way to achieve this end and accumulate the material means to sustain the empire’s activities. Despite the centrality of expansionism to Mongol policy objectives, however, it was not sufficient in itself to build a great empire and advance its interests.<sup>44</sup>

This thesis contends that the Mongol policy was driven by three primary vital interests. These interests, which held true through Kubilai Khan’s Yuan Dynasty, listed in order of priority include:

1. The protection and advancement of the *khan*’s authority and power;
2. The pursuit of stability and order within and beyond the empire;<sup>45</sup>
3. Imperial conquest of land and resources—natural, human, and financial.

These national interests aligned with the Mongol Empire’s need to confront the geopolitical realities that they faced on the steppe.

---

<sup>43</sup> Grygiel, 30.

<sup>44</sup> Alan G. Stolberg, “Crafting National Interests in the 21st Century,” in *Guide to National Security Issues, Volume II: National Security Policy and Strategy*, ed. J. Boone Bartholomees Jr. (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2008), 4, accessed 4 April 2019, [https://philwalter1058.files.wordpress.com/2017/09/crafting\\_national\\_interests\\_in\\_the\\_21st\\_century.pdf](https://philwalter1058.files.wordpress.com/2017/09/crafting_national_interests_in_the_21st_century.pdf). Alan G. Stolberg describes a national interest as a priority “that a state deems to be a desirable goal” that will have a positive impact on a state.

<sup>45</sup> Elizabeth Endicot-West, *Mongolian Rule in China: Local Administration in the Yuan Dynasty* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 111. “The fundamental goal of all dynasties on Chinese territory—whether conquest dynasties or Chinese dynasties—was twofold: to extract wealth from the empire, and to maintain order within the empire. Achieving a balance between the two was the key to success. If a government extracted too much in the way of taxes and corvette demands, the populace would revolt, and the dynasty’s claim to the mandate to rule would be jeopardized.”

Geopolitics describes the distribution of power according to geographic realities.

According to Grygiel:

Geopolitics is the world faced by each state. It is what is “outside” the state, the environment within which, and in response to which, the state must act. More precisely, geopolitics, or the geopolitical reality, is defined by lines of communication and the disposition of centers of economic and natural resources. These two variables, in turn determined by the interaction of geological features and human interactions, create a set of objective and geographically specific constraints to the foreign policy of states.<sup>46</sup>

Thus, geopolitics generated the need for Mongol expansion as a way to increase power.

The need to extend lines of communication, while maintaining control of those within the empire, were of great importance in facilitating commerce between the east and west in the absence of maritime trade and the increasing demand for exports from China.<sup>47</sup> The lines of communication on the interior of the empire also proved critical from a military perspective—supporting the force projection of Mongol armies while enabling strategic communication via the *yam* rider system.

Although Mongol policy and administrative structures began in a very primitive state during the reign of Chinggis, the continual growth of the empire, both geographically and economically, demanded increased bureaucracy to emplace the needed controls to centralize economic and political power. By the time of Kubilai Khan’s establishment of the Yuan Dynasty, the supreme leader had no choice but to integrate Chinese administrative and social structures into his political structure, both as a means to promote inclusion and as a necessity for exerting control over an expansive

---

<sup>46</sup> Grygiel, 24.

<sup>47</sup> Brook, 219-234.

territory with a large number of dense population centers made possible by the agricultural realities of China.<sup>48</sup> Through all of these changes, the Mongols demonstrated the ability to apply other elements of national power to continue pursuing their strategic ends, relying on war and violence as an extension of policy.

Historical records indicate that the Mongols made extensive use of diplomacy in the way of envoys dispatched ahead of military conflicts—such as those used to convince other civilizations to include the Mamelukes, the Southern Song, and even the Japanese—to offer submission to the Mongol empire as a substitute to war and destruction.<sup>49</sup> The willing submission of civilizations represented an opportunity for the Mongols to economize the use of force in the pursuit of its national interests, an important consideration given the significant cost of pursuing military operations on the steppe, which consumed vast quantities of resources and horses.<sup>50</sup> Submission via diplomacy also enabled the Mongols to maintain their global order.

In cases where diplomacy failed, the Mongols did not hesitate to draw upon their “big stick” in pursuit of the guidance mandated by the “highest heaven.”<sup>51</sup> Despite Chinngis’ claim that “heaven has promised me victory,” an analysis of the Mongols

---

<sup>48</sup> Brook, 35-36.

<sup>49</sup> Kenneth W. Chase, “Mongol Intentions towards Japan in 1266: Evidence from a Mongol Letter to the Sung,” *Sino-Japanese Studies Journal* 9, no. 2 (1990): 13-23, accessed 20 March 2019, <http://chinajapan.org/articles/09.2/09.2chase13-23.pdf>.

<sup>50</sup> Hsiao, 59-60.

<sup>51</sup> Quote from Kubilai Khan translated by Chase, “Mongol Intentions towards Japan in 1266,” 15-16.

warfighting capabilities across the joint functions illustrates the preferences, habits of mind, and behaviors the Mongols relied upon to deliver military success at all levels of warfare.<sup>52</sup> Unlike other nomadic societies from the steppe, such as the Khitans, who also possessed notable warfighting capabilities, the Mongols represented a militarized society that leveraged its culture to build a way of war suitable for continental imperial conquest. This culture formed the core of the Mongol way of war and was the centerpiece of the empire.

### The Big Stick

Contrary to popular belief, the Mongol imperial conquests did not consist of hordes of undisciplined warriors descending on civilization.<sup>53</sup> Instead, an array of sources indicate the Mongols used a sophisticated military system of well-trained units capable of distributed operations and precise maneuvers on the tactical and operational level of warfare. This warfighting proficiency stemmed from their aptitude in achieving shock effects through the use of cavalry, artillery, and the composite bow in synchronized, disciplined maneuvers rooted in their warrior culture and team-based hunting traditions on the steppe.<sup>54</sup> The knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired in each Mongol's

---

<sup>52</sup> Keegan, 201.

<sup>53</sup> The expeditions to Japan, conducted with massed formations of undisciplined, farmer-soldiers impressed into service seems to have taken on a much more horde-like character than the majority of Mongol military actions. Unlike the battles aboard Kyushu, where greater parity existed in force ratios between the Mongols and the samurai existed, the raids on Tsushima and Iki islands leveraged the mass of the landing forces to overwhelmed the islands' limited defenses.

<sup>54</sup> Hsiao, 7.

upbringing provided an asymmetric advantage against war parties of rival nomadic societies and the massed formations of sedentary militaries designed for pitched-battle on an open battlefield. The Mongol military system provided the empire with great operational reach, enabling imperial conquest across the great expanses of Asia.<sup>55</sup> The seven joint functions provide the basis for this thesis' model of the Mongol way of war.

### Command and Control

The Mongol way of war rested upon a foundation of command and control capabilities that linked the empire's leadership with its commanders and military formations on the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war.<sup>56</sup> The system also provided its military formations of life-long, compulsory warriors with competent leaders entrusted with the ability to conduct decentralized operations with distributed forces.<sup>57</sup> The entire system was bolstered by a communication apparatus that allowed leaders to communicate on the battlefield and across the vast empire. The Mongols command and control system rested on four pillars:

---

<sup>55</sup> Department of Defense, JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, GL-14. Operational Reach: the time and space across which military forces can operate.

<sup>56</sup> According to Joint Publication 3-0 the function of Command and Control encompasses the exercise of authority and direction by a commander over assigned and attached forces to accomplish the mission. Command includes both the authority and responsibility to use resources to accomplish assigned missions. . . . Control provides the *means* for commanders to maintain freedom of action, delegate authority, direct operations from any location, and integrate and synchronize actions throughout the operational area. Department of Defense, JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, III-2.

<sup>57</sup> The campaigns against the Khwarazm Empire demonstrate excellent execution of decentralized operations on the operational level of warfare. On the strategic level, Mongke Khan's simultaneous campaigns in Persia and China demonstrate the necessity of decentralized operations as part of Mongol way of war.

1. A deliberate training system that fostered cooperation and unity of effort;
2. The discipline of the individual soldier coupled with competent leadership;
3. A system of organization and command that enabled distributed operations;
4. Strategic, operational, and tactical means of communication.

The Mongols designed a military organization capable of conducting distributed operations that were synchronized in a manner to deliver the shock of massed effects at decisive points against adversarial forces. The evolution of a structured, hierarchical system provided an essential administrative apparatus for organizing and controlling nomadic warriors who were already self-sufficient and technically proficient by nature. The establishment of this system had the added benefit of allowing Mongol leaders to leverage the inherent resourcefulness of the individual while breaking the human tendency to revert back to tribal roots.<sup>58</sup> Breaking the individualistic propensity of nomadic warriors required a deliberate focus, on instilling the values of discipline and unity of effort.

As with contemporary western militaries, the Mongols placed a premium on unity of effort and discipline as a means to compensate for numerical inferiority and maximize horse-borne fire and maneuver.<sup>59</sup> The Mongols also made efforts to administrate more mundane military matters, publishing regulations about subjects ranging from individual conduct to resource management. Another key element of their unit and individual

---

<sup>58</sup> Marshall, 33-34.

<sup>59</sup> Geoffrey Parker, *The Cambridge History of Warfare* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3.



development system came from collective hunting exercises known as the *nerge*.<sup>60</sup> These training exercises, which took place on fronts of up to 80 miles in length, enabled Mongol leaders to gain familiarity with the exercise of command and control over units dispersed over wide areas, working toward a common goal as a unit.<sup>61</sup> According to May:

[T]he *nerge* contributed to a well-disciplined force capable of complex maneuvers over a broad front. That the Mongols were competent horsemen and archers due to daily exposure to both almost from birth is undeniable. Their discipline in maneuvers and coordinated moves across great distances was enhanced by the seasonal migrations of nomadic life.<sup>62</sup>

While proficiency and discipline contributed much to Mongol combat power, their success also required the selection of trusted, able-bodied leaders, warriors, and specialists prepared to contribute their skills in war.

Leadership remains an inextricable part of command and control in contemporary military affairs, just as it did during the rise of the Mongol Empire. The *Secret History* indicates that Chinggis grasped the importance of personnel assignment decisions that balanced dependability, potential, and trust. These important reforms took place in a military system that predated Gustavus Aldophus' military reforms of the Swedish Military by centuries. Rather than appoint leaders based off of blood-line or merit alone, Chinggis understood the need to put the right people in the right positions to maximize the efficiency of his force and bolster his grip on power.<sup>63</sup> Deliberate personnel selections

---

<sup>60</sup> Timothy May, *The Mongol Art of War: Chinggis Khan and the Mongol Military System* (Yardley, PA: Westholm Publishing, 2007), 46.

<sup>61</sup> Marshall, 40.

<sup>62</sup> May, 46.

<sup>63</sup> Rachewiltz, 151.

were also applied to individuals from conquered nations, who were then incorporated into the fabric of the empire. The incorporation of foreigners provided the empire with administrative and technical expertise that the nomadic lacked. These specialists, which included engineers, scientists, and government administrators, grew in importance with the expansion of the borders and ambition of the empire. By the time of the Yuan Dynasty, Kubilai, more than any of his predecessors, relied extensively on foreign advisors and commanders to exert governance and direct affairs in an increasingly complex geopolitical landscape.<sup>64</sup>

A hierarchical military structure provided a framework for the Mongol way of war that enabled the command and control of forces on the operational and tactical levels of warfare. Among Chinggis' most important military reforms described in the *Secret History* was his establishment of a structured order that employed various sized units, ranging from the *tumen*, a division ideally consisting of 10,000 soldiers, to the *arabn*, a squad-sized unit containing 10 soldiers.<sup>65</sup> This system helped dissolve tribal affiliations while employing capable leaders at each echelon of command.<sup>66</sup> Aside from battlefield dominance, this organization also allowed the Mongols to effectively deploy forces on the operational and strategic level on different lines of communication. This strategic and operational mobility gained through force structure and organization provided a significant competitive advantage over adversaries.

---

<sup>64</sup> Brook, 36.

<sup>65</sup> Rachewiltz, 152.

<sup>66</sup> Louis A. DiMarco, *War Horse: A History of the Military Horse and Rider* (Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2008), 136.

The ability to mass and concentrate forces in the right place and at the right time necessitated the development of a communication network capable of moving messages across vast spaces in a quick and efficient manner. The *yam* system, identified by Marco Polo as the “greatest resource ever enjoyed by any man on earth, king, or emperor,” gave the Mongols the ability to exert centralized control during the execution of decentralized operations.<sup>67</sup> This relay system, developed by Ogedei Khan, Chinggis’ son and successor, utilized distributed post-stations, known as *ulus*, that housed fresh horses for messengers as they rode “in haste through the post stations.”<sup>68</sup> The *yam* allowed correspondence to circulate through the empire’s communication channels at a speed of up to 120 miles per day, allowing messengers to exchange horses and riders as needed.<sup>69</sup> When necessary, *khans* employed numerous messengers to provide redundancy and ensure the delivery of sensitive correspondence. The *yam* provided the Mongols with a unique and revolutionary means by which to communicate on the strategic and operational levels of warfare, facilitating unity of effort across the world’s largest contiguous empire. The Mongols also made extensive use of tactical communications to synchronize units and facilitate battlefield success.

The Mongols used flags and messengers on the tactical level to choreograph maneuvers in battle. They also employed arrows with specialized tips, horns, and drums

---

<sup>67</sup> Brook, 30.

<sup>68</sup> Rachewiltz, 215.

<sup>69</sup> DiMarco, 139.

as a means of audible communication on the battlefield.<sup>70</sup> These capabilities allowed commanders to achieve rapid dissemination of the commands required to synchronize the employment of cavalry and supporting arms against enemy forces. The *Invasion Scrolls* provide evidence of their reliance on tactical communication systems, depicting the use of drums and banners to exert command and control in battle.<sup>71</sup>

The expeditions to Japan strayed far from the traditional command and control capabilities that were an integral part of the Mongol way of war. Not only did the force lack the training and quality of soldiers and leaders that comprised traditional Mongol formations, they also lacked the strategic communication channels back to the dynasty. From a command and control perspective, the Mongol expeditions found themselves isolated and subject to their own devices upon setting sail for Japan.

### Sustainment

The Mongols demonstrated aptitude in applying elements of their pastoral upbringing to maximize operational reach and sustain expeditionary operations in the austere environment of the steppe.<sup>72</sup> As with the other cultural underpinnings of the Mongol way of war, the inherent resourcefulness of the Mongols provided them with

---

<sup>70</sup> May, 114-116.

<sup>71</sup> Conlan, 79-78.

<sup>72</sup> According to Joint Publication 3-0, the function of sustainment includes the provision of logistics and personnel services to maintain operations through mission accomplishment and redeployment of the force. Sustainment provides the commander the means to enable freedom of action and endurance and to extend operational reach. Sustainment determines the depth to which the joint force can conduct decisive operations, allowing the commander to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative. Department of Defense, JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, III-47.

formations that were self-sufficient and adaptable. Their minimalist approach to campaigning created a stream-lined military force with great strategic and operational mobility. The Mongols' sustainment system capabilities rested on four pillars:

1. Expeditionary capabilities inherent in a nomadic lifestyle;
2. Mobility afforded by self-sustaining units and the horse;
3. Riverine and maritime transport capabilities derived from China and Korea;
4. Basing schemes that extended the operational reach of Mongol forces.

The Mongol sustainment system allowed them to project, maintain, and sustain combat power throughout the empire to achieve policy objectives. The Mongols possessed expertise in transportation because of their extensive use of the horse and the inherent requirement for nomadic societies to remain on the move throughout the year based off of climatic and seasonal patterns. This proficiency in displacement allowed them to sustain an average sustained rate of march of 15 miles per day for military movements.<sup>73</sup> While they had the capability of achieving higher rates of movement, up to 60 miles in a day if the situation demanded, limitations in rate were imposed by the need for constant for grazing in suitable pastureland since they did not transport feed or fodder with them.<sup>74</sup> By training their horses to graze at night rather than on the move, they retained the ability to operate on a regimented daily battle rhythm that began in the early morning hours and ended at nightfall. A predictable cycle also governed their annual operations.

---

<sup>73</sup> May, 55.

<sup>74</sup> DiMarco, 139.

The Mongols operated on a campaign cycle that synchronized their military operations with seasons, utilizing the warm months to prepare for campaigns and colder months to travel.<sup>75</sup> Although the Mongols fought during the spring, they preferred to use autumn as their fighting season, which allowed them to take advantage of harvest seasons abroad to support the higher caloric requirements of combat operations and inflict higher costs on the economies of their adversaries.<sup>76</sup> Their annual cycle further reduced supply and transportation requirements by moving during months of reduced water consumption rates. Winter movements also provided the added benefit of simplifying wet gap crossings, allowing armies to cross frozen bodies of water rather than having to bridge or ferry massive armies across water features, an endeavor that remains among the most complex and challenging operations even on a modern battlefield.<sup>77</sup>

Animals were vital to the sustainment system for Mongol campaigns. One example of this reliance on animals for sustainment and transportation was evidenced by Chinggis's crossing of the Kizil Jum Desert during the war against the Khwarazm Empire—a movement that was impossible without the self-sustainment capabilities provided by their horses.<sup>78</sup> While the horses were the greatest source of Mongol transportation capacity, they also provided vital sustenance in climates where food and water were scarce. The *Secret History* illustrates the use of animals to sustain the force

---

<sup>75</sup> May, 55.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> DiMarco, 141.

<sup>78</sup> Benfield, 21.

when it describes Ong Khan on campaign, feeding “himself on the way by milking five goats, muzzling their kids, and by bleeding his camel.”<sup>79</sup> While the Mongols used geldings as warhorses, they also campaigned with large numbers of mares to provide milk, cheese, blood, and occasionally meat to the campaigning armies in times of adversity.<sup>80</sup> According to May: “a horse could provide 14 pints of blood with approximately 156kcal/pint, or approximately 2,184kcal, two-thirds of the projected 3,000 kcal ration. So the five to eight mounts that a Mongol soldier took with him on campaign could provide him with several days of rations.”<sup>81</sup> The Mongols had an immense demand for horses to meet the needs of its cavalry formations. For example, a Mongol *tumen* campaigned with herds of up to 50,000 war horses to provide up to five re-mounts per cavalryman.<sup>82</sup>

The sustainment of such large herds required careful management and administration as well as dedicated horse herders to perform these functions. The horses also required much attention to maintain their obedience and training. Marco Polo confirms the quality of their training in his assessment that “their horses are so well trained that they can turn as quickly as a dog.”<sup>83</sup> The *Yuan Shi* and *The Secret History* even reference regulations created to govern the management of this vital, strategic

---

<sup>79</sup> Rachewiltz, 74.

<sup>80</sup> May, 61.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>83</sup> DiMarco, 126.

resource. These management practices influenced campaign planning as evidenced by guidance provided from Chinggis to his trusted General Subutai: “and again, I send you to cross high mountain passes and to ford wide rivers; mindful of the distance you have to cover, you must spare the army mounts before they become too lean and you must save your provisions before they come to an end.”<sup>84</sup> These management policies and structures maintained the strategic and operational reach of the Mongol Empire. They also ensured that Mongol formations retained the tactical mobility to fight and maneuver upon arrival on the battlefield.

The self-sufficiency of the Mongol sustainment system stands in stark contrast to other historical examples of the world’s great conquerors, whose logistics systems broke-down in catastrophe. The military systems of Alexander the Great and Napoleon Bonaparte were known for meticulous logistics planning but lacked the resourcefulness and adaptability of the Mongol military apparatus. Both of these great commanders faced abject failure when presented with insurmountable logistics challenges on campaign. One needs to look no further than Alexander’s logistical floundering in the deserts of the Kolwa Depression (modern day southern Pakistan) and Napoleon’s appalling losses in Russia in 1812.<sup>85</sup> Likewise, Adolf Hitler, whose logistics and intelligence preparations consistently took a backseat to operational planning, met with one of the most catastrophic logistical failures in human history during the fight against the Russians on the Eastern Front during World War Two. The Mongols, on the other hand, constrained

---

<sup>84</sup> Rachewiltz, 127.

<sup>85</sup> Julian Thompson, *The Lifeblood of War: Logistics in Armed Conflict* (London: Brassey’s, 1991), 16-27.



their operations—even those in modern day Russia—to what they understood as feasible and suitable to the Mongol way of war. The ability to thrive in the operating environments of their choosing played a large part in allowing them to build a massive empire. Yet, while they demonstrated mastery of operations ashore, they were not without their own challenges in terms of power projection.

The Mongols, by virtue of their rise on the land-locked Asian steppe, focused on developing requirements to meet their proximal needs. Even under Chinggis Khan, the Mongols demonstrated aptitude in planning and gap crossings, evidenced by the 48 bridges constructed to support river crossings during their campaigns against the Khwarazm Empire.<sup>86</sup> These wet gap crossing capabilities expanded to include riverine capabilities during the war against the Southern Song Dynasty in China.

These experiences, however, did little to prepare the Mongols for the challenges of operating the maritime domain. The Mongols relied on technologies and exports from their conquered civilizations to acquire the capability to conduct naval operations. These capabilities supported their often-overlooked incursions into Japan, Vietnam, and Java.<sup>87</sup> In fact, riverine and maritime power became a key element of the Mongol way of war under the Yuan Dynasty, playing a decisive role in the unification of China.

---

<sup>86</sup> Benfield, 20.

<sup>87</sup> Amphibious operation: a military operation launched from the sea by an amphibious force to conduct landing force operations within the littorals. Department of Defense, Joint Publication (JP) 3-02, *Amphibious Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2009), GL-7.

The Song Dynasty was renowned its nautical technology, seamanship, and great wealth generated in part from maritime trade with other nations such as Japan.<sup>88</sup> The Mongols understood that these capabilities provided the Song with a material and economic advantage during their protracted wars with the Mongols that stretched from 1254 to 1279.<sup>89</sup> By the time of his ascent to *khan* in 1260, Kubilai Khan recognized that the unification of China and the conquest of Japan remained beyond the reach of the empire without the incorporation of naval capabilities into the Mongol way of war. To achieve this end, the Mongols relied on Korean technology, as well as defectors from the Song Dynasty such as Lie Cheng, who convinced Kubilai that a shipbuilding program was necessary to extend his imperial conquests.<sup>90</sup>

The seafaring traditions of the cultural centers along the Yangtze provided generations of naval and riverine innovation in China. The most significant naval innovations included ships with transverse bulkheads, axial rudders, and battened sails that complemented China's wayfaring technologies, to include charts and the magnetic compass developed during the thirteenth and fourteenth century.<sup>91</sup> Taken together, many of these capabilities were incorporated into the Mongol way of war through

---

<sup>88</sup> Andrew R. Wilson, "The Maritime Transformation of Ming China," in *China Goes to Sea: Maritime Transformation in Comparative Historical Perspective*, ed. Andrew S. Erickson, Lyle J. Goldstein, and Carnes Lord (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009), 242.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Morris Rossabi, *Kubilai Khan: His Life and Times* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 82.

<sup>91</sup> Wilson, 242.

commandeered vessels and Kubilai's ship-building program. These additions provided the Mongol Empire with its first navy of four "wings" of sea-worthy vessels to enable operational and strategic mobility afloat.<sup>92</sup> A ship of the Mongol navy, which reflected both Korean and Chinese influence, had the capacity to transport 40 soldiers and a crew with full provisions and stores of materiel to sustain the force afloat.<sup>93</sup> Sasaki suggests that there were three primary vessel types built to support the expeditions to Japan, to include: "v-shaped cargo ships for transporting provisions, constructed in China's Fukien Province; miscellaneous flat and round bottomed vessels made along the Yangtze River; and flat-bottomed landing craft from Korea."<sup>94</sup>

Expeditionary basing concepts provided the final pillar of the Mongol sustainment system. These basing concepts enabled the Mongols to conduct expeditionary operations. On the operational level, historians note the use of intermediate staging bases following long treks during their campaigns against the Khwarazm Empire and the Chin Dynasty to ensure that their units had the opportunity to rest and re-fit prior to commencing battle.<sup>95</sup> Forward support bases, known as *ordus*, provided the localities from which to project power, reset forces, and sustain operations abroad.<sup>96</sup> These advance bases were organized

---

<sup>92</sup> Rossabi, 84.

<sup>93</sup> G. A. Ballard, *The Influence of the Sea on the Political History of Japan* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1921), 24.

<sup>94</sup> Sasaki, iii.

<sup>95</sup> Chris Peers and Michael Perry, *Imperial Chinese Armies (2): 590-1260* (London: Osprey, 1996), 44.

<sup>96</sup> Intermediate staging bases—tailorable, temporary locations used for staging forces, sustainment and/or extraction into and out of an operational area. Department of

and managed by designated quartermasters known as *jurtchis*, and they played an important role in enabling the sustainment of forces on the steppe, particularly during final preparations for battle and during operational pauses. Although soldiers furnished their own weapons and equipment to reduce the supply overhead and transportation requirements necessary to manage the advanced bases, the *ordus* provided a critical element in managing the immense logistic requirements to sustain Mongol formations. For example, a *tumen* of 10,000 soldiers included 40,000 non-combatants and auxiliaries as well as 600,000 animals that required no less than eight square miles of pasture land per day for grazing.<sup>97</sup> Strategic level advance bases were also required on both ends of the empire to support imperial expansion.

Mongol forces utilized the cities of Buda and Gran along the Danube River to support operations in Eastern Europe.<sup>98</sup> Likewise, the dynasty used Korea as a critical support base for operations in the east. The Korean Peninsula offered the Mongols with an outstanding advanced base that strengthened their ability to project power beyond the shores of Asia. The Mongol conquest of Korea consisted of a total of six invasions, spanning from Chinggis' reign until its final conquest by his grandson Mongke Khan in 1259, indicating the value the Mongols recognized in the peninsular nation's vast

---

Defense, Joint Publication (JP) 3-35, *Deployment and Redeploy Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2018), GL-7.

<sup>97</sup> DiMarco, 137.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 148.

resources—economic, material, and human capital alike.<sup>99</sup> Korea also provided naval technology and a key intermediate staging base to support the empire’s designs on the conquest of Japan and its vast reserves of gold.<sup>100</sup> During the final years of preparations for the expeditions, Kubilai commissioned large swaths of land in Korea to produce and amass the great stores of provisions required to support the deployment of the expeditionary forces to Japan.<sup>101</sup>

The geostrategic context and resource limitations of the expeditions to Japan led to a substantial divestiture of the sustainment capabilities that played a critical role in sustaining Mongol campaigns abroad. In the absence of advance bases to support operations in the vicinity of Japan, the expeditionary forces were forced to transport all of their sustainment requirements to the theater to support initial operations ashore. The lack of organic transportation capabilities, to include Mongol cavalry and the large herds of accompanying animals, limited the strategic and operational reach of the expeditions. Additionally, the dearth of auxiliary troops, as evidenced in the *Invasion Scrolls*, deployed to support and sustain the landing force highlight the inherent differences between traditional Mongol military formations and the impressed forces dispatched to Japan. Kubilai accepted significant risk in deploying formations comprised almost exclusively of foot soldiers rather than robust expeditionary forces replete with adequate sustainment capabilities.

---

<sup>99</sup> Conlan, 257.

<sup>100</sup> Brook, 219.

<sup>101</sup> Conlan, 258.

## Movement and Maneuver

Movement and maneuver served as the key to the Mongol way of war.<sup>102</sup> Their expert employment of cavalry formations, and their accompanying sustainment capabilities, provided the Mongols with an operational and strategic power projection capability that enabled them to operate in austere environments. Similarly, their extensive use of cavalry formations, the cornerstone of the Mongol way of war, allowed them to maneuver forces into positions of advantage in a manner that enabled them to capitalize on speed, shock, and concentration against enemy military formations. This served as a key enabler to Mongol imperial conquest. The Mongol movement and maneuver capabilities rested on three pillars:

1. Experience through a “life of arms” as opposed to a “profession of arms”;
2. Heavy reliance on cavalry;
3. Use of a corps system to enable tactical and operational maneuver.

The Mongol way of war conformed to the primacy of the offense and continuous pursuit of decisive results in battle, reducing the costs associated with operations in austere environments. Their employment of feints, demonstrations, raids, and attacks required discipline combined with expertise in the movement and maneuver of forces. It also required professional soldiers raised in a life of arms. Imperial expansion on the

---

<sup>102</sup> According to Joint Publication 3-0, the function of Movement and Maneuver encompasses the disposition of joint forces to conduct operations by securing positional advantaged before or during combat operations and by exploiting tactical success to achieve operational and strategic objectives. Maneuver is the employment of forces in the operational area through movement in combination with fires to achieve a position of advantage in respect to the enemy. Department of Defense, JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, III-37.

level of the Mongols demanded continuous campaigning for years on end. The inherent austerity of the nomadic culture built proficiency and experience through the seasonal movements of camps and tribal hunts that were considered preparations for war.<sup>103</sup> Further, the Mongols, like other steppe civilizations, were exposed to horses early in life and began training in horse archery by the age of five.<sup>104</sup> This demonstrates the cultural underpinnings of a truly militarized society with warfare and survival deeply entrenched in the being of every member. While agrarian societies taught their youth to toil in the fields as farmhands, Mongols trained their children in the ways of the horse and the instruments of war as a matter of imperial survival. These cultural factors converged to give the Mongol Empire its most distinct advantage on the battlefield—efficient, lethal cavalry formations.

The Mongol way of war relied on cavalry formations to achieve decisive results on the battlefield. Variations in armament between heavy, medium, and light cavalry units enabled the Mongols to perform complex maneuvers in battle to achieve surprise and massed shock effects. The employment of cavalry forces as screens, guards, and skirmishers allowed Mongol commanders to maintain heightened situational awareness during movements and in battle.<sup>105</sup> The use of cavalry also provided great flexibility to the Mongol military forces in the selection of appropriate types of attacks (feints, demonstrations, and counterattacks) or forms of maneuver (turning movements, flanking

---

<sup>103</sup> Hsiao, 7.

<sup>104</sup> May, 42.

<sup>105</sup> DiMarco, 140.

attacks, and penetrations) to support the ultimate goal of encircling and destroying the enemy. While the horse-borne archers that performed as light cavalry provided significant firepower, Mongol commanders preferred to utilize their heavy cavalry, which typically formed up to 40 percent of their formations, to deliver the final, decisive blow to the enemy, with lancers atop armored war horses equipped for close combat.<sup>106</sup> Aside from the ability to execute complex maneuvers in battle, the Mongols were experts in moving their forces across the great expanses of the empire.

The Mongols deployed their *tumen* in a similar fashion to a corps system while campaigning. This practice allowed the Mongols to retain operational mobility through operational dispersion. This method of movement, which Napoleon Bonaparte reproduced centuries later with his corps system, provided a unique style of force deployment that allowed Mongol formations to distribute forces along separate lines of communication. The Mongols thereby reduced the sustainment burden on the force as a whole by spreading the requirements across each column. Forces moving along separate axes of advance concluded with the final concentration of forces at the time of battle. This technique allowed the Mongols to function in a similar fashion to Count Helmuth von Moltke's use of rail lines during the Franco-Prussian War, which concentrated his forces at the right time and place without the need for complex sustainment plans required to support large, static forces afield. This practice provided the Mongols with unprecedented operational and strategic mobility in Europe and Asia. It also allowed them to traverse austere terrain, such as mountain passes and deserts, far away from

---

<sup>106</sup> DiMarco, 140.



traditional trade routes and mobility corridors, in order to achieve operational surprise.<sup>107</sup>

The Mongol Campaign against the Khwarazm Empire in 1219 provides an excellent example of the application of such operational maneuver.

During the course of that campaign, Chinggis Khan split his army of 200,000 soldiers into four corps. He assigned each corps a different axis of advance, despite facing a force four times its size.<sup>108</sup> While three of his corps progressed along predictable routes, Chinggis and his General Subedei led their corps 430 miles through the Kizil Jum Desert in order to close on the city of Bukara in time to concentrate their forces and achieve a decisive victory.<sup>109</sup> This campaign also demonstrated significant mobility operations through the employment of auxiliary troops, and engineers that built as many as 48 bridges along the main axis of advance.<sup>110</sup> These engineers provided siege warfare capabilities acquired during the wars against the Chinese dynasties on the eastern front.<sup>111</sup> Mongol armies continued to leverage the operational maneuver afforded by this corps system well beyond the conquest of the Khwarazm Empire; however, the expeditions against Japan lacked any sense of movement and maneuver either afloat or ashore.

---

<sup>107</sup> Benfield, 34.

<sup>108</sup> Marshall, 52.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>110</sup> Benfield, 20.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

In the absence of large concentrations of light and heavy Mongol cavalry formations, the expeditionary forces were deprived of the cornerstone of Mongol military power. Instead, the Mongols surrendered a key advantage to Japanese *samurai* horse-archers who retained the ability to maneuver and engage the formations of state-farm soldiers from well beyond the range of the pike. Additionally, in the absence of their traditional capacity for mobility, the Mongol expeditionary forces lacked the ability to disperse and maneuver to positions of advantage to defeat the Japanese on the tactical and operational level.

### Fires

The Mongols acquired many of their means to provide massed shock effects from conquered civilizations.<sup>112</sup> These weapons complimented the shock effect of the various echelons of Mongol Cavalry while also providing key capabilities needed to support Mongol campaigns.<sup>113</sup> The Mongols' fires capabilities rested on three pillars:

1. The compound bow;
2. Borrowed technologies for siege warfare;
3. Borrowed technologies for riverine and naval warfare.

The compound bow was a fundamental element of the Mongol way of war. When combined with the maneuverability of the horse, the weapon system provided an

---

<sup>112</sup> Stephen Turnbull, *The Mongol Invasions of Japan: 1274 and 1281* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2013), 27.

<sup>113</sup> According to Joint Publication 3-0, the function of Fires includes the use of available weapons and other systems to create a specific effect on a target. Department of Defense, JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, III-30.

asymmetric advantage over enemies, delivering decisive firepower in a manner that remained unrivaled until the advent of the musket.<sup>114</sup> Like many of the weapons employed by the Mongols, the compound bow evolved through centuries of employment by nomads on the steppe. Its combination of wood, horn, and leather bound by adhesives complete with a bowstring of horse hair, gave the short bow a draw strength in excess of 100 pounds.<sup>115</sup> The Mongols generated desired effects from their composite bows by using an array of arrowheads (fashioned from bone, iron, or stone) that ranged from armor-piercing to signaling arrows fastened atop two foot arrows.<sup>116</sup> This weapon system provided the stand-off range to allow Mongol Cavalry to establish a base of fire to set conditions for the commitment of their heavy cavalry lancers. As Friar John of Plano Carpini described, “only when the men and horses were worn down by arrows, do they come to close quarters [battle].”<sup>117</sup> Liddell-Hart argues that the Mongols were among the first to use large cavalry formations to demonstrate precision in the use of fires “to pave the way for the assault.”<sup>118</sup> These arrow storms ranged enemy formations out to 300

---

<sup>114</sup> Parker, 2.

<sup>115</sup> May, 50-51.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>117</sup> DiMarco, 140. Friar John of Plan Carpini was sent as an emissary from Pope Innocent IV to the Mongols in 1245. He wrote about his experience with the Mongols, providing critical insights from the Western European viewpoint.

<sup>118</sup> Ryon F. Adams, “Outfought and Outthought: Reassessing the Mongol Invasions of Japan” (Master’s Thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2009), 34.

meters, providing the Mongols with unprecedented stand-off distance and mass, even against enemy forces armed with inferior bows and crossbows.<sup>119</sup>

The Mongols also used siege engines to deliver fires against enemy fortifications. They made extensive use of siege equipment in China and in other campaigns, such as the siege of Nishapur in 1221, where a corps of engineers assembled an array of siege equipment to overcome an enemy employing as many as 300 *ballistae*.<sup>120</sup> The technology for these armaments came from conquered civilizations in the east and west alike. China for example, similar to their innovations in naval technology, achieved much sophistication in their development of their artillery capabilities, to include the use of gun powder and the composition of field manuals that detailed the construction of weapons and projectiles.<sup>121</sup> These capabilities achieved suppressive and destructive effects by using “rocks, burning tar, grenades, and firebombs” as projectiles.<sup>122</sup>

The Mongols used the *huo-p’ao*, a variant of the catapult, as early as 1233 against the Jurchens to set fires within the city of Ts’ai.<sup>123</sup> Similarly, the siege of Fan-cheng in Southern China, required the use of catapults, counter-weight trebuchets, and incendiary projectiles to break down protective walls with missiles that “shook heaven and earth”

---

<sup>119</sup> May, 72.

<sup>120</sup> May, 72.

<sup>121</sup> Peers and Perry, 41.

<sup>122</sup> Marshall, 96.

<sup>123</sup> Carrington Goodrich and Feng Chia-Sheng, *The Early Development of Firearms in China*, ed. Peter A. Lorge (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), 211-219.

and created much destruction within the city.<sup>124</sup> These artillery capabilities also included incendiary munitions composed of naphtha, Greek Fire, or melted-down human fat that burned in a manner that was “almost inextinguishable” according to Carpini.<sup>125</sup> The expeditionary forces even made use of artillery in Japan, achieving notable effects on the *samurai* defending Hakata.<sup>126</sup>

The use of these engines required special arrangements and planning. The Mongols did not deploy with massive trains of equipment. Instead, the Mongols preferred to use their engineer corps—typically composed of Chinese and Persian engineers—to supervise prisoners and slaves in assembling them on site with material gathered in vicinity of the objective.<sup>127</sup> This reduced the burden of the quartermasters in organizing the *ordus* while enhancing the mobility of their formations through the reduction of transportation requirements. The Mongols often used these engines in conjunction with blockades, counter fortresses, and flooding operations to weaken defenses or set conditions for effective breaching operations against enemy fortifications.<sup>128</sup>

For all of the value provided by the compound bow and the siege engines, the continued expansion of the empire beyond the steppe required weaponry capable of operating in riverine and maritime environments. The campaigns against China presented

---

<sup>124</sup> Rossabi, 82-86.

<sup>125</sup> May, 79.

<sup>126</sup> Goodrich and Chia-Sheng, 211-219.

<sup>127</sup> May, 78.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

the Mongols with challenges that they had not faced during the conquest of the steppe or Eastern Europe, to include warfare in riverine and maritime environments. The geography of Southern China, which included a number of formidable rivers, contributed to the Song Dynasty's reputation as an economic and maritime powerhouse. This fact required the Mongols to incorporate maritime and riverine capabilities into their arsenal to deliver troops and firepower afloat.<sup>129</sup> According to Andrew Wilson, the Song vessels, and by extension the Mongol navy, were equipped with a number of capabilities that made them suited for riverine and naval warfare, to include "a variety of grappling and holding implements, fire weapons, rams, cross-bows, defensive armor plating."<sup>130</sup> Larger vessels included mounted trebuchets capable of delivering solid and incendiary projectiles against troops, fortifications, and enemy watercraft.<sup>131</sup> The surface combatants were also outfitted with small, tender boats capable of delivering a landing force ashore. These vessels were instrumental in breaking the five-year siege and blockade of Hsiangyang in 1270, where the Mongols used up to 5,000 vessels in a number of large naval engagements against Southern Song Dynasty ships in the Yangtze River.<sup>132</sup>

As with many of the other elements of the Mongol way of war, the fires capabilities embarked for the expeditions to Japan were limited due to the transportation constraints imposed by the need to project power across the Korea Strait. While the

---

<sup>129</sup> Brook, 34.

<sup>130</sup> Wilson, 242.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Rossabi, 84.

Mongols did embark siege equipment capable of delivering incendiary projectiles against the Japanese defenders, these assets were not deployed in concentrations commensurate with traditional Mongol formations. The Mongols also had a limited ability to mass effects from their horse archers given the low concentration of cavalry available to support each of the expeditions. In essence, the advantage of range and shock effects, traditionally delivered by a wide array of fires assets, was traded for the reach of the pike wielded by foot-mobile troops.

### Information

Information played a central role in Mongol national and military strategy alike. Information bolstered their diplomatic efforts and embellished the fear that they used to underwrite the credibility of Mongol power.<sup>133</sup> As such, information played as much a role in shaping external behaviors as it did in the collection, processing, and dissemination of information required to support the Mongol military apparatus. The Mongols' use of information focused on supporting the following efforts:

1. Economy of force diplomacy;
2. Subversion;
3. Perpetuation of fear.

---

<sup>133</sup> According to Joint Publication 3-0, the Function of Information encompasses the management and application of information and its deliberate integration with other joint functions to change or maintain perceptions, attitudes, and other elements that drive desired behaviors and to support human decision making. Department of Defense JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, III-17.

Along with the horde myths, many believe that Mongols were blood-thirsty barbarians who resorted to violence under all conditions. In reality, as with many eastern cultures, the Mongols demonstrated mastery and sophistication in the conduct of information operations and warfare. They often employed diplomacy as an economy of force with adept coupling between diplomatic and military efforts.<sup>134</sup> According to Allsen, “the Mongols often brought about their [foreign states] capitulation without the expenditure of military force.”<sup>135</sup> This approach to information warfare complemented the Mongol way of war from an economic and ecological standpoint. First, the magnitude of the Mongols’ accomplishments in war results in a common underappreciation of the logistical coordination needed to sustain forces afield in an expeditionary environment.<sup>136</sup> Second, in the decades leading up to the establishment of the Yuan Dynasty, the Mongols lacked the intellectual and human capital to exert effective governance over conquered civilizations. These two conditions made the submission of states without the employment of force an ideal outcome. The conquest and destruction of civilizations caused unavoidable disruptions to the social fabric and political order that inhibited the extraction of wealth. Leaving a state and its governing structures in tact increased stability within the empire while guaranteeing a steady stream of resources.

---

<sup>134</sup> Economy of force: The judicious employment and distribution of forces so as to expend the minimum essential combat power on secondary efforts to allocate possible combat power on primary efforts. Department of Defense, JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, GL-8.

<sup>135</sup> Allsen, 64.

<sup>136</sup> Hsiao, 59.



The Mongols frequently dispatched emissaries with correspondence that outlined the conditions and terms of submission prior to the use of military force. This practice offered rulers with an option of “physical and institutional survival in return for acknowledging the suzerainty of the *khan*.”<sup>137</sup> Güyük, for example, dispatched the following message in a letter to Pope Innocent IV, via Carpini, in 1246: “Thou in person at the head of the kings, you must all together at once come to do homage to us. We shall then recognize your submission. And if you do not accept God’s command and act contrary to our command, we shall regard you as enemies.”<sup>138</sup> States that failed to submit to the demands of the empire became the targets of the Mongols’ informationalized escalation of force ahead of the dispatch of military forces. The Mongols employed various subversion techniques, ranging from hostage taking to the installment of puppet leaders abroad to sow discontent and seize power in foreign states.<sup>139</sup> They also leveraged *darughachis*, political commissars, within subject states to strain alliances and achieve political and economic isolation of states that refused to submit or failed to pay tribute to the empire.<sup>140</sup> The Mongols used these instruments to good effect against Baghdad in 1258.<sup>141</sup> If all else failed, the Mongols resorted to threats and demonstrations of ahead of military action.

---

<sup>137</sup> Allsen, 64.

<sup>138</sup> Chase, 17.

<sup>139</sup> Allsen, 74.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>141</sup> May, 130-134.

History abounds with instances of Mongol destruction, leaving shattered cities and civilizations in their wake. These behavioral patterns underwrote their credibility in matters of diplomacy and military affairs on each end of the empire.<sup>142</sup> Sentiments in Europe spurred the construction of caches and alliances ready to confront the imperial expansion of the Mongols who “ate serpents” and were considered “inhuman.”<sup>143</sup> The Japanese also recorded the atrocities they witnessed, to include the burning of settlements, the use of *samurai* as human shields, and the kidnapping of the women on Iki Island who were bound together in groups with rope strung through holes punctured through their hands.<sup>144</sup> These accounts reflected the effect of fear spread through information warfare, but also contained a fair amount of embellishment.

Aside from violence and atrocities, the Mongols also used their annual campaign cycle to achieve desired effects against adversaries. Through the deliberate conduct of autumn fighting seasons, the Mongols retained the capacity to target the economic and agricultural viability of societies amidst the harvest season. These efforts provided the Mongols with the ability to burn entire harvests in situations that demanded it. Fall campaigning also allowed the Mongols to induce famine by forcing target civilizations to mobilize their farmers to contribute to fight, leaving their unharvested crops to rot in the

---

<sup>142</sup> Marshall, 56.

<sup>143</sup> Marshall, 132-136.

<sup>144</sup> Turnbull, 37.

fields.<sup>145</sup> In doing so, the Mongol way of war demonstrated another method of undermining governance and stability abroad in the pursuit of policy aims.

The use of information to bolster diplomacy and military operations during the expeditions to Japan was extremely limited due to the insular nation of the Japanese archipelago. This prevented the easy access and deployment of spies, scouts, and agitators to gather information and spread discontent in Japan. Instead, the Japanese proved to be far superior in their use of information prior to and during the war, leveraging the perceived threat of a Mongol invasion to catalyze their wartime preparations.

### Intelligence

The Mongols built an extensive apparatus for the collection, processing, and dissemination of intelligence.<sup>146</sup> This provided them with the situational awareness required to understand the operational environment and their enemies. This was particularly important during the conduct of campaigning on the Asian steppe where axes of advance required viable pastureland. Intelligence also allowed Mongol formations to maintain strategic and operational surprise while maneuvering against numerically superior adversaries. The Mongol way of war rested on four pillars of intelligence:

1. Mobile security and reconnaissance operations;

---

<sup>145</sup> May, 55.

<sup>146</sup> According to Joint Publication 3-0, the function of Intelligence supports understanding with analysis of the operational environment to inform commanders about adversary capabilities, centers of gravity, vulnerabilities, and future courses of action, and to help commanders and staffs understand and map friendly, neutral, and threat networks. Department of Defense, JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, III-27.

2. Advanced force operations and long-range collections;
3. Spies;
4. Borrowed technologies for riverine and naval warfare.

The Mongols' ability to employ its military power with effectiveness and efficiency depended on maintaining an understanding of the world around them. They leveraged their unparalleled ground mobility to maintain an accurate picture of their operating environment as well as the capabilities, disposition, and strength of enemy forces. On the tactical and operational level, the Mongols made extensive use of mounted scouts.<sup>147</sup> According to May, scouts operated on the flanks and up to 50 km in advance of each column to maintain the situational awareness of forces on the move.”<sup>148</sup> These scouts, known as *algincin*, provided a day or two of advance notice to Mongol formations on the move regarding the enemy, prospective routes, and suitability of pastureland.<sup>149</sup> The Mongols also employed mounted cavalry sections as screens to provide advance warning of threats and to conduct limited engagements, thereby keeping the movements of Mongol forces masked from enemy observation and attack.<sup>150</sup> The Mongols employed

---

<sup>147</sup> Marshall, 93.

<sup>148</sup> May, 70, 139.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>150</sup> Screen. A security task that primarily provides early warning to the protected force. A covering force differs from a screen force by instead protecting the main body by fighting to gain time while also observing and reporting information and prevent enemy ground observation of the main body. A covering force is capable of operating independent of the main body. A guard force, on the other hand, performs the same functions as a covering force, but is incapable of operating independent of the main body. The Department of the Army, FM 3-0, *Operations*, Glossary 8 - 15.

flank and advance guard elements that enabled Mongol formations to conduct large-scale movements to contact while enabling their ability to decide between withdrawing or transitioning into the attack.<sup>151</sup> According to Marshall, for Mongol formations, “an encounter with the enemy was rarely a surprise.”<sup>152</sup> Taken together, this intelligence collection and distribution apparatus allowed the Mongols avoid meeting engagements, preserving combat power to fight at times and places of their own choosing.<sup>153</sup>

The Mongols also utilized long-range collections efforts in the way of advanced force operations to perform a number of key functions in preparation for military operations and force deployment. These operations included the conduct of limited-objective raids, route reconnaissance, and reconnaissance-in-force.<sup>154</sup> In combination, these advance force operations provided invaluable information regarding enemy force dispositions and suitability of routes, both from a sustainment and a mobility perspective.<sup>155</sup> Additionally, the selection of movement corridors that minimized gap

---

<sup>151</sup> DiMarco, 140.

<sup>152</sup> Marshall, 93.

<sup>153</sup> Meeting Engagement. A combat action that occurs when a moving force, incompletely deployed for battle, engages an enemy at an unexpected time and place. Department of the Army, FM 3-0, *Operations*, Glossary 12.

<sup>154</sup> Reconnaissance-in-force. A mission undertaken to obtain, by visual observation or other detection methods, information about the activities and resources of an enemy or adversary, or to secure data concerning the meteorological, hydrographic, or geographic characteristics of a particular area. The US Army also refers to it as a deliberate combat operation designed to discover to test the enemy’s strength, dispositions, and reactions or to obtain other information. The Department of the Army, FM 3-0, *Operations*, Glossary 15.

<sup>155</sup> May, 71.

crossing requirements and provided sufficient advance base potential enhanced their ability to project power in a responsive and flexible manner.

The growth of the empire required an expansive strategic intelligence collection apparatus. Mongol history abounds with instances wherein the Mongols employed ambassadors on diplomatic missions beyond the borders of the empire—from Persia to China to Japan—to receive tribute in the name of the *khan* or to present conditions that yielded peace instead of war.<sup>156</sup> The use of political commissars installed in foreign civilizations provided another *way* of bolstering these strategic collection efforts. The Mongols also made extensive use of spies, defectors, and envoys to good effect in providing critical information in support of diplomacy as well as military operations.

Spies allowed the Mongol Empire to attain detailed knowledge regarding adversaries while simultaneously providing a way to subvert foreign governance and stability. Spies were employed against the Khwarazm Empire, to gather information from the populace to shape their route selection and the campaign planning necessary to achieve strategic and operational surprise.<sup>157</sup> Likewise, Kubilai used spies such as Lie Cheng, a Song defector, to provide the Mongols with the technology needed to build his navy. Lie Cheng also served as a key member of Kubilai Khan's staff in planning the final conquest of the Song Dynasty, revealing Song strengths and weaknesses for subsequent exploitation.<sup>158</sup>

---

<sup>156</sup> Chase, 13.

<sup>157</sup> Benfield, 26.

<sup>158</sup> Rossabi, 83.

Given the Mongols' heavy reliance on intelligence collections to provide situational awareness and decision-making space, the expeditions to Japan were curious in their apparent dearth of deliberate intelligence preparation of the battlespace. The decision to embark upon military operations in the absence of a clear intelligence picture was a significant deviation from the Mongol way of war, contributing to the imprudence of deploying impressed foot-soldiers against well-trained *Samurai* cavalry in predictable locations. To make matters worse, the intelligence gathered during the first expedition appears to have had spurred little learning and adjustment on the part of the Yuan Dynasty. The Mongols, either as a result of their inability to update the intelligence picture or through obstinate hubris, generally landed in the same locations in 1281 without the benefit of understanding the significant preparations carried out by the Japanese during the Interwar Period. In contrast to their traditional military operations on the Eurasian continent, the expeditionary forces that deployed to Japan went in blind—both times.

### Protection

Protection formed an essential element of the Mongol way of war by preserving the leadership and warfighting potential of Mongol military power.<sup>159</sup> While the Mongols were excellent fighters, the protection of their leaders, military formations, and their vital sustainment capabilities was needed to support their long campaigns in the austere environment of the Central Asian steppe. The expansion of the empire, however, required

---

<sup>159</sup> According to Joint Publication 3-0, the Protection function focuses on force protection, which preserves the joint force's fighting potential. Department of Defense, JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, III-39.

the Mongols to commit increasing amounts of its warfighting potential to the maintenance of stability and the protection its territorial integrity. While protection was a fundamental element of the Mongol way of war, it also played ever-increasing role in undermining their warfighting potential by requiring the greater capital investments commensurate with the expansion of the empire. The Mongols' protection capabilities rested on three pillars:

1. Effective guard operations;
2. Protection of the *khan*;
3. Maintenance of the empire.

The Mongols made extensive use of cavalry detachments to perform the aforementioned security tasks as guards, screens, and covering forces.<sup>160</sup> While these elements contributed to the Mongols' intelligence collection efforts, they also protected the main force from surprise. They similarly informed the appropriate employment of the main force. According to Marshall:

When the enemy had been engaged, either on the flank or in front, the outer detachments quickly became the vanguard and were soon reinforced from the rear. Once the enemy's position and disposition had been discovered, the three treat ranks of light cavalry would move up through the ranks of heavy cavalry and gallop up to the line. Rarely would any of these detachments engage the enemy in close combat. Instead, they would detach small squadrons of some ten or twenty riders to gallop across the enemy's line, pouring in a deadly shower of arrows.<sup>161</sup>

---

<sup>160</sup> Marshall, 93.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.



The defense of the *khan* served as another key function of protection within the Mongol way of war since they often accompanied their armies on campaign to maintain overall command.

During his reign, Chinggis established an imperial guard—the *keshi*—of more than 10,000 soldiers and auxiliaries, known as the *kesigden*.<sup>162</sup> This elite Mongol paramilitary organization performed important functions, to include providing dozens of “day” and “night” guards that served as personal bodyguards to protect the *khan*.<sup>163</sup> The *keshig* also included up to 1,000, *ba’atud*, or braves, that accompanied him into battle as an advance guard of elite troops for the *khan*.<sup>164</sup> This unit held great power within the Mongol military system; Hsiao writes, “the *kesig* constituted the nucleus of the whole Mongolian army . . . the Grand Central Army.”<sup>165</sup> Most members of this elite unit were provided by trusted aristocratic families as collateral in exchange for appointments to positions of power and influence. The *kesig* also played a central role in governing the early empire, although many of these functions were siphoned off to other bureaucratic organizations created by the Yuan Dynasty to manage governance in China.<sup>166</sup> Kubilai also used the *keshig* as a symbol of Mongol dominance and a counterbalance to the

---

<sup>162</sup> Hsiao, 36.

<sup>163</sup> Marshall, 34.

<sup>164</sup> Hsiao, 36.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

foreign leaders needed to pacify the Chinese populace and facilitate the dynasty's transition to sedentary governance.<sup>167</sup>

The need to achieve stability and protect the borders of the empire continued to grow in importance as the empire expanded, particularly in China, as a matter of geostrategy and the need to safeguard the resources controlled by the dynasty. By the time of Kubilai's reign, the conquest of the Song forced him to confront complex security problems that the Mongols were ill-prepared to solve. According to Endicott-White:

The fundamental goal of all dynasties on Chinese territory—whether conquest dynasties or Chinese dynasties—was twofold: to extract wealth from the empire, and to maintain order within the empire. Achieving a balance between the two was the key to success. If a government extracted too much in the way of taxes and corvette demands, the populace would revolt, and the dynasty's claim to the mandate to rule would be jeopardized.<sup>168</sup>

These problems were fundamentally different than anything in the Mongols' nomadic experience. Their pastoral culture possessed neither the systems nor people nor know-how to govern with anything but the sword. The need to maintain security within the Yuan Dynasty and protect its borders came at great cost to the dynasty's ability to employ the Mongol way of war, disrupting its military system and limiting its ability to pursue further conquest—the oxygen of its empire.

Kubilai Khan himself alluded to the rising expense of conquest in China, even before the collapse of the Song. He stated: “previously, when our state launched military campaigns, we abandoned the cities and towns we had seized and did not set up camps to

---

<sup>167</sup> Rossabi, 128.

<sup>168</sup> Endicot-West, 111.

garrison them. Thus, the military campaign continued year after year.”<sup>169</sup> In consequence, his need to solve the problem of stabilizing China grew every year in correlation to the amount of land conquered. Meanwhile, Yuan investments to address the security needs within China continued to compound. As the function of protection became an increasingly important focus of Yuan military power, the risk associated with pursuing a war with Japan grew. Kubilai could not risk the loss of his finest cavalry warriors who were needed to protect the dynasty. He needed to find the manpower and material means to support the expeditions to Japan from non-traditional sources.

---

<sup>169</sup> Hsiao, 53.

## CHAPTER 3

### STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Empires have no interest in operating within an international system; they aspire to *be* the international system.

— Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*

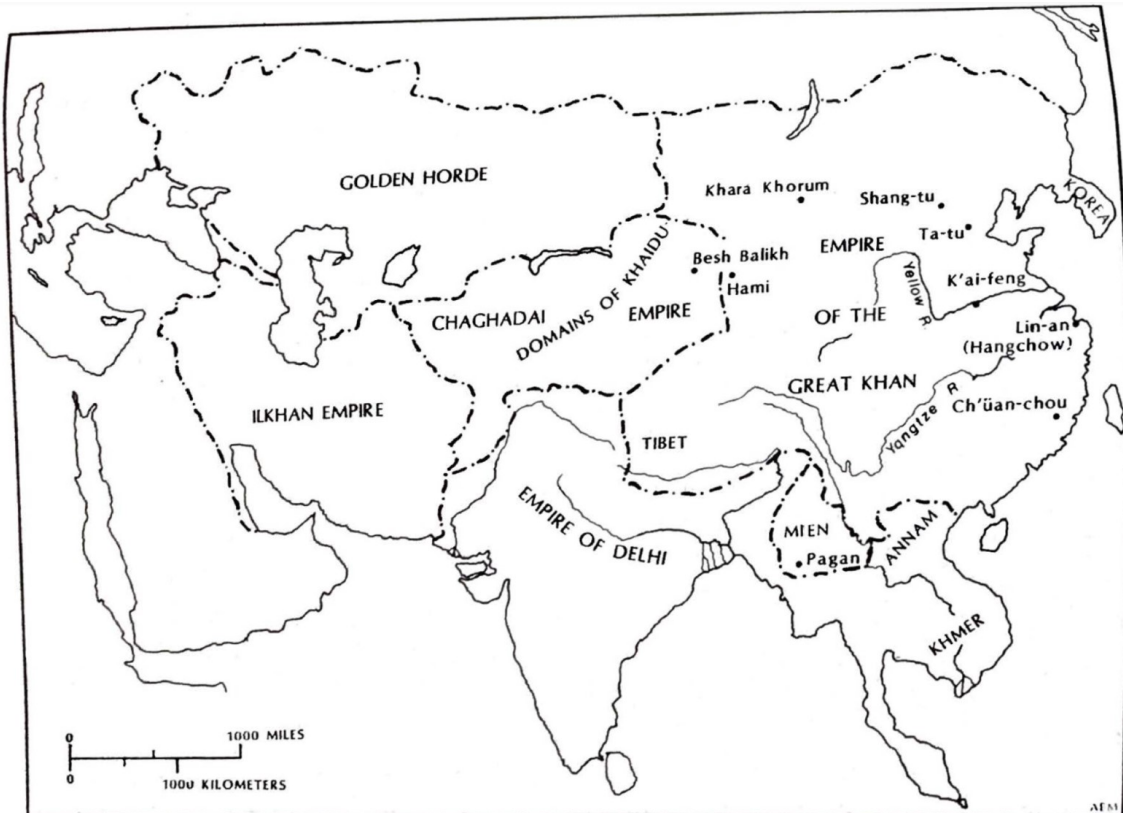


Figure 1. A Fractured Mongol Empire

*Source:* Morris Rossabi, *Kublai Khan: His Life and Times* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988.), 111. Based on Albert Herman, *An Historical Atlas of China*, 42-43.

Marco Polo never laid eyes on the “Island of Chipangu,” a mythical place that he described with vivid details in his memoirs. He characterized Japan as a place replete

with precious stones, rose-colored pearls, and a palace plated in gold.<sup>170</sup> His accounts explain what drew the attention of the mighty Yuan Dynasty in its search for power:

The people are white, civilized, and well-favored. They are Idolers and are dependent on nobody. And I can tell you the quantity of gold they have is endless; for they find it in their own islands and the King does not allow it to be exported. Moreover, few merchants visit the country because it is so far from the main land, and thus it comes to pass that their gold is abundant beyond all measure.<sup>171</sup>

Kubilai Khan also developed his understanding of the military and economic potential of Japan based off of accounts from Korea and Song Dynasty—two regions that had frequent engagement with Japan through maritime trade.<sup>172</sup>

The Song engaged in considerable trade with Japan, explaining in part their ability of the Song to resist Mongol conquest for decades.<sup>173</sup> While this material support to the Song brought the ire of Kubilai, his true interest in Japan lay in the pursuit of conquest.

While some argue that the initial expedition to Japan was intended as a reconnaissance-in-force or a punitive raid, this thesis contends that the first expedition was intended to attain the submission of Japan.<sup>174</sup> While the reconnaissance-in-force theory makes logical sense, given the Mongol reliance on intelligence to inform operations, the dearth of cavalry, the Mongols' most effective reconnaissance collection

---

<sup>170</sup> Yule, 253-254.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>172</sup> Brook, 26.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Department of the Army, FM 3-0, *Operations*, Glossary 15.

capability, indicates that the aims of the first expedition were larger than some believe. Additionally, the employment of artillery during the expedition implies that the expeditionary forces were prepared to partake in siege warfare. Given the dynasty's vital national interests, and Kubilai's peripheral interest in subjugating Japan, it seems far more likely that the first attempt was an economy-of-force operation to attain the willing submission of Japan. The conquest of Japan would come at a cost though, particularly in light of the dynasty's "China first" focus.

### A Fragile Empire

The war with Japan coincided with a complex time for the Mongol empire and the fledgling Yuan Dynasty. Kubilai Khan had to enact reforms to quell social unrest and avoid the appearance of a reign focused solely on exploitation of China's great resources.<sup>175</sup> He had to balance this internal security requirement with the need to protect his dynasty and its support base in Central Asia from exploitation by rival *khanates*.

Central Asia was a region of vital importance to the dynasty. The Asian steppe was the ancestral homelands of the Mongols and symbolic of its culture. Central Asia therefore remained a geopolitical necessity to the Yuan, and its control was of central importance in justifying Kubilai Khan's preeminence over the Mongol Empire and its *khanates*.<sup>176</sup> The loss of territory, particularly in the heart of Mongolia, jeopardized the support of the Mongols under his authority who filled key leadership roles and balance the conquered populations in China. Further, Central Asia was the strategic support base

---

<sup>175</sup> Rossabi, 95.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 103-104.

that the Yuan used to raise and mobilize the ethnic Mongol Cavalry needed to fight against rival *khanates* on the steppe.

Dismounted foot soldiers had little utility in the conduct of expeditionary operations on the Asian steppe. Thus an army of state-farm, part-time soldiers cobbled together from civilizations under the Mongol dominion was incompatible with operations in Central Asia, lacking the mobility, experience, and self-sufficiency to be of use against the cavalry of rival *khanates*. After all, the destruction of more than half a million Ming Dynasty soldiers at Tu-Mu in 1449 illustrates the futility of employing Chinese foot-soldiers against Mongol Cavalry in the open.<sup>177</sup>

Central Asia also had the capacity to generate the vast number of horses required to support the Yuan Dynasty given China's meager pasturelands. Of the comparatively low number of horses cultivated in China, the vast preponderance were bred for agricultural work, limiting their utility as warhorses for cavalry operations.<sup>178</sup> The horse supply problems were further complicated by limited grazing space resulting from the use of China's most viable pasturelands to support agriculture.<sup>179</sup> According to Ch'i-Ch'ing Hsiao, by the year 1307, the dynasty stables held only 13,000 horses, a mere fraction of the quantity required by the great Mongol armies of the previous decades. While this number comes close to 17 years after the second expedition, it illustrates the manifestation of serious flaws within the Yuan system and the growing costs associated

---

<sup>177</sup> Grygiel, 123.

<sup>178</sup> Hsiao, 60.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

with conquering and stabilizing China. From both a national sentiment perspective and a resource production stand-point, Kubilai understood that Central Asia was a vital interest for the Yuan Dynasty.

Another key element of the focus on Central Asia rested on its lines of communication that connected the eastern and western worlds. The trade routes spanning across Central Asia represented a key economic lifeline for the dynasty.<sup>180</sup> The “Silk Road” continued to be a strategic lifeline well into the Ming Dynasty in the fifteenth century up until maritime trade replaced reliance on ground transportation through Central Asia.<sup>181</sup> The greatest challenge to this area of vital geostrategic importance came not from foreign invaders, but from rival *khanates* within the empire.

Internal tensions and strife became commonplace within the Mongol Empire following the death of Chinggis as siblings and rival bloodlines struggled for power and legitimacy in succession. According to Brook, tanistry, “the practice of brothers competing with one another to succeed their father,” served as a legitimate principle of succession within the Mongol culture.<sup>182</sup> The ability of *khans* to consolidate and maintain power following the death Chinggis centered on the ability to prevail in civil strife. This requirement increased dramatically following the death of Mongke Khan, an event that some historians identify as the beginning of the decline of the Mongol Empire. Although Kubilai claimed the title of *khan* and defeated the challenge of his brother Arigh Boke in

---

<sup>180</sup> Rossabi, 103-104.

<sup>181</sup> Brook, 219-229.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 80.



1264, various *khanates* split off and charged Kubilai with turning his back on his “Mongol values to become an effete Chinese.”<sup>183</sup> In light of these sentiments, Kubilai had no choice but to commit his most capable forces to the protection of the dynasty as a vital national interest. After all, the loss of a civil conflict to a rival *khanate* posed an existential threat to his dynasty and legitimacy as *khan*. Thus, civil strife exacted an extremely heavy toll on Kubilai and his military capabilities as the 40-year Civil War against Kaidu wore on.

Marco Polo described the civil war between Kubilai and Kaidu as an “ever deadly war.”<sup>184</sup> He also claimed that Kaidu had the ability to field an army of up to 100,000 horse soldiers. In the absence of having to stabilize a volatile region such as China, Kaidu maintained the ability to conduct regular raids into China and Central Asia forced the “Great Khan from year’s end to year’s end keeps an arm watching all Caidu’s frontier. Lest he should make forays on his dominions.”<sup>185</sup> According to Hsiao, the civil war and the need to maintain a secure border from other incursions from the steppe “drew a great commitment of Yuan [ethnic Mongol] troops, exhausted the military households, and eventually shook the military foundation of the dynasty.”<sup>186</sup> Although estimates vary, the Yuan scholar Yao Sui indicated that the dynasty had more than 100,000 Mongol soldiers

---

<sup>183</sup> Mote, 461.

<sup>184</sup> Yule, 457-458.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Hsiao, 57.

deployed to the northwest in 1281—the same year as the second expedition to Japan.<sup>187</sup> Hsiao goes on to claim that “if we assume that the number of troops garrisoned in this area was somewhere in the neighborhood of 150,000 men, the number of troops in Mongolia should not be less than this figure.”<sup>188</sup> These figures indicate that Kubilai had as many as 250,000 of his best warriors committed to two missions that aligned with his vital national interests, protecting his dynasty against significant incursions and success in the civil war.

The massive commitment of high-quality human capital resources to the dynasty’s external security needs was accompanied with great capital investments of economic resources. In fact, it is estimated that sustaining formations of forward-deployed forces required up to one third of the Yuan Dynasty’s annual revenues by the turn of the century.<sup>189</sup> These exorbitant expenses were generated by the need to sustain static forces in an austere environment by importing supplies that traditional Mongol formations could attain through foraging and nomadic patterns of life. By extension, this massive commitment of the best blood and treasure the dynasty could spare left few resources to invest in the pursuit of peripheral national interests.

Aside from the civil war with Kaidu, the pursuit of a “China first” orientation in the dynasty’s imperial conquests also placed a unique and overwhelming burden on the Yuan Dynasty. The unification of China, which was not accomplished until the Interwar

---

<sup>187</sup> Hsiao, 59.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., 60.

Period, brought new security challenges unlike anything the Yuan's nomadic culture had ever dealt with: massive urban centers, vast economic resources, and a disenfranchised population shattered by decades of war. These challenges required the military to take on a greater role in security to maintain order amidst a state with significant cultural stratification and disenfranchisement. Kubilai recognized that his ability to quell rebellion and protect the territorial integrity of his dynasty required the establishment of a network of constabulary garrisons scattered throughout key areas and municipalities. This network, which became known as the Garrison System, was built to promote stability in China by preventing rebellion while maintaining ethnic Mongol control and presence throughout the dynasty.<sup>190</sup> Kubilai aligned this Garrison System with land divisions, known as *lu*, or districts, within the dynasty to prevent regions from amassing power and influence by malcontents opposed to Yuan rule.

Hsiao states that the Garrison System existed to “repress revolts within the realm, to ward off invasions from without, and, above all, to preserve imperial authority.”<sup>191</sup> The total manpower requirement to station troops in garrisons throughout the interior of China required the Garrison System to be manned with up to 925,000 soldiers.<sup>192</sup> This appraisal seems reasonable given some estimates of the total population of Southern Song China, which added a total of 50 million people to the Yuan Dynasty by the time of its final

---

<sup>190</sup> Rossabi, 128.

<sup>191</sup> Hsiao, 51.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

conquest.<sup>193</sup> While the preponderance of these garrisons were manned by conquered warriors, the dynasty distributed ethnic Mongols across leadership positions throughout the empire. Greater numbers of Mongols were utilized in key regions, such as critical urban centers and the military district north of the Huai River.<sup>194</sup>

The garrisons were outfitted by *myriarchies* of up to 5,000 troops that were responsible for “repression [of revolts] in various places” according to the Ming Dynasty author Yeh Tzu-ch’i.<sup>195</sup> The great demand for trustworthy soldiers exerted significant pressure on the Yuan Dynasty, making continued imperial expansion a very challenging matter. While most of these garrison troops were comprised of ethnic Chinese (a balance of soldiers from various regions to prevent power consolidation and deter uprising), units of Mongol soldiers were appointed to lead the garrisons to maintain allegiance to the dynasty. This was particularly important in key urban centers and areas prone to rebellion. This instability had deep roots.

Additionally, the widening scope of administrative and governmental responsibilities for the dynasty forced Kubilai to continually implement new ways of managing the dynasty’s collection and disbursement of great resources. The Privy Council, to which he delegated direct control of all military affairs in 1263, represented another significant military change implemented by Kubilai Khan.<sup>196</sup> This counsel cut the

---

<sup>193</sup> Rossabi, 229.

<sup>194</sup> Hsiao, 53.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>196</sup> Rossabi, 127.

traditional chain of command to the *khan*, allowing Kubilai to divest much of his responsibility for the direct management of military affairs.<sup>197</sup> These changes in governance had a profound, negative impact on the Mongol way of war. The severance of the traditional bonds between the *khan* and the empire's military apparatus signaled a significant shift in the imperial system.

### In the Pursuit of Imperial Legitimacy

Although Japan was not a vital national interest for the Yuan, it did present a number of benefits on the national strategic level. First, Japan represented a peripheral interest that offered the opportunity to expand the borders of the Mongol Empire, a geostrategic interest that demonstrated commitment to further conquest. This was a matter to which Kubilai was sensitive, given the great criticism of his legitimacy as a Mongol from within the fractured empire. Throughout his reign, Kaidu attacked Kubilai's legitimacy based off his bloodline and growing affinity for China which appeared to exceed his dedication to his Mongol heritage.<sup>198</sup> Mongol *khans* were judged by their feats of conquest, and Kubilai was no exception. While Kubilai intended to finish what his grandfather Chinggis had started in China, he did not have any intention of stopping there.

Next, the subjugation of Japan presented an opportunity to acquire an additional base of economic production due to its storied riches and maritime trade capacity. Marco

---

<sup>197</sup> Rossabi, 127.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 104-113.

Polo supports this notion through his description of Kubilai's desired end "to get possession of it [Japan]" and its immense riches.<sup>199</sup> This profit potential presented an opportunity to acquire additional capital with which to finance the exorbitant costs of pursuing his vital national security interests in China and Central Asia. It also presented an opportunity to fund the final conquest of the Song, the crowning accomplishment in the unification of China, an effort that spanned across the reigns of numerous *khans*.

Last, the subjugation of Japan offered access to high-quality human resources that he could leverage to support further conquests in Southeast Asia and India. Japan contained a martial culture that offered far more warfighting potential than the agrarian, state-farm soldiers impressed from conquered civilizations of the Eurasian landmass. The historical records indicate that the Japanese understood that impressment of their warriors to fight on behalf of the *khan* was a real possibility in the event of submission to the Yuan Dynasty. They recognized that the Mongols posed an existential threat to their way of life.<sup>200</sup>

#### Mongol Diplomacy and Preparations for War

In 1266, Kubilai dispatched his first correspondence to the "King of Japan."<sup>201</sup> After considerable delays, the envoy passed Kubilai's letter to a Korean messenger by the name of Pan Pu who proceeded to Hakata, Japan, traveling along the same sea line of

---

<sup>199</sup> Yule, 255.

<sup>200</sup> Conlan, 201.

<sup>201</sup> Chase, 15.

communication the Mongol expeditionary forces planned for use in coming years.<sup>202</sup> Pan Pu delivered the correspondence to Shoni Sukeyoshi, the *shugo* of Chikuzen province, who arranged the delivery of the message to the Kanakura *bakufu*, part of the Japanese dual polity administrative and judicial authority located in vicinity of Tokyo.<sup>203</sup> It read:

Favored by the decree of Highest Heaven, the emperor of the Great Mongol Nation sends this letter to the King of Japan.

Since ancient times, the sovereigns of small countries whose territories adjoined each other have taken it as their duty to cement peaceful relations by upholding good faith. How much more so [should this apply in this case], since our ancestors received a clear mandate from Heaven and controlled all of China, and those from distant places and other regions who fear our awesomeness and embrace our virtue have been countless.

When we first ascended the throne, as the innocent people of Korea had long suffered from spearheads and arrowheads, we immediately disbanded the soldiers and returned their frontier fortresses and send their old and young back [to their homes]. The Korean sovereign and subjects came to our court to express their thanks. Although in righteousness we were sovereign and subject, we were as happy as father and son. We believe that your subjects also already know this.

Korea is our eastern frontier. Japan is close to Korea. From the founding of your country you have also occasionally had contact with China, but to us you have not sent even “an envoy with a single cart” to communicate friendly [intentions].

Fearing that your kingdom knows this but has not considered it [carefully], we have specially dispatched an envoy with a letter to proclaim our intention. We hope that hereafter we will exchange greetings and establish friendly [relations] in order to have mutual affection and friendship. The sage treats all within the four seas as family; could it be the principle of a family not to mutually exchange friendly [greetings].

As for using soldiers and weapons, who would want that?<sup>204</sup>

---

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>203</sup> Conlan, 2.

<sup>204</sup> Chase, 15-16.

Kubilai Khan's diplomacy intended to attain the subjugation of Japan without force. He understood that with wars underway in China (the ongoing war with the Southern Song) and Central Asia (the Civil War against Kaidu) that a war on a third front was something the dynasty could ill afford.<sup>205</sup>

The letter had a profound impact on Japan. Rather than fostering Japanese compliance, the letter awoke them to the realization that the Mongols posed an existential threat to Japan and had designs on its conquest. The Kamakura, the same organization responsible for managing constabulary forces through each of the provincial *shugos*, began to mobilize the defense of Japan against the pirates.<sup>206</sup> The Kamakura also decided not to provide an official response to the Yuan Dynasty's diplomatic mission.<sup>207</sup> They understood that two suitable courses of action existed: fight or submit. The choice for submission risked the devastation of the nation and extraction of Japanese human and financial resources to fight the Song. The choice to fight, on the other hand, offered them the opportunity to guarantee the survival of their civilization. In his pursuit of diplomacy therefore, Kubilai Khan had unwittingly awoken the martial spirit of Japan.

The Japanese defenders understood that a Mongol incursion was forthcoming as early as 1271. This reality drove preparations for the defense of Kyushu, the southernmost of the Japanese home islands and the closest to the Korean Peninsula. According to Yamada, Kyushu, referred to as the "most important doorway to the

---

<sup>205</sup> Mote, 466.

<sup>206</sup> Conlan, 2.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.



Japanese Empire.”<sup>208</sup> Kyushu was the center of trade between Japan and the Song Dynasty, providing Kubilai the added advantage of attacking a decisive economic point that offered benefits for the war in China. These preparations were based on information the Japanese extracted from diplomatic missions during the on-going war with the Song, whom the Mongols had promised to conquer with “ten thousand warships” and “a thousand groups of armored horsemen.”<sup>209</sup> Yamada supports this notion, indicating that Japanese authorities “had not been uninformed of the recent growth of the Mongol power on the continent.”<sup>210</sup> Mobilization orders from the Kamakura included direction to the *gokenin*, the home guards, to report to the *shugo* of Chikuzen and Hizen provinces for guard duty assignments.<sup>211</sup>

Size estimates of the defense force mobilized by the Japanese vary. Administrative records suggest it was less than 6,000 warriors.<sup>212</sup> This figure matches Peter Lorge’s estimate of 2,300 to 5,700 soldiers.<sup>213</sup> Both estimates stand in sharp contrast to Yuan Dynasty records, which claim that the landing force faced a defense

---

<sup>208</sup> Nakaba Yamada, *Ghenko: The Mongol Invasion of Japan* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1916), 20.

<sup>209</sup> Chase, 18.

<sup>210</sup> Yamada, 80.

<sup>211</sup> Conlan, 202-203. According to Conlan, the *gokenin* or “housemen” carried the authority to perform guard services on behalf of the Kamakura *bakufu*.

<sup>212</sup> Conlan, 261.

<sup>213</sup> Lorge, 51.

comprised of more than 100,000 warriors.<sup>214</sup> This overestimation may well reflect the common trend written about by the military theorist Hans Delbrück in accounting for the common overestimation of opposing force sizes.<sup>215</sup> The size of the Japanese defense force was only part of the problem for the Mongols.

Regardless of the size of the Japanese defense force, the *samurai*, who were expert horse-archers, retained a significant qualitative edge over adversaries; that was reinforced by what Lorge describes as a “cultural and political apparatus surrounding the use of violence.”<sup>216</sup> While the employment of Mongol Cavalry formations offered Kubilai with an opportunity to offset the advantage of *Samurai* Cavalry, Kubilai could not afford to commit his best troops to the subjugation of the tiny, belligerent island. He chose instead to accept the risk of committing untrained, state-farm soldiers to the war with Japan. This decision had grave consequences when his forces were pitched in battle against the *samurai* who were professional soldiers trained in archery, horsemanship, and individual close-quarter fighting skills. Ironically, the *samurai* were raised in a military culture influenced by the works the ancient Chinese military theorist, Sun Tzu, which only further complicated the prospects of committing Chinese troops to the expeditions to Japan.<sup>217</sup>

---

<sup>214</sup> Conlan, 261.

<sup>215</sup> Lorge, 49.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, ed. Samuel B. Griffith (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 169-178.

The Mongols continued to seek a diplomatic solution on numerous occasions between 1266 and 1274. These follow-on missions may have signaled a level of reluctance to make the final commitment of precious troops and resources to the conquest of Japan. As with the first mission, they met with similar frustrations and little progress. Kubilai's diplomatic efforts finally culminated in a fifth and final mission undertaken by the emissary, Chao Liang-pi, who returned from the Kamakura in 1273 home without a response. The Japanese silence left Kubilai with one choice—conquest by force. After all, his legitimacy, as well as the international order established through generations of Mongol conquest, could not tolerate such belligerence to set a new imperial precedent, particularly given the extensive attempts at achieving a diplomatic resolution.<sup>218</sup> The Japan problem advanced from a matter of lust to a matter of dynastic honor, pride, and necessity.

An expedition to Japan entailed far more than dispatching an army across the steppe with its great formations of experienced cavalry. Instead, it required a fleet of seaworthy ships replete with sailors and navigators capable of guiding an expeditionary force across the Korean Strait. It necessitated the creation of a large landing force without detracting from the growing manpower needed to pacify China or guard against Kaidu's raids. It also required great provisioning to provide feed, fodder, and water for squadrons of cavalry as well as provisions for the troops. The prospects of an expedition to Japan were ambitious and expensive. Korea bore the brunt of these needs.

---

<sup>218</sup> John T. Kuehn, *A Military History of Japan: From the Age of the Samurai to the 21st Century* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2014), 77.

The Mongol conquest of Korea began in 1218 under Chinggis Khan, and it was not completed until 1271, after no less than six attempts.<sup>219</sup> Korea's great material, technological, manpower, and agricultural potential gave the peninsula much strategic value. Kubilai Khan relied almost exclusively on the Koreans to outfit the first expedition to Japan. Korea served as a keystone source of tributes and was exploited for everything ranging from its pottery to its naval technology.<sup>220</sup> Given the close proximity of Korea to Japan, the Korean peninsula also made an ideal forward support base and jumping-off point for both expeditions. Kubilai directed the Koreans to set aside large tracts of agricultural land to provision the expedition. Likewise, he demanded much from them in the way of human capital to flesh-out his formations of pikemen. He also ordered that the Koreans build a brand-new fleet of seaworthy ships to support the projection of power across the Korean Strait. The overwhelming demands for ships and young men to fight the Yuan Dynasty's war eventually pushed the Koreans into open revolt.

#### Tailoring the Expeditionary Force

Some historians estimate that the size of the first expeditionary force was less than 40,000 soldiers, as a result of the need to embark the sustenance and materiel to support the landing force until it established a lodgment ashore in Japan. The *Yuan Shi* also describes the number of soldiers pressed into the service of the Mongols at 40,000, drawing objection from the Koreans who indicated that fighting over the previous 30

---

<sup>219</sup> Rossabi, 97.

<sup>220</sup> Rossabi, 98.

years had inflicted a serious toll on their nation wherein “many died in military service.”<sup>221</sup> The impressment of soldiers into duty to support the Yuan Dynasty’s imperial conquests was not the Koreans’ only cause of protest.

Kubilai ordered the Koreans to construct up to 1,000 sea-worthy naval vessels to support his expedition to Japan.<sup>222</sup> The *Yuan Shi* reflects Korean objections against the size of the fleet, declaring that “it is impossible to do as expected.”<sup>223</sup> Despite the protests, historians believe that the Korean shipbuilders completed the construction of 900 ships prior to the commencement of the campaign.<sup>224</sup> Beyond the physics of cobbling together a massive enterprise, the prospects of the expedition were further complicated by a revolt in Korea that lasted from 1269 to 1271 in response to Kubilai’s demands.<sup>225</sup>

Other estimates of the Mongol landing force size come from the Mongols themselves in reports following the attack, indicating that it contained only 15,000 warriors spread across 900 vessels.<sup>226</sup> This estimate aligns with Turnball’s translation of the *Hachiman Gudokun*, which indicated that the landing force consisted of 10,000 Mongol Soldiers.<sup>227</sup> Regardless of force size, impressed soldiers comprised the majority

---

<sup>221</sup> China Twenty-Four Histories.

<sup>222</sup> Ballard, 24-25.

<sup>223</sup> China Twenty-Four Histories, Loc 43606.

<sup>224</sup> Conlan, 259.

<sup>225</sup> Lorge, 50.

<sup>226</sup> Ballard, 24-25.

<sup>227</sup> Turnball, 41.

of the expeditionary force that was augmented with a mix of ethnic Mongols and Chinese to flush-out the remaining requirements of the landing force.<sup>228</sup> Some historians, such as Lorge, contend that the first expedition contained few, if any ethnic Mongols at all.<sup>229</sup> Most historians agree that the preponderance of the force was comprised of part-time, state-farm soldiers, with a minority of Jurchen soldiers and cavalymen amongst their ranks.<sup>230</sup>

According to the illustrations within the *Invasion Scrolls*, the Mongols did embark some cavalry forces, but the preponderance of the force consisted of foot soldiers armed with pikes.<sup>231</sup> These farmer-soldiers lacked the training, discipline, and commitment of standard of troops that underwrote the Mongol way of war. Further, the limited concentration of cavalry hamstrung the expeditionary force with a significant mobility and maneuver disadvantage in a fight against the disciplined *samurai*—an armored cavalry force.<sup>232</sup> While the war against the Song provided the Yuan Dynasty with invaluable experience in riverine warfare, the expeditionary force found that projecting power 100 miles across the Korea Strait in a maritime environment was a different matter altogether. The Mongols completed their final preparations for the first expedition in early 1274. The expeditionary forces had to make do with whatever force the dynasty

---

<sup>228</sup> Conlan, 263.

<sup>229</sup> Lorge, 50-53.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>231</sup> Conlan, 67-87.

<sup>232</sup> Lorge, 51.

could scrounge-up from its conquered vassals in the pursuit of a peripheral interest.

Unfortunately, in the absence of the Mongol way of war, the expeditions to Japan had little chance at success.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE WAR WITH JAPAN

The way of the bow and arrow is to do what is worthy of reward.  
Charge!<sup>233</sup>

— Takezaki Sunaga, Japanese Defense Force, 1274

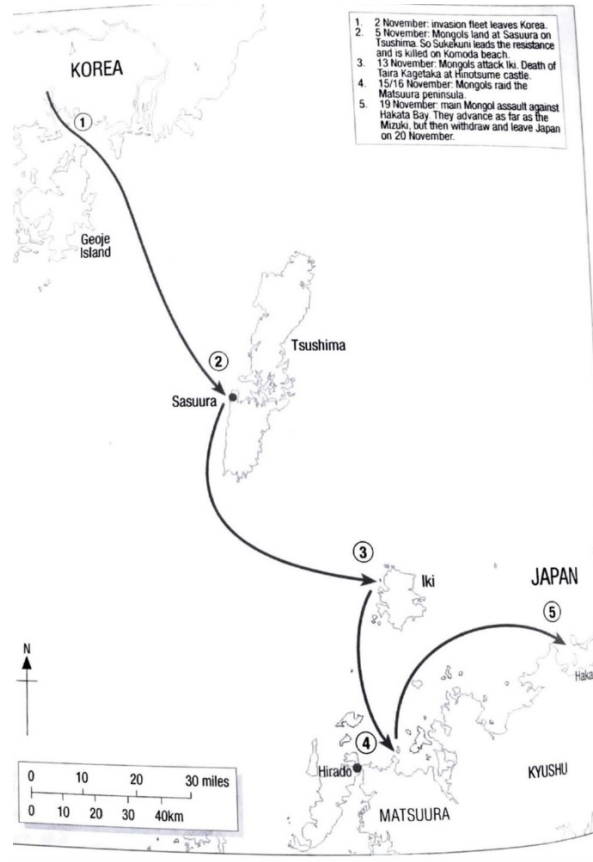


Figure 2. The Strategic Deployment of Forces in Support of the First Expedition to Japan

Source: Stephen Turnbull, *The Mongol Invasions of Japan: 1274 and 1281* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2013), 34.

<sup>233</sup> Conlan, 64. The quote from Takezake Sunaga at the top of the figure coincides with the transition of the *samurai* from defense into the pursuit of the Mongol invaders after reaching the “high water mark” in the foot hills surrounding modern day Fukuoka, Japan. In Little Need of Divine Intervention.



### The First Expedition

The Mongols embarked upon their first expedition to Japan in November 1274, following the conclusion of the typhoon season. The large amphibious force set sail from Busan, Korea, and landed on the island of Tsushima on 4 November. The Mongol landing force included 8,000 warriors for their main assault on Sasurra in southern Tsushima, a region characterized by a coastal plain surrounded by hills with significant relief and thick vegetation. Although the 80 *samurai* of the island garrison received advance warning of the inbound fleet, they had little time to prepare for the defense of the island.<sup>234</sup>

So Sukekuni, the *jitodai* (deputy *jito*) of Tsushima, organized his defense in the foothills surrounding the beach landing site at Sasurra, and the short battle began in the early morning hours of 5 November.<sup>235</sup> The *So Shi Kafu Records* describe the landing force as a “horde,” implying a composition of massed, dismounted troops rather than synchronized maneuvers of Mongol cavalry and shock troops.<sup>236</sup> Despite an aggressive defense “cutting deeply into the horde,” the defense force was overwhelmed by the Mongols with a force ratio of 100 to 1.<sup>237</sup> Ultimately, the *samurai* were “defeated and

---

<sup>234</sup> Turnball, 33.

<sup>235</sup> Turnball, 33. The *jitos* were land stewards who administrated in Japan. In some instances, the same individual could serve as a *jito* and a *gokenin*. The *jitodai* describes a deputy to the *jito*.

<sup>236</sup> Turnball, 36.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

Sukukuni fell dead.”<sup>238</sup> The “horde” had overcome the defenders’ advantage of maneuverability through sheer mass. The Mongols backloaded onto ships and proceeded to their next objective—Iki Island, 33 miles to the southeast.<sup>239</sup>

Despite the overwhelming tactical victory of the Mongol landing force during its first engagement, the Japanese were the victors on the operational and strategic levels. Not only did the Mongols abandon a potential communications hub and advance base to sustain future operations, they also spoiled their opportunity at achieving operational and strategic surprise on Iki or Kyushu. A number of shipborne messengers escaped the Mongol flotilla to warn of the approaching amphibious force. These messengers deprived the Mongols of the surprise needed to support their rudimentary amphibious operations, providing the *samurai* with time to prepare. This problem was further exacerbated by the expeditionary force’s decision to stay on Tsushima Island for almost 10 days.

Having already received word of the coming invasion, Taira Kagetaka, the *jitodai* of Iki Island, mobilized his *samurai* for the defense of the island.<sup>240</sup> Given the small size of Iki, and its proximity to Tsushima, the defenders had few options but to hide their families inside the walls of Hintosume Castle, which also served as the command post and the base of operations for Kagetaka and his defense force.<sup>241</sup> Upon arrival, on 13 November, the Mongol landing force faced fierce resistance at the water’s edge on the

---

<sup>238</sup> Turnbull, 36.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

north end of the island before Kagetaka withdrew his forces to Hintosume Castle at the conclusion of fighting on the first day.

The following day, the Mongols attacked Hintosume Castle. After facing significant resistance through much of the day, the Mongol landing force finally breached the castle walls, using a shield of Japanese corpses to protect their advance through their breach lane.<sup>242</sup> Kagetaka's defense forces were subsequently surrounded and killed. As with the battle of Tsushima, the Mongols secured another tactical victory, followed-up with an immediate back-load in preparation for the assault on Kyushu, the closest of the home islands to the Korean Peninsula.

On the operational level, the Mongol decision to abandon Iki Island marked the second time in the same campaign that the expeditionary force discarded an advanced base that may have enabled them to project and sustain combat power from the Asian mainland. These two islands could have provided the expeditionary force with space to reconstitute the force, reconfigure shipping, and establish stores of key provisions for operations ashore in Kyushu. They also could have served as relay nodes for communication back to the dynasty as part of a modified *yam* system afloat. These options, each of which offered the opportunity to leverage elements of the Mongol way of war, were discarded, perhaps in the interest of expediency or because of lack of experience.<sup>243</sup> Yamada holds a different opinion on this matter, claiming that the

---

<sup>242</sup> Turnball, 37.

<sup>243</sup> Yamada, 130, contends that the expeditionary force was driven by the emotion and momentum of easy victories against inferior forces.

Mongols were so overwhelmed with the excitement surrounding their success that they failed to see the strategic and operational value of the islands, setting sail for Kyushu “in the heat of their triumph.”<sup>244</sup>

As with the Tsushima defense force, the Japanese again made effective use of messengers aboard Iki to prepare for the defense of the homeland. Although Taira Kagetaka and his *samurai* faced annihilation at the hands of the “Mongol Horde,” he made a critical contribution to the success of the Japan defense forces on the home island of Kyushu. Kagetaka, recognizing that defeat was imminent, made the fateful decision to dispatch his daughter, Katsyra-hime, to Dazaifu on Kyushu to warn the Japanese defense forces of the approaching fleet.<sup>245</sup> Numerous documents confirm that the message aided in final preparations for the arrival of the Mongol landing force.<sup>246</sup> Unlike the expeditionary force, which lacked any semblance of intelligence regarding defense force disposition, the Japanese understood their enemy’s plans and knew that a landing on Kyushu was imminent. Of greater importance, the *samurai* understood that the enemy’s most likely avenue of approach, a key element in effective defensive planning, planned to enter the Japanese mainland by way of Kyushu. Official correspondence from Kamakura reflects the Japanese coupling between its political and military systems:

According to a report by *Shoni* Kakei, the Mongols have attacked Tsushima and Iki Islands and already battle waged. Quickly depart for Aki prior to the twentieth day of this month. If the invaders attack, mobilize the *jito*, *gokenin*, and those residents who possess full administrative authority over their lands throughout the

---

<sup>244</sup> Yamada, 130.

<sup>245</sup> Turnbull, 37.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

province and offer resistance. There must be no further negligence. This order is so conveyed.<sup>247</sup>

The involvement of the Kamakura in final preparations for the defense of the homeland; shows the level of political-military cooperation necessary to mobilize the defense of Japan. In contrast, the Yuan Dynasty had no involvement in the prosecution of the campaign from the strategic level once the invasion force departed the Korean Peninsula. The Mongol expeditionary force had no choice but to operate and make decisions in isolation—a significant deviation from most Mongol campaigns in the past, wherein *khans* were directly involved and responsible for military affairs.

---

<sup>247</sup> Conlan, 206.

Actions on Objective: Kyushu

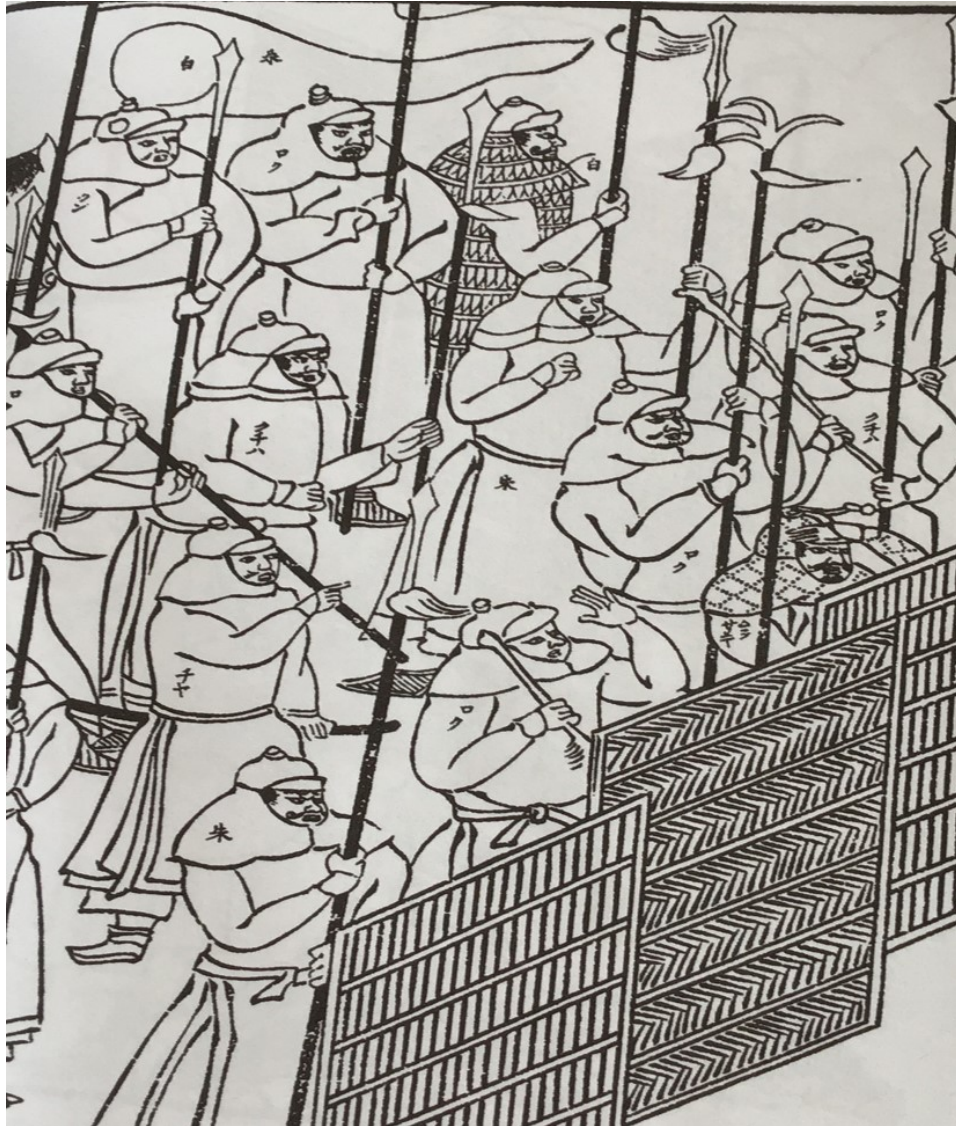


Figure 3. Foot-Mobile Pikemen, rather than Mongol Cavalry, Comprised the Majority of the Expeditionary Forces Dispatched to Japan

Source: Thomas D. Conlan, *In Little Need of Devine Intervention: Takezaki Suenaga's Scrolls of the Mongol Invasions of Japan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University East Asia Program, 2001), 78.

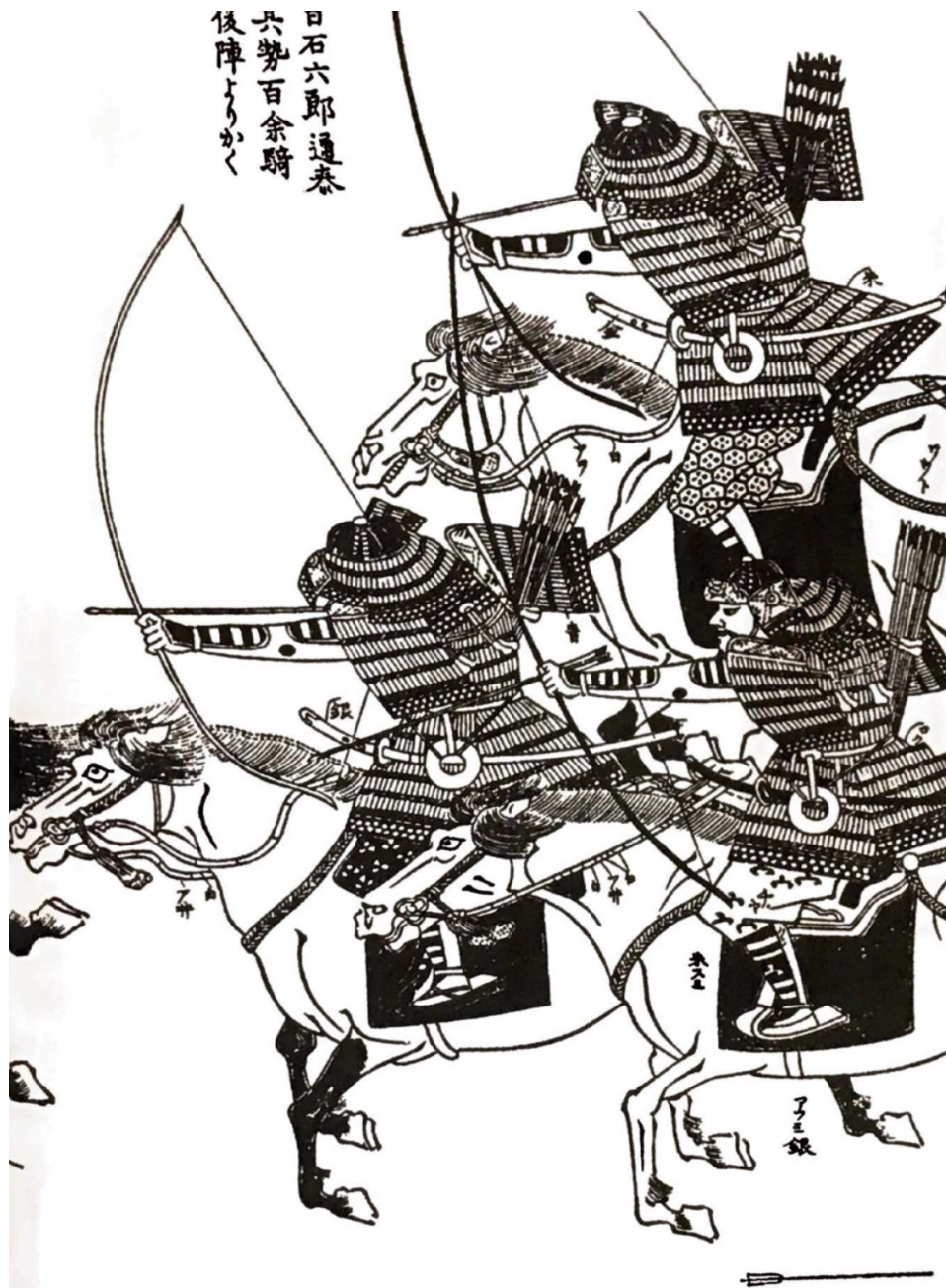


Figure 4. Samurai Cavalrymen Retained a Significant Tactical Mobility Advantage over the Dismounted Pikemen of the Mongol Expeditionary Forces

Source: Thomas D. Conlan, *In Little Need of Devine Intervention: Takezaki Suenaga's Scrolls of the Mongol Invasions of Japan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University East Asia Program, 2001), 78.

The Kamakura *bakufu*—the judicial and administrative body that ruled Japan in conjunction with the Kyoto Court—directed the mobilization of defense forces, provincial land stewards, and constables, known respectively as the *jitos* and *shugos*.<sup>248</sup> Takezaki Suenaga, who served as a member of the guard force authorized to defend Japan, was one of the many *gokenin*, or “houseman,” mobilized to fight the Mongol invaders in vicinity of Hakata Bay (near modern-day Fukuoka). After receiving mobilization orders, Takezaki reported to the provincial *shugo* of Kyushu for service, accompanied by his four retainers.<sup>249</sup> As the Mongol expeditionary force closed with Hakata Bay, a portion of the force conducted a raid on Takashima Island that resembled the battles on Tsushima and Iki Island. The Mongols’ loss of surprise permitted the defense to fully mobilize and prepare to defend against the probable attack on Hakata, a location that offered permissive landing beaches and a protected anchorage in Hakata Bay.

Hakata offered a suitable location for the expeditionary force to project force ashore. It was a large coastal plain with sufficient space for the landing force to muster sizeable formations for pitched battle in open terrain. The principal obstacle ashore for the attackers was the ring of foothills that surrounded Hakata. These hills provided the defense with excellent observation posts from which to maintain situational awareness and orchestrate the command and control of defense forces during the course of the battle. The foothills contained canalizing valleys suitable for fixed defenses and ambush

---

<sup>248</sup> Kuehn, 77-78.

<sup>249</sup> Conlan, 40.



tactics where the landing force could be lured into engagement areas for destruction by the mass effects of the *samurai* weapon systems. This terrain mitigated the need to fight as a numerically inferior force in a pitched battle in open terrain. The *samurai* also had the advantage of exterior lines, providing them the ability to shift forces and adapt their fighting as needed to fit the situation.

The Mongols landed on 19 November 1274, almost three weeks after departing their support base in Busan.<sup>250</sup> After a raid in vicinity of the Matasuura Peninsula, the initial elements of the landing force came ashore in the western portion of the Hakata Bay, where they were forced to fight their way to the east to link-up with other forces in vicinity of Hakata and Hakozaki.<sup>251</sup> The Japanese contested the landing wherever possible, fighting the pikemen at the water's edge. With an established a lodgment ashore, the army formed up for their advance inland.<sup>252</sup>

The Japanese defenders were well aware of the nature of the terrain between the penetration point and Dazaifu, the provincial administrative capital, a mere 12 miles east. They planned to use terrain to their advantage in the foothills beyond Hakata, executing a delaying action that began with the battle at shoreline.

---

<sup>250</sup> Turnball, 38.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 39-50.

<sup>252</sup> Lodgment: a designated area in a hostile or potentially hostile operational area that affords continuous landing of troops and materiel while providing maneuver space for subsequent operations. Department of Defense, Joint Publication (JP) 3-18, *Joint Forcible Entry Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), vii.

Upon hearing of the pirates ashore in vicinity of Akasaka, bands of Japanese warriors began to assemble and descend from the hills that surrounded the Mongol landing site.<sup>253</sup> While the defenders did not have the organization of a conventional force trained for massed battle tactics, they were professional warriors prepared to fight. The *samurai* that comprised the majority of the defense force consisted of armored cavalry with long bows and *nagatas*. The cavalry of the defense forces provided an asymmetric threat over the expeditionary force built around foot-mobile infantry. The *samurai* were expert archers, known for their martial skill on the individual level. Their ability to fight in small bands under the *gokenin* and leverage their superiority in mobility and maneuverability on exterior lines proved to be more than the expeditionary force could handle as the battle wore on.

Although the Mongol composite bow was superior to competitor long bows in terms of range and stopping power, the Mongols had embarked only limited cavalry forces with their expeditionary force. This limited concentration of cavalry had two significant impacts on the results of the battle. First, the expeditionary forces lacked the ability to mass the effects of mobile, horse-borne archers at a distance that rivaled the range of the *samurai* horse archers. Second, the expeditionary force also lacked the heavy cavalry exploitation columns of lancers capable of delivering a decisive blow against enemy forces. This force composition is evidenced in the *Invasion Scrolls* that contain only a limited concentration of light cavalry but does contain evidence that the landing

---

<sup>253</sup> Conlan, 23.

force did contain dismounted archers.<sup>254</sup> The *Hachiman Gudokun* describes the manner in which the Mongols fought: “They beat large drums and banged gongs and sometimes fired bombs made from paper and iron . . . ten thousand men in all were prepared with their arrows and fired them so that they fell like rain. . . . Halberds and long-shafted weapons were carried with no space between them.”<sup>255</sup> This picture of a Mongol force would have been unrecognizable to the countless societies conquered by the great Mongol cavalry formations. While the use of dismounted archers provided the landing force with firepower, the formations had limited mobility and thus could not exploit opportunities in a timely fashion against the horse-borne *samurai*.

Despite the challenges of their contested landing, the expeditionary force’s tactics and use of incendiary munitions did provide a temporary, psychological advantage over the Japanese *samurai*, leaving the defenders “perplexed . . . frightened out of their wits . . . blinded and their ears deafened.”<sup>256</sup> An anonymous Japanese account from the *Koji ruien* echoes this sentiment: “Drums were rolled and fighting started, when by the use of what is known as iron p’ao, they flung out iron balls of the size of a hand ball, two or three thousand at a time, which rolled down the hills with the speed of cartwheels, making a noise like thunder.”<sup>257</sup> The expeditionary force used its mass, combined with fires, to good effect on the open plains of Hakata, where they fought the battle according

---

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>255</sup> Turnball, 41.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>257</sup> Goodrich and Chia-Sheng, 216.

to the strengths of the dismounted infantry. The *samurai* sustained heavy losses before they “feigned retreat” to draw their pursuers into terrain where they could exploit the mobility limitations of the expeditionary force’s massed formations.<sup>258</sup> They withdrew eastward into the foothills toward Dazaifu.

As intended, the Mongols pursued the *samurai* into the hills. The *Yuan Shi* records the Mongol perspective of the advance as the Japanese defenders withdrew to a position of advantage in the hills surrounding Hakata: “When the enemy had moved into the pre-arranged positions, the invaders attacked from all sides. They also used firearms and slaughtered the enemy forces in countless numbers. Thus, the Japanese were put to route.”<sup>259</sup> While the *samurai* were undoubtedly affected by the shock of incendiary weapons and the presence of large enemy force on one of their home islands, this account indicates that the Mongols fell for the *samurais’* deception as intended. In essence, the *samurai* had drawn the Mongols into a mobile defense, and they intended to defeat the Mongols with their striking force waiting in the hills.<sup>260</sup>

Unbeknownst to the Mongol landing force, Kagesuke had ordered the Japanese defenders to “pull back” to the location of his forces in the hills above Hakozaki, given the “poor terrain” of Hakata.<sup>261</sup> Kagesuke recognized the significance of using terrain to

---

<sup>258</sup> Goodrich and Chia-Sheng, 216.

<sup>259</sup> Turnbull, 41.

<sup>260</sup> Mobile defense. A defensive task that concentrates on the destruction or defeat of the enemy through a decisive attack by a striking force. The Department of the Army, FM 3-0, *Operations*, Glossary 13.

<sup>261</sup> Conlan, 23-40.

his advantage and understood that his outnumbered force required a deviation from their traditional practices of individualized combat. He decided to maneuver his force to a position of advantage where it could mass and concentrate at a decisive point against the Mongol advance. When the time was right, he instructed his forces to “bear down on them [the Mongol landing force], firing at once” in a manner that resembled *omoni ni irubeki*, a Japanese group hunting technique.<sup>262</sup> He had pulled a page out of the Mongols’ own playbook.

Kagesuke employed a *mangudai*, a cavalry unit that engaged the enemy’s force before withdrawing to a coordinated location where a striking force lay in wait.<sup>263</sup> While the Mongols often utilized the *mangudai* to achieve envelopments in open terrain, the Japanese did not have enough force or space available to conduct an envelopment on the coastal plain of Hakata. Instead, the *samurai* leveraged terrain to achieve the effect of envelopment by forcing the Mongols into a canalized, terrain-restricted space. Not only did this negate the tactical mobility of the limited cavalry the Mongols brought ashore, it also made the tight formations of state-farm soldiers vulnerable to attacks from all sides from well beyond the reach of the pike.

---

<sup>262</sup> Conlan, 23.

<sup>263</sup> Marshall, 93. Marshall describes the *mangudai* as a corps of “suicide troops.” Although some may argue that Takezaki’s behavior was driven more by pride than participation in a “suicide” attack, the guidance by Shoni Kagesuke for the Japanese warriors to withdraw back to a known point of advantage demonstrated his intent to draw the Mongols into a deliberate engagement area of his choosing.

The Mongol advance reached its high-water mark at a fortification in the foothills named Mizuki.<sup>264</sup> The bastion had walls that were 15 meters in height, making it a formidable obstacle. Its placement in key terrain was intended to block an enemy advance toward the provincial administrative center of Dazaifu. This made it all the more significant, again indicating the sophistication and effectiveness of Japanese warfare. In any case, the Mongol advance was halted following the loss of the senior commander of the invasion force, Liu Fuxiang, who was shot by a *samurai* archer in the face.<sup>265</sup>

At this point, the *Yuan Shi* records exchanges among the Mongol and Korean leaders, wherein General Hu-tun exclaimed: “They say if one puts up a strong fight with a small force, one ends in being captured by the larger force. To drive on fatigued troops into the enemy ground is not safe tactics. It is better to draw back our forces.”<sup>266</sup> At least one Japanese account indicates that the Japanese defense force also made use of Huo-t’ung Artillery to repulse the Mongols, adding to the warfighting capacity of the Japanese defense force.<sup>267</sup>

This part of the battle indicates that the leaders of the expeditionary force understood that they faced dire situation on Kyushu. They understood that their force had reached its culminating point and faced destruction if it stayed to fight against the Japanese defense forces, which would undoubtedly continue to grow in size over time.

---

<sup>264</sup> Turnbull, 48.

<sup>265</sup> Conlan, 265.

<sup>266</sup> Turnbull, 49.

<sup>267</sup> Goodrich and Chia-Sheng, 216.

The Mongol expeditionary force, which lacked strategic communications with Kubilai, decided to cut its losses and withdraw while it still had the opportunity. In short, they recognized that the desired end of subjugating Japan far exceeded the means and ways employed by the expeditionary force.

The Mongols transitioned to an amphibious withdrawal back to Hakata, and they were doggedly pursued by the *samurai*.<sup>268</sup> Takazaki Suenaga's account chronicles the Mongols withdrawing in two separate groups, with a main force moving toward Sohara and a smaller force moving to Tsukara, both of which were pursued by the Japanese defenders.<sup>269</sup> The *samurai* were relentless in pressing the pursuit toward the water's edge, attacking the landing force in their "encampments" as they reembarked aboard their vessels. In a final act of defiance, the Mongols burned the city of Hakata during their withdrawal, as they had done following their assaults on Iki and Tsushima islands.<sup>270</sup> Japanese accounts from the *Haciman gudo-kun* corroborate the account of burning, indicating that the Mongols fired enough *t'ieh-p'ao*—iron ball incendiary rounds—to darken the skies.<sup>271</sup>

The Mongols set sail for Busan. Whether the return voyage succeeded or ended in catastrophic disaster due to weather remains a topic of debate. Marco Polo indicated that

---

<sup>268</sup> Amphibious Withdrawal. A type of amphibious operation involving the extraction of forces by sea in ships of craft from a hostile or potentially hostile shore. Department of Defense, JP 3-02, *Amphibious Operations*, GL-8.

<sup>269</sup> Conlan, 64.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.

<sup>271</sup> Goodrich and Chia-Sheng, 216.

at least part of the landing force was abandoned on an island four miles from Kyushu.<sup>272</sup> Yet, Conlan suggests that the few Japanese primary sources that mention the weather during the withdrawal of first expedition describe little more than a change in wind that blew the pirates back to sea.<sup>273</sup> In the end, the final disposition of the expeditionary force remains immaterial to this thesis because the Mongol operations ashore failed.<sup>274</sup> The failed expedition led Kubilai to the conclusion that doubling-down on his “third front” was the only option to subjugate Japan. In the interim, Kubilai decided to give diplomacy another shot.

### The Interwar Period

The first expedition failed to achieve decisive results for the Yuan Dynasty. Not only had it failed to conquer Japan, but it also failed to produce substantive punitive results against Japan for its diplomatic belligerence. The Yuan accrued no return on investment from the expedition. Instead, the botched operation squandered precious resources that could have been spent on advancing vital security interests such as the conquest of the Song or securing the dynasty’s own borders.

---

<sup>272</sup> Yule, 255.

<sup>273</sup> Conlan, 266.

<sup>274</sup> The expedition failed regardless of ultimate purpose. It did not cause the subjugation of Japan. If intended as a reconnaissance-in-force, it provided no information of value to increase the chances of success during the second expedition. Even if it represented a punitive raid, it achieved little more than driving the Japanese to increase their defensive preparedness.



Rather than turn away, Kubilai decided to increase his commitment to his peripheral interests across the Korea Strait, pursuing additional diplomatic efforts while preparing for a second expedition to “subjugate” Japan.<sup>275</sup> After all, with the benefit of seeing the ground, the next expedition was in a better position to succeed in operations ashore. From Kubilai’s perspective, the construction of a larger force with more men and more ships was the solution to the problem in Japan. Neither Kubilai nor his advisors foresaw Japan’s extensive, resource-intensive interwar preparations. In short, the shoreline of Hakata would be rendered unrecognizable by the time the second expedition reached the littorals of Kyushu in 1281.

### The Mongols

The “China first” policy received the priority of effort for the dynasty in the years immediately following the expedition. It achieved this goal in 1279, following the death of the final Song emperor who drowned aboard a sinking ship while attempting to evade the Mongol naval blockade of Yai-shan.<sup>276</sup> With the Song Dynasty subdued, Kublai re-oriented his attention on the conquest of Japan, a nation that continued to refuse submission and the payment of tribute.

Kubilai had anticipated that cessation of war in China and the appointment of Chinese leaders to positions of power would bring a period of stability to the region.<sup>277</sup> In reality, the interwar period brought great challenges that the dynasty was ill-prepared to

---

<sup>275</sup> Chase, 15-16.

<sup>276</sup> Rossabi, 94.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid., 115-119.

handle, to include wide-spread rebellion, cultural stratification, and the final transition from a nomadic culture to one of a sedentary life amidst great riches and resources.

The Yuan Dynasty needed governmental reforms following the unification of China in order to leverage the vast materiel, financial, and manpower resources in furthering Yuan interests. The dynasty sought a political framework that streamlined governance, without the total disenfranchisement of the conquered peoples of the South.<sup>278</sup> These challenges made a renewed attempt at diplomacy with Japan a logical and prudent choice ahead of investing in a second expedition.

The Mongol envoys deployed during the interwar period were doomed from the start. Kubilai dispatched his first interwar envoy to Japan during 1275, demanding again that Japan submit to the Mongols.<sup>279</sup> While the envoys dispatched ahead of the first expedition that were welcomed by the Japanese and then sent home empty-handed, this envoy was summarily executed upon arrival at the Kamakura following their two-month journey. Kubilai dispatched a second envoy in 1279 that met a similar fate. He had again exhausted his diplomatic patience for Japan.

Kubilai, who had already laid the ground work for a second expedition to Japan in the event that diplomacy failed, continued to assemble an expeditionary force that was twice the size of the one deployed during the 1274 campaign. These preparatory efforts were complicated by growing security concerns for the dynasty. While organized opposition to the Yuan Dynasty in China after 1279 was militarily insignificant, domestic

---

<sup>278</sup> Rossabi, 95.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid., 207.

rebellions persisted, and the cost of waging the civil war continued to increase from that point forward.<sup>280</sup> Kaidu's renewed focus in destabilizing the Yuan Dynasty began with an attack on the traditional Mongol capital of Karakorum.<sup>281</sup> This assault in the heartland of the steppe was followed-up by continuous raids into Yuan territory as well as the seizure of a number of the dynasty's borderland provinces.<sup>282</sup>

This threat required Kubilai to maintain his force of 300,000 Mongols deployed afield to confront Kaidu.<sup>283</sup> The sustainment of this force came at great cost to the dynasty from a resource perspective. Not only did it require massive imports of grains from China on multi-month wagon relays, but it also drained the dynasty's stables, forcing them to purchase horses from neighboring nomadic societies to keep their cavalry deployed.<sup>284</sup> Frederick Mote captures the overwhelming security struggle for Kubilai, indicating that he had to "fight on two Mongolian fronts, one in the east [China] and one in the far west [inner Asia], as the fighting rose and fell sporadically over a period of years."<sup>285</sup> The war with Japan continued to represent a peripheral interest that came at great cost to the dynasty.

---

<sup>280</sup> Hsiao, 60. Although this assessment looks at Yuan finances in the years following expeditions to Japan, it still provides a means to assess the relative cost of the unification and stability of China.

<sup>281</sup> Mote, 465.

<sup>282</sup> Mote, 465.

<sup>283</sup> Hsiao, 59.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>285</sup> Mote, 466.

Kubilai's need to invest heavily in securing the dynasty's vital national interests resulted in force management decisions that designed another expeditionary force a core of impressed, state-farm soldiers. In effect, the inevitable costs associated with achieving an acceptable state of stability in China sapped the Yuan Dynasty's vast resources just as it would for Imperial Japan during the Sino-Japanese War, as well as the Chinese Nationalists during the Chinese Civil War, centuries later during the 1900s. As with the first expedition, Kubilai lacked the resources to build an expeditionary force capable of projecting the Mongol way of war across the Korea Strait. He again decided to accept the risk of deploying an affordable force rather than a force with the appropriate means to subjugate Japan.

The size estimates of the force assembled for the second expedition range from 100,000 to 140,000 soldiers. The preponderance of these soldiers were impressed into service from Korea and China, and they were slated for transport aboard as many as 3,500 ships according to records from the Kamakura.<sup>286</sup> Lorge notes that estimates from Chinese sources contain as few as "33,000 (soldiers) and 2,000 horses."<sup>287</sup> This low number of horses indicate that cavalry was again limited for the expeditionary force, providing sufficient mounts for only 250 to 400 cavalymen under normal circumstances. Even with its small proportion of cavalry, the sealift required to transport the horses along with accompanying stores of water, feed, and fodder embarked to sustain the animals afloat undoubtedly came at a huge cost. Regardless of total size, the second

---

<sup>286</sup> Conlan, 264.

<sup>287</sup> Lorge, 52.

expeditionary force was substantially larger than the first—an enterprise made possible only by a vast pool of Chinese manpower made available through the final conquest of the Southern Song Dynasty.

The Mongols had to use two intermediate support bases in Asia to build the massive expeditionary force. The Busan support base again served as the central point for generating the forces drawn from the Korean Peninsula. The Koreans struggled to assemble this force as a result of the butcher's bill from the first Japanese expedition. That venture had consumed many of Korea's able-bodied males, thus stymieing Korean agricultural production and economy writ large during the Interwar Period.<sup>288</sup> In an effort to offset these manpower mobilization challenges, Kubilai decided to use impressed state-farm soldiers from China, requiring the establishment of a second support base in China. This complicated deployment plans by requiring forces generated in China, which comprised two-thirds of the expeditionary force, to traverse more than 480 miles of open ocean to reach the theater of operations.<sup>289</sup>

Kubilai Khan appointed commanders to lead each of the three main constituents that composed the expeditionary force—the Chinese, Koreans, and the Mongols. This ensured that conscripted and impressed warriors from each nation fought under leaders of their own ethnicity. The Koreans insisted that the 10,000 soldiers and 15,000 sailors from Korea remain under the command of Korean leadership.<sup>290</sup> Hong Tagu, a Korean

---

<sup>288</sup> Rossabi, 208.

<sup>289</sup> Conlan, 255.

<sup>290</sup> Rossabi, 208.

General, therefore served as the commander for Korean forces and the admiral in charge of the invasion fleet.<sup>291</sup>

Kubilai also appointed Fan Wen-he, a former Song general, to lead the expeditionary force from China, with assistance from a Mongol Commander named Hsin-tu. Together, they commanded the 100,000 soldiers and sailors of the southern invasion force.<sup>292</sup> The decision to appoint separate leaders for each national component of the combined expeditionary force appeased key stakeholders but came at the expense of unity of command and commitment. The troubles in the chain of command started at the top with Kubilai's lack of involvement and his failure to appoint an overall commander for the expeditionary force. These poor personnel management decisions resulted in dysfunctions and disagreements that plagued the expedition from start to finish.

The concept of operations for the expedition called for the Korean Fleet of 40,000 soldiers to deploy from Busan and conduct a link-up with the 100,000 soldiers of the Chinese Fleet, in the vicinity of the outlying islands, before commencing operations against Japan.<sup>293</sup> Given the ambition and complexity of conducting a link-up at sea, the Mongols' plan for deployment risked the dissolution of the entire operation if delays or disruptions occurred during force closure. The prospects of catastrophe were heightened

---

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> Rossabi, 208.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid., 209.

in the absence of suitable means of communication between the two converging fleets once they set sail for the theater of operations.

### The Japanese

In the immediate aftermath of the first expedition, the Japanese planned a retaliatory attack on Korea, scheduled for October of 1275, in response to its support of the first Mongol incursion.<sup>294</sup> The preparations for punitive “advances into foreign countries” included inventories of warriors, ships, and horses, among other matters.<sup>295</sup> These preparations also demonstrated the willingness of Japan to centrally assess and mobilize the nation’s assets and warriors to support collective defense and contingency operations abroad. Japan decided that the punitive raids, known as *wako*, against Korea had to wait, ultimately delaying them until 1350.<sup>296</sup>

The Kamakura made a point of convincing the populace that a great crisis faced Japan, given the likelihood of a follow-on Mongol incursion. After all, Japan’s trade relations with China and Korea provided access to important information concerning the persistence of Mongol imperial expansion. As a result, the Kamakura dispatched directives stating that it was the “height of disservice” not to prepare for the defense of the nation.<sup>297</sup>

---

<sup>294</sup> Conlan, 215.

<sup>295</sup> Conlan, 215.

<sup>296</sup> Turnbull, 88.

<sup>297</sup> Conlan, 213. Translation of Letter from Hojo Tokimune to Oromo Yoiyasu concerning preparations for the imminent second Mongol invasion attempt of 1281.

The Kamakura directed preparations for the return of the Mongols, codifying the need for warriors to operate under the orders of their *shugos* who were to “aid in defensive preparations and perform outstanding service in defensive battles.”<sup>298</sup> This demonstrated unified leadership and provided a stark contrast to the Yuan Dynasty’s growing stability requirements that diffused resources away from preparations for the conquest of Japan. The Japanese invested in a number of projects to defend the islands against any future attacks from the sea.

### Building the Wall

The construction of a defensive wall along Hakata Bay was by far the most significant construction project undertaken to bolster Japan’s defense during the Interwar Period. The wall enabled the Japanese to establish a deliberate defense-in-depth that was complemented by a standing defense force created from the Kamakura’s explicit direction that the “gokenin and gunpyo, lower-ranking warriors, shall follow the orders of the *shugo* and perform the service of defensive battle.”<sup>299</sup>

The wall, which reached a height of two meters along most of its expanse, was built within 50 meters of the highwater mark.<sup>300</sup> It stretched for 12 miles along Hakata Bay and took five years to build.<sup>301</sup> Given its design and positioning, it’s clear that the

---

<sup>298</sup> Conlan, 232. Translation from Hojo Sadatoki.

<sup>299</sup> Conlan, 213. Translation of Letter from Hojo Tokimune to Oromo Yoiyasu concerning preparations for the imminent second Mongol invasion attempt of 1281.

<sup>300</sup> Turnball, 54.

<sup>301</sup> Rossabi, 207.



Japanese intended to deny a landing force uninhibited access to the shores of Kyushu at the water's edge.

Walls have frustrated amphibious operations throughout history as one of the most rudimentary forms of area denial technology. Unlike the seawall in Inchon, Korea (built to protect the city from the significant tidal variations of the Korea Bay) that required the X Corps to use pre-fabricated scaling ladders during the legendary amphibious assault during the Korean War, the wall built at Hakata was constructed specifically to prevent a landing force from getting ashore. While the Mongols had the ability to bypass this wall, the complete lack of intelligence collection efforts prevented the expeditionary force from having any knowledge of the obstacle that would impede their planned amphibious assault.

Japan built other fortifications in Kyushu. These served to prepare for the anticipated Mongol invasion according to official correspondence from Oromo Yoriyasu, who ordered his deputy to ensure that fortifications were built by the *shugo* headquarters in Chikugo Province.<sup>302</sup> The *Invasion Scrolls* elude to similar preparations for future invasions when Takezaki Suenaga refers to a fortified command post he observed on his journey to wage battle against the Mongol invasion fleet.<sup>303</sup>

Beyond these significant construction projects, the Japanese also implemented guard force rotations to ensure adequate forces were prepared to respond year-round

---

<sup>302</sup> Conlan, 277.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid., 119.

against invaders.<sup>304</sup> The soldiers assigned to the guard posts were forbidden from traveling away from Kyushu without permission. There is also evidence of logistics shaping efforts directed by the Kamakura concerning the requisition and storage of excess stocks of rice and grains in support of their deliberate defense of the home islands.<sup>305</sup> The Japanese built a defensive scheme that synchronized resources and measures capable of being employed in unison.<sup>306</sup>

Official Japanese records contain evidence of the indications and warnings of the coming expeditions. On 8 December 1280, Hojo Tokimune stated “concerning the guarding of the Chinzei, it has been reported that the Mongol foreign pirates will attack during the fourth month of the next year. Quickly report to [your *shugo*] headquarters and be highly prepared.”<sup>307</sup> To facilitate this reporting system, Japan relied on a series of relay signaling stations on the outlying islands and the coast of the home islands to provide timely reporting of the approach of a hostile fleet.<sup>308</sup> While Japan learned from the experience of the first Mongol incursion, it still had to overcome organizational inertia and internal conflict of its own.

Despite the noteworthy preparations, the Japanese were confronted with a considerable amount of internal strife regarding administrative and constabulary

---

<sup>304</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid., 223.

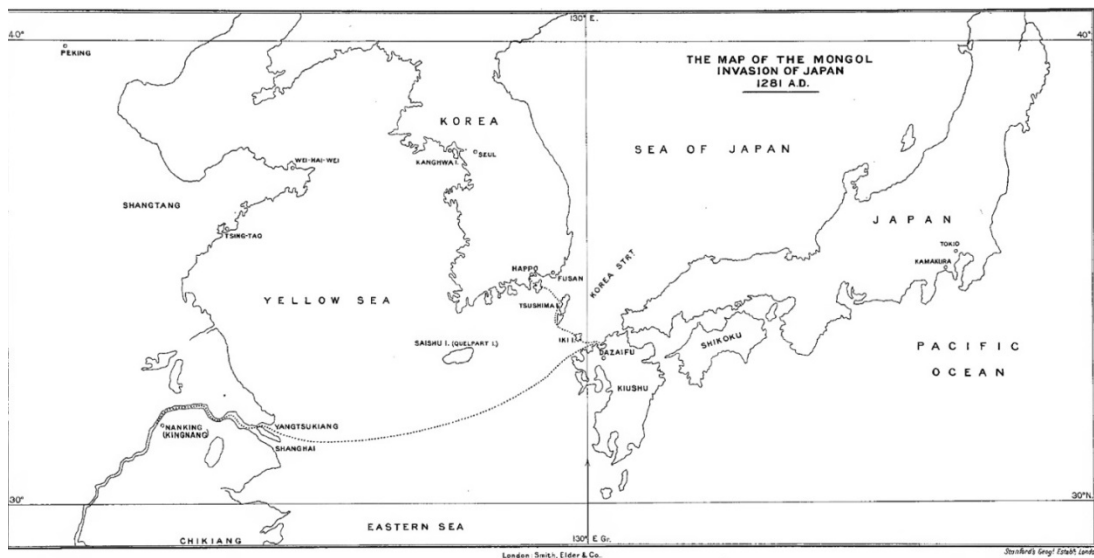
<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>308</sup> Yamada, 105-110.

authorities between the *shugos* and the *gokenin*.<sup>309</sup> The interjection of the Kamakura in such affairs not only showed an appreciation of the need for unity of effort, but also the existential threat posed by a Mongol invasion force prepared for an amphibious assault. Quelling these matters of internal strife became such a serious matter that the Kamakura threatened to “severely punish” those who disobeyed orders for their “disservice.”<sup>310</sup>

In 1281, Hojo Tokimune received advanced warning of the imminent Mongol expedition and issued a mandate to begin preparations for the defense of Japan: “In order to be fully prepared for the foreign pirates . . . if you hear that the pirate ships have entered the shipping lanes of the Sanyo ocean, perform defensive battle service.”<sup>311</sup>

### The Second Expedition



<sup>309</sup> Conlan, 213.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

<sup>311</sup> Conlan, 241.

Figure 5. The Strategic Deployment of Forces on Two Sea Lines of Communication to Support the Second Expedition to Japan

Source: Nakaba Yamada, *Ghenko: The Mongol Invasion of Japan* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1916), 183.

The Mongol expeditionary force set sail for Japan in June 1281. The plan called for the Northern and Southern Fleets to conduct a link-up at sea off of the west coast of Japan before beginning their amphibious assault on Kyushu.<sup>312</sup> As with most operations, the expeditionary force scrapped the original plan shortly after setting sail. In the absence of the operational and strategic means of communication that were key elements of the Mongol way of war, the expeditionary forces were isolated from external support. This left each of the fleet commanders to pursue the courses of action that suited their own interests.

Upon the arrival of the Northern Fleet in theater, Hong Tagu, the Korean Admiral, decided to act on his own after discovering that the Southern Fleet was nowhere to be found.<sup>313</sup> Unbeknownst to him, the Southern Fleet had been delayed by significant logistical hang-ups that only exacerbated the difficulties of a voyage that was four times longer than Hong Tagu's movement from Korea. The decision to act alone, prior to link-up, placed the entire campaign in jeopardy.

---

<sup>312</sup> Amphibious assault. A type of amphibious operation that involves establishing a force on a hostile or potentially hostile shore. Department of Defense, JP 3-02, *Amphibious Operations*, GL-6.

<sup>313</sup> Rossabi, 209.

Hong Tagu's first objective was the seizure of Iki Island, and his force landed on the island on 10 June 1281.<sup>314</sup> As with the first Mongol expedition, the landing force subdued the defenses on Iki Island with overwhelming force, employing massed formations of Korean pikemen. Unlike the first campaign, however, the Japanese defense forces rapidly mobilized a force of small boats as a means of waging area denial warfare to disrupt the deployment of the Mongol troop transport ships and tenders.<sup>315</sup>

The *Invasion Scrolls* show evidence of swarms of Japanese raiding craft dispatched to contest the Mongol amphibious force. The scrolls also capture the words of Takazake Suenaga, who claimed to have said, "I am a member of the shugo's forces who has been ordered to get onboard the next boat that arrives and fight!" The battle reports from the battle at Iki Island provide additional evidence of these efforts. In these reports, Hishijima Tokinori, the *gokenin* of Satsuma, stated that "several thousand of the Mongol pirates' boats attacked Iki . . . crossed over to the island and defended it."<sup>316</sup> Similarly, Kasai Norikage, one of Shoni Kagesuke's warriors, wrote about fighting in the waters off of Hizen Province, where he managed to "pursue a large vessel, one of three Mongol pirate crafts, and do battle [after] boarding [that] enemy ship."<sup>317</sup> The account goes on to

---

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> Area Denial. Action, activity, or capability, usually short-range, designed to limit an enemy force's freedom of action within an operational area. Department of Defense, JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, Gl-6.

<sup>316</sup> Conlan, 219.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid., 221.

state that Norikage “decapitated the enemy while his younger brother, Hironori, pursued the foreign pirates into the sea.”<sup>318</sup>

The *Invasion Scrolls* also show the *samurai* using small craft to deny the Mongol amphibious force uncontested access to landing sites.<sup>319</sup> Some of these vessels were referred to as “war boats,” crewed by oarsman and boarding parties of armored *samurai* with their retainers and bows.<sup>320</sup> With direct orders to “attack” the fleeing pirates, the *Invasion Scrolls* show evidence of the scramble by some warriors, such as Takezake Suenaga, to commandeer any available vessel to assist in the area denial fight.<sup>321</sup> Unlike the first expedition, where the defenders waited to fight the Mongols at the water’s edge, the *Invasion Scrolls* are illustrative in capturing the proactive seaborne defense of Kyushu in 1281. Takezake Suenaga for instance stated, “let’s find a good ship among the damaged craft in the harbor to the west of Takashima and drive off the pirates who are fleeing now.”<sup>322</sup>

---

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid., 148-175.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid., 139-174.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.



Figure 6. Japanese Small Boats Swarm Mongol Transport Vessels

Source: Stephen Turnbull, *The Mongol Invasions of Japan: 1274 and 1281* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2013), 58.

The geography of Japan predisposed the defense force for effective area denial warfare as a maritime nation. Japan's limited interior road network was a byproduct of its geographic character and heavily vegetated terrain. Thus, geography forced the Japanese to rely heavily on the seas for the domestic and international trade and transportation of goods. Thus, the society's maritime and martial culture combined to stymie the second expedition by exacting a significant toll on the Mongol forces afloat.

As with the first expedition, the Mongol force embarked aboard shipping, portrayed in the *Invasion Scrolls*, appears to have been fundamentally different from the Mongols of the steppe. While some of the Mongols on the vessels were armed with bows, most were armed with pikes that were close to useless in close-quarters fighting aboard a

ship.<sup>323</sup> Additionally, the *Invasion Scrolls* of the second invasion contain no evidence of horses or horse-specific transport vessels.<sup>324</sup> The *Invasion Scrolls* also reveal a Japanese qualitative assessment of the Mongol expeditionary force: “I don’t think they will fight with abandon, fearing not for their life until we board their enemy ships . . . capture them alive . . . they will prefer capture to death, for they want to return to their foreign lands.”<sup>325</sup> Although quite fitting for the limited-liability expeditionary forces, this description appears antithetical to the quality of warriors who filled the ranks of formations capable of executing the Mongol way of war.

Unlike the first expedition, wherein chance played a larger role than intelligence for the Japanese defense force, the networked communication system amongst the outlying islands provided timely indications and warnings of the approach of the Mongol amphibious force. This notion is supported by Yamada’s assessments that recognize the importance of the coastal warning system in bolstering the defense of Japan.<sup>326</sup> This system afforded the Japanese defenders more time to respond and fight the Mongols in depth while alerting the rest of Japan of the need to mobilize.

Following the seizure of Iki Island, Hong Tagu reembarked his landing force and decided to commence the invasion of the Japanese mainland without the Southern Fleet, which was still in transit from China. He decided on a follow-on objective of Manakata, a

---

<sup>323</sup> Conlan, 156-175.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>326</sup> Yamada, 105-110.



city at the north end of the defensive wall that ran along the coast of Kyushu from Hakata.

Arriving in theater a number of weeks behind schedule, the Southern Fleet, co-commanded by Fan Wen-he and Hsin-tu, similarly decided to forego link-up with the Northern Fleet and take action on their own accord. Together, the two wings of the expeditionary force represented a credible force capable of massing and concentrating decisive combat power. The combined military might of this force never came to fruition however, as the two wings continued to fight separately in the absence of any cooperation prior to the conduct of a link-up ashore on Kyushu.

The Southern Fleet landed on southern Kyushu and fought its way toward a link-up with the Northern Fleet. However, the Japanese defenses held their ground and stymied the expeditionary force through the months of July and August. Finally, with minimal sustainment capabilities and no established base of support, the tensions between the commanders of the expeditionary forces reached a breaking point as the will of the impressed Korean and Chinese soldiers collapsed.<sup>327</sup> The inability to employ and sustain the force in accordance with the Mongol way of war further reduced any chance at success for the expeditionary force that was rapidly unraveling aboard Kyushu.

In the end, the second expedition to Japan achieved equally dismal results as the first, failing to subjugate Japan or accomplish much beyond a number of punitive raids on the outlying islands before transitioning into an indecisive holding pattern along the shores of Kyushu. Unfortunately, sources vary widely in their explanations of the

---

<sup>327</sup> Rossabi, 211.

conclusion of the campaign, making it difficult to decipher precisely how events unfolded.

The *Yuan Shi*, for example, provides a euphemistic assessment of the conclusion of the campaign, indicating that the expeditionary force returned back to China in “triumph” after facing weather that forced them to abandon the mission.<sup>328</sup> Other accounts indicate that the second expedition found itself marooned ashore on Takishima Island after having lost its ships in a catastrophic storm that killed all but 30,000 soldiers who were subsequently taken prisoner by the *samurai*.<sup>329</sup> The prisoners were then marched to Hakata, where all were executed, with the exception of 10,000 Chinese soldiers who were spared as slaves.<sup>330</sup> According to Cordier, Fan Wen-hu, and the other generals leading the expedition, had already abandoned the expedition ahead of the disaster, never to be seen again.<sup>331</sup> Regardless, most accounts agree that after two months of inconclusive fighting in and around Kyushu, the second expedition dissolved due to a mix of Japanese fighting skill, poor leadership, ill-equipped forces, and unfavorable weather. Likewise, many accounts, with the exception of the *Yuan Shi*, agree that no more than 10 to 20 percent of the expeditionary force escaped from the fiasco in Japan.<sup>332</sup>

---

<sup>328</sup> China Twenty-Four Histories, loc. 22952.

<sup>329</sup> Yule, 260-261.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

<sup>332</sup> Lorge, 52.

In the aftermath of the second expedition, the Kamakura passed a series of resolutions to maintain the nation's readiness to confront future incursions. Despite "repelling the Mongol pirate ships," the Kamakura declared that the nation's defenders must remain in place to deal with any follow-on operations conducted by the Mongol invaders.<sup>333</sup> Guidance was also issued to repair fortifications, maintain guard duty rotations, and inspect every vessel, day-and-night, in order to prepare for and guard against any future Mongol incursions.<sup>334</sup>

### The Third Expedition to Japan: Calling it off

The first two expeditions failed to achieve the desired strategic objective of subjugating Japan. Undeterred by the results of these abysmal failures, Kubilai gave immediate orders to begin preparations for a third expedition.<sup>335</sup> Despite losing as many as 100,000 foreign soldiers and three flotillas of ships from China and Korea, he still had his Mongol armies largely intact, albeit deployed on the western front of the empire. If nothing else, his decision to accept the risk of conducting limited-liability campaigns had not cost him the Dynasty's most loyal and well-trained warriors. Further, Kubilai, perhaps better than anyone, understood that the ultimate victories in China and Korea were only realized through decades of persistence in protracted conflicts. It seems reasonable to believe that Kubilai saw his protracted conflict model, if employed in a

---

<sup>333</sup> Conlan, 230. Translation of a mandate from the *bakafu* in Kamakura to the leaders of Kyūshū regarding regulations following the invasion.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid.

<sup>335</sup> Rossabi, 212.

similar fashion to the wars in Korea and China, as a viable option to deliver desired results in Japan if applied over a long enough period of time.

Kubilai Khan accomplished what his grandfather Chinggis had dreamt of—the unification of China. The hard-fought war against the Song Dynasty taught him that empire-building required resilience, persistence, and commitment. Thus, Kubilai’s honor, pride, and insatiable need to maintain his legitimacy led him to triple-down on the conquest of Japan and avenge the embarrassing losses that brought the Mongol Empire’s established order into question.<sup>336</sup>

The Yuan Dynasty began its preparations for a third expedition, scheduled to set sail in 1286.<sup>337</sup> In a similar fashion to the second expedition, Kubilai demanded that the Chinese and Koreans begin constructing ships and amassing material provisions to outfit a new expeditionary force on an even grander scale. He also looked to others, such as the Jurchen of Manchuria, to assist in providing the manpower and material needs to support the project, as a way to offset the recurring costs imposed on other parts of the Yuan’s dominion.<sup>338</sup> Given the advice of his trusted advisors, however, along with significant protests lodged by the Koreans and southern Chinese regarding the exorbitant costs of another expedition, Kubilai eventually canceled the plan entirely. He may have recognized that the land where “gold is abundant beyond all measure” and “so far from

---

<sup>336</sup> Rossabi, 212.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

the mainland” lay beyond the strategic reach of his great empire.<sup>339</sup> He understood that his desired ends in Japan exceeded his diplomatic, economic, and military means.

The prospects of a third expedition to Japan ran the “risk” of collapsing the Yuan Dynasty through the exhaustion of its industrial and agricultural base, dissipation of its over-stretched military strength, and capitulation to growing instability from within and beyond its borders. Given the abortive results of the first two campaigns undertaken by Kubilai’s under-resourced expeditionary forces, the conquest of Japan required, at the very least, a large contingent of higher-quality troops outfitted with all of the complements of the Mongol way of war, to include a massive sustainment enterprise capable of extending the operational reach of the expeditionary forces beyond the shores of Kyushu. But even with an expeditionary force composed of all of the best troops the Mongol empire could muster, Kubilai likely recognized that success was not guaranteed, based off his experience gained through decades of continental campaigning. Kubilai understood that the continuance of his limited-objective war to subjugate Japan was no longer worth the risk to his position or the empire. Given the tenuous geostrategic context of the dynasty in the 1280s, the island nation of Japan forever remained beyond the strategic reach of the Mongol empire and its military might.

---

<sup>339</sup> Yule, 253.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: DISCARDING THE

MONGOL WAY OF WAR

So, out of this quarrel between them, there arose a great war, and several great battles were fought by the host of Kaidu against the Host of the great Khan, his uncle. And the great Khan from year's end to year's end keeps an army watching all Kaidu's frontier, lest he should make forays on his dominions.<sup>340</sup>

— Marco Polo

The Yuan Dynasty's war against Japan was an abject failure on the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of warfare. While the Mongols demonstrated the ability to leverage the vast resources of the empire to project power into Japan, their under-resourced expeditionary forces proved, on two occasions, to be incapable of achieving the dynasty's peripheral interest of subjugating Japan. Simply stated, the dynasty lacked the strategic reach to sustain operations beyond the coastal foothills of Kyushu.

The failure of the war with Japan was rooted in strategic resourcing decisions that deprived the expeditionary forces of the means required to wage the Mongol *way* of war. The dynasty's investment trail of human and economic capital reflected the dynasty's careful management of security needs and risk exposure in a tenuous geostrategic context. To balance these needs, Kubilai decided to pursue a limited war against Japan when diplomacy failed to attain the island nation's submission. By necessity, he was forced to build limited-liability expeditionary forces without detracting from the vast resource investments needed to meet his vital security commitments in China and Central

---

<sup>340</sup> Yule, 458.

Asia. In lieu of the notorious Mongol cavalry columns that formed the cornerstone of their continental empire, the Yuan sent state-farm soldiers pulled from the fields of Korea and China and impressed into military service. This decision robbed the expeditionary forces of the maneuver and firepower of horse-borne archers and heavy cavalry lancers, thereby supplanting the exceptional mobility of traditional Mongol military formations with foot-mobile pikemen. It also deprived the expeditions of loyal, well-trained warriors who were committed to the advancement of the Mongol Empire and its imperial interests.

In essence, Kubilai built the force he could afford rather than the one he wanted. Given his finite resources, he committed his most precious warriors and resources to the vital national interests that addressed the survival of his lifetime's crowning achievement—the Yuan Dynasty itself.

Above all, the civil war with Kaidu sapped the dynasty of its best cavalry warriors and a considerable share of its annual economic and agricultural production in the interest of protecting Central Asia with forces constantly deployed afield.<sup>341</sup> As a result of its geostrategic implications, the civil war represented the highest vital national security interest for the dynasty because it had existential implications regarding Kubilai's reign as *khan*. He recognized that losing the civil war to Kaidu, a royal descendent of Ogodei Khan, would provide Kaidu with a legitimate claim to the position of *khan* of the Mongol Empire. Kubilai also recognized that he could not afford to lose his support base in Central Asia. Unlike his peripheral interest in the subjugation of Japan, Kubilai could not afford to ignore Kaidu.

---

<sup>341</sup> Hsiao, 59.

Aside from tying up 300,000 of his best warriors that could have been committed to the conquest of Japan, the civil war also caused a great upheaval within ethnic Mongol society. According to Ch'i-Ch'ing Hsiao:

The prolonged wars in these areas against Kaidu's camp drew a great commitment of Yuan troops, exhausted the military households, and eventually shook the military foundations of the dynasty. As a dynasty based in China, the Yuan seems to have necessarily played a defensive role in this war. Troops had to be dispatched from China proper to the Mongolian steppes and the oases of Turkestan . . . the need to maintain huge garrisons in Inner Asia not only exhausted military families who had to provide garrison soldiers with clothes and equipment, but also imposed tremendous logistic and financial problems on the Yuan government.<sup>342</sup>

In the end, the conscious choice to undertake the expeditions to Japan with a state-farm army represented a calculated risk decision in an attempt to balance imperial conquest with geopolitical political realities facing the Yuan Dynasty.

The other vital security interest that shaped the outcome of the war with Japan was the need to stabilize the whole of China and prevent the consolidation of power and revolts. Kubilai's Garrison System, which required a commitment of close to a million trustworthy soldiers to perform constabulary functions throughout China, also had implications regarding the quality of human capital available, for commitment to the expeditions to Japan.

The manpower composition of the expeditions represents a fundamental deviation from the Mongol way of war. The high concentration of impressed soldiers robbed the expeditionary forces of the human capital required to employ the Mongol way of war. In contrast to the great formations of loyal Mongol Cavalry, the ranks of the expeditionary

---

<sup>342</sup> Hsiao, 57-60.



forces deployed to Japan were flush with Korean and Chinese soldiers impressed into service under the banner of a conqueror. These formations of impressed soldiers were not reared as products of Mongol military culture. Instead, they were raised under one of two conditions—either under the oppression of the Mongol Empire or in a society at war against it. Further, the state-farm soldiers were not trained to fight together as cohesive units as Mongol formations were. Plucked from the agricultural tracts of land in Korea and China, these impressed soldiers lacked the individual skills and implicit connection to their Mongol leaders forged through years of training and campaigning abroad. The expeditionary forces were also deficient in two key elements that were central to the Mongol way of war: cavalry formations and combined arms capabilities.<sup>343</sup>

The loss of tactical and operational mobility in the absence of cavalry formations armed with composite bows had the greatest foundational impact on the Mongol way of war. Not only did the expeditionary forces lack the ability to rapidly expand lodgments ashore, they also lacked the tactical mobility needed to exploit opportunities presented by the individualized style of combat waged by the *samurai*.<sup>344</sup> This flipped the tactical mobility equation that was a traditional strength of Mongol formations. The *samurai* used this advantage to good effect, using terrain and mobility to achieve success against an immobile force with a numerical advantage. Additionally, in the absence of the large herds of horses, and other pastoral animals that accompanied Mongols on campaign, the

---

<sup>343</sup> Conlan, 68-85.

<sup>344</sup> Department of Defense, JP 3-02, *Amphibious Operations*, IV-11.

expeditionary forces lacked the transportation capacity required to sustain large forces afield had they advanced beyond the coast of Kyushu.

From a fires' perspective, the *Invasion Scrolls* also indicate that the Mongols' ability to generate effects through fires were limited by the challenges of projecting combat power ashore. Not only did the landing forces lack the benefit of massed effects from light cavalry armed with composite bows, they also lacked the massive concentration of siege equipment that played a central role in the eventual capitulation of the Song Dynasty in China. Although evidence exists to support the use of artillery and incendiary munitions in the vicinity of Hakata, these assets were more than likely limited to small, mobile weapons, as well as ship-based platforms, given a limited transportation capacity of the expeditionary forces.<sup>345</sup>

The Mongol expeditions also suffered from a dearth of intelligence and shaping operations that were a signature of other campaigns and the Mongol way of war. Given the maritime nature of the expeditions, the Mongols were unable to employ scouts, screens, guards, or spies ahead of their landings to gain critical information regarding the composition, disposition, and strength of enemy forces. Traditional Mongol formations relied extensively on reconnaissance efforts and sound intelligence to enable maneuver and shape decisions for the employment of the force at a time and place of the Mongols' choosing. The actions ashore in Japan were, in principle, meeting engagements on unfamiliar land against unique enemy forces from a militarized culture. Similarly, the absence of effective intelligence collections, or the incorporation of lessons learned

---

<sup>345</sup> Conlan, 66-85.

during the first expedition, denied the landing force the ability to exploit the opportunities of maneuver afforded by amphibious operations.

None of the accounts of the battles in Japan bear any mention of operations ahead of the main force in order to set conditions for the landing. Contemporary amphibious warfare doctrine emphasizes the importance of employing an amphibious advance force—a temporary organization within which precedes the main body to an operating area to prepare the objective for the main assault through reconnaissance efforts and the seizure of supporting positions.<sup>346</sup> The Mongols routinely used advanced forces such as covering forces during the conduct of operations ashore in central Asia; therefore, it is curious that no attempt was made to apply the same logic to their naval expeditions to Japan.

To further complicate the lack of advance force operations, the Japanese received indications and warnings of the pirates' approach as a result of their operations aboard Tsushima and Iki islands.<sup>347</sup> These battles, which costed the expeditionary forces any semblance of strategic and operational surprise, enabled the *samurai* to organize their defenses on Kyushu ahead of Mongol landing operations. The mobilization of the defense force played an even larger role during the second expedition, wherein the *samurai* utilized small-boat swarm tactics and boarding parties to disrupt the Mongol troop transport ships and frustrate their attempts to land troops ashore.<sup>348</sup>

---

<sup>346</sup> Department of Defense, JP 3-02, *Amphibious Operations*, II-22.

<sup>347</sup> Conlan, 241. Translation of letter from Hojo Tokimune.

<sup>348</sup> Conlan, 136-174.

The expeditionary forces also demonstrated significant deviations from the Mongol way of war from a command and control perspective. On the tactical level, the *Invasion Scrolls* indicate that the landing force brought ample tactical communications capabilities ashore in the way of drums and banners.<sup>349</sup> Descriptions of the battles record similar observations. These assets allowed the landing force to synchronize movements of the formation in accordance with orders from the chain of command, enabling the landing force to synchronize operations even if the battle tactics employed differed from those of traditional Mongol formations. These assets did not, however, solve the lack of communications capabilities on the operational and tactical level.

From a strategic perspective, the absence of the *yam* system, or a viable alternative, all but ensured that each expedition remained in total isolation from the control and support of the Yuan Dynasty. While the Yuan lacked the capacity and capability to deploy strategic reserves in support of the expeditions, strategic communications enabling the dynasty to recall or redirect its forces if needed. The lack of strategic communications also denied the Mongols the ability to establish a reporting chain through which Kubilai, or his Privy Council, could have maintained their situational awareness directed the conduct of operations.

The unique conditions inherent in the conduct of operations in the maritime domain also deprived the expeditions of the operational level communication capabilities that were critical to other Mongol campaigns ashore. For example, the expeditionary force deployed in the 1281 campaign lacked the capability to facilitate communication

---

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., 78-79.

and coordination between the Northern and Southern Fleets. While the ability to communicate may not have changed the outcome of the expedition, it does demonstrate a significant deviation from the Mongol way of war that resulted in the unorganized commitment of forces to battle in the theater of operations.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the expeditions lacked the leadership structure and capacity to deliver decisive results during the war with Japan. While overall command of the expeditions remained under the direction of Mongol generals, their forces were cobbled together without training and expected to fight under unfamiliar leaders within the coalition. Just as the dynasty's security requirements deprived the expeditions of quality warriors, vital interests also required Kubilai to assign his ablest generals to the protection of Central Asia as well as the dynasty's borders. For example, Kubilai detailed his most prolific generals, to include Bayan and Aju, to lead the fight against rival *khanates* on the Asian steppe in 1276.<sup>350</sup> Similar to material and financial resources, Kubilai only had so much leadership capital to go around, and he invested it where it mattered most—in the pursuit of vital interests.

The aforementioned deviations from the Mongol way of war were all logical complications that tilted the scales of advantage toward the Japanese *samurai*, in the defense of their homeland. This, coupled with the challenges of projecting military power across the Korea Strait, ensured that the two limited-liability Mongol expeditions faced certain peril. While some argue about whether the Japanese defenders or the *kamikazes* prevented the Mongols from conquering Japan, this thesis presents a third option that

---

<sup>350</sup> Mote, 466.

argues a fundamental shift in thinking about the nature of the Mongols' attempts to conquer Japan.

Kubilai understood the geostrategic context of his dominion, as well as the severity of the domestic and external threats facing the Yuan Dynasty. He understood that vital security interests required the investment of significant resources that could not be used to generate a traditional force Mongol Cavalry for commitment against Japan. As a result, he accepted risk in pursuing a limited war. Unfortunately for the thousands of Chinese and Korean soldiers who lost their lives during the expeditions, these limited-liability campaigns were waged against an island nation prepared to mobilize its militaristic society to fight a total war if necessary. Japan recognized that the war was an existential fight against the oppression, subjugation, and exploitation that would follow in the wake of Mongol conquest. The Mongols would have been well-served in heeding Sun Tzu's adage: "do not press and enemy at bay."<sup>351</sup> The Japanese were prepared to pay the full measure in protecting their way of life.

In the end, the abysmal war against Japan was a symptom of a greater ill within the Yuan Dynasty and the Mongol Empire. Wasteful as they were, the abortive expeditions were mere storm clouds on the horizon of a faltering empire. In 1287, just a few years removed from the war with Japan, Kubilai found his armies flailing again in a remarkably similar situation in the Red River Valley of Vietnam, losing up to 300,000 soldiers to a committed adversary who was equally willing to fight with tenacity against

---

<sup>351</sup> Sun Tzu, 110.

an existential threat.<sup>352</sup> These military losses, coupled with growing unrest and rebellion, contributed to the rapid decline of the Yuan Dynasty. Within decades, the Mongols found themselves deposed from power and exiled back into the steppes of Central Asia with the rise of the Ming Dynasty.

When faced with vital security interests that consumed large portions of the dynasty's resources, Kubilai Khan accepted risk in his continued pursuit of peripheral interests that offered little return on investment and squandered precious blood and treasure. Unfortunately, many of the lessons from the war with Japan—the consequences of strategic overstretch, the challenges of operating in unique environments against committed adversaries, and the costs of going to war with the wrong capabilities—went unlearned.

---

<sup>352</sup> Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Viking Press, 1983), 101.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources

- China Twenty-Four Histories. *The History of Yuan Dynasty (Yuan Shi)*. Kindle e-book. Accessed 20 March 2019. [https://www.amazon.com/History-Yuan-Dynasty-Part-Twenty-fourbook/dp/B07JR885CZ/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?keywords=history+of+yuan+dynasty&qid=1553133777&s=gateway&sr=8-2](https://www.amazon.com/History-Yuan-Dynasty-Part-Twenty-fourbook/dp/B07JR885CZ/ref=sr_1_2?keywords=history+of+yuan+dynasty&qid=1553133777&s=gateway&sr=8-2).
- Conlan, Thomas D. *In Little Need of Devine Intervention: Takezaki Suenaga's Scrolls of the Mongol Invasions of Japan*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University East Asia Program, 2001.
- Rachewiltz, Igor. *The Secret History of the Mongols: A Mongolian Epic Chronically of the Thirteenth Century*, Vol. 1. Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2006.
- Yule, Henry, ed. *The Book of Ser Marco Polo the Venetian Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East, Volume 2*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903.

### Secondary Sources

- Adams, Ryon F. "Outfought and Outthought: Reassessing the Mongol Invasions of Japan." Master's Thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2009.
- Allsen, Thomas T. *Mongol Imperialism: The Policies of the Grand Qan Mongke in China, Russia, and the Islamic Lands 1251-1259*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987.
- Ballard, G. A. *The Influence of the Sea on the Political History of Japan*. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1921.
- Benfield, Darrel C. "The Mongols: Early Practitioners of Maneuver Warfare." Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2012.
- Brook, Timothy. *The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasty*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010.
- Chase, Kenneth W. "Mongol Intentions towards Japan in 1266: Evidence from a Mongol Letter to the Sung." *Sino-Japanese Studies Journal* 9, no. 2 (1990): 13-23. Accessed 20 March 2019. <http://chinajapan.org/articles/09.2/09.2chase13-23.pdf>.
- Clausewitz, Carl von. *On War*. Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976.
- Department of Defense. Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017.



- . Joint Publication (JP) 3-02, *Amphibious Operations*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2009.
- . Joint Publication (JP) 3-18, *Joint Forcible Entry Operations*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2018.
- . Joint Publication (JP) 3-35, *Deployment and Redeployment Operations*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2018.
- Department of the Army. Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*. Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate, 2017.
- DiMarco, Louis A. *War Horse: A History of the Military Horse and Rider*. Yardley, PA: Westholme Publishing, 2008.
- Endicot-West, Elizabeth. *Mongolian Rule in China: Local Administration in the Yuan Dynasty*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.
- Erickson, Andrew S., Lyle J. Goldstein, and Carnes Lord. *China Goes to Sea: Maritime Transformation in Comparative Historical Perspective*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009.
- Goodrich, Carrington, and Feng Chia-Sheng. *The Early Development of Firearms in China*. Edited by Peter A. Lorge. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2005.
- Gray, Colin S. “The American Way of War: Critique and Implications.” In *Rethinking the Principles of War*, edited by Anthony D. McIvor, 13-40. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005.
- Grygiel, Jakub. *Great Powers and Geopolitical Change*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016.
- Hart, Liddell B. H. *Strategy*. New York: Penguin Books, 1991.
- Headquarters Marine Corps. Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1-0, *Operations*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2001.
- Hsiao, Ch’i-ch’ing. *The Military Establishment of the Yuan Dynasty*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978.
- Jablonsky, David. *Roots of Strategy*. Book 4. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1999.
- James, Clayton D. “American and Japanese Strategies in the Pacific War.” In *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, edited by Peter Paret, Gordon A. Craig, and Felix Gilbert, 703-732. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986.

- Karnow, Stanley. *Vietnam: A History*. New York: Viking Press, 1983.
- Keegan, John. *A History of Warfare*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.
- Kissinger, Henry. *Diplomacy*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994.
- Kuehn, John T. *A Military History of Japan: From the Age of the Samurai to the 21st Century*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2014.
- Lorge, Peter A. *The Asian Military Revolution: From Gunpowder to the Bomb*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- Marshall, Robert. *Storm from the East: From Genghis to Khubilai Khan*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993.
- May, Timothy. *The Mongol Art of War: Chinggis Khan and the Mongol Military System*. Yardley, PA: Westholm Publishing, 2007.
- Mote, F. W. *Imperial China: 900–1800*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Parker, Geoffrey. *The Cambridge History of Warfare*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Peers, Chris, and Michael Perry. *Imperial Chinese Armies (2): 590-1260*. London: Osprey, 1996.
- Rossabi, Morris. *Kubilai Khan: His Life and Times*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988.
- Sasaki, Randall J. “The Origin of the Lost Fleet of the Mongol Empire.” Master’s Thesis, Texas A&M University, 2008.
- Stolberg, Alan G. “Crafting National Interests in the 21st Century.” In *Guide to National Security Issues, Volume II: National Security Policy and Strategy*, edited by J. Boone Bartholomees Jr., 3-14. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2008. Accessed 4 April 2019. [https://philwalter1058.files.wordpress.com/2017/09/crafting\\_national\\_interests\\_in\\_the\\_21st\\_century.pdf](https://philwalter1058.files.wordpress.com/2017/09/crafting_national_interests_in_the_21st_century.pdf).
- Sun Tzu. *The Art of War*. Edited by Samuel B. Griffith. London: Oxford University Press, 1963.
- Sverdrup, Carl. “Numbers in Mongol Warfare.” In *Journal of Medieval Military History Volume VIII*, edited by John France, Clifford J. Rogers, Kelly DeVries, 109-117. Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2010.

- Tangredi, Sam J. *Anti-access Warfare: Countering A2/AD Strategies*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2013.
- Thompson, Julian. *The Lifeblood of War: Logistics in Armed Conflict*. London: Brassey's, 1991.
- Turnball, Stephen. *The Mongol Invasions of Japan: 1274 and 1281*. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2013.
- Wilson, Andrew R. "The Maritime Transformation of Ming China." In *China Goes to Sea: Maritime Transformation in Comparative Historical Perspective*, edited by Andrew S. Erickson, Lyle J. Goldstein, and Carnes Lord, 238-285. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009.
- Yamada, Nakaba. *Ghenko: The Mongol Invasion of Japan*. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1916.