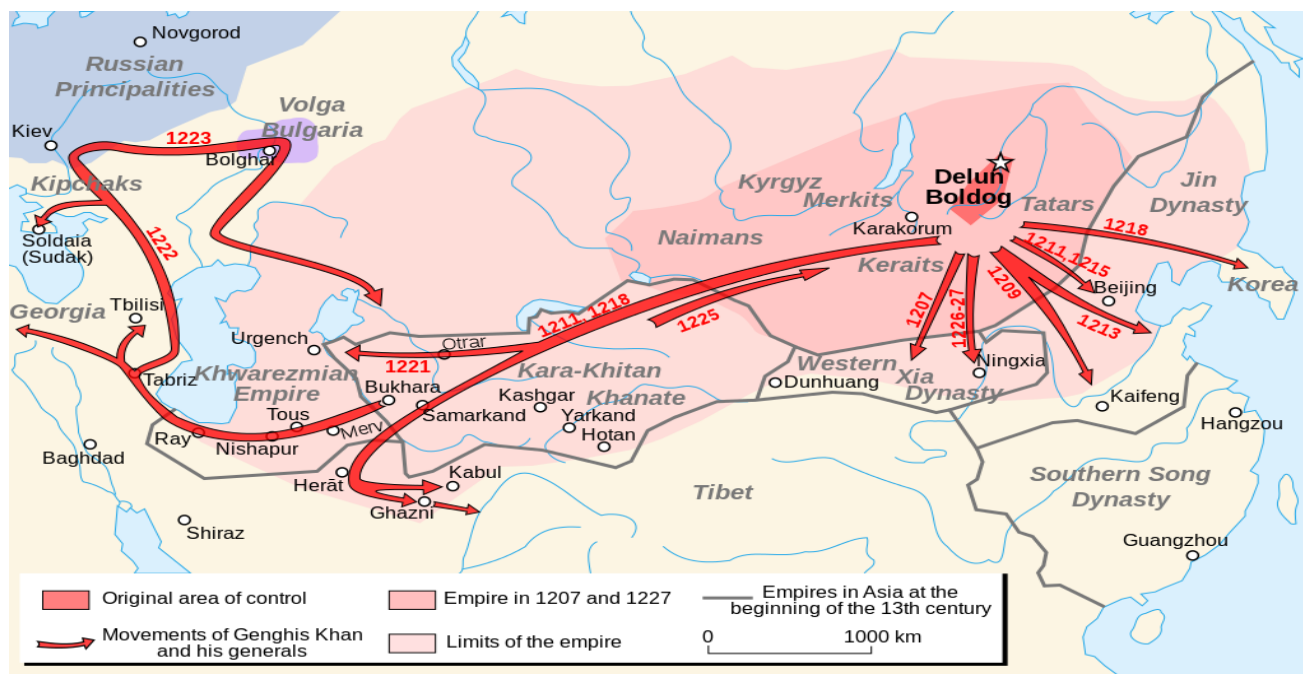


5.8 How the Stirrup Transformed Warfare

Background: One of the simplest and most interesting technological developments that revolutionized warfare was the stirrup. It was developed by Mongol horseman on the Central Asian plains around 1,000 BC. The addition of leather loops as footholds on either side of a horse saddle led to greater control of mounts and enhanced horses as fighting engines. Mongol fighters were a very effective light cavalry on the open plains. This contributed to the conquest of eastern, western and south Asian empires by the Mongols. Mongol armies with formidable horsemen armed with bows rapidly swept over Russia, Poland, Hungary, and in 1241 inflicted crushing defeats upon the Germans near Breslau and upon European cavalry near Buda. However, they were a less effective fighting force in the hills and forests of western Eurasia which finally ended their expansion westward. Stirrup technology spread rapidly. It made possible heavily armored, mounted knights as the chief military force in Western Europe and the evolution of feudalism.



Questions

1. What part of Eurasia was the original Mongol area of control?
2. What technological development helped make Mongol cavalry so effective?
3. How did this technology assist Mongol warriors in battle?
4. What role did this technology play in European feudalism?
5. Consider: Like cavalry was most effective on open plains. In what other area of the world were light cavalry, at least temporarily, able to slow the advance of a more powerful enemy?