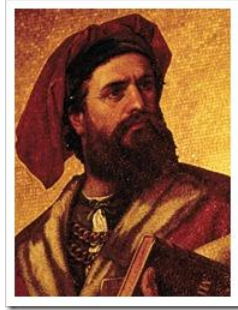


Marco Polo Discovers Paper Money



The two Polo Brothers, Niccoló and Maffeo, left Venice, Italy in 1265 for China. Niccoló's son, Marco, accompanied them on their second trip to China in 1271. Marco Polo served Kublai Khan for 17 years before returning to Italy. Marco Polo kept careful notes which he later used to write his book *The Travels of Marco Polo*. This extract describes how paper money was made and used within the empire.

Read the following excerpt carefully and answer the questions that follow on the next page.

In this city of Kanbalu (now Beijing), is the mint of the Great Khan, who may truly be said to possess the secret of the alchemists, as he has the art of producing money . . . He causes the bark to be stripped from . . . mulberry-trees. . . This . . . Is made into paper, resembling, in substance, that which is manufactured from cotton, but quite black. When ready for use, he has it cut into pieces of money of different sizes, nearly square, but somewhat longer than they are wide. . . The coinage of this paper money is authenticated with as much form and ceremony as if it were actual pure gold or silver; for to each note a number of officers, specially appointed, not only subscribe their names, but affix their seals also. . . The act of counterfeiting, it is punished as a capital offence. When thus coined in large quantities, this paper currency is circulated in every part of the Great Khan's dominions; nor dares any person at the peril of his life, refuse to accept it in payment. All his subjects receive it without hesitation, because, wherever their business may call them, they can dispose of it again in the purchase of merchandise they may require; such as pearls, jewels, gold, or silver. With it, in short, every article may be procured.



Early Chinese Paper Money

Marco Polo Discovers Paper Money

Name: _____

1. What was the paper money in Ancient China made from?
2. What happened if a person counterfeited this paper money?
3. How was trade affected by Paper money in Ancient China?
4. How can you tell from the above passage that Kublai Khan was truly a powerful man?
5. How does the paper money that Marco Polo described in his book compare with our money of today?