

Genghis Khan (1167-1227)

Doc. 1



Horrific though they were, Mongol atrocities were worse in rumor-as in dismemberment, roasting, and cannibalism portrayed in the 13th Century illustrated English Manuscript.

1. Why might this illustration be an exaggeration?

Doc. 2

“Man’s greatest good fortune is to chase and defeat his enemy, seize his total possessions, leave his married women weeping and wailing, ride his gelding (horse), use the bodies of his women...”

Genghis Khan

2. Why do you think the Mongols were so brutal?

Doc. 3

“Before being declared khan, Temujin (Genghis) had a reputation of being generous to those who joined him, giving them furs and horses. Many who suffered were suffering under unkind leaders switched their allegiance to him saying, “Temujin dresses his people in his own clothes, he permits them to ride his own horses.”

3. What qualities do you believe Genghis had that enabled him to create a large empire?

Doc. 4

“Being the adherent (follower) of no religion and the followers of no creed, Genghis Khan eschewed (avoided) bigotry (prejudice), and the preference of one faith to another, and placing of some above others; rather he honored and respected the learned and pious of every sect, recognizing such conduct as the way to the Court of God. And as he viewed the Muslims with the eye of respect, so also did he hold the Christians and idolaters in high esteem. As for his children and grandchildren, several of them have chosen a religion according to their inclination...”

4. How did Genghis Khan view religion? How do you think this helped him expand his empire?

Doc. 5

Battle Tactics of Genghis Khan

- Element of surprise
- Never repeat the patterns of movement in the same military campaign
- Pretend to retreat so that you can mount fresh horses and attack your tired enemies again
- Distract your enemy on the frontlines while other units attack from all angles

5. How do you think Genghis Khan’s battle tactics helped him expand his empire?

Impact of Mongol Rule

Doc. 6

Russia after the Mongol Conquest: An Eyewitness Account

"The Mongols went against Russia and enacted a great massacre in the Russian land, they destroyed towns and fortresses and killed people, they besieged Kiev which had been the capital of Russia, and after a long siege they took it and killed the inhabitants; for this reason, when we passed through that land, we found lying in the field countless skulls and bones of dead people; for this city had been extremely large and very populous, whereas now it has been reduced to nothing: barely two hundred houses stand there, and those people are held in the harshest slavery."

From: Archbishop Piano Carpini, papal legate, who crossed Southern Russia in 1245-1246 on his way to Mongolia; quoted in Nicholas Riasanovsky, *The History of Russia*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1969, p.79

6. According to the above document, what was the impact of the Mongol invasion on Russia?

Doc. 7 Tamerlane destroys Damascus, 1401

"I am the scourge [whip] of God appointed to chastise you, since no one knows the remedy for your unfairness except me. You are wicked, but I am more wicked than you, so be silent!" Thus spoke the all-powerful Mongol conqueror Tamerlane to a delegation of citizens outside the city of Damascus, the greatest city in Syria, in early 1401. The citizens had come to protest that the tribute demanded of them was beyond their means,...

Even after they had paid up, however, Tamerlane was not satisfied, and he handed the city over to his soldiers. What happened next was described by the Arab historian ibn-Taglribirdi: "They were beaten with canes, crushed in presses, scorched in flames, and suspended head down; their nostrils were stopped with rags filled with fine dust, which they inhaled each time they took a breath so that they almost died." After setting fire to the ransacked city, Tamerlane withdrew his army from Syria and marched on toward his next target."

Adapted from: *The Age of Calamity: AD 1300-1400*, Alexandria, VA., Time Life, 1989, p.71.

7. Why would Tamerlane burn the city and torture its citizens even after they paid the required tribute?

Doc. 8 China under Mongol Rule

"Foremost among Yuan [the Mongol dynasty founded by Kublai Khan in 1271] achievements was its transportation system. The Mongols, maintaining the world's largest empire, depended upon efficient transportation to hold the empire together. Roads were built throughout the empire, and all of them were linked with the nerve center, Tatu [today's Beijing]. Travelers and traders used them in peace time, and in time of war, troops could be dispatched quickly to trouble spots. An efficient postal system was maintained to transmit messages between Tatu and the provinces; and the Yuan regime also built the Grand Canal to link the Yangtze and [Huang He]".

Adapted from: Dun J. Li, *The Ageless Chinese: A History*, New York, Chas. Scribner, 1971, p.262.

8. Why was an efficient transportation system so important to the new Yuan empire?

Doc. 9 Kublai Khan

The Great Khan is the wisest man and the ablest in all respects, the best the ruler of subjects and of the empire and the man of highest character of all that have ever been in the whole history of the Tartars." -Marco Polo

9. What does Marco Polo's quote reveal about Mongol rule?

Doc. 10 Kublai's impact

...Chinese insularity was swept aside by a flood of foreign visitors...of the Great Khan. Kublai's merchant fleet developed important markets in India, Sri Lanka, Malaya, an Java and the Persian Gulf...Chinese manufacturers reached everywhere under the custody of Mongol world dominance and for the first time in human history Europe had direct contact with China."

10. What were the benefits of Kublai Khan's rule?