

---

# The Mongols: How Barbaric Were the “Barbarians”?

---

SV



---

A Document Based Question (DBQ)  
World History

## Mongols DBQ Lesson Plan – Shorter Version (SV)

### DAY 1

<b>HOOK (Optional)</b> 10 min.	The Hook Exercise is a critical part of this DBQ. The Hook involves defining the term “barbaric” and creating a list of attributes by which students will judge the Mongols.
<b>BACKGROUND ESSAY</b> 35 min.	Have students read the Background Essay. Be sure they are oriented in time (see Time Line. Take time with the essay. You may want to read it aloud. Fully grasping the story of conquest is important to understanding the documents that follow.
<b>Homework</b>	For homework, ask students to read rather quickly through the documents. Then, using the document list in their Student Guide Sheet, ask them to organize the documents into workable analytical categories. Review the analytical question. Around what analytical categories might they expect the documents to be organized? Repeat what they may already know, that discovering the organizational framework of a piece of writing is a huge step in understanding that writing. Outlines of document groupings are due before the Day 2 lesson.

### DAY 2

<b>DISCUSSION</b> 15 min.	Discuss outlines. Drawing from students' homework, create an outline that approaches the categories in the Teacher Document List or some viable alternative.
<b>DOCUMENT ANALYSIS</b> 30 min.	Using an overhead projector, examine one or more documents together as a class. Review with students what they are looking for – evidence that the Mongols were barbaric versus evidence they were not barbaric. On the board, or on a transparency of a Document Analysis Sheet, model the level of analytical notation you expect for each document. (See <i>Teachers' Toolkit</i> for samples.) Then, in pairs or small groups, have students work through the documents.
<b>Homework</b>	Students complete their document analysis.

### DAY 3

<b>DISCUSSION</b> 45 min.	When students have finished their analytical notes, conduct a full class discussion. Have transparencies of each document available for reference. Different individuals or pairs might be invited to come forward to describe a document or cluster of documents and assess the level of Mongol barbarism. Use the Content Notes and Teaching Tips in the Teacher Document Notes to guide your discussion.
------------------------------	---

### DAY 4 (optional)

<b>ESSAY</b> 45 min.	If the lesson is to culminate in an essay, unless the skill level of your class is high, one day for a writing workshop is suggested. Students can write their introductory paragraphs in class complete with title, “grabber,” thesis, and “road map” for how their paper will be developed. See Writing Guidelines in <i>The Teachers' Toolkit</i> for detailed suggestions.
<b>Homework</b>	Write essay.

### Pressed for Time?

**If only two days available. Day One:** Have students read the Background Essay the night before as homework. 1. In class, briefly review the historical content of the Essay. 2. Distribute the Hook Exercise and do in class. 3. Review the analytical question – *The Mongols: How Barbaric Were the “Barbarians”?* Can students predict possible analytical categories for how the documents might be organized? 4. For homework, divide the class into two equal groups. Group One is charged with reading through the 10 documents and developing a case that at bottom Mongol behavior in the 13th century was barbaric. Group Two is charged with finding evidence of civil Mongol behaviors and beliefs.

**Day Two:** Set up a debate between four volunteer members of each team. Give the teams 10 minutes to prepare their cases, writing the two positions on the board. Then, give each team 5 minutes to present their arguments to the class. Follow this with a general give and take with all students in class encouraged to participate. At the end ask if it is possible for both positions to be correct.

## TEACHER DOCUMENT LIST (SV)

There are 10 documents in the Shorter Version of this exercise. The documents are grouped into six analytical categories, one providing students with context, the others dealing with five aspects of Mongol life. An uncategorized list of documents appears at the beginning of the student materials. An important part of student analysis is to create analytical categories that may or may not be the same as those below.

### Context

Document 1: Map of the Mongol Empire

### Military Life and Warfare

Document 2: Carpini on Army Organization and Discipline

Document 3: Carpini on Battle Tactics

Document 4: The Taking of Nishapur

Document 5: Painting: Burial Alive

### Commerce

Document 6: Mongol Commerce in China and Persia

### Travel and Communication

Document 7: Battuta's Horses

Document 8: The Yams

### Religion

Document 9: Mongke Khan on God

### Law and Custom

Document 10: Fragments on Law and Custom

## STUDENT GUIDE SHEET

### The Mongols: How Barbaric Were the “Barbarians”?

**Directions:** In the 13th century CE the Mongols created the largest connected land mass empire in the history of the world. For centuries they have been remembered as a brutal tribe of nomadic barbarians who were a serious threat to people and civilizations throughout Asia and Europe. But is there more to the story? How barbaric were the barbarians?

SV

**It is suggested that you follow these steps:**

1. Read the Background Essay.
2. Skim through the documents to get a sense of what they are about.
3. Read the documents slowly. In the margin or on a Document Analysis Sheet record the main idea of each document.
4. Organize the documents by analytical category. One or more may be a context document. The categories might be different aspects of Mongol life.
5. Within each category, decide whether, in your opinion, Mongol practice or belief was positive or negative. Be able to explain each opinion citing concrete evidence.
6. Develop a summary answer to the question.

#### The Documents:

- Document 1: Map of the Mongol Empire
- Document 2: Carpini on Army Organization and Discipline
- Document 3: Carpini on Battle Tactics
- Document 4: The Taking of Nishapur
- Document 5: Painting: Burial Alive
- Document 6: Mongol Commerce in China and Persia
- Document 7: Battuta’s Horses
- Document 8: The Yams
- Document 9: Mongke Khan on God
- Document 10: Fragments on Law and Custom

## Teacher Notes

---

## The Mongols: How Barbaric Were the “Barbarians”?

### Introduction

Eight hundred years ago, during the 13th Century, a small tribe from the grasslands or **steppes** of central Asia conquered much of the known world. Operating from the backs of horses, Mongol warriors swept across much of Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe. Their reach extended from Korea to Poland, and from Vietnam to Syria. Nothing like it had ever been seen before. Nothing quite like it has been seen since.

The reputation of the Mongols is not pretty. Much of the world called them “barbarians.” For the ancient Greeks, “barbaros” simply meant foreigner. By the 1200s, “barbarian” was a much more negative term referring to people who lived beyond the reach of civilization, people who were savage, evil.

Below is a short sketch of Mongol history. Four maps are provided to help keep the story straight. This background essay is followed by ten documents. Your task is to use the background materials and the documents to judge the Mongol’s impact on the 13th and 14th Century world. Were they barbarians spreading death and destruction, or is there more to the story?

### Beginnings

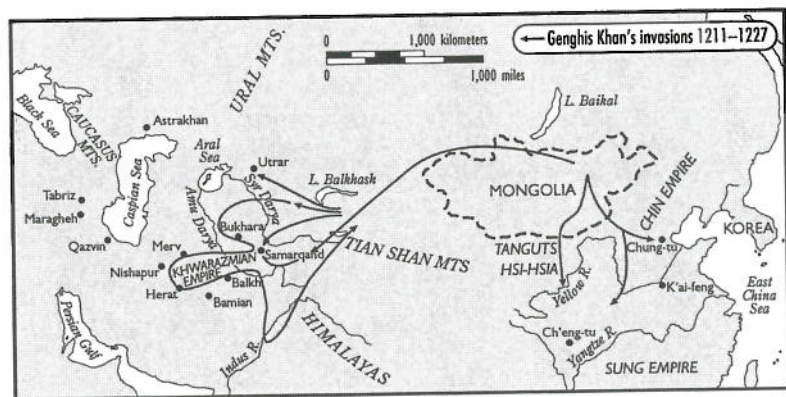
From the start, the Mongols lived in round, moveable houses they called **yurts**. They had few material possessions. They knew little about mining and cared nothing about farming. They were nomadic people who lived off the meat,

milk, and hide of horses, and the meat and wool of sheep.

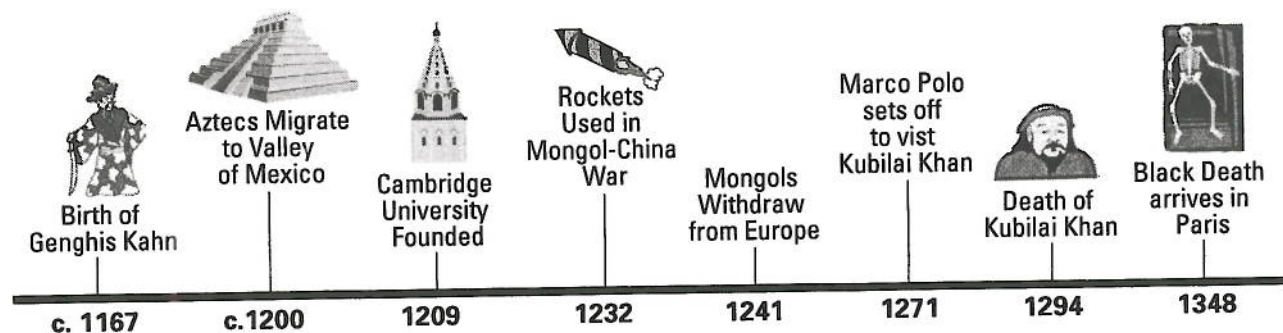
Then in 1167 a boy child was born on the Mongolian plains. His name was Temuchin. Temuchin did not have an easy childhood. His father was poisoned by a local enemy and the boy spent much of his teenage years fighting clan rivals. For an additional twenty years Temuchin fought to bring the Mongol clans of the region under one leadership. In 1206 Temuchin won that leadership and was given the title Genghis Khan. At this point, Genghis’ aspirations began to grow larger.

### The First Wave: North China and Ancient Persia

Genghis Khan’s first serious target was the Chin armies of north China in 1211. An army of 200,000 rode east. Numerous Chinese cities felt Mongol brutality. Slaughter was so great that the



streets of the Chinese capital were greasy with human fat and flesh. With north China under his control, Genghis next attacked his neighbors to the west – the Uighurs, the Kara-Khi tai, the



## Teacher Notes

---

Merkits, the Kipchaks. The Mongol empire was suddenly not so little.

Still further to the west was the ancient Persian empire of Khwarazm which included the modern nations of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran. Initially Genghis Khan and the Shah of Khwarazm worked out a peaceful trade agreement, but then a Mongol caravan of 150 traders entering Khwarazm from Mongolia was murdered by one of the Shah's governors. This turned out to be a bad mistake. What followed was a Mongol onslaught that raked over the land of the Khwarazm Shah. Cities fell; Persian casualties were extraordinarily high.

### The Second Wave: Russia and Eastern Europe

In 1227 Genghis Khan died and was succeeded by one of his four sons, Ogedei. Ogedei ordered the building of a Mongol capital called Karakorum, and afterward itched for further conquest. After long debate with his brothers



and generals the decision was made to invade Russia and eastern Europe. Ogedei predicted the campaign would take a long eighteen years. An army of 50,000 horse soldiers, Persian and Chinese engineers, and 20,000 draftees were made ready to march. By the winter of 1237 this army stood poised on the frozen banks of the Volga; Russia and Europe lay before them.

The next five years were to shake the Western world. The first city to fall was Riazan on the

eastern Russian frontier. The great Mongol general Subedei sought to make an example of Riazan that would cause other Russian cities to submit. The city was destroyed. Men, women, and children were slain. A few survivors were allowed to escape to carry the warning: The Mongols are coming – submit or die.

Kolumna, Suzdal, Vladimir, Kozelsk, Kiev and other cities in Russia; Lublin, Cracow in Poland; Liegnitz in Silesia; Buda and Pest in Hungary – the Mongols swept their way west. By May, 1242, Mongol intelligence patrols were just 60 miles from Vienna.

And then the unexpected – the Mongols turned back! Word from Mongolia had apparently reached the front lines that the Great Khan Ogedei had died. Not understanding what had happened, western Europe held its breath and waited.

At about this time, in the 1240s, a small number of European visitors began to visit Mongolia and Mongol-controlled China, men like the John of Plano Carpini, Friar William of Rubruck, and, several years later, the famous Marco Polo. These men joined the Persians and Chinese who were already visitors at the Mongol court in Karakorum or in China. Thanks to the writings of these travellers we have some firsthand accounts of Mongol life.

### The Third Wave: The Middle East

Ogedei was succeeded by Genghis' grandson Mongke. Mongke set his sights on still further conquest. Two targets were chosen, the Middle East and southern China.

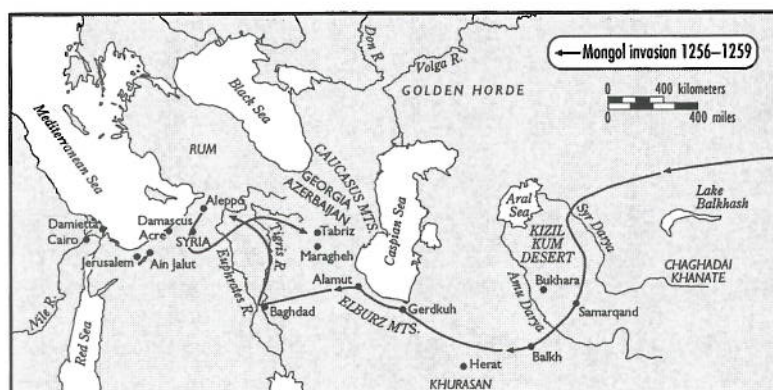
Again, a huge Mongol army was assembled on the steppes – thousands upon thousands of horses, numerous siege machines, and one thousand Chinese engineering teams for building roads and bridges. The massive army advanced into Persia on January 1, 1256.



## Teacher Notes

---

First the Mongols annihilated a troublesome sect known as the Assassins. Next they advanced 500 miles west to the walls of Baghdad. There, in February, 1258, this spiritual and cultural center of Islam fell. Mongol armies proceeded into Syria and Palestine where they were joined by Christian troops from Armenia and Georgia. It was a time of shifting alliances and these



eastern Christians saw the Mongol attack on the Middle East as a kind of crusade against Islam. Then, suddenly, history repeated itself. Just as the death of a Great Khan had stopped the Mongols as they approached Vienna in 1242, now the death of Mongke Khan in 1259 caused the Mongols to pull back from the walls of Jerusalem.

### Pax Mongolica and Kubilai Khan in China

By this time the Mongol Empire consisted of four parts or **khanates** – the Russian khanate called the Golden Horde, the Persian khanate of the Ilkhans, the central Asian khanate, and a fourth khanate which included Mongolia and China. The next Great Khan was the famous

Kubilai, a grandson of Genghis, who ruled in China. Kubilai maintained enough ties with the other khanates to achieve a measure of security across much of Asia. Historians have called this time **pax Mongolica** or “the Mongolian peace.”

Kubilai was probably the most cultured of the Great Khans. He expanded his holdings in China by defeating the Sung Empire in southern China and established a new dynasty he called the **Yuan**. For the first time in three hundred years China was again a united country but now under Mongol control.

In his later years Kubilai weakened his empire with unsuccessful attempts to conquer Japan and Java. After Kubilai’s death the Mongols began to lose their grip across the entire empire.

In Persia Mongol authority ended in 1335. In China the last Mongol emperor was removed in 1368. In Russia the Golden Horde breathed its final official breath in 1502. The Mongol era was over.

### The Question

What should we make of the Mongols? There is no debate among historians that the Mongols had their brutal side. But when the day of historical judgment comes and the Mongol goods and bads are placed side by side on the balance scale, which way does the scale tip? Read the documents that follow and make your judgment: *The Mongols: How barbaric were the “Barbarians”?*

SV

## Teacher Document Notes – Shorter Version (SV)

### Document 1: Map of the Mongol Empire

#### Content Notes:

- This chart provides a rough calculation of square miles conquered by Genghis Khan. The area of control would only grow larger by the end of the 13th century. As the Background Essay points out, the Mongol Empire at its peak was comprised of four khanates: the Yuan Empire in China most fully consolidated under Kubilai Khan; the Central Asian khanate; the Persian khanate; and the Russian khanate known most commonly as the Golden Horde. It is believed to be the largest continuous land mass empire in the history of the world. It was rivaled and perhaps exceeded in size by the total holdings of the British Empire, but that empire was, of course, separated by the oceans.
- Conqueror IDs
  1. Tamerlane, Turkic conqueror known for his cruelty; conquered from Mongolia to Mediterranean; died trying to subdue China
  2. Cyrus the Great, conqueror of Persia and Central Asia

#### Teaching Tips:

- To help students grasp the size of the Mongol Empire, have them use the scale of miles on the map to measure the distance from Korea to Buda and Pest. How does this compare to the distance between Boston and Los Angeles? (Note: The distance from Korea to Budapest, Hungary is about 5000 miles. The distance from Boston to Los Angeles is about 2600 miles.)
- In deciding how to remember the Mongols, is size of empire a positive, negative or neutral factor? (Perhaps a negative, if the scale of destruction was just that much more widespread. Perhaps a positive, if the conqueror is sewing seeds of religious tolerance and continental security. We might have to know more to assess the importance of this document.)
- This is a good time to drill students on the four khanates. Ask students to name some of the modern nations included in each. (Possible answers: China, Mongolia, Korea; Russia, Kazakhstan; Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan). After the death of Ghengis, the khanates remained loosely linked, though contact between and among them was as likely to be civil war as trade or military support.

## Document 1



Source: Map created from various sources.



SV

## Size of World Conquests

Conquerors	Square Miles Conquered
1. Genghis Khan (1162-1227)	4,860,000
2. Alexander the Great (356 - 323 BCE)	2,180,000
3. Tamerlane (1336 -1405)	2,145,000
4. Cyrus the Great (600 - 529 BCE)	2,090,000
5. Attila (406 - 453)	1,450,000
6. Adolf Hitler (1889 -1945)	1,370,000
7. Napoleon Bonaparte (1769 -1821)	720,000

**Note:** The area of the continental United States (excluding Alaska and Hawaii) is 3,036,885 square miles.

## Document 2: Carpini on Army Organization and Discipline

### Content Notes:

- John of Plano Carpini was a Franciscan emissary sent by the Catholic Pope, Innocent IV, to treat with the Great Khan, in the years 1245-1247. It was quite an undertaking for Carpini, who was 65 years old at the time and quite overweight. As he wrote in the prologue of an account of his travels, "We feared that we might be killed by the Tartars (Mongols) or other people, or imprisoned for life, or afflicted with hunger, thirst, cold, heat, injuries and exceeding great trials..." It was indeed remarkable that he not only survived the three years of hardship, but actually attended in the new Mongolian capital of Karakorum the enthronement of the Great Khan Guyuk.
- Plano Carpini had definite advice for Innocent IV on how to deal with the Mongols. Carpini expected the Mongols to launch another onslaught against Europe. To quote Carpini:
  - *It is the intention of the Tartars (Mongols) to bring the whole world into subjugation if they can and ... on this point they have received a command from Chingis Chan (Genghis Khan).*
  - *If one province is not prepared to help another, then the country the Tartars are attacking will be vanquished and they will fight against another country with the prisoners they take and these will be placed in the front line.*
  - *An army should be organized the same way as the Tartar army... (They) ought to have scouts in every direction ... for these Tartars always strive to surround their enemy.*
  - *There are men of many other nations (fighting) with them.... It is important to know that there are many men in the Tartar army who, if they saw their opportunity, would fight against the Tartars.*

### Teaching Tips:

- Is clear military organization an attribute of a civilized society?
- Mention to students that one of the most difficult decisions faced by President Abraham Lincoln during the American Civil War was to approve the execution of young Union soldiers for desertion. Was this a "barbaric" policy? According to Plano Carpini, did the Mongol policy go further than the execution of individual deserters? Was the Mongol policy "barbaric"?
- Ask students why there is apparent disagreement over how to spell the Khan's name. Carpini spells it "Chingis." Other renderings have it as "Chinghiz," "Jenghiz," or "Genghis." (When any word is transliterated from one kind of alphabet to another, spellings will vary simply because alphabets offer different ways to render a sound. At the time of Genghis Khan, the Mongols did not have a written language. Mongol sounds were written in various scripts by Uigher, Chinese, Persian, Turkish, Russian, and Latin chroniclers. Transliterations of those various alphabets and languages into western Roman [Latin] script resulted in different spellings. Today, "Genghis" seems to be the most widely used spelling.)

## Document 2

**Source:** John of Plano Carpini, *History of the Mongols*, in Christopher Dawson, *The Mongol Mission*, London: Sheed and Ward, 1955.

**Note:** John of Plano Carpini was a Franciscan emissary of Pope Innocent IV and traveled to Karakorum between 1245 and 1247. It is believed he was the first European to visit the Mongols in their homeland.

SV

Genghis Khan ordained that the army should be organized in such a way that over ten men should beset one man and he is what we call a captain of ten; over ten of these should be placed one, named a captain of a hundred; at the head of ten captains of a hundred is placed a soldier known as a captain of a thousand, and over ten captains of a thousand is one man, and the word they use for this number (is *tuman*). Two or three chiefs are in command of the whole army, yet in such a way that one holds the supreme command.

When they are in battle, if one or two or three or even more out of a group of ten run away, all are put to death; and if a whole group of ten flees, the rest of the group of a hundred are all put to death, if they do not flee too. In a word, unless they retreat in a body, all who take flight are put to death.

Likewise if one or two or more go forward boldly to the fight, then the rest of the ten are put to death if they do not follow and, if one or more of the ten are captured, their companions are put to death if they do not rescue them.

### Document 3: Carpini on Battle Tactics

#### Content Notes:

- Christopher Dawson in his series *The Makers of Christendom* writes that John of Plano Carpini, like William of Rubruck, provides “an absolutely first-hand authentic account of the first contact between Western Christendom and the Far East when the whole oriental world from Korea to Hungary was being turned upside down and remade by one of the greatest catastrophes in the history of the world.” Dawson saw the Mongols as inhabiting vast stretches of the “barbarous sea” that stretched between the two poles of civilization, Europe and China.

Christopher Dawson published his work on Carpini in 1955 before the more recent restraints of political correctness, and some would argue, more balanced scholarship. Dawson did not like the Mongols.

- A few profile notes on Carpini:
  - \* He was 65 years old when he undertook this mission.
  - \* Carpini entered the “barbarous sea” speaking no central Asia or oriental language.
  - \* Carpini was very much overweight and on his journey to Karakorum suffered greatly from thirst, hunger, and cold. Often his only meal was in the morning before departure.
- Unlike William of Rubruck who would travel a southerly route eight years later, Carpini took the difficult northern route to the Mongol homeland. His journey took about four months. Leaving during Lent he passed through Poland, then Russia, then took the long trek to Karakorum, arriving in Karakorum on July 22, 1246. Most of the journey was by horseback, often riding five or six horse relays per day. (One thing that all contemporary accounts agree on – there was seldom a lack of horses on the steppes.) After attending Guyuk Khan’s enthronement, Carpini left Karakorum on November 17, 1246, and was back on the Volga on May 9, 1247.
- Carpini wrote up a rather alarming report for the Pope. He believed a Mongol invasion of Europe was in the near offing. However an internal conflict among the Mongols and the death of Guyuk just two years after he became Khan probably saved Europe. The next Mongol thrust would be directed at the Middle East instead.

#### Teaching Tips:

- As far as we know from a full reading of Carpini’s *History of the Mongols*, Carpini was never himself an eyewitness to the Mongols at battle. For students faced with the question of Mongol barbarism, should this Carpini account be considered solid evidence of Mongol brutality? Why do prosecuting attorneys in a court of law try to get more than one witness? (Corroborating evidence is usually stronger than single unsubstantiated testimony.) Do other documents in this collection provide supporting evidence? (Students might next look at Documents 4 and 5.)
- More than one historian has described Mongol battle tactics as ranking among the most ingenious the world had ever seen. Which tactics described by Carpini do students find especially clever?
- Are the battle tactics described by Carpini evidence of Mongol barbarism?

### Document 3

Source: John of Plano Carpini, *History of the Mongols*, in Christopher Dawson, *The Mongol Mission*, London: Sheed and Ward, 1955.

#### Carpini on Battle Tactics

When ... they are going to join battle, they draw all the battle lines just as they are (about) to fight. The chiefs or princes of the army do not take part in the fighting but take up their stand some distance away facing the enemy, and they have beside them their children on horseback and their womenfolk and horses; and sometimes they make figures of men and set them on horses. They do this to give the impression that a great crowd of fighting men is assembled there.

They send a detachment of captives and men of other nationalities who are fighting with them to meet the enemy head-on, and some of the Tartars (Mongols) may perhaps accompany them. Other columns of stronger men they dispatch far off to the right and the left so that they are not seen by the enemy and in this way they surround them and close in and so the fighting begins from all sides. Sometimes when they are few in number they are thought by the enemy, who are surrounded, to be many, especially when the latter catch sight of the children, women, horses and dummy figures....

They reduce fortresses in the following manner. If the position of the fortress allows it, they surround

it, sometimes even fencing it round so that no one can enter or leave. They make a strong attack with engines (catapults for slinging large stones) and arrows and they do not leave off fighting by day or night, so that those inside the fortress get no sleep; the Tartars however get some rest, for they divide up their forces and they take it in turns to fight so that they do not get too tired. If they cannot capture it in this way they throw Greek fire (napalm); sometimes they even take the fat of the people they kill and, melting it, throw (catapult) it on to the houses, and wherever the fire falls on this fat it is almost inextinguishable.

While they are pitched before the fortification they speak enticing words to the inhabitants making them many promises to induce them to surrender into their hands. If they do surrender to them, they say: "Come out, so that we may count you according to our custom" and when they come out to them they seek out the artificers (artisans) among them and keep these, but the others, with the exception of those they wish to have as slaves, they kill with the axe....

SV



## Document 4: The Taking of Nishapur

### Content Notes:

- The first of the two dates (618) refers to the Moslem calendar. The Muslim Era is computed from the year Muhammad migrated from Mecca to Medina, 622 CE. The Moslem year has 354 (or sometime 355) days. Doing the math, students can determine that 618 in the Moslem calendar equals 1221 in the Gregorian calendar, which Americans have used since 1752.
- Ata-Malik Juvaini, known as simply Juvaini, was in the employ of the Mongol khanate in Persia. Juvaini personally knew Hulegu, Genghis Khan's grandson, and the first Il-Khan (friend of the Great Khan) to rule in Persia, present day Iran. Juvaini wrote his history in flowery classical Persian style that is not easy to translate. J.A.Boyle is regarded as one of the 20th century's best translators of classical Persian. Juvaini was born about 1226 and came from a distinguished Persian family. Juvaini's father went from fighting the Mongol invaders to serving as chief deputy to the Mongol's Persian khanate. At age 22, Juvaini accompanied his father and the Mongol governor to Karakorum. Juvaini was clearly in a position to learn much about the Mongol story.
- In 1251 Mongke became the Great Khan and decided to send Hulegu, his younger brother, on a major campaign to the west. It was Hulegu who would become the first official Khan of the Persian khanate and responsible for the second destructive invasion of Persia. Hulegu wiped out the Assassins and in 1258 Baghdad. Throughout this period, until about 1280, Juvaini served the ruling Mongol court, most of the time as the governor of Baghdad.
- How objective was Juvaini? He was on the one hand in the employ of the Mongol court, so there were definitely things he could not say. On the other hand, as the document shows, his Moslem and Persian self often shows through. Juvaini makes no mention of the destruction of Baghdad in his history even though he was to serve, as the Mongol's appointee, as the governor of Baghdad for twenty-five years.
- There are historians like Bernard Lewis (*Islam in History*, 1973) who write that the devastation of World War II puts the Mongol conquests in a new perspective. Lewis argues that while Mongol carnage in Persia in places like Nishapur was horrendous, the destruction was not universal. South Persia was relatively untouched. Several decades later when Marco Polo and then Ibn Battuta travelled through the region, they reported some cities were still recovering from the Mongol onslaught while other Persian cities were prospering.

### Teaching Tips:

- Explain that Toli (often spelled Tolui) was Genghis Khan's son. Merv and Nishapur are located in modern-day Pakistan not far from the Afghanistan border.
- Discuss with students the credibility of Juvaini's account. Would he have been more likely to exaggerate or play down the extent of Mongol brutality? Why? Be sure students read the Juvaini note accompanying the document before addressing this question.
- Ask students if an additional account from Juvaini might in any way influence their judgment of Mongol behavior. Here is another Juvaini description of a Mongol conquest of a Persian city. In this case, the city is Urganch, the capital of Khorazm region, Persia.

*The Tartar (Mongol) army planted a standard on top of the wall, and warriors climbed up and caused the earth to ring with their shouts, cries, yells and uproar. The inhabitants opposed them in all the streets and quarters of the town; in every lane they engage in battle and in every cul-de-sac they resisted stoutly. The Mongols meanwhile were setting fire to their houses and quarters with pots of naphtha and sewing the people to one another with arrows and man-gonels (catapults)... Quarter by quarter, house by house, the Mongols took the town, destroying the buildings and slaughtering the inhabitants, until finally the whole town was in their hands. Then they drove the people out into the open; those that were artisans or craftsmen, of whom there were more than a hundred thousand, were separated from the rest; the children and the young women were reduced to slavery and borne off into captivity; and the men that remained were divided among the army, and to each fighting man fell the execution of twenty-four persons.*

*As for the fighting and killing ... I have heard of such a quantity of slain that I did not believe the report and so have not recorded it. 'O God, preserve us from all the ills of this world and the torments of the world to come.'* (Ata-Malik Juvaini, *Genghis Khan: The History of the World Conqueror*. Translated by J.A.Boyle, Manchester University Press, 1958 / 1997, pp. 126-128.)

## Document 4

**Source:** Ata-Malik Juvaini, *Genghis Khan: The History of the World Conqueror*, edited by UNESCO and Manchester University Press, © UNESCO 1997. Reprinted by permission.

In the spring of 618/1221, the people of Nishapur (a city in Persia) saw that the matter was serious ... and although they had three thousand crossbows in action on the wall and had set up three hundred mangonels and ballistas and laid in a correspondent quantity of missiles and naphtha, their feet were loosened and they lost heart...

By the Saturday night all the walls were covered with Mongols;... The Mongols now descended from the walls and began to slay and plunder.... They then drove all the survivors, men and women, out onto the plain; and ... it was commanded that the town should be laid waste in such a manner that the site could be ploughed upon; and that ... not even cats and dogs should be left alive....

They severed the heads of the slain from their bodies and heaped them up in piles, keeping those of the men separate from those of the women and children.

**Note:** Juvaini was a Persian chronicler who was in the employ of the Mongol Il-khan of Persia who served under the Mongols as the governor of Baghdad. He wrote this account about forty years after the destruction of Nishapur.

### Reported Inhabitant Deaths From Varied Sources

Year	Place	Reported Deaths	Source
1220	Bukhara (Khwarazm)	30,000	Juvaini
1220	Samarkand (Khwarazm)	30,000	Persian chronicler
1221	Merv (Khwarazm)	700,000	Persian chronicler
1221	Nishapur (Khwarazm)	1,747,000	Persian chronicler
1223	Herat (Khwarazm)	1,600,000	Chronicler
1237	Riazan (Russia)	Few survivors	Russian chroniclers
1237	Kozelsk (Russia)	No survivors	Russian chroniclers
1258	Baghdad (Persia)	800,000 - 2,000,000	Persian chroniclers

**Note:** These casualty figures are found in George Marshall's *Storm from the East*. Despite very probable exaggeration, there is agreement among chroniclers of the time and historians of today that the number of deaths at Nishapur was staggering.

## Document 5: Painting: Burial Alive

### Content Notes:

- Much of our visual record of the Mongols comes from Persian manuscripts. Northern Persia was decimated by the Mongols and there are enough accounts of harsh Mongol behavior to make this scene credible.

### Teaching Tips:

- Couple this painting with the Juvaini account of Nishapur. What conclusions about the Mongols are you prepared to make?
- Assume that this is a fairly accurate portrayal of how the Mongols dealt with some prisoners in Persia. Is this hard evidence of barbarism?
- Are there any circumstances that would cause you to modify your judgment? For instance, setting an example to make sieges of additional cities unnecessary; or retaliation for the Persian murder of members of a Mongol-sponsored trade caravan. Both of these have been mentioned by historians as the Mongol justification for their actions.

## Document 5

**Source:** Persian manuscript, "The Shah Namah" or "Book of Kings," c. 1300, Chester Beatty Library, Dublin. In Robert Marshall, *Storm from the East, From Genghis Khan to Kubilai Khan*, University of California Press, 1993. Reproduced with the permission of BBC Worldwide Limited. Copyright © Robert Marshall 1993.



A scene from a Persian manuscript c.1300, showing the execution of a prisoner by a Mongol soldier. Others are being buried alive upside-down.

## Document 6: Mongol Commerce in China and Persia

### Content Notes:

- This document provides a counterweight to the argument that the Mongols were simply “barbarians.” Halperin does not downplay destruction in the initial conquest, but says something much more positive followed.
- Pax Mongolica is mentioned by Halperin and we refer to it as well in the Background Essay. For many historians it is seen as one of the important redeeming achievements of Mongol conquest. The argument is, “Yes, the means of Mongol conquest was brutal, but the payoff was a number of decades in the late 1200s and early 1300s when traders and travelers could safely cross the breadth of Asia.”

### Teaching Tips:

- In the first paragraph, the author of this document states his thesis about the Mongols in China and Persia. In your own words, what is it? (After causing much destruction, the Mongols encouraged a variety of economic activities in both China and Persia.)
- What evidence does this secondary source document provide to support the thesis that the Mongols promoted economic development in China and Persia? (In China: canal building, agriculture, crafts; in Persia: crafts and the arts, winemaking, and the silk industry)
- After the conquests, did the Mongols allow the Chinese and Persians to hold positions in Government? (Yes.)
- What was the Pax Mongolica? How did it benefit the Asian and European world? How did it benefit the Mongols? (The Mongolian peace produced enough security so that international trade could prosper. The Mongols benefitted by taxing the trade caravans.)
- How do you think Charles Halperin would answer our analytical question, *How barbaric were the “barbarians”?*

## Document 6

---

**Source:** Charles J. Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, Indiana University Press, 1985.  
Reprinted by permission of Indiana University Press.

### Mongol Commerce in China and Persia

The Mongols conquered nearly all of Asia and achieved what all Inner Asian steppe empires had dreamed of, control of the continental caravan routes from China to Persia. The enormous destructive cost of the Pax Mongolica cannot be denied, but the Mongol Empire made significant contributions to the political institutions, economic development, and cultural diversity of many lands. No history of the Mongol Empire ... which dwells only on Mongol destruction, can be satisfactory.

- In both China and Persia the Mongols had taken up residence among their new subjects, garrisoning cities and gradually blending to a degree with the (local) societies. As a result, their economic interests coincided with those of the native peoples, and the Mongols, after the destruction of the initial conquest, promoted diversified economic development.
- The (Mongol) Yuan emperors built canals to improve transportation and communication. In China agriculture and (craft) production ... continued unabated.
- The same was true in Persia, partly because Persian craft traditions were well-established, but also because the Ilkanids (Mongol rulers) were patrons of the arts.
- Persian viniculture (winemaking) ... thrived under the Mongols, who were great drinkers, even after their conversion.
- The Persian silk industry also benefitted from the Mongol conquest because of the contacts that opened up with China.
- Cities along the caravan routes, in Persia, Armenia-Georgia, Central Asia, and China, prospered as part of the tax-free customs zones protected by the Pax Mongolica.

## Document 7: Battuta's Horses

### Content Notes:

- Paul Ratchnevsky completed the manuscript of this book in 1978. He wrote in German and consulted a wide linguistic range of materials of which the main ones were Mongol, Turkic, Persian, Chinese, and Russian. This English translation of the German by Thomas Haining was undertaken ten years later. Ratchnevsky's work is an example of the linguistic minefield a historian has to cross when doing research on the Mongols. The scholarship involved can be quite remarkable.

### Teaching Tips:

- This document is built around the observations of four witnesses in the Middle East and Asia. Who are they? (Juvaini, Plano Carpini, Juzjani, and Ibn Battuta)
- Are these four observers in general agreement with one another? (Yes.)
- About what do the four observers agree? (They all comment on the absence of theft when traveling through lands controlled by the Mongols.)
- Does this document support or weaken the claim that Pax Mongolica was effective?
- In reading about Ibn Battuta one learns that there are some questions about the authenticity of some of his accounts. Similar questions have been raised about Marco Polo. There is no question that both men traveled widely and saw remarkable things. However, enough historical discrepancies exist to raise a few eyebrows. A couple of questions for students:
  - In a court of law if a witness lies under oath, should all of that witness testimony be disregarded by the jurors?
  - In a document based exercise like this, if a chronicler or diarist is known to have made up some material, should all of that source's material be disregarded?

## Document 7

**Source:** Paul Ratchnevsky, *Genghis Khan: His Life and Legacy*, translated by Thomas Nivison Haining, 1991. Reprinted by permission of Blackwell Publishing. (Italics added.)

The evidence of the chroniclers and travelers enables us to identify the striking changes wrought on Mongol morality by Genghis' Khan legislation. *Juvaini* comments that Genghis Khan rooted out...adultery and theft. "War, strife, bodily harm or murder do not exist, robbers and thieves on a grand scale are not to be found among them," remarks *Plano Carpini*, "and for this reason their houses and the carts in which they store their wealth have neither locks nor bolts." *Juzjani* writes that no one except the owner would dare pick up even a whip lying on the ground. *Ibn Battuta*, describing how during travels in Iraq two horses went astray during the night, reports that although the travelers left the country soon afterwards the horses were brought to them on their journey twenty days later. He also comments that although there were many pack animals in the Kipchak area, these could be left unattended because of the severity of (Mongol) laws against theft.

SV



## Document 8: The Yams

### Content Notes:

- In the 1260s, Marco Polo's father Niccolo and his uncle Mateo became the first Europeans to visit China. (Carpini and Rubruck had not made it past Karakorum.) In 1269 the senior Polos returned to Venice, found a healthy and eager 16 year-old son, Marco, and set out on a second journey to China that lasted from 1271 to 1295. For 17 of these years, Marco (according to Marco) served Khubilai Khan in various capacities, including ambassador. There are some serious inconsistencies in Polo's account of his travels to China, but his biographers are in general agreement that he made the trip.
- Marco Polo's claim that some messengers on some occasions covered as much as 250 miles a day is reasonable. A relay of Pony Express riders in the 1840s could carry a letter from California to Missouri in about a week. Polo also recounts that in emergency situations, Yam riders continued at night, accompanied by torch-bearing runners.
- In *Storm from the East*, Robert Marshall writes that the Yam was used first and foremost to carry royal orders across the breadth of Asia. The Yam was also used by messengers to escort envoys and to move goods. Messengers wore identifying medallions.
- Historian Paul Ratchnevsky writes that because it fell on the peasantry to maintain the Yam system, they were burdened by the system.
- The Persian chronicler Ata-Malik Juvaini also described the Yam system. Here is an excerpt:

*Again, when the extent of (the Mongol) territories became broad and vast ..., it became essential to ascertain the activities of their enemies, and it was also necessary to transport goods from West to East and from Far East to West. Therefore throughout the length and breadth of the land they established yams, and made arrangements for the upkeep and expenses of each yam, assigning thereto a fixed number of men and beasts as well as food, drink, and other necessities. All this they shared out amongst the tumen, each two tumen having to supply one yam. Thus ... messengers need make no long detour in order to obtain fresh mounts while at the same time the peasantry and the army are not placed in constant inconvenience,... Every year the yams are inspected, and whatever is missing or lost has to be replaced by the peasantry.*

Ata-Malik Juvaini, *Genghis Khan: The History of the World Conqueror*. Translated by J.A.Boyle, Manchester University Press, 1958 / 1997, p. 33.

### Teaching Tips:

- Ask students to explain the yam system. What was it and what was its purpose? (It was a series of relay stations set about 25 miles apart for supporting the movement of mail, trade, and people. Though he mentions the "palatial lodgings," Polo focuses on the carrying of messages.)
- If Polo is correct that the posting stations were about 25 miles apart and there were 10,000 of them in the system, what was the total length of the network? (250,000 miles) If this network was fanned out across China, Central Asia, the Middle East, and Russia, is 250,000 miles a believable number? (Perhaps. For comparison, the United States reached 250,000 miles of railroad track about 1920. Given that Mongol territory was vaster and that the post system within China alone had many branch routes, Polo's figures are within reason.)
- Can the Yam system be used in building an argument that the Mongols created more than desolation?
- A somewhat off-the-wall side question: In his book *The Travels of Marco Polo*, Polo describes his many years in China. He refers to the neighboring island of Japan as Cipangu from the Chinese Jih-penku. Two hundred years later Columbus read Polo's account and was spurred to visit this magical land of Cipangu and meet with "the Great Khan." Columbus did not know there had been no Great Khan in China since the Mongols were driven out in 1368 or that the Great Khan had never managed to conquer Japan. Nonetheless, it was the lure of the Great Khan that helped to draw Columbus across the Ocean Sea in 1492. Should the Mongols share in the credit for discovering the New World?

## Document 8

**Source:** Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, Penguin Books, 1958.

**Document Note:** Marco Polo journeyed to China from 1271 to 1295. For 17 of these years, Polo served Kubilai Khan in various capacities, including ambassador.

### The Yams

SV

Let us now turn to the system of post-horses by which the Great Khan sends his dispatches.

You must know that the city of Khan-balik (modern-day Beijing) is a centre from which many roads radiate to many provinces.... When one of the Great Khan's messengers sets out along any of these roads, he has only to go twenty-five miles and there he finds a posting station, which in their language is called a yam.... And at each of these posts the messengers find three or four hundred horses in readiness awaiting their command, and palatial lodgings such as I have described. And this holds throughout all the provinces and kingdoms of the Great Khan's empire.

By this means the Great Khan's messengers travel throughout his dominions... (M)ore than 200,000 horses are stabled at these posts for the special use of the messengers. Moreover, the posts themselves number more than 10,000, all furnished on the same lavish scale. The whole organization is so stupendous and so costly that it baffles speech and writing....

If it happens at any point that there is some river or lake over which the couriers and mounted messengers must pass, the neighboring cities keep three or four ferry-boats continually in readiness for this purpose.

...When the need arises for the Great Khan to receive immediate tidings (news) ... I assure you that the messengers ride 200 miles in a day, sometimes even 250. Let me explain how it is done.... They tighten their belts and swathe their heads and off they go with all the speed they can muster, till they reach the next post-house twenty-five miles away. As they draw near they sound a sort of horn which is audible at a great distance, so that horses can be got ready for them. On arrival they find two fresh horses, ready harnessed, fully rested, and in good running form. They mount there ... and off they go again.... And so it goes on till evening.

**Note:** The Great Khan is Kubilai Khan.

## Document 9: Mongke Khan on God

### Content Notes:

- Days after he recorded these words, William of Rubruck departed Karakorum, and returned safely to Europe via Baatu's camp (70 days) and thence through Persia and Syria to the Mediterranean.
- Mongke Khan's own religious practice was closer to old steppe traditions. This included divining future events by careful examination of bones. Here is William of Rubruck's account of a visit in February 1254 in the Khan's dwelling in Karakorum.

*We went in procession to Mangu's (Mongke Khan's) dwelling, and the monk and the two of us, having first been searched to see if we had any knives, went into his presence with the priests. As we were entering a slave was going out, carrying away sheep's shoulder-blades which had been charred until they were as black coal. I was greatly puzzled as to the purpose of this and when I enquired about it late I learned that the (K)han does nothing in the world without first consulting these bones....*

*This divination is carried out in the following manner: when the Khan wishes to do anything he has three of these bones brought to him before they have been burned, and holding them he thinks of that matter about which he wishes to find out whether he is to do it or not; then he hands the bones to a slave to be burned.... When the bones, therefore, have been burned until they are black they are brought back to the Khan and he thereupon examines them to see if with the heat of the fire they have split lengthwise in a straight line. If they have, the way is clear for him to act; if, however, the bones have cracked horizontally or round bits have shot out, then he does not. (William of Rubruck, *The Journey of William of Rubruck* translated by a nun of Stanbrook Abbey, edited by Christopher Dawson. Sheed and Ward, London, 1955, Chapter XXIX, p. 164)*

- A quote from the Persian chronicler Juvaini amplifies Document 9. By all accounts, the Mongols were not religious bigots.

*Being the adherent of no religion and the follower of no creed, (Genghis Khan) eschewed bigotry, and preference of one faith to another, and the placing of some above others; rather he honored and respected the learned and pious of*

*every sect.... And as he viewed the Moslems 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, some adopting Islam, others embracing Christianity, others selecting idolatry and others (choosing) the ancient (beliefs) of their fathers and forefathers and inclining in no direction; but these are now a minority.*

Ata-Malik Juvaini, *Genghis Khan: The History of the World Conqueror*. Translated by J.A. Boyle, Manchester University Press, 1958. This edition, 1997, p.26.

### Teaching Tips:

- What three religious traditions were called together by Mongke Khan to present their beliefs? (Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism)
- What did the Great Khan mean when he said, "... just as God gave different fingers to the hand so has He given different ways to men"?
- Ask students what Mongke means when he says the Mongols follow what the soothsayers tell them. (See Content Note #2. Mongol soothsayers foretold the future by reading the cracks of burnt bones and then gave advice which was followed. In Document 9 Mongke says that the Christians were not as good about following God's words found in the scriptures.)
- Ask students if there is sufficient evidence in Document 9 to claim that the Mongols practiced religious toleration? (You might want to read the Persian historian Juvaini's comment in Content Note #3.)

## Document 9

---

**Source:** William of Rubruck, *The Journey of William of Rubruck*, translated by a nun of Stanbrook Abbey, edited by Christopher Dawson, London: Sheed and Ward, 1955.

### Karakorum, Mongolia, May 30, 1254

SV

*The next day he (Mongke Khan) sent his scribes to me, who said: "Our master sends us to you and he says: 'Here you are, Christians, Saracens (Muslims), and tuins (Rubruck would translate tuins as pagans; in fact, they were Buddhists), and each of you declares that his law is the best and his literature, that is his books, are the truest.' He therefore wishes you all to meet together and hold a conference and each one is to write down what he says so that he can know the truth."*

*(On the day following the exchange between the religious spokesmen Mongke Khan made this profession of faith to Rubruck:) "We Mongols believe that there is but one God, by Whom we live and by Whom we die and towards Him we have an upright heart. But just as God gave different fingers to the hand so has He given different ways to men."*

- Notes:**
- Mongke Khan was the fourth Great Khan, the grandson of Genghis, and the brother of Kubilai who would succeed Mongke upon his death in 1259.
  - Over the course of the next two centuries Mongol leaders often converted to the region's dominant religions – Christianity, Islam, or Buddhism.

## Document 10: Fragments on Law and Custom

### Content Notes:

- Paul Ratchnevsky has produced some of the most widely acclaimed work on Genghis Khan. He believes there were two codes of conduct that guided Mongol life. One of these was the **yasa**, usually referred to as Mongol law. The second was the **bilik**, which was a set of rules to live by or edicts. A collection of the yasa does not exist today although there is reason to believe that there was once a written form. We know of the existence of the yasa through the many references made by Persian, Chinese and Russian chroniclers of the time. The yasa was likely written on large scrolls meant only for the eyes of the Khan himself and the immediate family. They were a collection of edicts proclaimed by Genghis Khan over a period of years. The bilik was the more public of their two codes.
- Mongol law was for the Mongols, not people subjugated by the Mongols. In most instances local law was left in place for dealings amongst the local people.
- Robert Marshall in his BBC companion book *Storm from the East* (University of California Press, 1993) wrote that many experts no longer see the yasa as a solid legal code guiding Mongol society but “a mixture of enlightenment and superstition that is as much an account of Mongol lore as law.” *Storm*, p.37. Given that the yasa and the bilik come to us through the filter of Persian, Chinese and Russian chroniclers, there is reason to take their literalness with a grain of salt.
- Drinking was a widespread Mongol pastime. The beverage of preference was fermented mare’s milk called qumis. Qumis is rather low in alcoholic content and great quantities were required to produce the full effect. According to Carpini and Rubruck, both Mongol men and women were heavy drinkers and developed high-volume drinking practices with music, hand-clapping, and ear-pulling to accompany drinking parties. Drinking was a problem in male Mongol society. Records show that alcoholism killed more than one khan. Genghis Khan was a drinker himself.
- Ratchnevsky says there is no evidence of anything in the Yasa about murder. Common Mongol law suggests compensation to the family of the victim. The Mongol practice of revenge, indeed, drove Genghis Khan. The Yasa did not prohibit clan revenge.
- Rashid al-Din was a Persian who was born a Jew and converted to Islam. He entered the Mongol service in the late 1200s and was asked by the Mongol Il-khan to write a history of the Mongols in Persia. His history includes a full treatment of edicts passed by the Il-khan Ghasan.
- William of Rubruck reported that Baatu, Khan of the Golden Horde in Russia, had twenty-six wives. He also recounts that the wife whom the husband will be sleeping with that night sits by his side throughout the preceding day, and co-wives must come to her dwelling to drink during that day.
- Rubruck confirms Carpini’s point on bride purchase and adds that Mongol women were often older when they married, perhaps due to the difficulty of prospective husbands coming up with the bride-price. The custom of paying a bride-price is of course quite common among many cultures around the world. Among the Mongols the bride-price was often paid in oxen, horses, sheep, or other livestock.
- It was not unusual for a son to inherit his father’s wives upon the father’s death. We know, for example, that Hulegu, who became the Khan in Persia, took his deceased father’s wife as his own chief wife.

### Teaching Tips:

- Use the Content Notes above to help students distinguish between the “yasa” and the “bilik.” (Both were decrees that were issued by the Great Khan, the former for the general population, the latter as guideposts for members of his own ruling family.) Explain that the yasa no longer exists, but we know about it through the writings of chroniclers.
- Ask students if they regard the bilik on hospitality as being an example of Mongol generosity or an abuse of the common person’s privacy by the Great Khan.
- On the eve of the American Revolution the British government passed the Quartering Act, which required American colonists to put up British soldiers for the night. Is the bilik on hospitality any different?
- Ask students what they make of the bilik on drinking. Does it speak well or poorly of Mongol culture?
- Do the yasa and the observations by Juvaini and the yasa fragment on Mongol adultery speak well or poorly of Mongol behavior? Explain. According to Juvaini, how did a Mongol soldier get around the restrictions on adultery when in enemy territory?
- Ask students if they can think of reasons why nomadic clans living in rather small groups in a harsh environment might permit or even encourage widows to be wed by a son of a co-wife or a sister who shared only a common father. (Economic and physical survival may have made it necessary.)
- Is polygamy evidence of being uncivilized? Ask students to explain their thinking.

## Document 10

**Document Note:** There were two codes of conduct that guided Mongol life. One of these was the **yasa**, usually referred to as the Mongol law. The second was the **bilik**, which was a set of rules to live by.

### On Hospitality

**Source:** Rashid ad-Din, *Collected Chronicles*.

When a husband goes hunting or to war, his wife must maintain the household, so that the messenger or guest who dismounts there finds all in order and the wife is able to provide him with good food and anything else he may require.

**Source:** John of Plano Carpini, *History of the Mongols*.

They show considerable respect to each other and are friendly together, and they willingly share their food with each other, although there is little of it.... When they are without food, eating nothing at all for one or two days, they do not easily show impatience, but they sing and make merry as if they had eaten well.

### On Drinking

**Source:** Rashid ad-Din, *Collected Chronicles*.

If then there is no means to prevent drunkenness, a man may become drunk thrice a month; if he oversteps this limit he makes himself guilty of a punishable offense. If he is drunk only twice a month, that is better – if only once, that is more praiseworthy. What could be better than that he should not drink at all? But where shall we find a man who never drinks?

**Source:** John of Plano Carpini, *History of the Mongols*.

Drunkenness is considered an honorable thing by them and when anyone drinks too much, he is sick there and then, nor does this prevent him from drinking again....

### On Adultery

**Source:** Yasa fragment, in Paul Ratchnevsky, *Genghis Khan*.

Whosoever commits adultery will be executed, whether or not they have previous convictions.

**Source:** Juvaini, trans. L.A. Khanlaryan in Paul Ratchnevsky, *Genghis Khan*.

If a woman who is captured by a Mongol has a husband no one will enter into a relationship with her. If an Unbeliever (i.e. a Mongol) desires a married woman he will kill the husband and then have relations with the woman.

### On Marriage

**Source:** John of Plano Carpini, *History of the Mongols*.

Each man has as many wives as he can keep, one a hundred, another fifty, another ten – one more, another less. It is the general custom of them to marry any of their relations, with the exception of their mother, daughter and sister by the same mother. They can however take in marriage their sisters who have only the same father, and even their father's wives after his death.... All other women they take as wives without any distinction and they buy them at a very high price from their parents.

SV