The Mongols

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World History
Essential Question


So, why historically significant?
Terrorists, or Facilitators?

- 13\textsuperscript{th}-20\textsuperscript{th} Century Scholarship focused on our Essential Question as the ‘gateway’ to understanding the Mongols because of their cruelty (USSR).

- The modern quest to understand them has revealed something different.
13th Century Impressions

“In one stroke, a world which billowed with fertility was laid desolate, and the regions thereof became a desert, and the greater part of the living and their skin and bones crumbling in the dust; and the mighty were humbled and immersed in the calamities of perdition…”

13th century Persian
Another description:

The Mongols were “terrible to look at and indescribable, with large heads like buffaloes’, narrow eyes like a fledgling’s, a snub nose like a cat’s, projecting snouts like a dog’s, narrow loins like an ant’s, short legs like a hog’s, and by nature with no beards at all...” - An Unknown Armenian observer
...and Yet More

- "They are in human and beastly, rather monsters than men, thirsty for and drinking blood, tearing and devouring the flesh of dogs and men.... They are without human laws." – 13th Century European Historian Matthew Paris

- “They smell so heavily that one cannot approach them. They wash themselves in urine...” – Unknown Chinese traveler to Mongolia
The Mongol Empire at its height
The Mongols

- Nomadic tribe that conquered Eurasia during the 1200’s
  - Used horses and leadership effectively
  - Known as savage captors who used newest technology in their war-making
    - Conquered more land than any other society
    - Used brutal techniques to terrorize enemies
- Conquered b/c they enjoyed the hunt
- Currently live in Mongolia
The Mongols

- At its height, they built the largest empire in history stretching from Poland to China
- 13.8 million square miles
- Controlled 100 million people
Chronology of the Mongol Empire
Reads Like a Medieval “Rap Sheet”

- 1206-1227  Reign of Chinggis Khan
- 1211-1234  Conquest of northern China
- 1219-1221  Conquest of Persia
- 1237-1241  Conquest of Russia
- 1258  Capture of Baghdad
- 1264-1279  Conquest of southern China
Mongol Lifestyle

- Constantly migrated during the seasons
  - Kept them mobile and used to the harsh environments
Mongol Lifestyle

- Lived in yurts
  - Temporary homes made out of felt
Mongol’s Leadership

- Four leaders existed during The Mongols’ short reign
  - Genghis Khan (1167-1227)
  - Ogedei Khan (1227-1241)
  - Civil War (1241-1251) – ‘rule’ of Töregene (widow)
  - Mongke (1251-1259)
  - Hulagu (1259-1260)
  - Civil War (1261-1264)
  - Kublai Khan (1264-1294) – Marco Polo
Mongol’s Leadership

- Genghis Khan ("Temujin")
  - 1167-1227
  - Father killed by rival clan at 7; mother became a slave
  - Was responsible for bringing together all Mongol tribes into a single confederation
Temujin: Leader of the Mongols

- Mastered the art of steppe diplomacy which called for displays of personal courage in battle, combined with intense loyalty to allies, a willingness to betray others to improve one’s position (Tolgru) and the ability to entice other tribes into cooperative relationships
Mongol Leadership

- Used complex military tactics
  - Bow/arrow warfare, horse attack, siege warfare
  - "Feigned Withdraw"
- Created Mongol language for military
- Died while leading battle at Great Wall
  - Fails to achieve goal of keeping Mongols out
The Wisdom of Chinggis Khan:

“Man’s greatest joy is in victory: to conquer one’s enemies, to pursue them, to deprive them of their possessions, to make their beloved weep, to ride on their horses, and to embrace their wives and daughters...”
Shortly after Chinggis Khan’s death, his empire split into four Khanates.
The Mongol “Art of War”

- Great horsemen and archers
- Large, quickly moving armies
- “Cutting edge weapons”
- Masters at psychological warfare

“By putting cities to the sword, they let terror run ahead of them”

John Fairbank
Strong Equestrians and Archers

- The Mongols were oriented around extreme mobility. They carried their houses with them, drank their own horse's blood to stay alive, and could travel up to 62 miles per day.
- They had an elaborate priority-mail-system which allowed orders to be transmitted rapidly across Eurasia.
- Mongol archers were very deadly and accurate
  - Their arrows could kill enemies at 200 meters (656 feet)
Technological Innovations

"With their highly skilled engineers from China, Persia, and Europe combined Chinese gunpowder with Muslim flamethrowers and applied European bell-casting technology, they produced the canon, an entirely new order of technological innovation from which has sprung the vast arsenal of weapons from pistols to missiles. While all of these items had significance, the larger impact came in the way the Mongols selected and combined technologies to create unusual hybrids."

- Used special glues and wood create the re-curve bow.
Mongol War Equipment

- The warrior carried a protective shield made of light leather armor
  - which was impregnated with a lacquer-like substance in order to make it more impervious to penetration by arrows, swords and knives, and also to protect it against humid weather

- The Mongol warrior used to wear Chinese silk underwear, if it could be obtained, because it was a very tough substance
  - If arrows are shot from a long distance, it would not penetrate the silk
  - It would also prevent poison from entering the bloodstream
Mongol War Equipment

- During winter they wore several layers of wool as well as heavy leather boots with felt socks on their feet.
- The legs were often protected by overlapping iron plates resembling fish scales, which were sewn into the boots.
- Each warrior carried a battle axe, a curved sword known as scimitar; a lance, and two versions of their most famous weapon: the Mongol re-curved bow.
  - One of the bows was light and could be fired rapidly from horseback, the other one was heavier and designed for long-range use from a ground position.
Psychological Warfare

- “Feigned Withdraw”
- Genghis Khan slaughtered a few cities, in an attempt to scare all other cities to surrender without a fight. He, being a practical leader, also valued smarts more than bravery.
- He also engaged in the building of beacon towers made of severed human heads to warn off potential enemies.
A Cultural Transformation?

- New investigations tell us a very different story about the Mongols
  - “Seemingly every aspect of European life-technology, warfare, clothing, commerce, food, art, literature, and music, changed during the Renaissance as a result of Mongol influence.” – Jack Weatherford, "Genghis Khan: The Making of the Modern World"
  - “With Genghis’ support, goldsmiths and weavers produced gold plaques, jewellery, and bowls, and silk clothing, banners, and religious articles.” – Morris Rossabi
  - The Khan’s plans included religious tolerance, respectability and progress – so, why all the destruction in the first place??
The Mongol “Rules of War”

- If enemies surrendered without resistance, the Mongols usually spared their lives, and they provided generous treatment for artisans, craft workers, and those with military skills.

- In the event of resistance, the Mongols ruthlessly slaughtered whole populations, sparing only a few, whom they sometimes drove their armies as human shields during future conflicts.
Genghis Khan’s first Mongol Empire

- Genghis Khan’s original territorial base
- The Mongol Empire in 1206
- The Mongol Empire at Genghis Khan’s death (1227)
- Itineraries of armies led by:
  - Genghis Khan
  - His sons and generals
  - Towns destroyed or pillaged
Mongol Leadership

- Odogeii Khan
  - Succeeded Genghis in 1229
  - Third of Genghis’ four sons
  - Expanded empire to Russia and Poland
  - Died in 1241
  - Europe might have been overthrown if not for Odogeii’s premature death
“The Devil’s Horsemen”

- Few Europeans knew about the Mongols
- Strange fantastical creatures
- Mongol overthrow of Poland (1241) left Europe in a state of shock
- Rumors of the Mongol ‘priest king’ Prester John arose in hopes of pacifying Europeans and defeating the ‘Arab hordes’ (not Arabs, but Mongols)
A Change of Opinion

- Fearing further European attacks, Pope Innocent IV sent Friar John Carpini in 1243 to the Mongol Empire, hoping to persuade them to consider Christianity.
- Unexpectedly, Carpini discovered a government of ambassadors and emissaries that actively encouraged religious tolerance.
- Although they denied Carpini’s offer, his meeting later resulted in the widespread flourish of Christianity in the region.
Mongol Leadership

- **Kublai Khan**
  - Succeed father Odogei in 1260
  - Expanded empire into South China, but never as powerful as previous leaders
  - Expanded postal system
  - First to allow Asian/European countries to trade
  - Marco Polo writes about his 23-yr stay w/Mongols
- Died in 1294
How did Japan resist Mongol invasion?

- The Mongols attempted to invade Japan *twice* (1274 and 1281)
- *Twice* they were repelled by typhoons
- "*Kamikaze*" or "divine wind"
- Japanese use this as inspiration for Kamikazes of WWII
Under the Mongols, there was unprecedented long-distance trade.

Mongols encouraged the exchange of people, technology, and information across their empire.

Weatherford: The Mongols were "civilization’s unrivaled cultural carriers..."
Mongol Script and Currency
Reasons for Mongol’s Collapse

- Conquered areas were too big
- Failures against Japan & Egypt (1260-1288) forced Mongols out – combined Muslim/Christian alliance
- Political infighting weakened them
- Conquered peoples copied strategy & tactics
Effect of Mongolian Conquests

- “The Mongols created a single economic, cultural, and epidemiological world system”
  - Mongol Exchange
  - New methods of warfare
  - Established trade from Venice to Beijing & beyond
  - Demographic change via the plague and major population shifts
  - Altered the political histories of Russia, China, Europe, and The Middle East
  - Unparalleled cultural diffusion via ‘Silk Road’
  - Many inventions brought to Europe - Printing Press, Gunpowder, Compass
Essential Question

“The Mongols made no technological breakthroughs, founded no new religions, wrote few books or dramas”

So, why historically significant?