

WORLD HISTORY
Document-Based Question

Suggested reading and writing time: 1 hour

It is suggested that you take 15 minutes reading the documents and 45 minutes writing your response.

Note: You may begin writing your response before the reading period is over.

Directions: The question is based on the accompanying documents. The documents have been edited for the purpose of this exercise.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a historically defensible thesis or claim that establishes a line of reasoning.
- Describe a broader historical context relevant to the prompt.
- Support an argument in response to the prompt using at least six documents.
- Use at least one additional piece of historical evidence (beyond that found in the documents) relevant to the argument about the prompt.
- For at least three documents, explain how or why the document's point of view, purpose, historical situation, and/or audience is relevant to an argument.
- Use evidence to corroborate, qualify, or modify an argument that addresses the prompt.

Prompt: Evaluate the extent to which the Mongols were able to conquer such a large territory in a relatively short period of time.

Document 1

Source: John of Plano Carpini, *History of the Mongols*, circa 1250.

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.

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 2

Source: John of Plano Carpini, *History of the Mongols*, circa 1250.

Carpini on Battle Tactics

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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....

Document 3

Source: Adapted from *Kublai Khan: His Life and Times* by Morris Rossabi, 1988.

Kublai Khan's Rule in China: Selected Events

- 1260** Kubilai becomes Grand Khan of China
- 1261** Kubilai increasingly gives Moslems positions of authority in government
- 1262** Kubilai edict prohibits Mongol nomads from settling on Chinese farmers' land
- 1264** Kubilai grants tax exemption to Buddhist monasteries
- 1266** Kubilai orders construction of new capital city near modern-day Beijing
- 1266** Kubilai asks Marco Polo to bring 100 learned Christians with him on his next visit to China. Polo revisits China in 1275 but without Christians
- 1267** Persian astronomer Jamal al-Din arrives to head Kubilai's court astronomers
- 1271** Kubilai puts new legal system in place; reduces capital crimes by half
- 1270s** Chinese theater blossoms during Kubilai's reign; evidence of over 600 plays written and performed in growing Chinese cities
- 1280** Mongols with joint Chinese, Korean and Mongol forces fail to conquer Japan; Kubilai no longer seen as invincible
- 1285** Envoys sent to India to attract skilled craftsmen and doctors; first of three visits
- 1294** Number of postal stations in China for servicing mail and trade reaches 1,400
- 1294** Death of Kubilai Khan

Document 4

Source: Charles J. Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde*, 1985.

Mongol Commerce in China and Persia

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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 5

Source: Ata-Malik Juvaini, *Genghis Khan: The History of the World Conqueror*, circa 1260.

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.

Source: Robert Marshall, *Storm from the East: From Genghis Khan to Kubilai Khan*, 1993.

Reported Inhabitant Deaths

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: 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 6

Source: Friar William of Rubruck, *The Journey of William of Rubruck*, 1254.

Karakorum, Mongolia, May 30, 1254

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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 7

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 al-Din, *Collected Chronicles*, 13th century.

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*, circa 1250.

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 al-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, date unknown.

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

Source: Ata-Malik Juvaini, *Genghis Khan: The History of the World Conqueror*, circa 1260.

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.