

The rise of the mongols essay example

[Government](#), [Army](#)



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Iranian civilization history

For the first time in history in the 13th century a phenomenon arose in central Asia of a virtual world war due to the fury of the Mongolians. The existence of new tormentors amidst them was something the Euro/Asiatic land masses did not expect as the Mongol tribe unleashed their fury on them.

The few works of art that have lived to give an impression of how the invaders looked like being just two objects that show similar images but different cultures of the Mongol conquerors: The furthest point to the west that the Mongols reached which in recent times is now Wroclaw in Poland, lies the tomb of the Duke of Silesia Henry the Pious.

Henry was killed in battle in Legnica with the Mongols, his tomb is currently at the Wroclaw's National Museum and just below his feet is a carving of the characteristic headgear worn by a Mongol warrior; in one of the many conquests of the Mongolians but this time in an easterly direction half a

world away, a similar representation was being made of the Mongol warriors (Grousset, 34). The image was not carved in stone this time around but it was a horizontal picture scroll painting. The Mongol Invasion Scroll was created in Japanese emakimono and named as Moko Shurai Ekotoba. The Scroll was created to claim a reward of heroism therein: a samurai leader known as Takezaki Suenaga, to celebrate a victory and not to remember defeat.

Neither Tekezaki Suenaga nor Henry the Pious was aware the other ever existed let alone that they had fought the same enemy, but this was the Mongol empire's nature. The space and time that existed between Hakata and Leignitz, the Mongols had fought on the coast of Vietnam, caused sieges in the snow plains of Russia, caused skirmishes in the mountains of Afghanistan and fought battles in the Syrian desert (Smith, 3). The conquests of the Mongols affected the lives of countless kings and the peasants of those kingdoms. Many of the victims of the Mongols feared them and they referred to them as the “ devils horsemen” who took everything with them and left nothing behind but pure devastation and death (4).

The Mongols had a great ability to adapt to new military skills and changing conditions (Smith, 5). Their traditional techniques of mounted warfare were very good as well as the achievements they made in the early years of their conquests. The administration of the territories that were conquered were a victim of the famous comment on how the Mongol empire had been won by horseback as much as it could not be led by it, but in many occasions it was obvious the Mongols were not able to operate in any other way. Without the mounted warfare element there were deep problems.

Problems in the great Mongolian empire started when they decided to campaign in areas outside the steppe (Smith, 7). The crops grown by the sedentary society were a perfect replacement for the grass used to feed the horses in the steppe areas and a good approach with serious insight and planning was needed for their exploit. Campaigns done in various environments that had strange humidity, temperatures, jungles, swampy areas and rivers provided different grounds of battle unlike the familiar territories of the north. Military techniques that were new had to be learned in these cases an example is; when the Mongols marched into the cities of Song in the southern parts of China they found that their walls were heavily defended and too massive, this was around the 1254 onwards. In 1272 at Xiangyang Khubil ai Khan had to send his kinsmen to the west for extra armory to breach the same walls. The Mongols had amazing survival and adaptation skills (Smith, 10).

It was in the steppes of central Asia that the Mongols came into history as one of the many nomadic tribes. The beginning and rise of the Mongol conquest came from disunity to unity in a dramatic shift, and this achievement was possible due to the military skills and personality of one man. Temuchin was the name of this man and he was probably born around 1167 (Turnbull, p. 17). Survival skills and rivalry is the world which Temuchin encountered as a nomad. Temuchin as a Mongol child learned how to handle a bow and arrow and how to ride a horse with great skill at a very young age.

After a young life filled with many events and encounters, his thoughts turned to a different kind of opportunity which was unifying and taking

control of the Mongol tribes and defeating his rivals. Temuchin's biggest victory was the defeat of the Naimans many years and warfares later. At the source of the Union River in 1206, a grand assembly was called where a white standard was raised symbolizing the Mongol's protective spirit with its nine points forming a representation of the newly unified tribes of Mongol (Morgan, 12). In this gathering Temuchin was re-named Genghis Khan meaning, universal ruler and the leader of the Mongolian tribe.

The xixia campaign 1205-10

With the title of Genghis Khan in 1206, Temuchin's needs strategically changed from unifying the nomads to impressing them by showing the power he had against the civilizations who were agriculture based bordering their lands. Nearby China is where one of these enemies lay. During this period China was divided and led by different rulers who did not trust each other, hence this weakness made the conquest and its prospects more promising.

The Song and the Jin were the main power block dynasties in the start of the 13th centuries. The Jin Empire was situated on the Yangtze River in the north its capital being Zhongdu in the north, the present day Beijing and Kaifeng in the south. The Jurchens were the tribe in the Jin; these are similar to the Manchuria who would arise later as the dynasty of Qing of china (Grousset, p. 37). The Jin had fought a long lasting war against the Song dynasty and managed to capture Kaifeng from them in 1126. The Song ended up confined to the area south of river Yangtze and hence became known as the Southern Song.

However in the north-west of china was Xixia state comprised of the Tangut

people. Genghis Khan knew the Xixia had to be first on his list as they would threaten his flank when he moved for the Jin. He raided Xixia in 1205 and 1206 but he managed to destroy them completely in 1209 by launching a major attack (Grousset, 41). A march is what started the operation through the sandy wastes of the Gobi desert where the Mongol army stormed the Wolohai Xixia fortress effortlessly. The Xixia hit back through the road of their capital Yinchuan which was situated in a high mountain range but the result was a stalemate. With the arrival of more Xixia Tangut troops the Mongols used a tactic of false withdrawal a ruse that successfully enabled the Mongols to lure their enemies to the fortified camp (42). A heavy battle commenced in which Weiming the Xixia commander was captured.

The traditional tactics of the Mongol up to this point of assault of fortified places and mobile cavalry had worked well for them in battles, but the Yinchuan capital of Xixia had been ready for the siege. The siege of the Mongols halted at the walls of Yinchuan with its complex canals of irrigation fed by the Yellow river and the prospect of conducting a long siege was what the Mongols had to go through for the first time. With this defeat the Mongols demonstrated their skills in learning and adaptation.

Genghis Khan gave instructions for a dyke to be built seeing that the rains had widened the river and the city soon began to flood. In January 1210 the walls of Yinchuan were about to collapse hence the dykes burst open. It's not known whether the Xixia caused the breach but the effect was to cause a big flood on the siege lines of the Mongols. The Xixia ruler surrendered to Genghis Khan Flood or no flood and presented him with a tribute (Grousset,

48). Genghis Khan withdrew his military sure of the first defeat against a sedentary civilized state.

The Mongol army

The Mongol army comprised of light and heavy cavalrymen and the armor they wore was similar to the lamellar armor of the Asiatic style; a composite armor plate was made by small scales of leather and iron pierced with holes and sewn together (Turnbull, 17). The feet would be covered with heavy leather boots and the coat which was reinforced using metal plates worn under the armor suit. Large iron pieces made the helmet which had a rounded cone like rough shape, with a guard of iron plates added to it to cover the neck. The horses ridden by the heavy Mongol cavalry had on the lamellar armor. The main weapons used by the Mongols were maces, swords and bows.

The Mongol army also had a habit of salvaging the lives of artisans who had special skills such as famed scholars in the towns they conquered. These people would later be used as advisors for the army or even Genghis himself (Curtis, 12). The rest of the town's people would either be sold for slavery or slaughtered. Any city that surrendered to the Mongol army would at times be required to pay a huge tribute for their deliverance or else they would all be eliminated.

According to Turnbull the military and civil society of the Mongol was founded on firm discipline. The head of the ruling Khan family was Genghis Khan; the lands for grazing were divided amongst his four sons forming the future basis for future Khanates (19). This was the steppe aristocracy a feudal system just like the one found in the army. The Mongol army was

arranged into three wings that is the right, left and center plus reserves.

The Mongols did not have any illusions about the reality of logistics. Each man had a string of horses as much as sixteen a big asset for mobility, meat, milk and blood purposes hence keeping them in the field for long periods of time.

The Mongols fought a variety of enemies more than any army in history and these included sedentary societies and nomads like them. Their easiest target was the European heavy cavalry. The Mongols never put themselves in any place where an attack could destabilize them (Turnbull, 18).

The Mongol tactics at Mohi and Leignitz neutralized their well armored knights. The Chinese also formed one of Mongol's enemies and they used different tactics such as landmines and explosives to try and stop them. The Koreans attempted to defeat the Mongolians by throwing molten iron projectiles at them as well as ambushes for invasion of the Mongol army which at some point proved to be effective. The Mongols planned a surprise attack on the Japanese which the Samurai tried to fight back using traditional methods. In Burma the Mongols were challenged by their tactics of using elephants, but the Mongols used to shoot at the elephants using arrows, causing a stampede hence a great victory for them.

The Khwarazm campaign

Khwarazm situated at Amu Darya River region is central Asia oldest centers of civilization. The Khwarazm Empire whose date of founding is not clear was a province of the Ghaznavid Empire from 992-1041. But starting 1077 the Seljuqs took over ownership under the leadership of Anush, a former Turkic slave of the Seljuq sultan. It used to be part of Achaemenid Empire of

Cyrus the great in the 6th century B. C but it got its independence in the 14th Century B. C and was inhabited by the Indians who followed Zoroastrianism. When the Arabs conquered the empire in the 7th Century the empire was converted to Islam. By 995 the empire was now a center of agriculture and trade it gained independence from Seljuk Turks and started under the ruling shahs to expand its power and rule. In 1141 Anush's grandson was forced to hand over power to Kara Khitay.

A war broke between the Mongolian empire and Khwarazm when a trade mission was sent by Genghis Khan in 1218 to one of Khwarazm states. On arrival of the ambassadors, the governor of Otrar began to suspect that the ambassadors were spies and ordered their execution. When Genghis Khan asked for compensation the Shah refused to pay and that is when Genghis Khan started his first conquest at the empire of Khwarazm.

The operation of Kara-Khitai which was a success brought Genghis Khan close to his greatest enemy Sultan Muhammad of Khwarazm who was in charge of the Muslim in the east. The Khwarazm Shah came from a Turkic family and he ruled an empire that stretched from Afghanistan to the whole of Iran and from the Aral to the Persian Gulf (Turnbull, 24). There were serious divisions among the Shah's subjects and he was not willing to appoint one person to lead his army in case he betrayed him and these were the weaknesses Genghis was ready to exploit. Genghis started a campaign against Muhammad in 1219, claiming the Muslim merchants under Mongolian protection were being treated badly and he also accused them of being spies. The execution of some Mongolian envoys is what sparked immediate action (Turnbull, 27).

As soon as Genghis learnt of the massacres he named Ogodei as heir and spent the summer of 1219 taking charge of military tactics and provision arrangement to exact revenge. With proclamations and propaganda already having been made by Muhammad's supporters causing further division, the Mongols approached the city of Otrar in autumn of that year. It was after five whole months that Otrar fell due to the siege with its governor being executed (Turnbull, 27).

As the siege of Otrar was in progress Genghis moved across the desert to Bukhara which was his next target. Bukhara had been a part of the Khwarazm Empire from 1207 and as the Mongol army came close many of the men in the Bukhara army fled and the few left was easily defeated (Smith, 36). Samarkand of the Khwarazm Empire was the next target and with the political divisions affecting it had weak defense, and the Mongols came out victorious. The hardcore garrison inside the citadel is all that was left to resist the determination Genghis Khan had. The gates between the two prayers were captured by the Mongols. Negotiations were then carried out by a series of senior clerics with Genghis Khan who were driven out of the city with a promise that their lives would be spared.

The outcome of the Khwarazm war was determined by the fall of Samarkand. Urgench on the Amu Darya river the old capital of Khwarazm fell after a long siege and after handing over power to his son Jalal al-Din Khwarazm Shah became a fugitive. Genghis left the pursuit of Muhammad to his best generals, Subadai and Jebe and resolved to destroy Jalal al-Din.

Unfortunately the old Muhammad died in 1221 of pneumonia in an island in the Caspian Sea (Smith, 39).

Genghis Khan even as a man who was not educated, was neither ignorant or a savage as many would have viewed him. As soon as the people he had planned to conquer were subdued he did not plan to live in their cities he instead set up his own city in the steppes called Karakorum where he called on all the wise men from all over in other cities and empires to join him in his quest. It was in Karakorum that Genghis consulted with the Muslim engineers on how to make weapons of siege and with the scholars of Confucian on how to rule China as well as the ways he would be able to improve trade with other nations in the deep west (Curtis, 7).

Through absorbing the talents and advice of both the Chinese and Muslim scholars Genghis created an administrative framework devised in the common Mongolian language to have a standard law and to help with record keeping. He also came up with a legal code that the army was instructed to enforce.

The main aim of this code was to quell the arguments that had been among the Mongolian people. Harsh penalties were put in place for any person caught stealing horses or rustling livestock and the lands for grazing were divided in a systematic manner among the different Mongolian tribes (Grousset, 39). Through the advice of the counselors from China Genghis resisted turning the lands in the north of China into vast grazing areas which would have meant the end of millions of peasants settling there and he instead decided to tax the peasants on a regular basis which would support his military exploits.

The Mongol conquest brought much peace to Asia generally which lasted for generations. Genghis Khan and his successors promoted trade and its

growth and made sure caravan routes were safe from bandits (Morgan, 33). Safe trade route paved way for cosmopolitan cities and wealthy and prosperous merchants. They also ensured there was a spread of food in all regions. The expansion of the Mongol empire that started with the vision of one man ended up being a major social and economic force.

The death of Genghis Khan and the division of the empire

Genghis Khan fell prey to an injury he had sustained before the attack he had led to the Tangut capital of the Xixia Empire and he fell seriously ill months later. Genghis Khan finally died in August of 1227 soon after talking to his sons about the dangers of disagreements among them warning them that it would destroy the empire he had worked so hard to build (Turnbull, 47).

The Mongols carried out one last siege only this time the death of Genghis Khan was the motivation. His body was taken back to Mongol for the burial, but on the way the Mongol army that guarded the funeral procession murdered every animal and human being in their path. The army also carried out Genghis last instruction and slaughtered the inhabitants who had been left in the capital of Tangut who were unarmed and even after there had been an arranged mission for them to surrender and make peace.

The pasturelands of the Mongol Empire were now divided among Genghis three remaining sons and a grandson who would take the place of his deceased son Jochi (Morgan, 56). The cultivated regions and towns like the ones in Persia and north China were seen to be the property of the ruling family of the Mongols. At Karakorum which was the capital of the Mongol Empire is where Ogedei was named successor of as his father Genghis Khan

had willed. Ogedei was Genghis' third son. Hence he was named the " grand Khan" (Morgan, 57).

Ogedei was a deft manipulator and crafty diplomat, skills that were crucial for him to lead the Empire and vast provinces his father had left behind. For almost a decade he directed his efforts into further conquests and campaigns and the regions he had targeted for the further expansion of the Mongol Empire paid a hefty price for peace. This included the fate of China, the Islamic heartlands, Eastern Europe and Russia. The Mongols were surely not done with their vision of building a world empire and change the route global history would take.

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