

Mongols in the middle east

[History](#), [Middle East](#)



The Mongols were raiders, clan warriors, and rulers of a transcontinental empire in the thirteen century. Also referred to as the Tatars and barbarians, they conquered Persia before moving on to Europe with the Khan of Khans, Genghis Khan as their most important leader. Eventually the Mongols made an empire for themselves which is known as the largest contiguous empire in world history.

In Europe, the Mongols first attacked Hungary in the year 1241. They smashed all military opposition in Poland and the Balkans before regrouping to push west. The Mongol invasion of all Europe could have been completed in the course of a year. However, an unexpected message arrived to call back all Mongols to Genghis Khan. Europe was partly delivered. But Islam was not.

By the year 1220, the Mongols had captured Samarkand and Bukhara. And, in the year 1255, the Mongol rulers of Persia went to war against the Caliph of Islam in Baghdad. Led by Genghis Khan's grandson, Hulagu Khan, they invaded Syria and Palestine, and in 1258, captured Baghdad, destroying the city and killing the Abbasid Caliph in the process.

Baghdad, before the Mongol invasion, was one of the centers of intellectual activity for the entire globe. By attacking the center, the Mongols pretty much snuffed out the intellectual flowering of the time. Besides, the city had had its agriculture supported by a canal network thousands of years in age. The Mongols also destroyed the physical structure of Baghdad - before then referred to as the City of Peace - by filling in the irrigation canals and leaving

Iraq too depopulated to restore them. The barbarians had killed around eighty thousand people of Baghdad.

After Baghdad, the Mongols marched westward, but were halted at Ayn Jalut, one of the decisive battlefields of history near Nazareth in Israel. In the year 1260, the Turkish and Egyptian forces routed the Mongols at Ayn Jalut, thereby preventing the enemy from attacking Egypt and North Africa. The Golden Horde Mongols of Russia sided with the Turks and the Egyptians to turn against their own kind.

By coming into contact with the Muslims through invasions, countless Mongols began to embrace Islam. Ghazan Khan Mahmud, a Mongol ruler, officially adopted Islam as the religion of the state at the dawn of the fourteenth century. During this period, the Mongols built mosques and schools, and patronized all sorts of scholarship.

Then again, Tamerlane, the world conqueror, appeared among the Mongols, leading the barbarian forces to sweep down on Central Asia, India, Iran, Iraq, and Syria; occupying Aleppo and Damascus; and threatening the Mamluks. The Muslims survived their invaders. Nonetheless, the damage had been done. Some of the regions occupied by the Muslims in the past did never recover fully, and the Muslim empire never fully regained its enormous power held in the past.

The Mongol invasions happened to be a major cause of subsequent decline that set in throughout the heartland of the Arab East. The Mongols, in their sweep through the Muslim world, had killed and deported innumerable

scholars as well as scientists; destroyed libraries along with their irreplaceable works; and thereby set the stage for general intellectual decline in the Middle East. By wiping out the invaluable cultural, scientific, and technological legacy that the Muslim scholars had been preserving for some five hundred years - the Mongols had left an indelible mark on the minds of the Middle Easterners. After the Mongols, the Middle East never really reached the height of intellectual supremacy it once had reached.

The Mongols came to rule the entire Middle East except for Egypt.

Traditionally the worshippers of heaven, the Mongols had believed in their divine right to rule the entire world. The Muslims in the Middle East had also believed in their own supremacy until this time. This is because the Holy Qur'an had referred to the believers as the best of communities raised on earth. The Mongol invasions were a bitter disappointment for the Muslims of the Middle East, seeing that they showed how the great Muslim Caliphate could be routed easily by a band of barbarians.

A serious setback for the Muslims of the Middle East, Mongols ruled the Middle Easterners from Persia instead of Baghdad, crushing the Arab sense of superiority in the process. The masters had turned into subjects. This, indeed, was an important lesson for Middle Easterners, seeing that the events of the centuries to come held even greater blows in store for them.

Muslim historians have asserted that the Mongol invasion of the Middle East was a punishment from God for the rulers of the Muslim world that had turned to corruption. Moreover, God does not tolerate arrogance on the part of a race that comes to rule another. The Middle Easterners had, by this

time, seen tremendous successes almost everywhere in the world. And yet, the Abbasids had overthrown the Umayyads, thereby setting the stage for Middle Eastern decline. This is because Islam does not set brother against brother. It may very well be that rulers from the Middle East had begun overthrowing one another for power alone rather than Islam. In fact, the same pattern was applied among the Mughal emperors of the subcontinent, who too were eventually overthrown by “ outsiders”.

When the Ottomans were overthrown by “ outsiders” after the First World War, it was a reminder for the Muslim world. As a matter of fact, the Mongols were brought to mind. Once again, the Muslim Caliphate had been done away with.

One of the reasons cited by Muslim scholars for the fall of the Muslim Caliphate is that many of the caliphs who came after Prophet Muhammad and his friends, Abu Bakr, Usman, Umar, and Ali - were defeated because they had built grand empires at the cost of discarding thoughts about the afterlife. In fact, right up to the Ottomans, the Muslims had formed a truly magnificent empire.

Harems were common, and there was just too much excitement over worldly affairs to let the afterlife be of much concern to the rulers as well as their subjects. In actuality, Muslims are meant to be focused on the afterlife instead of worldly affairs. Even though the grandeur of David and Solomon is not disdained, many of the caliphs of Islam after the first few ones are truly known to have turned too much attention on worldly affairs. This,

according to Muslim historians, was one of the chief causes of Middle Eastern decline.

The Mongols stay in the consciousness of the Middle Easterners today as a reminder of the brutal past - a past for which only they were held responsible. The reminder is beneficial. In point of fact, the history of the Mongols among the Middle Easterners is only meant to bring the Muslims of the Middle East closer to God, and the real spirit of Islam.