

Genghis khan essay sample



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The world has had many successful leaders. Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Julius Caesar and Philip the Great of Macedon once raised to power and built or expanded an empire. None however were as influential as Genghis Khan, ruler of Mongolia. He transformed the nomads of the Mongolian steppes to a mighty empire, which defeated such world powers as China and the Islamic world. Genghis Khan and his successors expanded their territory westward as far as Poland, and eastward to include all of China, thus making it the largest empire that has so far existed.

Contrary to people's beliefs Genghis Khan was not a murderous tyrant, but a brilliant savage that fought out of necessity and for the good of his people. To the Mongols, he was viewed as a hero and a beloved father. He promoted the growth of trade throughout Asia, created a code of laws and was a great military strategist. Under Genghis Khan's rule trade flourished. Before Genghis Khan the nomadic people living on the steppes were used to trading only for things they could not make themselves.

Chinese merchants forced the Mongols to trade their agricultural goods and art works for cheap tools and weapons. As the trade routes started to establish under Genghis Khan, however, Mongolian goods, ornaments in particular became highly valuable. Portable art, such as decorated saddles, jewelry, clothing, and textiles made by Mongolian artisans were admired by Muslim and European Merchants. Mongolian art was introduced to the entire known world in a short period of time as a result of trade. Consequently, Mongolian tribes became wealthier and transformed into a civilization.

Under Mongol rule and protection, the Silk Road gained travelers and convoys that could travel throughout the Mongol Empire without the fear of being attacked by thieves. The peace that the Mongols kept over the Silk Road helped to easily ship weapons and essential supplies to feed the great Mongolian army. Genghis Khan encouraged trade along the famous Silk Road and formed additional trade routes throughout the Eurasian continent and Middle East. With the increase in trade between Eurasia and Europe the western and eastern cultures were brought together, allowing them to mix.

Skillful Mongol weavers wove colorful cloths, which was used in burials in the West or were used to decorate holy places such as the church. Mongol textiles reached as far as Western Europe and were used for the burial of an Italian bishop and were even mentioned in the writings of Chaucer, an English poet of medieval England. Tile work found at Takht-i-Sulaiman in Persia, an excavated palace in the Mongolian period shows a great deal of Chinese influence. Similarly early Persian silk work and glass is noticeable in Chinese art.

Perhaps Genghis Khan's most significant contribution to the Mongol empire was the creation of a code of laws, referred to as the great Yasa. It is believed to have been first established at the qurital of 1206 when Genghis Khan was proclaimed as the leader of Mongolia. The Yasa is considered to be the first sign of democracy in the East and the source of the ideals that shape today's democratic, capitalist Mongolia. What is surprising to many people is that Genghis Khan, a character wrongly portrayed as a ruthless tyrant is associated with democratic principals.

He however, instituted many of the same basic principles that form the foundation of modern democracy nine years before King John signed the Magna Carta. He codified the four basic principles that make a country a democracy known as participatory government, rule by law, equality under the law, and personal freedoms of religion and speech. The Yasa also brought peace and harmony to the Mongolian steppes. After Genghis Khan was declared the Khan of Mongolia he said, “ I will rule them by fixed laws so that rest and happiness shall prevail in the world. Since the punishment of committing any crime was usually death, rules were taken very seriously.

It was said that the Yassa worked so well that if a carload of gold was left unsupervised overnight it would not be touched. Another significance of Yasa was the loyalty, obedience, honesty and discipline it brought to the army, which greatly contributed in their victories. Mongolian warriors would have died serving their country and leader or were put to death in public and for being traitors and enemies. Until the modern era no military force could have matched the effectiveness and mobility of the Mongol army under Genghis Khan’s leadership.

He organized the nomads of the steppes in a traditional decimal system. It was built upon a squad of ten that would then compose a company of a hundred and another unit of a thousand. During the battle, soldiers formed lines that often stretched for miles. These ranks would begin to surround an area and force the enemy into a ring. This same system was used by the neighboring Russian tribes but it was proven that only an army with incredibly high degree of organization, communication, and cooperation such as the Mongols were capable of mastering this technique.

Another method of invasion used by Genghis Khan, which led to many of his successful conquests was attacking the enemy in three columns. It consisted of a central force and two flanks. The Jun-gar was the Army of the Left Wing or East, the Baran-gar was the Army of the Right Wing or West, and the Khol was the Army of the Center. The flanks in most cases covered different territories before rendezvousing with the center column. This enabled Genghis Khan to cover more territory in one third of the time it would take for another army to conquer the same area.

Furthermore, the use of columns with professional scouts gathering intelligence helped the Mongols to locate the enemy armies much more rapidly. They obtained information from travelers, merchants, farmers and anyone else who might have had any useful knowledge. They learned about mountain passes, roads, fortified places, towns and military forces that they might have encountered on a campaign. Genghis Khan died on August 18, 1227, and was buried in a secret location in Mongolia. He was feared by civilizations from France to Japan, while loved and respected by the people in his own homeland.

He began the creation of what was to become the largest empire the world has ever known. He was not a mere barbarian but rather a great leader that molded illiterate nomads of Mongolia into superb horseman and fierce warriors. As a result of his conquests trade flourished and art underwent a profound change. He for the first time in Mongolian history codified laws that are still being used in many villages in Mongolia. He structured his army in a unique fashion and used many brilliant warfare tactics, which led to his great conquests.