

THE MONGOLS

In the 1200's, the Song was threatened by a wave of invaders from the North. The brilliant Mongol chief was **Genghis Khan**. He conquered China, much of Asia and portions of Europe. His men controlled China for over 150 years. How did he do this? Well, he imposed strict military discipline and demanded absolute loyalty. They were truly tough guys. His armies could travel for days at a time, eating only small handfuls of grain and drinking mare's milk. (I'm hungry when I haven't eaten by sixth period!) They were also possibly the most skilled horsemen in the world. Every Mongol soldier wore a long silk undershirt. When hit with an arrow, he could remove it by carefully pulling on the silk, which usually entered with the arrow. Upon witnessing Mongols pulling arrows from their bodies, some of their opponents became convinced that the Mongols were superhuman. But even though arrows were removed carefully, Mongol soldiers often died of infection, due in part to poor hygiene. Mongol warriors rarely washed and when they did, they used urine from their horses. Their silk undershirts were usually worn until they rotted off. (They didn't have Ban deodorant or Tide detergent. Pee yu!) They often had a lot of surprise attacks, letting the other side think they won and then would charge them. He was quoted as saying:

"Man's greatest good fortune is to chase and defeat his enemy, seize his total possessions, leave his married woman weeping and wailing, ride his gelding (horses), use the bodies of his women as a nightshirt and support..."

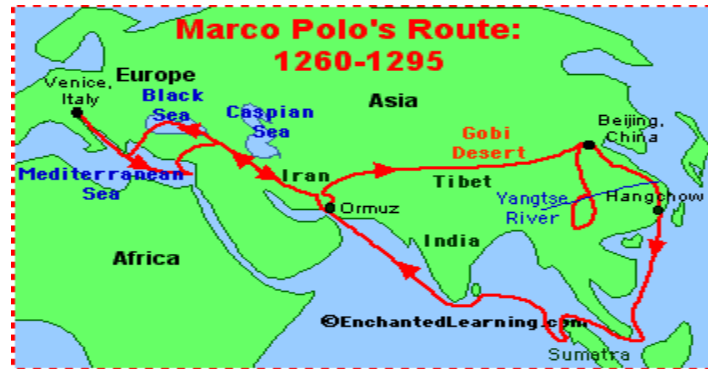
Wow! He has some built up hostility. Actually, his beloved father was tricked and poisoned by a rival clan. This could explain his desire for conquest and revenge.

The heirs of Genghis continued to expand his empire. Their furious assaults spread destruction from southern Russia to the Middle East. However, once they conquered, they were not oppressive (harsh) rulers. During the 1200's and 1300's, Mongol rulers established peace and order within its empire. They often let the conquered people live as they had before – as long as they paid their tribute to them (money and loyalty). They gained control of the Silk Road. Trade allowed people from different cultures to mix within the empire. As a result of Mongol control, there was increased contact between China and the western world. People felt so safe to travel, that it was once said that Mongol rule meant that people "enjoyed such a peace that a man could have journeyed with a golden platter on his head and have been perfectly safe. (They experienced economic growth.

Kublai Khan, the grandson of Genghis, conquered the Song dynasty. He set up the Yuan dynasty. The Yuan improved transportation, encouraged trade, and created an efficient mail system. However, he did not want the Mongols to be absorbed into the Chinese civilization. He gave the best government jobs to Mongol workers. Only Mongols were allowed to serve in the army. As you can probably guess, the Chinese did not like these foreign invaders.

1. Who conquered China in the 1200's? _____
 2. What did they call their dynasty? _____
 3. What tactics did Genghis use to get power?
 4. How did Genghis treat people once in power
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5. What was one result of Mongol rule? _____
 6. Why did the Chinese dislike the Mongols?
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Polo tells Europe about China



Read the following excerpt from the writings of Marco Polo and answer the questions that follow.

I shall now speak of how the Emperor Kublai Khan shows great charity and care to the poor in the city of Kanbulu. Whenever he hears of a family, who had once lived in comfort, but who has been reduced to poverty because of misfortunes, or who are unable to work for a living because of illness, then he gives that family all they need for one year. At the customary time, such people present themselves before the officers who manage this department of the Emperor's expenses, and who live in a palace in which that business is taken care of. In a similar way the Emperor provides clothing to the poor, which he can do because all subjects are expected to provide him with one-tenth of all the wool, silk and hemp they produce.

I should also comment on the order and regularity shown by the people of all classes when they present themselves before the Emperor. When they approach within half a mile of the place where he happens to be, they show their respect for his noble character by acting humble, calm and quiet, so much so that not the least noise or any person's voice can be heard. Men also take with them handsome white leather boots and give the boots in which they had walked to the servants to take care of. This practice is observed so that they will not soil the beautiful carpets, which are unusually made of silk and gold and exhibit a variety of colors.

1. According to Marco Polo, how did Kublai Khan treat the poor?
2. Describe two ways that people showed respect for the Emperor.
3. Based on the excerpt, what conclusions might Europeans have drawn about the relationship between Kublai Khan and the Chinese people?

