

# MONGOL DBQ

The following question is based on the accompanying documents (1-10). The documents have been edited for the purpose of this exercise.

Be sure your essay accomplishes each of the following:

- \* provides a complete answer to all parts of the question
- \* has a relevant thesis that is supported by evidence from the documents
- \* uses all of the documents
- \* analyzes the documents by grouping them in as many appropriate ways as possible and does not simply summarize the documents individually
- \* takes into account both the source of the document and the author's point of view where appropriate
- \* refers to at least one other document that is not included which could help further understanding of the issue

You may refer to relevant historical information not mentioned in the document.

**Based on the following documents, analyze the impact of the Mongols on Eurasia. What additional kind of document(s) would you need to evaluate the extent of Mongol interactions on political, economic and social developments across the Eurasian steppe?**

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:** As early as the second millennium B.C.E., central Asian nomads threatened states from China to the Mediterranean basin, and from classical times they traded regularly with settled societies for agricultural surpluses and manufactured goods. During the half millennium from 1000 to 1500 C.E., these nomads played a more prominent role than ever before in the affairs of Eurasia. The Mongols especially demonstrated the potential of nomads to project formidable military power over settled societies and facilitate trans-regional interaction.

## Document 1

Letter sent to fellow Franciscans who were working as missionaries in the Black Sea area by Friar John, 1307, forwarded to Rome

“I, Friar John of Monte Corvino departed from Tauris in the year of our Lord, 1291.....found my way to Cathay (China), the realm of the emperor of the Tartars (Mongols) who is called the grand Khan. To him I presented the letter of our lord the pope and invited him to adopt the Catholic faith of our Lord Jesus Christ....but he had grown too old in idolatry; however, he bestows many kindnesses upon the Christians....I request some good fellow-workers to help me..”

## **Document 2**

"In the whole world there are to be found no more obedient subjects than the Tartars [Mongols] .... They pay their lords more respect than any other people, and would hardly dare lie to them.... dispute hardly ever leads to blows.... and there are no large-scale thieves or robbers among the....

.... they regard each other almost as members of one family, and, although they do not have a lot of food, they like to share it with one another....No one holds his fellow in contempt, but each helps and supports the other to the limit of his abilities.

They are extremely arrogant toward other people and look down on all others with disdain. In fact, they regard them, both noble and humble people alike, as little better than nothing.... they are the greatest liars in the world in dealing with other people....

They are messy in their eating and drinking and in their whole way of life....At the same time they are mean and greedy, and if they want something, they will not stop begging and asking for it, until they have got it. They cling fiercely to what they have, and in making gifts they are extremely miserly. They have no conscience about killing other people."

- Giovanni de Piano Carpini, Franciscan envoy to the "Great Khan" from Pope Innocent IV ca. 1246

## **Document 3**

"The people of Tabriz live by trade and industry; for cloth of gold and silk is woven here in great quantity and of great value. The city is so favorably situated that it is a market for merchandise from India and Baghdad, from Mosul and Hormuz, and from many other places; and many Latin merchants come here to buy merchandise imported from foreign lands.... It is a city where good profits are made by traveling merchants. The inhabitants are a mixed lot and good for very little....

Among the people of these kingdoms there are many who are brutal and bloodthirsty. They are for ever slaughtering one another; and, were it not for fear of the government, that is, Tartar lordship...they would do great mischief to travelling merchants. The government imposes severe penalties upon them..."

- Marco Polo, reporting on his travels through Persia, as recorded by Rusticiano, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, ca. 1300

## **Document 4**

"Having taken counsel for making peace with us, You Pope and all Christians have sent an envoy to us....The contents of your letters stated that we ought to be baptized and become Christians. To this we answer briefly that we do not understand why we should do this....you wonder at so great a slaughter of men, especially of Christians and in particular Poles, Moravians, and Hungarians, we reply....

"Because they did not obey the word of God and the command of Chingis Chan and the Chan, but took council to slay our envoys, therefore God ordered us to destroy them and gave them up into our hands. For otherwise if God had not done this, what could man do to man? ...But we worshipping God have destroyed the whole earth from the East to the West in the power of God....Therefore if you accept peace and are willing to surrender your fortresses to us, You Pope and Christian princes, in no way delay coming to me to conclude peace....But if you should not believe our letters ....nor hearken to our counsel then we shall know for certain that you wish to have war. After that we do not know what will happen: God alone knows.

- letter from Guyuk Khan, third grandson of Chinggis Khan, to Pope Innocent IV, ca. 1247

## **Document 5**

"For some years I continued averse from mentioning this event, deeming it so horrible that I shrank from recording it and ever withdrawing one foot as I advanced the other. To whom, indeed, can it be easy to write the announcement of the death-blow of Islam and the Muslims....

"For even Antichrist will spare such as follow him, though he destroy those who oppose him, but these Tatars spared none, slaying women and men and children, ripping open pregnant women and killing unborn babes....these Tatars conquered most of the habitable globe, and the best, the most flourishing and most populous part thereof, and that whereof the inhabitants were the most advanced in character and conduct, in about a year; nor did any country escape their devastations which did not fearfully expect them and dread their arrival.,,,

"It is now time for us to describe how they first burst forth into the lands. Stories have been related to me, which the hearer can scarcely credit, as to the terror of the Tatars, which God Almighty cast into men's hearts; so that it is said that a single one of them would enter a village or a quarter wherein were many people, and would continue to slay them one after another, none daring to stretch forth his hand against this horseman. And I have heard that one of them took a man captive, but had not with him any weapon wherewith to kill him; and he said to his prisoner, "Lay your head on the ground and do not move," and he did so, and the Tatar went and fetched his sword and slew him therewith. Another man related to me as follows: "I was going," said he, "with seventeen others along a road, and there met us a Tatar horseman, and bade us bind one another's arms. My companions began to do as he bade them, but I said to them, "He is but one man; wherefore, then, should we not kill him and flee?" They replied, 'We are afraid.'

- Ibn al-Atir, 1220-1221, Muslim historian

## Document 6

*Kutadgu Bilig* (Wisdom of Royal Glory), a book of advice for Turkish rulers of Central Asia, c. 1069 CE

“[Merchants] never rest from trading and making a profit. They roam the world for a living, while they keep mind and heart devoted to God. Associate with them – do business with them . . . For they have acquired all the choice and beautiful and desirable things of the world. They travel round from east to west . . . They provide all sorts of silken stuffs, and all the world’s rare and wonderous things. . . . If the China caravan ceased to raise dust on the roads, how could these countless kinds of silks arrive. So consort with them, leave the door open. Treat them kindly . . . Hear a man who has roamed the world: if you would spread your name abroad, be sure to treat travelers hospitably. Give merchants good recompense . . . favor the traveler and merchant caravan.”

## Document 7

Al-Magrizi, Egyptian doctor and historian, from his chronicle of the spread of the Black Death in Southwest Asia, mid – 1300 CE

“Before the disease reached Egypt, it began in the lands of the Great Khan, a six month journey from Tabriz (city in Iran), a country inhabited by the Khitai and the Mongols. These heathen people numbered more than 200 tribes and all perished without apparent reason in their summer and winter encampments, in the course of pasturing their flocks and during the seasonal migrations [across the steppe]. Their mounts died, beasts and men abandoned where they fell. The land of the Khitai became deserted; in three months, sixteen princes died. The soldiers of the Mongol Great Khan perished in considerable numbers. Ultimately the Great Khan himself and six of his children succumbed to the disease. China was depopulated by the pandemic, while India was damaged to a lesser extent.”

## Document 8

Friar William of Rubruck, Agent of King (St.) Louis IX of France to the Mongols, from his journal record of the expedition, c 1254 C.E.

“Living among the peoples of Asia though of alien race are Nestorian (Christians) and Saracens (Muslims) all the way to Cathay (China). In fifteen cities of Cathay there are Nestorians, and they have a bishop in a city called Segin (Ch’ang-an, the old Tang capital) . . . The priests of the idols (Buddhists) all wear wide saffron-colored cowls. There are among them, as I gathered some hermits who live in forests and mountains, and who are wonderful by their lives and austerity. The Nestorians know nothing. They say their masses and prayers and have sacred books in Syriac, but they do not know the language so the chant like monks among us who do not know grammar, and they are absolutely depraved. They are usurers (loan money for profit) and drunkards; some even have several wives. When they enter church, they wash their lower parts like Saracens. They administer no sacrament without receiving remuneration.”

## Document 9

Poem by Yüan Chen, 8<sup>th</sup> century C.E. Tang Dynasty Poet

“Ever since the Western (Turkish) horsemen  
began raising smut and dust,  
Fur and fleece, rank and rancid  
have filled Hsien (Ch’ang-an, Tang capital) and Lo (Loyang).  
Women make themselves Western  
Matrons by the study of Western makeup;  
Entertainers present Western tunes,  
In their devotion to Western music.”

## Document 10

Orkhon Stone Inscription, Eastern Turks in Inner Mongolia, 679 C.E.

“The sons of the Turkish nobility became slaves of the Chinese people and their virgin daughters became bondmaids. The Turkish nobles abandoned their Turkish titles and received Chinese ones in their place. They submitted to the Chinese kaghan, and for fifty years worked and strove on his behalf. For him they undertook expeditions towards the rising sun, and to the west as far as the Iron Gates (in Turkestan). But to the Chinese kaghan they surrendered their empire and their institutions.”