

Class 11 · History (027) · Themes in World History · Section II: Empires · Theme 3 · CBSE 2026-27

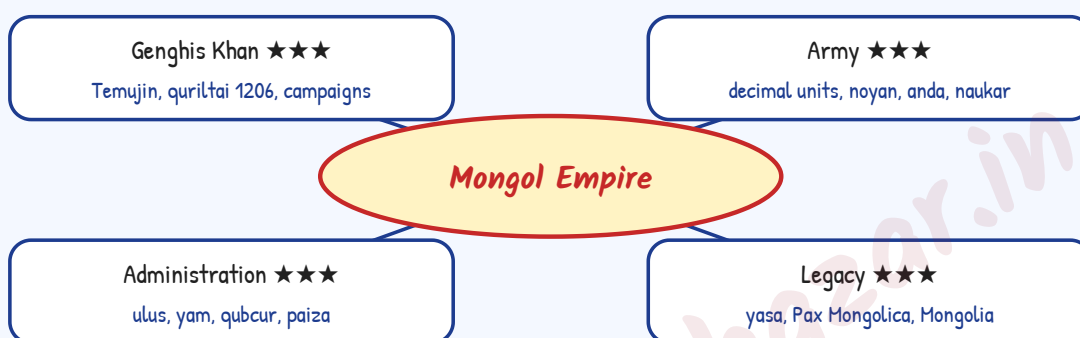
Theme 3

Nomadic Empires



Sources on the Mongols · the social and political background · the career of Genghis Khan · military achievements · the Mongols after Genghis Khan · social, political and military organisation · the four ulus · yam, qubcur and the Pax Mongolica · nomads and settled societies · the yasa · Genghis Khan and the Mongols in world history

Chapter map (★ = most important for exams)



Syllabus and weightage

Section II (Themes 2-3): **20 marks** — 4 MCQs and two 8-mark long answers. Theme 3: the nature of nomadism; formation of empires; conquests and relations with other states. Important: Temujin's rise, military organisation, the four ulus, the yam courier system, Pax Mongolica, nomads and settled societies, the yasa, the Mongol legacy.

★ **Exam tip:** In the 13th-14th centuries the **Mongols** under **Genghis Khan** (d. 1227) and his descendants built the largest empire the world had yet seen, across Europe and Asia. It was made by **pastoral nomads**, whom settled societies usually called "barbarians". The chapter asks how nomads created and ran such an empire and how they related to the settled peoples they ruled.

3.1 Sources ★★★

- Nomads produced **little literature** of their own. Information comes mainly from **chronicles, travelogues and documents of city-based litterateurs**, who often wrote ignorant and **biased** reports of nomadic life.
- But Mongol success attracted many literati — **Buddhist, Confucian, Christian, Turkish and Muslim** — who wrote travelogues or served Mongol masters; many wrote **sympathetic accounts, even eulogies**, that challenged the hostile view of "steppe marauders".
- "**Barbarian**" comes from the Greek *barbaros*, a non-Greek whose speech sounded like "bar-bar"; the stereotype passed to the Romans (Germanic tribes, Gauls, Huns); Chinese terms for steppe peoples were also negative.
- **Russian scholars** (18th–19th centuries, under the Tsars) produced survey notes in a colonial setting. In the Soviet period, **Marxist** historians placed the Mongols in a transition from a tribal to a **feudal** mode of production; **Vladimirtsov** did excellent research on Mongol language and society; **Bartold's** sympathetic view of Genghis Khan got him into trouble with Stalin's censors — his works were published (nine volumes) only in the 1960s.
- Sources are in many languages — Chinese, Mongolian, Persian, Arabic, Italian, Latin, French, Russian. The same text may differ across languages: the Mongolian and Chinese versions of **The Secret History of the Mongols** (the earliest narrative on Genghis Khan) differ, as do the Italian and Latin versions of **Marco Polo**. Historians must also be **philologists** (Igor de Rachewiltz, Gerhard Doerfer).

3.2 Introduction ★★

- Genghis Khan believed he had a **mandate from God to rule the world**; his own campaigns were in north China, Transoxiana, Afghanistan, eastern Iran and the Russian steppes; his descendants went further.
- **Mongke** (1251–60) warned **Louis IX** of France: "In Heaven there is only one Eternal Sky, on Earth there is only one Lord, Genghis Khan, the Son of Heaven ..." — a claim to **universal rule**.
- **Batu** (1236–41) devastated Russian lands up to **Moscow**, seized Poland and Hungary and camped outside **Vienna**. Many in China, the Middle East and Europe saw the conquests as the "**wrath of God**".
- **Juwaini** on Bukhara (1220): Genghis Khan told the rich residents at the festival ground, "I am the punishment of God"; a survivor said: "They came, they [mined the walls], they burnt, they slew, they plundered and they departed."

3.3 Social and political background ★★★

- **People**: a diverse body linked by language to the **Tatars, Khitan and Manchus** (east) and the **Turkic** tribes (west).
- **Two groups**: (i) **pastoralists** — horses, sheep, and to a lesser extent cattle, goats and camels — who nomadised in the **steppes of Central Asia** (modern Mongolia), ringed by the **Altai** mountains (west), the **Gobi** desert (south), drained by the **Onon and Selenga** rivers; (ii) **hunter-gatherers** north of them in the **Siberian forests** — humbler people who traded furs.
- **Climate**: harsh, long winters and brief, dry summers. Farming was possible for short periods but the Mongols (unlike some Turks) **did not take to farming**. Neither economy could sustain dense settlement, so there were **no cities**. They lived in tents (**gers**) and moved between winter and summer pastures.
- **Lineages**: society was divided into **patrilineal lineages**; richer families were larger, had more animals, pasture and followers. Natural calamities (harsh winters, drought) led to conflict over pasture and **raids** for livestock. Families allied around powerful lineages, but confederacies were usually **small and short-lived**. Genghis Khan's confederacy was matched in size only by **Attila's** (d. 453) — but was far more **durable**.
- **Trade with China**: agricultural produce and **iron utensils** from China for horses, furs and game — mutually beneficial but tense; when Mongol lineages allied they forced better terms or plundered; when they were in disarray, China asserted itself in the steppe. Frontier wars hurt settled societies more (nomads could retreat).

- **Great Wall:** Chinese regimes built fortifications from the **8th century BCE**; from the **3rd century BCE** they were integrated into the "Great Wall of China" — testament to the fear of nomadic raids.

3.4 The career of Genghis Khan ★★★

- Born **around 1162** near the **Onon** river in north Mongolia; named **Temujin**; son of **Yesugei**, chieftain of the **Kiyat**, a group of families related to the **Borjigid** clan. His father was murdered when he was young (by the **Tatars**); his mother **Oelun-ke** raised him and his brothers in great hardship.
- A decade of reversals: Temujin was **captured and enslaved**; soon after his marriage his wife **Borte** was kidnapped and he fought to recover her.
- Friends: **Boghurchu**, his first ally; **Jamuqa**, his blood-brother (**anda**); and **Tughril / Ong Khan**, ruler of the **Kereyits** and his father's old **anda**.
- **1180s–90s**: ally of Ong Khan; defeated Jamuqa (now a foe), then the **Tatars** (his father's assassins), the Kereyits and Ong Khan himself (**1203**). The final defeat of the **Naiman** and Jamuqa in **1206** left him dominant.
- **1206 quriltai** (assembly of Mongol chieftains): proclaimed "Great Khan of the Mongols" (**Qa'an**) with the title **Genghis Khan** — "**Oceanic Khan**" or "**Universal Ruler**". Just before, he had reorganised the Mongols into a disciplined military force.

Campaigns ★★★

Year	Event
China was divided into three: Hsi Hsia (Tibetan origin, north-west), Jurchen / Chin dynasty (north, from Peking), Sung (south)	
1209	Hsi Hsia defeated
1213	Great Wall breached
1215	Peking sacked ; wars with the Chin went on till 1234; Genghis Khan returned home in 1216
1218	Qara Khita (Tien Shan mountains) defeated — Mongol lands reach the Amu Darya , Transoxiana and Khwarazm
1219–21	Khwarazm : Sultan Muhammad had executed Mongol envoys; Otrar, Bukhara, Samarqand, Balkh, Gurganj, Merv, Nishapur and Herat surrendered; towns that resisted were devastated
1221	Pursued Sultan Jalaluddin into Afghanistan and Sindh; at the Indus considered returning through North India and Assam, but the heat, the habitat and his Shaman's ill omens changed his mind
1227	Death of Genghis Khan

3.5 Military achievements ★★★

His success came from **innovating** and turning steppe fighting into highly effective strategy:

- **Speed and mobility**: horse-riding skills of Mongols and Turks; the cavalry travelled light and moved fast.
- **Archery**: rapid-shooting archers from horseback, perfected in **hunting expeditions** that doubled as **field manoeuvres**.
- **Winter campaigns**: using knowledge of terrain and weather, they campaigned in deep winter, treating **frozen rivers as highways** to enemy cities and camps.
- **Siege warfare**: nomads were usually helpless against fortifications, but Genghis Khan quickly learnt the use of **siege engines** and **naphtha bombardment**; his engineers made **light, portable** equipment used with devastating effect.

Destruction ★★★

- At **Nishapur**, where a Mongol prince was killed, he ordered the town laid waste "so that the site could be ploughed upon".
- Reported figures: Nishapur (1220) **1,747,000**; Herat (1222) **1,600,000**; Baghdad (1258) **800,000**; Nasa 70,000; Baihaq 70,000; Tun 12,000.
- How were such figures reached? **Juwaini** said **1,300,000** were killed at **Merv** because counting took **13 days at 100,000 corpses a day** — clearly exaggerated.
- Cities destroyed, farmland laid waste, trade and crafts disrupted; tens of thousands killed, more enslaved; all classes suffered.
- The **qanats** (underground canals) of the Iranian plateau were not maintained; the desert crept in — ecological devastation from which parts of **Khurasan** never recovered.

Why did the Mongols succeed? (1) Unification of the tribes and a durable political system; (2) decimal units that broke tribal loyalties; (3) cavalry speed and mounted archery; (4) hunts as military training; (5) winter campaigns; (6) siege engines and naphtha learnt from China; (7) terror against cities that resisted; (8) new loyal elite (noyan, anda, naukhar); (9) fast communications through the yam.

3.6 The Mongols after Genghis Khan ★★★

Two phases of expansion: **1236–42** — gains in the Russian steppes, Bulghar, Kiev, Poland and Hungary; **1255–1300** — conquest of all of **China (1279)**, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Then the frontiers stabilised.

Great Khan	Events
Ogodei (1227–41)	Third son; capital Karakorum ; Batu (son of Jochi) led campaigns in Russia, Hungary, Poland, Austria (1236–42)
Guyuk (1246–49)	Son of Ogodei
Mongke (1251–60)	Son of Toluy; fresh campaigns in Iran and China (1253–55); his younger brother Hulegu captured Baghdad (1258) , ending the Abbasid caliphate , and founded the Il-Khanid state of Iran
Qubilai Khan (1260–94)	Grand Khan in Peking (1260); conquered the Sung; Yuan dynasty in China (ended 1368)

Why western expansion stopped ★★★

- After the 1260s the impetus in the West could not be sustained; Vienna, western Europe and Egypt were within reach, yet the Mongols **retreated from Hungary** and were **defeated by Egyptian forces**.
- (1) **Succession politics**: Jochi and Ogodei descendants allied to control the office of Great Khan — more important to them than European campaigns. (2) The **Toluyids** (Mongke, Qubilai) marginalised them and turned to Iran and then **China**, diverting forces and supplies, so only a small, understaffed force faced Egypt. (3) Conflict between **Jochids and Toluyids** on the Russian–Iranian frontier diverted the Jochids from Europe.
- Campaigns in China continued: China was reunited under the Mongols. Paradoxically, family conflict surfaced at the moment of greatest success.

After 1260 ★★

The realm split into lineages: **Toluyids** — Yuan (China) and Il-Khans (Iran); **Chaghataids** — steppes north of Transoxiana, "Turkistan"; **Jochids** — Russian steppes, the "**Golden Horde**". Ogodei's line was absorbed by the Toluyids. **Berke** (1257–67) turned the Golden Horde towards Islam and allied with Egypt against the Il-Khans.

3.7 Social, political and military organisation ★★★

- All able-bodied adult males bore arms. Unification and conquest brought new members — the **Turkic Uighurs** (who joined willingly) and defeated peoples like the **Kereyits** — making the army a **heterogeneous mass**.
- **Decimal units**: the old steppe system of 10s, 100s, 1,000s and (notionally) 10,000 (**tuman**). Earlier, clans and tribes coexisted inside the units. Genghis Khan **divided old tribal groupings and distributed their members** into new units; anyone who moved without permission was harshly punished. This gave a **new identity derived from Genghis Khan**.
- The contingents served under his **four sons** and specially chosen captains called **noyan**.
- A band of loyal followers formed a new aristocracy: some honoured as **anda** (blood-brothers); others, freemen of humbler rank, given special rank as his **naukar** (bondsmen). Old clan chiefs lost their rights; status came from **closeness to the Great Khan**.

The four ulus ★★★

Son	Ulus
Jochi (eldest)	Russian steppes — extending "as far west as his horses could roam"
Chaghatai	Transoxianian steppe and lands north of the Pamirs
Ogodei	Named successor as Great Khan; capital at Karakorum
Toluy (youngest)	The ancestral lands of Mongolia

- **Ulus** did not originally mean fixed territory — frontiers were fluid in an age of rapid conquest.
- The sons were to rule **collectively**: military contingents (**tama**) of each prince were placed in every ulus.
- At the **quriltai**, decisions on campaigns, distribution of plunder, pasture lands and succession were taken **collectively**.
- By the mid-13th century the shared patrimony gave way to **separate dynasties**, and "ulus" came to mean a **territorial dominion**.

3.8 The yam and the qubcur ★★★

- Genghis Khan created a rapid **courier system** (**yam**): fresh mounts and dispatch riders placed in **outposts at regular distances**.
- Its upkeep: Mongol nomads contributed **a tenth of their herds** (horses or livestock) — the **qubcur** tax, paid **willingly** for the many benefits it brought.
- Refined after his death; its **speed and reliability surprised travellers**; it let the Great Khans keep a check on the farthest corners of the empire.

3.9 Pax Mongolica ★★★

- After the conquests, **Europe and China were territorially linked**. In the peace that followed (**Pax Mongolica**), trade matured: commerce and travel on the **Silk Route** reached their peak.
- Unlike before, routes did not end in China but continued north to Mongolia and **Karakorum**, the heart of the empire.
- Travellers got a **pass** for safe conduct — **paiza** (Persian), **gerege** (Mongolian); traders paid the **baj** tax for the same purpose — all thereby acknowledging the Khan's authority.

3.10 Nomads and the settled world ★★★

- The conquered felt no affinity with their nomadic masters. But the contradictions between nomadic and sedentary elements **eased** during the 13th century.

- In the **1230s**, during the war with the Chin, a strong group advocated **massacring the peasantry** and turning fields into pasture. By the **1270s**, after the conquest of the Sung, **Qubilai Khan** appeared as the **protector of peasants and cities**.
- **Ghazan Khan** (1295–1304), Il-Khanid ruler of Iran (a Toluyid), the first Il-Khan to convert to **Islam** (from Buddhism), told his Mongol-Turkish commanders — in a speech probably drafted by his Persian wazir **Rashiduddin**: "I am not on the side of the Persian peasantry. If there is a purpose in pillaging them all, there is no one with more power to do this than I. Let us rob them together. But if you wish to be certain of collecting grain and food for your tables in the future ... If you insult the peasantry, take their oxen and seed and trample their crops into the ground, what will you do in the future? ... The obedient peasantry must be distinguished from the peasantry who are rebels." Its sedentary tone "would have made Genghis Khan shudder".

3.11 Civil administrators ★★★

- From Genghis Khan's reign the Mongols recruited **civil administrators from conquered societies**, sometimes moving them around — **Chinese secretaries in Iran, Persians in China**. They integrated distant dominions and **blunted the harsher edges** of nomadic predation.
- The Khans trusted them as long as they raised revenue; some had great influence: in the 1230s the Chinese minister **Yeh-lu Ch'u-ts'ai** muted **Ogodei's** rapacious instincts; the **Juwaini** family played a similar role in Iran in the later 13th century; **Rashiduddin** drafted Ghazan Khan's speech.

3.12 Separation of the lineages ★★★

- The pressure to **sedentarise** was greatest in areas far from the steppe. By the mid-13th century the common patrimony was replaced by separate dynasties, each ruling its own ulus — partly due to succession struggles for the office of Great Khan and prized pastures.
- **Toluy's** descendants: **Yuan** (China) and **Il-Khanid** (Iran); **Jochi's**: the **Golden Horde** (Russian steppes); **Chaghatai's**: Transoxiana and Turkistan.
- **Nomadic traditions lasted longest** among the steppe dwellers — the Chaghataids of Central Asia and the Golden Horde of Russia.
- The Toluyids controlled China and Iran and could recruit many literati, so their version of family quarrels dominated the histories.

Exam point — the nomad-settled dilemma: nomadic tradition prized mobility, herds and plunder; ruling vast agrarian empires needed taxation, administrators and protection of peasants. The Mongol rulers balanced the two: they used Chinese and Persian officials and protected peasants for revenue, yet kept their identity through the **yasa** and their Genghis Khanid descent.

3.13 Rewriting the memory of Genghis Khan ★★★

- To appear as heroes to a sedentary audience, his descendants **could no longer appear quite like their ancestor**; they stressed the merits of the ruling Khans in contrast to past rulers — even Genghis Khan.
- Persian chronicles of **Il-Khanid Iran** (late 13th century) detailed his gory killings and **greatly exaggerated the numbers**: an eyewitness said **400 soldiers** defended the citadel of Bukhara, but an Il-Khanid chronicle reported **30,000 soldiers killed** there. They still praised Genghis Khan, but with relief that "the great killings of the past were over".

3.14 The yasa ★★★

- Following the research of **David Ayalon**, recent work on the **yasa** — the law code Genghis Khan was supposed to have proclaimed at the **quriltai of 1206** — shows how his memory was fashioned by his successors.
- Earliest form **yasaq** = "law", "decree" or "order"; the few known details are **administrative regulations**: the hunt, the army and the postal system.
- By the mid-13th century "yasa" was used in a general sense — "the **legal code of Genghis Khan**".
- Why the change?** The Mongols were now a unified people ruling sophisticated urban societies, but were a **numerical minority**. A sacred law from their ancestor protected their **identity and distinctiveness**. The yasa was probably a compilation of Mongol **customary traditions**, but calling it Genghis Khan's code gave them a "**lawgiver**" like Moses and Solomon whose code could be imposed on subjects. It united the Mongols, affirmed their link to Genghis Khan's descendants and let them keep their ethnic identity while adopting sedentary ways — a hugely **empowering ideology**.
- Bukhara, two scenes:** in 1220–21 Genghis Khan assembled the rich Muslim residents at the **festival ground**, called them sinners and demanded their hidden wealth. In the late **16th century** 'Abdullah Khan, a distant descendant of **Jochi**, went to the same ground to perform **holiday ('Id) prayers**; his chronicler **Hafiz-i Tanish** wrote that this was "according to the yasa of Genghis Khan" — showing how the yasa's meaning had changed to legitimise even Muslim piety.

3.15 Genghis Khan and the Mongols in world history ★★★

- Common image: a **conqueror, destroyer of cities**, responsible for thousands of deaths — the view of 13th-century town-dwellers of China, Iran and eastern Europe.
- For the **Mongols**, the greatest leader of all time: he **united the Mongol people**, freed them from **tribal wars and Chinese exploitation**, brought prosperity, built a **transcontinental empire** and **restored trade routes and markets** that drew travellers like the Venetian **Marco Polo**. One dominant perspective can erase all others.
- Pluralism:** the Khans belonged to various faiths — **Shaman, Buddhist, Christian and eventually Islam** — but **never let personal beliefs dictate public policy**. They recruited administrators and soldiers from all ethnic groups and religions: a **multi-ethnic, multilingual, multi-religious** regime, utterly unusual for its time, and a model for later regimes like the **Mughals**.
- Timur** (late 14th century), who also sought universal rule, hesitated to declare himself monarch since he was not of Genghis Khanid descent; he declared sovereignty as **guregen** ("royal son-in-law") and married a Genghis Khanid princess.
- Modern Mongolia**, after decades of **Soviet control**, has made Genghis Khan a **national hero**, publicly venerated, an icon in forging national identity.

Timeline ★★

Date	Event
c. 1162	Birth of Temujin (NCERT timeline: c. 1167)
1203	Ong Khan defeated
1206	Proclaimed Genghis Khan
1215	Peking sacked
1219–21	Khwarazm campaign
1227	Death of Genghis Khan
1227–41	Ogodei
1236–42	Batu in Russia, Hungary, Poland, Austria

1251–60	Mongke
1258	Hulegu takes Baghdad; Il-Khanid state
1260	Qubilai Grand Khan in Peking; fragmentation
1279	All China conquered
1295–1304	Ghazan Khan in Iran
1368	End of the Yuan dynasty
1370–1405	Timur, a Barlas Turk ("guregen")
1500	Shaybani Khan (Uzbek) takes Transoxiana
1526	Babur seizes Delhi and Agra; Mughal empire
1759	Manchus conquer Mongolia
1921	Republic of Mongolia

NCERT exercises, solved ★★★

1. Why was trade so significant to the Mongols?

3

Ans. The steppe's scarce resources could not sustain the nomads fully; the Mongols did not farm and had no cities. They needed **agricultural produce and iron utensils** from China, which they exchanged for **horses, furs and game** — a mutually beneficial exchange. When trade terms were poor or calamities struck, they raided. Later the empire itself depended on trade: the Pax Mongolica, the Silk Route through Karakorum, passes (paiza) and the baj tax brought wealth and held the empire together.

2. Why did Genghis Khan feel the need to fragment the Mongol tribes into new social and military groupings?

3

Ans. Steppe confederacies built on lineages were small and short-lived, and his army had become a heterogeneous mass of allies (Uighurs) and defeated peoples (Kereyits). Old clan and tribal loyalties could revive rivalries. So he divided tribal groupings and distributed members into new decimal units (up to the tuman), punished anyone who moved without permission, placed them under his sons and noyan, and created a new aristocracy of anda and naukhar — giving everyone a new identity derived from himself and ensuring a durable, disciplined state.

3. How do later Mongol reflections on the yasa bring out the uneasy relationship they had with the memory of Genghis Khan?

3

Ans. The original yasaq was only administrative orders (hunt, army, post). Later, as a minority ruling sedentary societies, the Mongols called it Genghis Khan's legal code to keep their identity and impose their law. Yet to be accepted by settled subjects they could not act like him: Il-Khanid chronicles exaggerated his killings to praise the new rulers, and 'Abdullah Khan's Muslim prayer at Bukhara was described as "according to the yasa" — honouring his memory while changing its meaning.

4. "If history relies upon written records produced by city-based literati, nomadic societies will always receive a hostile representation." Do you agree? Does it explain the inflated casualty figures in Persian chronicles?

Ans. Largely yes: most records were by city-based authors who saw nomads as "barbarians" (a term from Greek *barbaros*), wrote ignorant and biased accounts and stressed destruction; the nomads left little writing. But not entirely: many literati who served the Mongols wrote sympathetic accounts and eulogies; the Secret History gives a Mongol view; travellers like Marco Polo admired the empire; Bartold wrote positively. The inflated figures (Nishapur 1,747,000; Merv 1,300,000 by Juwaini's "13 days × 100,000" count; 30,000 at Bukhara's citadel against an eyewitness's 400 defenders) are only partly due to hostility: Il-Khanid chroniclers, though employed by Mongols, exaggerated past killings to show that the present Il-Khans were better rulers and the "great killings" were over — a political motive of the patrons.

5. How did the historical experiences of Mongol and Bedouin nomadic societies differ? Why?

Ans. Common ground: both were pastoral nomads in harsh lands (steppe; Arabian desert), organised in kin-based tribes, depending on animals and on trade and raids with settled neighbours, and both built huge empires after unification. **Differences:** (1) The Bedouin tribes were unified by a **new religion, Islam**, and the Islamic state; the Mongols by a **military-political system** (decimal army, ulus, yasa) and a leader's charisma, staying religiously plural. (2) Bedouin conquerors adopted Islam and Arabic, which spread with their rule; Mongol rulers adopted the religions of their subjects (Islam in Iran, Buddhism in China). (3) The Mongols, a minority, kept a separate nomadic identity and the yasa; the Arabs merged into a common Islamic urban civilisation. (4) The Mongol empire split into four lineages within two generations. **Explanations:** the unifying role of religion vs kinship and the army; the size and diversity of conquered societies; succession disputes in the Genghis Khanid family.

6. How does William of Rubruck's account enlarge upon the character of the Pax Mongolica?

Ans. Rubruck, a Franciscan sent by **Louis IX**, reached **Karakorum** in **1254**. He met **Paquette**, a woman from Lorraine brought from Hungary, serving a prince's Nestorian Christian wife, and **Guillaume Boucher**, a Parisian goldsmith employed by Queen Sorghaqtani and then Mongke's brother. At court festivals **Nestorian priests** blessed the Khan's cup first, followed by **Muslim clergy and Buddhist and Taoist monks**. This shows: (1) Europe and Asia were linked — people travelled or were brought across the continent; (2) Karakorum was a cosmopolitan capital drawing skilled people; (3) all religions were honoured at court — the Khans did not let personal faith dictate policy; (4) the peace and safe routes of the Pax Mongolica allowed embassies, artisans and traders to move freely.

Important exam questions, fully solved ★★★

Class 11 has no CBSE board paper; these questions follow the CBSE Class 11 History pattern (Section II: 1-mark MCQs and 8-mark long answers), with complete answers.

Multiple choice (1 mark)

1. Temujin was proclaimed Genghis Khan at a quriltai in: (A) 1162 (B) 1206 (C) 1227 (D) 1258

Ans. (B) 1206 — the title meant "Oceanic Khan" or "Universal Ruler".

2. Assertion (A): Genghis Khan broke the old tribal identities of the Mongols. Reason (R): He distributed members of tribes into new decimal military units.

Ans. Both true; R explains A. Mixed units gave a new identity derived from Genghis Khan.

3. The tax that maintained the yam was the: (A) baj (B) qubcur (C) tama (D) jizya

Ans. (B) qubcur – a tenth of the nomads' herds, paid willingly.

4. Baghdad was captured in 1258 by: (A) Batu (B) Qubilai (C) Ogodei (D) Hulegu

Ans. (D) Hulegu, Mongke's younger brother, ending the Abbasid caliphate.

Long answer (8 marks)

5. Describe the social and political background of the Mongols and explain how Genghis Khan transformed their organisation.

Ans. Background: Mongols were linked by language to Tatars, Khitan, Manchus and Turks; pastoralists (horses, sheep, cattle, goats, camels) in the steppe ringed by the Altai and Gobi and drained by the Onon and Selenga, and hunter-gatherers in the Siberian forests trading furs; harsh climate; no farming, no cities; gers and seasonal migration. Society was divided into patrilineal lineages; richer families had more animals and followers; calamities caused raids; confederacies were small and short-lived. They traded with China (grain, iron for horses, furs) and raided when strong; China built the Great Wall.

Transformation: Temujin united the tribes (defeating Jamuqa, Tatars, Kereyits, Ong Khan, Naiman) and became Genghis Khan in 1206. He broke tribal groupings by distributing members into decimal units (10 to 10,000/tuman), forbade movement without permission, placed units under his four sons and chosen captains (noyan), and created a new aristocracy of anda and naukhar bound to him. Conquered peoples were assigned to his sons as four ulus; tama contingents and the quriltai kept rule collective; the yam and qubcur linked the realm; the yasa later gave a common law – turning short-lived confederacies into a durable empire.

6. "The Mongols were not merely destroyers; they also built an efficient administration." Examine.

Ans. Destruction: Nishapur laid waste "so that it could be ploughed"; huge (if exaggerated) death tolls at Nishapur, Herat, Merv, Baghdad; farmland, trade and crafts ruined; qanats neglected – parts of Khurasan never recovered.

Administration: (1) decimal army under noyan; (2) four ulus with tama and quriltai for collective decisions; (3) the yam courier system with fresh horses at outposts, financed by the qubcur; (4) Pax Mongolica – Silk Route at its peak, extended to Karakorum, with paiza/gerege passes and the baj tax; (5) civil administrators from conquered lands (Chinese in Iran, Persians in China) – Yeh-lu Ch'u-ts'ai restrained Ogodei, the Juwaini family in Iran; (6) protection of peasants – Qubilai in China, Ghazan Khan's speech in Iran; (7) religious and ethnic pluralism; (8) the yasa as a unifying code. So after the first destructive phase the Mongols governed a vast multi-ethnic empire and encouraged trade and communication.

7. Assess the place of Genghis Khan and the Mongols in world history.

Ans. Settled chroniclers remembered him as a conqueror and destroyer of cities. For the Mongols he united the people, ended tribal wars and Chinese exploitation, brought prosperity and built a transcontinental empire. His descendants extended it from Russia and Hungary to China (Batu, Hulegu,

Qubilai), forming the Golden Horde, Chaghataid, Il-Khanid and Yuan states. The empire linked Europe and China: the Silk Route at its peak, travellers like Marco Polo and Rubruck, passes and the yam. It was multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-religious — unusual for its age — and a model for later regimes like the Mughals. Genghis Khanid descent remained a source of legitimacy: Timur called himself guregen, Babur claimed descent, 'Abdullah Khan invoked the yasa. Today Mongolia venerates him as a national hero. Limits: heavy destruction (cities, qanats) and fragmentation as heirs settled into different cultures.

Practice set

1. What is a ger?
2. What was a quriltai?
3. What does "anda" mean?
4. Who were the noyan?
5. What was a tuman?
6. What was the yam?
7. What was a paiza?
8. Why did Timur call himself guregen?

Answers

- Ans.** 1. A Mongol tent.
2. An assembly of Mongol chieftains that took collective decisions, including succession.
3. Blood-brother.
4. Specially chosen captains of Genghis Khan's army units.
5. A unit of about 10,000 soldiers.
6. The Mongol courier system of riders and fresh mounts at outposts.
7. A safe-conduct pass for travellers (gerege in Mongolian).
8. He was not of Genghis Khanid descent, so he ruled as "royal son-in-law" of the family.

Multiple choice: 20 MCQs

1. Temujin was born near the river:
(a) Indus (b) Volga (c) Onon (d) Euphrates
2. Temujin's father was:
(a) Yesugei (b) Ogodei (c) Jamuqa (d) Toluy
3. Temujin's wife was:
(a) Oelun-eke (b) Sorghaqtani (c) Chabi (d) Borte
4. Ong Khan was the ruler of the:
(a) Tatars (b) Kereyits (c) Naiman (d) Merkits
5. Peking was sacked by the Mongols in:
(a) 1206 (b) 1215 (c) 1258 (d) 1279
6. Sultan Muhammad, who executed Mongol envoys, ruled:
(a) Qara Khita (b) the Kereyits (c) Hsi Hsia (d) Khwarazm
7. Underground canals of the Iranian plateau are called:
(a) qanats (b) ulus (c) gers (d) tama
8. The Persian chronicler who counted 1,300,000 dead at Merv was:
(a) Marco Polo (b) Rashiduddin (c) Juwaini (d) Rubruck

9. Ogodei's capital was:
(a) Samargand (b) Sarai (c) Tabriz (d) Karakorum
10. The campaigns in Russia, Poland and Hungary were led by:
(a) Hulegu (b) Batu (c) Guyuk (d) Qubilai
11. The Yuan dynasty in China was established by:
(a) Mongke (b) Ogodei (c) Qubilai Khan (d) Ghazan Khan
12. Mongol western expansion ended after a defeat at the hands of forces from:
(a) Egypt (b) Poland (c) Kiev (d) Hungary
13. Specially chosen captains of army units were called:
(a) naukhar (b) noyan (c) anda (d) qa'an
14. The eldest son of Genghis Khan was:
(a) Toluy (b) Ogodei (c) Jochi (d) Chaghatai
15. Military contingents of the princes placed in each ulus were called:
(a) baj (b) yam (c) qubcur (d) tama
16. The tax traders paid for safe passage was the:
(a) baj (b) zakat (c) qubcur (d) jizya
17. Rashiduddin drafted a speech protecting peasants for:
(a) Ghazan Khan (b) Genghis Khan (c) Batu (d) Timur
18. The Chinese minister who restrained Ogodei was:
(a) Juwaini (b) Hafiz-i Tanish (c) Rashiduddin (d) Yeh-lu Ch'u-ts'ai
19. Recent work on the yasa follows the research of:
(a) Bartold (b) David Ayalon (c) Vladimirtsov (d) Marco Polo
20. Mongke's letter claiming universal rule was sent to:
(a) the Pope (b) the Sultan of Delhi (c) Louis IX of France (d) the Sung emperor
- 1 (c) · 2 (a) · 3 (d) · 4 (b) · 5 (b) · 6 (d) · 7 (a) · 8 (c) · 9 (d) · 10 (b) · 11 (c) · 12 (a) · 13 (b) · 14 (c) · 15 (d) · 16 (a) · 17 (a) · 18 (d) · 19 (b) · 20 (c)

Assertion-Reason (6)

(a) Both A and R true, R explains A. (b) Both true, R does not explain A. (c) A true, R false. (d) A false, R true.

1. A: Chinese regimes built the Great Wall. R: Nomadic raids caused disturbance and fear in the agrarian societies of north China.
2. A: Nomads paid the qubcur tax willingly. R: The Mongols lived in tents called gers.
3. A: The Mongols recruited administrators from conquered societies. R: The Mongol Khans had no interest in revenue.
4. A: Most of our knowledge of the Mongols comes from their own writings. R: The Mongolian and Chinese versions of The Secret History of the Mongols differ.
5. A: The Mongol regime was multi-religious. R: The Khans did not let their personal beliefs dictate public policy.
6. A: Timur declared his sovereignty as guregen. R: He was not of Genghis Khanid descent.

Key: 1 (a) · 2 (b) · 3 (c) · 4 (d) · 5 (a) · 6 (a)

- **Last-night summary:** Sources — city litterateurs (biased), sympathetic literati, "barbarian" from barbaros, Russian scholars (Vladimirtsov, Bartold), Secret History, Marco Polo, many languages. Mongke's letter to Louis IX; Batu to Vienna; Juwaini on Bukhara. Background: pastoralists and hunter-gatherers; Altai, Gobi, Onon, Selenga; no farming, no cities; gers; patrilineal lineages; short-lived confederacies (Attila); trade and raids with China; Great Wall.

- Temujin c. 1162, Yesugei (Kiyat, Borjigid), Oelun-eke, Borte, Boghurchu, Jamuqa (anda), Ong Khan (Kereyits); 1203; quriltai 1206. Hsi Hsia 1209, Wall 1213, Peking 1215, Qara Khita 1218, Khwarazm 1219–21, Indus, d. 1227. Riders, archers, hunts, winter campaigns, siege engines, naphtha; Nishapur, Merv (Juwaini's count), qanats, Khurasan.
- Ogodei (Karakorum), Batu 1236–42, Guyuk, Mongke, Hulegu (Baghdad 1258), Qubilai (Yuan, China 1279); end of western expansion (succession politics, Toluyid focus on China, Egypt). Decimal units, tuman, noyan, anda, naukhar; four ulus (Jochi, Chaghatai, Ogodei, Toluy), tama, quriltai. Yam + qubcur; Pax Mongolica, Karakorum, paiza/gerege, baj; Qubilai and Ghazan Khan protect peasants; Yeh-lu Ch'u-ts'ai, Juwaini, Rashiduddin; Golden Horde, Chaghataids, Il-Khans, Yuan. Yasaq → yasa (Ayalon), 400 vs 30,000, 'Abdullah Khan; pluralism; Timur guregen; Mongolia's national hero.

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