Impact of the Mongol Invasions

Directions: Examine each of the documents below and use what you have learned to answer the questions that follow.

INVADING HORDES IN BAGHDAD
"They swept through the city like hungry falcons attacking a flight of doves, or like raging wolves attacking sheep, with loose reins and shameless faces, murdering and spreading terror...beds and cushions made of gold and encrusted with jewels were cut to pieces with knives and torn to shreds. Those hiding behind the veils of the great Harem (royal women’s quarters) were dragged...through the streets and alleys, each of them becoming a plaything...as the population died at the hands of the invaders."
Source: Wassaf al Hadrat, 14th Century Historian of the Ilkhanate, on the Mongol Siege of Baghdad in 1258

1. What actions does the author attribute to the Mongol invaders? What is the overall image of the Mongols?

2. If you heard about something like this happening today, how would you feel? What would you think?

LASTING INFLUENCE
... Though much of what the Mongols wrought (brought about) on their westward march was destructive, some benefits were reaped from their forays (raids) into Europe and conquests in Muslim areas. By example, they taught new ways of making war and impressed on their Turkic and European enemies the effectiveness of gunpowder.
As we have seen, Mongol conquests facilitated (aided) trade between the civilizations at each end of Eurasia, making possible the exchange of foods, tools, and ideas on an unprecedented scale. The revived trade routes brought great wealth to traders such as those from north Italy, who set up outposts in the eastern Mediterranean, along the Black Sea coast, and as far east as the Caspian Sea. Because the establishment of these trading empires by the Venetians and Genoese [of Northern Italy] provided precedents (examples) for the later drives for overseas expansion by peoples such as the Portuguese and English, they are of special significance in global history....
3. In what ways did the Mongols positively influence and impact the lands they conquered? Give two examples.

UNDER MONGOL CONTROL
A common misconception is that the semiliterate Mongols came out of the steppes of Mongolia, quickly conquered far more advanced civilizations, and left the government in each area in the hands of the conquered. While Chinese bureaucrats still did their jobs and the local Persian rulers stayed in power as long as they did not cause the Mongols any trouble, the situation was much more complex....

The Mongols used qualified people wherever they were needed. It was not unusual to have Arabs serving in Russia or Persians in China. Still, the Mongols preferred not to tinker too much with systems that worked well. When Yelu Qucai (1189–1243), the great minister and governor of northern China, demonstrated how much wealth the region could produce for Ögödei Khan, the Mongols kept his system in place....

In smaller provincial territories, many local rulers maintained their position, serving as the local daruqachi or shahna [governor]. As long as they paid tribute, provided troops when called upon, came before the khan to pledge their loyalty, and kept good order in their territories, they remained in their positions. For the Mongols, it made good sense, as the local rulers knew the customs of their people....

Source: Timothy May, “Taking Control,” Calliope, A Cobblestone Publication

4. According to Timothy May, what different actions were taken by the Mongols to control the territory they conquered?

RELIGIOUS TOLERATION
“In addition to his administrative changes and the enlargement of territories under Mongol control, Chinggis Khan (Genghis Khan) introduced other innovations. Perhaps one of the more important was his policy of toleration towards foreign religions. He sought to ingratiate himself to religious leaders who might then influence their people to accept Mongol rule. His principal interest was to use religion to help him govern. He did not appear to be devoted to a specific foreign religion. …He did not condone any religious persecution. His descendants generally… persisted in this policy of religious toleration... [In the capital of Khara Khorum, his son Ögedai Khan permitted the building of] two mosques, Buddhist and Daoist temples, and a Nestorian Christian church within the city.”

5. According to Morris Rossabi, why did the Mongol rulers maintain a policy of religious tolerance?

NEW STYLES FOR NEW RULERS

Yelü Chucai was Confucian scholar who worked for the Jin Dynasty of China, though he was from the nomadic Khitan tribe, a neighbor of the Mongols. When the Mongols conquered Northern China, Yelü Chucai became a top advisor to Genghis Khan and to the next Great Khan, his son Ögedei. He is said to have once told Ögedei Khan, “You can conquer an empire on horseback, but you cannot rule it on horseback.”

**Source:** Peter Casey, “Impact of Mongol Invasions”

6. What do you think Yelü Chucai meant by this statement? What changes might that predict for the future of the Mongol Empire?

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Genghis Khan (Founder)  Ogedai Khan (Son of GK)  Mongke Khan (Grandson of GK)  Hulagu Khan (Grandson of GK)  Kublai Khan (Grandson of GK)

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7. Examine the images above of these three generations of Mongol rulers. Considering the statement above, how did Mongol rulers change to adapt to their new roles? Do you think this was a smart change or were they sellouts?

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THE CHANGING SHAPE OF EMPIRE

8. Examine the map to the right. What eventually happened to the Mongol Empire? Why do you think this happened? What does it suggest about the Mongol Empire?