

The History of Baghdad

Lesson 5: The Mongol Attack on Baghdad

LO: To know that the Mongol attack on Baghdad in 1258 destroyed the city.

What was the House of Wisdom?
Why was it so important?



Key Vocabulary

Mongols - A native or inhabitant of Mongolia; a Mongolian

Asia - A continent that includes countries such as Iraq, Mongolia, China

Abbasid - A dynasty of caliphs who ruled in Baghdad from 750 to 1258.

Caliphate - The name given to the Muslim government which ruled the Islamic Empire during the Middle Ages.

Depopulate - Reduce the number of people living in an area.

Uninhabitable - A place unsuitable to live in.

Irrigation - The supply of water to land to help crops grow.

Mongolia Today



Who were the Mongols?

In 1206, a man named Temujin, later known as Genghis Khan, united many tribes of modern day Mongolia.

The Mongolians would later create the largest land empire in the history of the world.

There are many different views of Genghis Khan. Mongolians take pride in their historic leader, however many people including many Chinese, Persian (Iran), and Russians describe Genghis Khan as a destructive monster who committed terrible acts of mass murder and destruction.

Between the 1200's and the mid 1400's it is estimated that the Mongols killed around 40 million people. They used the military plan of "surrender or die."



Who were the Mongols?



Horses were the main factor that made the Mongol army so strong. The primary weapon of the Mongol forces was the Mongol bow. At the time it was unmatched for accuracy, force and reach. It is believed that most soldiers could hit their target from nearly 100 yards.

Who were the Mongols?



Mongols were experts in attacking forts, walled cities, or other “safe” places. Technology was one of the important parts of Mongolian warfare. For instance, machines such as catapults, siege towers, and the battering ram were an important part of Genghis Khan's warfare. The machines were disassembled and were carried on horses to be rebuilt at the site of the battle.

One of the Great Khan’s favourite things to do was to gather innocent civilians from the nearby areas and force them to attack a walled city to save their own troops, basically using them as "human shields". Another favourite siege attack was catapulting flaming diseased bodies into a walled city or catapulting poison food for people who are starving inside the walls.

The Siege of Baghdad



The Mongols attacked Baghdad because the Caliph Al-Musta'sim refused to surrender to Mongke Khan and give him his military forces.

Mongke Khan (Genghis Khan's grandson) sent his brother Hulago Khan to destroy the city of Baghdad in January 1258.

The Siege of Baghdad

The city had no hope of resisting the Mongol army. It is believed that the Mongols:

- Stole riches from the city
- Threw thousands of books into the Tigris River, making the river run black with ink
- Slaughtered its inhabitants (between 200,000 to 1,000,000 people) and made Caliph Al-Musta'sim watch this, before killing him.

The Mongols believed that spilling royal blood could cause natural disasters like earthquakes. Just to be safe, they wrapped Caliph Al-Musta'sim in a carpet and rode their horses over him, trampling him to death.

The Siege of Baghdad ended on February 10th 1258. The destruction of Baghdad signaled the end of the Abbasid Caliphate.

Your Task

Write some accounts of the Siege of Baghdad from different perspectives:

As a Mongol Tribesman

As a trader who escaped the invasion

A large, rounded rectangular speech bubble with a tail pointing towards the bottom right. Inside the bubble are ten horizontal lines for writing.

As a Mongol Tribesman



A large, empty speech bubble with a black outline and a tail pointing towards the man. The bubble contains eight horizontal lines for text entry.

As a trader who escaped the invasion