

# AP WORLD HISTORY

## Q2 READING 4: THE MONGOLS

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### QUESTIONS

1. What are the most important points that Juvaini makes about Chinggis Khan and the Mongols?
2. How are the Mongols portrayed in the Russian Chronicles?
3. According to Rashid al-Din, what were the chief attributes of Ogedei?
4. What does William of Rubruck report about gender structures among the Mongols?
5. Based on your reading of these sources, how do you explain the Mongol's military success?
6. In seeking to understand the Mongols, what are the advantages and disadvantages of relying on Persian writers who served as high officials under the Mongols? On Russian chroniclers who identified with the victims of the Mongols? On a Western European friar who visited the Mongols?
7. Did life on the steppe adequately prepare the Mongols to successfully govern agrarian societies such as Persia and China?
8. How did the Mongols contribute to cross-cultural trade, the spread of technology, the blending of cultures, and the spread of diseases?

### Part 2: Reading #78

1. How would you rate Polo (P) as a primary source? Give reasons. What is his POV or bias in this document? Give an example/s. Who was his audience in this reading? When did these events take place?
2. Describe the city of Peking. Why did the Mongol emperor build a newer city next to the old city?
3. Describe the Emperor and his court.



## 1. JUVAINI: A PERSIAN HISTORIAN ON CHINGGIS KHAN AND THE MONGOLS

*(‘Ala-ad Din ‘Ata-Malik Juvaini (1226-1283) wrote one of the most valuable histories of the Mongols, from which the following passages have been taken. The book was written just prior to Juvaini's appointment in 1259 as governor of Baghdad by the Mongol Il Khan Hulegüj)*

The home of the Tartars [the Mongols], and their origin and birthplace, is an immense valley, whose area is a journey of seven or eight months both in length and breadth ....

Before the appearance of Chingiz-Khan they had no chief or ruler. Each tribe or two tribes lived separately; they were not united with one another, and there was constant fighting and hostility between them. Some of them regarded robbery and violence, immorality and debauchery as deeds of manliness and excellence. The Khan of Khitai [ruler of northern China] used to demand and seize goods from them. Their clothing was of the skins of dogs and mice, and their food was the flesh of those animals and other dead things . . .

The sign of a great emir amongst them was that his stirrups were of iron; from which one can form a picture of their other luxuries. And they continued in this indigence, privation and misfortune until the banner of Chingiz-Khan's fortune was raised and they issued forth from the straits of hardship into the amplitude of wellbeing ....

In accordance and agreement with his own mind he [Chinggis Khan] established a rule for every occasion and a regulation for every circumstance; while for every crime he fixed a penalty. And since the Tartar peoples had no script of their own, he gave orders that Mongol children should learn writing from the Uighur; and that these yasas and ordinances should be written down on rolls. These rolls are called the Great Book of Yasas and are kept in the treasury of the chief princes. Wherever a khan ascends the throne, or a great army is mobilized, or the princes assemble and begin [to consult together] concerning affairs of state and the administration thereof, they produce these rolls and model their actions thereon; and proceed with the disposition of armies or the destruction of provinces and cities in the manner therein prescribed ....

Being the adherent of no religion and the follower of no creed, he eschewed bigotry, and the preference of one faith to another, and the placing of some above others; rather he honoured and respected the learned and pious of every sect, recognizing such conduct as the way to the Court of God. And as he viewed the Moslems with the eye

of respect, so also did he hold the Christians and idolaters in high esteem. As for his children and grandchildren, several of them have chosen a religion according to their inclination, some adopting Islam, others embracing Christianity, others selecting idolatry and others again cleaving to the ancient canon of their fathers and forefathers and inclining in no direction; but these are now a minority. But though they have adopted some religion they still for the most part avoid all show of fanaticism and do not swerve from the yasa of Chingiz-Khan, namely, to consider all sects as one and not to distinguish them from one another.

It is one of their laudable customs that they have closed the doors of ceremony, and preoccupation with titles, and excessive aloofness and inaccessibility; which things are customary with the fortunate and the mighty. When one of them ascends the throne of the Khanate, he receives one additional name, that of Khan or Qa'an, than which nothing more is written [in official documents]; while the other sons and his brothers are addressed by the name they were given at birth, both in their presence and in their absence; and this applies both to commoners and to the nobility. And likewise in directing their correspondence they write only the simple name, making no difference between Sultan and commoner; and write only the gist of the matter in hand, avoiding all superfluous titles and formulas ....

The reviewing and mustering of the army has been so arranged that they have abolished the registry of inspection and dismissed the officials and clerks. For they have divided all the people into companies of ten, appointing one of the ten to be the commander of the nine others; while from among each ten commanders one has been given the title of 'commander of the hundred,' all the hundred having been placed under his command. And so it is with each thousand men and so also with each ten thousand, over whom they have appointed a commander whom they call 'commander of the tumen.' In accordance with this arrangement, if in an emergency any man or thing be required, they apply to the commanders of tumen; who in turn apply to the commanders of thousands, and so on down to the commanders of tens. There is a true equality in this; each man toils as much as the next, and no difference is made between them, no attention being paid to wealth or power. If there is a sudden call for soldiers an order is issued that so many thousand men must present themselves in such and such a place at such and such an hour of that day or night.

And they arrive not a twinkling of an eye before or after the appointed hour. Their obedience and submissiveness is

such that if there be a commander of a hundred thousand between whom and the Khan there is a distance of sunrise and sunset, and if he but commit some fault, the Khan dispatches a single horseman to punish him after the manner prescribed: if his head has been demanded, he cuts it off, and if gold be required, he takes it from him ....

Again, when the extent of their territories became broad and vast and important events fell out, it became essential to ascertain the activities of their enemies, and it was also necessary to transport goods from the West to the East and from the to obtain fresh mounts while at the same time the peasantry and the army are not placed in constant inconvenience. Moreover strict orders were issued to the messengers with regard to the sparing of the mounts, etc., to recount all of which would delay us too long. Every year the yams are inspected, and whatever is missing or lost has to be replaced by the peasantry.

Since all countries and peoples have come under their domination, they have established a census after their accustomed fashion and classified everyone into tens, hundreds and thousands; and required military service and the equipment of yams together with the expenses entailed and the provision of fodder-this in addition to ordinary taxes; and over and above all this they have fixed the qupchur charges also.

They have a custom that if an official or a peasant die, they do not interfere with the estate he leaves, be it much or little, nor may anyone else tamper with it. And if he have no heir, it is given to his apprentice or his slave. On no account is the property of a dead man admitted to the treasury, for they regard such a procedure as inauspicious.

When Hulegu appointed me to [the governorship of] Baghdad, the inheritance taxes were in force in all that region; I swept away that system and abolished the imposts that had been levied in the countries of Tustar and Bayat . . . .

## **2. RUSSIAN CHRONICLES ON MONGOL CONQUESTS**

It happened in 1237. That winter, the godless Tatars [i.e., the Mongols], under the leadership of Batu, came to the Riazan principality from the East through the forests. Upon arriving they encamped at Onuza, which they took and burned. From here they despatched their emissaries-a woman witch and two men-to the princes of Riazan demanding a tithe from the princes and complete armor and horses from the people. The princes of Riazan, Iurii Igorevich and his brother Oleg, did not allow the emissaries to enter the city, and [together with] the Muromand

Pronsk princes [they] moved against the Tatars in the direction of Voronezh. The princes replied: "When we are gone, everything will be yours." . . . The princes of Riazan sent a plea to Prince Iurii of Vladimir, begging him to send aid or to come in person. Prince Iurii, however, did not go; neither did he listen to the plea of the princes of Riazan, as he wanted to fight the Tatars alone ....

The princes of Riazan, Murom, and Pronsk moved against the godless and engaged them in a battle. The struggle was fierce, but the godless Mohammedans emerged victorious with each prince fleeing toward his own city. Thus angered, the Tatars now began the conquest of the Riazan land with great fury. They destroyed cities, killed people, burned, and took [people] into slavery. On December 6 [1237], the cursed strangers approached the capital city of Riazan, besieged it, and surrounded it with a stockade. The princes of Riazan shut themselves up with the people of the city, fought bravely, but succumbed. On December 21 [1237], the Tatars took the city of Riazan, burned it completely, killed Prince Iurii Igorevich, his wife, slaughtered other princes, and of the captured men, women, and children, some they killed with their swords, others they killed with arrows and [then] threw them into the fire; while some of the captured they bound, cut, and disemboweled their bodies. The Tatars burned many holy churches, monasteries, and villages, and took their property.

On Tuesday February 3 [1238], . . . the Tatars approached Vladimir. The inhabitants of Vladimir, with their princes and military commander, Peter Osljadiukovich, shut themselves up in the city. The Tatars came to the Golden Gates, brought with them Prince Vladimir, the son of the Grand Prince Iurii Vsevolodovich, and inquired: "Is the Grand Prince Iurii in the city?" But the inhabitants of Vladimir began to shoot at them. They, however, shouted: "Do not shoot!" And, having approached very close to the gates, they showed the inhabitants of Vladimir their young Prince Vladimir, son of Iurii, and asked: "Do you recognize your young Prince?" As a result of privation and misfortune, his face was sad and he looked weak. Vsevolod and Mstislav stood atop the Golden Gates and recognized their brother Vladimir. Oh, how sad and tearful it is to see one's brother in such a condition! Vsevolod and Mstislav, with their boyars and all the inhabitants, wept as they looked at Vladimir. And the Tatars departed from the Golden Gates, circled the entire city, examined it, and encamped at Zremany in front of the Golden Gates and about the entire city; and there were many of them ....

After they made camp around Vladimir, the Tatars went and occupied the city of Suzdal . . . . They brought a

multitude of prisoners into their camp, approached the city of Vladimir on Saturday, and from early morning till evening they built scaffolds and set up rams, and during the night they surrounded the entire city with a fence. In the morning, the princes, Bishop Mitrophan, military leader Peter Osladiukovich, and all the boyars and the people realized that their city would be taken and they all began to weep .... On Sunday, February 8 [1238], . . . early in the morning the Tatars approached the city from all sides and began to hit the city [walls] with rams, and began to pour great stones into the center of the city from far away, as if by God's will, as if it rained inside the city; many people were killed inside the city and all were greatly frightened and trembled. The Tatars broke through the wall at the Golden Gates, also from the Lybed [side] at the Orininy and the Copper Gates, and from the Kliazma [direction] at the Volga Gates, and in other places; they destroyed the whole city, threw stones inside, and . . . entered it from all sides like demons. Before dinner they took the new city which they set on fire; and there they killed Prince Vsevolod with his brother, many boyars and people, while other princes and all the people fled into the middle city. Bishop Mitrophan and the Grand Duchess with her sons and daughters, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, boyars, and their wives, and many people fled into a church, locked the church gates, and climbed inside the church to the choir loft. The Tatars took this city too, and began to search after the princes and their mother, and found that they were inside the church. The Tatars broke the gates of the church and slaughtered those who were inside and resisted. And they began to ask the whereabouts of the princes and their mother and found they were in the choir loft. They began to entice them to come down. But they did not listen to them. The Tatars then brought many fire logs inside the church and set it on fire. Those present in the choir loft, praying, gave their souls to God; they were burned and joined the list of martyrs. And the Tatars pillaged the holy church, and they tore the miraclemaking icon of the Mother of God.

### **3. KRAKORUM: BUILDING A MONGOL CAPITAL**

*[Rashid al-Din (ca. 1247-1317) was a Persian historian and the author of a massive world history, from which the following passage comes. Like Juvaini, Rashid served the Mongols as a high official. Ogedei, the subject of this reading, was the son of Chinggis Khan and succeeded his father as Great Khan, 1229-1241.]*

During the seven years [between 1234/35 and 1240/41] . . . [Ogedei] enjoyed life and amused himself. He moved from summer to winter camp and vice versa, serene and happy, and took permanent delight in beautiful women and moonfaced enchantresses.

At every opportunity, he allowed his sublime thoughts to overflow lavishly into the most just and charitable of good deeds, into the eradication of injustice and enmity, into the development of cities and districts, as well as into the construction of various buildings. He never neglected any measure designed to strengthen the framework of peace, and to lay the foundations of prosperity. In earlier years, he had already brought with him from China various craftsmen and masters skilled in the arts. Therefore in his main camp ('yurt') in Karakorum, where he contentedly resided most of the time, he now had erected his palace with a very high base and columns as befits the lofty thoughts of such a ruler. Each side of the palace was an arrow-shot long. In the centre, a sumptuous high pavilion ('kiosk') was built; the building was handsomely decorated with paintings and representations, and it was called qarshi [Mongolian = Palace]. The Khan designated it his sublime residence. [Thereafter] the order was put out, that each of his brothers, sons and the other princes residing close to him should build a handsome house near the palace. Everybody obeyed the order. When these buildings were completed and snuggled one against the other they formed a whole settlement. [Furthermore the Great Khan] ordered that experienced goldsmiths should make for the drinking house a centerpiece of gold and silver in the shape of animals such as elephants, tigers, horses, and the like. They were set up, together with large drinking vessels which were filled with wine and fermented mare's milk (qumys). In front of each figure a silver basin was set up: from the orifices of these figures wine and mare's milk poured into the basins.

[Once, the ruler] asked: 'Which is the best city on earth?' The reply was: 'Baghdad.' He therefore had a great city built on the banks of the river Orkhon, and he called it Karakorum.

### **4. A REPORT ON MONGOL GENDER RELATIONS**

*[The author of the following passage, William of Rubruck, was a Franciscan friar who visited the Mongols during the 1250s on behalf of King Louis IX of France.]*

The married women make themselves very fine wagons, which I could describe to you only by drawing-and indeed I should have drawn everything for you had I known how to draw. One rich Mo'al [Mongol or Tartar] has easily a hundred or two hundred such wagons with chests. Baatu has twenty-six wives, each of whom has a large dwelling, not counting the other, smaller ones placed behind the large one, which are chambers, as it were, where the maids live: to each of these dwellings belong a good two hundred wagons. When they unload the dwellings, the

chief wife pitches her residence [curia] at the westernmost end, and the others follow according to rank, so that the last wife will be at the eastern end: there is a space of a stone's throw between the residence of one lady and the next. Hence the court [ curia] of one wealthy Mo'al will have the appearance of a large town, though there will be very few males in it.

One woman will drive twenty or thirty wagons, since the terrain is level. The ox- or camel-wagons are lashed together in sequence, and the woman will sit at the front driving the ox, while all the rest follow at the same pace. If at some point the going happens to become difficult, they untie them and take them through one at a time. For they move slowly, at the pace at which a sheep or an ox can walk ....

It is the women's task to drive the wagons, to load the dwellings on them and to unload again, to milk the cows, to make butter and grut [curds or cheese], and to dress the skins and stitch them together, which they do with a thread made from sinew. They divide the sinew into tiny strands, and then twist them into a single long thread. In addition they stitch shoes, socks and other garments. They never wash clothes, for they claim that this makes God angry and that if they were hung out to dry it would thunder: in fact, they thrash anyone doing laundry and confiscate it. (They are extraordinarily afraid of thunder. In that event they turn out of their dwellings all strangers, and wrap themselves up in black felt, in which they hide until it has passed.) They never wash dishes either, but instead, when the meat is cooked, rinse the bowl in which they are to put it with boiling broth from the cauldron and then pour it back into the cauldron. In addition [the women] make the felt and cover the dwellings.

The men make bows and arrows, manufacture stirrups and bits, fashion saddles, construct the dwellings and the wagons, tend the horses and milk the mares, churn the comos (that is, the mare's milk), produce the skins in which it is stored, and tend and load the camels. Both sexes tend the sheep and goats, and they are milked on some occasions by the men, on others by the women. The skins are dressed with curdled ewe's milk, thickened and salted.

When they want to wash their hands or head, they fill their mouths with water, and let it trickle slowly from their mouths onto their hands, using it to wet their hair and wash their heads.

Regarding their marriages, you should know that the only way to have a wife there is to purchase her, and for this reason the girls are sometimes very mature before they

are married, for the parents always keep them until they sell them. They observe the first and second degrees of consanguinity, but none of affinity, for they can have two sisters at the same time or in succession. Widows among them do not marry, on the grounds of their belief that all who serve them in this life will do so in the one to come; and so in the case of a widow they think that after death she will always revert to her first husband. Consequently, there is to be found among them the shameful practice whereby a son sometimes marries all his father's wives except his own mother. The residence [curia] of the father and mother always devolves upon the youngest son, and so he himself is obliged to provide for all his father's wives who pass to him along with his father's household; then, if he wishes, he treats them as his own wives, since he reckons he has made no loss if they revert to his father after death.

So, then, when someone makes a contract with someone else to take his daughter, the girl's father holds a banquet, and she flees to her relatives in order to lie in hiding. Then the father says, 'Behold, my daughter is yours; take her, wherever you may find her.' At this the man searches for her with his friends until he discovers her, and he is required to take her by force and carry her off with a semblance of violence to his own home.

deeds. . . . They do not fight among themselves: Internal warfare, brawls and assaults do not occur. . . . If a large animal strays, whoever finds it either lets it go or leads it to men of authority from whom the owner can get it back with no difficulty at all simply by asking for it. They respect each other quite well enough and . . . throw frequent banquets in spite of the scarcity of good things to eat among them. At the same time, they are so hardy that they can go a day or even two without eating and still sing and joke around as if they had had plenty to eat. . . . Tartar women are chaste: There are not even rumors of immodest female behavior among them, although the women do sometimes use filthy language. . . . Even though the Tartars get quite drunk often, this does not lead to hostile words or actions among them.

Having said this much about their good side, let me go on to their bad one. Their pride is terrible when they confront non-Tartars—nobles and commoners alike—whom they are apt to despise. . . . They show their angry and totally condescending natures to foreigners, to whom they habitually lie. When Tartars speak to non-Tartars the truth is seldom in them. When they start off, their conversation is nice enough, but they sting like scorpions before they are through talking. They are cunning, crafty, and very elusive with their falsehoods. When they have hostile plans toward foreigners, they are experts in concealing them so that the foreigners will not know to be on guard. . . . They are very greedy and shameless with their outrageous demands, while they hold fast to what is theirs and are unbelievably stingy givers. Killing off foreign peoples simply does not bother them.

Chinghiz Khan arranged their order of battle by putting ten men under the command of a squad leader, ten squad leaders under one centurion, ten centurions under a battalion commander, thus giving him a thousand men, ten battalion commanders under a colonel and the whole army under two or three generals, but with one of them clearly the theater commander. If in battle, one, two, or three—any number—of men flee from a squad, the whole squad is executed; if the whole squad flees, then the hundred soldiers with the centurion over them are all executed; and, to summarize this point briefly, units with men in them who flee are wiped out. . . . If members of a squad are captured and not rescued by the rest, the rest are executed. The minimum arms they are required to carry are: two bows . . . , three quivers full of arrows, one ax, and ropes to pull along machines of war. To be sure, their nobles carry . . . slightly curved swords with sharp points, and their horses wear armor of multiple thickness of leather shaped to fit their bodies. . . .

Some of them have a hook attached to the necks of their lances with which they will pull a rider off his saddle if they can. Their arrows are about two feet, eight inches long . . . and each man carries a file in his quiver to sharpen their heads. . . .

When they come to a river, they cross it with the higher-ups using large, lightweight leather bags with loops and drawstrings to seal up their clothes and necessary equipment for the crossing. The resulting pack floats. Tied to the tails of their horses, who swim over, the pack serves as a sort of boat. . . . Even the common soldiers have nearly waterproof leather bags, into which they stuff their things . . . and then hang them securely on the bases of their horses' tails before crossing.

You should know that the Tartar emperor told me in person that he wanted to send his armies into Livonia [on the Baltic Sea] and Prussia and that he intended to destroy the whole countryside or reduce it to servitude. They enslave people in a way which we find intolerable. . . . Their tactics include using captives from lands just conquered to fight against a province still holding out against them. They put these captives in the front ranks: If they fight poorly, they kill them; if they fight well, they en-

courage them with cheering words and promise to make them great lords so that they will not escape. However, once the dangers of battle are passed, they keep these people in line by making hapless serfs out of them, while taking the women they want for serving maids and concubines. Their use of men from one defeated country after another against the next country makes it impossible for any single country to resist them, unless God chooses to fight for them. . . .

Thus, if Christians wish to defend themselves, their countries, and Christianity, it will be necessary for kings, princes, barons, and other chiefs of the lands to cooperate as one and to send men under a consolidated command into battle against them before they have so drained the earth of men that there will be nowhere to draw aid from. . . . This army should be ordered as *they* do it, from officers commanding a thousand through officers commanding a hundred and overall commanders of the army. These generals should never enter the fighting themselves, just as Tartar commanders do not enter it, but they should be able to observe the army's action and direct it. Our people should make it a regulation that the soldiers advance into battle together or elsewhere in the order established.

## 78 Marco Polo in China

The creation of a huge Eurasian empire by the Mongols in the thirteenth century again opened the overland routes—the roads once used by the ancient silk traders and Buddhist pilgrims—that had been blocked since the eleventh century by the expansion of Islam. Caravans of traders and pilgrims were again able to move to and from the East. Many European missionaries and merchants made overland journeys to the court of the Mongol Khans. Perhaps the best-known European traveler to the court of Kublai Khan in Cambaluc (Peking) was Marco Polo (1254–1324), the son of a Venetian merchant.

In about 1264, young Marco's adventurous father Nicolo and uncle Maffeo reached the Grand Khan's court after a long and difficult journey through southern Russia, Bukhara, and Chinese Turkestan. They aroused much curiosity in Kublai's mind about Europe and the papacy. In 1266, they were sent back to Europe as Kublai's ambassadors to ask the pope to send one hundred well-schooled missionaries and scholars to China. The Holy See failed to take Kublai's request seriously and sent two priests who made it only as far east as Armenia. Had the pope sent one hundred dedicated and well-trained missionaries, the course of history might have been altered.

In 1271, Marco Polo joined his father and uncle in their second journey to the court of the Kublai Khan. After three and a half years of difficult, overland journey, they reached Shang-Tu (Xandu), the summer residence of Kublai Khan. The Grand Khan was delighted to see them and grew particularly fond of Marco, whom he appointed as his personal, roving administrator for important missions in several

distant provinces. In 1292, after seventeen years of service at Kublai Khan's court, the three Polos set out for Europe. This time they went by ship and took with them a young princess whom Kublai was sending as a bride to the Mongol Khan of Persia. In 1295, the Polos returned to Venice, where the Venetians lionized Marco with the nickname "Il milione" (the million).

Shortly after Marco Polo's return, a war broke out between Venice and Genoa. While serving as a Venetian naval commander in this war, Marco was captured and sent to a Genoese prison for three years. During this time, Marco Polo dictated the account of his adventures and travels in China to a fellow prisoner. His book, printed in Italian, Latin, French, and other languages, introduced Asia to Renaissance Europe and also inspired the great explorers, such as Christopher Columbus, to begin the Age of Discovery in the fifteenth century.

The following excerpts are Marco Polo's eyewitness accounts of the Grand Khan and the capital city of Cambaluc.

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Compare and contrast the Kublai Khan's power and palace with those of one of the powerful medieval kings of Europe (see Reading 55).
2. From a historical perspective, what do you think are the most important contributions made by Marco Polo?
3. How would you compare Marco Polo's views on China with Ibn Battuta's views on Africa (see Reading 62)?

### CONCERNING THE PERSON OF THE GREAT KAAH

The personal appearance of the Great Kaan [Khan], Lord of Lords, whose name is Cublay, is such as I shall now tell you. He is of good stature, neither tall nor short, but of a middle height. He has a becoming amount of flesh, and is very shapely in all his limbs. His complexion is white and red, the eyes black and fine; the nose well formed and well set on. He has four wives, whom he retains permanently as his legitimate consorts; and the eldest of his sons by those four wives ought by rights to be emperor;—I mean when his father dies. Those four ladies are called empresses, but each is distinguished also by her proper name. And each of them has a special court of her own, very grand and ample; no one of them having fewer than 300 fair and charming damsels. They have also many pages and eunuchs, and a number of other attendants of both sexes; so that each of these ladies has not less than 10,000 persons attached to her court.

When the Emperor desires the society of one of these four consorts, he will sometimes send for the lady to his apartment and sometimes visit her at her own. He has also a great number of concubines, and I will tell you how he obtains them.

From Henry Yule, trans. and ed., *The Book of Ser Marco Polo*, Vols. 1 and 2 (London: John Murray, 1903), pp. 356–58, 362–64, 374–75.

You must know that there is a tribe of Tartars called Ungrat, who are noted for their beauty. Now every year a hundred of the most beautiful maidens of this tribe are sent to the Great Kaan, who commits them to the charge of certain elderly ladies dwelling in his palace. And these old ladies make the girls sleep with them, in order to ascertain if they have sweet breath [and do not snore], and are sound in all their limbs. Then such of them as are of approved beauty, and are good and sound in all respects, are appointed to attend on the Emperor by turns. Thus six of these damsels take their turn for three days and nights, and wait on him when he is in his chamber and when he is in his bed, to serve him in any way, and to be entirely at his orders. At the end of the three days and nights they are relieved by another six. And so throughout the year, there are reliefs of maidens by six and six, changing every three days and nights.

### CONCERNING THE PALACE OF THE GREAT KAAH

You must know that for three months of the year, to wit December, January, and February, the Great Kaan resides in the capital city of Cathay, which is called Cambaluc [Peking]. . . . In that city stands his great Palace, and now I will tell you what it is like.

It is enclosed all round by a great wall forming a square, each side of which is a mile in length; that is to say, the whole compass thereof is four miles. This you may depend on; it is also very thick, and a good ten paces in height, whitewashed and loop-holed all around. At each angle of the wall there is a very fine and rich palace in which the war-harness of the Emperor is kept, such as bows and quivers, saddles and bridles, and bow-strings, and everything needful for an army. Also midway between every two of these Corner Palaces there is another of the like; so that taking the whole compass of the enclosure you find eight vast Palaces stored with the Great Lord's harness of war. And you must understand that each Palace is assigned to only one kind of article; thus one is stored with bows, a second with saddles, a third with bridles, and so on in succession right round.

The great wall has five gates on its southern face, the middle one being the great gate which is never opened on any occasion except when the Great Kaan himself goes forth or enters. Close on either side of this great gate is a smaller one by which all other people pass; and then towards each angle is another great gate; also open to people in general; so that on that side there are five gates in all.

Inside of this wall there is a second, enclosing a space that is somewhat greater in length than in breadth. This enclosure also has eight palaces corresponding to those of the outer wall, and stored like them with the Lord's harness of war. This wall also hath five gates on the southern face, corresponding to those in the outer wall, and hath one gate on each of the other faces, as the outer wall hath also. In the middle of the second enclosure is the Lord's Great Palace, and I will tell you what it is like.

You must know that it is the greatest Palace that ever was. [Towards the north it is in contact with the outer wall, whilst towards the south there is a vacant space which the Barons and the soldiers are constantly traversing. The Palace itself] hath no upper story, but is all on the ground floor, only the basement is raised some ten palms above the surrounding soil [and this elevation is retained by a wall of marble raised to the level of the pavement, two paces in width and projecting beyond the base of the Palace so as to form a kind of terrace-walk, by which people can pass round the building, and which is exposed to view, whilst on the outer edge of the wall there is a very fine pillared balustrade; and up to this the people are allowed to come]. The roof is very lofty, and the walls of the Palace are all covered with gold and silver. They are also adorned with

representations of dragons [sculptured and gilt], beasts and birds, knights and idols, and sundry other subjects. And on the ceiling too you see nothing but gold and silver and painting. [On each of the four sides there is a great marble staircase leading to the top of the marble wall, and forming the approach to the Palace.]

The Hall of the Palace is so large that it could easily dine 6000 people; and it is quite a marvel to see how many rooms there are besides. The building is altogether so vast, so rich, and so beautiful, that no man on earth could design anything superior to it. The outside of the roof also is all coloured with vermilion and yellow and green and blue and other hues, which are fixed with a varnish so fine and exquisite that they shine like crystal, and lend a resplendent lustre to the Palace as seen for a great way round. This roof is made too with such strength and solidity that it is fit to last for ever.

[On the interior side of the Palace are large buildings with halls and chambers, where the Emperor's private property is placed, such as his treasures of gold, silver, gems, pearls, and gold plate, and in which reside the ladies and concubines. There he occupies himself at his own convenience, and no one else has access.] . . .

### CONCERNING THE CITY OF CAMBALUC

Now there was on that spot in old times a great and noble city called Cambaluc, which is as much as to say in our tongue "The city of the Emperor." But the Great Kaan was informed by his Astrologers that this city would prove rebellious, and raise great disorders against his imperial authority. So he caused the present city to be built close beside the old one, with only a river between them. And he caused the people of the old city to be removed to the new town that he had founded; and this is called Taidu. . . .

As regards the size of this (new) city you must know that it has a compass of 24 miles, for each side of it hath a length of 6 miles, and it is four-square. And it is all walled round with walls of earth which have a thickness of full ten paces at bottom, and a height of more than 10 paces; but they are not so thick at top, for they diminish in thickness as they rise, so that at top they are only about 3 paces thick. And they are provided throughout with loop-holed battlements, which are all whitewashed.

There are 12 gates, and over each gate there is a great and handsome palace, so that there are on each side of the square three gates and five palaces; for (I ought to mention) there is at each angle also a great and handsome palace. In those palaces are vast halls in which are kept the arms of the city garrison.

The streets are so straight and wide that you can see right along them from end to end and from one gate to the other. And up and down the city there are beautiful palaces, and many great and fine hostelries, and fine houses in great numbers. [All the plots of ground on which the houses of the city are built are four-square, and laid out with straight lines; all the plots being occupied by great and spacious palaces, with courts and gardens of proportionate size. All these plots were assigned to different heads of families. Each square plot is encompassed by handsome streets for traffic; and thus the whole city is arranged in squares just like a chess-board, and disposed in a manner so perfect and masterly that it is impossible to give a description that should do it justice.]

Moreover, in the middle of the city there is a great clock—that is to say, a bell—which is struck at night. And after it has struck three times no one must go out in the city, unless it be for the needs of a woman in labour, or of the sick. And those who go about on such errands are bound to carry lanterns with them. Moreover, the established guard at each gate of the city is 1000 armed men; not that you are to imagine

this guard is kept up for fear of any attack, but only as a guard of honour for the Sovereign, who resides there, and to prevent thieves from doing mischief in the town.

## 79 The Yuan Code: Homicide

In 1279, for the first time in Chinese history, all of China fell under an alien rule—that of the Mongols who invaded from across the Great Wall. The Mongol conquerors, who remained in control of the Chinese Empire for less than a century (until 1368), adopted the dynastic name "Yuan," according to Chinese custom. Once in the seat of power, the Mongols, who were disdained by the Chinese as nomadic barbarians, sought to establish their supremacy as new masters by implementing systematic discriminatory policies against the Chinese, who constituted more than 90 percent of the Mongol Empire's population. For instance, the Mongol rulers patronized Lamaism, a Buddhist sect that had originated in Tibet, in order to undercut the pervasive influence of Confucianism and Taoism. The Mongols stratified the population of the empire in such a way that the Chinese were placed at the bottom of the social ladder, even below the foreigners. The Chinese suffered from administrative and judicial discrimination and were also forced to carry a heavy burden in taxes and forced labor. The following excerpts from the Yuan penal code show, for instance, that the murder of a Mongol by a Chinese invoked the death penalty, whereas the murder of a Chinese by a Mongol was punished by exile to an expeditionary army. Interestingly, the code also seems to reflect the Mongol's nomadic background in that it shows a preference for corporal punishment over imprisonment.

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Compare the punishments for homicides provided in the Yuan Code with that of the Franks (see Reading 53).
2. How differently were the cases involving involuntary manslaughter and premeditated murders treated in the Yuan Code? What seemed to be the criteria for the differences?
  1. A person who kills another person is punishable by death. The family of the victim is entitled to receive from the family of the killer fifty taels of silver for funeral expenses. The amount could be reduced if the family of the killer is too poor, but under no circumstances should it be less than ten taels of silver in paper currency.