

General Concepts In Mongol Persona

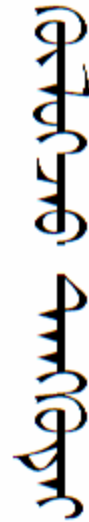
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Introduction

Mongols were historically a nomadic people. This leads to some difficulties with research due to their lack of permanence and even a written language until 13th century. Most surviving sources are from those that they encountered. Much of the permanent cities they built in the height of their expanse were destroyed by enemies of later years. This, however, gives a strong foundation for a culture suited to surviving any extreme they encountered, even the 'barbaric' peoples who live in permanent dwellings and pollute the land they need to survive.

One thing you will find is that there is a wealth of sources in Mongol, Chinese, Russian, Arabic, Japanese, and even German but very little translated into English.

History

Availability

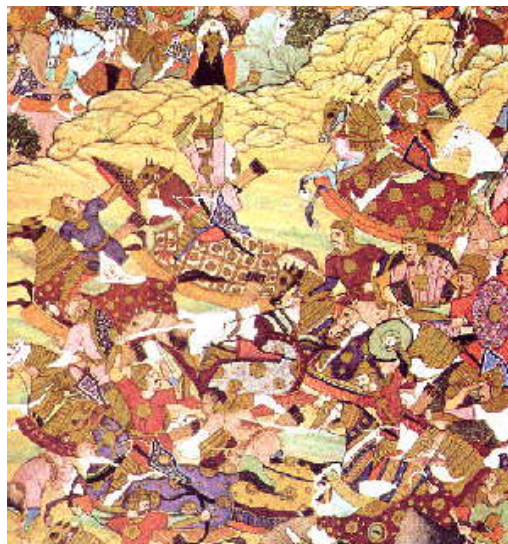
There are problems in accuracy due to cultural bias. Most period sources were from those that encountered them with little knowledge of who they were or subjected by conquest and naturally inclined to incur a negative disposition. Russians, for example, refer to Mongols as “Tartars” as a play on the name of one of the nomad tribes “Tatars”. The word literally translates to “Devil” and actually comes from the Greek word “Tartarus” for “Underworld”.

Examples of such prejudice survived into modern English. “Horde” derives from the Mongol word “Ordu” meaning “camp” and was used to describe countless numbers to explain devastating losses at the hands of the Mongol armies which were, in reality, almost always outnumbered. Another example is “Mongoloid” which would be the equivalent of calling a hideous disease “Caucasianoid”.

Research is further complicated by Communist China. Any web search on Mongols will turn up the plight of Inner Mongolia, which shares similar troubles as Eastern Turkistan and Tibet. In the past Century, the Chinese have destroyed artifacts preserved by Mongols since the days of Chingghis Khan for his memory and built, in Chinese architecture, a monument in a region where honoring his memory was harshly punished. Then, to the outside world, proclaim Mongols and Chingghis Khan to be a part of Chinese cultural roots in such forums as “Glorious China” as part of China’s attempt to improve its image on human rights while the reality remains quite different. Needless to say, modern Mongols find this quite offensive due to both the human right atrocities and the official denial of a distinct heritage. Fortunately, this is only a stumbling block for the casual researcher as the deception is mostly at a propaganda level with inaccuracies easily revealed with a bit of serious research.

The Great Khan

Chingghis Khan (Temujin) is the single most important figure in Mongol history and is respected to this day by his ‘children’, the Mongol people, as a man of strength, wisdom, and culture. His ancestry is documented in *The Secret History of the Mongols* back to the mythological wolf and deer who gave birth to the Mongols and his descendants ruled as his successors for hundreds of years. He unified the nomad tribes of the steppe to eventually form the largest single country ever. His grandson, Kublai Khan, finished the conquest of China to form the final united country we know today from what was many separate Kingdoms when Temujin was born.



Military

The military history of the Mongol empire is the best documented area due to their profound expertise and success. Most sources in English will focus on their military campaigns.

Their capabilities were the result of nomadic lifestyle with unforgiving environment and neighbors. Surviving in central Asia meant a disciplined life with endurance to bear temperature extremes from the Gobi desert to the Siberian permafrost to Himalayan mountains and efficient use of a limited set of resources. The steppe ponies they rode are an animal of high endurance as well that is capable of maneuvering on harsh terrain and were trained to give the rider a steady base for shooting their bows. Mongol children learned to ride as soon as they learned to walk and were taught to shoot a bow shortly thereafter as good hunting skills are necessary to survival as well. The field tactics and organization were largely based on hunting tactics and tribal structure. The population was almost entirely mobile on short notice, a majority of which being armed and ready to fight.

The Chinese often kept the nomads at bay by inciting them to fight each other. “Fight barbarians with barbarians” was the mentality. After Chingghis Khan united the steppe nomads, the Mongol Yoke (the expanse of their conquest) covered China, Russia, Persia, invaded Europe to the doorstep of Vienna, laying waste the armies of Poland, Teutonic Knights, Knights Templar, and Pest along the way, attacked Japan and collected tribute from coastal cities all around south and southeast Asia. At its height, the empire touched from the Adriatic to the Pacific. Subsequent splinter groups of the vast empire included the Timurids of Persia and the Moghul Empire in India.

Place & Period

While the height of the Mongol Empire is during the 13th to 15th century, the nomadic tradition was a long standing culture that dates well back to the ancient Scythians of the first millennium BC.

The standard Mongol persona will prefer to enjoy the best of Mongol popularity with the days of Chingghis Khan and the Empire he built. If you so choose to be a part of Chigghis' world, you would have live around the turn of the 12th to 13th century and been a part of one of many distinct tribes that witnessed a great unification under Chingghis' 9 horsetail standard and campaigned against the many sedentary countries that have, for centuries, incited war among nomads to keep their powers weak.

An easy to research persona would be one of a few years later that enjoyed the fruits of the vast Empire choosing to live in any of the many regions of Asia encompassed by the Mongol Yoke but still preferring a superior nomadic lifestyle. In the same time period, you could as well be a persona that was under Mongol domination, as was most of the Asian world in the day. Mongols were known to collect artisans and allow a great deal of cross cultural influence and trade that did not exist before. A Russian artist might easily find himself working in the same Mongol built city as, sharing ideas with, Tibetans and Persians and Chinese as a daily routine. Another alternative would be one of the numerous merchants who both supplied the Mongol leaders with tales of neighboring countries and prospered under the rich trade economy of the Mongol Empire.

For those that prefer a later period, the nomadic ways of the Mongols was preserved throughout period until the present day in the central Asian steppe. Subsequent splinter groups of the Empire would allow a Mongol persona to be one of the Moghuls in India who built the Taj Mahal.

Philosophy

Religion

The original religion of the steppe nomads is shamanism, a belief system involving various nature spirits that is still practiced in some areas today especially in the northern mountainous areas in Mongolia. One notable feature of this system of beliefs is that there is no doctrine that dictates “no god before me” as in other religions. As a result, the Mongols would not persecute people based on religious beliefs and even adopted the local religions of their subjected peoples, a practice quite different from many other empires.

When Chingghis Khan began including Tangut and Tibet under his rule, he embraced Buddhism and included a Tibetan Lama as one of his close advisors. Buddhism has had a place for some time but went through several phases. After the breakup of the empire, many of the people went back to their original beliefs. After about two hundred years, (16th c.?) Buddhism was reintroduced to the Mongols by travelling Tibetan Lamas and a sect was tailored that included much of the shamanistic ideas. This survived until Communist rule of this century tried to eliminate religion and went so far as to massacre monks and leave mass graves of hundreds in the countryside. Today, after the peaceful dissolving of the communist party Buddhism is being rejuvenated in this most recent fashion.

When the Mongols conquered Persia, Islam worked its way to the Mongol rulers of the IlKhanate after some strife. During the invasion of Persia, Chingghis Khan was said to have cleaned out a Mosque for supplies and, while the practitioners stood outside, sat on the steps of the main entrance and told them that he was sent by god as punishment for their sins. That Mosque still holds prayers for him not to return. In modern Pakistan, children are told Chingghis Khan will come for them if they are bad. In view of the level of danger they posed, the Mongols were responsible for the elimination of the assassin cult much to the welcome of the neighboring cities. In later years the IlKhans eventually embraced Islam and kept the faith through successive rulers to the Moghuls. Many of the Turkic tribes that were encompassed by Chingghis Khan embraced Islam to this day and it is now a prominent religion in central Asia.

Christianity played a lesser part among the Mongols but had a significant presence none the less. The Rus adopted a form of Greek Orthodox Christianity but it never got a foothold among Mongol rulers. When Carpini traveled to the capitol Kara Korum, he was surprised to find a Christian church there. There was a sporadic relationship between the Mongols and Christian Europe. While the Mongols had thorough intelligence into the religious and political organization of Europe, the Europeans were taken unaware by the Mongols whose never realized objective of 1241 was to take the political center of Europe: Rome. Three primary sources are journals of Christian envoys to Mongol lands over the next 60 years. A letter sent by Kuyuk Khan to Pope Innocent IV addressed him as the Emperor of Europe – a letter preserved in the Vatican Library.

Judaism is a religion of little consequence to Mongols but had a presence as far as China. There is one tribe of Turkic nomads that were and are Jewish, the Khasars, who had a significant country that reached as far north as Scandinavia and began falling apart a century before Chingghis Khan and settled in present day Uzbekistan.

The basic attitude of the Mongols towards religion was that of tolerance. Their subjects were allowed to freely follow their beliefs. Chingghis Khan was once attributed as to saying that he did not want chance offending whatever God there might be restricting any religion when he did not know which one had the correct view. The Mongol Empire was the first country in history to put into law and practice freedom of religion.

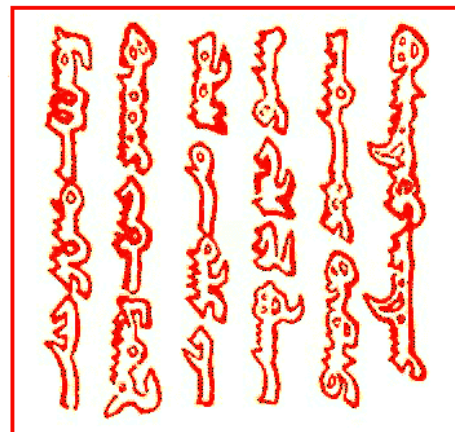
Yasa

The laws of the Mongols were known as Yasa. Most of the laws were long standing customs that are restated as laws every time a new ruler takes power and some were significant to the development of the Empire. The written laws of Chingghis Khan were recorded after his death as most were existing laws and written language was new to the nomads.

Some examples concerning environment, country, and honor:

- Whoever urinates into water or ashes is to be put to death.
- Chingghis Khan decided that no taxes or duties should be imposed upon fakirs, religious devotees, lawyers, physicians, scholars, people who devote themselves to prayer and asceticism, muezzins and those who wash the bodies of the dead.
- He ordered the Khan to establish permanent postal communications in order that he might be informed in good time of all the events of the country.
- The Yasa of Chingghis Khan forbids lies, theft and adultery and prescribes love of one's neighbor as one's self; it orders men not to hurt each other and to forget offences completely, to spare countries and cities which submit voluntarily, to free from taxes temples consecrated to God, and to respect old people and beggars. Whoever violates these commands is to be put to death.

Seal of Kuyuk Khan



Garb

The *del* is the basic Mongol outfit and is basically a long robe that buttons on the right side. A signature of Mongol fashion was that, unlike similar outfits in surrounding regions, there would be two buttons in front of the right shoulder. Under this were always worn pants and boots. The basic outfit was highly maneuverable, a necessity for life on horseback, and very warm and was worn by both men and women. The outfit was belted (cloth or leather) and often layered with a shirt underneath, perhaps a vest (waist length, side or center buttoned – for men) or a center buttoned sleeveless robe (for women) or jacket or another silk or even fur dels as weather might require. It was decorated by being trimmed and used fancy embroidered images.

The boots were thick leather with a flat soul and pointed, turned up toe that both made inserting the foot into a stirrup easier and did not disturb the ground when walking. These were worn with a sock that came above that top of the boot. All exposed areas were decorated and the pant was tucked into the sock. While calf length was most common, shorter and occasionally thigh high boots were worn as well.

Men typically wore fur lined hats with flaps to cover the ears and back of the head. Women wore elaborate beaded headdresses and sometimes sculpted their hair to look like horns held with glue and silver clasps. Men often braided their hair around their ears and women prided themselves with waist length hair.

The outfit was accessorized with bead and coral necklaces, knife and chopstick set, and a fire scythe.

While the *del* is a simple matter for anyone who sews, a first set of garb for the new Mongol persona may find the necessity to purchase an outfit. The best place to find a traditional Mongol outfit is in Ulaan Bataur, Mongolia where such things are still worn. The local SCAdian may prefer a shorter migration to Chinatown where some traditional outfits are very close to period dress. A basic lee jacket seen in most Kung Fu movies and waist tying pants works well. With a bit of looking, the “male dress” is a robe of similar style to a Mongol *del* and can be found in cotton, and rayon and raw silk. Into the Village you can find both Tibetan and Afghani shops that carry expensive but traditional styles.

Handmade Mongolian dels and boots can be ordered through:

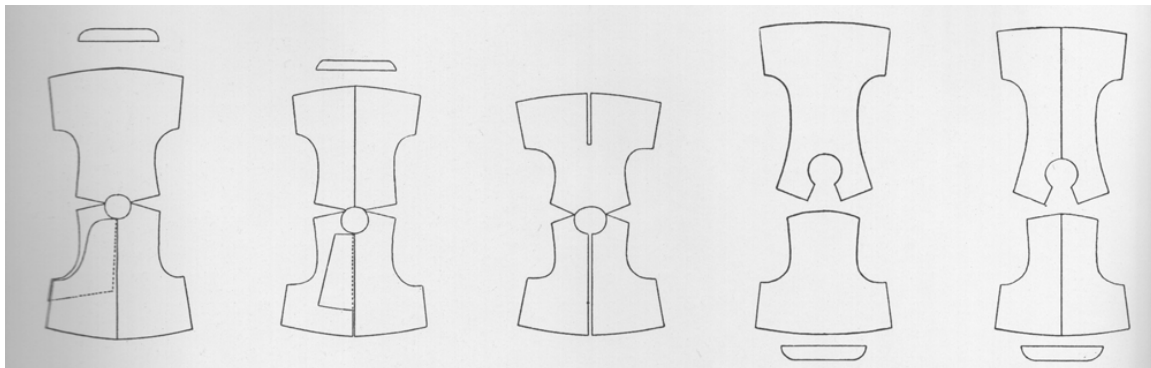
NYCMongol

<http://www.NYCMongol.com>

33 Seeley Ln. 3rd Fl.

Staten island, NY 10308

(212)771-1969



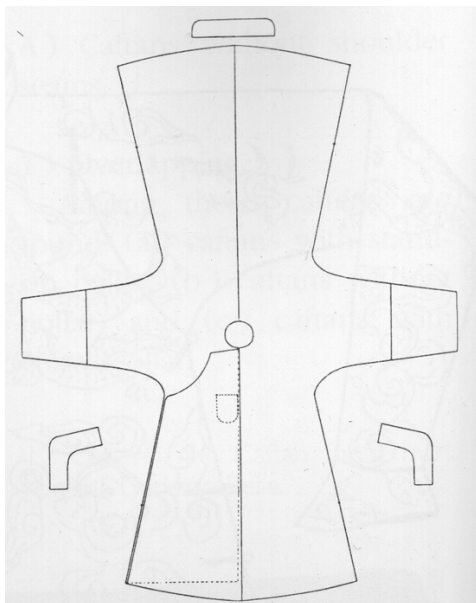
82 Diagram of waistcoat, Cat. no. 148. Shoulder seams: closing to the right due to overlapping; front and back consist of one length of material; no vertical seam at back; stand-up collar.

83 Diagram of waistcoat, Cat. no. 151. Shoulder seams: closing to the right due to overlapping; front and back consist of two lengths of material each (cf. Cat. nos. 83 and 107); stand-up collar.

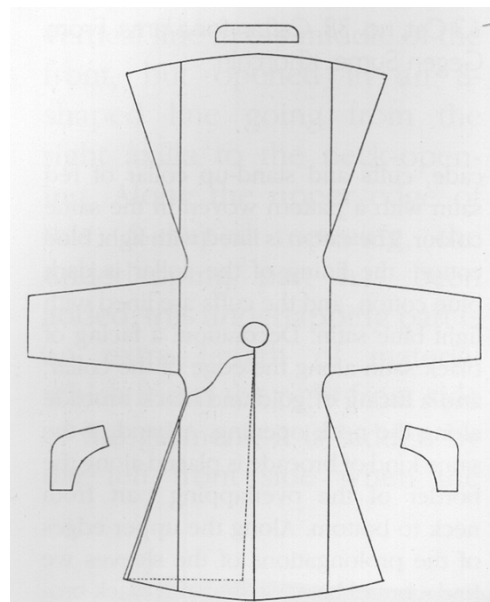
84 Diagram of waistcoat, Cat. no. 161. Shoulder seams: central opening; front and back consist of one length of material each (cf. Cat. no. 113).

85 Diagram of waistcoat, Cat. no. 164. Loose front; front and back consist of one length of material each.

86 Diagram of waistcoat, Fig. 81. Loose front; front and back consist of two lengths of material each.



15 Diagram of caftan, Cat. no. 38. No shoulder seams; closing to the right due to overlapping; the body consists of two lengths of material; vertical seams both at front and back; stand-up collar (cf. Cat. no. 135).



14 Diagram of caftan, Cat. no. 34. No shoulder seams; closing to the right due to overlapping; the body consists of one length of material; vertical seam only in front; stand-up collar.

Sources

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Japanese Invasion Scroll

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Genghis Khan: The History of the World-Conqueror

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The successors of Genghis Khan - by Rashâid al-Dâin òTabâib

Written by the official IlKhanate historian. This is the entire section of his World History dedicated to Mongol history. He was alleged to have access to a non surviving official history of Mongols kept exclusively to ethnic Mongols of period.

Historia Mongolorum – Carpini

First of Christian envoys to Mongol Empire. First European to travel to Asia and return alive in 200 years. Gathered much “Intelligence” on Mongol culture while on mission to convert the Khan.

A Journey to Eastern Parts of the World – Rubruck

Second Christian envoy to keep a record of his travel to Mongol Empire. Went seeking to enlist Mongol support against Muslims in the Crusades of the 13th century.

The Travels of Marco Polo : The Complete Yule-Cordier Edition

by Marco Polo, Henry Yule (Translator), Henri Cordier (Editor)

Dover Pubns; ISBN: 0486275868 (vol 1) & 0486275876 (vol 2)

Third Christian envoy to keep such a journal. While many people discount him as being prone to exaggeration and embellishment, some points raised against him are easily disputed. He was unaware that it was common practice to use foreigners as ambassadors and ministers. *Secret History* refers to ponies with Unicorn like deformity.

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Handmade Mongolian delts and boots can be ordered through:
NYCMongol
<http://www.NYCMongol.com>
33 Seeley Ln. 3rd Fl.
Staten island, NY 10308
(212)771-1969

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