

History

Lesson 3

Enquiry: How did the Mongols create a world Empire?

Controlling the Mongol Empire

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Controlling an empire

When Genghis Khan died in 1227, the Mongol Empire was thousands of miles across, stretching from the Pacific Ocean to the borders of Eastern Europe. For many years, even after Genghis' death, this land was ruled as one single empire. Genghis and his **successors** achieved this through a combination of ruling through fear, providing clear rules and giving people in different parts of the empire the freedom to live as they wished. Many of these rules were written down in **a law code** called **the Yasa**.



Loyal soldiers

Genghis Khan kept control of his huge empire by making sure his men were completely loyal to him. Unlike previous tribal leaders, who favoured members of their own tribe, Genghis promoted soldiers based on how good they were at doing their job. This meant that the Mongol leadership felt they owed their power and wealth to the Khan. The Yasa said that if anyone disobeyed Genghis Khan or announced someone else to be emperor, lord or king, they were punished with death. It also said that if you were a Mongol, you had to fight. Refusal to do so was considered a major crime.



Religious tolerance

Another reason why the Empire was successful was that if a city had accepted Mongol rule without **resistance**, the people living there were allowed to continue their lives as before. The Mongols would leave a leading man in the area to keep an eye on things, and ensure taxes were paid, but other than that, the local population was left alone. This was especially the case where religion was involved. In one version of the Yasa, it said that “all religions were to be respected and that no preference was to be shown to any of them”.



Communicating quickly

Another way that Genghis and his successors were able to keep control of such a big empire was a messenger system called **the Yam**. It was made up of chains of stations that were no more than 40 miles apart. If news or a command needed to be sent to a military leader or Genghis Khan himself, a messenger on horseback would travel to a station, where the news or command would then be passed on to another messenger. That way, the message could travel quickly across great distances, rather than be delayed by messengers needing to rest. The messengers carried a special coin-sized medal called **a paiza**, which gave them protection wherever they were.



Glossary

A law code: a list of rules about how a country or empire is run.

To resist: to fight back.

The Yasa: the law code made by Genghis Khan to govern the Mongol Empire.

The Yam: the messenger service that spanned the whole Mongol Empire.

A paiza: a medal that a Yam messenger carried to protect himself.

Successor: someone who follows after someone else.



Comprehension Questions

1. What was the Yasa?
2. What did Genghis Khan think about a person's religion?
3. What was the Yam?
4. What did having a paiza mean?
5. How did Genghis Khan keep his soldiers loyal?

