

Chapter-5

Nomadic Empires

Question 1.

Why was trade so significant to the Mongols?

Answer:

The region which was occupied by Mongols lacked natural resources. The steppe region of Central Asia had extreme climate. Cultivation of food was not possible there, only trade could help their survival. The Mongols were forced to trade as the scanty resources of the steppes did not help cultivation. So the Mongols traded with neighboring countries and it was beneficial for both the countries.

Question 2.

Why did Genghis Khan feel the need to fragment the Mongol tribes into new social and military groupings?

Answer:

The following reasons forced Genghis Khan to fragment the Mongol tribes into new social and military groupings:

- Mongols were the inhabitants of the steppe region. They had their own separate identities. So in order to bring them in touch with other tribes, Genghis Khan took this step.
- Mongols were courageous people. Because of this nature, Genghis Khan organized them into military groups and established a formidable army. A sound military organization could be very helpful in trade also .
- Childhood experiences of Genghis Khan were also responsible for the fragmentation of Mongol tribes. Genghis Khan himself had to suffer a lot during his childhood.

Question 3.

How do later Mongol reflections on the Yasa bring out the uneasy relationship they had with the memory of Genghis Khan?

Answer:

Yasa were the rules and regulations. These were approved by Quritali during Genghis Khan's reign. These rules were mainly concerned with Mongol army, hunting, postage system, social ladder, etc. They were compilation of traditions and customs that prevailed in Mongol tribal society itself.

Question 4.

"If history relies upon written records produced by city-based literati, nomadic societies will always receive a hostile representation." Would you agree with this statement ? Does it explain the reason why Persian chronicles produced such inflated figures of casualties resulting from Mongol campaigns? (HOTS)

Answer:

Yes, I agree with the statement. I give the following reasons for my view.

- There were vast differences between The Secret Society of Mongols and Marco Polo's Travelogues in terms of events and their descriptions.
- Being the transcontinental span of the Mongol empire, the sources were written in different languages.
- Persian chronicles produced inflated figures of casualties resulting from Mongol campaigns to prove their cruelty or to prove them as cruel assassins

Question 5.

Keeping the nomadic element of the Mongol and Bedouin societies in mind, how, in your opinion, did their respective historical experiences differ? What explanations would you suggest account for these differences?

Answer:

Mongols were tribes in the steppes of central Asia, a diverse body of people linked by similarity in language to Tatars, Khitan and Manchus in east and Turkic tribes to the west. Bedouins were Arab tribes moving from dry to green desert in search of food and fodder for cattle. Some Mongols were pastoralists while others were hunter-gatherers. On the other hand, Bedouins were pastoralists, agriculturists and

traders because of central Islamic lands surrounded by seas from four sides. The steppes inhabitants usually produced no literature, so our knowledge of nomadic societies under Mongols are quite different and the Italian and Latin versions of Marco- Polo's Travels to the Mongol Court do not match.

Question 6.

How does the following account enlarge upon the character of the Pax Mongolica created by the Mongols by the middle of the thirteenth century?

The Franciscan monk, William of Rubruck, was sent by Louis IX of France on an embassy to the great Khan Mongke's court. He reached Karakorum, the capital of Mongke, in 1254 and came upon a woman from Lorraine (in France) called Paquette, who had been brought from Hungary and was in the service of one of the prince's wives who was a Nestorian Christian. At the court he came across a Parisian goldsmith named Guillaume Boucher, 'whose brother dwelt on the Grand Pont in Paris'. This man was first employed by the Queen Sorghaqtani and then by Mongke's younger brother. Rubruck found that at the great court festivals the Nestorian priests were admitted first, with their regalia, to bless the Grand Khan's cup, and were followed by the Muslim clergy and Buddhist and Taoist monks.

Answer:

The above account depicts the character of the Pax Mongolica by the middle of the 13th century:

- It became clear from the above incident that the French Monarch Louis IX had sent his ambassador William of Rubruck to Karakorum, the capital of Mongke in 1254. This depicts that Mongol rulers had established a well-knit relation with their neighbours.
- Guillaume Boucher proved that Mongol rulers lived with great pomp and show and they had brought servants to serve them from different parts of the world. They were paid good salaries. That is why they reached to serve Mongol court from far away.
- Mongol rulers were not fanatics and anxious to get the blessings of all the people. They recruited administrators and armed forces from people of all ethnic groups and religions. There was a multilingual, multi-religious regime that did not feel threatened by its pluralistic constitution. The above descriptions display the best aspect of Pax-Mongolica. It is said that in a vast empire, the Mongols had established such a rule that one could walk freely without the fear of robbery.