*Position: Mongols were barbarians*

**Destruction under the Mongol Empire**

Historians regard the Mongol raids and invasions as some of the [deadliest](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_wars_and_disasters_by_death_toll) conflicts in human history up through that period. “The Mongols brought terror to Europe on a scale not seen again until the twentieth century."[1] The Mongol invasions induced population displacement "on a scale never seen before," particularly in Central Asia and eastern Europe. The [Khans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khagan#Mongol_Khagans) guaranteed protection only if the populace submitted to Mongol rule and was obedient to it.

Sources record massive destruction, terror and death if there was resistance. David Nicole notes in *The Mongol Warlords:* *"terror and mass extermination of anyone opposing them was a well-tested Mongol tactic."*[4] The alternative to submission was total war: if refused, Mongol leaders ordered the collective slaughter of populations and destruction of property, as the source of oppressive evil.

Ancient sources described Genghis Khan's conquests as wholesale destruction on an unprecedented scale in certain geographical regions, causing great [demographic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics) changes in Asia. According to the works of the Iranian historian [Rashid al-Din](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rashid-al-Din_Hamadani) (1247–1318), the [Mongols](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mongols) killed more than 700,000 people in [Merv](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merv) and more than a million in [Nishapur](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nishapur). The total population of [Persia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iran) may have dropped from 2,500,000 to 250,000 as a result of mass extermination and famine. Population exchanges did also in some cases occur but depends as of when.[8]

The Mongols' natural, popular and martial purpose destruction of the irrigation systems of Iran and Iraq turned back centuries of effort to improving agriculture and water supply in these regions. The loss of available food as a result may have led to the death of more people from starvation in this area than actual battle did.

Mongols were known to burn farmland; when they were trying to take the [Ganghwa Island](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ganghwa_Island) palaces during the invasions of Korea under the [Goryeo Dynasty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goryeo_Dynasty), crops were burned to starve the populace supportive and surrounding oppressive then mainly non-productive urban centers. Other tactics included diverting rivers into and from cities and towns, and [catapulting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catapult) diseased corpses over city walls to infect the population.

from ***The Mongol War Machine: How Were the Mongols Able to Forge the Largest Contiguous Land Empire in History?***

Terror and Destruction

When the Mongols beat an enemy, the often decapitated their heads and impaled them on wooden stakes for all to see. When they took a town or city that had resisted them, they generally executed every male taller than a cart wheel or a whip and according to one figure, the death toll from their campaign in Hungary was estimated at fifty per cent of the local population.[[48]](http://www.thepicaproject.org/?page_id=522#_ftn48#_ftn48)Those inside of Kiev when the Mongols stormed it were put to death and in fact, nearly every other major eastern European city was destroyed and its population slaughtered. Genghis Khan’s brutal war in the Khwarizmian Empire has been described as ‘campaign of extermination’ by historian Archer Jones.[[49]](http://www.thepicaproject.org/?page_id=522#_ftn49#_ftn49) According to contemporary tallies, the death toll in this campaign was in the millions and whilst this is highly unlikely, given that the total population of the region probably only ran into the few millions, it points to the massive trail of death and destruction that the Mongols left behind them.[[50]](http://www.thepicaproject.org/?page_id=522#_ftn50#_ftn50) In general, where ever the Mongols went, the local populations suffered greatly.

One of the most basic purposes of Mongolian terror was to send a message to all who may oppose them that resistance is futile and anyone who resists will meet the same fate. This message traveled faster than any courier and so the Mongols’ reputation arrived at a city before they themselves did, often leading a city to surrender without a fight. When cities did resist, they were razed to the ground without mercy – women were raped, young men taken into slavery for labor or conscription, older males executed and any artisans were sent back to Mongol camps. The city of Merv, a hugely important Islamic cultural centre, resisted the Mongols before surrendering, however, they were still all put to the sword for daring to defy the Mongols.

If a city did not resist at all, they were spared, like the ancient city of Herat, however, the city revolted after the Mongols’ departure. Genghis is reputed to have asked how this city failed to understand their message of terror as evidenced by their uprising. He sent his army back to Herat and they slaughtered everyone. Genghis Khan very consciously did these things to permanently subdue large groups of people by instilling in their collective memory what the repercussions of defiance were. Genghis Khan is said to have asked a Khwarizmian if the bloodshed will ever be forgotten, to which the man answered, ‘“If Jenghiz Khan continues this campaign of murder, no one will be left alive to harbor a memory of the bloodshed.”’[[52]](http://www.thepicaproject.org/?page_id=522#_ftn52#_ftn52) Essentially, the cruelty of the Mongols was so effective that their relatively small force could go from city to city, take many of them without a fight and then return if any dared to defy them and thereby conquer huge swathes of territory.

Of course the brutal slaughters also served a few other purposes and not just that of encouraging others not to fight. It was very pragmatic and in destroying every town or city that they came across, the Mongols secured their lines of communication, demoralized enemies that were resolved to fight and also left no one behind to become enemy soldiers in the near or distant future. Furthermore, they destroyed the production centers needed to equip and supply any gathering of soldiers. Also, by butchering the garrison of every place they came across, the Mongols ensured that they would not need to leave behind many of their own forces to hold and garrison the city themselves, thus freeing up the maximum number of warriors possible to move on and continue their conquests.

In short, the Mongols used terror because it offered them many advantages as a minority during their expansions. As such, they cultivated their reputation for massacres.