

## 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 Hulegu.]*

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 well-being. . . .

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 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 *tümen*.’ In accordance with this arrangement, if in an emergency any man or thing be required, they apply to the commanders of *tümen*; 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.

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 Far East to the West. Therefore throughout the length and breadth of the land they established *yams* [rest stops], and made arrangements for the upkeep and expenses of each *yam*, assigning thereto a fixed number of men and beasts as well as food, drink and other necessities. All this they shared out amongst the *tümen*, each two *tümen* having to supply one *yam*. Thus, in accordance with the census, they so distribute and exact the charge, that messengers need make no long detour in order

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.