

The Mongols and the Eurasian Nexus of Global History will provide participants with five weeks of enthusiastically-delivered and intellectually-absorbing lectures, discussions, museum visits, and films focused on investigating the Mongol period of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries—an era of extraordinary interactions among the peoples and civilizations of Asia and Europe that in many ways marked a turn toward greater multiculturalism and more concertedly pursued globalization. As craftsmen, military men, scientists, officials, and religious figures were moved from their native lands to serve in other parts of the Mongol empire, they contributed to the emergence of a global imaginary that remains powerful to the present day.

I. INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Significant trends in the globalization of politics, commerce, health and education over the last half century have dovetailed with concurrent growth in the study of global history to draw critical attention to how presuppositions about metageography have shaped—if not substantially distorted—the research and teaching of history and cultural origins. Having begun to realize the extent to which knowledge and understanding of our past (and present) have been constrained by the “myth of continents,” contemporary scholarship is exploring new ways of organizing research and teaching. The classic division of Europe and Asia at the Ural Mountains—even as a heuristic—has obscured the fact that both “European” and “Asian” cultures developed in complex interaction with one another.

Colleges and universities now generally require courses on world history, and introducing students to the challenges and creative possibilities of multicultural interactions is a standard learning outcome across the humanities and social sciences. In spite of this trend, teaching and knowledge about the Mongols and their extraordinary influence on Eurasian trade and world history remain limited. In part, this can be attributed to the fact that present-day Mongolia is a relatively isolated and thinly populated country that is surrounded and both politically and economically dwarfed by its two powerful neighbors: Russia and China. Another major factor, however, is the extraordinary geographic and cultural reach of the Mongol empire. At its zenith in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, the Mongol empire reached the Korean peninsula in the east, encompassing to the south all of China and parts of what are now Vietnam and Burma; to the west, it stretched as far as present-day Poland and encompassed everything southward from Siberian Russia to the Indian subcontinent, including all of what are now Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq, most of Turkey, and significant parts of Eastern Europe. Research on the Mongol empire requires, at the very least, skills in classical languages of Mongolian, Chinese, Russian and Persian, as well as a host of modern languages. A related factor has been

the tendency of textbook treatments of the Mongols to focus almost exclusively on their military exploits, giving little attention either to the conditions that made their conquests possible or to the intercultural dynamics of Mongol rule over much of Eurasia.

The Mongols and the Eurasian Nexus of Global History will draw on the best research available to provide undergraduate educators with the resources needed to develop curricular materials on the Mongol conquests and empire, to assess their pivotal roles in shaping premodern global history, and to examine with their students the modern legacies of the Mongol era.

Why the Mongols?

The Mongols have often been represented one-dimensionally as ruthless marauders responsible, directly or indirectly, for the deaths of millions of people. And to be sure, Mongol armies so devastated some of the regions they conquered that recovery took decades, and the transcontinental scale of their conquests ensured that the unprecedented ferocity of the Mongol military was not long in becoming the stuff of tragic legend.

The best evidence, however, is that Mongol victories had less to do with their ferocity than with their weaponry, tactics and organization, and the case can be made that the Mongols were responsible for developing the first “modern” army. Not only did Mongol warriors undergo rigorous training, Mongol leaders simultaneously stressed precisely-executed planned maneuvers and battlefield versatility, and were masters of battlefield improvisation and the strategic use of local terrain and weather conditions. Not surprisingly, the Mongols affected the future use of weaponry, strategy, tactics, and military organization throughout their domains.

Nonetheless, the legacies of Mongol rule were not restricted to establishing new, global heights of violence and military prowess. In addition, the Mongol era (lasting from roughly the 13th to the 15th century) was one in which sustained East-West relationships were formally established for the first time. Although the Roman Empire was transcontinental in scope (encompassing Europe and parts of the Middle East and North Africa) and the Viking sphere of influence was transoceanic, neither fostered significant direct contact among peoples across Eurasia. It was under the Mongols that the first direct contacts were realized among Europe, the Middle East, and China.

Of course, China, India, and the Middle East had been in touch with each other long before the Mongol conquests. The trade in silk between China and other regions in

Asia developed as early as the first century BCE and persisted, with a few sharp breaks, until the era of Chinggis Khan (1162-1227). Nevertheless, in spite of this long history of Eurasian interactions, the Mongolian-dominated century differed dramatically. Silk roads trade is often wrongly imagined as having been brokered by traders who accompanied their goods across the thousands of miles separating the centers of civilization and commerce in the Middle East and India with those in the East Asia. But in actuality, transcontinental and transoceanic trade routes were quilted together by disparate sets of traders operating in relatively small circuits of exchange. Among the few travelers, for example, to journey the entire way from India to China prior to the twelfth or thirteenth centuries were Buddhist monks. During the Mongol era, Europeans and Chinese began meeting in person rather than through intermediaries, and interactions among the peoples of East, South, Central and West Asia reached hitherto unprecedented scales, including interactions resulting possibly in the historically momentous spread of such diseases as the bubonic plague.

Crucially, the Mongols not only conquered vast territories, they governed them with the indispensable help of Chinese, Iranian, and Turkic advisers and administrators. With them, the Mongols set up governments and bureaucracies, devised systems of taxation, and promoted the interests of farmers, herdsman, and merchants. Eurasian trade expanded rapidly as both travel and security costs were reduced, and many of the institutional innovations developed during the Mongol era had significant lifetimes after the empire's collapse. The so-called *Pax Mongolica* markedly accelerated the pace of transcontinental technological, artistic, and religious diffusion. Iranian astronomy and medicine had an influence on those disciplines in China, while Chinese arts and agricultural knowledge had impacts in Iran. Even as Russia, Iran, and Europe became markets for a variety of Chinese products, China was exposed to Christianity, and Europe learned—via Marco Polo's work—about Buddhism and Confucianism. In each case, as cultures and societies across Eurasia adopted foreign artifacts, ideas, or technologies, they did so by adapting or altering what they borrowed to fit their own needs and values.

Like many empire builders, the Mongol Khans were tolerant of foreign religions, and active persecution of any sect in the Mongol realm was rare. Indeed, the period of Mongol rule was one of uncommon flourishing for some religious groups, such as Tibetan Buddhists and Sufis. Yet, a number of Mongol leaders went further, actively encouraging the growth of native cultures, patronizing artists, writers, and historians. Chinese drama and painting, Iranian historical writing, Russian metalwork, and Tibetan Buddhist art and architecture all flourished under Mongol occupation. The Mongol Khans supported Zhao Mengfu, the greatest Chinese painter and calligrapher of the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368), as well as Rashid al-Din, a Renaissance man of his era

and the greatest Iranian historian. In the ruins of the ancient Mongol capital of Khara Khorum and in Khubilai Khan's summer capital of Shangdu (known to Westerners as Xanadu), archeologists have unearthed exquisite Buddhist statues, jade belt ornaments, gold bracelets, temple frescos, and porcelains, confirming the sophisticated tastes of Mongol rulers. Excavations of the Mongol summer capital of Takht-i Sulaiman in Iran and sites in Russia similarly have uncovered beautiful tiles, Chinese porcelains, silk fabrics, and gold belts and goblets, offering a glimpse of the scope of the Mongol appreciation of culture.

Finally, and perhaps more importantly, however, the Mongol era can be seen as having helped bring about a "global imaginary" linking various world regions and societies as parts of a coherent, even if often conflict-riddled, whole. As already noted, historians have long recognized that the Mongol era witnessed the first sustained, direct contacts between Europe and China. Catholic popes dispatched Franciscans to the Mongol domains; Western craftsmen served at the courts of the Khans; and Genoese and Venetian merchants—including Marco Polo, his father, and his uncle—reached Dadu (modern Beijing). These interactions had a profound influence on European history, in part because they precipitated Western efforts to find less hazardous and more direct routes to Asia than those passing through the mountain passes and deserts of Central Asia. In this sense, the Mongol era can be seen as having initiated a transformation of the premodern imagination of the world that helped propel the European age of exploration of the fifteenth century—early climaxes of which were the discovery of the sea route around the Cape of Good Hope to Asia, and Christopher Columbus' unsuccessful (but historically momentous) effort to find a western route to the Indies. It is no accident that Christopher Columbus had Marco Polo's book at his bedside as he sought a sea route to Asia.

Although the Mongol empire lasted less than two hundred years, Mongol rule left lasting marks on peoples and societies across Eurasia. The native Chinese Ming dynasty (1368-1644) that overthrew the Mongol-ruled Yuan dynasty still employed Mongols in its security and police forces, established a Bureau of Muslim Astronomy, sustained patronage of Tibetan Buddhism, and produced maps and geographical works that reflected Mongol influence. It was a Mongol prince, Altan Khan (1508-1583), who provided the head of the Gelugpa School of Buddhism in Tibet with the honorific title, Dalai Lama, establishing a Mongol-Tibetan alliance powerful enough to drive troops to the gates of Beijing, the legacies of which still haunt China-Tibet relations today. In the west, it was Turkic peoples driven out of their homelands into Anatolia by the Mongols who established the Ottoman Empire in the fourteenth century, and it was descendants of Chinggis who founded the great Moghul Empire that ruled the Indian subcontinent from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. In fact,

while the Mongols were initially reviled by the Muslim peoples of the Middle East as the “scourge of God,” the Mongols played important roles in the spread of Islam, in decentralizing Islamic religious authority, and in the rise of Cairo as a center of Islamic scholarship.

Over the course of our five-week institute, we will examine the Mongol era, its precedents and legacies, exploring how the Mongols managed to consolidate and then rule the largest land empire in history. What conditions enabled a relatively small nomadic population to gain transcontinental political dominance? What were their motivations and what roles did technology and the desire for expanded trade play in their conquests? Why after reaching such heights of power and wealth did the Mongol era end? And, what are the key legacies of this pivotal period in global history? By seeking to provide answers to these questions, the institute will help to redress important gaps in many courses in world history, art, and culture.

II. INSTITUTE READINGS AND PROGRAM

In keeping with ASDP’s mission, the proposed Institute will emphasize multi-disciplinary and integrative approaches to studying the historical development of Eurasian cultures and societies. The purpose is to enable instructors and their institutions to significantly expand undergraduate Asian and other area studies offerings. The Institute is designed to provide a stimulating array of resources and experiences that will enable each participant to draft a course module or syllabus incorporating the program’s themes and content in ways suited to their own unique teaching responsibilities. Throughout, the focus will be on generating a humanities-based, richly interactive intellectual environment, carefully combining readings of primary sources and secondary research with lectures, film screenings, museum visits, group discussions, and curriculum development sessions.

Prior to the Institute, participants will receive a topical bibliography from which they will be encouraged to read materials selected according to their own teaching and research interests. All participants will be expected to read the following background texts:

- *Genghis Khan and the Mongol Empire*, edited by William Fitzhugh, et.al. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2nd. ed., 2013)
- *The Mongol Art of War: Chinggis Khan and the Mongol Military System*, Tim May (Westholme Publishing, 2007)
- *Daily Life in the Mongol Empire*, George Lane (Greenwood Press, 2006)

Participants will also be asked to make use of the Institute website containing links to daily readings assigned by presenters, as well as to bibliographies, lists of relevant films, and a forum for sharing information and making inquiries prior to, during, and after the Institute program.

Previous ASDP and NEH institutes have shown that, in addition to plenary sessions, participants benefit from working in smaller, discipline-based groups on topics of special interest. Issues and questions emerging from small group conversations will be further engaged in plenary discussions. Experience has also demonstrated the benefits of sustained engagement with academic leaders and presenters. Regular plenary discussion sessions will be hosted in which participants will be able to work with the week's presenting scholars, following up on insights, gaining clarification, and exploring the curricular potentials of the week's content.

WEEK ONE: MONGOLS: ENVIRONMENT, PEOPLE, AND EARLIEST CULTURES

The first week of the program will orient participants to the aims of the Institute and introduce the basic cultural, environmental, and economic forces operating in both traditional and modern Mongolia. On the morning of the first day, Professor Morris Rossabi, the Lead Academic, will offer participants an overview of the Institute program and the key questions it will address, following which he will discuss the natural and cultural geography of the Mongol homelands. This discussion will continue on Tuesday when he will offer a more detailed examination of "Mongolia" prior to the building of the Mongol Empire, focusing on the Xiongnu, Türk, and Khitan peoples, their interactions with imperial China, and the importance of the tribute system through which the Chinese managed these interactions. Attention will also be given to the geographic and human factors that dictated traditional Mongolia's interactions with China, Central and West Asia, including Persia.

On Wednesday morning, Dr. William Fitzhugh (Smithsonian Institute) will focus on the distinctive lifestyle of Mongolia's nomadic pastoralists from earliest times to the days of the Mongol Empire, including their foods, shelter, and social relations. On Wednesday evening, a showing of *"The Story of the Weeping Camel"* (a 2003 Academy Award documentary nominee) and the feature film, *"A Mongolian Tale,"* will complement Professor Fitzhugh's observations on the pastoralist lifestyle. On Thursday morning, Dr. Fitzhugh will draw on his own excavation experiences in Mongolia to discuss important pre-Mongol and Mongol archeological sites, including the new and exciting digs of the first Mongol capital at Khara Khorum, which was built by Chinggis Khan's son. That afternoon, Professor Rossabi will go more deeply

into Mongol culture by examining the central roles of women in Mongol culture, the ways in which these roles were linking to the military mobilization of Mongol men, and the rights to property and political participation that they exercised, with two Mongol women ruling the Empire at its height (1241-46). The week will conclude (as will each week in the program) with each of the presenters returning for a participant-generated discussion of key themes, teaching resources, and pedagogical strategies related to the week's content.

WEEK TWO: THE MONGOL INVASIONS: HOW DID THEY SUCCEED?

The second week will examine the possibilities for and successes of the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century and their eventual establishment of the largest contiguous land empire in history. Professor Rossabi will open the week by discussing the political and economic conditions that prevailed in various states across the traditional Silk Roads regions of Central Asia, Persia, and the Middle East, as well as a general introduction to conditions in China and Northeast Asia.

That afternoon, Professor Wang Wensheng (University of Hawai'i) will discuss the political and economic situation of thirteenth century Song dynasty China (960-1279) on the eve of the Mongol invasions. Although Song China was less cosmopolitan and less geographically extensive than the Tang (618-907), it exemplified a model of imperial rule that influenced all of East Asia and that became a *de facto* foundation for Mongol rule in China during the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368).

Building on these context-setting presentations, Professor Christopher Atwood (Indiana University) will conduct two sessions on Tuesday aimed at providing a comprehensive and yet detailed description and evaluation of the unification of the Mongols. Using the life and career of Chinggis Khan as a focus, he will first offer critical reflections on the process of Mongol unification and the shift from a focus on short term raids to territorial conquest. In his second session, he will discuss the evolution of the Mongol military, its distinctively modern organizational and tactical character, and the devastating efficiency of the Mongol armies that swept across Eurasia to eventually threaten Vienna in the European cultural heartlands as well as the Japanese archipelago and the trading kingdoms of Java before internal succession disputes brought an end to widespread Mongol military campaigns.

On Wednesday, participants will meet with Dr. Hershock and Professor Rossabi to discuss their projects. Dr. Hershock and Professor Rossabi will help participants develop a course module on the Mongols, providing advice on themes and the best sources. On Thursday, Professor Rossabi will discuss the influence of foreigners on

the success, later rule, and cultural contributions of the Mongols. This week will also include screenings of a four-part BBC film on the Mongol conquests, "*Storm from the East*."

WEEK THREE: THE MONGOLS AND RELIGIONS

The third week will emphasize the impact of the Mongol invasions and rule on their own and foreign religions. To meet the needs of undergraduate educators who have little or no knowledge of Asian religions, the week will include three introductory lectures. The first of these, on Monday morning by Project Director, Peter Herschok, will provide an overview of the origins and basic teachings of Buddhism in India, and a discussion of Buddhism's evolution as it spread—along with trade and a new vision of "righteous polity"—through Central Asia into China, Tibet, Korea and Japan. Following on Monday afternoon, Professor James Frankel (University of Hawai'i) will discuss the fundamental tenets and practices of Islam, its spread across Eurasia into China, and the Mongols' encounter with and eventual support of this religion. Finally, on Tuesday morning Professor Rossabi will discuss the spread and influence of Nestorian Christianity across the Silk Roads, its impacts on the Mongols, and its distinctive attraction for Mongol women, including Khubilai Khan's mother and sister-in-law.

The Mongol invaders adopted a policy of toleration toward all foreign religions and of active patronage to some. Professor Johan Elverskog (Southern Methodist University), an expert on Buddhism and Islam on the Silk Roads and on Mongol literature and religion, will present three lectures on the final two days of the week. The first of these will focus on indigenous Mongolian shamanism and the spread of Buddhism—especially Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism—among the Mongols. The second session will begin with a discussion of how Buddhism and Islam were profoundly and mutually transformed in the context of cross-cultural interactions along the Silk Roads, and will then examine the role of Mongol rule in intensifying these interactions. In his final presentation, Professor Elverskog will explore Mongol oral and epic literature, including the *Secret History of the Mongols*, the *Altan Tobchi*, and other texts about Mongol history. "*Khadak*," an entrancing film on shamanism, will illustrate the most significant features of shamanism to the participants.

WEEK FOUR: MONGOLS AND GLOBAL HISTORY

The fourth week of the program will directly examine the relation between Mongolia and the emergence of an imaginary of global history. Professor David Morgan (Emeritus, University of Wisconsin) will conduct two closely linked presentations. On

Monday morning, he will first describe the concrete practices and institutions by means of which the Mongols governed China, Russia, Persia, the Middle East, and parts of Europe, both developing new institutions and adapting existing practices of those they had subjugated. In the second half of the session, he will examine the conditions that led to the collapse of the Mongol Empire. On Tuesday, he will turn to the legacies of Mongol rule, focusing on the prominent example of Persia, and in particular on the Persian Renaissance in historical writing (e.g. the great histories of Juvaini, Juzjani, and Rashid al-Din), poetry, and the arts. Professor Rossabi will complement Morgan's presentations and further attest to role of the Mongols in creating an imaginary of global history by examining the lives and travels of the well-known European figure of Marco Polo and the much lesser known Chinese traveler, Rabban Sauma. The travel accounts of Marco Polo and Rabban Sauma offer rich and pedagogically useful "case studies" of how the founding and brief flourishing of the Mongol Empire helped to generate global perspectives on history. The week will also include a screening of the film "*Marco Polo*," with interviews of Dr. Nicola di Cosmo (Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton) and Professor Rossabi.

Even more tangible is the Mongols' contribution to artistic diffusion. Dr. David J. Roxburgh, the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Professor of Islamic Art History at Harvard University, will speak first about the Mongols' artistic legacy, especially their efforts in fostering the diffusion of Chinese motifs and techniques to Persian illustrated manuscripts, ceramics, and tiles. Following this session, participants will be treated to a guided tour of the Asian and Islamic art at the Honolulu Museum of Art. In a second, Thursday morning session, Roxburgh will confirm Professor Morgan's assertion of a Persian Renaissance in Mongol-ruled Persia in a presentation that will take place at Shangri La, the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art—a unique institution that exhibits Islamic art, furnishings and built-in architectural elements, many of which date from the Mongol period.

WEEK FIVE: LEGACY OF THE MONGOLS

The Institute's fifth and final week will focus on the legacy of the Mongol invasions and rule on other Eurasian polities. On Monday morning, Professor David Robinson (Colgate University) will describe the Mongols' impact on the Chinese military and the spread of Tibetan Buddhism and the concept of empire in China. On both Monday and Tuesday, he will continue with an analysis of the Mongols' influence on more distant states, including Korea, Japan, Russia, Iran, and Europe. On Wednesday morning, Professor Rossabi will conclude the substantive section of the Institute with a presentation on the lasting and vivid impression of the Mongol empire on modern Mongolia. The last two days of the Institute will be devoted to the participants'

presentations of their projects and to a discussion of future courses of action for the work completed in the Institute.

PROJECT DISSEMINATION

The primary avenue for sharing the results of the Institute will be the ASDP website. In addition, participants will be encouraged to attend and make both research and pedagogically focused presentations at the Spring 2015 ASDP National Conference. As with other NEH-funded institutes hosted by ASDP, participants will also have the opportunity to collaborate on an edited volume organized around the Institute's themes and addressing the needs of undergraduate educators that will be considered for publication as part of the peer-reviewed Asian Studies Development series at the State University of New York Press. To date, the series includes: *The Dynamics of Cultural Counterpoint in Asian Studies* (2014); *Teaching the Silk Road: A Guide for College Teachers* (2010); *Asian Texts/Asian Contexts; Encounters with Asian Philosophies and Religion* (2010); *Confucian Cultures of Authority* (2006); *Chinese Aesthetics and Literature: A Reader* (2004); *An Introduction to Chinese Culture through the Family* (2001); and *Japanese Aesthetics: A Reader* (1996).

FACILITIES AND ARRANGEMENTS

The Institute will be held at the East-West Center and the University of Hawai'i in Honolulu and the Institute's participants will have full access to the facilities of these (adjacent) campuses.

The East-West Center is an educational institution established by the US Congress in 1960 to promote cooperative study and research in the Asia-Pacific region. Close to 50,000 people, primarily from Asia and the Pacific, have participated in Center programs, while some 2000 research fellows, graduate students and professionals in business and government each year work with the Center's staff on a variety of issues including health, security, economic and trade policy, the environment, and international relations.

The University of Hawai'i is a Carnegie I Research university with more than 23,000 students and 2200 faculty on its main campus. Over 300 faculty members teaching 600 Asia-focused courses each year are associated with the UH School of Pacific and Asian Studies, which includes the following area studies centers: the Center for Asian Studies; the Center for Chinese Studies; the Center for Japanese Studies; the Center for Korean Studies; the Center for Philippines Studies; the Center for South Asian Studies; and the Center for Southeast Asian Studies. Many of these are the largest such area

studies centers in the U.S.. The University of Hawai'i collection of Asian materials is among the best in the country, including a substantial body of audiovisual material. In summer, the Asia Collection at the Hamilton Library is open Mondays through Thursdays from 8:00 am to 9:00 pm, Fridays from 8:00 am until 5:00 pm, and on Sundays from 12 noon to 5:00 pm. In addition, the East-West Center has its own library focused on contemporary research materials and journals which can be used by the Institute's participants.

The Center and the University are located in Manoa, one of the most beautiful valleys in all the Hawaiian Islands. The city of Honolulu, located on the island of O'ahu, has close to a million residents and is among the most cosmopolitan and ethnically diverse of American cities. Inter-island air-room-car packages are available for very reasonable amounts, making travel to the other islands an attractive possibility over weekends.

LOGISTICAL AND PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

NEH Stipend. PARTICIPANTS WILL RECEIVE A TOTAL STIPEND OF \$3900 TO HELP MEET COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH ATTENDING THE INSTITUTE, INCLUDING TRAVEL, HOUSING, MEALS, AND REQUIRED INSTITUTE TEXTS. A STIPEND CHECK WILL BE DISBURSED ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE INSTITUTE. PARTICIPANTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR OWN ROUND-TRIP AIRFARE TO HONOLULU.

Lodging and Meals. Lodging during the Institute will be at the Center's Lincoln Hall. Studio units will be available at \$30/night (at monthly rate). These rooms include private bath, telephone, cable TV, internet access, refrigerator, and ceiling fans. None of the units are air-conditioned, but the duly famous Hawaiian tradewinds and modest humidity (60%) make for comfortable conditions even without air-con. If you prefer, arrangements can be made for you to stay at the Center's dormitory facility, Hale Manoa. Single rooms are available for \$15/night and slightly larger double rooms at \$23/night (also at monthly rate). These rooms offer basic accommodations, shared bathroom facilities, and access to shared kitchens. Children under 18 are permitted only in Lincoln Hall. Meal plans are available for Institute participants who choose to use them and there are many restaurants on and near the campus accessible to participants by foot or bus. We will also assist participants seeking off-campus housing and childcare if necessary. Housing in Honolulu, especially in Manoa, tends to be quite expensive with one-bedroom apartments renting for over a thousand dollars per month. Child-care is available in summer activities programs run by the City as well as from private preschools in the range of \$700/month. Applications should be made as early as possible following acceptance into the seminar.

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