



# OXFORD UNIVERSITY

## HISTORY APTITUDE TEST

November 2020

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### INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

**Please read this page carefully, but do not open the question paper until told to do so.**

A separate 8-page answer booklet is provided. Please check you have one.

Read the instructions on the answer booklet and complete the information requested in the spaces provided. Please write very clearly in black or dark blue pen.

Applicants for:

- **History**
- **Ancient and Modern History**
- **History and English**
- **History and Modern Languages**
- **History and Politics**
- **History and Economics**

You have **one hour** for this test. We recommend that you read the paper before beginning to write your answers. Spend about a third of your time on reading, thinking and planning, and the rest of the time writing.

If you find the text difficult and unfamiliar, don't worry: the exercise is intended to be challenging, but we hope you will also find it thought-provoking. There is no 'right' answer to the question: you will be judged on the quality of your argument, how clearly you make it and how effectively you support it. You should use your own words in answering the question.

**This question paper consists of 4 printed pages and 4 blank pages**

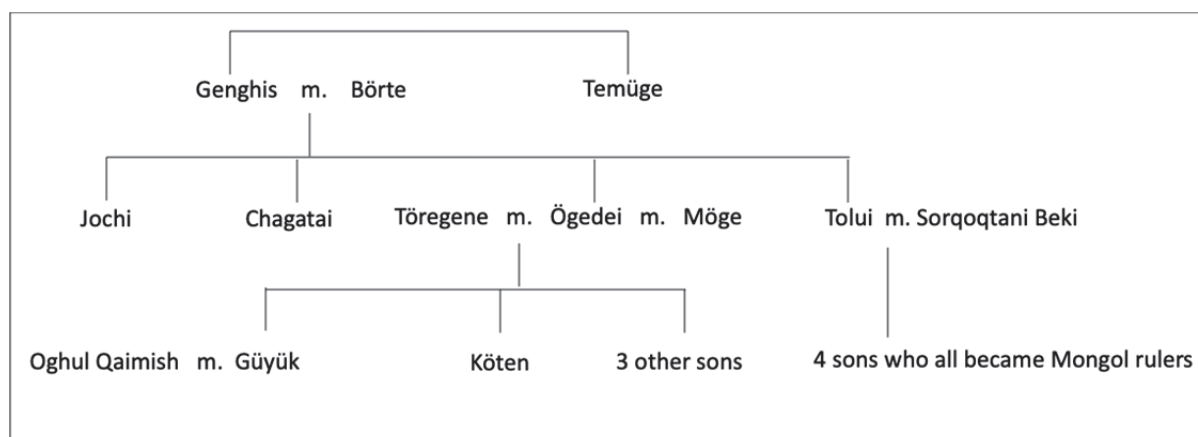


## OXFORD UNIVERSITY HISTORY APTITUDE TEST 2020

**NOTE:** This test consists of one question based on a passage from a primary source. You do not need to know anything about the author of the passage or the context in which it was written to answer the question. Candidates will not be rewarded for making use of any outside knowledge, or penalised for omitting accents from personal names in their answers.

This passage is taken from Juvaynī's *History of the World-Conqueror*, which recounted the conquests of Genghis Khan and his successors as they created the Mongol empire, which stretched from China to the Mediterranean. Juvaynī was an administrator and scholar from a powerful Persian family, who rose to become the Mongol governor of the region equivalent to modern-day Iraq from 1258. He knew the empire's ruling family personally, and was present for some of the events described in the passage, notably the process by which a new ruler, Güyük Khan, was selected and assumed power in 1246. Juvaynī began writing his *History* in 1251, during a period spent at the imperial capital in central Mongolia. 'Khan' and 'Khatun' in this passage mean 'ruler' and 'ruler's wife'.

The relationships between some of the people named in the text are illustrated below.



**Question: What can we learn from this document about the expectations and realities of rulership in the Mongol empire?**

When the Ruler of the World, Ögedei Khan, passed away [in 1241], Güyük, his eldest son, had not returned from a campaign in the west of the empire. Therefore, in accordance with precedent, the dispatch of orders and the assembling of the people took place at the door of the camp of his favourite wife, Möge Khatun. But since another of Ögedei's wives, Töregene Khatun, was the mother of his eldest sons and was moreover shrewder and wiser than Möge Khatun, she took it on herself to send messages to the princes – the brothers and nephews of the Khan – and told them of the death of Ögedei. She said that until a Khan was appointed by agreement someone would have to be ruler so that the business of the state might not be neglected nor the affairs of the community be thrown into confusion; in order, too, that the army and the court might be kept under control and the interests of the people protected.

Chagatai and the other princes sent representatives to say that Töregene Khatun was the mother of the princes who had a right to put themselves forward to be the Khan; therefore, until an assembly was held, it was she that should direct the affairs of the state, and the old ministers should remain in the service of the court, so that the legal system might not be changed.

Now Töregene Khatun was a very shrewd and capable woman, and her position was greatly strengthened by this unity and concord. And when Möge Khatun shortly afterwards died, by finesse and cunning Töregene obtained control of all affairs of state and won over the hearts of her relatives by all kind of favours and kindnesses and by sending them gifts and presents. And for the most part strangers and relations, family and army inclined towards her, and submitted themselves obediently and gladly to her commands and prohibitions, and came under her sway. And all manner of men bent their steps towards her while the chief secretary Chinqai and the other ministers of the former Khan continued to perform their duties as before, and the governors on every side remained at their posts.

During the lifetime of the Khan there had accumulated in Töregene's breast a feeling of hatred towards certain of the courtiers, and the wound had grown deep. When she was entrusted with affairs of state, and her position had grown strong, and none dared quarrel or dispute with her, she determined to seek relief from her pain by avenging herself on each of these persons. She accordingly sent messengers to northern China to fetch its governor, Mahmūd Yalavach, and also tried to lay hands on Chinqai. Chinqai, however, perceived that she had something else in mind; and before her plan could be realized he hastened to Köten, her son, and sought his protection. As for Yalavach, when the messengers reached him, he welcomed them with marks of respect and honour. Every day he showed them fresh attentions and civilities, and two or three days passed by in this way; but all this time he was secretly preparing to flee and, on the third night, he put the messengers to sleep and departed to Köten together with a few horsemen, and escaped from their hands.

And when both notables reached Köten and sought refuge with him, making his threshold their asylum, they were embraced with his favour. Töregene Khatun sent a messenger to demand their return, and Köten replied: 'These men have sought sanctuary with us. To send them back is forbidden by the code of magnanimity and humanity and is remote from the practice of generosity and liberality. An assembly is shortly to be held: let their crimes and offences be brought to the attention of the family and the military commanders, and let them receive whatever punishment they deserve.' When she realized that their return was impossible, she endeavoured to persuade 'Imad-al-Mulk Muhammad of Khotan, who had been one of the ministers of the Khan, to fabricate some false allegations so that they might be punished at the great assembly. But since loyalty and generosity – which are amongst the most essential and the most beautiful of the characteristics of the great – had gained mastery of his being, he refused to consent to the shame and disgrace of slander and calumny.

And Oghul Qaimish [Güyük's wife, and, later, ruler of the empire after his death] and the wives of Chagatai sent Arghun to seize Körgüz [governor of Khurasan, central Asia]. And when Arghun brought Körgüz to Töregene Khatun, she imprisoned Körgüz because of an ancient grudge and sent Arghun to Khurasan in his stead.

And at that time there was a woman called Fatima, who had acquired great influence in the service of Töregene Khatun and to whose counsel and capability were entrusted all affairs of state. Fatima exalted her agent, 'Abd al-Rahmān, and sent him to northern China as governor in place of Yalavach.

And everyone sent ambassadors in every direction and broadcast drafts and assignments; and upon every side they attached themselves to factions and followed their instructions—all save Sorqoqtani Beki and her sons, who did not swerve one hair's breath from the law of their ordinances. [Sorqoqtani subsequently played a similar role to Töregene by ensuring the eventual succession of her eldest son after Güyük's death in 1248.]

As for Töregene Khatun, she dispatched ambassadors to the East and the West and to the North and South of the world to summon the sultans, military commanders and governors, and to bid them to the assembly.

Meanwhile Güyük had not yet returned and his place seemed empty, and Genghis Khan's brother Temüge thought to seize the position of Khan by force and violence. With this intention he set out for the camp of the Khan. When he drew near, Mengli Oghul, a son of Ögedei's by a concubine, approached him with his retinue and troops and made him repent of his design. Meanwhile there came tidings of the arrival of Güyük, whereupon his repentance increased.

And when Güyük came to his mother, he took no part in affairs of state, and Töregene Khatun still executed the decrees of the empire although her son was Khan. But when two or three months had passed and the son was somewhat estranged from his mother on account of Fatima, Töregene passed away [in 1246].

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