

## **Matthew Paris, The Greater Chronicle: An Entry for 1241, based on Ivo of Narbonne's Confession**

In this very year a detestable satanic people, namely an immense army of Tartars [the European name for the Mongols] burst out their mountain-encircled land, which had been made fast with an impassable mass of rocks [Europeans believed a myth that Alexander the Great had sealed off the Caucasus Mountains to prevent invasion from the "barbarians."] Escaping like demons...they swarmed out and, like locusts, overwhelmed the face of the Earth. They devastated the lands of the East with dreadful destruction, laying waste with fire and carnage. Traveling through the lands of the Saracens [Muslims], they leveled cities, cut down forests, tore down fortresses, ripped up vineyards, destroyed agricultural fields, and massacred city dwellers and rural folk....They used up their captives as if they were beasts of burden.

Because of the many other sins that have arisen among us Christians, an angry Lord has been made, as it were, into a hostile devastator and a fearful avenger. I can say this because a certain ill-bred breed of inhuman humans, whose law is lawlessness, whose wrath is furious, that serves as the rod of the Lord's fury, is overrunning countless lands, which it is dreadfully devastating, killing and horribly exterminating by fire all who stand in their way.

And only this summer, this aforementioned people who are called Tatars, departing from the Kingdom of Hungary, cruelly laid siege with countless soldiers to the fortified town in which I was then securely residing [in Austria]....Without consideration of class, fortune, sex, or age, they indiscriminately destroyed them all by various forms of torture.

...The Tatars suddenly retreat back into Hungary at the approach of a large Christian army. Several of the former besiegers are captured, including a multi-lingual English outlaw, who had served the Tatars as an interpreter and envoy, since they needed such talents in order to attain their goal of conquering the world. He then begins to tell his captors about his former masters.

...[From this captive] we learned that they believe all things have been created for them alone. They believe it is no sin to exercise cruelty against rebels...They are clothed in the skins of bulls, are armed with iron lances, short in stature, stocky and compact in body, vigorously strong, invincible in war. Their backs are unarmored, but their fronts are protected by armor. They fight without tiring and bravely with lances, maces, double-edged axes, and swords, but they prefer bows...They are all marvelous archers, no matter their sex, age, or rank....As a delicacy, they drink blood flowing from their cattle [in reality, the Mongols drank fermented mare's milk]...They have large, strong horses that eat leaves and even trees [this seems quite far-fetched]...

If vanquished they beg no favors; if victorious they show no mercy. All of them as one man persist in their desire and purpose of total dominance over the world. Yet they do not even number a million...