

Gates of Babylon

In collaboration with



Presenting **The Siege of Baghdad**

We **are** the Goofy Historians and we are delighted to again work with our favorite youtuber from New Zealand, Ali. who is very knowledgeable about the subject and wrote almost the entirety of these show notes

On January 29th in the year 1258 did the 1 million plus inhabitants of the Mega City of Baghdad know that their world was ending? That is a question we may answer in today's *non* humorous history podcast (non humorous so we don't need to be funny, but you never know)

Today we are Presenting **The Siege of Baghdad** what became know as later, the **End of The Golden Age of Islam**, the destruction of the House of Wisdom, just 636 after the birth of the Prohet Mohamed the Abbasd leaving no Caliph along with nearly 1 million dead in about a week. How, Why? - we will try to tell the story.

This is something we have wanted and planned to do for some time. So let's get started There will be some interesting stuff you may not have heard of before so stay tuned...

The Nestorians were spared because Hulugu's favorite wife and his mother were Nestorians and wanted a peaceful homelife (?)

Later Hulugu became a Budhists and I guess tried to reconcile his misdeeds?

NOTES below from our esteemed colleague Ali

I think the best match for the Mongolias are: three kingdoms period of China Han armies, First Caliphate and especially the Roman Empire in 100 AD.

Also, The Phalanx formation kept in use by Byzantium and a similar one improved in Medieval Europe and Napoleonic times of what is called square formation.

The Siege of Baghdad properly the most negative influential doing the Mongolias have done that completely changed history. The siege despite how horrible it was ,it still was funny how many inappropriate mistakes and chaos.

The city is designed generally to be unconquerable... at lest from outside but, they are surrounded with Muslim powers and any action to take down the city from inside can be noticed and take care of very easily.

If someone read about the city, especially the core circle part they would start to think " Am I reading a fantasy book? ". There are many things about the city that would make it straight up out of a fantasy book. The only thing missing is Dragons and magic. LoL.

Just to give you an idea the outside later build random walls as the city grows outside the circle city part stands on average 20m high and 8m thick (not talking about the wall towers) elevation over the ground. The circular walls are even bigger average 32m high and at some points reaching to 50m high and 12+m thick. There is so much more. This just a simple example.

not only that.. but the main army was out away and the Mongolias attack was a surprise and was highly calculated. The leaders were weak and scared ,they committed tons of mistakes. Also, they didn't use their money, they were in panic. Especially as the military commanders were out of the city the politicians did not know what to do. The Mongolias also bypassed the castles very quickly (there was 10 main strong powerful castles that normally strategically you need to take first, but they just ran across). The attack was fast and the city wasn't prepared. The leaders committed more mistakes and people were thinking they are Goag and Mogag people so they did not want to fight, also most of the people didn't understand the Mongolias yet and they were naive. The city of Baghdad at the time was very much impossible to take down by force even with WW1 technology (not counting the airforce). They put the dome to themselves. They were naive and thought Mongolias would want peace. They surrendered to the Mongolias without a fight because they were cowards and then as the Mongolias army was in for free, turned on them and destroyed the city. The city did fight but very little. The Mongolias using plam trees as a weapon is like an out of Hollywood movie. The Mongolia army still lost half of their numbers at the end of the week. All they had to hold for 2 weeks then a 30,000 strong army would attack the Mongolia force. The city is too big and too military designed as a big castle, especially the circular core of the city. That it is very much impossible to defeat if the

1.5M-2M people resisted. Most of the male and female in the city are trained in fighting and military. There are many other things too. The police force alone are 100k men and some few thousand women in the city. The amount of gold and importance of the city can very much be used to unify the Muslim world against the Mongolia if the leaders played it right. The Mongolians did not defeat Baghdad, Baghdad surrendered without a fight, a real fight like Mamluk of Egypt for example, Baghdad was far stronger than that. Imagine fighting a city the size of Auckland in NZ with 1.5M people that is designed to be a giant castle for every inch and house and street in the city. The city can't be starved due to the river across and a lack of inside and multiple walls and there is a giant guardian and other sections of small farms. There is inside about 20k palm date trees too and other trees of other fruits. There are so many walls and layers and traps and underground tunnels and secrets. With preparations and 30,000 strong military soldiers and tons of money and storage and siege equipment it makes the city at least a 100× harder to take down than Constantinople. Not to mention the many castles that if you were not a full horse force would be forced to take down first, and every main layer has a 3-3 layer wall defense system which is 18× harder to crack than the 2 layer wall system in Constantinople but generally the same idea but more expensive. Baghdad had 5 of those main layers then a big castle in the middle that is big even for Europe and Qin China, then the Caliph place. The gates of the town keep that in size and part with western European big castles. Many layers of gates opposite in directions with kill zone paths. There are many small details. But a big important detail is there are many castles in the city. There are too many layers of trenches at military positions. As well as water trenches in front of the main outside layers of walls and in front of the circular part. In battle there many other staff gets added to the trenches too. The city of Baghdad today is just 3 times bigger than its ancient counterpart. It might sound 3× is a lot so it was small or something but not considering that modern Mesopotamia or Iraq population just like around the world have expanded a lot. Which makes it a testament to how big Baghdad was for the period. For the Mongolians and Europeans Baghdad is like the huge capital of the republic in STAR WARS. Even the Mongolians if they go against 2M people behind normal walls they would get smashed because too many people to fight over 10+ times your numbers. The stupid thing the Sultan did not use the money and surrendered to them or tried to come up with a treaty outside his walls so they said are you stupid so come over here you are under arrest we not going to talk lol. The more stupid thing that he did was actually listen to the Mongol commander Holoqu and brought with him top 800 minds of the city which the Mongolians executed on the spot. There is a story of while the sultan in person before getting executed too he got hungry so then Holoqu sent some gold to him and came to talk, the sultan said i can't eat gold so Holoqu then said why didn't you use it u stupid, if you did i would not have won. There was a lot of Gold that the Mongolians didn't want to bring all of it so it didn't corrupt them. Also they wanted to take a big part but they couldn't as they can't carry it with them, no space.

The Mongolians went on 8 days of freetime, basically doing anything including raping, killing, stealing and destroying. Generally Mongolians did just killing so far and it is in Baghdad they did massive raping. They burned people and drowned others in the river water.

They did of course, nobody can forget, the library and study center of House of Wisdom. The Mongols did destroy that. It reported to have more than 1M books. It was worse than library of Alexandria Library accidentally burning. This was on purpose. Many historians say that the Library of Alexandria destruction took humanity 1000yrs backwards. House of wisdom is far more took humanity backwards. The thing to note here is back in the days and 13th century no computers or photographers and no printers. Which means 1M books means at least 500K original ones. One of them is kind books that got destroyed as if they didn't exist at all. Imagine 500k different scholars' research results gone. Many scholars today say what we know and survived of the Mongolia attack on Baghdad and Golden age of Islam is a fraction of what was once there. There is tens of thousands of scholars whose life of research and development got wasted. So many books in fact that the giant two rivers changed color of blood and ink for a month across Mesopotamia in a clear terrifying way and damaged farming.

There is actually more to say.

Would say few things more:

The siege of Baghdad was a siege that took place in Baghdad in 1258, lasting for 13 days from January 29, 1258 until February 10, 1258. The siege, laid by Ilkhanate Mongol forces and allied troops, involved the investment, capture, and sack of Baghdad, which was the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate at that time. The Mongols were under the command of Hulagu Khan, brother of the khagan Möngke Khan, who had intended to further extend his rule into Mesopotamia but not to directly overthrow the Caliphate. Möngke, however, had instructed Hulagu to attack Baghdad if the Caliph Al-Musta'sim refused Mongol demands for his continued submission to the khagan and the payment of tribute in the form of military support for Mongol forces in Persia.

800k - 2M civilians died. 100k become slaves.

Armenians and Georgia was involved.

Main strength of the city outside of it is 30k ish but still has a decent military of 50k within soldiers alone.

One of the most horrific things happened.

Baghdad had for centuries been the capital of the Abbasid Caliphate, the third caliphate (note: except for first Caliphate the other 2 are more Sultanate than a Caliphate), whose rulers were descendants of Abbas, an uncle of Prophet Muhammad. In 751, the Abbasids overthrew the Umayyads and moved the Caliph's seat from Damascus to Baghdad. At the city's peak, it was populated by approximately one million people (due to Mongolia activity as well as the towns around weant behind Baghdad giant walls it had more than 2M people in it) and was defended by an army of 60,000 soldiers. By the middle of the 13th century the power of the Abbasids had declined and Turkic and Mamluk warlords often held power over the Caliphs/Sultans.

After defeating the Assassins, Hulagu sent word to Al-Musta'sim, demanding his acquiescence to the terms imposed by Möngke. Al-Musta'sim refused, in large part due to the influence of his

advisor and grand vizier, Ibn al-Alkami. Historians have ascribed various motives to al-Alkami's opposition to submission, including treachery and incompetence, and it appears that he lied to the Caliph about the severity of the invasion, assuring Al-Musta'sim that, if the capital of the caliphate were to be endangered by a Mongol army, the Islamic world would rush to its aid.

Although he replied to Hulagu's demands in a manner that the Mongol commander found menacing and offensive enough to break off negotiations, Al-Musta'sim neglected to summon armies to reinforce the troops at his disposal in Baghdad. Nor did he strengthen the city's walls. By January 11 the Mongols were close to the city, establishing themselves on both banks of the Tigris River so as to form a pincer around the city. Al-Musta'sim finally decided to do battle with them and sent out a force of 20,000 cavalry to attack the Mongols. The cavalry were decisively defeated by the Mongols, whose sappers breached dikes along the Tigris River and flooded the ground behind the Abbasid forces, trapping them.

The Abbasid caliphate could supposedly call upon 50,000 soldiers for the defense of their capital, including the 20,000 cavalry under al-Musta'sim. However, these troops were assembled hastily, making them poorly equipped and disciplined. Although the caliph technically had the authority to summon soldiers from other Muslim empires to defend his realm, he neglected or lacked the ability to do so. His taunting opposition had lost him the loyalty of the Mamluks, and the Syrian emirs, whom he supported, were busy preparing their own defenses.

Al-Musta'sim attempted to open negotiations with Hulagu, who rebuffed the Caliph. Around 3,000 of Baghdad's notables also tried to negotiate with Hulagu but were murdered. Five days later, on February 10, the city surrendered, but the Mongols did not enter the city until the 13th, beginning a week of massacre and destruction.

Contemporary accounts state Mongol soldiers looted and then destroyed mosques, palaces, libraries, and hospitals. Priceless books from Baghdad's thirty-six public libraries were torn apart, the looters using their leather covers as sandals. Grand buildings that had been the work of generations were burned to the ground. The House of Wisdom (the Grand Library of Baghdad), containing countless precious historical documents and books on subjects ranging from medicine to astronomy, was destroyed.

Destruction of books tossed into the Tigris such that the water turned black from the ink, for a day and a bit around the city.

(Back in the days a book would have 1-10 copies only but usually 1-3 copies)

Some historians believe that the Mongol invasion destroyed much of the irrigation infrastructure that had sustained Mesopotamia for many millennia. Canals were cut as a military tactic and never repaired. So many people died or fled that neither the labor nor the organization were sufficient to maintain the canal system.

Berke - ie Golden Horde when it became somewhat Muslim - , who had converted to Islam in 1252, became enraged that Hulagu destroyed Baghdad. Muslim historian Rashid al Din quoted Berke Khan as sending the following message to Mongke Khan, protesting the attack on

Baghdad, (not knowing Mongke had died in China): "He (Hulagu) has sacked all the cities of the Muslims. With the help of God I will call him to account for so much innocent blood."

Although hesitant at first to go to war with Hulagu out of Mongol brotherhood, the economic situation of the Golden Horde led him to declare war against the Ilkhanate. This became known as the Berke–Hulagu war.