

## Student Handout 7.8 John of Plano Carpini, *History of the Mongols* (Source 1) Key

### Section 1

[The Tartars] are extremely rich in animals, camels, oxen, sheep, goats / they (the Tartars) have such a number of horses and mares that I (John of Plano Carpini) do not believe there are so many in all the rest of the world / they (the Tartars) do not have pigs or other farm animals....

### Questions

1. List the animals the Tartars/Mongols have and how each of the animals can help the Tartars.

Example: camels – good for riding, milk, food

oxen – pulling carts, riding

sheep – wool, meat, milk

goats – meat, milk

horses – riding, pulling carts

2. Considering that the Tartars were nomads, why do you think they had the animals you listed in question 1, but not pigs or other farm animals? The animals could more easily move with them and were useful for mobile societies. Pigs and farm animals are meant to stay put and would not be as useful.

3. What does John think of the Tartars' animals? What words tell you that? The animals provided the Tartars with wealth, and Mongols had more horses than any other society. "They are extremely rich in animals" and "I do not believe there are so many in all of the rest of the world."

### Section 2

The men ... hunt and practice archery, for they (the men) are all, big and little, excellent archers / and their (the Tartars') children begin as soon as they (the children) are two or three years old to ride and manage horses and to gallop on them (the horses) / and they (the children) are given bows to suit their (the children's) stature and are taught to shoot;...

Young girls and women ride and gallop on horseback with agility like the men. We (John and his companions) even saw them (young girls and women) carrying bows and arrows. Both the men and the women are able to endure long stretches of riding. ... They (the Tartars) look after their horses very well, indeed they (the Tartars) take the very greatest care of all their (the Tartars') possessions. ...

### Questions

1. What are the children taught to do? At what age? Ride, manage, and gallop on horses at two or three years old.
2. The third clause is written in passive voice: "they are given bows to suit their stature and are taught to shoot." Passive voice is when the actor of the sentence is not mentioned but is only implied. In this way it is hard to determine **who** gave the bows to the children and **who** taught the children to shoot. Make an inference: who do you think gave the bows to the children and taught them to shoot? Probably their parents, adult Tartars.

3. John specifically mentions young girls and women. How does he describe them? Given what you know about medieval Europe, do you think this was similar or different to what would happen in Europe? **This is different. Women are not often seen as hunters or warriors who would need bows and arrows. European noblewomen were taught to ride horses but not to shoot weapons.**

4. Why would it be so important for the Tartars/Mongols to be good at archery on horseback? **As they moved around, they had to ride horses for travel, to hunt, and to fight other people.**

### Section 3

*When they (the Tartars) are going to make war, they (the Tartars) send ahead an advance guard, / and these (the guards) carry nothing with them (guards) but their (the guards') tents, horses and arms. They (the guards or Tartars) seize no plunder, burn no houses and slaughter no animals / they (the guard or Tartars) only wound and kill men or, / if they (the guards or Tartars) can do nothing else, put them (people from other groups) to flight. ... If they (the Tartars) can avoid it, the Tartars do not like to fight hand to hand / but they (the Tartars) wound and kill men and horses with their (the Tartars') arrows; they (the Tartars) only come to close quarters when men and horses have been weakened by arrows.*

### Questions

1. Why do you think the Tartars send ahead an advance guard? **So they can report back, or fight far in front of the whole group.** What is the advantage of only carrying tents, horses, and arms? **They travel light, so they can move quickly as needed to find/fight others.**
2. What do you think the author means when he says, "if they can do nothing else, put them to flight"? **If they can't do anything else, they scare/chase them away.**
3. Here John describes how the Tartars fight their enemies. Restate this in your own words. Make sure to address what they do and what they do not do. **The Tartars send ahead a group of warriors to do the fighting. The Tartars do limited damage: no stealing, no burning, and no killing of animals, except horses. They only hurt or kill men or scare them away. They usually wound and kill men and horses to weaken their enemies before fighting close up.**

### Final Questions

1. Summarize the lifestyle of the Mongols as described by John of Plano Carpini. **They are nomadic people who value their animals, especially horses. Both men and women learn to ride and shoot bows and arrows at an early age. When they fight they send out an advance guard who only wound and kill men and horses with bows and arrows to weaken them and avoid hand-to-hand combat, or they chase people away.**
2. How does this lifestyle help answer the investigative question, How did the Mongol Empire destroy states and increase the interconnection of Afroeurasia? **They are nomads and skilled hunters, and they learn to be archers on horseback from a young age. They have more horses than any other society and so they can dominate that way.**