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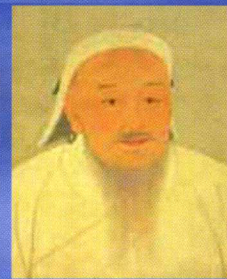
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GENGHIS KHAN and THE MONGOL EMPIRE



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GENGHIS KHAN AND THE

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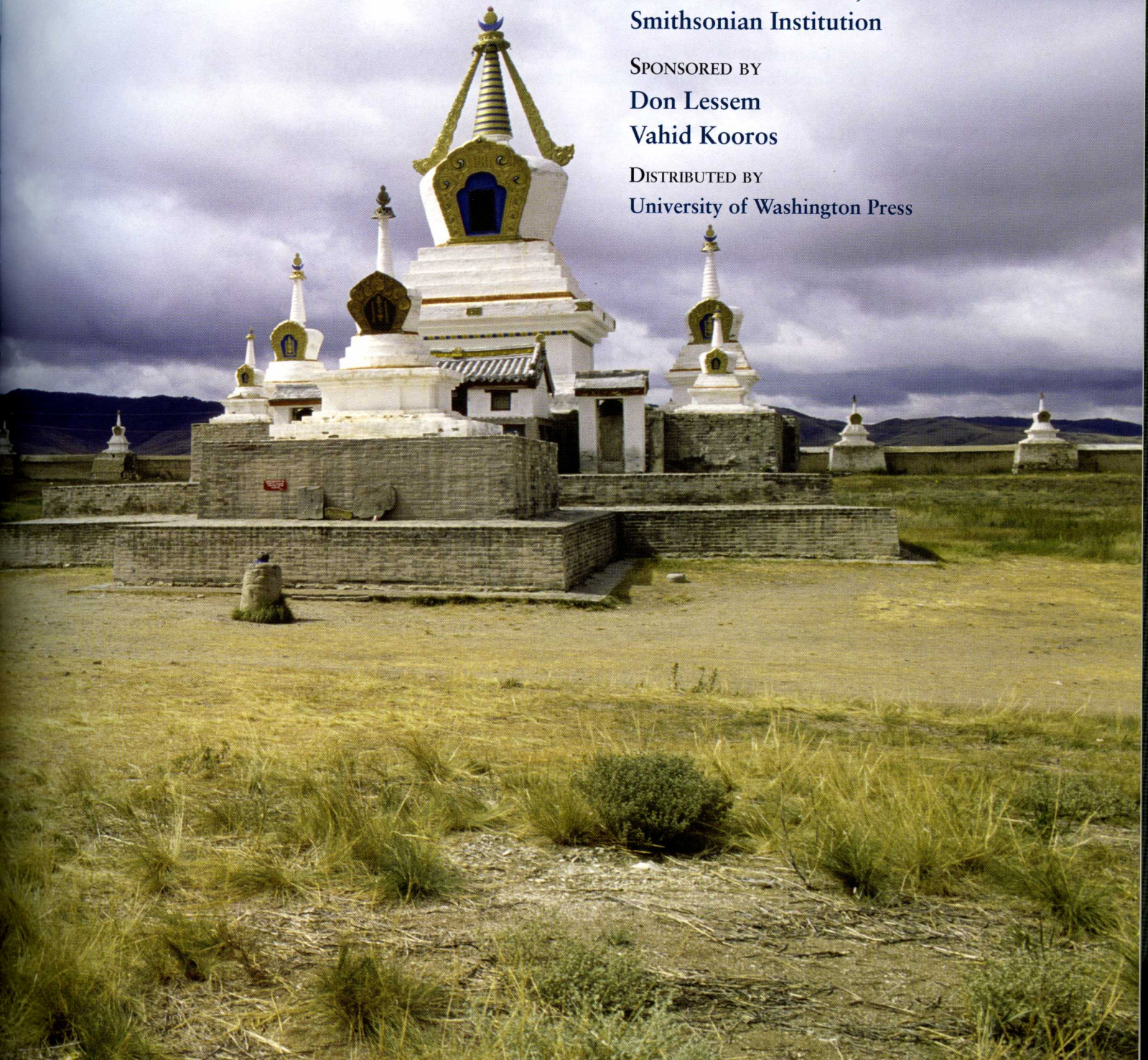
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COVER

Nadaam Riders

Horses have been central to Mongol cultures for thousands of years. Speed and horsemanship are contested as much today as in the past, primarily in *nadaam* festivals held annually in early July. Competitive racing has been an important part of Mongol life for centuries, if not for thousands of years, and was the basis for training Genghis Khan's 13th-century cavalry troops.

PAGE 1

Whistling arrow

Mongol battle commanders used whistling arrows as sound signals to initiate battle orders and for disorienting prey during the hunt. The sound was created by wind rushing across small cup-shaped hollows in the arrow stem.

PAGE 2-3

Erdene Zuu Monastery

After its heyday in the 13th century, the Mongol capital city, Khara Khorum, declined and knowledge of its location was lost. Archaeological work conducted in the 20th century identified its buried remains under and north of the Erdene Zuu monastery. Archaeologists believe the monastery, founded in 1586, is built on the remains of the khan's palace.

BACK COVER:

Paiza

Use of metal *paizas*, or messenger passes, preceded the Mongol period, but were adopted by Genghis and later Mongol khans to guarantee safe passage for official representatives and emissaries throughout the Mongol realm. They were worn about the neck and were inscribed with a silver-inlaid message proclaiming that anyone harming the bearer could be put to death. Early *paizas* were shaped as oblong plates, while those of the Yuan period like this one were round and inscribed with 'Phags-pa script.

The Editors have adopted a common sense approach toward transliteration of foreign words. In general, the following standard systems of Romanization have been used: pinyin for Chinese, the revised romanization of Korean of 2000, and Hepburn for Japanese. The Royal Asiatic Society system has been used for the transliteration of Persian. Antoine Mostaert's scheme for the transliteration of Classical Mongolian, as modified by Francis Cleaves, has been adopted, except for these deviations:

ch is used for č
sh is used for š
gh is used for y
kh is used for q
j is used for ĵ

Macrons and other symbols have not been used in order not to impose on the reader. For contemporary Mongolian terms in the Cyrillic alphabet we use a simplified transliteration system in which some letters and diacritical marks represent one or more than one Cyrillic letter as follows:

a is used for А
e is used for Э
i is used for И and Ы
o is used for О and Ө
u is used for У and Y
y is used for Ы
ye is used for Е
yo is used for Ё
ya is used for Я
yu is used for Ю
' is used for Ь

When a Mongolian term has a traditional transliteration in English, such as the word "gobi," we defer to that form. When authors have requested specific transliterations, we have done our best to accommodate them.

Ancient Cities of the Steppe

J. DANIEL ROGERS

EVEN BY TODAY'S MEASURE OF NATION STATES and globalized interaction, the geographic extent of the Mongolian empire is breathtaking. Though it was to last no more than 150 years, the Mongols controlled the largest contiguous landmass of any empire. At different times throughout their imperial history, and at opposite ends of the earth, Mongol regiments took on Egyptian armies of Mamluk slave-soldiers, Polish armored knights, and Japanese samurai. Until today, the Mongol empire has been known largely through the biased historical records compiled by the peoples they defeated. Combining environmental and archaeological research with the study of early documents is producing a more complete and objective understanding of how societies change within empires, of the imperial state established by Genghis Khan, and of the legacy of the Mongols in the modern world.

Archaeological research, in particular, has begun to modify the image etched into the Western collective imagination of hordes of Mongol warriors descending with bows drawn upon peaceful farm villages, or laying waste to the walled cities of China and Persia with catapults and siege machines. Indeed, such events occurred during the initial and most destructive phase of conquest, which wrought havoc on vibrant cultures and civilizations. But these events are only short chapters in the long story of the Mongol empire. Many essential questions remain. What was the empire like internally and across its different regions? How was it organized and who made decisions? How did it evolve and change through time? How was it different from other great empires? Answers to some of these queries are only hinted in documents as revealing as *The Secret History of the Mongols* (see Chapter 14).

Recent studies of settlements and urban sites on the Mongolian steppe have begun to raise—and sometimes answer—questions about the economy, agriculture, manufacturing, and trade with far-flung peoples. The Mongol empire and the early Inner Asian empires that preceded it established a new model for large-scale political organization. The steppe statecraft arose from nomadic and pastoral production; seasonal movement of camps and settlements; and horse-based transport and communication systems all adapted to the ecology of the vast steppe regions of Inner Asia. These characteristics produced both a range of novel options and unique problems for political integration and centralization across large regions and diverse populations.¹

The Mongols did not emerge as lords of the steppe without substantial political experimentation and precedent on the part

16.2 Gol Mod II

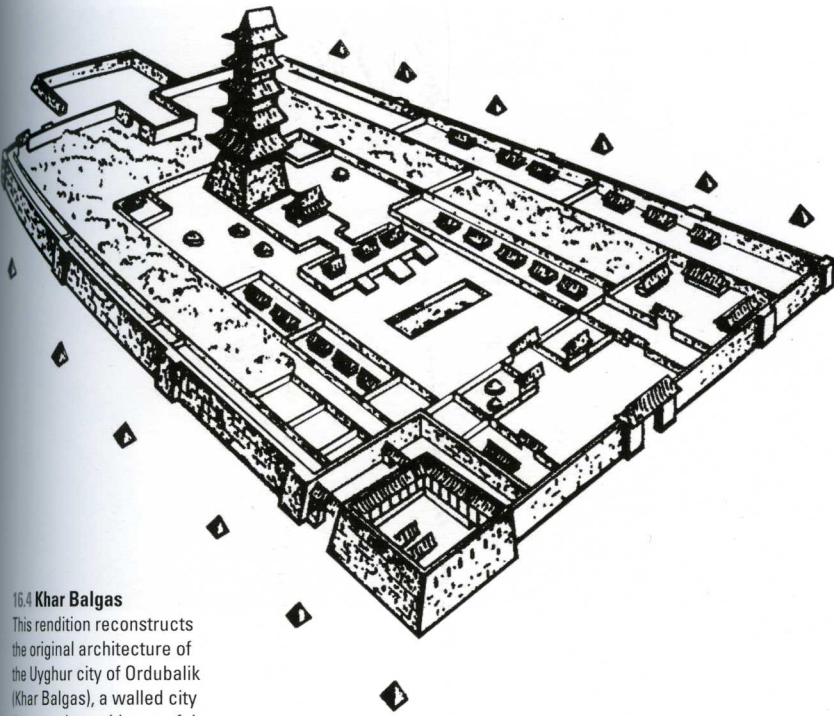
The Xiongnu royal cemetery at the unexcavated Gol Mod II site in the Khanui Valley has scores of burial features ranging from small mounds to huge ramped platforms. Excavations at the nearby Gol Mod I royal cemetery revealed deeply buried interments flanked by subsidiary royal graves. Xiongnu tombs contain lavish grave offerings, including chariots, horses, and spectacular personal artifacts.



of former steppe peoples, many of whom, like the Mongols, constructed empires.² Without the long legacy of unique mobile statecraft that had developed over a thousand years on the eastern steppe, the Mongols probably would have been hard pressed to conquer, much less manage, the massive swath of Eurasia that became their political domain. The first example of large-scale and centralized polity building on the territory of Mongolia arose through the efforts, fortunes, and strategies of the ancient Xiongnu (ca. 200 BCE–155 CE)³ (see Chapter 8). The historical record of these peoples is neither indigenous nor copious; archaeology is the major source of information about Xiongnu ways of life and techniques of organization—and there is still much to learn (fig. 16.2). Some of the principle themes of Xiongnu organization become part of a long-term political repertoire in later steppe empires. Two examples that are repeated time and again are the creation of military-administrative units based on decimal organization (units of 10, 100, 1,000, etc.) and geographical divisions of large-scale polities into “right hand” (western), “left hand” (eastern), and central administrative units.⁴

Cities, Palaces, and Seasonal Camps

The Xiongnu began the tradition of building large walled sites on the open steppe. Several of these structures have been recorded and a few examined by excavation.⁵ Several other walled sites were later built by the Khitans, among others (fig. 16.3). Although little is known about the function of these sites, preliminary studies based on archaeological surveys argue that the relationships between walled centers and pastoral nomadic hinterlands change dramatically and strategically over time.⁶ Such changes were part of long-term innovations to older techniques that the Mongols carried on in every sphere of life, from trade, to manufacture, to statecraft. Like prior empires, the Mongolian khanate arose from the pastoralist tradition, but evolved different types of settlements and spatial geography as appropriate for its time, setting, and needs. These sites were often planned and built to serve central administrative, military, manufacturing, and trade purposes. Steppe settlements had much smaller populations than the great cities of China or other sedentary states, and the layout of these settlements reflected the pastoralist preference for open spaces and distaste for the narrow confines of the city.



16.4 Khar Balgas
 This rendition reconstructs the original architecture of the Uyghur city of Ordubalik (Khar Balgas), a walled city that was the residence of the Uyghur khan, Bögü (r. 759–79 CE). The site is located in the Orkhon Valley, 24 km north of Khara Khorum. According to Ata-Malik Juvaini, the Persian scholar and administrator, the Mongols confirmed its identity from an inscription, then built Khara Khorum nearby as proximity to the once-powerful Uyghur capital would add prestige to their city. Recent research suggests the high tower may not be an accurate projection; instead, a much smaller stupa or an elevated part of the citadel may have existed.

16.3 Kherlen Bars Stupa
 The walled city of Kherlen Bars in Dornod province, far eastern Mongolia, was a leading Khitan urban center dating to ca. 10th–12th century. The Khitans, who created the Liao empire in northeastern China, had a language that was expressed in two independent writing systems but is now extinct and only partially deciphered. Many Khitan documents have been recovered from the Kherlen Bars ruins; further progress in deciphering the language depends on the acquisition of more texts. To protect these rare archaeological resources, the site has been listed for protection as a world heritage site by UNESCO. Its Buddhist stupa is the largest standing in Mongolia today.



Genghis Khan continually moved his court from one outlying palace site to another, a practice reminiscent of the seasonal movements of individual herder households. Japanese archaeologists have posited the identification of seasonal sites associated with Genghis Khan's itinerary from evidence recovered in these places. These include a settlement site on the Avraga River as a possible winter and spring camp (see Chapter 17); the site of Sa'ari Ke'er, a possible summer palace, located about 110 km southeast of Ulaan Baatar; and Khara Tün, a possible autumn palace, located 30 km southwest of Ulaan Baatar.⁷ While it is sometimes difficult to match archaeological sites with places mentioned in early sources, the work on these potential seasonal encampments continues, and their association with Genghis Khan's seasonal travel is an intriguing theory.

When the need for a more permanent central place was determined—after the death of Genghis Khan—construction of a capital for the Mongol empire began at a site along the Orkhon River in central Mongolia. It was completed during the rule of Ögödei Khaghan, Genghis's third son and successor, in 1234. The construction of the Mongol

walled capital of Khara Khorum did not put this region on the map: the Orkhon Valley is a natural crossroads, where mountain fringes, major rivers, and the steppe edge intersect at the center of the eastern grasslands, and had long been a place of ceremonial significance for the Türks and Uyghurs prior to the Mongols (see Chapter 9). The broad well-watered valleys and grasslands of the Orkhon River area accommodated horse breeding, a practice of the Uyghur and Türk elites.⁸ The Uyghurs established the largest of their steppe urban centers at Ordubalik (Khar Balgas), 24 km north of the future location of the Mongol capital (fig. 16.4). Another objective of Genghis Khan's heirs in selecting the Orkhon may have been to accrue political legitimacy through geographic association with the former Uyghur walled capital. Prior to the building of Khara Khorum, the Mongols conducted what was undoubtedly the first archaeological excavation ever to take place in Mongolia to confirm that the ruined and toppled walls were indeed those of Ordubalik. Through their work an inscribed stela was unearthed that identified the site as Ordubalik, the residence of the Uyghur khan Bögü, who reigned from 759 to 779.⁹

Khara Khorum is the best-known settle-



16.6 Pharaonic Maskettes

Two small Egyptian masks with classic pharaonic features were found in the 1970s in the vicinity of Khara Khorum by construction workers. They probably arrived at Khara Khorum during the Mongol era when the city received foreign visitors and gifts from Western envoys.

16.5 Mongolian Central Air

Excavations below the floor at Uglugchiin Kherem, a site in Khentii province of probable Khitan affiliation, revealed stone-lined ducts for delivering heated air to the floors or rooms above. Similar heating systems were employed in Korea and China and have come to light in excavations at the crossroads in Khara Khorum.



ment of the Mongol empire, but there are other large and small sites that have attracted much less attention from researchers (fig. 16.6). Khar Khul Khaany Balgas, covers about three square kilometers on the Khanui River, slightly northwest of the Orkhon Valley.¹⁰ There are ten square enclosures—the largest has earthen walls, built for defensive purposes, standing four to five meters high. Remains of the walls and of glazed roof tiles indicate that buildings once stood on low earthen platforms within most, if not all, of the enclosures.¹¹ The function of this site is not mentioned in any written sources, but the investment in sizable buildings suggests it was a royal administrative center.

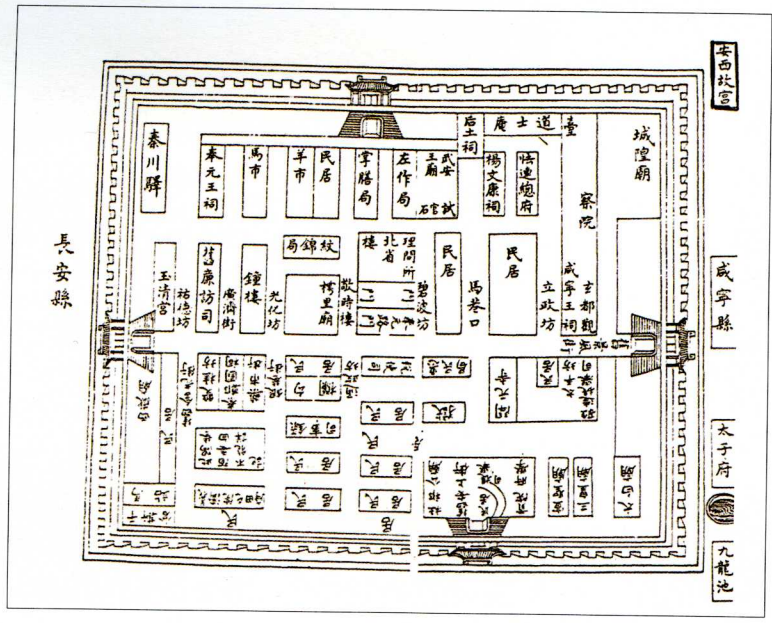
The chronology of Shazaan Khot, a possible Mongol-period palace site, is established by the presence of Chinese coins dated to 1064–66, 1078–85, and later. The ceramics, especially various types of Chinese porcelain, date to the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368).¹² Like other outlying palace sites, Shazaan Khot is not fortified by a major exterior wall but organized as an irregular assortment of building platforms arranged along a central street, similar to that found by archaeologists at Khara Khorum (see Chapter 18). At the end of the street, enclosed by a wall, is a large platform mound with column bases and other evidence of a major building.

Mongol steppe settlements incorporated

design principles from China and other regions, but their layout and architecture had unique attributes (fig. 16.5). The royal courts constructed by Genghis Khan's grandson, Kublai Khan, were designed to invoke the steppe origins that lay behind the founding of the Mongol Yuan dynasty of China in 1271. Both Shangdu, where Kublai had already moved his seat of government in North China by 1256, and Daidu, which we now know as Beijing,¹³ were built with Chinese principles in mind, but employed uniquely Mongol elements.¹⁴ With the relocation of the capital to Daidu, principles of Chinese construction were emphasized, as Kublai realized that to rule China he must at least have the appearance of being a Chinese emperor (fig. 16.7). Inside the Chinese façade of the imperial compound, the young Mongol princes lived in traditional steppe tents.

Archaeological work on the urban centers of Mongolia continues to yield important discoveries. Based on preliminary research using survey and excavation techniques, a few common characteristics in the design of Mongolian settlements can be identified. Defensive walls with gates at midpoints are typical of large Mongol cities. Inside the walled enclosure, a Mongol settlement generally has a square or rectangular layout organized around a central street that connects the gates and bisects cross streets. In general, public buildings,

16.7 Plan of a Chinese City
 Illustration of the Yuan Dynasty City at Qin showing principles of Chinese city plannings, such as a squared layout with gates in the middle of the four walls and a gridded interior plan of streets and enclosures. Some Mongol urban sites follow this general plan, but little detailed research has been conducted to understand the great variation found in them.



including palaces, are not centrally located but at one edge of the urban matrix. Low earthen platforms formed the typical foundations for tents or royal buildings and other administrative structures. At some sites there is no evidence of buildings or habitations within large sectors of the city that were probably occupied as tent neighborhoods, which leave little or no archaeological trace, but are well known from written sources.¹⁵

The Mongol empire drew on ancient steppe customs both in the construction of urban centers and in the creation of political and economic systems. The bustling center of Khara Khorum became a destination for the many foreign embassies bringing tribute to the burgeoning empire, and for the bureaucracy of government, notably, services to support the royal court. Like the empire, Khara Khorum was a multiethnic town that drew on many traditions and cultures across

half the globe—the vast Eurasian steppe, the forests of Siberia, the Middle East, the Manchurian plain, and China. Archaeology continues to add to our understanding of how and when these traditions developed and how they contributed to the sweep and power of the Mongol empire.

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2. Di Cosmo 1994.
3. Barfield 1981.
4. Honeychurch and Amartuvshin 2006.
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6. Honeychurch and Amartuvshin 2006.
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10. Tseveendorj et al. 1999.
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12. Moriyasu and Ochir 1999; Tseveendorj et al. 1999.
13. Rossabi 1988.
14. Steinhardt 1988.
15. Rogers et al. 2005.