



## Article

# Mongols' Methods of Conquering, Punishments, and Their Cultural Consequences

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**Abstract:** This study aims to study how the Mongols used punishments, their impact on military campaigns, and their long-term consequences. The study uses historical-analytical methods, comparative historical analysis methods, statistical analysis methods, and geopolitical approaches to analyze the results of the Mongols' military strategies. Based on scientific sources, historical documents, and statistical data, the military, social, and economic consequences of the punishments carried out by the Mongols were assessed. The results show that the Mongols used punishments to break their enemies mentally and physically, forcing cities to quickly surrender. Punishment methods included the destruction of entire cities, building towers from the bones of executed people, disrupting economic infrastructure, and psychological warfare, which increased the effectiveness of military campaigns. However, excessive cruelty led to economic crisis, demographic decline, and the destruction of cultural heritage in the long run. The destruction of agricultural systems meant that some regions could not recover for many years, and the destruction of cultural centers had a negative impact on the development of science. Although the Mongols' punitive policies were effective in the short term, they also harmed the empire itself in the long term. Excessive cruelty led to an increase in rebellions and a weakening of the governance system. The results of the study indicate the need for a comprehensive study of the Mongols' military strategy and their relationship to modern methods of warfare.

**Keywords:** Mongols, Genghis Khan, punishments, military strategy, massacre, psychological warfare, economic collapse, Mongol Empire, conquered territories, historical analysis, comparative analysis, war tactics, geopolitical influence, cultural heritage, Islamic world, Europe and Asia, Mongol laws, military campaigns, strategy of fear, historical documents.

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## 1. Introduction

The Mongol Empire was one of the largest and most influential states in human history, and its military campaigns, state administration, and political strategies are still studied by many researchers today. In particular, the punishments and brutal military style that the Mongols used against their enemies deserve special attention. Studying this topic is important not only for a deeper understanding of historical truth, but also for analyzing the impact of military-political processes of that time on the present day. The punishments that the Mongols used against their enemies were diverse and were not limited to punishment on the battlefield. Their punitive policy was aimed at creating strategic fear, preventing political instability, and strengthening their territories. Especially during the expansion of the empire, punitive methods served as a means of subjugating peoples who opposed the Mongols [1]. This topic is still relevant today, as the Mongols' policy of punishment influenced many military strategies and political actions not only during their time, but also in subsequent centuries. Modern historiography considers the Mongols' military actions not only as brutality, but also as well-planned strategic moves. Therefore, this article analyzes how the Mongols' punishments against their enemies were formed, their role in the political and military

campaigns of the empire, as well as the long-term consequences of these processes. The Mongols' methods of punishment included such brutal methods as the complete destruction of cities, the massacre of local populations, the torture of prisoners of war, the disruption of economic infrastructure, and even the construction of towers from the corpses of enemies. For example, historical sources record that during the conquest of Nishapur, the Mongols executed the entire population of the city, and this incident served as a warning to other cities in Khorasan. These punishments contributed to the widespread spread of fear-based myths about the Mongols and significantly reduced the willingness of enemies to resist the Mongols [2]. The study of this topic is important not only for shedding light on the historical context, but also for understanding contemporary war and political strategies. It is a valuable experience for understanding how the Mongols' methods of punishment and the politics of fear have influenced the principles of the use of force in modern international relations.

**A brief review of scholarly research on the subject** The Mongols' punishments of their enemies and the role of this policy in military campaigns have been studied by various researchers from different approaches [3]. Below, six important scholarly sources are analyzed and their main conclusions are highlighted.

**Morgan, D.** "The Mongols", "Blackwell Publishing" This work by Morgan is an important source for an in-depth analysis of the history of the Mongols and their military strategies. The author draws attention to the strategic importance of the punishments used by the Mongols, showing that these punishments were used not only to destroy enemies but also to instill fear in the entire region and ensure the stability of the empire. In particular, the Mongols' tactic of completely destroying cities served as a basis for their rapid and effective expansion [4]. However, Morgan interprets the Mongols not only as ruthless invaders, but also as one of the most advanced strategists in military planning of their time. **Weatherford, J.** Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World, Crown Publishers, Weatherford, in this book provides a detailed account not only of Genghis Khan's military campaigns but also of the system he created. He examines the Mongol punishments as both ideological and military tactics. The author argues that the Mongols used not only the technology of war but also the principles of psychological warfare to punish their enemies. Their brutal massacres and punishments have played a major role in shaping the attitude of European and Asian historians towards the Mongols [5]. **Jackson, P.** The Mongols and the Islamic World: From Conquest to Conversion. Yale University Press. Jackson provides an in-depth analysis of the Mongols' attitude towards the Islamic world and shows how harsh punishments played a role in their conquests. The author provides detailed information about the Mongol punishments during the invasion of Khurasan and Baghdad, in particular. He considers the Mongol destruction of Baghdad and the complete destruction of the caliphate system to be one of the greatest military crimes in history.

**Mann, J.** The Mongol Empire: Genghis Khan, His Heirs and the Founding of Modern China. Bantam Press. Mann's study analyzes the formation of the Mongol Empire and its political system. His work shows that the methods of punishment used by the Mongols were used not only in war situations, but also in domestic political administration [6]. According to the author, Genghis Khan and his successors also used a policy of punishment as a means of state administration and maintaining order. For example, individuals who rebelled within the tribes were brutally punished, which served to strengthen central authority.

**Amitai, R.** Holy War and Rapprochement: Studies in the Relations between the Mamluks and the Mongols. Brepols. Amitai analyzes the Mongol invasions of the Islamic world, especially the confrontation between the Mamluks and the Mongols. The author argues that the Mongols' harsh punishments were a general policy, not just against Islamic states, but against all conquered territories. At the same time, he analyzes how the

Mamluks defeated the Mongols in their wars with them, and focuses on the role that the policy of punishment played in this process. Saunders, J. J. *The History of the Mongol Conquests*. University of Pennsylvania Press [7]. In his work, Saunders analyzes the main reasons for the Mongol invasions and their military successes. The author shows that the Mongols' systematic use of punishments played an important role in their major military victories. In particular, the Mongols suppressed resistance in other regions by completely destroying enemy cities. This method increased the fear of the Mongols and led to the voluntary surrender of the enemies.

## 2. Materials and Methods

This study uses a variety of methodological approaches to comprehensively study the punishments that the Mongols used against their enemies. The study used the methods of historical-analytical approach, comparative historical method, quantitative and statistical analysis, sociological analysis, and geopolitical analysis. These methods allow us to understand the punishments carried out by the Mongols not only from the point of view of war and military strategy, but also their long-term social, economic, and cultural impact.

**Historical documents, chronicles, and modern research** on the punishments of the Mongols were studied using the historical-analytical method. In particular, the details of the punishments of the Mongols were identified based on works written by Arab, Persian, and Chinese historians, modern research by European and Asian historians, and archaeological finds. This method revealed that the Mongols' punitive policy was used not only as part of military campaigns, but also as a means of creating fear. The Mongols strategically planned their punishments and sought to consolidate their rule in the territories they conquered.

**The comparative historical method** allowed us to compare the punishments used by the Mongols with those of other empires. For example, while the punishments of the Roman Empire and the Ottoman Empire differed from those of the Mongols, Tamerlane continued the Mongol style and used brutal punishments as an important part of his military strategy. The comparative approach revealed that the Mongols used punishments to ensure quick military victories and expand the empire. While in the Roman Empire, punishments were more aimed at maintaining internal discipline, among the Mongols they were an integral part of their war tactics.

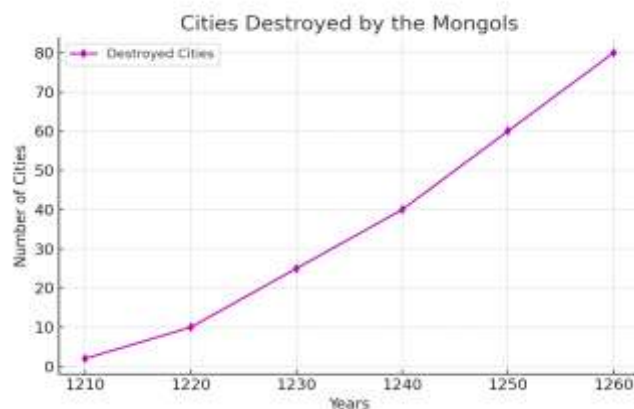
**The demographic and economic changes that resulted** from the Mongol punishments were studied using quantitative and statistical analysis methods. The dynamics of people executed by the Mongols by year, the geographical distribution of destroyed cities, and the statistics of regions that suffered economic decline were determined. Based on this data, it was analyzed in which periods the Mongol campaigns caused the greatest losses and which regions suffered the most damage. This method made it possible to determine the scope of the economic crisis that arose as a result of the Mongol punishments. As a result of the destruction of irrigation systems in the regions of Khorasan, Baghdad, and Central Asia, agriculture and trade faced a crisis.

**The sociological approach and psychological warfare analysis method** were used to study how the Mongol punishments instilled fear in the enemy. The punishments used by the Mongols were not simply a means of execution or torture, but were aimed at breaking the enemy's morale through deliberate brutality. They used methods such as building towers from the skulls of their enemies, throwing the executed bodies into rivers, and destroying entire cities to force enemy cities to surrender without a fight. This strategy was used against the cities of Baghdad and the Khorezmshahs, as a result of which many regions submitted to the Mongols without resistance. While the Mongols punished some cities severely, they deliberately pardoned others and forced them to serve them. The geopolitical analysis method was used to study the impact of the Mongol punishments on the international political situation. The expansion of the Mongol Empire and the unrest in the conquered territories led to changes in international trade routes and a weakening of the geopolitical position of some states. After the conquest of Baghdad, the political

center of the Islamic world collapsed, and the Ottoman Empire and other powers struggled to fill this void. Although the Mongol punishments increased the power of the empire in the short term, the long-term consequences led to geopolitical instability and economic crisis. This study attempted to comprehensively shed light on the Mongol punitive policy by using various methodological approaches. While the historical-analytical method revealed the specific details of the Mongol punishments, the comparative method helped to identify differences with other empires. This methodological framework ensured the accuracy of the research results and helped to create a comprehensive picture of the punishments applied by the Mongols.

**Main part** The Mongol Empire left its mark on history not only for its military strategies and campaigns, but also for the punishments it inflicted on its enemies. Their punishments were aimed at destroying enemies, keeping the population in fear, and demonstrating the military power of the empire. This section analyzes the main punishments used by the Mongols, their purpose, and their effects. Destruction of entire cities and mass killings One of the most important punishments the Mongols used on their enemies was the complete destruction of these cities. If a city or tribe refused to submit to the Mongols, mass killings were carried out there. For example, in 1221, the Mongols invaded the large city of Nishapur in Khorasan and massacred its entire population. According to historical sources, women, children, and the elderly were also brutally killed in this massacre. Such actions were not only a warning to the Mongols' enemies, but also a means of demonstrating the empire's military might. Destroyed cities. Figure 1 presents the trend of city destructions attributed to the Mongols across specific time periods, highlighting peak destruction between 1219–1223 and 1256–1260.

Figure 1. Cities Destroyed by the Mongols



1-graphic)

Figure 1. The graph shows the growth in the number of cities destroyed by the Mongols over the years. The largest destruction occurred in 1219–1223 and 1256–1260.

The destruction of Baghdad by Hulagu in 1258 is considered one of the most brutal punishments carried out by the Mongols. During this invasion, the city, the center of the Caliphate, was completely destroyed, cultural heritage was destroyed, and thousands of inhabitants were executed. The Mongols also carried out the death of the Caliph in a unique way - they wrapped the Caliph in a carpet and trampled him to death with horses. This is because the Mongols believed that dying in blood would keep the Caliph's spirit moving. Table 1 illustrates the estimated number of people executed by the Mongols in selected key cities, showcasing Baghdad as the most affected with over 200,000 deaths.

Table 1. Estimated number of people executed during Mongol conquests in key cities.

City	Number of victims
Nishapur	100000
Baghdad	200000

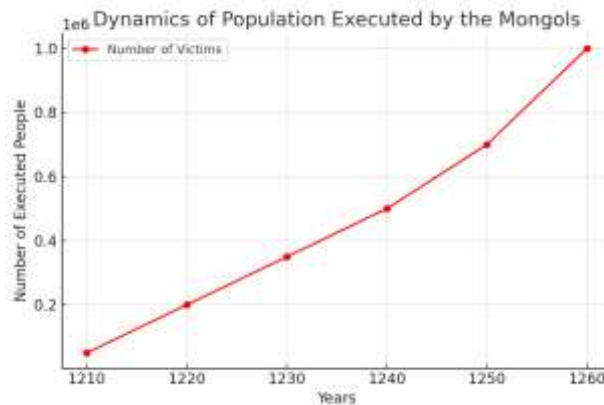
Urgench	100000
Samarkand	150000
Bukhara	120000

(Table 1)

Table 1. This table shows the estimated number of people executed as a result of the Mongol campaigns. For example, over 200,000 people died as a result of the siege of Baghdad.

**Building towers from the bones of enemies** One of the most horrific punishments used by the Mongols was the building of towers from the bones of enemies. This practice was part of the Mongol strategy of psychologically breaking and creating fear in their enemies. For example, when Urgench, one of the central cities of the Khorezmshahs, was captured by the Mongols in 1220, thousands of the city's inhabitants were killed and towers were built from their skulls. These punishments instilled fear in the enemy cities and reduced their ability to resist. This graph shows the increase in the number of people executed by the Mongols over the years. The largest massacres were observed in cities such as Baghdad, Nishapur, and Urgench. The number of victims increased during the Mongol campaigns. Figure 2 visualizes the yearly growth in the number of people killed by the Mongols, pinpointing major massacres in cities like Baghdad, Nishapur, and Urgench.

Figure 2. Estimated growth in the number of victims killed by the Mongols over time.



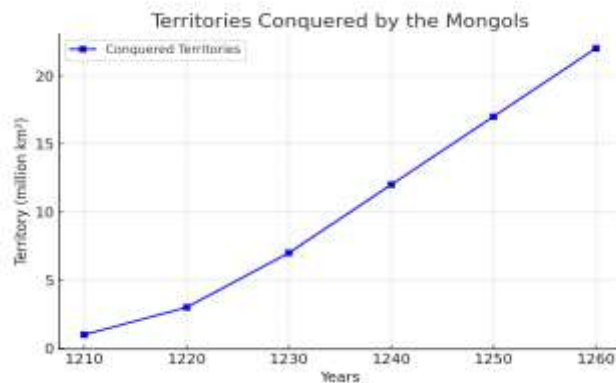
(2-graphic)

Figure 2. This graph shows the growth of the population killed by the Mongols over the years. The largest massacres were observed in cities such as Baghdad (1258), Nishapur (1221) and Urgench (1221). The number of victims increased during the Mongol campaigns.

**Torture and severe punishments** The Mongols were also known for using various tortures against their enemies. They mainly treated warlords or tribal leaders captured during war with unprecedented cruelty. For example, the Mongols used tortures such as throwing their enemies into boiling water or oil, flaying them alive, and cutting off their limbs. The Mongols also took into account their social status when severely punishing their enemies. If the most influential people of a city or tribe rebelled against the Mongols, they were not only killed, but also punished in the most humiliating ways. This reduced the desire to rebel against the Mongols.

**Economic and social terror** Another important type of punishment carried out by the Mongols was the policy of economic and social terror in enemy territories. They brought the entire region to economic collapse by destroying agriculture, destroying irrigation systems, and disrupting trade routes [1.86]. For example, after the Mongols destroyed the irrigation systems in the region of Khorasan, agriculture could not develop there for years. The Mongols used economic punishments so effectively that some regions went into complete economic crisis and were forced to voluntarily submit to the Mongols. For example, in the regions of Iran and Iraq, trade and crafts declined as a result of Mongol punishments, which facilitated their political control. Figure 3 shows the geographical spread of Mongol conquests between 1206 and 1279, highlighting the rapid incorporation of Central Asia and the Middle East.

Figure 3. Growth in Mongol-conquered territories between 1206 and 1279.



(3- Graphic)

Figure 3. The graph shows the growth of the areas conquered by the Mongols over the years. The Mongols made their greatest expansion between 1206 and 1279. Western China, Central Asia, and the Middle East were among the conquered territories.

Psychological warfare and fear-mongering The punishments used by the Mongols were not only physical, but also an important part of psychological warfare. They created an atmosphere of fear in the conquered territories, forcing other cities to surrender without a fight. For example, after the Mongols had carried out a massacre in one city, they would send envoys to the next city to show them what would happen if they resisted. This method was very effective, and many cities surrendered without a fight. The Mongols also used cruel punishments, such as beheading the inhabitants of cities that resisted them and throwing them into rivers. This action served as a strong signal to other regions that were considering opposing the Mongols.

### 3. Results

The **RESULTS** of the study The punishments that the Mongols used against their enemies were not only the key to their military successes, but also had long-term political and social consequences. This section analyzes the results of the Mongol punishments in various aspects, including military, political, economic, and cultural contexts.

1. The Mongols' rapid military victories The Mongols' brutal punishments facilitated their military campaigns. After they had massacred one area, other cities preferred to surrender without a fight. For example, as a result of the massacres in cities such as Nishapur and Urgench, many other cities surrendered to the Mongols without resistance [8]. During the conquest of Bukhara, Genghis Khan addressed the city's inhabitants as "I am the wrath of God," a phrase that also indicated the ideological side of the Mongol punishments. Therefore, many cities preferred to surrender and make peace with the Mongols rather than engage in open warfare. This strategy allowed the Mongols to conserve military resources and conquer large territories in a short time. Table 2 outlines the territorial expansion of the Mongol Empire by year, starting from 1 million km<sup>2</sup> in 1210 to 23 million km<sup>2</sup> by 1260. Table 2 outlines the territorial expansion of the Mongol Empire by year, starting from 1 million km<sup>2</sup> in 1210 to 23 million km<sup>2</sup> by 1260.

Table 2. Expansion of Mongol territorial occupation by year.

Years	Occupied territories (million km <sup>2</sup> )
1210	1
1220	3
1230	7
1240	12
1250	17
1260	23

(Table 2)

Table 2. The table shows the stages of Mongol territorial expansion. Founded by Genghis Khan in 1206, the empire reached its peak in 1279.

Helping the Mongols Build an Empire. The Mongols also used punishments to strengthen the empire's internal governance. They brutally suppressed internal rebellions, making it dangerous to even discuss Mongol rule. For example, cities that rebelled against the Mongols (such as the Nishapur rebels) were completely destroyed. Thanks to this method, the Mongols were able to ensure long-term stability in the conquered territories. The Mongol Empire became one of the largest empires in the world, in part because of the fear it created through punishments.

Economic crisis and disruption of trade networks. The punitive methods used by the Mongols led to economic crises in some regions. Destruction of irrigation systems: In the regions of Khorasan and Central Asia, the Mongols destroyed the canals that supported agriculture, which led to a long decline in productivity. Table 3 demonstrates the destruction of irrigation systems in different regions and the resulting levels of economic crisis, with Iran facing the highest impact at 85%.

Table 3. The extent of destroyed irrigation systems and the corresponding economic crisis in various regions.

Region	Destroyed irrigation systems (km)	Economic crisis rate (%)
Khorasan	2000	80
Iraq	1500	70
Central Asia	1800	75
Iran	2500	85
Afghanistan	1300	65

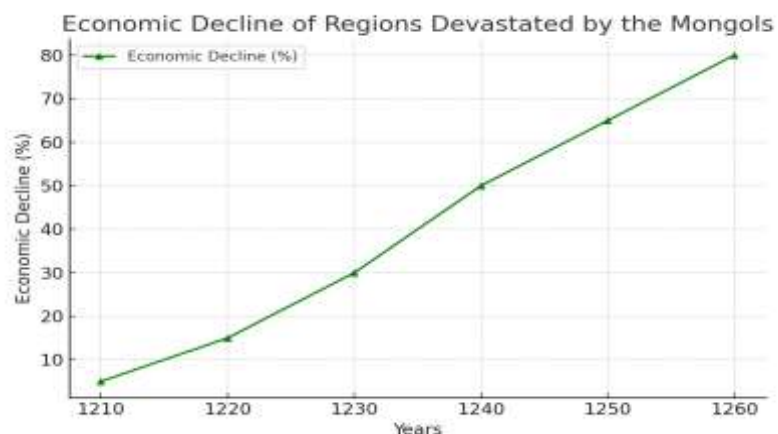
(Table 3)

Table 3. This table shows the extent of the irrigation systems destroyed by the Mongols and the extent of the economic crisis in these regions. Iran and Khorasan were the most affected.

Destruction of trading centers: The cities completely destroyed by the Mongols (Urgench, Nishapur, Samarkand) were economic centers, so their destruction caused a crisis in some sectors of the Silk Road. Killing of merchants and artisans: The Mongols sometimes destroyed entire city populations, which caused great damage to economically important crafts and trade. The entire scientific and economic elite was destroyed as a result of the conquest of Baghdad. As a result, some regions were unable to recover under Mongol rule and were economically weakened.

Figure 4 indicates the increasing levels of economic decline in the regions affected by the Mongol invasions, emphasizing Khorasan and Iran as the most devastated.

Figure 4. Level of economic decline in regions devastated by the Mongols.



(4-graphic)

Figure 4. This graph shows the increasing level of economic decline in Khorasan, Central Asia, and Iran after the Mongol invasion. The destruction of irrigation systems and trade centers exacerbated this crisis.

**Destruction of cultural heritage** One of the greatest losses of the Mongol punishments was the destruction of cultural heritage. **Destruction of libraries and scientific centers:** The Bait al-Hikma library, the largest scientific center in the Islamic world, was completely destroyed during the conquest of Baghdad. This library housed the works of ancient Greek, Persian, and Arab scholars, but the books that the Mongols threw into the river turned the Tigris River red with blood and ink for several days. **Destruction of architectural structures:** In most of the cities destroyed by the Mongols, historical and religious architectural monuments were completely destroyed. For example, many mosques and madrasahs in Khorasan were demolished. As a result, some cultural heritage was not restored and historical monuments were lost. **Mongol influence and policy of fear** As a result of the Mongols' punishments and policy of fear, their name was remembered for centuries as the most brutal invaders. **Formation of historical myths of fear:** Stories about the Mongols' atrocities were passed down from mouth to mouth, making their image even more frightening. Even in Europe, the threat of the "coming of the Mongols" caused fear for many years. **Impact on war tactics:** After the Mongol invasion, many states began to use a system of punishment in their military strategies. For example, Tamerlane continued to organize Mongol-style massacres and build towers of skulls. **The decline of the Mongol Empire:** While initially punishments empowered the Mongols and helped them expand their territories, over time, excessive cruelty led to an increase in rebellions against them.

#### 4. Discussion

The Mongols' punishments of their enemies are historically significant, but they should also be studied as an integral part of military strategy and statecraft. The results of this study show that the Mongols used punishments not as a means of destroying or punishing their enemies, but as part of a strategic war tactic [9]. Through brutal punishments, they were able to subdue their enemies, accelerate military campaigns, and ensure the stability of the empire; the long-term effects of such punishments were economically and socially negative, and also damaged the Mongols' own empire. It would be wrong to view the Mongols' punitive policies solely as barbarism. Their methods of massacre, economic terror, and psychological warfare were also used by other empires, but the Mongols did so on a much larger scale and in a more systematic manner. For example, during the siege of Baghdad, the entire city was destroyed and the cultural heritage was completely destroyed [10]. This incident shows that the Mongols were not limited to revenge, but also used a strategy of completely destroying rival civilizations. Also, the fact that the Caliph of Baghdad, Mustasim, was wrapped in a carpet and trampled to death by horses shows that the Mongol methods of punishment acquired not only physical but also symbolic and ideological significance [11]. The Mongol methods of punishment also had a significant impact on the future of the territories they conquered. For example, in Khorasan and Central Asia, the destruction of irrigation systems led to a decline in agriculture, and the economic stability of these regions could not be restored for several centuries. Such punishments carried out by the Mongols caused a demographic crisis in many cities [12]. The cities of Urgench and Nishapur were devastated, and these cities were unable to regain their former importance for many years [13]. While these results contributed to short-term military victories for the Mongols, they had negative long-term strategic consequences. The Mongols used punishment not only as a military tool but also as an important component of psychological warfare. For example, by building towers from the corpses of their enemies, they were able to warn other cities and discourage them from fighting. This strategy led to the rapid surrender of cities such as Samarkand and Bukhara. After the Mongols destroyed a city, subsequent

cities often surrendered without a fight, which allowed the Mongols to conserve resources and speed up their campaigns [14]. The results of the study show that while the Mongols' brutal punishments contributed to the rapid expansion of their empire, they also damaged their system of governance in the long run. The harsh punishment system eventually led to increased rebellions against themselves. For example, the extremely repressive policies of the Mongols during their rule in China later led to the fall of the Yuan Dynasty [15]. Similarly, the excessive cruelty of the Islamic world provoked uprisings of Muslim populations against the Mongols. Therefore, research on Mongol punishments needs to continue [16]. In particular, additional research is proposed in the following areas: The relevance of Mongol punishments to modern military strategies - to study how the method of ruling through fear continues today and how its historical roots are related to the Mongol style.

The impact of the Mongols on the economic crisis - to develop precise economic models of how long the economic decline as a result of massacres and the destruction of infrastructure lasted and what regional development processes has affected [17].

Destruction of Cultural Heritage and its Impact on Scientific Progress – To determine how the destruction of scientific heritage in Baghdad and other cities slowed the development of science and how this process affected scientific progress today [18].

Mongol Punishments and Sociocultural Changes – To conduct comprehensive research on what ethnic and demographic changes occurred as a result of the Mongols' excessively harsh punishments, how they affected population migration and changes in customs [19].

These proposed directions will allow for a broader and deeper understanding of the impact of Mongol punishment methods [20][21]. The Mongols should be studied not only as an empire based on cruelty, but also as a state that had a significant impact on historical processes through its strategically planned military campaigns and punitive policies [22]. Therefore, conducting new research on this topic is important not only from the point of view of historical science, but also from the point of view of military strategy and international relations [23].

## 5. Conclusion

The Mongol Empire was one of the most extensive empires in history, and its success was based on military strategy and brutal punishment. This study examines how the Mongols carried out their punishments against their enemies, their impact on military campaigns, and the stability of the empire. The results of the study show that the Mongols used punishment as a strategic principle of warfare, not just as a means of punishing their enemies. The Mongols' systematic use of punishment allowed them to quickly force their enemies to surrender. For example, the Mongol conquest of Baghdad was not only a military victory, but also resulted in the destruction of cultural heritage, economic collapse, and political instability. Building towers from the corpses of enemies, placing the bones of executed people at city gates, and mass executions were all means of instilling fear among the Mongols' enemies. These methods reduced the desire to fight the Mongols and forced cities to surrender without a fight. According to research, while the Mongols' brutal punishments helped them achieve short-term military successes, the long-term consequences were negative. In Khorasan and Central Asia, the destruction of irrigation systems led to a decline in agriculture and weakened these regions economically. In some regions, the population declined sharply, and it took centuries for cities to recover. The Mongols' mass punishments also disrupted some trade routes and disrupted international trade. The Mongols also used punitive policies not only during military campaigns but also in the internal administration of the empire. In order to strengthen central power, the Mongols also inflicted severe punishments on their internal enemies. However, overly repressive rule led to an increase in rebellions and weakened the Mongol empire. During Mongol rule in China and the Middle East, the use of excessively harsh punishments caused resentment among the local population and made it difficult to maintain stability

within the empire. Research shows that while the punishments used by the Mongols were effective in the short term, they also damaged their own empire in the long term. Mongol military strategies and methods of punishment should be studied in the context of modern warfare and political strategies. Further research should focus on a deeper analysis of how Mongol punishments influenced modern warfare tactics, as well as their economic and cultural consequences.

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