

**Volume 14**

**Number 061**

**Sorghaghtani Beki – Woman of the  
Mongol Court**

**Lead: Sorghaghtani Beki, the most well known woman of the vast but short lived Mongol Empire, groomed her son Kublai Kahn to become the greatest of the Mongol emperors and the founder of the Yuan dynasty of China.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: The Mongol Empire was the largest contiguous land empire in history, but lasted only about 150 years. The Mongols were one of the Turkic nomadic tribes that lived on**

**the steppes of Central Asia. Existing on this belt of wild plains and vast grasslands, they raised wild horses and trained their children to ride and use a bow and arrow – skills which would help them fight and conquer vast regions where they were clearly outnumbered. The military might of horses enabled the Mongols to attack much larger forces, retreat quickly and conduct lightning-like and very lucrative raids on their enemies.**

**The Mongol Empire was founded by Chinggis Khaan in the early 1200s. He organized and unified his savage warriors and led them in the conquest of China, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe. This expansion was completed about 1297 by Kublai**

**Khan, grandson of the Great Khaan.**

**Based on chronicles from the following century, it is evident that clan women played an important role in Mongol administration. Women were trained for military maneuvers and it is known that at least some Mongol women had positions of authority.**

**The most well known of them was Sorghaghtani Beki, Chinggis Khaan's daughter-in-law and mother of Kublai Khan. Although she was illiterate, she prepared four of her sons for rule. Recognizing the great challenges of administering a vast empire of various religions and languages, she submitted her sons to a**

**regimen of cultural and language study. She came to the aid of the Chinese peasantry in their ancient struggle with the landed Chinese aristocracy, recognizing that their productivity would enhance imperial tax collections.**

**Although Kublai Kahn's military expeditions were not successful, under his rule there was economic prosperity, advancements in art, science and literature, toleration for different religions, and increases in trade east to west.**

**Research assistance by Ann Johnson. At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

**Rossabi, Morris. "Women of the Mongol Court." 22 June 2007. <http://www.woodrow.org/teachers/world-history/teaching/mongol/women.html>.**

**Saunders, J. J. The History of the Mongol Conquests. Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.**

**Sorghaghtani Beki "The Mother of Great khans." ' Mongolia Web. 10 June 2008<<http://www.mongolia-web.com/content/view/1224/209/>>.**

**<http://www.womeninworldhistory.com/heroine8.html>**

Copyright by Dan Roberts Enterprises, Inc.