

*The Confucian and the Unicorn*

How long did GK remain in Afghanistan? When he left, how did he return to Mongolia? Why is that significant? What apparition did his bodyguard see, and what did that figure signify?

What parallels exist between Alexander the Great (d. 323 BCE) and GK (d. 1227)? What happened to the ‘sacred water of immortality’ Alexander acquired?

Describe Yelu Chucai’s role in GK’s court. From the previous chapter, we know his distaste for the Taoists, but now what do we learn about his sympathies for the Confucians? Why are the Confucians so closely identified with China alone?

What were “incense societies”?

Who were GK’s own “Illuminati”?

What Confucian values did GK approve? Disapprove?

Examine the contrasts between Confucianism and Mongol belief and practice listed on pp. 253-254. What do you find most surprising? Most telling?

Note the numbers: a million or so Mongols—but more than a hundred million conquered peoples. Who ruled these conquests, and why?

What did Yelu Chucai value in each of the religions he encountered? What is ironic about the way he ended as more Mongol than Chinese?

What languages did Mongol rulers use?

*The Last Campaign*

Why did GK undertake this last campaign? Where did it occur? How had the Tangut angered him?

What is an ald?

According to GK, whence comes morality?

Who was Iluqu Burkhan? And why was that name offensive to GK? In the end what happened to this ruler? Why did he change his name? And to what?

The Tangut grew rich from the Silk Road. What did they do with their riches?

Why did the Mongols find it strange for practitioners of other religions to build edifices and to rely on priests? What might we learn from the Mongols about religion?

The Buddhists we read about in this chapter differ substantially from the Buddha and from the Buddhists of myth. How?

Why did the Mongols prefer to travel, lay siege, and fight in winter? Describe the winter they set out to reconquer the Tangut. How cold was it?

What event causes GK's injury and death? What did he do between the injury and his death?

Describe the disposal of GK's body. Why is that particularly appropriate given his life and beliefs?