

Mongols and Elephants

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Mongols had no experience of elephants in their homeland, and this paper seeks to explore how their encounters with the great beasts have been analysed. Some scholars contend that the Mongols quickly got over their initial shocked surprise, and devised efficient tactics to deal with troops mounted on elephants. The Mongols ruling China even collected a number of the beasts, although they never really used them for military purposes. Other scholars consider that the Mongols found it impossible to truly conquer areas that employed elephants for war, at a time when rudimentary firearms did not yet give the advantage to horses over elephants. This would then, in part, account for the Mongol inability to subdue Mainland Southeast Asia, or make any long-term conquest of India.