Life and Conquests of Genghis Khan

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Life Of Genghis Khan

As Emperor of the Mongols (1162-1227), he was a warrior and conqueror who brought together one of the greatest empires in the history of the planet.

Genghis Khan is the name by which Timuÿin (1167-1227), the Mongol conqueror, is known. He was born near the Baikal Lake (in present Russia), the son of Yesugei, head and leader of a vast region between the Amur River and the Great Wall of China. At the age of thirteen, Timuÿin succeeded his father as tribal chief. His early reign was marked by the successive revolts of his tribes and by an intense struggle to maintain his leadership, but the Mongol leader showed his military capacity very soon and conquered not only his unruly subjects but also their hostile neighbours, mercilessly killing them.

Universal Emperor

Born on the banks of the Orhon River, the son of a chief who commanded Mongolia from the Amur region to the Great Wall of China, Temujin succeeded his father when he was thirteen years old. He did not obtain any military victory until defeating the Keraites in 1203. With this, his people declared him Gêngis Khan, which means “universal emperor.” The new title was accepted without hesitation and, to live up to the honour, he decided to go on a campaign of conquest that would last no less than 25 years. Genghis first turned his attention to the Tartars. After defeating them, he headed south toward China, where the Sung dynasty was on the verge of ruin and thus an easy target for the Mongol looters. Gêngis captured Beijing in 1214 and soon occupied most of China (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.).

For centuries, the Mongols had been a nomadic people living on the vast plains of central Asia. They were scattered across the steppes and lived fighting each other and plundering villages on the fringes of the Chinese Empire. Outside their homeland, few people had ever heard of the Mongols. The Great Wall of China, whose construction began around 200 AD, had kept them distant, and most of Europe was thousands of miles away from the high, cold deserts inhabited by the Mongols.

However, after Genghis took power, distance or walls were no longer obstacles to his ambitions. In 1219, the “universal emperor” headed west for lands that had never heard of his conquests. The

Mongol Hordes, as the vast waves of heavily armed knights became known, swept through Russia, destroyed the Persian Empire, engulfed Poland and Hungary, and threatened Europe as a whole.

The warrior chief of the Mongols, who did not have much affinity with the fine products of Chinese and European civilizations, slept in a tent and used to ride a swift, sturdy Mongolian stallion. It is very likely that he was the most successful military leader in the history of the world. Genghis Khan saw no limits to the expansion of the Mongol Empire. For the next eight years, he gathered the longest continuous empire the world had ever seen. The success of his destructive hordes, however, depended entirely on the skill and leadership of Genghis Khan and the unification of the Mongols. For some time after his death, when he was succeeded by his third son, Ogodei Khan (1185-1241), the conquests continued. But then, the empire began to crumble, and the Mongolian Hordes changed course.

The great importance of Genghis Khan and the Mongol Empire in history has been to make people on opposite sides of the world, such as China and Europe, aware of each other.

However, it was not only terror that built the empire of Genghis Khan. He was a charismatic leader with a profound sense of justice. Acts of bravery conquered his heart, and the bravest warriors, even among the enemy, were rewarded with positions of command in their troops. He was the first leader to institute meritocracy in the choice of his generals, high officials and counsellors. On the other hand, traitors were punished by death. The leader was grateful to friends and respected the religion of others, incorporating Christians, Buddhists and Muslims in their paintings. He valued knowledge in his own way: among the prisoners, those with professions or some skill were sent to Caracorum, a military fortress that served as capital for the Mongols. He preferred to retreat rather than suffer great losses in a battle.

The architect of such a feat was Genghis Khan, who, after grouping the various Mongolian tribes under his command, not without effort, went against the neighbouring empires to which he was subjected, one after the other, unmercifully. At the time of his death, Temuyin (Genghis Khan’s real name) controlled much of Asia and left the way open for his successors to enlarge his legend.

The future Great Khan did not start from nothing. Our protagonist descended from Qaidu, who was the monarch of the first historical Mongolian kingdom, the prefiguration of the future Gengiskanid Empire. His glory, therefore, is based on a past that we should not despise, although his first steps were more turbulent and dangerous than those of the Macedonian king. Much of his childhood and youth passed from one place to another while fleeing from the enemies who were determined to end his lineage. Given the framework of instability and anarchy typical of nomadic life, which turns power into a chimera available only to a few individuals, lineage was not enough to attain it. The prestige of the leader [who] brings together around him the grouping of disgusted and famished clans, of isolated families in search of a protector, of adventurers impatient to give a good saber, of archers willing to trade in loot and game infallible accuracy of his arrows”.

Murder Of His Brother & Father

Genghis Khan himself murdered his stepbrother Bekter in cold blood for an insignificant offence. The death of his father and the subsequent abandonment of related clans jeopardized the safety of the family, which was forced to roam the steppes. This desperate situation forged the character of Temuyín, who, little by little, was demonstrating his extraordinary war skills and carving a name among the Mongolian clans. His reputation brought him closer to Toghril. From this moment, the rise of Genghis Khan became unstoppable.

Army Of Genghis Khan

To create an empire, he needed a prepared and disciplined army to defeat all armies facing him and a state to support the army and rule the conquered peoples. For this, he established laws that everyone had to respect, known under the name of *Yasa*, which governed all the civil and military institutions that he created.

Genghis Khan raised a true armed state in which every man, both in times of peace and war, was mobilized from the age of fifteen until his seventies. Women also participated with their work in the production of food and in the making of all kinds of war material for the troops; women enjoyed rights that were not enjoyed by women in more civilized countries, such as property rights. Genghis Khan was able to end the idea of tribe or clan and inculcate the idea of State or Nation.

Genghis Khan organized his army into groups based on a decimal system:

- *Arban* was formed by ten soldiers under the orders of a *bogatur*.
- *Jaghun* was formed by ten *arban* (100 soldiers) commanded by a *bogatur*.
- *Mingghan* was formed by ten *jaghun* (1,000 soldiers) commanded by a N*oyan*.
- *Tumen*, consisting of 10 *Mingghan* (10,000 soldiers) commanded by *a Noyan*.
- *Hordu, or horde,* formed from 2 to 5 *tumen*, was under the command of the kan or his direct *boyan* generals.

He formed the units by mixing ethnic groups and tribes, which obviously improved the internal cohesion of the army at the most fundamental levels (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, n.d.).

The commanders at each level enjoyed some initiative and could, to some extent, execute their orders in the way that seemed most appropriate. This command structure proved to be quite flexible and effective, allowing the Mongol army to attack en masse, split up into small groups to surround their enemies or ambush them, or split up into small groups of ten men to take down a defeated army and retreat.

The army was composed almost exclusively of cavalry, although later, it also had a body of engineers

to carry out the sieges.

There was an Imperial Guard called *Keshik,* whose troop strength ranged from a *Monaghan* (1,000) to a *Tumen* (10,000). They were formed by children of the aristocratic class, who would later become the *noyan* or generals.

The cavalry was composed of light cavalry, or mounted archers, and heavy cavalry, or spearmen. The standard consisted of 40% heavy cavalry and 60% light cavalry.

King Of The Mongol Empire

Until the end of the 12th century, Mongolia remained a large province of China. In the 13th century, it stood out as the most dominant empire in the world. Genghis Khan led the greatest conquests, federating the Mongol troops and making them advance to the borders of present-day Turkey. This is how the Mongol Empire was founded. The wars with China were frequent and pincers. In 1204, he was appointed King of the Mongols, although not all clans accepted this appointment. This caused Genghis Khan to undertake a systematic campaign to eliminate all his opponents, which culminated in his victory in the Battle of the Tempest and the execution of his main adversary, Djamuqa. The costly unification of the Mongol clans and his appointment as sovereign of all Mongolia in the spring of 1206, now unopposed and under the title of Eternal Blue Sky, gave way to incursions against the neighbouring kingdoms. The Tangut, the Kin, the Uyghurs, the Naimans and the Corasmians were some of the victims of the Mongolian push. The terror inspired by the Mongolian forces spread throughout Asia to reach the vicinity of the Arabian Peninsula (OpenStax, 2022).

During a meeting of the tribes in 1206, the mighty conqueror Timuÿin, then lord of almost all of Mongolia, was proclaimed universal leader with the title of Genghis Jan. The city of Karakorum (Karakoram) was designated as a capital. The army of Genghis, despite not being especially large for its time, was distinguished by its magnificent cavalry and archers, the discipline and control of their aristocratic leaders and the peculiar tactics and military strategies of Jan. The neighbouring empire of northern China and the States of Central Asia, militarily weak and fragmented, surrendered, inevitably, as did the Turkish-Arab Islamic society in the Middle East to the Mongol hordes that toured Asia. All of this was one of the reasons that the empire of Genghis was able to achieve a degree of centralization and unprecedented power between the first domains of Mongolian-speaking tribes. Genghis ruled by virtue of a divine right that he himself had been awarded, recognizing him as the sole authority; the Great Yasa, an imperial code that he himself drafted, became the permanent basis of the Mongolian government. The vast empire of Genghis stretched from the South China Sea to the River Dnieper and Perisco from the Gulf to the Arctic Ocean.

He defeated all who opposed him. Timuÿin, in 1206, was already the ruler of almost all of Mongolia. That same year, the Assembly of the tribes proclaimed him Genghis Jan (chêng-sze, in Chinese, ‘courageous warrior’; in Turkish, Jan, ‘Sir’), the leader of the Mongol tribes and Tartar nations, and the

city of Karakorum (Karakoram) was designated as his capital.

It was then that the Jan started the conquest of China under the pretext of looking for grazing land for his horses in the fertile fields. In 1208, he had already established a point of support within the Great Wall, and in 1213, he led his armies to the south and west into the territory dominated by the Chin dynasty (1122-1234), without stopping until the Shandong Peninsula. In 1215, his armies took the city of Yenking or Zhong-du (present-day Beijing), the last fortress of China to the north of the country, and in 1218, the Korean peninsula fell into the hands of the Mongols.

In 1219, in revenge for the murder of some merchants, Genghis Jan sent his Mongol armies west, invading Juarizm, a large Turkish empire formed by the present countries of Iraq, Iran, and part of western Turkestan. The Mongols ravaged Turkestan and looted the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand, acquiring a reputation for terrible ferocity through their killings. In what is today northern India and Pakistan, the invaders conquered the cities of Peshawar and Lahore as well as nearby territories. Apparently, in those years, Muslim counsellors had taught Genghis to appreciate the value of cities as sources of wealth. In 1222, the Mongols came into what is now Russia and plundered the region, stretching between the Volga and Dnieper rivers and from the Persian Gulf to the Arctic Ocean.

The greatness of the Jan as a military leader was due not only to his conquests but also to the excellent organization, discipline, and manoeuvrability of his armies. In addition, the leader was an admirable statesman; his empire was organized so well that, as was said, travellers could go from one end of his domains to the other without any kind of fear or danger. However, they showed savagery without limits to their rivals and enemies and used assassination as a weapon in their conquests. At his death, which occurred on 18 August 1227, the Mongol empire was divided between his three children. Four of his grandchildren (especially Batu Khan and Kublai Jan) became great Mongol leaders in their own right. The invasions of Genghis Khan continued to enjoy great historical importance long after his death.

After the death of Genghis, his Empire, according to tribal custom, was divided among the sons of his first wife and his heirs. The Khanate of East Asia was ruled directly by his third son, Ogoday (1185-1241), who succeeded Genghis as Great Khan. The khanate was formed by what is now Outer Mongolia, Manchuria, Korea, a large part of China, Tibet and the northern fringes of Indochina.

Although Ogoday was succeeded by his son and grandson, the great leader who inherited the khanate was his nephew, Mangú Jan (1208-1259). Together with his brother Kublai, Mangú Jan managed to conquer almost all of China.

Death

The death of Genghis Khan in the year 1226 was caused by the consequences of a bad fall while hunting. The most important monarch of Asia died after doing what he liked best: hunting. Genghis Khan was a wise, fair and staunch defender of loyalty. His actions, even the most terrible ones, were

not directly attributable to him but were seen as justified as a reaction against a betrayal or an affront. For example, the destruction of the Chorasmian Empire would have been due to the massacre of a Mongolian caravan and the assassination of its ambassador by a Chorasmian governor.

Consequences/Conclusion

The Mongol hero remains a demigod, generous, magnanimous and grandiose, moderate in everything, balanced, with solid common sense, human, and even full of humanity.

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