

Genghis Khan

c.1167–1227



WHY HE MADE HISTORY Genghis Khan was the most famous Mongol emperor. He united the Mongol tribes, organized armies, and led campaigns that extended the Mongol Empire throughout Asia.



As you read the biography below, think about how Genghis Khan's organizational skills and leadership helped him organize nomadic tribes and form an empire.

The name Genghis Khan usually makes us think of a fierce and ruthless warrior who spread fear throughout Asia. However, there is much more to Genghis Khan. Ambitious and determined, he was also an extremely intelligent and disciplined organizer. Genghis Khan had a persuasive personality that helped him attract supporters, even among the people he conquered. Known to be flexible and adaptable, he would listen to advice from others, such as his mother, his wife, and men from other cultural backgrounds.

Putting aside his fearsome reputation, we must recognize the extent of Genghis Khan's achievements. He established the Mongol nation, organized an imposing army, and led military campaigns. He was responsible for founding the great Mongol Empire, which became the largest and greatest land empire to ever exist.

Genghis Khan was born with the name Temujin. He was chief of a small Mongol tribe. At this time the Mongol tribes were **nomadic**, disorganized, and at war among themselves. Temujin created an army and conquered the different tribes which he united



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VOCABULARY

nomadic roams from place to place

feudal system political system of landlords and tenants who serve them

catapult military machine for throwing missiles

into a confederacy under a kind of **feudal system**. Temujin exterminated the nobility and eliminated any rivals. In 1206 he was named Genghis Khan, which means “universal ruler.”

With a unified nation, Genghis Khan could now turn to the conquest of neighboring lands. The army was disciplined, well equipped, and fiercely loyal. Made up exclusively of cavalry at the beginning, the army adopted new methods such as using **catapults**, ladders, and burning oil in order to effectively attack cities. City after city was conquered and destroyed until Genghis Khan’s empire extended from the Korean Peninsula in the east to the Black Sea in the west.

Genghis Khan died in 1227, but not before naming one of his sons as his successor and guaranteeing the obedience of his other sons. By leaving an organized army and a strong nation, Genghis Khan made it possible for his successors to continue Mongol conquests until the largest continental empire to exist in medieval or modern times was formed.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. Identify What were some of Genghis Khan’s achievements?

2. Draw a Conclusion How did Genghis Khan make sure that the empire would continue to grow after his death?

ACTIVITY

Imagine that you are Genghis Khan and you are trying to decide who will be your successor. Write down five characteristics, in order of importance, that you think your successor should have. Explain why the characteristic you listed as number one is the most important.