

History: The Mongol World Empire
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Chinggis Khan: A Complex and Devout Leader

Chinggis Khan is a man that not many people could say they have a true understanding of. The person they associate the name with is an emperor built from stereotypes and associations of fear alone. People view him as brutish, powerful, and unforgiving. This is a consistent perception that has lasted thousands of years and does not give the history of his lifetime justice. Rather, his legacy tends to end with his name attached to power but not much more.

In reality, he was righteous as well as deserving. The power he obtained was fought for through skill and relations, not one that was bought or bestowed. He had a strong moral code and it was evident in all parts of his life which was why he was so easy to follow. As the man who united all the Mongol regions, he was not and could not have been a leader who was generally hated. He achieved much for the nations he united, through facilitating trade and communication between Asia and Europe, and within combat he was both powerful and strategic. When he was not able to fight with numbers, he opted for cunning. He was able to instill fear in his enemies with psychological warfare and use small battles to his advantage. For example, he decimated one village to show his prowess without holding the manpower to actually fight the same number that he scared. It was 'savagery', perhaps, but there was a method in his actions. He was skilled in leading his troupes and that's what let him rise into the power that all others feared.

From the early age of nine, the boy Temujin started his tale of survival, betrayal, and growth. A boy- "Who has fire in his eyes, who has light in his face." (pg. 13, *Secret History of the Mongols*), right from the start, was said to show promise of a great leader. It was on the same trip in which he was traded for his betrothed that his father was poisoned, and he was forced to return home to his mother despite Yisugei's agreement with his wife's family. Soon after, he witnessed gruesome death for the first time just after being abandoned by the Tayiçi'ut. A young mind is not developed to deal with such things as seeing a man speared in the back or the messy politics of a tribe. This is the foot he started on, and it taught him many things much too soon.

Now being raised with his brothers by his mother alone, he faced new struggles and had to learn how to support his family from the place of being the eldest male. He clashed heads with his brothers often, but he tried to take care of those around him. He grew to be very gracious and tried to return all that he received. Temujin developed a moral code as strong as his heart, dealing with both loyalty and betrayal.

Often the relationships he thought were supposed to be close or sacred were severed, and not of his own volition. But he gave back to those who had given him favours and was sure to show others they were appreciated, should they have reason to be. He was always one to fight his own battles and never wanted another to take the fall for himself or to be self-sacrificial in his stead. He would always be at the head of battle if the opportunity permitted. His mother had described his ambition for justice with many metaphors, not always positive. One such example of brutality was when he killed one of his own brothers. Bekter had been the aggressor to Temujin and Khasar in his code, but, in another sense, he was the reason Temujin and his other siblings were not unified. Belgütei, who had often sided with Bekter's antics, seemed to follow Temujin's lead closely thereafter. Was that out of fear? Or perhaps out of admiration for his leadership among disorder? The reasoning can only be left to speculation.

Chinggis Khan had always been known for his dislike of betrayal and appreciation of honesty. His confrontation with his brother made for a defining aspect of his need for justice. Bekter's actions against him, stealing hunts and claiming them for his own, led Temujin to have black-and-white judgements regarding interpersonal relationships. The constant swinging back and forth of relationships during his growth led him to appreciate when others were forthright in their intentions. Agreements would always be honoured, provided that one was upfront. Despite that, one of the greatest factors of Temujin's life was his relationship with his childhood companion, Jamugha. Temujin loved Jamugha dearly, and throughout their time in each other's lives, there was a lot of discrepancy in Jamugha's loyalties that Temujin was able to constantly forgive. This had been one of his greatest inconsistencies, as he took loyalty very seriously.

Although his image is one of a hard-shelled leader, he was still just a person with complex thoughts and emotions, even irrational fears such as dogs. Trust issues can be developed by anyone, not just eccentric commanders. He loved like any other and feared like them too. But because his known qualities were so fierce, those were the ones that prevailed in his public perception. Common soldiers knew how to appeal to them, such as the two soldiers who

infamously released their own captive Khan because they knew that Chinggis would not take their betrayal of his own enemy lightly. To an extent, these known qualities he had could make him predictable, but they also made him honourable. Though often viewed as eccentrics of his character, they were not much more than the traits of a man who had lived through traumas. They were nuanced, which was attested by his connection to Jamugha. Despite the position he was in, his character was often prematurely judged.

Chinggis Khan was also just Temujin, simply a person in a position of power. He was not perfect, nor could he be said to have the greatest of histories. As a warlord he devastated entire villages, keeping only small children. Or in the cases of retribution for his favoured grandson, he did not even pillage before annihilation. And interpersonally, he killed one of his own brothers. But he made allies well and was loyal to those who deserved it. His moral code within the cultural context was just and fair. He was not the greatest man to ever live, but he is far more than a brute as the stereotypes would say. Chinggis Khan grew up to be the greatest conqueror in all history, not because he was a savage, but because he was an incomparable genius.