



THE MONGOL EMPIRE

Conquest & Warfare

The Largest Contiguous Land Empire in History

TIMELINE OF CONQUEST

1206

1215

1219

1241

1258



Genghis Khan
unifies Mongolia

Capture of
Zhongdu (Beijing)

Invasion of
Khwarezmia

Invasion of
Europe

Sack of
Baghdad

From the steppes of Central Asia, the Mongols built the largest contiguous land empire in just 60 years, stretching from Korea to Hungary.

GENGHIS KHAN

Temüjin (c. 1162 – 1227)

Born into a fractured world of warring nomadic tribes, Temüjin rose from exile and captivity to unite the Mongol peoples under a single banner in 1206.

Unified the Steppe

Forged alliances and defeated rivals to unite all Mongol and Turkic tribes

Created the Yasa

A universal legal code governing military discipline, trade, and religious freedom

Meritocratic Army

Promoted commanders by ability, not birth — revolutionary for the era



GREAT KHAN

*Ruler of All
Who Live in Felt Tents*

MILITARY ORGANIZATION

10

ARBAN

The basic squad. Ten warriors who trained, fought, and camped together.

100

ZUUN

Ten arbans. Led by a captain chosen by the Khan for proven ability.

1,000

MINGGHAN

Ten zuuns. Operated as independent tactical units in battle.

10,000

TUMEN

The primary strategic unit. Could be deployed as an entire army.

The decimal system allowed rapid communication and coordination across vast distances.

TACTICS & STRATEGY



Feigned Retreat

Pretended to flee in disorder, then wheeled around to annihilate pursuers — their most devastating maneuver.



Psychological Warfare

Spread terrifying rumors ahead of their armies. Many cities surrendered without a fight.



Intelligence Network

Vast spy networks mapped enemy territory, identified water sources, and turned local merchants into informants.



Encirclement

The 'Tulughma' formation split forces into flanking wings and a reserve, surrounding enemies on all sides.



Siege Adaptation

Recruited Chinese and Persian engineers to build trebuchets, siege towers, and gunpowder weapons.



Strategic Speed

Covered 60–100 miles per day with multiple remounts. Enemies were overwhelmed before they could react.

WEAPONS & EQUIPMENT

THE COMPOSITE BOW

The Mongol warrior's primary weapon. Made of horn, sinew, and wood, it could launch arrows up to 500 meters — outranging any European bow of the era. Warriors trained from age three, learning to shoot from horseback at full gallop.

500m

effective range

160lb

draw weight

Mongol Saber

Curved blade optimized for slashing from horseback at speed

Lance & Lasso

For shock charges and pulling enemies from their mounts

Silk Undershirt

Worn under armor — arrows pushed silk into wounds without breaking it, making extraction easier

Lamellar Armor

Overlapping leather or iron plates tied with leather cords, light yet effective

Northern China & the Jin Dynasty

1211 – 1234

Genghis Khan declared war on the Jurchen Jin Dynasty in 1211, beginning a campaign that would last over two decades. The Mongols initially struggled with China's fortified cities but rapidly adapted, incorporating Chinese siege engineers and gunpowder weapons into their forces.

Zhongdu (modern Beijing) fell in 1215 after a prolonged siege. The Jin capital was systematically looted and burned. The final conquest of the Jin Dynasty was completed in 1234 under Genghis Khan's successor, Ögedei Khan.

23

Years of
Campaigning

30M+

Estimated
Casualties

1215

Fall of
Zhongdu

1234

Jin Dynasty
Destroyed

The Khwarezmian Empire

1219 – 1221

When the Shah of Khwarezmia executed Mongol trade envoys, Genghis Khan launched the most devastating military campaign in history. With 100,000–150,000 troops, he struck across Central Asia with multiple coordinated armies, a feat unmatched until the 20th century.

Bukhara

1220 | Pop: ~300,000

Genghis Khan told the people he was the punishment of God. The city was sacked and burned.

Samarkand

1220 | Pop: ~500,000

The jewel of Central Asia. Fell in just five days despite a garrison of 110,000 defenders.

Urgench

1221 | Pop: ~200,000

The bloodiest siege of the campaign. Mongols diverted the Amu Darya river to flood the city.

The Invasion of Europe

1236 – 1242

Under Batu Khan and the brilliant general Subutai, Mongol armies swept through Russia, Poland, and Hungary in coordinated campaigns that stunned Europe.

Battle of Legnica

April 9, 1241 — Silesia (Poland)

A combined army of Polish, German, and Templar knights was annihilated. The Mongols used smoke screens and feigned retreats to break the European heavy cavalry. Duke Henry II was killed and his head displayed on a lance.

Battle of Mohi

April 11, 1241 — Hungary

Subutai destroyed the Hungarian army of King Béla IV using a night river crossing and stone-throwing siege engines on an open battlefield — the first recorded use of this tactic in Europe. Hungary lost an estimated 10,000 soldiers.

The Sack of Baghdad

1258

Hulagu Khan, grandson of Genghis, led 150,000 troops against Baghdad — the crown jewel of the Islamic world and seat of the Abbasid Caliphate. The city had been the center of learning, culture, and power for over 500 years.

The Siege

The Mongols encircled the city, broke its walls with siege engines, and diverted canals to flood defenses. After 12 days of siege, the city fell on February 10, 1258. Caliph Al-Musta'sim was executed by being rolled in a carpet and trampled by horses.

The Aftermath

Estimates suggest 200,000 to 1,000,000 inhabitants were killed. The House of Wisdom — the greatest library of the medieval world — was destroyed. Books were thrown into the Tigris, which reportedly ran black with ink. The 500-year Abbasid Caliphate ended.

THE EMPIRE AT ITS PEAK

24Mkm²

Total Territory

25%

of World Population

110

Million Subjects

By 1279, the Mongol Empire was the largest contiguous land empire ever — stretching from the Pacific coast of Korea to the gates of Vienna, and from the frozen forests of Siberia to the Persian Gulf.

THE FOUR KHANATES

Yuan Dynasty

China & Mongolia

Chagatai

Central Asia

Golden Horde

Russia & E. Europe

Ilkhanate

Persia & Middle East



SUBUTAI

*Master of
Mongol Warfare*

65+

Battles Fought

32

Nations Conquered

History's Greatest General?

Subutai was Genghis Khan's most trusted general and arguably the greatest military commander in history. He directed campaigns across a wider range of territory than any other commander — from the Korean Peninsula to Hungary.

Two-Front Mastery

At Legnica and Mohi, he coordinated two armies 500 miles apart to strike on the same week.

Adaptive Genius

Invented new siege techniques for every campaign — no two battles used the same approach.

Deep Battle Doctrine

Pioneered the concept of operational-level warfare, striking deep behind enemy lines.

MILITARY LEGACY

The Mongol military innovations influenced warfare for centuries and are still studied at military academies worldwide.

Combined Arms

Integrated light cavalry, heavy cavalry, siege engineers, and infantry — a concept not fully adopted in Europe until centuries later.

Operational Maneuver

Coordinated armies across hundreds of miles with precise timing. Soviet Deep Battle doctrine was directly inspired by Subutai's campaigns.

Intelligence Warfare

Systematic espionage, disinformation, and psychological operations were core doctrine, not afterthoughts.

Gunpowder Spread

Mongol conquests carried Chinese gunpowder technology westward, transforming European and Middle Eastern warfare forever.

Meritocracy in Command

Promoting officers by ability rather than birth created a professional military class adopted by later empires.

The Yam Postal System

A relay station network spanning the empire enabled communication speeds unmatched until the telegraph.



*"The greatest happiness is to vanquish
your enemies and chase them before you."*

— attributed to Genghis Khan

THE MONGOL EMPIRE

1206 – 1368