

Inspector Rex's History Snippet #35



Attribution **Bradley Betts** Voracious consumer of historical knowledge

Why is Genghis Khan called Khan? Is he Muslim? If not, why did he have Khan after Genghis?

Genghis Khan was not called *khan* because he was a Muslim - Muslims are often called *Khan* because of Genghis.

Khan is a very old Turko-Mongolic title meaning, roughly, 'chieftain'. It probably derives from the **Ruanruan** (old Mongolic) word *qayan*, meaning 'ruler'.

All the leaders of the Mongol tribes were titled *khan*, but no other was called *Ghengis*. It derives, ultimately, from the Chinese *Zhèng*, meaning 'just' or 'true', and was granted to Ghengis because he united all the Mongol tribes into one nation.

Ghengis Khan is probably best translated, given the context, as 'true ruler'.

His actual name, given him by his mother, was Temüjin, which means 'blacksmith'.

Ghengis founded the Mongol Empire in 1206, and died in 1227. After a period of internecine warfare, his grandson Kublai Khan took the reins in 1260, and on his death in 1294 the Empire split into four successor states: The Golden Horde (yellow), the Ilkhanate (light green) the Chagatai Khanate (dark green) and the Yuan dynasty (purple).



Gif taken from Wikipedia.

Click on the link to see the conquered areas referred to above

<https://qph.fs.quoracdn.net/main-qimg-d56491679449eb14e4f7f4ec69fa54dd>

You will note that all of what is now Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, and part of Pakistan were all ruled over by Mongols from around 1259.

The people of these regions were all ethnically Turkic already. The title *khan*, or local variants, would already have been familiar to them. While the Mongolian Empire and its successor states were religiously tolerant, lengthy Mongol rule halted or even reversed the Persianisation of local culture (due to previous conversion to Islam and rule by Persian nobles) and reasserted the primacy of Turko-Mongolic culture in these regions.

That is why many people from these regions are now called Khan.

Comment by Inspector Rex

Where do these lines come from?

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.

Where is Xanadu? Is it a real or fictional place?
Was Kubla Khan a real person?
Is there a river Alph?