

The Genetic Legacy of Genghis Khan



Genghis Khan, leader of one of the fiercest armies the world has ever seen, violently acquired more territory during his life time than any other conqueror in the world. At the time of his death in 1227, Genghis Khan had succeeded in the unification of the Mongol people and organized an invincible army of fearless nomadic warriors that would rule the largest empire in the world. After his death, his sons and grandsons continued to expand his empire until it stretched from Korea to Hungary. One grandson, Kublai Khan, became emperor of China and the founder of the Yüan dynasty.

Descendents of Genghis Khan

Not only was Genghis Khan driven by a lust for power, but he was also driven by lust itself. Genghis brought a new wife home from every campaign and had a harem of at least 500 women. According to writings 100 years after his death, there were already more than 20,000 people of his lineage at that time.

A recent population genetics study, reported by the American Journal of Human Genetics, examined the Y chromosomes of 2,123 men from regions across Asia. The Y chromosome, found only in men, is passed down unchanged from father to son just like a surname. In this study, over 90% of the subjects had a very diverse Y chromosome profile, indicating multiple paternal ancestors. In sharp contrast, 8% of the subjects had Y chromosomes that were essentially identical, indicating a recent common ancestor. It is estimated that this chromosome occurs in 16,000,000 men, or 0.5% of the world's population. This study, authored in part by the world renowned geneticist Spencer Wells, concludes that this lineage is likely from male descendents of Genghis Khan and his male relatives.

While the story is still debated among some geneticists because there are no documented living relatives of Genghis Khan, most argue there is no other plausible explanation for such wide distribution of a single genetic profile. Finding the tomb of Genghis Khan could provide the definitive evidence needed to answer any lingering doubts to this fascinating discovery.

Genghis Khan brought a new wife home from every campaign.

16 million men in the world are thought to carry the Genghis Khan Y chromosome.

Setting the Standard for Quality DNA Identification



Chromosomal Laboratories, Inc.
1825 W. Crest Lane
Phoenix, AZ 85027
877.434.0292
623.434.0292
FAX: 623.321.6118
www.chromosomal-labs.com
info@chromosomal-labs.com

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