

Genghis Khan's reputation as history's most fertile father challenged by 9 mystery men

Millions of men bear the genetic legacy of Genghis Khan, the famously fertile Mongolian ruler who died in 1227. Researchers have now recognized ten other men whose fecundity has left a lasting impression on present-day populations. The team's study points to sociopolitical factors that foster such lineages, but the identities of the men who left their genetic stamp remains unknown.

The case for Genghis Khan's genetic legacy is strong, if circumstantial. A 2003 paper led by Chris Tyler-Smith, an evolutionary geneticist now at the Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute in Hinxton, UK, discovered that 8% of men in 16 populations spanning Asia (and 0.5% of men worldwide) shared nearly identical Y-chromosome sequences. The variation that did exist in their DNA suggested that the lineage began around 1,000 years ago in Mongolia.

In addition to Genghis Khan and his male descendants, researchers have previously identified the founders of two other highly successful Y-chromosome lineages: one that began in China with Giocangga, a Qinq Dynasty ruler who died in 15823, and another belonging to the medieval Uí Néill dynasty in Ireland.

Genghis Khan's paternal lineage again stood out, as did Giocangga's, Jobling's team reports in the *European Journal of Human Genetics*¹. The other nine lineages originated throughout Asia, from the Middle East to southeast Asia, dating to between 2100 bc and ad 700. Jobling warns that these dates come with huge margins of error, but he notes that the estimates for the lineages attributed to Khan and Giocangga are very close to those of past studies.

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