

ATL Research

Genghis Khan and Espionage

Read the following passage from the essay “The Mongol Intelligence Apparatus: The Triumphs of Genghis Khan’s Spy Network”, pp.3-5:

In 1162, a young Mongol boy by the name of Temujin was born with a blood clot in his fist. This was said to be a sign of a great leader. The prophecy was fulfilled in a way few could have foreseen. Temujin was to become the leader of one of the greatest empires in human history. He was a great military strategist, but his unparalleled ability to run intelligence operations was the key to his victories.

An early *anda* (blood brother) of Temujin’s, named Jamuqa, would become one of his earliest rivals. Jamuqa and Temujin were both promising young Mongol leaders. Their companionship was real and the bond between them was not easily broken. It was Jamuqa who had aided Temujin in his battle against the Merkit tribe to recover his kidnapped wife Berta. In 1206, however, a *quriltai* (a meeting of tribal and military leadership) was convened and Jamuqa was conferred as Gur Khan (Universal Ruler). This caused some division amongst the Mongol peoples. Jamuqa and Temujin were two strong personalities with equally strong followings. Although Jamuqa was considered the superior military strategist, it was Temujin that had an aptitude for accessing intelligence and could enable various groups to coexist. Their friendship quickly dissolved after the *quriltai*. Neither men were fit for subordinate roles.

The practice of using spies or scouts was not new to these men. In fact, such a large number of spies were used that much intelligence had to be passed off as disinformation. By the time Gur Khan sent

out his “defectors”, Temujin had already been declared Genghis Khan (Rightful Ruler) of his people. The disinformation Gur Khan’s spies delivered Genghis was irrelevant.

Gur Khan was clearly readying his troops for battle. Genghis would reciprocate. There were numerous skirmishes between the two Mongol Khans, many of which Gur Khan would be victorious. But Genghis’ men had an unsurpassed devotion to him, a trait Gur Khan sorely lacked. With each passing scuffle, more Mongol clans would revert to Genghis. His fate sealed, Gur Khan asked his former *anda* to put him to death. In ceremonial fashion (without the spilling of blood), Genghis Khan broke Gur Khan’s back. Gur Khan was not the only person who felt threatened by the ascension of Genghis. Senggum, the son of Ong Khan and partner of Gur Khan, devised a plan to invite Genghis to a conciliatory meeting and assassinate him. After Genghis failed to show, Senggum prepared his men to attack. The assault proved ineffective against Genghis’ men. News of the assassination attempt and the corresponding counterattack had all been leaked by two shepherds. The Secret History of the Mongols insinuates that these two men, Badai and Kishliq, were Genghis’ spies. Others warned him of the assassination attempt, but it was his own well-placed verifiable sources that assuaged any doubts he may have had. If not for his crafty manipulation of sources, Genghis may have never outlasted his rivals and propelled himself into the pages of history.

References:

De Hartog, *Genghis Khan: Conqueror of the World*, pp.20-25.

Question:

"...but it was his own well-placed verifiable sources that assuaged any doubts he may have had. If not for his crafty manipulation of



sources, Genghis may have never outlasted his rivals and propelled himself into the pages of history." Using the text above and your own research, **explain** how Genghis Khan employed spies to gain advantage over his rivals. (6)

