

## Terror

One of the most successful strategies employed in Mongol warfare was terror. When a city was captured, for example, the entire civilian population could be executed - men, women, children, priests, even the cats and dogs - with a handful of survivors allowed to escape and tell of the atrocity in the neighboring towns. Consequently, when towns heard of the Mongol's approach many surrendered without a fight in the hope of clemency, which was often given. An even subtler strategy was used in the conflict with the Jin Jurchen Dynasty of northern China in the first decade of the 13th century CE when the Mongols repeatedly sacked cities, sometimes the same city several times, and then allowed the Jin to retake them, obliging them to deal with the chaos.

Another utterly ruthless strategy was to use prisoners as human shields when Mongol troops advanced on a fortified city unwise enough to put up resistance, even to dress up prisoners as Mongol warriors and march them in the front ranks so that defenders wasted their precious arrows on killing their own compatriots. A further source of terror was the Mongol treatment of the dead; bodies were mutilated and warriors often took trophies from the fallen, usually the ears of their victims.

In summary, then, the Mongols were unstoppable in field battles for all of the above reasons combined, as the noted military historian S. R. Turnbull remarks: