

THE SECRET HISTORY OF
THE MONGOLS

The Origin of Chinghis Khan

An Adaptation of the *Yuan Ch'ao Pi Shih*,
Based Primarily on the English Translation
by Francis Woodman Cleaves

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When Chiledu saw the three Mongol coming
he whipped his dun-colored horse
and rode off around a nearby hill with the three men behind him.
He cut back around the far side of the hill
and rode back to Hogelun Ujin, the girl he'd just married,
who stood waiting for him at the front of their cart.
"Did you see the look on the faces of those three men?" she asked him.
"From their faces it looks like they mean to kill you.
As long as you've got your life
there'll always be girls for you to choose from.
There'll always be women to ride in your cart.
As long as you've got your life
you'll be able to find some girl to marry.
When you find her,
just name her Hogelun for me,
but go now and save your own life!"
Then she pulled off her shirt and held it out to him, saying:
"And take this to remember me,
to remember my scent."
Chiledu reached out from his saddle and took the shirt in his hands.
With the three Mongol close behind him
he struck his dun colored horse with his whip
and took off down the Onan River at full speed.
The three Mongol chased him across seven hills
before turning around and returning to Hogelun's cart.
Then Yesugei the Brave grasped the reins of the cart,
his elder brother Nekun Taisi rode in front to guide them,
and the younger brother Daritai Odchigin rode along by the wheels.
As they rode far back toward their camp,
Hogelun began to cry, saying:
"My young master Chiledu has never had to set his face into the wind.
He's never had to ride hungry across desert lands.
And now you've made him run for his life,
riding into the wind.
He looks ahead,
and the wind tosses his two braids of hair onto his back.
He turns to look back,

and the braids are tossed onto his breast.
The wind tosses them forward,
then tosses them back
as he rides alone across desert lands."
Then she set up a loud wailing,
and she cried till she stirred up the waters of the Onan River,
till she shook the trees in the forest and the grass in the valleys.
But as the party approached their camp
Daritai, riding beside her, warned her to stop:
"This fellow who held you in his arms,
he's already ridden over the mountains.
This man who's lost you,
he's crossed many rivers by now.
You can call out his name,
but he can't see you now even if he looks back.
If you tried to find him now
you won't even find his tracks.
So be still now," he told her.
Then Yesugei took Hogelun Ujin to his tent as his wife.

Since the last message Ambaghai Khan sent
had named both his son Khadagan and his nephew Khutula,
all the Mongol and Tayichigud people gathered in the Khorkhonagh Valley for a Great Assembly.
They decided to make Khutula their new ruler
and this set the Mongol to dancing and feasting.
Once they made Khutula their khan
they danced around the Great Branching Tree of Khorkhonagh,
dancing until they'd beaten down a ditch as deep as their waist,
dancing until they'd raised up the dust as high as their knees.

So Khutula Khan and Khadagan went to war with the Tatar.
Thirteen times they met each other in battle
but they weren't able to get their revenge.
They weren't able to get satisfaction for Ambaghai Khan's death.
It was during one of these battles
that Yesugei captured a Tatar chief named Temujin Uge.
Yesugei's people were camped at Deligun Hill on the Onan then,

and Hogelun Ujin was about to give birth to her first child.
It was here that Chingis Khan was born.
As he was born
he emerged clutching a blood clot the size of a knucklebone die in his right hand.
They gave him the name Temujin, saying:
“He was born when his father had captured the Tatar, Temujin Uge.”
Yesugei had four sons by Hogelun Ujin,
Temujin, Khasar, Khachigun, and Temuge.
Then they had one daughter, Temulun.
When Temujin was nine years old
Khasar was seven and Alchidai Khachigun was five.
Temuge Odchigin was only three and Temulun was still in the cradle.

That year, when Temujin was nine,
Yesugei decided to take him to visit his mother’s tribe, saying:
“I’ll ask for a girl from his mother’s tribe to marry him.”
On their way to the Olkhunugud tribe they met an Ungirad man, Dei the Wise,
camped between Mount Chegcher and Mount Chikhurkhu.
Dei the Wise addressed Yesugei as if they were related by marriage:
“My friend Yesugei, travelling so far,
who are you going to see?”
“I’m on my way to the Olkhunugud,
the tribe of this son of mine’s mother,
to find a girl for him there,” he replied.
Dei the Wise said to him:
“I look at your son and I see
his eyes contain fire,
his face fills with light.
My friend Yesugei, I had a dream last night.
A white falcon holding the Sun and the Moon in its claws
flew down from the sky and lit on my hand.
I told my family this, saying:
‘Whenever I saw the Sun or the Moon in my dreams before
it was always from a distance.
Now this falcon, taking them in his claws,
has brought them both into my hand.
The bird was all white and it brought them to me.

What does this good omen mean?’ I asked.
My friend Yesugei,
I had this dream the very moment you were leading your son to our camp.
What could it mean?
Obviously it was a sign that a nobleman like yourself would come to our camp.
Since the days of old we Ungirad have been protected by the beauty of our daughters,
by the loveliness of our granddaughters,
and so we’ve stayed out of battles and wars.
When you elect a new khan,
we take our loveliest daughters and place them on carts.
Harnessing a black camel to the cart,
we have him trot off to the khan’s tent.
We offer our daughters to sit there beside him and be his khatun.
We don’t challenge empires;
we don’t go to war with our neighbors.
We just bring up our daughters and place them in the front of the carts.
Harnessing a black camel to the cart,
we lead them off to the khan’s tent.
We offer our daughters to sit by the khan,
and he places them up on the throne.
Since the days of old the Ungirad have had khatun as their shields.
We’ve survived by the loveliness of our granddaughters,
by the beauty of our daughters.
When one of our boys wants to marry
you can judge the wealth of our camp to decide if you want him.
But as for our girls you only have to look at their beauty.
My friend Yesugei, let’s go to my tent.
I’ve got a young daughter there.
My friend should meet her.”
Dei the Wise led Yesugei’s horse to his tent and helped him dismount.
When Yesugei saw Dei’s daughter he was impressed.
She was a girl whose face filled with light,
whose eyes filled with fire,
and he began to consider her father’s proposal.
She was ten years old, a year older than Temujin,
and her name was Borte.
After spending the night in the tent,

the next morning Yesugei asked Dei for his daughter.
"I could let you have her after awhile,
waiting for you to ask me again and again,
but who'd praise me for stalling?
I could let you have her right away,
just waiting for you to ask me twice,
and who'd curse me for replying too quick?
No, this girl's fate is not to grow old by the door of the tent she was born in.
I'll be happy to give you my daughter.
But now you should go,
and leave your son with me for awhile,
so we can get to know our new son-in-law."
Both men gave their pledge to the other
and Yesugei added:
"I'll leave you my son for awhile.
You should know that he's frightened by dogs.
Don't let the dogs frighten him, my friend."
Then Yesugei offered his lead horse as a gift,
and leaving Temujin in Dei's tent, he rode back to his people.

As he rode back Yesugei came on a camp of the Tatar,
who were feasting below Mount Chegcher on the Yellow Steppe.
Tired and thirsty, he dismounted to join in the feasting.
But the Tatar recognized who he was, and said to themselves:
"Yesugei of the Kiyani clan is among us here."
They remembered the times he'd defeated them in battle.
Secretly they decided to kill him,
mixing poisons into the drinks he was offered.
On his way back he felt something was wrong
and after riding three days to get back to his tent
he knew he was dying.
Yesugei the Brave spoke from his bed, saying:
"I feel that I'm dying.
Who's here beside me?"
Someone answered him:
"Munglig, the son of Old Man Charakha is here."
Yesugei called the boy over to him and said:

"Munglig, my child, my sons are still very young.
As I rode back from leaving Temujin with his wife's family
I was secretly poisoned by the Tatar.
I can feel that I'm dying now.
Take care of my sons like they were your own little brothers.
Take care of my wife like she was your own elder sister.
Go quickly now, Munglig, my child, and bring Temujin back."
Then Yesugei passed away.
Following Yesugei's last words Munglig went to Dei the Wise and said:
"My Elder Brother Yesugei's heart aches
and he is constantly thinking of his son.
I've come to take Temujin back to him."
Dei the Wise answered him:
"If my friend thinks so much of his son, I'll let him go.
When he's seen his father again, have him quickly come back."
So Father Munglig brought Temujin back to his family.

The following spring Ambaghai's widows, Orbei and Sokhatai,
the senior women of the Tayichigud clan,
performed the ceremony of sacrifice to the ancestor's spirits.
By the time Hogelun Ujin arrived for the service
they'd already burnt all the meat
and divided it between them, leaving her nothing.
Hogelun said to them:
"You must be saying to yourselves,
'Yesugei the Brave is dead now and his sons are still boys.'
So you think you can just leave me out of the ceremony
and keep it all for yourselves!
You think you can divide up the meats and leave nothing for me?
I see what you're up to.
You think that I'll just sit here while you're feasting from now on,
that you don't even have to invite me to join you.
And one morning you'll break camp and move on,
and not even wake me."
Orbei and Sokhatai, the two old khatun, answered her:
"Obviously you live by some rule that says,
'I don't need to be offered some food before I take something to eat.'

You have the custom of eating whatever you can find.
You seem to have a rule that says,
'I don't need to be invited to take part in a feast.'
Your custom is to just come uninvited and take for yourself.
Tell us, Hogelun, do you say to yourself,
'Ambaghai Khan is dead now,'
is that why you think you can insult us this way?"
Later the old women conferred among themselves and said:
"The best thing to do is abandon these people,
these mothers and sons.
We should break camp and leave them behind."

So at dawn the next day the two chiefs of the Tayichigud clan,
Targhutai Kiriltugh and Todogen Girte,
ordered the people to move on down the Onan River.
Old Man Charakha saw they were leaving Hogelun Ujin behind,
that they were abandoning these mothers and sons,
so he stepped forward, protesting to Todogen Girte.
But Todogen said to him:
"Everything has changed now.
The deepest waters are dry,
the brightest gem has been broken to pieces,"
and the chief ordered the people to keep moving along.
Then when Old Man Charakha turned away from him
Todogen yelled back:
"What gives you the right to say that we're wrong to do this?"
and he drove a spear into the old man's back.
Old Man Charakha struggled back to his tent
and lay down in great pain from his wound.
Temujin came to his bedside and the old man said to him:
"As the Tayichigud were taking the people your good father assembled,
as they were taking our people away from the camp,
I stepped out and protested to Todogen.
See what he's done to me."
Temujin sat and wept by the dying man
and then left the tent.

When Hogelun Ujin saw the people were leaving her
she grabbed up the standard of Yesugei the Brave
and rode out into the travelling camp.
Just the sight of her holding the banner
and shouting caused half of the people to stop and turn back with her.
But the ones who turned back couldn't stay.
They were forced to return with the others by the Tayichigud
and told to move on.
After the Tayichigud brothers had abandoned the old camp,
leaving only Hogelun Ujin,
her sons and her little ones,
after the Tayichigud had taken all of the people away,
leaving only the mothers and sons,
Hogelun Ujin, a woman born with great power,
took care of her sons.
Proudly she put on her headdress and gathered the folds of her skirt.
She went up and down the banks of the Onan
and gathered pears and wild fruit.
Day and night she found food for their mouths.
Mother Hogelun, a woman born with great courage,
took care of her sons.
Taking a juniper stick in her hands
she fed them by digging up roots.
These boys who were nourished on the wild onion and pear,
who were fed by Ujin, the Mother,
became the great Lords of all men.
These boys who lived on the roots that she dug for them,
who were cared for with pride by Mother Ujin,
became the wise men who gave us our laws.
These boys who were nourished on the wild onion and pear,
who were fed by the beautiful Ujin,
grew up to be fine, daring men.
Once they'd grown into men,
they pledged to themselves: "Now we'll feed our mother."
They sat on the banks of the Mother Onan
and bent needles they'd found into fishhooks.
With these hooks they caught a few misshapen fish.

They made nets to sweep through the river
and they caught tiny fish.
With these in their turn they helped feed their mother.

One day Temujin and Khasar,
along with their half-brothers Begter and Belgutei,
were sitting together on the riverbank
pulling a hook through the water
when they saw a shiny fish had been caught on it.
When they landed the fish
Begter and Belgutei took it away from Temujin and Khasar.
Temujin and Khasar ran back to their tent to complain to Mother Ujin:
“Begter and Belgutei took a fish from us,
a shiny fish that bit on our hook.”
But even though Begter and Belgutei were only her stepsons
Mother Ujin replied:
“Stop this!
How can brothers act this way with each other?
Now, when we’ve no one to fight beside us but our own shadows,
when there’s nothing to whip our horses but their own tails,
how will we get our revenge on the Tayichigud brothers?
Why do you fight among yourselves like the five sons of Mother Alan?
Don’t be this way.”
But Temujin and Khasar wouldn’t listen to what she said.
They ignored her warning and answered instead:
“Besides that, yesterday they took a bird from us,
a lark we’d shot down with one of our own arrows.
And now they’ve stolen a fish.
How can we live with them?”
The two boys pushed aside the door of the tent and stalked out.
While Begter sat in a clearing watching the family’s nine horses grazing,
Temujin hid himself in the grass and crept up from behind
while Khasar crept up from the front.
Then suddenly they sprang up,
drawing their arrows to shoot,
and Begter, seeing what they meant to do to him, said:
“How can you do this to me,

when our mouths are tilled
with the bitterness of what the Tayichigud clan has done,
when we ask ourselves,
‘How can we get our revenge on them?’
how can you treat me like some dirt in your eye,
like something that’s keeping the food from your mouth?
How can you do this,
when there’s no one to fight beside us but our own shadows,
when there’s nothing to whip our horses but their own tails,
how can you kill me?
But if you must
don’t destroy the fire of my hearth.
Don’t kill my brother Belgutei too!”
Then Begter sat down before them,
crossing his legs,
and waited to see what they’d do to him.
At close range both Temujin and Khasar shot arrows into him,
striking him down in the front and the back,
and then left him.
When they got back to the tent
Mother Ujin could see on their faces what they’d done.
She looked at her two sons,
then pointing first at Temujin said to them:
“Killers, both of you!
When he came out screaming from the heat of my womb
this one was born holding a clot of black blood in his hand.
And now you’ve both destroyed without thinking,
like the Khasar dog who eats its own afterbirth,
like the panther that heedlessly leaps from a cliff,
like the lion who can’t control its own fury,
like the python that thinks: ‘I’ll swallow my prey alive,’
like the falcon that foolishly dives at its own shadow,
like the river pike who silently swallows the smaller fish,
like the he-camel who snaps at the heels of his colt,
like the wolf who hides himself in the blizzard to hunt down his prey,
like the mandarin duck who eats his own chicks when they fall behind,
like the jackal who fights with anyone who’s touched him,

The Wars in Mongolia

Temujin and Jamugha pitched their tents in the Khorkonagh Valley.
With their people united in one great camp,
the two leaders decided they should renew their friendship,
their pledge of anda.
They remembered when they'd first made that pledge,
and said, "We should love one another again."
That first time they'd met Temujin was eleven years old.
In those days
when he and his family had been abandoned by the Tayichigud,
he'd first met Jamugha,
a young noble of the Jadaran clan,
and they'd played at games of knucklebone dice on the banks of the Onan,
casting bones on the frozen waters of the Onan.
Jamugha had given Temujin the knucklebone of a roebuck
and in return Temujin gave Jamugha a knucklebone of brass.
With that exchange the two boys had pledged themselves anda forever.
Then later that spring
when the two were off in the forest together shooting arrows,
Jamugha took two pieces of calf-horn.
He bored holes in them,
glued them together to fashion a whistling arrowhead,
and he gave this arrow as a present to Temujin.
In return Temujin gave him a beautiful arrow with a cypresswood tip.
With that exchange of arrows
they declared themselves anda a second time.
So Temujin and Jamugha said to each other:
"We've heard the elders say,
'When two men become anda their lives become one.
One will never desert the other and will always defend him.'

This is the way we'll act from now on.
We'll renew our old pledge and love each other forever."
Temujin took the golden belt he'd received
in the spoils from Toghtogai's defeat
and placed it around Anda Jamugha's waist.
Then he led out the Merkid chief's warhorse,
a light yellow mare with black mane and tail,
and gave it to Anda Jamugha to ride.
Jamugha took the golden belt he'd received
in the spoils from Dayir Usun's defeat
and placed it around the waist of Anda Temujin.
Then he led out the whitish-tan warhorse of Dayir Usun
and had Anda Temujin ride on it.
Before the cliffs of Khuldaghar
in the Khorkhonagh Valley,
beneath the Great Branching Tree of the Mongol,
they pledged their friendship and promised to love one another.
They held a feast on the spot
and there was great celebration.
Temujin and Jamugha spent that night alone,
sharing one blanket to cover them both.

Temujin and Jamugha loved each other for one year,
and when half of the second year had passed
they agreed it was time to move camp.
It was the sixteenth day of the summer's first moon,
the Red Circle day,
when they broke their camp and set out.
They rode together at the head of the carts
as the camp moved across the steppe,
and Jamugha turned to his friend, saying:
"Anda, Anda Temujin,
let's pitch our camp near the mountains.
Let the cattle herders make a camp for themselves.
Let's pitch our camp near the stream.
Let the shepherds look for their own food."
Temujin couldn't understand what Jamugha's words meant.

He said nothing in reply
and brought his horse to a stop,
allowing the carts of the travelling camp to pass by
until he saw the carts of his own family's tents.
He rode up to the cart where Mother Hogelun was riding
and said to her:
"Anda Jamugha said to me,
'Let's pitch our camp near the mountains.
Let the cattle herders make a camp for themselves.
Let's pitch our camp near the stream.
Let the shepherds look for their own food.'
I did not understand what he meant so I said nothing.
I've come to you thinking,
'I'll ask my mother if she knows what he means.' "

Before Mother Hogelun could answer
Borte Ujin spoke up, saying:
"They say Anda Jamugha's a fickle man.
I think the time's come when he's finally grown tired of us.
These words are meant to cover some kind of plot.
When he stops, let's not pitch our camp.
Let's tell our people to keep right on moving,
and if we travel all night
by daybreak our camps will be well separated."

Agreeing with what Borte Ujin had said,
when Jamugha stopped to pitch camp
Temujin ordered his people to keep moving,
and they drove their carts on through the night.
As they travelled Temujin's people passed by the Tayichigud camp.
When the Tayichigud heard them approaching
they fled from their camp toward the place Jamugha had pitched his tents.
When Temujin's people reached the camp the Tayichigud had abandoned
they found a young boy named Kokochu who'd been left behind
and they gave him to Mother Hogelun.
From that time on
Mother Hogelun took care of him.

After travelling all that night
they halted at dawn to see who had followed them.
Camping circles from nearly all of the clans had chosen to follow Temujin.
People arrived from the Jalayir,
from the Onggur and the Manghud.
Ogele Cherbi, Bogorchu's kin, joined from the Arulad,
and Jelme's younger brother, Subetei the Brave,
left the Uriangkhai to join him.
People came in from the Besud, from the Suldus and the Khongkhotan.
Chaghagan Uua, chief of the Chinos clan,
came to join from Jamugha's camp.
Camp circles arrived from the Sukeken,
from the Olkhunugud, the Dhorolas, the Dorben,
from the Noyakin, the Oronar, and the Barulas.

Then in came Khorchi of the Bagarin.
When Khorchi arrived he spoke with Temujin, saying:
"My people are descended from the woman Holy Ancestor Bodonchar captured
and took for his wife.
Because of this, we're such close kin to Jamugha
that we're just like people who share the same mother's belly,
like people who come from the waters of the same mother's womb.
We'd never have left Jamugha's camp.
But a sign from Heaven came to me in a dream
and told me that Temujin was meant to be our leader.
In this dream I saw a great cow enter our camp.
First she circled Jamugha,
then she charged at his tent,
then charged at Jamugha himself,
striking him with her head and breaking one of her horns.
'Bring me my horn!' she cried to him,
'Bring me my horn!'
bellowing at him as she stood there
kicking up dustclouds with her hooves,
with one crooked horn on her head.
Then an ox with no horns at all

pulled up the tent stake and harnessed himself to the cart.
He drew away Jamugha's cart until he came up to Temujin.
He stopped there and began bellowing,
'Heaven and Earth have agreed
that Temujin should be Lord of the Nation.
I've come to bring you the Nation.'
These are the signs I've seen and the dreams I've received.
Now, if you, Temujin, become Lord of the Nation,
just as I have predicted,
how will you show me your gratitude and make me rejoice?"
Temujin answered him:
"If I am allowed to rule the Nation
I'll make you a captain often thousand men."
But Khorchi replied:
"What kind of happiness will being the captain often thousand men bring me?
Me, a man who's foretold great things to come!
After you've made me a captain often thousand men
allow me to choose thirty wives
from among the most beautiful girls you've assembled.
And remember everything I've said will come to pass."

Later Daritai, Temujin's uncle, arrived with a camp circle of followers,
along with people from the Geniges, Jadaran, and Saghayid clans.
When Temujin had moved his camp to Kimurgha Stream
Sacha Beki and Taichu, the eldest descendants of Khabul Khan,
left Jamugha and brought with them the Jurkin clan to join Temujin.
Then Khuchar Beki, son of Temujin's uncle Nekun Taisi, joined as well.
Finally Altan, the eldest descendant of Khutula Khan, arrived.
All these men left Jamugha to join Temujin's camp at Kimurgha Stream.

Then they moved the whole camp
to the shores of Blue Lake in the Gurelgu Mountains.
Altan, Khuchar, and Sacha Beki conferred with each other there,
and then said to Temujin:
"We want you to be khan.
Temujin, if you'll be our khan
we'll search through the spoils

for the beautiful women and virgins,
for the great palace tents,
for the young virgins and loveliest women,
for the finest geldings and mares.
• We'll gather all these and bring them to you.
When we go off to hunt for wild game
we'll go out first to drive them together for **you** to kill.
We'll drive the wild animals of the steppe together
so that their bellies are touching.
We'll drive the wild game of the mountains together
so that they stand leg to leg.
If we disobey your command during battle
take away our possessions, our children, and wives.
Leave us behind in the dust,
cutting off our heads where we stand and letting them fall to the ground.
If we disobey your counsel in peacetime
take away our tents and our goods, our wives, and our children.
Leave us behind when you move,
abandoned in the desert without a protector."
Having given their word,
having taken this oath,
they proclaimed Temujin khan of the Mongol
and gave him the name Chingis Khan.

Once Chingis had been elected
Ogele Cherbi, Bogorchu's young kinsman,
was named as his archer.
Soyiketu Cherbi promised him:
"I'll see to it
you'll never miss your morning drink,
you'll never miss your evening meal.'
and he became head cook.
Degei promised him:
"I'll see to it
that a lamb is brought in for the morning broth,
that another's brought in for the evening.
I'll herd the speckled sheep

and see that your carts are filled with their wool.
I'll herd the yellow sheep
and see that your flocks are filled with their number,"
and he became head shepherd.
Then his younger brother, Guchugur, promised:
"I'll see to it
that the lynch-pins are always tight on the wheels of your carts,
that the axletree doesn't break when the carts are on the road.
I'll be in charge of the tent carts."
Dodai Cherbi promised:
"I'll be in charge of the men and women who serve in your tents."
Then Chingis appointed three men,
along with his brother Khasar,
to be his personal swordsmen, saying:
Anyone who thinks they are stronger,
you'll strike off their heads.
Anyone who thinks they're more courageous,
you'll cut them in two.
My brother Belgutei will bring the geldings in from the pasture.
He will be in charge of the horses.
Mulkhalkhu will be in charge of the cattle.
Arkhai Khasar, Taghai, Sukegei, and Chakhurkhan,
these four warriors will be like my arrows,
like the arrows I shoot near and far."
Then Subetai the Brave promised him:
"I'll be like a rat and gather up others,
I'll be like a black crow and gather great flocks.
Like the felt blanket that covers a horse,
I'll gather up soldiers to cover you.
Like the felt blanket that guards a tent from the wind,
I'll assemble great armies to shelter your tent."
Then Chingis Khan turned to Bogorchu and Jelme, and said:
"You two,
from the time when there was no one to fight beside me but my own shadow,
you were my shadow and gave my mind rest.
That will always be in my thoughts.
From the time when there was nothing to whip my horses with but their own tails,

you were their tails and gave my heart peace.
That will always be in my heart.
Since you were the first two who came to my side
you'll be chiefs over all the rest of the people."
Then Chingis Khan spoke to the people, saying:
"If Heaven and Earth grant me their protection so that my powers increase,
then each of you elders of the clans
who've chosen to leave Anda Jamugha and follow me
will be happy with the choice that you've made.
I'll give you each your position and office."

Chingis sent messengers to Toghoril Khan of the Kereyid, saying:
"They've made Temujin khan and given him the name Chingis Khan."
Toghoril Khan sent a message back saying:
"You're correct to make my son Temujin your khan.
How could the Mongol survive without a ruler?
Never go back on your decision.
Now that you've put this collar on your coat never remove it."
Then Chingis sent his warriors Arkhai Khasar and Chakhurkhan
off with a message to Jamugha,
and Jamugha sent a message back addressed to Altan and Khuchar, saying:
"You two,
why have you done this to us?
Why have you come between Anda Temujin and myself?
It's as if you came at us with a knife,
slashing our legs,
stabbing our sides to keep us apart.
Why didn't you elect Anda Temujin khan while we were still together?
What thoughts are behind this move to elect him now?
Altan and Khuchar,
don't forget these promises you've made.
See to it that my anda's mind is at rest and serve him well."

Sometime later, Taichar, a young kinsman of Jamugha's,
set out to steal the horses of our kinsman, Jochi Darmala.
Jochi Darmala's horses were grazing on the Donkey-back Steppe.
Taichar succeeded in stealing the entire herd

From his refuge in Kai-feng
the Golden King sued for peace with Chingis Khan,
sending one of his sons with a hundred companions as tribute,
saying: "Let him serve as your dayguard."
Accepting this tribute Chingis Khan said:
"I will withdraw my troops,"
and he took his army north by way of Chu-yung Kuan.
He sent the army of the Left Hand
commanded by his brother Khasar
along the shore of the Gulf of Chihai, ordering him:
"Make your camp at the city of Ta-ning.
Take this city
and continue north to where the Jurchid people live.
If these people resist you, attack them.
If they surrender to you, pass by their cities.
Go north to the Taur River
and follow it back to the mountains.
Come back and join me at the Great Camp."
He sent three of his commanders with Khasar
and they took the city of Ta-ning,
made the Jurchid people surrender themselves,
capturing all of the cities along the way.
Then Khasar, riding back along the Taur River,
reported Chingis Khan at the Great Camp in Mongolia.

Once Chingis Khan heard that his hundred ambassadors led by Ukhuna
had been arrested and killed by the Moslems, he said:
"How did the Moslems break my golden reins?
I'll go to war with them to get satisfaction for this crime;
to win revenge for their killing of Ukhuna and my hundred ambassadors."
His Tatar wife, Yesui Khatun, spoke:
"The Khan will cross the high mountain passes,
cross over wide rivers,
waging a long war far from home.
Before he leaves has he thought about setting his people in order?
There is no eternity for all things born in this world.
When your body falls like an old tree

who will rule your people,
these fields of tangled grasses?
When your body crumbles like an old pillar
who will rule your people,
these great flocks of birds?
Which of your four heroic sons will you name?
What I've said everyone knows is true,
your sons, your commanders, all the common people,
even someone as low as myself.
You should decide now who it will be."
Chingis Khan replied:
"Even though she's only a woman,
what Yesui says is quite right.
My commanders, my sons, Bogorchu, Mukhali, and the others,
none of you have had the nerve to say this to me.
I've been forgetting it as if I won't follow my ancestors someday.
I've been sleeping like I won't someday be taken by death.
Jochi, you are my eldest son.
What do you say?"
But before Jochi could speak, Chagadai spoke up:
"When you tell Jochi to speak
do you offer him the succession?
How could we allow ourselves to be ruled
by this bastard son of a Merkid?"
Jochi rose up and grabbed Chagadai by the collar, saying:
"I've never been set apart from my brothers by my father the Khan.
What gives you the right to say that I'm different?
What makes you any better than I am?
Maybe your heart is harder than mine,
that's the only difference I can see.
If you can shoot an arrow farther than I can,
I'll cut off my thumb and throw it away.
If you can beat me at wrestling,
I'll lay still on the ground where I fall.
Let the word of our father the Khan decide."
The two brothers grasped each other by the collar,
Bogorchu pulling Jochi back by his arm

and Mukhali holding back Chagadai.
when Koko Chos, always standing at Chagadai's side, spoke:
"Chagadai, how can you say such things!
Of all his sons, your father had highest hopes for you.
In the time before you were born
the stars in the heavens were spinning around.
Everyone was fighting each other.
Unable to sleep in their own beds,
they constantly stole from each other.
The crust of the earth was pitching back and forth.
All the nations were at war with each other.
Unable to lie beneath their own blankets,
they attacked each other every day.
When your mother was stolen by the Merkid
she didn't want it to happen.
It happened when one nation came armed to fight with another.
She didn't run away from her home.
It happened when one nation attacked the other.
She wasn't in love with another man.
She was stolen by men who had come to kill other men.
The way you speak will harden the butter
and sour the milk of your own mother's love for you.
Weren't you born from the same warm womb as Jochi?
Didn't you and Jochi spring from a single hot womb?
If you insult the mother who gave you your life from her heart,
if you cause her love for you to freeze up,
even if you apologize to her later the damage is done.
If you speak against the mother who brought you to life from her own belly
even if you take back what you've said the damage is done.
Your father the Khan has built this whole nation.
He tied his head to his saddle
poured his own blood into great leathern buckets,
never closed his eyes nor put his ear to a pillow.
His own sleeve was his pillow and the skirt of his jacket his bed.
He quenched his thirst with his own spittle
and ate the flesh between his own teeth for his supper,
fighting on till the sweat of his forehead soaked through to the soles of his feet

and the sweat of his feet reached up to his forehead.
Your mother fought there beside him,
working together,
she placed her headdress on top of her head
and tucked in the ends of her skirt.
She fastened her headdress firm on her head
and pulled in the waist of her skirt.
She raised up her children,
giving each of you half the food that passed by her mouth.
Out of her great compassion she even blocked her own mouth
and gave all her food to you.
leaving her own stomach empty.
She pulled you up by the shoulders and said to herself,
'How can I make these children as tall as great men?'
She stretched you up by the neck, saying,
How can I make him a man?'
She cleaned out your diapers
and lifted your feet to teach you to walk.
She brought you up to the shoulders of men,
to the flanks of the horses.
Don't you think she wants to see you all find happiness?
Our holy Khatun raised you up
with a heart as bright as the Sun,
a heart as wide as the Sea."
Then Chingis Khan spoke:
"How can you say this about Jochi?
Jochi is my eldest son, isn't he?
Don't ever say that again."
Hearing this, Chagadai smiled and said:
"I won't say anything about whether Jochi is stronger than I am,
nor answer this boast that his ability is greater than mine.
I'll only say that the meat you kill with words
can't be carried home for your dinner.
You can't clothe yourself in the skin of an animal
you only say you've killed.
Jochi and I are your two eldest sons.
Together we'll give all our strength to our father the Khan.

We'll cut down the one of us who strays from his promise.
We'll cut the feet from the one of us who falls behind.
Brother Ogodei is honest.
Let's agree on Ogodei.
If Ogodei stays at the side of our father,
if our father instructs him in how to wear the hat of the Great Khan,
that will be fine."
Hearing this Chingis Khan spoke:
"Jochi, what do you say?
Speak up!"
and Jochi said:
"Chagadai speaks for me.
The two of us will give all our strength to him.
Let's agree on Ogodei."
So Chingis Khan made a decree:
"Why say you'll stay together?
Mother Earth is broad and her rivers and waters are numerous.
Make up your camps far apart
and each of you rule your own kingdom.
I'll see to it that you are separated.
Don't forget what you've pledged today, Jochi and Chagadai.
Don't do anything that will give men cause to insult you.
Don't give men cause to laugh at your promises.
In the past Altan and Khuchar gave their word like this
and they didn't keep it.
You know what happened to them.
I'll give you each a band of people,
people who had once been the possession of Altan and Khuchar.
Seeing these people you won't forget your promises.
Now Ogodei, what do you say?
T e l l m e !"
Ogodei answered:
"If my father the Khan commands me to speak
what can I say to him?
Can I answer him no and decline?
I will say that I'll do the best my ability will allow.
Long after this day

if my descendants are so empty of bravery
that wrapped up in sweet grass an ox won't even eat them,
wrapped up in rich fat a dog won't even smell them,
they'll be as likely to miss the broadside of an elk with their bow
as strike the head of a rat.
That's all I have to say for myself."
Chingis Khan made a decree:
"Then Ogodei agrees.
Now Tolui, what do you say?
Speak up!"
And Tolui said:
"I'll stay beside my elder brother.
I'll remind him of anything he forgets
and waken his judgment whenever it sleeps.
I'll stay by his side and help him press on.
I'll lend him all my strength in long wars and quick fights."
Chingis Khan approved of all this and made a decree:
"Each of my brothers Khasar, Alchidai, Odchigin, and Belgutei
have appointed one of their sons to govern after them.
Likewise I've appointed one of my sons to rule.
If all of you respect this decree then all will go well.
And if the descendants of Ogodei are so empty of bravery
that wrapped in sweet grass an ox won't even eat them,
wrapped in rich fat a dog won't even smell them,
then some other one of my descendants will be found to succeed him."

Before setting out
Chingis Khan sent ambassadors to Burkhan Khan of the Tanghuts, saying:
"You've said to me,
'I'll be your right hand.'
Now the Moslems have broken my golden reins
and I'm setting out to war with them.
Send me your army to be my right hand."
Before Burkhan could even speak
his minister Asha Gambu sent this reply:
"If he's not strong enough to conquer the Moslems alone
then why does he call himself khan?"

He sent the ambassadors back to Chingis without any troops.
When Chingis Khan heard this he said:
“How could Asha Gambu say such things to us?
It wouldn't be difficult to go to war with the Tanghuts on our way to the West.
But it's enough now that we go to war with the Moslems.
If Heaven protects me,
if I manage to tighten my golden reins on the Moslem people and return to Mongolia,
then I'll see to the Tanghut.”

In the Year of the Hare
Chingis Khan went to war with the Moslems,
riding off past the settlement of Alai.
He took the Merkid, Khulan Khatun, from his wives as companion
and left his brother Odchigin in command of the Great Camp.
The first army he sent out was commanded by Jebe,
behind them he sent another led by Subetei,
and behind them a third under Tokhuchar.
Sending off these three commanders he told them:
“Ride off to the outside of the Sultan's armies
and wait there until I arrive.
Then you'll attack them from your side when I strike from mine.”
Jebe rode out past the cities ruled by Amin al-Mulk without touching them.
Subetei's forces also passed them unharmed,
but behind them Tokhuchar robbed these frontier towns
and stole many animals from their herds.
Amin al-Mulk cried:
“They're robbing my cities!”
and he took all his forces to join the Moslem Sultan, Jalal al-Din.
When Amin al-Mulk and Jalal al-Din joined together
they sent an army out to attack Chingis Khan.
In front of Chingis Khan's army were troops led by Shigi Khutukhu.
Jalal al-Din defeated Shigi Khutukhu's troops
and drove them back toward Chingis Khan's camp.
Then from behind appeared the armies of Jebe, Subetei, and Tokhuchar,
who fell on the Moslem armies,
killing many and breaking their ranks,
keeping them from reforming at the cities of Bukhara, Samarkand, or Otrar,

driving them back to the banks of the Indus.
so that they were forced to throw themselves into the waters
and many Moslems drowned in the river.
Jalal al-Din and Amin al-Mulk swam the river,
saving their lives,
while Chingis Khan led his forces along the Indus
where they made their camp on the Parwan Plain.
Later Chingis Khan sent Bala of the Jalsyir clan
off to pursue Jalal al-Din across the Indus into Punjab.
He rewarded Jebe and Subetei for what they'd done, saying:
“Jebe, you had a different name when you fought us as one of the Tayichigud,
but now you've become my Jebe, my weapon.
As for you, Tokhuchar,
you willfully disobeyed me and attacked the cities on the frontier.
This caused Amin al-Mulk to join forces with Jalal al-Din against us.
For having done that I'll have your head cut off.”
But after saying that he did not kill Tokhuchar.
Instead he lectured him about his disobedience
and removed him from the command of the army.

From the Parwan Plain Chingis Khan sent out his three sons,
Jochi, Chagadai, and Ogodei, saying to them:
“Cross over the Oxus River with the army of the Right Hand
and lay siege to the Khwarezm capital of Gurganj.”
Then he sent out Tolui, saying to him:
“With your forces surround the cities of Merv.”
Then Chingis Khan himself lay siege to the city of Otrar.
His three sons sent him a message, asking:
“Our armies are all assembled
and we have surrounded the city of Gurganj.
Whose orders are we to follow?”
And Chingis Khan told them:
“You will act according to the words of Ogodei.”
So when Otrar surrendered to Chingis Khan
he rode from there to the city of Samarkand,
and from there to the city of Bukhara.
That summer he spent in the Sultan's former palace,

awaiting word from Bala,
making camp on the ridge of the Golden Hills,
and he sent a message to Tolui, saying:
“Join me here now that the season is hot
and the armies are making their camps.”
Tolui had captured the cities of Merv and Sistan
and was taking the city of Herat when the messenger found him.
He moved his army to join Chingis Khan.

When Jochi, Chagadai, and Ogodei took the city of Gurganj
they divided the city’s people three ways
and didn’t leave a part for Chingis Khan.
When these three sons came to pitch their camp with him,
Chingis Khan yelled at the three of them,
Jochi, Chagadai, and Ogodei,
and for three days he wouldn’t see them.
Then his three commanders,
Bogorchu, Mukhali, and Shigi Khutukhu, petitioned him, saying:
“We’ve made the Moslem Sultan bow at our feet
and taken his cities and people.
Your sons took the city of Gurganj and divided it up,
but it’s all the possessions of Chingis Khan.
Just when our wealth has grown like Heaven and Earth,
when the Moslems are forced to bow at our feet,
when our armies are rich and happy,
why has the Khan grown angry?
Your sons know what they’ve done wrong
but now they’re afraid of your anger.
If you continue this way you may break their spirits.
Let them come see you face to face.”
This pacified Chingis somewhat and he allowed his three sons,
Jochi, Chagadai, and Ogodei,
to present themselves, chastising them loudly,
reciting ancient phrases and quoting old sayings to them in his anger,
yelling at them till their feet sank into the Earth where they stood,
till the sweat on their foreheads soaked thru to their feet,
and still he continued to censure them

until his three archers,
Khongkhai, Khongtaghar, and Chormakhan, petitioned him, saying:
“Why do you heap such abuse on your sons?
In warfare they’re only immature falcons whose feathers are grey;
they’re only learning what to do in war.
If you put too much fear in their hearts they won’t know what to do.
From where the sun rises to where it sets there are enemy people.
Set us loose against them like Tibetan dogs
and we’ll increase your strength by Heaven and Earth;
we’ll bring you back gold, silver, and satins,
and many more people to rule.
If you ask us, ‘Which people?’ we say to you
‘To the West there is a ruler
who calls himself the Caliphite Sultan of Baghdad.’
We’ll go to war against him.”
This cooled Chingis Khan’s anger and he approved, saying:
“Khongkhai and Khongtaghar will stay by my side.
Chormakhan will go to war against the people of Baghdad
and the Caliphite Sultan.”

Then he sent Dorbei the Fierce off against the city of Merv,
and on to conquer the people between Iraq and the Indus.
He sent Subetei the Brave off to war in the North
where he defeated eleven kingdoms and tribes,
crossing the Volga and Ural Rivers,
finally going to war with Kiev.

Once he had conquered the Moslem people
Chingis Khan appointed agents to govern in each of their cities.
From the city of Gurganj came two Khwarezm Moslems,
a father and son named Yalavech and Masgud,
who explained to Chingis Khan the customs and laws of these cities
and the customs by which they were governed.
Chingis Khan appointed the Khwarezm Masgud head of the agents
who governed the cities of the Turkestan:
Bukhara, Samarkand, Gurganj, Khotan, Kashgar, Yarkand, and Kusen Tarim.
And his father Yalavech he made governor of the city of Chung-tu in Cathay.

Since among all the Moslems Yalavech and Masgud
were the most skilled at the customs and laws for governing cities,
he appointed them the governors of Cathay,
along with our own agents.

Chingis Khan still waited to hear from Bala the Jalayir.
Bala had crossed the Indus River
pursuing Jalal al-Din and Amir al-Mulk into the land of the Hindus,
but he soon lost track of them there.
After attacking the people along the frontier
and taking many camels and he-goats from the Hindus,
he returned without taking the Sultan.
In the seventh year of the Western campaign,
in the autumn of the Year of the Cock,
Chingis Khan returned to his Great Camp,
pitching his tents in the Black Forest by the Tula River.

During that winter Chingis Khan said:
"I will go to war with the Tanghut people."
He reassembled his army for war
and in the autumn of the Year of the Dog he set out.
From among all his wives he took the Tatar, Yesui Khatun, as his companion.
Later that winter as they approached the land of the Tanghut,
Chingis Khan was hunting wild horses in the Arbukha region,
riding his horse known as Red-Earth Gray.
As some soldiers drove the wild horses out from the bush
Red-Earth Gray bolted and threw Chingis Khan to the ground.
The fall caused him a great deal of pain
and he pitched his camp there at Chogorkhad.
That night his condition grew worse
and the next morning
Yesui Khatun called the princes and commanders together.
"Talk among yourselves and decide what to do," she said.
"The Khan has spent a bad night and his Hesh has grown hot."
The princes and commanders formed a council
and Tolun Cherbi spoke to them:
"The Tanghut are people who build city walls.

They're people whose camps don't move from year to year.
They won't run away from us
carrying off the walls of their cities.
They won't escape from us
leaving their buildings behind.
We should withdraw
and then when the Khan's fever cools
we can come back and go to war with them."
All the princes and commanders agreed with this plan
and they sent it to Chingis Khan in the form of a petition.
When Chingis Khan heard it, he replied:
"If we do this
the Tanghut will say that our hearts have failed us.
That's the reason they'll think we've gone back.
Let's send ambassadors to them from our camp here at Chogorkhad.
If my sickness gets worse
we can withdraw after we hear their reply."
So he sent off ambassadors
letting them carry this message:
"When you, Burkhan, spoke to me before, you said,
'We Tanghut will be your right hand.'
After you gave me this promise
I sent a request to you, saying,
'Now that a conflict has come up with the Moslem people
I am going off to war with them.'
And you, Burkhan, did not keep your promise.
You sent me no troops and instead sent me insults.
So as I left to fight with the people in the West I said,
'I will settle this matter when I return.'
I went to war with the Moslem people.
Since I am protected by Everlasting Heaven
I made them surrender to me and set them in order.
Now I come back to you, saying,
'Now I will meet Burkhan face to face
and I'll see why he sent me this message of insults.'"
When Burkhan Khan of the Tanghut heard this he answered:
"I did not speak this message of insults to you."

And Asha Gambu also sent a reply, saying:
"I spoke the message of insults.
Now if you Mongol know nothing but fighting and say,
'Let's go to war,'
well, my camp is at Alashai.
All my tents are pitched there
along with my wealth stored on the backs of my camels.
Take yourselves to Alashai and meet me there.
That's where I will fight you.
If you're in need of more silver, satins, and gold
take yourselves to our cities,
to Ning-hsia or Liang-chou."
When they brought these messages back to Chingis Khan
he was enraged by what he heard.
Though his flesh was still burning with fever he said:
"Yes, that answer is more than enough!
How can we withdraw after he's said such things?
Even if it means I die here
we must answer these boasts with a fight.
Eternal Blue Heaven, you decide who will win!"

Chingis Khan took his army to Alashai and fought Asha Gambu.
They overcame the Tanghut forces on the plains there.
Asha Gambu retreated to a fort in the mountains of Alashai
but he was captured there and his people were defeated.
All his tents and all the wealth stored on the backs of his camels were taken,
and all his soldiers were killed,
blown away like the ashes of a fire gone out.
Chingis Khan ordered this, saying:
"Let our soldiers kill every Tanghut they can lay hands on,
let them slaughter any Tanghut soldier they can get.
Kill the bold and the brave ones,
put every capable Tanghut man to death."

As the summer heat set in
Chingis Khan moved to the snows of Mount Chasutu,
and from there he sent out his soldiers to fight the Tanghut who lived in tents,

all the Tanghut who kept their wealth stored on the backs of their camels.
all the Tanghut who had run off with Asha Gambu to the mountains.
Then he offered rewards to his two commanders,
Bogorchu and Mukhali, saying:
"Let these two take as much as they can take."
Again he offered these two men more rewards, saying:
"I said to myself,
'I haven't given you a part of the people of Cathay.'
So you two divide between you the Juyin clan of the Kara Khitan.
Have their sons be your servants
and hold your falcons for you when you hunt.
Have their daughters be your servants
and sew clothing for your wives.
The Juyin people were the favorites of the Golden King of Cathay,
the one who killed the fathers and grandfathers of the Mongol.
Now let them serve my two favorites, Bogorchu and Mukhali."

Chingis Khan left his camp on Mount Chasutu
and laid siege to the city of Ying-li.
Once he had taken Ying-li
he moved on to Ling-wu
which stood only a few miles from the Tanghut capital.
As Chingis Khan was breaking down the walls of Ling-wu,
Burkhan presented himself with offerings for peace.
He brought out images of the Buddha made from gold.
Then followed bowls and vessels made of silver and gold,
nine and nine,
young boys and young maidens,
nine and nine,
fine geldings and fine camels,
nine and nine,
and every other thing in his realm,
each arranged according to its color and form,
nine and nine.
Chingis Khan ordered Burkhan to present himself outside the closed door of his tent,
Burkhan was told to wait there three days,
and on the third day Chingis Khan decided what to do.

He gave Burkhan Khan the new title Shidurghu.
One Who Has Been Made Upright.
and after allowing Burkhan Shidurghu to stand before him,
Chingis Khan said:

“See that he is executed.
Let Tolun Cherbi be the one to see that he is killed.”

When Tolun Cherbi sent a report saying:

“I have laid hands on Burkhan and he is dead,”

Chingis Khan made this decree:

“When we were approaching the Tanghut land
to settle the words that Burkhan had sent to me,
when I had been injured while hunting the wild horses of Arbukha,
it was Tolun who advised that I take care of my life and my body.
saying, ‘Let it heal,’ when he heard of my pain.
Because of these poisonous words from our enemy
Everlasting Heaven has once again increased our strength
and caused our enemy to fall into our hands.
We have taken our vengeance.
Now let Tolun take the great palace tent Burkhan has brought,
along with the bowls and vessels of silver and gold.”

Chingis Khan took everything from the Tanghut people.

He gave their ruler Burkhan the name Shidurghu
and then executed him.

He ordered that the men and women of their cities be killed,
their children and grandchildren, saying:

“As long as I can eat food and still say,
‘Make everyone who lives in their cities vanish,’
kill them all and destroy their homes.
As long as I am still alive
keep up the slaughter.”

This is because the Tanghut people made a promise they didn’t keep.

Chingis Khan had gone to war with the Tanghut a second time.

He had destroyed them,
and coming back to Mongolia,
in the Year of the Pig,

Chingis Khan ascended to Heaven

After-he had ascended

Yesui Khatun was given most of the Tanghut people who remained.