

THE UNIFICATION OF MONGOLIA BY GENGHIS KHAN
IN THE TWELFTH AND THIRTEENTH CENTURIES

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INTRODUCTION

The emergence of world conquerors out of the arid wastes of Mongolia has always demanded an explanation from historians and is even today not too well understood. This is the general historical problem for which this investigation attempts to find answers.

At the outset, we may discard several explanations for the rise and success of the Mongols. The Mongols were not fanatical religious crusaders. The urge to spread a religion did not motivate them to conquest as it did the Christians and the Muslims. Another untenable explanation is the old theory that the progressive drying up of Central Asia "forced" the Mongols out of their homeland and caused them to attack civilized states. The naive explanation given by Asian and European peoples of the Middle Ages that Genghis Khan was a terrible scourge of God sent against the sins of Islam and Christendom is even less acceptable, as is the idea that the onslaught of the Mongols was some mighty natural explosion like the thunderstorms of the late summer in the Gobi desert.

Some investigators have found a part of the truth and have emphasized that part with disregard for other important factors. Thus some claim all was due to the genius of one man, Genghis Khan. But the question usually left unanswered is how he could have arisen from obscurity and poverty. There is often no attempt to understand Genghis Khan as a product of his socio-historical environment. Others would have us believe that the rise and success of the Mongols can be understood entirely in terms of a sudden flowering of the Mongol national spirit. But it

must then be asked why a great national spirit suddenly appeared in a people without a national existence until only a few years before they embarked upon their conquest of the world. Another often given reason for the success of the Mongols is that the simplicity and freedom of nomad life was superior to that of more decadent and cultured peoples. While this explanation has much of truth in it, it is again another partial explanation and consequently inadequate.

There were good reasons for the rise and success of the Mongols and these reasons are more complex than any of the above explanations would indicate. Yet, they are easily understood in the context of the social life and history of the Mongols and of the conditions in the empires they conquered.

The historical period of principal interest in this investigation is limited to that of the unification of Mongolia by Genghis Khan, a unification which began in the late twelfth century and was completed in the first decade of the thirteenth. However, for reasons to be explained below, our investigation begins with a brief survey of the major political and military events in Mongolia and China through the twelfth century. It is difficult if not impossible to draw concise lines to delimit great historical events and all attempts to do so are usually frustrated by facts that do not fit into prearranged schemes. Thus our choice of the year 1189, in which the first major tribal war involving the Mongols took place, for the beginning of the unification of Mongolia is partially arbitrary. It is arbitrary because at least the desire for and the possibility of unification must have existed long before this time. Moreover, this war was probably not thought of by the principal participants as a step towards unification. The date of 1206 for the completion of the unification is more precise, since it was in that year

that the sovereignty of Genghis Khan was formally recognized by all the tribes. But military operations against minor internal enemies continued for several years beyond this time.

The emergence of the Mongols, their rise to power in Mongolia and their success in world conquest are all parts of the general historical problem for which we will attempt to find answers. Our investigation, however, does not include a discussion of the events of the conquest itself. The prerequisite for foreign conquest, for the creation of a multi-state empire, was the unification of Mongolia. And the same factors that made unification possible also determined the success of the conquest that followed. Therefore once we have an understanding of why and how Mongolia was unified plus an idea of the conditions in other contemporary Asian empires, the success of the Mongol conquest seems to follow as though it had been a necessary and inevitable outcome.

We propose to understand how and why the unification of Mongolia took place by first answering a series of general questions concerning the geography; climate and economy of Mongolia; the chief characteristics and beliefs of its people, in particular with regard to war; and the nature and history of the conflict between steppe-dweller and farmer; and then by answering two specific questions. The main questions of a general nature are: In what ways did the geography and climate of Mongolia determine the way of life of the people? And what relationship did this way of life have to the conflict with sedentary peoples? What advantages did this way of life give the Mongols in warfare? In what ways did the physical environment, the predominant economy and social organization determine the principal characteristics of the Mongols? How were these characteristics beneficial to a nation of conquerors? Who were the principal antagonists inside Mongolia from the earliest times? In what way

did the existence of several races in Mongolia determine its relatively late unification by the Mongols? What were the causes and nature of the conflict between the inhabitants of Mongolia and the Chinese? What was the history of this conflict up to and including the twelfth century? And what patterns are discernible in this conflict? Answers to these general questions are based on discussions throughout the text but especially in Chapter I and Chapter III.

The specific questions to be answered are two: why was Mongolia unified in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries rather than at some other time? And what specific factors made this unification possible and successful? A discussion of the factors that answer these questions forms the central theme or core of the investigation. These factors, which appear in Chapters II through VI, are four in number: the conditions in Asia, China and Mongolia in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries(Chapter II), the contributions of Mongol social organization(Chapter III), military organization or the Mongol army(Chapter IV), and leadership(Chapters IV, V, and VI).

Detailed reference has been made to the conditions in twelfth-century China since, by reason of their geographical proximity, China and Mongolia have from ancient times played important roles in each other's histories. Never was this more true than in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. While conditions in Central and Western Asia were important factors in the success of Mongol arms in these areas, they had less immediate influence upon the unification of Mongolia and are only briefly referred to.

In Chapter VII we have given a series of conclusions to the general and specific questions posed by the investigation and have attempted to define the place the unification of Mongolia and subsequent world conquest

by the Mongols have in Asian and in world history.

CHAPTER I

MONGOLIA AND CHINA TO THE TWELFTH CENTURY; A SURVEY OF MAJOR EVENTS

The geographical Location and Climate of Mongolia

Mongolia proper or Outer Mongolia extends south of Lake Baikal to the Altai mountains in the west and to the Khingan mountains in the east. It is bounded by Siberia on the north, Manchuria on the northeast, China on the southeast and Chinese Turkistan on the southwest. Mongolia in the broadest terms consists of the great central desert of Gobi or Shamo, fringed on the northwest, northeast and east by a more fertile belt. This fringe is essentially a plateau of rolling pasture land varying in the quality of its soils and in altitude from 3,000 to 5,000 feet. The north of Outer Mongolia is distinguished by its mountainous woodland and pasture land in wide basin-like valleys or plains while the south is steppe and desert. The plateau as a whole is characterized by dryness and great seasonal range of temperature. The Mongolian climate is severe in the extreme with winter temperatures dropping to 50 degrees below zero and the summers are very short. Eternal snows cover the higher mountain ranges. In general, Mongolia is a wind swept, cold, desolate land. Just to remain alive there called for the development of great resourcefulness and endurance, a much greater resourcefulness and endurance than is common among sedentary people. It is little wonder that the steppes of Mongolia have for centuries produced proud, fierce warriors. In considering the characteristics of the Mongols, it is difficult to

attribute observed qualities exclusively to the effects of the physical environment since the way of life and social organization of a people are important determining factors in the formation of character and beliefs. Therefore we have left further discussion of the principal characteristics of the Mongols to our chapter on Mongol social organization.

The Earliest Inhabitants of Mongolia

From the beginning of recorded history, Mongolia has been the homeland of fierce tribesmen. The Mongolian plateau has poured forth wave after wave of invading hordes who at times have reduced to subjection almost every one of the Asiatic empires and more than once have made themselves the masters of half of Europe. Considering the important role this region and its people have played in world history, it is surprising that its earliest history is almost completely unknown. The early inhabitants possessed no system of writing and consequently have left no literary monuments. Serious archaeological investigation of the region has only just begun.¹ For our knowledge of the early inhabitants of Mongolia, we must still rely largely on the Chinese records. Although the Chinese do not give an adequate picture of the early Mongolians until the events of the second century B.C., they were the only people with a literary tradition who had any early contact with the northern tribes.² It is thus still uncertain when the so-called barbarians began to inhabit Mongolia and the northern frontiers of China, but there are records of a Chinese war against a people called the Hun-yu (ancestors of the Huns) as far back as 2600 B.C.³

¹William Montgomery McGovern, The Early Empires of Central Asia: A Study of the Scythians and the Huns and the Part They Played in World History (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1959), p. 37.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 88.

This early reference is vague. The most we can conclude from it is that some difference already existed between the mode of life of the steppe and frontier-dwelling peoples and that of the earliest Chinese inhabitants who were settled in the fertile valleys of North China.

Lattimore presents the interesting hypothesis that in the most ancient times there were probably no basic differences of economic activity and culture between the northern tribesman and the southern farmer. At that remote time, there would have existed only very primitive hunters, fishermen and gatherers. Later, some of these peoples would have reached the fertile valleys of North China and would have become sedentary, developing a new type of economy and a higher culture. For one reason or another, their companions were left behind and came to form an encirclement of barbarians around the settled areas.⁴ There would have been a natural tendency for the less fortunate outer peoples to attack and attempt to conquer, or at least to plunder, the more fortunate settled peoples. This was the beginning of the conflict between the steppe and the sown.

One of the most perplexing problems is that relating to the racial affinities of the early inhabitants of Mongolia. It has usually been taken for granted that these early inhabitants were "Mongolian" or Mongoloid in appearance. Recent archaeological work has proved, however, that in the heart of Mongolia the round-headed(Mongoloid)race of the present day was preceded by a long-headed(non-Mongoloid)race. Moreover, the first Chinese records describe these early inhabitants as having red hair, green eyes and white faces. It appears that a blond, long-headed type lived in southern Siberia

⁴Owen Lattimore, Inner Asian Frontiers of China(New York: The American Geographical Society, 1901), p. 20.

and had spread into northern Mongolia. But the tribes in direct contact with the Chinese on their frontier were brunette and round-headed.⁵ Latimore's hypothesis for the existence of an ancient race from which the Chinese and the Mongols separated out on the basis of a divergence in economic activity would seem to be entirely compatible with these latest archaeological findings which indicate the priority in time of a long-headed people in Mongolia.

It is now universally agreed that the early inhabitants of Mongolia spoke a language, or rather languages, belonging to the Turanian or Ural-Altai linguistic group, which includes Finno-Ugrian, Samoyed, Turkish, Mongol and Tungusic.⁶ Both archaeological evidence and the Chinese records point to the early Huns, the first barbarians against whom the Chinese fought, as being Turkish and not Mongolian in racial type.⁷ One passage in a Chinese dynastic history describes the Huns as having large prominent noses and as being extremely hairy, both Turkish racial characteristics.⁸ The vast majority of specialists now agree that the Huns spoke a Turkish language and that it was not until many centuries after the fall of the Hunnic Empire (second century A.D.) that the Mongolian speaking group constituted more than a small minority in the Mongolian population.⁹ Thus it would seem certain that the Huns who are the first Mongolian people of whom we have any definite knowledge were both "Turks" in race and "Turkish" in language. The complete "Mongolization"

⁵MacGovern, *op.cit.*, p. 95.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 97-98.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 99.

of Mongolia did not take place until some time after the great bulk of the Huns had removed themselves from direct Chinese influence by settling in Turkistan.¹⁰ The Turkish and the Mongolian races were from the first the important sectors of humanity in Mongolian history and this history is one of the alternating dominance of the Turks and the Mongols.

Two stages in the economic and cultural development of the early inhabitants of Mongolia have been clearly distinguished. As late as the sixth century B.C. the northern tribes were foot nomads and probably hunters and gatherers of food. They may even have practised a rude agriculture, but the horse culture had not then revolutionized their lives.¹¹ Some Chinese records affirm that the nomads of the Gobi even as late as the fifth century B.C. were still unmounted and easily defeated by charioteers. But by about 300 B.C. they were expert cavalrymen whose methods the Chinese were obliged to copy in order to achieve any measure of success.¹² A great cultural revolution occurred in Mongolia at sometime, probably half way, between 541 B.C. and 300 B.C.¹³ At that time the Huns borrowed their horse culture from the Iranian nomads of the West (Turkistan and southern Russia). The whole material culture of the Turanian peoples was then transformed through borrowing from the West. But in spite of this cultural revolution, the Huns and the Mongols remained among the most backward of Asiatic peoples. Whether they continued to be hunters in the Siberian forest of the north, or became nomadic herdsmen on the immense steppes stretching southward from the forest zone to the Gobi desert, they were still half

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 96.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 100.

¹² E. D. Phillips, The Royal Hordes: Nomad Peoples of the Steppes (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965), p. 91.

¹³ McGovern, op.cit., p. 101.

swage. The entire wealth of these tribes consisted in their flocks, with which they migrated seasonally in search of pasture and water holes. In scorching heat and freezing cold they led a miserable existence, always in danger of starvation should drought wither the grass of the steppes and kill their herds. They were ignorant of writing, town life, and agriculture and their only religion was a crude shamanism.¹⁴

The Continuing Conflict Between Nomad and Farmer

It is not surprising that these northern tribes living on the edge of existence were attracted by the wealth of the settled areas of China. But it was a special type of nomad who invaded China, one who already had some knowledge of the wealth and the easier life there. Until Genghis Khan's conquest of North China in the early thirteenth century, none of the northern barbarians who established their rule on Chinese territory south of the Great Wall were full nomads. All had had some, and often prolonged, contact with Chinese culture. Lattimore observes, "I do not think it has ever before been pointed out that the great 'nomad conquests' of China did not come from the open steppe at all, but from the border of the steppe. In other words, they were not the work of unmodified, typical nomads but of peoples of mixed culture adjacent to the Inner Asian Frontier."¹⁵ Even Genghis Khan did not come from the wildest part of the steppe and it seems that he had lived for a time near the Great Wall of China. Moreover, the Mongol people had had some contact with Chinese merchants. But compared with all earlier invaders of the Middle Kingdom, they were the least touched by Chinese civilization.

¹⁴Rene Grousset, The Rise and Splendour of the Chinese Empire (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1959), p. 222.

¹⁵Lattimore, op.cit., p. 541-542.

The millennium, shifting conflict between the nomad and the farmer, is explained by some scholars as a swinging pendulum of conquest and reconquest. They suggest that the yin (the Chinese female principle) of the barbarian would swing in to conquer China and that this would be followed by the swinging out of the yang (the Chinese male principle) as China, again strong from an infusion of new blood and new martial ardor, threw back the nomads and invaded deep into the steppes.¹⁶ And this in fact has been the basic over-all pattern of the conflict for thousands of years. Lattimore investigates another aspect of the conflict. The purpose of his work, which has become a classic on this problem, was to point out the great importance played by the border regions and border peoples in the history of foreign conquests of China. He seems to lose sight of the over-all pattern and cautions us that "it is necessary to keep clear of the usual phraseology which deals with barbarians 'pressing inward' in time of conquest and being 'thrown back' by reflex movements. What really took place at the time of a conquest was a process of recruiting; and what took place when a dynasty fell was not a series of migrations back to the north but simply a disbandment of the outlying adherents of the dynasty."¹⁷ Thus Lattimore, while giving less attention to the general pattern of the conflict, investigates processes and interactions in greater detail. His conception of the conflict is certainly correct for all incursions into and invasions of China before the Mongols. And to a lesser extent it may be applied to the Mongols themselves. The Mongols under Genghis Khan had at least one vassal people who lived along the Great Wall and who it is reported "opened the Great Wall" for the Mongol armies. But the Mongols came from the far north and unlike earlier invaders had

¹⁶Edwin O. Reischauer and John K. Fairbank, East Asia: The Great Tradition (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1958), I, p. 154.

¹⁷Lattimore, op.cit., p. 136-137.

had very little direct contact with Chinese culture.

The Major Political and Military Events
Through the Twelfth Century

In the fifth century B.C., a Turkish people appeared on China's northwestern frontier. These were the Huns and were known to the Chinese as the Hsiung-nu. We have seen that there was a cultural revolution among the northern tribes around the fourth century B.C. This revolution marked the beginning of a millenium during which the mounted archer dominated warfare in most of Asia. ¹⁸ The Hsiung-nu had acquired the horse from Central Asia. It was at this time that they also changed their battle organization and weapons from the foot-soldier using long swords to that of a mounted cavalry fighting with bows and arrows. Their extremely powerful reflex bow, stiffened at the ends with plates of bone, appears to have been invented by hunting tribes around Lake Baikal before 500 B.C. It was to become the regular weapon of mounted nomad conquerors from the eastern steppes over many centuries. ¹⁹ The borderlands of China and the whole Chinese defense system became permeated with semi-Sinicized barbarians. ²⁰ Thus the present day Inner Mongolia became the domain of Hunnic tribes, who were in general clients and frontier guards for the Chinese Empire. ²¹ It is important to observe that in the fourth century B.C. the Chinese Chou dynasty had begun to weaken and that this coincided with the barbarian incursions. As the Chou dynasty became weaker, the northern barbarians, who had at first submitted to Chinese jurisdiction, revolted and succeeded in reestablishing

¹⁸ Reischauer and Fairbank, op.cit., p. 131.

¹⁹ Phillips, op.cit., p. 111.

²⁰ Reischauer and Fairbank, loc.cit.

²¹ René Grousset, L'Empire Mongol (Paris: E. de Boccard, Editeur, 1946), p. 9.

their independence. Those already independent became bolder in their raids upon the Chinese frontier.²² But by the fourth century the leaders of the future Chinese Ch'in dynasty had developed a fine cavalry force. They continued to develop new techniques of military and political organization, many undoubtedly adopted from the barbarians with whom they were in close contact. By 221 B.C. the Ch'in had destroyed the Chou. A strengthened China then counter-attacked the Hsiung-nu. The Hunnish leader Touman and his hordes were forced to retreat from Inner to Outer Mongolia in 214 B.C. However, within five years, the Ch'in dynasty was itself in a state of confusion and decay. The Chinese were again no longer able to guard their northern frontier. Touman led his hordes back south and in 209 B.C. reconquered the whole of Inner Mongolia.²³

The fall of the Ch'in dynasty while seemingly a period of decline in China was in fact the beginning of a long era of unification, for the great Han dynasty (206 B.C. - 220 A.D.) immediately followed the Ch'in. In this same period that China was becoming a unified empire, a comparable process of unification was occurring in Mongolia. By the third century B.C. the Hsiung-nu tribal federation spread roughly from western Manchuria across Mongolia and southern Siberia into Chinese Turkestan as far as the Pamirs.²⁴ The pressure from Chinese invading armies seems to have been the driving force which caused the Hsiung-nu to forget their tribal differences and form a powerful political organization under the leadership of a single chieftain.²⁵ This first unification of the tribes inhabiting Mongolia (209 B.C. - 511 A.D.) occurred when China was still a very small state and consisted only of the middle and lower sections of the Yellow River basin.

²²McGovern, op.cit., p. 91.

²³Ibid., p. 115-116.

²⁴Reischauer and Fairbank, op.cit., p. 95.

²⁵McGovern, op.cit., p. 116.

The rise of the Han dynasty was of the greatest importance in the power struggle between steppe-dweller and farmer. The Hanish Empire and the Han dynasty were established at about the same time, and by a curious coincidence they both weakened and were destroyed within the same generation. These two empires were for many decades bitter and evenly balanced rivals and on at least one occasion it seemed as if the Huns rather than the Hans were to become the masters of Eastern Asia. Had this taken place, it is probable that the history not only of Asia but of the whole civilized world would have been very different.²⁶

During this first long period of conflict with the barbarians, the Chinese developed what for them was to become a consistent policy along with the use of force; the use of one barbarian people against another to maintain control of their frontier regions. This strategy was on the whole successful throughout more than a thousand years of Chinese-barbarian conflict, but it finally proved to be the undoing of the Chinese in their encounter with the Mongols.

Soon after the fall of the Han dynasty in 220 A.D., China found itself once again in a weakened condition. The northern barbarians began to increase their raids into Chinese territory and beginning in 304 A.D., the whole of North China was overrun by tribal war bands of nomadic origin.²⁷ There followed a period of confusion which the Chinese have called the Sixteen Kingdoms (504-439). Many semi-Sinicized barbarians tried to claim the Han throne. These semi-Sinicized invaders of North China were called the "Five Barbarians" and were the Turcic Hsiung-nu, the Chieh, the Hsien-pai (proto-Mongolian); the Ti and the Ch'iang (Tibetans).²⁸ The invaders soon began

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

²⁷ Reischauer and Fairbank, *op.cit.*, p. 131-132.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 149-150.

to struggle among themselves over the division of North China and there was a series of short-lived kingdoms to which we have referred. In 439 A.D. the T'o-pa, a Hsien-pai group and largely Mongolian became the first semi-nomadic masters of North China. They were unsuccessful in their efforts to conquer South China.²⁹

The second half of the sixth century was to witness a second unification in Mongolia and in China. In Mongolia the T'u-chueh, a Turkish people, established their empire in 552 A.D., which, however, split in 581 A.D. into the Eastern Empire centered on the Orkhon river and a Western Empire.³⁰ The Sui dynasty was established in China in 589 A.D. and began a reconquest against the barbarian invaders. The Sui suffered a defeat at the hands of the Eastern Turks in 615 A.D. after the dynasty had become weakened from extended wars and heavy labor requirements imposed on the Chinese peasantry.³¹ The Sui was overthrown in 618 A.D. and followed by the T'ang (618-907), the most brilliant of Chinese dynasties. There thus occurred a curious repetition of history. The first unification of Mongolia under the Turkish Huns and the first unification of China under the Han were paralleled by a second almost simultaneous unification in Mongolia by the T'u-chueh Turks and in China by the T'ang. The first Chinese unification had been spearheaded by a brief dynasty, the Ch'in, and the Sui was its counterpart in the second half of the sixth century. There were also marked parallels between Mongolia and China during the periods after the fall of the Hunnish Empire and the Han and after the division of the sixth-century Turkish Empire and the fall of the T'ang. Both were periods of disorder in Mongolia and in China. Within these two great cycles of parallel unification and decline, we observe what

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 151-152.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

³¹ *Ibid.*

seem to be recurrent cycles of invasion and retreat, first by the barbarians then by the Chinese as the two antagonists became stronger or weaker.

The Chinese scholar Ch'ao-ting Chi has recognized a recurring historical pattern for China and has formulated a "theory of dynastic cycles". However, to this investigator's knowledge, he has not included the strikingly parallel Mongolian cycles in his theory. Ch'ao-ting Chi designates the first Chinese unification under the Han as the first "period of peace and unity" for China, followed by the first "period of division and struggle". A second period of peace and unity occurred under the Sui and T'ang dynasties, followed by a second period of division and struggle. He considers that a third period of peace and unity occurred under the Mongol-Yuan and the Manchu-Ch'ing dynasties.³²

The history of Mongolia after the division of the Turkish Empire from the sixth century until the first part of the tenth century was one of struggle among the Turkish peoples of Mongolia. The Eastern Turks were overthrown by the Uighur Turks in 745 A.D. For a century, until 840 A.D., the Uighurs under the influence of Chinese civilization and of Nestorian religion, began a transition from pastoral nomadism to a sedentary way of life.³³ Outer Mongolia seemed destined to become the seat of a great civilized empire.³⁴ But in 840 A.D. the Uighurs were driven from the Orkhon region by the Kirghiz, another Turkish people.³⁵ The Uighurs migrated to the

³²Lattimore, op.cit., p. 533 /quoted from Ch'ao-ting Chi, Key Economic Areas in Chinese History, as Revealed in the Development of Public Works for Water Control (London: 1936), p. 9-10/.

³³Crousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 10.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid., p. 11.

cesses of Chinese Turkestan and the Kirghiz returned Mongolia to a state of barbarism. During the 80 years of Kirghiz domination in Mongolia(840-920), there is no evidence of new efforts towards a civilization similar to that of the Eastern Turks and the Uighurs.³⁶ The Kirghiz were in turn driven from the Orkhon in 920 A.D. by the Khitan(a Mongol people). After their invasion, the Khitan did not occupy the country. Mongolia was again abandoned to diverse nomadic herds of north Asiatic origin and was to remain in a barbarous state until the advent of Genghis Khan. After 920 A.D. historical interest shifts from Mongolia proper to the western part of southern Manchuria and follows the newly arisen Khitan people.

The Khitan were a border people, semi-agricultural and semi-nomadic. The fall of the T'ang dynasty in 907 A.D. had given rise to a new period of confusion and anarchy in China. To reward the Khitan for their services as border guards and because they were too weak to defeat them, the Chinese gave them sixteen border prefectures around Peking in northern Hopei and in northern Shansi. The Chinese(of the Later Chin dynasty) also agreed to send tribute to the Khitan, a confirmation of China's military weakness. A later Chinese emperor revised this decision and stopped the tribute payments. Thereupon the Khitan invaded North China and established their so-called Liao dynasty(946-1125).³⁷ The Khitan were able to retain only a small part of North China. In 1004 A.D. they concluded a peace with the Chinese Sung dynasty and thereafter were rapidly civilized, without loss of the qualities of their race. The fruit of this transformation was the Khitan prince Yeh-lu ch'u ta'ai, a Chinese type scholar, characterized by great humanity and humanism, while conserving enough of the Mongol character to later become Genghis Khan's most trusted advisor.³⁸

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Reischauer and Fairbank, *op.cit.*, p. 196.

³⁸ Grousset, *L'Empire Mongol*, p. 13.

In the twelfth century a revolution occurred in Manchuria. This revolution was produced by the Tungusic peoples, related to the modern Manchus. This people had until then lived by hunting and fishing in the forests and had had only limited contact with the civilized world through the Khitan, who they more or less recognized as their suzerains. The most energetic element of the Tungusics was the Jurched. From 1113 to 1125 A.D. the Jurched revolted against the Khitan, taking southern Manchuria from them, then Jehol, and finally all of their possessions. The Jurched at first collaborated with the Chinese, who had taken the Khitan from the rear, but once the Khitan were overthrown, the Jurched became embroiled with the Chinese over the possession of Peking and soon broke off relations with China. The Jurched invaded and conquered North China and marched through South China(1129-1130). But they were unable to establish themselves permanently south of the Yangtze river and in 1138 A.D. concluded a peace with the Chinese Southern Sung dynasty.³⁹ This conquest set the scene of division in China between the Northern Chin(Jurched) or "Golden" dynasty and the Southern Sung dynasty, a division that existed when the Mongol invasion under Genghis Khan began in 1211 A.D. The Khitan, fleeing west before the Jurched, finally established the Western Liao Empire(1124-1211), called Kara-Khitai or "Black Khitan" by the Mongols. They were overwhelmed by the Mongols in 1211.⁴¹

To complete our survey of the major political and military events in Mongolia and China before the advent of Genghis Khan, one other people must be mentioned, important for their geographical position between the Mongols and the Chinese. These people were the Tibetan Tanguts, who founded the Hsi Hsin Kingdom in northwest China(1038-1227). Between 1028 and 1036,

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13-14.

⁴¹ Reischauer and Fairbank, *op.cit.*, p. 256.

the Tanguts conquered the modern province of Kansu. Enriched by Central Asian commerce over which they commanded the routes of access, the Tanguts reached a high degree of cultural development under the influence of the Chinese. They were in a strategic position from which they could dominate both Chinese and Mongol commerce, and, as we shall see, because of their control of Chinese and Central Asian trade may have been a factor in the Mongol decision to begin foreign conquests after the unification of Mongolia.

CHAPTER II

CONDITIONS IN ASIA, THE CHINESE EMPIRE AND MONGOLIA IN THE TWELFTH AND EARLY THIRTEENTH CENTURIES

General Conditions In Asia

Around the year 1200, there stretched across Central Asia from east to west a belt of settled communities founded on agriculture and connected with one another by trade. As we saw, China was divided between the Sung dynasty in the south, an unwarlike state, and the alien Jurchen-Chin dynasty in the north. In the northwest of China was the Hsi Hsia Kingdom of the Tibetan Tanguts. West of the Hsi Hsia were the Uighur Turks, who had settled in the small oases of Central Asia. Defeated by the Khitans, they were no longer the military power they had been in the T'ang period.

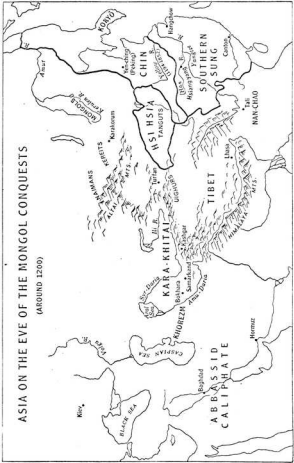
In the Middle East, the Arab-Turkish society was also in military decay. It included the empire of Khorezm or Khwarezm on the Amu-Daria south of the Aral Sea, the Abbasid Caliphate at Baghdad and other smaller states.⁴² In general, in China, in Central Asia and in Persia, the twelfth century was one of political decay, social unrest and military weakness. These states had all become wealthy from commerce, but none of them was very warlike and none was strong enough to dominate the others.

In the north, another east to west belt of peoples stretched across Central Asia. These were the nomad tribes of the steppe country.

⁴²Ibid., p. 261.

ASIA ON THE EVE OF THE MONGOL CONQUESTS

(AROUND 1200)



As we have seen, they were Turkish, Mongolian, and Tungusic in various mixtures and lived by an extensive pastoral economy. They had great mobility and comparative self-sufficiency, but with a long history of supplementing the requirements for their way of life by trade with and raids upon the settled communities. The wealth-weak civilized states to their south and west must have now, more than ever, seemed like great prizes to these northern tribes. Their patriarchal clan organization, which we will discuss in greater detail in our chapter on social organization, made them amenable to strong leadership and this leadership arose in the person of Genghis Khan who united all the roamed tribes under a dynamic, centralized authority. Against the disorganization and weakness of the agrarian, civilized states, the Mongols brought to bear an invincible military power. We have just spoken of the barbarous state into which Mongolia had fallen after partial conquest by the Khitan. Mongolia was, therefore, also undergoing a great social crisis parallel to the crises of the civilized states. But the crisis in Mongolia was to lead to unification, while the decay in the two major empires to the west and south of Mongolia, the Khwarizmanian and the Chinese, was to continue. The combination of this social crisis in Mongolia and the decay of these two empires made it the destiny of Genghis Khan to become the greatest conqueror since Alexander of Macedon.

Conditions in China in the Twelfth Century

The decline in China of the twelfth century was political, social and military. The brilliant T'ang dynasty which fell in 907 A.D. was succeeded during the tenth century by a long period of strife and confusion. The price for the greatness of the T'ang was the ruin of the whole

country and the misery of the people.⁴³ Under the Sung dynasty (960-1126) decline continued. We saw that the Khitan invaded North China in 907 A.D. and that they in turn were conquered by the Jurchen-Chin in 1125 A.D. The Sung could no longer defend its frontiers and was forced to withdraw south of the Yangtze river. China was divided between the Northern Chin and the Southern Sung. During this period, when Chinese feudalism was in complete decay, the Mongols were making their first attempts at unification in the steppes.

The main cause of the decline of feudalism in China from the eighth through the thirteenth centuries seems to have been a commercial revolution which was itself the result of the development of a vast exchange of goods between the Chinese and their immediate nomadic neighbors. The Sung were constantly importing horses for their cavalry from the Tibetans, Turks, Mongols, and Tungus. They paid for them with Chinese products which many of these peoples had by then become accustomed to use. The incorporation of millions of Chinese into the empire of the Liao, the Hsi Hsia and the Chin increased the demand in these states for the products of South China, and the trade between the Sung and the northern areas grew to huge proportions.⁴⁴ Later we shall see the profound effect this commercial revolution in China had upon Mongol society.

The government's dependence on revenue from commerce increased greatly. Most previous Chinese regimes had relied almost exclusively for their revenues on agricultural taxes. But by the twelfth century the Chinese government had come to rely overwhelmingly on commercial taxes.⁴⁵ After this change in the source of revenue, which began in the eighth century,

⁴³ Ralph Fox, Genghis Khan (Castle Hedingham, Essex: The Daimon Press Ltd., 1962), p. 13-14.

⁴⁴ Hirschauer and Fairbank, op.cit., p. 214.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 217-218.

the government was less interested in protecting large private land holdings. At the same time, it became increasingly difficult for the old landed aristocracy to maintain their tax-free status and their influence began to decline. The government no longer opposed the private accumulation of agricultural land and many small and medium landowners appeared.⁴⁶ This was another blow at the power of the old aristocracy, a class that had been notable for its military qualities. Formerly these aristocrats had dominated society and government. Their subordinates had been their loyal retainers on whom they could count for military support. Once the economic base of the aristocracy was undermined, they could not command this personal military power. The new sources of power were in commerce and in scholarly excellence. The old aristocracy was gradually absorbed into a new, broader class known as the "gentry".⁴⁷

The commercial revolution from the eighth through the thirteenth centuries saw the concentration of trade in the towns and cities. During this period of urbanization, the "gentry", landlords, officials and rich merchants all moved into the cities and towns to be nearer the sources of wealth. In this way, Chinese leadership became a city-dwelling elite largely separated from the peasantry that constituted the principal defense of the empire. The cities became great amusement centers with all kinds of entertainment for those able to pay. The Chinese at the court and the upper classes in the cities became fond of luxury and spent their time on dice and cards, on horse-racing, dancing-girls and great quantities of rice wine.⁴⁸ The comparison between the weakening of Chinese leadership and the strength

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ G.A. Goodban, China in World History (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 79.

of Mongol leadership is striking and as we have indicated a principal factor in the rise and success of the Mongols.

Neo-Confucianism appeared in the late T'ang and early Sung periods and reflected the turning of Chinese leaders from a martial to a pacifistic ideal. It also reflected the pessimism they felt from the losing battle the Chinese had fought against the barbarians since the eighth century. Among Chinese leaders there was a growing fear and resentment for the barbarians.⁴⁹ In the twelfth century the luxurious life led by the Chinese ruling classes combined with a philosophy of pacifism that placed civil achievements above military exploits. This was the very opposite of the dolorous unification then being undertaken in Mongolia by the warlike Mongolian tribes under Genghis Khan.

The political history of China shows a steady military decline from the high point of the T'ang in the eighth century to the conquest of all China by the Mongols in the thirteenth century.⁵⁰ We have seen that up until the Mongol invasion, China was under constant attack by the Khitan, the Tangut and the Jurched-Chin barbarians. Chinese armies were unable to defeat these nomads on the battlefield and Chinese emperors tried to buy peace by paying tribute. We have noted that one of the chief characteristics of the new urban culture in China was the triumph of the civilian as opposed to the military point of view. Until the early T'ang, the Chinese had taken pride in their military power. But by the Sung there had appeared the overwhelming emphasis on civil accomplishments and pacifism that have since characterized Chinese civilization. There was a growing disregard, even contempt, for martial life and prowess. It was felt that military service was fit only for the

⁴⁹Holschauer and Fairbank, op.cit., p. 235-236.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 211.

degre of society.⁵¹ Such an attitude held by the Chinese leaders was bound to be adopted by the Chinese foot-soldier and cavalryman and reflected in a declining record of achievement in battle. The decadent, city-dwelling, Chinese upper classes no longer gave good examples to their fighting men. They had given up hunting and horse-back riding and for these martial sports they had substituted literature, art and scholarship. The countryside was no longer a place in which to prepare for war, but a place to consume poetically with nature.⁵² How different this way of life was from that of the Mongols will be seen below.

The quality of the Chinese soldier had definitely declined by the twelfth century. A large part of the Chinese armies were composed of the city unemployed and criminals, placed in the army to get them off the streets. But perhaps the greatest military weakness of the Chinese was the varied national composition of their armies. They included men of Mongol race, a heritage of centuries of nomad invasions, who at the first opportunity deserted to the victorious Mongols. They had divisions recruited from the Mongol Khitan, from the Jurchen-Chin, and native Chinese.⁵³ The Chinese peasant was burdened with increasingly heavy taxes to pay for the luxuries of the Chinese ruling classes and pay tribute to invading nomads. He could not leave his fields without loss of production. And he no longer enjoyed the strong leadership of the old aristocracy.

The political disunity that had divided China since the fall of the T'ang and the beginning of new barbarian invasions had reached its height in the twelfth century. There was continuous political and sometimes military warfare between the Chin dynasty of the north and the Sung in the south.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 223-224.

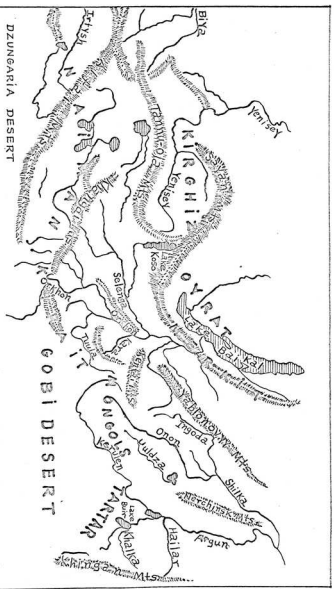
⁵³ Fox, *op.cit.*, p. 90.

Both of these dynasties constantly intrigued with the barbarians outside of China to gain their support. These intrigues were not a solution for overcoming the political division of China and were to prove disastrous for the Chinese. We saw that in order to stop the attacks of the Khitan, the Chinese had made an alliance with the Jurchen-Chin. After the Chin defeated the Khitan and conquered North China, they turned their armies against the Chinese. The Chinese Southern Sung dynasty was to make the same mistake again. They turned for help to the Mongols, who defeated the Chin and then conquered the Southern Sung.

Conditions in Mongolia in the Twelfth Century

Turning to the map of Mongolia of the twelfth century, we will mention the locations of the principal tribes that were to have major roles in the unification of the new nation. The original homeland of the historic Mongols was the area between the Onon and the Kerulen rivers, southeast of Lake Baikal, from whence they extended their conquest. To the southeast of the Mongols were the Tartars, whose name came to be used in China and the West to mean Mongols in general, but who were a different people. Furthest west lived the Haimans, between the upper Irtysh and the Orkhon rivers, north of the Altai mountains. The Haimans were the most civilized of Mongolian tribes and had accepted Christianity in the form of Nestorianism. Near the Haimans, in the degree of their civilization, were the Kiraits, who lived to the southeast of the Haimans, along the Orkhon river. Most of the Kiraits had also been converted to Nestorianism about the year 1000 A.D. North of the Haimans and the Kiraits lived the Morkits, who were mainly forest hunters. Northwest of the Morkits were the Cyrats, also a very primitive tribe. The Chinese gave broad, general names to all of these northern tribes. According to their degree of civilization, the Chinese distinguished the "White

DZUNGARIA DESERT
PRINCIPAL TRIBES OF MONGOLIA AROUND 1200 A.D.



Tartars," to the south of Mongolia near the northern frontier of China, the "Black Tartars," to the north and the "Savage Tartars" or "People of the forests" who contrary to most of the Mongolian tribes still lived by hunting, fishing and gathering, and among whom shamanism was still predominant.

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We saw that the ancestors of the Mongols had been conquered by the ancestors of the Turks. From 552 A.D. to 924 A.D., Mongolia remained under Turkish masters (the T'u-chueh or Eastern Turks, the Uighur Turks, and the Kirghiz Turks). During this period, the Mongols were forced to leave their old homeland and to take refuge in mountains to the east, on the lower Kerulen river. In 924 A.D. when the Khitan defeated the Kirghiz Turks, other Mongol tribes began to reenter the regions of the Onon, the upper Kerulen and Tula rivers. After centuries of Turkish domination, the Mongols had by the middle of the tenth century begun a reconquest of their traditional lands.

By the twelfth century, this reconquest was accompanied by a decay of the Mongol patriarchal clan (obog) system and the rise of what has been called nomad feudalism. The break-up of the patriarchal clan system seems to have been directly related to the commercial revolution in China, which lasted from the eighth through the thirteenth centuries. Thus it would seem that the social crisis which Mongolia was undergoing in the twelfth century was mainly the result of the increased foreign trade of China with Central Asian peoples and with Turkish and Mongolian peoples on China's northern frontiers. ⁵⁵ Not only were the tribes living on the great land routes to China affected by this increased commerce. Uighur, Uzbek and Chinese merchants

⁵⁴ Bertold Spuler, Les Mongoles dans l'Histoire (Paris: Fayot, 1961), p. 12.

⁵⁵ Fox, op.cit., p. 26-27.

had developed a considerable trade among the Mongols farther north. As we saw, the Chinese were mainly interested in trading for nomad horses. Most of this trade was by simple barter, but by the twelfth century, it is probable that money was being increasingly used in the steppe as a result of the great expansion of its use in China and in Chinese foreign trade. From the eighth century, as we mentioned, the Chinese were forced to pay large amounts of tribute to the northern tribes. This tribute also increased the wealth of clan and tribal leaders. The effect of this new wealth, from trade and tribute, was to create a wealthy and powerful Mongol aristocracy.⁵⁶

By the twelfth century, the old patriarchal clan system of the Mongols was shattered. A condition of anarchy existed among the tribes. Old clans with unbroken blood relationships had dispersed as their stronger members became wealthy and voluntarily established themselves as petty lords or princes (noyon) with followers who were no longer blood kinsmen but vassals observing a system of fealty and protection. The success of a new prince depended on how well he protected his followers. He had to work constantly to find and control the best pastures and hunting grounds and give generous presents.⁵⁷ In addition to trade with China and Central Asia, a prince had other sources of wealth. He received all the spoils of hunting (skins and furs), he had the first choice of booty from war and was entitled to the services of his vassal followers.

The unification of Mongolia was no historical accident. The crisis of the twelfth century demanded the appearance of a great leader who would

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 27.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 30-31.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 31.

destroy the last traces of the patriarchal clan system and build a new society based on new relationships. The success of Genghis Khan in overcoming this crisis and unifying the Mongols into a strong, warlike nation at a time when China and other Asian empires were militarily weak and politically divided and when the greed of the new Mongol aristocracy had been stimulated by the rich Chinese and Central Asian commerce, made the Mongol conquest inevitable.

Fox confirms this, and contrary to the opinions of many investigators, he believes that conquest was an absolute necessity for the Mongols. He reasons that Genghis Khan did not seek war with China or with the Moslem empire of Khwarizmia. Genghis Khan, according to Fox, would have engaged willingly in peaceful trade if it had been possible, but it was not. The new empire had to enter into relations with its neighbors, to carry on trade with them on a large scale. And this was so because the new feudal class had to have the marks of their rank. Moreover, the army had to be equipped and Mongol society could not produce weapons on a large scale. Grain had to be imported, while China needed from the Mongols the raw materials of their pastoral economy in exchange for manufactured goods. The Mongols needed to trade but, peaceful trade was impossible. China was divided between two hostile dynasties. The Chin dynasty of the north was threatened by a great peasant rising, assisted by the Southern Sung. The Tanguts had cut off the Lop Nor trade route to the west and held the caravan route into Mongolia itself. The Qurkhan(ruler) of the Kara-Khitai Empire blocked the free flow of trade between China and the west. The Khwarizm-Shah Mohammed aimed to monopolize the whole western trade to China. The new Mongol Empire had to either fight or die. It had to either force freedom of exchange on its neighbors or collapse before their pressure and its own inability to maintain its social structure, with

its greedy and ambitious class of feudal military leaders, unable to maintain themselves with the low productive power of Mongol pastoral society. Fox also considers the interests of merchants who flocked to Mongolia from Central Asia and the border regions of the Great Wall as soon as a stable state had been created in Mongolia. These merchants undoubtedly saw the advantages to themselves if a man like Genghis Khan could establish a firm rule over North China and beyond and bring order out of the chaos. Fox concludes there was no dream of world empire, only the pressure of economic forces combined with the genius of one man and the cunning of his more civilized advisers.⁵⁹

Thus the twelfth and thirteenth century conditions in Asia, China and Mongolia were an important first factor in the rise of the Mongols, their unification of Mongolia and the success of their foreign conquests. The wealth and resulting trade of the other empires and especially that of the Chinese Empire caused the break-up of the old society in Mongolia and supplied the basis for a new society. Yet, the political divisions in the other empires were a threat to the survival of the new Mongol Empire because they threatened their necessary foreign commerce. This made the Mongol conquest of these empires inevitable. The military weakness of these empires insured Mongol success.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 80-81.

CHAPTER III

MONGOL SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The Patriarchal Clan System

True nomads have no home. They dwell in a desert or plateau region where the soil is poor and the grass is sparse. They must move often or their flocks will perish. They live in tents which they can strike in a few hours or as in the case of the Mongols in tents transported on wagons forming great, moving tent-cities. Each group is a family of nearly related folk, ruled by the oldest man, the father of most of the children. Such a system is called patriarchal.⁶⁰ The Mongols had advanced beyond this family stage. Patriarchal clans (*ghag*) were the basic social and political units of Mongol society. The patriarchal clan was divided into families (*yagun*) literally meaning "bones".

The ties which bound individuals, families, clans and even whole tribes together were the relationships upon which the Mongols created an invincible military organization. There were several kinds of important ties in the patriarchal clan system. And all of these ties demanded loyalty. First, the individual's spiritual life was focused on loyalty to his clan, which was expressed in a cult of the hearth. A group of clans were bound together by blood relationships, forming a larger tribal unit, and the individual felt a similar loyalty to his tribe.⁶¹ Besides the blood

⁶⁰Geoffrey Parsons, The Stream of History (New York and London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), p. 170.

⁶¹Reischauer and Fairbank, op.cit., p. 263.

relationships, there were other ties of loyalty. The principal of blood kinship could be extended by the oath of anda ("sworn brother").⁶² One Mongol might become the anda of another, a personal alliance and loyalty relationship often established between equals of different clans. In contrast to the status of anda was that of naicur (pl. naicut) or "companion," a relationship between a superior and a subordinate. A naicur forswore all obligations and loyalties, including kinship to declare himself solely "the man" of a freely chosen war leader. Finally, adoption was widely practiced in Mongol society which remained rather open and fluid.⁶³

The Decline of the Patriarchal Clan System and the Rise of Feudalism

When the Mongols first appeared in history in the middle of the tenth century and more clearly by the twelfth century, the patriarchal clan was in the process of crumbling and seemed to be returning to a state of individual families.⁶⁴ But any return to individual family units must have been only temporary if at all. The break-up of the patriarchal clan system was followed by a dispersal of individuals and clans from their original social units but there was a simultaneous process going on in which they were being regrouped under princes and aristocratic clans. A Mongol clan or tribe of the twelfth century was no longer composed of only members related by blood. However, blood ties continued to be important among the new aristocracy. The aristocracy were now the blood members of any clan and they included both rich and poor. Thus by the twelfth century, there was a ruling class of wealthy aristocrats, heads of a clan or a tribe, whether a free clan or a vassal clan, then the poor of the free and vassal clans, and

⁶²Genghis Khan, "Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1967 ed., Vol. X, p. 102.

⁶³Neischnauer and Fairbank, *loc.cit.*

⁶⁴Crousset, *L'Empire Mongol*, p. 32-33.

finally the slaves.⁶⁵

We have referred to the rise of princes(noyon) who becoming more wealthy than their clan fellows broke away from the patriarchal clan system giving rise to a new form of social organization known as nomad feudalism.⁶⁶ Even before the new source of wealth appeared in the steppes, which we have attributed to the commercial revolution in China, the tribes were never static. Two processes alternated with each other. Claims to pasture and the right of movement either led to the splitting up of tribes and the formation of separate clan-like groups, or to the coalescence of small groups under capable leaders.⁶⁷ The demand for freedom to move gave extraordinary power to the tribal lords who regulated the allotment of pastures and orbits of migration. This led to tribal wars, but it also made possible periods of relative stability based on the smooth adjustment of claims to mobility.⁶⁸ From the time the Mongols first became a nomadic people,⁶⁹ tribal lords must have exercised great authority and have held great power owing to these important social functions which they performed. But due to the precarious existence of steppe life and the resulting generalized poverty, these lords could hardly have lived much better than the other members of the tribe. The appearance of new wealth from expanded trade and receipt of tribute from China, created a decisive gap between leaders and followers and gave rise to a definite class stratification. The greed of newly arisen

⁶⁵Vox, op.cit., p. 30.

⁶⁶Gurva, p. 31.

⁶⁷Lattimore, op.cit., p. 79.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 71.

⁶⁹The Mongols probably did not become nomadic herders before 500 or 400 B.C. (McGovern, op.cit., p. 11). It is now believed that nomadism originated from mixed farming by way of specialized stockbreeding, diverging in this way from that other line of development which led through intensive agriculture to an economy capable of supporting cities (Phillips, op.cit., p. 10).

princes for even greater wealth and power led to endless tribal wars.

In the course of tribal warfare families, clans and tribes would become subordinate to other tribes, enhancing the power of the conquerors. On the personal level, a defeated individual might become a servitor or slave of a stronger man.⁷⁰ Tribes could hierarchize themselves, through defeat, or from having been rescued by another tribe, or from having sought the protection of powerful neighbors, when they became their clients or vassals.⁷¹ Thus there had grown up a hierarchy of feudal-type relations of fealty and protection among "lords," "knights," "commoners" and "serfs".⁷² This hierarchy was bound together by hereditary personal loyalty. By the twelfth century, nomad feudalism had developed to the point where a strong personality might rise to a position of commanding leadership.⁷³ There was some protection for commoners in the fact that should a lord be completely arbitrary or too weak to protect them, they could transfer their allegiance from one chief to another. But no one could hope to survive alone and necessarily had to become the vassal of some prince. And according to steppe law the prince had absolute control over the persons of his subjects. The first and foremost principle of this law was military. Disobedience to a prince or his subordinates was immediately punished by death.

The loyalty ties of the patriarchal clan system, those of sworn brother, of companion and of adoption continued under nomad feudalism. But loyalty based on blood relationships among commoners must have been greatly weakened due to the dispersal of individuals and clans and the new hierarchization. However, any weakening of loyalty based on blood ties was

⁷⁰Reischauer and Fairbank, loc.cit.

⁷¹Grousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 50.

⁷²Reischauer and Fairbank, loc.cit.

⁷³Ibid.

repaired and strengthened by the system of fealty and protection.

The struggle among nomadic feudal princes for the possession of wealth and followers was the principal cause of the anarchy and warfare in twelfth-century Mongolia. There were two other causes of civil strife directly related to Mongol social organization.

Polygamy, and more specifically polygyny, was a traditional institution among the Mongols. John of Plano Carpini, a Western political emissary to Mongolia in 1245-47, writes: "Each man has as many wives as he can keep, one a hundred, another fifty, another ten -- one more, another less."⁷⁴ Polygyny of course heightened the demand for wives, but these had to be acquired from outside the clan because of a rule of clan exogamy.⁷⁵ Bohannan tells us that polygyny is most tenacious in a society in which economic rights in women can both be acquired and have some meaning.⁷⁶ Women played a part of great importance in Mongol society. They were the producers, making almost everything that was needed. Each wife had a right to her own tent and household and women usually followed the men to war. In war, women cared for the men's gear, prepared food and tended the flocks. More than this, a widow assumed all the rights of her husband, including leadership of the clan or tribe. And in some cases she might become the ruler of an empire.⁷⁷ For these reasons, women were highly valued economically and a high price had to be paid to the parents of a girl. The scarcity of marriageable women due to polygyny, the further limitation imposed by the

⁷⁴Christopher Dawson (ed.), The Mongol Mission: Narratives and Letters of the Franciscan Missionaries in Mongolia and China in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, Translated by a nun of Stanbrook Abbey (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955), p. 7.

⁷⁵Neischauser and Fairbank, loc.cit.

⁷⁶Paul Bohannan, Social Anthropology (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 109.

⁷⁷Fox, op.cit., p. 28.

rule of exogamy, and the cost of acquiring a wife caused the seizure of women to become a common practice. And this fostered feuds, raids of vengeance and petty warfare between clans and even whole tribes.

A third cause of warfare was due to the combined workings of the feudal system of fealty and protection, in which unity and peace might be achieved during the life time of a strong leader; and the absence of any strict law of inheritance in the steppe. Leadership among the nomads could not just be inherited. It had to be fought for and won. A prince's death was usually followed by a wild scramble for power among his surviving brothers and sons and hence gave rise to perpetual civil wars.⁷⁸

Characteristics, Customs and Beliefs of the Mongols

We have now seen the main outlines of twelfth-century Mongol social organization and the condition of anarchy that existed. Now we must ask what kind of individual did nomad feudalism produce. Here we are interested only in those characteristics, customs and beliefs of the Mongols that seem to have some bearing on the Mongol as a fighting man. There is no greater testimony to the superior fighting qualities of the Mongol than the world empire that he conquered. But the centuries that stand between this noble warrior and ourselves have caused his outline to grow dim. There is no better way in which to feel his presence than by reading the first-hand account of a man who lived with the Mongols when their empire was at its height. For this reason, John of Plano Carpini has been freely quoted.

Behind Mongol social organization and in large measure determining its form was the peculiar physical environment of Mongolia. The harsh physical environment in which the Mongol lived and its meager resources was undoubtedly the cause for his developing the qualities of endurance and thrift. The

⁷⁸McGovern, op.cit., p. 106.

necessity to supplement his pastoral life by hunting and the continuous warfare in which he engaged explain his skill with the bow and arrow and his superb horsemanship. Carpini writes:

The men . . . hunt and practice archery, for they are all, big and little, excellent archers, and their children begin as soon as they are two or three years old to ride and manage horses and to gallop on them, and they are given bows to suit their stature and are taught to shoot; they are extremely agile and also intrepid. Young girls and women ride and gallop on horseback with agility like the men. We even saw them carrying bows and arrows. Both the men and the women are able to endure long stretches of riding . . . they look after their horses very well, indeed they take the very greatest care of all their possessions . . . their women make everything . . . in all their tasks they are very swift and energetic.⁷⁹

Lamb records the pride and covetousness of the Mongols:

The pride of the nomads actuated all they did. They fought savagely to keep their personal liberty. At the same time, they coveted the rich possessions of the civilized areas. Such possessions meant security and endless hours of feasting . . . the Mongols longed to bring into the steppes and to have for their own the thousands of women, the cartloads of grain, the trained hawks and limitless wine of the Cathayans and the Golden people.⁸⁰

Carpini, who is writing after the unification of Mongolia, tells us of the obedience of Mongols to their rulers, of their endurance and of what modern sociologists would call their strong "in-group" loyalty:

. . . the Tartars, are more obedient to their masters than any other men in the world, be they religious or secular; they show great respect to them nor do they lightly lie to them. They rarely or never contend with each other in word, and in action never . . . they show considerable respect to each other and are very friendly together, and they willingly share their food with each other . . . they are also long-suffering. When they are without food, eating nothing at all for one or two days, they do not easily show impatience, but they sing and make merry as if they had eaten well. On horse back they endure great cold and they also put up with excessive heat. . . . there is practically no litigation among them. No one scorns another but helps him and promotes his good as far as circumstances permit.⁸¹

⁷⁹Dawson, op.cit., p. 18.

⁸⁰Harold Lamb, The Earth Shakers (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1949), p. 46.

⁸¹Dawson, op.cit., p. 14-15.

Carpini considers the above characteristics to be the "good" qualities of the Mongols. He also finds what he thinks are their "bad" qualities:

They are most arrogant to other people and look down on all, indeed they consider them as nought, be they of high rank or low born . . . they are quickly roused to anger with other people and are of an impatient nature; they also tell lies to others and practically no truth is to be found in them. At first indeed they are smooth-tongued, but in the end they sting like a scorpion. They are full of slyness and deceit, and if they can, they get round everyone by their cunning . . . any evil they intend to do to others they conceal in a wonderful way so that the latter can take no precautions nor devise any thing to offset their cunning . . . they are exceedingly grasping and avaricious; they are extremely exacting in their demands, most tenacious in holding on to what they have and most niggardly in giving . . . they consider the slaughter of other people as nothing . . . 82

And Carpini, judging the Mongols by Christian ideals, continues:

. . . to kill men, to invade the countries of other people, to take the property of others in any unlawful way, to commit fornication, to revile other men, to act contrary to the prohibitions and commandments of God is considered no sin by them. 83

We must remember that Carpini was a European whose people were directly threatened by the Mongol conquest. And that he was a man whose thinking reflected the conditions of the Middle Ages in Europe. Far from being "bad" qualities as Carpini thought, we suggest that these were and are the characteristic attitudes of great conquerors and that all of these characteristics contributed to the political and military success of the Mongols.

The beliefs held by a people, and especially by a nation of conquerors, as to their military prowess and invincibility and their conception of future life after death have undoubtedly always been important, although little considered, factors in military success. There is evidence that by the time Genghis Khan had completed his unification of Mongolia, the Mongol people had begun to believe, as their gran Khan did, that they were destined to

⁸² Ibid., p. 15-16.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 11.

rule over other men and that no human force could successfully oppose them. The following excerpt from a letter by Carpini would indicate a sense of greatness and fearlessness among the Mongols and just a hint of a national consciousness:

When anyone threatens them saying: 'If you invade that country you will be killed, for a vast number of people live there and they are men skilled in the art of fighting', they still give answer, 'once upon a time indeed we were killed and but seven of us were left, and now we have increased to a great multitude, so we are not afraid of such men.'⁸⁴

The Mongol warrior seems to have believed that when he was killed, life would continue in about the same way as before his death, and that his wealth would even increase. He was not burdened with fears of sin and eternal punishment, all of which amazed Carpini:

They know nothing of everlasting life and eternal damnation, but they believe that after death they will live in another world and increase their flocks, and eat and drink and do other things which are done by men living in this world.⁸⁵

Our survey of Mongol social organization, the second major factor in the rise and success of the Mongols, has revealed a number of ways in which it served them as a source of political and military strength. Nomad feudalism inherited several forms of loyalty relationships from the patriarchal clan system and reinforced these with its own system of fealty and protection. These relationships created obedience and discipline in Mongol society and in the Mongol army. They created a feudal hierarchy that was the basis of a strong, centralized government and thereby facilitated the unification of the nation and the empire. And they created the need for a supreme leader of genius. The new system of feudal relations in particular developed a Mongol warrior who was absolutely loyal to his leaders. The conflicts for wealth, for followers, for women and over inheritance gave

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 12.

rise to warfare. But this warfare developed in the Mongol qualities of endurance, courage, cunning, even cruelty, all of which made him the finest soldier of his day.

CHAPTER IV

THE MONGOL ARMY

The Influences of Social Organization, Environment and Military Technology

Whatever the Mongols may have lost by the break-up of their patriarchal clan system, which had been relatively democratic, was to be compensated for by their new source of military strength based upon the new relationships of nomad feudalism. The social organization of the tribes contributed to their military strength and provided for a continuous renovation of leadership. Clan chieftains rose to their positions through personal prowess. Unlike the patriarchs of a sedentary society, they could not retain power when old and weak. They would be displaced by younger and stronger leaders.⁸⁶ The new personal relations of fealty and protection of nomad feudalism produced a type of political organization in which a strong personality could quickly rise to the top of this hierarchy of personal relationships.⁸⁷ Genghis Khan took full advantage of the developing feudal political organization in his rise to power and in his reorganization of the Mongol army.

There were two clearly distinct stages of development discernible in the military organization of the Mongols. During the early years of the unification of Mongolia by Genghis Khan and up until 1204 when this unification was but two years distant, the military organization he relied on followed his political organization exactly. Except for the introduction

⁸⁶ Reischauer and Fairbank, *op.cit.*, p. 247.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

of some new battle tactics, it was the same organization used by the other tribes. The political structure was organized on the family principle, families forming clans, clans forming tribes, tribes grouped in larger units, and the latter forming an empire in later times.⁸⁸ In the early stages of unification, clans and tribes fought as units. In 1204, only seven years before he began his attack on North China, Genghis Khan reorganized his army.⁸⁹ This new army was aristocratically organized at the top with its own elite, the personal body guard of the Khan. The army was reorganized on a decimal system in units of tens, hundreds, thousands and of ten thousand (a unit called a tumen, which was considered an independent tactical formation under the orders of a general). The commanders of each group were known as captains, i.e., captains of ten, of a hundred and of a thousand. The new concept and practice became that of mixed units. A Mongol soldier no longer fought along side his blood kinsmen. In this reorganization based on the decimal system, clan members having blood ties were usually carefully intermixed in separate units. The military organization became more permanent and more impersonal, a confirmation of the decay of the patriarchal clan system.

Nomad feudalism brought a new economy to the steppe, a military economy that was regulated by the cautious Genghis Khan, who was suspicious of everything that did not serve him.⁹⁰ This new military economy combined with the natural harshness of the physical environment and early training received by Mongols to prepare themselves for survival in the steppe, filled the ranks of the Mongol army with superior soldiers.

We have seen that the Mongols were not just herdsmen but hunters and

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 264.

⁸⁹ Grousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 156-159.

⁹⁰ Lamb, op.cit., p. 52-53.

warriors. Their active outdoor life produced a type of individual who was independent, self-reliant and omniscient because he was unspecialized.⁹¹ Carpini had observed that the training of the youths in martial exercises started at a very early age. Indeed while they were still babies, the Mongols were taught to ride on the backs of sheep, and to shoot with miniature bows and arrows at birds and rats.⁹² This early training of the individual continued when he reached adulthood and paid big dividends in war. The virtuosity of the Mongol hunters and herdsmen in their use of the bow was a decisive factor in battles.⁹³ From birth to death, the Mongol was never inactive. Even during the winter months, the yasa (the code of laws established by Genghis Khan) ordered the horde to devote itself to hunts on a grand scale, expeditions after antelope, deer and wild ass.⁹⁴ The babies who rode on sheep became the magnificent cavalymen who conquered China and swept across Asia into Europe. The mobility of this cavalry gave it a deceptive appearance of being everywhere at the same time which in itself constituted a considerable strategic advantage over other armies of the period.⁹⁵ And cavalry had become the dominant weapon in the military technology of the day, a ready means of conquest possessed by the Mongols.⁹⁶

The Khan's Bodyguards

Of the greatest importance in the new feudal society was the institution of nikut,⁹⁷ the squires of the khans and nobles, who formed a kind

⁹¹Reischauer and Fairbank, op.cit., p. 248.

⁹²McGovern, op.cit., p. 105.

⁹³Grousset, Chinese Empire, p. 223.

⁹⁴Harold Lamb, Genghis Khan: The Emperor of All Men (New York: Robert M. McBride & Co., 1927), p. 76.

⁹⁵Grousset, Chinese Empire, p. 223.

⁹⁶Reischauer and Fairbank, op.cit., p. 261.

⁹⁷Supra, p. 35.

of chivalry of free companions and were the nucleus of the military state organization. The nikour might be a messenger or ambassador, an organizer of the chase, a personal attendant on the lord, a camp commander, a member of the Khan's guard, an official in command of a tribal levy, or a great general. The important thing was that his allegiance was a personal one to his lord and was entirely independent of family or clan. He was a free man, without the obligations of the vassals or the degrading toil of the slave.⁹⁸ Genghis Khan had the genius to see what a tremendous weapon the institution of the nikout could be if developed and properly used. In place of unruly khans, he substituted his own vassals, bound to him by inviolable allegiance, at the head of the subdued, defeated and broken tribes.⁹⁹

From the day he first became Khan, Genghis paid special care and attention to his personal following. He made the most talented of these into the little group of picked military leaders, devoted to him, who became known as "the four knights of Temujin," and as his "four hounds."¹⁰⁰

From his own following and from the nobility, Genghis Khan chose his personal guard. Only the sons of clan leaders, generals and kinsmen could belong to the guard. All the men of the guard were chosen personally by the Khan. This guard which began with about 150 men, was increased in 1204, during the reorganization of the entire army, to 10,000 members. This increase reflected the requirements of the new military state and also, undoubtedly, the growing ambitions of the Khan himself.

Before, said Genghis Khan, I had only 70 day guards (tourgha'out) and 80 night guards (kehte'ut). Now that Heaven (Tengri) has commanded me to govern all nations, it is necessary that there be recruited from among the thousands (minghat), the hundreds (da'out)

⁹⁸ Fox, op.cit., p. 67.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 66.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 69

and the tens (harbat), and others, to be my personal guard (ke'chik). These men, who will be assigned to my person, should be chosen from among the sons of the nobles (noyat) or free men (tar-gat) and should be agile, well-built and intrepid.¹⁰¹

The privileges of the guard were great, but the discipline in turn was strict. The commandants of the guard could not punish guard members. If an offense was committed in the guard, the Khan was to be notified immediately and he would decide upon beheading or cudgelling.¹⁰² A common guardsman had precedence over the commander of a thousand in the army, and from the guard Genghis Khan chose most of his generals.¹⁰³ The Khan's guard was a unique organization. No such military force existed anywhere in the world at that time and such a closely-knit, highly trained and courageous body of men had rarely taken the field.¹⁰⁴ The organization of a permanent guard was Genghis Khan's first step in the reorganization of the Mongol army.

The Reorganization of the Army

The creation of the horde as a permanent military organization was the work of Genghis Khan. He ruled it with the yassa and held it together with inexorable authority.¹⁰⁵ Although his division by the decimal system followed the Chinese model, the organization of the army was the personal creation of the military genius of Genghis Khan.¹⁰⁶ As we mentioned, his first army was made up of clan levies. Each clan formed its own division in

¹⁰¹Grousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 191.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 192.

¹⁰³Rene Grousset, L'Empire des Steppes: Attila, Gengis-Khan, Tamerlan (Paris: Fayot, 1948), p. 282.

¹⁰⁴Fox, loc.cit.

¹⁰⁵Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 76.

¹⁰⁶Spuler, op.cit., p. 19.

battle, with its own clan and tribal leaders. By 1206 this system had completely disappeared. The clans themselves were so broken and dispersed that they were no longer blood unions but the feudal appanages of military leaders directly responsible to the Khan.¹⁰⁷ The iron will of Genghis Khan and his organizing ability brought discipline and ceaseless activity with a far-reaching goal into the lives of the Mongols. Each individual was given new responsibilities.

He allowed the nomads who followed him no more idleness. To their accustomed, haphazard life he gave a purpose. Instead of a coalition of tribes -- the ancient pastoral ulus -- he formed an army of horsemen, with tribes merged into regiments. Into this army he drafted the best of the men able to ride, over fourteen years of age and less than seventy. Able-bodied men not chosen for the army were given the duty of caring for roads and transport animals. The weaker sort of men, armed only with sticks and whips, cared for the herds¹⁰⁸

Even when they are actually engaged in fighting, there is exacted from them as much of the various taxes as is expedient, while any service which they used to perform when present devolves upon their wives and those of them that remain behind. Thus if work be afoot in which a man has his share of forced labour, and if the man himself be absent, his wife goes forth in person and performs that duty in his stead.¹⁰⁹

. . . each man toils as much as the next, and no difference is made between them, no attention being paid to wealth or power.¹¹⁰

The decimal system of organization employed by Genghis Khan among the leaders paralleled that among the troops and was as follows: over ten men was set one man, a captain of ten; over ten of these was placed a captain of a hundred; over ten captains of a hundred was a captain of a thousand, and over ten captains of a thousand was one man called a tuman (also

¹⁰⁷Fox, op.cit., p. 71.

¹⁰⁸Lamb, Earth Shakers, p. 52.

¹⁰⁹Ata-Malik Juvaini, The History of the World-Conqueror. Translated from the text of Mirza Muhammad Qasvini by John Andrew Boyle, 2 vols. (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1958), I, p. 30-31.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 31.

the name of the military unit of ten thousand). Two or three chiefs were in command of the whole army, but in such a way that one held the supreme command.

¹¹¹

Genghis Khan divided the entire army into three great sections, the Center (kul) was flanked by the Left Wing (juu-gar) and by the Right Wing (harun-gar). When not on a foreign campaign, the Center remained at home,¹¹² the Left Wing operated in the east and the Right Wing operated in the west.

At first Genghis Khan measured strength not in terms of political power or wealth, but of man-power. He seemed to be obsessed by a hunger for men to serve him.¹¹³ On the summit of a bare mountain, he prayed for men to serve him. And they began to come to his standard, at first by families and by tens, then by hundreds and thousands as his reputation of generosity and justice spread.¹¹⁴ Once he had completed the unification of Mongolia, he had the imagination to see the many peoples of the steppes united in one horde. He had the gift of eloquence to stir deep emotions in them. He never doubted his ability to lead them. He held before them the vision of conquest in unknown lands and at the same time mobilized them for this conquest.¹¹⁵

A common and quite natural mistake among many historians is to describe the Mongol army as a vast multitude. But the horde, like the Roman legion, was permanently organized, and as we have seen, was organized on a system some what like modern armies. Thus the horde of Genghis Khan was not, like the Huns, a migratory mass, but a disciplined army of invasion. Obedience and discipline were among the chief characteristics of the Mongol army.

¹¹¹ Dawson, op.cit., p. 32-33.

¹¹² Lamb, Earth Shakers, p. 32.

¹¹³ Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 42.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 43.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 74-75.

Juvaini informs us:

Their obedience and submissiveness is such that if there be a commander of a hundred thousand between whom and the Khan there is a distance of sunrise and sunset, and if he but commit some fault, the Khan dispatches a single horseman to punish him after the manner prescribed: if his head has been demanded, he cuts it off, and if gold be required, he takes it from him.¹¹⁶

If there is a sudden call for soldiers an order is issued that so many thousand men must present themselves in such and such a place at such and such an hour of that day or night. And they arrive not a twinkling of an eye before or after the appointed hour.¹¹⁷

As to the size of the horde, there has been much speculation as to how many troops Genghis Khan had under his command. This is a difficult question to answer today and in any estimate based on the supposed population of Mongolia in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it must be remembered that Mongol women quite often fought along side their men. After the unification of Mongolia, an allowance must be made for the large contingents the Mongols often drew from subject peoples. From the many estimates that have been made, we will mention only two. Lamb estimates the population of the Gobi during the time of Genghis Khan as no more than 1,500,000, and concludes that no more than 200,000 effectives could have been mustered.¹¹⁸ He also quotes Sir Henry Howorth on the composition of the Mongol army, which gives us an estimate of its total numbers as follows:

Imperial Guards	1,000
The Center	101,000
Right Wing	47,000
Left Wing	52,000
Other Contingents	29,000
	230,000 ¹¹⁹

It is not certain how Sir Henry made his estimate, and it would appear to be too low for the number of Imperial Guards which other sources inform us

¹¹⁶Juvaini, *loc.cit.*

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹¹⁸Lamb, *Genghis Khan*, p. 206.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 207.

numbered 10,000 after 1204. However, this was apparently the largest army Genghis Khan ever assembled. ¹²⁰ Between 1219 and 1225, he performed the remarkable military feat of subjecting the country from Tibet to the Caspian Sea with only about 100,000 men, and from the Dnieper to the China Sea with no more than 250,000 in all. ¹²¹

Although the loyalty of Genghis Khan's personal following and of his guard never seems to have been questioned, he was too sagacious to have several hundred thousand men loose and fully armed, scattered over a million square miles of plains and mountains. Weapons, at least lances, heavy armour and shields, were kept in arsenal by chosen officers, cared for and cleaned until warriors were summoned for a campaign. The troops were then issued weapons, mustered and inspected. ¹²² This general disarming of the Mongols except when foreign campaigns were planned was also probably a precaution taken by Genghis Khan to prevent a recurrence of the anarchy that had held sway in Mongolia before the unification. There were strict rules for the inspection of troops and arms.

Whenever the slaying of foes and the attacking of rebels is purposed, they specify all that will be of service for that business, from the various arms and implements down to banners, needles, ropes, mounts and pack animals such as donkeys and camels; and every man must provide his share according to his ten or hundred. On the day of review, also, they display their equipment, and if only a little be missing, those responsible are severely punished. ¹²³

Fox tells us the Khan had to carry out this inspection in person, ¹²⁴ but this

¹²⁰ During the reign of Ogotai, a son of Genghis Khan, many Turkish tribes of mid-Asia joined the Mongols. Ogotai probably had more than half a million effective fighting men in his armies. Mangu and Kubilai, grandsons of Genghis Khan, probably had double that number (Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 208-209).

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 206.

¹²² Ibid., p. 76.

¹²³ Juvenal, op.cit., p. 30.

¹²⁴ Fox, op.cit., p. 70.

would seem far too great a task for one man. In any case, the Khan had to know everything the soldiers should have with them and he punished a soldier who lacked any article of equipment.

Genghis Khan developed a code of laws to govern civil and military life and he established a religious sanction as well by which he asserted his divine mission, delegated to him by the Eternal Blue Sky, the deity of the steppes.¹²⁵ But he must have known that belief in a divine mission was not sufficient to realize the divine will. The proof that he did realize belief alone would not be sufficient to unify Mongolia and to conquer other lands was the army he created and the famous ideal he gave his army in these words:

In daily life, be like a two year-old fawn, but in battle, attack like a sparrow-hawk. In the feasts and the rejoicings, be heedless like young colts, but in combat, fall upon the enemy like a falcon. During the day, be in wait like an old wolf, and be on guard in the darkness, like a black raven.¹²⁶

Genghis Khan had created a new force in warfare, a disciplined mass of heavy cavalry capable of swift movement in all kinds of terrain. The ancient Persians and the Parthians had had cavalry as numerous as the Mongols, but they lacked the great skill with the bow and the savage courage of the Mongols. The horse was a weapon of vast destruction if rightly handled and held in restraint.¹²⁷

With regard to the organization of their army, from the time of Adam down to the present day, . . . it can be read in no history and is recorded in no book that any of the kings that were lords of the nations ever attained an army like the army of the Tartars, so patient of hardship, so grateful for comforts, so obedient to its commanders both in prosperity and adversity, and this not in hope of wages and gifts nor in expectation of income or promotion. This is, indeed, the best way to organize an army; for lions, so long as they are not hungry, will not hunt or attack any animal. There is a Persian proverb: 'An over fed dog catches no game', and it has also been

¹²⁵Reischauer and Fairbank, op.cit., p. 264.

¹²⁶Grousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 195.

¹²⁷Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 76.

said: 'Starve thy dog that it may follow thee.'¹²⁸
What army in the world can equal the Mongol army! In time of action, when attacking and assaulting, they are like trained beasts out after game, and in the days of peace and security they are like sheep, yielding milk, and wool, and many other useful things. In misfortune and adversity they are free from dissension and opposition. It is an army after the fashion of a peasantry, being liable to all manner of contributions . . . occasional taxes, the maintenance of travellers or the upkeep of post stations with the provision of mounts and food therefor. It is also a peasantry in the guise of an army, all of them, great and small, noble and base, in time of battle becoming swordsmen, archers and lancers and advancing in whatever manner the occasion requires.¹²⁹

The Khan's Lieutenants

Proper handling and restraint of the Mongol army required leadership of a superior quality at all levels. And in his knowledge of men and where to place them in his organization, as well as how to reward them for faithful service, Genghis Khan had no equal. In appointing his generals, he used the friends of his youth in whom he could have complete confidence. He had a guarantee that his orders would be well executed.¹³⁰ He was careful to single out discerning men as well as daring ones for his lieutenants, the leaders of the armed horde. He knew the value of the cunning that could bridle anger and wait for the proper moment to strike a blow. The brave but foolhardy he allowed to care for the supplies. The stupid were left to tend herd.¹³¹ Bravery was not the only quality Genghis Khan looked for in his lieutenants. Of one leader he said:

No man is more valiant than Yessoutai; no one has rarer gifts. But as the longest marches do not tire him, as he feels neither hunger nor thirst, he believes that his officers and soldiers do not suffer from such things. That is why he is not fitted for high command. A general should think of hunger and thirst, so he may understand

¹²⁸Juvaini, op.cit., p. 29-30.

¹²⁹Ibid., p. 30.

¹³⁰Spuler, loc.cit.

¹³¹Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 46.

the suffering of those under him, and he should husband the strength of his men and beasts.¹³²

The same ties of personal loyalty found in feudal Mongol society united the commanders of ten, of one hundred, of one thousand, and of ten thousand.¹³³ Above everything, Genghis Khan looked for loyalty. A traitor could bring about the destruction of a whole tent village or lead a horde into ambush. Treachery was the unpardonable sin of the clansman.¹³⁴ In all history, there have probably been few examples of a loyalty so absolute in word and deed as that which existed between Genghis Khan and his military leaders. He called them his "paladins," his "heroes" and showered them with high titles, wealth and power. These paladins of the Khan were known throughout the Gobi as the Kiyat or Raging Torrents. Two of them carried devastation over ninety degrees of longitude in a later day -- Chepe Noyon, the Arrow Prince, and Subotai Bahadur, the Valiant.¹³⁵ Genghis Khan made his first reputation by giving power and rewards to his followers and even to men who had been loyal followers of his old enemies. He thereby created a new aristocracy which had to consolidate itself. This aristocracy could not then stop, but had to go on to complete conquest and the establishment of a new order dominated by itself.

¹³⁶

The greatest of rewards fell to those of his paladins who had aided him in some crisis. He created tar-khans, and raised them above all others. They could enter the royal pavilion at anytime without ceremony. They could make the first selection of spoil taken in any war, and they were exempt from all tithes. They could do no wrong. Nine times the death punishment would be forgiven them. They were to have whatever land they selected and these privileges would be inherited

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Grousset, L'Empire des Steppes, p. 282.

¹³⁴ Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 42.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 44.

¹³⁶ Lattimore, op.cit., p. 128.

by their children to nine generations.¹³⁷

Evidence of the great loyalty and devotion between the Khan and his padlans has come down to us in their recorded sayings. For example, Genghis Khan is reported to have said of his heroes, "I was like a sleeping man when ye came to me. I was sitting in sadness aforetime and ye roused me."¹³⁸ And Subotai, the greatest of his cavalry leaders, promised his Khan in the picturesque language of the steppe, "I will gather for thee like an old mouse, fly for thee like a jackdaw, cover thee like a horse-blanket and protect thee like a felt in the lee of the wind. So will I be towards thee."¹³⁹ Other leaders swore, "when we capture beautiful women and splendid stallions, we will bring all to thee. If we transgress thy commands or work harm to thee, leave us out in the wild barren places to perish."¹⁴⁰ Because he had these trusted lieutenants and a disciplined army behind him, Genghis Khan could take swift decisions and strike lightning blows impossible to his enemies, hampered by family divisions and jealousies.¹⁴¹

Warfare

The purpose for which Genghis Khan created, reorganized and trained such a large and efficient army and able, loyal corps of leaders was two-fold: to maintain order and unity in Mongolia and to conquer and dominate other nations. The Mongol clansmen were war hungry and smarting from ancient feuds. It may have seemed to Genghis Khan that the one way to keep them from each other's throats was to lead them to war elsewhere.¹⁴² And, as we saw, the need of the Mongol aristocracy

¹³⁷Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 68.

¹³⁸Ibid., p. 45.

¹³⁹Fox, op.cit., p. 48.

¹⁴⁰Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 45.

¹⁴¹Fox, op.cit., p. 71-72.

¹⁴²Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 74.

to consolidate itself and maintain the newly established nomadic feudal relationships with only the limited productive capacity of the steppes required increased trade with neighboring empires. These empires all being in a state of disunity and disorder, seemed to make military conquest by the Mongols inevitable.¹⁴⁵

The Mongols are still remembered by history principally for the ruthless and deceptive ways in which they waged war. There are many accounts of this warfare. We have again quoted extensively from the letters of John of Plano Carpini because he was an observer shortly after the unification of Mongolia and because of his vivid descriptions. Carpini gives us a very complete description of the arms of the Mongols from which we have taken the following excerpts:

They all have to possess the following arms at least: two or three bows, or at least one good one, three large quivers full of arrows, an axe and ropes for hauling engines of war . . . the wealthy . . . have swords . . . a horse with armour . . . helmets and cuirasses. Some have cuirasses, and protection for their horses, fashioned out of leather . . . some of the Tartars have all the things we have mentioned made of iron . . . some of them have lances which have a hook in the iron neck, and with this . . . they will drag a man from his saddle . . . the length of their arrows is two feet . . . the heads of the arrows are very sharp and cut on both sides like a two-edged sword . . . the Tartars always carry files at the side of their quiver for sharpening their arrows . . . the iron heads have a pointed tail . . . they have a shield of wicker or twigs . . .¹⁴⁴

The horde had the following fixed plan when invading hostile country:

1. A Kuriltai, or general council was summoned at the head quarters of the Khan. All higher officers, except those with permission to remain on active service, were required to attend. The situation was discussed; the plan of the campaign explained. Routes were selected, and the divisions chosen.
2. Spies were sent out, and informers brought in for questioning.
3. The doomed country was entered from several points at once. Each division or army corps moved toward a fixed objective. The division or corps commander was free to maneuver at his discretion, while following the general plan, but had to keep in touch by courier with the Khan.

¹⁴⁵ Supra, p. 32-33.

¹⁴⁴ Dawson, op.cit., p. 33-35.

4. Separate divisions posted observation forces before the large fortified towns, while the neighboring district was ravaged. Supplies were gathered off the country and a temporary base established if the campaign was to be long.¹⁴⁵

Carpini gives us an idea of Mongol tactics when advancing into enemy territory:

When they are going to make war, they send ahead an advanced guard and these carry nothing with them but their tents, horses and arms. They seize no plunder, burn no houses and slaughter no animals; they only wound and kill men or, if they can do nothing else, put them to flight. The army follows after them taking everything they come across, and they take prisoner or kill any inhabitants who are to be found. Not content with this, the chiefs of the army next send plunderers in all directions to find men and animals and they are most ingenious at searching them out.¹⁴⁶

All maneuvers were directed by signals and the whole army worked as smoothly as a machine. The Mongols avoided closing with the enemy until he was weakened and disorganized by their superior fire power. Their battle tactics allowed for this. The battle formation was in five ranks, separated by wide intervals. The two front ranks were the heavy armoured cavalry and the three rear ranks the unarmoured light cavalry. The advance was always covered by clouds of skirmishers. As the opposing forces drew near, the rear ranks passed through the intervals and poured a hail of arrows and javelins into the enemy. When their fire had disorganized his advance they retired again through the intervals and the front ranks charged.¹⁴⁷

In describing Mongol battle tactics, Carpini tells us of how their leaders were protected in battle, of their deception in combat and how a few Mongols could be made to appear as many:

When . . . they are going to join battle, they draw up all the battle lines just as they are to fight. The chiefs or princes of the army do not take part in the fighting but take up their stand some distance away facing the enemy, and they have beside them their children on horseback and their womenfolk and horses; . . . sometimes they make figures of men and set them on horses . . . to give the impression that a great crowd of fighting men is assembled there. They send a detachment of captives and men of other nationalities who are fighting with them to meet the enemy head-on, and some Tartars may perhaps accompany them. Other columns of stronger men they dispatch far off to the right and the left so that they are not seen by the enemy and in this way they surround them and close in and so the fighting begins

¹⁴⁵Lamb, Genchis Khan, p. 210-211.

¹⁴⁶Dawson, op.cit., p. 35.

¹⁴⁷Fox, op.cit., p. 89.

from all sides. Sometimes when they are few in number they are thought by the enemy, who are surrounded, to be many, especially when the latter catch sight of the children, women, horses and dummy figures . . . which are with the chief or prince of the army and which they think are combatants; and alarmed by this they are thrown into disorder.

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The Mongols often encountered enemy forces so superior in numbers that other battle tactics were called for:

. . . if they see that they are opposed by a large army, they sometimes turn aside and, putting a day's or two day's journey between them, they attack and pillage another part of the country . . . they retreat for some ten or twelve days and stay in a safe place until the army of the enemy has disbanded, whereupon they come secretly and ravage the whole land.

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Once battle had begun, a more rapidly executed variation of this deceptive tactic of retreat was sometimes used:

. . . if they see that they are not going to be able to defeat them, they retire, going back to their own line. They do this as a blind to make the enemy follow them as far as the places where they have prepared ambushes. If the enemy pursues them to these ambushes, they surround and wound and kill them.

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The Mongols employed yet other deceptions in battle. A favorite tactic was:

. . . if it happens that the enemy fight well, the Tartars make a way of escape for them; then as soon as they begin to take flight and are separated from each other they fall upon them and more are slaughtered in flight than could be killed in battle. However . . . if they can avoid it, the Tartars do not like to fight hand to hand but they wound and kill men and horses with their arrows; they only come to close quarters when men and horses have been weakened by arrows.

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The yassa established strict regulations for conduct in battle. One of the most important of these regulations was designed to keep the Mongol units from dispersing when in contact with the enemy:

148 Dawson, op.cit., p. 36-37.

149 Ibid., p. 36.

150 Ibid.

151 Ibid., p. 37.

When they are in battle, if one or two or three or even more of a group run away, all are put to death; and if a whole group of ten flee, the rest of the group of a hundred are all put to death, if they do not flee too . . . unless they retreat in a body, all who take flight are put to death . . . if one or two or more go forward boldly to the fight, then the rest of the ten are put to death if they do not follow and, if one or more of the ten are captured, their companions are put to death if they do not rescue them.¹⁵²

As soon as the Mongols invaded North China and other civilized empires, they came up against an enemy who often fought from his fortified towns and cities. This was a completely new experience for the Mongols, but they devised tactics to subdue fortifications:

They reduce fortresses in the following manner. If the position of the fortress allows it, they surround it, sometimes even fencing it round so that no one can enter or leave. They make a strong attack with engines and arrows and they do not leave off fighting by day or night, so that those inside the fortress get no sleep; the Tartars however have some rest, for they divide up their forces and they take it in turns . . . If they cannot capture it in this way they throw Greek fire; sometimes they even take the fat of the people they kill and, melting it, throw it on to the houses, and whenever the fire falls on this fat it is almost inextinguishable . . . If the city or fort has a river, they dam it or alter its course and submerge the fortress if possible. Should they not be able to do this, they undermine the city and armed men enter it from underground; once inside, some of them start fires . . . the rest fight the inhabitants.¹⁵³

And should all else fail:

. . . they establish a fort or fortification of their own facing the city so as not to suffer any injury from the missiles of the enemy; and they stay for a long time . . . unless by chance . . . outside help . . . moves them by force.¹⁵⁴

The Mongols knew of and used what we today call "psychological warfare" to induce the defenders of fortified cities to surrender. This tactic was sometimes successful and their treatment of captives was one of the reasons why they were so dreaded by Asians and Europeans. Carpini tells us:

While they are pitched before the fortification they speak enticing words to the inhabitants making them many promises to induce

¹⁵² ibid., p. 35.

¹⁵³ ibid., p. 37.

¹⁵⁴ ibid.

them to surrender into their hands. If they do surrender to them, they say: 'come out, so that we may count you according to our custom,' and when they come out to them they seek out the artificers among them and keep these, but the others, with the exception of those they wish to have as slaves, they kill with the axe. If they do spare any others they never spare the noble and illustrious men . . . and if by chance the unexpected happens and some nobles are kept, they can never afterwards escape from captivity either by entreaty or by bribe.¹⁵⁵

And on the manner of the killing of captives Carpini adds:

They divide those who are to be killed among the captains of a hundred to be executed by them with a battle-axe; they in their turn divide them among the captives, giving each slave to kill ten or more or less as the officers think fit.¹⁵⁶

Genghis Khan had a limited number of warriors. Any single decisive defeat would have sent the nomads back into the deserts. Any doubtful victory was no gain for the Mongols. His success had to be decisive without the loss of too many men. When the Mongols began their foreign conquests, Genghis and his lieutenants had to maneuver their divisions against armies led by masters of tactics.¹⁵⁷ The Chinese were to be the first witnesses to the military genius of Genghis Khan. They said he led his armies like a god, moving large bodies of men over vast distances, without apparent effort. They also commented on the judgment he showed in the conduct of several wars in countries far apart, on his strategy in unknown regions.¹⁵⁸ No superb battle tactics, Genghis Khan supplied the inflexible purpose and the rare ability to do the right thing at the right time, as well as to hold his men under iron restraint.¹⁵⁹ Surprise, however, was always the chief weapon of the Mongols, an indispensable tactic because in almost every battle they

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 37-38.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁵⁷ Lamb, *Genghis Khan*, p. 80.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 211-212.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

were numerically inferior to the enemy.¹⁶⁰ Genghis, nevertheless, never allowed hesitation or overcaution to interfere with his campaigns. The record of his successful sieges and brilliant victories were such that Europe can offer nothing that will surpass, if in fact she has anything that compares with it.

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The Mongol army was the third major factor in the rise and success of the Mongols. Its superiority was due to the nature of nomad feudal social organization which was characterized by a system of loyalty relationships and by a centralized hierarchy of command. Its superiority was also due to the skilled and courageous type of warrior produced by the environment and way of life in the steppe and this warrior's possession of the most advanced weapons of the day. And the army's superiority was based on the superior leadership of Genghis Khan and his lieutenants.

¹⁶⁰Fox, op.cit., p. 50.

¹⁶¹Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 212.

CHAPTER V

THE UNIFICATION OF MONGOLIA

The Rise of Genghis Khan to Power

The birth name of Genghis Khan was Temujin, which signifies "The Finest Steel" -- Tumur-ji. The Chinese version is T'ie mou jen, which has an altogether different meaning, "Supreme Earth Man".¹⁶² The birthdate of Temujin varies according to sources: 1155 according to Persian historians, 1162, according to the Chinese dynastic history of the Yuan and 1167, according to M. Pelliot who used Chinese sources from 1340.¹⁶³ The Mongol chroniclers give the dates of birth and death of Genghis Khan as born 1155, "year of the swine", and died 1227, also "year of the swine".¹⁶⁴ Latourette accepts the year 1155 of the Persian and Mongol sources,¹⁶⁵ and this would appear to be the more correct birthdate.

Temujin, one of the great military and political geniuses of all time, who controlled and planned conquests that demanded powers of organization, mastery of strategy, wise calculation and strength of will such as few men have ever possessed,¹⁶⁶ was born in a felt yurt in Outer Mongolia,

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁶³ Grousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 51.

¹⁶⁴ Michael Charol, Genghis Khan. Translated by Andre Cogniet (Paris: Fayot, 1951), p. 14.

¹⁶⁵ Kenneth Scott Latourette, The Chinese: Their History and Culture, 3rd ed. rev. (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1946), p. 251.

¹⁶⁶ Fox, op.cit., p. 6.

near the sources of the Onon and Kerulen rivers.¹⁶⁷ At the time of his birth, his father Yesugei, a feudal prince, had been absent on a raid against a tribal enemy Temujin by name. The enemy was made prisoner, and the father, returning home, gave to his infant son the name of the captive foeman.¹⁶⁸

Lamb succinctly states the enigma of Genghis Khan in these words: "We", he says, "are faced with the mystery that surrounds him. A nomad, a hunter and herder of beasts, outgeneraled the powers of three empires; a barbarian who had never seen a city and did not know the use of writing drew up a code of laws for fifty peoples."¹⁶⁹ It is our purpose in this section to briefly outline some of the salient events in the youth and early adulthood of Genghis Khan. His important personal qualities will be discussed in Chapter VI. The "mystery" of how Genghis Khan rose to power in Mongolia and led the united tribes to world conquest is, in fact, no mystery at all. The events of his youth and the conditions of his day adequately explain his motivations. We must agree with Vladimirtsov that whatever were Genghis Khan's aptitudes or his genius, he was a man of his times, of his people. Consequently, his action must be situated within the framework of his epoch, within his environment and must not be transposed to another time and another place.¹⁷⁰ In prior chapters, we have seen what the general conditions of Temujin's Asia were and the readiness of Mongolia for the appearance of a strong personality who would complete the transition from the system of patriarchal clans to that of nomad feudalism. As we try to catch

¹⁶⁷ Grousset, Chinese Empire, p. 222.

¹⁶⁸ Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 20.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁷⁰ S. Vladimirtsov, Genghis-Khan. Translated from the Russian by Michel Carsoff (Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d' Orient, 1948), p. 131.

a glimpse of this romantic figure, we must constantly remember the centuries that separate his day from our own and in judging him it must not be forgotten that the most intelligent of his chroniclers, Persian and Chinese, were his enemies.

In the year 1176, according to M. Pelliot's chronology,¹⁷¹ Temujin's father while passing through the country of the Tartars was obliged to attend one of the many feasts, at which he was given mortal poison.¹⁷² The death of his father was a momentous event in Temujin's life. It weakened his position among those whom he would otherwise have considered his equals. It forced him to develop his talent for organizing, leading, and protecting men still less important than himself and to rise by gratifying their demands until he was able to recover his old position and reach out still further.¹⁷³

Under Kabul Khan, Temujin's great-grandfather, the Yalqa Mongols (Temujin's clan) had occupied especially good grazing lands. When Temujin's father died, other clans prepared to destroy the young boy and drive the Yalqa out.¹⁷⁴ A great part of Temujin's clan deserted him upon the death of his father, although Houlun, Temujin's mother, tried to avert the break-up of the clan.¹⁷⁵ The deserters of course carried away most of the herd. Temujin was ignorant and illiterate and hardly able to catch enough game to keep his mother and brothers alive. So great was his poverty that he was reduced to hunting prairie mice in order to keep alive.¹⁷⁶ Every strong man

¹⁷¹ Grousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 52.

¹⁷² Charol, op.cit., p. 19.

¹⁷³ Lattimore, op.cit., p. 127-128.

¹⁷⁴ Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 26.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁷⁶ Fox, op.cit., p. 26.

became his enemy. But Temujin managed to survive and he grew in strength and cunning. Until manhood, he lived an obscure and hunted life, a life full of defeat and humiliations. Not until middle age was he able to build a secure position for himself and not until about the age of fifty did he begin his career of conquest.¹⁷⁷

Left an orphan, his clan having deserted him because they considered him too young and too weak to protect them, in complete poverty and with every prince who aspired to hegemony in the steppe seeking his destruction, he endured, survived, and taking advantage of the anarchy of his day, rose to supreme leadership, at first, by his own efforts alone. Herein lies the genius of the man. Temujin would have sunk permanently to the status of a common warrior, a vassal of some other chief, if he had not, through appeal to the blood feud and the clan war, proved himself as a leader and won his way to a gradually increasing power.¹⁷⁸

Temujin seems to have been conscious of his right to leadership. He was the first-born of Yesugei the Valiant, Khan of the Yakka or Great Mongols, who had been master of 40,000 tents.¹⁷⁹ Temujin had learned from the tales of the minstrels that he came of distinguished stock, the Bourchikoun, or Gray-eyed Men. His ancestor, Kabul Khan was said to have pulled the emperor of China by the beard and had been poisoned as a consequence. He learned that his father's sworn brother was Toghruk Khan of the Kiraits, the most powerful of the Gobi nomads.¹⁸⁰ At seventeen, after holding together his clan by his own efforts for four years, he visited his father's friend Toghruk

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁷⁸ Lattimore, op.cit., p. 119.

¹⁷⁹ Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 22.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 23.

Khan.¹⁸¹ But Temujin was fiercely proud and independent. He did not ask Toghrul for protection or aid which according to steppe law he could have done because Toghrul had been his father's anda. Even at this early age, perhaps Temujin had dreamed of unifying Mongolia, it was a common dream throughout the steppe. And perhaps he had visualized the important role Toghrul could have in this unification. But Temujin vowed not to seek Toghrul's aid until he could approach him as a near equal.

Temujin spent his youth attempting to revenge the death of his father. Revenge was not simply a matter of honor but was an essential step in his political career.¹⁸² Young and of aristocratic descent, but threatened with loss of status and loss of his followers when deprived, so young, of the protection of his father, he had to prove himself. This was the unwritten law of the steppe. We have seen that hereditary leadership had no meaning among the Mongols. Leadership was always achieved, never ascribed, and the law of the tribes permitted the clansmen to select another leader should Temujin be unable to protect them. Temujin's rise to the supreme rulership of Mongolia was a long, difficult struggle. In early middle age, he was still the vassal of Toghrul Khan and among a tribal steppe people who did not yet recognize the common linguistic bond later expressed in the name Mongol.

Temujin arose through adversity from the lower nobility, building his power on personal loyalty and asserting his mission to rule the world as the delegate of the Eternal Blue Sky. He gave his tribal name, Mongol, to all the tribes that joined him. Borrowing the Uighur script for the purpose, he codified the customary law of his people and declared it supreme and universal. He created a nation in arms, organizing a great army and

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁸² Lattimore, loc.cit.

carefully selecting a personal bodyguard from which he drew his generals. During his life he was given many names -- the Mighty Man-Slayer, the Scourge of God, the Perfect Warrior, and the Master of Thrones and Crowns.¹⁸³ In the great kuriltai or assembly of all the tribes in 1206, Temujin was given the title of Genghis Khan. The title Genghis is probably from the Turkic tengis, meaning "ocean," with the extended meaning suitable to the cosmology of the time, of "wide," or "encompassing," or "universal".¹⁸⁴ Khan means "chief" and is to be distinguished from Khagan, "emperor," a title never used by Genghis.¹⁸⁵

The Principal Events of the Unification

In this section no pretense is made to give all of the details of the unification of Mongolia which Genghis Khan began about the year 1169 and which he completed in 1206. Instead, our purpose has been to mention the main events of the Conqueror's rise from an unimportant vassal to the supreme rulership of Mongolia.

A word should be said about the sequence of the main events. The chronology of the period is still much debated among specialists. This is due to the fact that the original Chinese, Persian and Mongol sources are in almost complete disagreement as to the order in which the principal events took place. The Chinese Yuan-Chi and the account of Rashid ed-Din, the Persian historian, coincide, while the Mongol record, the Secret History, gives an entirely different sequence. Our account follows that adopted by Crousset. He is of the opinion that the Secret History related the events in a climactic form for narrative effects and he himself accepts the

¹⁸³Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 15.

¹⁸⁴Genghis Khan, " Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1967 ed., Vol. X, p. 102.

¹⁸⁵Ibid.

chronology of the Chinese and Persian sources.¹⁸⁶

The years of unification of the steppe tribes was a period of continuous struggle not only in the numerous tribal wars, but in many minor events which often found the steppe aristocracy resisting the growing power of Genghis Khan, elected as Khan by some of their members. As time went on and his power steadily increased, all of them began to realize that they had appointed over themselves a complete master. But, as we saw, the crisis in Mongol society in the twelfth century demanded the appearance of a great leader to bring order out of chaos. Everything called for one man to unite the Mongol people. Yet when every wealthy owner of great herds, every ambitious khan, saw himself as the potential leader of the people, the man who in fact was to unite them could only succeed through the physical destruction of his rivals.¹⁸⁷

Thus a vague urge for unity was there among the clan leaders, and the need was pressing, for this young feudal society could give no security, no safety or law, until someone bound all the unruly chieftains together.¹⁸⁸ War was the primitive shamanism of the Mongols of any hope. It was incapable of providing any principle of spiritual unity, just as the patriarchal clan system provided no basis for an imperial administration.¹⁸⁹ In a sense, it may be said that Genghis Khan created nothing new. The need for the feudal state he created had long been felt among the Mongols and the germs of all its institutions had been in existence for many years. The genius of Genghis Khan was that he understood the meaning of the changes taking place among his people, and he speeded up these changes through impetuous energy

¹⁸⁶ Grousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 96.

¹⁸⁷ Fox, op.cit., p. 67.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁸⁹ Dawson, op.cit., p. xxiii.

and wisdom and gave them their final form.¹⁹⁰

When he was a little over thirty years old and had 100,000 tents that followed him, a plan began to form in his mind, "our elders have always told us that different hearts and minds cannot be in one body. But this I intend to bring about. I shall extend my authority over my neighbors". Thus his thought was to build one great nation of clans and tribes and to make his feudal enemies his subjects. And with his great patience he set about realizing this task.¹⁹¹ As the twelfth century drew to its end he was still laboring at what his elders told him could not be brought about, a confederacy of the clans.¹⁹²

For some time the Mongols were to remain among the weakest of the nomads beyond the Great Wall and were constantly harrassed from the east by the Taidjuts and the Tartars. Although Temujin was unwilling to demand aid from Toghrukh Khan, the latter did in fact protect the Mongol's western flank. Temujin did not, however, forget his right to claim adoption by Toghrukh, and this he did after himself building up Mongol power.¹⁹³ Temujin's father had helped place Toghrukh on his throne and to make him one of the most powerful men in the steppe. When Temujin visited Toghrukh to recognize him as his "father" or sovereign, Toghrukh was much flattered and vowed to aid Temujin regroup his clan.¹⁹⁴ They swore loyalty to each other in these words: "In war we will fight together against the enemy. In the chase we will hunt together. Should any men make trouble between us we will neither hear nor believe them, but will on all occasions speak direct with one

¹⁹⁰ Fox, op.cit., p. 66.

¹⁹¹ Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 50-51.

¹⁹² Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁹³ Ibid., p. 52-53.

¹⁹⁴ Grousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 65-66.

another.¹⁹⁵

Around the year 1189, not long after this alliance was concluded, the Merkit attacked the Mongols by surprise. The motive for the surprise attack of the Merkit was revenge. Yesugel had once carried off one of their women, Houlun, the mother of Temujin. They now had their revenge by carrying off Burté, Temujin's first wife. Temujin and his followers escaped into the forest of Burkan Kaldun in the Kental mountains.¹⁹⁶ The carrying away of Burté had delayed the aggressors and saved Temujin and his warriors. But Temujin was not resigned to the loss. He went to Toghrul Khan, now his lord and "father," and asked for military aid.¹⁹⁷ Toghrul answered his petition in this way:

Did I not tell thee last year? When thou brought me a sable coat and didst clothe me with it saying that in the times of your father he and I declared ourselves anda and that I therefore was as your father, then I told thee: 'in return for the sable coat, I will ransom your dispersed people; . . . now faithful to these my words, . . . if it be necessary to destroy all of the Merkit, I will rescue and return to thee your Burté . . .'¹⁹⁸

Toghrul also pledged support from another of his vassal chiefs. Thus was formed a coalition against the Merkit.¹⁹⁹ The plan was to first fall upon the Toktoa, the principal tribe and the most formidable of the Merkit.²⁰⁰ The Merkit were not expecting an attack against their homeland and their forces were scattered. After the victory and after recovering Burté, Temujin decided not to pursue the Merkit. But in retaliation 500 Merkit who had participated in Burté's abduction were killed. Their wives were given to the Mongol

¹⁹⁵Fox, op.cit., p. 56.

¹⁹⁶Grousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 66-67.

¹⁹⁷Ibid., p. 69.

¹⁹⁸Histoire Secrète des Mongols (Yuan-sh'ao pi-shih). Restoration of the Mongol text and the French translation of Chapters I through VI by Paul Pelliot (Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, 1949), par. 104, p. 146.

¹⁹⁹Grousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 69.

²⁰⁰Ibid., p. 69-70.

warriors.²⁰¹

After the war against the Merkit, there occurred another momentous event in the life of Temujin. This was the breaking off of friendly relations between himself and Jamuga Sechen, Jamuga the Wise, Temujin's anda. Jamuga's name is linked with that of the Conqueror throughout the years of the unification, first as a fast friend and then as Temujin's worst enemy. The Secret History does not give a clear reason for this break between the two anda which seems to have occurred about 1194. However, Fox tells us that both Temujin and Jamuga were adventurous and resourceful and that many families and fragments of clans began to gather around each of them. It seemed only a matter of time, sworn friendship or no, before a split would come between them.²⁰²

After the war against the Merkit and at sometime between 1194 and 1199, some of the aristocrats called together a kuriltai and there decided to proclaim Temujin Khan. At that time he was given the title of Genghis.²⁰³ Temujin was accordingly fully recognized as a member of the nobility, and the aristocrats who elected him seemed to have had as their goal the ending of the fragmentation of clans.²⁰⁴ The Secret History informs us that at the time of his election, Genghis Khan distributed among his trusted followers the principal military and civilian posts.²⁰⁵ Genghis then spoke to his followers and said: . . . you have left Jamuga to join me. If the Tengri TCV preserves me and comes to my aid, you will all be, oh, my old friends, the

²⁰¹ Histoire Secrète, par. 115, p. 152.

²⁰² Fox, op.cit., p. 46.

²⁰³ Histoire Secrète, par. 123, p. 156.

²⁰⁴ Grousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 77.

²⁰⁵ Histoire Secrète, par. 124, p. 156.

happy companions of my fortune." ²⁰⁶ Genghis then asked for and obtained recognition of his new status as Khan from Toghrul who replied, "It is very good that you have chosen Genghis your Khan, for how could you Mongols do without a Khan? Do not undo what you have agreed in council." ²⁰⁷ And strange as it may seem, Genghis also asked for and received recognition from Jamuga. ²⁰⁸ But in the tone of Jamuga's reply there was disappointment and bitterness. This bitterness led to the first open conflict between the two.

The immediate cause of the conflict may have been planned by Jamuga as a pretext. Jamuga's younger brother stole a troop of horses from one of Genghis Khan's vassal followers. The herdsman pursued the robber and killed him by shooting an arrow into his back. ²⁰⁹ Jamuga, seeking revenge for his brother's death, attacked Genghis by surprise. There are two different versions of the outcome of the battle. Rachi'd ed-Din says Genghis won the battle and boiled his adversaries in seventy large kettles, which was a common punishment of the times. ²¹⁰ The Secret History says Genghis was defeated and was forced to retreat to the Onon river. And that many of his vassal chiefs were captured by Jamuga and boiled in seventy large kettles. ²¹¹ Grousset believes the Secret History version of this battle is the correct one and cites Vladimirtsov, Gengis-Khan, p. 37, who believes the atrocity committed by Jamuga made Genghis Khan appear the more conservative of the two. Because of this many steppe chiefs went over to his side. In this way Genghis was able to turn a military defeat into a moral and political

²⁰⁶ Ibid., par. 125, p. 157.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., par. 126, p. 158.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., par. 127, p. 159.

²⁰⁹ Grousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 80.

²¹⁰ Ibid., p. 81.

²¹¹ Histoire Secrète, par. 129, p. 160.

success.²¹²

Around the year 1196, the new Mongol aristocracy was for the first time called upon to intervene in international politics. The Chin of North China had previously used the Tartar tribes to the east of the Mongols to keep the latter under subjection. Now the Chin asked the Mongols to aid them in destroying the Tartars who had become insupportable with their frontier raids against the Chin.²¹³ The Chin sent an army against the Tartars and asked Genghis Khan to attack the Tartars from the rear. Genghis again called on Toghrul Khan for aid and the two with their armies in alliance with the Chin broke the power of the Tartars.²¹⁴ Genghis accomplished two things by aiding the Chin. He avenged himself of the people who had slain his father and he increased his prestige in the steppe, for he was rewarded by the Chin with the title of "Commander Against Rebels". Toghrul was given the more important Chinese title of wang or king and was thereafter known as Wang-Khan. The Tartars were defeated in this war but were not completely subjugated by the Mongols until the year 1209.^{215,216}

In 1199 the Wang-Khan was attacked from the west by the Haimans and was forced to ask Genghis Khan to come to his aid, which the latter did sending his four great warriors. The Mongols saved the Kirait army, entered the combat, put the Haimans to flight, recaptured all the booty and captives and

²¹²Crousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 82.

²¹³Ibid., p. 90.

²¹⁴Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 55-56.

²¹⁵Histoire Secrète, par. 134, p. 162.

²¹⁶For a detailed account of the principal battle and the awarding of titles with commentary on the Chinese text see Histoire des Campagnes de Genghis Khan (Chang-rou Ts'in-Tcheng Lou). Translated and annotated by Paul Pelliot and Louis Hambis, Vol. 2, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1951), p. 191-213.

turned all over to the Wang-Khan.²¹⁷ At this time the Naimans were a divided people and consequently weaker than they had been. The Naiman king In-antoh-bilga had just died and the country was divided between his two sons who were embroiled over the possession of a concubine. However, the possibility of a complete Mongol victory over the Naiman was foiled by Jamuga who induced the Wang-Khan to betray Genghis and to leave the battle field with his army at night. At dawn Genghis was forced to retreat.²¹⁸

In the year 1200, a coalition of tribes including the Merkit, the Tayitchi'out (a Mongol forest tribe) and the Tartars formed against Genghis Khan. During the following six years Genghis, between other great battles, defeated and subjugated the tribes of this coalition one by one. There is conflicting information from Rachi ed-Din and the Secret History as to whether Genghis Khan attacked the Tayitchi'out before or after Jamuga had been elected by the coalition as anti-khan.²¹⁹ In any case, Genghis and the Wang-Khan began military operations against the Tayitchi'out in 1200 and defeated them in the same year.^{220, 221}

By 1201 Jamuga had become the anti-khan and reformed the coalition which now included tribes from the four corners of Mongolia.²²² The coalition prepared to take Genghis by surprise but he was forewarned in time.²²³

²¹⁷Grousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 103.

²¹⁸Ibid., p. 101-102.

²¹⁹Ibid., p. 103.

²²⁰Ibid., p. 106.

²²¹For a detailed account of the battle see Histoire des Campagnes de Genghis Khan, p. 369-392.

²²²Grousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 108.

²²³Ibid., p. 110.

Genghis and the Wang-Khan again united and defeated the coalition.²²⁴ Grousset reports Rashid ed-Din(I, p. 124 and II, p. 108) as saying that a great storm arose and pressed against the anti-khan coalition, which along with the attack of Genghis and the Wang-Khan, forced the anti-khan coalition to flee, each tribe to its own country.²²⁵

In 1202 Genghis Khan returned to the attack against the Tartars.²²⁶ This time it was a struggle to the death. No male life was spared, save children no taller than the axle of a cart. The Tartars sold their lives dearly but they could not hold out against the disciplined army of the Conqueror.²²⁷ The surviving Tartars were divided among several tribes, the principal ones being the Tcha'an Tartar(White Tartars) and the Aitchi Tartars.²²⁸ The destruction of the Tartars was much more profitable to Genghis Khan, whose center of power was on the upper Kerulen than it was to his ally the Wang-Khan of the Kirait, whose center was on the upper Tuula river. The Tartars were the only people powerful enough to contest the domination of Eastern Mongolia with Genghis Khan. Once they were defeated, he became the sole master of that region, facing the Kirait, the rulers of Central Mongolia. The benefit Genghis Khan was to derive from the extermination of the Tartars came in 1203, when embroiled with his ally, the Wang-Khan, he was able to flee temporarily east to safety. If the Tartars had still been a power in 1203, Genghis would have been encircled by his hereditary enemies and the Wang-Khan and would certainly have been

²²⁴Histoire Secrète, pars. 142-143, p. 166-167.

²²⁵Grousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 111.

²²⁶Histoire Secrète, pars. 153 and 154, p. 175-176.

²²⁷Fox, op.cit., p. 53.

²²⁸Grousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 118.

crushed.²²⁹

After destroying the Tartars, Genghis continued to obey the Wang-Khan, to aid him, and in general to be his vassal, even though the Wang-Khan had already begun to show a less friendly attitude towards him.²³⁰ The fact was that the destruction of the Tartars had changed the balance of power in Mongolia to the advantage of Genghis Khan and to the disadvantage of his ally the Wang-Khan. It may be, as Grousset suggests, that after his victory over the Tartars, he lost no time in elevating his aspirations and that this produced a break in the alliance between himself and the Wang-Khan.²³¹ Lamb believes that Genghis Khan had been working to keep the Kiraits at war with the western Turkish tribes while he strengthened himself in the east and had been trying to keep the Wang-Khan allied to him until his eastern clans were strong enough to face the Kiraits on an equal footing.²³² Vladimirtsov admits two possibilities. On the one hand, he concedes that Genghis may have planned to take advantage of his favored position under the Wang-Khan to strengthen himself and his prestige. Genghis did ask for one of the Wang-Khan's daughters to marry his eldest son Juchi. And he proposed to wed his own daughter to one of the Wang-Khan's sons. His petition was refused and it is recorded that he was greatly disappointed and that his heart grew cold.²³³ On the other hand, Vladimirtsov believes that in spite of some military successes, it is probable that Genghis still had no idea of challenging the Wang-Khan. In 1205, in the eyes of almost everyone, Genghis was still considered to be only a very industrious and skillful

²²⁹ Ibid., p. 121-122.

²³⁰ Vladimirtsov, op.cit., p. 40-41.

²³¹ Grousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 122.

²³² Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 58.

²³³ Vladimirtsov, op.cit., p. 42.

chief of several aristocratic clans. He was still somewhat of an adventurer, while the Wang-Khan was the ruler of a sizable country and the representative of an old reigning house. Moreover, he had been honored by the ruler of North China with the title of wang. These circumstances made him appear very important to the nomads. ²⁵⁴

An important cause of the growing coldness between the two allies seems to have been the jealousy and fear of Genghis Khan's old enemies, the chief of whom was Jamuga. And it would seem that their fears were not entirely unfounded. Juvaini tells us of the favoritism the Wang-Khan showed for Genghis and of the influence the latter had gained at the Kirit court:

Upon every occasion, by reason of the nearness of their confines and the proximity of their territories, he used to visit Ong-Khan Wang-Khan, and there was a feeling of friendship between them. When Ong-Khan beheld his counsel and discernment, his valour, splendour and majesty, he marvelled at his courage and energy and did all that lay in his power to advance and honour him. Day by day he raised his station and position, until all affairs of state were dependent upon him and all Ong-Khan's troops and followers controlled by his discipline and justice. ²⁵⁵

Undoubtedly, the turning of the Wang-Khan against Genghis was in large part the work of Jamuga. It is reported that Jamuga skillfully excited the Wang-Khan's suspicions of Genghis, saying that the latter was in alliance with the Haiman and that he was preparing to betray the Wang-Khan. ²⁵⁶
The Kirit court was willing to listen to Jamuga:

The sons and brothers of Ong-Khan and his courtiers became envious of the rank and favour he Genghis Khan enjoyed; they accordingly cast the nets of guile across the passage provided by opportunity and set the traps of treachery to effect the blackening of his name; in the ambushes of private audiences they put out the story of his power and pre-eminence and repeated the tale of the inclination of all hearts towards obedience and allegiance to him. In the guise of well-wishers they kept these stories fresh until Ong-Khan too became suspicious of him and was doubtful as to what he should do; and

²⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 41-42.

²⁵⁵ Juvaini, op.cit., p. 56.

²⁵⁶ Vladimirtsov, op.cit., p. 41.

fear and dread of his courage and intrepidity became implanted in his heart. Since it was impossible to attack him and break with him openly, he thought to remove him by craft and guile and to hinder by fraud and treachery God's secret design in fortifying him. It was agreed, therefore, that at dawn, . . . Ong-Khan's men should make a night attack upon Chingiz-Khan and his followers and thus free themselves from their fears.

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Thus his adversaries under the Wang-Khan contrived to band together and attack him, but Genghis Khan was forewarned:

They made every preparation for the deed and were about to put their intention into action; but since his luck was vigilant and his fortune kind, two youths in Ong-Khan's service one of them named Kishlik and the other Bada, fled to Chingiz-Khan and informed him of the badness of their faith and the uncleanness of their treachery. He at once sent off his family and followers and had his tents moved away. When at the appointed time, in the dawn, the army charged down upon the tents they found them empty . . . Ong-Khan set off in search of him with a large force of men, while Chingiz-Khan had but a small force with him. There is a spring which they call Baljuna; here they joined battle and fierce fighting ensued. In the end Chingiz-Khan with his small army routed Ong-Khan with his great host and won much booty.

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Juvaini's account of the outcome of the first battle seems to be incorrect. The Wang-Khan's attack came as almost a complete surprise, but Genghis had time to abandon his camp and flee into the mountains where he prepared for battle. The first day of battle saw heavy losses both among the Kirait and among the Mongols. The battle was halted when the hereditary Kirait prince, Sen-Kung, was shot through the cheek with an arrow and the Kirait army stopped to save him. Several of Genghis Khan's best generals had been seriously wounded. The fight was taken out of the Kirait army after the first day, but the battle had been inconclusive. However, the Kirait army was still much more numerous and better mounted than the army of Genghis Khan. The Kirait generals were sure of success. At this time, Genghis

237 Juvaini, loc.cit.

238 Ibid., p. 36-37.

239 Grousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 130.

240 Ibid., p. 132-133.

is said to have had left only 2,600 men. The outcome was a retreat by both the Kirait and the Mongols. Genghis retreated to the extreme east of Mongolia. Lamb confirms this, saying that this first battle had been the most desperate of the young Mongol's career. In it he was defeated and withdrew eastward but managed to keep the nucleus of his clansmen intact and himself alive. With less than 3,000 men, he withdrew down the Khalka river, reached the Buir Lake region and halted on the Tungal river where he began to fatten his weak horses.

Since nomad chieftains were inclined to ally themselves with any growing power, the Kirait victory strengthened the alliance against Genghis Khan. But the Wang-Khan began to feel remorse and realized that he had been misled by Genghis Khan's enemies. He is reported to have said, "We have fought a man with whom we should never have quarreled." Genghis was also grieved over the broken friendship and sought peace with the Kirait. He wrote and sent to the Wang-Khan this famous "complaint" and asked for peace:

O Khan my father, when your uncle . . . for having killed your brothers . . . drove you to take refuge, did not my father come to your rescue? Did you not then become anda with my father, and was not this the reason I styled you father?

When you were driven away by the Haiman, and when your brother was attacked by the Merkit, did I not attack and defeat them? Here is a second reason for your gratitude.

When in your distress you came to me with your body peering through with tatters, like the sun through clouds, and worn out with hunger, you moved languidly like a dying flame, did I not fall on the tribes who molested you? You came to me haggard. In a fortnight you were stout and well-favoured again. Here is a third service we have done you.

²⁴¹ Ibid., p. 134.

²⁴² Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 60.

²⁴³ Fox, op.cit., p. 57.

²⁴⁴ Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 62.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 61.

When you defeated the Merkit, you gave me none of the booty, yet shortly after, when you were hard pressed by the Naiman, who had taken the women and folk of Sen-Kung, a full half of thy following, I sent my four knights who brought back the women, the cattle and all the folk carried off from Sen-Kung. Then also did you thank me. Why now do you reproach me?

Do you remember, O Khan, my father, how on the river Kara, near the mount Burkan, we swore that if a snake glided between us and envenomed our words, we would not listen to it until we had received some explanation. Yet you suddenly left me without asking me to explain.

O Khan, my father, why suspect me of ambition? I have not said: 'my part is too small, I want a greater,' or 'it is a bad one, I want a better.' When one wheel of a cart breaks, and the ox tries to drag it, it only hurts its neck. If then we detach the ox, and leave the wagon, thieves will come and steal the load. If we do not unyoke it, the ox will die of hunger. Am I not one wheel of thy chariot? ²⁴⁶

But Sen-Kung would not agree to peace. Genghis then turned to treachery to destroy his enemies. ²⁴⁷ His brother Kasar had left his wife and three children in the Wang-Khan's camp. Genghis had Kasar send a treacherous message to the Wang-Khan saying that Kasar had been unable to find Genghis any where and he now wished to submit to the Wang-Khan. The Kiraits arrived at a festival given by Kasar and did not suspect that the Mongols were near. The Mongols attacked without warning and after three days of hard fighting routed the Kiraits. The Wang-Khan fled to the Naiman, who beheaded him. His son Sen-Kung fled to Tibet, where he was slain. Jamuga fled to the Naiman and began to plot again against Genghis Khan. ²⁴⁸ The country of the Kirait was annexed to the Mongol Empire. ²⁴⁹

Annexation of the country of the Kirait made Genghis Khan master of Central Mongolia, as well as of Eastern Mongolia. There remained only Western Mongolia which was held by the Naiman. Before beginning his campaign against the Naiman, Genghis completely reorganized the Mongol army in 1204.

²⁴⁶ Histoire Secrète, par. 177, p. 188-191 (translation by Fox, op.cit., p. 57-58.)

²⁴⁷ Fox, op.cit., p. 59.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 60-61.

²⁴⁹ Grousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 145-152.

A debate ensued among the Mongol generals as to whether they should wait until their horses were fatter in the autumn or attack the Haiman at once. Genghis decided that a sudden surprise attack carried out at once would give the Mongols victory. Thus in May of 1204, Genghis Khan began his march to Western Mongolia and arrived there in the autumn. All of his ancient enemies including the Merkit, the last rebellious Kirait, some Tartars and others had grouped around the Tayang Khan of the Haiman. Once again Jamuga was busy among the Haiman and their allies forming a second coalition to attack Genghis Khan.

The Tayang Khan had watched the steady rise of Genghis Khan with uneasiness and his alarm increased after the Kirait were overthrown and Genghis had gained control of the whole of Eastern and Central Mongolia. The Tayang Khan had resolved to strike Genghis down before he could move on Western Mongolia. He sought an alliance with the Ongut Turks who lived near the Great Wall of China in North Shansi. The Ongut and the Haiman were both of the Turkish race, both professed the Nestorian religion and had ethnic and cultural affinities. It was to be expected therefore that the Ongut would join the Haiman and that their combined armies would overcome the Mongols. But this was not to be. Not only did the Ongut ruler refuse the Tayang's petition, he at once informed Genghis Khan that the Haiman were preparing an attack against him. The decision by the Ongut not to oppose Genghis was undoubtedly one of the great turning points in the story of the unification of Mongolia. But the final outcome of the conflict was still by no means assured.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 156-158.

²⁵¹ Ibid., p. 159-161.

²⁵² Vladimirtsov, op.cit., p. 49.

²⁵³ Grousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 154-155.

²⁵⁴ Vladimirtsov, op.cit., p. 50.

Upon arriving in Naiman territory, Genghis Khan was advised of the condition of his army and one of his generals gave him this prudent counsel:

We are less numerous and our horses are lean. Let us fatten them here, and at the same time to deceive the enemy, put out a long line of warriors, each of whom will at night light five fires well spaced. Even if the Naiman are numerous, the Tayang is a weak man and has never led an expedition. In this way we will trouble his spirit, and when our horses are refreshed, we will attack.

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To the good credit of the Conqueror he followed this advice. And it is reported that seeing the innumerable fires which the Mongols lit at night, the Naiman sentinels would say: "There are more Mongol fires than stars."

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One of the great and decisive differences between the Tayang and Genghis Khan was the ability of the latter to recognize sound advice and to act upon it, while the Tayang lacked this ability. The Tayang's scouts had caught a lean Mongol horse, so the Tayang knew the poor state of the Mongol cavalry, but the Mongol strateges completely deceived him, and although he knew they were weak, he believed them to be far superior in numbers to his army. He was advised to withdraw to the other side of the Altai mountains and it was thought the Mongols would pursue. The Mongol horses already tired would then be overfatigued while the Tayang's cavalry remained in excellent condition. He would then be able to crush the Mongols. This seemed to be good advice, but the Tayang did not follow it. His son, Prince Kutchlug, accused his father of cowardice and compared him to an old woman. One of the Naiman officers agreeded. The Tayang had a weak will and ceded, giving the order to march on the Mongols. The Tayang's army was cut to pieces by the Mongols and many of the Naiman fled beyond the Altai mountains. Januga

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²⁵⁵Crousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 161.

²⁵⁶Ibid.

²⁵⁷Ibid., p. 162-163.

deserted his allies and most of the other tribes submitted to Genghis Khan. The Teyang was killed, Kutchlug fled to join the remaining Merkit clans and Jamuga turned to a life of brigandage on the steppe.

In the year 1205, Jamuga's last followers betrayed him and surrendered him to Genghis Khan. Vladimirtsov tells us that Genghis did not hesitate in putting Jamuga to death. Fox, however, gives an account that is probably closer to what actually happened and more in accord with our knowledge of the personal qualities of Genghis Khan. Genghis is said to have slain the traitors who had been unfaithful to their master Jamuga and to have offered peace and forgiveness to his old friend and enemy. But Jamuga is reported to have uttered these heroic words:

In those days long ago, when we became anda, we cooked our food and ate together, we spoke words to one another that cannot be forgotten. Then there came people between us who set us against one another. Remembering those old words, I grow red with shame and have not the courage to face my anda. Thou dost wish me to become thy comrade, but though I bore the name, in fact I should not be so. To-day thou hast gathered peoples under thy rule and there is no way I can be thy comrade. If thou dost not slay me I shall always be like a louse on your collar or a spine on your inner gate. Because of me thou wilt be uneasy by day and at night sleep fearfully. Thy mother has wisdom; thyself art a hero; thy brothers have talent; thy comrades are valiant knights; thou has seventy-three geldings in thy great lords. But I from childhood have had neither parents nor brothers; my wife is a babler; my comrades not trusty. So my anda, above whom is the sky, has surpassed me. Now grant that I may die quickly that my anda's heart may be at peace, and that I may die without shedding of blood. Then I, after death, will be for ever the protector and helper of thy descendants.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 166-168.

²⁵⁹ Fox, op.cit., p. 62-63.

²⁶⁰ Vladimirtsov, op.cit., p. 53.

²⁶¹ Infra, p. 93-101.

²⁶² Fox, op.cit., p. 63.

²⁶³ Ibid.

Genghis Khan was saddened by Jamuga's words but said: "Jamuga and went ever his own way. He is a man who might be corrected but he desires no more to live. So be it." ²⁶⁴ And Jamuga was crushed to death, without shedding his blood, in order that his spirit might dwell unchanged among men, for the Mongols believed that man's spirit resided in the blood. ²⁶⁵

We may consider this final scene between the two sworn brothers in either of two ways. If we are willing to believe that the generosity and moderation for which Genghis Khan was known throughout the steppe was genuine, we must conclude that he had really forgiven Jamuga and did desire to spare his life. If we conclude that Genghis was by nature cruel and self-seeking and that his generosity and moderation were but personal weapons used to advance himself, then the recorded forgiveness of Genghis and the renunciation of life by Jamuga could be seen as a drama by which Genghis calculated to destroy his worst enemy and at the same time to leave a false image of his humanity. Almost all of the accounts we have of the personal qualities of Genghis Khan indicate the duality of his personality. He was at times supremely cruel and at other times humane and moderate. From extensive reading about the reactions of Genghis Khan in many different situations, it is our opinion that whatever fears and misgivings he may have had, his forgiveness of Jamuga was probably genuine.

After the conquest of the Haiman, Genghis Khan was master of Mongolia and in the year 1206 he called together a great kuriltai in which he was confirmed as Khan and elected as the supreme ruler of the Turco-Mongol peoples. ²⁶⁶ There were still some scattered clans and bandits who had not submitted to the Conqueror. But the last touches of unification were given quickly

²⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 63-64.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 64.

²⁶⁶ Latourrette, loc.cit.

and efficiently. Subotai followed the remnants of the Merkit and completed their destruction. Kubilai was dispatched after Kutchlug, the fugitive Naiman prince. Genghis Khan's eldest son Juchi thrust into the forest and river regions of Siberia and subdued the Kirghiz and the Oyrat. This opened the road by which the grain from the rich Yenisey region might flow into Mongolia.

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The last attempt at any opposition to Genghis Khan came soon after the kuriltai of 1206 and came from the shamanist Kokchu, whose religious name was Teb-Tengri ("Ascending to Heaven"). Teb-Tengri was a man of great influence among the tribes and there is evidence that he played a considerable part in the election or rather confirmation of Genghis Khan in 1206. If Teb-Tengri had hoped to win wealth and position for himself by supporting Genghis Khan, he was to be disappointed. An older man was appointed Bek, or chief shaman. Almost immediately Teb-Tengri and his brothers began to intrigue against the unity of Mongolia. They almost succeeded in turning Genghis against his brother Kasar and in causing the tribes to leave the Conqueror and go over to Teb-Tengri. But Genghis was able to destroy the shaman and his brothers in time chiefly, it seems, because of the timely advice of his old mother Houliun and his wife Burte. ²⁶⁹ Juwaini gives the following account of Teb-Tengri and of his destructions:

At this time there arose a man whom I have heard from trustworthy Mongols that during the severe cold that prevails in those regions he used to walk naked through the desert and the mountains and then return and say: 'God has spoken with me and has said: "I have given all the face of the earth to Temujin and his children and named him Chingiz-Khan. Bid him administer justice in such and such a fashion." ' They called this person Teb-Tengri, and whatever he said Chingiz-Khan

²⁶⁷ Fox, op.cit., p. 76.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 77.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid., p. 77-80.

used implicitly to follow. Thus he too grew strong; and many followers having gathered around him, there arose in him the desire for sovereignty. One day in the course of a banquet, he engaged in altercation with one of the princes; and that prince, in the midst of the assembly, threw him so heavily upon the ground that he never rose again. 272

The Yassa

The exceptional personality of Genghis Khan is attested to not only by his military success but as importantly by his legislative activity. To hold his new subjects in check, he relied on the military organization of his Mongols and in addition he announced his code of laws, known as the yasa. In this code he assembled the laws of his people, arranged them and added to them and formed the Constitution of the empire. Juvaini tells us that Genghis Khan abolished reprehensible customs which had been practised by his people and had enjoyed recognition among them and that he established such usages as were praiseworthy from the point of view of reason. The yassa was thus a code of laws that combined the will of Genghis Khan and the most expedient of tribal customs. The laws of the yassa were remarkably complete and comprehensive and were written down.

In accordance and agreement with his own mind he established a rule for every occasion and a regulation for every circumstance; while for every crime he fixed a penalty. And since the Tartar peoples had no script of their own, he gave orders that Mongol children should learn writing from the Uighur; and that these yassa and ordinances should be written down on rolls. These rolls are called the Great Book of Yassa and are kept in the treasury of the chief princes. 276

Fox calls the yassa the fullest expression of the Mongol feudal spirit, with all the harsh intolerance that distinguishes every purely military

272 Juvaini, op.cit., p. 39.

273 Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 70.

274 Juvaini, op.cit., p. 25.

275 Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 70.

276 Juvaini, loc.cit.

civilization. ²⁷⁷ He observes that the yassa was enforced with implacable severity wherever the Mongols ruled and that it proved an invaluable weapon to them in binding their empire together. ²⁷⁸

There would appear to be no complete compilation of the laws extant today. Below we give a partial list from Fox with some observations:

1. It is ordered to believe that there is only one God, creator of heaven and earth, who alone gives life and death, riches and poverty as pleases Him — and who has over everything an absolute power. Probably from the influence of Nestorian Christianity or from Islam.
2. Leaders of a religion, preachers, monks, persons who are dedicated to religious practice, the criers of mosques, physicians and those who bathe the bodies of the dead are to be freed from public charges. The Mongols were very tolerant of all religions.
3. It is forbidden under penalty of death that any one, whoever he be, shall be proclaimed emperor unless he has been elected previously by the princes, khans, officers and other Mongol nobles in a general council. Genghis Khan doubtless thought to protect his own privileges and those of his descendants with this law.
4. It is forbidden chieftains of nations and clans subject to the Mongols to hold honorary titles. Genghis Khan permitted only titles like, "the Valiant," "the Brave," "the Wise," etc.
5. Forbidden to ever make peace with a monarch, a prince or a people who have not submitted to the Mongols.
6. The ruling that divides men of the army into tens, hundreds, thousands, and ten thousands is to be maintained. This arrangement serves to raise an army in a short time, and to form the units of commands.
7. The moment a campaign begins, each soldier must receive his arms from the hand of the officer who has them in charge. The soldier must keep them in good order, and have them inspected by his officer before a battle.
8. Forbidden, under death penalty to pillage the enemy before the general commanding gives permission; but after this permission is given the soldier must have the same opportunity as the officer, and must be allowed to keep what he has carried off, provided he has paid his share to the receiver for the emperor.
9. To keep the men of the army exercised, a great hunt shall be held

²⁷⁷ Fox, op.cit., p. 71.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

every winter. On this account, it is forbidden any man of the empire to kill from the month of March to October, deer, bucks, roe-bucks, hares, wild nes and some birds.

10. Forbidden to cut the throats of animals slain for food; they must be bount, the chest opened and the heart pulled out by the hand of the hunter.
 11. It is permitted to eat the blood and entrails of animals --- though this was forbidden before now.
 12. (A list of privileges and immunities assured to the chieftains and officers of the new empire.)
 13. Every man who does not go to war must work for the empire, without reward, for a certain time.
 14. Men guilty of the theft of a horse or steer or a thing of equal value will be punished by death and their bodies cut into two parts. For lesser thefts the punishment shall be, according to the value of the thing stolen, a number of blows of a staff, seven, seventeen, twenty-seven, up to seven hundred. But this bodily punishment may be avoided by paying nine times the value of the thing stolen.
 15. No subject of the empire may take a Mongol servant or slave. Every man, except in rare cases, must join the army.
 16. To prevent the flight of alien slaves, it is forbidden to give them asylum, food or clothing, under pain of death. Any man who meets an escaped slave and does not bring him back to his master will be punished in the same manner.
 17. The law of marriage orders that every man shall purchase his wife, and that marriage between the first and second degrees of kinship is forbidden. A man may marry two sisters, or have several concubines. The women should attend to the care of property, buying and selling at their pleasure. Men should occupy themselves with hunting and war. Children born of slaves are legitimate as the children of wives. The offspring of the first woman shall be honored above other children and shall inherit everything.
 18. Adultery is to be punished by death, and those guilty of it may be slain out of hand.
 19. If two families wish to be united by marriage and have only young children, the marriage of these children is allowed,
 20. It is forbidden to bathe or wash garments in running water during thunder. Based on an ancient superstition of the steppe
 21. Spies, false witnesses, all men given to infamous vices, and sorcerers are condemned to death.
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22. Officers and chieftains who fail in their duty, or do not come at the summons of the Khan are to be slain, especially in remote districts. If their offense be less grave, they must come in person before the Khan.²⁷⁹

It is to be noted that particularly condemned in the code were theft and adultery the punishment for which was death. Women, horses, sheep and cattle were the most important property and were thus protected. The code further required obedience of children to their parents, and of the younger brother to the elder. A husband was to have confidence in his wife, and the wife was to be submissive to her husband. The rich were to aid the poor. Subordinates were to show respect for leaders. A man's spoken word was a solemn matter among the Mongols. So unless he was caught in the act of a crime, he was not to be adjudged guilty, if he did not confess.²⁸⁰ Especially protected by the law was the new aristocracy. The yasa confirmed by law the position of the new class of feudal nobles.²⁸¹ To avoid conspiracies among the princes and to strengthen central control,²⁸² all nobles had to address themselves solely and directly to Genghis Khan and not to one another, under penalty of death.²⁸³

Genghis Khan was a great builder as well as a great destroyer. He left his people this code of laws with which to govern themselves and rule others and the yasa continued to be observed and to guide the affairs of the empire long after his death.

Whenever a khan ascends the throne, or a great army is mobilized, or the princes assemble and begin to consult together concerning affairs of state and the administration thereof, they produce these rolls and model their actions thereon; and proceed with the

²⁷⁹ Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 201-205.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 70-71.

²⁸¹ Ibid., p. 72.

²⁸² Fox, loc.cit.

²⁸³ Ibid.

disposition of armies or the destruction of provinces and cities in the manner therein prescribed.²⁸⁴

During the last years of his life, Genghis Khan became a great teacher among his people and his "sayings" were eagerly copied down. After establishing the Mongol nation and dividing its peoples and armies among his sons, brothers and kinsmen,

. . . he was wont to urge the strengthening of the edifice of concord and the consolidation of the foundations of affection between sons and brothers; and used continually to sow the seed of harmony and concord in the breasts of his sons and brothers and kinsfolk and to paint in their hearts the picture of mutual aid and assistance. And by means of parables he would fortify that edifice and reinforce those foundations. One day he called his sons together and taking an arrow from his quiver he broke it in half. Then he took two arrows and broke them also. And he continued to add to the bundle until there were so many arrows that even athletes were unable to break them. Then turning to his sons he said: 'So it is with you also. A frail arrow, when it is multiplied and supported by its fellows, not even mighty warriors are able to break it but in impotence withdraw their hands therefrom. As long, therefore, as you brothers support one another, though your enemies be men of great strength and might, yet shall they not gain the victory over you. But if there be no leader among you, to whose counsel the other brothers, and sons, and helpmeats, ^{sir} and companions submit themselves and to whose command they yield obedience, then your case will be like unto that of the snake of many heads. One night, when it was bitterly cold, the heads desired to creep into a hole in order to ward off the chill. But as each head entered the hole another head would oppose it; and in this way they all perished. But another snake, which had but one head and a long tail, entered the hole and found room for his tail and all his limbs and members, which were preserved from the fury of the cold.'

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Thus although there was to be but one supreme leader, all were to share and participate.

. . . and although authority and empire are apparently vested in one man, namely him who is nominated Khan, yet in reality all the children, grand-children and uncles have their share of power and property . . .

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In this chapter we have reviewed the principal events of the rise of Genghis Khan to power and the unification of Mongolia. More important than

²⁸⁴ Juvaini, *loc. cit.*

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 41-42.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

the events themselves for our understanding of the rise and success of the Mongols are what they reveal about the leadership ability of Genghis Khan and his lieutenants. Genghis Khan came from an aristocratic family and this was a constant reminder to him that he had a right to rule. But, as we saw, this right had to be won anew. And he began life under the most unfavorable of circumstances. The need to struggle against adversity combined with a superior native intelligence produced the qualities of this great leader which we describe in our concluding chapter.

CHAPTER VI

GENGHIS KHAN

His Personal Qualities

Genghis Khan was a conqueror of more gigantic stature than Alexander of Macedon, the Caesars, or Napoleon. ²⁸⁷ Yet we still know much less about him than we know of these other great conquerors. Many things have contributed to keep the personality of Genghis Khan hidden from us. The Mongols could not write. The annals of his day exist only in the scattered writings of the Uighurs, the Chinese, the Persians and Armenians. ²⁸⁸ But with these relatively few original accounts of the man himself and some understanding of the conditions of the Asia he knew, we are able to gain insight into his personality and character. His life made him what he was. The tasks he set himself demanded the qualities he had. One may feel mingled disgust and admiration for him. He stopped at nothing to build his empire. He ruined his enemies gleefully. He early discovered the secret of success among ²⁸⁹ the rulers of men, to combine unbounded love for himself with generous gifts, cunning flattery and merciless hatred towards any who failed or deserted. ²⁹⁰

Grousset points to the curious contrast between the personal character of Genghis Khan and the conduct of the Mongol armies. The Conqueror appears to have been a wise prince, balanced in judgment, endowed with good

²⁸⁷ Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 13.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 16.

²⁸⁹ Fox, op.cit., p. 54.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 48.

sense and moderation, thoughtful of equity and morality.²⁹¹ It would be a mistake, however, to imagine that Genghis Khan was in some way basically different from his countrymen. He had been raised in the same environment as they. He had all the virtues and failings of his race. One can only conclude that his virtues were greater and his failings less than those of the average Mongol. Above all he was heir to an illustrious aristocratic past which he was forced to fight to recover. This struggle developed in him a powerful and disciplined will-power that set him above his fellows and destined him for leadership. Probably the strongest influence in his life was his passionate, ambitious mother, who was forever reminding him of his father's prowess, of the need to revenge his father's murder, to win followers like a true prince and fight for supremacy on the steppes.

Lamb tells us that from accounts young Temujin was handsome and remarkable for the strength of his body and a downright manner.²⁹² Although spare in build, he became the leader of the wrestlers. He could handle a bow well,²⁹³ though not so well as his brother Kassar, who was called the Bowman. But, we are told, Kassar was afraid of Temujin.²⁹⁴ The agility and bravery of Temujin are best illustrated from accounts of his youth when he and his brothers had horse races twenty miles into the prairie and back, and wrestling matches in which bones were freely broken.²⁹⁵ In later life when at the head of his armies, there is no record of his bravery, since in battle he was always to be found in places which made impossible any show of personal bravery. He always directed military operations in person but did not himself fight in the

²⁹¹ Grousset, Chinese Empire, p. 225.

²⁹² Fox, op.cit., p. 42.

²⁹³ Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 25.

²⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 22.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

ranks of his cavalry. This was not considered the proper role of a Khan.²⁹⁶
Endurance was Temujin's first heritage. As a youth he had many duties. He and the other boys of the family fished the streams on the way from the summer to the winter pastures. They were in charge of the horses and rode afield after lost animals and to search for new pasture lands. They watched the skyline for raiders and spent many nights in the snow without a fire. They learned to stay in the saddle for several days at a time and to go without cooked food for three or four days or without any food at all. These early lessons of endurance were demonstrated in later life by a stubborn perseverance in his every enterprise. Once he had decided on a campaign, he never ceased his activity until his objective had been won. Once he had decided to destroy an enemy, he never lifted his attack until he was victorious. This perseverance was epitomized in a recorded saying to his sons, "the merit of an action is in finishing it to the end."²⁹⁷

The struggles of Temujin's youth go far in explaining another of his most important qualities, strength of will. He showed his great mental power in the strength with which he dominated his own strong nature, the prudence which he employed in all things. Vladimirtsov agrees that only an exceptional will-power permitted him to hold his practical, despoiling instincts in check, to master them in order to attain to superior goals. And this will-power, this mastery, the ability to set aside irrational impulses seems to have been the characteristic trait of his personality.²⁹⁹ With will-power, he developed a disciplined mind. He first conquered himself before he conquered

²⁹⁶ Vladimirtsov, op.cit., p. 134.

²⁹⁷ Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 21.

²⁹⁸ ibid., p. 66.

²⁹⁹ Fox, op.cit., p. 72.

³⁰⁰ Vladimirtsov, op.cit., p. 128.

other men. This characteristic of discipline was demonstrated in his wanting each thing at its proper time and in its proper place. And he demanded that his companions and subordinates discipline themselves.³⁰¹ He had little use for weak characters. Strength of will and a disciplined mind taught him how to wait and wait still more.³⁰² Submitting all to his will, he knew how to contain his anger, usually, by rational consideration of the situation.³⁰³ By dominating his own instincts, he was usually able to show great moderation in his actions. He, for example, enjoyed hunting and loved good horses and wine, thus sharing completely in the tastes of his people, yet he almost always preserved his reserve and moderation.³⁰⁴ Like his people he loved to gorge himself and drink to stupidity in feasts, yet he was careful to be neither a drunkard nor a glutton.³⁰⁵

From youth, Genghis Khan developed a reputation for an ability to scheme and this cunning kept him alive in the anarchy of steppe life.³⁰⁶ His cunning grew with time because while a fugitive for years he refused to seek the aid of Toghrul Khan and was thereby forced to develop self-reliance. Apart from the many years during which he resisted the strength and deceit of stronger men and held his little band of followers together, the most eloquent testimony to his cunning was the skill with which he made and broke alliances. He made alliances discreetly and broke them only after preparing arguments to put himself in the right, in order to become the undisputed

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 55.

³⁰³ Vladimirtsov, op.cit., p. 129.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 127.

³⁰⁵ Fox, loc.cit.

³⁰⁶ Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 54.

leader of the nomad tribes.³⁰⁷

Genghis Khan was a great organizer and politician. Grousset believes that his genius for organization and discipline were his major qualities.³⁰⁸ We have seen that the Mongol army was rather small even by the standards of the times. Thus Genghis Khan can hardly be described as a barbarian genius who swept all before him by sheer ferocity or by force of numbers. He was, rather, skilled in tribal politics, in international diplomacy and psychological warfare.³⁰⁹ Skill in politics was gained through years of participation in the crisis in Mongolia. In this way, he came to know all the feuds and the personalities of all the leaders. He knew who was an ally and who a foe. He had lived near the Great Wall of China for a time with his wife's people and so we must suppose that he knew something of settled life.³¹⁰

Genghis Khan's political ability was, however, far surpassed by his military genius. It was in generalship and conquest that he excelled all other leaders of his day. His success in the administration of conquered peoples was less spectacular. In warfare, he had learned the art of moving swiftly, of knowing the ground which concealed his enemy and of striking hard at the decisive moment.³¹¹ And it was combat and the results of his victories that brought him the deepest satisfaction. His greatest pleasures were to receive reports of victories won over his enemies, the gratification of revenge and the acquisition of new goods.³¹²

Even though Genghis Khan undoubtedly had had some personal contacts

³⁰⁷"Genghis Khan," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1967 ed., Vol. X, p. 102.

³⁰⁸Grousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 78.

³⁰⁹"Genghis Khan," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1967 ed., Vol. X, p. 101.

³¹⁰Fox, op.cit., p. 43.

³¹¹Ibid., p. 40.

³¹²Vladimirtsov, op.cit., p. 128.

with the peoples of the great civilized empires, and especially with foreign merchants, before he began his conquests he was in great part ignorant of the ways of sedentary peoples and, in fact, of anything which lay beyond his native steppe. But these limitations were those of his age and environment. We also know that he was superstitious, himself practising magic and divination, but he seems to have been perfectly aware that superstition is also an excellent weapon for fooling the ignorant.

In spite of his ignorance and tendency to be superstitious, he had a saving quality -- his willingness to listen to and to learn from others. It was no doubt his great mental energy which made him such an eager listener to those with better education and wider experience than himself. He knew the value of having men around him who were skilled in government and was never afraid to take advice. Because he was willing to listen to the advice of civilized people and by reason of his exceptional intelligence, he seems to have had a natural aptitude for civilization.

Two other important qualities of Genghis Khan were his generosity and his loyalty. Generosity was apparently deep seated in him and his memory for those who served him unflinching. We do not know whether or not his generosity was calculated as a means to an end. But throughout his career it was of great practical value to him. The many "floating" clans that shifted their loyalty between Genghis Khan and his enemies were gradually won over to the Conqueror by his acts of loyalty and generosity. It was said of

³¹³Grousset, Chinese Empire, p. 225.

³¹⁴Fox, op.cit., p. 72.

³¹⁵Ibid.

³¹⁶Ibid., p. 93.

³¹⁷Grousset, Chinese Empire, p. 225.

³¹⁸Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 55.

him, "Temujin will take off his own clothes and give them to you. He will descend from his horse and offer it to you. He is truly a man who knows how to possess a country, nourish his warriors, and keep his tent in order."³¹⁹ And even after having established an iron discipline among his troops and order in his possessions, he invariably distinguished himself for his generosity, his magnanimity and his hospitality, becoming in the eyes of his companions the ideal of the valiant steppe aristocrat.³²⁰ And Genghis Khan became known for being a man of his word. Cunning and deceit he used against his enemies, but his word when pledged to one of his own following was inviolate. In later years he is reported to have said, "word breaking is hideous in a ruler."³²¹

The character of Genghis Khan was a contrast of great cruelty and of demonstrations of humanity and mercy. The first recorded act of his cruelty was his slaying of his half brother Bekter, when they were both still in their teens. It seems that Bekter had merely stolen a fish from him. Mercy was of little value to nomad youths, but retribution was an obligation.³²² Many sources tell us of sanguinary acts by the Mongol conqueror against his enemies. The duality of his nature shows a blood thirsty tyrant and at the same time an epic hero, a barbarian destroyer and a creator.³²³ Although his contacts with civilized peoples had worked some changes in him before his death, the duality of his nature remained to the end.

Vladimirtsov is correct in saying that Genghis Khan can in no sense be called a simple assassin. Vladimirtsov also believes that the Conqueror

³¹⁹Grousset, L'Empire Mongol, p. 85.

³²⁰Vladimirtsov, op.cit., p. 130.

³²¹Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 35.

³²²IMd., p. 22.

³²³Vladimirtsov, op.cit., p. 131.

did not will the destruction of civilized peoples. It is true that before his death he had become fully aware of the advantages of ruling sedentary peoples rather than completely destroying them. But this change did not prevent him from destroying now and then a given city when such action was required by the necessities of war and military policy. ³²⁴ Even as he lay dying, he thought to satiate his vengeance posthumously against the Tangut. He ordered that all the defenders of the Tangut capital of Ming Hia be exterminated, to the last generation. His final instructions were that after his death, when offering to his body the fumary sacrifices, one was to announce to him that he was well revenged, that the Tangut Kingdom had been erased from the face of the earth. Said the Khan, "During my meal announce to me: 'They have been exterminated to the last man.' The Khan has annihilated their race."³²⁵ Years before history records a famous question posed by Genghis to one of the officers of his guard. He asked what, in all the world, could bring the greatest happiness. The officer replied, "the open steppe, a clear day, and a swift horse under you, and a falcon on your wrist to start up hares." "Nay," responded the Khan, "to crush your enemies, to see them fall at your feet -- to take their horses and goods and hear the lamentation of their women. That is best."³²⁶ Many modern historians point to this as positive proof of the basic depravity and cruelty of his nature. But we would suggest that these historians often fail to fully understand the age in which Genghis Khan lived and that they are too ready to judge the man by modern ideals of justice and mercy.

³²⁴ Id., p. 133.

³²⁵ René Grousset, Le Conquérant du Monde: Vie de Genghis-Khan (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1944), p. 348.

³²⁶ Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 106-107.

His Legacy and His Death

While pressing his campaign against the Tanguts, and during a hunting expedition, Genghis Khan fell from his horse which then rolled over him. From this time on he began to suffer severe internal pains. He died on the 18th of August 1227 north of the Wei river, in the mountains of eastern Kansu where he had gone to seek relief from the heat and the pain of his internal wounds. ³²⁷ On his death bed he called his sons together and divided his domains among them, giving all the lands in the east to Tuli, all those in the west to Chatagai, and the supreme rule to Ogotai. ³²⁸

Though dying, he longed to continue the war against the Golden King of North China, the hereditary enemy of the Mongols. The thoughts of the dying Khan were of this unfinished part of his work and he charged his son Tuli to complete the task. He made provision for the destruction of his old ³²⁹foeman, the king of the Tanguts, and gave clear directions of how to carry ³³⁰on the war against the Chinese Southern Sung dynasty, a war of which he would not live to see the end. ³³¹

The Khan's body was escorted back to the Gobi, shown to his people and then carried to his first wife Burté. The news of the Khan's death was ³³²for some time kept a secret. All people encountered along the route taken by the funeral cart were killed so that there would be no one to spread the news. This was moreover an ancient Altaic custom to procure servants for the

³²⁷ Grousset, Conquérant du Monde, p. 349.

³²⁸ Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 185.

³²⁹ Grousset, Conquérant du Monde, p. 348.

³³⁰ Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 185.

³³¹ Ibid.

³³² Ibid., p. 186.

deceased in the future life. ³³³ The news of his death was not made public until the funeral cortege had reached the imperial encampment near the source of the Kerulen river in Mongolia. ³³⁴ The chroniclers have recorded the lament of Genghis Khan's warriors along the route:

Aforetime thou didst swoop like a falcon;
now a rumbling car bears thee onward,

O my Khan,

Hast thou in truth left thy wife and children,
and the council of thy people?

O my Khan,

Wheeling in pride like an eagle, once thou
didst lead us; but now thou hast stumbled
and fallen,

O my Khan,

³³⁵ Genghis Khan had chosen the place for his burial, beside one of the heights that form the massif of Burkhan-Kaldun, the present Kentai. This was the sacred mountain of the Mongols from which descended the Onon, Kerulen and Tuula rivers that watered the ancestral prairie. There he was buried under the foliage of a great, lone tree. ³³⁶ And we are told that a certain clan was charged to watch the site and that incense was burned unceasingly in the grove until the forest grew so thick that the tall tree was lost among its fellows and all trace of the grave vanished.

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³³³Grousset, Conquérant du Monde, p. 351.

³³⁴ibid., p. 352.

³³⁵Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 187.

³³⁶Grousset, Conquérant du Monde, p. 355.

³³⁷Lamb, Genghis Khan, p. 187.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

The geographical features of Mongolia and its predominant climate placed limits to the possible types of economic activity. In the great Gobi desert little or no economic activity was possible. In the more fertile areas to the northwest, northeast and east the earliest inhabitants of Mongolia engaged in hunting, fishing and gathering in the forests, pasture lands and rivers. Around the fourth century B.C. these northern forest tribes acquired the horse culture and possibly a knowledge of herding from the Iranian nomads. Some of these tribes remained forest hunters. Most of them became nomadic herdsmen. Thus the geography and climate of Mongolia would support both hunting and pastoralism as specialized types of economic activity. The latter type of economy was the most profitable and advanced and became the predominant way of life in the steppe. Neither intensive nor extensive agriculture was successful in Mongolia. *In intensive agriculture is successful*

Although nomadic pastoralism was a great advance over hunting and gathering, its success was dependent upon the precarious climatic conditions of the steppe. It was an economy that could never produce great wealth such as that possessed by the sedentary peoples of China. It did not provide the economic base for the creation of a great civilization. Therefore the steppe nomads remained culturally backward.

The conflict between steppe-dweller and farmer was most intense along the northern frontier of China, where the two different ways of life met. Steppe nomads who lived near the sedentary areas of China had a chance

to observe the great contrast between their poverty and insecurity and the relative wealth and security of the farmer. These nomads, or semi-nomads living near the northern frontier of China were the ones with first-hand knowledge of this contrast in ways of life and they had become modified to varying degrees by contact with Chinese culture. It was they, and not tribes far to the north, who raided and invaded China whenever conditions favoured them. The Mongols of Genghis Khan, living in Outer Mongolia and separated from China by the Gobi desert, appear to have been an exception to the rule that only semi-nomadic, semi-Sinicized tribes invaded China. However, by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the contrast in ways of life had been carried far north by Chinese and Central Asian merchants. The frontiers of the sedentary states had in effect been expanded and brought into contact with greater numbers of nomadic peoples. Closer contact between these two different ways of life resulted in increased conflict and began to revolutionize the traditional social organization of the Mongols.

The pastoral nomadic way of life of the Mongols and their hunting tradition, which was never completely abandoned, gave them two important advantages in warfare which the sedentary peoples lacked -- mobility and fire-power. Pastoral nomadism became dependent upon the horse and required constant movement. This gave the Mongols mobility and the possibility of surprise attack anywhere. The hunt, even when no longer the basic economic activity, became a military exercise in maneuver and the use of the bow and arrow in which the Mongols were unsurpassed masters. The sedentary areas were poor in horses. Their defense was based on fortifications and masses of foot-soldiers, neither of which was adequate against the heavy cavalry of the Mongols.

The physical environment, the predominant economy and the form of social organization all combined to produce the special characteristics of the Mongol people. The severe climatic conditions of Mongolia and the scarcity of

subsistence taught the Mongols endurance and thrift. The freedom of nomadic life made them proud and independent. The rigors of life on the steppe produced a people of great physical and mental strength. Hunting made the Mongol an expert bowman. Herding made him a fine horseman.

Any primitive people few in numbers who depend upon an environment with meager resources always place great emphasis on sharing and on group loyalty. And this is absolutely necessary for the group's survival. The most important feature of Mongol social organization was its several relationships requiring reciprocal obligations and loyalty. This was true under the patriarchal clan system and under nomad feudalism. The main characteristics of the Mongols that can be attributed to their social organization were their willingness to share the basic necessities of life with their fellows, their willingness to aid each other and the loyalty and obedience they gave to their leaders. These were important qualities that unified clans and tribes and they were important in the unification of Mongolia as well as in later foreign conquests.

We have observed that the Mongols had other characteristics that many might label "bad" qualities. They were arrogant, quickly roused to anger, cunning in speech and action, grasping and avaricious, niggardly in giving and seemed to believe that the killing of men and the taking of the property of others was no sin. These characteristics were also products of the environment and social organization of the Mongols. And it is to be noted that these characteristics were displayed when the Mongols were dealing with non-Mongols. We would suggest that these characteristics should be seen in their function as a group defense against outsiders and that they should not be described as either "good" or "bad" but rather as "successful" or "unsuccessful". History indicates that these traits were very successful in the unification of Mongolia and in the military aspect of foreign conquest. They were

less successful when the Mongols began to govern conquered areas. But for our period, loyalty towards the "in-group" and hostility towards the outsider were important factors in Mongol political and military success.

Since the earliest times for which we have any records, Mongolia has been inhabited by two distinct races -- the Turks and the Mongols, although they were related linguistically. And since the earliest times these two peoples have fought each other for supremacy in Mongolia. Until the middle of the tenth century, the Turkish peoples were the masters of Mongolia. The Turkish peoples gradually migrated into Central Asia and into Europe or lost their former military power thereby allowing a reconquest by the Mongol tribes beginning about 924 A.D. In less than 300 years after this date, the Mongols had become supreme in Mongolia.

A second important aspect of the history of Mongolia was the long conflict between its inhabitants and the Chinese. There was a definite pattern discernible in this conflict. First, whenever China was weak, under a declining dynasty or after a great dynasty had fallen, semi-Sinicized nomads always increased their incursions into Chinese territory. The intensity of these incursions and their success depended on whether or not Mongolia was also in a state of disunity and internal conflict. China was especially weak and disunited in the third and fourth centuries B.C., in the third century A.D. and from the tenth century A.D. on. These periods correspond to nomadic invasions and conquests of China. Second, when China was united and the inhabitants of Mongolia were not, the Chinese were able to make their greatest conquests in Central Asia and Mongolia. The most notable examples of this pattern were after 221 B.C. under the Ch'in dynasty, during the later Han dynasty in the first and second centuries A.D., and during the early T'ang dynasty in the seventh and eighth centuries A.D. A third pattern presented itself when both China and Mongolia were unified at

about the same time -- the early Hunnish Empire and the Han; the T'u-chueh Turks and the Sui. At such times there was a temporary balance of power between the steppe and the sown.

The conflict between the Mongols and the Chinese in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries followed the first pattern. China was disunited and militarily weak, Mongolia was fully united and militarily strong. The search for historical patterns in this conflict thus enables us to observe that the conquest of China by the Mongols was inevitable and that because the weakness of China corresponded to a unification in Mongolia, a situation that had never occurred before, the Mongols were able to conquer the whole of China, the first time that this had ever been possible.

We have asked why Mongolia was unified in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and not at some other time. And what factors made this unification possible and successful. In addition to the general considerations we have just discussed, our investigation has revealed four major factors that answer these questions.

The first of these factors was the conditions existing in Western and Central Asia, in China and in Mongolia at the time of the Mongol unification. The political disunity and military weakness of the empires around Mongolia explain the success of the Mongol armies. But more important for our investigation, the wealth and expanding trade of these empires hastened the unification of Mongolia. This was particularly true in the case of China, whose commercial revolution created a wealthy nomad aristocracy and thus was instrumental in destroying the patriarchal clan system in Mongolia. And, as we saw, once this nomad aristocracy had been created, it continued to depend upon foreign trade for its survival. Consequently the disunity in Western and Central Asia and in China presented itself as a threat to the new Mongol nation. The unification of Mongolia had been impossible until after

the removal and defeat of the Turkish peoples in the tenth century. Then the reconquest by the Mongols occurred at a time of trade expansion in the sedentary states and this caused a revolution in the traditional Mongol social organization which eventually led to unification.

The second factor that made the unification of Mongolia possible was this consequent revolution in Mongol social organization. The first effects on Mongol society of contact with the Chinese commercial revolution were increased disunity and anarchy as the patriarchal clan system began to disintegrate. Nevertheless, the new system of nomad feudalism that was being created established new relationships of fealty and protection that were more binding than the old kinship ties. And as we have noted, by the twelfth century nomad feudalism had developed to the point where a strong personality might rise to supreme leadership of all the tribes. This would have been nearly impossible under the patriarchal clan system. Nomad feudalism created a hierarchy of hereditary personal loyalty that controlled civil and military life. This hierarchy made centralized control possible and produced in Mongolia a centralized, military state.

The military organization of the Mongols brings us to the third major factor that explains their success in unification and later foreign conquests. Although the Mongol army was numerically rather small, it was a completely new type of military organization. It was permanently organized, highly trained, disciplined and obedient to its leaders and employed the ultimate weapon of the day, a heavy cavalry of mounted archers. It was an army with esprit de corps, hardened by years of warfare. And it was a working army, laboring as a peasantry and producing for the new nation in time of peace.

The fourth major factor in Mongol success was that of superior leadership. This leadership was not confined to Genghis Khan, although he was

the supreme example. His principal lieutenants were great military and political leaders in their own right and his sons and grandsons became wise rulers of great empires. The best testimony to the military leadership of Genghis Khan was his creation of the Mongol army and its success in unifying the tribes of Mongolia as well as its inimitable record of foreign conquests. A second testimony to the leadership ability of Genghis Khan was his code of laws, the yassa, which places him among the great law givers of history. Our knowledge of the dominion he had over himself, of his will-power, perseverance and organizing ability confirm the importance of his presence to the successful unification of the Mongol nation.

The rise and expansion of the Mongol Empire are among the most important events of late medieval history. There was hardly a country in Europe or Asia that was not in some way affected by the Mongol conquest and many of these countries had the whole course of their history changed by it. So devastating was the impact of the Mongols upon civilization that virtually a new beginning had to be made in half the world.

A Mongol dynasty was established over the whole of China, Mongols ruled in Central Asia, in Persia, over the Russian steppes, their princes and descendants crossed the great mountain barrier into India and they shook the whole of Eastern Europe.

The Mongol conquest of agricultural lands brought the suppression or systematic regression of agriculture by the retreat of tillage and by the massacre or expulsion of the farmer. The normal development of sedentary countries was halted. China once released from Mongol rule did not recover for a long time its creative spontaneity. After the shock of the Mongol conquest, China under the Ming demonstrated a distrust of herself and of the world outside, a timidity and retreat that for five centuries would permit her to assume only an attitude of copying the past. For China the Mongol

period constituted a break or transition between the brilliant culture of the Sung and the commonplace, uninspired centuries that began with the Ming and were to continue nearly to the present.

The loss of life and property in Central and Western Asia and in Europe was not less than in China. Genghis Khan was a destroyer, but he was also a creator and represented a new beginning. He broke down the barriers of the Dark Ages. A new chapter began in the story of Europe's relations with China. Europe rediscovered China. The silk trade revived. China made technical contributions to Europe, such as the making of paper and movable type.

The Mongols having effected a revolution in their own country cleared the way for an immense series of revolutions in Asia and Europe. For the first time in history they created a real world market. The decaying feudalism of the East failed to profit by this. But it gave an impulse to a new civilization in the West that in the end was to conquer and devastate Asia more terribly than did the Mongol armies. By unifying nearly all of Asia and reopening great transcontinental trade routes, the Mongol conquest put China in contact with Persia, and Christianity in contact with the Far East. In this sense, the Mongol Empire served the same function as did the Roman Empire.

When Genghis Khan conquered a nation all other warfare came to an end. The whole scheme of things was altered. Among the survivors of a Mongol conquest peace endured for a long time. Order and security were established from the coast of the Pacific to those of the Black Sea and the Persian Gulf. Peace, ironically, seems to have been the greatest contribution of the Mongol conquest to the late medieval world. For the Mongol, like the Roman peace, embled culture to spring up anew.

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