

CHAPTER  
**12**

Section 2

PRIMARY SOURCE *from The Secret History of  
the Mongols*  
by Arthur Waley

The Secret History of the Mongols was called "secret" because it was written for the Mongols and not for the Chinese. This excerpt, which dates from about the middle of the 13th century, describes how Temujin became Genghis Khan, the "universal ruler" of all the Mongol clans, in 1206 and prepared to conquer all the tribes in Mongolia. How did Genghis—called Chingis in this excerpt—reward his friends and relatives once he became Great Khan?

**Chingis Becomes Khan of the Mongols**

Altan, Khuchar, Sacha-beki and all of them, after consulting together, said to Temujin, "We appoint you as our Khan. If you will be our Khan, we will go as vanguard against the multitude of your enemies. All the beautiful girls and married women that we capture and all the fine horses, we will give to you. When hunting is afoot, we will be the first to go to the battue and will give you the wild beasts that we surround and catch. If in time of battle we disobey your orders or in time of peace we act contrary to your interests, part us from our wives and possessions and cast us out into the wilderness." Such was the oath they made to serve him. They made him Great Khan, with the name Chingis.

Chingis said to Bo'orchu and Jelme: "When I had no companions you were the first to become my comrades; I have not forgotten it. You are to be at the head of all these followers of mine." And to his other followers he said: "All of you left Jamukha, thinking to come to me. If Heaven and Earth give their protection, you elders will now and long afterwards be my blessed comrades." Speaking thus, he gave charges to all of them. After Chingis became Khan he sent Dakhi and Sugegei to the Ong Khan To'oril, ruler of the Kereits. The Ong Khan said, "You were quite right to make Temujin your Khan. What would become of you Mongols without a Khan? Don't go back on what you agreed upon at the start."

Such was his discourse. . . .

**Chingis Becomes Great Khan of All the Tribes in Mongolia**

After Chingis had made subject to him all the many tribes he set up at the source of the Onan river a white banner with nine pendants and became Great Khan. This was in the year of the Tiger (1206).

Chingis said: "I have now assigned their tasks to my sons-in-law and to the ninety-five commanders of a thousand. Among them there are officers who have rendered particularly great service to me and I am going to reward them further." He then told Shigi-khutukhu to summon Bo'orchu and Mukhali. Shigi-khutukhu said, "To whose services are those of Bo'orchu and Mukhali superior, that they should be further rewarded? I have been in your family since I was a child, all the time till I became a grown man, and never once left you. To whose services are mine inferior? What reward are you now going to give me?" Chingis said, "You became my sixth brother and have had your share, just like my other brothers, enjoying the privilege of being allowed to sin a hundred times without punishment. Now that I have subdued all the peoples, I want you to listen and look for me. No one shall be allowed to act contrary to what you say. If there are cases of robbery or fraud, it will be for you to mete out punishment, slaying those who ought to die and punishing those who ought to be punished. You are to decide all disputes arising out of division of family property, and are to write your decisions on the Blue Register, in which no one is to be allowed ever to make alterations."

from Arthur Waley, *The Secret History of the Mongols* (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1963), 245, 285–286.

**Activity Options**

1. **Making Inferences** Based on this excerpt, what qualities do you think helped Genghis Khan succeed as a leader? Make a chart of these qualities. Share your chart with classmates.
2. **Writing for a Specific Purpose** With a small group, write a skit about Genghis Khan and his rise to power. Use details and dialogue in this excerpt. Then perform the skit for the class.