## THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE MONGOLS

The Origin of Chinghis Khan

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

By Paul Kahn

NORTH POINT PRESS

San Francisco · 1984

Copyright © 1984 by Paul Kahn Printed in the United States of America Library of Congress Catalogue Card Number:83-061394 ISBN:0-86547-138-x

This book makes extensive use, with the permission of the Harvard-Yenching Institute, of material in *The Secret History of the Mongols*, translated and edited by Francis Woodman Cleaves, published by Harvard University Press for the Harvard-Yenching Institute.

Frontispiece: Kublai Khan Hunting, Liu Kuan-Tao (Yuan Dynasty, ca. 1280 A.D.), hanging scroll. Collection of the National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China; reproduced by permission.

The photographs on p. xxx (bottom) and p. xxxii are reproduced by courtesy of the Finno-Ugrian Society and the photograph on p. xxx (top) is reproduced by courtesy of John Hangan.

## The Heritage and Youth of Chingis Khan

There came into the world a blue-gray wolf whose destiny was Heaven's will.

His wife was a fallow deer.

They travelled together across the inland sea and when they were camped near the source of the Onan River in sight of Mount Burkhan Khaldun their first son was born, named Batachikhan.

The seventh generation after Batachikhan was Kharchu. Kharchu's son was named Borjigidai the Clever, and Mongoljin the Fair was his wife.

Their grandsons were the two brothers,
Duua the Blind and Dobun the Clever.

In the middle of Duua's forehead there was one great eye.

With this eye Duua could see a place so far away it could take three days to reach it.

One day Duua climbed up Mount Burkhan Khaldun with his younger brother. Looking out from the mountain
Duua could see a band of people approaching,
driving their carts along the Tungelig Stream.

"In the middle of a band of people I see coming this way,
at the front of a black cart,
there's a fine-looking woman," he said.

"If she's not already promised in marriage
I'll ask that she be given to you," he said to his younger brother
and he sent Dobun down to meet her.

When Dobun reached the travelling camp
he saw she was indeed a good woman,

neve or so

fine to look at with noble manners,
well known and respected by her own people,
given the name of Alan the Fair.
She hadn't yet been promised in marriage.
Long ago the Lord of Kol Barghuji Hollow
had given his daughter, Barghujin,
to a chief of the Khori Tuman clan, named Khorilartai the Clever.
Now this was their daughter we speak of,
who was born to Barghujin and Khorilartai
while they camped at the Arigh River
and they gave her the name of Alan the Fair.
After she was grown her father, Khorilartai, gathered his people together.

They'd been restricted from hunting by neighboring clans in the Khori Tumad country, an area rich in sable, squirrel, and other wild game.

They left there and changed their clan name to Khorilar.

Khorilartai said to his people:

"The wild game of Mount Burkhan Khaldun is easy to hunt and the land around the mountain is good grazing land."
They came to the territory of the Uriangkhai people, whose leaders allowed them to settle.
This is how Duua came to ask for and Dobun came to marry
Khorilartai's daughter, Alan the Fair.

So Alan the Fair came to live with Dobun and she bore him two sons, named Bugunutei and Belgunutei. Duua, the elder brother, had four sons, and in time he passed away.

After Duua was gone his four sons wouldn't follow their uncle's authority. They hated their uncle so they took their own people away and made their own camp. The four brothers took the clan name Dorbun, meaning 'the four' and these were the first of the Dorbun people.

After they'd left him their uncle Dobun went out hunting one day up in Tokhochagh Heights. In the forest there he met with an Uriangkhai man who'd just brought down a three-year-old deer

and was cool Dobun said t "My friend, g "Certainly, I'l He cut off h as well as the then he gave So Dobun s and on his leading his "What peop The man r "I am a Maş Give me so Dobun acc He broke and gave i Then Dol In time D and after gave birtl They we The first talked to "Even the and nov she's giv The onl the boy These t Even tl their m Then c while 1

Alan t

She se

gave t

continue

ther.

ity.

He cut off half of the breast with the lungs, as well as the hide to keep for himself, then he gave Dobun all the rest of the deer meat. So Dobun set out carrying the meat from the deer on his horse, and on his way back he met with a poor man on foot leading his son by the hand. "What people are you from?" Dobun asked him. The man replied: "I am a Magaligh Bayagud, and I haven't had food for days. Give me some of that deer meat and I'll give you my son in return." Dobun accepted the man's offer. He broke off a thigh from the three-year-old deer and gave it to the hungry man. Then Dobun took the man's son back with him to work in his tent. In time Dobun passed away and after he was gone Alan the Fair, without a husband, gave birth to three more sons. They were named Bughu Khatagi, Bughutu Salji, and Bodonchar the Fool. The first two sons, Belgunutei and Bugunutei, talked to each other about this: "Even though our mother has no brothers or kin here and now has no husband at all she's given birth to three sons. The only man in her tent is the servant, the boy our father brought from the Magaligh Bayagud. These three must be his children." Even though they were careful to say all this out of her sight, their mother, Alan, could hear them talking about her. Then one day in the spring, while boiling a soup from dried mutton, Alan the Fair assembled her five sons together. She seated them all in a row, gave them each the shaft of an arrow

and was cooking its ribs on a fire.

"My friend, give me the meat that you're cooking."
"Certainly, I'll give you the meat," the man answered him.

Dobun said to the hunter:

Lunhure

and said to them: "Break it!" A single arrow shaft. it took no great strength to break it, and each of them broke it and tossed it away. Then she bound together five shafts in a bundle, and giving the bundle to each in his turn, said to each of them: "Break it!" Each of the brothers held the five bound together and no one could break them. Then their mother, Alan, said to them: "Belgunutei and Bugunutei, you are my first two sons and you've doubted me. You've said to each other: 'She's given birth to three new sons. Who is their father and what is their clan?" You're right to ask questions like this, so I'll tell you. Every night a man as yellow as the sun would enter my tent by the light from the smoke-hole or by the place light enters at the top of the door. He'd rub on my belly. The light from this man would sink into my womb. Then he'd leave me, crawling out on the sunbeams or the shafts of moonlight, crawling up like a dog as yellow as the sun. So now do you believe me? Now that you know the truth can't you see it's a sign? These brothers of yours must be the sons of Eternal Heaven. How can you think these are the sons of a mortal man? When they become Lords of all people, then common men will understand who they are." Then Alan the Fair spoke to her five sons and gave them this advice: "You five were all born from one womb. If, like the five single arrows that you held you separate yourselves, each going alone, then each of you can be broken by anyone. If you are drawn together by a singular purpose

bound like the five shafts in a bundle how can anyone break you?"

Then in time Alan the Fair passed away. After their mother, Alan, was gone the five brothers divided among themselves the herd and the food. Belgunutei, Bugunutei, Bughu Khatagi, and Bughutu Salji, each of these four took an equal part. Then looking at Bodonchar they said to each other: "He's witless and a fool." They wouldn't acknowledge him as their brother and gave Bodonchar nothing at all. When Bodonchar saw he'd been left out he said to himself: "What'll I do with myself now?" He saddled a grayish-white horse with a black stripe down its back, with sores on its spine and no hair on its tail, and said to himself: "If my horse dies then I'll die. If my horse lives then I'll live." He set out riding down the Onan River till he reached Baljun Island. There he fashioned himself a tent from the river grass to live in. Then he saw a gray falcon that had killed a black pheasant and was eating its prey not far from his tent. Bodonchar fashioned a snare from the horse's tailhair, from the grayish-white horse with a black stripe down its back, with sores on its spine and no hair on its tail, and he caught the young falcon. He trained the bird to hunt food for them both. When he was hungry he'd find where the wolves had surrounded some game on a cliff, then shooting down some of this game the wolves trapped for him he'd feed himself and his falcon. Then it was spring again. As the ducks returned north he starved his falcon and let the bird loose. From tree branches he hung all the ducks and wild geese his falcon brought down. There were so many birds

the one who stabbed Belgutei during the feast on the Onan. The fourth son of Khabul was Khutula Khan and Jochi and Altan were his sons. Khabul Khan ruled all the Mongol and when he passed away even though he had seven sons of his own he asked that his cousin, Ambaghai Khan, take the throne. Then Ambaghai Khan gave his daughter in marriage to one of the Tatar clans, rhe Tatar who lived on the Urshun River hetween Lake Buyur and Lake Kolen. As he rode through that country to deliver his daughter he was seized by another Tatar clan and taken in chains to the Golden King of Cathay. When he was captured Ambaghai Khan sent one of his men back with a message. He told the messenger: "You'll speak to Khutula, middle son of Khabul Khan, and of my ten sons you'll speak with Khadagan Taisi. Tell them, 'Beware of the Tatar and don't forget what they've done to me. When you become Lord of all men don't forget that I was betrayed by the Tatar, dragged off in chains as I brought them my daughter to marry. You must try to avenge me with all the strength you can find, till the nails of your fingers wear off,

rave.

That year Yesugei the Brave was out hunting with his falcon on the Onan. Yeke Chiledu, a nobleman of the Merkid tribe, had gone to the Olkhunugud people to find himself a wife, and he was returning to the Merkid with the girl he'd found when he passed Yesugei hunting by the river.

When he saw them riding along Yesugei leaned forward on his horse. He saw it was a beautiful girl.

Quickly he rode back to his tent and just as quick returned with his two brothers,

Nekun Taisi and Daritai Odchigin.

till your fingers themselves wear away from your hands!""

neve

Marries y Hoselun

ΙI

continue

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

and the wind tosses his two braids of hair onto his back.

and the l The win then toss as he rid Then sh and she till she s But as t Daritai, "This fel he's alre This m he's cro You car but he If you t you wo So be s Then'

Since thad na all the They and the Once they chanci danci

So K Third but they It wa

that

Yesu

He turns to look back,

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

Since the last message Ambaghai Khan sent had named both his son Khadagan and his nephew Khutula, all the Mongol and Tayichigud people gathered in the Khorkhonagh Valley for a Great Assembly. They decided to make Khutula their new ruler and this set the Mongol to dancing and feasting.

Once they made Khutula their khan they danced around the Great Branching Tree of Khorkhonagh, dancing until they'd beaten down a ditch as deep as their waist, dancing until they'd raised up the dust as high as their knees.

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

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

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

("The Death of Yesugei")

continue

orn in.

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

The following spring Ambaghai's widows, Orbei and Sokhatai, the senior women of the Tayichigud clan, performed the ceremony of sacrifice to the ancestor's spirits. By the time Hogelun Ujin arrived for the service they'd already burnt all the meat and divided it between them, leaving her nothing. Hogelun said to them: "You must be saying to yourselves, 'Yesugei the Brave is dead now and his sons are still boys.' So you think you can just leave me out of the ceremony and keep it all for yourselves? You think you can divide up the meats and leave nothing for me? I see what you're up to. You think that I'll just sit here while you're feasting from now on, that you don't even have to invite me to join you. And one morning you'll break camp and move on, and not even wake me." Orbei and Sokhatai, the two old khatun, answered her: "Obviously you live by some rule that says, 'I don't need to be offered some food before I take something to eat.' You have the custom of eating whatever you can find.
You seem to have a rule that says,
'I don't need to be invited to take part in a feast.'
Your custom is to just come uninvited and take for yourself.
Tell us, Hogelun, do you say to yourself,
'Ambaghai Khan is dead now,'
is that why you think you can insult us this way?"
Later the old women conferred among themselves and said:
"The best thing to do is abandon these people,
these mothers and sons.
We should break camp and leave them behind."

lon Find

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

and then left the tent.

wa have

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

1,

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

One day Temujin and Khasar, along with their half-brothers Begter and Belgutei, were sitting together on the riverbank pulling a hook through the water when they saw a shiny fish had been caught on it. When they landed the fish Begter and Belgutei took it away from Temujin and Khasar. Temujin and Khasar ran back to their tent to complain to Mother Ujin: "Begter and Belgutei took a fish from ùs, a shiny fish that bit on our hook." But even though Begter and Belgutei were only her stepsons Mother Ujin replied: "Stop this! How can brothers act this way with each other? Now, when we've no one to fight beside us but our own shadows, when there's nothing to whip our horses but their own tails, how will we get our revenge on the Tayichigud brothers? Why do you fight among yourselves like the five sons of Mother Alan? Don't be this way."

But Temujin and Khasar wouldn't listen to what she said. They ignored her warning and answered instead: "Besides that, yesterday they took a bird from us, a lark we'd shot down with one of our own arrows. And now they've stolen a fish.

How can we live with them?"

The two boys pushed aside the

The two boys pushed aside the door of the tent and stalked out.

While Begter sat in a clearing watching the family's nine horses grazing,
Temujin hid himself in the grass and crept up from behind
while Khasar crept up from the front.

Then suddenly they sprang up,
drawing their arrows to shoot,
and Begter, seeing what they meant to do to him, said: