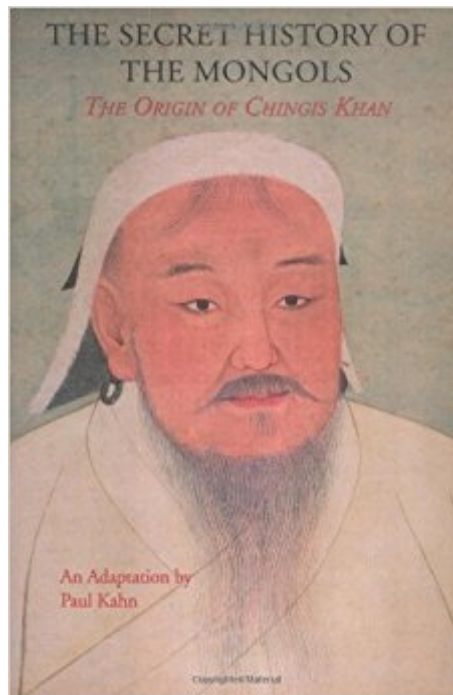




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# **Secret History Of The Mongols: The Origin Of Chingis Khan**



## Synopsis

This adaptation of what is recognized today as the oldest Mongolian text (written two decades after Chingis Khan's death) tells the Mongols' own version of the origin of their nation, the life of Chingis Khan, and the creation of an empire that stretched across Eurasia in the 13th century. Adapted from Francis Woodman Cleaves' erudite translation, it is presented here as a narrative poem in colloquial English. An overview of medieval Asia, maps, lineage charts, a glossary of proper names, and a bibliography are included. This expanded edition includes a 17th-century account of Chingis Khan's death and a new essay by the author.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This adaptation of what is recognized today as the oldest Mongolian text (written two decades after Chingis Khan's death) tells the Mongols' own version of the origin of their nation, the life of Chingis Khan, and the creation of an empire that stretched across Eurasia in the Thirteenth century. Kahn has adapted the scholarly English of Francis Woodman Cleaves' erudite translation in colloquial English, making this exciting narrative accessible to all readers. It is written "as an act of research and imagination," an example of story-telling as history which offers not only an accurate and dramatic description of Mongolian culture and heritage, but wisdom and insight into the humanity of this small group that ruled much of Asia, Russia, and the Middle East for nearly two hundred years. Although it opens in a mythical past, *The Secret History of the Mongols* quickly becomes a treasure-trove of factual information, not only about the life and career of Chingis Khan, but also about the Mongolian people. It describes in fascinating detail the daily life, social structures, and customs of the tribes of Central Asia, and in terms of accuracy and immediacy eclipses the more

familiar Travels of Marco Polo. An overview of medieval Asia, maps, lineage charts, a glossary of proper names, and a bibliography are included. This expanded edition includes a Seventeenth century account of Chingis Khan's death and a recent essay by the author.

This is a gem. A wonderful, un-self-consciously poetic translation of a major historical record. If you are interested in the history of Central Asia, the Mongols, or Genghis Khan this is a must-read book. I loved it. At its height, the Mongol Empire was the biggest the world has ever seen. Gives a real feel for the culture of these nomads who burst out of nowhere to devastate both Islam and Christian Europe. It took over two centuries before the population of Eurasia returned to the level it had reached prior to Genghis Khan's depredations. A detailed account of Genghis Khan's origins, upbringing and deeds, especially how he succeeded in uniting the always fractured Mongolian nomads into an unstoppable military tidal wave.

If you are passionate about Mongolian history and want to read the original story, then do yourself a favor and buy this Kahn version for a fraction of the price compared to others. Some reviewers suggest this cheaper version is somehow lacking, but I couldn't disagree more. If you are engaged in some academic or literary pursuit, then this version falls far short and you are better off with Igor de Rachewiltz's translation followed by Professor Urgunge Onon's as a second choice. Most people reading this review are best served by Kahn's version, and don't think you are missing out because of price. What you will get from Kahn is a highly readable story-like version that doesn't make you stumble everytime you need to pronounce any Mongol word, which makes for a much more pleasant experience. If we compare the Kahn's translation to the scholarly IdR, the single biggest thing you will notice is the spelling of all things Mongol. Example, IdR spells Genghis Khan as Cinggis Qa'an while Kahn gives an acceptable Chingis Khan. I will offer an example in translational difference that will hopefully give you a sense of what to expect: Kahn, p160: "He sent Subetei the Brave off to war in the north where he defeated 11 kingdoms and tribes, crossing the Volga and Ural Rivers, finally going to war with Kiev." IdR, p194 #262: "Further, he sent Sube'etei Ba'atur northwards to campaign as far as the countries and peoples of these 11 tribes: Qanglin, Kibca'ut, Bajigit, Orusut, Majarat, Asut, Sasut, Serkesut, Kesimir, Bolar, and Kerel; and, making him cross the rivers Idil and Jayaq rich in waters, he sent Sube'etei Ba'atur to campaign as far as the city of Kiwa Menkermen." (Note: I was unable to add all the symbols that accompany letters in the Mongol words, and 1-3 are present in virtually all of them.) The comparison of those two passages (they are the same) should tell you everything you need to know; the Kahn version is significantly more

user-friendly and I can't possibly stress this enough. You can check out my review of the IdR translation if you are still not convinced, and compare the opening sentence of both books by the title of my review. I hope this helps you make this difficult decision, and I do highly recommend this version even if it is not the densest or most scholarly of those available. Enjoy.

It is a little hard to read but if this subject interest you, then this book is a must read. There are other versions out there and this book seems somewhat easier to follow. Great insight into the Mongols.

great book

Excellent resource and translation.

There is nothing wrong with Kahn's writing, I was just disappointed in how little real information about the Chingis Khan regime was in it. I was expecting details on battle strategies, more background on his relationship with Borte and his sons, and stuff like that. It was a lot more about who was put in command of which tribe, what color people's horses were, and things like that.

Currently reading ancient Secret History of the Mongols--an adaptation in blank verse--thoroughly enjoying it--from the get go--"Genghis was descended from the union of a grey wolf and a fallow doe."It was first written in Mandarin Chinese, then translated into English and other languages by Arthur Waley, among others.I love Conn Iggulden, but can't write it like he does, so this one, maybe I will write it like my Shee-Monkey goes West, in a more lyrical style, from a women's point of view.Like many oral histories, which were later written down centuries later, including Beowulf, and the Buddha's story,this one has many moments of emotional truth among the rhythmic memory-jogging stanzas--e.g. from the Buddha's story--Ananda leaned his head against a lintel and said--(as the Buddha Gotama lay dying)and hereafter there was no horse for Genghis (Temujin's) young wife Borte, and she was abducted,Temujin finally was able to raid the camp of her captors --"he went among the gers shouting 'Borte! Borte!'"Since Secret History is also the oldest extant source, and also added on to by the equally lyrical Arab historian Juvaini--I feel I can't go wrong, that's why I bought a second hand copy.I carefully wiped the cover with a kitchen towel soaked in Listerine,and I must say I just LOVE this adaptation from the original translation.As Beowulf begins in Old English--Hwet!!!Listen up.KMKaung6-10-2014

If you want historical fiction, please pick up Conn Iggulden's Conqueror series-- which is outstanding. This is a translation of Chingis Khan's own story. The really cool thing about the book is that it was originally a private work commissioned by the descendants of Chingis Khan. A little rambling, old world, sort of a lengthy poem similar to Beowulf but easier reading. Loved it. It's like a behind the scenes tour of Chingis Kahn's mind and times.

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