

# PEOPLE IN WORLD HISTORY **25**

## PROFILE

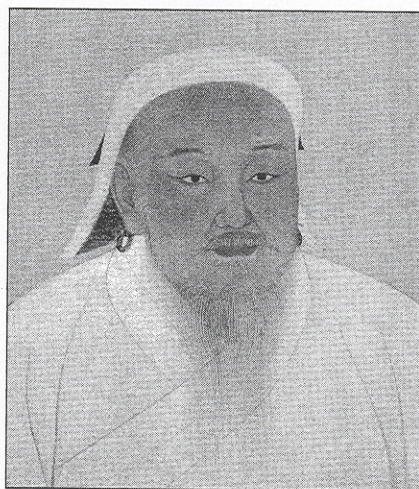
### Genghis Khan (A.D. 1162–1227)

*The pleasure and joy of man lies in treading down the rebel and conquering the enemy, in tearing him up by the root, in taking from him all that he has.*—Genghis Khan

Born in 1162 to a barbarian chieftain and a woman kidnapped from another tribe, the boy named Temujin spent his childhood traveling with his father's nomadic clan. Legend has it that he was born holding a clot of blood in his fist. Some felt this was a sign that he would be a heroic warrior.

At that time in Mongolia, many tribes were feuding, and when Temujin was 13 his father was poisoned by a group of enemies. The tribe abandoned Temujin and his mother, considering them too weak to exercise leadership. Fighting starvation, wild animals, and marauders, the boy grew into manhood with a reputation for courage and resourcefulness. At 17, Temujin married Bortei, a marriage that had been arranged by their fathers years earlier. Now that Temujin was a grown man and no longer "weak," he wanted to avenge himself upon his father's tribe for abandoning his family. His mother's old tribe, the Merkits, however, invaded Temujin's encampment to avenge her kidnapping. The Merkits kidnapped Temujin's wife, Bortei. Temujin now had two enemies.

Temujin gathered an army of 20,000 men. He first destroyed the Merkit nobility and took the common people as his own soldiers and ser-



vants. Temujin then set about systematically eliminating all rivals in his quest to become master of the steppes. In 1206 a large meeting of clan leaders was held by the River Onon, and Temujin was proclaimed Genghis Khan, or Universal Ruler.

The year 1206 was a turning point in the history of the Mongols. The petty tribal quarrels and raids were a thing of the past. A unified Mongol nation came into existence as the personal creation of

Genghis Khan and still survives today. Genghis Khan's military genius was adaptable. Initially his troops were exclusively cavalry using horses to help them defeat nomads. However, Khan developed other strategies when battling cities and employed catapults, ladders, and burning oil, even diverting rivers, if needed.

At the time of his death, Genghis Khan had conquered a landmass extending from Beijing to the Caspian Sea, and his generals had raided Persia and Russia. Genghis Khan used violence to win and maintain power, but he also brought a measure of civilization to his subjects, establishing trade routes and laws that shaped his empire long after his death.

#### Reviewing the Profile

Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. According to legend, what sign showed that Temujin was born to greatness?
2. What does the title "Genghis Khan" mean?
3. What event in Genghis Khan's early life motivated him to be so ambitious?

#### Critical Thinking

4. **Analyzing Information** Write a list of adjectives that describe Genghis Khan.
5. **Determining Cause and Effect** What was one result of Khan's military victories?