



Leland Liu Rogers, *The Golden Summary of Činggis Qačan: Činggis Qayan-u Altan Tobči*

Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009. xii + 151 pages, b/w photos, glossary, index. Cloth, US\$75.00; paperback, €42,00/CHF 73,00. ISBN 978-3-447-06074-5.

BECAUSE SO FEW English-language studies about Mongolian legends and history have been published, the work under review is a useful work. The book is a translation of a late-sixteenth or early-seventeenth century Mongolian manuscript entitled, in English translation, *The Golden Summary of Chinggis Khaghan*. It was written at the time that Mongolians began to convert to Tibetan Buddhism and thus reflects mostly Mongolian legends and actual events, with a few Buddhist conceptions interspersed. Unlike *The Secret History of the Mongols*, the thirteenth-century almost-contemporary source on Chinggis, *The Golden Summary* presents an entirely positive portrait of the Great Khan. *The Secret History*, on occasion, offers unflattering stories about Chinggis murdering his half-brother, ordering the killing of a powerful shaman, and uttering nasty remarks about the pleasures of massacring one's enemies and ravishing their wives. *The Golden Summary* tends to deify Chinggis, repeatedly referring to him as the "Lord," setting the stage for rituals and a cult centered on the founder of the Mongolian Empire.

On examining this brief text, the reader will be struck by the close association between Mongolians and animals. Verbal images, metaphors, and turns of phrase link man and beast. This should not be a surprise because the Mongolians were dependent on their sheep, goats, yaks, camels, and horses. The text describes Mongolians as "evil-tongued owls" and as having "snake-light thoughts" among much animal imagery. Chinggis himself instructs his soldiers to attack like saker falcons, to rest like two-year old oxen, and to celebrate like newborn billy goats (76). Mongolians frequently used animal terminology to describe routine activities. For example, they referred to urination as "watching the horses." Animals also played vital roles in their campaigns. As the text notes about their siege of cities, cats' tails "were bound with cotton ... and set aflame. The cats went onto the roofs of buildings. The city was taken and incinerated with flame" (85).

Mr. Rogers' translation of the text into English is, in other respects, valuable. This is partly due to the paucity of Mongolian texts for the period of the Mongolian's greatest significance in global history. Although *The Golden Summary* was written several centuries after the events it describes, it still provides a Mongolian perspective as opposed to the more numerous and more consulted Persian, Chinese, and Korean accounts. Part of its significance also lies in its availability in English. Few Mongolian manuscripts and documents have been translated into English. Yet there is a plethora of texts in Mongolia, China, Russia, India, Denmark, and

other locations. Most are Buddhist sources or writings about animals, medicine, and shamanism. Mr. Rogers' translation might encourage others to tackle these other works. Finally, it offers a version other than *The Secret History*, which has, for understandable reasons, riveted the attention of most specialists. Because *The Secret History* has been translated into German, Hungarian, English (at least five times), Chinese, French, and a slew of other languages, historians have always used the work for their interpretations of the Mongolians' earlier history. Later works, such as *The Golden Summary*, may actually have copied earlier and non-extant texts which could elucidate and supplement events described in *The Secret History*.

Leland Liu Rogers, the author, translated the work as part of his Master of Arts program. He gives reasons for dating the manuscript as the late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century and provides a romanized transcription and a word index. It would have been too much to ask for a historical or anthropological analysis of the text. He has already done a creditable job.

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