

## Chinggis Khan Letter to Changchun 1219

Heaven has abandoned China owing to its haughtiness and extravagant luxury. But I, living in the northern wilderness, have not inordinate passions. I hate luxury and exercise moderation. I have only one coat and one food. I eat the same food and am dressed in the same tatters as my humble herdsmen. I consider the people my children, and take an interest in talented men as if they were my brothers.... At military exercises I am always in the front, and in time of battle am never behind. In the space of seven years I have succeeded in accomplishing a great work, and uniting the whole world into one empire. I have not myself distinguished qualities. But the government of the [Chinese] is inconstant, and therefore Heaven assists me to obtain the throne....

All together have acknowledged my supremacy. It seems to me that since the remote time... such an empire has not been seen.... Since the time I came to the throne I have always taken to heart the ruling of my people; but I could not find worthy men to occupy [high offices]....With respect to these circumstances I inquired, and heard that thou, master, hast penetrated the truth.... For a long time thou has lived in the caverns of the rocks, and hast retired from the world; but to thee the people who have acquired sanctity repair, like clouds on the paths of the immortals, in innumerable multitudes.... But what shall I do? We are separated by mountains and plains of great extent, and I cannot meet thee. I can only descend from the throne and stand by the side. I have fasted and washed. I have ordered my adjutant... to prepare an escort and a cart for thee.

Do not be afraid of the thousand li (a great distance). I implore thee to move thy sainted steps. Do not think of the extent of the sandy desert. Commiserate the people in the present situation of affairs, or have pity upon me, and communicate to me the means of preserving life. I shall serve thee myself. I hope that at least thou wilt leave me a trifle of thy wisdom. Say only one word to me and I shall be happy.

- Why did Chinggis Khan seek a meeting with Changchun?
- How does Chinggis Khan define his life's work? What is his image of himself?
- How would you describe the tone of Chinggis Khan's letter to Changchun? What does the letter suggest about Mongol attitudes toward the belief systems of conquered peoples?
- How do Documents 1 & 2 help explain the success of the Mongols' empire-building efforts?
- What core Mongol values do these documents suggest?