

# *The Cambridge History of the Mongol Empire*

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## **Rationale:**

Although the Mongol empire has indeed attracted a great deal of scholarly attention over recent decades, few are the works that focus on the empire at large. As demonstrated, first and foremost, in the seminal works of Thomas T. Allsen (esp. *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* [CUP, 2001]), viewing the empire in its full Eurasian context provides researchers with a deeper understanding of the Chinggisids' policies and their impact on world history. Assuming this vantage point, scholars have latterly accentuated not only the devastation that Mongol troops left in their wake, but the empire's contribution to intensive and fruitful cross-cultural ties across the Eastern Hemisphere. Moreover, these studies have illuminated the regime's nomadic legacy and its influence on the contours of its successor states in China, Iran, Central Asia, and Russia. Against this backdrop, the time is ripe for an up-to-date review of the scholarly knowledge on the Mongols.

While 'Cambridge Histories' of various regions (mainly China, Iran, Russia, Turkey, and Inner Asia) include chapters that examine Mongol polities, the *raison d'être* of this work is to scrutinize the empire from a holistic perspective. More specifically, the contributors will treat this entity not only as a chapter in the annals of China, Iran, Russia or Inner Asia, , but as a multi-faceted phenomenon—one that combined elements from various Asian imperial traditions (particularly steppe, Islamic, Persian, and Sinitic empires)—which has had a broad and enduring impact on world history. In light of the above, this project is designed to stand alone, rather than comprise a part of an existing Cambridge series.

The editors envision a two-volume set that features the following components: Volume 1 will be divided into four main parts. The first, "A Political History of the Mongol Empire," will concentrate on the political-military history of the United Empire and its four successor states. One of this section's chapters will compare the various stages of the Chinggisid imperial enterprise between 1260 and 1368, underscoring the common attributes of the various Mongol polities. Furthermore, several of the entries will incorporate recent archaeological findings, which are especially relevant to the United Empire and the Golden Horde.

As opposed to the previous section's regional breakdown, "Thematic Histories" (part 2) will refer to the United Empire and the four khanates as a whole – an approach that indeed constitutes the principal innovation of *The Cambridge History of the Mongol Empire*. More specifically, the authors will expand upon the Mongols' institutions, ideology, and military machine as well as the economic, religious, artistic, and scientific exchange under their rule. Other topics include the Chinggisids' impact on the environment (including the outspread of the Black Plague) and gender roles throughout their realms.

Unlike "A Political History of the Mongol Empire" (part 1) and, for that matter, most imperial histories, the third section, "Regional Histories," offers 'views from the edges.' Put differently, the focus is on particular subjected regions, most of which the Mongols administered indirectly. Besides showcasing the assortment of Chinggisid

governing methods, the entries falling under this heading promise to shed light on the 'centers' as well as the institutions and policies described in section 1 and 2, respectively, by vetting their connections to the margins. The first chapter is devoted to Mongolia itself. While the empire's capital was originally in Mongolia (Qaraqorum), the seat of government was transferred to China in 1260. From that point on, the Chinggisid 'homeland' is virtually ignored by the research literature. Among the other case studies of outlying territories are Siberia, Georgia and the Caucasus, Korea, Tibet, and the Rus principalities.

The final part of this volume, "External Histories," explores the Chinggisids' impact on regions outside their empire's borders. It includes chapters on Western Europe, the Mediterranean, India, the Arab Middle East, and Maritime Asia (Japan and South East Asia). While these lands were never succumbed to the Mongols, they could not help but be affected by the era's lone superpower.

The second, complementary volume consists of literary, archaeological, and visual sources on the Mongol empire, along with attendant discussions and analysis. The discussion of the literary sources, which comprise the lion's share of this volume, will be arranged according to the most pertinent languages. While the research of most empires demands proficiency in one or two languages, the Mongols' voluminous holdings encompassed a bewildering array of languages. Consequently, the linguistic entries herein will be of immense value to students and scholars interested in turning their sights on the Chinggisids.

*The Cambridge History of the Mongol Empire* will draw on a diverse array of contributors: both young and venerable scholars alike from the United States, Europe, and Asia. Our preference is for researchers well-versed in sources from the opposite ends of the Chinggisids' domain, or at least those with a strong appreciation for the holistic nature of the Mongol empire. In few cases authors specializing in Eastern and Western Asia will be paired for writing one entry.

### **Market:**

While the primary market for this work is naturally libraries, the subject matter is bound to attract wider audiences (especially if printed in paperback). The volumes are likely to serve as an indispensable tool for scholars, graduate and even undergraduate courses on the Mongol polities as well as those on world and global history and the comparative study of empires. Moreover, *The Cambridge History of the Mongol Empire* is bound to appeal to scholars and those occupied with the following topics: medieval Chinese, Islamic, and Russian history, medieval commerce, the history of science, and cross cultural contacts in general.