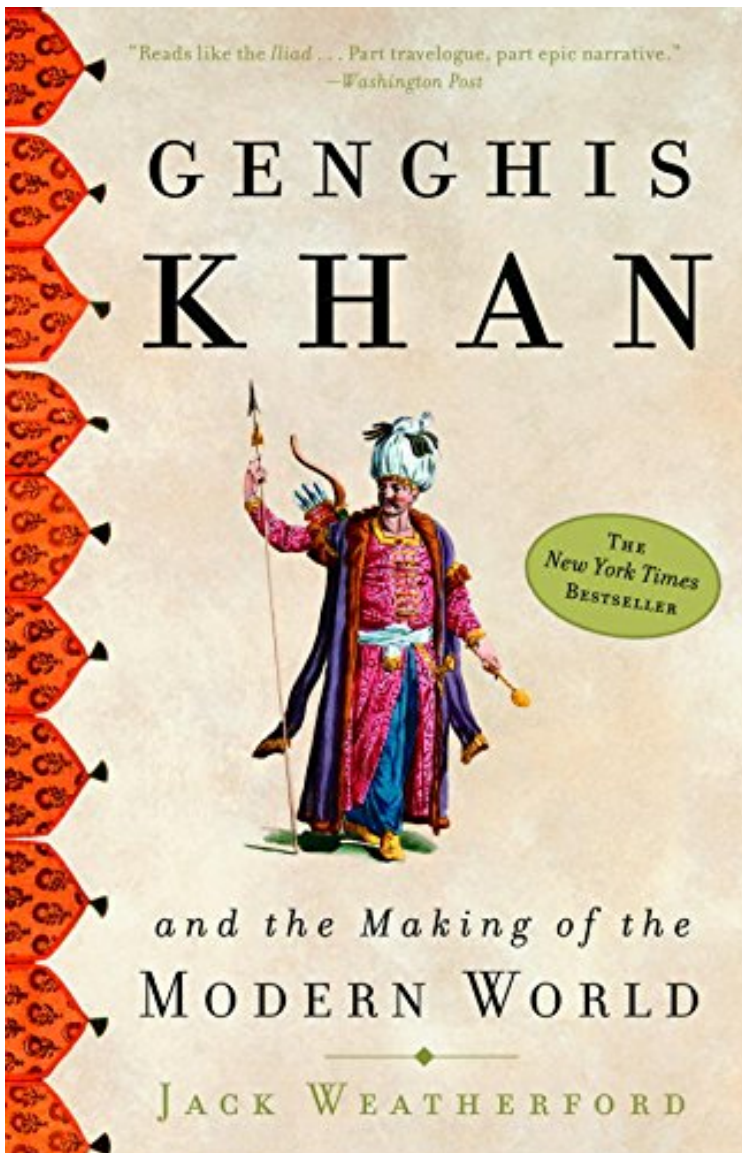


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Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World



Par Jack Weatherford
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe name Genghis Khan often conjures the image of a relentless, bloodthirsty barbarian on horseback leading a ruthless band of nomadic warriors in the looting of the civilized world. But the surprising truth is that Genghis Khan was a visionary leader whose conquests joined backward Europe with the flourishing cultures of Asia to trigger a global awakening, an unprecedented explosion of technologies, trade, and ideas. In *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World*, Jack Weatherford, the only Western scholar ever to be allowed into the Mongols Great TabooGenghis Khans homeland and

forbidden burial sites tracks the astonishing story of Genghis Khan and his descendants, and their conquest and transformation of the world. Fighting his way to power on the remote steppes of Mongolia, Genghis Khan developed revolutionary military strategies and weaponry that emphasized rapid attack and siege warfare, which he then brilliantly used to overwhelm opposing armies in Asia, break the back of the Islamic world, and render the armored knights of Europe obsolete. Under Genghis Khan, the Mongol army never numbered more than 100,000 warriors, yet it subjugated more lands and people in twenty-five years than the Romans conquered in four hundred. With an empire that stretched from Siberia to India, from Vietnam to Hungary, and from Korea to the Balkans, the Mongols dramatically redrew the map of the globe, connecting disparate kingdoms into a new world order. But contrary to popular wisdom, Weatherford reveals that the Mongols were not just masters of conquest, but possessed a genius for progressive and benevolent rule. On every level and from any perspective, the scale and scope of Genghis Khan's accomplishments challenge the limits of imagination. Genghis Khan was an innovative leader, the first ruler in many conquered countries to put the power of law above his own power, encourage religious freedom, create public schools, grant diplomatic immunity, abolish torture, and institute free trade. The trade routes he created became lucrative pathways for commerce, but also for ideas, technologies, and expertise that transformed the way people lived. The Mongols introduced the first international paper currency and postal system and developed and spread revolutionary technologies like printing, the cannon, compass, and abacus. They took local foods and products like lemons, carrots, noodles, tea, rugs, playing cards, and pants and turned them into staples of life around the world. The Mongols were the architects of a new way of life at a pivotal time in history.

In *Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World*, Jack Weatherford resurrects the true history of Genghis Khan, from the story of his relentless rise through Mongol tribal culture to the waging of his devastatingly successful wars and the explosion of civilization that the Mongol Empire unleashed. This dazzling work of revisionist history doesn't just paint an unprecedented portrait of a great leader and his legacy, but challenges us to reconsider how the modern world was made.

From the Hardcover edition.

Excerpt: The Blood Clot There is fire in his eyes and light in his face. The Secret History of the Mongols Of the thousands of cities conquered by the Mongols, history only mentions one that Genghis Khan deigned to enter. Usually, when victory became assured, he withdrew with his court to a distant and more pleasant camp while his warriors completed their tasks. On a March day in 1220, the Year of the Dragon, the Mongol conqueror broke with his peculiar tradition by leading his cavalry into the center of the newly conquered city of Bukhara, one of the most important cities belonging to the sultan of Khwarizm in what is now Uzbekistan. Although neither the capital nor the major commercial city, Bukhara occupied an exalted emotional position throughout the Muslim world as Noble Bukhara, the center of religious piety known by the epithet "the ornament and delight to all Islam." Knowing fully the propaganda value of his actions by conquering and entering the city, Genghis Khan rode triumphantly through the city gates, past the warren of wooden houses and vendors' stalls, to the large cluster of stone and brick buildings at the center of the city. His entry into Bukhara followed the successful conclusion of possibly the most audacious surprise attack in military history. While one part of his army took the direct route from Mongolia to attack the sultan's border cities head-on, he had secretly pulled and pushed another division of warriors over a distance longer than any other army had ever covered--two thousand miles of desert, mountains, and steppe--to appear deep behind enemy lines, where least expected. Even trade caravans avoided the Kyzyl Kum, the fabled Red Desert, by detouring hundreds of miles to avoid it; and that fact, of course, was precisely why Genghis Khan chose to attack from that direction. By befriending the nomads of the area, he was able to lead his army on a hitherto unknown track through the stone and sand desert. His targeted city of Bukhara stood at the center of a fertile oasis astride one of the tributaries of the Amu Darya inhabited mostly by Tajik or Persian people, but ruled by Turkic tribesmen in the newly created empire of Khwarizm, one of the many transitory empires of the era. The sultan of Khwarizm had, in a grievously fatal mistake, provoked the enmity of Genghis Khan by looting a Mongol trade caravan and disfiguring the faces of Mongol ambassadors sent to negotiate peaceful commerce. Although nearly sixty years old, when Genghis Khan heard of the attack on his men, he did not hesitate to summon his disciplined and experienced army once again to their mounts and to charge down the road of war. In contrast to almost every major army in history, the Mongols traveled lightly, without a supply train. By waiting until the coldest months to make the desert crossing, men and horses required less water. Dew also formed during this season, thereby stimulating the growth of some grass that provided grazing for horses and attracted game that the men eagerly hunted for their own sustenance. Instead of transporting slow-moving siege engines and heavy equipment with them,

the Mongols carried a faster-moving engineer corps that could build whatever was needed on the spot from available materials. When the Mongols came to the first trees after crossing the vast desert, they cut them down and made them into ladders, siege engines, and other instruments for their attack. When the advance guard spotted the first small settlement after leaving the desert, the rapidly moving detachment immediately changed pace, moving now in a slow, lumbering procession, as though they were merchants coming to trade, rather than with the speed of warriors on the attack. The hostile force nonchalantly ambled up to the gates of the town before the residents realized who they were and sounded an alarm. Upon emerging unexpectedly from the desert, Genghis Khan did not race to attack Bukhara immediately. He knew that no reinforcements could leave the border cities under attack by his army, and he therefore had time to play on the surprise in a tortured manipulation of public fear and hope. The objective of such tactics was simple and always the same: to frighten the enemy into surrendering before an actual battle began. By first capturing several small towns in the vicinity, Genghis Khan's army set many local people to flight toward Bukhara as refugees who not only filled the city but greatly increased the level of terror in it. By striking deeply behind the enemy lines, the Mongols immediately created havoc and panic throughout the kingdom. As the Persian chronicler Ata-Malik Juvaini described his approach, when the people saw the countryside all around them "choked with horsemen and the air black as night with the dust of cavalry, fright and panic overcame them, and fear and dread prevailed." In preparing the psychological attack on a city, Genghis Khan began with two examples of what awaited the people. He offered generous terms of surrender to the outlying communities, and the ones that accepted the terms and joined the Mongols received great leniency. In the words of the Persian chronicler, "whoever yields and submits to them is safe and free from the terror and disgrace of their severity." Those that refused received exceptionally harsh treatment, as the Mongols herded the captives before them to be used as cannon fodder in the next attack. The tactic panicked the Turkic defenders of Bukhara. Leaving only about five hundred soldiers behind to man the citadel of Bukhara, the remaining army of twenty thousand soldiers fled in what they thought was still time before the main Mongol army arrived. By abandoning their fortress and dispersing in flight, they sprung Genghis Khan's trap, and the Mongol warriors, who were already stationed in wait for the fleeing soldiers, cut them down at a nearly leisurely pace. The civilian population of Bukhara surrendered and opened the city gates, but the small contingent of defiant soldiers remained in their citadel, where they hoped that the massive walls would allow them to hold out indefinitely against any siege. To more carefully assess the overall situation, Genghis Khan made his unprecedented decision to enter the city. One of his first acts on reaching the center of Bukhara, or upon accepting the surrender of any people, was to summon them to bring fodder for his horses. Feeding the Mongol warriors and their horses was taken as a sign of submission by the conquered; more important, by receiving the food and fodder, Genghis Khan signaled his acceptance of the people as vassals entitled to Mongol protection as well as subject to his command. From the time of his central Asian conquests, we have one of the few written descriptions of Genghis Khan, who was about sixty years old. The Persian chronicler Minhaj al-Siraj Juzjani, who was far less kindly disposed toward the Mongols than the chronicler Juvaini, described him as "a man of tall stature, of vigorous build, robust in body, the hair on his face scanty and turned white, with cats' eyes, possessed of dedicated energy, discernment, genius, and understanding, awe-striking, a butcher, just, resolute, an overthrower of enemies, intrepid, sanguinary, and cruel." Because of his uncanny ability to destroy cities and conquer armies many times the size of his own, the chronicler also goes on to declare that Genghis Khan was "adept at magic and deception, and some of the devils were his friends." Eyewitnesses reported that upon reaching the center of Bukhara, Genghis Khan rode up to the large mosque and asked if, since it was the largest building in the city, it was the home of the sultan. When informed that it was the house of God, not the sultan, he said nothing. For the Mongols, the one God was the Eternal Blue Sky that stretched from horizon to horizon in all four directions. God presided over the whole earth; he could not be cooped up in a house of stone like a prisoner or a caged animal, nor, as the city people claimed, could his words be captured and confined inside the covers of a book. In his own experience, Genghis Khan had often felt the presence and heard the voice of God speaking directly to him in the vast open air of the mountains in his homeland, and by following those words, he had become the conqueror of great cities and huge nations. Genghis Khan dismounted from his horse in order to walk into the great mosque, the only such building he is known to have ever entered in his life. Upon entering, he ordered that the scholars and clerics feed his horses, freeing them from further danger and placing them under his protection, as he did with almost all religious personnel who came under his control. Next, he summoned the 280 richest men of the city to the mosque. Despite his limited experience inside city walls, Genghis Khan

still had a keen grasp of the working of human emotion and sentiment. Before the assembled men in the mosque, Genghis Khan took a few steps up the pulpit stairs, then turned to face the elite of Bukhara. Through interpreters, he lectured them sternly on the sins and misdeeds of their sultan and themselves. It was not the common people who were to blame for these failures; rather, "it is the great ones among you who have committed these sins. If you had not committed great sins, God would not have sent a punishment like me upon you." He then gave each rich man into the control of one of his Mongol warriors, who would go with him and collect his treasure. He admonished his rich prisoners not to bother showing them the wealth above the ground; the Mongols could find that without assistance. He wanted them to guide them only to their hidden or buried treasure. Having begun the systematic plundering of the city, Genghis Khan turned his attention to attacking the Turkic warriors still defiantly sealed inside the citadel of Bukhara.

Although not familiar with the Mongols in particular, the people in the urbanized oases of central Asian cities like Bukhara and Samarkand had seen many b...
Revue de presse "There is very little time for reading in my new job. But of the few books I've read, my favourite is Genghis Khan and the Making of the Modern World by Jack Weatherford (Crown Publishers, New York). It's a fascinating book portraying Genghis Khan in a totally new light. It shows that he was a great secular leader, among other things." Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India
Reads like the Iliad. . . Part travelogue, part epic narrative. Washington Post
Its hard to think of anyone else who rose from such inauspicious beginnings to something so awesome, except maybe Jesus. Harpers Weatherfords lively analysis restores the Mongols reputation, and it takes wonderful learned detours. . . . Well written and full of surprises. Kirkus s Weatherford is a fantastic storyteller. . . . [His] portrait of Khan is drawn with sufficiently self-complicating depth. . . . Weatherfords account gives a generous view of the Mongol conqueror at his best and worst. Minneapolis Star Tribune
From the Trade Paperback edition.