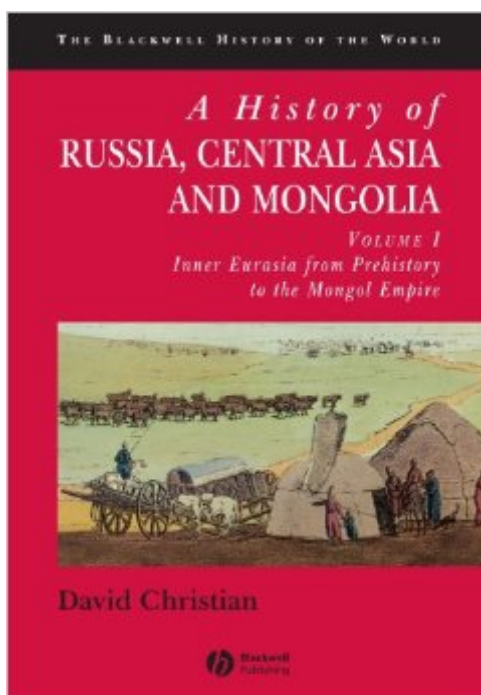


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A History Of Russia, Central Asia And Mongolia, Vol. 1: Inner Eurasia From Prehistory To The Mongol Empire



Synopsis

This is a history of Russia, Central Asia and Mongolia from the time of the first inhabitants of the region up to the break up of the Mongol Empire in 1260AD.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a fine survey of Inner Asian history from early human occupation of Inner Asia to the Mongol Empire. Christian offers all the basic narrative but what really distinguishes this book is his effort to provide structural analyses of the basic features of this aspect of Eurasian history. Christian begins with the basic ecology and biogeography of Inner Asia, particularly the steppe lands and deserts, which largely precluded agriculture and sedentism. With the development of appropriately domesticated animals, carts, and later developments like the compound bow, a pastoral culture emerged that was relatively uniform across Eurasia and persisted for centuries. Against this background, he introduces some interesting qualifications. The steppe-desert-forest lands of Inner Asia spread across all of Eurasia but specific differences in geography and ecology produced different results. In the east, the pastoral cultures interacted with the great sedentary societies of China, often in strongly interdependent ways that frequently encouraged the emergence of pastoralist empires. In central Eurasia, the steppes and deserts were interdigitated with river valleys and oases that encouraged agricultural societies. In the west, the steppes petered out, partially protecting the sedentary societies and leading to societies with combinations of pastoralists and agriculturalists. Another important theme is the ways in which Inner Asia and the various pastoralist societies acted as major trade and cultural conduits across the continent. Christian does very well in

narrating the basic history of the major pastoral societies and their interactions with surrounding sedentary societies. The way events would ramify across the steppes is described well.

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