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Genghis Khan: The World Conqueror, Volume II

Sam Djang
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In Volume I, Sam Djang included many imagined dialogues and stories to showcase moments in the life of Temujin, a young Mongol who became known as the feared warrior Genghis Khan. In Volume II of his solidly researched study, Djang focuses on the military aspect of the Mongol leader's march of conquest.

In balanced detail, the author presents the organization, strategy, tactics, and technological innovations that allowed a comparatively small tribe to conquer armies and empires many times its size. The Mongol "horde" (from the Turkish word *ordu*, a Mongol unit of organization) never put more than 150,000 warriors on the field. The various Chinese states—the Khwarazarm Empire of Central Asia, the Caliph of Baghdad, the Princes of Rus, and other steppe tribes—amassed vast armies, yet the Mongols soundly defeated them.

Djang presents this information in an easily readable and understandable narrative. He offers a detailed explanation of how Genghis Khan and his descendants carved out the largest empire the world has ever seen.

At no point in *Genghis Khan: The World Conqueror, Volume II* does Djang sugarcoat this bloody march. In one section, he presents a litany of cities that are razed and ravaged by the Mongols, their entire populations mercilessly murdered. The list of what, in modern times, would be considered war crimes or even genocide goes on and on. So, too, do the siege and battle reports, many of which explain how the Mongols used mobility, science, and trickery to prevail.

While his admiration for Genghis Khan is evident, the author also presents the dark side of the empire through the eyes of its victims. One victim, a Persian poet who witnessed and escaped the slaughter, sums up the violence in a succinct couplet: "Oh merciful God, close my eyes. I have already seen judgment day."

While Djang offers insight into the character, mind, and heart of the Great Khan, he keeps the reader at an emotional distance from his subject. More history than fiction, *Genghis Khan: The World Conqueror, Volume II* provides a good overview of the life and conquests of the Mongol leader.

MARK G. MCLAUGHLIN (October 3, 2011)

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