

VOLUME ONE

THE HISTORY OF
CENTRAL ASIA

The Age of the Steppe Warriors

CHRISTOPH BAUMER

I.B. TAURIS

LONDON · NEW YORK

Published in 2012 by I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, reprinted 2014
6 Salem Road, London W2 4BU
175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10010
www.ibtauris.com

Distributed in the United States and Canada
Exclusively by Palgrave Macmillan,
175 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10010

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Translated by Miranda Bennett
Photographs © Christoph Baumer 2012

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ISBN: 978-1-78076-060-5

A full CIP record for this book is available from the British Library
A full CIP record is available from the Library of Congress

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: available

Designed by Christopher Bromley

Printed and bound in Italy by Printer Trento



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THE HISTORY OF CENTRAL ASIA

The Age of the Steppe Warriors

The epic plains and arid deserts of Central Asia have witnessed some of the greatest migrations, as well as many of the most transformative developments, in the history of civilization. Christoph Baumer's ambitious four-volume treatment of the region charts the 3000-year drama of Scythians and Sarmatians; Soviets and transcontinental Silk Roads; trade routes and the transmission of ideas across the steppes; and the breathless and brutal conquests of Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan.

Masterfully interweaving the stories of individuals and peoples, the author's engaging prose is richly augmented throughout by colour photographs taken on his own travels. For all the complexity of the history, Dr Baumer, a noted authority on Central Asia, never loses sight of the sweeping grandeur of its overall setting. Volume 1 focuses on the geography of the area now occupied by present-day Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, northern Afghanistan, western and central Mongolia and parts of southern Russia and northern China. Discussing the changing climates of the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Ages, the author explores subjects as diverse as glacial retreat; the rise of early cities; the invention of the wheel; the legendary Cimmerians and Amazons; Hellenism and Zoroastrianism; and the Oxus Treasure.

This unique work offers a sumptuously illustrated history of one of the most mysterious and compelling regions on earth. It will be required reading for scholars and students alike of antiquity, history, archaeology and religious studies. Future volumes by the author will explore the later historical periods of the region.

'This is a most impressive book. Dr Baumer has a wide-ranging knowledge of his subject, an extensive on-the-ground acquaintance with Central Asia itself, and an ability to convey that knowledge in a most interesting and comprehensible way. He has a gift for the striking observation. For example, he remarks on a curious parallel between a Central Asian story about a hero's sword having to be thrown into the sea and the rather similar tale about Excalibur, commenting that this is perhaps not merely coincidence: might it have something to do with the Sarmatian soldiers sent by Marcus Aurelius to guard Hadrian's Wall? Another excellent idea is the periodic insertion of "excursuses", on such topics as Roy Chapman Andrews the "dinosaur hunter", the Siberian collections of Peter the Great, and the Amazons. No history of Central Asia, or indeed of anywhere else, can ultimately claim to be "complete". But this one is certainly very comprehensive indeed, far more so than any other recent work of which I am aware. The publication of this volume, and of its successors too, seems to me to be a very valuable enterprise indeed.'

—DAVID MORGAN, PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON, AND AUTHOR OF *THE MONGOLS*.



ISBN 978-1-78076-060-5



9 781780 760605

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