

Book Review - Wolf of the Plains by Conn Iggulden

“The greatest joy a man can know is to conquer his enemies and drive them before him. To ride their horses and take away their possessions, to see the faces of those who were dear to them bedewed with tears, and to clasp their wives and daughters in his arms”

- Genghis Kahn

The name, Genghis Khan, conjures images of unmitigated blood sport. Historical lore abounds with stories of cruelty. Little is known about his life, given that almost all accounts were destroyed or did not last. There is just one, which is the source of this stunning book. These great hardships have created Genghis into one of the greatest military rulers of all time.

Born the second son of Yesugie, a tribal warlord, Temujin (who later calls himself Genghis) grows up in Mongolia. His father was the khan of the Wolves, a particularly ferocious tribe constantly warring with the Tartars, so, therefore him and his family, including his mother and a small baby, were left to starve, by the new khan of the tribe known as Eueluk. Much of this book is about how Temujin, his brother and mother manage to survive in the face of extreme hardship. The fact that Temujin killed his elder brother in cold blood shows what extremes he and his family were pushed, and the incredible power of Höelün, the mother of the wolves, not losing even one of her children to the harsh winters of Mongolia.

As he grew, Temujin built up a gang of warriors by raiding other tribes and keeping some of the men and their families alive. Temujin also realized that if the Mongols were to protect their land and their rights, they must unite. He realized the Mongols were growing weak fighting amongst themselves, thereafter Genghis embarked on a quest to unite the silver people of Asia.

Later, with the threat of the Chinese, Temujin managed to bring some of the major tribes under his leadership. At this point he renamed himself Genghis – Khan of the sea of grass. His bravery was unmatched as he drove the Mongols to massacre the crusaders of the western world to crash through the great wall of China if not for this great military conquest Temujin of the wolves may have very well stayed a local phenomenon.

The author has brought out the growing years of Genghis, the way of life at that time and the cultural landscape in the era in a most detailed and beautiful manner, touching me on a very personal level to be able to see through this beautiful book what levels of hardship, ruthlessness and a pure passion to conquer the weak that forged the fiery young Temujin (meaning iron in his native language) into a supreme warlord of Asia.

Despite some liberties with historical fact in the interest of great storytelling, a brilliant portrayal of Genghis Kahn emerges in this amazing series of books that is a must read for anyone who wishes to honor the great Khan that ruled from eastern Europe all the way to the Chinese empire. Truly the greatest ruler that Asia has ever known.

-Joshua Koshy 9 ICSE