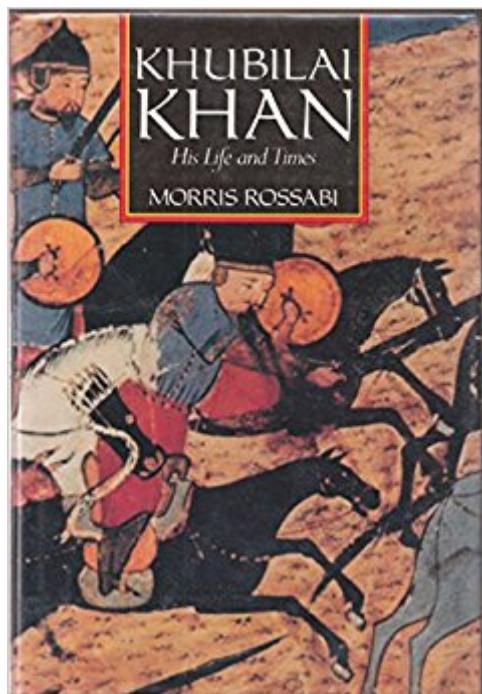


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# Khubilai Khan: His Life And Times



## Synopsis

Living from 1215 to 1294 Khubilai Khan is one of history's most renowned figures. Here for the first time is an English-language biography of the man. Morris Rossabi draws on sources from a variety of East Asian, Middle Eastern, and European languages as he focuses on the life and times of the great Mongol monarch. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 322 pages

Publisher: Univ of California Pr; First Edition edition (May 1988)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0520059131

ISBN-13: 978-0520059139

Package Dimensions: 9.3 x 6.5 x 1.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds

Average Customer Review: 3.7 out of 5 stars 9 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #490,289 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #189 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Ethnic & National > Chinese #614 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Asia #974 in Books > History > Asia > China

## Customer Reviews

In this highly readable biography Rossabi confines himself to historical sources to provide a fascinating life of this great ruler. Although Khubilai acquired the title of Great Khan, the Mongol empire of the 1250s already had broken into four segments, with Khubilai ruling North China. His greatest success came when he was over 60 with the conquest of the southern Sung dynasty. In the last years of his life, however, he suffered from personal tragedies, obesity, alcoholism, and military reverses. Still, Khubilai ruled "the largest and most populous empire in the history of the world until that time." Recommended for most libraries. History Book Club main selection. David D. Buck, Univ. of Wisconsin - Milwaukee Copyright 1988 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"Khubilai Khan is much more than a biography. It is a comprehensive treatment of the cultural and political dimensions of the 13th century in both China and Central Asia." -- Pamela Kyle Crossley, The New Republic "Morris Rossabi has written this impressive biography for scholarly use, but he does not neglect the casual reader. He brings Khubilai and his era to life with myriad details, providing an ironic portrait of an invader conquered by his own conquest." -- Amanda Heller, The

Boston Globe" [Khubilai Khan] will probably stand for many years as the best account of Khubilai available. . . . Rossabi, his scholarship a patient accretion of details, provides us with a fascinating portrait of a restless nomad chieftain seen mainly through the eyes of the sedentary populations over which he ruled." -- T.H. Barrett, London Review of Books -- This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Review of Rossabi's "Khubilai Khan" by Paul F. Ross A movie reminded this reader that he knew essentially nothing about the Mongols and their dominance across the northern land mass now known as Europe and Asia. Thinking Chinggis (Genghis) Kahn was the most successful, I searched for a biography. However I failed to make the distinction between Chinggis (1162-1227, early leader uniting Mongol power) and Khubilai (1215-1294, Chinggis's grandson and the Khan that ruled over the largest territory). Thinking I was buying a biography of Chinggis, I actually bought a biography of Khubilai. I had much to learn. Among other things, I relearned that Marco Polo made his trip from Venice, Italy, to China in about 1272 and, among many other things, visited the court of Khubilai Khan in Ta Tu. Nicolo and Maffeo Polo reached Khubilai Khan's court in about 1265 or 1266. The Polos knew a good trading mission when they saw one. Morris Rossabi, author of this history of Khubilai Khan, taught Chinese history at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland and the China Institute, Columbia University, and Queens College in New York. Rossabi and all other historians seeking to review the history of the Khans face a difficult task. The Mongols had no written language. So there are no histories of the Mongols written by the Mongols. The sources available to the historians are Confucian Chinese, Muslim Persians, and Shinto Japanese, and Nestorian Christians

primarily the first two and the Confucian Chinese of the Southern Sung dynasty were the largest and most advanced population conquered by Khubilai. These several sources were recorded with points of view held by peoples subjugated by the Mongols. The sources differed in their descriptions of the Mongols and their governance. Rossabi reports that Khubilai was relatively even handed in supporting all of the cultures coming under his rule, supporting their religions, avoiding extensive damage to their economies, carefully avoiding imposition of the nomadic hunting-gathering economy of the Mongols on the agriculturists in the

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Rossabi, Morris "Khubilai Khan: His life and times" 1988, University of California Press, Berkeley CA, xvii + 323 pages

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Chinese economies, respecting many of the Chinese governing traditions, actively seeking to build the economies of the conquered peoples (thus allowing the collection of more taxes), supplying food and other support such as tax relief when disasters (such as drought) struck, supporting their arts. As in ruling families worldwide, Khubilai had to cope with a few relatives who led rebellions against Khubilai as well as some rebellions among the conquered peoples. Khubilai was elected the Great Khan (ruler of the Mongols) in 1260 and held that role until his death in 1294.

Khubilai's reign in China was designated the Yuan dynasty in Chinese history and it concluded in 1368, less than seventy five years after Khubilai's death. Rossabi seeks to present a broad sweep of Khubilai's times by telling the military stories, Khubilai's governance stories as Rossabi sought to balance competing political forces, stories about collecting taxes, stories describing the theater, stories describing Khubilai's efforts to create a written language for the Mongols, and so on. Rossabi struggles with his diverse sources and their conflicting points of view, frequently warning the reader that his description is a guess, he having tried to weigh the differing points of view of his sources and report what Rossabi regards as the likely truth. One can get another look at the Yuan dynasty through the eyes of Fairbank and Goldman (1998, p 119-142) as the Mongol rule under Khubilai Khan is embedded by these historians in their history of China. It is a brief report, twenty three pages, in a 500+ page history of China. "The Mongols were despised and Mongol rule lasted less than a century, more brief than Ruzhen rule had been in North China. Except along the Great Wall the Mongols could not take root (p 122)," Fairbank and Goldman write. The difference between a history written with Rossabi's sources from 800 years ago and current history or biography is enormous. With many sources including people who experienced the events, histories describing recent events are very much more satisfying than this history of a people who had no written language. For current standards, see Bernanke's account (2015) of the 2007-2009 worldwide economic recession and the efforts to recover. See Canellos and colleagues (2009) describing the life of Teddy Kennedy. Davies (1996) views the history of Europe over a long timeline and his history has little to say about the Mongols' invasion by Chinggis Khan. History, one must judge, is always a set of events sifted by the values of the historian and the richness and perspectives of the sources. Rossabi's history of Khubilai Khan has the marks of careful workmanship, given the sources available to him. Rossabi organizes his topics into chapters, opens by telling you what he is going to tell you, then tells you, and finally summarizes what he told you. Some of Rossabi's account is

generalizations about Khubilai are repeated many, many times. However my ignorance of the Mongols and their history was stark and my knowledge of Chinese history was very sketchy. So long as memory sustains what I have learned, that ignorance has been pushed away in at least some areas by this read of Rossabi's history of Khubilai Khan. Bellevue, Washington 19 November 2015 Copyright © 2015 by Paul F. Ross. All rights reserved. References Bernanke, Ben S. *The courage to act: A memoir of a crisis and its aftermath* 2015, W. W. Norton & Company, New York NY Canellos, Peter S. (Editor) *Last lion: The fall and rise of Ted Kennedy* 2009, Simon & Schuster, New York NY Davies, Norman *Europe: a history* 1996, Harper Perennial, New York NY Fairbank, John King, and Goldman, Merle *China: A new history* Enlarged Edition. 1998, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA Rossabi, Morris *Khubilai Khan: His life and times* 1988, University of California Press, Berkeley CA

excellent source, reliable and thorough, parts are naturally better suited for asian or history majors text is actually 230 pages with about 95 pages of cite material delivers a very clear picture of the development and influence kubilai and mongolian culture had on 13th century asia, because of the balancing act that kubilai was responsible for, there is a near pleading for the reader to indulge other aspects of this time because kubilai is such a dense figure and the mongols such a volatile despotism that despite the density of sources it feels like wisps of information that reveal both a cunning and touching glimpse of power i would like to read about genghis and chiang kai-shek, if the same author has tackled other asiatic dynastic figures i can only hope they would be as well crafted, fully satisfied

Great book

If you have ever been interested in learning about the amazing Khubilai Khan or the Mongols this is the book to read. Morris Rossabi knows his stuff and it is clearly evident in this book. Rossabi does a great job explaining the man Marco Polo met in China. Rossabi does a great job explaining the Mongols, their Empire, and their leader Khubilai Khan. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in learning about one of the largest empires to ever exist and their amazing leader. It is great to read a book written by someone who knows his stuff. Rossabi knows his stuff!

This scholarly biography, published in 1988, is sympathetic to the Mongol emperor of China, Khubilai Khan who founded the Yuan Dynasty in 1271 (and was hated by the Chinese who were 3rd

and 4th class citizens). This history has footnotes from divergent sources, whether Mongol, Chinese, Muslim and so on. It praises the Khan as a ruler who „endeavoured to protect the welfare and promote the interests of his diverse subjects“ (p 231). But this is unconvincing and the details of the Khan's personal life are only hinted at, such as his harem. Kublai Khan is never quoted.

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