



The Turks in World History

Carter V. Findley

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Beginning in Inner Asia two thousand years ago, the Turks have migrated and expanded to form today's Turkish Republic, five post-Soviet republics, other societies across Eurasia, and a global diaspora. For the first time in a single, accessible volume, this book traces the Turkic peoples' trajectory from steppe, to empire, to nation-state. Cultural, economic, social, and political history unite in these pages to illuminate the projection of Turkic identity across space and time and the profound transformations marked successively by the Turks' entry into Islam and into modernity.

The Turks in World History Details

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Nargiz says

Each chapter of the book can be a separate book by itself. It seems like a history textbook, so it gets boring in some part. However, the titanic effort of the author to comprehend as much as possible about Turkic people shouldn't be underestimated, and taking this into consideration, the book is really good.

I recommend "The Turks in the World History" for anyone, who would like to have a general picture about Turks.

Hasan says

This book provides a comprehensive analysis of the origins and development of the Turkic people. The early introduction of an analogy of a caravan with carpet traders moving from central Asia to Europe describing simultaneously, Turkic diversity and common cultural roots, paints a powerful picture of context for the reader.

It should also be highlighted that this book is written in a very formal academic style with a great amount of reference material. While offering the assurance of accuracy, this style can come across as somewhat dry. However I think it still works for what this book sets out to achieve.

Overall, thoroughly enjoyed it, especially considering there is very little out there that offers a comprehensive look at the Turkic people in a single book.

Nick says

Stopped after chapter 3. I'd like to come back to this one day when the study of Central Asia is not sullied by the memory of school.

Simon Jones says

Good as a high level overview and particularly in as much as it treated the whole sweep of Turkic history from the Xiongnu to the Huns and Bulgars to the Seljuks to the Mongols, Ottomans and Mughals to modern former Soviet Republics. So from that point of view it is comprehensive and inclusive. It focusses on big picture cultural and social/political phenomena rather than the nitty gritty of conquering hordes or specific personalities. My main complaint was that 50% of the content was focussed on the last two centuries at the expense of Medieval period which is probably the most interesting and dynamic period and the period in which Turkic peoples played their greatest role on the world stage. Bit of a missed opportunity. It probably tries to cover too much ground in less than 300 pages and rather skims over the good bits. That said if you are more interested in the modern history of the Turks you will be much happier.

Hakan says

5 vermemin sebebi biraz reklam amaçlı:) Turk kulturunun daha cok kisi tarafından ogrenilmesi amaçli diyelim. Bir Turk olarak cogunlukla asina oldugunuz seyleri bulucaksiniz kitapta. O acidan yeni bir seyler ogrenmek icin pek uygun olmayabilir. Ama bir yabanciya epey bir seyler katacagini fusunuyorum. En guzel buldugum yani haliciligi Turklerin diger ozellikleri ile cok guzel bir sekilde sentez yapip bunu butun kitaba yaymasi. Orta asya turkleri ve anadolu turklerinin son donem icin 1900 ve sonrasi karsilastirmasinin yaninda genel olarak butun turk devletlerinin de ozet bi sekilde tarihinin anlatildigi yerleri bulabiliyorsunuz kitapta. Ben okuduguma pisman olmadim umarim siz de seversiniz.

Shane Hill says

Solid short read of the Turkic peoples going back over 2000 years!! Excellent material here!

Cem Ertül says

At the first glance, this book seems short considering it is about a very broad topic. But it is written very densely and thanks to the authors vast amount of knowledge, and his clever use of many different sources, it manages to successfully cover the entire turkic history. Findley is clearly an expert of the topic, instead of focusing on the Ottoman Empire, or even the Turkish Republic, he explores less known turkic states, both modern and ancient, such as the Xiongnu or Azerbaijan. This sums up to a comprehensive overview of the turkic race. A must read if you are interested in the topic.

Caracalla says

A very solid survey of the history of Turkic speaking groups. It's only 250 pages so not enough really enough to give a detailed treatment of anything and although that's understandable it's also somewhat disappointing given the interest that a detailed treatment of Ottoman society and culture, or the Great Game, or the conquests of Timur. Instead the book ties its subject together with a sort of comparative politics approach, detailing the different destinies of Turkic groups in Anatolia, the Caucasus and Central Asia who all left the same Turkic homeland of what's now Western Mongolia and continue to speak closely related languages. The two main changes Findley believes Turkic groups underwent (at around the same time) were conversion to Islam and modernity (a sort of complex integration into the modern industrialized world economy and also a grappling with new mass politics enabled through the technology). It's a fruitful approach and has a lot of interesting things to say about Islam and modernity, as well as state formation. Interestingly enough one of the main texts the work engages with is the spectacular Baburnameh, partly because it shows state formation in action in Babur's early forays in Ferghana and India. Two inconceivably massive dislocations in Turkish history were the giant changes in language found in Turkey (where the language was in the space of less than half a century denuded of Arabic and Persian loan-words and changed to the extent that Atatürk's speeches are no longer comprehensible) and Central Asia (where Soviet initiatives contributed to the diminishment of the classical languages of Persian and Chagatai Turkish common in music, etc. in favour of upgrading Turkic dialects to full languages) and detribalization (which partly as a result of the Mongol invasions and the black death, meant all the old kinship links and tribal structure fell away, a giant change in the political culture of

these people). Findley's theory that Turkic groups as traditionally constituted (large and mobile groups of nomads with compound bows) could only form states parasitically (i.e. by exacting tribute from sedentary/urban populations and using it to achieve a group cohesion) is interesting and makes a lot of sense when the period after Timur is reached and gunpowder becomes wide-spread in usage; now nomads are at a firm disadvantage against sedentary populations with access to this technology and state formation has to involve a switch to a sedentary lifestyle, internal taxation, etc. (something the Ottomans and the Mughals did, anticipated by the Seljuks, 400 years earlier)

Helmut says

Uninspirierter Flickenteppich

Der Teppich - ein zentrales türkisches Kulturfundament - wird in diesem Fachbuch über die Geschichte der Türken von ihren Ursprüngen in Zentralasien über die Islamisierung bis heute als Metapher für die Entwicklung der Gesellschaft genutzt. Eine wirklich tolle Idee, leider schlecht umgesetzt.

Dieses Fachbuch, laut Klappentext auch insbesondere für den Laien geschrieben, hat mich schwer enttäuscht. Meine Erfahrung ist, dass englischsprachige Fachbücher in den allermeisten Fällen besser lesbar sind als deutsche - leider findet sich hier ausgerechnet bei einem Thema, für das es sonst kaum Literatur gibt, die berühmte Ausnahme. Trocken und uninspiriert zählt der Autor praktisch nur Fakten auf und versäumt es, einen roten Faden in den Teppich zu weben. Es entsteht einfach kein Gesamtbild; nach dem Lesen dieses Buches war ich so schlau wie vorher, denn es bleibt nichts hängen, obwohl es fachlich sicherlich ohne Mängel und mit viel Details versehen ist.

Sehr schade, denn, wie schon erwähnt, ist dies eine enorm spannende Thematik, die dringend einer guten Aufbereitung bedürfte.

Wer also ein Fachbuch sucht, das man regelrecht durcharbeiten muss, ist hier gut bedient; und Spezialisten oder Historiker können unbesehen zugreifen, denn die drei Sterne spiegeln weniger den fachlichen Inhalt als die äußerst schlechte Lesbarkeit für den (explizit als Zielgruppe angesprochenen) Laien wieder. Der Text ist nicht schwer im Sinne von kompliziert, er ist einfach nur sehr langweilig und blutleer.

Nicht besonders hübsch aufgemacht, mit grobem Papier und unansehnlichen Bildreproduktionen passt sich die äußerliche Form der innerlichen an.

Robert says

Good analysis of Turkic history and themes spanning throughout their existence. However, incredibly dry and academic, which makes it very inaccessible. In addition, given its scope and language, its brevity is a both a blessing and a curse... but still, it probably since been longer to flesh out the innumerable concepts discussed within its pages. If you're considering this as an introductory text.... well, just don't.

Eric Dykes says

This is a pretty comprehensive history of the Turkic ethnic group of Northeast Central Asia, its ethnic branches, and the state of the Turkic peoples today. One can come away from this book with a good understanding of how the Turks came from the Central Asian steppes near Mongolia, and ended up with countries today such as Turkey, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Xinjiang province in China, as well as Turkic enclaves in Russia and elsewhere. What is also very interesting is the eras of the Khanates, and the great empires of the Seljuks and Ottomans. Basically, Turks went from being steppe nomads, like the Mongols, to having various kingdoms and empires that ruled much of the land in Europe and Asia. I highly recommend this book.

Evan says

Though a little light on specificities regarding Turkic interactions with the Persian world in particular, still a very fine overview, and highly recommended.

Mark Rossiter says

This book by Carter Vaughn Findley of Ohio State University (whose Wikipedia page is in Turkish), traces the movement of the Turkic and Turkish peoples through history from the earliest records of steppe nomads on the margins of ancient empires (the Scythians for the Romans, the Xiongnu for the Chinese) to the contemporary Turkish republic which inhabits Anatolia and Thrace, and Turkic post-Soviet central Asia and Xinjiang. He sees all of these folk as a loose cultural and linguistic unit, but with the important caveat that it is impossible to fix this to any one particular “ethnic” group, certainly at least in terms of genetics. The appealing metaphor he uses at the beginning is that of a caravan rolling gradually across Asia from Mongolia to Istanbul, picking up and dropping people and baggage as it goes, so that by the time it reaches its destination it is both the same vehicle that started out and yet a different phenomenon altogether.

The other metaphor that threads its way through the book is that of the weaving of a Turkish carpet, so that all the shifting developments that have occurred in the Turkic/Turkish space – most significantly the conversion to Islam, and the encounter with modernity (whether in its European or Soviet forms) which characterized the 19th and 20th century Turkish/Turkic experience – are seen as strands woven into the fabric of its history by those who have created them. One dynamic that stands out is the author’s contention that historically it has been possible, even (in conditions of diffuse power) inevitable for states to be formed on the steppes, but that they have not been able to last unless they took over an Empire (the Mongols became the Yuan Dynasty, the Ottoman conquest of Byzantium) and then became sedentary themselves; otherwise the centrifugal forces were bound to overwhelm the centripetal ones. Another is the change that came with gunpowder and industry: now the steppes themselves can be pinned down by the great empires.

There is plenty of dense academic analysis here, but it is Findley’s propensity for weaving metaphor in and out of the text that lifts the book into a higher class, where the provision of detailed information merges with the sympathetic human search for meaning in history and the quest to create a liberating space where once nomadic peoples can live in an age where there are no more open spaces to roam.

Joe King says

Very comprehensive but also very dry. Recommend Central Asia in World History by Peter B. Golden for those who want a lighter, less detailed read.

Ali Rehman says

The importance of Turk race and it's impact on different civilizations have been explored in this book
Transition to being a modern country have also been highlighted All in all a must read for those who are willing to explore this topic
