

inheritance by women as part of securing its own property interests. The Brahmins constituted a source of law and a potential counter-power to the rulers, though nowhere as unified in a coherent institution as the Church in Europe. The Ottoman sultan was similarly constrained by the idea of the shari'a and its upholder, the corpus of ulama. While the power of the Catholic Church in Europe is well attested, we may express some doubts about the other two cases. We should note that both the shari'a and Brahmin rules relate primarily to ritual and to private areas of law – family, property, and transactions – with little beyond nominal relevance to public affairs and the state. And neither clerical caste enjoyed anything like the corporate coherence and political power of the European Church, let alone its legal thrust.

Accountable government and the rule of law were best achieved in England, through the accumulation of contingent advantages consolidated after the Norman conquest. A strong king was challenged by a cohesive nobility and parliament, increasingly free cities, and a prosperous gentry, all aided by the tradition of common law and its embodiment in courts and corporations at local and regional levels, culminating in the confrontations of the seventeenth-century civil war between king and parliament, followed by the Glorious Revolution. France and Spain were not so lucky: a weak absolutism divided the nobility in competition over rent-seeking through venal office and purchase of state revenues, combined with frequent wars, making for unsustainable debts and intensified fiscal pressures. Russian rulers subordinated the aristocracy into hierarchical office holders, bribing them with a bonded peasantry. These variables of absolutisms versus nobility and bureaucracy guide the comparison into other European countries: Scandinavian (success) and Hungary (failure). Outside Europe, the Ottoman and Mamluke states of the Middle East, at the height of their power, relied on slave soldiers and bureaucrats, with no kinship loyalties in the native society, thus avoiding patrimonial and aristocratic challenges: the erosion of those institutions was one factor in their political decay.

Though the main themes are familiar in comparative histories, Fukuyama's book makes an original contribution in the scope of its comparisons and its systematic analyses, and in avoiding the simple contrast of the West and the Rest. As the title indicates, this historical tour de force only brings us to the French (and industrial) Revolution. A second volume is promised, which will take the comparative narrative into modern times.

## The Mongol conquests in world history

By Timothy May. London: Reaktion Books, 2012.  
Pp. 320. Hardback £25.00, ISBN 978-1-86189-867-8.

Reviewed by Rudi Paul Lindner  
University of Michigan, USA  
E-mail: rpl@umich.edu

doi:10.1017/S1740022813000405

Timothy May is the student of one of the most important synthesizers of Mongol history, David Morgan, and has already published a number of important studies in this field. His latest work will readily be adopted in undergraduate or graduate teaching. Morgan's book began with an introduction to nomadic ways and means, and then, after a description and analysis of Chinggis Khan's career, contained studies of the Mongol empire and the successor khanates, especially in China and Persia. May takes a different approach. He begins, as did Morgan, with a commentary on the sources and recent historiography, with special reference to materials available in English. The body of his book is divided into two parts: the first part, 'The Mongol conquests as catalyst', provides a narrative of the development and dissolution of the empire; the second, 'The Chinggis exchange', develops the larger picture and makes the case that the Mongols represent the beginnings of early modern and global history.

The first part contains an able chronicle and analysis of the rise and partition of the Mongol enterprise, with rather more material on the Golden Horde and the Chagatayid khanate than in Morgan's book. Central to the first part, in addition, is a chapter on 'The world of 1350: a global world', and it is here that May strikes out on his own. In this section he offers suggestions about the ways in which successor enterprises to the Mongols both preserved that influence and moved beyond it. He also discusses what he terms 'lingering Mongol influences' and the changes in the image of the Mongols and Chinggis Khan in the modern age.

The second part, on the 'Chinggis exchange', reflects May's view that the growing interest in world history not only among the public but also in academia has led to a well-founded suspicion that global history as we know it today grew out of the Mongol matrix. For example, in the earlier history of the steppe, pastoralists had ventured forth to sedentary trade centres to exchange goods. Under the Mongols and afterwards, traders encountered the nomads and new routes, tastes, and entrepôts

came into being. What we know of the history and development of Islamic textiles changed considerably; here May pays tribute to the path-breaking work of Thomas Allsen.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the development of Mongol tastes provoked desires for new products, goods, and services that lasted long after the demise of the enterprise. As May reminds us, Marco Polo's book served as a Fodor's guide for Columbus.

May has already published a monograph on Mongol warfare.<sup>2</sup> In this volume he discusses the contribution of Mongol practice to forms of warfare not only in the Renaissance era but also in later periods, across the entirety of the globe. He has a number of interesting remarks to offer on the spread of gunpowder weapons and their utility in the warfare on the borders of the steppe. He also discusses the ways in which modern scholars of strategy and tactics have adopted what they considered to be Mongol ways. At the very least, the Mongols have 'fuelled' the popular imagination in warfare'.

When William of Rubruck visited the Mongol court in the 1250s, he engaged in a discussion with representatives of other faiths, held before the Great Khan. Looking back on his failure to bring the Khan to what he considered reason, he opined that had he possessed the power to work miracles, he might have won the day. May analyses the Mongols' later conversion to Islam and Buddhism, suggesting in the end that, when the Mongols 'converted', they remained first and foremost Mongols who happened to profess one or the other religion.

In return for accepting religions, the Mongols exported the plague, and the book contains a nuanced discussion of the varying impacts and experiences of the different parts of the enterprise and the wider world. In any study of world history, the spread of disease must play a large part, and here May brings in a good bit of comparative material to help the reader appreciate both the differential effects and the variety of responses. This leads to a very important discussion of migration and demography. We are reminded that, while travelling scholars may have been among the least of the constituencies comprising the Mongol world, their dispersal led to the greatest impact in terms of the spread and transformation of ideas and perhaps the diffusion of material culture as well.

There is also a nice discussion of the effects of the movements of troops and families on Mongolia itself.

The final chapter is on cultural exchanges, and this is in some respects the most surprising one for first-time students of global history. May provides a sampling of the impacts and exchanges and points out vistas and landscapes for students to explore in the future. For example, he remarks on the possibility that Copernicus might have had access to some of the work from the Mongol observatory at Maragha; recent work from Robert Morrison appears to suggest that there is far more than a possibility here. We also have a discussion of the role of women and the impact on the far west of the Ottoman enterprise. The last illustration in May's discussion of exchange in the arts is of a Mongol in a fresco of Ambrogio Lorenzetti; and there is, while we are in Italy, a digression on the noodle and the dumpling. There is much food for thought here, the most intriguing and suggestive chapter of an excellent book.

This is a wonderful book for teaching and for new ideas; not the least of its virtues is May's dry humour, which pops up when least expected. While some of the content has appeared before in the work of other scholars, and this is inevitable in such an expanding field as this one, May's work moves away from Morgan's and brings us to the forefront of recent research and conjecture. For those who might seek a work of smaller compass, to be digested in a week or two, Morris Rossabi's brand new book on the Mongols for the Oxford 'Very short introduction' series might work well; but this is the book of choice for a course that explores the world that the Mongols helped to make.

### Religious internationals in the modern world: globalization and faith communities since 1750

*Edited by Abigail Green and Vincent Viaene.*  
*Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. Pp. xiv + 383.*  
*Hardback £65, ISBN 978-0-230-31950-9.*

Reviewed by Michael Laffan  
 Princeton University, USA  
 E-mail: mlaffan@princeton.edu

doi:10.1017/S1740022813000417

This remarkable volume shows very well the ways in which, from the middle of the eighteenth century, diverse manifestations of networked religion sowed the seeds of today's global civil society. With the sort of contemporaneous treatment on offer here, we see

1 Thomas Allsen, *Commodity and exchange in the Mongol empire: a cultural history of Islamic textiles*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

2 *The Mongol art of war*, Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2007.