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***THE EURASIAN STEPPE: PEOPLE, MOVEMENT, IDEAS***, By Ayse Dietrich\* Richard Dietrich\*\*, Published by Edinburgh University Press, Written by Warwick Ball, Year of Publishing: 2021. Subject Area: Central Asian history, Russian history. Book Type: Regional history. Total Number of Pages: 424. ISBN: 978-1474488068, hardback, \$24.95.

*The Eurasian Steppe* is one of the more recent works on the history of Central Asia and/or the Eurasian steppe that have appeared in recent years. The work consists of an introduction, thirteen chapters, notes, bibliography and index and generally presents a chronological narrative. This chronological account is interrupted by three chapters dedicated to topics that the author believed merited a detailed discussion: the origins, movements and language(s) of the Indo-Europeans (Chapter 3), the image of the female warrior/Amazon (Chapter 5), and steppe art (Chapter 6). While some of the information in the other chapters is not significantly different from what is found in other books, there are several qualities of this book that distinguish it from the other works and make it a valuable contribution to the field of Eurasian studies.

To begin with, the author is an archaeologist by training with extensive experience working and living in the Near East and surrounding regions. As a result, *The Eurasian Steppe* often provides clear, comprehensible archaeological perspectives on the people and states of the steppe, a perspective that is not always presented in as detailed a fashion in books written by historians without a background in archaeology. Having visited many of the sites described in the book, the author is also able to provide first-hand observations of these sites.

In the chronological accounts, the author dedicates longer discussions to certain topics that he clearly believes are important and have not been adequately discussed in other works. Examples of such discussions can be found in chapters 8, 9 and 10. Chapter 8 covers the early history of the Turkic peoples, a topic that has obviously been covered in all other works related to the history of the Eurasian steppe. However, what makes this work different is his examination of the term “Turk”, and the various peoples who have designated as “Turks”. His discussion clearly demonstrates how flexible this designation has been over the centuries. In chapter 9 he discusses the impact of the peoples of the Eurasian steppe on the history and culture of Europe in general, and Russia in

particular. Throughout, the author is able to demonstrate when, where and how various steppe peoples had a clear influence on the course of European history, particularly in the early medieval period. Finally, chapter 10 is dedicated to the Khazars, their empire, and their complex legacy, a topic that is generally not covered as completely as it is here. Chapter 12 discuss the establishment and effect of Mongol states in Europe, the first Mongol state in Russia, the Golden Horde, the defeat of the Mongols by the Russians at Kulikova Battle, establishment of other Tatar Khanates, invasion of the khanates by the Russians, the emergence of new steppe groups on the southern steppes in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the last major tribal movement into Europe, the Kalmyks; and the last Chapter 13 examines Russia's European credentials and Asiatic influences and Mongol legacy.

The book contains an extensive bibliography of books and articles related to the peoples, events and issues discussed in the text. While the works listed in the bibliography are numerous and cover diverse topics related to the history of the Eurasian steppe, there are two minor shortcomings to this bibliography. One is the scarcity of original sources, the ancient and medieval works on which our understanding of Eurasian history is based. The other is the almost complete lack of sources, ancient or modern, in languages other than English. As the author himself has so clearly shown in this work, the history of the Eurasian steppe is linked to the history of numerous peoples and states, and scholars from many countries have written works about it. Some of these works certainly deserve mention in any bibliography on the Eurasian steppe.

Overall, *The Eurasian Steppe: People, Movement, Ideas* is a well-written and well-researched work on a vast topic. The author's style is enjoyable and interesting, and the book is extensively illustrated. Its extended discussions on topics that have received less attention in other works in the field provide a unique and valuable contribution to our understanding of the history and impact of the Eurasian steppe. For anyone interested in the history of Eurasia, *The Eurasian Steppe: People, Movement, Ideas* is highly recommended.

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