

## By Steppe Desert And Ocean The Birth Of Eurasia

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Kazakhstan, officially the Republic of Kazakhstan, is a transcontinental country mainly located in Central Asia with a smaller portion west of the Ural River in Eastern Europe. It covers a land area of 2,724,900 square kilometres (1,052,100 sq mi), and shares land borders with Russia in the north, China in the east, and Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan in the south while also adjoining ...

The story of the peoples of Eurasia, from the birth of farming to the expansion of the Mongols in the thirteenth century. An immense historical panorama set on a huge continental stage, this is also the story of how humans first started building the global system we know today.

By Steppe, Desert, and Ocean is nothing less than the story of how humans first started building the globalized world we know today. Set on a huge continental stage, from Europe to China, it is a tale covering over 10,000 years, from the origins of farming around 9000 BC to the expansion of the Mongols in the thirteenth century AD. An unashamedly 'big history', it charts the development of European, Near Eastern, and Chinese civilizations and the growing links between them by way of the Indian Ocean, the silk Roads, and the great steppe corridor (which crucially allowed horse riders to travel from Mongolia to the Great Hungarian Plain within a year). Along the way, it is also the story of the rise and fall of empires, the development of maritime trade, and the shattering impact of predatory nomads on their urban neighbours. Above all, as this immense historical panorama unfolds, we begin to see in clearer focus those basic underlying factors - the acquisitive

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nature of humanity, the differing environments in which people live, and the dislocating effect of even slight climatic variation - which have driven change throughout the ages, and which help us better understand our world today.

For humans the sea is, and always has been, an alien environment. Ever moving and ever changing in mood, it is a place without time, in contrast to the land which is fixed and scarred by human activity giving it a visible history. While the land is familiar, even reassuring, the sea is unknown and threatening. By taking to the sea humans put themselves at its mercy. It has often been perceived to be an alien power teasing and cajoling. The sea may give but it takes. Why, then, did humans become seafarers? Part of the answer is that we are conditioned by our genetics to be acquisitive animals: we like to acquire rare materials and we are eager for esoteric knowledge, and society rewards us well for both. Looking out to sea most will be curious as to what is out there - a mysterious island perhaps but what lies beyond? Our innate inquisitiveness drives us to explore. Barry Cunliffe looks at the development of seafaring on the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, two contrasting seas — the Mediterranean without a significant tide, enclosed and soon to become familiar, the Atlantic with its frightening tidal ranges, an ocean without end. We begin with the Middle Palaeolithic hunter gatherers in the eastern Mediterranean building simple vessels to make their remarkable crossing to Crete and we end in the early years of the sixteenth century with sailors from Spain, Portugal and England establishing the limits of the ocean from Labrador to Patagonia. The message is that the contest between humans and the sea has been a driving force, perhaps the driving force, in human history.

In this highly illustrated book Barry Cunliffe focuses on the western rim of Europe--the Atlantic facade--an area stretching from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Isles of Shetland. We are shown how original and inventive the communities were, and how they maintained their own distinctive identities often over long spans of time. Covering the period from the Mesolithic hunter-gatherers, c. 8000 BC, to the voyages of discovery c. AD 1500, he uses this last half millennium more as a well-studied test case to help the reader better understand what went before. The beautiful illustrations show how this picturesque part of Europe has many striking physical similarities. Old hard rocks confront the ocean creating promontories and capes familiar to sailors throughout the millennia. Land's End, Finistere, Finisterra--until the end of the fifteenth century this was where the world ended in a turmoil of ocean beyond which there was nothing. To the people who lived in these remote places the sea was their means of communication and those occupying similar locations were their neighbours. The communities frequently developed distinctive characteristics intensifying aspects of their culture the more clearly to distinguish themselves from their in-land neighbours. But there is an added level of interest here in that the sea provided a vital link with neighbouring remote-place communities encouraging a commonality of interest and allegiances. Even today the Bretons see themselves as distinct from the French but refer to the Irish, Welsh, and Galicians as their brothers and cousins. Archaeological evidence from the prehistoric period amply demonstrates the bonds which developed and intensified between these isolated communities and helped to maintain a shared but distinctive Atlantic identity.

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Brilliant horsemen and great fighters, the Scythians were nomadic horsemen who ranged wide across the grasslands of the Asian steppe from the Altai mountains in the east to the Great Hungarian Plain in the first millennium BC. Their steppe homeland bordered on a number of sedentary states to the south - the Chinese, the Persians and the Greeks - and there were, inevitably, numerous interactions between the nomads and their neighbours. The Scythians fought the Persians on a number of occasions, in one battle killing their king and on another occasion driving the invading army of Darius the Great from the steppe. Relations with the Greeks around the shores of the Black Sea were rather different - both communities benefiting from trading with each other. This led to the development of a brilliant art style, often depicting scenes from Scythian mythology and everyday life. It is from the writings of Greeks like the historian Herodotus that we learn of Scythian life: their beliefs, their burial practices, their love of fighting, and their ambivalent attitudes to gender. It is a world that is also brilliantly illuminated by the rich material culture recovered from Scythian burials, from the graves of kings on the Pontic steppe, with their elaborate gold work and vividly coloured fabrics, to the frozen tombs of the Altai mountains, where all the organic material - wooden carvings, carpets, saddles and even tattooed human bodies - is amazingly well preserved. Barry Cunliffe here marshals this vast array of evidence - both archaeological and textual - in a masterful reconstruction of the lost world of the Scythians, allowing them to emerge in all their considerable vigour and splendour for the first time in over two millennia.

Impressive in every sense, this hugely ambitious and assured book takes as its subject the entire history of the British Isles from the end of the last Ice Age and their physical emergence as islands all the way down to the Norman Conquest. Barry Cunliffe's magisterial narrative is abetted by correspondingly high production values, and whilst complex ideas are explained with admirable clarity, making the book an ideal introduction to Britain's prehistory and early history, there would be plenty here for the most seasoned professional to enjoy and profit from. Cunliffe kicks off with an examination of the ways in which our ancestors have conceived the distant past, from medieval myths to the dawn of modern archaeology. The remainder of the book is roughly chronological in structure. Prominent themes include the 'problem of origins', where Cunliffe's own research has been of such significance (the Celtic from the west hypothesis is synthesised here with concision and flair), and the importance of communication, connectivity and cultural transmission is emphasised throughout, with the Channel, the Atlantic and the North Sea seen as highways linking Britain and Ireland to the continent and building up an ongoing narrative which is anything but narrowly insular.

Fierce warriors and skilled craftsmen, the Celts were famous throughout the Ancient Mediterranean World. They were the archetypal barbarians from the north and were feared by both Greeks and Romans. For two and a half thousand years they have continued to fascinate those who have come into contact with them, yet their origins have remained a mystery and even today are the subject of heated debate among historians and archaeologists. Barry Cunliffe's classic study of the ancient Celtic world was first published in 1997. Since then huge advances have taken place in our knowledge: new finds, new ways of using DNA records to understand Celtic origins, new ideas about the proto-urban nature of early chieftains'

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strongholds, All these developments are part of this fully updated , and completely redesigned edition. Cunliffe explores the archaeological reality of these bold warriors and skilled craftsmen of barbarian Europe who inspired fear in both the Greeks and the Romans. He investigates the texts of the classical writers and contrasts their view of the Celts with current archaeological findings. Tracing the emergence of chiefdoms and the fifth- to third-century migrations as far as Bosnia and the Czech Republic, he assesses the disparity between the traditional story and the most recent historical and archaeological evidence on the Celts. Other aspects of Celtic identity such as the cultural diversity of the tribes, their social and religious systems, art, language and law, are also examined. From the picture that emerges, we are — crucially — able to distinguish between the original Celts, and those tribes which were 'Celtized', giving us an invaluable insight into the true identity of this ancient people.

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The first complete history of Central Eurasia from ancient times to the present day, Empires of the Silk Road represents a fundamental rethinking of the origins, history, and significance of this major world region. Christopher Beckwith describes the rise and fall of the great Central Eurasian empires, including those of the Scythians, Attila the Hun, the Turks and Tibetans, and Genghis Khan and the Mongols. In addition, he explains why the heartland of Central Eurasia led the world economically, scientifically, and artistically for many centuries despite invasions by Persians, Greeks, Arabs, Chinese, and others. In retelling the story of the Old World from the perspective of Central Eurasia, Beckwith provides a new understanding of the internal and external dynamics of the Central Eurasian states and shows how their people repeatedly revolutionized Eurasian civilization. Beckwith recounts the Indo-Europeans' migration out of Central Eurasia, their mixture with local peoples, and the resulting development of the Graeco-Roman, Persian, Indian, and Chinese civilizations; he

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details the basis for the thriving economy of premodern Central Eurasia, the economy's disintegration following the region's partition by the Chinese and Russians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the damaging of Central Eurasian culture by Modernism; and he discusses the significance for world history of the partial reemergence of Central Eurasian nations after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Empires of the Silk Road places Central Eurasia within a world historical framework and demonstrates why the region is central to understanding the history of civilization.

How is it possible for six men to take a Liberian-flagged oil tanker hostage and negotiate a huge pay out for the return of its crew and 2.2 million barrels of crude oil? In his gripping new book, Jatin Dua answers this question by exploring the unprecedented upsurge in maritime piracy off the coast of Somalia in the twenty-first century. Taking the reader inside pirate communities in Somalia, onboard multinational container ships, and within insurance offices in London, Dua connects modern day pirates to longer histories of trade and disputes over protection. In our increasingly technological world, maritime piracy represents not only an interruption, but an attempt to insert oneself within the world of oceanic trade. Captured at Sea moves beyond the binaries of legal and illegal to illustrate how the seas continue to be key sites of global regulation, connectivity, and commerce today.

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