

Historic Novel Reveals the Little Known Role Women Played in the Mongol Empire's Transformation

History Through Fiction to Release *The Sky Worshipers* by F. M. Deemyad in Early 2021

By Rachel M. Anderson, Contributing Writer

(Potomac, MD) – Of all the world's great leaders, one of the most feared was Genghis Khan, who in the 13th century launched the Mongol invasions of Eurasia, bringing the magnificent civilizations of that era to their knees. While little attention is paid in America to the personality of Genghis Khan, the impact of the Mongol invasions on the people in China, Russia, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East who lived during the 13th century cannot be overstated.

In her epic novel, F.M. Deemyad brings to life the characters who lived through these tumultuous times. "I believe there are lessons in history that we cannot ignore," she says, adding, "Genghis Khan was one of the fascinating characters in the ancient world. Despite the fact that he lost his father at a young age and was left at the mercy of nature to fend for himself and his siblings, later on in life he was able to unite the Mongols and shape an empire that ultimately stretched from the Sea of Japan to the gates of Vienna.

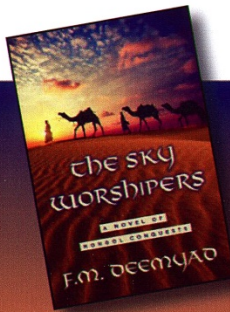
An examination of how a man with such a background became a world conqueror is the inspiration behind Deemyad's debut novel, *The Sky Worshipers*. History Through Fiction, a Minnesota-based independent press, founded in 2019 by author and historian Colin Mustful, will release the title on March 2, 2021.

History Through Fiction is dedicated to publishing high-quality fiction that is rooted in accurate and detailed historical research. Deemyad did five years of extensive research for the novel, which ultimately became part of her thesis for a Masters in Writing degree earned at Johns Hopkins University.

Each generation of Mongol rulers underwent transformations that Deemyad attributes to the women brought by force to the Mongol court, particularly those who came of age in palaces of conquered lands. In her novel, three princesses, following their dramatic abductions, marry three generations of Mongol rulers: Princess Chaka, daughter of a Chinese Emperor, Princess Reyhan the granddaughter of the last Seljuk King in Persia, and Princess Krisztina, niece to Henry the Pious, High Duke of Poland and Silesia. Each takes part in secretly chronicling the events of war and conquest in a manuscript that a century later is discovered by Lady Goharshad, wife to King Shahrokh, the ruler of Persia and Transoxiana. Touched by her predecessors' struggles, Lady Goharshad proves to be a woman of fierce determination and a champion of peace.

The tale begins in 1398 with Lady Goharshad showing her husband an old manuscript found buried among the ruins of Karakorum, which was the capital of the Mongol Empire between 1235 and 1260. The manuscript contains some words in Persian that the King is able to read. "*My name is Krisztina, but they call me Dounia which means 'the world,' and my story begins years before my birth with a princess by the name of Chaka in a land that is today called China.*"

Part I of the novel is dedicated to Chaka's story. Her father is Emperor Xiangzong, leader of the Tangut people in Northwest China. During the celebration in honor of the anniversary of her father's ascension to the throne, Chaka is kidnapped by Genghis Khan's men. Their intent is to force the Emperor into submission. The tables are turned, however, when Chaka's father offers his daughter's hand in marriage to the Mongol leader. Chaka



THE SKY WORSHIPERS F.M. DEEMYAD

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eventually begins to keep a manuscript in which she secretly chronicles the wars. She also humanizes the man who became one of the most feared rulers on the planet by revealing the warrior's vulnerabilities.

Part II of the book begins in the winter of 1220 when the stage is set for the Persian invasion. That part of the story is told by Persian Princess Reyhan, who like Chaka, is kidnapped and forced to marry Ogodei, Genghis Khan's son, and heir. Reyhan continues the tradition of recording the events as Mongol cavalymen subdue one nation after another. Reyhan admires the tolerance Mongol rulers show toward people of other faiths; however, she does point out that they do so out of convenience rather than a conviction for religious freedom. Being barren, she devotes her time to the education of Mongol children, among them Kublai and Hulagu, who respectively become rulers of China and Persia.

Part III of the story takes the reader to the court of Henry the Pious and his niece Krisztina who is taken as a prisoner of war by the Mongols. She is left with no choice but to marry Hulagu, the grandson of Genghis Khan. After Hulagu's death, Krisztina is finally able to return to Poland, a place she hardly recognizes because of the destruction that has taken place.

"I wanted my characters to be quite distinguishable from one another," Deemyad says, "Chaka is brilliant and defiant. Reyhan is more subdued and patient. Krisztina is vivacious and daring. Lady Goharshad is probably the one who possesses a combination of those characteristics and is, therefore, able to take action and conquer the minds and hearts of the people the Mongols had subjugated, healing the wounds of war."

Early reviews of the novel have been very favorable. John DeDakis, a novelist, writing coach, and former senior copy editor for CNN's *The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer*, said, "F.M. Deemyad immerses the reader into the 13th Century world of Genghis Khan. It's an unforgettable story of survival and strong women as we experience life through the eyes of the conquered – and the conquerors. In *The Sky Worshipers*, history comes vividly alive."

"The author's in-depth research is evident throughout *The Sky Worshipers*. For readers who enjoy a lush blend of historical fact and fiction, this novel details the smells, sights, sounds of a pivotal era in time, uniquely told through the eyes of three captive princesses," said Gina Wilkinson, author of *When the Apricots Bloom*.

Copies of *The Sky Worshipers* will be available for pre-order from HistoryThroughFiction.com in early 2021. Books will eventually be sold through Bookshop.org, Amazon, Barnes and Noble, as well as many additional retailers where books are sold.

About the Author

F.M. Deemyad was born in Kermanshah, Iran. She grew up in the capital, Tehran, attending bilingual schools run by Christian and Jewish minorities. Her father, born and raised in India, had come to Iran when he was in his late twenties. Being the son of a linguist who had taught English Literature in India for a number of years, he exposed the author in her preschool years to the English language, and she learned to love classic literature under her father's instructions. She received her Master's degree in Writing from Johns Hopkins University in 2016. She currently resides with her husband in Maryland.



*EDITOR'S NOTE: This feature article and the accompanying photography are available for your use copyright free and cost-free. If you prefer to arrange your own interview with F.M. Deemyad, contact Rachel M. Anderson, Publicist, at 952-240-2513 or rachel@rmapublicity.com to arrange an interview. Review copies of *The Sky Worshipers* are available upon request.*

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