Chapter 17

Nomadic Empires and Eurasian Integration
Economy and Society of Nomadic Pastoralism

- Rainfall in central Asia too little to support large-scale agriculture
- Animal herding
  - Food; clothing; shelter (*yurts*)
- Migratory patterns to follow pastureland
- Small-scale cultivation
- Limited amounts of pottery, leather goods, weapons and tools
Nomadic and Settled Peoples

- Trade links between nomadic and settled peoples
- Nomads engage in long-distance travel
  - Caravan routes
Nomadic Society

- Governance basically clan-based
- Charismatic individuals became elite leaders, occasionally asserted authority
- Unusually fluid status for elites
  - Hereditary, but could be lost through incompetence
  - Advancement for meritorious commoners
Gender Relations

- Women wielded considerable influence
  - Advisors
  - Occasionally regents or rulers
  - Genghis Khan’s daughters helped cement alliances with leaders of neighboring groups (such as the Uighurs) through marriage and diplomacy
Nomadic Religion

- Shamans are focus of pagan worship
- Appeal of Buddhism, Nestorian Christianity, Islam, Manichaeism from sixth century C.E.
- Turkish script developed, partially to record religious teachings
- Conversion to Islam in tenth century due to Abbasid influence
Military Organization

- Large confederations under a khan
- Authority extended through tribal elders
- Exceptionally strong cavalries
  - Mobility
  - Speed
Turkish Empires and Their Neighbors, ca. 1210 C.E.
Seljuq Turks and the Abbasid Empire

- Eighth to tenth centuries, Turkish peoples on border of Abbasid empire
  - Service in Abbasid armies
- Eventually came to dominate Abbasid caliphs
- Tughril Beg recognized as sultan, 1055
  - Consolidated hold on Baghdad, then extended rule to other parts of empire
- Abbasid caliphs served as figureheads of authority
Seljuq Turks and the Byzantine Empire

- Defeat of Byzantine army by Seljuq Turks at Manzikert, 1071
  - Emperor taken captive
- Large-scale invasion of Anatolia
- Many conversions to Islam
- Constantinople conquered by Ottoman Turks, 1453
Ghaznavid Turks and the Sultanate of Delhi

- Invasion of northern India by Mahmud of Ghazni, Turkish Ghaznavids of Afghanistan
- At first for plunder, later to rule
- Northern India completely dominated by thirteenth century
- Persecution of Buddhists, Hindus
Chinggis Khan (1167–1227) and the Making of the Mongol Empire

- Temüjin, b. 1167
  - Father prominent warrior, poisoned ca. 1177, Temüjin forced into poverty
  - Mastered steppe diplomacy, elimination of enemies
  - Brought all Mongol tribes into one confederation
  - Proclaimed Chinggis Khan (“universal ruler”), 1206
Mongol Political Organization

- Broke up tribal organization
- Formed military units from men of different tribes
- Promoted officials on basis of merit and loyalty
- Established capital at Karakorum
Mongol Arms

- Mongol population only one million (less than 1% of Chinese population)
  - Army numbered 100,000–125,000

- Strengths:
  - Cavalry
  - Short bows
  - Rewarded enemies who surrendered, cruel to enemies who fought
Mongol Conquests

- Conquest of northern China by 1220
- Conquest of Afghanistan, Persia
  - Mongol envoys to Kwarazm shah murdered
  - Following year, Chinggis Khan pursued shah to his death
  - Ravaged lands to prevent future rebellions
    - Large-scale, long-term devastation
    - Destruction of qanat irrigation system
The Mongol Empires, ca. 1300 C.E.
Khubilai Khan (r. 1264–1294)

- Grandson of Chinggis Khan
- Rule of China
- Ruthless warrior, but religiously tolerant
- Established Yuan dynasty (to 1368)
- Unsuccessful forays into Vietnam, Cambodia, Burma, Java
- Two attempted invasions of Japan (1274, 1281) turned back by typhoons (*kamikaze*: “divine winds”)
The Golden Horde

- Their name purportedly comes from the golden color of their tents.
- Group known for Conquest of Russia, 1237–1241:
  - Established tributary relationship to fifteenth century.
  - Ruled over Crimea to late eighteenth century.
- Raids into Poland, Hungary, Germany.
The Ilkhanate of Persia

- Abbasid empire toppled by Hülegü (Khubilai’s brother)
- Baghdad sacked, 1258
  - 200,000 massacred
- Expansion into Syria checked by Egyptian forces
Mongol Rule in Persia

- Nomadic conquerors had to learn to rule sedentary societies
  - Inexperienced, lost control of most lands within a century
- Persia: dependence on existing administration to deliver tax revenues
  - Left matters of governance to bureaucracy
- Eventually assimilated into Islamic lifestyle
Mongol Rule in China

- Strove to maintain strict separation from Chinese
  - Intermarriage forbidden
  - Chinese forbidden to study the Mongol language
- Imported administrators from other areas (especially Arabs, Persians)
- Yet tolerated religious freedoms
The Mongols and Buddhism

- Shamanism remained popular
- Lamaist school of Buddhism (Tibet) gained strength among Mongols
  - Large element of magic, similar to shamanism
  - Ingratiating attitude to Mongols: khans as incarnations of Buddha
The Mongols and Eurasian Integration

- Experience with long-distance trade
  - Protection of traveling merchants
  - Increased volume of trade across central Asia
- Diplomatic missions protected
- Missionary activity increased
- Mongol resettlement policies
Decline of the Mongols in Persia

- Overspending, poor tax returns from overburdened peasantry
- Ilkhan attempted to replace precious metal currency with paper in 1290s
  - Failure, forced to rescind
- Factional fighting
- Lastilkhan died without heir in 1335; Mongol rule collapsed
Decline of the Yuan Dynasty

- Mongols spent bullion that supported paper currency
  - Public lost confidence in paper money
  - Sharp rise in prices
- From 1320s, major power struggles
- Spread of bubonic plague, 1330s–1340s
- 1368, Mongols fled from peasant rebellion
Surviving Mongol Khanates

- Khanate of Chaghatai in central Asia
  - Continued threat to China
- Golden Horde in Caucasus and steppes to mid-sixteenth century
  - Continued threat to Russia
Tamerlane (ca. 1336–1405) and the Timurids

- Turkic-Mongol conqueror Timur
  - Timur the Lame: Tamerlane
- Eliminated rivals to power
- Major military campaigns
  - Built capital in Samarkand
Tamerlane’s Empire, ca. 1405 C.E.
Tamerlane’s Heirs

- Poor organization of governing structure
- Power struggles divided Timurid empire into four regions
- Yet heavily influenced several empires:
  - Mughal
  - Safavid
  - Ottoman
The Foundation of the Ottoman Empire

- Osman, charismatic leader who dominated part of Anatolia
- Declared independence from Saljuq sultan, 1299
- Attacked Byzantine empire
  - Followers known as Osmanlis or Ottomans
Ottoman Conquests

- Conquests in the Balkans, 1350s
  - Local support for Ottoman invasion
  - Peasants unhappy with fragmented, ineffective Byzantine rule
- Tamerlane defeated Ottoman forces in 1402, but Ottomans recovered by 1440s
The Capture of Constantinople, 1453

- Sultan Mehmed II
  - Sacked city
  - Renamed Istanbul, capital of Ottoman empire
- Ottomans quickly absorbed remainder of Byzantine empire
- Continued to expand