

CHAPTER XII OUTLINE

I. Opening Vignette

A. Legacy of Chinggis Khan in Mongolia

1. His spirit banner was destroyed by Communists in 1937
2. Late twentieth-century revival of Chinggis Khan's memory
3. 2006 was 800th anniversary of foundation of Mongol Empire

B. The story of the Mongols is an important corrective to historians' focus on agriculturalists.

II. Looking Back and Looking Around: The Long History of Pastoral Nomads

A. Economies focused on livestock production emerged around 4000 B.C.E.

1. Dependent on horses, camels, goats, sheep, cattle, yaks, reindeer
2. Pastoral societies developed in:
 - a. grasslands of Eurasia and sub-Saharan Africa
 - b. Arabian and Saharan deserts
 - c. subarctic regions, Tibetan plateau
 - d. not in Americas: lack of large animals for domesticating

B. The World of Pastoral Societies

1. Standard features of pastoral societies:
 - a. generally less productive than agricultural societies
 - b. needed large grazing areas
 - c. populations much smaller than in agricultural societies
 - d. lived in encampments of related kinfolk, usually common ancestry in male line
 - e. clans sometimes gathered as a tribe; could absorb unrelated people
 - f. more egalitarian than sedentary societies, but sometimes distinguished between nobles and commoners
 - g. women usually had higher status than in sedentary societies
 - h. mobility—nomads
2. Pastoralists had deep connections to agricultural neighbors
 - a. sought access to foodstuffs, manufactured goods, luxury items
 - b. inner Eurasia, longing for civilized products encouraged formation of nomadic states
3. Formation of nomadic states was difficult
 - a. leaders like Chinggis Khan could make tribal alliances that became powerful states
 - b. when formed, almost the whole male population (and some women) became warriors
4. Cultural interaction with agricultural lands
 - a. inner Eurasian nomads adopted Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Manichaeism at various times
5. mastered environments unsuitable for agriculture
 - a. brought food-producing revolution and significant human presence to fringe regions
 - b. life changed for Inner Asian steppe peoples' intro of horseback riding ca. 1000 B.C.E.

C. The Xiongnu: An Early Nomadic Empire

1. Mounted warfare made nomadic empires possible
2. The Xiongnu (in Mongolian steppes north of China) formed an important early confederacy (from Manchuria to central Asia) in third to second centuries B.C.E.
3. Ruler Modun (r. 210–174 B.C.E.) revolutionized nomadic life
 - a. created a more centralized, hierarchical political system
 - b. divinely sanctioned ruler
 - c. distinction between “junior” and “senior” clans became more important
 - d. exacted tribute from other nomads and from China
4. Xiongnu Empire was a model copied by Turkic and Mongol empires

D. The Arabs and the Turks

1. Nomads made their greatest impact on world history between 500 and 1500 C.E.
 - a. Arabs, Berbers, Turks, and Mongols created largest empires of that millennium
 - b. Islam derived from largely nomadic Arabs, carried by Turks
 - c. Byzantium, Persia, India, and China were all controlled at least for a time by formerly nomadic people
2. Bedouin Arabs became effective fighters with development of a good camel saddle (sometime between 500 and 100 B.C.E.)
 - a. made control of trade routes through Arabia possible
 - b. camel nomads were shock troops of Islamic expansion
3. Turkic-speaking nomads (homeland in Mongolia and southern Siberia)
 - a. gradual southward/westward spread
 - b. series of short-lived nomadic empires 552–965 C.E.
 - c. spread of Turkic language and culture over much of Inner Asia and beyond
 - d. Turkish conversion to Islam between tenth and fourteenth centuries
 - e. Seljuk Empire (eleventh to twelfth centuries): Turks began to claim the Muslim title *sultan*; exercised real power
 - f. carried Islam to India and Anatolia

E. The Masai of East Africa

1. Best information on nomad/agrarian relations in Africa comes from after 1500
2. No large states or chiefdoms, pastoral or ag. developed in what is now Kenya and Tanzania
3. Masai were nomadic cattle-keepers
4. Masai had been partly agricultural before eighteenth to nineteenth centuries
5. Masai interaction with settled peoples
 - a. Masai would admit outsiders into their society
 - b. depended on hunters and farmers
 - c. during times of drought or disease, Masai might take refuge with hunters or farmers
 - d. farmers adopted elements of Masai culture and military

III. Breakout: The Mongol Empire

A. the Mongols formed the greatest land-based empire in history following their breakout from Mongolia in the thirteenth century.

1. Extensive linkage of nomads of inner Eurasian steppes with agricultural civilizations
2. Created far greater contact between Europe, China, and Islamic world than ever before
3. Total Mongol population was only about 700,000

4. Did not have a major cultural impact on the world
 - a. did not try to spread their ancestor worship/shamanism to others
 - b. mostly interested in exploiting conquered peoples
 - c. Mongol culture today largely confined to Mongolia
 - d. Mongol Empire was the last great nomadic state

B. From Temujin to Chinggis Khan: The Rise of the Mongol Empire

1. Temujin (1162–1227) created the Mongol Empire
2. Mongols before Temujin were unstable collection of feuding tribes and clans
3. Temujin's rise
 - a. father was a minor chieftain, but was murdered before Temujin turned ten
 - b. Temujin's mother held family together after they were deserted by the clan
 - c. Temujin grew up, he drew a small following of friends, allied with more powerful tribal leader
 - d. shifting series of alliances, betrayals, military victories
 - e. won a reputation as a great leader
4. 1206: Mongol tribal assembly recognized Temujin as Chinggis Khan ("universal ruler")
5. Chinggis Khan then began expansion to hold his followers together
 - a. major attack on China in 1209 started 50-year Mongol world war
 - b. Chinggis Khan, Ogodei, Mongke, and Khubilai created an empire that included China, Korea, Central Asia, Russia, much of Middle East, and parts of Eastern Europe
 - c. setbacks marked outer limits of Mongol Empire

C. Explaining the Mongol Moment

1. Mongol Empire grew without any grand scheme
2. By the time of his death, Chinggis Khan saw conquests as a mission to unite the whole world
3. Mongols were vastly outnumbered by their enemies
4. Mongol success was due to their well-led, organized, disciplined army
 - a. military units of 10, 100, 1,000, and 10,000 warriors
 - b. conquered tribes were broken up and scattered among units
 - c. tribalism was also weakened by creation of imperial guard
 - d. all members of a unit were killed if any deserted in battle
 - e. leaders shared the hardships of their men
 - f. elaborate tactics: encirclement, retreat, deception
 - g. vast numbers of conquered peoples were incorporated into army
5. Mongol reputation for brutality and destructiveness
 - a. those who resisted were destroyed
 - b. kingdom of Khwarizm murdered Mongol envoys
6. Ability to mobilize resources
 - a. elaborate census taking and systematic taxation
 - b. good system of relay stations for communication and trade
 - c. centralized bureaucracy began
 - d. encouraged commerce
 - e. gave lower administrative posts to Chinese and Muslim officials
 - f. practiced religious toleration

IV. Encountering the Mongols: Comparing Three Cases

A. China and the Mongols

1. Mongol conquest of China was difficult, took from 1209 to 1279
2. Began in northern China (ruled by dynasties of nomadic origin), was vastly destructive
3. Conquest of southern China (ruled by Song dynasty) was far less violent
 - a. more interest in accommodation of local populace
 - b. landowners were guaranteed their estates in return for support
4. Mongols unified a divided China, made many believe that the Mongols had been granted the Mandate of Heaven
5. Mongols didn't know how to govern an agricultural society, used many Chinese practices
 - a. gave themselves a Chinese dynastic title, the Yuan ("great beginnings")
 - b. built a new capital—Khanbalik ("city of the khan"; now Beijing)
6. Kubilai Khan (r. 1271–1294) had a set of ancestral tablets made
7. Still, Mongol rule was harsh, exploitative, and foreign
 - a. Mongols did not become Chinese
 - b. "Forbidden City" in the capital was set up like the steppes
 - c. relied heavily on foreigners for admin., rather than the traditional admin. system
 - d. few Mongols learned Chinese
 - e. Mongol law discriminated against the Chinese
 - f. Mongol women were shockingly free by Chinese standards
8. By 1368, rebellions had forced the Mongols out of China

B. Persia and the Mongols

1. Conquest of Persia: first invasion led by Chinggis Khan 1219–1221; second assault under his grandson Hulegu 1251–1258
2. Massive impact of invasion
 - a. very destructive
 - b. shook faith: how could Muslims be savaged so badly by infidels?
 - c. sacking of Baghdad in 1258 ended the Abbasid caliphate
 - d. profound damage to Persian/Iraqi agriculture
 - e. increase in wine and silk production
3. Mongols were transformed far more in Persia than in China
 - a. extensive use of Persian bureaucracy
 - b. Ghazan (r. 1295–1304) tried to repair some of their earlier damage
 - c. Mongols in Persia converted to Islam on a large scale
 - d. Mongol elites learned some Persian
 - e. some Mongols took up agriculture
4. Mongol dynasty collapsed in 1330s

C. Russia and the Mongols

1. Mongol devastation of Russia 1237–1240
 - a. Russia was a number of independent principalities
 - b. could not unite against Mongol threat
 - c. destruction of cities, widespread slaughter, and deportation of skilled workers
2. Russia was integrated into Mongol Empire as the Kipchak Khanate (Russians called it the "Khanate of the Golden Horde")
 - a. but Mongols did not occupy Russia
 - i. remained on steppes north of Black and Caspian seas
 - ii. collected tribute and heavy taxes; also raided for slaves

3. Some Russian princes and the Russian Orthodox Church flourished
4. Moscow became primary tribute-collector for the Mongols
5. Mongol rulers of Russia were far less assimilated or influenced
6. Russian princes adopted Mongol weapons, diplomatic rituals, court practices, tax system, and draft
 - a. Moscow became the core of a new Russian state
 - b. used the Mongol mounted courier service
7. Russians broke free of Mongol rule by the end of the fifteenth century

V. The Mongol Empire as a Eurasian Network

A. Toward a World Economy

1. Mongols produced little for distant markets; were not active traders
2. But they promoted international commerce as source of tax revenue
3. Made it relatively safe to travel across Central Asia
4. Mongol trading circuit was central to larger Afro-Eurasian commercial network

B. Diplomacy on a Eurasian Scale

1. Mongol encroachment into Eastern Europe led both the pope and European rulers to dispatch diplomatic missions to the Mongols
 - a. had no diplomatic or religious consequences
 - b. but brought back valuable information about the East
2. Persian and Chinese courts developed close relationships

C. Cultural Exchange in the Mongol Realm

1. Thousands of craftsmen and educated people were forcibly relocated by the Mongols
2. Mongol religious tolerance and support of merchants drew foreigners
3. The Mongol capital of Karakorum was a cosmopolitan center
4. Lively exchange of ideas and techniques
 - a. westward flow of Chinese technology and art (painting, printing, gunpowder weapons, compass navigation, high-temperature furnaces, medical techniques, etc.)
 - b. Muslim astronomy spread to China
 - c. circulation of plants and crops
 - d. Europe benefited particularly from new contact with Asia

D. The Plague: A Eurasian Pandemic

1. The plague (a.k.a. pestilence, Black Death) spread across trade routes of the Mongol Empire in early fourteenth century
 - a. probably originated in Central Asia
 - b. carried by rodents and transmitted by fleas
2. The plague broke out in northeastern China in 1331
 - a. reached Western Europe by 1347
 - b. Mongol siege of Caffa (Crimea) in 1346: catapulted plague-infected corpses into city
 - c. massive death toll
 - d. periodic returns of the plague for centuries
3. India and sub-Saharan Africa were much less affected
4. Best information about the plague's impact comes from Europe
 - a. the plague was described in apocalyptic terms
 - b. Jews blamed for the plague; many fled to Poland
 - c. longer-term changes in European society

5. The plague was primary reason for breakdown of the Mongol Empire 14th to 15th centuries
 - a. with population contraction, volume of trade was reduced
 - b. by 1350, the Mongol Empire was in disarray
 - c. within a century, Mongols had lost control of China, Persia, and Russia
 - d. the Central Asian trade route largely closed
6. Disruption of land routes to the east encouraged Europeans to seek trade routes by sea
 - a. European naval technology gave them an advantage
 - b. similarity of sixteenth-century Europeans to Mongols: people on the periphery who were economically less developed and forcibly plundered wealthier civilizations

VI. Reflections: Changing Images of Nomadic Peoples

A. Nomads have often received “bad press” in history books.

1. Only mentioned in regard to their destruction of established civilizations
2. Educated, sedentary peoples have feared and usually despised nomads
3. Nomads were usually illiterate, so we don't have their perspective
4. Agricultural societies eventually won out

B. There have been recent efforts to present a more balanced view.

1. Emphasize what nomads achieved as well as what they destroyed
2. The total wars and genocides of the twentieth century have made people less judgmental toward the Mongols
3. Historians are shaped by their times