Ch 14 - The Last Great Nomadic Challenges:
From Chinggis Khan to Tamerlane
1206 - mid 14th century
Chronology of the Mongol Empire

• 1206-1227 Reign of Chinggis Khan
• 1211-1234 Conquest of northern China
• 1219-1221 Conquest of Persia
• 1237-1241 Conquest of Russia
• 1258 Capture of Baghdad
• 1264-1279 Conquest of southern China
Who were the Mongols?

- From the steppes of eastern central Asia
- Nomadic peoples
- United under the leadership of Temujin a.k.a Chinggis Khan
- “Courage Cultures”
The Mongols and Eurasian Empire

- Built the **largest empire in history** stretching from Poland to China

- 13.8 million square miles

- 100 million people

Chinggis/Genghis Khan
The Mongol Empire at its height
From Temujin to “Universal Ruler”

- Born 1167
- Orphaned at 10
- “Mastered the art of steppe diplomacy”
- United Mongol tribes into a single confederation
- 1206 made Chinggis Khan
The Mongol Art of War

• Great horsemen and archers
• Large, quickly moving armies
• “cutting edge weapons”
• Masters at psychological warfare:
  “By putting cities to the sword, they let terror run ahead of them”
  John Fairbank

A “ger”
Strong Equestrians and Archers

- The Mongols were oriented around extreme mobility.
- They carried their houses with them, drank their own horse's blood to stay alive, and could travel up to 62 miles per day.
- They had an elaborate priority-mail-system which allowed orders to be transmitted rapidly across Eurasia.
- Mongol archers were very deadly and accurate
  - Their arrows could kill enemies at 656 feet
Battle Formations

- One type of battle formation was consisted of five squadrons spread wide apart
  - The two spearhead ranks wore the heaviest armor as well as the heaviest weaponry.
  - When an attack began, the three rear ranks broke through the openings between the lines of the front ranks, and harassed the opposing army with continuous hails of arrows.
  - When this had worked its effects for some time, the rear ranks would withdraw in order to be able to encircle the opponent's forces in the event of an attempt of escape.
  - Simultaneously, the front ranks would charge and deliver a decisive blow, and now they would finally engage in close combat
**WOMEN'S TASKS**

Women's primary duty was to milk thousands of sheep and goats. Mongol women also played an active role in battle, tending to the wounded and attending to the needs of their men.

**PORTABLE GERS**

While most of the Mongols camped in the tents called gers, portable gers were taken apart for transport. The khan’s ger and those of his khanu and generals were festooned on wagons and the horses drew them.

**GREASING THE WHEELS**

In rough terrain, wagon wheels were constantly lubricated with animal fat.

**TOTAL ENCOMPASS**

In the nomad encampment, the khan’s haimkar was held in particular esteem.
Battle Formations

• Encirclement strategies, often on a very large scale, the Mongols would prioritize mobility and swiftness
  – They simply wanted to harass the opponent with feints, showers of arrows and javelins until the opposing army was "ripe."
  – When the opposing forces were outflanked, sufficiently angered, exhausted and disorganized, the charge began.
Mongol War Equipment

• The warrior carried a protective shield made of light leather armor
  – which was impregnated with a lacquer-like substance in order to make it more impervious to penetration by arrows, swords and knives, and also to protect it against humid weather

• The Mongol warrior used to wear Chinese silk underwear, if it could be obtained, because it was a very tough substance
  – If arrows are shot from a long distance, it would not penetrate the silk
  – It would also prevent poison from entering the bloodstream

• The legs were often protected by overlapping iron plates resembling fish scales, which were sewn into the boots.

• Each warrior carried a battle axe, a curved sword known as scimitar; a lance, and two versions of their most famous weapon: the Mongol recurved bow.
  – One of the bows was light and could be fired rapidly from horseback, the other one was heavier and designed for long-range use from a ground position
Psychological Warfare

- Genghis Khan used combined fake retreats with accurate Manguadai Horse Archers to pick off his European enemies.
- Genghis Khan slaughtered a few cities, in an attempt to scare all other cities to surrender without a fight.
- He, being a practical leader, also valued smarts more than bravery.
- If enemies surrendered without resistance, the Mongols usually spared their lives, and they provided generous treatment for artisans, craft workers, and those with military skills.
- In the event of resistance, the Mongols ruthlessly slaughtered whole populations, sparing only a few, whom they sometimes drove their armies as human shields during future conflicts.
The Mongols were “terrible to look at and indescribable, with large heads like buffaloes, narrow eyes like a fledgling’s, a snub nose like a cat’s, projecting snouts like a dog’s, narrow loins like an ant’s, short legs like a hog’s, and by nature with no beards at all…”

An Armenian observer
How did Japan resist Mongol invasion?

- The Mongols attempted to invade Japan twice (1274 and 1281)
- Twice they were repelled by typhoons
- “Kamikaze” or “divine wind”
Inspiration for WWII “kamikaze”
And according to one Chinese observer:

“They smell so heavily that one cannot approach them. They wash themselves in urine…”
Shortly after Chinggis Khan’s death, his empire split into 4 Khanates.
China: The Yuan Dynasty
1279-1368

- Most famous ruler: Khubilai Khan
- Government administered by Mongols and non-Chinese advisors
- Allowed religious freedom but dismantled Confucian exam system

Khubilai Khan
Painting by Liu Guandao of Khubilai Khan on a hunting expedition, 1280
Shortly after Chinggis Khan’s death, his empire split into 4 Khanates.
“Pax Mongolia?”

• Pax = Peace in Latin

• Under the Mongols, there was unprecedented long-distance trade

• Mongols encouraged the exchange of people, technology, & information across their empire

• Weatherford: the Mongols were “civilization’s unrivaled cultural carriers…”

Marco Polo en route to China
• **Kublai Khan**, leader of the Mongolian Borjigin clan
  - Genghis Khan's grandson
  - first official Mongol emperor of China
  - extended Mongol rule beyond China’s borders to Korea
  - **1266 CE** - he ordered the construction of his new capital in what is now the city of Beijing
Yuan (Mongol) Dynasty

1294

Yuan Dynasty
Kublai Khan renamed the Mongol Dynasty in China to the **Yuan — “Origin of Universe”**
Yuan (Mongol) Dynasty

- Marco Polo visited the court of Kublai Khan
  - his writings sparked European interest in China
Yuan (Mongol) Dynasty

- a period of economic growth and increased trade with the West
- declined after Kublai Khan’s death
- the Chinese resented Mongol rule, and there were frequent uprisings
Queen (First Wife) of Khublai Khan

Taizong (Ogadei Khan)
One of Ghengis’ sons who helped conquer China and rule the vast Mongol empire
How did Kublai Khan Rule China?
Used Chinese Government

- **Abolished** Civil Service Exam

- **Separate rules** for Mongols and Chinese

- Used some Chinese in **low** government positions
4 Categories in China:

– Mongols
– Miscellaneous Aliens – Muslims
– N. Chinese (Han)
– S. Chinese (Song) – least trustworthy
How did Kublai Khan Rule China?

- Supported Agriculture – Created an Office for Stimulation of Agriculture.
- Prohibited nomad’s animals from grazing on farmland.
- Filled grain storage in case of famine
How did Kublai Khan Rule China?

- Organized farmers into She – 50 families
- Fixed tax system – one payment a year to central government
- Used forced labor for public works (Grand Canal)
How did Kublai Khan Rule China?

- Welcomed foreigners (Marco Polo)
- Used merchants to gather intelligence
- Paper currency
- Artisans got grants of food – did not have to do labor
How did Kublai Khan Rule China?

• Improved communication system.
• Did not become assimilated to Chinese
How did Kublai Khan Rule China?

- 2 capitals:
  - Upper Capital
  - Central Capital – set aside huge amount of land to keep nomadic ways and hunting
"The Mongols made no technological breakthroughs, founded no new religions, and wrote few books or dramas."

Why is this historically significant?
The Mongol Empire at its height
Impact of the Mongols

• “The Mongols created a single economic, cultural, and epidemiological world system”
  “for several centuries, Inner Eurasia was a pivot for world history”
– Mongol Exchange
– New methods of warfare
– Trade from Venice to Beijing and beyond
– Demographic change via the plague and major population shifts
– Altered the political histories of Russia, China, Europe
– Unparalleled cultural diffusion
High Point of Kublai Khan

- Intellectual – saw wisdom of taxing rather than killing
- Scholars
- Justice
- tolerant of religions
- Encouraged diplomats and traders (Marco Polo)
Mongol Script & Currency
Decline of Kublai Khan

• 2 unsuccessful attacks on Japan b/c of Typhoons
• Unsuccessful attack on SE Asia
• Over taxed peasants to pay for the attacks
• Inflation
• More forced labor on Grand Canal
Decline of Kublai Khan

- Became distrustful of merchants
- Persecuted Muslims
- Kublai Khan died – problems over successors
- Rise of local landlords
- Buddhist monk led revolt and founded Ming Dynasty - 1368
The Mongol Legacy & an Aftershock:

The Brief Ride of Timur

- born in 1336
- the son of a Turk commander
- a fiery, charismatic, brutal Mongol ruler who attempted to reclaim Genghis Khan’s empire in the fourteenth century.
As a young man, he injured himself in a sheep-raiding accident, and "as unable to bend his right knee or raise his right arm ever again.

This earned him the nickname Timur the Lame, which became Tamerlane.

Tamerlane claimed he was Genghis's descendant, but there is no evidence to support this, although apparently two of his four wives were related to Genghis.
MONGOLIA
(XV CENTURY)

Colour Code:
Mongol Tumens:
Left Wings:
1. Khalkha (Northern and Southern Khalkhas and Buryats)
2. Chakhar
3. Uriankhai
Right Wings:
4. Kharchin and Khorchin
5. Ordos and Tumet
6. Yunsiyebu
Relict States of the Mongol Empire
Foreign states
In 1361, Tamerlane became chieftain of the Timurid tribe.

With Amir Husayn, his brother-in-law, Tamerlane began defending the Timurids and within a decade he defeated his enemies and later Husayn's army itself.

Tamerlane named himself sole ruler of Transoxiana in 1369.

Mongol power in Transoxiana had been significantly reduced from the days of Genghis Kan, as various factions sought to assert leadership.
The Brief Ride of Timur

- After seizing power in Central Asia, Tamerlane assaulted western Iran and eastern Anatolia for the next three decades, leading armies of upwards of 300,000.
- He began attacking Persia in the 1380s, burying 2,000 Persians alive during a raid in Isfizar, an assault he would later blame on his associates.
Tamerlane heading to attack India
The Brief Ride of Timur

- In 1398-1399, Tamerlane attacked India swiftly conquered Delhi after 100,000 captives slaughtered.
- In battle on the banks of the Indus River against an army on elephants, his soldiers placed straw on their camels' backs, then set the straw on fire.
- The camels ran in alarm, and the elephants retreated, trampling many Indian soldiers in the process.
The Brief Ride of Timur

- Tamerlane turned west and conquered Damascus in 1400-1401, moving toward an assault on the Byzantine Empire.
- In 1402, Turkish Anatolia fell to Tamerlane.
- He forced many of the Anatolian soldiers to join his army, ultimately capturing the Anatolian leader Beyezid, who died after eight months of torture.
The Brief Ride of Timur

• He became sick after excessive eating and drinking at a celebration before the incursion; after three days of heavy drinking, he died from a fever on February 18, 1405.

• Despite his physical handicaps (or perhaps because of them), Tamerlane was an exceptional field leader, governing from horseback.

• Though his armies numbered in the hundreds of thousands, he kept his soldiers in units of 10.

• As a political leader, he did not establish government in the lands he conquered, though he would make Samarkand his capital.
The Brief Ride of Timur

- During his reign, Tamerlane beautified Samarkand, imported captured artisans from Syria and India to design buildings. It has been said that he loved art so much that he could not help stealing it.
- Known to be a chess player, he had invented a more elaborate form of the game, now called Tamerlane Chess, with twice the number of pieces on a board of a hundred and ten squares.
- He would generously reward good workers, but on one occasion, Tamerlane had two artisans hanged for building a mosque porch he did not like.
Tamerlane's bravado was legendary.

Before assaulting Damascus, he announced, “I am the scourge of God appointed to chastise you, since no one knows the remedy for your iniquity except me. You are wicked, but I am more wicked than you, so be silent!”
AP Exam – Key Concepts

a. How was the Mongol Empire built?

b. How did the building of the Mongol Empire lead to the establishment of extensive trade networks?

c. What were some consequences of this trade?