11 Pastoral Peoples on the Global Stage, 1200-1500
Introduction

– Legacy of Chinggis Khan in Mongolia
  • his spirit banner was destroyed by Communists in 1937
    – according to Mongol tradition, that means his soul was destroyed
    – late twentieth-century revival of Chinggis Khan’s memory
    – 2006 was 800th anniversary of foundation of Mongol Empire

– The story of the Mongols is an important corrective to historians’ focus on agriculturalists.
  • pastoralists had a lasting impact on development of Afro-Eurasia
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<th>Event/Description</th>
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<td>Beginning of pastoral communities</td>
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<td>c. 1000 BCE</td>
<td>Beginning of horseback riding</td>
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<td>c. 200 BCE-200 CE</td>
<td>Xiongu Empire</td>
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<td>1295</td>
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<td>1348-1350</td>
<td>High point of Black Death in Europe</td>
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Looking Back and Looking Around:
The Long History of Pastoral Nomads
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<th>Region and Peoples</th>
<th>Primary Animals</th>
<th>Features</th>
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<tr>
<td>Inner Eurasian steppes (Xiongnu, Yuezhi, Turks, Uighurs, Mongols, Huns, Kipchaks)</td>
<td>Horses; also sheep, goats, cattle, Bactrian (two-hump) camels</td>
<td>Domestication of horses by 4000 BCE; horseback riding by 1000 BCE; site of largest nomadic empires</td>
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<td>Southwestern and Central Asia (Seljuks, Ghaznavids, Mongol Il-khans, Uzbeks, Ottomans)</td>
<td>Sheep and goats; used horses, camels; and donkeys</td>
<td>Close economic relationship with neighboring towns; provided meat, wool, milk products, and hides in exchange for grain and manufactured goods</td>
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<td>Arabian and Saharan deserts (Bedouin Arabs, Berbers, Tuareg)</td>
<td>Dromedary (one-hump camels); sometimes sheep</td>
<td>Camel caravans made possible long-distance trade; camel-mounted warriors central to early Arab/Islamic expansion</td>
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<td>Grasslands of sub-Saharan Africa (Fulbe, Nuer, Turkana, Masai)</td>
<td>Cattle; also sheep and goats</td>
<td>Cattle were a chief form of wealth and central to ritual life; little interaction with wider world until 19th century</td>
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<tr>
<td>Subarctic Scandinavia, Russia (Sami, Nenets)</td>
<td>Reindeer</td>
<td>Reindeer domesticated only since 1500 CE; many also fished</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tibetan Plateau (Tibetans)</td>
<td>Yaks, sheep, goats</td>
<td>Yaks for trade routes; animals goods for manufactured goods</td>
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</table>
Economies focused on livestock production emerged around 4000 B.C.E.

- dependent on horses, camels, goats, sheep, cattle, yaks, reindeer
- pastoral societies developed in:
  - grasslands of Eurasia and sub-Saharan Africa
  - Arabian and Saharan deserts
  - subarctic regions, Tibetan plateau
  - not in Americas: lack of large animals for domesticating
– The World of Pastoral Societies

• standard features of pastoral societies:
  – generally less productive than agricultural societies
  – needed large grazing areas
  – populations much smaller than in agricultural societies
  – lived in encampments of related kinfolk, usually common ancestry in male line
  – clans sometimes gathered as a tribe; could absorb unrelated people
  – more egalitarian than sedentary societies, but sometimes distinguished between nobles and commoners
  – women usually had higher status than in sedentary societies
    » fewer restrictions
    » greater role in public life
    » involved in productive labor
  – mobility—nomads
• pastoralists had deep connections to agricultural neighbors
  – sought access to foodstuffs, manufactured goods, luxury items
  – especially in inner Eurasia, longing for civilized products encouraged formation of nomadic states

• formation of nomadic states was difficult
  – charismatic leaders like Chinggis Khan could make a series of tribal alliances that became powerful states
  – when formed, almost the whole male population (and some women) became warriors

• cultural interaction with agricultural lands
  – inner Eurasian nomads adopted Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Manichaeism at various times

• mastered environments unsuitable for agriculture
  – brought food-producing revolution and significant human presence to fringe regions
  – life changed significantly for Inner Asian steppe peoples with introduction of horseback riding ca. 1000 B.C.E.
The Xiongnu: An Early Nomadic Empire

- mounted warfare made nomadic empires possible
- the Xiongnu (in Mongolian steppes north of China) formed an important early confederacy (from Manchuria to central Asia) in third/second centuries b.c.e.
- ruler Modun (r. 210–174 b.c.e.) revolutionized nomadic life
  - created a more centralized, hierarchical political system
  - divinely sanctioned ruler
  - distinction between “junior” and “senior” clans became more important
  - exacted tribute from other nomads and from China
    » Han emperor Wen had to acknowledge their equality
- Xiongnu Empire was a model copied by Turkic and Mongol empires
• nomads made their greatest impact on world history between 500 and 1500 c.e.
  – Arabs, Berbers, Turks, and Mongols created largest empires of that millennium
  – Islam derived from largely nomadic Arabs, carried by Turks
  – Byzantium, Persia, India, and China were all controlled at least for a time by formerly nomadic people

• Bedouin Arabs became effective fighters with development of a good camel saddle (sometime between 500 and 100 b.c.e.)
  – made control of trade routes through Arabia possible
  – camel nomads were shock troops of Islamic expansion
- Turkic-speaking nomads (homeland in Mongolia and southern Siberia)
  - gradual southward/westward spread
  - series of short-lived nomadic empires 552–965 C.E.
    » fragile alliance of tribes, held together by a kaghan
  - spread of Turkic language and culture over much of Inner Asia and beyond
  - Turkish conversion to Islam between tenth and fourteenth centuries
    » made them the third major carrier of Islam
    » gave Turks a growing role in Islamic heartland
    » started as slave soldiers, gradually took power
  - Seljuk Empire (eleventh–twelfth centuries): Turks began to claim the Muslim title sultan; exercised real power
    » Abbasid caliphs remained as figureheads
  - carried Islam to India and Anatolia
The Masai of East Africa

- best information on nomad/agrarian relations in Africa comes from after 1500
- no large states or chiefdoms, pastoral or agricultural, developed in what is now Kenya and Tanzania
- Masai were nomadic cattle-keepers
  - linked their people beyond village and clan ties with initiation of adolescent boys, followed by life in an “age-set”
- Masai had been partly agricultural before eighteenth–nineteenth centuries
  - several groups returned to agriculture in mid-nineteenth century
• Masai interaction with settled peoples
  – Masai would admit outsiders into their society
  – depended on hunters and farmers
  – during times of drought or disease, Masai might take refuge with hunters or farmers
  – farmers adopted elements of Masai culture and military
    » hairstyles
    » cattle terms
    » name for High God
    » long spear
    » practice of drinking cow’s milk before battle
| Key Moments in Mongol History                                      |  
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---
| Birth of Temujin                                                  | 1162  
| Temujim gains title of Chinggis Khan (“universal ruler”)         | 1206  
| Reign of Chinggis Khan                                           | 1206-1227  
| Beginning of Mongol conquests                                     | 1209  
| Conquest of China                                                | 1209-1279  
| Initial assault on Persia                                         | 1219-1221  
| Conquest of Russia                                                | 1237-1240  
| Attacks in Eastern Europe; then withdrawal                        | 1241-1242  
| Mongol seizure of Baghdad                                        | 1258  
| Khubilai Khan as ruler of China                                   | 1271-1294  
| Failed Mongol attacks on Japan                                    | 1274, 1281  
| Conversion of Il-khan Ghazan to Islam                             | 1295  
| High point of plague in Europe                                    | 1348-1350  
| Ming dynasty established; end of Mongol rule in China             | 1368  
| End of “Mongol yoke” in Russia; Moscow emerges as center of a Russian state | 1480  

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

- extensive linkage of nomads of inner Eurasian steppes with agricultural civilizations
- created far greater contact between Europe, China, and Islamic world than ever before
- total Mongol population was only about 700,000
- did not have a major cultural impact on the world
  - did not try to spread their ancestor worship/shamanism to others
  - mostly interested in exploiting conquered peoples
  - Mongol culture today largely confined to Mongolia
  - Mongol Empire was the last great nomadic state
From Temujin to Chinggis Khan: The Rise of the Mongol Empire

- Temujin (1162–1227) created the Mongol Empire
- Mongols before Temujin were an unstable collection of feuding tribes and clans
- Temujin’s rise
  - father was a minor chieftain, but was murdered before Temujin turned ten
  - Temujin’s mother held family together after they were deserted by the clan
  - when Temujin grew up, he drew together a small following of friends, allied with a more powerful tribal leader
  - shifting series of alliances, betrayals, military victories
  - won a reputation as a great leader
- 1206: Mongol tribal assembly recognized Temujin as Chinggis Khan (“universal ruler”)
• Chinggis Khan then began expansion to hold his followers together
  – major attack on China in 1209 started 50-year Mongol world war
  – 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
  – setbacks marked outer limits of Mongol Empire
    » withdrawal from Eastern Europe (1242)
    » defeat by Egyptians (1260)
    » failed invasions of Japan (1274, 1281)
    » difficulty penetrating jungles of Southeast Asia
Explaining the Mongol Moment

- Mongol Empire grew without any grand scheme
- by the time of his death, Chinggis Khan saw conquests as a mission to unite the whole world
- Mongols were vastly outnumbered by their enemies
- Mongol success was due to their well-led, organized, disciplined army
  - military units of 10, 100, 1,000, and 10,000 warriors
  - conquered tribes were broken up and scattered among units
  - tribalism was also weakened by creation of imperial guard
  - all members of a unit were killed if any deserted in battle
  - leaders shared the hardships of their men
  - elaborate tactics: encirclement, retreat, deception
  - vast numbers of conquered peoples were incorporated into army
    » nomads joined Mongol cavalry units
    » agriculturalists provided infantry and artillery
    » conquered subjects also provided labor and cartage
    » conquered subjects with skills were moved to where they could be used
• Mongol reputation for brutality and destructiveness
  – those who resisted were destroyed
  – kingdom of Khwarizm murdered Mongol envoys
    » its cities were destroyed
    » captured soldiers were executed
    » women and skilled craftsmen were enslaved
    » unskilled civilians were used as human shields for attacks on the next city or as moat filler

• ability to mobilize resources
  – elaborate census taking and systematic taxation
  – good system of relay stations for communication and trade
  – centralized bureaucracy began
  – encouraged commerce
  – gave lower administrative posts to Chinese and Muslim officials
  – practiced religious toleration
Encountering the Mongols: Comparing Three Cases

I eat the same food and am dressed in the same rags as my humble herdsmen. I am always in the forefront, and in battle I am never at the rear.
• Mongol conquest of China was difficult, took from 1209 to 1279
• began in northern China (ruled by dynasties of nomadic origin), was vastly destructive
• conquest of southern China (ruled by Song dynasty) was far less violent
  – more interest in accommodation of local populace
  – landowners were guaranteed their estates in return for support
• Mongols unified a divided China, made many believe that the Mongols had been granted the Mandate of Heaven
• Mongols didn’t know how to govern an agricultural society, so they used many Chinese practices
  – gave themselves a Chinese dynastic title, the Yuan (“great beginnings”)
  – built a new capital—Khanbalik (“city of the khan”; now Beijing)
• Khubilai Khan (r. 1271–1294) had a set of ancestral tablets made
  – much of his reign was in the model of a benevolent Chinese emperor
• still, Mongol rule was harsh, exploitative, and foreign
  – Mongols did not become Chinese
  – “Forbidden City” in the capital was set up like the steppes
  – relied heavily on foreigners for administration, rather than the traditional administrative system
  – few Mongols learned Chinese
  – Mongol law discriminated against the Chinese
  – Mongol women were shockingly free by Chinese standards
• by 1368, rebellions had forced the Mongols out of China
  – during the succeeding Ming dynasty, memory of brutal Mongol rule stimulated commitment to Confucian values, effort to wipe out all traces of Mongol impact
Persia and the Mongols
• conquest of Persia: first invasion led by Chinggis Khan 1219–1221; second assault under his grandson Hulegu 1251–1258
  – Hulegu became first il-khan (subordinate khan) of Persia
• massive impact of invasion
  – very destructive
  – shook faith: how could Muslims be savaged so badly by infidels?
  – sacking of Baghdad in 1258 ended the Abbasid caliphate
    » more than 200,000 people massacred
  – profound damage to Persian/Iraqi agriculture
    » peasants were driven from land by massive taxation
    » much agricultural land was turned to pasture (or desert)
    » neglect of fragile irrigation systems (qanatsa)
  – increase in wine and silk production
• Mongols were transformed far more in Persia than in China
  – extensive use of Persian bureaucracy
  – Ghazan (r. 1295–1304) tried to repair some of their earlier damage
  – Mongols in Persia converted to Islam on a large scale
  – Mongol elites learned some Persian
  – some Mongols took up agriculture
• Mongol dynasty collapsed in 1330s
  – Mongols were assimilated, not driven out
• Mongol devastation of Russia 1237–1240
  – Russia was a number of independent principalities
  – could not unite against Mongol threat
  – destruction of cities, widespread slaughter, and deportation of skilled workers

• Russia was integrated into Mongol Empire as the Kipchak Khanate (Russians called it the “Khanate of the Golden Horde”)
  – but Mongols did not occupy Russia
    » remained on steppes north of Black and Caspian seas
    » collected tribute and heavy taxes; also raided for slaves
• some Russian princes and the Russian Orthodox Church flourished

• Moscow became primary tribute-collector for the Mongols
  – gave Moscow a leading role in the fifteenth century

• Mongol rulers of Russia were far less assimilated or influenced
  – were gradually Islamized and assimilated by the Kipchaks of the steppes

• Russian princes adopted Mongol weapons, diplomatic rituals, court practices, tax system, and military draft
  – Moscow became the core of a new Russian state
  – used the Mongol mounted courier service

• Russians broke free of Mongol rule by the end of the fifteenth century
The Mongol Empire as a Eurasian Network
– Toward a World Economy
  • Mongols produced little for distant markets; were not active traders
  • but they promoted international commerce as source of tax revenue
  • made it relatively safe to travel across Central Asia
    – many Europeans (including Marco Polo) made the journey
  • Mongol trading circuit was central to larger Afro-Eurasian commercial network

– Diplomacy on a Eurasian Scale
  • Mongol encroachment into Eastern Europe led both the pope and European rulers to dispatch diplomatic missions to the Mongols
    – had no diplomatic or religious consequences
    – but brought back valuable information about the East
  • Persian and Chinese courts developed close relationships
Cultural Exchange in the Mongol Realm

- thousands of craftsmen and educated people were forcibly relocated by the Mongols
- Mongol religious tolerance and support of merchants drew foreigners
- the Mongol capital of Karakorum was a cosmopolitan center
- lively exchange of ideas and techniques
  - westward flow of Chinese technology and art (painting, printing, gunpowder weapons, compass navigation, high-temperature furnaces, medical techniques, etc.)
  - Muslim astronomy spread to China
  - circulation of plants and crops
  - Europe benefited particularly from new contact with Asia
    » and Europe wasn’t devastated by the Mongols
    » some scholars posit that this is the root of Europe’s rise to global prominence
The Plague: A Eurasian Pandemic

- the plague (a.k.a. pestilence, Black Death) spread across trade routes of the Mongol Empire in early fourteenth century
  - probably originated in Central Asia
  - carried by rodents and transmitted by fleas
- the plague broke out in northeastern China in 1331
  - reached Western Europe by 1347
  - Mongol siege of Caffa (in the Crimea) in 1346: Mongols catapulted plague-infected corpses into city
  - massive death toll
    » estimates are that one-third to two-thirds of European population died
  - periodic returns of the plague for centuries
% of populations effected by plague

Europe
- Died: 33%
- Alive: 67%

China
- Died: 50%
- Alive: 50%

Middle East
- Died: 33%
- Alive: 67%
• India and sub-Saharan Africa were much less affected
• best information about the plague’s impact comes from Europe
  – the plague was described in apocalyptic terms
  – Jews blamed for the plague; many fled to Poland
  – longer-term changes in European society
    » led to conflict between scarce workers and the rich
    » undermined practice of serfdom
    » perhaps encouraged technological innovation
    » created more employment opportunities for women

• the plague was a primary reason for the breakdown of the Mongol Empire in fourteenth–fifteenth centuries
  – with population contraction, volume of trade was reduced
  – by 1350, the Mongol Empire was in disarray
  – within a century, Mongols had lost control of China, Persia, and Russia
  – the Central Asian trade route largely closed
• disruption of land routes to the east encouraged Europeans to seek trade routes by sea
  – European naval technology gave them an advantage
  – similarity of sixteenth-century Europeans to Mongols: people on the periphery who were economically less developed and forcibly plundered wealthier civilizations
Reflections: Changing Images of Nomadic Peoples

– Nomads have often received “bad press” in history books.
  • only mentioned in regard to their destruction of established civilizations
  • educated sedentary peoples have feared and usually despised nomads
  • nomads were usually illiterate, so we don’t have their perspective
  • agricultural societies eventually won out

– There have been recent efforts to present a more balanced view.
  • emphasize what nomads achieved as well as what they destroyed
  • the total wars and genocides of the twentieth century have made people less judgmental toward the Mongols
  • historians are shaped by their times