Lecture 20: The Mongols

Topics:
- Nomads + Empires = A Nomad Empire
- After 1000 CE

Questions:
- How and why did the Mongols conquer such a vast territory?
- How did they rule it?
- What consequences did the Mongol invasions have for Eurasia?
Peoples of the Steppe

- Pastoral & mobile
- Trade relationship with settled agriculturalists
- Independent tribes
- “Khan” chosen only to lead joint military endeavors
- Universal, supreme sky-god (Tenggeri)
Later ‘Abbasid Empire

Internal fragmentation

Nomad invaders

Turks
Nomads and Empires II: The Seljuk Turks

**Sultans and Caliphs**

- Settle on ‘Abbasid borders (c. 750-950 CE)
- Convert to Islam in 10th c.
- By mid-10th c., large numbers of Seljuks in ‘Abbasid army
- **1055 CE**: Tughril Beg = “sultan”
  - Takes power in Baghdad
  - Successors rule Syria, etc.
- Last 200 years of ‘Abbasids (750-1258 CE):
  - Caliph = figurehead
  - Seljuk sultan = real power

**Turks and Byzantines**

- **11th c. CE**: Seljuk Turks invade Anatolia
- **1071 CE**: Battle of Manzikert

Reduce Byzantine Empire to little more than Constantinople

Transform Anatolian society
Song Dynasty (960-1279 CE)

Characteristics of Tang intensify!

- Economic productivity
- Meritocracy of scholar-officials
- Cultural “Golden Age”

From mid-9th c. CE: Decline in state-sponsorship of Buddhism.

Spring Festival on the River, by Zhang Zeduan (early 12th c.)
Technological innovation

- Mass-production of porcelain
- Moveable block printing
- Magnetic maritime compass
- Gunpowder and firearms
- Paper money

Song Ceramics
Nomads and Empires II: Song Dynasty China

Political difficulties

Internal
Political “parties” among scholar-officials
Disagreement over social reform

External
Nomads
Partly sedentary & already sinicized
Usual Song policy: Buy them off

1126 Jin (Jurchen) invade northern China
Song emperor flees Kaifeng
Establishes rule from Hangzhou

Jin Dynasty (1126-1234 CE)
Southern Song (1127-1279 CE)
The largest land empire in history!
Genghis Khan and the Mongols

1206 CE: Temuchin = “universal leader” of Mongols
1211-34 CE: Conquest of No. China
1219-21: Conquest of Persia

1237-41: Conquest of Russia
1258: Take Baghdad
1264-79: Conquest of So. China

Siege of Baghdad, 1258 CE
How did they do it?

- Horsemanship
- Archery
- Swift maneuvering
- False retreats
- Very large armies
- Hierarchical but independent military units (100, 1000, 10000)

Genghis Khan’s army in action

Massively destructive!

Terror tactics
Why did they do it?

Supplement low-level pastoral economic productivity with agrarian surpluses

Cycle of reward necessary to maintain confederation

How do we know what we know?

- No writing before Genghis Khan
- Among the conquered, in many languages
- *The Secret History of the Mongols*
- Travels of Marco Polo
How did they rule it?
How did they rule it?

• By force, i.e., military organization
• Taxation/extortion
• Efficient, speedy communications
• Low-level native administrators only

Little intervention in daily life:

so long as cash kept flowing
no signs of rebellion...
“Pax Mongolica”

Map of Marco Polo’s Travels