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**Ways of the World: A Brief Global
History with Sources**
Second Edition

Chapter 11

Pastoral Peoples on the Global Stage:
The Mongol Moment (1200–1500)

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Chinggis Khan at Prayer
Werner Forman/Art Resource, NY
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1. Describe this painting. What different kinds of actions are represented here?

This painting shows men in battle and in prayer. A group of mounted warriors armed with spears and bows and arrows in the bottom right corner of the image seem to be attacking an encampment across a river, where warriors in similar armor and weaponry seem to be mounting a counterattack. In the upper left corner of the image we can see warriors on horseback ride into a camp of tents where men flee in terror. The dominance of warriors on horseback, the tent encampment, the turbans, and other clothing and headgear suggest that this is a battle in central Asia among nomadic tribes.

2. Who is the central figure in this picture? Can you explain his position in this image?

The central figure in this image is Chinggis Khan in the top right corner. He seems to be praying, probably for guidance in the ongoing battle. Behind him stand three men in turbans, their hands lifted up as if in prayer themselves, or in a sign of deference to Chinggis Khan. Directly below Chinggis Khan stands a man holding what is most likely the Khan's horse. It is not clear whether the artist has deliberately painted Chinggis Khan as if hovering above the ground, or whether he knelt on an outcropping of rocks. Either way, it shows the Khan high above the tumultuous battle in a pose of calm concentration.

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

A. The World of Pastoral Societies

1. Small populations on large amounts of land
2. High levels of social and gender equality
3. Mobile but in contact with settled agriculturalists
4. Tribal alliances and military power of horsemen

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

A. The World of Pastoral Societies

1. Small populations on large amounts of land: Pastoralists were less productive than settled agriculturalists, resulting in smaller populations that required larger expanses of land. They specialized in making a living off unproductive land. These grasslands could not sustain humans, but they could sustain their herds of animals. Thus, the pastoralists lived off meat, milk, and blood rather than grains.
2. High levels of social and gender equality: With low population density and relatively simple social structures, these societies enjoyed much greater social equality than their settled neighbors. Women engaged in most of the same tasks as men in terms of raising the herd and riding.
3. Mobile but in contact with settled agriculturalists: While they were a mobile population that lived off their animals, they still needed the products of settled societies. Thus, even though they might disdain the agriculturalists, they were frequently in contact with them and exchanged their animals products for the manufactured goods of the towns and cities.
4. Tribal alliances and military power of horsemen: Without urban centers, it was very difficult to sustain a state system. A few charismatic individuals, such as Genghis Khan, could forge alliances, but the strength of the union was dependent on wealth coming in and would fall apart when their economic fortunes turned.

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

B. Before the Mongols: Pastoralists in History

1. Modun of the Xiongnu (r. 210–174 B.C.E.)
2. Bedouin Arabs and the rise of Islam
3. Turkic nomads versus China, Persia, and Byzantium
4. Berbers and the Almoravid Empire

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

B. Before the Mongols: Pastoralists in History

1. Modun of the Xiongnu (r. 210–174 B.C.E.): This leader united a diverse group of tribes from Manchuria and Central Asia. He engaged in revolutionary change of the military and forced the Han Chinese to negotiate with the Xiongnu as equals.
2. Bedouin Arabs and the rise of Islam: These nomadic Arabs made an alliance with the urban-based merchants led by Muhammad and served as the main military power for the prophet. They also helped to spread Islam as they moved about the Arabian Peninsula.
3. Turkic nomads versus China, Persia, and Byzantium: A variety of Turkic speaking peoples came out of the steppes of Central Asia and threatened these settled agricultural empires. Soon aspects of Turkic culture influenced the Northern Chinese court. The Seljuk Turks fought a series of wars with Byzantium but it was the Ottoman Turks that finally overthrew the last vestige of Rome in 1453. The Ottomans then became a very urban society and culture.
4. Berbers and the Almoravid Empire: In Northwest Africa, the Berber people converted to Islam but were superficial in their practice. After 1039, Ibn Yasin, a scholar who turned from the Hadj, launched a reform campaign to make the practice of the faith more orthodox. Soon the movement became an expansionist state that moved into Spain and controlled much of present-day Morocco. Like other examples, the Almoravids became urbanized and enjoyed impressive art and architecture.



Spot Map The Xiongnu Confederacy
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Spot Map The Almoravid Empire
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II. Breakout: The Mongol Empire

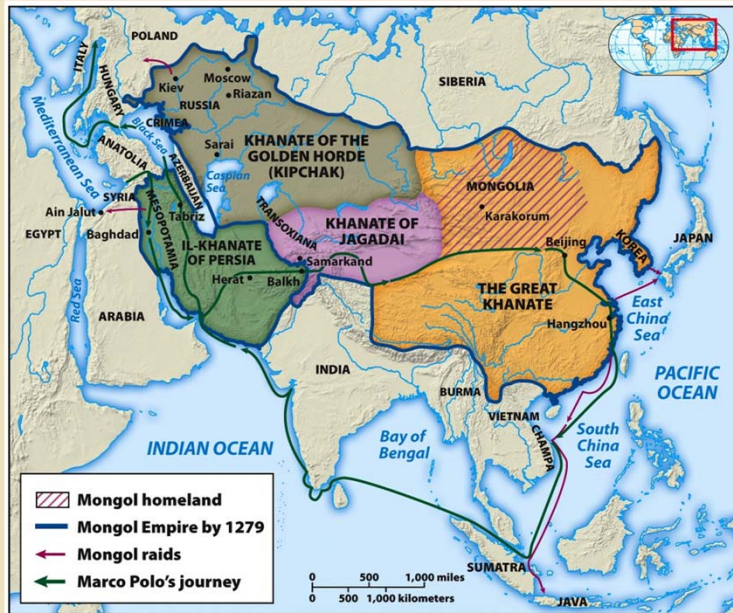
A. From Temujin to Chinggis Khan: The Rise of the Mongol Empire

1. Desperate and poor childhood
2. Generous to friends, ruthless to enemies
3. Supreme Leader of a Great Mongol Nation, 1206
4. Started five decades of expansionist wars, 1209

II. Breakout: The Mongol Empire

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

1. Desperate and poor childhood: After his father was murdered, his resourceful mother led the immediate family through a marginal existence. But as he won a series of battles and forged alliances based on loyalty and not kinship, Temujin steadily built up a powerful force.
2. Generous to friends, ruthless to enemies: In this process, he gained a reputation for destroying his enemies but rewarding those loyal to him. He also incorporated warriors from defeated tribes into his army.
3. Supreme leader of a Great Mongol Nation, 1206: A tribal assembly made him the great leader and gave him the title of Chinggis Khan.
4. Started five decades of expansionist wars, 1209: To build more power but also to hold the Mongol alliance together, he started a series of expansionist wars that eventually conquered China and Central Asia. The empire was only checked in Eastern Europe, the Levant, the jungles of Southeast Asia, and the Sea of Japan. He set in motion the building of the world's largest land based empire and it was run by a population of only 1,000,000.



Map 11.1 The Mongol Empire
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II. Breakout: The Mongol Empire

B. Explaining the Mongol Moment

1. No plan or blueprint
2. Weak enemies and a strong army
3. Discipline, loyalty, and charisma ... and loot!
4. Incorporation of useful conquered people
5. Ruthless and terrifying
6. Strong administration and systematic taxation
7. Favorable conditions for merchants
8. Religious toleration

II. Breakout: The Mongol Empire

B. Explaining the Mongol Moment

1. No plan or blueprint: Like the Romans, but growing much bigger much faster, the Mongols created objectives, strategy, and ideology as they expanded. They were only checked when they turned around in Eastern Europe, were defeated in the Levant and the jungles of Southeast Asia, or hit by typhoons when invading Japan.
2. Weak enemies and a strong army: The Mongols were lucky in that both the Chinese and Arab empires were in a weak and divided condition when they attacked. They also succeeded by organizing a superior army with a clear command and control structure.
3. Discipline, loyalty, and charisma ... and loot!: The army faced severe discipline, including the death penalty for desertion, but loyalty was greatly rewarded. Chinggis Khan had great charisma, eating and fighting with his troops. The Mongol people also became very wealthy from the loot of the empire.
4. Incorporation of useful conquered people: The Mongols made good use of conquered people who had skills, such as artisans and technicians.
5. Ruthless and terrifying: When attacking or taking revenge against an insult, the Mongol army was ruthless and engaged in huge massacres and the enslavement of women and children. This had a clear psychological impact on cities faced with a coming Mongol horde.
6. Strong administration and systematic taxation: Despite their ruthlessness in battle, the Mongols showed excellent administrative skills after the conquest. With a system of riders for communication and well-organized taxation, the Mongol Empire had the resources and infrastructure to govern itself.
7. Favorable conditions for merchants: Recognizing the value of a vibrant economy, the Mongols ensured profits and safe conduct for merchants.
8. Religious toleration: With no interest in religious imperialism, the Mongols tolerated various religions and even improved the conditions of some minorities such as Christians.

III. Encountering the Mongols: Comparing Three Cases

A. China and the Mongols

1. 70 years of conquests, 1209–1279
2. Yuan Dynasty and Kublai Khan (r. 1271–1294)
3. A foreign and exploitative occupation
4. Collapse of Mongol rule and rise of the Ming Dynasty

III. Encountering the Mongols: Comparing Three Cases

A. China and the Mongols

1. 70 years of conquests, 1209–1279: China was the main target of the Mongols and in 1209, Chinggis Khan launched an attack on this wealthy and prosperous region. After a series of campaigns lasting some seven decades, the Mongols were victorious. While the Mongols were brutal and destructive in the north of China, they were much more accommodating in the south.

2. Yuan Dynasty and Kublai Khan (r. 1271–1294): The Mongols did adopt some aspects of Chinese statecraft in order to rule the region more effectively and withdraw as much wealth as possible. They went so far as to establish a Chinese-style dynasty. Kublai Khan, the grandson of Chinggis Khan, listened to the council of his favorite wife Chabi and adopted policies that encouraged agricultural production in order to generate more wealth. The Mongols adopted some aspects of Chinese ancestor veneration and built roads, canals, and other forms of infrastructure to promote commerce.

3. A foreign and exploitative occupation: While the Mongols did try to accommodate their Chinese subjects, they were foreign occupiers who were there to extract as much wealth as possible and were thus resented by the Chinese. Mongols' disregard of the exam system and their reliance on foreigners such as Muslims from Central Asia and the Middle East to administer the empire irked many. The Mongol elite kept many of their traditional practices such as sleeping in tents even when in the capital.

4. Collapse of Mongol rule and rise of the Ming Dynasty: Factionalism among the Mongols, rising prices, and a series of natural disasters weakened their hold on power and allowed some space for rebels to challenge their authority. The Yuan Dynasty was overthrown in 1368, and the new Ming Dynasty sought to eliminate the memory of the Mongols.

III. Encountering the Mongols: Comparing Three Cases

B. Persia and the Mongols

1. Chinggis Kahn (1219–1221) and Helugu (1251–1258)
2. Damage to agriculture
3. Persian civilization of barbarian Mongols

III. Encountering the Mongols: Comparing Three Cases

B. Persia and the Mongols

1. Chinggis Kahn (1219–1221) and Helugu (1251–1258): Two brutal attacks brought down the Persian Empire, falling much faster than China. These attacks were much more intense and devastating than earlier assaults from Turkic invaders. They were also more psychologically devastating, because unlike the Turks, the Mongols were not Muslims but pagan barbarians.
2. Damage to agriculture: Out of a lack of respect for agriculture and because of the damage caused by the Mongols' herds, there was serious damage to the region's farmland. Important underground irrigation systems fell apart, leading to desertification of some areas.
3. Persian civilization of barbarian Mongols: The Persians had a much more significant impact on the Mongols than the Chinese did. The invaders quickly realized the importance of the Persian bureaucracy and used it for their own purposes. They also began to rebuild damaged cities and road systems. When the dynasty fell in the 1330s, the Persians did not expel the Mongols but rather assimilated them into Persian culture.



Mongol Rulers and Their Women
Bibliothèque nationale de France
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1. What does the picture show?

This image shows the Russian town of Ryazan with outside walls, wall towers, and fortified buildings visible in the background. In the midst of this town we see a battle—a large number of men on horseback on the left wielding their swords over their heads and charging against a crowd on foot that looks timid and overwhelmed on the right. Some of the riders carry torches and it looks like they have already set some buildings on fire.

2. How does this image speak to the role of Mongols in Russia in the thirteenth century?

The image underlines the strength of Mongols and their ability to overpower Russian towns. Consider the fact that the heavy walls and fortified buildings were no match for the Mongol assault and that the city's residents on foot look meek and hopeless in comparison to the Mongol warriors on horseback. This complete lack of assimilation of Mongols in Russian society was unique—different from Mongols in China and India—and made the violent destructions of Russian cities all the more likely.

III. Encountering the Mongols: Comparing Three Cases

C. Russia and the Mongols

1. Brutal invasion of a disunited Kievan Rus (1237–1240)
2. Khanate of the Golden Horde
3. Exploitation without occupation
4. Resistance and collaboration
5. Rise of Moscow and expansion of the church

III. Encountering the Mongols: Comparing Three Cases

C. Russia and the Mongols

1. Brutal invasion of a disunited Kievan Rus (1237–1240): Using technology such as catapults and battering rams gained from campaigns in China and Persia, the invasion of the Kievan Rus was an impressive assault on a weak and disunited people.
2. Khanate of the Golden Horde: This was the Russian term for Mongol rule.
3. Exploitation without occupation: While the invasion was impressive and devastated some areas, the Mongols chose not to occupy the relatively poor and isolated Rus. Instead they settled nearby on the steppes and pastoral lands north of the Caspian and Black Seas. They put them within striking distance of the cities from which they extorted tribute.
4. Resistance and collaboration: Some cities chose to resist and faced brutal retaliation. Kiev, for example, was razed. Others collaborated and helped the Mongols collect tribute and taxes and wound up doing very well for themselves.
5. Rise of Moscow and expansion of the church: Moscow rose as the core of a new Russian state that adopted Mongol weapons, diplomacy, taxation, court system, and a draft. The Russian Orthodox Church enjoyed Mongol tolerance and tax exemption and spread its reach deeper into the countryside.

IV. The Mongol Empire as a Eurasian Network

A. Toward a World Economy

1. Not producers or traders but promoters of commerce
2. Security on the Silk Roads
3. Connected to the larger world system

B. Diplomacy on a Eurasian Scale

1. European envoys sent east
2. European discovery of the outside world
3. Mongol linkage of China and Persia

IV. The Mongol Empire as a Eurasian Network

A. Toward a World Economy

1. Not producers or traders but promoters of commerce: While the Mongols did not make anything or engage in trade, they did promote production and commerce in the regions they controlled, providing tax breaks for merchants and sometimes paying high prices to attract commerce to their cities.
2. Security on the Silk Roads: The most important contribution was an unprecedented security on the Silk Roads. This allowed for a dramatic increase in trade throughout Central Asia, with many individuals making the entire journey from west to east and back. Marco Polo was the most famous but many others used guidebooks on their trips.
3. Connected to the larger world system: The Mongol trade circuit connected to other trade networks throughout the rest of Asia, the Indian Ocean, the Middle east, Africa, and Europe, doing much to forge a global economy.

B. Diplomacy on a Eurasian Scale

1. European envoys sent east: When the Mongols made their way into Eastern Europe in a 1241–1242 campaign, they seemed poised to take the region. However, the death of Great Khan Ogodei required the Mongol leaders to return home. Aware of the threat the Mongols posed, European kings and the Pope sent emissaries east to negotiate with the Mongols.
2. European discovery of the outside world: These missions provided the previously isolated Europeans with a wealth of knowledge about the rest of the world.
3. Mongol linkage of China and Persia: As these two great empires were part of a larger Mongol system, communications between the two increased. Thus, the Mongols created an

unprecedented level of international communication.



Map 11.2 Trade and Disease in the Fourteenth Century
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IV. The Mongol Empire as a Eurasian Network

C. Cultural Exchange in the Mongol Realm

1. Forced population transfers and voluntary migrations
2. Technology transfer and the spread of crops
3. Europe gained the most

IV. The Mongol Empire as a Eurasian Network

C. Cultural Exchange in the Mongol Realm

1. Forced population transfers and voluntary migrations: The Mongols forced some people, such as artisans and engineers, to move from one place to another where their skills were needed. Others moved freely as part of religious travel tolerated by the Mongols or as part of commercial activity encouraged by the Mongols.
2. Technology transfer and the spread of crops: Technology, especially from China, moved freely and quickly within the Mongol domain, as did medical knowledge. Various crops were carried from one region to another.
3. Europe gained the most: Poor, backwards, and isolated Europe gained the most from these exchanges. As it had the least to offer, it had the most to gain. This may have set Europe on the path toward expansion.

IV. The Mongol Empire as a Eurasian Network

D. The Plague: An Afro-Eurasian Pandemic

1. The Black Death
2. China, 1331, Europe, 1347, and East Africa, 1409
3. The end of the world?
4. Social changes in Europe
5. Demise of the Mongol Empire

IV. The Mongol Empire as a Eurasian Network

D. The Plague: An Afro-Eurasian Pandemic

1. The Black Death: A mutation of the *Yersinia Pestis*, or bubonic plague, spread quickly and killed large numbers in areas of dense populations. The death spread during the increase of trade, from fleas that lived on rats.
2. China, 1331, Europe, 1347, and East Africa, 1409: Starting in China, the disease followed the world trade routes and savaged cities across Afro-Eurasia. Some estimate that 50 percent of Europeans may have perished.
3. The end of the world? In a prescientific era of high religiosity, some in the Christian and Islamic worlds saw it as the end days.
4. Social changes in Europe: With so many dead, there were labor shortages that provided new opportunities for skilled workers, women, and peasants. This mass death set in motion several important social changes. There was also a rise in labor-saving devices, spurring new technological innovations in Europe.
5. Demise of the Mongol Empire: The biggest victim of the Black Death was the Mongol Empire itself. With trade disrupted, the economic heart of the empire failed. Mongol wealth decreased and rebellions increased.

V. Reflections: Changing Images of Pastoral Peoples

- A. Bad press for nomads
- B. Sources from urban centers
- C. Winners write history
- D. A new history of nomadic achievements
- E. Was Mongol violence unique?

V. Reflections: Changing Images of Pastoral Peoples

A. Bad press for nomads: Most histories have a very dim view of nomadic people, only noting when they threatened a more advanced society.

B. Sources from urban centers: Part of the problem is that historians use written sources from settled areas that were threatened by nomadic forces.

C. Winners write history: Another problem is that most nomadic people were taken over by settled societies. The nomads lost and the winners wrote the history, often with a disdainful attitude for those that were different.

D. A new history of nomadic achievements: Recently revisionist historians have taken a new look at the nomadic people and stressed their achievements and their role in creating a world system.

E. Was Mongol violence unique? Looking back at the horrors of the twentieth century puts the violence of the Mongols in perspective. Clearly, they were not the only brutal people in world history.



Visual Source 11.1 The Flagellants
 Private Collection/The Bridgeman Art Library
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Visual Source 11.2 Burying the Dead
Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique, Brussels, Belgium/The Bridgeman Art Library
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Visual Source 11.3 A Culture of Death
St. Nicolai's Church, Tallinn, now the Niguliste Museum. Photo: Visual Connection Archive
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Visual Source 11.4 In the Face of Catastrophe — Questioning or Affirming the Faith
HIP/Art Resource, New York
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