Introduction. Nomadic herders populated the steppes of Asia for centuries during the classical and postclassical eras and periodically came into contact and conflict with the established states and empires of the Eurasian land mass. It was not until the eleventh century, however, that the nomadic peoples like the Turks and Mongols began to raid, conquer, and trade with the urban-based cultures in a systematic and far-reaching manner. While these resourceful and warlike nomads often left a path of destruction in their wake, they also built vast trans-regional empires that laid the foundations for the increasing communication and exchange that would characterize the period from 1000 to 1500 in the eastern hemisphere. The success of these nomadic empires in this era can be attributed to:

- Their unmatched skill on horseback. When organized on a large scale these nomads were practically indomitable in warfare. Outstanding cavalry forces, skilled archers, and well-coordinated military strategy gave these peoples an advantage that was difficult for even the most powerful states to counter.
- Their ability to integrate vast territories through secure trade routes, exceptional courier networks, diplomatic missions, missionary efforts, and resettlement programs.

Chinggis Khan  |  Marco Polo  |  Khubilai Khan  |  Tamerlane  |  Osman  |  Sultan Mehmed II
Khan Saljuq Turks  |  Karakorum  |  Khanbaliq  |  Chaghatai  |  Golden Horde  |  Yuan Dynasty
Ilkahnate  |  Ottoman Turks

I. The Mongol empires (Starts page 476(old text)-
A. Chinggis Khan and the making of the Mongol empire
1. Chinggis Khan ("universal ruler") unified Mongol tribes through alliance and conquests
2. Mongol political organization
   a. Organized new military units and broke up tribal affiliations
   b. Chose high officials based on talent and loyalty
   c. Established capital at Karakorum
3. Mongol strategy: horsemanship, archers, mobility, psychological warfare
4. Mongol conquest of northern China
   a. Chinggis Khan, Mongols raided the Jurchen in north China beginning in 1211
   b. Controlled north China by 1220
   c. South China was still ruled by the Song dynasty
5. Mongol conquest of Persia
   a. Chinggis Khan tried to open trade and diplomatic relations with Saljuq leader Khwarazm shah, the ruler of Persia, 1218
   b. Upon being rejected, Chinggis Khan led force to pursue the Khwarazm
   c. Mongol forces destroyed Persian cities and qanat
   d. Chinggis died in 1227, laid foundation for a mighty empire

B. The Mongol empires after Chinggis Khan
1. Division of the Mongol empires: heirs divide into four regional empires
2. Khubilai Khan
   a. Chinggis Khan's grandson, consolidated Mongol rule in China
   b. Promoted Buddhism, supported Daoists, Muslims, and Christians
3. Conquest of southern China
   a. Khubilai extended Mongol rule to all of China
   b. Song capital at Hangzhou fell in 1276, Yuan Dynasty founded in 1279
   c. Unsuccessful conquests of Vietnam, Burma, Java, and Japan
4. The Golden Horde
   a. Group of Mongols overran Russia between 1237 and 1241
   b. Further overran Poland, Hungary, and eastern Germany, 1241-1242
   c. Maintained hegemony in Russia until the mid-fifteenth century
5. The Ilkhanate of Persia: Khubilai's brother, Hülegü, captured Baghdad in 1258
6. Mongol rule in Persia
   a. Persians served as ministers, governors, and local officials
b. Mongols only cared about taxes and order  
c. Ilkhan Ghazan converted to Islam, 1295; massacres of Christians and Jews followed

7. Mongol rule in China  
a. Outlawed intermarriage between Mongols and Chinese  
b. Forbade Chinese from learning the Mongol language  
c. Brought foreign administrators into China and put them in charge  
d. Dismissed Confucian scholars; dismantled civil service examination  
e. Tolerated all cultural and religious traditions in China

8. Mongol ruling elite became enchanted with the Lamaist Buddhism of Tibet

C. The Mongols and Eurasian integration  
1. The Mongols and trade  
a. Mongols worked to secure trade routes and ensure safety of merchants  
b. Elaborate courier network with relay stations  
c. Maintained good order for traveling merchants, ambassadors, and missionaries

2. Diplomatic missions  
a. The four Mongol empires maintained close diplomatic communications  
b. Established diplomatic relations with Korea, Vietnam, India, Europe

3. Resettlement  
a. Mongols needed skilled artisans and educated individuals from other places  
b. Often resettled them in different locations to provide services  
c. Uighur Turks served as clerks, secretaries, and administrators  
d. Arab and Persian Muslims also served Mongols far from their homelands  
e. Skilled artisans were often sent to Karakorum; became permanent residents

D. Decline of the Mongols in Persia and China  
1. Collapse of the ilkhanate  
a. In Persia, excessive spending and overexploitation led to reduced revenues  
b. Failure of the ilkhan's paper money  
c. Fractional struggle plagued the Mongol leadership  
d. The last ruler died without an heir; the ilkhanate collapsed

2. Decline of the Yuan dynasty  
a. Paper money issued by the Mongol rulers lost value  
b. Power struggles, assassinations, and civil war weakened Mongols after 1320s

3. Bubonic plague in southwest China in 1330s, spread through Asia and Europe  
a. Depopulation and labor shortage undermined the Mongol regime  
b. By 1368, the Chinese drove the Mongols back to the steppes

4. Surviving Mongol khanates  
a. The khanate of Chaghatai continued in central Asia  
b. The Golden Horde survived until the mid-sixteenth century

II. After the Mongols  
A. Tamerlane the Whirlwind (1336-1404) built central Asian empire  
1. The lame conqueror, Timur was self-made; rose to power in 1360s; established capital in Samarkand  
2. Tamerlane’s conquests  
a. First conquered Persia and Afghanistan  
b. Next attacked the Golden Horde  
c. At the end of the fourteenth century, invaded northern India  
d. Ruled the empire through tribal leaders who relied on existing bureaucrats to collect taxes

3. Tamerlane’s heirs struggled and divided empire into four regions

B. The foundation of the Ottoman empire  
1. Osman  
a. Large numbers of nomadic Turks migrated to Persia and Anatolia
b. Osman, a charismatic leader, carved out a small state in northwest Anatolia
   c. Claimed independence from the Saljuq sultan in 1299

2. Ottoman conquests in the Balkans in 1350s
   a. Sultan Mehmed II sacked Constantinople in 1453, renamed it Istanbul
   b. Absorbed the remainder of the Byzantine empire
   c. During the sixteenth century, extended to southwest Asia, southeast Europe, and north Africa