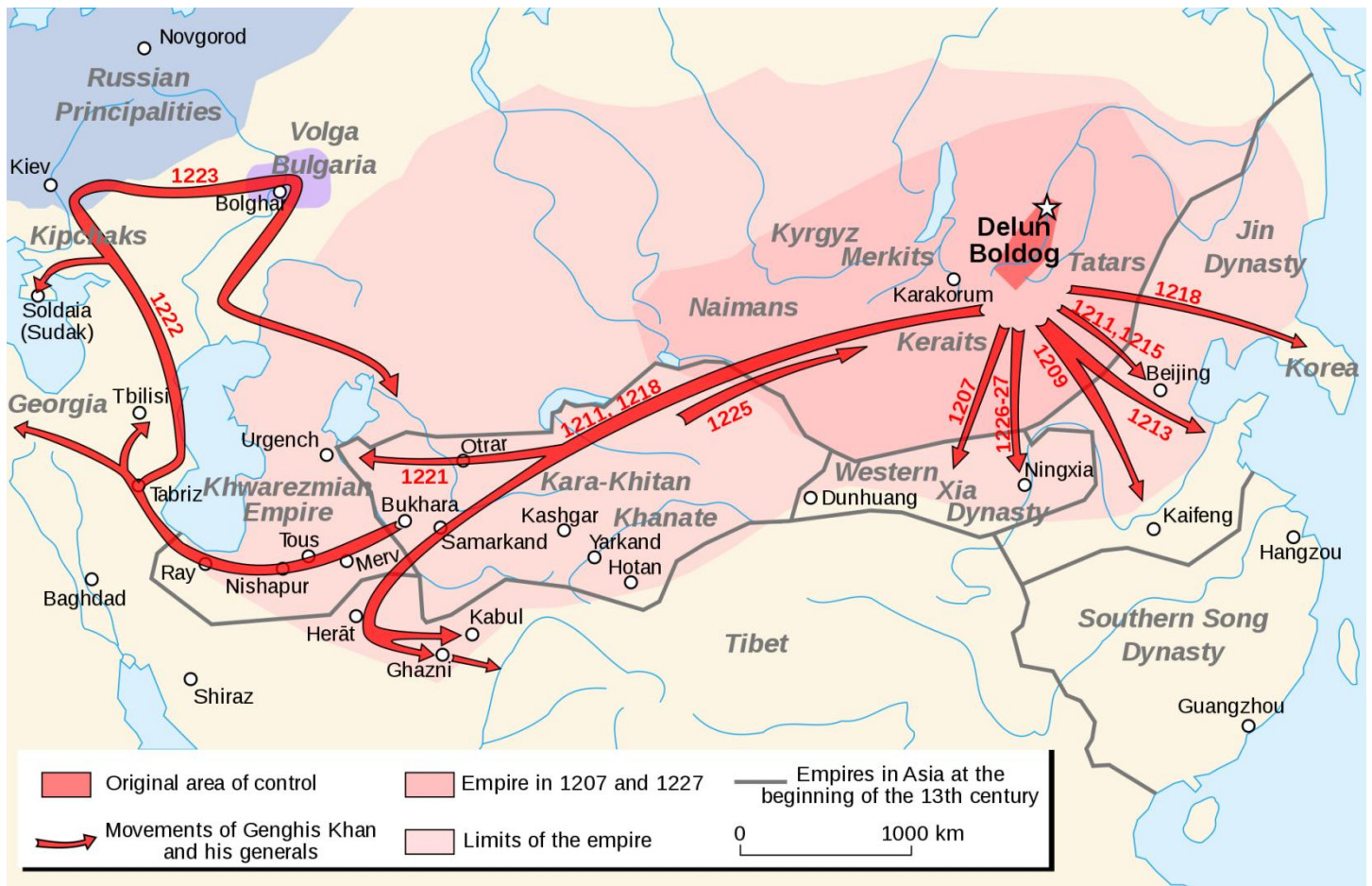


Tamerlane the Great (1336?-1405) (aka Tamerlane the Whirlwind)

*This note is taken from *Traditions and Encounters: A Global Perspective on the Past, Third Edition (2006)*



The Empire of Chinggis Khan

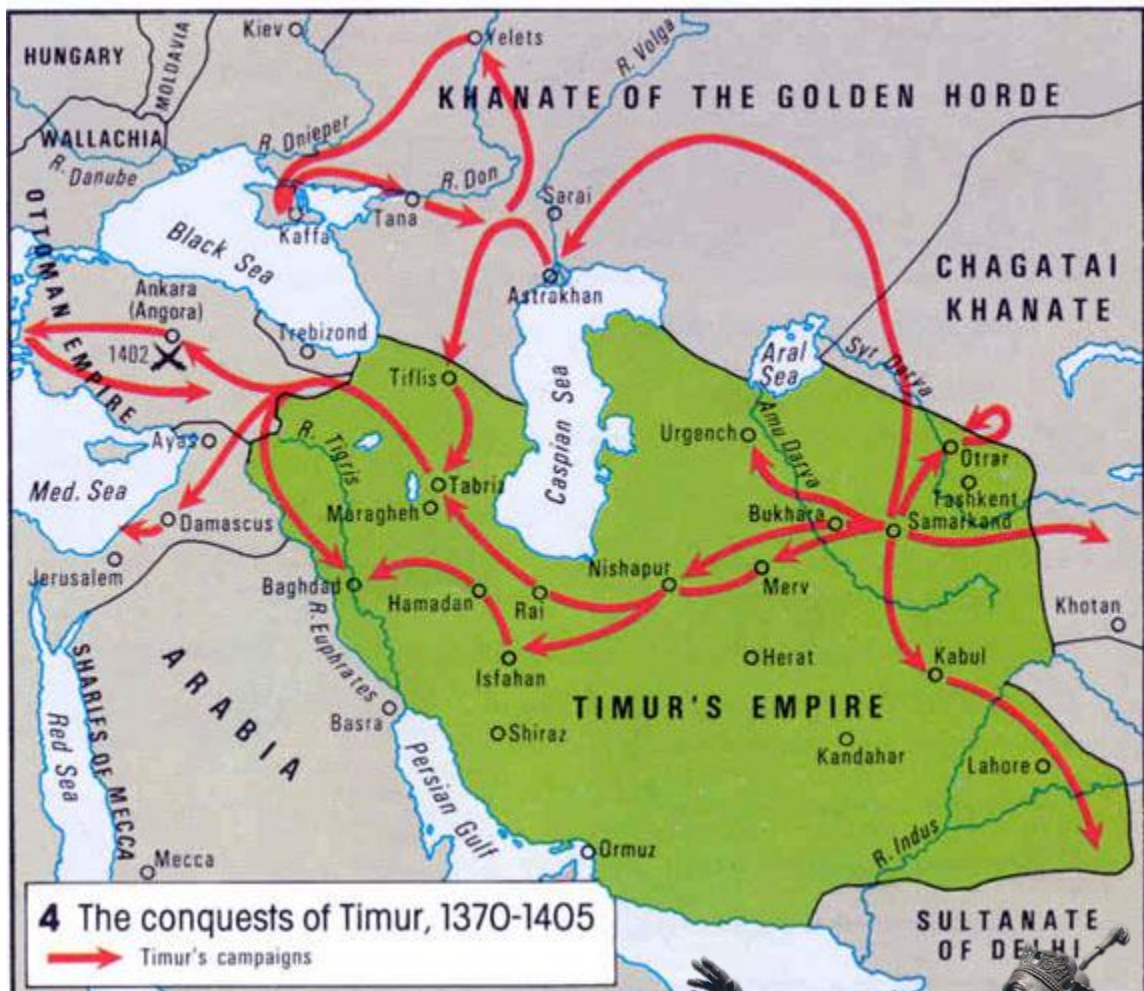
Following the collapse of the Mongols, new nomadic empires rose to fill the void in Eurasia. Mongol-Turkish peoples (Mongol people who had assimilated into Turkish cultures, including adopting Islam as their faith) resumed the expansive campaigns that the Mongols had interrupted. The Mongol-Turkish conqueror Tamerlane built a central Asian empire rivaling that of Chinggis Khan.

- What was a “nomadic empire” and how did it work and, more importantly, endure?

... to be answered later ...

- The rapid collapse of the Mongol states left gaping power vacuums in China and Persia. The Mongol Dynasty filled the vacuum in China, a self-made Turkish conqueror named Tamerlane moved on Persia. Since he walked with a slight limp, contemporaries referred to him as - *Timur-l ang* - “Tamerlane the Lamé,” which has made its way into English as **Tamerlane**.

- Basing himself on Chinggis Khan, Tamerlane was born in 1336 near Samarkand. He was charismatic, Muslim, and extremely intelligent (enjoyed the company of scholars & patronized the Arts). Tamerlane is considered one of the most violent individuals to walk the earth, and he rapidly extended his power and established a magnificent capital at Samarkand.



- For the rest of his life Tamerlane led his armies on various campaigns of conquest.
 - Tamerlane relied on Islamic symbols and language, referred to himself as the "Sword of Islam", and patronized educational and religious institutions.¹

Modern Statue of Tamerlane, Tashkent



¹ Marozzi, Justin (2004). Tamerlane: Sword of Islam, conqueror of the world. HarperCollins.

- Tamerlane's armies were inclusively multi-ethnic and were feared throughout Asia, Africa, and Europe, sizable parts of which his campaigns laid to waste. Scholars estimate that his military campaigns caused the deaths of 17 million people, amounting to about 5% of the world population at the time.²
- He turned first to the region between Persia and Afghanistan, and he took special care to establish his authority in the rich cities so that he could levy taxes on trade and agricultural production.
- He attacked the Golden Horde (another nomadic empire) in the Caucasian Region and Russia, and had severely weakened it by the 1390s.
- During the last years of the 1390s, he invaded India and subjected Delhi to a ferocious sack (some chroniclers reported that birds didn't even visit the devastated city for two months following the attack). Before attacking Delhi, Tamerlane executed 100,000 captives. Tamerlane never incorporated India into his empire.
- Tamerlane opened the new century with campaigns in southwest Asia and Anatolia (present-day Turkey).
- In 1400, Tamerlane invaded Christian Armenia and Georgia. Of the surviving population, more than 60,000 of the local people were captured as slaves, and many districts were depopulated.³
- Tamerlane invaded Baghdad in June 1401. After the capture of the city, 20,000 of its citizens were massacred. Tamerlane ordered that every soldier should return with at least two severed human heads to show him. When they ran out of men to kill, many warriors killed prisoners captured earlier in the campaign, and when they ran out of prisoners to kill, many resorted to beheading their own wives.⁴
- In 1404 Tamerlane began preparations for an invasion of China, and he was leading his army east when he fell ill and died in 1405.

² McMahon, C. (2018). THE REHABILITATION OF TAMERLANE. [online] Chicagotribune.com. Available at: <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1999-01-17-9901170256-story.html> [Accessed 19 Nov. 2018].

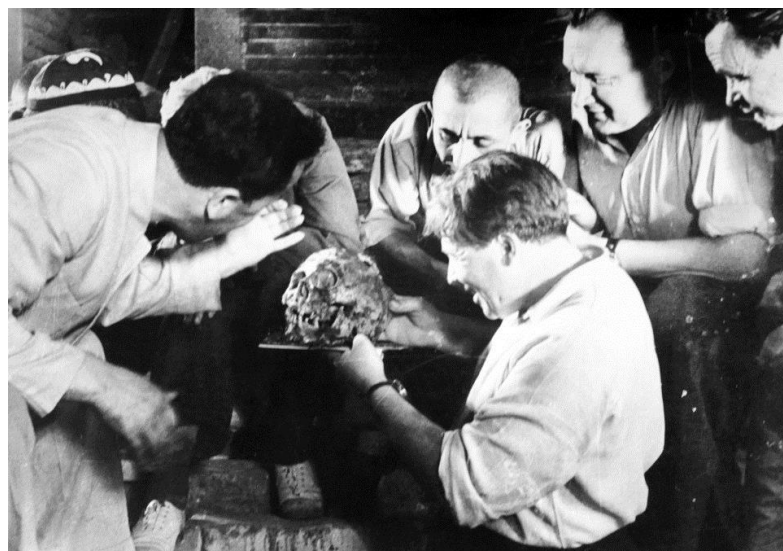
³ Rbedrosian.com. (2018). Armenia and the Turco-Mongol Invasions. [online] Available at: <http://rbedrosian.com/atmi4.htm> [Accessed 19 Nov. 2018].

⁴ Ibn Arabshah, Tamerlane the Great Amir, 168.

- **Tamerlane was a conqueror, not a governor** (he spent his entire adult life planning and executing military campaigns). He did not create an imperial administration but, rather, ruled through tribal leaders who were his allies. He appointed overlords in the territories he conquered, but they relied on existing bureaucratic structures and simply received the taxes and tributes on Tamerlane's behalf.
- Given its loose organization, it is not surprising that Tamerlane's empire experienced stresses and strains after the conqueror's death. Tamerlane's sons and grandsons engaged in a long series of bitter conflicts that resulted in the contraction of the empire. It would ultimately dissolve into:
 - The Mughal Empire
 - The Safavid Empire
- Stalin was fascinated by both Chinggis Khan and Tamerlane. While Soviet's could not locate Chinggis Khan's tomb, Tamerlane's body was exhumed from his tomb on 19 June 1941 by Soviet anthropologists.



- It is alleged that Tamerlane's tomb was inscribed with the words, "When I rise from the dead, the world shall tremble." It is also said that when the Soviets exhumed the body, an additional inscription inside the casket was found, which read, "Whomsoever opens my tomb shall unleash an invader more terrible than I." Three days after Gerasimov began the exhumation, Adolf Hitler launched Operation Barbarossa, the largest military invasion of all time, upon the Soviet Union. Tamerlane was re-buried with full Islamic ritual in November 1942 just before the Soviet victory at the Battle of Stalingrad.⁵



Soviet Anthropologists Examining Tamerlane's Skull

⁵ Mishkov, A. (2018). How The Curse of Tamerlane's Tomb changed the course of World War II. [online] DocumentaryTube.com. Available at: <http://www.documentarytube.com/articles/how-the-curse-of-Tamerlane-s-tomb-changed-the-course-of-world-war-ii> [Accessed 19 Nov. 2018].