Annual climate during the rise and fall of the Great Mongol Empire: Rapid collection of an ancient and endangered paleoclimate resource

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Abstract – This proposal seeks funding to secure paleoclimate data necessary to place the rise and fall of the Great Mongol Empire in an annual, climatic context. Longstanding speculation is that drought during the 13th century was a major driver in leading the Mongols to conquer Asia and Eastern Europe. Our preliminary record indicates the opposite: the rise of the Mongols occurred during an extended, warm and wet pluvial. We hypothesize that this climatic optimum led to high grassland productivity and Mongol expansion. To test this hypothesis, we will reconstruct drought and grassland productivity, the basis of energy and carrying capacity for the Mongolian herding culture, over the last 2k years. However, ***due to ecotourism and wildfire pressures, it is urgent that we complete collection of this record before it is destroyed.***