

HMDC Presents... CRISIS - MONGOL 1225: Full Report

HMDC Presents... Mongol Empire 1225: Death of Genghis Khan (Research Report, December 2026)

Prepared for HMDC Forensics delegates attending Harvard Model United Nations Online, December 5-6, 2026. Every fact below comes from a page or official document that was opened and read in October 2026. Each evidence entry repeats its publication and date so the source is always visible.

This is a historical crisis committee. The real history of 1225-1229 is the foundation, but the committee staff will invent events. In this report, anything that did not happen is clearly marked **CRISIS INVENTION** so that no delegate mistakes an invented scenario for history. Parts 2 and 3 also include brief modern parallels, clearly marked **MODERN PARALLEL**, because the United Nations did not exist in 1225.

A note on names: the same person appears in sources as Genghis Khan, Chinggis Khan or Čengiz Khan. His sons appear as Jochi (Jöchi, Joči), Chagatai (Chaghatai), Ögedei (Ögödei, Ogodei) and Tolui (Toluy). These are different spellings of the same names.

WHAT OUR CHAIRS WILL FOCUS ON

Harvard tells us that in December we sit as members of the Mongol Empire in 1225, at the moment when Genghis Khan is close to death. The empire is huge, but it has two weak points that Harvard names directly: keeping the family and the army united, and finding a steady way to pass power to the next ruler. As delegates, we will face growing threats to the empire and decide which direction it takes next. Harvard asks us to work together to keep the Mongols in power while we shape the empire's "political, economic, and military institutions."

Harvard Model United Nations, HMUN Online Committee Page, Last Accessed: October 2026
<https://www.harvardmun.org/mongol-online>

The parts of this report that match that focus most closely are the **TIMELINE**, the **CRISIS INVENTION BOX**, 1A (the succession and unity entries), Major Solutions 1 to 5 in 1B to 1F, 2H (the factions of the Mongol court) and 3A to 3C (envoys, the postal relay network and trade).

How we use this report: Our first job is succession and unity, so we study 1B to 1D and 2H until we can defend one plan for who rules next and how the family stays together. Next we prepare ideas for the empire's institutions: taxes and trade in 1E and 3A to 3C, and law, writing and army units in 1F. The modern United Nations material in Part 2 (2A to 2G) and in 3D and 3E, along with the DNA and climate entries in 1A, is background only, because none of it can be used inside a committee set in 1225. We read it once for understanding, but we spend our practice time on the 1225 court.

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INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING THE TOPIC

In 1206, an assembly of Mongol nobles gave the leader Temujin the title Chinggis Khan. Over the next twenty years he united the steppe tribes and led them against the Tangut kingdom of Xi Xia, the Jin dynasty of North China and the Khwarazmian empire of Central Asia. By 1225 he ruled the core of what would become the largest connected land empire in history. He was about 63 years old, and he had four sons who mattered for the succession: Jochi, Chagatai, Ögedei and Tolui.

The central problem of this committee is succession. Chinggis Khan built an empire held together by personal loyalty to himself, not by a fixed rule for who rules next. His eldest son Jochi had fallen out with him. His second son Chagatai would later be remembered as a just and energetic ruler. His third son Ögedei was easy-going and fond of trade. His youngest son Tolui was known as the keeper of the family homeland. When a ruler like this dies, the question is not only who becomes the next khan, but whether the empire survives at all.

Delegates represent members of the Mongol court in 1225. They must decide how power passes, how the conquered lands are governed, what happens to the campaigns still under way, and how the empire treats the many peoples inside it.

TIMELINE: WHAT REALLY HAPPENED, 1218-1229

The dates below come from the evidence entries in this report. Some sources disagree on details, and those disagreements are noted.

1. **1218:** The governor of Otrar, a city of the Khwarazmian empire, has a Mongol merchant caravan killed and robbed; the Khwarazm-shah then executes a Mongol envoy who came to protest (Encyclopaedia Iranica).
2. **1219:** Chinggis Khan invades Central Asia; in the campaign that follows, Bukhara and Samarkand are sacked (Encyclopaedia Iranica; Columbia University).
3. **About 1221:** Tension grows between Chinggis Khan and Jochi; from 1222 Jochi stays out of his father's battles (Encyclopaedia Britannica).
4. **1223 or 1225:** Chinggis Khan leaves Central Asia for home. Encyclopaedia Iranica gives 1223 for his departure from the Islamic world; Columbia University gives 1225 for leaving Central Asia. Unlike earlier campaigns, he leaves troops behind to occupy the conquered land (Columbia University).
5. **1226-1227:** Chinggis Khan leads his last campaign, against the Tangut kingdom of Xi Xia (Encyclopaedia Iranica).
6. **February 1227:** Jochi dies, about six months before his father (Encyclopaedia Britannica).
7. **August 18, 1227:** Chinggis Khan dies during the Tangut campaign (Encyclopaedia Britannica; Iranica says "late summer"). Xi Xia is conquered the same year (Encyclopaedia Britannica).
8. **1227-1229:** Tolui serves as regent (Encyclopaedia Britannica).
9. **1229:** Ögedei, whom his father had chosen before his death, becomes Great Khan (Columbia University; Encyclopaedia Britannica).

CRISIS INVENTION BOX: WHAT THE COMMITTEE STAFF MIGHT ADD

Everything in this box is **CRISIS INVENTION**. None of it is history. It is here to help delegates prepare for the kinds of surprises a crisis committee may present.

1. **CRISIS INVENTION:** Chinggis Khan falls ill in 1225, years earlier than he really died, and the court must plan for his death while he is still alive.
2. **CRISIS INVENTION:** Jochi, still alive in the committee's timeline, refuses to accept Ögedei and threatens to rule the western lands independently.
3. **CRISIS INVENTION:** A rival claimant from outside the four sons, such as one of Chinggis Khan's brothers, demands a share of power.
4. **CRISIS INVENTION:** The Tangut king offers surrender on terms the court must accept or reject.
5. **CRISIS INVENTION:** News of the khan's death leaks early, and conquered cities in Central Asia rise in revolt.

Delegates should build their arguments on the real evidence below and then apply it to whatever events the committee presents.

PART 1, THE TOPIC

1A. THE HARMS

The harms of this crisis fall on three groups. First, the conquered peoples, in Central Asia, Iran and the Tangut kingdom, suffered mass killing and the destruction of their cities and farms. Second, the Mongol people themselves faced the risk of civil war, because their empire had no fixed rule of succession. Third, everyone who depended on the empire's stability, from traders to farmers, would be hurt if the empire broke apart, which is what eventually happened by 1260.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, Last Accessed: October 2026: The Mongol Empire covered about 9 million square miles at its height

Tagline: Measuring the largest land empire

Source: According to... Encyclopaedia Britannica, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Mongol-empire>

Fact: It states... The Mongol Empire was founded by Genghis Khan in 1206 and lasted in various forms until 1368. At its greatest extent it stretched from the Pacific Ocean to the Danube River and the Persian Gulf, covering about 9 million square miles, the largest connected land empire in history.

This means... The decision this committee makes about succession affects a territory and a population far larger than any one kingdom. A failed succession could harm millions of people across Asia and Europe.

Encyclopaedia Iranica, December 15, 1990: Contemporary writers described the people of Khorasan killed "in the millions"

Tagline: Destroying the cities of Khorasan

Source: According to... Encyclopaedia Iranica, December 15, 1990

Link: <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/cengiz-khan>

Fact: It states... Khorasan (in modern Iran, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan) was devastated by forces under Chinggis Khan's youngest son, Tolui. Writers of the time described its cities as razed and its people massacred "in the millions"; one gave 1,747,000 dead at Nishapur and 1,600,000 at Herat. The article warns that these numbers should not be taken literally, because no one was really counting, but stresses that the scale of death was beyond anything people had known. The long-term damage may have been worse: underground irrigation channels (qanats) decayed as farmers fled, and farmland could be lost quickly.

This means... The conquests left whole regions in ruins. The court must decide whether to keep ruling by terror, which destroys the wealth it hopes to collect, or to rebuild the lands it already holds.

Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026: The Central Asian campaign was the most devastating, with mass slaughter on both sides

Tagline: Slaughtering on both sides

Source: According to... Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/conquests/conquests_2c.htm

Fact: It states... Chinggis Khan personally led three invasions, each linked to an economic dispute. The third, against Central Asia from 1219, began as revenge for the murder of his envoys and was the most devastating of his campaigns. Both sides engaged in mass slaughter, and the conquest took several years. When he left Central Asia in 1225, he did not withdraw all his forces, as he had before, but left Mongol troops to occupy the conquered lands.

This means... By 1225 the Mongols were no longer only raiders; they were occupiers who had to govern. The court must decide who will rule these occupied lands and how.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, Last Accessed: October 2026: The Tangut kingdom of Xi Xia ended in 1227

Tagline: Ending the Tangut kingdom

Source: According to... Encyclopaedia Britannica, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Xi-Xia>

Fact: It states... Xi Xia (Western Xia) was a kingdom of Tibetan-speaking Tangut tribes founded in 1038 in what are now the Chinese provinces of Gansu and Shaanxi. Its rulers created their own writing system and made Buddhism the state religion. For about two centuries it kept a three-way balance with the Song and Liao. It was conquered by Genghis Khan's forces in 1227.

This means... A kingdom with its own script and culture, almost two hundred years old, came to an end in the same year Chinggis Khan died. Delegates must decide how to treat the Tangut people after the war: as enemies to punish or as subjects to govern.

Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026: Chinggis Khan left no orderly system of succession

Tagline: Leaving no succession system

Source: According to... Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/conquests/conquests_2d.htm

Fact: It states... When Chinggis Khan died, he did not leave an orderly system of succession, nor any principle other than personal loyalty to one figure, as a basis for the confederation. The confederation rested on the personal loyalty of tribal and other chiefs; it did not extend to a Mongol nation or a Mongol ethnic identity. So each new khan had to rebuild these personal relationships.

This means... This is the heart of the crisis. Without a rule, every succession becomes a contest, and every chief may switch loyalty. The committee's main task is to create a rule, or a process, that the whole court will accept.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, Last Accessed: October 2026: Jochi was estranged from his father from about 1221 and died in February 1227

Tagline: Breaking between father and eldest son

Source: According to... Encyclopaedia Britannica, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jochi>

Fact: It states... Jochi received a vassal kingdom (ulus), with its domain and personal estates, in the western part of the empire. Tensions with his father arose around 1221, for reasons that are not clear. From 1222 until his death he stayed out of his father's battles, though he joined a 1223 attack on the Volga Bulgars. Genghis Khan may have suspected a plot, but Jochi died in February 1227, about six months before his father, before anything happened. His sons Orda and Batu later founded the White Horde and the Golden Horde.

This means... In 1225, the eldest son is alive, powerful in the west and distant from his father. Delegates must decide whether to bring Jochi back into the family's decisions or prepare for the possibility that he refuses to accept them.

Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026: After Ögedei died in 1241, disputes over succession lasted 19 years

Tagline: Stalling the empire for nineteen years

Source: According to... Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/conquests/conquests_3.htm

Fact: It states... By 1241, Mongol troops had reached Hungary but had to withdraw that year because of the death of Ögedei, the Great Khan. The Mongol elite returned to Mongolia to choose a new Great Khan but could not reach agreement. For the next 19 years there were disputes over which of Chinggis Khan's descendants deserved to be Great Khan.

This means... History shows what happens when the succession question is left open: armies stop, and the family fights. Delegates have the chance to design a rule that prevents this.

Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026: By 1260 the empire had split into four separate parts

Tagline: Splitting the empire into four

Source: According to... Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/conquests/conquests_4.htm

Fact: It states... By 1260, struggles over succession and leadership had led to a gradual breakdown of the Mongol Empire. Because the tribe was the basic social unit, loyalty beyond the tribe was hard to build. Some Mongols wanted to adopt the institutions of the settled peoples they ruled; traditionalists wanted to keep the nomadic way of life. The empire split into four parts: China and Mongolia under Khubilai Khan, Central Asia, the Ilkhanate in West Asia, and the Golden Horde in Russia, and some of these parts fought one another.

This means... Two problems broke the empire: unclear succession, and disagreement over whether to govern like settled states or stay nomadic. The committee can address both.

Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, March 25, 2014: The Mongol rise coincided with 15 straight wet years, unprecedented in 1,112 years

Tagline: Depending on unusual wet years

Source: According to... Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, March 25, 2014

Link: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3970536/>

Fact: It states... Scientists from Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory and partner institutions used a 1,112-year tree-ring record from central Mongolia. They found that the climate during Chinggis Khan's conquests was warm and persistently wet, with 15 consecutive years of above-average moisture, a pattern not seen in the last 1,112 years. They propose that this helped grasslands grow, which fed the horses and herds that powered Mongol political and military strength. The same study found that the early 21st-century drought in central Mongolia was the hottest drought in that 1,112-year record.

This means... The empire's power rested on grass and animals. If the weather turned dry, herds and armies would weaken. A wise court would plan for hard years, not assume the favourable weather of the conquest era would continue.

American Journal of Human Genetics, January 17, 2003: About 8% of men in a large region of Asia carry one male line linked to Chinggis Khan

Tagline: Multiplying the royal male line

Source: According to... American Journal of Human Genetics, January 17, 2003

Link: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1180246/>

Fact: It states... Researchers from Oxford and partner institutions found a Y-chromosome line in 16 populations from the Pacific to the Caspian Sea, carried by about 8% of men in that region, or about 0.5% of all men in the world. It appears to have started in Mongolia about 1,000 years ago and spread too fast to be chance. The researchers propose that it is carried by likely male-line descendants of Genghis Khan.

This means... Chinggis Khan's family grew very large over the generations. Each generation adds more princes with a possible claim to rule, so a clear rule about who may inherit becomes more urgent over time, not less.

Smithsonian Magazine, March 3, 2026: New ancient DNA from Golden Horde tombs questions the "1 in 200 men" claim

Tagline: Questioning the royal male line

Source: According to... Smithsonian Magazine, March 3, 2026

Link: <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/are-1-in-200-men-alive-today-really-related-to-genghis-khan-probably-not-according-to-new-research-180988282/>

Fact: It states... A study published in the journal PNAS in 2026, led by a researcher at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, studied ancient DNA from four people (three men and one woman) buried in mausoleums in Kazakhstan who are thought to be high-ranking members of the Golden Horde. All four traced their ancestry to the Mongolian plateau, and the three men came from the same male line. Their Y-chromosome belongs to the large "C3*" family that the 2003 study linked to Chinggis Khan, but the new study finds that this family had already split into many branches by his time. The researchers say they cannot tell which branch, if any, is his until his burial site is found.

This means... Even scientists disagree about how far Chinggis Khan's family really spread. Delegates should treat the "1 in 200 men" figure as a debated estimate, not a fact, while still noting that the Golden Horde's rulers did come from the Mongol homeland.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, September 21, 2026: Massacre was a weapon Chinggis Khan used regularly, even against cities that surrendered

Tagline: Using terror as a weapon

Source: According to... Encyclopaedia Britannica, September 21, 2026

Link: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Genghis-Khan/Legacy>

Fact: It states... Massacres were weapons that Chinggis Khan used regularly. He often ordered the methodical killing of the people of cities that refused to surrender, as a form of psychological warfare meant to frighten the next city into giving up. Mongol agents spread threats and promises to weaken enemy garrisons before battle. The article adds that massacre was sometimes carried out for its own sake, and that at Balkh the people were killed even though the city surrendered quickly, for tactical reasons.

This means... Terror helped the Mongols win quickly, but it also killed the farmers, craftsmen and taxpayers the empire would later need. The new khan must decide whether terror stays official policy or whether cities that surrender will be spared.

Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026: The commanders of ten thousand men were bound to Chinggis Khan personally

Tagline: Tying commanders to one man

Source: According to... Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/conquests/conquests_2b.htm

Fact: It states... Chinggis Khan organised his people on the principle of ten, in units of 10, 100, 1,000 and 10,000. The commanders of the largest units, of ten thousand men, had a strong personal relationship with Chinggis Khan himself, and this loyalty was key both to his rise and to keeping control over the many parts of his empire. In battle, his troops used tactics such as pretending to retreat to draw enemies into a trap.

This means... The empire's greatest generals were loyal to one man, not to an office. When he dies, every one of these commanders must decide whom to follow next, which makes winning over the generals one of the first tasks of any successor.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, Last Accessed: October 2026: Batu pulled his army back from Europe in 1241 to take part in choosing a new khan

Tagline: Halting the march into Europe

Source: According to... Encyclopaedia Britannica, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Batu-Mongol-ruler>

Fact: It states... Batu, a grandson of Chinggis Khan, was chosen in 1235 as commander of the western part of the empire and led the invasion of Europe. By 1240 he had conquered Russia, and in April 1241 Mongol armies defeated forces in Silesia and Hungary. When Batu learned that the Great Khan Ögedei had died in December 1241, he withdrew his army to take part in choosing a successor. Britannica says this probably saved western Europe from devastation. Batu went on to found the Golden Horde in southern Russia.

This means... Every succession in this empire pulls its armies home, because princes must be present to choose the next khan. A clear rule that does not require every prince to travel back could keep campaigns and government running when a khan dies.

1B. MAJOR SOLUTION 1: CONFIRM ÖGEDEI THROUGH A KURILTAI

The first major solution is to follow Chinggis Khan's own choice of his third son, Ögedei, and confirm it publicly at a kuriltai, the great assembly of Mongol nobles. This is close to what really happened. The advantage is that it combines the dying ruler's wish with the approval of the nobles, which gives the new khan legitimacy. The disadvantage is that it does not solve the deeper problem: Ögedei must still win the personal loyalty of every chief, and his older brothers' families may feel passed over.

Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026: Before his death, Chinggis Khan chose Ögedei, his third son

Tagline: Choosing the third son

Source: According to... Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/conquests/conquests_2d.htm

Fact: It states... Chinggis Khan had four sons, and before his death he chose the third, Ögedei, to be his successor. Ögedei oversaw the greatest expansion of the Mongol Empire during his 12-year reign (1229-1241), moving into Russia, Georgia and Armenia, destroying the Jin dynasty by 1234 and occupying all of China north of the Yangtze River.

This means... Choosing the third son, not the eldest, broke the simple rule of "oldest first". Delegates must decide whether a ruler's personal choice should be enough, or whether the family and nobles must also agree.

Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026: A kuriltai of nobles gave Temujin the title Chinggis Khan in 1206

Tagline: Granting authority through assembly

Source: According to... Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/figures/figu_geng_unity.htm

Fact: It states... Many historians believe that uniting the Mongols, rather than the later conquests, was Chinggis Khan's greatest achievement, since it meant bringing many separate tribes into one confederation loyal to him. In 1206 a khuriltai, an assembly of the Mongol nobility, gave him the title "Chinggis Khan". The title showed that the nobles accepted his leadership and promised their loyalty.

This means... The Mongols already had a tradition of choosing leaders through an assembly. Delegates can argue that a new khan is legitimate only when a kuriltai confirms him, which spreads responsibility for the choice across the whole elite.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, August 1, 2026: A kuriltai elected the new khan by custom, and the oldest surviving son was passed over

Tagline: Electing by traditional custom

Source: According to... Encyclopaedia Britannica, August 1, 2026

Link: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Mongol-empire/The-period-of-relative-unity-1227-60>

Fact: It states... After Chinggis Khan's death, a kuriltai, a general assembly of Mongol nobles, was called to elect the new Great Khan according to traditional custom. Britannica says the Mongols usually followed the rule that the eldest son inherits, but Jochi had died six months before his father, and Chagatai, the oldest surviving son, was passed over. Ögedei was appointed Great Khan and ruled from 1229 to 1241, with the Khitan statesman Yelü Chucai as his chief adviser and Chinkai, a Kerait Nestorian Christian, at the head of his writing office.

This means... The 1229 choice broke the usual "eldest first" pattern, and the kuriltai made that break acceptable. Delegates who support a kuriltai can argue that an assembly is the only body strong enough to set aside a custom without starting a war.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, September 21, 2026: Chinggis Khan chose Ögedei "with great care" and made sure his other sons would obey him

Tagline: Choosing an heir with great care

Source: According to... Encyclopaedia Britannica, September 21, 2026

Link: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Genghis-Khan/Legacy>

Fact: It states... Chinggis Khan chose his successor, his son Ögedei, with great care, and made sure that his other sons would accept Ögedei's authority. He handed on an army and a state "in full vigour", so the empire was not weakened by his death. The article adds that his successors went further than he did by trying to join their conquests into a tightly organised empire, something he perhaps never really planned.

This means... **ADVANTAGE:** A ruler who names his heir early, and gets his other sons to agree while he is still alive, gives the empire a smooth handover. Delegates can argue that the court's first task in 1225 is to secure these promises before the khan dies, not after.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, Last Accessed: October 2026: Ögedei became the first Mongol ruler to call himself khagan and built Karakorum

Tagline: Building Karakorum and expanding

Source: According to... Encyclopaedia Britannica, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ogodei>

Fact: It states... Ögedei (1185-1241), the third son of Genghis Khan, succeeded his father in 1229. He was the first Mongol ruler to call himself "khagan" (great khan). He built the capital Karakorum on a site his father had chosen. He ran several campaigns at once through generals acting on his orders, supported by a messenger system across most of Asia. With help from the Song dynasty, the Mongols took the Jin capital at Kaifeng in 1234.

This means... The historical choice of Ögedei led to a period of growth and new institutions. Delegates who support this solution can point to these results.

Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026: Rashid al-Din described Ögedei as easy-going and fond of drink

Tagline: Drinking at the top

Source: According to... Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/figures/figu_ogo.htm

Fact: It states... The Persian historian Rashid al-Din portrayed Ögedei as an easy-going, fun-loving ruler who drank heavily, and whose policies supported trade, merchants and crafts. Ögedei is credited with building the first Mongol capital at Karakorum, creating the first regular system of taxation in conquered lands, and recruiting Muslims to help run the empire's finances. Encyclopaedia Britannica adds that Ögedei later died during a drinking bout in 1241.

This means... The heir's personal habits matter when everything depends on one person. Delegates who oppose or question this solution can argue that the empire needs institutions that work even if the khan is weak.

1C. MAJOR SOLUTION 2: A REGENCY UNDER TOLUI, KEEPER OF THE HOMELAND

The second major solution is to place power temporarily in the hands of a regent while the family gathers to choose the next khan. Tolui, the youngest son, was the natural candidate, because he held the ancestral homeland and was known as its guardian. The advantage is that a regency keeps the empire running and gives time for the family to gather from distant lands. The disadvantage is that a regent with an army may become a rival, and a long delay can let quarrels grow.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, July 14, 2026: Tolui, "guardian of the hearth", was regent from 1227 to 1229

Tagline: Guarding the hearth as regent

Source: According to... Encyclopaedia Britannica, July 14, 2026

Link: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Tolui>

Fact: It states... Tolui was the youngest son of Genghis Khan. He received the ancestral Mongol homeland in eastern Mongolia and was known as the "guardian of the hearth and fire". After Genghis Khan died, Tolui served as regent from 1227 to 1229, and then Ögedei was chosen as Great Khan. Tolui died in 1232. His wife was Sorghaghtani Beki, and their sons were Möngke, Kublai, Hülegü and Ariq Böke. Later, a council of Genghis Khan's descendants elected Möngke as Great Khan, which moved power to Tolui's branch of the family.

This means... A regency worked in 1227-1229, but power later moved to the regent's own children. Delegates must decide whether a regent should be barred from the throne, or whether the most powerful family member should simply rule.

1D. MAJOR SOLUTION 3: DIVIDE THE EMPIRE INTO FAMILY DOMAINS (ULUS)

The third major solution is to give each son his own domain, called an ulus, while one Great Khan stays at the centre. This is partly what really happened. The advantage is that each branch of the family has its own land to govern, which reduces fights over a single throne. The disadvantage is that, over time, the domains grew into separate states that sometimes fought each other.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, Last Accessed: October 2026: Chagatai received Kashgaria and most of Transoxania

Tagline: Granting Central Asia to Chagatai

Source: According to... Encyclopaedia Britannica, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Chagatai>

Fact: It states... Chagatai, the second son of Genghis Khan, received Kashgaria (southern Xinjiang, China) and most of Transoxania as a vassal kingdom when his father died. His capital was Almarikh, near present-day Yining. He ruled justly and energetically for about 14 years and died in 1241.

This means... Giving each son land of his own was part of the historical settlement. Delegates must decide how much independence each domain should have, and what each owes to the Great Khan.

Encyclopaedia Iranica, December 15, 2001: Jochi's descendants founded the Golden Horde, which later fell into civil war

Tagline: Founding the Golden Horde

Source: According to... Encyclopaedia Iranica, December 15, 2001

Link: <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/golden-horde>

Fact: It states... The Golden Horde was a Mongol khanate ruled by descendants of Jochi, the eldest son of Chinggis Khan. Its core, the steppe north of the Black and Caspian Seas, was conquered in 1236-1240 by an army under Jochi's son Batu, its first khan. Batu's line ruled until about 1360. After it died out, the Golden Horde fell into a long civil war between rival khans, and in the 15th century it broke into smaller states.

This means... Even Jochi, who was estranged from his father, founded a lasting state through his sons. But the same succession problem returned inside the Golden Horde. A domain system moves the problem lower down; it does not remove it.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, October 1, 2003: At its largest, the empire was divided into four main branches

Tagline: Naming the four later branches

Source: According to... Metropolitan Museum of Art, October 1, 2003

Link: https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/khan1/hd_khan1.htm

Fact: It states... About two generations after Genghis Khan, the Mongol Empire was divided into four main branches: the Yuan dynasty in China, founded by his grandson Khubilai Khan and holding the Great Khan's title; the Chagatai khanate in Central Asia (about 1227-1363); the Golden Horde in southern Russia (about 1227-1502); and the Ilkhanid dynasty in greater Iran (1256-1353).

This means... The domain system eventually produced four separate empires, some lasting centuries. Delegates can argue that this was a success (each branch survived) or a failure (the united empire did not).

Encyclopaedia Britannica, September 1, 2026: Each son held a vassal kingdom, and "further fission was inevitable"

Tagline: Dividing the lands among four sons

Source: According to... Encyclopaedia Britannica, September 1, 2026

Link: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Mongolia/The-successor-states-of-the-Mongol-empire>

Fact: It states... Each of Chinggis Khan's four sons was to hold a vassal kingdom. Jochi, the eldest, received the lands to the west, "as far as the hooves of Mongol horses have reached"; Chagatai received Kashgaria and most of the land between the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers; Ögedei received western Mongolia and the Tarbagatai region; and Tolui, the youngest, inherited the homeland in eastern Mongolia. In 1229 a great assembly confirmed Ögedei as Great Khan; Britannica explains that, by nomadic tradition, a dying ruler could name the son seen as ablest and most acceptable to his brothers. It adds that, with this first division, further splitting was inevitable.

This means... **DISADVANTAGE:** Dividing the empire keeps the peace between brothers today but plants the seeds of separate states tomorrow. Delegates who support domains should also propose limits, such as shared armies or shared taxes, that keep each domain tied to the Great Khan.

University of Wisconsin-Madison, February 19, 2026: DNA from Golden Horde tombs shows Mongol rulers blending with local culture

Tagline: Blending with local cultures in the west

Source: According to... University of Wisconsin-Madison News, February 19, 2026

Link: <https://news.wisc.edu/dna-analysis-provides-insight-into-mongol-empires-genetics-and-integration-with-local-cultures/>

Fact: It states... Researchers studied ancient DNA from four tombs of Golden Horde ruling elites in present-day Kazakhstan; local tradition says one of them belongs to Jochi, the founder of the Golden Horde. The team calls this the first ancient DNA evidence of the ancestry of the Golden Horde's rulers, and found that all four traced their ancestry back to the Mongolian plateau. The other three tombs give evidence of Mongol cultural practices blending with local culture.

This means... The rulers of Jochi's western domain stayed Mongol by family, yet began to mix their customs with those of the people they ruled. Delegates can use this to argue that a domain far from the homeland will slowly develop its own identity, which may weaken its loyalty to the Great Khan.

1E. MAJOR SOLUTION 4: GOVERN BY TAXATION INSTEAD OF DESTRUCTION

The fourth major solution is to change how conquered lands are treated: tax farmers and merchants instead of killing them. The advantage is steady income and a population that can supply skills and soldiers. The disadvantage is that many traditional Mongols distrusted settled ways of life and wanted grazing land, not farms and cities.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, Last Accessed: October 2026: Yelü Chucai persuaded Ögedei to spare North China

Tagline: Sparing North China for taxes

Source: According to... Encyclopaedia Britannica, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Yelu-Chucai>

Fact: It states... Yelü Chucai (1190-1244), a statesman of Khitan origin, advised both Genghis Khan and Ögedei. He set up a formal bureaucracy and a more systematic tax system for the Mongol-ruled parts of China. He persuaded Ögedei to spare the population of northern China so the Mongols could use its wealth and skills, which also gave them access to Chinese weapons that later helped them conquer the Song dynasty.

This means... An adviser from a conquered people changed Mongol policy and saved many lives. Delegates can argue that the court should listen to such advisers, while traditionalist delegates may argue that outsiders should not shape Mongol rule.

Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026: Ögedei created the first regular taxation in conquered lands

Tagline: Organising regular taxation

Source: According to... Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/figures/figu_ogo.htm

Fact: It states... Among Ögedei's achievements were building the first Mongol capital at Karakorum, creating the first regular and orderly system of taxation in newly conquered territories, and recruiting Muslims to help run the empire's finances.

This means... A regular tax system turned conquest into government. Delegates can propose that the next khan's first duty is to organise the conquered lands, not to start new wars.

Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026: Mongol rulers hired Muslim outsiders as tax collectors and administrators

Tagline: Hiring outsiders to run finances

Source: According to... Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/history/history7_a.htm

Fact: It states... The Mongols recruited many Muslims to help rule China, especially in financial administration, and Muslims often served as tax collectors and administrators. The page explains that the Mongol rulers could not rely only on the conquered Chinese, so they needed outsiders. They also invited Persian astronomers and doctors, who helped build an observatory, improve the calendar and set up an "Office for Muslim Medicine".

This means... These examples come from the later Yuan period in China, but they show a lasting Mongol method: rule a conquered people with the help of skilled outsiders whose loyalty is to the khan. **ADVANTAGE:** taxes are collected by experts. **DISADVANTAGE:** the conquered people may resent foreign tax collectors, so delegates should plan how to keep taxation fair.

1F. MAJOR SOLUTION 5: STRENGTHEN LAW, WRITING AND RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

The fifth major solution is to strengthen the institutions that hold the empire together beyond one person: a written script, a body of law and a policy of religious tolerance. The advantage is that these institutions can survive the death of any ruler. The disadvantage is that historians disagree on how formal Mongol law really was, and many peoples in the empire did not share Mongol customs.

Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026: Tolerance, a written script, support for trade and a legal code

Tagline: Leaving four great legacies

Source: According to... Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/figures/figu_geng_legacy.htm

Fact: It states... Chinggis Khan's four great legacies were: religious tolerance, including tax relief for Buddhist monasteries and other religious institutions; the first Mongol written language, which he ordered in 1204 based on the Uyghur script; support for trade and crafts; and a legal code called the Jasagh (also spelled Yasa), a set of general moral rules and laws with punishments, especially for nomadic society.

This means... The empire already had some tools that did not depend on one person. Delegates can propose expanding them, for example writing down the succession rule in the Mongol script so it cannot be disputed later.

Encyclopaedia Iranica, December 15, 1990: Historians now doubt that Chinggis Khan wrote a formal law code

Tagline: Doubting a written law code

Source: According to... Encyclopaedia Iranica, December 15, 1990

Link: <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/cengiz-khan>

Fact: It states... The article says it no longer seems possible to credit Chinggis Khan with creating a written legal code (the "great yasa"); Mongol law of the time appears to have been more customary and case-by-case. The army was organised in the usual steppe way on a decimal system, and because all adult men were in effect soldiers, Chinggis Khan could call up an unusually large share of his people. He relied on Uyghur and Khitan administrators.

This means... Sources disagree about how formal Mongol law was. A delegate who claims "the Yasa clearly says" something about succession may be on weak ground, so it is safer to argue that the court should create a clear written rule now.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, September 21, 2026: In 1206 Chinggis Khan replaced tribes and clans with units given to loyal companions

Tagline: Replacing tribes with loyal units

Source: According to... Encyclopaedia Britannica, September 21, 2026

Link: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Genghis-Khan/Rise-to-power>

Fact: It states... In 1206 a great assembly by the Onon River proclaimed Temujin as Genghis Khan, a title that probably meant "Universal Ruler". He planned to give thousands of families to his relatives and companions, replacing the old pattern of tribes and clans. His troops were organised on the decimal system and strictly disciplined, and his generals were his own sons or men he had chosen who were completely loyal to him. Britannica says his harsh methods aimed to crush clan loyalties and unite the nomads in personal obedience to his family.

This means... Chinggis Khan already replaced one old institution, the tribe, with a new one that he designed. Delegates can argue that the court now has the same power to design a new institution: a written rule of succession that the whole family must obey.

Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026: Chinggis Khan broke up tribes so that loyalty went to him, not to tribal chiefs

Tagline: Breaking up the old tribes

Source: According to... Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/conquests/conquests_2a.htm

Fact: It states... Hardship in his youth taught Chinggis Khan that survival depended on friendly relations and allies, which he sealed through "anda" blood-brother bonds. He saw tribal loyalty as a weakness, because loyalty inside a tribe went to the tribal leader rather than to him. So he tried to turn tribal identity into a wider Mongol identity, and when a tribe joined him, he spread its members across different units so they would not stay under their own leaders.

This means... The empire's unity was built on purpose, by moving people away from their old chiefs. If the court does not keep this system working after 1227, the old tribal loyalties may return and split the empire.

Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026: The Mongols tolerated every faith and gave tax benefits to its clergy

Tagline: Courting the clergy of every faith

Source: According to... Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/history/history7.htm>

Fact: It states... Although the Mongols themselves followed shamanism, they decided early on that forcing their own religion on their subjects would work against them. Instead they courted leading foreign clergy to help them govern newly conquered lands, and offered those clergy tax benefits. The page names Buddhism, Islam, Daoism and Nestorian Christianity among the faiths they supported, and quotes Marco Polo's account of Khubilai Khan saying "I do honor and reverence to all four" major faiths.

This means... **ADVANTAGE:** Tolerance turned religious leaders into partners of Mongol rule instead of leaders of revolt. Delegates can argue that keeping this policy steady during the succession is one of the cheapest ways to keep conquered peoples calm.

1G. LESSER SOLUTIONS

These ideas are smaller in scope, but delegates may add them to a directive or plan.

1. **Keeping the khan's death secret for a time:** Columbia University records a legend that the funeral was hidden and the grave concealed (see the Death of Chinggis Khan page linked below). Secrecy could prevent revolts while the family gathers. This is historical legend, not confirmed fact.
 - Link: https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/figures/figu_geng_death.htm
2. **Protecting trade routes and merchants:** keeping the relay stations and trade policies running during the transition (see Part 3).
3. **Bringing conquered soldiers into the army:** Columbia University notes that the Mongols succeeded partly by including loyal conquered peoples, especially Turkic groups such as the Uyghurs, in their armies.
4. **Planning for drought:** storing resources for dry years, since the conquests coincided with unusually wet weather (see the PNAS entry in 1A).
5. **Limiting heavy drinking at court:** Columbia University notes that one scholar partly blames the empire's fall on alcoholism among its leaders.

PART 2, THE UNITED NATIONS RECORD (MODERN PARALLELS)

The United Nations was founded in 1945, more than seven hundred years after this committee's events, so it has no record on the death of Chinggis Khan itself. This part briefly explains the closest **MODERN PARALLELS**: how the UN today deals with mass killing, the destruction of cities and heritage, the protection of envoys, and the modern state of Mongolia. Delegates should not cite modern law as if it applied in 1225, but these parallels can help them understand why the committee's choices matter.

2A. TABLE OF UN RESOLUTIONS AND INSTRUMENTS

Every symbol below was confirmed on an official UN site (documents.un.org, undocs.org, un.org, legal.un.org or unesco.org); each resolution was rechecked against the official UN document on October 14, 2026.

Symbol	Year	Body	What it does
A/RES/260 (III)	1948	General Assembly	Adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.
1954 Hague Convention (UNESCO instrument)	1954	UNESCO intergovernmental conference	Protects cultural property, such as monuments and libraries, during armed conflict.
Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (UN conference instrument)	1961	UN Conference on Diplomatic Intercourse and Immunities	Makes the person of a diplomat inviolable and protects envoys from arrest and harm.
S/RES/166 (1961)	1961	Security Council	Recommended that the Mongolian People's Republic be admitted to the UN.
A/RES/1630 (XVI)	1961	General Assembly	Admitted the Mongolian People's Republic as a member of the United Nations.
A/RES/53/77 D	1998	General Assembly	Welcomed Mongolia's decision to declare its territory free of nuclear weapons and supported its security.
S/RES/2347 (2017)	2017	Security Council	Condemned the destruction of cultural heritage in war and said attacks on historic sites may be war crimes.
A/RES/76/253	2022	General Assembly	Declared 2026 the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists.

A/RES/79/30	2024	General Assembly	Renewed support for Mongolia's international security and nuclear-weapon-free status.
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2B. MONGOLIA AT THE UNITED NATIONS

MODERN PARALLEL: The Mongolian homeland of Chinggis Khan is today the independent state of Mongolia. Its path at the UN shows how a small state between two large neighbours protects itself through international recognition rather than conquest.

United Nations Security Council (S/RES/166 (1961)), October 25, 1961: Recommending Mongolia's admission to the UN

Tagline: Admitting Mongolia to the UN

Source: According to... United Nations Security Council, October 25, 1961

Link: [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/166\(1961\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/166(1961))

Fact: It states... At its 971st meeting on October 25, 1961, the Security Council examined the application of the Mongolian People's Republic and recommended to the General Assembly that it be admitted to UN membership. The General Assembly then admitted Mongolia in resolution 1630 (XVI).

This means... Modern Mongolia gained its place in the world through recognition by other states, not by force. Delegates can compare this with 1225, when the Mongol position depended entirely on military strength and one leader's authority.

United Nations General Assembly (A/RES/53/77 D), December 4, 1998: Recognising Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status

Tagline: Recognising Mongolia's nuclear-free status

Source: According to... United Nations General Assembly, December 4, 1998

Link: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/53/77>

Fact: It states... Section D of resolution 53/77, titled "Mongolia's international security and nuclear-weapon-free status", recalls the UN Charter and the principles of friendly relations among states, and welcomes Mongolia's decision to declare its territory free of nuclear weapons.

This means... Today's Mongolia seeks security through international guarantees. This is a sharp contrast with the empire of 1225, and delegates may reflect on which approach offers longer-lasting security.

United Nations General Assembly (A/RES/79/30), December 2, 2024: The UN still supports Mongolia's nuclear-free status every two years

Tagline: Renewing support for a small state

Source: According to... United Nations General Assembly, December 2, 2024

Link: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/79/30>

Fact: It states... The General Assembly has repeated its support for Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status every two years since 1998 (resolution 53/77 D). The 2024 resolution welcomes the declarations of September 17, 2012, by Mongolia and by the five nuclear-weapon states on that status. It supports Mongolia's balanced relationship with its neighbours, invites member states to help protect Mongolia's independence, sovereignty, borders, economic security and ecological balance, and asks the Secretary-General and UN bodies to keep assisting Mongolia.

This means... **MODERN PARALLEL:** The homeland that once conquered its neighbours now protects itself through promises from the great powers. Delegates can compare this with the 1225 court, where security came only from military strength and the loyalty of the khan's family.

2C. MASS KILLING AND THE DESTRUCTION OF CITIES

MODERN PARALLEL: The killings in Khorasan and the end of the Tangut kingdom (see 1A) would today fall under international laws on genocide, war crimes and the protection of cultural heritage. No such laws existed in 1225.

United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention, Last Accessed: October 2026: The Genocide Convention was adopted on December 9, 1948

Tagline: Outlawing genocide since 1948

Source: According to... United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide-convention.shtml>

Fact: It states... The UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide on December 9, 1948 (resolution 260 (III)), and it entered into force on January 12, 1951. As of July 2019 it had 152 states parties. The Convention says genocide can happen in war or peace, and its definition has been widely adopted, including in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

This means... Modern law treats the deliberate destruction of a people as an international crime. Delegates can use this to understand why historians today describe some Mongol campaigns in such strong terms.

United Nations Security Council (S/RES/2347 (2017)), March 24, 2017: Attacks on historic monuments may be war crimes

Tagline: Protecting cultural heritage in war

Source: According to... United Nations Security Council, March 24, 2017

Link: [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2347\(2017\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2347(2017))

Fact: It states... The Security Council deplores and condemns the unlawful destruction of cultural heritage, including religious sites and artefacts, and the looting and smuggling of cultural property during armed conflicts. It affirms that unlawful attacks on sites dedicated to religion, education, art, science or charity, or on historic monuments, may in some circumstances be war crimes. It also says peacekeeping missions may help protect cultural heritage when mandated.

This means... The loss of cities, libraries and irrigation works in 1219-1227 (see 1A) is the kind of harm the modern Council now condemns. Delegates can weigh how much of a conquered people's culture the empire should preserve.

UNESCO, Last Accessed: October 2026: The 1954 Hague Convention was the first treaty devoted only to protecting cultural heritage

Tagline: Shielding cultural property in war

Source: According to... UNESCO, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://www.unesco.org/en/heritage-armed-conflicts/1954-convention>

Fact: It states... The Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, adopted in 1954, was the first and most complete treaty devoted only to protecting cultural heritage, in peace and in war. It covers monuments, archaeological sites, artworks, manuscripts, books and scientific collections. States parties must prepare to protect such property, avoid using it in ways that expose it to damage, and refrain from hostile acts against it.

This means... Modern law asks armies to plan ahead to protect heritage. Delegates may consider whether the Mongol court of 1225 could have chosen to spare the Tangut capital and its Buddhist and written heritage.

2D. PROTECTING ENVOYS

MODERN PARALLEL: The war with Khwarazm began after the murder of Mongol envoys and merchants (see Part 3). Today the safety of diplomats is protected by treaty.

United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, March 2009: The Vienna Convention makes diplomats inviolable

Tagline: Protecting diplomats from harm

Source: According to... United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, Audiovisual Library of International Law, March 2009

Link: <https://legal.un.org/avl/ha/vcdr/vcdr.html>

Fact: It states... The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations was adopted in Vienna on April 18, 1961, at the close of a UN conference, and entered into force on April 24, 1964. Article 29 protects the person of diplomatic agents (they may not be arrested or harmed), and Article 31 gives them immunity from the civil and criminal courts of the host state, with specific exceptions.

This means... Modern law now protects envoys the way the Mongols demanded in 1218. The Mongol view that killing an envoy was the worst of crimes became, centuries later, a rule of international law.

2E. PROTECTING MONGOL HERITAGE TODAY

MODERN PARALLEL: UNESCO, the UN's agency for education, science and culture, now protects places linked to Chinggis Khan and the early empire.

UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Last Accessed: October 2026: Burkhan Khaldun, believed to be Chinggis Khan's birthplace and burial site

Tagline: Honouring Chinggis Khan's sacred mountain

Source: According to... UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1440/>

Fact: It states... The Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain and its surrounding sacred landscape, in the Khentii mountains of northeastern Mongolia, was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2015. It is believed to be the place of Chinggis Khan's birth and burial. During his lifetime he made it one of four sacred mountains, giving official status to mountain worship. Worship there declined after Buddhism was adopted in the late 15th century but has revived since the 1990s.

This means... The location of the khan's grave is still uncertain today. A court that chooses secrecy for the burial (see 1G) shapes how the khan is remembered for centuries.

UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Last Accessed: October 2026: Orkhon Valley, home of the Mongol capital Kharakhorum

Tagline: Preserving the old capital's valley

Source: According to... UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1081/>

Fact: It states... The Orkhon Valley Cultural Landscape in central Mongolia, about 360 km southwest of Ulaanbaatar, was inscribed in 2004. It includes Kharakhorum, which UNESCO describes as the grand capital of the vast Mongol Empire established by Chinggis Khaan in 1220, at the height of its influence in the 13th and 14th centuries.

This means... The capital chosen in Chinggis Khan's time became the centre of the empire under his successor. Delegates must decide where power will sit after 1227: at a fixed capital or in the moving camps of the khan.

UNESCO World Heritage Committee, 2021: Mongolia set up a management authority for Burkhan Khaldun and was asked to control tourism

Tagline: Managing the khan's sacred mountain

Source: According to... UNESCO World Heritage Committee (Decision 44 COM 7B.147), 2021

Link: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/soc/4195>

Fact: It states... Mongolia sent UNESCO a report on the state of the Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain on November 30, 2020, and the World Heritage Committee reviewed it in 2021. The Committee praised Mongolia for setting up a working management authority for the site, and noted that earlier concerns about its legal protection and about mining were now resolved. It asked Mongolia to finish a management plan with a monitoring system, a stronger policy to control tourism and visitors, and a detailed action plan with timelines and budgets, and to send an updated report by December 1, 2022.

This means... **MODERN PARALLEL:** Eight centuries after his death, the mountain linked to Chinggis Khan's birth and burial needs a government plan to protect it from visitors and development. Delegates can see that decisions about a ruler's burial place, made in 1227, still shape what a nation must protect today.

UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, Last Accessed: October 2026: Mongolian worship of sacred sites was placed on the urgent safeguarding list in 2017

Tagline: Reviving worship at sacred sites

Source: According to... UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/USL/00871>

Fact: It states... In 2017 UNESCO placed "Mongolian traditional practices of worshipping the sacred sites" on its List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. The practices grew out of nomadic life close to nature and an ancient belief in spirits of the sky, earth and mountains; elders teach the young how to take part, and the ceremonies build a sense of community. Worship of sacred sites was banned under the communist government, and today it is threatened by fast globalisation and city growth, by herders moving to cities, by a sharp fall in the number of masters who hold the knowledge, and by mining.

This means... **MODERN PARALLEL:** Chinggis Khan made mountain worship official (see the Burkhan Khaldun entry above), and the tradition he backed is still alive but fragile. Delegates can argue that what a ruler chooses to honour can outlast his empire, so the court's choices about religion and ritual in 1225 have very long effects.

2F. HERDERS AND GRASSLANDS TODAY

MODERN PARALLEL: The Mongol empire was built on grass and herds (see the PNAS entry in 1A). The UN now treats pastoral herding as a way of life that must be protected.

United Nations General Assembly (A/RES/76/253), March 15, 2022: Declaring 2026 the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists

Tagline: Honouring herders and grasslands

Source: According to... United Nations General Assembly, March 15, 2022

Link: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/76/253>

Fact: It states... The General Assembly decided to declare 2026 the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, and invited the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to help carry it out. The resolution notes that more than half of the Earth's land surface is classified as rangelands and that these areas are suffering serious desertification. It describes pastoralism, the herding of animals across grasslands, as a changing livelihood linked to many cultures, identities and forms of traditional knowledge.

This means... The year of this committee's Harvard conference, 2026, is the UN's year of herders. Delegates can point out that the way of life that powered the Mongol armies is still practised today and still depends on healthy grasslands.

2G. WHAT IS WORKING AND WHAT IS NOT

1. **Working (modern):** Mongolia has been a UN member since 1961 and has used the UN to gain recognition of its nuclear-weapon-free status.
2. **Working (modern):** UNESCO protects key Mongol heritage sites such as Burkhan Khaldun and the Orkhon Valley.
3. **Working (modern):** Envoys are protected by the widely accepted Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.
4. **Not working (modern):** Destruction of cultural heritage in war continues, which is why the Security Council had to adopt resolution 2347 in 2017.
5. **Not working (modern):** As of 2019, 42 UN members had still not joined the Genocide Convention.

6. **Working (modern):** The General Assembly has renewed its support for Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status every two years since 1998, most recently in 2024 (A/RES/79/30).
7. **Working (modern):** Mongolia set up a management authority for Burkhan Khaldun, which the World Heritage Committee praised in 2021.
8. **Not working (modern):** Mongolian worship of sacred sites is still on UNESCO's urgent safeguarding list, threatened by city growth, mining and the loss of masters who hold the knowledge.

2H. WHERE THE MAJOR BLOCS STAND: THE FACTIONS OF THE MONGOL COURT

In a historical crisis committee, the "blocs" are the families and groups inside the Mongol court, not modern countries. Every position below comes from historical sources about the years around 1225-1260. A delegate's character will usually belong to one of these groups.

1. **The house of Jochi (Jochi and his son Batu):** Jochi held the western lands but was estranged from his father from about 1221 and died in February 1227. His son Batu later argued that, as the heir of the eldest son, he had a better right to the khanate.
 - Source: According to... Encyclopaedia Britannica, August 1, 2026 (with Encyclopaedia Britannica, Jochi, Last Accessed: October 2026)
2. **The house of Chagatai:** Chagatai was the oldest surviving son but was passed over in 1229. His family later felt slighted when power moved to Tolui's line in 1251, and bitter hostility grew between the two branches.
 - Source: According to... Encyclopaedia Britannica, August 1, 2026
3. **The house of Ögedei:** Ögedei was his father's chosen heir and was confirmed by the 1229 assembly. After his death, his widow Töregene ruled with the nobles' consent and worked to have their son Güyük elected in 1246, over Batu's opposition.
 - Source: According to... Encyclopaedia Britannica, August 1, 2026
4. **The house of Tolui (Tolui and his wife Sorghaghtani Beki):** Tolui held the homeland, was known as the "guardian of the hearth", and served as regent from 1227 to 1229. His sons Möngke and Kublai later became Great Khans, moving power to his branch.
 - Source: According to... Encyclopaedia Britannica, July 14, 2026
5. **The advisers from conquered peoples:** Statesmen such as the Khitan Yelü Chucai and the Kerait Christian Chinkai ran the bureaucracy and writing office. They pushed to tax and govern settled lands instead of destroying them.
 - Source: According to... Encyclopaedia Britannica, August 1, 2026 (with Encyclopaedia Britannica, Yelü Chucai, Last Accessed: October 2026)
6. **The traditionalists and the commanders:** Many Mongols wanted to keep the nomadic way of life rather than adopt the institutions of settled peoples. The great commanders of ten thousand men were loyal to Chinggis Khan personally, so their support must be won again by each new khan.
 - Source: According to... Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026 (Collapse of the Empire; Organization and Tactics)

PART 3, INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS

In 1225 there were no international organisations, but there were diplomacy, trade agreements, envoys and a network of roads and relay stations that linked many peoples. The Mongols' own system of safe travel and trade, often called the Pax Mongolica, was one of the largest "international" systems of its time. This part covers those efforts and, briefly, one modern parallel.

3A. ENVOYS, TRADE DEALS AND THE ROAD TO WAR

Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026: Each of Chinggis Khan's three invasions began with an economic dispute

Tagline: Fighting over trade terms

Source: According to... Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/conquests/conquests_2c.htm

Fact: It states... In 1209 Chinggis Khan attacked the Tanguts of Xi Xia over a trade dispute, won a reduction in the tariffs they charged on trade, and went home without taking their land. Against the Jin, also in a trade dispute, his troops seized the area of present-day Beijing by 1215, and he again returned home once he had the trade he wanted. The Central Asian war began when the shah killed envoys who had asked for changes to trade terms. A related Columbia page explains that the Jin and Xia dynasties had tried to reduce trade with the Mongols, who badly needed grain and manufactured products.

This means... Many Mongol wars began as fights over trade access, not land. Delegates can propose trade agreements with neighbours as a way to reduce the need for future wars.

Encyclopaedia Iranica, December 15, 1990: The governor of Otrar killed a Mongol caravan in 1218

Tagline: Killing the caravan at Otrar

Source: According to... Encyclopaedia Iranica, December 15, 1990

Link: <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/cengiz-khan>

Fact: It states... The war with Khwarazm was triggered in 1218 when Inaljuq Ghayir Khan, governor of Otrar, ordered a Mongol merchant caravan killed and robbed. When a Mongol ambassador came to protest, the Khwarazm-shah had him executed. In 1219 the Mongols invaded with a three-pronged attack; Bukhara and Samarkand were sacked, and the shah fled and died on an island in the Caspian Sea.

This means... The breakdown of diplomacy led to one of the most destructive wars in history. Delegates should treat the safety of envoys and merchants as a matter of war and peace.

3B. THE POSTAL RELAY NETWORK

Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026: Relay stations about every 20 miles supplied food, horses and lodging

Tagline: Connecting the empire every twenty miles

Source: According to... Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/history/history4_a.htm

Fact: It states... The Mongols set up postal stations about every 20 miles along major trade routes, first to carry official mail across the empire. The stations were stocked with food, horses and lodging and became a major help to all travellers, including merchants. Under the Mongols, merchants did not face the heavy confiscation of earlier Chinese dynasties, and in Persia the Mongols gave traders tax breaks to promote commerce.

This means... The relay network was how orders, and news of a khan's death, travelled across the empire. Delegates must decide how to use it during the succession: to call the family to a kuriltai quickly, or to control what news spreads.

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Last Accessed: October 2026: An iron safe-conduct pass reads "By the strength of Eternal Heaven, an edict of the Emperor"

Tagline: Carrying the khan's travel pass

Source: According to... Metropolitan Museum of Art, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/39624>

Fact: It states... The museum holds a paiza, or safe-conduct pass, from the late 13th century (Yuan dynasty, China). It is a round iron plaque, about 18 cm high, with lettering inlaid in silver. Its inscription, in the Phakpa script used to write Mongolian, reads: "By the strength of Eternal Heaven, an edict of the Emperor [Khan]. He who has not respect shall be guilty."

This means... This pass comes from later in the Mongol era, but it shows how the khan's authority travelled with his messengers: anyone who disrespected the holder was disrespecting the khan himself. Whoever becomes khan after 1227 inherits this power, so delegates must decide who may issue such passes during the succession.

3C. PAX MONGOLICA AND CONTACT WITH THE WORLD

Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026: Traders were generally safe for about 100 years of Mongol rule

Tagline: Keeping roads safe for traders

Source: According to... Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/history/history5.htm>

Fact: It states... The Mongols promoted relations between states through the "Pax Mongolica", the Mongol Peace. Having conquered a huge territory in Asia, they could guarantee the safety of travellers. Although the Mongol khanates sometimes fought each other, they recognised that trade and travel mattered to all of them, so traders were generally safe during the roughly 100 years of Mongol rule over Eurasia.

This means... The empire's later fame for peaceful trade depended on surviving the succession crisis of 1227. If the empire had broken apart then, there would have been no Pax Mongolica.

Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026: Merchant partnerships called ortogh shared the risks of caravans

Tagline: Sharing risk in caravan partnerships

Source: According to... Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/history/history4_b.htm

Fact: It states... The Mongols set up merchant associations called *ortogh* to support long-distance caravan trade. A single caravan might have 70 to 100 men who needed food, pay, camels and horses for long periods, and many caravans were lost to natural disasters or bandits, which could ruin a single merchant. In an *ortogh*, merchants pooled their money and shared the losses, risks and profits. The Mongols offered loans at relatively low interest, but only to merchants who belonged to an *ortogh*.

This means... The Mongols did not only protect trade with soldiers; they built financial institutions for it. Delegates can propose that the next khan keep these partnerships and loans running during the succession, so merchants do not abandon the roads.

University of Washington Silk Road Seattle, Last Accessed: October 2026: Merchants reported the road from the Black Sea to China was safe "by day and by night"

Tagline: Travelling safely across Eurasia

Source: According to... University of Washington, Silk Road Seattle (essay by historian Daniel C. Waugh), Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/exhibit/mongols/essay.html>

Fact: It states... Chinggis Khan invaded Khwarazm in 1219-1220 after a trade mission he had sent was murdered. After his death in 1227, the capital was at Karakorum on the Orkhon River. Later, the Florentine agent Pegolotti reported that, according to merchants, the road from Tana (on the Sea of Azov) to China was safe by day and by night, and Italian merchants and missionaries were present in China. By the end of the 13th century, however, the parts of the empire had become independent of each other and were competing for control of the trade routes.

This means... Safe roads across a whole continent were a real achievement, but they did not survive the empire's split into rival parts. Delegates can argue that keeping the empire united after 1227 is the best way to protect trade.

Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026: The empire linked Europe and Asia and welcomed foreign travellers

Tagline: Linking Europe and Asia

Source: According to... Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/history/history_a.htm

Fact: It states... The Mongol Empire linked Europe and Asia and began an era of frequent contact between East and West. Once their lands were stable, the Mongols did not block relations with foreigners and were hospitable to foreign travellers, even those whose rulers had not submitted. European merchants, craftsmen and envoys travelled as far as China for the first time, and European demand for Asian products later helped inspire the search for a sea route to Asia.

This means... Openness to outsiders was a Mongol strength. Delegates can argue that the next khan should continue this policy because it brings wealth and information.

Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026: The Pope sent envoys to the Mongols in 1245 and 1253-1255

Tagline: Receiving envoys from Rome

Source: According to... Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/history/history3.htm>

Fact: It states... Two European missions travelled to the Mongols: John of Plano Carpini, who left Europe in 1245, and William of Rubruck, who travelled through Mongol lands in 1253-1255. Both hoped to stop Mongol attacks on Europe and to convert the Mongols to Christianity. Some Mongol women, including Chinggis Khan's own mother, had become Nestorian Christians. The envoys were received politely and, though their missions failed, brought back the first accurate European accounts of the Mongols.

This means... These missions came after 1227, but they show that the empire's decisions about religion and diplomacy shaped how the rest of the world saw it. Delegates can decide in 1225 what kind of foreign relations the empire wants.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, July 28, 2026: Carpini was the first noteworthy European traveller in the Mongol empire

Tagline: Sending the first European observer

Source: According to... Encyclopaedia Britannica, July 28, 2026

Link: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Giovanni-da-Pian-del-Carpini>

Fact: It states... Giovanni da Pian del Carpin (John of Plano Carpini), an Italian Franciscan friar born about 1180 who died on August 1, 1252, was the first noteworthy European traveller in the Mongol empire. He wrote the earliest important Western work on Central Asia, and Britannica calls his account of Mongol customs and history probably the best treatment of the subject by any medieval Christian writer. A separate Britannica article on the Mongol empire (August 1, 2026) adds that Carpini was an eyewitness to the election of Güyük as Great Khan in 1246.

This means... A foreign envoy watched a Mongol succession happen and reported it to Europe. Delegates should remember that the way the court handles succession is seen by neighbours and rivals, who will judge the empire's strength from it.

Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026: Mongol openness to foreigners started an "extraordinary interchange" across Eurasia

Tagline: Building a bridge between East and West

Source: According to... Columbia University Asia for Educators, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://afe.easia.columbia.edu/mongols/history/history2.htm>

Fact: It states... The Mongols' attitude toward foreigners was a key factor in cultural exchange and led to "an extraordinary interchange of products, peoples, technology, and science" across their lands. Marco Polo from Venice and Ibn Battuta from Morocco both reached China in this period, and Rabban Sauma, a Nestorian Christian from the Beijing area, travelled to Europe and met the kings of England and France and the Pope. The page suggests that global history begins with the Mongols and the bridge they built between East and West.

This means... **ADVANTAGE:** An open empire gains goods, skills and information from every direction. Delegates can argue that the next khan should guarantee safe passage for foreign travellers and envoys from the first day of his reign.

3D. MODERN PARALLEL: THE UNESCO SILK ROADS PROGRAMME

UNESCO, Last Accessed: October 2026: Studying the shared legacies of the Silk Roads for more than three decades

Tagline: Studying shared Silk Road legacies

Source: According to... UNESCO, Last Accessed: October 2026

Link: <https://www.unesco.org/en/silkroads>

Fact: It states... The UNESCO Silk Roads Programme is one of UNESCO's flagship "Routes of Dialogue" projects and has run for more than three decades. It studies the shared legacies and mixed identities that grew from commercial, cultural and scientific exchange along the Silk Roads, and how those exchanges shaped modern societies, under the motto "Shared pasts, connected futures".

This means... **MODERN PARALLEL:** The trade routes the Mongols protected are now studied as a shared heritage of many nations. Delegates can see that the empire's choices about trade had effects that lasted for centuries.

UNESCO, September 21, 2026: Over 7,000 young people from 100 countries photographed living Silk Road heritage

Tagline: Seeing Silk Road heritage through young eyes

Source: According to... UNESCO, September 21, 2026

Link: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/discover-winners-8th-edition-unesco-youth-eyes-silk-roads-photo-contest>

Fact: It states... The 8th UNESCO Youth Eyes on the Silk Roads Photo Contest, held from April 8 to July 28, 2026, received more than 7,000 entries from 100 countries, in two age groups, 14-17 and 18-25. Its theme was "Living Heritage along the Silk Roads": traditions, crafts and cultural practices that are still part of Silk Road life today. Winners from Central Asia included a photograph of a traditional Kyrgyz horseback game and one of a young craftswoman weaving a carpet in Uzbekistan.

This means... **MODERN PARALLEL:** Horse culture and craft traditions from the steppe lands the Mongols once ruled are still alive, and young people around the world now celebrate them together. Delegates can argue that the trade and contact the empire protected left a heritage that outlived its armies.

3E. MODERN PARALLEL: THE 2026 UN DESERTIFICATION CONFERENCE IN ULAANBAATAR

United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe, August 28, 2026: The UN land conference in Mongolia launched US\$1.2 billion for rangelands

Tagline: Restoring the grasslands of the steppe

Source: According to... United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe (UNRIC), August 28, 2026

Link: <https://unric.org/en/unccd-cop17-advances-new-pathways-for-land-restoration-drought-resilience-and-implementation/>

Fact: It states... The 17th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP17) ended in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on August 28, 2026, after two weeks of negotiations among its 197 Parties. During the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, the conference launched a Rangelands Flagship Initiative bringing together 1.2 billion US dollars across 45 projects, the largest single effort for rangelands in the Convention's history. Rangelands cover 54% of the Earth's land surface, support around two billion people and are cared for by about 500 million pastoralists.

This means... **MODERN PARALLEL:** In 2026, Chinggis Khan's homeland hosted the world to protect the same grasslands that once fed the Mongol herds and armies. Delegates can argue, as the PNAS evidence in 1A suggests, that protecting pasture is a matter of power and survival, then and now.

KEY VOCABULARY

1. **Khan and Khagan:** a khan is a ruler; khagan (Great Khan) is the supreme ruler over other khans. Ögedei was the first to use the title khagan.
 2. **Kuriltai (khuriltai):** a great assembly of Mongol nobles and princes that chose or confirmed a new khan and decided major campaigns.
 3. **Succession:** the process by which power passes from one ruler to the next.
 4. **Regent:** a person who rules temporarily until a new ruler is chosen or is old enough to rule; Tolui was regent from 1227 to 1229.
 5. **Ulus:** a family domain or people given to a prince to rule under the Great Khan.
 6. **Yasa (Jasagh):** the body of Mongol law and rules linked to Chinggis Khan; historians disagree on whether it was a formal written code.
 7. **Anda:** a sworn blood brother; such alliances helped Chinggis Khan rise to power.
 8. **Decimal system:** the Mongol army's organisation into units of 10, 100, 1,000 and 10,000 soldiers.
 9. **Steppe and pastoral nomadism:** the steppe is the vast grassland of Central Asia; pastoral nomads move with their herds of animals instead of farming in one place.
 10. **Xi Xia (Tangut kingdom):** the Buddhist kingdom in northwest China that Chinggis Khan was fighting when he died in 1227.
 11. **Khwarazm:** the Central Asian empire the Mongols conquered from 1219 after the killing of Mongol merchants and an envoy at Otrar.
 12. **Pax Mongolica:** "the Mongol Peace", the period of relatively safe travel and trade across Mongol-ruled Eurasia.
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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Should the next khan be the person the dying ruler chooses, the eldest son, the youngest son who keeps the homeland, or whoever a kuriltai elects? Which method would the whole court accept?

2. Jochi, the eldest son, is estranged from his father and powerful in the west. Should the court try to reconcile with him, limit his power, or let him rule his lands independently?
3. Should the empire be divided into family domains (ulus), or kept as one state under a single Great Khan? What does history after 1260 suggest?
4. Should the empire keep conquering, or turn to governing the lands it already holds through taxation and administration?
5. How should the court treat conquered peoples such as the Tanguts and the people of Khorasan, whose cities and farms were destroyed?
6. Should the khan's death be kept secret until the family gathers? What are the risks of secrecy and of openness?
7. Should advisers from conquered peoples, such as Yelü Chucai, have a role in governing the empire?
8. CRISIS INVENTION: If a rival prince seizes the army while the family is travelling to the kuriltai, what directive would your character issue first?