

ON SOME GEOGRAPHIC NAMES  
IN THE  
*JAMĪ' AL-TAWĀRĪX*

NICHOLAS POPPE  
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

Rašīd al-Dīn's famous work *Jamī' al-tawārīx* is not only an important historical work but also a valuable source for the Mongolian language of the XIVth century. It contains numerous Mongolian words and proper names and, among the latter, a large number of geographic names. So far this work has been given very little linguistic study.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that Rašīd al-Dīn possessed a very accurate knowledge of the geography of ancient Mongolia. He mentions numerous lakes, rivers, and places which really exist and still retain their ancient names. Of course, as the available manuscripts of his work are later copies, many of these names have been distorted. Some places may even have since changed their names. Therefore, it is not easy in all cases to identify the old geographic names with their modern equivalents. However, good large-scale maps and especially travel in those areas will probably enable students of historical geography to identify most of the names.

In this article an attempt will be made to identify a few names of rivers and lakes mentioned by Rašīd al-Dīn with their present names. I confine myself to two areas, namely, the region of Burqan Qaldun which is the present Kentei mountain range,<sup>2</sup> and the border of Outer Mongolia and Barga.

According to Mongolian legends, the most ancient homeland of the Mongols was the region called Kōl Baryujin Töküm,<sup>3</sup> which

<sup>1</sup> The next task for Mongolists should be to extract all the Mongolian words and compile an alphabetic glossary.

<sup>2</sup> My late friend, Gombojab Mergen Güng, told me that the local Mongols identify the Burqan Qaldun with the peak *Tsaḡāṅ ṽndar* (Tsagan Öndör) of the Kentei Range.

<sup>3</sup> *Histoire Secrète des Mongols, Restitution du texte mongol et traduction française des chapitres i à vi*, Oeuvres posthumes de Paul Pelliot, Paris, 1949, p. 5, 122.

can be identified with Transbaikalia. The word *köl* is a Turkic loan word and means "lake."<sup>4</sup> Lake Baryujin is obviously Lake Baikal. *Töküm* means "depression," "low land." Consequently, it means the low land where Lake Baikal is situated. The name Baryujin still exists as the name of a large river emptying into Lake Baikal from the east.

The legendary ancestor of the Mongols, Qorilartai Mergen, moved from there to the mountain Burqan Qaldun. This name means "the Buddha mountain" or "the divine mountain." *Qaldun* is an appellative noun meaning "mountain." This meaning is found in the *Secret History*<sup>5</sup> and in Written Mongolian.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The Turkic word *köl* has been preserved in many lake names in Transbaikalia, e. g., the lake Gusinoe ozero "Goose Lake" (on the bank of which a famous Lamaist monastery was situated) is called *Xuul nür*, i. e., "\*Köl Lake" in Buriat. In the Barguzin area there is a lake called *Xas Xuul*, i. e., "Goose Lake" from Turkic *qaz* "goose" and *köl* "lake." There are no Turks there at the present time, but in ancient times that area was inhabited by ancestors of the Yakuts, who still play an important role in the folklore of the Tungus (Evenki) living in the Barguzin area.

<sup>5</sup> It occurs there in the plural form *qaldut* translated by HAENISCH as "Abhänge," "Felswände." Cf. ERICH HAENISCH, *Wörterbuch zu Manghol un Niuca Tobca'an (Yüan-ch'ao pi-shih)*, *Geheime Geschichte der Mongolen*, Leipzig, 1939, p. 57. PELLIOU translates the passage *qaldut-ta qaru'asu qamuq ulus ken medegü* "quand je sortirai sur la montagne,—qui gouvernera le peuple tout entier?" Cf. *op. cit.*, pp. 179-180.

<sup>6</sup> The word *qaldun*, plural *qaldud*, occurs in Written Mongolian as late as the XVIIIth century, cf. the following passage taken from Čorytu Taiji's inscription: *tuγula mören-ü tangsuγ tala-yin öriine jüg qaldud-un jirüken neretü aγula-yin emüne-tü egsiyergüdü . . .* "[an unimaginably precious temple . . . was completed] on the western side of Tangsuγ Tala ('Marvellous Plain') of the Tuγula River, on the southern slope of the mountain called Qaldud-un Jirüken ('The Heart of the Qaldud')." Cf. Dr. GEORG HUTH, *Die Inschriften von Tsaghan Baisin, Tibetisch-mongolischer Text mit einer Übersetzung sowie sprachlichen und historischen Erläuterungen*, Leipzig, 1893, pp. 31-32. HUTH dates this inscription 1601, *op. cit.*, p. 51. RINGCHEN, a member of the Mongolian Committee of Sciences in Ulan Bator, states in his interesting article that *qaldun* means a particular kind of willow tree in Dagur. Cf. RINTCHEN, "L'Explication du nom *Burqan Qaldun*," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, Tomus I, fasc. 1, Budapest, 1950, p. 189. It is possible that *qaldun* is a particular kind of mountain covered with willow tree groves, but not the willow tree itself, because in the *Secret History* the word *qaldud* is glossed as "slopes." I visited the ruins of Tsaghan Baishing in 1926 and I know that area well. I still remember that in that place the valley of the Tula River (*Tuγula*) is very wide and the ruins are on the left bank of the river, at the bottom of a chain of hills rising on the left, i. e., west. The nearest hills are absolutely bare of any vegetation, but at the bottom of the hills and rocks closest to the water there is a dense grove of willows. On one of the rocks behind the willow thicket there was hidden another inscription of Čorytu Taiji,

Numerous rivers have their sources on the slopes of the Burqan Qaldun = Kentei. Rašīd al-Dīn says the following about them:

. . . There is a big mountain in Mongolia called the *Burqan Qaldun*. Many rivers flow down from one slope of this mountain. There is an immense number of trees and many forests along those rivers. In those forests the Taiči'ut tribes live. Činggis Qan chose a place there for his burial and ordered: "Our burial and that of our *uruγ*<sup>7</sup> shall be here!" The summer and winter camps of Činggis Qan were within [those] frontiers; he had been born at *بلوک بلاق* Blük Boldaq,<sup>8</sup> in the lower course of the Onan River, and travel from there to Mount Burqan Qaldun takes six days. One thousand Oirats of the Uqai Qaraču clan live there and defend that country.

The detailed enumeration of those rivers is as follows:<sup>9</sup>

1. Kelüren is the name of a river which, according to Rašīd al-Dīn, originates in the center of the southern side of the Burqan Qaldun.<sup>10</sup> The present name of this river is Mo. *Kerülen* and Kh. *Xerlən*. Rašīd al-Dīn correctly renders the ancient form, which is also *Kelüren* in the *Secret History*.<sup>11</sup>

The metathesis of *l* and *r* is frequent in Mongolian. Cf. *alčiyur-arčiyul* < *arčiyur* "kerchief," *ülir-üril* "kind of wild apple," *ele-gür-eregül* "health," etc.

It should be remarked that in Middle Mongolian the consonant *l* was still preserved in the second syllable of words which had the consonant *r* at the beginning of the third syllable or closing the second syllable. At the present time the order of these consonants is reversed in the words in question.

2. Onan (انان) is the ancient form of the name of the well-known Onon River. In Mongolian manuscripts of the pre-classical period the form *Onan* occurs frequently, e. g., in the historical

hitherto unknown, dating from 1627. Cf. Н. Н. Поппе, Отчет о поездке на Орхон летом 1926 г. Материалы Комиссии по исследованию Монгольской и Танну-Тувинской Народных Республик и БМАССР, вып. IV, Ленинград, 1929, pp. 3-5. The word *jürüken* "heart" as a topographic term is explained in note 36.

<sup>7</sup> The word *uruγ* means "relatives, descendants."

<sup>8</sup> This is a distorted form of *دلون بلاق* *Del'ün Boldaq*.

<sup>9</sup> The names of rivers discussed under nos. 1-7 and a few more follow. See Рашид-ад-дин, Сборник летописей, Том I, книга 2, Издательство Академии Наук СССР, Москва-Ленинград, 1952, p. 234.

<sup>10</sup> Рашид-ад-дин, *loc. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> PELLLOT, *op. cit.*, p. 21 *et passim*.

work *Altan Tobčei* by Lubsan Dandzan<sup>12</sup> and in the colophon of *Pañcarakṣā* belonging to the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R.<sup>13</sup> The form *Onan* also occurs in the *Secret History* as *Onan-Onon*.<sup>14</sup> The modern forms are Mo. *Onon*, Kh. *Onbŋ* (*Onöŋ*), and Bur. *Onöŋ* with a secondary *o* < \**o* in the second syllable.

3. The Čikö flows, according to Rašid al-Dīn, away from Mount Burqaŋ Qaldun in a northerly direction.<sup>15</sup> This name should be read as transcribed here and not *Čiku*, as the editors of the new translation of Rašid al-Dīn's work transcribe it.<sup>16</sup> The transcription *Čikö* is justified by the modern Khalkha and Sartul-Buriat forms *Tsv̆χχa* < \**Čökö* < \**Čikö*. It is well known that before a secondary \**ö* of the second syllable the vowel \**i* of the first syllable becomes *ö* in Khalkha.

4. The Qilqo (قَلْقَو) flows, according to Rašid al-Dīn, straight from the northwestern side of the Burqaŋ Qaldun,<sup>17</sup> i. e., in a northwesterly direction from the Kentei mountain range. It is possible to identify it with the river Iró, Kh. *Jör̆*, as the editors of the translation do. They transcribe this name as *Kalaku* (the same as *Qalaku* in my transcription).<sup>18</sup> However, the names *Qalaku* (or *Qilqo* as I read it) and *Iro* are so different that it is to be assumed that Rašid al-Dīn confused the *Iro*, which he does not mention at all, with another river. In my opinion, قَلْقَو should

<sup>12</sup> *Altan Tobčei, A Brief History of the Mongols by bLo-bzañ bsTan-'jin* with a Critical Introduction by The Reverend Antoine MOSTAERT and an Editor's Foreword by Francis Woodman CLEAVES, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1952, p. 13 *et passim*.

<sup>13</sup> Its registration number is Ž 130. The language of this translation is very archaic. See N. POPPE, "Beiträge zur Kenntnis der altmongolischen Schriftsprache," *Asia Major* 1 (1924).669.

<sup>14</sup> HAENISCH, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

<sup>15</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 234, note 3.

<sup>16</sup> In the same note this river called the Chikoi in Russian is incorrectly described as an affluent of the Menzya River. Mo. *Minji*, Kh. *Mindž?*, is a left affluent of the Chikoi, and the latter is a right tributary of the Selenga. Cf. Э. Мурзаев, Монгольская Народная Республика, Физико-географическое описание, Изд. 2ое, дополненное, Москва, 1952, p. 367.

<sup>17</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>18</sup> *Loc. cit.* Iró, a right affluent of the Orkhon, is a big river originating from the confluence of the Khongin and Sharlun rivers. Cf. MURZAEV, *op. cit.*, p. 365.

be read as *Qilqo*, corresponding to *Kilyo* in the *Secret History*,<sup>19</sup> Bur. *Āolgo*, and Russian Хилок (*Khilók*). It is well known that in Middle Mongolian the syllables *qi* and *γi* were still preserved and became *ki* and *gi* respectively at a later date.<sup>20</sup> The Written Mongolian form *Kilyo* has developed from \**Qilyo*. Consequently, قَلْقُو *Qilqo* (and not *Qalaqu*) is the present Khilok. However, the latter does not come down from the northwestern slope of the Kentei range but originates from the Irgen, one of the lakes of the Chita region, and empties into the Selenga not far from the city of Novyĭ Selenginsk.

5. The Qara (قرا) flowing from the southwestern side of the Burqan Qaldun<sup>21</sup> is easily identified with Kh. *Xarā*, Mo. *Qaraya*, a right-hand affluent of the Orkhon.<sup>22</sup> Its name has nothing to do with the word *qara* "black."

6. The Kirquču (كِرْقُچُو) flows, according to Rašīd al-Dīn, from the "great north" of the Burqan Qaldun. Consequently, it must be a river flowing straight to the north, i. e., it must be more or less parallel to the Chikoi (Čikö), which is described as flowing in the same direction. The only big river matching this description is the Ingoda, not mentioned by Rašīd al-Dīn. However, the names *Kirquču* and *Ingoda* are so dissimilar that such an identification raises doubts. It is improbable that كِرْقُچُو is a mere graphical corruption of the Arabic spelling of the name Ingoda or whatever its exact pronunciation was in the XIIIth-XIVth centuries. Therefore, such a hypothesis must be rejected from the start.

The name كِرْقُچُو is fortunately not greatly distorted. In my opinion, in the Arabic spelling كِرْقُچُو the letter ر *r* should be changed into ل *l*. As a matter of fact, the letters ر and ل are frequently confused in Arabic manuscripts. Thus, I am inclined

<sup>19</sup> PELLLOT, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>20</sup> Н. Н. Поппе, Монгольский словарь Мукаддимат ал-Адаб, ч. I-II, Тр. Инст. Востоковедения XIV, Москва-Ленинград, 1938, p. 48.

<sup>21</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>22</sup> The editors of the translation of the *Jamī al-tawārīx* erroneously call it a left affluent, *op. cit.*, p. 234, note 3.

to read *Kilquču* (كل قچو or كلفچو) instead of *Kirquču* and to identify this name with that of the river Килкосон (*Kilkosón*) and Bur. *Āolgoso* in the Buriat-Mongolian Autonomous Republic of the U.S.S.R. This river begins at the Malkanskiĭ mountain range and empties into the Khilok River near the Khilok railroad station. It flows for the most part between 110° and 111° east longitude.

The name *Āolgoso* is a Buriat form with *s* < \*č̣. In some dialects of the Buriat language, e. g., in the Tsongol dialect on the Selenga and in the Mukhur-Shibir subdialect of the Khori dialect, the vowel \**u* before a syllable with \**u* becomes *o*. Thus *Āolgoso* has developed from \**Qilquču* or \**Qilyuču* in the same manner as *áomohon* "nail" has developed from *qimusun*, etc.

As for the fact that the *Kilkosón* does not come down from the Burqan Qaldun (= Kentei) we have already seen that the *Qilqo*, also listed by Rašid al-Dīn as beginning at the Burqan Qaldun, has its source much farther to the north. From this the conclusion can be drawn that Rašid al-Dīn uses the name Burqan Qaldun for a mountainous area much wider than that of the Great Kentei.

7. The *Kirqutu* (كرقتو) flows from the Burqan Qaldun to the northwest.<sup>23</sup> This name can be read as *Kirqatu*, *Kiraqtu*, and *Kirqutu*.

Names of rivers resembling *Kirqutu* are found only among the affluents of the Onon River. On the only large-scale map of that area accessible to me,<sup>24</sup> I find the names of two rivers which faintly resemble *Kirqutu*. These are Кыркун (*Kyrkun*) and Кырка (*Kyrka*). The map shows them as emptying into the Onon from the left. However, MURZAEV states that the Хирхун (*Khirkhun*), as he spells it, is a tributary of the Baljir River, a left affluent of the Onon.<sup>25</sup> The map also shows a third river, the

<sup>23</sup> Рашид-ад-дин, *l. c.*

<sup>24</sup> Карта Монголии, изд. Коммерческой частью и Экономическим бюро К.В.Ж.Д. под общим руководством В. И. Сурина, дополнена по данным на I. апреля 1933 (scale 1 inch = 40 verst or almost 27 miles).

<sup>25</sup> MURZAEV, *op. cit.*, p. 370

Хурху (Khurkhu) = Kh. *χurχob gol*. It is mentioned by MURZAEV as a right affluent of the Onon.<sup>26</sup> It is difficult to decide which of these rivers might have been meant by Rašid al-Dīn, not to mention that none of them flows in the direction indicated by him.

Therefore, in my opinion, the Kirqutu is the same as the Khilgo-són, the name of which is once rendered as *Kirquču* (instead of *Kilquču*) and once as *Kirqutu* (instead of *Kilqutu*, a further corruption of *Kilquču*). In other words, Rašid al-Dīn has made two rivers of one and the name in question is misspelled both times.

8. The Talat (or Talan) Balji'us is in Arabic spelling بالجوس بالان صلالان.<sup>27</sup> Rašid al-Dīn does not explain whether this is a river, a lake or a place name. However, it is easily identified with Dalan Baljut which occurs several times in the *Secret History*.<sup>28</sup>

Dalan Baljut is famous for being the scene of a great battle between Činggis Qan and Ĵamuqa in which Činggis Qan's army was forced to retreat.<sup>29</sup> As for the relation of the form *Baljut* to Rašid al-Dīn's *Balji'us*, both are regular plural forms. Thus, *Dalan Balji'us* (or *Baljut*) means the "Seventy *Baljun*." In other words, it is a name formed like *Dörben Oyirat*, the "Four Oirat" (the name of a federation of tribes), *Dalan Nemürges* (a place name in the *Secret History*)<sup>30</sup> or *Dalan Dzadagad* (a place name in the southern part of the Mongolian People's Republic).

The singular form *Baljun* occurs as the name of a lake. In the *Secret History* it is called *Baljuna*.<sup>31</sup> There is also a place called

<sup>26</sup> MURZAEV, *op. cit.*, p. 369.

<sup>27</sup> РАШИД-АД-ДИН, ТОМ I, КН. ПЕРВАЯ, p. 74.

<sup>28</sup> PELLIOU, *op. cit.*, p. 160 *et passim*. The editors of the translation of Rašid al-Dīn's work identified Dalan Balji'us with the mountainous locality Dolōn situated southwest of Ulan Bator (cf. *op. cit.*, p. 74, note 3). This identification is incorrect. Not to mention the fact that the editors did not say anything about the occurrence of this name in the *Secret History*, they do not explain how Talan Balji'us could have become Dolōn "seven" which in Middle Mongolian occurred only as *dolu'an* or *dolo'an*.

<sup>29</sup> PELLIOU, *op. cit.*, p. 160. Later on, Činggis Qan, in addressing Ĵamuqa, reminded him of this defeat which, however, had not filled him with fear. Cf. PELLIOU, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77. Nevertheless, the defeat must have greatly impressed Činggis Qan, because he also mentioned it in his speech to Narin To'oril (*op. cit.*, p. 85).

<sup>30</sup> PELLIOU, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

<sup>31</sup> PELLIOU, *op. cit.*, p. 194; cf. p. 80.

*Baljun Aral*, i. e., "Baljun Island" which is located somewhere near the Onon River.<sup>32</sup>

Lake Baljuna really exists. It is found on large-scale maps at 51° north latitude and between 113° and 114° east longitude, a little to the south of the spa of Darasun and about 50 miles west of the town of Aginskoe in the former Aga *aimak* (district) of the Buriat-Mongolian Autonomous Republic.<sup>33</sup> The Tura River originates from this lake. The latter is called in Russian Озеро Балезино (*Ozero Balezino*).

This lake also played an important role in later history. There is a beautiful Buriat legend about it, which narrates that sometime in the XVIth century there lived a Mongolian prince by the name of Buubai Batur. His wife died and he married again. His young wife fell in love with his son and hated the latter's wife whose name was Baljin. Not able to bear her persecution, the son took his wife and fled. They fled to a place across the Argun River, living there for some time. At the instigation of his young wife, Buubai sent an army to seize his son and daughter-in-law. The soldiers arrived and killed Baljin. She was buried on a hilly peninsula (= *Baljun Aral* of the *Secret History*) in a lake which was called *Baljina* after her.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> To reach it the legendary Bodončar had to move downstream on the Onon. Cf. PELLIOТ, *op. cit.*, p. 24. Among those who identified Baljuna with Lake Balezino in Transbaikalia was HUNG Chün who locates it north of the Onon River in his *Yüan shih i-wen cheng-pu*. Cf. Francis Woodman CLEAVES, "The Historicity of the Baljuna Covenant," *HJAS* 18 (1955).357-421 (p. 374). The names *Baljuna*, *Baljun Aral*, and *Dalan Baljus* have been thoroughly discussed by PELLIOТ and HAMBIS in *Histoire des campagnes de Gengis Khan, Cheng-wou ts'in-tcheng lou*, traduit et annoté par Paul Pelliot et Louis Hambis, tome I, Leiden, 1951, pp. 37-49. PELLIOТ and HAMBIS believe that these names refer to three absolutely different places (p. 49) and refuse to accept the identification of Lake Baljuna with Balezino from which the Tura River originates (p. 46). In my opinion, however, Lake Baljuna can only be the same as Balezino. The events discussed by PELLIOТ and HAMBIS did take place in localities from which Lake Baljuna-Balezino could be easily reached in almost no time.

<sup>33</sup> Map of Asia (1: 1,500,000), fol. VII-13.

<sup>34</sup> А. Позднѣвъ, *Образцы народной литературы монгольскихъ племенъ*, выпускъ I, С.-Петербургъ, 1880, p. 188-189. The Mongolian text is found in А. Позднѣвъ, *Монгольская хрестоматія для первоначальнаго преподаванія, съ предисловіемъ профессора Н. И. Веселовскаго*, Санктпетербургъ, 1900 (Изданія Факультета Восточныхъ Языковъ Имп. СПб. Университета, No. 7), p. 50.

In conclusion, it should be remarked that the only correct reading is *Talan Baljī'us* and not *Talat Baljī'us*. The initial *t* in *talan* stands for *d*. Confusion of *d* and *t* is frequent in Moslem sources on Middle Mongolian.

9. Köke na'ur (كوكا ناور) should be so read, not *Kuka na'ur*.<sup>35</sup> It means "Blue Lake." There are many lakes in Mongolia so named. The *Secret History* lists such a lake located near Qara Jirügen "Black Heart."<sup>36</sup> This "Black Heart" is somewhere on the Senggür River.<sup>37</sup> However, one cannot be sure whether Rašīd al-Dīn meant this Köke na'ur or another one.

10. The Kūyin (كويين) is identified by the editors of the Russian translation of Rašīd al-Dīn with the Khuin Gol near Ulan Bator or with another river so named which flows in Barga.<sup>38</sup> The latter identification seems to be more correct, because this geographic name occurs among those mostly referring to the area on the frontier of Mongolia and Manchuria.

11. Qala'aljīn elet<sup>39</sup> corresponds to *Qalaqaljit elet* the "Qalaqaljit Sands" in the *Secret History*.<sup>40</sup> This place name cannot be easily identified. It is evident from the *Secret History* that this place was not far from Dalan Nemürges. After the battle at the Qalaqaljit elet, Činggis Qan moved upstream along the Ulqui and Silügeljit rivers.<sup>41</sup> From Dalan Nemürges Činggis Qan followed the course of the Qalqa River.<sup>42</sup> Thus Qalaqaljīn (or Qalaqaljit) elet must be somewhere near the Khalkha and Ulkhui rivers which are on the frontier of Outer Mongolia and Manchuria.

<sup>35</sup> Рашид-ад-дин, Том I, кн. первая, p. 74, note 3.

<sup>36</sup> The basic meaning of Mo. *ǰirūken*, Kh. *dzurχa* is "heart," but as a topographic term it is "a mountain with an oval pointed top." Cf. V. A. KAZAKEVICH, *Modern Mongolian Toponymy*, Publication of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union, Leningrad, 1934, translated by F. D. LESSING, Berkeley, California, 1944, p. 35. No dictionary of any Mongolian language lists this meaning of *ǰirūken*. Numerous names of places in Outer Mongolia are formed with this word, e. g., *Bayan Dzurχa* "Rich ǰirūken," *Xara Dzurχa* "Black ǰirūken," etc.

<sup>37</sup> PELLIOU, *op. cit.*, p. 140. The Senggür River flows from the Kentei range in a southerly direction and is lost in the sands.

<sup>38</sup> Рашид-ад-дин, *l. c.*

<sup>41</sup> PELLIOU, *op. cit.*, p. 184, 187.

<sup>39</sup> Рашид-ад-дин, *l. c.*

<sup>42</sup> PELLIOU, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

<sup>40</sup> PELLIOU, *op. cit.*, p. 184. Cf. pp. 75, 80.