ON SOME GEOGRAPHIC NAMES
IN THE
JAMĬ AL-TAWĀRĪX

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Raʾid al-Diʾn’s famous work Ḫamīʾ 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. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate that Raʾid al-Diʾn 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 Raʾid al-Diʾn with their present names. I confine myself to two areas, namely, the region of Burqan Qaldun which is the present Kentei mountain range, and the border of Outer Mongolia and Barga.

According to Mongolian legends, the most ancient homeland of the Mongols was the region called Köl Baryujin Töküm, which

1 The next task for Mongolists should be to extract all the Mongolian words and compile an alphabetic glossary.
2 My late friend, Gombojab Mergen Gung, told me that the local Mongols identify the Burqan Qaldun with the peak Tsagan ʻındar (Tsagan Öndör) of the Kentei Range.
The word *köl* is a Turkic loan word and means “lake.” Lake Baryujin is obviously Lake Baikal. *Toküm* 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* and in Written Mongolian.

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4 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 *Xuíd när*, i.e., “*Köl Lake*” in Buriat. In the Barguzin area there is a lake called *Xas Xuíd*, 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.


6 The word *qaldun*, plural *qaldud*, occurs in Written Mongolian as late as the XVIIth century, cf. the following passage taken from Čoṛtu Taiji’s inscription: *tuyula mören-i tangsuy tala-γin örüne jüq qaldud-un jiriiken neretü ayula-γin emüne-tü e pièr ergüdü . . . “[an unimaginably precious temple . . . was completed] on the western side of Tangsuy Tala (‘Marvellous Plain’) of the Tuyula River, on the southern slope of the mountain called Qaldud-un jiriiken (‘The Heart of the Qaldud’).”* Cf. Dr. Georg HUTH: *Die Inschriften von Tsaghan Baishing, Tibetisch-mongolischer Text mit einer Übersetzung sowie sprachlichen und historischen Erläuterungen*, Leipzig, 1893, pp. 31-32. HUTH dates this inscription 1601, op. cit., p. 31. RINCHEN, 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. RINCHEN, “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 Tûla River (*Tuyula*) 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 Čoṛtu Taiji,
Numerous rivers have their sources on the slopes of the Burqan Qaldun = Kentei. Raśid al-Din 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. Cinggis Qan chose a place there for his burial and ordered:

"Our burial and that of our uruy Ž shall be here!" The summer and winter camps of Cinggis Qan were within [those] frontiers; he had been born at Блук Boldaq, in the lower course of the Onan River, and travel from there to Mount Burqan Qaldun takes six days. One thousand Oirats of the Üqaï QaraEu clan live there and defend that country.

The detailed enumeration of those rivers is as follows: *

1. Kelüren is the name of a river which, according to Raśid al-Din, originates in the center of the southern side of the Burqan Qaldun. The present name of this river is Mo. Kerülen and Kh. Xerloη. Raśid al-Din correctly renders the ancient form, which is also Kelüren in the Secret History.

   The metathesis of ’ét and 8 is frequent in Mongolian. Cf. al6iyur- ar6iyul < ar6iyur “kerchief,” ulir-uril “kind of wild apple,” ele- giir-eregiil “health,” etc.

   It should be remarked that in Middle Mongolian the consonant 8 was still preserved in the second syllable of words which had the consonant 8 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 (Onan) 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 Тувинской Народных Республик и БМАССР, вып. IV, Ленинград, 1929, pp. 3-5. The word jirüken “heart” as a topographic term is explained in note 36.

7 The word uruy means “relatives, descendents.”

* This is a distorted form of Deli‘ün Boldaq.

* The names of rivers discussed under nos. 1-7 and a few more follow. See Raśid-ad-din, Сборник летописей, Том I, книга 2, Издательство Академии Наук СССР, Москва-Ленинград, 1952, p. 284.

10 Raśid-ad-din, loc. cit.

11 PELLIOT, op. cit., p. 21 et passim.
work Altan Tobēi by Lubsan Dandzan 12 and in the colophon of Pañcarakšā belonging to the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R.13 The form Onan also occurs in the Secret History as Onan~Onon.14 The modern forms are Mo. Onon, Kh. Onōn (Onōn), and Bur. Onōn with a secondary o < *o in the second syllable.

3. The Čikō flows, according to Rašid al-Dīn, away from Mount Burqan Qaldun in a northerly direction.15 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.16 The transcription Čikō is justified by the modern Khalkha and Sartul-Buriat forms TsviXūa < *Čökō < *Čikō. It is well known that before a secondary *o of the second syllable the vowel *i of the first syllable becomes i in Khalkha.

4. The Qilqo (ğūd) flows, according to Rašid al-Dīn, straight from the northwestern side of the Burqan Qaldun,17 i.e., in a northwesterly direction from the Kentei mountain range. It is possible to identify it with the river Iro, Kh. Jör3, as the editors of the translation do. They transcribe this name as Kalaku (the same as Qalaqu in my transcription).18 However, the names Qalaqu (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, ğūd should

12 Altan Tobēi, A Brief History of the Mongols by bLo·bzaN bsTan·'jin with a Critical Introduction by The Reverend Antoine MOSTAEHT and an Editor’s Foreword by Francis Woodman CLEAVES, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1952, p. 13 et passim.
13 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.
14 HAENISCH, op. cit., p. 181.
16 In the same note this river called the Chikoi in Russian is incorrectly described as an affluent of the Mensya River. Mo. Minji, Kh. Mindži, 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.
17 Loc. cit.
18 Loc. cit. Iro, 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,¹⁹ Bur. Xölgo, and Russian Хилок (Khilık). 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.²⁰ The Written Mongolian form Kilyo has developed from *Qilγo. Consequently, 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 Novy Selenginsk.

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

6. The Kirquçu (قروص) flows, according to Raṣīd 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 Raṣīd al-Dīn. However, the names Kirquçu and Ingoda are so dissimilar that such an identification raises doubts. It is improbable that كرقص 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 كرقص is fortunately not greatly distorted. In my opinion, in the Arabic spelling كرقص the letter Ṣ should be changed into ޟ l. As a matter of fact, the letters Ṣ and ޟ are frequently confused in Arabic manuscripts. Thus, I am inclined

²¹ Loc. cit.
²² The editors of the translation of the Jami‘ al-tawārīx erroneously call it a left affluent, op. cit., p. 234, note 3.
to read Kilquçu instead of Kirquçu and to identify this name with that of the river Kilkosón (Kilkosón) and Bur. Xolgosó in the Buriat-Mongolian Autonomous Republic of the U.S.S.R. This river begins at the Malkanskii 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 Xolgosó is a Buriat form with s < *č. In some dialects of the Buriat language, e.g., in the Tsongol dialect on the Selenga and in the Mukhur-Shibir subdialect of the Khor dialect, the vowel *u before a syllable with *u becomes o. Thus Xolgosó has developed from *Qilquçu or *Qilyuçu in the same manner as Xomošon, “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 Rašíd al-Din as beginning at the Burqan Qaldun, has its source much farther to the north. From this the conclusion can be drawn that Rašíd al-Din uses the name Burqan Qaldun for a mountainous area much wider than that of the Great Kentei.

7. The Kirqutu (قروقتو) flows from the Burqan Qaldun to the northwest. 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,24 I find the names of two rivers which faintly resemble Kirqutu. These are Kyurkun (Kyrkun) and Kyurka (Kyrka). The map shows them as emptying into the Onon from the left. However, Murzãev states that the Kirkhuγh (Khirkhun), as he spells it, is a tributary of the Baljir River, a left affluent of the Onon.25 The map also shows a third river, the

23 Rašíd-al-Din, l. c.
24 Karça Mongoli, izd. Kommerchskoj chasty i Ékonomichskim byuro K.V.J.D. pod obshim руководством В. И. Сурина, дополнена по данным на 1. апреля 1933 (scale 1 inch = 40 verst or almost 27 miles).
25 Murzãev, op. cit., p. 370
Xypxy (Khurkhu) = Kh. χυρχο gol. It is mentioned by Murzab as a right affluent of the Onon. It is difficult to decide which of these rivers might have been meant by Rašid al-Din, 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 Khilgosón, the name of which is once rendered as Kirkuču (instead of Kilkuču) and once as Kirqutu (instead of Kilqutu, a further corruption of Kilkuču). In other words, Rašid al-Din 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. Rašid al-Din 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.

Dalan Baljut is famous for being the scene of a great battle between Cinggis Qan and Jamuqa in which Cinggis Qan’s army was forced to retreat. As for the relation of the form Baljut to Rašid al-Din’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 Dorben Oyirad, the “Four Oirat” (the name of a federation of tribes), Dalan Nemürges (a place name in the Secret History) 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. There is also a place called

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26 Murzab, op. cit., p. 369.
27 Rašid-ad-Din, том I, кн. первая, p. 74.
28 Pelliot, op. cit., p. 160 et passim. The editors of the translation of Rašid al-Din’s work identified Dalan Balji’us with the mountainous locality Dolon 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 Dolon “seven” which in Middle Mongolian occurred only as dolu’an or dolo’an.
29 Pelliot, op. cit., p. 160. Later on, Cinggis Qan, in addressing Jamuqa, reminded him of this defeat which, however, had not filled him with fear. Cf. Pelliot, op. cit., pp. 76-77. Nevertheless, the defeat must have greatly impressed Cinggis Qan, because he also mentioned it in his speech to Narin To’oril (op. cit., p. 85).
30 Pelliot, op. cit., p. 175.
31 Pelliot, op. cit., p. 194; cf. p. 80.
Baljun Aral, i.e., "Baljun Island" which is located somewhere near the Onon River.\footnote{To reach it the legendary Bodončar had to move downstream on the Onon. Cf. \textit{PELLIOT, op. cit.}, p. 24. Among those who identified Baljuna with Lake Balezino in Transbaikalia was \textit{Hung} Chi\textit{n} who locates it north of the Onon River in his \textit{Yüan shih i-\text{\-}sen cheng-pu}. Cf. Francis Woodman \textit{CLEAVES}, "The Historicity of the Baljuna Covenant," \textit{IIJAS} 18 (1955), 357-421 (p. 374). The names Baljuna, Baljun Aral, and Dalan Baljus have been thoroughly discussed by \textit{PELLIOT} and \textit{HAMBI} in \textit{Histoire des campagnes de Gengis Khan, Cheng\text{-\text{\-}nou ts\text{-\text{\-}in\text{-\text{\-}teheng lou}}, traduit et annoté par Paul Pelliott et Louis Hambis, tome I, Leiden, 1951, pp. 37-49. Pelliott 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 Pelliott and Hambis did take place in localities from which Lake Baljuna-Balezino could be easily reached in almost no time.} The latter is called in Russian Озеро Балзино (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 \textit{Secret History}) in a lake which was called Baljina after her.\footnote{Map of Asia (1: 1,500,000), fol. VII-13.}
In conclusion, it should be remarked that the only correct reading is *Talan Balji'us* and not *Talat Balji'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 (كُوكِة ناور) should be so read, not *Kuka na’ur*.\(^{35}\) It means “Blue Lake.” There are many lakes in Mongolia so named. The *Secret History* lists such a lake located near Qara Jirigen “Black Heart.”\(^{36}\) This “Black Heart” is somewhere on the Senggūr River.\(^{37}\) However, one cannot be sure whether Rašid al-Din meant this Köke na’ur or another one.

10. The Kūyin (كُوين) is identified by the editors of the Russian translation of Rašid al-Din with the Khuin Gol near Ulan Bator or with another river so named which flows in Barga.\(^{38}\) 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’aljin elet\(^{39}\) corresponds to Qalaqaljit elet the “Qalaqaljit Sands” in the *Secret History*.\(^{40}\) 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.\(^{41}\) From Dalan Nemürges Činggis Qan followed the course of the Qalqa River.\(^{42}\) Thus Qalaqaljin (or Qalaqaljit) elet must be somewhere near the Khalkha and Ulkhui rivers which are on the frontier of Outer Mongolia and Manchuria.

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\(^{36}\) The basic meaning of Mo. *jirūken*, Kh. *dzúrxə* is “heart,” but as a toponymic 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 *jirūken*. Numerous names of places in Outer Mongolia are formed with this word, e.g., *Bayan Dzūrxə* “Rich jirūken,” *Xara Dzūrxə* “Black jirūken,” etc.

\(^{37}\) Pelliot, *op. cit.*, p. 140. The Senggūr River flows from the Kentei range in a southerly direction and is lost in the sands.

\(^{38}\) Rašid-al-Dīn, *l.c.*

\(^{39}\) Rašid-al-Dīn, *l.c.*


\(^{41}\) Pelliot, *op. cit.*, p. 184, 187.

\(^{42}\) Pelliot, *op. cit.*, p. 188.