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SEARCHING FOR ČINGGIS QAN: NOTES AND COMMENTS ON HISTORIC SITES IN XENTIĪ AĪMAG, NORTHERN MONGOLIA*

In August 1997 I took part in a survey of several historic sites in XentiĪ AĪmag, northern Mongolia, all of them localities connected with the life of Činggis Qan (? 1162-1227), including – and prominently so – the imperial burial ground on Burqan Qaldun/XentiĪ Xan.

The twelve-day expedition (17-28 August), which included also an archaeologist who has specialized on 13th century Qara Qorum and two geographers trained in the historical geography of Mongolia, was arranged by the International Association for Mongol Studies (IAMS) in collaboration with Tsagaan Shonkhor Holdings, Ltd., an Ulan Bator-based company which provided logistic support. Assistance with transport and lodgings was also received from the local authorities in Mōngön Morit and Delgerxaan¹.

The first locality that we investigated was the reputed burial site of Činggis Qan and other members of the imperial family, such as Činggis' son Tolui (1186/90-1232?) and grandsons Mōngke (1209-59) and Qubilai (1215-94). It will be recalled that Činggis Qan died in August 1227 south of Liu-p'an shan on the

* The present paper is a brief report on three major sites (out of ten that we visited) chosen because of the controversy that still surrounds them. I hope to deal with the other sites in a future article. I have followed the conventional scientific transcription for Xalxa (xa.) and Script (Written) Mongolian (mo.), except that in the case of the former I have omitted the dot on the *e* for technical reasons. Whenever necessary, the Written Mongolian forms are followed by the Xalxa forms in parenthesis and vice versa.

¹ In 1994 and 1995, in connection with my research on the *Secret History of the Mongols*, I corresponded with Professor Sh. Bira, Secretary General of IAMS, on the possibility of visiting various localities in Mongolia that have historical links with Činggis Qan. It was only in September 1996, however, that I was able to send Prof. Bira a list of proposed sites. The arrangements with Tsagaan Shonkhor Holdings, Ltd., were made in the following months, originally through Prof. Bira, with Dr. Kh. Lkhagvasuren of the International Centre for Chinggis Khan Studies established by TSH to promote research on Činggis Qan and Mongolian history. The arrangements were finalized in July-August 1997. The expedition was led by Dr. Lkhagvasuren, archaeologist and historian, assisted by Dr. D. Bazargur from the Centre of Nomadic Pastoralism Studies of the Institute of Geography, the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, and by Mr. O. Sukhbaatar, a Senior Researcher and specialist on the historical geography of the XentiĪ region. Mrs C. Moloney of Canberra joined the expedition and made a video recording; and Prof. Ts. Sumiya of the National University of Mongolia acted as interpreter and all-round informant.

Kansu-Ningsia border of Inner Mongolia (at 34 N and 106 E), during the military campaign against the state of Hsi Hsia.

From the 13th and 14th century Persian and Chinese sources, we know that his body was brought back to Mongolia and buried, according to his will, on Burqan Qaldun, a mountain at the sources of the Kerülen (Xerlen) and Onan (Onon) rivers in the Kentei Range (Xentiin Nuruu), the name of which is associated with the legendary origins of the Mongols and with numerous events in Činggis Qan's life². A meticulous analysis of these sources and of the later tradition was carried out by the great French scholar Paul Pelliot (1878-1945) in the late 1930s, but because of the war and the death of Pelliot, it was not published until 1959³. Although Pelliot established beyond doubt that Činggis Qan was buried on «the sunny side», i.e. on the southern or southeastern side of Burqan Qaldun – in the so-called Yeke Qoriy (Ix Xorig) or Great Forbidden Precinct – he did not attempt to identify Burqan Qaldun with a particular mountain in the Xentiin.

From the above sources we also know that at the end of the 13th century, i.e. some eighty years after Činggis' death, Qubilai's grandson Kammala (1263-1302)⁴ built a temple at Burqan Qaldun, no doubt to perform the prescribed rites *in situ*; and that a 1,000-strong contingent of Uriyangqai troops guarded the Great

² See P. RATCHNEVSKY, *Činggis-khan. Sein Leben und Wirken*, Wiesbaden: F. Steiner Verlag, 1983, pp. 31, 128, 135, 138 (English translation by T.N. HAINING, *Genghis Khan. His Life and Legacy*, Oxford & Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1991, pp. 34, 144, 151, 155). Cfr. also R. GROUSSET, *Conqueror of the World*, translated by D. Sinor and M. MacKellar, Edinburgh-London: Oliver & Boyd, 1967, p. 5 *et passim*.

³ P. PELLIOT, *Notes on Marco Polo*, Vol. I, Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1959, pp. 330-363. For further information on Burqan Qaldun, see also P. PELLIOT et L. HAMBIS, *Histoire des campagnes de Gengis Khan. Cheng-wou ts'in-tcheng lou*, Vol. I, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1951, p. 439 (Index). In the *Yüan shih* (Po-na ed., 1, 23b; 2, 8a, 9a; 17, 24a; etc.), the locality associated with the imperial burials is called Ch'i-lien ku, or Ch'i-lien Valley, which as Pelliot has pointed out (*op. cit.*, pp. 330-332), can only mean the «Valley where the Imperial hearse (*lien*) was raised (*ch'i*)», referring to the place where – also according to Sayang Sečen – Činggis' coffin was raised on the state carriage prior to interment. In my opinion, the valley in question is probably the valley of the Bogd River in the proximity of Xentiin Xan (see below). However, in 1987 Prof. Y. Irinčin of Inner Mongolia University (Huhehot) published an article in *Öbör Mongyol-un Yeke Surγayuli-yin erdem sinjilegen-ü sedkül* (*Journal of Inner Mongolia University, Philosophy & Social Sciences*), no. 3, pp. 44-50, which was subsequently translated into German and published under the title «Ch'i-nien-ku und Kürelgü» in *Zentralasiatische Studien* 23:1992/93, pp. 67-75. In it, the author attempts to identify «Ch'i-nien-ku» with the Gürelgü or Kürelgü mountains of the *Secret History of the Mongols*. See F.W. CLEAVES (tr.) *The Secret History of Mongols For the First Time Done into English out of the Original Tongue and Provided with an Exegetical Commentary*, Vol. I (Translation), Cambridge, Mass.-London: Harvard University Press, 1982, pp. 32, § 94; 54, § 122; 60, § 129; 69, § 141. Unfortunately, Prof. Irinčin's argument is untenable on both geographical and phonetic grounds: the Gürelgü area is too far south of Burqan Qaldun to be taken into consideration, and «Ch'i-lien-ku» cannot possibly represent «Gürelgü» or «Kürelgü»; furthermore, the character *ch'i* of Ch'i-lien ku is never used in the transcriptions of Mongol names and terms into Chinese. For the situation of the Gürelgü mountains, see PELLIOT et HAMBIS, *op. cit.*, pp. 42, 50.

⁴ For Kammala, or Kamala, see L. HAMBIS, *Le Chapitre CVII du Yuan che. Les généalogies impériales mongoles dans l'histoire chinoise officielle de la dynastie mongole*, avec des notes supplémentaires par P. Pelliot, Supplément au Vol. XXXVIII du *T'oung Pao*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1945, p. 129 *et passim* (see «Index des noms propres», p. 168b).

Precinct, becoming in time the traditional custodians of the sacred burial ground⁵. Kammala's temple and the Uriyangqai Guards must have been in service until the collapse of the Yüan dynasty, i.e. until the middle/second half of the 14th century. This means that for several decades there was a sizable human presence at, and near, Burqan Qaldun, with at least one permanent building. With the collapse of the Mongol dynasty in China in 1368 and the almost continuous civil strife in Mongolia in the following centuries, the memory of the imperial tombs on remote Burqan Qaldun dimmed considerably, as we would expect, but it did not fade out completely. Several chronicles of the 17th century, drawing from much earlier texts, record the old traditions according to which Činggis Qan was taken to «the Qan's great land» (*qan yeke yaĵar*), i.e. to the emperor's native land (the word *yeke* «great» is the regular epithet of royalty and of anything royal), and was then buried on Burqan Qaldun, or «at a place called Yeke Öteg on the shady (= northern) side of Altai Qan and on the sunny (= southern) side of Kentei Qan». Altai Qan and Kentei Qan designate of course the Altai and Xentü mountains respectively, but it is not clear whether these names point at a specific mountain in these ranges, the «chief» mountain as it were, as the title Qan would suggest.

With regard to the puzzling name Yeke Öteg (written Yeke Ötög and Yeke Undui in some manuscripts), Pelliot inferred that it must be a corruption of Yeke Ündür, lit. «Great Height (= Hill)», another designation of Mount Burqan Qaldun already attested in Rašīd al-Dīn's *Ĵāmi' al-Tavārīx*⁶.

⁵ See PELLIOT, *Notes on Marco Polo*, pp. 335-338. Cf. RASHĪD AL-DĪN, *The Successors of Genghis Khan*, translated from the Persian by J.A. Boyle, New York: Columbia University Press, 1971, p. 322.

⁶ The chronicles in question are: 1. LUBSANGDANĴIN, *Altan tobči*, facsimile edition of the original ms. copy, Ulan Bator: Mongolian Academy of Sciences, 1990, f. 127v; cfr. LUBSAN DANZAN, *Altan tobči* («*Zolotoe skazanie*»), translated by N.P. Šastina, Moscow: Nauka, p. 242; 2. C.R. BAWDEN, *The Mongol Chronicle Altan Tobči*, *Göttinger Asiatische Forschungen* 5, Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, pp. 61, § 49, 146; 3. SAFANG SECEN, *Erdeni-yin Tobči* («*Precious Summary*»). *A Mongolian Chronicle of 1662*, Vol. I, the Urga text transcribed and edited by M. Gō, I. de Rachewiltz, J.R. Krueger and B. Ulaan, Faculty of Asian Studies Monographs: New Series, no. 15, Canberra: The Australian National University, 1990, pp. 82-83, ll. 42r29-42v01; Cfr. I.J. SCHMIDT (tr.), *Geschichte der Ost-Mongolen und ihres Fürstenhauses verfasst von Ssanang Ssetsen Chungtaidschi der Ordus*, St. Petersburg-Leipzig, 1829 (various reprints), p. 109; and 4. N.P. ŠASTINA (tr.), *Šara tudži. Mongol'skaya letopis' XVII veka*, Moscow-Leningrad: Izd. Akad. Nauk SSSR, 1957, p. 137. For Pelliot's comments, see *Notes on Marco Polo*, pp. 345-346. It should be noted that the expression «the Qan's great land» found in LubsangdanĴin's *Altan tobči*, the meaning of which is perfectly clear from the context (see also the *Altan Tobči* edited by Bawden, *op. cit.*, p. 61, § 48, and the *Šara tudži*, *loc. cit.*), has become «the place called «The Qan's Great Land»» (*Qan Yeke Ĵaĵar kemekü oron*) in Saĵang Sečen's *Erdeni-yin tobči* (ll. 42r24-25), i.e. it has been transformed into a place name, thus confusing the issue. In his *Short History of Mongolia*, A. Amar (1887-1939), after quoting extensively from the *Altan tobči*, wonders whether this «Great Land (or Place)» (*Yeke Ĵaĵar*) can be identified with Yeke Ötög as a locality north (?) of the Kentei Mountains, i.e. in the Onon-Kerülen-Kentei territory where Činggis Qan's body was unquestionably taken and buried. See AMUR, *Mongolĵun tobči teüke*, Vol. I, Ulan Bator: Mongĵol Kebeľ-ün Qoriya, 1934, pp. 312-318. Cfr. A. AMAR, *Mongolĵun tovč tüüx*, Ulan Bator: Ulsyn XevleliĴn Gazar, 1989, pp. 163-165. Subsequently, the official *History of the MPR* stated as a fact that Činggis Qan was buried, according to his will, in his native territory, at a place called Ix Ötög

In the 19th century, the Buriat scholar Dorži Banzarov (1822-55) described a Shamanist manuscript in which Burqan Qaldun and Kentei Qan are mentioned together with other peaks in connection with the cult of sacred mountains in Mongolia. For Banzarov, Kentei Qan is a single mountain. He writes: «It is remarkable that all the mountains mentioned here (i.e., in the manuscript – I.R.) bear the epithet Qan, i.e. the king of mountains.» Like Pelliot, Banzarov does not identify Burqan Qaldun with a particular mountain⁷.

Commenting on the frequent references to Burqan Qaldun in Mongolian sources, the late Professor B. Rintchen (1905-77), undoubtedly one of the most competent scholars in the field, wrote in 1950 that «nous savons que, selon les vieilles traditions chamanistes, les Mongols contemporains, même les bouddhistes, font des sacrifices à ce mont, mais l'endroit où il était situé est déjà tout à fait inconnu»⁸.

A few years later, N. Poppe, discussing some geographic names in the *Ĵāmi' al-Tawārīx*, equated Burqan Qaldun with Kentei; since he regarded the former as a mountain, not a mountain range, by «Kentei» he could have only meant Kentei Qan/Xentiï Xan⁹.

Xentiï Xan is, indeed, a conspicuous mountain in the western Great Xentiï Range (Ix Xentiï Nuruu), separating this from the Small Xentiï Range (Baga Xentiï Nuruu), and situated at 48 50 N and 109 08 E. In our maps its height is variously given as 2362, 2367, 2451 and 2452 m¹⁰. Its regular association with Burqan Qaldun in the Mongolian historical and literary sources cannot be regarded as fortuitous. Moreover, the fact that in the 17th and 18th centuries there was an established tradition among the Mongols in Mongolia *as well as in China*¹¹ that Činggis Qan was buried on «Kentei Qan» (or simply «Qan»),

of the Xentiï Range. See Š. NACAGDORŽ (ed.), *Bügd Naïramdax Mongol Ard Ulsyn Tüüx*, Vol. I, Ulan Bator: Ulsyn Xevleliin Xereg Erklel Xoros, 1966, p. 240. For Badamxatan (see below, n. 14), pp. 12, 23, 34, Ixsiin Gazar (Yekes-ün Gaĵar) and Ix Ötög (Yeke Ötög) are synonymous, both designating the burial site of Činggis Qan's ancestors on Burqan Qaldun/Xentiï Xan and the surrounding area. These and other recent developments have further clouded the issue. See below, n. 19.

⁷ See DORŽI BANZAROV, «Černaya vera, ili šamanstvo u mongolov» in *Sobranie sočineniï*, Moscow: Izd. Akad. Nauk SSSR, 1955, pp. 70-71. Cfr. DORŽI BANZAROV, «The Black Faith, or Shamanism Among the Mongols», translated from the Russian by Jan Nattier and John R. Krueger, *Mongolian Studies* 7: 1981-82, p. 69. The other mountains listed by Banzarov are Qangyai Qan, Müne Qan and Jetkü Qan. See *ibid.* Banzarov published his essay in 1846.

⁸ RINTCHEN, «L'explication du nom Barqan Qaldun», *Acta Orientalia* (Budapest) 1:1950, p. 189. The emphasis is mine.

⁹ N. POPPE, «On Some Geographic Names in the *Ĵāmi' al-Tawārīx*», *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 19:1956, p. 35.

¹⁰ The height given in the U.S. Army Map Service (LU), Corps of Engineers, World Map (Asia) 1:1,000,000, series 1301, Edition 2-AMS: Washington, D.C., 1963, Sheet NM 49, is 2452 m. The height given in the Gurvan Gol Project Report (1990), p. 10 (see below, n. 14) is 2,361.5 m.

¹¹ See A. GAUBIL, *Histoire de Gentchiscan et de toute la dynastie des Mongous ses successeurs, Conquérants de la Chine*, Paris: Briasson et Piaget, 1739, p. 54. Cfr. C. D'OHSSON, *Histoire des Mongols, depuis Tchinguiz-Khan jusqu'à Timour Bey ou Tamerlan*, Vol. I, La Haye et Amsterdam: Les Frères Van Cleef, 1834 (repr. Tientsin, 1940), p. 384.

knowing (as we do now) that he was definitely buried on Burqan Qaldun, indicates, in my view, that we are dealing here with a *single* mountain, viz. Burqan Qaldun alias Kentei Qan.

In 1961, Professor Johannes Schubert (1896-1976) of Leipzig's Karl Marx University and Professor X. Perlee (1911-82) of Ulan Bator's State University led a joint German-Mongol expedition to investigate historic sites in Mongolia. The detailed account of their interesting journey, and the scientific results of the expedition, are described in Schubert's book *Ritt zum Burchan-chaldun* published in 1963¹².

Schubert and Perlee investigated Xentiï Xan in September 1961, the German scholar being the first known European to climb the mountain. At the first «level» – some 80m up – they found the remains of a building or structure consisting of a great number of tiles and bricks similar to those used at Qara Qorum (Xar Xorin) in the first half of the 13th century. They also found iron vessels, apparently dating from the same period, as well as iron nails. After a superficial examination of this site they continued their climb, and beyond the tree line and the rhododendron bushes further up they came to a wide level ground where one could see numerous holes filled with stone blocks and rocks, with moss growing between them. They crossed this area, i.e. the second «level», and climbed a steep rocky elevation several meters high to reach the top of the mountain, which is also flat and forms a large rocky field covered with hundreds of *ovoo*-cairns: a sea of *ovoos*, in fact, with a «Haupt-Owoo» (Ix Ovoo) around which were found an iron armour, arrow points and other articles¹³.

From the top of the mountain one can see the valley of the Bogd River (Bogdyn Gol) flowing into the Xerlen to the south; the valleys of the tributaries of the Onon to the east and northeast; and the mountains to the southwest beyond which the Tuul River begins its course.

This is the area in the Xentiï Range from which the three great rivers originate – the so-called Gurvan Mörnïï Ex or Source of the Three Rivers. It is from this region that the joint Mongolian-Japanese Gurvan Gol («Three Rivers») Project sponsored by *The Yomiuri Shimibun* took its name, the primary aim of the project being the search for, and discovery of, the burial place of Činggis Qan.

The Gurvan Gol Project (1990-93), which attracted much attention and enjoyed world-wide publicity, was supported by the Mongolian Academy of Sciences. The large research team included noted archaeologists and geophysicists from both Mongolia and Japan, geographers (among them Dr. D. Bazargur), the

¹² J. SCHUBERT, *Ritt zum Burchan-chaldun. Forschungsreisen in der Mongolischen Volksrepublik*, Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus Verlag, 1963. See also, by the same author, «Burxan Xaldun - Xentiï Xan?», in B. SIRENDEV *et al.* (eds), *Olon Ulsyn Mongolč Erdemtnïi II Ix Xural, II Bot'*, Ulan Bator: BNMAU Olon Ulsyn Mongolč Erdemtnïi Ix Xurlyn Baingyn Xoroo, 1973, pp. 311-315.

¹³ See SCHUBERT, *Ritt*, pp. 84-99.

well-known ethnologist S. Badamxatan and linguist C. Šagdarsüren. The «general leader» on the Japanese side was the eminent archaeologist Namio Egami. The scientific results of their investigation were published in two volumes, the first one covering the initial year (1990), and the second one the three following years (1991-93). Further information on the project, its aims, results and future expectations is found in a recently published booklet by S. Badamxatan¹⁴.

The joint expedition surveyed the Xentiï Xan area briefly in April-May 1990, investigating sites at Ix Davaa (between the Xerlen and the Onon); in the Bogd River valley up to Dood Ovoo (at the bottom of Xentiï Xan); in contiguous valleys; at Bosgyn Davaa on the left bank of the Xerlen, and at Duut Yan north of Xentiï Xan.

As for Xentiï Xan itself, the exploration team apparently carried out only a cursory investigation. Under the heading «On the top of the Hentii Han», the *Report* says: «There is also an old tale that the tomb of Genghis Khan is on the top of the Hentii Han. We landed on the top by helicopter and surveyed the area for about an hour. The peak of the mountain is 2,361.5 m above sea level and there is a flat place with a big Ovoo in the center and 200-300 places of worship around it. There were no signs of tombs or graves on the top and we could find only horse tracks going up to the top from four directions»¹⁵.

At the bottom of the mountain, the exploration team surveyed «a sunny open space» in the Baga Ovoo area to the south which presented «anomalies» underground. These could not, however, be further investigated at the time¹⁶.

From an illustration of roof tiles in Vol. II (p. 14, fig. 11) of the *Report*, it appears that members of the joint team investigated also the area on the first «level» where tiles and bricks and other artifacts were found by Schubert and Perlee in 1961. They too refer to the former structure on this site as a temple; however, no detail of their investigation appears in the *Report* or in Badamxatan.

Although the *Report* refers to Ix Xorig and the «front side» of Xentiï Xan, and this area is indeed marked on the map showing the extent of the survey in the

¹⁴ *A Report on the Joint Investigation under the Mongolian and Japanese GURVAN GOL Historic Relic Probe Project*, by the Mongolian Academy of Sciences and The Yomiuri Shimbun, Japan, Vol. I: Initial Year (1990), [n.p.], 1991; Vol. II: 1991-1993, [n.p.], 1994. Preface to Vol. I by S. Norovsambuu and S. Badamxatan; to Vol. II by Namio Egami (hereafter referred to as *Report*); B.S. BADAMXATAN, *Čingis Xaan: «End bi noĩrsono»*, Ulan Bator: Mongol Ulsyn Šinžlex Uxaany Akademi Tüüxiin Xüreelen, 1997 (hereafter referred to as Badamxatan). It should be pointed out, however, that the *Report* and Badamxatan are at variance on certain important issues, such as the probable location of Činggis Qan's grave. See below, n. 18.

¹⁵ *Report*, Vol. I, p. 10. The «big Ovoo» (Ix Ovoo) on top of the mountain is not in the centre, but near the edge; and the «places of worship» are the smaller *ovoos* that crowd the top. The estimate of «200-300» is well below their real number.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 52. Baga Ovoo («Small Ovoo») is listed in Badamxatan, p. 24, among the 14 sites investigated by the joint team in 1990. See below, n. 17.

upper Xerlen region, it is evident that no systematic or properly conducted investigation of the whole southeastern side of the mountain was carried out.¹⁷ From this, one can infer that the organizers of the project were probably not acquainted with Pelliot's study on Burqan Qaldun, and that they also ignored Schubert's report on Xentiï Xan and the conclusions reached by both Schubert and Perlee concerning the paramount historical importance of the site in the quest for Činggis Qan's grave.

The Gurvan Gol Project, therefore, did not (and, in my opinion, could not) achieve its primary aim. Regrettably, it disregarded the literary evidence and the written sources ancient and modern, and although equipped with excellent scientific instruments it seems to have paid scant respect to a rigorous scientific method in its overall research. This is exemplified in the *Report's* «Conclusions based on archaeological research», which are the following: «1. 'The Secret History of the Mongols' can be considered an accurate, historical document, particularly in regards to its description of the life of Genghis Khan. 2. Based on the geographic names appearing in the above-mentioned book, Genghis Khan was born in Lamin Ukhaa – Deluun Boldog – in Binder County in Khentii Province. The place name Ikhsiin gazar can be presumed to be Oglogchiin Kherem on Mt. Binder'ya in Binder County. Two Mt. Binder festivals – one for Genghis Khan and the other for Lamaism – lend credence to this projection. The most recent festival was held on the mountain in 1927. There is also a legend that 14 nobles of Jonon van were buried there. From other legends, it was concluded that Ikhsiin gazar could be only Mt. Binder'ya. *Through geographical observations from Mt. Binder and interviews with people in the area, it appears that Genghis Khan was buried somewhere in Oglogchiin Kherem*»¹⁸.

¹⁷ In the *Report*, Vol. I, p. 7, it is stated that from 25 April to 25 May «we surveyed the uppermost valley of the Herlen River, around the Hentii Han Mountain, where is suspected the existence of the burial locations of Genghis Khan, his predecessors, and his succeeding Mongolian Hagens, according to historical sources, legends and folkloric sources. Mongolian scholars O. Zhamjyan, H. Perlee and Ts. Dorjsuren already conducted research in the region, and, furthermore, S. Badamhatan has marked 8 important points as Ihsiin Gazar (see below, n. 19 - I.R.), Ih Eteg (= Ix Öteg - I.R.), Ih Horig and so on, from an ethnographical view point». The reference to Ih Horig, i.e. Ix Xorig (Yeke Qoriy) would imply the supposed burial site on Xentiï Xan, but the *Report* does not mention a specific investigation of this area, and the above quotation speaks only of a survey «around» Xentiï Xan. In Vol. II, p. 75, the map of the Survey Area of Gurvan Gol Project includes the area of Xentiï Xan (no. 7: Khentie), but without specifying the actual sites surveyed. Cfr. also Vol. I, p. 41. A list of 14 sites surveyed in this area in 1990 is given in Badamxatan, p. 24, and the names of 16 other sites surveyed in 1992 is given on p. 28. Neither list includes Xentiï Xan as such (although the 1992 list includes Erdene Uul). None of these 28 sites yielded positive results as regards Činggis' grave. However, eight other sites (unnamed) could not be properly investigated because of bad weather conditions and/or difficulty of access (cfr. *Report*, Vol. I, p. 8). Since they are in the mid-upper part of the mountains, Badamxatan (pp. 34-35) expects positive results from some of them.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 29. The emphasis is mine. Only a few pages earlier the *Report* had expressed the opinion that the Delgerxaan region was «the closest spot to the tomb of Genghis Khan»; and that «it is almost certain that Genghis Khan's tomb is in this area (i.e. in the area of the «Avraga Palace» -

Leaving aside for the moment the still unresolved question of Činggis Qan's birthplace, one wonders what the «geographical observations from Mt. Binder» may be that point at Oglogchiin Kherem (Öglögčiin Xerem), i.e. The Almgiver's Rampart (which is, archaeologically, a pre-Činggis Qan site), as his burial place; and what credence can one place on «interviews with people in the area»? Furthermore, the identification of «Ikhsiin gazar» (Iksiin gazar) with Öglögčiin Xerem is both gratuitous and groundless. The toponym Iksiin gazar (mo. *Yekes-ün yaĵar*) is actually an expression meaning literally «the land (or place) of the Great Ones», i.e. «the place where the Ancestors are buried». In the present context this designation is spurious, as it originates from an early misunderstanding of a passage in the *Secret History of the Mongols* (§ 70) which has unfortunately been perpetuated to this day by Mongolian and Western scholars alike.¹⁹ There was, in fact, no place or area called «Iksiin gazar» in

I.R.)»!. See *ibid.*, pp. 17, 13. Cfr. Badamxatan, pp. 15 and 35, where the author expresses his view that, although one cannot pinpoint Činggis Qan's burial site, all the evidence strongly favours its location on Burqan Qaldun/Xentiĵ Xan or one of the Ix Xentiĵ mountains.

¹⁹ The relevant passage in the *Secret History* reads as follows: *Tere qabur Ambaqai Qa'an-u qatut Örbei Soqatai jirin yekes-e qajaru inerü qaruqsan-tur Hö'elün Üĵin odču qojit gürčü...* «That spring, when Örbei and Soqatai, the wives of Ambaqai Qa'an, performed the *Qajaru Inerü* (sacrifice) to the ancestors, Lady Hö'elün (also) went, but as she arrived late...» The *Qajaru Inerü* sacrifice consisted in an offering of food to the souls of the ancestors which was performed in spring. See A. MOSTAERT, *Sur quelques passages de l'Histoire secrète des Mongols*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1953, pp. [14]-[23]; I. DE RACHEWILTZ, «The Expression *Qajaru Inerü* in Paragraph 70 of *The Secret History of the Mongols*», in P. DAFFINÀ (ed.), *Indo-Sino-Tibetica. Studi in Onore di Luciano Petech*, «Studi Orientali IX», Rome: Dipartimento di Studi Orientali, Università di Roma «La Sapienza», 1990, pp. 283-290. Cfr. CLEAVES, *op. cit.*, p. 19. Although the technical expression *Qajaru Inerü* still presents problems of interpretation, there is no doubt that the text should be read *yekes-e qajaru inerü qaruqsan-tur* (= mo. *yekes-e yaĵaru inerü ĵaruqsan-dur*). However, in his translation of the *Secret History* into Russian, S.A. Kozin rendered this passage as follows: «That spring, the two wives of Ambagai-khagan, Orbai and Sokhatai, went to the cemetery in the "Land of the Ancestors". Oelun-učšin also went, but she arrived too late...». See S.A. KOZIN, *Sokrovennoe skazanie. Mongol'skaya khronika 1240 g. pod nazvaniem Mongol-un niĵča tobčijan. Yuan' čao bi ši. Mongol'skiĵ obydennyĵ izbornik. Tom I. Vvedenie v izučenie pamyatnika. Perevod, teksty, glossarii*, Moscow-Leningrad: Izd. Akad. Nauk SSSR, 1941, p. 88. In rendering the Mongolian *yekes-e qajaru inerü qaruqsan-tur* as «went to the cemetery in the "Land of the Ancestors"», Kozin misunderstood the text, without realizing how far-reaching the consequences of his mistake would be. A few years later, in fact, the late Prof. C. Damdinsüren, relying largely on Kozin's translation for his own version of the *Secret History* into modern Mongolian, rendered our passage as follows: «That spring, when the wives of Ambayai Qayan, Orbai and Soqatai, offered the sacrificial food at the place of the Great Ones (the place where one buries the corpses of the ancestors), because Lady Ögelün had been late in going...». See Č. DAMDINGSÜRÜNG (tr.), *Mongol-un niĵča tobčijan*, Ulan Bator: Mongol Arad Ulus-un Šinjileküi Uqayan-u Küriyeleng, 1947, p. 42. Unfortunately, Damdinsüren's incorrect rendering was not rectified in subsequent editions in spite of the appearance of Mostaert's work in which this passage is discussed in detail (see MOSTAERT, *loc. cit.*). See, e.g., the 1990 edition in Cyrillic: *Mongolyn Nuuc Tovčoo*, Ulan Bator: Ulsyn Xevleliin Gazar, p. 44. It was also adopted by scholars outside Mongolia. See, e.g., U. ONON (tr.), *The History and the Life of Chinggis Khan (The Secret History of the Mongols)*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990, p. 18; and M.-D. EVEN et R. POP (trs), *Histoire secrète des Mongols. Chronique mongole du XIIIe siècle*, Paris: Gallimard, 1994, p. 70. Thus, through a simple textual misinterpretation of Kozin, the expression *Yekes-ün yaĵar* «Land of the Ancestors» (xa. *Iksiin gazar*) came into use in Mongolia in connection with the burial ground of the Mongol emperors and, also under the influence of the name *Yeke yaĵar* extrapolated from the *Altan tobči* (see above, n. 6), it acquired a life of its own as a toponym (cfr. also

Mongolia; therefore, its identification with a present locality like Öglögčiin Xerem is vitiated from the very beginning and must be left out of consideration when discussing the burial site of the Mongol emperors. In view of this, we can safely ignore the conclusions of the *Report* and return to the more recent developments in the investigation of Burqan Qaldun/Xentiï Xan.

Our team climbed Xentiï Xan on 19 August from its southern side, following exactly the same route as Schubert and Perlee thirty-six years before. We could confirm Schubert's detailed description of the natural and man-made features of the mountain. As far as we could ascertain from our Mongolian colleagues, no other mountain in the region presents such characteristics, and it is beyond doubt that Xentiï Xan was the object of a special cult from early times. The remnants of the structure(s) at the foot of the mountain – possibly, and quite likely, Kammala's temple – show that it was especially worshipped in the 13th-14th centuries. It should be mentioned that Xentiï Xan still occupies a unique position among the mountains in the Xentiï Range, being considered sacred and, therefore, of restricted access.

The inescapable conclusion of Schubert and Perlee, which is shared by us without reservations, is that this mountain cannot be anything but the famous Burqan Qaldun and, *ipso facto*, the burial site of Činggis Qan and the other Mongol rulers.²⁰ The imperial graves must then all be situated on its south and southeastern side, the structure(s) at the foot of the mountain marking the beginning of the Great Forbidden Precinct that extended upwards immediately beyond it, in the area comprised between the first and the third «levels»²¹.

the *Report*, p. 30, n. 43, where its modern equivalent is given as Binderiya uul, and its situation at 110 16 E and 48 23 N). This is the genesis of the «Ixiün Gazar Myth», which should be abandoned once and for all, being a constant source of error and misunderstanding as shown in the *Report*, Badamxatan (especially pp. 8-16, 34), and other recent publications, such as D. BAZARGÜR and D. ENKHABAYAR, *Chinggis Khaan (Činggis Qayan) Historic-Geographic Atlas*, Ulan Bator: Cartographic Enterprise of the State Administration of Geodesy and Cartography, 1997, pp. 10-11.

²⁰ See SCHUBERT, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-99. For Perlee's earlier identifications of Burqan Qaldun with other mountains, see his *Nuuc Tovčoonđ gardag gazar usny zarim neriig xaiž olson n'*, Ulan Bator: Šinžlex Uxaan, 1958, p. 6 (English translation by L. MOSES, «On Some Place Names in the *Secret History*», *Mongolian Studies* 9: 1985-86, pp. 87-88). Although there are still a few dissenting voices, the consensus among scholars in Mongolia is that Xentiï Xan is Mount Burqan Qaldun of old. See D. ŽAMBAA, *Ix ezniđ domogt gazryg möšgösön temdeglel*, Xentiï Aimag: Ix Nirun Kompani, 1996, pp. 8-12 (esp. pp. 8-9 and 12), 47-53. See also Badamxatan, pp. 15, 35. On the other hand, Dr. D. Bazargur is of the opinion that there are several Burqan Qalduns, such as the Uriyangqai Burqan Qaldun corresponding to present-day Erdene Uul (between the Xerlen and Terelž rivers at 48 30 N and 108 41 E) and the surrounding area, and the Mongyol Qamuy Burqan Qaldun corresponding to Xentiï Xan. He has also some reservations concerning Činggis Qan's burial site, and will discuss these issues in a forthcoming book. In the meantime, see BAZARGÜR and ENKHABAYAR, *op. cit.*, pp. 8, 12, 14, 16, 18 and 20, where the two Burqan Qalduns are clearly marked.

²¹ The local Mongols speak of three *xorigs* or precincts, corresponding to the first, second and third «level» of the mountain respectively. This triple division may go back a long way, but it is not recorded in the literary and historical sources concerning Burqan Qaldun/Xentiï Xan. In view of the fact that Mongol graves on hills and mountains are found at the foot as well as halfway up or higher (see, e.g., the *Report*, p. 15), no portion of the south and southeastern side of Xentiï Xan can be excluded as a burial site.

Although, understandably, the Great Precinct area ought not to be disturbed, I would recommend that the archaeological site at the first «level» be duly investigated, not only to determine its nature and date, but also – and principally – to protect the relics and artifacts that it contains against weather deterioration and human action. The presence of recently damaged tiles indicates that visitors may have already been interfering with the site²².

After Burqan Qaldun, our team visited the area of Delüün Boldog near the Gurvan Nuur («Three Lakes») at Dadal Sum, in the northeastern corner of Xentiï Aïmag at 49 01 N 111 37 E. The locality is a well-known mineral spa and tourist resort, and the reputed birthplace of Činggis Qan²³. It is about 165 km east of Xentiï Xan as the crow flies.

In the *Secret History* § 59 it is stated that Činggis was born «at Deli'ün Boldaq («Spleen Hill») of the Onan». Deli'ün Boldaq is mentioned two more times in the *Secret History* (§§ 97 and 211), but without providing any clue as to its exact situation along the Onon River.²⁴ However, the fact that in every instance the place is referred to as 'Deli'ün Boldaq of the Onan' indicates that it must have been a hill in close proximity of this river, almost certainly within sighting distance. The Persian and Chinese sources confirm the name of the place, which also occurs in the Mongol chronicles of the 17th century, but again we are not informed as to its exact location.²⁵

In his famous biography of Činggis Qan published in 1922, B. Vladimircov (1884-1931) stated that Činggis was born «on the bank of the river Onon, at the edge of Deliun-boldak, which still bears this name»²⁶. Unfortunately, Vladimircov does not say *where* this locality is situated along the Onon. Presumably, he relied on earlier Russian reports (by Yurinskü, Abramov and Banzarov) to the effect that the place in question was «somewhere above the Čindant fort, opposite the

²² This fact was personally ascertained by us when we visited the site on 19 August. In 1990, Tim Severin visited several historic sites in Mongolia, including Burqan Qaldun. The ascent of the sacred mountain, described in his book *In Search of Genghis Khan*, London: Arrow Books, Ltd., 1991, pp. 64-80, happened to coincide with the inconclusive exploration of the area by the Gurvan Gol Project team. Since Mr Severin's account does not contribute in any way towards the solution of the problems with which we are concerned, I have refrained from commenting on it in the present paper.

²³ Dadal is mentioned in the tourist guides of Mongolia. See, e.g., R. STOREY, *Mongolia. A Travel Survival Kit*, 2nd ed., Hong Kong: Lonely Planet Publications, 1996, pp. 183-184.

²⁴ See CLEAVES, *op. cit.*, pp. 14, 33, 153.

²⁵ Cf. PELLIOT et HAMBIS, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11; RAŠID-AD-DIN, *Sbornik letopiseš*, Vol. I/2, tr. by O.I. Smirnova, Moscow-Leningrad: Izd. Akad. Nauk SSSR, 1952, p. 75; LUBSANGDANJIN, *Altan tobči*, ff. 12r, 23v, 66v, 127r; LUBSAN DANZAN, *Altan tobči*, p. 423a (Index); SAFANG SECEN, *Erdeni-yin Tobci*, p. 56, l. 29r17; 82, l. 42r02; I.J. SCHMIDT, *op. cit.*, pp. 71, 107, 379.

²⁶ B. Ya. VLADIMIRCOV, *Činggis-khan*, Berlin-Petrograd-Moscow: Izd. Z.I. Gržebina, 1922, p. 18. Cfr. B. VLADIMIRTSOV, *Gengis-khan*, tr. by M. Carsow, Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1948, p. 12 (the locality is misplaced in the map of Mongolia in Idem, *Le régime social des Mongols. Le féodalisme nomade*, tr. by M. Carsow, Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1948, B VIII).

village Yäkä-aral, about lat. 50° and long. 132° [= east of Greenwich 114°]». ²⁷ But a locality on the Onon at that longitude, i.e. near Ust' Ilya in southern Chita, is so far to the northeast as to be excluded from serious consideration as a likely birthplace of Činggis Qan.

In 1948, X. Perlee wrote that there were two localities called Deligün Bolday (Delüün Boldog): (1) near the confluence of the Onon and Balži rivers (the ancient Baljun Aral) at 49 N and 111 E, and (2) a locality on the right bank of the Onon, seven *versts* from Yeke Aral, at 50 N and 132 E. He mentioned also a place called Deligün (Delüün) near the Xerlen River at 49 N and 109 E²⁸. Perlee's (2) is the earlier mentioned locality in Chita. As to (1), Perlee personally favoured it, and by 1958 he was convinced that in spite of the many conflicting folk traditions and hypotheses regarding it, the true birthplace of Činggis Qan was the one near the mineral spa of Gurvan Nuur²⁹. His view was shared by C. Doržsüren (1960) and the majority of Mongolian academics³⁰. In 1962, a monument to Činggis Qan was erected there, and although the hill in question has since apparently «shifted» from its original situation in one of the Three Lakes to the present Boldogiin Ereen Tolgoi further to the northwest, the area of Dadal is to this day considered the conqueror's historic birth site³¹.

Reviewing the literature on the subject, it is clear that Perlee's identification relies entirely on local tradition and folktales (*domog*), and the general suitability of this area as a candidate for the *Secret History's* Deli'ün Boldaq: near the Onon, at the right distance from Burqan Qaldun, etc.³² Unfortunately these arguments are not probant, either individually or *in toto*. Moreover, the site at Gurvan Nuur is much closer to the Balži River than to the Onon: it is in fact nowhere near the latter, being about 18 km north of it. This consideration alone would, in my view, cast serious doubts on its identification with Deli'ün Boldaq, although one cannot dismiss it entirely.

²⁷ PELLIOU, *Notes on Marco Polo*, p. 282 (citing I.N. Berezin). Cfr. C. DORŽSÜREN, *Čingis xaany törsön Deliün boldag xaana baına*, *Studia archaeologica* I, 2 (Ulan Bator, 1960), p. 3, where the longitude is given as 115 E. The statement in RATCHNEVSKY, *op. cit.*, p. 15, n. 66, that Činggis' birthplace «on the right bank of the Onon upstream from the island Yeke Aral and near the confluence of the Balji River is still known today by its old name» is a conflation of data from various sources and an incorrect one at that.

²⁸ X. PERLEE, «'Mongolyn nuuc tovčoo'-ny gazar usny neriin tuxai ur'dcilsan neree», *Šinžlex Uxaan. Nauka* 1 (16): 1948, pp. 67-68.

²⁹ See PERLEE, *Nuuc Tovčooond...* (see above, n. 20), p. 9. Cfr. DORŽSÜREN, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.

³⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 14; *Report*, Vol. II, p. 29; ŽAMBAA, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16 (but cfr. *ibid.*, pp. 40-47!).

³¹ I owe the information regarding the transfer of the birth site location from the lake to the present one to Dr. D. Bazargur and Mr. O. Suxbaatar, with whom I discussed this problem on 24 August during our stay at the Three Lakes Sanatorium. According to them, the hill originally designated as Deli'ün Boldaq was actually an island in one of the Three Lakes which has since disappeared. The monument erected in 1962 on Tömör Očir's recommendation faced the original hill in the lake. A commemorative stele with inscription has been erected at the present site on Boldogiin Ereen Tolgoi.

³² See DORŽSÜREN, *op. cit.*, pp. 7ff. Cfr. SCHUBERT, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

