A NAME STUDY OF “BURQAN QALDUN” IN THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE MONGOLS

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ABSTRACT

In the present article, we aim to explain the name “Burqan Qaldun” in the Secret History of the Mongols, which is a major piece of historical, linguistic, and cultural heritage in Mongolia, based on the ideas of previous researchers and the theory of spatial name studies. While we fully accept the propositions of previous researchers regarding burqan-burgas, we also propose a three-stranded notion of burqan-tenger-ovoo by relating the term to the ancient act of worshipping “Ovoo” (a sacred pile of stones). The name Qaldun is considered in accordance with the systemic principle, which states that in any language, a proper name consists of the proper name and base name. We attempt to prove this hypothesis using evidence from Mongolian geographical names.

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АННОТАЦИЯ

В данной статье мы стремимся объяснить название «Буркан Колдун» в «Сокровенном сказании Монголов», которое является важной частью исторического, лингвистического и культурного наследия Монголии, основываясь на идеях предыдущих исследователей и теории исследования пространственных названий. Хотя мы полностью принимаем предположения предыдущих исследователей относительно буркан-бургас, мы также предлагаем трёхцепочечное понятие буркан-тenger-овоо, связанное с древним ритуалом поклонения «Овоо» (куха камней).

Название «Колдун» рассматривается в соответствии с системным принципом, который гласит, что в любом языке имя собственное состоит из имени собственного и основного имени. Мы пытаемся доказать эту гипотезу, используя в свидетельство монгольские географические названия.

**Ключевые слова:** Буркан, тенгер, овоо, ива, поклонение, Сокровенное сказание Монголов.

**Keywords:** Burqan, tenger, ovoo, willow, worship, Secret History of the Mongols.

Introduction

The Secret History of the Mongols is a primary source document that describes and contains multifaceted social phenomena, including the medieval Mongolian language, folklore, script, traditions, history, religion and military information. This source is worth studying in numerous scientific disciplines. Since evidence of Mongolian geographical names is maintained in this sourcebook, it has a significant importance for determining macro-object names as well as their origins and locations and is beneficial to not only linguistics but also society and culture.

In the sourcebook, the name Burqan Qaldun is mentioned 26 times in 11 different forms, namely Burqan Qaldun (2 times, Chapter I-5), Burqan Qaldunaa (2 times, Chapter I-1, Chapter II-103), Burqan Qaldunaa (2 times, Chapter II-97, 102, 111, 211), Burqan Qaldunii (7 times Chapters I-9 & 89, III-106 & 107, III-115), Burqan Qaldunii (4 times, Chapters II-102 &103, III-111, VIII-199), Burqan (2 times, Chapters II-100 &101), Burqanaa (1 time, Chapter II-103), Burqanaa (3 times Chapters III-112, IV-145, VIII-205), Burqan deer (1 time, II-103), and Burqan deerreees (1 time, Chapter II-103).

Burqan Qaldun is related to an important part of Euro-Asian history in the XII-XIII centuries, the Mongols who defined the history of that time period, the Great Mongolian Empire and the life of Great Khan Chinggis. Therefore, Great Burkhan Kalgudun (Burqan Qaldun) was registered as a UNESCO World Heritage site because of its relation to Mongolian traditions, original views, beliefs, culture, literature and historical publications. Burqan Qaldun is still a state-worshipped sacred mountain in Mongolia.

An Overview of Geographical Name Studies on the Secret History of the Mongols

In the Secret History of the Mongols (hereafter abbreviated SHM), the historical plot takes place in a vast area. According to some researchers, the area covers seven thousand kilometres from the Yellow River in eastern Asia to the Dnieper River in Europe and another three thousand kilometres between the Indus River of South Asia and Lake Baikal in Central Siberia. It is not a straightforward issue to define the geographical location by tracing the time period of the events that occur in the area that stretches thousands of kilometres. The research on the SHM, and specifically on its geographical names, began to intensify from the middle of the 20th century. In 1926, Vladimirtsov B.Ya full member of the Academy of Sciences of the former Soviet Union, concluded that the names used in the SHM were losing meaning in terms of the situation before the middle of the 20th century. Since that time, the situation has changed significantly. In the present article, we have selected and briefly discussed three substantial studies among the complex research work on SHM (in other words, the research work studying all or a number of geographical names concurrently). Subsequently, the research overview on Burqan Qaldun is comprehensively given.

According to our literature review, it is possible to consider the article of 1956 titled “On some geographical names in the Jami’ al-Tawārīx–HIAS” by Poppe Nicolas, a professor at Washington University in the USA, to be the first substantial publication on the matter. In his article, Poppe N. dealt with a few geographical names used in an acclaimed work titled Jami’ al-tawārīx by Rashid al-Din, which is considered to be not only the essential historical source for information on 14th-century Mongols but also a valuable source of information on the Mongolian language. Poppe N. stated that his goal was to show a number of ancient names that were not changed, although many ancient names of lakes, rivers and other geographical features were either altered to other names or evolved. Poppe N. expressed his views on the following names: Burqan Qaldun, Köl Barγujin Tuham, Kelbren, Onan, Čikő, Qilgo, Qara, Kirqüču, Kirqutu, Talat (Talan, DalanBaljut), Kőke na’ur, Küyin and Qala’aljin elet. The author clarified the abovementioned names in terms of the transcription by Rashid al-Din, the names’ current pronunciations and the Mongolian geographical name tradition. Moreover, Poppe N. conducted field research for observing and defining the geographical names based on the appearance of the rivers and lakes. There have not been many studies either based on the historical sources written by Rashid al-Din or in the Arabic and Persian languages. Thus, this work is still valuable.

Other work was conducted by the Mongolian scholar Perlee H. and published in 1958. Perlee identified 92 names that were used in the SHM in accordance with latitude and longitude and suggested the exact location of origin of approximately 40 geographical names.

The study of the SHM and research on the geographical names included in it have been increasing since 1990, and various publications on the subject have
been issued in Mongolia as well as in other foreign countries. An Inner Mongolian researcher of PRC, Belguudein Buhhad N. [2010], thoroughly stated his views on the geographical location of the undermentioned names in the second chapter, titled “The Relation of Some Geographical Names of SHM with Uzemchin, a sub group of Mongolia”, of a publication titled “Investigation of the Secret History of the Mongols”. Belguudein Buhhad N. used the Chinese transcription of the SHM as the primary source and was mainly based on the publications previously discussed in detail by the scholar Bazarragchaa M., and the main ideas were explained by relating the name to an immense number of trees and many forests along those rivers. In those forests, the Taič’ut tribes live. Činggisi Qan chose a place there for his burial and ordered: ‘Our burial and that of our ancestors’ mountain with willow trees’ shall be here!’ It is worth mentioning again that the idea, which is related to willow trees and ancestral burials, was translated from the section of the SHM about Burqan Qaldun Mountain in the Rashid al-Din publication in the English language by Poppe N., which was previously cited by us, namely that “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 Täč’ut tribes live. Činggisi Qan chose a place there for his burial and ordered: ‘Our burial and that of our uruγ’ shall be here!’ It is worth mentioning that the corresponding idea was previously proposed by several scholars before the publication by Dulam S. There is also noteworthy evidence that it was written as “burgad” and explained as “burgasun” in the ancient historical source Luvsandanzan Tovlev. Moreover, the Inner Mongolian researchers Bayar and Mansan transcribed the name “burqan” as “burgasun” or “burgas” when the SHM was translated into the modern Mongolian language. Eldendei and Ardaajav also transcribed the word as “burgasun” or “burgas” when the SHM was translated into the modern Mongolian language. Finally, to emphasize this, it is worth mentioning that for generations, Mongols, particularly today’s Mongols, have kept Burgan Mountain as burqan–shuteen (worship) in their minds, and it is not wrong for them to have done so. All in all, Burqan Qaldun Mountain is a divine mountain according to all of the different explanation trends.

2) The name etymology of Burqan Qaldun is the same for the two following trends of thought. The first is the idea that the name burqan originated from an ancient Mongolian root that formed before the Buddhist religion. According to scholar Dulam S., the difference is that the name burqan originated from a root meaning bushes that grow densely in mountains and wild places, and he confirmed this by referring to the explanation of scholar Tsevel Ya. (Other researchers have explained the ancient bur- root differently in relation to the development of the Mongolian language, as is discussed later.) The idea of connecting the name Burqan to burgas (willow trees) was supported by citing relevant phrases and examples such as the fire ritual, folklore, ancient poetry and ancient Mongolian burial rituals; the word was considered to have the meaning of “Uugudii burgastai uul (Ancestors’ mountain with willow trees). We think it is worth mentioning again that the idea, which is related to willow trees and ancestral burials, was translated from the section of the SHM about Burqan Qaldun Mountain in the Rashid al-Din publication in the English language by Poppe N., which was previously cited by us, namely that “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 Taič’ut tribes live. Činggisi Qan chose a place there for his burial and ordered: ‘Our burial and that of our uruγ’ shall be here!’ It is worth mentioning again that the corresponding idea was previously proposed by several scholars before the publication by Dulam S. There is also noteworthy evidence that it was written as “burgad” and explained as “burgasun” in the ancient historical source Luvsandanzan Tovlev. Moreover, the Inner Mongolian researchers Bayar and Mansan transcribed the name “burqan” as “burgasun” or “burgas” when the SHM was translated into the modern Mongolian language. Eldendei and Ardaajav also transcribed the word as “burgad”. This idea was explained by relating the name to Ulaan burgad used in the SHM by Belgunudee Buhhad N.

3) Some have correlated the name Burqan with the ancient Mongolian language root bur- because of linguistics and word etymology. An overview of this idea, as stated in the following outline, was thoroughly stated in detail by the scholar Bazarragchaa M., and the main ideas of the dominant researchers are briefly discussed here. Uuganbayar M. acknowledges that Burqan Qaldun is a collocation and that its meaning is a burial ground
and an ancestral spirit (burqan means forefathers and qaldun means old women). Tsentsentsogt Sh. states that burqai means great-great ancestors. Eldedei and Ardaajav explain that burqai means great-great forefather. Tserensodnom D. relates the name burqan to the ancient Turkic and Mongolian language root denoting “dun”, and Bazarragchaa M. explains that burqai is connected to the ancient root of the figurative word. Jin Gang remarks that burqan means šakhe buqa.

An Overview of the Proper Noun “Qaldun” in the Collocation of “Burqan Qaldun”

The explanation of the proper noun Qaldun is much more complicated than that of the proper noun burqan. Therefore, very few different suggestions were offered by the researchers. We mentioned that for the very first time i.e., in 1950 His Excellency Rinchen B. related the proper noun to the “willow tree”, whereas in 1956 Poppe N. explained it as “a slope of a mountain”. The latter researchers’ opinions differ from each other, and they are unique.

Dulam S. in our previously quoted publication wrote the following: “Wörterbuch zu MANGHOL UN NIUCA TOBA‘AN (YÜAN-CH‘ANO PISHI) Geheime Geschicke der Mongolen, Franz Steiner Verlag GMBN, Wiesbaden, 1962, p. 57 (The dictionary of the Secret History of the Mongols) Henish E. explained the words as the following, namely: qaldun means drängend, hastend to (crowd), haldut (the plural of the previous word), Abhänge (side of a mountain), Felswände (cliff, mountain), Pelliott explained la montagne (mountain) in the French language translation of the Secret History of the Mongols, His excellency Damdinsuren Ts. wrote it as ‘cliff dwelling’ when he transliterated the Secret History of the Mongols into the modern Mongolian language.” After giving a short overview of the researchers’ opinions related to the mountain and cliff, he proposed relating the qaldun name to a kind of tree based on the phrase “Han Hentii Guardian Spirit with Qaldun Tree Label”, which is used in the evocation of the Han Hentii Guardian Spirit. Since Uuganbayar M. realized that burqan is fathers and ancestors, qaldunis is old ladies, old women and queens. Uuganbayar’s idea was supported by Bazarragchaa M., and the former proved that the name Burqan Qaldun is the collocations of male and female and fathers and mothers. Bazarragchaa M. wrote in his publication that Chadurav S. considered the name to mean the queen. It is noteworthy that His Excellency Gaadamba Sh. contemplated qaldun as “a burial place of worship”.

Discussion

“Burqan” in the collocation of “Burqan Qaldun”

We fully support the aforementioned concept on the correlation of burqan-burgas suggested by previous researchers, and we proposed a triple notion of burqan-tenger-ovooy several years ago in accordance with modern onomastics, in particular, the name structure of geographical names.

Burqan, tenger and ovooy worship may date back to at least the late period of the Old Stone Age. Chinese researcher He Xing Liang wrote an explanation for ancient Australian worship in his publication named “Ancient Chinese Totem”.

A researcher named Sainjargal stated that the acclaimed scholar Zen Si Gu from the Tan Dynasty wrote a description of Hunnu’s tradition, which says that “if there is no tree, a branch of a willow tree is inserted for a replacement. Numerous horsemen stop after circling three times. It is their inherited tradition.” On the other hand, recent publications by researchers studying Shamanism and Ovoo worship have proven that the act of worship was a common phenomenon across mankind. Indeed, He Xing Liang [1992], Magdalena Tatář [1976] and Ganzorig D. [2008] mentioned that Australians, Indians, the Chinese, and Tibetans as well as different nationalities and ethnic groups of Siberia partook in Ovoo worship.

While that may be, three names, namely, burqan, tenger and ovooy, are very ancient names related to the act of worship. Although some etymological varieties of the first two names were proposed by researchers, the origin is vague, and the root of the language is still unclear. In terms of the name Ovoo, various researchers have offered different roots as the word origin, namely, Maidar D. and Darisuren L. considered the word origin to be ‘ovooohi’ (a Mongol tent without the walls set up for temporary use) [1987]. Setsentsogt suggested that the word origin is ‘ovog’ (clan) [1988], and Jin Gang considered the word origin to be ‘övög’ (ancestor) [1999]. However, the researchers fully agree that the origin of the word ‘Ovoo’ is a native name rooted in the Mongolian language. The name “Ovoo” was used in a few languages, particularly Chinese and Korean languages, quite early. According to the Qing Dynasty Rule System written in the year 1684 i.e., the 28th year of Emperor Kangxi, which is considered to be one of the source books on Ovoo in the Chinese language, “Ovoo is a heap of stones piled by the nomads marking the territory boundary in places where no mountains and rivers are” [1684]. Ao Bao (敖包) is a Mongolian transliteration of the Chinese word meaning Ovoo. There is another transliteration of “ao bo” (敖包). In the Korean language, it became öl, which is 1. a peak of a mountain, and in the Jeju dialect, the meaning was altered to 2. ‘mountain’ (orim— the pronunciation of the word). Likewise, there is considerable evidence of the use of ‘ovooy’ in the form of the Mongolian word for naming geographical features in a number of western countries during Chinggis Haan’s conquering in the Middle Ages. Since Ovoo worship is an ancient act, in the Mongolian language, ‘ovooy’ was for as “burqan” and “tenger”, or these two words might have been used in parallel at certain times in history. The meaning of these names was “önöm” (totem), “shuteen” (worship), “süll” (protective genius) and “ezen sahis” (shamanist spirit), which denote a having a magic power for attaining salvation, averting evil and summoning good fortune by beckoning. Each word is discussed below in detail in order to ascertain the concept of each.

Burqan. One quotation from the SHM is “Qoriltai-Merkhan Qori-Tumadun qajar-turiyan buluqan keremun koree-tai qajar-iyan qorilalduju maualalduju, Qoril avboqtu boluq, Burqan-qaldun-no koreesun koruuli saitu, qajar sain, keen, Burqan-qaldun-no Ejet Burqan bosaqasan (=erected ovooy R.E.) Šinči-bayan-
uriyanqai-tur nouju aisuun ajru." On the one hand, it is indisputable that the abovementioned word “burqan” was the word and concept used before the spread of Buddhism. On the other hand, there is a high probability of semantically matching “erecting burqan” to “shuteent (worshipped)”, “ezen sahihit (guardian spirited)” and “tomet”, the last of which is equivalent to “spirit of mercy”, as noted by Purev O. Such supporting evidence can be found in the SHM. One such piece of evidence is the following:

Temuujin: “Tede qurban Merkit maqat keyjt-tur-iyen ajiraba-yu, bukču-u amui?” keen, Belkutai, Boorcū, Jelme, qurban-i, Merkid-un goinača uqauta qurban qnoq daqalzul, Merkid-kun keskeležul, Temujin Burqan deereč burqant (“going down Ovoo R.E.”), ebčuuen moeleču, ukulerun:

[... “Qaldun-burqan-na Qača-in tedui amin-iyan Qalqalalägdabä je bi! Maži ayuuldabä bi! Burqan-qaldun-i Manaqr buri maliyasuqai, Udur buri očisuki! Uruq-un uruq mino uqatuqtai!” keen, naran eserku buse-ben kujuun-duriyen erikelju, malaqai-ban qar-turiyen seejeleļu, qar-iyen ebčeuun-duriyen moeleču, naran juk yesunte soketču, sačči očuli okba” (I climbed the Qaldun On one horse, following elk tracks; A shelter of broken willow twigs I made my home. Thanks to Qaldun Burqan My life, a grasshopper’s life, Was indeed shielded! But I was greatly frightened. Every morning I will sacrifice to Burqan Qaldun, every day I will pray to it: the offspring of my offspring shall be mindful of this and do likewise!’ He spoke and facing the sun, hung his belt around his neck, put his hat over his hand, beat his breast with his fist, and nine times kneeling down towards the sun, he offered a libation and a prayer. (Translation by Igor de Rachewiltz) were asseverated, and Temujin made a spiritual sprinkling.

If so, in “The Thematic Dictionary of Mongolian Geographical Names”, which we compiled (Ulaanbaatar, 2004, 8 volumes), there are a total of 325 names consisting of the words “burqan”, “burqant”, and “burqantin”, namely, 67 mountains, 116 hills (knolls), 7 mountain passes, 3 mountain ranges, 34 mountain valleys and 15 wells are registered. Despite the fact that it is impossible to define a name alteration in accordance with its historical time period, this evidence is not forthcoming. The abovementioned words all have the compound meaning of “shuteent” (with worship), and it is undeniable that there can be geographical names such as Burqan Qaldun that were used during the medieval period or before.

According to the contemporary Mongolian geographical name list containing the word “burqan”, the name “burqan” has not been used as a base noun. This is definitely related to the semantic evolution and alteration of the name, which was later used to mean: 1. King of all people or an enlightened or awakened sentient being according to Buddhist principles; burqan bagsh (Buddha), burqant gazar, bug chatgur (good and bad sides), 2. Various items of figures and portraits depicting religious beliefs: burqand murguh (pray to God), shavar burqan (Buddhist image created out of clay), zurmal burqan (Buddhist images), or 3. Bunhan; burqan suvraga. It is worth emphasizing that the current meaning of the word “Burqan” still carries the aforementioned ancient meaning of “bunhan (tomb); burqan suvraga (pagoda)”.}

Heaven. According to Shamanism, six great kings occupy the world. One of them is the King of Heaven, who exists in the heavens, and the other five kings include the king of humans living on the earth and the great kings of water spirits, carnivores, winged creatures and reptiles. The King of Heaven quenches all of the other kings’ thirst, including that of the water spirits, and nourishes them with his rain water; because of that last quality, the King of Heaven is intimately connected to the earth. Thus, he is the male origin of evolving life and rules over all. In other words, the notions of heaven and the earth are integrated, so the act of worshipping them is also unified, according to Purev O. and other researchers. In today’s world, it is not unusual to call “Ovoo tahih (the act of Ovoo worshipping)”, “tenger tahih (the act of Heaven worshipping)”. For example, the Oirats still say “tenger murgunu” or “tengert murgunu” (pray to sky). Furthermore, there are some related expressions in a commandment for worshipping Bogd Han Hairhan mountain, Han Hentiin mountain and Otgon Tenger mountain issued by the Bogd Khan. The related expressions are as follows: worship “uuliiin tenger” Bogd Han Hairhan mountain and Han Hentiin mountain twice, once each in the summer and winter of each year at the same time as the previous year, tengerig taix terguun said, tengeriin talaahuid, uulsiin tengerig taix tsorj lam, uuliiin tengerig taix, etc. Hence, the notions of “tenger tahih” and “ovoo tahih” are interchangeable on some occasions.

Based on the previous statements, the meaning of “tenger” studied here is seemingly closer to the word “ovoo” than to the word “burqan”. This can be proven by using the reflecting feature of current Mongolian geographical names. In our dictionary, some evidence of “tenger (heaven)” have been used in two different ways as a base noun and as a proper member. Altogether, 9 names, including Gun Naurin tenger, Ih tenger, Muhar tenger, Nuhmel tenger, Otgon tenger, Suvene Ulaanii tenger, Sulen Ulaanii tenger, Hallariin tenger, and Tsagaan Buluunii tenger in the territory of the Uurgamal, Otgon, Duruljihin and Telmen local administrative units of Zavhan Province are registered as having the base noun function. In addition, there are 25 piece of evidence in which the name “tenger” is used as the proper member. Of those, “uul (mountains)” are located in the following territories: Otgon Tenger uul is in the Otgon local administrative unit of Zavhan Province, Tenger Davaa uul is in the Burd local administrative unit of Bulgan Province and the Bulnai local administrative unit of Zavhan Province, Tenger Davaa uul is in the Hutagundur local administrative unit of Bulgan Province, Tenger Han uul is in the Sant local administrative unit of Selenge Province, Tenger Tsrar uul is in the Hangai local administrative unit of Artanhai Province and the Gurvanbulag local administrative unit of Bayan Hongor Province, Tsagaan Tenger uul is in the Dadal local administrative unit of Hentii Province and Elst Tenger uul is in the Numrug local administrative unit of Zavhan
Province. Additionally, “tenger (heaven)” is located in the following territories: Tenger Davaanii am is in the Bulnai and Durvulijn local administrative units of Zavhan Province, Ih Tengerii am is in a district of Ulaanbaatar city, Tenger Usnii hooloi is in the city of Choibalsan in Dornod Province, Tenger Davaanii Hoid hyar is in the Jargalant local administrative unit of Huvsugul Province, Tenger Davaanii hyar is in the Ih Uul local administrative unit of Zavhan Province, Tenger Tsaramin hyar is in the Hangai local administrative unit of Arhangai Province and Gurvanbulag local administrative unit of Bayanhongor Province, Tenger davaa is in the Undurshireet and Lun local administrative units of Tuv Province, Tengeriin tal is in the Altanbulag local administrative unit of Dornogovi Province, and Tenger toiroom is in the Hatunbulag local administrative unit of Dornogovi Province.

The notion of Ovoo will now be discussed. Since the names of ovoo, including ovoo erecting, including a charm, consecrating and worshipping, are a large subject of study on their own, we only aim to accomplish the research goal of tracing the name meaning of ovoo, which can be correlated with the aforementioned name of “burqan” and “tenger” in terms of meaning. The reason for this goal is that it is very common in Mongolian geographical names for the names of mountains to be made from the names of “ovoo” and for “ovoo” to be called by their mountain names. On the other hand, we have considered that ancient sacred Mongolian geographical objects should be reflected in the names of ovoo and other geographical names that came before. We intended to investigate this hypothesis with Mongolian geographical name evidence. Therefore, we first look at the type of names collocating with the base name “ovoo” and then examine the type of names consisting of the names of carnivores, winged creatures and representatives of other animals relating to animal worship in early Shamanism.

Currently, there are 862 names in Mongolian territory, as registered in our dictionary and the “Electronic Fund of Mongolian Geographical Names”, in which “ovoo” is used as the base noun and 4439 names in which “ovoo” is used as a proper noun.

“Qaldun” in the collocation of “Burqan Qaldun”

The various interpretations of qaldun give an impression of the substructure principle of speech, namely, the universal proper noun structure, i.e., proper noun + base noun which is the product of speech, i.e., the creation of the speaking person, and no language structure is being disregarded. The proper noun exists neither without the base noun nor alone, i.e., the base noun is the existing foundation of the proper noun. Therefore, proper nouns are composed of at least two words, as seen by examples of the implementation of natural objects, persons, animals, candies, fruits and carpets, etc. In modern speech, we say that “We are passing the winter in Hujirt”, “Today, I ran into Dolgor”, and “I will buy Yargui”. In this situation, the communicating people know that Hujirt is a river or a mountain valley, Dolgor is a person and Yargui is a candy, so they abbreviate the base nouns. If a communicating person does not know the base noun of the proper noun, the base noun must be mentioned in order to gain understanding. Communicating with the use of a single proper noun tends to be dominant in informal speech in comparison with written language. In our research on modern Mongolian geographical names, by the double counting of dialects, we find that approximately 240,000 proper nouns are followed by approximately 450 base nouns. When His Excellency Perlee H. prepared a list of geographical names in the Secret History of the Mongols, few base nouns that are used as proper nouns were used in accordance with this context. This example can be used as clear proof of our abovementioned idea. Furthermore, we acknowledge that the names of rivers differ from names of mountains and other objects by their structural constituents and features as proper nouns, and this idea was sufficiently proven in Research on Forms and Semantics of Mongolian Geographical Names, Ulaanbaatar, 2004, page 322; Onomastics of Mongolian Geographical Names, Ulaanbaatar, 2008, page 534; a dictionary with a total of 18 volumes; and numerous presentations and articles. Based on the conclusions of these studies, it should be considered that the name qaldun is a compound noun that includes the name mountain, and it is a base noun altered by merging it with a previous word. Such phenomena commonly occur in Mongolian geographical names, for example, aduun tseg−adaatsag, shar had−sharad, ar sogoot (in a valley)−argsaat, har shar (mountain)−galshar (a local administrative unit).

Conclusion

Based on our research, the following conclusions are drawn.

1) First and foremost, we fully support that the etymology of “burqan” is related to the “burgas” (willow tree) based on the act of ovoo worshipping in the Hunnu Dynasty by ancestors of the Mongols, as written in the Chinese Historical Sources and “Altan tovch” by Scholar Luvsandanzan.

2) In the SHM, the first occurrence of the name “burqan” can be understood as “hishgiin (well-being)” burqan i.e., ovoo, and the second occurrence of the name “burqan” can be understood as “ongon (a shamanist ancestral idol of a certain tribe at that time)”, i.e., ovoo. “Burqan” is considered to be different from the Buddhist term “burhan”.

3) Synthesizing all of the previously mentioned evidence related to “tenger (heaven)” in a certain time span, it seems that “tenger” was used as the base name for the notion of “shuteent ongon (totem of veneration)” by combining “gazar and tenger (the earth and heaven)”. Therefore, in the name of “Oton tenger”, meaning “gracious”, the original base name meaning of “tenger” became vague, and the word “sul” was added in the final position and the new collective form began to be used in practice. On the other hand, this idea is proved by the evidence of the name “tenger” in modifying “am” (mountain valley) and having the function of the proper member as well as by evidence of the name “am” leading to “tenger” or “ovoo” in the current practice. One clear example of this proof is “Ih Buga Tengeriin am” leading to Tssetse Gun, the sacred ovoo of Bogd Han Hairhan.
Along with this, it is undeniable that the proper member “tenger” collocates with the other base names, such as “davād” (mountain-pass), “törom” (salt marsh) and “iil” (steppe), in the formation of the Mongolian geographical names by modifying them with the meaning of “undur” (high), “huh” (blue), “ihi” (many) and “hyaaqargui” (limitless). Furthermore, it should be emphasized that there are some cases of relating the other geographical objects to the geographical object called “tenger” for naming purposes, among them are the 25 names mentioned above.

4) The names viz burqan, tenger(sky), bunhan (tomb), sharil(remaing), tahilga(ceremony of offering), tahil (offering), altan (golden), haan (king) and noyon (lord), collocating with “ovoo” in Mongolian geographical names, prove our hypotheses suggesting that the three base nouns, Бураган-тэнгэр-овоо (Burqan–tenger–ovoо), had the same meaning and replaced each other in certain historical time periods or that the three names were used during different periods of time. These usages are clearly traced through time. On the other hand, the immortalization of several animal names that have been inherited through acts of Shamanism and Buddhism and have been used for a long time in Mongolian geographical names witnesses geographical names of nomads, who are intimately related with nature, as monuments created by historical and cultural words that contain an immense amount of information.

5) We ourselves prove that there is a base noun, mountain, that is included in the name qaldun, but we are taking a step back to say which previous names were used without any concrete evidence before now. In terms of the hypotheses of the previously mentioned researchers, the hypothesis that is closest to our suggestion is rock+mountain.

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