

GEOGRAPHY OF ‘THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE MONGOLS’ : Location of c13th Mongol place names and topographical features in Northeast Mongolia

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ABSTRACT: *This paper examines the time and space relationship of events recorded in ‘The Secret History of the Mongols’ (SH) by reference to primary and secondary associated historical sources, available satellite imagery and the results of on the ground reconnaissance expeditions conducted in 2008, 2009 and 2010. The pre Chinghiss period of Temuchin’s life is irrevocably tied to NE Mongolia and in particular with the upper river basins of the rivers Kerulen and Onon, often referred to as ‘Ononkerule’, the homeland of 13th Century (C13th) Mongols. The expeditionary work carried out in this area, added to emerging historical evidence contributes significantly to the view that the SH accounts have real validity and can be geographically located. Since ‘The Secret History of the Mongols’ has become widely available in the public domain, considerable effort has been dedicated to identify the geographical locations of recorded events in the life of Temuchin. By the end of the C20th renowned Mongolists have advanced considerably the space time relationships of the pre Chinghiss Khan period of Temuchin’s life, with the geography of North East Mongolia. Notwithstanding these advances much remains to be investigated studied and tested, to dispel doubt and controversy. Definitive identification of key events, named locations and geographical features, such as the whereabouts of the Tunggelik, Tana, Sanguur Streams and Burgi Ereg (Ergi) to name some and perhaps even where Chinghiss’s sacred mountain Burkhan Khaldun is not, will significantly improve our understanding of C13th Mongol History for the benefit of the people of Mongolia and worldwide interest. This paper will review geographical features and place names associated with Temuchin’s life, before being accorded the title of Chinghiss Khan (Genghis Khan) and present supporting evidence for*

their locations in relation to each other and with known locations in North East Mongolia.

Introduction

The development of information technology and the advent of the Internet, has given rise to unlimited access and exchange of information and instant communication has become synonymous with modern life styles, taken together with increased freedom of movement and cultural exchange it has meant that research and transfer of ideas is accessible to most, unhindered by remoteness or political obstacle. The 13th Mongols, whether knowingly or unknowingly, in facilitating global freedom of movement between East and West and promoting trade and cultural exchange, were perhaps the forerunners of these modern day processes, but in their wildest dreams they could never have conceived time would come when the 'Blue heaven' would look down to trace the paths they took and allow the world to admire what evidence they had left behind. Nevertheless their achievements also relied heavily on the tactical use and exploitation of knowledge and available technology, to discover the secrets and weaknesses of their adversaries and thus they would not be surprised, that 800 years later similar tactics are in turn also being employed to discover their secrets.

In the spring of 1228 (some translations of primary sources suggest 1229) Kings and Princes had made their way to the upper basin of the Kerulen valley to pay their respects and elect a new Kha'an. Chinghiss Khan had died in August 1227, since then his burial in the tribal homeland of the Kyat¹(Howarth, 1876) (Boyle, 1997), had probably already taken place and now Ogadai was destined to be elected Kha'an as decreed by his father. The empire was divided by order of Chinghiss Khan amongst the ruling houses of his male sons with Tolui, his favourite and youngest son, inheriting the 'Hearth',² the indigenous homeland of the newly created Mongol nation. The importance and prestige attached to the Mongol Homeland can be gauged by the fact that Tolui also inherited 100,000 of the then 129,000 Mongol fighting force, effectively making him and his descendants the principal power broker of the Chinghissid dynasty for the next 162 years³; and the fact that subsequent Kha'ans all sought to legitimise their positions by returning to this part of Mongolia, on or soon after their election and during their reigns⁴.

¹ *Menggetu-Kyan* SS* 50 (SS* refers to the numbered sections of SH) and '*Yusegei the Kyan has come*' SS 67 in the SH are first references we have in history directly identifying individuals as members of the Kyat, as these were brothers it is no surprise they were both known as 'Kyan'. H.H. (Rachewiltz, 2004) Howarth 'History of the Mongols' vol 1 p.43 explains the origin of the term 'kyan' referring to the six sons of Qabul Khan who were collectively named 'Kiat or Kiats'; relating that '*Albughazi says the Mongols called a mountain torrent Kian*'. Chinghiss Khan in his time was the titular head of the Kyat, the clan whose origin in Mongol genealogy can be traced back to the descendants of Qabul Khan, his great grandfather.

² See L. Hartog, (1989) *Conqueror of the world* p.149. The custom and practice of the Mongols was that the youngest male member of the family of the first wife 'the Otchigin', was deemed to be 'the guardian of the hearth and home' and Tolui as the youngest male of Borte's children fulfilled this capacity. Interestingly under this custom, Temuge as the 'Otchigin' of Yusegei and Holeun should have inherited the 'hearth' of his father, he did not so it would seem that this rule did not always apply for it is clear that Temuchin, after his father's death in due course took on the role of leader of the Kyat and guardianship of their tribal territory, the 'Home and the Hearth'.

³ Following the demise of the Ogadai family line and the election of Monkhe as great Khan in 1251 the Toluid family line dominated the supreme Khanship role in the Mongol empire until the fall of the Yuan' in 1362.

⁴ Monkhe in 1251 and 1257 Ogadai in 1233 Tai-ting in 1323 amongst others see Pelliot 'notes on Marco Polo' p328.

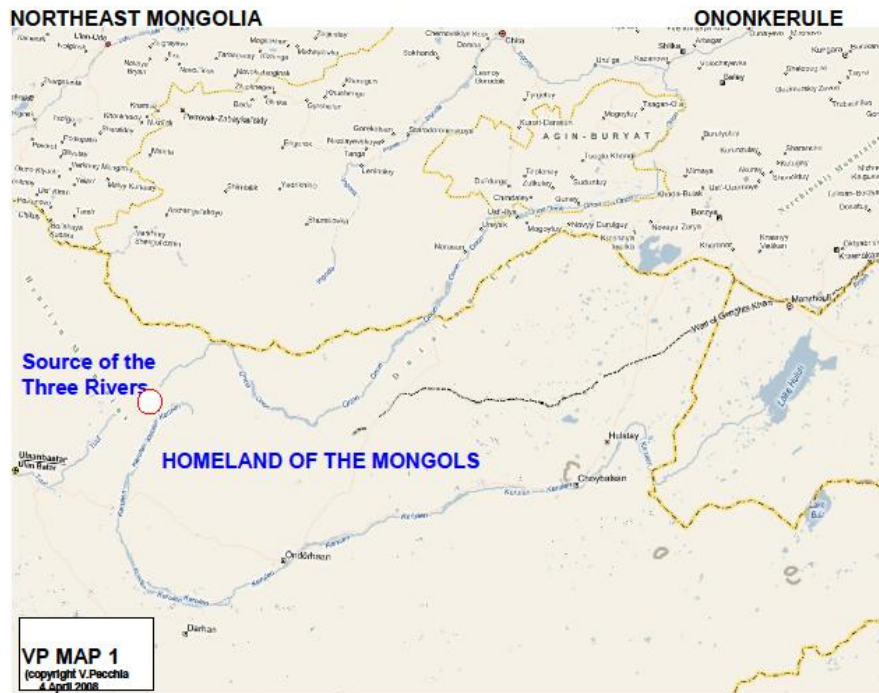


Figure 1. Homeland of the Mongols 'Ononkerule' (COURTESY OF GOOGLE EARTH)

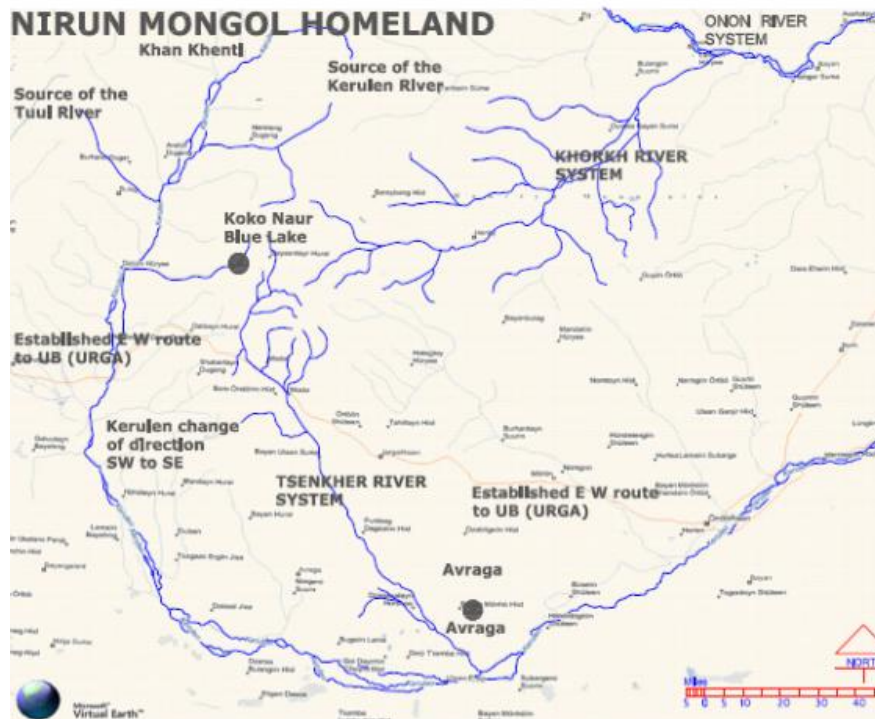


Figure 2. Homeland of the Nirun⁵ Mongols within 'Ononkerule' (COURTESY OF GOOGLE EARTH)

The 'Hearth' of the Imperial family and the Mongols is also referred to as 'Ononkerule'⁶ by Europeans i.e. the land between the river Onon and the Kerulen (see

⁵ Of the Mongol tribes descended from Bodonchar and of the Borjigin line it is said their genetic trait was 'grey blue eyes' and because their progeny was reckoned to have occurred by supernatural birth they were also known as 'Nirun Mongols' or 'the children of light'. All other Mongols, not of the Borjigin lineage, were on the other hand, known as the Darligns (Howarth, 1876).

Figure 1) which to my mind, is exactly that and in particular can be visually identified with the upper Kerulen (Herlen) River basin and the land enclosed by the large bend the river forms (see Figure 2) as it changes from a South West to South East and then to a North East direction.

THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE MONGOLS (SH)⁷

The original history was written, probably in Uighur script, by an unknown author in Kod'e Aral⁸. The suspicion falls on Shigi Kutuqu⁹ or someone not only known to Chinghiss but also to the Imperial family, who had unlimited access to written¹⁰ and oral records. It is generally accepted that while the work was started at the inauguration of Ogadai's reign it was probably finished, as his demise is never stated or inferred in it, before his death in 1241. Some of the recorded information was probably sourced from oral story telling traditions, other from the accounts of members of Chinghiss's Court still living or from their immediate descendants and not least from likely participants in the actual chronicled events. Many of these events had geographical locations many of which are not yet identified and where recently they have, have been done so on speculative assumptions with little support of evidence on the ground¹¹.

SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION IN THE MONGOL HOMELAND

Within 'OnonKerule' Mongol tribes all had their own recognised tribal areas,¹² ancestral home territories whose geography tribal members knew well. For the

⁶ William Rubriquis writes that '*Onankerule, which is as it were their original home, and in which is the ordu of Chingis Chan*' 'More Nestorians para 6'.

⁷ 'The Secret History of the Mongols' as we know it today has a chequered history no least because an original copy has never been found. What we have are translations of original transcriptions of a phonetic record of the original Mongol document; the original Chinese document is known as the Yuan Chao Pi Chi, its contents also correspond with the 'Golden Register' or 'Altan Debter' of Rashid Ud Din which records the ancestral history of the Il Khans. The historical background of the SH is well recorded and translations prepared by notable scholars (see Arch. Palladius post 1870, H. Howarth 1883, , Bretschneider 1910, E Heinisch 1937, P. Pelliot 1913, FW Cleaves 1956, Laureano Ramirez Bellerin 1996). Palladius was the first scholar to introduce this work to the west having acquired in 1870 a Chinese copy of the transliteration which had been printed in 1848. Heinisch, Pelliot and Cleaves followed suit with their own translations and in more recent times Bellerin, Mostaert, U Onon, P Khan and I de Rachewiltz. The process of translation and interpretation across linguistic and cultural barriers is difficult at best of times let alone when the original source has been lost. Being involved in a small way with modern translation from and to my native language I know only too well how cultural concepts can be lost when literal translation methods are adopted and similarly, intent and purpose misconceived when understanding and experience is lacking. It is no surprise, therefore, that there is no standard version of 'The Secret History of the Mongols' in English let alone agreement in detail across international divides even if there is greater consensus on its overall content in general. The result is that many passages of the SH reflect the Authors' idiosyncrasies, knowledge and expertise and often in the absence of better information, subjective deduction of the available information at the time of translation.

⁸ Kode'e Aral; Aral is generally accepted to signify 'Island' but the supposition that the Mongol meaning is the same as the western notion of an island, that is a piece of land surrounded by a body of water, does not signify. In fact our Mongol guides explained the term 'Aral' can also correspond to an area of land with the same topography and surrounded by continuous mountain ranges. Similarly P. Pelliot and I De Rachewiltz suggest that it could be an area of land defined by the confluence of two rivers, the latter accepting the current location to be in the Avraga area at the confluence of the Tsenkher with the Herlen River this conclusion relies heavily on the assumption that the Tsenkher= Sanguur. See Rachewiltz Vol. 2 commentary to the SH page 501.

⁹ Shigi Qutuqu the founding Tartar boy (SS135) adopted by Holeun and whom Chinghiss Khan in SS 203 of the SH effectively puts in charge of the Judiciary and makes him responsible to keep a register and record in writing judgements thus in effect in charge of scribes and record keepers. It would seem inconceivable that Shigi Qutuqu could not, therefore, have been involved in the writing of the most important story of all, recording the history of the Great Khan and the beginning of the Mongol Nation, in at least editorial capacity. For detailed description of functions of the Mongols see I de Rachewiltz 1966. (Rachewiltz, 1966)

¹⁰ The detail contained in the SH must have involved access to principals of the Imperial family and those involved directly in recorded events and campaigns. Writing had only recently been ordained to be introduced by CK following the submissions of the Uyghur's to Mongol rule, thus while some written records would have been available most of the other information would have been collected and related to the writer from oral sources.

¹¹ There is a remarkable amount of historical information relating and supposing geographical locations on the ground, and much credit should be attributed to early Jesuit missionaries such as Gaubil, Gerbillon, De Mailla, sinologists Remusat, Grousset and Pelliot amongst others are 19th C Russian explorers who travelled the Mongol steppes, collecting anecdotal evidence from local sources to try and make sense of spatial relationships and mapping them, using available technology as best they could. Inevitably the problems of transcription, forgotten place names, duplication of names and lack of formal records at local and national level made this process very difficult and too often if a location was wrongly identified it would become the building block for yet more errors in identifying other locations.

¹² The Genealogy of C13th Mongol tribal composition is primarily derived from the SH augmented by supplemental records in the Yuan Shi and Il Khan histories of Rashid d Din, Juvaini and Albughazi. Henry Howarth in the History of the Mongols Vol 1, probably gives the most

purpose of this paper, the homelands of the Tayijiuts the Jadaran and the Kyat are of significant interest, see Figure 3 below (Bellerin, 1996), for the respective leaders of each of these tribes Targudai Kiriltuk, Jamuqa and Temuchin all held ambition to be the new leader of the Mongol peoples. Each had an equal ancestral pedigree¹³ to fulfil the post if only they could show they had the mettle to be a great leader. The accepted view¹⁴ is that the Jadaran occupied the middle basin of the Onon in the present day Kyra district, whereas the Tayidjiut controlled the upper middle basin of the river Onon in and around its junction with the present day Khorkh river near Binder and extending part way up the Khorkh River Valley.

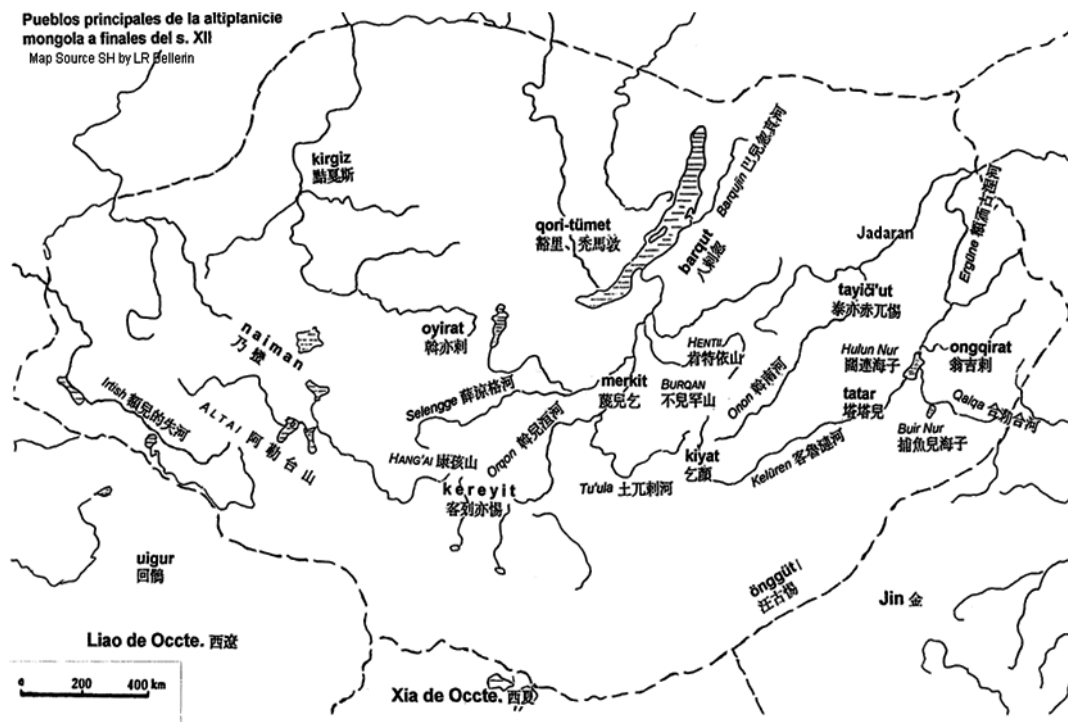


Figure 3. Distribution of inner asian peoples in late C12th Mongolia

The Kyat for their part controlled the upper basin of the Khorkh river system and the upper basin of the Kerulen River (Bellerin, 1996). In this and in the forthcoming paper the ‘hearth’ of the Kyat clan, is central to understanding the early geography of

detailed background account not only of Mongol tribal structures but also of contemporary tribal peoples such as the Naimans, Merkits, Tartars, Ongquuts etc. and their relationship to territorial areas. See also Plano di Carpine accounts Chapter V and Chapter IX. (Dawson, 1966). Howarth makes clear that these peoples were associated with specific territories which were under their control even if there were no marked boundaries. Similarly within these territories individual tribes or clans were also associated with specific locations which were recognised and accepted as tribal/clan lands appertaining to them. The relationship between Clan territory and Clan culture and custom is also well documented by Yu.I. Drobyshev (see Funeral and memorial Rituals of the Medieval Mongols and Their Underlying World view 2006). (Binsteed, 1914) The Secret History SS 9 is the first testimony that while freedom of movement and access across the Mongol landscape was available, territorial there can be no doubt that Qorilardai-mergen knew that in deciding to move from the ‘Qori Tumed country’ he was moving into a new territorial area that appertained to the Uriangqai. Similarly from D’Hosson ‘Histoire des Mongols 1852 page 26’ we learn that the ‘Djelairé having been attacked on the banks of the Kerulen and having suffered a heavy defeat by the army of the Kin Emperor, sixty two families by ‘passerent sur le territoire de Monouloun’ had encroached on territory not belonging to them. Dei –Sechen in his speech to Yusegei SS65 concludes with ‘Our Noble sons protect their home land’ see Dorjgotov, Erendo SH 2006. Jamuqa in his speech of ss 105, even though he is far from the Selenga lands where the Merkits dwell clearly knows the location of the three Merkit tribal lands by naming each individually. Not least we are recurrently informed by the SH that ‘Temuchin and as Chinghiss khan’ titular head of the Kyat’ has a semi permanent base in the area of the Kurelkhu and the Kerulen.

¹³ See LR Bellerin 1996 for the genealogy relationships and (Howarth, 1876) (Rachewiltz, 2004). All three respective clans/tribes had a common ancestor in Bodonchar and all three had equal claim to belonging to the Borjgin Tribe whose origins are associated with Bodanchar.

¹⁴ As more current information becomes available in the geographical field of the SH it may well be that such views will have to be revised.

the SH and most if not all historical sources always place it in this area. Grousset in his translation (Grousset, 1944) of the Chinese histories reports Qaidou, (Temuchins' great great grandfather whose son Qabul was effectively the procreator of the Kyat) as *'Il y a lieu de penser qu'il établit alors ses campements dans l'ancien patrimoine de sa famille, au sud-est du mont Kenteï, près des sources sacrées de l'Onon et du Kèrulèn'*. It is no surprise therefore that much of the pre-Chingiss period accounts of the SH focus on these areas.

The only fixed geographical point named in the SH, which can be identified with absolute certainty, is Koko Na'ur¹⁵ otherwise also known as Blue lake. Here Temuchin was recognised as leader of a budding Mongol Confederacy and was given the title of Chinghiss Khan for the first time.¹⁶ The event is reputed to have occurred in 1189.¹⁷ This Koke Na'ur is also the location from which the family then move onto the Sanguur valley camp referred to in SS 94 and where Borte is brought to, by Temuchin, as his wife. Similarly, on route to and from Koko Na'ur, are other important locations¹⁸ which as they become identified on the ground, provide valuable clues which help expand the geographical knowledge of the SH.

GEOGRAPHY OF THE PRE-CHINGHISS PERIOD IN THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE MONGOLS

The pre Chinghiss period is covered in the first three chapters of the SH and concludes with the election of Temuchin as Chinghiss Khan in SS 120 to 125 inclusive. The primary locations of interest associated with this period are the:

Kimurkha Stream, Terghune Heights, Ayil Qaraqana, Koko Na'ur (Blue Lake), Qorqonaq Jubur, Sanguur Stream, Beder Spur, Burgi Ereg (Ergi) and Escarpment, Tunggelik Stream, Tana Stream, Kurelkhu Mountains and Temuchin's Burkhan Khaldun.

The locations represent either places which Temuchin and/or his family recurrently use as camp sites or physical features that identify place names or which formed travel corridors between camps or for troop movements.

CAMP MOVEMENTS

¹⁵ KoKo Na'ur is a name often used in Mongolia but this particular location is identified by its association with 'Khara Zurkh Mount (Qara-jirugen)' the 'Sanguur Stream' (Binsteed, 1914) (Pelliot, 1959) and the 'Gurelgu Mountains'.

¹⁶ The view that Temuchin was granted the title of 'Chinghiss Khan' in 1206 following the execution of Jamuqa is incorrect according to SH. In fact the title is recorded in the SH to have been bestowed much earlier than this date (in 1189 (Onon, 2001)) following his separation from Jamuqa after the liberation of his wife from the Merkits. The later date of 1206 would seem to represent the effective unification of all the Mongol tribes which could only have happened with the final death of his greatest rival and only realistic pretender to be ruler of all Mongols, his 'Anda' Jamuqa. It is true that SS 202 states that the title of 'Qan' was again bestowed on 'Chingiss Khan' at this time; the restatement of Chinghiss Khan's position as 'Qan' was probably necessary so that all tribes recently come over to his cause, could swear allegiance, accepting his position as their sovereign. Dismissing the SH as being 'anachronistic' in respect to these events has little weight and I de Rachewiltz's view in his commentary p.760, seems a proper understanding of the SH record. The date of 1206 is often quoted as the commencement of the Mongol Empire (see Blochet 1910 page 180), with some justification I think, as it was only then that Chinghiss Khan could reasonably have been said to have become undisputed sovereign and from when the institutions of the Mongol State, can be said to have been instigated.

¹⁷ See U. Onon 'The history and life of Chinghiss Khan page 103' (Onon, 2001).

¹⁸ Many geographical locations have sequential relationships either in time or space or both; correct or incorrect identification of a location will thus have great bearing on the logistics of the chronicled events and the correctness of the overall geography.

The logistics of familial and strategic camp movements which involved a substantial part of the tribe, clan or troops, in reality do not differ greatly from each other, other than family groups are not necessarily moving for strategic reasons but generally following established seasonal pattern to suit Summer, Autumn, Winter and Spring conditions. In strategic camp movements there are more people, more animals and likely to involve larger distances, but the likelihood is that the same discipline prevails¹⁹. Early observers describe how in the early dawn, with the sound of drums, break of camp would commence involving the taking down of Gher, packing, gathering and loading the burden animals and carts etc. Once all is made ready the journey would start at say about 08.00-09.00 hours. The rate of movement would be determined by the slowest participants which more than likely would have been the herds of sheep and goats and the procession, travelling at say 2 to 4 miles an hour would by 15.00/16.00 hours reach the new camp site which forward scouts would have secured. The timing would allow for the new camp to be raised, seeing to the animals and milking to take place by say 18.00, in time to commence the evening routines of lighting fires, cooking, processing milk and other food stuff, while it was still light. The distance actually travelled being inevitably determined by terrain and the prevailing climatic conditions experienced along the way. The logic of such a routine is not far removed from the reported accounts of C19th travellers in the area like Prezwalski, Podziniev, Palladius, Kozloff, Binstead, Campbell or even the first hand C13th accounts of Carpine, William of Rubruck and Montecorvino.²⁰ At best the maximum resulting camp stages would correspond more or less to 25 miles²¹ (42 km).

METHODOLOGY

The identification of SH place names, to date, has relied on close reading and cross referencing of associated historical accounts and making sense of their locations, by relating them to available mapping and anecdotal evidence from travellers and local sources. In the early C18th Gaubil was perhaps the first and most renowned scholar to attempt a methodical approach at recording the geography of the Chinghissid period, even so, for information of relevant place names it's more than likely he relied heavily on Chinese historical sources available to him²² and then he probably geographically positioned them whilst travelling with the Imperial Expeditions. While some of his locations do not coincide with their modern day latitude and longitude positions, many do. I suspect those that do were locations whose identification was not in doubt²³ and their coordinates were recorded on the spot, by compass bearing or astronomical

¹⁹ For detailed description of camp set up procedures, discipline and daily camp tasks see Plano de Carpine and William of Rubruck (Dawson, 1966) and Peng Daya and Xu Ting (Olbricht, et al., 1980) (Khair, et al., 2005).

²⁰ Accounts related by these travellers illustrate the impact on distance based on method of transport, terrain, weather and the seasons. Carpine under the guidance of Mongol guides with fresh remounts at staging posts would have achieved 100 miles per day whereas Corvino and William of Rubruck on foot and cart would have been lucky to manage 14 to 16 miles per day. C 19/20th explorers travelling on horseback with pack camels would aim to cover 20 to 30 miles per day with key staging posts based on access to water and fodder. See (Kozloff, 1909) (Binstead, 1914) (Palladius, 1872) (Giles, 1910) (Jomini, 1862).

²¹ 19/20th C explorers travelling on horseback and with pack camels would aim to cover 20 to 30 miles per day with key staging posts based on access to water and fodder. See (Kozloff, 1909) (Binstead, 1914) (Palladius, 1872) (Giles, 1910) (Jomini, 1862).

²² It is doubtful that the SH document as we know it today was known to him. His principal sources would have been the Chinese historical accounts of the various dynasties and of particular importance would have been the Yuan Shi.

²³ For example principal lakes like the Kolu'un and Buiyr specific location on river courses, named mountains, settlements and fortified positions.

observation, whereas those that do not were probably interpolated from known positions and or information gathered along the way. Today remote access satellite imagery and real time global positioning satellite navigation, would have astonished the early pioneers in this field, allowing their modern day counterparts a world view of any location they choose and pinpointing its position to within metres. Such sophisticated technology, however, is no panacea when trying to identify historical locations which have no modern day identification and by itself it is actually quite useless. Critical to success, in addition to a thorough understanding of a location's primary reference and context, are travel time relationships between associated locations and all that that implies in regard to quantifying 'travel time' in respect of means of transport, environmental constraints and cultural practice. Recently some researchers seem to have placed great store on pinpointing hitherto unknown site locations through 'Remote Sensing'²⁴ technique alone, giving rise to quotes propounding it capable '*to find the needle in the haystack without touching a single blade of grass*', such comment being allegedly made in support of a contemporary search for the 'Tomb of Genghis Khan' by the Valley of the Khans project. Of course this pre supposes the right '*haystack*' has first been identified!

Our methodology to establish the spatial locations of the place names in the SH involves the:

- 1. Cross referencing of multiple translations of the SH by creditable and renowned Authors;²⁵**
- 2. Cross referencing of relevant primary and secondary historical sources and accounts;²⁶**
- 3. Address spatial relationships between geographical sites by remote sensing techniques;²⁷**
- 4. Interpolation and application of travel time and distance between locations, by analysis and estimate of typical journeys times (from military camp and troop movement discipline, historical records of journeys in Mongolia and cultural practice) in association with environmental constraints and the means of transport available;²⁸**

²⁴ Identifying an object or phenomenon by using recorded or real time information acquired via wireless devices such as satellites, fly over aircraft or ship remote from the object under investigation.

²⁵ The principal editions used for this paper are listed in the Bibliography index.

²⁶ Inevitably reliance has had to be placed on transcriptions and translations of primary sources from renowned scholars in the field and limited by the obstacle of language, thus it is acknowledged that there may exist more evidence in sources inaccessible to me which may add or detract to the ideas expressed in this paper; notwithstanding this, the range and quality of sources that have been used I believe, are of more than adequate provenance to underpin the conclusions reached. The principal sources and authors used for this paper are listed in the reference and bibliography index.

²⁷ Initially readily accessible satellite imagery through Google, Virtual Earth and NASA World Wind, supplemented by detailed satellite imagery from Landsat and GeoEye and aerial photographs privately commissioned.

²⁸ Based on research of pre mechanised military practice, accounts of CK and post CK military campaigns, C18th and C19th travel accounts conducted in the area, reference to C 13th ambassadorial visits to the Mongol Court, reference to C 13th Vatican embassy's to the Mongol court, research in the 'yam' and 'pony express' courier systems and Training and Fitness procedures for Athletic Horses.

5. Comparison with field work investigation of local custom, practice and associated knowledge of the area's physical geography.²⁹

The early events of the SH can be placed in the areas of and in between the Onon and the upper Kerulen basin, for here are the ancient territories of the 'Nirun' Mongols (for 'Nirun' see figure 2 and note 6) and in particular the Kyat, the story of whose leader the SH records. Within this 'haystack' lie the principal locations associated with Temuchin's early life and while the river courses of the Onon and the Kerulen have always been readily identifiable, the whereabouts of other places, other than Ko'ke Naur, have remained doubtful. The doubt inevitably arises when their location appears in conflict with one or more of the five categories listed above, resulting in forced logic of the original text or declaring it wanting in some way or other when the logic does not fit.

The methodology adopted in this study intends to formulate a cohesive overall framework for the spatial context of this period, enabling better comprehension of chronicled events in part and as a whole. If the premise is accepted that the original SH Mongol document did accurately reflect its environment, then the conclusion must be that there is a logical spatial structure matching its accounts. Success in establishing such a framework will itself generate momentum to add to it as and when newer and better information becomes available and will act as an anchor for maybe new discoveries. The starting point of our methodology is to address the locations of the watercourses as these would have been important not only as movement and transport routes but also because their well watered valley bottoms would, in the late C12th have been important pasture grounds for herd animals, much as they are now and key to survival and the well being of families and social groups. This paper will now address each of the significant place names listed above in turn; of particular interest, however, is the link between the Onon and Kerulen Rivers, hence our starting point is the Kimurkha Stream.

KIMURKHA STREAM

There is a general presumption amongst present day scholars (Rachewiltz, 2004), appearing to be supported by the S. D'Anville map published in 1734,³⁰ that the location of the Kimurkha stream and its valley is synonymous with the present day Khorkh River valley system (see Figure 2 and 6). Following the attack by Targutai Kiriltuk in the vicinity of the Terghune Heights and concluding with the capture and imprisonment of Temuchin where he is taken away and held captive; we are told in SS81 of the SH he was held in the Tayijiut camp (Cleaves, 1982) on the banks of the 'Onan'. He eventually escaped from there and retracing his steps, follows the Onan upstream and then follows the Kimurkha Stream, which enters the Onan from the West.

²⁹ Reconnaissance explorations were conducted, by the 'V2' Exploratory Team (for details see acknowledgements) in 2008, 2009 and 2010 in the upper Kerulen and Khorkh River basin areas.

³⁰ In the S D'Anville published 'Carte la plus Generale et qui comprend LA CHINE ET LA THIBET MDCCXXXIV' this watercourse appears to be named 'Kimurqua'.

Following tracks in the grass, he eventually rejoins his family. Of passing interest is that in the case of Cleaves, I. de Rachewiltz, Mostaert, Dorjgotov/Erendo, Gaubil, Pelliot et al., the translation of 'Wo-nan' from the original Chinese 'Yuan Chao Pi Chi' and 'Oua-nan' from the Y-Tong Chi (according to Gaubil), transcribes as 'Onan' rather than 'Onon'. Most of these learned sources seem to accept that these differences are interchangeable and refer in fact, to the same river for the whole of its course³¹ (Rachewiltz, 2004), to its present day accepted source. Personally I do not believe this can be taken for granted and maybe the 'Onan' of the 'Yuan Chao Pi Chi' and the 'Y-Tong-Chi' is not necessarily synonymous with a single source notion of the River Onon.

Cleaves (1982) relates this event as;

§88 [26r] Temüjin, being so gone, arrived at his place which they had fortified by making a fence. By means of the tracks in the grass, he trailed [them] up along the Onan [26v] River—the Kimurya Stream entereth [the Onan River] from the West—and, having trailed up along that, he encountered [them], at the moment when they were at Qorčūqui Hill of the Beder Spur of the Kimurya Stream.

§89 [27r] Uniting themselves there, they departed. Camping [at] Köke Lake³² of [Mount] Qara Jirügen of the Senggür Stream within [Mount] Gürelgü in front of [Mount] Burqan Qaldun, they killed and ate marmots and field mice.



Figure 4. Confluence of the Korkh and Onon Rivers (COURTESY OF GOOGLE EARTH)

If the fact is, however, accepted that the Onan in this case is the total present day river course of the Onon in its upper basin, then the Kimurkha stream must correspond to the present day Khorkh River which can be seen to join the main course of the present day Onon at Binder. Figure 4 shows the confluence of these two rivers and while the general flow of the Khorkh River approaches the Onon from a SW direction it can be accepted, I suppose, its point of entry into the Onon is from the West.

TERGHUNE HEIGHTS

Various proposals have been put forward for the location of the Terghune heights. Scholars such as Perlee and De Rachewiltz (see SH commentary page 373 (Rachewiltz, 2004)) suggest its location is above the confluence of the Kimurkha (khorkh) with the Onon. These proposal are implausible as all translators of the SH generally agree with the text of SS 88 which makes clear Temuchin '*reached the place where they had earlier built the palisade*'³² (I. de Rachewiltz p27) which must have been in close proximity to the Terghune Heights (for it is doubtful that Temuchin could have outrun the Tayijiuts to reach his hiding place, over any lengthy distance)³³ before

³¹ For the purpose of this paper the distinction has little material significance other than raising doubt that Temuchin could have reached his family from the area of his escape in a short period of time and it sits uncomfortably with the location of the Tayijiuts camp referred to in SS 119 which at that time was located between Qorqonaq Jubur and Ayl Qaraqana. The distinction is critical to the overall geography of the SH will be addressed in a later paper.

³² SS 79 Describes the attack by the Tayijiuts on Temuchin's family. In trying to defend themselves and the capture of Temuchin, the family construct a 'palisade' or 'barricade' using trees and shrubs, to keep the attackers at bay.

³³ The Tadjits had come prepared for the event and would have had good quality horses and no doubt remounts. Temuchin is on a single horse and over any great distance in the open plain or over a lengthy journey, he would have been run down.

reaching the spot where the Kimurkha stream entered the Onon from the West. The Terghune Heights, therefore, must be downstream of the confluence of these two rivers.

BEDER SPUR AND QORCHUQUI HILL

From the Kimurkha/Onan confluence Temuchin follows the tracks in the grass, thus implying that his capture had not been of long duration and joins his family at the Qorchuqui Hill of the Beder Spur³⁴ *‘of the Kimurkha stream.’* If the Kimurkha Stream, as supposed, corresponds to the Korkh River, then the Beder Spur must also be located somewhere on the present day Khorkh River.

Bellerin in his translation of the SH (Bellerin, 1996) adds;

huellas a la orilla de este riachuelo, fue remontándolo y explorándolo hasta dejar a un lado las estribaciones de Beder,⁵⁸⁸ a cuyo frente se alza un monte solitario que llaman Qorchuqui.⁵⁸⁹ Y en él encontró a su madre y a sus hermanos.

‘following the banks of this stream upriver where at its side it has the escarpment of Beder and where at its front there rises a solitary hill that they call Qorchuqui. There he met up with his mother and his brothers’

The only location that fits this description in the Khorkh river valley is a spur in its upper basin at Latitude 48 4.62 and Longitude 109 3.0 corresponding to the confluence of the present day (Hentiy)

Bayangol³⁵ with the Khorkh main river channel. Figure 5 shows the satellite image of this location and the contour description of the eastern most point of the Spur. The front of the spur is defined by the two watercourses and culminates in a solitary hill with an elevation of c. 1304 m above sea level (a.s.l.), standing some 20m or so above the surrounding ground levels.



Figure 5. Solitary Hill in front of Spur on the Korkh River
(COURTESY OF GOOGLE EARTH)

³⁴ The duration of Temuchin's capture is at variance with various authors were Blochet, in quoting the Yuan Shi, suggests that while captured he was rotated between local 'Ayls' every two weeks or so thus indicating captivity of maybe a month or more; Cleaves et all on the other hand translate the rotation to be nightly; in any event the length of captivity would not have prevented Temuchin finding his family as he would have known the general area his family would make for at that time of the year as even today local herders have established seasonal locations between the plains and the sheltered valleys. The routes between such places are determined by terrain and are well established where the recurring passage of carts, over the years will have left clear indication of passage lasting considerable periods of time.

³⁵ 'Bayan = Rich', 'Gol = stream' in Mongol. Today the valley is in constant seasonal use by local herders and holiday makers.

This location is some 100 km from the confluence with the Onon; Temuchin would have to manage an average travel rate of say 30 km per day, to reach his family in 3 days or so. As the crow flies this location is some 40km (25miles) distant from Koko Na'ur, the next family camp location, just within an acceptable range of say one to two days transfer journey³⁶.

KOKO NA'UR (BLUE LAKE), QARA JIRUGEN AND THE GURELGU (KURELKHU) MOUNTAINS

Koko Na'ur lies just off a well established route that links the Hentiy³⁷ settlement and the Khorkh Valley with the upper basin of the Kerulen River (see Figure 6). Today four wheeled vehicles make their way through the river valley approach, linking the lake site area to the Kerulen, bringing tourists to the famed spot where Temuchin was given the title of Chinghiss Khan for the first time. No doubt in the C13th this route was also an important through route to the heartland of the Mongols via the Kimurkha/Khorkh valley and then onto the main Onon River valley. Its location is well established and sound, described in the SH SS89 and 122 and thereafter it is always associated with its proximity to the Sanguur Stream and the mount of Khara Zurkh (Qara-jirugen). Authors translate this passage in slightly different ways yet the immediate relationship between the different locations should not be diluted!



Figure 6. Korkh River Basin (Kimurkha) and Location of Koko Na'ur

³⁶ U Onon (Onon, 2001) page 41 suggests a camp stage to be in the region of 10 miles clearly such distances depend on terrain and climatic conditions. In 2010 discussion with local herders based in the Yudeg Valley, highlighted that three seasonal camp locations are repeatedly used by them and other local family groups in the area, annually unless exceptional circumstances prevail. The seasonal camp locations correspond to Summer, Spring/Autumn and the Winter seasons. In this particular case the distance between camp locations corresponded to c. 15 miles.

³⁷ Hentiy is a small settlement in the middle basin of the Khorkh valley on route to Binder. It is the principal route through from the Herlen to the Onon today and will have been so in the C13th. The wide valley floor of the present day Ikh Gutekh river narrows as it reaches the watershed with the Tsenkher and the Khorkh Rivers and the opens up again into a wide grass plain on the descent, ideal for four wheeled vehicles today and horse mounted cavaliers of the C13th.

Professor U. Onon (2001) translates this passage as;

[89] After their reunification, they went to camp by LakeKökö¹⁸⁶ on the Senggür Stream¹⁸⁷ on Qara-jirügen¹⁸⁸ Mountain in the Gürelgü [Mountains] on the southern side of Burqan qaldun [Mountain]. While there, they killed and ate marmots and field mice.

Professor P. Pelliot 1949 translates this passage as;

89. — S'étant réunis là, [tous] partirent et fixèrent leur campement au Kökö-na'ur du Qara-jirügän de la rivière Sänggür à l'intérieur du [mont] Gürälgü, en avant du Burqan-qaldun ; là ils se nourrissaient en tuant des marmottes et des.....¹.

‘after reuniting there, (all) left and they fixed their camp at Koko-naur of Qara-Jirugan on the banks of the river Sanggur in the interior of (mount) Guralgu, in front of Burqan-qaldun; there they were nourished by killing marmots

Professor I de Rachewiltz (Rachewiltz, 2004) translates this passage as;

89 Once they were reunited there, they left and set up camp at Koko Naur of Mount Jirugen by the Sanguur stream in the Gurelgu Mountains south of Burqan Qaldun. Here they stayed killing marmots and field-mice for food.

Professor Cleaves (Cleaves, 1982) translates this passage as;

§89 [27r] Uniting themselves there, they departed. Camping [at] Köke Lake ⁸⁹ of [Mount] Qara Jirügen of the Senggür Stream within [Mount] Gürelgü in front of [Mount] Burqan Qaldun, they killed and ate marmots and field mice.

Professor Bellerin (Bellerin, 1996) translates this passage as;

‘Following their meeting all of them departed to the Gurelgu mountains south of Burqan from where there discharges a river Senguur on whose banks there rises the hill Qara Jirugen and that it meets with Blue lake, here they survived by eating marmots and silver mice that they were able to catch’

Professor Dorjgotov , Erendo (Dorjgotov, et al., 2006) translates this passage as;

Once they were reunited. They moved and settled in Koko Lake of Qara-jiruken in the Senguur Stream along the Khurelkhu valley at the Southern foot of Burqan-qaldun. Here they lived by hunting marmots and short tailed gophards’ (*probably gophers are here meant*)

This particular passage of the SH is a key indicator to the whereabouts of the Sanguur Stream, Burqan Qaldun (Khaldun), mount Khara Zurkh (Qara-jirugen) and locates specifically where the Gurelgu or Kurelkhu Mountains are to be found. More importantly the translated examples also illustrate the difficulty translators face,

especially in this case, where the exact nuance of a passage can be interpreted and expressed in slightly different ways³⁸.

SANGUUR STREAM

The principal issue for the time being, however, is the identification of the Sanguur Stream referred to in SS89 of the SH. Notable scholars including Rachewiltz, Perlee and Podzniew identify the Sanguur stream with the present day Tsenkher or Cenxer (see I de Rachewiltz 2004 Vol. 2 comment. p.382). Close reading of all the translation of SS 89 above suggests that Koko Na'ur is '*on*' or '*by*' or '*on the banks*' of the Sanguur and in the case of Professor Bellerin's translation, the Sanguur is reckoned to discharge or run into Koko Na'ur.

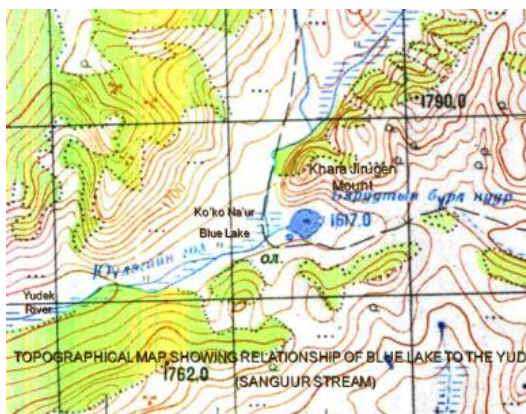


Figure 8. Watershed between Koko Na'ur and Tsenkher

(COURTESY OF RUSSIAN ORDNANCE SURVEY)

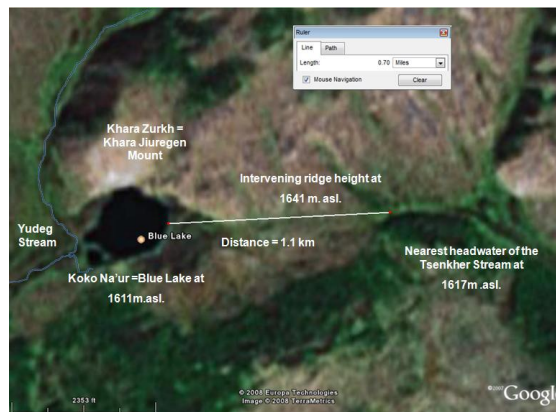


Figure 7. Distance between Koko Na'ur and Tsenkher

(COURTESY OF RUSSIAN ORDNANCE SURVEY)

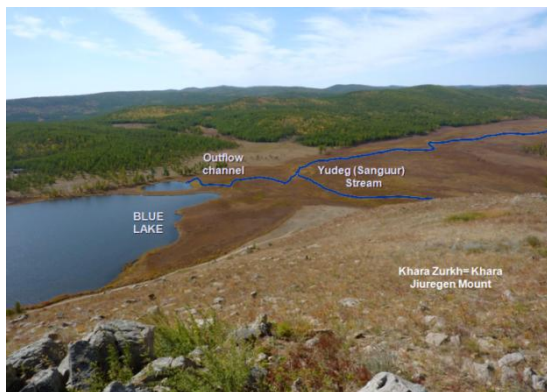


Figure 10. View across watershed to Tsenkher Basin



Figure 9. View to Koko Na'ur and the Yudeg (Sanguur) River

The message in these translations is clear; the Sanggur is immediately adjacent to Koko Na'ur.³⁹ The Tsenkher stream, on the other hand, runs in a SE direction and

³⁸ Such differences, even though slight, can be critical when trying to identify geographical locations, where topography is unknown and local knowledge is missing. It is not necessarily the case that an author is right or wrong, for human communication across cultures is difficult to get right face to face, let alone attempting to get it right across centuries of time, handicapped by transliteration processes and alien cultural practice. The methodology of reviewing alternative ways of expression, if nothing else, identifies consensus or conflict enabling appropriate weight to be attached to the original intent.

joins the Kerulen some 200 miles away in the Avraga area (see Figure 2). Its catchment and source could, at a stretch, be said to be in the general area but even the smallest of its upper basin supply streams is at least in excess of 1 Km distant from the lake see Figure 8 above.

Further the surface level of Koko Na'ur is at 1611m. Above sea level (a.s.l.) the nearest (possible) headwater of the Tsenkher, at 1 Km distance, is 1628m a.s.l and the land in between rises to a small ridge at an elevation of 1641 m. a.s.l.⁴⁰ The separation by level and distance excludes any possibility that the present day Tsenkher corresponds to the Sanguur Stream the subject of SS 89 of the SH. The SH reference to the Sanguur can only apply to the feeder stream that is now fed by Koko Na'ur from the East and drains the lake and its catchment area, by out flowing westward eventually discharging into the Kerulen, in the Mongonmorit area⁴¹.

QORQONAQ JUBUR AND AYIL QARAQANA

In his commentary to SS 57 of the SH de Racheviltz makes a strong case that Qorqonaq Jubur translates to Qorqonaq Valley (see notes to SS57 p 317). Cleaves and L. R. Bellerin equally in their translations support this view, Onon, on the other hand, translates the Name as Qorqonaq Forest (see below). On balance, I believe de Racheviltz and Cleaves' analysis that 'Jubur' corresponds to 'river valley' seems sound. The various translations relate SS57 as;
Professor Cleaves(1982);

§57 [39r] Forasmuch as Ambayai Qahan had named both Qa-da'an and Qutula, all the Mongyol and Tayiçi'ud assembled [in] the Qorqonay Valley of the Onan [River] and made Qutula qahan. As for the rejoicing of the Mongyol, they were wont to rejoice,

Professor L R Bellerin(1996);

junta en el claro de Qorqonaq],⁴⁰⁴ y nombraron emperador⁴⁰⁵ a Qutula. Con ello, celebraron un festín bajo el gran árbol;⁴⁰⁶ tanto era el regocijo de los mongoles,⁴⁰⁷ que bailaron y brincaron alrededor del árbol hasta labrar con sus huellas una profunda zanja.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁴ Huorhuona *chuan dimian* 豁兒豁納川地面, mong. Onan-u Qorqonaq Jubur. O.: "en el bosque de Qorqonaq, junto al río Onon". C., E/P.: "en el valle de Qorqonay, del río Onan". P. "en Qorqonaq-jubur del Onon". *chuan* 川 (*jubur*) puede ser "río", "llano", "estepa", "valle", etc. Para LWT se trata del río Qorqo, Huorhuo 活兒活 o Karka 喀爾喀, que desemboca en el lago Hulun; por el contexto, sin embargo, los mongoles debían de encontrarse por los alrededores del Onon.

³⁹ Informed readers will know that amongst the many things C13th Mongols were very good at was in finding their way through the landscape. They could not have succeeded in their many and distant campaigns without the ability to understand and communicate the geography of their environment. Thus while it may be difficult to decipher the Geography of the SH, a good starting point is acceptance that the original geographical descriptions and topographical relationships will have been accurate and understandable to the intended audience of the SH.

⁴⁰ The topography described was investigated and verified in the 2010 reconnaissance exploration. It is inconceivable that Koko Na'ur can be considered to be 'on', 'by' 'on the banks' or as potentially 'discharging into the Tsenkher', today or at any time in the past.

⁴¹ A small settlement to the west of the upper Kerulen also referred to also as 'Bulag'. See Russian 1969 edition topographical map M-49-134; 1:100 000 scale.

Prof. I de Rachewiltz (2004);

'According to the message of Ambaqai qa'an, which had nominated both Qada'an and Qutula, all the Mongols and Tayiciut gathered in the Qorqonaq valley by the Onan and made Qutula qa'an.....'

While professor Bellerin does not translate a meaning for 'jubur', in his note 404 (See above) to the main text relating to SS57, one of his suggestions on the original Chinese reference corresponds to '*it is about a river Qorqo, Huorhuo or maybe karka which discharges into L. Hulun*'. In this note Bellerin tries to make sense of the reference by relating 'Qorqo or Huorhuo' in the absence of better information, wrongly with the Karka (Khalka river which more correctly discharges into L. Buir rather than Hulun) and while I am not an etymologist, it seems to me the name of the river here being proposed is highly probable to refer to the present day Khorkh River.

Given that in SS115 & 116 of the SH, Qorqonaq Jubur is named as the joint camp location chosen by Jamuqa and Temuchin, on their return home following the withdrawal from Merkit territory, this location must be in Mongol homeland territory;⁴² this is supported by the fact that Jamuqa and Temuchin remained there for a long period of time, for we are told that in that place '*they loved each other one year and half*'. In this instance we are also told the location of Temuchin's next camp site is at Ayil⁴³ Qaraqana; again located '*by the Kimurkha Stream*', SS122 (see I de Rachewiltz 2004 p. 48) or '*on the Kimurkha Stream*' (see U Onon p 102). Thus Qorqonaq Jubur, by implication must correspond, therefore, to somewhere in the middle or the lower basin of the present day Khorkh river system.

Given that we know one certain camp location recorded in SS 122 being that of Koko Na'ur, measuring back from there using 25 miles as a camp stage⁴⁴ it is possible, therefore, to reasonably conclude where the general location of Ayil Qaraqana and Qorqonaq Jubur is to be found. On the basis that Ayil Qaraqana is, as we are told, on the

⁴² See Ss 115 of the SH. Jamuqa and Temuchin retrace the route taken to Mongol Territory while Togh'oril makes his way back to the 'Black Forest' in the area of present day Ulaanbaatar by following Tuul River valley on the west side of Khan Khenti.

⁴³ It is often stated that the Mongols were not a sedentary population and before the C 13th, it is generally accepted they did not have or live in urbanised settlements. They are referred to as a nomadic people and the impression is created they were constantly on the move in some kind of aimless way seeking fresh pastures for their herds. Earlier in this paper the view was expressed that the various tribes and clans were clearly associated with known territorial areas and while the social and economic structures were based on transhumance and hunting, the custom and practice was generally associated with their respective territories and given the scarcity of population at that time, no doubt the neutral territorial areas in between respective tribal lands. To safeguard against hard times, encroachment and or abuse of territory prudent alliances would have been very important to survival, however secured, backed by strength and force of arms, this would have been the standard for judging the worth of a Tribe/Clan and its leader. While this life style was not conducive to permanent settlements it did foster semi permanent camp locations which would have been in regular use according to seasonal demand. Rashid ad Din describes two forms of camp arrangements in use at this time see pp 44-45 (Vladimirtsov, 1948); The Kuriyan and the Ayil. The former, a circle camp (see SH SS 91 and 205) often also referred to as a 'Kurhee' would have been the settlement base of the tribal leader accommodating his family, his court and personal retinue and the main body of his fighting force. Such camps were probably more than semi permanent as can be inferred from the SH, on numerous occasions, that Togh'oril's (Ong Khan) base camp was in the 'Black Forest' on the bend of the River Tuul (see SH ss 104) and that of Otchigin's, while CK was fighting in the west, was based in the L. Kol'un and Buyur area (see 'Travels to the West of K'iu Ch'ang Ch'un' (Bretschneider, 1910). Whereas the Kuriyan was a principal camp of the ruling or principal family the Ayil would have been a lesser camp site associated with important tribal members, local chiefs and their families which in turn would be the 'hub' for other familial camps associated with them. Even though these were secondary tier camps, in turn they too would, over time, gain a geographical identity as indeed Ayil Qaraqana seems to have had, as its location is named more than once at different time periods. These settlement forms appear to be specifically associated with the Pre Chingiss period of Mongol society for post Chingiss the principal settlements appear to be referred to as 'Ordu' rather than 'Kuriyan' and 'Ayil', this is probably due to the enormous impact and changes CK and his conquests had on traditional tribal structures, their polity and their economy.

⁴⁴ See section on camp movements described on p.7 of this paper.

Kimurkha Stream and that Qorqonaq Jubur was the next camp stage⁴⁵ along probably also in the Kimurkha/Khorkh river valley, it is of no surprise, therefore, our methodology locates Ayil Qaraqana in the environs of the previously identified Beder Spur and Qorqonaq Jubur east north east of the present day settlement of Hentiy (see figure 6). Close reading of the SH SS 120-122, however, implies the stage between Ayil Qoroqana and Qorqonaq Jubur to actually correspond to one day and one night continuous journey, in which case we should allow say two camp stages along for Qorqonaq Jubur and therefore its location would best coincide with the area in and around the settlement of Binder.

TANA STREAM, BURGI EREG, BURGI ESCARPMENT, THE TUNGCELİK STREAM AND TANA STREAM⁴⁶

Remarkably the Tana stream's name has remained and its location is well known to present day herders who live in the area. On the 2008 visit to this part of Mongolia,⁴⁷ casual inquiry of local people in and around Mongonmorrit and of Guides who regularly use the terrain and routes to and from Hentiy, were able to pinpoint the Tana Stream right under our very noses a half a mile or so from our camp. The maps of today refer to it as the Tenuun Stream whereas local tourist guide maps refer to it as the Tana Ghorki⁴⁸. The Tana Stream's location is another key indicator to the whereabouts of other locations, in particular the Tungcelik stream and Burgi Ereg, whose identification will be addressed later in this section. The SH in SS 107 refers to both of these streams and their relation to Burgi Ereg, in connection with the troop movements involved in the rescue of Borte⁴⁹ from the Merkits, by the joint forces of Togh'oril, Jamuqa and Temuchin. The information gathered locally identifies the Tana Stream as the westward flowing river that discharges into one of the eastern channels of the Kerulen some 20 miles on a NE bearing from Mongonmorrit. The head waters consist of two tributaries, one turns to the south and is according to local herders, even today, the through route used by them to reach the settlement of Hentiy in the Khorkh/Kimurkha valley. Our 2008 and 2009 camps⁵⁰ were, indeed, very close to this water course and it was noted that in early September it was in full flow, with clear water ranging in depth from 300 to 650 mm.

BURGI EREG (ESCARPMENT OR SPUR) AND THE BURGI BANK

Local knowledge was also able to throw light on the existence of the East and West Burkh (Burgi)⁵¹ Rivers. These originate in the Hoshygin Nuur⁵² mountains to the

⁴⁵A daily camp stage would generally correspond to 20 to 25 miles, see earlier section on 'CAMP MOVEMENTS'.

⁴⁶These locations are grouped together as the text of the SH specifically links them see SS 107.

⁴⁷The V2 2008 reconnaissance expedition based itself at Tayilun Tolgoy north of Mongonmorrit and overlooking the present day Tenuun Stream. The expedition utilised guides with local connections and Horses and Horse grooms were locally based herders who had been born and lived in the area with their immediate and extended families. The reference to local names and locations were derived from these sources.

⁴⁸Ghorkhi=Stream.

⁴⁹The principal wife of Temuchin (Chinghiss Khan) was abducted by the Merkits in retaliation for Yusegei's abduction of Ho'leun (Temuchin's mother) from Yeke Chiledu.

⁵⁰The V2 2009 reconnaissance expedition used as a base Tayilun Tolgoy and the valley of the Hahir Stream a tributary of the Zargol.

⁵¹Local maps record the sister rivers as Burkh local peoples pronounce it Burghe.

⁵²Part of the Khenti mountain range forming the watershed between the Kerulen and the Tuul River.

west of Mongonmorrit, flowing in a SE direction and discharging into the west bank of the Kerulen. The Zuun (east) Burkh's location is just north of Mongonmorrit while the Baruun (west) Burkh flows south of it. The confluence of the Zuun Burkh with the Kerulen is impeded by a north south escarpment, forming the western bank of the Kerulen, which rises to an elevation of c.1560 m. standing some 200m above the surrounding area. The high ground forces the East Burkh to change its direction of flow to the North East and eventually, skirting the northern spur of the escarpment, discharges into the Kerulen. The Baruun (West) Burkh, on the other hand, follows the lie of the land in a South West direction and discharges into the Kerulen River at the southern most point of the Escarpment.

The SH, in SS 96-107 describes the abduction of Temuchin's wife Borte, by the Merkits, whilst they were encamped at Burgi Ereg and the ensuing request and granting of help from Togh'oril and Jamuqa, to mount a rescue. The Burgi environs are often referred to in the SH and it is hereabout where at least one of the principal camp sites, repeatedly in use by Temuchin and his family and later as Chingiss Khan, is located. The original Chinese text renders the location of the familial camp as Burgi Ergi (or Ereg) and other than U. Onon(2001), the other translators render it as 'escarpment'. The three allies, Togh'oril, Jamuqa and Temuchin, having agreed on a rescue plan in SS 106, Jamuqa sends a message to his 'Anda' Temuchin and Togh'oril to join him at Botoqan Bo'orgi⁵³ on the Onon with specific instruction to Togh'oril to come there from the Black Forest (UB River Tuul area) via south of Burkhan Khaldun.

The translated SS 107 below recounts the logistical movement of their forces prior to the meeting of Temuchin's forces with those of Togh'oril and Jaqa Gambu at Ayil Qaraqana on the Kimurkha Stream. The various translations generally agree on the movements of the allied troops and the routes taken by them to reach Ayil Qaraqana. There is some variation, however, on the physical description of Temuchin's campsite location whereby;

- U Onon refers to it as 'the Burgi bank of the Kerulen';
- FW Cleaves refers to it as 'the 'Burgi escarpment of the Kerulen';
- Bellerin refers to it as 'Burgi of the Kerulen' (notes 763 & 764, p132 clarifies it to be an escarpment);
- P Pelliot refers to it as 'the bank of the Burgi of the river Kerulen'.

The differences are slight but the notion that an escarpment or spur is meant in the case of Burgi Ereg, is sustainable. As to where along the 12 km. stretch of the escarpment or whether Temuchin's camp remained in the same place in the intervening period of Borte being abducted and the rescue event, is unclear.⁵⁴ The rendering of the

⁵³ The location is not identified but logically it should lie at or near the meeting of the two routes taken by the allies.

⁵⁴ The Kerulen River in this area runs from a NN East to SS West direction and is constrained on its Western bank by a steep scarp face rising from river level at c.1370 m a.s.l to an average ridge height of c. 1500 m. a.s.l. The highest point, near its northern extremity reaches 1570 m a.s.l. The escarpment extends for some 12 km and separates the East Burkh/ Burghi in the north from the West Burkh/Burghi in the South. The Eastern bank of the Kerulen, matching the length and direction of the escarpment, is formed by a series of wide grassed river terraces, ranging in width from 30 to 50 m and in height from 3 to 6 m along whose length Herding families locate their summer camps. The

passages suggests that the camp of the wife abduction incident (SS 98-101), was likely to have been at the northern end of the escarpment because of its association with the Tunggelik and that river's association with the Tana Stream (see later in this paper); whereas the camp site location of SS 107 is likely to have been at the southern end of the escarpment not only because translators make repeated reference to the term '*bank or banks*' (see note 54) below, but also because of Temüchin's reported action once the approach of Togh'oril becomes evident discussed later in this paper. As can be seen all translations of this event (SS 107) do differ slightly according to the author thus;

Professor Pelliot;

[§ 107] Qasar y Belgütei volvieron y repitieron a Temüjin las palabras de Jamuqa, y fueron a ver al Qan Rey. Y, conociendo la respuesta de Jamuqa, el Qan Rey puso en armas⁷⁶¹ a veinte mil⁷⁶² de los suyos y marchó hacia las riberas escarpadas del Bürgi⁷⁶³ del Kelüren, por frente del Burqan Qaldun. Cuando Temüjin, que a la sazón paraba por el Bürgi, supo que el ejército del Qan Rey iba a pasar por allí,⁷⁶⁴ remontó el Tönggelik,⁷⁶⁵ haciendo alto cabe el riachuelo Tana,⁷⁶⁶ frente al Burqan. Desde allí volvió a partir con sus hombres,⁷⁶⁷ llegando al cabo al paraje que dicen Ayil Qaraqana,⁷⁶⁸ a orillas del Kimurqa,⁷⁶⁹ donde estaban acampados el Qan Rey con sus diez mil

Professor Cleaves;

§107 [9v] Both Qasar and Belgütei coming [back] and speaking unto Temüjin these words of Jamuqa, [10r] he sent a message unto To'oril Qan. To'oril Qan, having suffered [him] to send these words of Jamuqa, set forth, twenty thousand [in number]. When To'oril Qan set forth, [Temüjin,] saying, "He draweth nigh, betaking himself [unto] the Bürgi Escarpment of the Kelüren, in front of Burqan Qaldun,"—Temüjin was at the Bürgi Escarpment—and saying, "[I] am on the way," removing, journeying up along the Tünggelik [Stream], pitched at the Tana Stream, in front of [10v] Burqan Qaldun. Temüjin, moving [his] troops from thence, at the moment when To'oril Qan, ten thousand [in number], and Jaqa Gambu, the younger brother of To'oril Qan, ten thousand [in number], with twenty thousand [in all], were pitching at Ayil Qaraqana of the Kimurqa Stream, pitched, uniting [forces with them].

Professor U Onon:

[107] Qasar and Belgütei returned and told Temüjin what Jamuqa had said. [Temüjin] then sent the message on to To'oril Qan. On hearing these words of Jamuqa, To'oril Qan set out at the head of twenty thousand [men]. 'When To'oril Qan sets out, he will come towards the Bürgi Bank of the Kelüren on the south side of Burqan-qaldun, 'thought Temüjin', who was on the Bürgi Bank; 'and [I] am in his path.' So he yielded, and moved upstream along the Tünggelik to the Tana Stream on the south side of Burqan qaldun, where he set up camp. From there, Temüjin and his army set out. The ten thousand [men] under To'oril Qan and the ten thousand under To'oril Qan's younger brother, Jaqa-gambu, twenty thousand altogether, set up camp at Ayil-qaraqana on the Kimurqa Stream. At that point, [Temüjin] joined [them] and set up camp.

Professor L R Bellarin;

terraces appear as high 'banks' which shelter good pastures and provide ready access to water. De Rachewiltz pp 392-393 commentary (Rachewiltz, 2004) relates that Perlee identifies this escarpment as the location of 'Bureg Ereg' and adding its modern place name as being on the West bank of the Kerulen. The present West bank place name location should not infer the SH location and indeed if it were thought so this would be irreconcilable with the sequential detail of SS 107.

107. — Qasar et Bālgūtāi vinrent tous deux et dirent à Tāmūjin ces paroles de Jamuqa, et [Tāmūjin] en fit donner connaissance à To'oril-qan. Quand To'oril-qan eut reçu connaissance de ces paroles de Jamuqa, il fit monter à cheval deux *lümān*. Quand To'oril-qan monta à cheval, il dit : « J'arriverai en prenant la direction de la rive de Būrgi du [fleuve] Kālūrān en avant du Burqan-qaldun ; comme Tāmūjin est à la rive de Būrgi, il est sur la route. » Et s'éloignant, et se déplaçant en remontant la [rivière] Tōnggālik, il descendit de cheval à la rivière Tana, en avant de Burqan-qaldun. De là, Tāmūjin mit ses troupes en mouvement. To'oril-qan avait [levé] un *lümān* ; le frère cadet de To'oril-qan, Jaqa-gambu², avait levé un *lümān*. Alors qu'avec ces deux *lümān* ils étaient descendus de cheval au Ayil-qaraqana de la rivière Kīmurqa, [Tāmūjin] descendit de cheval et se joignit à eux.

Jamuqa's instructions in SS 106, on the route Togh'oril's forces are to take to arrive at the specified rendezvous point, while his own forces are making their way upstream along the Onon, are succinct and explicit. Further by his reported chagrin (See SS 108 SH) at their late arrival it is also clear he considered that time was of the essence. The location of the specified rendezvous point of Botogan-bogurji at the source of the Onon is not known. What this paper has identified, however, is the location of Ayil Qaraqana on the Kimurkha stream where the joint troops of To'oghril and Temuchin were enjoined prior to moving onto the rendezvous point.

The choice of Ayil Qaraqana as an assembly point between these forces could not have been an accidental event, occurring without previous consideration or pre planning. Even cursory knowledge of Mongol campaigns⁵⁵ and particularly those undertaken by Chinghiss Khan, make clear that detailed planning always preceded such movements where forward scouting parties would select and secure routes and camp sites, identifying and safeguarding appropriate pastures and watering grounds for their animals (Smith, 2007) (Amitai-Preiss, 1995) (Martin, 1943). The C13th Mongols did not rely on chance and were at all times aware of their space time relationship with their environment. Ayil Qaraqana will have been chosen because it was a suitable site to stop and refresh animals, agree poilicy on command and control issues and most important, because it was on the shortest and most direct route to the rendezvous point selected by Jamuqa, something Jamuqa will have known and which was why he had commended Togh'oril to come via '*the southern side of Burkhan Qaldun*' a landmark⁵⁶ known to them all. Temuchin and his generals, being in full knowledge of their home territory will have chosen Ayil Qaraqana as the best place to enjoin with To'oghril on route to Botugan-bogurji and his scouts will undoubtedly have communicated this information to To'oghril before hand. The translation of SS107, is to my mind, a fair account of what was intended and probably, what actually happened other than the casual interpretation that Temuchin moved out of the way of To'oghril from deference and respect. The tone of this passage infers that Temuchin at the time was camped on the Burgi Banks at the southern end of the Burgi Escarpment. The main camp would have included Temuchin and the family's immediate retinue which would have

⁵⁵ Mongol troop movements were planned in detail well in advance not only to avoid being surprised by the enemy but also to secure feeding and watering points for the animals. In addition prior to being able to move troops the troops would have to be summoned and assembled and made ready; pre planning of troop movements at the scale being inferred in these events would have been essential.

⁵⁶ Details in relation to this landmark will be explored in a subsequent paper at a later date.

included, nearby, all their grazing animals both equine and subsistence herds. Given the imminent arrival of 2 tumen of mounted cavaliers it would behove well for Temuchin to remove himself and all his wealth away from the area to avoid maybe ‘envious eyes’ syndrome and also to allow pastures to be available for his allies horse; what better way to couch such action for posterity in terms of ‘deference or respect’. The fact is that logistically Temuchin would also have had to assemble whatever forces were immediately at hand in Kyat territory and bring together those that would have been dispersed throughout the large grass plain North of Burgi Ereg. It would make perfect sense, therefore, in the interest of security and speed given the anticipated arrival of Togh’oril and Jaqa-gambu, for him to move not only the base camp but to select an assembly point for his own forces, remote from the route the allies had been allocated to take and yet be on route to the rendezvous point with them at Ayil Qaraqana. The only sensible route available to him would have been to proceed North along the Tunggelik (for location of this stream see later in this paper) then pick up the Tana valley route to Hentiy, eventually swinging south towards the Kimurkha (Khorkh) valley. The issues posed from this event arise when trying to reconcile the actual routes taken by Temuchin and To’oghril with the supposed geographical features on the ground. In particular the relation between the Burgi Ereg/Escarpment, Tungelik Stream, Tana Stream, Ayil Qaraqana on the Kimurkha and their relation to Burkhan Qaldun.

Notwithstanding this, two geographical locations that we can reasonably be certain of, in relation to this event, are the location of the Tana Stream and Ayil Qaraqana on the Kimurkha Stream. In SS 107 we are told that Temuchin from Burgi Ereg moved upstream along the Tunggelik and set up camp on the Tana stream and from there moved on to Ayil Qaraqana. The lie of the land in the upper Kerulen basin falls generally in a southerly direction thus by implication, as water does not flow uphill, the Tunggelik and Burgi Ereg must be south of the known location of the Tana Stream. Further as the Tana stream flows into the Kerulen from the east the Tunggelik must also be on the east bank of the Kerulen and Temuchin’s route, therefore, when moving upstream along the Tunggelik, must have been on the East side of the Kerulen river. Any conclusion that locates the Tunggelik stream to the west of the Kerulen must, therefore, be flawed.

Professor FW Cleaves in his publication ‘The Historicity of the Baljuna Covenant’ (Cleaves, 1955) undertakes and records a thorough research of the events surrounding the final struggle for ascendancy between Chinghiss Khan, To’oghril and Jamuqa, the basis of SS170 to 185 inclusive. Here Cleaves addresses the time and space relation of these events and in particular the movement of the respective fighting forces, essentially between the upper basin of the Kerulen River and the lake Buyr / Koluun (also known as Dalai Nor) areas and specifically the place where Chingiss and his followers undertook the oath of loyalty known as the Baljuna Covenant⁵⁷. For reference

⁵⁷ Cleaves addresses this event recorded in the Yuan Shi records but not in the SH. The event relates to the final struggle between Chinghiss’s forces and those of Ongh Qan, recounted in SS 170 – SS 185 inclusive of the SH.

Cleaves draws on many primary sources including the SH, Yuan Shi, Jami al Tawrikh, Ch'in-ching-lu and not least the deliberation of contemporary notable scholars such as Pelliot, Heissig, Bawden and others. His analysis required and relied on a thorough understanding and reconciliation of the geographical locations of the protagonists associated with this event and the movement between their camp positions.

After being victorious in battle, he collected his troops in the North and going up to the Wu-erh-hu (Ulqu[i]) River 爾烏虎河¹²⁴ reached Mount So-yüeh-erh-chi (Söyörgi) 索岳爾濟山.¹²⁵ Again, he went northward to Lake Pei-erh (Buyir) 貝爾池 of the K'a-erh-k'a (Qalqa) River 喀爾喀河 and subjugated a separate clan of the Hung-chi-la (Qunggira[d]). Then, returning to the K'o-lu-lun (Kerülen) River 克魯倫河 in the West, he reached his old camp on the Sang-ku-erh (Senggür) River 桑沽兒河. [The site was] [Sr] what the *Pi-shih* calls the Eastern Bank of the Tung-ko-li (Tüng-geli[g]) Stream 統格黎小河 and also what the *Yüan shih* calls the Tung-ko (Tüngge) Swamp. At this place he dispatched an envoy to bring a rebuke to Wang Han (Ong Qan) and again moved the army eastward, which is what the *Pi-shih* calls "Straightway arose and departed. Reaching Lake Pa-le-chu-na (Baljuna),"

On page 329 (Cleaves, 1955) see above, Cleaves provides critical information of Chingiss's old camp location on the Kerulen river, here his sources implicitly locate and relate it to the Sanguur and Tungelik stream. This evidence supports the view, not only that the Sanguur of the SH cannot possibly correspond to the Tsenkher River but that at some point along its course the Sanguur is also relatively close to the Tunggelik Stream on the east bank of which is where the Yuan Shi records Chingiss's 'old camp site'⁵⁸ to have been. There can be very little doubt that the SH account of the relationship between the various geographical locations, here referred to, are correct other than it would appear they are really irreconcilable with the most important location of all, that is Khan Khenti as Burkhan Khaldun!

THE TUNGCELİK STREAM

The SH mentions the Tunggelik Stream on a number of occasions. In the first chapter it is associated with one eye Duwa-soqor⁵⁹ and then with Bodanchar. In later chapters its geographic location is always associated with Temuchin's camp sites and specifically related to the Kerulen, Burgi Ereg and the Tana stream. We have seen when discussing the location of the Tana⁶⁰ that because of the sequential relation between these locations at least part of the Tunggelik Stream must have, at that time, been located south of the Tana stream and in fact between the Tana and Burgi Ereg. In this area the general fall of the land and drainage pattern is North to South and thus by implication the general flow of the Tunggelik should also follow this ground topography.

⁵⁸ The reference clearly implies the site to have historical precedence as a camp site in use by Temuchin and the area must have entertained favourable strategic and logistical features. During the visits of 2008, 2009 and 2010 it was noted that the area had permanent and semi permanent occupation by local people, supporting the view that even now the area is a favourable environment to reside.

⁵⁹ SS relates how Duwa Soqor sees travellers coming down the Tunggelik from his vantage point on Burkhan Khaldun, the relation between these two locations will be addressed in a subsequent paper.

⁶⁰ See text on Tana Stream above and SS 107 of the SH.

The 2008 and 2009 site visits were unable to identify any such stream in this location, displaying these characteristics. In fact it was noted the principal water channels clearly belonged to the Kerulen which in this area collected incoming tributaries flowing either from the west or eastern watersheds. From the eastern watershed the main tributaries are the Tana, Zorgol, Bayangol and Yudeg, all generally flow from East to West and into the Kerulen. Following the 2008 visit, a detailed plot of the main Kerulen channels and of the incoming tributaries from the East watershed was carried out, including plotting evident sem-dry channels⁶¹ where it seemed obvious, they may have been part of previous watercourses.

The resulting plot revealed that at some previous time the double channel structure of the upper Kerulen may have indeed extended further south than present. The Kerulen valley above the Burgi Escarpment is wide and the river gradient is quite gentle. The consequence of this valley profile has meant that over time and for various reasons, frequent changes have occurred in the watercourse, involving meander erosion and the formation of new channels which in turn often results in river capture of subsidiary streams⁶².

Above the confluence of the Zorgol stream, the Kerulen has two distinct main channels (see Fig.11 above) referred to as the East and West channel on our plot. The channels join to form one watercourse some 2.5 Km. above the Zargol, coming in from the east, makes a sharp 90 deg change of direction to the south.

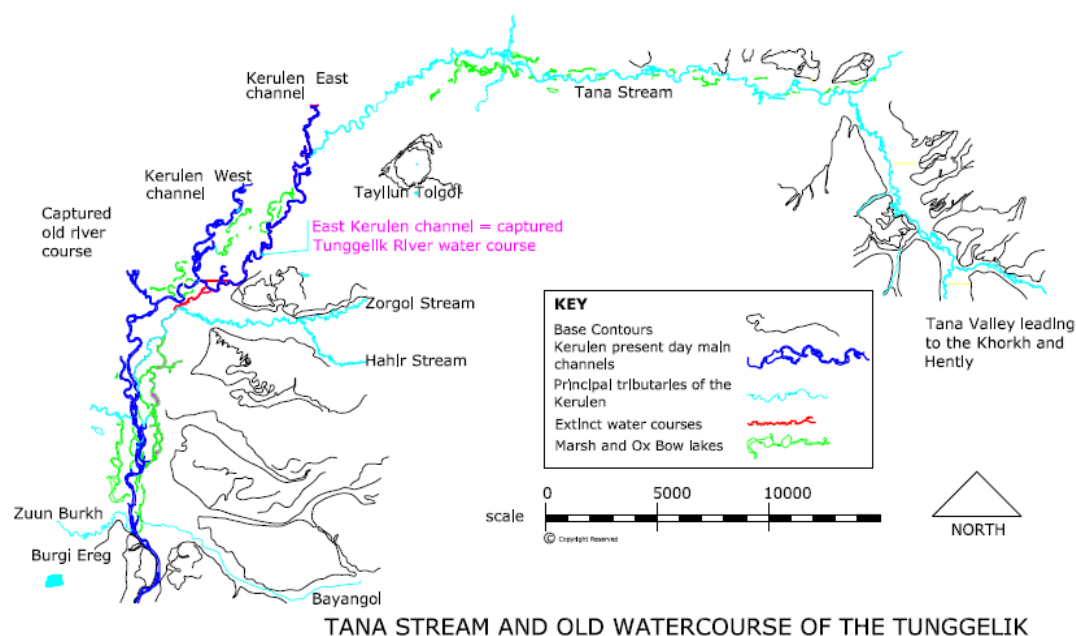


Figure 11. Plot of the Kerulen River water channels in the upper basin and incoming tributaries

⁶¹ The selected channels and Ox-bow lakes all displayed signs of 'wetness' i.e. held some water or showed profuse greening indicating marshy or swampy conditions.

⁶² Stream capture, river capture, or stream piracy is a [geomorphological](#) phenomenon occurring when a stream or river [drainage system](#) or [watershed](#) is diverted from its own bed, and flows instead down the bed of a neighbouring stream.

Satellite imagery and visual inspection on the ground in 2009 showed that at some point in the past the Kerulen eastern channel was joined to the present Zargol water course and in fact the Zargol in effect terminated here as a tributary of this channel. In addition the satellite imagery allowed us to track the previous course of the East channel all the way down to just North of the Burgi Escarpment. The multitude of wet and swampy Ox Bows features found here are witness to a previous watercourse that once linked Burgi Ereg with the Tana stream. In effect this is more than likely to have been the Tunggelik stream the SH refers to in SS 100 & 107, totally consistent in its topographical characteristics as described in the Yuan Shi, but because it has been captured by the main river, sadly it is no more! The evidence left behind, however, is yet another example that the SH does in fact reflect well its geographical context.

TEMUCHIN'S SACRED MOUNTAIN OF BURKHAN KHALDUN

The location of this mountain is probably the most important of all locations and to date it has been and remains the most enigmatic. It is said that there are potentially twenty mountains in N E Mongolia that are known by this name, albeit there is general acceptance by the Mongol Government and notable historians, past and present, that Burkhan Khaldun in Khan Khenti, is synonymous with this mountain. The supporting evidence that this view is correct is scant and the notion that Temuchin's sacred mountain corresponds to the Khan Khenti location, contentious, especially as it fits very badly with chronicled events, rational observation and spatial relation to other named locations in the SH; those reviewed in this paper and others that remain to be reviewed. The sum of evidence to be presented, in relation to this location, is extensive and sadly is beyond the scope of this paper, it will be addressed in due course in a separate publication. At that time other important locations will also be reviewed so as to add substantially to the emerging geographical structure of The Secret History of the Mongols.

CONCLUSION

'The Secret History of the Mongols' was never intended to be secret, rather as a record of historical events and genealogy of the Imperial family, its' very purpose was to ensure the hierarchy and their progeny should know of it and always be reminded of their grass roots. It is known that the ruling class of C13th Mongols had access to the original document and they were disposed to allow access to third parties,⁶³ for the purpose of further adding to the imperial record. At the time of its writing, the events recorded were still relatively fresh in people's minds and there can be little doubt that many of those involved⁶⁴ in these events were still living and contributed to its composition. Thus the events and place names described would have been corroborated,

⁶³ It is generally accepted that Rashid ad Din was given access to the original 'Golden Register' to enable him to compile the 'Djam al Tawrikh'.

⁶⁴ Borte and principal wives, Chagadai, Ogadai, Tolui his sons and their wives, Subodei, Yu Lieu Chu Tsai, Bo'orchu his generals, Mongke, Kublai, Arik Buqa his grandchildren to name just a few of those in the upper social strata let alone those in the rank and file.

locations known and the spatial context, where obvious sequential and directional relationships are implied, undisputed.

Recent scholars (Onon, 2001) (Rachewiltz, 2004) (Dorjgotov, et al., 2006) have made great strides in attempting to identify the place names of the SH on the ground; albeit sometimes the supporting rationale for some locations does not always stand up to close scrutiny so that some named locations defy logic and perpetuate doubtful conclusions.

Reliable in this field, however, is the work of P. Pelliot⁶⁵, whom time and again shows a remarkable and accurate understanding of the geographical context of C13th Mongol history, where, given his lack of access to modern day satellite imagery and convenience of travel, his conclusions, relying mostly on cross referencing primary historical sources with contemporary maps and accounts of travellers, still remain relevant. The lack of correlation between quoted place names and extant geography has in some people's mind given rise to doubt and lack of authenticity to the early parts of this important historical source.

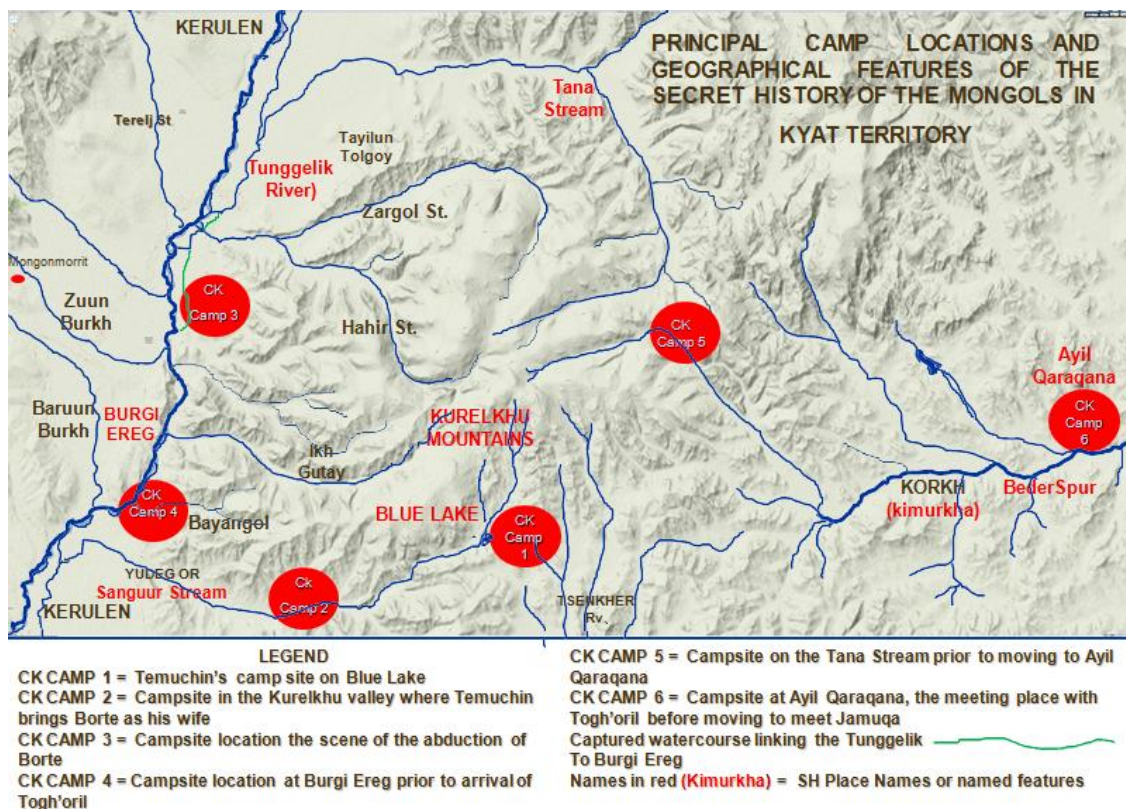


Figure 12. Locations of Temuchin's camps and principal geographical features in 'The Secret History of the Mongols' (COURTESY OF GOOGLE EARTH)

Confirming the accuracy of its geographical context, however, does much to confirm the veracity of the related accounts and adds considerable weight to dispel such views. In part the confusion surrounding the geography of the SH is compounded by

⁶⁵ P. Pelliot is a favoured source of modern scholars seeking to identify place names see (Rachewiltz, 2004) et al.

what is often conflicting information in historical sources⁶⁶ where second and third hand information on place names and their locations is recounted. Similarly modern day remote speculation without direct experience of local topography and understanding of constraints associated with terrain and climate, nor the limitations imposed by the means of transport, usually result in unsustainable conclusions.

The locations identified in this paper resonate the authenticity of the SH by logically relating to each other in time and space and with witnessed local topography and the logistics of camp movements. Identification of the SH Sanguur and Tunggelik Rivers and their relation to Burgi Ereg has always been problematical, either by confusion or design, their supposed locations until now have contributed little, if anything, to the formulation of a cohesive picture of the geography of the SH.

The identification of these locations, as reported in this paper, substantively contribute to this picture and are important links which in turn raise questions against the accepted wisdom of the locations of other important place names of the SH such as the Sari Kher, Kode Aral, Chinghiss's Burkhan Khaldun, his Ikh Qoruc and Ordus and I believe will stimulate a new chapter in Mongol History.

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⁶⁶ See (Rashid ad-Din, Vol 1, b. 2:233–235) It is highly unlikely that Rahid ud Din ever visited NE Mongolia and his source, most likely, were accounts from Mongols and travellers who knew the area or had acquired the information second hand.

⁶⁷ V2 Became the adopted team name of the first reconnaissance field trip in 2008 and has remained the Team name for all subsequent field trips led by V. Pecchia. The original members of the V2 team were Dr. M. Horton (Archaeology), Dr. D. Tumen (Archaeology and Anthropology), Mr. G. Parkes (Geography), M. J. Man (History), Mr. J. Pecchia (Sound and Film) and Mr. V. Pecchia (Team Leader).

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