

ARTICLE

A NEWLY IDENTIFIED INCENSE-OFFERING LITURGY TO CHINGGIS KHAN AND RELATED MOUNTAIN CULT TEXTS FROM KHENTII

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Abstract

This article introduces and examines a newly identified Tibetan-language incense-offering liturgy dedicated to Chinggis Khan, preserved within a private manuscript collection in Berkh, Khentii Province. Entitled *Ezen Bogd-un San* (“The Incense Offering to the Lord Sovereign”), the text constitutes an important new source for the study of the ritual veneration of Chinggis Khan within Mongolian Buddhist tradition. Through textual, liturgical, and historical analysis, the article demonstrates that the prayer invokes Chinggis Khan not merely as a remembered imperial ancestor, but as a sacralized sovereign figure integrated into a wider Buddhist cosmological and protector-deity framework. Particular attention is given to the repeated invocation of *Ezen Bogd*, the liturgy’s adaptation of Buddhist incense-offering structures, and its synthesis of Chinggisid sovereignty, territorial cult practice, and Tibetan ritual language.

The article further situates the *Ezen Bogd-un San* within a broader corpus of mountain and ovoo liturgies preserved alongside it in the Berkh collection. These include ritual texts dedicated to sacred mountains, territorial deities, and frontier cults associated with the former Setsen Khan Aimag and the wider Khentii region. Together, these manuscripts reveal an interconnected ritual landscape in which mountain worship, territorial cults, and the sacral veneration of Chinggis Khan formed part of a shared liturgical tradition. The study argues that these newly recovered materials provide important evidence for the ritual geography, sacred landscape traditions, and manuscript culture of eastern Mongolia, while also underscoring the urgent importance of documenting cultural heritage preserved in private collections.

Keywords: *Chinggis Khan, Ezen Bogd, Lord Sovereign, Dalha Protector, incense offering, san takhilga, sacred mountain*

Introduction

In Berkh soum, Khentii Province, there survives an important manuscript legacy preserved within the family archive of the researcher J. Saruulbuyan. Transmitted across generations, this collection contains a wide range of rare materials, including works on Buddhist philosophy, medicine, astronomy, and prayers dedicated to incarnate lamas. Of particular significance among them are newly identified

liturgical texts devoted to the worship of Chinggis Khan, alongside a substantial group of ritual texts associated with the mountain and ovoo cults of Khentii. It is these materials, and their broader historical and ritual significance, that form the subject of the present study.

The ritual veneration of Chinggis Khan has long occupied an important place in both Mongolian religious life and modern scholarship. Mongolian and foreign researchers alike have produced substantial studies on the subject, and the ritual corpus connected with Chinggis Khan has already attracted sustained scholarly attention. Among the most important recent contributions was the publication, in 2016 and 2017, of the edited volume *Liturgical Texts for the Worship of Chinggis Khan*, which brought together a small but important body of ritual texts in both Mongolian and Tibetan. These included, on the one hand, the liturgy composed by Panchen Erdeni at the request of the people of Ordos, and on the other, the recitation texts used at the Banner Shrine of Bayan Erkheto, formerly located in Bulgan soum of Dornod Province.

One of the most striking observations to emerge from that earlier corpus was the close correspondence between the Mongolian recensions of the Chinggis Khan liturgies preserved in Ordos and the texts recited at the Banner Shrine in eastern Mongolia. This textual continuity is especially significant, as it points to a broader ritual and liturgical coherence across regional traditions of Chinggis Khan worship. A copied manuscript of the liturgical text formerly used at the Tug Chinggis Shrine in Bulgan soum, Dornod Province, is now preserved in the National Library of Mongolia.

In recent years, however, additional ritual materials have begun to emerge from less studied manuscript holdings, particularly among the collected works of Mongolian learned monks and scholar-lamas. The materials preserved in Berkh belong to this wider body of newly recovered sources and offer important new evidence for both the liturgical veneration of Chinggis Khan and the ritual geography of the Khentii region.

1. Chinggis Khan as Ezen Bogd: *The Ezen Bogd-un San* (The Incense Offering to the Lord Sovereign)

1.1. Chinggis Khan in Mongolian Buddhist Ritual Tradition

Why is Chinggis Khan venerated? How does this form of ritual veneration differ from modes of commemoration in which reverence is expressed through flowers, ribbons, or symbolic offerings placed before statues and monuments? These questions require a clear and historically grounded explanation.

Within Buddhist cosmological thought, existence is not confined to the human realm alone. In addition to the world of human beings, Buddhist cosmology recognizes a hierarchy of divine realms inhabited by celestial beings of superior karmic condition. Among these, the heavenly realm (*tngri*) occupies a central place. Such beings, though not fully liberated from the cycle of rebirth, are understood to possess power, agency, and the capacity to intervene in human affairs. For this reason, they have long served as objects of invocation, prayer, and ritual propitiation.

Buddhist ritual traditions generally distinguish between offerings directed toward supramundane enlightened beings and those made to worldly deities. The latter category includes a wide range of protector beings: oath-bound divine entities who, though not fully enlightened, are believed to assist in worldly affairs, support meritorious action, safeguard the Buddhist religion, and protect individuals and communities under their care. These include numerous classes of deities, among them wealth deities, fortune deities, life deities, male and female deities, war deities, and territorial deities.

Among these, the war deity *Dalha* (Tib. *dgra lha*) occupies a particularly important place in Mongolian ritual thought. As a protector associated with martial power, territorial defense, and the repulsion of hostile forces, *Dalha* is understood to guard against both visible and unseen threats,

including violence, enemies, affliction, and misfortune. For this reason, it came to be regarded as one of the most immediate and potent classes of protective divine force.

Among Mongols, several categories of such protective deities have long received particular ritual devotion, including the Five Royal Heavenly Kings, the *Dalha* deities, and the Five Fortune Deities (*go ba'i lha lnga*).¹ Within the cult of *Dalha* itself, multiple forms and enumerations are attested, including the Nine *Dalha*, Eleven *Dalha*, Thirteen *Dalha*, *Dalha Odongarav*,² and *Dalha Dunjongarav*.³ More broadly, however, the term *Dalha* functions not merely as the name of a single deity, but as a wider designation for powerful protective beings, ranging from the territorial spirits of state-sacralized mountains to more generalized guardian powers.

In the state ritual of Khan Khentii Mountain, it is recorded that the sacred images ceremonially borne from the Bogd Khan's palace included representations of Padmasambhava (*Lobon Badamjunai*), *Dalha*, and the *savdag*—the territorial spirit—of Khan Khentii itself. This ritual configuration is especially revealing, for it places protective Buddhist figures, territorial divine powers, and sacralized landscape cults within a single ceremonial framework. It is precisely within this ritual context that the veneration of Chinggis Khan must be understood.

The liturgical writings and ritual injunctions of major Buddhist authorities—including the Seventh Panchen Lama Palden Tenpai Nyima (1782–1853), Jangja Rolpai Dorje, Mergen Gegen Lobsangdambijantsan, and the Chief Chant Master of Ikh Khüree, Luvsandongdov—contain repeated references to rites dedicated to Chinggis Khan. These include offerings to Chinggis, incense offerings to Chinggis Tengri as the protector deity of Ordos, ritual procedures for the worship of Lord Chinggis Khan as a manifestation of Vajrapāṇi, and liturgies bearing titles such as *Chinggis Offering* and *The Rite of Presenting Incense Offerings*. Taken together, these liturgical and doctrinal sources make clear that within the Buddhist ritual sphere Chinggis Khan was not venerated merely as a historical ruler or ancestral sovereign, but invoked and worshipped in a manner structurally analogous to that of a protector deity.

This sacral understanding is articulated with particular clarity in the *Altan Debter*⁴ (*Golden Book*), a Buddhist historical work composed by Zava Damdin,⁵ the learned *gavj* and full member of the Institute of Scriptures. There Chinggis Khan is identified as “Badrangui Tsagaan Tengri, the youngest son of Khurmast Tengri.” The conception of Chinggis Khan as a heavenly son descended into the human world occupies a central place in Mongolian religious and political thought. Its roots are considerably older than the Buddhist ritual texts discussed here: already in the imperial decrees of the Mongol Empire one encounters the well-known formula *Möngke Tengri-yin kücündür*—“By the power of Eternal

¹ The Five Fortune Deities consist of the Territorial Deity, the Male Deity, the Maiden Deity, the Enemy-Deity, and the Life Deity. These deities accompany each individual like a shadow, protecting and sustaining them throughout life. They are believed to be born together with a person and to remain as protective companions for the duration of one's lifetime. Through devotion and ritual reliance upon them, harmful influences and adverse causes are dispelled, while one's appearance, bodily vitality, undertakings, and prosperity flourish. [Author's note.] See L. Terbish, *Comprehensive Tibetan–Mongolian Dictionary* (Ulaanbaatar, 2018), 283.

² “*Dalha Odongarav*” refers to the protector deity Nechung Chöjön. See Dungkar Lobsang Trinlé, *Dungkar Tshigdzö Chenmo* (*The Great Dictionary of Dungkar*), 620. Following the establishment of the Bogd Khanate of Mongolia in 1911, when a state oracle was instituted, this Nechung Odongarav protector deity was said to descend through the oracle medium. The oracle rituals were conducted at what is now the Choijin Lama Temple Museum.

³ “The Lord of Bogd Khan Mountain,” the name of the heavenly deity associated with Bogd Khan Mountain.

⁴ Among Luvsandamdin's most celebrated works are the historical composition *Hor Choinjung*—The Melodious Song of the Auspicious Dharma Concerning the Emergence of Buddhism in the Mongol Lands of the North—and the companion work *Altan Debter* (*Golden Book*), written as an explanatory supplement to it. [Author's note.] See L. Khürelbaatar, *Огторгуйн цагаан гарьд* [*The White Garuda of the Sky*] (Ulaanbaatar, 2008), 231.

⁵ This Luvsandamdin (1867–1937), widely known by the scholarly name “Zava Damdin,” also called Luvsandayan, was a learned *gavj* of Ikh Khüree in Khalkha Mongolia and originally from the Govi Üizen Güng Banner of the Tüsheet Khan Aimag. He was renowned as a Buddhist philosopher, historian, literary stylist, and scholar of poetic and musical composition. [Author's note.] See L. Khürelbaatar, *Огторгуйн цагаан гарьд* [*The White Garuda of the Sky*] (Ulaanbaatar, 2008), 231.

Heaven”—a phrase that expresses the enduring centrality of heavenly legitimation in Mongol sovereignty.

This celestial genealogy is reinforced in visual and ritual representations of Chinggis Khan. In iconographic depictions of Chinggis as a sacral figure, he is frequently shown with Vajrapāṇi above his crown and, in some instances, alongside Khurmast Tengri himself. One widely circulated legend recounts that while the Buddha was preaching the Dharma, Khurmast Tengri vowed before him to protect the Buddhist religion for as long as it endured in the world. After a long passage of time, Khurmast looked upon the human realm and saw that Buddhism in India had nearly disappeared, that monasteries and monastic communities had fallen into decline, and that in other lands too the religion and its associated culture stood in danger of collapse. In response, he asked who would descend into the human world to preserve the Buddhist faith. At that moment, the youngest among the Thirty-Three Heavens stepped forward and declared: “I shall go.”

According to this interpretation, the youngest son of Khurmast Tengri was subsequently reborn in the human realm as Lord Chinggis Khan. Mongolian monastic writings frequently refer to Chinggis Khan as *sa yi tshangs pa*—“the Brahmā of the Earth,” or more precisely, the earthly manifestation of Khurmast Tengri. This designation reflects not merely reverence for Chinggis Khan as a historical sovereign, but his elevation within Mongolian Buddhist thought as a sacral ruler endowed with divine presence and protective authority.

Few rulers in world history have been absorbed into so extensive, enduring, and ritually elaborated a tradition of worship as Chinggis Khan. His afterlife in Mongolian religious culture extends far beyond dynastic memory or political commemoration: across the centuries, Chinggis Khan was not merely remembered, but invoked, propitiated, and ritually installed within a living liturgical tradition. Such continuity alone suggests that he was understood not simply as a historical sovereign, but as an exceptional and sacralized being whose presence remained active within the ritual imagination of later Mongolian Buddhism.

1.2 The Ezen Bogd-un San: The Newly Identified Incense-Offering Liturgy

During a 2018 field research trip conducted in Batnorov soum and Berkh in Khentii Province, we were able to examine a remarkable manuscript collection preserved by the scholar and researcher Dr. J. Saruulbuyan. Carefully maintained within his family archive were materials that preserved the intellectual and ritual legacy associated with the monk Luvsandanzan, who was formerly connected to a monastic community in the Süjigt Beise Banner of the old Setsen Khan Aimag.⁶ The collection offers

⁶ Lama Luvsandanzan studied Buddhist philosophy at Süjigt Monastery in his youth and served as its *unzad* (chant master) shortly before the monastery’s closure. Following the suppression of the monastery, he preserved many of its surviving manuscripts and ritual texts. He was also the maternal uncle of the scholar J. Saruulbuyan.

According to Saruulbuyan’s recollection, during the late 1970s the police authorities of Khentii Province confiscated the large manuscript collection that Luvsandanzan had safeguarded from Süjigt Monastery. The texts were loaded loosely onto open trucks, and as the vehicles traveled from Batnorov soum to the provincial center, countless manuscript leaves were scattered across the steppe by the wind. Local residents later recalled that pages from the manuscripts could be seen caught among shrubs and brush across the landscape, and many people were unable to pass through those areas for some time, lamenting the scale of the cultural loss.

Most tragic of all was the reported destruction of a large portion of the confiscated manuscripts, which were burned in a steam furnace by provincial police authorities. News of this destruction eventually reached the distinguished scholar Ts. Damdinsüren, who subsequently published an article in *Ünen* newspaper entitled “The Preservation and Protection of Literary Cultural Heritage,” in which he cited the destruction of the manuscripts preserved by Luvsandanzan as a striking example of cultural devastation. According to J. Saruulbuyan, who preserves a copy of the article, Luvsandanzan repeatedly pleaded for the manuscripts not to be destroyed, but was threatened and warned into silence. The elderly lama passed away not long afterward. *Interview notes from discussions with J. Saruulbuyan, Berkh, Khentii Province, March 4, 2018.*

a rare glimpse into the textual and ritual world of eastern Mongolian Buddhism as it was preserved outside institutional archives.

Among these manuscripts are numerous rare and valuable works spanning several branches of Buddhist learning. Most significant for the present study is a striking two-folio incense-offering text entitled *Ezen Bogd-un San* (“Incense Offering to the Lord Sovereign”). Though modest in length, the text is of exceptional importance. It appears to have been a liturgy recited within the former territory of Setsen Khan, yet no parallel recension has thus far been identified elsewhere. Its author remains unknown, but its compact form, ritual precision, and doctrinal density mark it as a text of considerable significance.

Despite its brevity, the *Ezen Bogd-un San* preserves a remarkably dense ritual and cosmological vocabulary. The following analysis explores the text in translation, paying particular attention to the ways in which Chinggis Khan is invoked through the language of protector-deity worship, sacral sovereignty, and Buddhist liturgical tradition.

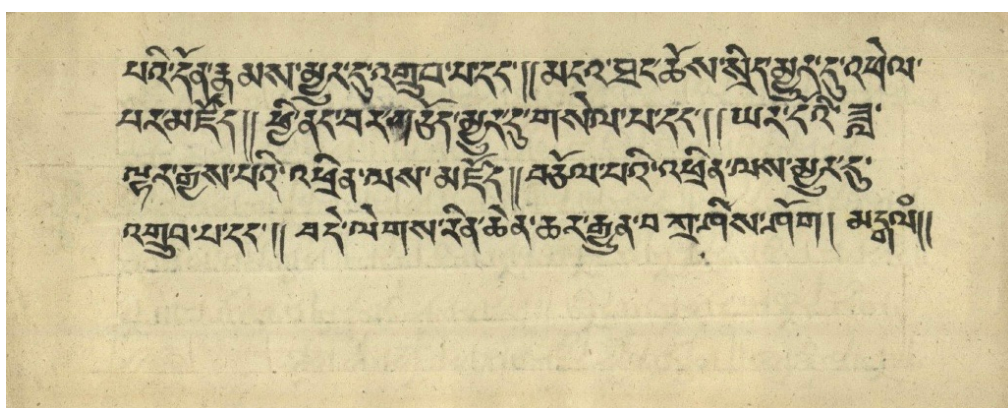
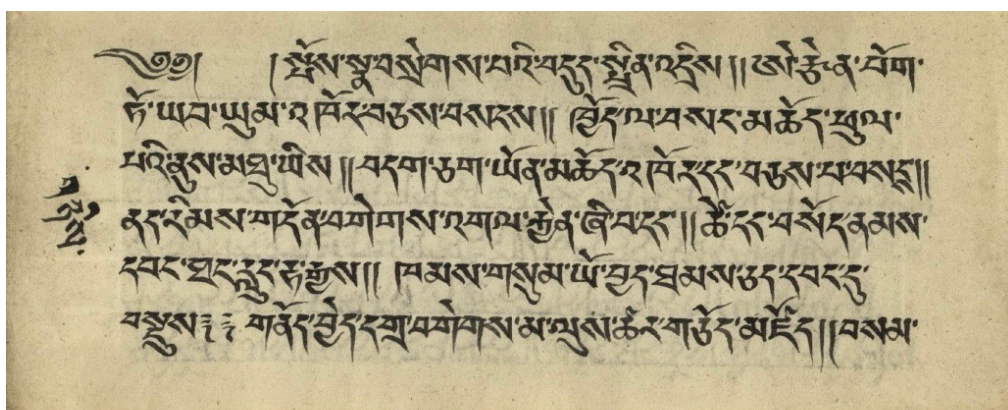
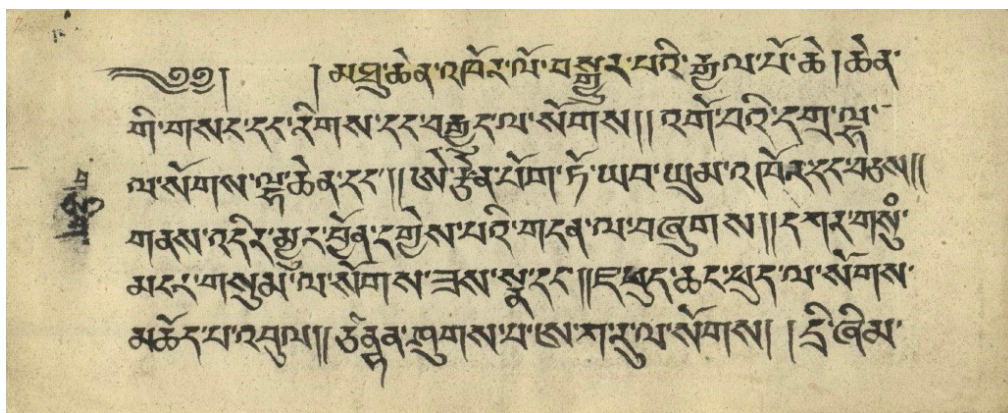


Figure 1-3. Liturgical Text for the Worship of Chinggis Khan. The manuscript consists of 2 folios measuring 21 cm in length and 10 cm in width, handwritten in black ink with 6 lines per page.

The Tibetan-language incense offering prayer reads:

| mthu chen `khor lo bsgyur pa`i rgyal po che|
 | chen gi gsang dang rigs dang brgyud la sogs|
 | `go ba`i dgra lha la sogs lha chen dang`|
 | ai rtsen pog to yab yum `khor dang bcas|
 | gnas `dir myur byon dgyes pa`i gdan la bzhugs|
 | dkar gsum mngar gsum la sogs zas sna dang`|
 | ja phud chang phud la sogs mchod pa `bul|
 | tsan tan shugs pa a ka ru la sogs|
 | dri zhim spos sna bsregs pa`i bdud sprin `dris|
 | ai rtsen pog to yab yum `khor bcas bsangs|
 | khyod la bsang mchod phul pa`i nus mthu yis|
 | bdag cag yon mchod `khor dang bcas pa bsangs|
 | nad rims gdon bgegs `gal rkyen zhi ba dang`|
 | tshe dang bsod nams dbang thang rlung rta rgyas|
 | khams gsum yo byad thams cad dbang du bsdu|
 | gnod byed dgra bgegs ma lus tshar gcod mdzod|
 | bsam pa`i don rnams myur du `grub pa dang`|
 | mnga` thang chos srid myur du `phel par mdzod|
 | phyi nang bar gcod myur du gsel pa dang`|
 | yar ngo`i zla ltar rgyas pa`i `phrin las mdzod|
 | bcol pa`i `phrin las myur du `grub pa dang`|
 | bde legs rin chen char rgyun bkra shis shog |

Mongolian Translation:

Их хүчит Загарвардийн агуу хаан
 Чингис хийгээд түүний язгуур удмынхан болон
 Заяаны тэнгэр, Дайны тэнгэр тэргүүтэй Их тэнгэр хийгээд
 Эзэн Богд хаан хатан нөхөр сэлтэс
 Орон энд үтэр түргэн залран соёрхоо
 Гурван цагаан, гурван амттан элдэв идээ хийгээд
 Цайны дээж, сархадны дээжээр тахил өргөмүй
 Зандан агар, арц хүжис тэргүүтэй
 Сайхан үнэртэн уугуулсаны үүлэн тахилаар
 Эзэн Богд хаан хатан нөхөр сэлтийг тахимуй
 Танд сан тахил өргөсний хүч чадлаар
 Бид өглөгийн эзэд нөхөд сэлт ариусаад
 Хижиг өвчин, ад тотгор харшлах шалтгаан амирлаад
 Нас буян, эрх сүр, цог хийморь дэлгэрч
 Гурван орчлонгийн хэрэглэл бүгдийг эрхэндээ хурааж
 Хорлон үйлдэгч дайсан тотгорийг хоцроолгүй мөхөөн сөнөөхтүн
 Санасан хэрэг бүхэн түргэн бүтээд
 Буян хишиг, шашин төрийг үтэр түргэн дэлгэрүүлэн зохио
 Гадна дотны саад тотгорыг түргэн арилгаад
 Шинийн саран мэт дэлгэрүүлэхийн үйлсийг зохиогтүн
 Даатгасан үйлсийг минь үтэр түргэн бүтээж
 Амгалан жаргалангийн их эрдэнийн хур үргэлжид өлийтэй орших болтугай.

English Translation:

Great and mighty universal sovereign,
Chinggis, together with his lineage and descendants,
the Fortune Deity, the War Deity, and the Great Heavenly Powers,
together with the Lord Sovereign, his consort, and retinue—
swiftly descend here and be seated upon this pleasing seat.

We present offerings of the three whites, the three sweets, and various foods,
together with the first portions of tea and the first libation of spirits.
With billowing clouds of fragrant incense smoke—
sandalwood, aloe, juniper, and other fine perfumes—
we make incense offerings to the Lord Sovereign, his consort, and retinue.

By the power and strength of this incense offering made to you,
may we, the patrons and assembled retinue, be purified;
may pestilence, disease, malevolent forces, and adverse conditions be pacified;
may life, merit, authority, splendor, and spiritual fortune increase;
may all provisions and resources of the three realms be brought under our command;
may hostile enemies and obstructing forces be utterly destroyed without remainder.

May all intended aims be swiftly accomplished;
may dominion and the dual order of religion and state rapidly flourish;
may outer and inner obstacles be swiftly dispelled;
may deeds of increase unfold like the waxing moon.

May the tasks entrusted to us be swiftly fulfilled,
and may a continuous rain of the precious jewel of peace and well-being
ever descend in auspicious abundance.

Notably, the repeated invocation of *Ezen Bogd* (“Lord Sovereign”) throughout the liturgy is far more than a formulaic honorific. Its insistent recurrence marks the text’s ritual language as both explicitly sovereign and overtly sacral, invoking Chinggis Khan not merely as a revered ruler, but as a consecrated sovereign presence whose authority is at once political, cosmic, and liturgical.

The *Incense Offering to the Lord Sovereign bsang* (incense offering) preserved in the Luvsandanzan manuscript collection is significant not merely as evidence of Chinggis Khan’s continued ritual veneration, but as evidence of its liturgical transformation. In this text, Chinggis is invoked not simply as an ancestral founder or martial forebear, but in the language of Buddhist universal kingship: *mthu chen 'khor lo bsgyur pa'i rgyal po che* (“great and mighty universal sovereign”), a clear rendering of the *cakravartin* or wheel-turning king. This places Chinggis within a Tibetan Buddhist cosmological register, elevating him from imperial founder to ritually enthroned sovereign whose authority is framed as universal, sacral, and cosmically sanctioned.

At the same time, the prayer does not simply subsume Chinggis into Buddhist orthodoxy. Rather, it preserves a hybrid ritual field in which Buddhist liturgical forms coexist with older Mongolian structures of sacral power. Chinggis is invoked together with his lineage and descendants, alongside fortune deities, war deities, and great heavenly powers, revealing a ritual assemblage in which dynastic authority, martial charisma, and protective divine forces remain closely intertwined. The text thus does not erase the older steppe cult of Chinggis Khan, but rearticulates it within a Tibetan liturgical frame.

Formally, the text is structured as a *bsang* offering: an invocation, enthronement, offering, and petition. Chinggis and his retinue are summoned to descend, invited to take their seat, and presented with offerings of the “three whites,” “three sweets,” tea, spirits, and fragrant incense. This sequence is

not merely devotional ornament, but ritual enactment. Chinggis is not simply remembered; he is made present. Through invitation, enthronement, and offering, the rite reactivates him as a ritually present sovereign power, transforming historical memory into liturgical immediacy.

Its petitions further underscore the practical and political function of the prayer. As a *bsang* text, it is concerned less with Buddhist soteriology than with ritual efficacy: the pacification of disease and malevolent forces, the increase of life, merit, authority, and fortune, the destruction of enemies, and the flourishing of *chos srid*—the dual order of religion and state. In this sense, the prayer is not merely devotional, but political. It presents Chinggis not as a distant object of reverence, but as an active ritual guarantor of sovereignty, prosperity, and right order, demonstrating how Chinggisid sacrality endured not despite Buddhist liturgy, but through it.

1.3. Liturgical Symbolism and Ritual Poetics of *The Incense Offering to the Lord Sovereign*

Beyond its political theology, the prayer is also carefully structured as ritual literature, drawing on a compact but highly conventionalized symbolic vocabulary that would have been immediately legible within Tibetan liturgical practice. Its imagery is formulaic in the best sense: not ornamental, but functional. Substances such as sandalwood, aloe, juniper, tea, spirits, the “three whites,” and the “three sweets” are not merely offerings of abundance, but encoded ritual signs of purification, nourishment, and auspicious reciprocity. Their accumulation produces a sensory field—fragrance, taste, smoke, sweetness—through which devotion is materialized and divine presence made ritually inhabitable. The imagery is cumulative and atmospheric, building a world fit for descent, enthronement, and exchange.

The prayer also relies on a distinctly Tibetan liturgical poetics of ascent and diffusion. Incense smoke rises in “billowing clouds” (*bdud sprin*), transforming the offering into a medium of transmission between human and divine realms. Smoke here is not incidental but symbolic: it renders material offering into purified, ascending essence, capable of reaching and pleasing unseen powers. This imagery is paired with downward movement in the repeated invitation to “swiftly descend here,” creating a reciprocal vertical axis: offerings rise, blessings descend. The ritual thus unfolds through a carefully balanced symbolic choreography of ascent and return, in which smoke, fragrance, and invocation move upward while presence, power, and blessing are drawn down.

Its petitions likewise employ a literary register shaped by simile and auspicious metaphor. The line “may deeds of increase unfold like the waxing moon” invokes one of the most common Tibetan and Inner Asian images of gradual augmentation: the waxing moon as the ideal figure of steady, visible, and auspicious growth. Likewise, the closing wish for “a continuous rain of the precious jewel of peace and well-being” draws on a classical Buddhist image of jewel-rain, a metaphor of inexhaustible blessing, prosperity, and divine favor. These are not decorative flourishes, but cosmological metaphors that translate political desire into ritually intelligible poetic form. Through such imagery, the prayer situates prosperity, authority, and right order within a symbolic universe of celestial increase, fragrant ascent, and auspicious descent.

2. Related Liturgical Traditions and Ritual Texts from Khentii

2.1. Chinggis Khan Liturgies in Mongolian Buddhist Tradition

The *Ezen Bogd-un San* does not stand in isolation. Rather, it forms part of a broader and still insufficiently studied ritual corpus in which the liturgical veneration of Chinggis Khan appears alongside the cults of mountains, territorial deities, and *ovoo* spirits across eastern and central Mongolia. Read in this wider context, the Berkh manuscript is best understood not as an anomalous survival, but as one element within a larger ritual and textual tradition that linked the sacral figure of Chinggis Khan to the wider ceremonial landscape of Mongolian Buddhist worship.

This wider ritual geography is especially significant in the case of Khentii. Revered in Mongolian historical memory as the birthplace homeland of Chinggis Khan, the region also contains Burkhan Khaldun—one of the most sacred mountains in Mongolian tradition and a site intimately connected with Chinggis Khan’s lineage, oath traditions, and imperial sacrality. The broader Khentii region furthermore formed part of the *Ikh Khorig* (“Great Taboo” or “Great Sacred Enclosure”), the protected homeland and sacred territorial domain associated with the imperial family and the burials of Chinggisid royalty. Within such a landscape, where sacred mountains, ancestral memory, territorial cults, and imperial ritual authority converged, the preservation of liturgical texts dedicated both to Chinggis Khan and to local mountain deities acquires particular historical and religious significance.

The manuscripts preserved in Berkh make it possible to situate the *Ezen Bogd* liturgy within this broader ritual world. Alongside the Chinggis offering are additional liturgical texts dedicated to Chinggis Khan, as well as numerous *san* and *bsang* texts for sacred mountains, territorial deities, and local ritual sites in Khentii and beyond. Taken together, these materials reveal a connected liturgical environment in which sovereign cult, sacred geography, and territorial ritual were not discrete traditions, but mutually reinforcing elements of a shared ritual order.

The Chief Chant Master (*Tsorj*) of Ikh Khüree, Agvaanluvsandondov,⁷ also composed a major liturgical work entitled *The Ritual Procedure for Performing the Propitiation of Lord Chinggis Khan, Manifestation of Vajrapāni, Called the Wish-Fulfilling Jewel that Brings Forth the Nine Aspiration*,⁸ written at the request of the monk Dondov of the Ordos banner. This text likely represents one of the latest known ritual compositions dedicated to the worship of Chinggis Khan, probably dating to the late nineteenth century. In both scale and complexity, it stands among the most elaborate Chinggis liturgies presently known.

The *Tsorj* lama also authored a number of other incense-offering and mountain cult liturgies, including rites for Uylga Kharuul Mountain, Dashlhünbe Mountain, the incense offering of Bayan Mountain, the rite for Jonont Mountain, the offering for Khökhöt Khan, the incense offering to the sacred spring called Khotkhan, the incense rite for Khüder Kharuul, the offering for Argal Mountain, and the liturgy for Khan Mountain. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that he composed ritual texts not only for mountains and sacred landscapes, but also for the *kharuul* temples situated along the frontier and for the nearby mountains associated with them—materials that have not previously been noted in scholarship.

The significance of Agvaanluvsandondov’s ritual writings extends well beyond the cult of Chinggis Khan alone. He also composed a substantial body of incense-offering and mountain cult liturgies, including rites for Uylga Kharuul Mountain, Dashlhünbe Mountain, Bayan Mountain, Jonont Mountain, Khökhöt Khan, the sacred spring known as Khotkhan, Khüder Kharuul, Argal Mountain, and Khan Mountain. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that these works were directed not only toward mountains and territorial deities, but also toward the *kharuul* temples situated along the frontier and the sacred landscapes associated with them. Such materials have received little to no attention in previous

⁷ Agvaanluvsandondov served as *Tsorj* (Chief Chant Master) of Ikh Khüree in 1887, deputy *Khamba* in 1900, and *Darkhan Tsorj* in 1907. He was one of the five *Tsorj* of the Eighth Bogd Jebtsundamba Khutugtu (1869–1924) and served as the teacher of Queen Dondogdulam, the State Mother (Ulus-un Eke Dagina). Agvaanluvsandondov authored more than two hundred works in eight volumes, including biographies, ritual texts, prayers, empowerments, meditation manuals, and tantric works. Among them are biographies of the First Bogd Zanabazar (1635–1723), the Fourth Bogd Jebtsundamba (1775–1813), and the Fifth Bogd Jebtsundamba (1815–1841), as well as praises and ritual works related to the Seventh and Eighth Bogds. By decree of the Eighth Bogd, he also translated the Chinese astrological work *Jade Casket* from Mongolian into Tibetan. The collected works (sungbum) of Agvaanluvsandondov were printed in Ikh Khüree by order of the Bogd Khan and Queen Dondogdulam. [Author’s note.] See R. Byambaa, *Монголчуудын Төвд хэлээр туурвисан Монгол хэлэнд орчуулсан ном зүйн бүртгэл* [*Bibliographic Register of Works Written by Mongols in Tibetan and Translated into Mongolian*] (Ulaanbaatar, 2004), 3:1074.

⁸ The liturgical text entitled | phyag na rdor rje’i rnam ’phrul e dzing ching ges rgyol po’i gsol mchod sogs bya tshul ’dod dgu’i ’byung ba’i yid bzhin dbang rgyal zhes bya ba bzhugs so |—a ritual text for the worship of Chinggis Khan—is preserved at the Institute of Language and Literature. It was printed in the Cha volume of the collected works (sungbum) of *Tsorj* Agvaanluvsandondov. [Author’s note.] See O. Sükhbaatar, *Монголын тахилгат уул усны судар оршвой* [*Sacred Sites of Mongolia: The Scriptures of the Venerated Mountains and Waters of Mongolia*] (Ulaanbaatar, n.d.), 171.

scholarship and suggest the existence of a far more extensive ritual geography connected to frontier protection, territorial cults, and regional sacred landscapes than has previously been recognized.

All of these texts survive in Cha-botid script and remain in need of detailed philological and historical study.

2.2. Mountain and Ovoo Liturgies Preserved in the Berkh Collection

Alongside these materials, the manuscripts preserved in Berkh also contain a considerable number of *san* and *bsang* liturgies associated with sacred mountains and ritual sites in present-day Khentii Province. Several representative examples may be briefly introduced below.

| gzhib bdag tho rgyal ba'i gsol mchod bsangs bzhugs so |

Here begins the incense offering and supplication to the territorial lord Tho rgyal.

This text is the liturgical offering rite dedicated to Öndör Khaan Mountain, located in present-day Chinggis City, the administrative center of Khentii Province. According to the colophon, the work was composed by the Seventh Panchen Erdeni, Palden Tenpai Nyima (1782–1853), at the request of Gombojav, ruler of a banner within the Setsen Khan Aimag.

The name *Tho rgyal* represents the Tibetan rendering of “Öndör Khaan” (“High King”) and reflects the broader process through which Mongolian sacred landscapes and territorial cults were incorporated into Tibetan Buddhist liturgical language. The term appears in a variety of Tibetanized Mongolian religious contexts and titles, including expressions such as *Tho rgyal darqan* and related ritual designations. The existence of such terminology demonstrates the degree to which local mountain cults had become integrated into the wider Buddhist ritual and textual tradition.

The ritual cult of Öndör Khaan Mountain itself has also attracted scholarly attention and has previously been discussed in the works of O. Sükhbaatar.⁹

| yul bdag mung khe 'ul rtsi'i thu la bsangs mchod |

Incense offering to the territorial lord Mönkh-Ölziit.

This text is the liturgical offering rite dedicated to Mönkh-Ölziit Mountain, located in Kherlen soum of Khentii Province. Although concise in form, the text belongs to the wider tradition of territorial deity worship associated with sacred mountains and local protective spirits within the Mongolian Buddhist ritual sphere. Its preservation within the Berkh collection further demonstrates the extent to which local mountain cults continued to be maintained through written liturgical traditions.

| yul lha thun mong 'ul rtse'i bsangs bya tshul bzhugs so |

Here begins the method for performing the incense offering to the territorial deity Tümen-Ölzii.

According to the colophon, this text was composed by the *agramba* Lodoi at the request of the monk Zundui. It constitutes the offering liturgy for Tümen-Ölzii Mountain, located in Mörön soum of Khentii Province. As with many of the mountain cult liturgies preserved in the Berkh manuscripts, the text illustrates the close relationship between local territorial worship and the institutional world of Mongolian Buddhist monastic scholarship, in which local sacred landscapes were incorporated into formalized liturgical practice.

⁹ O. Sükhbaatar, *Монголын тахилгат уул усны судар ориной* [*Sacred Sites of Mongolia: The Scriptures of the Venerated Mountains and Waters of Mongolia*] (Ulaanbaatar, n.d.), 171.

| *ho thog 'u li bsang bzhugs so* |

Here begins the incense offering to Khutag Mountain.

According to the colophon, this text was composed by the abbot (*shireet lama*) Chaiv¹⁰ at the request of the physician-monk Luvsandagva of the banner of Jasag Puntsagdorj.¹¹ The work constitutes the incense-offering liturgy dedicated to Khutag Mountain, located in Kherlen soum of Khentii Province. The text is particularly valuable in demonstrating the participation not only of high-ranking clerics, but also of local monastic and medical figures in the preservation and transmission of regional mountain cult traditions.

| *gzhi bdag chen po pa yan khang ri'i bsangs mchod bde legs kun 'byung bzhugs so* |
Here begins the incense offering to the great territorial lord Bayan Khang Mountain, called "The Source of All Auspicious Well-Being."

This text is the incense-offering liturgy dedicated to Bayan Khang Mountain, located in Batnorov soum of Khentii Province. According to the colophon, it was written by an individual named Madi—possibly to be identified with Sambuu, though this remains tentative—at the request of the *unzad* chant master and monk Agvaansamdan of Shadüvchoinkhorlin Monastery.¹²

The cult of Bayan Khang Mountain itself preserves traces of a wider local ritual tradition and has previously been noted by the scholar and writer J. Saruulbuyan in an article published in *Idermeg* newspaper in August 1999, later cited by Sükhbaatar in *Legends of Mongolian Place Names*.¹³ The survival of this liturgy alongside local historical accounts further illustrates the close relationship between manuscript tradition, sacred geography, and regional ritual memory in Khentii.

| *gzhi bdag chen po pa yan khang gi bsangs mchod rdzogs ldan sprin phung zhes bya ba bzhugs so* |
Here begins the incense offering to the great territorial lord Bayan Khang, called "The Perfect Cloud Mass."

According to the colophon, this liturgy—entitled *The Perfect Cloud Mass*—was composed for the great territorial lord Bayan Khang of the Daichin Jasag Banner¹⁴ at the request of the devout and diligent chant master, the monk Danzan. The work was written by an author styled *Losal*, “He Who Makes Sarasvatī Smile,” a literary and devotional pseudonym rather than a personal name. Particularly noteworthy is the colophon’s explicit statement that the text could be adapted for use in offerings to other territorial deities simply by substituting the relevant names. This suggests the existence of a broader liturgical template within Mongolian mountain cult practice, in which individual sacred landscapes were integrated into a shared ritual structure.

Dr. J. Saruulbuyan has tentatively suggested that the mountain in question may be the Malgar Bayan Khang of Batnorov soum. At the same time, he notes that another Bayan Khang Mountain exists in Dadal soum, making definitive identification difficult and underscoring the continuing challenges involved in reconstructing historical sacred geographies from manuscript sources.

¹⁰ Chaiv Shireet Luvsandan may have been a Tibetan lama, though no biographical record has yet been identified.

¹¹ Puntsagdorj, ruling *jasag* noble of the Sergelen Güng Banner of the Setsen Khan Aimag.

¹² Name of the monastery belonging to the Sergelen Güng Banner of the Setsen Khan Aimag.

¹³ A note written in yellow ink at the end of the manuscript reportedly stated that the incense-offering liturgy of Idermeg Bayan Khang Mountain had been composed by the learned *unzad* Agvaansamdan of Shadavchoinkhorlin Monastery of the banner. According to local accounts, when the actual liturgical text was recited, the names of Prince Pun and his consort were mentioned. This appears to indicate that they were among the principal initiators of the cult, name, and ovoo worship associated with Idermeg Bayan Khang. [Author’s note.] See Sükhbaatar, *Монголын газар усны нэрийн домог* [*Legends of Mongolian Place Names*] (Ulaanbaatar, n.d.), 139.

¹⁴ Gongor Daichin Beise Banner of the Setsen Khan Aimag, corresponding to the territory of present-day Batnorov soum, Khentii Province.

| *ri chen po pa yan mon kho'i gzhi bdag rnams la mchod gtor 'bul tshul bde chen char 'bebs zhes bya ba bzhugs so* |

Here begins "The Rain of Great Peace": the rite for presenting offerings and ritual cakes to the territorial deities of Great Bayan Mönkh Mountain.

This text constitutes the liturgical offering rite dedicated to the territorial deities and local spirits associated with Bayan Mönkh Mountain in present-day Bayanmönkh soum of Khentii Province. The extensive colophon preserves especially valuable historical and religious information. It records that the text was composed at the repeated request of the monk Sherab, who is described as a devoted practitioner of pure merit and as one deeply learned in esoteric mantra traditions. The ritual itself was intended as an offering to the territorial deities and local spirits of the Kherlen region, and especially to those associated with Great Bayan Mönkh Mountain.

By the command of a revered *yonzin* (spiritual preceptor), the text was composed by the incarnate lama Puntsagnamjil, known by the honorific title Erdene Bandida, and completed on the fifteenth day of the middle autumn month in the Water Male Dragon year.¹⁵ The scribe is identified as the learned *güshi* Luvsanchoymchog. Beyond its liturgical function, the text is significant for the insight it offers into the networks of patronage, authorship, reincarnate authority, and local ritual devotion that shaped the production and transmission of Mongolian mountain cult liturgies.

| *pa yang 'er khe thi'i bsangs mchod 'bul tshul zhes bya ba bzhugs so* |

| *brtseg se the'i thal pu lag pa yang 'er khe thi'i* |

Here begins the rite for presenting incense offerings to Bayan Erkhēt.

Reedy plain and spring-fed Bayan Erkhēt.

The precise identification of the sacred site referred to in this text remains uncertain. A place known as Bayan Erkhēt is located south of the Kherlen River in Bayanhutag soum of Khentii Province, while another sacred mountain bearing the same name is found in Bayanjargalan soum of Töv Province. Such ambiguity reflects the broader difficulties involved in reconstructing historical sacred geographies from surviving liturgical and manuscript evidence, particularly where place names recur across multiple regions.

The colophon states: "This rite for presenting incense offerings to Bayan Erkhēt in the territory of Erdene Adai Güng was composed at the request of companions and associates by one bearing the name of the Jebtsundamba Khutugtu; may auspicious merit flourish." This wording strongly suggests that the text was composed either by an incarnation connected to the Jebtsundamba lineage or by an individual acting under its religious authority. The liturgy therefore provides further evidence for the close relationship between regional mountain cults and the broader religious authority of the Jebtsundamba Khutugtus within Mongolian Buddhist ritual culture.

| *khang 'u la ching gel the'i bsangs bzhugs so* |

Here begins the incense offering to Khan Mountain and Chingeltei.

This text constitutes the incense-offering liturgy dedicated to Bogd Khan Mountain and Chingeltei Mountain. According to the colophon, it was composed by the Seventh Panchen Erdeni, Palden Tenpai Nyima (1782–1853), at the request of the Jebtsundamba Khutugtu, described in the text as the "Lord of the Religion of the Northern Land." Chronologically, this request must have originated either with the Fourth Jebtsundamba Khutugtu (1775–1813) or the Fifth Jebtsundamba Khutugtu (1815–1841), on whose behalf the Seventh Panchen prepared the ritual text.

The liturgical veneration of Bogd Khan Mountain appears to have occupied a particularly important place within the ritual geography of Mongolian Buddhism. In addition to the present text,

¹⁵ The Year of the Black Dragon (1892).

liturgies dedicated to the mountain were also composed by Jangja Khutugtu, the *Khamba Nomun Khan* of Ikh Khüree Agvaankhaidav, the Chief Chant Master Agvaanluvsandondov, and the incarnation Lashin Agvaanprinlaijamts. The existence of multiple ritual compositions dedicated to the same sacred mountain suggests both the prestige of the site and the continuing elaboration of its ritual cult within the intellectual and liturgical traditions of Mongolian Buddhism.

| *bsangs chog gdod dgu'i dpal ster ces bya ba bzhugs so* |

Here begins the incense offering called "The Bestower of the Glory of the Nine Primordial Aspirations."

This text constitutes the offering liturgy dedicated to the mountain known as Dashlhünzeg and preserves one of the most historically valuable colophons among the manuscripts discussed here. The colophon records that during the reign of the Kangxi Emperor (*Enkh-Amgalan Khan*), unrest and instability arose in the region, prompting an official named Ravdan to seek ritual protection and guidance from the First Jebtsundamba Khutugtu, Luvsandambijantsan. In response, the Jebtsundamba declared that the local mountain known as Öndör Tsagaan should be ritually renamed Dashlhünzeg, and that an ovoo should be erected and worshipped there so that peace and well-being might be restored to the region.

From the Year of the Male Rat¹⁶ onward, the mountain appears to have entered formal ritual use under the name Dashlhünzeg, remaining an object of veneration for more than a century. By the eighteenth regnal year of the Qianlong Emperor (*Saišaalt Yörüöltü*), in the Year of the Black Hen, local practitioners proposed that the rites of incense offering and *balin* offering should be renewed. In response to repeated requests, Galsanravjai composed the present liturgy spontaneously, "as it arose in his mind," concluding with the aspiration that "through this, the peace and well-being of all beings may further increase."

The colophon is especially significant because it preserves direct evidence for the ritual renaming of a sacred mountain by decree of the First Jebtsundamba Khutugtu, thereby illuminating the active role of high Buddhist authority in the formation and institutionalization of local mountain cults within Mongolia. The precise identification of the mountain, however, remains uncertain.

| *mun gung mor the'i bsang mchod bzhugs so* |

Here begins the incense offering to Möngönmorit.

This text is the incense-offering liturgy dedicated to the sacred mountain of Möngönmorit, located in present-day Möngönmorit soum of Töv Province. According to the colophon, the work was composed on the basis of the incense-offering liturgy for Chingeltei written by Panchen Erdeni Palden Tenpai Nyima at the request of the Jebtsundamba Khutugtu. The author explicitly notes that the earlier text was adapted to suit the local ritual landscape by altering certain passages and adding two *sholok* verses.

Particularly noteworthy is the final statement of the colophon, which records that the text was written by one named *Vahaya*—almost certainly a Sanskritized literary pseudonym employed in place of the author's personal name. The adaptation of an earlier mountain liturgy for a new sacred site further demonstrates the fluid and transmissible character of Mongolian mountain cult ritual literature, in which established liturgical frameworks could be reworked and localized for different territorial deities and ritual landscapes.

Taken together, the liturgical texts preserved in the Berkh collection reveal the existence of a highly interconnected ritual landscape in which sacred mountains, territorial deities, ovoo cults, and Buddhist liturgical traditions functioned as part of a unified ceremonial system. Far from representing isolated local cults, these texts demonstrate that the sacred geography of Khentii was integrated into

¹⁶ The Year of the Yellow Male Rat (1708).

wider networks of monastic authorship, ritual transmission, and Buddhist scholastic culture. The repeated adaptation of earlier liturgical models for new mountains and territorial deities further suggests the existence of shared ritual templates through which local sacred landscapes could be incorporated into broader Buddhist ritual frameworks.

At the same time, the manuscripts preserve valuable evidence for the historical sacralization of landscape within eastern Mongolia. Colophons referencing banner rulers, chant masters, incarnate lamas, frontier temples, and the renaming of mountains by high religious authorities illustrate the degree to which ritual practice, political authority, and territorial identity were intertwined. Viewed collectively, these texts reveal Khentii not merely as a geographical region, but as a densely sacralized ritual landscape shaped by the interaction of Chinggisid memory, mountain worship, and Mongolian Buddhist liturgical tradition.

Conclusion

The discovery in Berkh, Khentii Province, of the liturgical text *Ezen Bogd-un San* (“The Incense Offering to the Lord Sovereign”) is of particular importance for the study of Mongolian religious history and the ritual veneration of Chinggis Khan. Although the cult of Chinggis Khan has long been recognized within both scholarship and popular memory, the recovery of previously unknown liturgical materials such as this provides rare insight into the concrete ritual language through which Chinggis Khan was invoked, worshipped, and sacralized within Mongolian Buddhist tradition. The repeated invocation of *Ezen Bogd* within the text, together with its integration of protector-deity imagery, incense-offering formulas, and territorial ritual language, demonstrates that Chinggis Khan was understood not merely as a remembered imperial ancestor, but as an actively venerated sovereign presence situated within a wider Buddhist cosmological and ritual framework.

At the same time, the *Ezen Bogd-un San* does not stand alone. The broader corpus of mountain and ovoo liturgies preserved alongside it reveals the existence of an interconnected ritual landscape extending across the former territory of the Setsen Khan Aimag and the wider Khentii region. These texts preserve traditions associated with sacred mountains, territorial deities, ovoo cults, frontier shrines, and local ritual geography, many of which survive today only in fragmentary form or have become detached from their earlier liturgical foundations. Their recovery therefore contributes not only to the preservation of manuscript heritage, but also to the reconstruction of ritual continuity and historical sacred geography in eastern Mongolia.

The scholarly significance of these materials extends well beyond liturgical studies alone. The manuscripts preserve valuable evidence relating to historical place names, changing toponyms, monastic and banner organization, territorial cult practice, and the ritual geography of earlier Khentii. Particularly important are the accompanying geomantic and geographical manuals, which preserve detailed instructions concerning the placement of ovoos, sacred mountains, aristocratic and monastic ritual sites, burial grounds, and monastic foundations. Taken together, these materials illuminate a far more extensive and textually grounded ritual landscape than has previously been recognized in scholarship.

Finally, the manuscripts discussed here underscore the urgent importance of documenting and studying cultural heritage preserved in private collections. Materials such as those safeguarded in Berkh remain vulnerable to dispersal, neglect, and irreversible loss if they are not brought into scholarly circulation. Yet they also demonstrate the extraordinary richness of the manuscript traditions that continue to survive beyond institutional archives. Even within the limited scope of the Burkhan Khaldun Environmental Research Project, it has already become clear that many further ritual and historical sources remain preserved in the countryside, awaiting documentation and study. The *Ezen Bogd-un San*, discovered in the birthplace region of Chinggis Khan himself, stands as one important example of the historical, religious, and cultural significance of these surviving manuscript traditions.

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