The Worship Altai In Mongolian People’S Culture and The Oirat Written Monument “Incense Offering to Altai”

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the sacred text of reverence of Altai in the Oirat old written language. The purpose of the article is a scientific introduction of the Buddhist text reflecting ancient beliefs of the Western Mongols, associated with the worshipping of nature and widely represented in the folklore

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of the Mongolian people. The text, which talks of Tengri (spirit-gods) encoded information not only about spirit-masters of different (forest and steppe) areas, but also about the part of “The Altai Mountains” occupying western part of Mongolia, home of the lyricist offering incense to Altai.

**Key Words:** Altai, Incense, Manuscript, Mountains, Shamans, Worship and reverence, Western Mongolia, Buddhist text

1. Introduction

Among many sacred texts in the Oirat language (“todo or todorxoi bičiq” – “clear script,” created in 1648 on the basis of the old written Mongolian language by a renowned Oirat religious and public figure Zaya Pandita Namkhaijamtsa), a special interest group is presented by the essays devoted to the incense offering to Altai ‘altayin sang orošibui’. The manuscript (6 pp., 17,9x8,5 cm, 14–15 rows, in black, partly red ink) was found in the manuscript collection of the Centre for the Study of the Oirat history and culture “Tod nomin Gerel” (The written monument is kept in the Khovd Aimag Sum Mankhan, Mongolia, Raashgonzeglin Monastery (also known as Tugrugiin Khiid), considered “Rabjamba Zaya Pandita Monastery.” This text is stored in many repositories, including Manuscript Funds of the Institute of Language and Literature Academy of Sciences of Mongolia (Gerelmaa 2005: 171–172) and the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts (Sazykin 1988: 225–226), as well as in private collections of Mongolian herdsmen. Among manuscripts in the catalogue of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Section VI “The cult of the land and mountains,” there are two copies described by N.N. Poppe, one of which is directly dedicated to the rite of incense offering to Altai (Poppe 1932: 185). The State Archives of Kalmykia do not contain texts on Altai.

The mountain system of Altai runs along the borders of Russia (Altai-skii Region and the Republic of Altai), Mongolia (Ubs Nuur, Khobd and Bayan-Ulgii aimags), Kazakhstan, and China (Xinjiang), and stretches from the West Siberian Plain to the Gobi Desert for more than two thousand kilometers (BSE 1970: 458). On the territory of Mongolia, the mountain ridge is extended from the southwestern border of Russia and is divided into Mongolian and Gobi Altai (MNR 1986: 7). The mountain chain of the Altai Mountains is covered "with medium and high mountain terrain
types ... with predominantly mountainous steppes” (Lkhagvasuren 2013: 21–22), the rivers and lakes of the Mongolian Altai belong to the Great Lakes basin (MNR 1986: 7; Lkhagvasuren 2013: 22). Mountain peaks are partially covered with glaciers. Forest area is “small and insignificant, ... grazing pastures are in broad intermountain valleys and hollows, ... vegetation is distributed unevenly.” (Lkhagvasuren 2013: 21–22).

There are different versions of the origin of the word “Altai”. Some researchers believe that it is derived from the Mongolian word alt (‘gold’) and affix -tan and means 'gold, gold-bearing', while others regard it as stemming from the Turkic words ala (‘mottled’) and tau (‘mountain’), or from Turkic al (‘high’) and tai (‘mountain’). V.V. Radlov’s dictionary gives following meanings: altai –1) Altai proper, i.e. mountains between the Katun and the Irtysh rivers; 2) high mountains, mountainous country; as a part of the phrase Altyn tū meaning ‘golden mountain’ (on the top of which is the throne of Ulgen) (Radlov 1893: 402–406).

2. "Land of Ancestors"

According to the beliefs of the Mongols, the world axis (axis mundi) is either a mythical or a real mountain symbolizing center of the universe, with the Altai Mountains being that very sacred location. In traditional culture of the Mongolian peoples, mountains are the “key symbols of the territories occupied by particular local groups” (Prostranstvo 2008: 58), and “major landmarks in both geographical and sacred sense.” Geographically speaking, mountains act as a “center around which a microtoponym of a specific territory was created”; mountains as a sacred object are seen as “the name of the main spirit of the mountain,” with the name being more often replaced with epithets (Zhukovskaya 1988: 27). Before the revolution of 1921 in Mongolia, many towns and aimags were named after revered mountains located nearby: out of 67 khoshuns, 56 had been named in this way (Murzaev 1952: 19; Zhukovskaya 1988: 27). After 1921, important sacred centers were given consideration while naming new administrative units under the national government. For the Kalmyks, whose ancestors migrated from Dzungaria at the beginning of
the 17th Century to the territory of Russia, “Altai” has been associated with the “homeland,” a “symbol of ancestral motherland, an epic hero” (Bicheev 2005: 32), “a marker of ancient homeland, land of ancestors” (Bakaeva 2009: 31). However, in the area of their settling in the Lower Volga reaches, the rituals were performed on artificial or natural mounds due to the lack of high mountains (Bakaeva 2003: 206–207). Similar ideas are typical for traditional culture of Altai: “…the country, the world, all the earth,” and “the mountains surrounding the place of residence of the hero” (Tyukhteneva 2009: 154), the habitat of the Altai warrior is reverently titled ‘Master Altai of gold and stone’” (Gabysheva 2012: 116).

Worshipping of mountains among Mongolian peoples goes back to ancient times. According to Buryat researcher L.S. Dampilova, mountains, rocks and stones are “mediators between the worlds”; they are worshipped and performed rites and rituals for “the world as a mountain-axis, where Tengri children descend, structures the model of shamanic world” (Dampilova 2012: 82, 96). Academician B. Enkhtuvshin depicts “the universe as a big ‘Ovoo’ (consisting of 13 Altai peaks covered in permanent snow … nomads made sacrifices for them … mainly in spring and fall” (Enkhtuvshin 2014: 559). The main orientation of ritual sacrifice was to call for rain, which encouraged vegetation growth and, therefore, provided fattening of cattle, which allowed for safe survival during winter, whereas people could lead happy life, free from disease and shocks (Enkhtuvshin 2014: 559), i.e. Altai is a sacred place of dwelling, “an object of worship and a habitat” (Tyukhteneva 2009: 106). According to the accounts from informants, the Altai Mountains have one master, and their spurs and ridges are abodes for the spirits (savdag), usually formidable (hatuu, lit. 'solid'); they are appeased and provided with sacrifices. According to oral tradition, the Altai master is a revered deity Tsagaan ovgon (The White Old Man), who annually endows his subordinates with years of life during the arrival of the holiday Tsagaan Sar (PMA: 2015) An appeal to the “master-spirits,” headed by one Altai god-master of all, is determinated by archaic beliefs of the Oirat people, with worshiping of local spirits being essential for life of the ethnic group. During a trip to northwestern Mongolia in 1879, G.N. Potanin recorded beliefs of the local people and noted savdag of Altai – Altan Khan, while a proverb recorded by a Derbet of Ulangom (now aimag center of Ubs Nuur Aimag) reads as follows: “Sabdyk
of Alten Khan, i.e. of the Altai Mountains, holds his hand open, he is generous in distributing favors to cattle and people, sabdyk of Khangai holds his hand closed, is stingy” (Potanin 1883: 125, 262). Altan Khan is probably associated with Tsagaan ovgon, who protects “wealth, happiness and family well-being” (Zhukovskaya 1977: 30). The White Old Man lives on a mountain top and controls forces of nature, protecting people and animals; he is worshiped also in Southern Altai and is known as Ezen Eelu or Ulgen (Lkhagvasuren 2012: 35). Wherever he appeared, or “under his benevolent gaze” (in this case with “open hand”) cattle multiplied, people became happier and land prettier; where the White Old Man was absent, or where he “did not cast his blessing glance,” there followed a period of decline, hit by the epidemic, people and cattle perished. The Kalmyks worshiped the White Old Man (Kalm. Tsagaan Avga) on mounds ova (Mong. ovoo) during the second day of welcoming of summer holiday Ürs Sar. He protects land and all living beings, and bestows longevity and happiness (Bakaeva 2003: 97–100). The Altai Mongolian Uryankh people call the master of Altai Alia Khongor, usually a young woman “always astride” (Lkhagvasuren 2013: 142). It should be noted that in the Mongol-Oirat epic, the mountains of Altai and Khangai are always mentioned as a pair: “spurs of the Altai and Khangai,” “the hill of the Altai and Khangai,” “fifty-headed Khangai ... seventy-headed Altai” (Vladimirtsov 2003a: 372, 374, 379); “Seventy double mountains of the motherland Altai ... fifty secret mountains of the Khangai,” “wide, rich Khangai and Altai,” “went to hunt in Altai, Khangai,” “the peaks of Altai-Khangai” (Vladimirtsov 2003b: 408, 409, 410, 479); “the high rich Altai, Khangai” (Vladimirtsov 2003c: 482); “The shadow side of Altai and Khangai,” “the hill of Altai and Khangai” (Vladimirtsov 2003d: 504, 506); “the Great fatherland Khangai ... the great homeland Altai,” “steppe wormwood, feather grass ... are beautiful, marvelous, multi-colored flowers in Altai and Khangai” (Vladimirtsov 2003d: 517). It is by no accident that the Khangai Mountains stretch parallel to the Altai (Murzaev 1952: 110). Pairing of the two mountain ridges can be confirmed by an excerpt from the epic “Egil-Mergen,” when two famous and courageous heroes, Egil-Mergen and Baykhankhan-Arsalan, heading to Ergil-Mergen’s motherland, decided after a meal break “to make their pillow from Altai, resting their feet on Khangai” (Vladimirtsov 2003v: 501).

In Kalmykia, where the Oirats / Kalmyks migrated from Dzungaria at the beginning
of the 17th Century, and where the prevalent relief type is plain (with Ergeninskaya Plateau only in the western part), the cult of the White Old Man was closely linked with the cult of ova (Mong. ovoo), small mounds. In Mongolia, the rite ovoo takhilga (‘sacrifice to ovoo’) is performed usually on a single day either in summer or fall. It is believed that, on these days, dragon spirits descend from heavens; they rule “diseases of people, loss of livestock and other natural disasters; this why the Mongols honor these spirits trying to appease them with sacrifice” (Pozdneev 1993: 404). In this way, shamans perform their rites (A.M. Pozdneev calls them “shaman lining” – K.O.). Lamas conduct this ritual by 13 rather than one pile of stones (ovoo): one is the main or “biggest,” which symbolizes the Mount Sumeru as “the center of the Buddhist universe,” while four smaller piles corresponding to four sides of the world or continents are around the first pile, with eight even smaller piles further on “standing for the inhabited world” (Pozdneev 1993: 404; Zhukovskaya 1977: 41); according to D. Banzarov, around one big mound there are 12 smaller ones bringing their total to 13, indicating the Mount Sumeru and 12 parts of the world (Banzarov 1891: 20). A.M. Pozdneev recounts “all these are inventions of later times” (Pozdneev 1993: 404). According to N.L. Zhukovskaya ovoo cult “persisted throughout the period of development and prosperity of shamanism, ... without contradicting the principles of shamanic world view, ... [ovoo – K.O.] was strictly personified and had a well-defined master” (Zhukovskaya 1977: 37). Moreover, N.L. Zhukovskaya documented the ritual sacrifice to 13 deities (one main god and the rest its retinue, or deities of lower rank) among the Chakhars. Among the Altai Uryankh, shamans perform the same ritual calling 13 masters of Altai <...> and other formidable patrons, setting 13 censers (altayn 13 sang) for incensing (Lkhagvasuren 2012: 158; Mirzaeva 2016: 58) during the ceremony. Quite accordingly, 13 Altai peaks personified 13 masters (deities). The Center of Oriental Manuscripts and Block-prints at the Institute of Mongolian, Buddhist and Tibetan Studies of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences stores manuscripts in the Oirat language, including ceremonials dedicated to 13 gods Altai, Khan Altai Ekhe-Dakini, etc. (Gerasimova & Syrtypova 2001: 72). Names of the deities are believed by Buryat scholars K.M. Gerasimova and S.-H.D. Syrtypova to be connected with the territory of the Altai settlements of the Uryankh, Derbets, Baits, and Mingats of Ubs Nuur Aimag. Thirteen peaks
of the Altai are colorfully depicted in the Mongol-Oirat heroic epics “thirteen rich auburn Altair” (Vladimirtsov 2003v: 499); “The thirteen-peaked rich Altai” (Vladimirtsov 2003v: 498); “The thirteen-headed rich Altai” (Vladimirtsov 2003v: 502); “Thirteen rocky caves on the shady side of the Altai” (Vladimirtsov 2003d: 488); “Thirteen passes of Altai” (Vladimirtsov 2003b: 409).

Bright epithets dedicated to Altai are found in the folklore of Mongolian peoples: “towering seventy-headed Altai, rising together with one rock” (Vladimirtsov 2003a: 379); “Rich Khangai and Altai, full of all earthly blessings” (Vladimirtsov 2003b: 409); “Rich Altai” (Vladimirtsov 2003v: 498); “Mighty Altai” (Vladimirtsov 2003v: 502); “Mysterious Altai” (Vladimirtsov 2003v: 504); “Great homeland Altai” (Vladimirtsov 2003d: 517); etc.

The subject of ancient homeland, the land of ancestors in ritual semantics, is associated with the system of ethnic cultural markers. For the Oirats of Mongolia these markers, along with others, are Clan Mountains and ovoo constructions, “land-water” and other cultural components. Homeland theme is traced not only in folklore, but as shown in the materials we collected during field expeditions, also in old written Buddhist monuments. A characteristic feature of these texts is calling upon “the spirit-masters of areas (in this case, Altai) to appease them and make sacrifice to them through incense.

Now we will address to the text of “Incense offering to Altai”.

3. Transliteration:

Altayin sang orosibui::

arši šakyamuni kigēd axamud köböün mayidari arya naγajuna türbil ūgei kigēd adiša gbrom aldarši=qsan congkapa pece blama dalai nuγuudtu aburida sogüdün jalbardamui adiša tiderān xura oroulun soyi=rxo coq törö şaǰin tuq tō soyirxo eke boluqsan diyan erel xangγan soyirxo eši uxāni nomi üǰēd giyigüülün soyirxo erdeni γurban sur=γuuli bariqči ni örgöǰüülün soyirxo

(1a): o ḍče xōson činar bol=xu ya ḍče erdeni saba ḍime xotolo tōgūskū: inu ḍče:
kūseli yin tabun ya ed öbör čilōnēr bütükü yeke amuγū=langtu samādan bariyin takil:: aγui yeke bütükü: o: o ya: u: o ya: iu: o ya iu:: γayixamšiqtaį teng=geri oron terigüüten xān alatuni yeke daginis oron olon nögödör ögligü yin ezen mani örgüxsen ene takili tūrbel ügei (1b) ene oron du õdō bol=do joqlon soyorxo: toba čiloxulā öbör öbör yin you durluqsani:: dādxaji arban yurban al=taγiyin ariulumui: γučin: γurban köküyigi ariulu-mui: sutan: xān yeke nöküd selteyigi ariulumui: āxad orbi nököd selteyigi ariulu-mui āxad nököd selteyigi ariulumui abxad nököd selteyigi ariulumui oulan murin dalayin emči yigi bügüde (2a) ariulumui: oroni teng=geri orodiyin ezen bügüde xangxu boltuyai: tere me=tü sang yin adistid ēr bide yøγuuzari nököd sel=tėdi zedkerlen üldü=müi: dayisun čidkür arilun nasun kigēd coq učiral del=gerölulen üyiled ödö: yurban tan alaqsal ügei yaxaruuusulan üyiled söni yurban tan alaqsal ügei caqdan üyiled čınaqší yabuxuyiudeşin üyi= (2b) led: inaqší irekşidi uqtaŋ üyiled xadadu abirixudu şatu bolun üyiled oron du suuxui du nököcön üyi=led byavā olon mörtü yabu=xuyiγ xułuγai demás ü=gei bolγon üyiled: yurban oroyigi ergeke-dü mini xuran üyiled xoγor köl=tü kümümü şidi oq: dō=rbōn kultu aduusuni şidi xayirlan batu xu=yaq zemseqqgiyin şidi (3a) yaxuyirlan iro douni şidi: xārλan iro aldar kūçüni şidi: xārλan nasun buγan ediyin şidi xārλan cō=lōn asarmaγayai nöködiyin şidi xārλan dēdü kigēd yeruyin şidi xārλan kieteq=sen yēn duγan: zalbiraxla xamugi ayiladun tūyideγ ügei bolγon soyorxo::: ibu yadu bolod kūse=qsen kereγiyi mini dōrbōn zūqti xotolo tögūs bol=γon üyiled kieteq=sen: (3b) bügüdeγiyi xuran metū buulγād caγan zügi te=ki: tenggeri kieteq=sen ke=regi būteqči ķamaman erdeni metū yarbaras mo=dun metū ūre zemes to=qtuγ caq ūrğulide you sanaqsani mini bütükü bol=tuγai:: γayixamšiqtaį o/qtoryi unprecedented tabun yin bulun yēn or=ki=xu metū dayiči tenggeri kümüm ēce bu xayaça buγu arban saran bolōd öbör yēn or=kixu metū dayiči tenggeri kümüm ēce bu xayaça xayaγasun du usun nökockü metū dayi=ći tenggeri kümüm ēce bu xayaça xaya=sun do nökockü metū dayi=ći tenggeri kümüm ēce bu xayaça xaya=sun du nökockü metū dayi=ći tenggeri kümüm ēce bu xayaça yu rlu du doun nökockü metū dayiči teng=geri kümüm ēce bu xayaça dalayin tenggeridi padma ceceq uryuuxalu metū: dayiči tenggeri kümüm ēce bu xayaça cege eke köbōn ačidu inaqšan asaraxu (4b) metū: dayiči tenggeri kümüm ēce bu xayaça tenggeri oq=toryuyidu: naran saran nök=çokü metū dayiči tenggeri kümüm ēce bu xayaça olon: ulušiyin dumda daysuni bayułuγān ēce teyin ilγaru=luŋ üyiled dayiči
tenggeri ertoncoyin xarangγuyigir arilγaqči naran sarayin:: ki=šigi ölzötü oron ende oq küseqsen keregi ögüq=či ze çindamani erdeniyin kišigi ölzötü oron ende (5a) oq esurun xurmusta teri=güüten tenggeriyin kišigi ene ödör ölzötü oron ende öq kürdü orčuluq=či xän terigüüten kümüni ki=šigi ene ödör ölzötü oron ende öq bayas-xulang bayiγuluqči terigüüten rluyn k ešigi ene ödör ölzö=tü oron ende öq xor ögüqči te=rigüüten zokoliyin nere bayi=γuluqči kešigi ene ö=ödör ölzötü oron ende öq geseriyin zügi daraqči čiri= (5b) giyin kešigi ene ödör öl=öütü oron ende öq izour ündüsü örgöjiülüqči kō=böün ačiyan kešigi kešigi ene ödör ölzötü oron ende öq mesër ulü daq=dagu batu xuyagiyin kešigi ene ödör ölzötü oron ende oq sanaqsadu mini ne=gen aqšiinda kürgen ćidaxu morini kešigi ene ödör ölzötü oron ende oq ye kekčüti ayin kešigi ene ödör ölzötü oron ende oq (6a) yeke kükčitei sayin dou=tai noxoyin kešigi ene ödör ölzötü oron ende öq ariun yabudaltai uran beriyin kešigi ene ödör ölzö=tü oron ende öq xototo togüs züq éce teyin ai=layuqsan burxani kešigi ene ödör ölzötü oron ende oq oron tedeni ölöi xutugi abäd dayiči tenggeriyin nöködtü zalan aru éce tüşıülün ömönösö gegörülün (6b) căru yabuxuyidu udušin naru ereküyidu uqtun söni γurban ta caqda xarousulun ödör γurban ta üyileded ebečin ada yeke γai zedker bügüdei=gi arilγayd sanaqsan kere=gi jibxulangtaı buurten üyiled üleqsen kešigi duuqsan üyiledbüriyin gësöuin buuraqsan kigëd mini üyile-duqsen ayimšiq kedüi bu bügüdegi cu külìcen soyırixo:: sarva ma gi la:: :: Om ma::

4. Translation:

“Incense offering to Altai”

“Ever I bow and pray to the hermit Shakyamuni, the elder brothers Maitreya, Manjushri, saint Nagarjuna, Asangama, Atisha, Bromtonpa, Tsongkapa, the Dalai Lama. Let rain come, Atisha. Let that glory, power, and religion be respected. Let a request for contemplation be fulfilled, which is the foundation of [all]. Illuminate us with religious teaching and instruction. Extend the teaching of the Three Jewels. (1a): Let a full [transformation] of precious matter and spirit into the properties of the void be completed. Today five wishes will be granted with the assistance of a special stone, rite of sacrifice [will be conducted] peacefully [quietly] and in deep thoughts. Completely and greatly [everything] will be fulfilled. O, ya, u, o,
u. Please, come immediately to the place (1b): [sacrifice], where I make an offering to the abode of amazing Tengri and other beings, Khan Altai, the abode of great Dakinis and many other almsgivers. ... I consecrate 13 [summits] of Altai, consecrate 33 peaks of [Khan] Khukhei. I consecrate all Khans and high [important] friends. I consecrate all old friends. I consecrate all uncle’s friends. I consecrate all (2a) clouds, rivers, seas. Let all the patrons of the heavenly places and spaces be appeased. Likewise, thanks to the grace of the incense, we together with friends, Yogachara, disseminate and prevent [misery?]. Destroying enemies and foes [devils], we will lengthen the life and prolong happy meetings, three times a day without a break [is needed, we will perform [the rite of incense] and three times at night without a break will we protect [the place of sacrifice]. When [the spirits] depart, you are to see [them] off (2b); when [the spirits] arrive, you are to welcome [them]. For the salvation in the rock, it is necessary to make a ladder; when you settle down in an area, you are to make friends [with spirits]. When you walk many paths, you will avoid theft and robbery. When you have circumambulated the place [of worship] three [times], I will do a religious service. Granting supernatural powers [magic] to a man with both feet; endowing supernatural abilities to living beings (animas) with four legs, you yourself are endowed with magic strong armor and weapons (3a); praying, wishing all the desired, magic of fame will collapse, magic of power and glory will crumble, magic of longevity and property will fall to pieces, magic of weak friends will disperse, magic of higher and ordinary [people] will fall apart. Deign to comprehend and to do everything immediately and without obstacles. Becoming very poor, all of my desired actions become perfect in four directions. (3b) As if I fully assembled all the desired, I guard the [righteous] path. Let everything I take care of prosper and become realized, like a jewel chindamani that Tengris use to grant wishes and like sandalwood pollinates fruits. Do not get rid [avoid] of the people, together with comrades of brave Tengris like five elements of wondrous space. Do not dispose of (4a) brave Tengris and people like a lion on a snowy mountain captivated by its [hunting]. Do not dispose of brave Tengris and people like a deer, which leaves its [territory, habitat] for ten months. Do not dispose of men and brave Tengris like water disposes of fish. Do not dispose of brave Tengris and people like the roar of a dragon. Do not dispose of brave Tengris and people...
like lotus planted on the sea skyline. Do not dispose of brave Tengris and people like a father and a mother brought up and loved (4b) their grandchildren. Do not dispose of brave Tengris and people like the sun and moon appearing in the sky. Grant the happiness of the sun and moon to this blessed place, eliminating the darkness of the universe, and brave Tengri preventing battles with the enemy among many peoples. Grant here and on this day chindamani jewel (granting desired wishes) to the blessed place of happiness (5a). Grant here and in this day, the blessed place of prosperity of Esrua Qormusta and Tengris. Grant here on this day and in this blessed place, prosperity to the Khan turning the Wheel (Chakravartin) and to people. Grant here and on this day in this blessed place, the welfare to those who create joy and to dragons. Grant here and on this day in this blessed place, welfare to those who is impoisoned with venom and others who glorify [lit. create] the glory of deeds. Grant here and on this day in this blessed place, welfare to warriors (5b) suppressing the Geser’s country [lit. side]. Grant here and on this day in this blessed place, welfare to our grandchildren under clan tutelage. Grant here and on this day in this blessed place, prosperity to strong armor impenetrable for cold weapons. Grant here on this blessed day and place, welfare to that horse which is able to deliver what I think of (ponder over) in a moment. Grant here and on this day in this blessed place, prosperity to mighty deeds (6a). Grant here on this blessed day and place, prosperity to the dog with a powerful bark. Grant here on this blessed day and place, happiness to a beautiful daughter-in-law with noble intentions. Grant here on this blessed day and place, prosperity of the Buddhas [endowed] in all cardinal directions of [the world]. Having blessing and happiness of their place, inviting and welcoming brave Tengris with friends, you will find support in the north and enlightenment from the south (6b). When [the spirits] depart, you are to bid them farewell and see them off, when they arrive, you are to meet and welcome them, three times a night guards are to protect the [place of sacrifice], three times a day [incense] is to be burned. Getting rid of all - misery, disease and evil spirits – you officially complete what is planned. As much as I fear, help me persevere through all. Sarva ma gi la! Om ma.”
5. Conclusion.

An analysis of the text indicates its Buddhist origin. The initial part is an appeal to the Buddha Shakyamuni, bodhisattvas Maitreya and Manjushri, as well as Buddhist teachers Nagarjuna, Asangama, Atisha, Bromtonpa, Tsongkapa and the Dalai Lama. In addition, the text clearly traces folk foundation and connection to the pre-Buddhist beliefs. The text syncretism appears in an appeal to the Buddhist master Atisha calling the latter a rain-giver, which, according to the traditional pre-Buddhist ideas of Western Mongols (Oirats), is in its turn granted by local spirit-masters. The function of incense in the text is described not only as consecration of terrain and summoning rain, but as a deliverance from misery, disease, and evil spirits, ensuring the welfare of all people led by the ruling Khan, including defenders-warriors, all clans with their members, their younger generations (descendants) and daughters included in the clan; even ensuring the welfare of livestock. The text makes a remarkable reference not only about 13 peaks of the Altai, and 33 summits of the Khan Khukhei, a small mountain ridge also called Tokhtakhuiin Shili (with some peaks reaching the height of 2500–2500 m) (Simukov 2007: 572), separating the basins of Uvs (Ubsa, Ubs Nuur) and Khyargas Nuur lakes, the largest lakes on the territory of Ubs Nuur Aimag of Mongolia, whose population mostly consists of the Oirats – Derbets and Baits (the largest ethnic group among the country's ethnic Mongolian minority). “The Eastern or Khan Khukhei Region,” according to A.D. Simukov, occupied eastern and central parts of Ubs Nuur Aimag, i.e. the ridge of Tokhtakhuiyn Shili – Khan Khukhei and the adjacent areas to the north and south (Simukov 2007: 579) covered with forests (larch, cedar) and steppes. It is quite possible that the text, which talks of Tengri (spirit-gods) blessing granting support from the north and enlightenment from the south, encoded information not only about spirit-masters of different (forest and steppe) areas, but also about the part of “The Altai Mountains” occupying western part of Mongolia, home of the lyricist offering incense to Altai. Thus, in the Buddhist text, the offering of incense to the Altai Mountains reflects ancient beliefs and traditional perceptions of the Western Mongols-Oirats and designates the territories of their habitation.
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